

ROST AND ROSTO: LEXICULTURAL (DIS)SIMILARITY IN ROMANIAN AND PORTUGUESE

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Abstract

*Words travel through history and cultures and change their meanings according to their social and cultural use. The Romanian **rost** and the Portuguese **rosto** are believed to make a convincing case for the importance of sociocultural and historical contexts in triggering semantic changes, which may happen due to some general mental associative patterns: although they share the same Latin root, their current main meanings, ‘face’ in Portuguese and ‘purpose’ in Romanian, are far apart. Employing instruments from historical, comparative, and cognitive linguistics, the study shows how different historical and social settings can lead to considerable semantic differences between the two almost identical word forms.*

Keywords: semantic change; semantic false friends; metaphor; metonymy; cultural keywords.

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1. Introduction

The present paper draws on the striking formal proximity between the Portuguese *rosto* and the Romanian *rost*, and will attempt to show, by employing instruments from historical, comparative and cognitive linguistics, how different social, cultural and historical settings can lead to considerable differences in meaning between the two almost identical word forms found in the two languages. They make a good example of what has been called *semantic false friends* (Chamizo Domínguez and Nerlich, 2002) given that they share the same Latin etymon, *ROSTRUM*; however, their first meanings found in various contemporary dictionaries, namely ‘face’ in Portuguese and ‘purpose, rationale’ in Romanian, are hardly decodable by Romanian and Portuguese speakers, respectively, without some previous language knowledge.

In what follows, after some brief literature review, a short incursion into the history of the words designating ‘face’ in Latin and their descendants in the Romance

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languages will be made. The lexical diversity and richness found in the various Romance languages will be related to the role played by human creativity in perceiving and conceiving of the world and the environment. Following Wierzbicka (1997: 21) this study attempts at adding evidence to the fact that

[l]anguage – and in particular, vocabulary - is the best evidence of the reality of ‘culture’, in the sense of a historically transmitted system of ‘conceptions’ and ‘attitudes’. Of course, culture is, in principle, heterogeneous and changeable, but so is language.

The third section addresses the various meaning widening and narrowing processes that led, in time, to the rich polysemy of *rosto* in Portuguese; next, Romanian data around the form *rost* are presented in the attempt to show that the complex semantic changes that took place in Romanian may have been caused by some specific sociocultural and historical settings. The conclusions will sum up the findings trying to emphasize, once more, the important role played by extralinguistic facts in triggering and determining surprising semantic changes in words with a long history going as back as Latin.

2. Literature review

Words etymology is one of the linguistic areas that stir people’s curiosity and interest even if they are not specialists in linguistics. The way meanings are widened and/or narrowed throughout the history of languages challenge people to discover the mechanisms behind these processes. There is common agreement in the specialized literature that semantic change “deals with change in meaning, understood to be a change in the concepts associated with a word” (Campbell, 1999: 255). One of the key questions is how these semantic changes came into being. Although “the driving force behind language change was held to be cultural” (Campbell, 1999: 255), there were attempts to argue in favour of a general mechanism of semantic change under the form of some *associative patterns of human thought* (Campbell, 1999: 267). The present study aims to demonstrate that the semantic changes illustrated by the Portuguese *rosto* and the Romanian *rost* are triggered by sociocultural factors along some *thinking patterns* that employ *metaphor* and *metonymy* as cognitive instruments that people use “in order to understand and verbalize an aspect of reality in such a way that can be communicated and shared with other people” (Ciolăneanu, 2019: 195). This definition largely follows Lakoff and Johnson’s (2003) definitions of metaphor and metonymy in their seminal work, *Metaphors We Live By*, which insist on *understanding* as being the main function of these cognitive instruments:

Metaphor is principally a way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding. Metonymy, on the other hand, has primarily a referential function, that is, it allows us to use one entity to stand for another. But

metonymy is not merely a referential device. It also serves the function of providing understanding. (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003: 6)

By placing the discussion in a communicative context, in which people verbalize/express their thoughts in order to share them with others, the social, historically determined dimension of language is added to the universal perspective claimed by Lakoff and Johnson. This midway position is not new, it is also observed by other specialists that argued for “metaphorical models” as

tools aimed at producing a working understanding of some aspect of reality (as opposed to a complete, “true” model), whose analysis allows us to observe the subtle ways a culture weaves together its representatives, as well as how it can accommodate within its fabric even those seemingly at odds with one another. (Buccheri, 2016: 172)

The result of metaphors and metonymies understood as cognitive mechanisms, triggered by specific social-historical factors will be shown to have resulted in two formally very close lexical units in Romanian and Portuguese: *rost* and *rosto*, yet far apart in terms of their semantics. Their formal proximity as well as their common Latin root, *ROSTRUM*, qualify them as *semantic false friends*, i.e., each element of this *interlinguistic etymological doublet* has followed a particular path in its own language throughout its history, which implied a certain sequence of semantic links, and eventually acquired a different meaning. The *semantic false friends* are to be kept apart from *accidental false friends*, i.e., similar word forms which do not share common etymology (for a comprehensive classification of *false friends*, see Veisbergs, 1996; Chamizo Domínguez and Nerlich, 2002; Al-Athwary, 2021).

3. Designating ‘Face’: From Latin to Romance languages

There were various words in Latin used to designate the front part of the head: *RŌSTRUM*, ‘beak, muzzle’, *CARA*, from Late Latin, *FACĪES*, ‘physiognomy, face’ and *VĪSUS*, ‘appearance, face’. Out of this variety, the Romance languages have made their own selection: Italian and French selected the last two forms (it. *faccia*, *viso*, fr. *face*, *visage*), whereas Castilian ‘chose’ the first two (*rosto*, *cara*); Portuguese opted for three words: *rosto*, *cara* and *face*, and Romanian, for two: *față* and *rost*. Despite these different choices, both the selection process and the semantic widening process are quite similar in French, Castilian and Portuguese, however significantly different in Romanian.

In French there is evidence that *face*, *chère* (chiere) and *vis*, *visage* go as far back as the 12th century. The old form *vis* (which still exists in *vis-à-vis*), common by the 15th century, found itself in competition with *visage*, a derived form (*vis* + the suffix -age), and with *chère*, still in use in the 16th century. From that period on, *visage* has

competed with *face*, and it has become the most frequent word used to designate ‘face’. (ATILF, n.d.)

However, *chère* and *face*, survived in various expressions: *faire mauvaise/bonne chère*, ‘to frown’/ ‘to welcome heartily’; *perdre/sauver la face*, ‘lose/save dignity’, *faire face à*, ‘confront’. Additionally, *face* went through a process of sematic extension and generalisation, and started to be used as ‘side’, as in ‘each side of a figure’, be it geometrical or related to a building etc.; also, the face of a coin or medal in which the face/ figure of a famous person was represented.

In Castilian, *haz* (< FACĬES, attested as *face* in the 10th century *Glosas Emilianenses* and *Silenses*, and as *faz* in the 11th century *Cid* and in the 12th century *Mozarabic kharjas*) was the word commonly used in the Middle Ages; it then became archaic, and was replaced by *cara*, which can be found, for example, in Cervantes (Corominas, 1980-1991 s.v.). The origin of *cara* is not very clear. There are authors that consider the Late Latin form CARA as a direct etymon from the Greek *kārā*, ‘head’; others (cf. IEL and Pokorny, 1959-1969 s.v.) associate the Greek form with a Proto-European root *Ker-*. On the other hand, there are authors (Corominas, 1980-1991 s.v.) who argue against this theory since there are no descendants of this root in Italian and Romanian, which would have been the case if the hypothesis of the Greek origin had been true. In fact, *cara* is a word shared by all Hispano and Galo-Romance languages, which may indicate a pre-roman origin. This situation is not unusual when it comes to designating body parts.

The Latin form RŌSTRUM is a derived form of the verb RŌDĒRE ‘chew’, to which the instrumental suffix –TRUM was added, to designate ‘the beak of a bird’. Later, it was extended to ‘the muzzle of a pig or a dog’, and then ‘mouth’, and, by another process of semantic extension, ‘face’. One of the first instances of this semantic change seems to be pejoration. Plautus (c. 254-184 BC), for instance, uses the word RŌSTRUM in relation to human beings to get this pejorative effect. Nonetheless, the Medieval Castilian documents attested the meaning of ‘beak, muzzle’ until the 15th century. The old pejorative connotation is forgotten in time as *rostro* starts to be used as a synonym of *cara* and *haz*, as, for instance, in the 16th century poetry of Góngora (1561-1627) (Corominas, 1980-1991 s.v.).

Nowadays, the most frequently used word in Castilian is *cara*, which also means ‘side’ (of a coin, medal, etc.) and is part of various phrases such as *cara a cara*, ‘face to face’, *cara a*, ‘in front of, with a view to’ (cf. DLE). The word *haz*, less frequent today, survived in fixed expressions such as *a dos haces*, ‘with a hidden agenda’, *cara con dos haces*, ‘to say something and think something else’, or got the meaning of ‘side’, thus paralleling the situation found in French.

4. 'Face' in Portuguese

The *voyage* of these words in Portuguese is not very different. Both Houaiss (2001, s. v.) and Cunha (1986, s. v.) indicate the 13th century as the period in which *cara*, *face* and *rosto* were first attested. Machado (1977, s.v.), on the other hand, registers the word *cara* only in the 15th century, in *Contemplação de São Bernardo*: “E outros lhe cospiam na cara e outros lhe depenauam a barua”, ‘some were spitting in his face and others were pulling his beard’. However, there are earlier records of the three words in *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (cf. CdP): “el Rey cara sannuda lle mostrou”, ‘the king showed him an angry face’; “E que veja no Ceo a ta face velida”, ‘might I see in heaven your beautiful face’; “inchou-ll' a garganta, assi que perdeu a fala, e tornou-ll' o rosto negro muito mais que os carvões”, ‘his throat swelled so much that he lost his speech, and his face became blacker than coal’.

Infopédia, a contemporary dictionary of reference presents *cara*, *face* e *rosto* as synonyms, as the following table shows:

Table 1. Meanings of *cara*, *face* and *rosto* as listed in *Infopédia*

Cara	Face	Rosto
1. parte anterior da cabeça; rosto, face; ‘front part of the head; <i>rosto</i> ; <i>face</i> ’	1. cada uma das partes laterais do rosto humano ‘each of the lateral parts of the human face’	1. cara, face ‘ <i>cara</i> ; <i>face</i> ’
2. pessoa; personagem ‘person; character’	2. cara; rosto; semblante ‘ <i>cara</i> ; <i>rosto</i> ; countenance’	2. traços fisionómicos; semblante ‘physiognomic traits; countenance’
3. expressão da face; semblante ‘face expression; countenance’	3. superfície ‘surface’	3. parte dianteira; frente ‘front part’
4. aspeto, aparência ‘aspect, appearance’	4. lado da frente ‘front part’	4. lado da medalha oposto ao reverso ‘the side of the medal, opposed to the back’
5. lado da moeda onde está a efígie, oposto a cunho ‘the side of the coin where the effigy is imprinted, opposed to the back of the coin’	5. lado das moedas ou medalhas em que está a efígie ‘the side of the coins or medals where the effigy is imprinted’	5. página do livro que tem o título e nome do autor ‘page in a book with the title and the name of the author’

The secondary meanings are *face* as ‘surface’, *rosto* as ‘cover page’, *rosto* and *face* as ‘front part or lateral part’, and *cara*, *face* and *rosto* as ‘side of a coin or medal where the effigy is imprinted’. The process by which these words widened their meanings is not difficult to understand. The three of them have been in use as synonyms since old stages of Portuguese and, in time, through successive metaphorical and metonymical uses, they started to be used in relation to both a human and a non-human referent. Since a human head is frequently represented on

one side of a coin, the designation of this side by using *cara*, *face* ou *rosto* is by no means surprising.

rosto = *cara* = *face* ('front part of the head')

→ front side [+ human] → front [- human] ('heads (of the coin), cover page')

→ front side [+ human] → side [- human] ('surface').

All these meanings are partially available in Morais' (1813) *Diccionario da lingua portugueza*, which presents *cara*, *face* and *rosto* as synonyms. Additionally, it registers 'surface' and 'building façade' as secondary meanings of *face* and 'forehead or the front part' of *rosto*. Only the entry for *rosto* registers the phrases: *rosto do livro*, 'book cover', *rosto da medalha*, 'coin face' e *rosto do sapato*, 'shoe face'.

Towards the end of the 20th century, Cândido de Figueiredo's *Novo Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa* had already added 'a face of the medal or coin, where the effigy is represented' to the entry for the word *face*. In the meantime, *rosto do sapato*, 'shoe face' disappeared. It was an expression used in the 16th century and attested in *Dicionário de Latim-Português* by Jerónimo Cardoso (1569-70): *ho rosto dos çapatos*, 'the shoe face'; later, in Bluteau's *Vocabulário* (1712-1728): "Rosto de sapato. A parte dianteyra delle, sobre as solas", 'Shoe face. The front part, on the shoe sole'. (cf. CLP)

In Bluteau's *Vocabulário*, the dictionary entry for *rosto* also registers 'The coin face. The face where the effigy is imprinted' and, for *face*, 'Surface. The front part of an object in relation to the opposite part', which is identical to the one presented earlier in Jerónimo Cardoso: 'surface(s). The front face'. (cf. CLP)

To put it succinctly, *cara*, *face* e *rosto* have been attested in the Portuguese documents since the 13th century, with the core meaning 'front part of the head', which has been preserved in the language until today; in the 16th century, *face* had already acquired the meaning of 'surface, side', and *rosto*, that of 'the front part of the shoe'. In the 18th century, *rosto* added 'the front part of the medal'; at the beginning of the 19th century, the 'cover page' meaning was added to the ones before. At the end of the same century, *rosto* was no longer applied to shoes, and *face* started to be used in reference to medals. Finally, nowadays, and probably due to the synonymy between *cara*, *face* e *rosto*, any of these words may be employed to designate one of the two parts of coins or medals. Curiously enough, *rosto* was selected to be used in relation to books: *o rosto do livro* 'book cover', *a folha de rosto*, 'cover page'.

The discussion above is summed up in the table below:

Table 2. The semantic evolution of *cara*, *face* and *rosto* in Portuguese

	18th c. Bluteau	Early 19th c. Morais	Late 19th c. Figueiredo	20th-21st c. Infopédia
<i>cara</i>				of the coin
<i>face</i>	surface	surface	surface of the medal	surface of the coin or of the medal
<i>rosto</i>	of the shoe of the medal	of the shoe of the medal of the book	- of the medal of the book	- of the medal of the book

5. 'Face' in Romanian

Romanian³, as mentioned before, preserved only two forms from Latin: *față* (from the Latin *facia*, *facies*, 'appearance, aspect, figure, face') and *roșt* (from the Latin *rostrum*, 'beak') (cf. CLRE). The definitions of *față* presented by various dictionaries show a similar situation as the one presented for the Portuguese *face*. Once the meaning widening took the direction animate human – nonanimate nonhuman, *față* started to be used in relation to almost any front surface of any object that allows it: *fața casei*, 'the front part of the house', *fața pământului*, 'the face of the earth'; or to designate an object placed on another object to cover the latter: *față de masă*, 'tablecloth', *față de pernă*, 'pillow cover'. What maybe gives even a clearer image of the extensive use of *față* in Romanian in a wide range of contexts is the grammaticalization process it went through that resulted in various locutionary phrases, e.g., *în fața casei*, 'in front of the house' or *la fața locului*, 'right in the place (where something happened)', *față-n față*, 'face to face', *pe față*, 'in an obvious way' etc. (cf. Dexonline)

Rost, in its turn, went through a semantic widening process in Romanian similar to what have been described for Portuguese up to a certain point. The transfer non-human animate - human animate was slightly different: instead of a metonymic change based on contiguity, as it was shown in section 2, the semantic extension of *roșt* in Romanian took a metaphorical turn, which seems to be based on the analogy facilitated by the function 'mouth' performs for animals as well as for human beings. Further on, it metonymically extended and started to be used in reference to the act of 'speaking, manner of speaking'. There is evidence that attests early uses of the word meaning 'mouth' across centuries, as the examples below (extracted from CLRE) show:

tu ascultă pre fericitul Ioan cel cu rostul de aur (Neagoe Basarab, 1518 - 1521)
'Listen to the golden-mouthed John'

³ Besides the forms to be discussed in this paper, Romanian has a third word that designates 'face', *chip*, borrowed from Hungarian, which will not be included in the analysis.

Cum fără osândă să deșchid rostul miu cel nedăstoinic și să laud (Paraclis, 1639)

‘How without punishment I open my unworthy mouth and praise’

Ah! Ce frumoase vorbe din rostul lor răsar (George Coșbuc, Jertfele împăcării, 1893)

‘Ah! What beautiful words are coming out of their mouth’

Nowadays, the meaning illustrated above is no longer present in language unless as part of some frozen phrases such as *a învăța pe de rost*, ‘to learn by heart’ and *a lua la rost*, ‘to scold, to tell off’, or as root for the verb *a rosti*, ‘to utter’, ‘to speak’, and its corresponding action noun, *rostire*, ‘uttering’. The current most frequent meanings of *rost* (as shown in the table below), i.e., ‘rationale’, ‘purpose’, ‘way of organising one’s life’, apparently have nothing to do with the etymological meaning discussed so far.

Table 3. The meanings of *rost* cf. Dexonline⁴

	Meaning	Contexts
1	rationale that justifies the existence of something or the realization of an action; reason, meaning, sense, purpose	<i>fără rost</i> , ‘without any use, meaningless’ <i>a-și avea rostul</i> , ‘to have the right to, to make sense’ <i>n-are rost</i> , ‘it’s worthless’ <i>ce rost are?</i> , ‘what’s the purpose?’
2	way of organizing one’s life; social, material, and familial situation	<i>om cu rost</i> , ‘an accomplished person’ <i>a-și face un rost în viață</i> , ‘manage to attain a good life’ <i>a face rost de ceva</i> , ‘manage to obtain something (usually difficult to get)’
3	way of organizing an activity; order in which an action takes place; material or spiritual well-being;	<i>a fi în rostul lui</i> , ‘to be where one belongs’ <i>a nu-și afla rostul</i> , ‘to be restless’ <i>a-și pierde rostul</i> , ‘to lose one’s self-control’
4	(loom/weaving) the space between the two plans of the warp yarn through which the shuttle can be inserted	<i>rostul pânzei</i> , ‘the shed of the cloth’ <i>Să crească rostul mare!</i> ‘May the <i>rost</i> grow big’ ⁵
5	the narrow space between two parts of a construction or a technical system	<i>rost de etanșare</i> , ‘sealing joint’
6	(archaic) mouth; speaking, uttering	<i>a învăța pe de rost</i> , ‘learn by heart’, <i>a lua la rost</i> , ‘to scold’

⁴ Dexonline is an online lexicographic collection which compiles the many meanings of *rost* that appear in various dictionaries of Romanian. The order of its meanings is an indication of their frequency in language (from the most to the least frequent).

⁵ A phrase addressed to someone in order to wish them to be productive in the weaving activity.

Most of the dictionaries included in Dexonline present only one entry for the analysed word, in which the various meanings are listed and generally explained in the same way. There is only one dictionary (Șăineanu, 1929) that includes two entries: *rost*¹, which lists the meanings related to ‘mouth’ (basically, the meaning 6 above), and *rost*², which largely includes the meanings from 4 to 1, signalling the semantic change from concrete to abstract, and explicitly mentioning that the figurative meanings from 3 to 1 are metaphors based on the weaving technique.

The lexicographic presentation of *rost* in *Corpus lexicografic românesc electronic* (CLRE), the other database used for the purpose of this study, is mostly similar to the one found in Dexonline, only richer, and hence, extremely valuable, in details and examples. There is one dictionary included in CLRE, *Dicționarul limbii române* (DLR), which displays two entries, however differently conceived: *rost*¹ includes all the meanings above (plus some other construction-related senses not included in *Dexonline*), differently organised (from the oldest meaning, ‘mouth’ to the most frequent, contemporary meanings, ‘purpose, rationale, meaning in life’), however all of them sharing the same etymology, i.e., the Latin *ROSTRUM*, ‘beak’; *rost*² has a regional use (Bucovina and Banat), and it designates a technical concept (not mentioned before): ‘the grate of a stove through which the ashes fall’. Contrary to the meanings mentioned under *rost*¹, *rost*² comes from the German *ROST*. Consequently, the dictionary treats the two *rost* as homographs and homophones based on the different etymology of the two.

The brief incursion into the two Romanian lexicographic databases presented above shows without any shadow of a doubt that the semantic extensions of *rost* that took place in Romanian are more complex and, hence, more difficult to explain, in comparison to what happened in the other Romance languages. The essential conclusion that can be drawn is that the analysed lexicographic resources show, implicitly or explicitly, that all the meanings of the word *rost* share the same etymology, the Latin *ROSTRUM*, and that its semantic extension, from a very concrete meaning, ‘mouth’, to a very abstract one, ‘purpose, rationale, meaning in life’ took place via a series of metonymies and metaphors, understood as cognitive processes that help human beings understand and explain the world.

6. *Rost* – a cultural keyword in Romanian

There are no available studies that clearly and systematically explain the semantic evolution and extension of *rost* in Romanian. Nonetheless, various scholars list *rost* among the key words of the Romanian culture, i.e., “culture-specific words”, which are “conceptual tools that reflect a society’s past experience of doing and thinking about things in certain ways”; moreover, they “help perpetuate these ways” (Wirezbicka, 1997: 5). Differently put, by analysing these words, one can better understand the attitudes, the values and the beliefs that stay at the core of a certain culture. Consequently, the surprising evolution of the word *rost* in Romanian, from

‘mouth’ to ‘purpose, rationale, meaning in life’, may be claimed to testify the fact that our existence and the awareness of our ego are projected in language (Steiner, 2015: 170).

The first Romanian scholar who noticed the complex semantic evolution of *rost* and, consequently, its paramount importance as a *mot à charge culturelle partagée* (Galisson, 2000: 57) was the Romanian philosopher Nicolae Noica. In his 1970 seminal paper, *Rostirea filozofică românească*, he was emphasising the untranslatability of this word into other languages given its implicit semantic and conceptual core heavily linked to the Romanian cultural specificity and uniqueness. He claimed that a miracle happened in the laboratory of our language sometime in the 16th - 17th century, when *rost* evolved from a common concrete meaning (a part of the loom) to a meaning of maximum speculation (purpose, rationale, meaning in life).

An explanation for the miracle that Noica was talking about can be found in the universal mechanisms that govern human thinking, among which, as already established by the specialised literature (as shown in section 2), metaphor is seen as a cognitive instrument employed by human cognition to make sense of the world. Many cognitive studies argue that cultural conceptualizations (i.e., people’s view of the world, thoughts, and feelings) and language are intrinsic aspects of cultural cognition (Sharifian, 2009: 166). People interact and get to know the world in their own experiential context, which is culture specific; hence, the important role that the experience of people with the concrete world plays in moulding, by means of metaphorical processes, the way they conceptualize and then linguistically codify abstract notions.

As far as *rost* is concerned, the first metaphorical transfer seems to have taken place between the name of a body part, ‘mouth’ (as etymologically inherited from the Latin *ROSTRUM*) and a part of a non-animate, non-human object⁶, by means of an analogy probably based on the similarity between the physical form of the two referents. This is in line with cognitive theories that consider the human body a model for interpreting the world and the embodied experience as being fundamental in processing and perceptually and cognitively understanding the environment and the world (Gibbs, 2005; Lakoff and Johnson, 2003 among many others). Therefore, the transfer in this case may be based on the ‘opening’ that the mouth allows and with the form of the teeth that the opening allows to be seen. Thus, the word *rost* acquired new meanings in line with the type of activities that were very common in the 16th-17th century Romanian rural life. In the field of weaving, *rost* began to refer to the vertical space between the raised and the unraised warp yarns through which the shuttle carrying the filling yarn passes. In construction, it designates the small

⁶ As shown in section 4, the same transfer metaphorical transfer took place in Portuguese, from the inherited meaning ‘human face’ to various non-human, non-animate surfaces.

distance between different parts of the construction (e.g., between bricks) that allows some flexibility in case of temperature variation or other physical changes. In the case of the *hand saw*, it designates the toothed blade.

The second semantic extension is more complex, and it can be explained only if it is looked at as part of a systemic conceptual change based on the cultural cognition characteristic of the 16th-17th century Romanian society, i.e., the conceptual, semantic and linguistic systems that were available for the Romanian people, mainly living in rural areas, to understand and describe the world. The loom has played an important role throughout the history of humanity since immemorial times. The Romanian society of those times made no exception. The loom was representing an essential survival instrument, helping people solve the needs related to body thermic protection. On the long and very cold winter days, which were the norm in the discussed geographical region, one of the Romanian women's most common activity was weaving in order to produce warming garments and fabrics. Besides its utilitarian function, the loom was also a social facilitator since men and women would gather around it during the long winter days. Therefore, the loom was a key piece, present in almost every house.

There is common agreement that all social experiences, as well as samples of practical and concrete life, play an essential part in forming specific cultural concepts, which are then encoded in language. In this way, language proves to be a sort of "collective memory bank" of cultural conceptualizations of the past and of the present (Sharifian, 2009: 168). Consequently, given the fact that the loom was a constant presence in the homes of the Romanian peasants around which an important part of the socialising process was taking place, one can now easily understand how a concrete term, designating the space between two parts of the loom, acquired a highly abstract life-related meaning, as described above: without appropriately creating this space when the loom is assembled, the process of weaving cannot take place, i.e., it is not successful. Hence, one of the biggest wishes of the weaver was to be successful, which was linguistically expressed by saying "Rostul Mare!", as the quote below shows:

Dorința cea mai mare a lucrătoarei era să aibă mereu spor la lucru și asta e posibil numai dacă rostul e mare. Prin rost se înțelege deschiderea dintre fibre, deschidere realizată prin mișcarea ițelor și prin care trece suveica. De altfel, cine intra în camera în care se țesea trebuia negreșit să salute cu urarea îndătinată "Rostul mare!" (Neculau, 2023: 169)⁷

⁷ The worker's greatest desire was to always have success at work, and that was possible only if the *rost* was big. What is understood by *rost* is the opening between the fibers, which is created by the movement of the threads and through which the shuttle passes. In fact, anyone who entered the room where the weaving was taking place had to greet with the traditional saying "May the *rost* be big!" [our translation]

In light of what has been said so far, it becomes clear that Noica's "miracle" actually takes the form of an analogy which, cognitively speaking, operated systematically between the way the loom works and the way life was understood. In other words, the metaphor (understood as a cognitive instrument) that seems to legitimate the meaning related to the organising process, which then extended to 'order, reason, meaning in life' is LIFE IS A LOOM, i.e., the way life is organised and functions is seen by analogy with the way the loom is built and functions. The metaphorical interpretation is further supported by other terms that designate various components of the loom which developed abstract meanings also related to the idea of order. For instance, *urzeală*, 'warn', which comes from the Latin *ordire* 'to begin' and which is linked to *ordem*, 'order', is used metaphorically to describe the complexity of life⁸ as in the following examples retrieved from CoRoLa, *The Reference Corpus of the Contemporary Romanian language*:

Nu sunt uitate problemele specific românești, aflate la ordinea zilei: agitația politică (...) În această urzeală existențială, "biu (un alter ego al poetei) află că există".
'The specifically Romanian problems that are on the agenda are not forgotten: political turmoil (...) In this existential warp, "biu (an alter ego of the poet) finds out that she exists".'

Doamne, c-am obosit,/ Să cred în nimic!/ Redă lumii mele infinitul,/ Să-mi lase spiritul/ Să te cunoască-n iubire/ Fără nici urmă de-ndoială,/ Vreau să fiu sigur pe dragostea/ Ce-ți port cu sufletul,/ Fără-a minciunilor urzeală.
'Lord, I'm tired/ Of believing in nothing!/ Give back to my world the infinite,/ Let my spirit/ Know you in love/ Without a trace of doubt,/ I want to be sure of the love/ I bear to you in my soul,/ Without the warp of the lies'

Iță (from Latin *licia*), another term belonging to the weaving terminology, is the squared shape in which the warn is fixed and it is used figuratively to describe the complexity of life/situation; it is part of various expressions: *a (se) încurca ițele*, 'to tangle up, to complicate a situation', *a (se) descurca ițele*, 'to untangle, to solve a complicated situation' (cf. Dexonline).

7. Conclusion

This study has revisited the many designations that the concept of 'face' has been assigned in the Romance languages throughout time and space. By going through various cognitive mechanisms, in particular metonymy and metaphor, these terms have semantically evolved and shifted, thus acquiring new and sometimes surprising meanings, mainly moving from concrete to more abstract senses.

⁸ A similar situation is found in Portuguese: *urdidura* (a part of the loom) figuratively means 'plot', 'intrigue'.

The main semantic shift that has been observed in the Romance languages goes along human animate-nonhuman nonanimated, using the human body as a model for representing nonanimated objects through language. Portuguese and Romanian make no exception. However, in Romanian the metaphorical transfers continued and took a surprising turn, significantly conditioned by the sociocultural and historical context of the 16th-17th century Romania, towards the abstract life-related meaning of ‘purpose, rationale’. The very first meaning, diachronically speaking, of ‘mouth’ has almost completely disappeared from the mind of Romanian language users, but it can still be found in some frozen phrases.

The Portuguese *rosto* and the Romanian *rost* are polysemic words that share the same Latin etymon, but their current meanings are not readily grasped by the users of the other language. Consequently, they qualify as *semantic false friends*. This fact has important consequences in translation and language learning as well since both the translators and the language learners need to be aware that their almost identical orthographic forms in two or more languages do not necessarily designate a shared semantic content.

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