New Insights into the Mental Lexicon

New Insights into the Mental Lexicon

Edited by

Teodora Popescu

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part Three: The Construal of Meanings in Literary Works and Cinematic Adaptations

PREFACE

The aim of this book is to put forward original approaches to meaning creation and decoding in a wide array of current preoccupations in cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics, corpus research, media studies. In particular, this volume is an attempt to answer the insidious questions of word and concept meanings, of the debate over a possible middle ground between meaning fixedness and fluidity or fuzziness, of the (im)possibility to cope with these 'slippery customers' (Labov 1973), and the 'vague boundaries and fuzzy edges' (Lakoff 1972) of natural language concepts. It is structured into three major parts, one devoted to the functioning and processing of meaning in both mother tongue (Romanian) and foreign language (English), the second focuses on meaning creation in different discourses (political, cultural, social media, business journalese), while the third tackles the issue of meaning construction in literary works and film adaptations. The research methodology draws on a wide compound of frameworks: Pragglezaj method (2007), MIPVU technique (2010), Charteris-Black's (2004) critical metaphor analysis framework, Alice Deignan's corpus-based metaphor analysis (2005), Forceville's multimodal metaphor analysis theory (2009), parallel text analysis, Isabela and Norman Fairclough's political discourse analysis (2012), Halliday and Hasan's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework (1989). Both qualitative and quantitative analysis of data was performed, as well as semi-automatic treatment of text (LancsBox and ConcApp concordancing software). The approach to the mental lexicon is for the most part cognitive-linguistic rather than psycholinguistic, with a marked focus on abstract properties of the lexicon, using linguistic grammars and dictionaries, lexical databases (WordNet) and word categorisation in corpora. However, experimental data was also measured resulting from elicited behaviour of Romanian learners of English. Limitations refer to the scope of research, which was rather time-bound, including a limited size of corpora.

The book *New Insights into the Mental Lexicon* consists of 10 individual contributions grouped around three relevant areas in the study of meaning creation: developing the mental lexicon in mother tongue and foreign language, construal and comprehension of meaning in contemporary discourses (political, cultural, social media, journalese), as well as in literature and cinematic adaptations.

Part One comprises three chapters centred on the mental lexicon in mother tongue and foreign language. Chapter One, *Comprehension of figurative lexicon in English and Romanian*, authored by Teodora Popescu provides the conceptual framework for the analysis of figurative comprehension, delineating the main operational concepts in the field and putting forward a taxonomy of figurative competence, made up of four sub-competences: collocational, polysemic, idiomatic and paremiologic. The author considers metaphorical competence as paramount to figuration comprehension, but sees it as more of a transversal competence, identifiable across a number of language structures, such as: collocations, polysemous words, idioms and proverbs. The chapter also presents the results of a pedagogic experiment meant to assess differences between the figurative lexicon in Romanian as mother tongue and English as a foreign language.

The second chapter, *A study of the mental lexicon in the oral discourse of Romanian learners of English*, by Andreea Laurențiu, presents the results of a pedagogic experiment conducted online for two groups of high school students–an experimental and a control one–meant to assess their oral discourses in a simulated Baccalaureate language examination. Both Romanian language (L1) and English language (L2) were tested in this mock exam which aimed to measure lexical richness, cohesion, reference and register. Students in the experimental group had previously attended a 12-week Public Speaking Program, which led the author to posit the hypothesis that following this course, students' oral discourses feature better lexical density, diversity and richness.

Chapter Three, titled *A contrastive analysis of figurative language and metaphors in the ECoC Corpus*, authored by Crina-Maria Herțeg and Gabriela-Corina Șanta (Câmpean) aims to identify linguistic metaphors and figures of speech from two parallel corpora submitted by Romanian local authorities with a view to securing the title of European Capital of Culture. The comparative analysis was carried out using the LancsBox concordancing instrument for both corpora, i.e. the original Romanian one and the English translation. Findings revealed the use of metonymy and personification in both corpora, as well as collocational choices, with a preference for nominal collocations. The most common conceptualisations identified were CULTURE IS A HUMAN BEING, CULTURE IS FOOD, CULTURE IS AN ENGINE/MACHINE, CULTURE IS A BUILDING, CULTURE IS A PLANT, CULTURE IS A PATIENT, CULTURE IS MEDICINE, CULTURE IS A JOURNEY and CULTURE IS A CONTAINER.

Part Two revolves around figurative language in contemporary discourse and consists of three main chapters. Chapter Four, Adina Botaș' *Presidential discourse in US pre-election debates: A normative interpretation of ironic*

and sarcastic references centres on a series of selected pieces of talk-in-interaction, drawing on the ironic and sarcastic references to one's opponent used by candidates in US presidential election debates. The analysis is performed from a pragma-rhetorical approach, as the normative component of political discourse analysis (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012), following the principles of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1999). The author managed to identify the less obvious connotations and semantic associations of presidential candidates when referencing their opponent, in their effort to disqualify them.

The fifth chapter, *A contrastive approach to puns in Romanian and English internet static memes*, by Diana Emanuela Tîrnăvean, affords a compelling insight into humorous puns, irony and sarcasm in Romanian and English Internet static memes as identified through various social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest). The author contrastively analyses the way in which people from different cultures construe and interpret such memes. Findings reveal that irony and sarcasm hinge on encyclopedic knowledge rather than on core meaning and memes apparently depend on basic frequent words with fuzzy meaning so as to warrant their humorous effect.

Chapter Six, *Conceptualisations of apps in business journalese*, authored by Bianca Tincu, concentrates on metaphors for apps and their overall image as represented in the online newspaper *The Economist*. The apps under scrutiny are Facebook and Instagram, however, articles in the self-made corpus made also reference to other big tech companies, such as Google or Apple. Findings revealed metaphors clustered around six main categories: CONTINENTS ARE LIVING ORGANISMS, ORGANISATIONS ARE LIVING ORGANISMS, IDEAS ARE PEOPLE, ORGANISATIONS ARE INSTRUMENTS OF DOMINATION, PROFITS ARE FOOD FOR INVESTMENTS and COMPETITION IS WAR.

The third part consists of four chapters which tackle the construal of meanings in literary works and cinematic adaptations. Melinda Gorgan's contribution, *The construction of double identities in Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde"*, unveils the duality of human nature as reflected through linguistic devices. In particular, the author focuses on indexicals which contribute to constructions foregrounding the theme of the split self, duality, and atavism. Moreover, when used with reference to characters, different semantic and lexical fields were understood as carrying across a message of duality and an intermingling of light and darkness. The author concludes by stating that the dichotomy of the rational, social self, versus the atavistic regression is epitomised not only by the downward spiralling of events, but also by the symbolism and

atmosphere materialised through the deliberate use of bizarre linguistic structures, ambiguous indexicals, and semantic fields polarising the two conflicting personae of the human self.

Chapter Eight, *The multimodal semantics of violence in "The Hunger Games" trilogy and film series*, by Adina-Mirela Feșteu, provides an investigation into the linguistic structures that make up the fictional framework of violence in *The Hunger Games* trilogy, alongside an analysis of visual and multimodal metaphors in the dramatised version of the series. The author aims to carry out a componential analysis of the meaning of violence, an identification of verbal, mono- and multimodal metaphors that contribute to the construction of violence, together with a comparative analysis of violence in both book and film series and a decoding of symbols and signs using social semiotic studies. The author contends that in Collins' auctorial discourse, violence is construed not only through words and expressions within its semantic field, but also through metaphors that withhold the verbalisation of pure, elemental aggression.

The ninth chapter, *The "linguistic self" in Rodica Braga's autofiction*, penned by Sorina Victoria, attempts an interdisciplinary approach to autofiction by analysing it from a linguistic perspective, through various lenses such as first-person perspective, subjectivity, self-referentiality, self-consciousness, self-knowledge and self-portrayal, as well as self-construction and representation of the self by means of linguistic devices. Victoria posits that Rodica Braga resorted to multiple forms of self-reference in order to express her linguistic self, thus unveiling the ego-anchored feature of her writing and of autofiction in general. The poetess mainly relied on indexicals, in particular *pure indexicals* (Kaplan 1989) or *egocentric particulars* (Russell 1919), to convey "*de se* beliefs" (mainly "I", "here" and "now").

The last chapter, Rebeca-Rahela Marchedon's *The language of a psychopath and its influence on childhood trauma in the autobiographical novel "A Child Called 'It'" by Dave Pelzer*, investigates the language used by a psychopath mother and the traumatic effect her words may have on her child. In particular, Marchedon focuses on the use of the pronoun "it", which depersonalizes the son, annihilates his personality, casting guilt, shame, and humiliation on him. The interpretation provided by Marchedon to the mother's language is made in line with Emily Smedley's theory of linguistic devices common to psychopaths and Olivia Rayne's theory of behavioural characterisation.

To conclude with, the book *New Insights into the Mental Lexicon* brings forth a fresh perspective on meaning creation in topical domains

nowadays which will inform and entertain both the general reader and the specialist, aiming to further investigate the captivating facets of the mental lexicon in mother tongue and foreign language, in various discourses (political, cultural, social media, business journalese), as well as in literature and cinematic adaptations. The complexity and extensive array of investigative angles would make this book a must-read for anyone genuinely interested in achieving a broader overview of the mental lexicon from a multitude of perspectives.

Teodora Popescu, 2022

ABBREVIATIONS

CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference)
CMT (Conceptual Metaphor Theory)
ECoC (European Capital of Culture)
EFL (English as a foreign language)
IELTS (International English Language Testing System)
MDA (Multimodal discourse analysis)
MIP (Metaphor Identification Procedure)
MIPUV (Metaphor Identification Procedure VU University Amsterdam)
MOE (Mock Oral Language Examination)
MOLE (Mock Oral Language Examination)
OLEs (Oral Language Examinations)
PSP (public speaking programme)
PSP (Public Speaking Programme)
SF (Science Fiction)
TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) talks
TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)

PART ONE:

THE MENTAL LEXICON IN MOTHER TONGUE AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Chapter One

Comprehension of Figurative Lexicon in English and Romanian

Teodora Popescu

1 Introduction

The words in our minds are nothing like the words in the dictionary: they differ both from a structural point of view and in terms of content. Thus, the mental lexicon of each individual is not a fixed entity – we coin new words daily, either through a process of metaphorical creation or more mundanely though just as authentically, by spoiling pronunciation or maltreating grammar. Dictionaries, in turn, are static and outmoded, poor and despondent, of no more value than a wardrobe full of expensive, fancy, colourful but unworn clothes.

The mental lexicon represents the cognitive mapping of complex structures and relationships between words and concepts in the speaker's mind, a sort of repository of dynamic, lively meanings. The authors Jarema and Libben (2007, 2) describe the mental lexicon as a system that embodies "the capacity for conscious and unconscious lexical activity". According to Libben, Goral and Libben (2017, 1), the mental lexicon represents the "backbone of language ability".

Starting from Aitchison's view of the mental lexicon as a "dictionary in the mind", a large and complex human word store (Aitchison 1994), more recent studies regard it as a more dynamic and integrated process governing the connections among words and their representations (Libben, Goral and Libben 2017). This dynamism is characterised by the fluidity of the connections of words within the mental lexicon and their representations. In turn, integration depicts the mental lexicon as a single expanded unit rather than separated lexical stores.

Other researchers, such as Aitchison (1994) and Wierzbicka (1992, 1997), reveal the possibility of using the mental lexicon to explore the interweaving among cognition, knowledge organisation and communication.

Aitchison (1994, 222-227) sees the mental lexicon as a mixed, interconnected system, with two main components: on the one hand, semantic and lexical (meaning and word class, organised for speech production); and on the other, phonological (organised for speech comprehension). These sectors overlap and interact with other aspects of cognition and language, e.g. the perception, general knowledge and memory information of an individual. From Wierzbicka's (1992, 1997) argument, it can be inferred that the study of mental lexicons can be of great use in investigating cultural phenomena as they provide valuable insights into culturally specific concepts and worldviews.

2 Literature Review

Various specialists have researched the way in which the mental lexicon functions (e.g. Aitchison 1994; Libben and Jarema 2002), referring in particular to the retrieval of lexical knowledge while trying to assess the number of words speakers possess (an adult speaker supposedly knows about 150,000 words) and the way in which speakers handle this great number of lexical forms in everyday usage. For example, Langacker (1991) offers one approach to representing prototypical structures and structures of mental lexicons–what he calls the network model, which would allow us to understand and conceptualise the commonly shared structures of words, meanings and concepts.

However, most research, especially in the field of psycholinguistics, has focused on investigating lexical processing, from which lexical representation is inferred. Consequently, research into the mental lexicon actually represents the study of lexical activity. Further, researchers have focused on the interrelatedness between language and culture as far back as the 18th century, starting with Wilhelm Von Humboldt. Franz Boas, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf have continued this work, underscoring the interdependence between language, cognition, and culture.

2.1 The interplay between language and culture

Across the last century, different perspectives on language have ranged from language perceived as a cognitive system (or a faculty of the mind) to language seen as action, language as social practice and language viewed as a complex adaptive system. In this chapter, I focus in particular on the human ability to recognise, comprehend, produce and even create figurative language in both their mother tongue (in our case, Romanian) and in a foreign language (English), and the relationship between this

capacity and cultural awareness.

The importance of the interplay between language and culture cannot be overstated. This practice defines the extent to which culture may be conducive to meaning creation, which in turn will mark how speakers create cultural determinations when talking about the world and their surroundings. Culture will undeniably determine how linguistic manifestations are organised and structured across the globe. Moreover, the semantics of a language can contribute to the cognizance of cultural meanings.

Scholars have long demonstrated the intrinsic relationship between the language and the culture of a certain ethnic or national group. Culture in relation to linguistic structures has been analysed in reference to a number of approaches and frameworks that assume that the mental lexicon of a language unveils the interrelatedness between cognition, knowledge organisation and communication (Quinn and Holland, 1987; Geertz 1973; Palmer 1996; Aitchison 1994; Wierzbicka 1992, 1997; Jackendoff 1983)

Both language and culture represent historically transmitted systems, and consequently, they both feature flexibility and heterogeneity. Along the same lines, culture has been considered a cognitive or symbolic system, social practice or a construct (see Foley 1997; Eglin 2015; Atkinson 2015; Sharifian 2015). According to Geertz, culture reveals a historically inherited matrix of meanings encapsulated in symbols, a system of transmitted "conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (1973, 89).

Nevertheless, we cannot speak of a subdiscipline of linguistics or cultural studies that would focus solely on this subject. Attempts have been, though limited, to diachronically classify identifiable paradigms in the study of language seen in association with culture from an anthropological perspective. The table below synthesises the paradigms brought forth by Alessandro Duranti (2003):

Table 1. Three different paradigms in the history of the study of language as culture (Duranti, 2003, as cited by Sharifian, 2015, 4)

Focus	View of language	Associated labels
Documentation, description, and classification of indigenous languages	Language as lexicon and grammar	Anthropological linguistics
Language use in context	Language as a culturally organised and culturally organising domain	Linguistic anthropology, ethnography of speaking
Identity formation, narrative, and ideology	Language as an interactional achievement filled with indexical values	Social constructivism

2.2 Figurative language competence

Figurative competence can be broadly defined as an individual's capacity to recognise metaphorical language structures and to process them as non-literal, to perceive their pragmatic role within a given context and to use them in both socially and culturally appropriate situations. I hereby claim that figurative language competence is made up of four sub-competencies: collocational competence (Sinclair, 1991; Lewis, 1997, 2000; Nesselhauf 2005; Popescu 2007; McEnery and Hardie 2012; Herțeg and Popescu 2013), polysemic competence (Ravin and Leacock 2000; Hoey 2005), idiomatic competence (Gibbs 1994; Liontas 2015) and paremiologic competence (Hrisztova-Gotthardt and Varga 2014; Norrick 1985).

Collocational competence refers to the ability to comprehend and utilise word associations (two or more words that naturally and predictably co-occur, usually in a grammatical context). The importance of developing learners' collocational competence cannot be underestimated, as numerous lexical collocations represent the most economical manner of rendering a certain idea, and more often than not, the lack of a sufficiently large collocational lexicon can lead to a shortage of ideas (Hill, Lewis and Lewis 2000, 93).

By **polysemic competence**, we understand language users' ability to identify and appropriately use the various meanings of a word according to

social and pragmatic situations. According to Hoey's (2005, 82) *drinking hypotheses*, the polysemic senses of a word tend to avoid each other's primings (i.e. co-occurrence within certain collocations, semantic associations, colligations). Moreover, where one sense is still found with the same primings, this will create ambiguity (momentarily or permanent), humour, or a new meaning that combines the two senses. Knowing the lexical behaviour of a word's senses has been considered to be of importance for foreign language learning, and as Ravin and Leacock (2000, 1) state, polysemy seldom poses problems in language use (except for puns and humour); instead, it is problematic in the case of semantic theory and applications (e.g. translation or lexicography). Nevertheless, as my experiment has revealed, it can be challenging even among native speakers, especially when some word senses are obsolete or socially "senseless" to the speakers' age.

According to Liontas (2015, 623), **idiomatic competence** is "the ability to understand and use idioms appropriately and accurately in a variety of sociocultural contexts, in a manner similar to that of native speakers, and with the least amount of mental effort". His research into how to develop idiomatic competence in the ESOL classroom has filled a void in the field of second language acquisition theory and research.

Katz (1989) considers idioms and proverbs as figures of speech, but I claim that they are language structures in which various tropes may occur, such as metaphor, simile and irony. According to Hrisztova-Gotthardt and Varga (2014), **paremiological competence** is understood as an individual's descriptive (active) and prescriptive (passive) knowledge of proverbs as revealed in a paremiological experiment, i.e. a test to examine the informants' above-mentioned knowledge.

In the model I advance, **metaphorical competence**, which is paramount to figuration comprehension, is more of a transversal competence, as it can occur in any of the language structures I mentioned above. Metaphors can be identified in **collocations** (e.g. "soaring prices", "run out of time", albeit dead metaphors some of them), **polysemous words** (especially in meaning extensions, such as "window [of opportunity]" – a propitious period), **idioms** ("blessing in disguise") and **proverbs** ("A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush").

When discussing Bachman's (1990) typology of language competence components, Jeannette Littlemore and Graham Low (2006, 276) argue that metaphor plays an important role across all four elements of the proposed model, i.e. illocutionary competence, textual competence, grammatical competence and strategic competence as well as sociolinguistic competence. However, it is important to understand the mechanisms underlying the

formation of metaphorical competence among EFL learners.

According to the two authors mentioned above, metaphoric competence represents "both knowledge of, and ability to use, metaphor" and Low's (1988) "skills needed to work effectively with metaphor". As the focus of this study is figures of speech and the way in which they can be appropriated by both native and foreign-language speakers as part of their mental lexicon, for conceptual clarification, I have come to re-define figurative competence as:

1) adequate knowledge of denotative vs connotative meanings of individual words and an understanding of collocability, polysemy and idiomaticity of word associations, as well as paremia;
2) the ability to recognise and appropriately use figurative meanings through individual words and concepts;
3) a positive attitude towards metaphorical creation (in line with Aitchison's Novtown, i.e. humans' ability to create a hypothetically infinite number of new words and meanings).

Nevertheless, I acknowledge that metaphorical competence differs between native and foreign-language speakers, but they cannot be researched individually. The main structures that I consider relevant for figurative competence are collocations, polysemous words, idioms and proverbs. Polysemous words differ from collocations as they actually refer to the same word form with different meanings, whereas collocations refer to combinations of words that are characterised by their frequency of usage. Some dictionaries of idioms include proverbs, such as "bad habits die hard" (idioms.thefreedictionary.com).

Therefore, I have come to define the **figurative lexicon** as the dynamic mapping of relationships and combinations of words and concepts used figuratively within a given context (principally metaphor, metonymy and irony). As for the sub-competencies that characterise the mental lexicon, I focus on collocational, polysemic, idiomatic and paremiological usages.

Across all these language structures, i.e. collocations, polysemous words, idioms and proverbs, we encounter both linguistic and conceptual metaphors, other tropes and figuratively used words and expressions. To what extent they are metaphorically or simply denotatively used is heavily dependent on context.

3 Data and Methods

3.1 Aims and scope

The aim of the research presented in this chapter is to investigate the figurative lexicon of Romanian philology students studying English at the University of Alba Iulia, Romania, so as to lay the basis for wider research into how they develop an understanding of figurative language and build their metaphorical competence across various language structures.

3.2 Method and data

The research involved 51 first-year undergraduate students of Romanian-English Language and Literature and Translation and Interpretation, 45 Romanian and six Moldavan Romanians (enrolled as full-time students).

Of the full sample, 24 students had taken a course in idiomatic English the previous semester, led by a different instructor than the author. All students took two tests (one in Romanian and the other in English) consisting of three sections, each testing one sub-competence of the mental lexicon (collocational, polysemic, idiomatic and paremiologic) and involving both vocabulary checks and metaphorical comprehension (both tests are presented in annexes).

The English test also involved a translation exercise (from English into Romanian) to investigate the mechanisms underlying the process of figuration understanding when shifting from a foreign language into their mother tongue. I only wanted to explore their translation skills based on Mona Baker's (1992) premise that a professional interpreter would normally be translating a foreign language into their native language or a language of habitual use. However, I resorted to translations from a foreign language into the mother tongue in the case of proverbs, as this gave me better insight into how well students comprehend paremia.

4 Findings

4.1 Romanian test

4.1.1 Collocational competence

Table two summarises the answers provided by the students, including the preferred collocational associations (the most typical primings) and the accepted ones, which are less frequently associated with the headwords.

Table 2. Summary of results in the mother tongue collocational test

	Correct answers		Wrong answers
	preferred	accepted	
Item 1	39	7	5
'i-a <u>trecut</u> răceala'	(PP 'trecut')	(PP 'luat')	
unstressed 3 sg. personal pronoun in IO case + has + PP passed + flu	*passed*	*taken (away)*	
Item 2	51	0	0
'se <u>spală</u> pe dinți'	(pres 3 sg 'spală')		
him/herself washes on teeth	*washes*		
Item 3	38	8	1
'l-au <u>dat</u> la școală'	(PP 'dat')	(PP 'dus')	
unstressed 3 sg. m. personal pronoun in DO case + have + PP given to school	*given*	*took (to)*	
		4	
		(PP 'trimis')	
		sent (to)	
Item 4	27	12	0
'își <u>pierde</u> timpul'	(pres 3 sg 'pierde')	(pres 3 sg 'ocupă')	
him/herself loses + ART time	*loses*	*occupies*	
		7	
		(pres 3 sg 'petrece')	
		spends	
		3	
		(pres 3 sg 'umple')	
		fills	
		2	
		(pres 3 sg 'omoară')	
		kills	
Item 5	43		8
'nu a <u>opus</u> rezistență'	(PP 'opus')		
not + has + PP opposed + resistance	*opposed*		

The example in (1) below is an impersonal construction, elliptic of the subject, for which the correct collocating verb is 'a trece' / to pass. The other response, 'a lua' / to take (away), could be accepted, as it is often heard in Romanian in reference to a drug (or sometimes a healer) that takes an illness away: 'I-a luat durerea (cu mâna)' / 'She made her pain go away (with her hand)'. The difference is that the second association entails a personal subject (either animate – a person, or inanimate – a drug).

(1) I   -   a   trecut   răceala ca   prin   farmec.
   unstressed 3 sg.   has PP passed ART flu   like through charm
   personal pronoun
     in IO case
   He/she got rid of the flu as if by magic.

The least problematic word association in Romanian was (2), with 51 correct answers. The translation into English, however, was more challenging, as the typical association is to wash + teeth, and thus the interference error was quite frequent among the students, as they used the wrong association "to wash one's teeth".

(2) Se   spală   pe dinți în fiecare   seară.
   him/herself washes on teeth in every   evening
   He/she brushes his/her teeth every evening.

Item (3) presents a very commonly-used verb in Romanian, 'a da' / 'to give', which frequently appears in the composition of numerous expressions, including 'a da pe gât' [to give on throat]/'to gulp down one's drink'; "a da în judecată" [*to give in judgment*]/ "to file suit against", or "a da cu pușca" [*to give with the gun*]/"to shoot a gun". However, there were other responses that might be considered acceptable, though not carrying the exact intended meaning, e.g. "a duce" /'to take (sb to a place)' or 'a trimite'/'to send (sb to a place)'.

(3) Părinții   l   -   au   dat   la școală de la 5 ani.
   ART Parents unstressed 3 sg. m. have PP given to school from 5 years
                personal pronoun
                in DO case
   His parents enrolled him in school when he was 5.

For Item (4), a large variety of collocates were provided, e.g. 'ocupă'/occupies, 'petrece'/spends, 'omoară'/'kills'. Despite the somewhat positive semantic prosody of 'a petrece'/'to spend', I accepted the response.

(4) Își   pierde   timpul   cu tot felul de prostii.
   him/herself Pres 3 sg loses ART time with all sort of stupidities
   He's wasting his time on all sorts of stupid things.

As for Item 5, not all students managed to interpret it correctly, as some of them provided wrong verb collocates for the noun "rezistență"/ *resistance*, such as "a da"/ *to give*.

(5) Bărbatul de 28 de ani nu a <u>opus</u> deloc rezistență în   momentul arestării.
 ART Man of 28 of years not has opposed at all resistance   in ART moment ART arrest
 The 28-year-old man did not oppose resistance at all at the moment of his arrest.

4.1.2 Polysemic competence

Table 3. Summary of results for the mother tongue polysemic test

	Correct answers	Wrong answers
Item 6	49	2
1. '...ART rostul...' / 'use'		
2. 'rost / '(social) status'		
3. '(luat la) rost / '(receive) a reprimand'		
Item 7		
1. 'sâmbătă' / 'Saturday'	51	
2. ART Gen sâmbetei / '(down the) drain'	51	
3. ART fem. sg. sâmbetele / '(bear a) grudge'	27	20 (sg. 'sâmbăta') 4 wrong
Item 8		
1. 'răcoare' / 'coolness'	48	3
2. (băgat la) 'răcoare' / '(put behind) bars'	48	3
3. (bagă în) pl. 'răcori' / '(give sb) the creeps'	34	17
Item 9		
1. 'soarta' / 'fate'	51	0
2. 'soarta' / 'destiny'	51	0
3. pl. (tras la) 'sorți / '(draw) lots/make draws'	18	33
Item 10		
1. 'gură' / 'mouth'	51	0
2. 'gură' (de canal) / '(sewage) lid'	51	0
3. fem. pl. 'gurile' (rele) / 'gossipmongers'	47	4

In the case of polysemous words, there was a single answer accepted, i.e. that one that made the sentence meaningful. As Romanian is an inflected language, the polysemous word can have morphological variations (grammatical case or number). In the case of Item (6), curiously enough, although the first two sentences provide easy to guess contexts, two students were unable to provide the correct word. The Romanian expression "a fi luat la rost" may be said to display a certain degree of opaqueness, and, it may be argued that it is an idiomatic expression and not a polyseme. However, if one knows the sense of *meaning*, or *justification*, then it may be inferred that when somebody is *taken at + reprimand*, i.e. "luat la rost", one may thing of asking for a justification from somebody for their deeds. Another idiomatic expression with the

word "rost" is "a învăța pe de rost", i.e. *to learn sth by heart*. The sense *joint* or *filling in tiles* is particularly interesting, as it does not appear to be a case of homonymy. In the Romanian language, "rost" is etymologically derived from the Latin "rostrum", meaning *beak*, *snout*. The Romanian word for *beak* is "cioc", derived from the Albanian "čok". Probably in Romanian, "rost" is an extension of meaning from the Latin plural "rostra", a platform for public orators and politicians in the Roman Forum which was decorated with the beaks of seized ships, at least for the sense of *justification*, *motivation*, when a public figure would explain a certain course of action and clarify their decisions for the masses.

(6) Nu   înțeleg   rostul   orelor   de religie   în   școală.
    Not 1 sg understand ART use ART Gen pl.   of religion in   school
                                   classes
  I don't understand the usefulness of religion classes in school.

(6`) Nu   și   -   a   găsit   niciun   rost   în   viață.
     Not   unstressed   has PP found   any   status in   life
            refl pron pers 3
  He/she hasn't achieved any status in life.

(6``) Copilul   a   fost   luat   la   rost   de părinți pentru că a
      ART Child AUX has been PP taken at reprimand by parents because AUX has

      chiulit   de la   școală.
      PP played truant   from   school.
  The child received a reprimand from his parents because he had skipped school.

Item (7) is another example of a polysemic word that may border idiomatic usage, given its archaic and mythological origin, which may no longer be known to younger speakers for whom Romanian is their mother tongue. Apa (S)âmbetei (*Saturday's River*) is a river associated with hell in the mythical geography of Dacian-Romanians, a sort of portal between the world of the living and that of the dead. Its role can traditionally take the form of any river across a village where people throw away useless things, including items or possessions that belonged to those who have died (Evseev 1997, 22-23). Thus, "a se duce pe apa sâmbetei" (lit. "to go down Saturday's River") means "to vanish", "to get lost", "to get wasted", "to go down the drain". Saturday, unlike more auspicious days of the week, is more ill-boding and unfortunate. It is, according to Romanian tradition, a day more appropriate for the remembrance of the dead and consequently there are three official Saturdays of the Dead in the Romanian orthodox calendar, although it is possible to honour the dead on any Saturday of the year. The other expression, i.e. "a purta sâmbetele

cuiva" (lit. "to bear the Saturdays to somebody") refers to "wishing harm upon someone", by summoning Saturday's inauspicious, maleficent powers. The noun Saturday is used in the plural.

(7) <u>Sâmbătă</u>   mergem   la   ziua   Olguței.
    Saturday   pers 1 pl go   at   birthday ART gen Olguța
    We're going to Olguța's birthday (party) on Saturday.

(7`) Averea   lui Gigi Becali   s -   a   dus   pe   apa   sâmbetei.
    ART Fortune of Gigi Becali unstressed has PP gone on ART water ART Gen.
                         refl pron pers 3   Saturday
    Gigi Becali's fortune went down the drain.

(7``) Cine   îi   poartă   <u>sâmbetele</u> liderului PNL   și   de ce.
     Who   unstressed   pres 3 sg ART Saturdays ART gen PNL and   why
        pron pers 3 IO   bears   leader
     Who bears a grudge against the PNL (National Liberal Party[1]) leader and why.

Item (8) was more easily recognisable to students, as "răcoare" ("coolness") is used with two meanings that both are an extension of "low temperature", i.e. "in jail" (a place that is, by definition, cold and dark) and "in shivers" (a brief trembling movement as a result of being cold, or, more specifically, frightened). Again, the plural form of the noun was not well known to the subjects.

(8) Indicat   e   să   le   utilizați   seara   când e mai <u>răcoare</u>.
    PP Indicated is conj. unstressed pers 2 pl   ART   when is more coolness
                    subordin. pron pers 3   use   evening
                    noun clause pl DO
    It is advisable that you use them in the evening when it is cooler.

(8`) Tânăr   din Boloteşti, băgat la <u>răcoare</u> pentru   furt   calificat.
    m.sg. Youth from Boloteşti, put   at   jail   for   theft   qualified
    Young man from Boloteşti, put behind bars for grand larceny.

(8``) O decizie ANAF bagă în   <u>răcori</u>   furnizorul   de agent termic.
     A decision ANAF puts in coolnesses ART provider of agent thermal
     A decision by ANAF[2] gives the creeps to the thermal agent provider.

Item (9) was the noun "soartă" (supernatural force governing people's life, destiny, fate, luck; life circumstances; evolution, unfolding of an action, denouement). In the plural form "sorți", it is mainly used in two

[1] Explanation mine.
[2] National Agency for Fiscal Administration (explanation mine).

expressions, "a trage la sorți" (lit. "to draw at lots", to pick, to select, esp. games or names in a sporting competition) and "sorți de izbândă" (chances of success, victory). Although this expression is still used in sports news, many students were not able to identify this usage.

(9) Fericirea   -   mi   nesfârșită / Într-o clipă   s -   a   sfârșit!
    ART Happiness unstressed endless / In a moment unstressed has   PP ended
                   pron pers. 1   pron pers 3
                   sg Poss Dat   refl

  Așa - i   soarta!
   So is   fate
 My endless happiness / In a moment ended! Such is fate!

(9`) Conferința   internațională care va decide   soarta   Siriei
    ART Conference international   which will decide ART destiny ART Gen Syria

     ar   putea   avea   loc   în iulie.
   pres cond 3 pers   might   take place in July.
   The international conference that might decide Syria's destiny will take place in July.

(9``) S   - au   tras   la sorți partidele   din optimile de finală   ale
    unstressed have PP drawn at lots   ART   from ART   of final   Det
     poss refl   games   eighths   Art Gen
    pron pers 3

    Cupei României,   meciurile fiind programate   la finalul acestei   luni.
    Cup   ART Gen   ART   being   PP   at   ART ART Gen month
          Romania   games   programmed   end   this
   The eighth-finals games for the Romanian Cup were drawn, with matches scheduled for the end of this month.

    The noun "gură" is highly polysemic, especially due to the fact that it is found in numerous expressions in Romanian, e.g. "gură-n gură" (lit. mouth in mouth, meaning very close to each other); "cu sufletul la gură" (lit. with soul at mouth, meaning out of breath due to exhaustion or emotion, or very sick, dying); "a uita de la mână până la gură" (lit. to forget from hand to mouth, meaning very forgetful); "gură spartă" (lit. mouth broken, meaning a person who cannot keep a secret).

(10) Obiceiul de   a respira   pe gură   și nu pe nas, poate modifica
    ART Habit of to breathe on mouth and not on nose, can   modify

     fizionomia   și poate duce la anomalii   dentare la copii.
    ART physiognomy   and can lead to anomalies dental at children
   The habit of mouth breathing instead of nasal breathing may change one's physiognomy and can lead to dental anomalies among children.

(10`) O <u>gură</u> de canal   i - a   băgat în   bucluc   pe   șoferii
A mouth of sewage unstressed AUX has put   in conundrum on ART drivers
pron pers 3
pl. DO

ieșeni   în   această   dimineață.
adj form   in   this   morning
Iași + desinence
internal vowel change
A sewage lid created a conundrum for the drivers in Iași this morning.

(10``) Gurile   rele   vorbeau că   relația   lor e "îngropată", dar Elena
ART Mouths bad   were saying that relationship their is "buried", but Elena

Băsescu și soțul   ei sunt mai apropiați   ca niciodată!
Băsescu and husband her are more close   than never!
Gossipers said that their relationship is dead and buried, but Elena Băsescu and her husband are closer than ever before.

4.1.3 Idiomatic competence

Table 4. Summary of results for the mother tongue idiomatic test

	Correct answers	Wrong answers
Item 11 <u>dus cu preșul</u> / bamboozled, duped	51 dus de nas / hoodwinked dus cu zăhărelul / fooled mințit / lied to amăgit/ misled fraierit / duped înșelat / deceived, cheated	0
Item 12 <u>dă [...] apă la moară</u> / inspirit	26 a încuraja / to encourage a stimula / to stimulate a susține / to support	WA 15 a porni din loc / to set off a starta (inexistent) NA 10
Item 13 <u>ușă de biserică</u> / <u>saint</u>	35 sfânt / saint cuminte /well-behaved 6 nevinovat /innocent 9 cinstit / honest onest /honest 1 credincioasă / believer (fem.)	

Item 14	6	5
<u>are boală pe</u> / bears a grudge against	le poartă pică / harbour a grudge	
	8	
	are ciudă pe / begrudges	
	21	
	invidiază / envies	
	11	
	urăște / hates	
Item 15	41	10
<u>sapă de lemn</u> / bankruptcy	au sărăcit / went broke au falimentat / have gone bankrupt	clacat / broke down au ajuns la limită / reached the limit au ajuns la culme / reached the peak

Distinguishing between polysemous words and idioms may seem difficult in Romanian, as not all idioms are opaque–most can be understood from their extension of meaning and contextual use. For example, "to be the door of a church" could easily make us think that this expression refers to holiness, saintliness or puritan behaviour. However, the phrase "bad mouths" still metonymically refer to the mouth as an organ of speech, hence its inclusion in the category of polysemic words. "To give water to the mill" refers to the practice of starting/stopping the wheel through braking it, thus directing the flow of water. Item (12) proved to be the most challenging for the students and almost half engaged in faulty guesswork.

(11) L   -   <u>a   dus   cu   preșul</u>   timp   de   trei   ani   până   când
   unstressed AUX has carried with ART rug time of three years until when
   pron pers 3
     sg m DO

   în   final   i   -   a   dat   papucii.
   in ART end unstressed has PP given ART shoes
                pron pers 3
                  sg m IO
   She duped him for three years until eventually shed dumped him.

(12) Cum   le   <u>dă</u>   un   lider   PSD[3]   <u>apă   la   moară</u>   protestatarilor.
   How unstressed give a leader PSD[3] water at mill ART Dat protesters
          pron pers 3
              pl IO
   How a PSD leader encourages the protesters.

---

[3] Social Democrat Party (explanation mine).

(13) Mie pușcăria mi   -   a   prins   bine.   Că   nici   eu
    To me jail   unstressed AUX has PP caught well.   That neither   I
             pron pers 1
             sg IO
  nu   eram   <u>ușă   de   biserică</u>.
  not was   door of   church.
  Jail (time) did me good. 'Cause I was no saint myself.

(14) Sindicatul <u>are   boală pe</u> șefi!
    ART Union has illness on bosses!
  The Union bears a grudge against bosses!

(15) Chiar dacă în fața   micilor   ecrane   încearcă să   epateze și   să
    Even   if   in front Art Gen small screens   try   Conj dazzle and Conj

  nu   arate că   au   probleme, multe dintre vedetele   autohtone
  not show that have problems, many   of   stars   autochthonous

  <u>au   ajuns   la   sapă   de   lemn</u>.
  have PP reached at shovel of   wood.
  Even if they try to dazzle and hide that they are having problems when appearing on TV, many local stars have gone bankrupt.

4.1.4 Paremiologic competence

Table 5. Summary of results for the mother tongue paremiologic test

	Figurative explanation	Literal explanation	Wrong answers / No answers
Item 16 "Chelul lesne se tunde." / A bald man is soon shaven	7	26	WA 7 NA 11
Item 17 "Chiar și cea mai bună între femei tot are o coastă de drac într-însa." / Every rose has its thorns.	6	21	WA 11 NA 13
Item 18 "Omul de ce-i place, de aceea se îngrașă." / Everything *good* in life is either immoral, illegal or fattening.	12	23	WA 6 NA 10
Item 19 "Râde ciob de oală spartă." / The pot calling the kettle black.	37	2	WA 6 NA 6
Item 20 Cum ți-e lucrul, așa ți-e plata. / You will be paid according to your work.	19	25	WA 0 NA 7

    In the case of the five items testing students' knowledge of proverbs, the
results were unexpectedly disappointing, though some are not used in an
everyday context and may be reserved for literary discourse or journalistic
purposes. However, journalism often features antiproverbs, which creates even
more confusion for the younger Romanian speakers. The best comprehension
of a proverb was that for "râde ciob de oală spartă" (lit. "laughs shard of pot
broken", meaning *the pot calling the kettle black*). For the remaining for items,
students understood the proverb literally, but could not provide a figurative
explanation. Item (17) presented the greatest difficulty in comprehension.
Understandably, students could not provide appropriate translations into the
English language, apart from *the pot calling the kettle black.*

(16) Chelul   lesne   se   tunde.
     ART Bald m. sg. easily   unstressed
                                  pron refl   cuts (hair)
                                  pers 3

   A bald man is soon shaven.

(17) Chiar și cea   mai   bună între femei tot are o coastă de drac
     Even and that COMPAR   good among women still has a rib   of devil
              SUPERIOR

într - însa.
in   pron pers 3
         f sg
   Even the best woman still has a devil's rib inside her.
   Every rose has its thorns. (approximate meaning in English)

(18) Omul   de   ce   - i   place, de aceea   se   îngrașă.
     ART Man Prep what unstressed likes, Prep that   unstressed   gets fat
              Acc   pron pers3   pron refl
                        Dat IO   pers 3
   What man likes will make him fat.
   Everything good in life is either *immoral, illegal or fattening.* (approximate meaning
   in English; saying attributed to Alexander Woollcott [according to Doyle, Mieder and
   Shapiro, 2012])

(19) Râde   ciob de   oală   spartă.
     Laughs shard of   pot   broken
   The pot calling the kettle black. (same meaning in English)

(20) Cum   ți   - e lucrul, așa   ți   - e   plata.
     How unstressed is work,   so unstressed is payment
          pron pers 2   pron pers 2
          sg poss Dat   sg poss Dat
   You will be paid according to your work.
   As you make your bed, so you must lie on it. (approximate meaning in English)
   A fair day's wage for a fair day's work. (motto of the American Federation of Labor)