

# A Paradigm of Comparative Lexicology



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By

Floriana Popescu

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TO THE MEMORY OF

my mother-in-law, Veta Popescu (1924–2014),  
whose uninterrupted thirty-year support facilitated my long  
hours of individual study

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED



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## PREFACE

This volume began as a practical coursebook to facilitate one of the teaching tasks I had to accomplish in the late 1990s. As my students were minoring in English but majoring in Romanian, they would insistently ask me to complement my illustrative English sets with Romanian examples. To ease their learning process the comparative perspective was preferred.

Their requests considered, my modest coursebook gradually turned into a comparative compendium of the English and Romanian lexicons, which appear to be separated from each other by the European continent lying in between.

This book shows my personal findings, observations, analyses, and commentaries, unfolding a coherent mapping of the numerous facts of language which are similar in the two languages. Although the lexicological terminology is sometimes overlapping and easily confusable, our etymologically argued choices will highlight the distinctiveness of each particular concept and its related aspects.

Since, through the years, numerous students have inspired the making of this book, I should like to thank them all for their interest in learning more and more about the lexicology of the English language taught through the comparative perspective. Professor Elena Bonta at “Vasile Alecsandri” University of Bacău and my colleagues in the English Department Research Centre at the Faculty of Letters of “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati, Romania deserve my heartfelt thanks for their critical comments and valuable suggestions which helped me correct my infelicitous wordings and errors. I am nevertheless fully responsible for all those which remain.

I would like to give my thanks to Victoria Carruthers, Rebecca Gladders, Amanda Millar, Hannah Fletcher, Adam Rummens and Matthew Scott from Cambridge Scholars Publishing, who provided consistent help and, more importantly, precious encouragement.

My great debt is to my husband, Valentin. He has not only put up with my moments of discouragement and fatigue, but also consistently helped me with productive discussion through his well-aimed questions, which ultimately enabled me to find adequate theoretical or illustrative solutions, whenever necessary.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

*Aeron.* – aeronautics  
*Anat.* - anatomy  
*Archit.* – architecture  
*Astron.* - astronomy  
*Bldg.* – building  
*Bot.* – botany  
*Chem.* – chemistry  
*Comp.* – computers  
*Comp. Technol.* – computer technology  
*Dent.* – dentistry  
*Du* – Dutch  
*Elect.* – electricity  
*Electron.* - electronics  
*F.* – French  
*Geol.* – geology  
*Immunol.* - immunology  
*lex. m.* – lexical morpheme  
*M.E.* – Middle English  
*M.F.* – Middle French  
*Mach.* – machinery  
*Math.* – mathematics  
*Metall.* – metallurgy  
*Min.* – mineralogy  
*Naut.* – nautics  
*Naval Archit.* – naval architecture  
*Nuclear Phys.* - nuclear physics  
*O. E.* – Old English  
*O. F.* – Old French  
*O. H. G.* – Old High German  
*Ophthalm.* – ophthalmology  
*Photog.* – photography  
*Phys.* – physics  
*R. Rd.* – rail roads  
*Sla.* - Slavic  
*Surg.* – surgery  
*Zool.* – zoology

**PART ONE:**  
**PROLEGOMENA TO COMPARATIVE**  
**LEXICOLOGY**

# CHAPTER ONE

## BASICS IN COMPARATIVE LEXICOLOGY

### 1.0. Introduction

As evidence and historic relics of national development and progress, words have been both the most precious cultural possession of human communities and a topic of interest and research in language and communication sciences. Their appropriate use is key to universal wellbeing and the best premise for headway and success, and wealth and comfort, as the knowledge of words is power.

For centuries the vocabularies of different European languages have been studied for well-stated purposes and from different interpreting perspectives, but all these studies have been one-language explorations only. Fairly recently, a comprehensive, word-focused, five-volume series entitled *Word Formation: an International Handbook of the Languages of Europe* (Müller et al. 2015) was published. This encyclopaedia describes each language of the world from the perspective of word formation. In its fourteen comprehensive chapters, the series acknowledges word formation to be a consistent ramification of lexicology. The approaches to units, methods and processes, rules and restrictions, semantics and pragmatics, and native and loan representations in the first two volumes consider both general and particular cases. Other extremely interesting topics are developed, but they are all one-language focused vistas.

The current study is the first attempt to demonstrate that, although “the vocabularies of individual languages are structured very differently” (Gast, König, and Moyse-Faurie 2014, 145), the English and Romanian vocabularies reveal a wide array of similarities both at macro and micro-structural lexical levels.

This comparative approach follows a previous analysis which minutely explored eponyms and eponymic formations identified in the two languages. These thematic lexical explorations indicated that, in addition to eponyms and eponymization, these two languages share many other lexical representations.

Although it may seem an unsustainable enterprise since it is intended to draw a parallel between the languages of two apparently unrelated

worlds, I hope my findings will demonstrate quite the opposite. It is true that these languages are spoken in opposite regions of Europe, with the United Kingdom, the birth place of the English language, situated at the extreme western border, and Romania, the cradle of the Romanian language, at the extreme eastern margin of the continent. They are as distant territorially and historically as they are culturally, and linguistically their origins relate them to different branches of the Indo-European tree of languages. With English descending from Germanic and Romanian from the Latin branch, one could hardly imagine their zones of interference. They have not only evolved in different “leagues” and played in different championships through the centuries, but also had specific global and European roles. Nevertheless, they share aspects related to the European history and culture whose representations are observable at the vocabulary level. First, they share insularity, a feature with concrete representations for the British Isles, which are surrounded by (sometimes hostile) waters, and with an abstract mapping for the Latin-based Romania surrounded by the “Slavic Ocean.” Secondly, both languages have similarities noticeable at the macro and micro-structural levels of vocabulary; these similarities start with phonetic, orthographic, and etymological aspects and finish with the lexical strata. Thirdly, they reveal more lexical, semantic, and associative similarities than dissimilarities in the fields of word formation and word relationships. Both languages have a native thesaurus of their own, which is complemented by a considerable percentage of shared foreignisms and a minor percentage of language-specific naturalizations and adoptions, whose zones of lexical correspondence will be supported by relevant examples.

Following Lipka’s (1992, 69) model of cross-classification, I devise a cross-lexicological perspective fit to facilitate these English-Romanian lexical parallels, comparing: (1) the structure of their lexicons, (2) the structure of lexemes and lexical formations, (3) word formations, (4) semantic relationships between words, and (5) lexical strata.

Complementary to grammar, the vocabulary of a language is an extremely complex domain which incorporates all its words with their etymological, structural, semantic, historic, stylistic, and grammatical information. Immaterial in their essence, words are among the most reliable scientific pieces of evidence, being a:

symbol by which people express their ideas, [and] an accurate measure of the range of their thoughts at any given time. Words obviously designate the things a culture knows, and just as obviously the vocabulary of a language must keep pace with the advance of the culture’s knowledge. The date when a new word enters the language is in general the date when the

object, experience, observation or whatever it is that calls it forth has entered the public consciousness.

(Baugh and Cable 1994: 295)

As the basic representation of the world in the human mind, words are the vital instruments enabling humans to communicate and express themselves. In this way, words may be used either discretely or included in the most diverse combinations based on a wide range of patterns and criteria.

In a wider perspective, in the sum total of words in a language as well as their ability to express very simple and linear to very complex, intricate and sophisticated concepts, feelings, objects, etc. the vocabulary reflects its speaking community level of knowledge and progress at a certain point or interval on its timeline. In a minimizing perspective, a vocabulary may be reflectively interpreted with regards to a person's level of understanding and knowledge. In brief, "vocabulary" is a context-dependent notion related to the total number of words and their capability of envisaging the amount of knowledge a person or a society may have reached at a certain moment.

Meanings of words along with their etymology, evolution, and contribution to the English and Romanian vocabulary enrichment were studied long before the twentieth century, but these approaches were not assigned to a special linguistic branch, such as lexicology. The word "lexicology" (< Gr. *lexikós* "words" + Gr. *logía* "study"), which has been active in the English vocabulary beginning in the 1820s (McArthur 1996, 554) and the Romanian vocabulary almost a century later, may according to its etymology be defined as simply the study or the science of words.

General dictionaries describe lexicology as:

- (1) the study of the overall structure and history of the vocabulary of a language.

(C. E. D. 1999, 892)

- (2) ramură a lingvisticii care studiază lexicul unui sistem socio-cultural dat. [a branch of linguistics which studies the lexicon of a given socio-cultural system.]

(Oprea et al. 2006, 733, my translation)

Language encyclopaedia, language companions, and specialist dictionaries provide formal definitions, describing lexicology to be a branch of linguistics which studies: "the nature, meaning, history, and use of words and word elements and often also the critical description of lexicography" (McArthur 1996, 555). More specific definitions of "lexicology" outline



its major directions of study, which include: “sources of the vocabulary, the word-building process, meanings of words, changes of meaning, transfer of meaning, semantic relations between words, lexical strata and lexicography” (Bonta 2004, 8).

Little is known about what happened to make the word “lexicology” become part of the Romanian vocabulary because specialist literature omits any reference to its chronology (Bidu-Vrânceanu et al. 2001, 289). The ideologically-biased linguistic studies situate the first approaches on the Romanian word stock within the early segment of the 1950s. Alexandru Graur (1954, 15) refers to a few contributions published between 1950 and 1953, ignoring the roots of lexicographic and lexicological studies which go back to Hașdeu and Șăineanu, the two reputed philologists of the mid-nineteenth century.

Hașdeu<sup>1</sup> stands among the few encyclopaedists who were also awarded by the Romanian Academy. His two-volume contribution *Cuvente din bătrâni* [*Words from Our Forefathers*] (1878), tackling the historic descriptions of Romanian words, has remained important to this day. He was the initiator of *Etymologicum Magnum Romaniae*, the first great lexicographic project designed to produce the most comprehensive dictionary of the Romanian language. Regrettably, only the first five volumes were published between 1886 and 1889. Next to Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu, Lazăr Șăineanu<sup>2</sup> should also be remembered for at least his book *Încercare asupra semasiologiei limbii române* [*A Tentative Study on the Semasiology of the Romanian Language*] (1887), the first of this kind, i.e. to consider lexicological aspects. The Romanian tradition in the study of words, with its roots going back to the end of the nineteenth century, witnessed an ideologically-biased revival in the 1950s when quotations from Stalin followed by references to Russian linguists were a must which conditioned the publication of any linguistic study, Romania being a Sovietized country until the mid-1960s. New stages in the history of Romanian linguistics can be determined after the 1970s when the published literature was not ideologically tainted. A renewed interest in Romanian linguistics was manifest only after the year 2000, when many more aspects were explored.

In sum, be it used either discretely or as part of more or less complex associations, the concept of “word,” with its representations and enclosed meanings, forms the essence of both in-depth and surface lexicological approaches.

## 1.1. Terminological Issues

Lexicology works with words in a manner similar to other language sciences, such as terminology and terminography, but unlike them it operates with both the general stock and field-specific representations.

### 1.1.1. Word

As elemental as it may be, “the notion of word is not as simple as it seems at first sight” (Lipka 1992, 68). Finding a satisfactory definition for “word” is an elusive goal, and producing one applicable in several languages is an impossible mission. Most of the simple definitions account for a word to be either “what native speakers think a word is” (Matthews 1972, 75), or “a unit of language as spoken, written or printed” (Hornby and Parnwell 1982, 609), or: “a sound or combination of sounds (or the written symbols) forming a unit expressing an object, action, idea, etc. in a language” (O. S. D. 1988, 720).

In Romanian linguistics, “word” is the term which denotes the basic unit of a given language resulting from the association of a particular meaning to a particular group of sounds capable of a particular grammatical employment (Levițchi 1970, 13; Bejan and Asandei 1981, 8). For our comparative analysis, “word” is taken to mean “the physical form which realizes or represents a word in speech or writing” (Katamba 2005, 11).

Lexicology analyses words, concepts, relationships, meanings, hierarchies, and aspects of language change through the centuries as well as context-dependent language changes. Given the wide variety of its topics, historiographic interpretations show that lexicological terminology seems to rely on interchangeable words which, despite their sense similarities, still have well-established meanings. And such words include elemental or discrete components, such as “lexeme,” “lexical unit/formation,” “base,” “stem,” “root” or “radix,” and “affix,” or are linked to systems and systematic approaches like “lexicon,” “lexis,” and “vocabulary.”

In the field of terminology, denominations of word formations are also interchangeable. For example, what is presented under “conversion” in one source (Bauer 1983, 226–30) is “derivation by a zero morpheme” in another (Marchand 1960, 293–308); what is envisaged as “word composition” (Jespersen 1938, 161) in a few approaches is substituted by “composition” (Bonta 2004, 63) and “compounding” (Bauer 1983, 201–13; Marchand 1960, 11–84; Rayevska 1971, 67–82) in a few others; what “word manufacturing” means to Marchand (1960, 367) means “blending”

or “telescoping” to Bonta (2004, 66). As another illustration, Jespersen’s “back-formation” (1982, 164, 176) is Rayevska’s “back-derivation” (1971, 63), and so on. Interchangeability applies equally to the theoretical and illustrative levels. Thus, the very examples supporting one word formation are repeated to exemplify other types of word formation, even under the same author (see chapter three, sections 3.5. and 3.6).

### 1.1.2. Lexis, vocabulary, and lexicon

“Back-formation,” “telescoping,” and the rest of the examples above are terms used to denote the system formed by the sum total of words a language possesses, be it synchronically or diachronically considered. “Vocabulary” is a word of Latin origin which displays the following basic meanings:

- (1) a list or collection of words or of words and phrases usually alphabetically arranged and explained or defined: LEXICON
- (2) (a) a sum or stock of words employed by a language, group, individual, or work or in a field of knowledge; (b) a list or collection of terms or codes available for use (as in an indexing system)
- (3) a supply of expressive techniques or devices

(W. E. U. D. 1996, 2129).

Borrowed from Greek (*lexis*, meaning “speech”), “lexis” is a word which is frequently used “especially in British linguistics for the vocabulary of a language or sublanguage, consisting especially of its stock of lexemes” (McArthur 1996, 555).

Similarly to “vocabulary,” “lexicon” is a word borrowed from Greek and also has three meanings:

- (1) a book containing an alphabetical arrangement of the words in a language and their definitions: DICTIONARY
- (2) (a) the vocabulary of a language, of an individual speaker or of a group of speakers or of a subject; (b): the total stock of morphemes in a language
- (3) repertoire, inventory
- (4) (a) the total inventory of morphemes in a given language; (b) the inventory of base morphemes plus their combinations with derivational morphemes

(W. E. U. D. 1996, 1107).

At their first and second levels, the two terms defined by each of the same sources are synonyms. In context, they are broadly used interchangeably to refer to (a) the lexical knowledge of individuals or

groups of speakers and (b) all those volumes of lexical materials or “leximats” (Verlinde, Leroyer, and Binon 2009, 1–17), incorporating dictionaries, thesauri, language companions or language encyclopaedias, and glossaries.

The word “lexicon” has specialized its meaning, being used in linguistics to denominate language which “is stored primarily in the head of its speakers, and for most of the history of mankind, it was only stored there” (Klein 2001, 8764). Due to the theoretical background of the current approach, in what follows “lexicon” will be used as a synonym for “vocabulary” (Crystal 1999a, 359).

## 1.2. Language Units

With their overt or hidden meanings, inspired stylistic uses, and articulate or apparently loose and undetermined associations and combinations, “words” represent the focus of several language sciences, including lexicology. When they refer to “a single word” or “a unit in the lexicon or vocabulary of a language” (McArthur 1996, 553), specialists prefer the term “lexeme” (Lyons 1987; Lipka 1992, 47). When they refer to chunks of language or chains of words, they usually discuss “collocations,” “idioms,” or “idiomatic structures,” “clichés,” “sayings,” “proverbs,” “metaphors,” “metonyms,” “similes,” and “aphorisms.” In what follows, only a few of the language units will be considered.

### 1.2.1. Lexeme. Morpheme – base, root, and stem

“Lexeme,” “lexical unit/item,” or “word” are all similar in meaning. Each of them denotes a basic unit of a given language, resulting from the matching of a particular meaning to a particular group of sounds capable in a particular grammatical employment.

In traditional approaches words are separated into smaller units which have a grammatical function and a meaning of their own. The lexical representations of units within a vocabulary incorporate “morphemes,” “roots,” and “lexemes.” In between appear two other small units, which are functional at sound and form level, respectively. The “phones,” i.e. the smallest units functional at sound level, and their class of variants known as “allophones” are terms peculiar to phonetics and phonology; the “morphemes” or “morphs,” with their corresponding class of variants the “allomorphs” (Lipka 1992, 68), initially pertained to morphology. “Morphemes” are described by the conjoining of three different definitions:

- (1) the morpheme is the smallest meaningful linguistic unit and therefore the smallest linguistic sign
- (2) the morpheme consists of a class of variants, the allomorphs, which are either phonologically or morphologically conditioned
- (3) the morpheme is an abstract unit of the system of a language, for example the plural morpheme or the past tense morpheme in English  
(Lipka 1992, 69)

Since the word “morpheme” is shared by grammar and lexicology, it has assumed a few distinctive values. Table 1.1 below synthesizes their distinctiveness as pinpointed by Lipka (1992, 70).

**Table 1.1. Lexical versus grammatical morphemes**

Lexical/semantic morphemes:	Grammatical morphemes:
- denote ( <i>particular</i> ) extralinguistic objects and states of affairs: e.g. actions events, situations, relations	- denote ( <i>general</i> ) grammatical functions: e.g. plural, tense, syntactic relations: concord of gender, number
- denote ( <i>particular</i> ) open class (set)	- denote ( <i>general</i> ) a closed class (inventory)
- precede grammatical morphemes (in Germanic languages)	- follow lexical morphemes (in Germanic languages)
- denote ( <i>particular</i> ) often restricted combinations (with other lex. m.)	- exhibit relatively unrestricted combinations (with lex. m.)
- combine to outcome: new lexeme	- combine to outcome: wordforms

The class of morphemes incorporates (a) independent or free morphemes, (b) dependent or bound morphemes, and (c) flexible morphemes, which may be either independent or dependent lexical units. For example, in the case of *show*, *showed*, *shown*, *showing*, *shows*, these words can be further separated into [*show*] + [*-ed*], [*-en*], [*-ing*] and [*-s*], and these endings are frequent with many other words (such as *sow* and *sew*). Nevertheless, while “show” appears as a word, the rest of the endings will never occur discretely and this is the reason why *show* is a free morpheme; the rest of the examples are bound/dependent morphemes and will always have to be attached to words. In addition, there are those (few) words (Ginzburg, Khidekel, Knyazeva and Sankin 1979, 92), which may occur either as independent words or as affixes. “Onym” is such an example, as it has come to be used as a noun (Lamb 2010, 178) and a morpheme (e.g. *heteronyms*, *backronym*, and *hydronym*); *well* and *half* are free morphemes

in *sleep well* or *half an hour*, and bound morphemes or prefixes in *well-known*, *well-reputed*, *half-eaten*, and *half-done* (Ginzburg, Khidekel, Knyazeva and Sankin 1979, 92). Tables A.10 and A.16 in the appendix provide other examples.

Closely related to the notions of “lexeme” and “morpheme,” numerous linguists use the terms “base,” “radix,” “root,” and “stem” interchangeably. “Base” is a generic term used with reference to any lexical unit which accepts a particular affix. Other authors consider that stems are the concern of inflectional morphology (Bauer 1983, 20).

Rayevska (1971, 38) defines “root” as “the primary element of the word, its basic part which conveys its fundamental lexical meaning,” which cannot be further analysed in terms of morphemes, be they derivational or inflectional. She decomposes *unbreakables* into four elements, which are represented in Table 1.2 below, inspired by Bloomfield’s (1975, 90) example of analysis in immediate constituents:

**Table 1.2. *Unbreakables* – immediate constituents**

<i>unbreakables</i>			
<i>un-</i>	<i>break</i>	<i>-able</i>	<i>-s</i>
↓	↓	↓	↓
affix	<b>root</b>	affix	affix

Among others, the term “base” is quite common in lexicology it is used by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1972, 1985). They admit “base” and “stem” to be fundamental terms when dealing with the constituents whose meanings are sometimes interchangeable in the word-building processes. For example, *man*, *person*, and *apply* are accepted as “stems,” while a complex word such as *depolarization* superficially looks like a “simple linear string of items,” decomposable into four “affixes” and a “base” (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik 1985, 1518). Table 1.3 breaks this down into immediate constituents and unchains the following elements.

**Table 1.3. *Depolarization*: immediate constituents**

<i>depolarization</i>				
<i>de</i>	<i>pol(e)</i>	<i>ar</i>	<i>iz(e)</i>	<i>ation</i>
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
affix	<b>base</b>	affix	affix	affix

While Rayevska uses “root” interchangeably with “base” and “stem,” Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985) avoid “root” and use “base” and “stem” distinctively. They admit “base” as the lexical unit which combines with a particular affix (and thus is used with a well-defined but restrictive meaning) and “stem” to be that “form of a word stripped of all affixes which are recognizable as such in English” (Quirk and Greenbaum 1987, 979), and which “combine with affixes to yield adjectives” (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik 1985, 1519). Romanian linguists (Guțu-Romalo 1968, 39; Hristea 1984, 69–70) operate with the same distinctions between *rădăcină*, which is meaningfully similar to the English “base,” and *radical*, which is the equivalent of “stem.”

### 1.2.2. Affixes

If interpreted only on the basis of tables 1.2. and 1.3 above, “affixes” refer to all those morphemes which are placed either at the front or the end of lexemes to coin new words. According to the position they may take in relation to the bases they are attached to, affixes further divide into outer and inner affixes. The outer affixes may be proclitic when they are placed in front of the word, and are also known as “prefixes” or enclitic when they are placed at the end of the word and are commonly known as “suffixes.”

The affixes purposefully inserted within the structure of multi-element words divide into “infixes” and “interfixes.” “Infixes” are meaningful letters or groups of letters inserted between a base and other affixes. For example, *-li-* in *cleanliness* (< clean + *-li-* + *-ness*) was originally a suffix, but when *-ness*, this new suffix, was attached to the base, the bound morpheme *-li* became an infix. “Interfix” (< inter “between” + fix) is also a lexicological term which designates a linking vowel such as *-o-* in *oscilloscope* or consonant, such as *-s-* in *statesman* (< state + *-s-* + man), which is used to weld the elements in a solid-styled compound. Thus, a few groups of letters or rather words behave both as free and bound morphemes. They represent the categories of semi-prefixes or *prefixoids* and semi-suffixes or *suffixoids*, which were acknowledged and named as such in the comparative approaches to Romance languages authored in the mid-1960s. Tables A.10 in and A.16 in the appendix illustrate formal details about these two categories.

It is beyond doubt that “the English lexicon is so vast and varied that it is impossible to classify it into neat categories” (Crystal 1985, 170). In his generic vista, Lyons (1981, 145) distinguishes between: (1) “word-

lexemes” which structurally consist of one word, and (2) “phrasal lexemes,” whose forms are phrases in the traditional sense of the term, e.g. *put up with*, *a red herring*, or *a pig in a poke*. What Lyons leaves aside is the internal structure of words. Even if in one unit, numerous English words may have a rather complex structure. Thus, both *home* and *inconsistency* are one word units, but while *home* cannot be separated into free + dependent morphemes, *inconsistency* shows a structure that consists of the following morphemes: {[in-] + [con-] + [sist < sister “to place”] + [-ency]}. Structurally similar examples, such as *deal* (hill) and *imposibilitate* (impossibility) {[im-] + [posibil] + [-itate]} do exist in Romanian, and their further analysis in immediate constituents reveals similar formative patterns, i.e. while the former cannot be separated into free plus dependent morphemes, the latter is made of an independent morpheme [*posibil*] as well as proclitic [*im-*] and enclitic morphemes [-*itate*].

### 1.2.3. Lexical formations

The syntagm “lexical formation” generally denotes diverse word combinations, such as compounds (e.g. *classroom*, *blackbird*) and phrasal verbs, which have a meaning of their own. Phraseology explores lexical formations which incorporate “phrases,” “phraseologic constructions” or “phrasal lexemes,” “word combinations,” “idioms,” or “idiomatic expressions,” and “collocations” or “phrasemes.” Our presentation will only define and illustrate their presence in the English and Romanian vocabularies.

“Phrases” are only those word combinations which: (a) contain “one or more words that have a full lexical value (noun/noun equivalent; adverb; adjective),” (b) stand “for a part of speech and take its grammatical function,” and which, from the lexical viewpoint express (c) “a certain sense unit” (Bonta 2004, 11). Structurally, phrases may be made up of either variable or invariable elements. Variable phrases are built around a verb which may change its form to convey temporal and aspectual information (*to go through thick and thin/a trece prin ciur și prin dârmon*, *to be the talk of the town/a intra în gura lumii*, and *to be on a wild goose chase/a umbla după cai verzi pe pereți*). Invariable elements, such as *at dawn/în zori*, *cloak and dagger/capă și spadă*, and *cu surle și trâmbițe* preserve their dictionary form in whatever context they may occur. My parallel view of English and Romanian phrases facilitates the finding of some idiomatic structures which make use of the same structural fixity and meaningful coincidences with such set phrases like *high and dry/cu buzele umflate* and *cap in hand* and *cu cușma în mână*, which are used



adverbially. The former describes what a person may feel when left in a difficult situation and unable to do anything about it, and the latter suggests the submissive attitude of a person who has a favour to ask. The list of set phrases is long, but only these examples were selected: *from tip to toe/din creștet până-n tâlpi*, *from cover to cover/din scoartă în scoartă*, *shoulder to shoulder/umăr la umăr*, and *empty-handedly/with empty hands/cu mâinile goale*.

This latter category of examples represents the set phrases or those associations of words which never change their form. The examples below make use of meaningfully similar set phrases:

- (1) She used to work *from dawn to dusk*
- (2) Muncea *din zori și până-n noapte*

Set phrases may also incorporate denominations of religious celebrations, such as the *Fig Sunday/Duminica Floriilor*.

“Idioms” represent another element of interest in phraseology, and may be interpreted through their broad and narrow meanings. Thus, in its broad meaning, an “idiom” is: “a form of expression, construction, and phrase, a peculiarity of phraseology approved by usage, and often having a meaning other than its grammatical or logical one” (Fowler et al., quoted in Hulban 2001, 29).

In its narrow meaning, an “idiom” is an expression of a given language that is peculiar to itself grammatically and cannot be understood from the individual meanings of its elements, as in *keep tabs on* (informally), meaning “to observe carefully.”

A tentative classification of idioms (Bonta 2004, 12) would envisage them as related to four groups:

- (1) feelings and attitudes: *to be thrilled to the bits, to think the world of someone, a se topi de fericire*
- (2) animals: *to let the cat out of the bag, to smell a rat, neither fish nor fowl/a nu fi nici cal nici măgar, a fi prins cu mâța-n sac*
- (3) colours: *black market/piața neagră, to be caught in the red, to go brown, a fi negru în cerul gurii, a vedea stele verzi*
- (4) comparisons: *to go like clockwork, to be like a cat on hot bricks, a fi frumoasă ca o cadră, a merge ca vântul și ca gândul, a alege ca o gazelă*

I would add two more categories of idioms which incorporate:

- (5) parts of the human body:  
*to have a head for/a avea cap pentru, to have a green thumb, to have a sweet tooth, a to be caught red-handed, to speak through the nose/a vorbi pe nas, a-și băga nasul ..., a avea ochi de șoim/două mâini stângi, a fi cu capul pe umeri/în nori*
- (6) numerals:  
*to be second to none/a nu avea pereche, six feet under/doii metri sub pământ, first and foremost/în primul și în primul rând, to be on cloud nine/a fi în al șaptelea cer*

A “collocation” is a word or phrase which is often used with another word or phrase, in a way that sounds correct to people who have spoken the language all their lives. In the phrases *a hard frost* and *ger năprasnic*, *hard* collocates with *frost* and *năprasnic* with *ger*. If *strong*, for example, were used instead of *hard* and *puternic* instead of *năprasnic*, the phrase would not sound natural or appropriate to a native English or a native Romanian, respectively. Similarly to idioms, collocations reveal both broad and narrow meanings. In its narrow meaning, “collocation” refers to the combination of words formed when two or more words are often used together in a way that sounds correct. The phrases *a rough wind*, *deadly blow*, and *a rough sea* are collocations. In its broad meaning, collocation refers to the regular use of some words and phrases with others, and in a special way which is difficult to guess.

“Clichés” represent another category of phrases which have been interpreted in a positive way by some researchers (Freedman and Freedman 1996) and in a negative way by others (Crystal 1995). Admitted as “ready-made vehicles for easy communication, clichés draw on the experiences and history which we all share” (Freedman and Freedman 1996, 5).

Among the sources of clichés, the two authors include:

- (1) old proverbs:  
*Don't cross bridges before you come to them* (English proverb) and *Every dog will have his day* (Macedonian proverb) (Freedman and Freedman 1996, 75)
- (2) idioms whose metamorphosis hides their initial form:  
*parting shot* (< a Parthian shot), *to save your bacon* (bacon < O. E. *baec* meaning “back” or “body”)
- (3) “our love of catchy rhymes”:  
*eager beaver* (Freedman and Freedman 1996, 5), *itsy bitsy*

- (4) idiomatic structures related to crucial historic moments:  
*to turn a blind eye* (Freedman and Freedman 1996, 77),<sup>3</sup>  
*to fiddle while Rome burns* (Freedman and Freedman 1996, 83)<sup>4</sup>
- (5) quotations and aphorisms:  
*Every cloud has a silver lining* is a cliché which is admitted to be an adaptation from John Milton's *Comus* (Freedman and Freedman 1996, 75)
- (6) metaphors: *The Iron Lady* (adapted from Partridge 1978, xii),  
*Achilles' heel*, *Argus-eyed*

According to Partridge, a “cliché,” a trite or overused expression or idea, is actually a fragment of language or a phrase which has become “so hackneyed that scrupulous speakers and writers shrink from it because they feel that its use is an insult to the intelligence of their auditor or audience, reader or public” (Partridge 1969, 73).

Clichés emerge when expressions outlive their usefulness as conveyors of information. They may be used as speech situations of the most different kinds (Crystal 1995, 186), such as:

- the passing remarks as people recognize each other in the street but with no time to stop
- the self-conscious politeness of strangers on a train
- forced interactions in mundane events (parties, conferences, etc.)
- desperate platitudes which follow unhappy events (vigils, funerals, and the like)

The Romanian practice has shown that clichés occur as conversational fillers, particularly in TV talk shows, when journalists, historians, sociologists, political analysts, and politicians rely on these helpers to take time and formulate their opinions. Such phrases as *despre ce vorbim?* /*what are we talking about?*, *Care-i/Care este problema (ta)?* /*what's/ what is (your) problem?*, or *Ce să vezi?* /*What would you say?* have been used so frequently that they have lost their power to inform or draw the listener's attention, or include them in the respective discursive act.

Of the large number of idiomatic structures which have become clichés, very few will be mentioned here. Applying the same distinction which is operable with phrases, clichés may be divided into set clichés under (a) and flexible clichés under (b), as follows:

- (1) *a blessing in disguise/o binecuvântare mascată, at this moment in time/în acest moment, every Tom, Dick, and Harry/și Popescu și Georgescu și Ionescu,<sup>3</sup> since Adam was a boy/de pe vremea lui Adam/de la Adam și Eva, from time immemorial/din vremuri neștiute, (as) dead as a doornail/beat mort/crișă*
- (2) *to add insult to injury/a pune paie pe foc, to have a thick skin/a avea obrazul gros/a fi gros de obraz, to cut the Gordian knot/a taia nodul gordian, etc.*

Cliché usage has been criticized since these lexical fillers envisage speakers as lazy, unimaginative, uninspired thinkers, or hesitating persons, who are unable to yield their own wording patterns. At the same time, when they use learned clichés, speakers wish to impress the audience or show off, which may be annoying or irritating to the listener. Characterizing clichés as “fragments of language apparently dying, yet unable to die,” Crystal considers that the best label for them would be “lexical zombies” (1995, 185), which are dying not from underuse, as happens with the gradual disappearance of old-fashioned words, but from overuse.

In parallel with cliché adversaries, its supporters admit that these constructions do fill awkward gaps in conversation, and thus act as lexical lifejackets.

Irrespective of their stylistic aspects, the line that separates idioms from clichés is rather vague and fuzzy, and what stands for an idiom with a lexicographer may as well stand for a cliché with another. For example, *a Dutch uncle*, *Dutch courage*, and *to go Dutch* are included both among clichés (Freedman and Freedman 1996, 68) and idioms (Kirkpatrick and Schwarz 1996, 92–3).

Longer chunks of language with a moralizing meaning, “proverbs” represent not only a repository of culture and tradition but also a symbol of national wisdom. Proverbs are mainly studied within the framework of paremiology. As they are part of both the English and Romanian cultural heritages, they will be considered only from the lexical perspective, i.e. that of phraseological units with a particular meaning. This meaning may or may not be the sum of the elements forming it. For example, while *out of sight, out of mind* and *ochii care nu se văd se uită* are understood in their literal meanings, *blood is thicker than water* and *sângele apă nu se face* have hidden meanings and should be read as *family will always support you*, as family ties are stronger than anything else.

In my very modest attempt to comparatively approach English and Romanian proverbs, they appear to be similar: (a) in structure, (b) in content, or (c) in both, or they may as well envisage their language specificity (d) in form, despite their similarity in content or (e) language specificity without any paremiologic equivalent (neither in form nor in content):

- (1) *Cold hands, warm heart/Mâini reci, inimă fierbinte, or First come, first served/Primul venit, primul servit*
- (2) *Actions speak louder than words/Vorba sună, fapta tună or Like father like son/Cum e sacul și petecul*
- (3) *Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today/Nu lăsa pe mâine ce poți face azi; Haste makes waste/Graba strica treaba*
- (4) *An Englishman's home is his castle/Nicăieri nu-i mai bine ca acasă, or I know on which side my bread is buttered/Imi cunosc interesul*
- (5a) *Charity begins at home; Better safe than sorry*
- (5b) *Femeia numai după urs nu se duce că-i e teamă c-o mănâncă /it is only a bear that a woman won't marry for she fears she might be eaten*

Structurally, the linguistic representations which begin with morphemes and gradually expand to end with proverbs incorporate the same typologies in both English and Romanian.

### 1.3. Lexicology as Part of a System

Words have at least one meaning or value, if they are taken separately as parts of a context, and they may reveal new shades of meaning, distinctions, or stylistic values induced by their contextual distribution. The general interrelationship and interdependence of phenomena in nature and the society are analysed and interpreted through the notion of system. Applying the same principle of interpretation in lexicology, “system” will be used in this approach to denote the sum total of the English words and their history, meanings, and overt or hidden connections. Their collecting, sorting and minute arranging based on well-defined criteria as well as their accurate explaining are the tasks of lexicography, the century-old practice which has contributed to the standardization of the present-day English and Romanian vocabularies. From an upper level, lexicology aims at the systematization of the lexical material and studies recurrent patterns of semantic relationships as well as any formal, phonological, morphological, or contextual means by which they may be rendered.

Linguistic relationships between words may be of a syntagmatic or a paradigmatic nature. The syntagmatic relationships are based on the horizontally linear character of speech, i.e. on the influence of the context (subject-predicate concord, marks for tense, aspect, and voice, ways of expressing gradability, possession, etc.). A “context” is the minimum stretch of speech necessary and sufficient to determine which of the possible meanings of a polysemantic word is meant. In some cases, the micro-context (a sentence or a syntagm) may not suffice, and the speaker could require a broader stretch of words to grasp the message.

Paradigmatic relationships determining the system of the vocabulary are based on the interdependence of words within the vocabulary (classes, subclasses, and groups of words). Comparing words within the same word family, one can notice the difference in the arrangement of morphemes: *house-dog* and *dog-house*. In fact, change in one word may cause changes in another word or several other words. A good illustration of this statement can be seen in the influence of foreignisms on native words. Thus, in O. E., “harvest” originally meant both “the gathering of grain” and “the season of reaping.” Beginning at the end of the fourteenth century, after the introduction of the Latin word *autumnus* into the English lexicon, the second meaning of its native word was lost, being displaced by the Latin one.

With syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships, and with words which gradually become so old that they fade away and ultimately go out of use, the English and Romanian vocabularies have demonstrated their vivid nature and power of adaptation as well as their systematic organization. Lexicology provides a wide range of theoretical instruments that are useful for the systematic description of the present-day vocabulary and the various tones in the use of words, emphasizing those particular means which suggest their expressiveness and hence their stylistic value.

### 1.3.1. Facets of lexicology

Relatively new among other language sciences such as rhetoric, whose roots go back to Antiquity, or lexicography, whose principles had been active in the late Middle Ages, the nineteenth-century born lexicology has evolved through its objectives, perspectives, and methods of study to produce such ramifications as general lexicology, semasiology, and etymology.

As Chițoran (1973, 97) described it, *traditional lexicology* deals with the following three types of lexical relationship: semantic, morpho-semantic, and syntagmatic. The semantic ties are based on the signification