

## WHAT'S IN A ROSE? IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS THROUGH THE LENS OF DIFFERENT LANGUAGES. CONTRASTIVE APPROACH

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*Abstract: The purpose of this study is to compare rose-containing idiomatic expressions from English, German, French, Italian and Romanian in order to determine their equivalents. The first part of the analysis focuses on theoretical factors connected to the description and classification of these structures in the literature. An overview of several idiomatic expressions that can be found in various languages that make use of “roses” is presented, together with their definitions, histories, Romanian equivalents, and, when available and relevant, their etymological roots. The research concludes by comparing and contrasting the idioms in all the above mentioned languages that use the word “rose”.  
Keywords: rose, idiomatic expressions, contrastive approach, foreign languages*

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### **Introduction**

Like any other living thing, language evolves over time to meet the requirements of the people who speak it. The lexicon, and thus the idiomatic expressions, are the levels of linguistic analysis that most accurately reflect the historical events and influences to which a group of speakers is subjected. New linguistic terms are constantly emerging on a near-daily basis, while others gradually decline in usage until they ultimately vanish from the language entirely. Figurative language is, certainly, the use of evocative words, phrases, and sentences to express a message that implies something without explicitly saying it. The

utilisation of creative language serves to enhance the audience's comprehension and infuse words with heightened impact through the incorporation of diverse emotional, visual, and sensory associations. Figurative language is commonly seen in both literary works and everyday discourse. The process of assigning meaning to a concept or idea is achieved by prompting the reader or listener to comprehend it in light of its association with another entity, activity, or visual representation. This linguistic device is sometimes referred to as idiomatic expression, when comparisons are employed to enhance the level of information in a certain context.

### **Defining idioms**

Idioms are a vital part of the curriculum when teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), and more specifically horticultural terminology, to undergraduate students in Romanian. This is because they allow students to not only expand their general vocabulary, but also make connections between idioms and characteristics of plants. The primary objective of this study is to ascertain the presence of the word rose in all five languages and afterwards analyse the similarities and dissimilarities. The higher the degree of similarity, the greater the probability of the acquisition by students. It has been observed that idioms present a persistent challenge in terms of their classification and are considered among the most arduous vocabulary terms to instruct (McPherron and Randolph, 2014, p. 1).

For all those interested in the study of idioms, including those who are in the business of learning or teaching idioms, the fundamental question of what constitutes an idiom is extremely crucial but challenging (Cornell, 1999; Moon, 1998). Upon doing a comprehensive review of scholarly literature pertaining to idioms, it becomes evident that the definition of idiom exhibits significant variation among different scholars. According to many researchers, the term is commonly used in a comprehensive manner, encompassing various linguistic elements such as fixed phrases, clichés, formulaic speeches, proverbs, slang expressions, and, in some cases, even individual words with multiple meanings. Thus, there have been incorporated individual words, particularly those employed metaphorically, such as the term "weigh" in the expression "weigh a decision," into the category of idioms. However, some scholars have a more limited definition of the term "idiom," referring specifically to expressions that are fixed, semantically opaque, and metaphorical, such as "kick the bucket" or "spill the beans" (Moon, 1998, p. 4). In fact, a small number of scholars even exclude metaphorical idiomatic expressions from their concept of "idiom" (Grant & Bauer, 2004). When faced with the various interpretations of the term "idiom," it is reasonable to concur with Moon's (1998, p. 3) assertion that "[t]he term 'idiom' is ambiguous and subject to conflicting usage". The ambiguity of the phrase arises from the inherent complexity and elusive nature of idioms. Given the intricate and enigmatic nature of this idea, it is arguable that a singular description may not enough, or even be feasible, particularly when considering the many research interests of scholars.

### **Rose chromonym**

The perception of colours among humans is universally facilitated by the visual system. According to He (2011), the examination of colour as a fundamental cognitive domain may be traced back approximately 2500 years ago (p. 1805). Closer to our times, Goethe, in his work *Theory of Colour* published in 1840, posits that specific colours elicit distinct

emotions within individuals, and asserts that colours possess an inherent capacity to bring pleasure to humanity at large. He asserts that the sight necessitates it in the same manner that it necessitates light (pp. 304-5). Within the realm of objective reality, the issue of colour is primarily a matter related to society (Pastoureau, 2012, p.12). In essence, it is the society the one that constructs colour, assigning it definitions and significance, establishing codes and values, and organising practises while determining its implications. As for the pink-rose colour, Haller K., in her Psychology of Colours, asserts that it expresses “empathic love, full of care and attention, [...] being relaxing and tempering the energy” (Haller K. p. 74, 76)

### An Analysis of expressions containing rose in various languages

In what follows, we will present the origins and meaning of several idioms containing rose and their equivalent in French, German, Italian and Romanian. We started from the English ones, as they seem to be the most numerous. We also grouped their significance according to colour or plant.

#### *Idioms related to colour*

This category includes three idioms and expressions from English: bring the roses to one’s cheek, as red as a rose, through rose-coloured glasses. The expression in French is voir tout en rose, in Italian arossire, and Romanian a roși. The expression through rose-coloured glasses express an unduly idealistic, optimistic, sentimental, or wistful perspective on or about something. Primarily heard in UK. Its French counterpart, voir tout en rose signifies “to always look on the bright side, to consider everything in an optimistic way”, according to La Rousse. The expression was highly popularised due to Edith Piaf’s song (Voir la vie en rose). As for the Italian and Romanian verbs, they both are derigations from the word rosso/roșu (red). The expression to bring the roses to one’s cheek means “to make someone vigorous and healthful, or to make them appear as such”. The Romanian equivalent is connected to another flower, i.e. peony (a se îmbujora).

#### *Idioms and expressions connected to the flower*

In this category we can find more expressions both in English and in other languages. We present a general view below:

**Table 1 Idiomatic and fixed expressions**

Nr crt	English idiomatic expressions	Equivalent in other languages
1.	As fresh as a rose	Être frais comme une rose (French)
		Fresco come una rosa (Italian)
2.	There is no rose without a thorn	Trandafir fără spini, nu se poate (Romanian)
		Il n’y a pas de roses sans épines (French)
		Non c’è rosa senza spine (Italian)
		keine Rose ohne Dornen, keine Liebe ohne Dorn
3.	Be no bed of roses	Trai pe roze (Romanian)
		Être couché sur le roses
		Être sur un lit de roses (French)
		Letto di rose (Italian)

		Nicht auf Rosen gebettet sein (German)
4.	Said under the rose	În secret/ taină, pe șoptite (Romanian)
		Être sur le roses (French)
		Sotto la rosa (Italian )
		Sub Rosa (German)

*Fresh as a rose*

This expression appears in half of the languages taken into study here. It generally refers to being alert, energetic, and enthusiastic, typically after some refreshing activity. Its equivalent in French and Italian are identical to the English version. In French it appeared for the first time in the 14th century. In Italian, it has the same meaning, i.e. excellent physical condition, rested; also vital, lively, full of energy. Referring to the healthy, fresh, rosy complexion, particularly said of a child. As an exception, in Italian it is also used for someone who makes a very naive speech or for someone who presents himself with an innocent and casual air after having caused a big mess, or having made others worry and so on. A variation of the expression is fresco come una rosa di Maggio

*There is no rose without a thorn*

As we can easily notice, this expression has the same form in all five languages. In English it has been proverbial since the mid 15th century, the earliest recorded instance being in a work of John Lydgate (1430-1440): “there is no rose...in garden, but there be sum thorne” (Oxford Dict of Idioms, p. 247). In French, it appears for the first time in 1690 in a work of Furetiere, a more ancient version being “nulle rose sans epines (1611, Cotcave) (Cfr. Le Robert, p. 705). Its meaning is that beautiful things can hide problems that are not initially seen. Just as roses despite their beauty have a prickly side, so all beautiful things also hide a negative side. The Italian website sapere.Virgilio.it considers that it originates from the poem "remedia amoris" (Ovid): “urticae proxima saepe rosa est” (The rose often grows near nettles).

*Be no bed of roses*

A situation or activity that is comfortable or easy is considered to be a bed of roses by the Oxford dictionary (p.19). In France it first appeared at La Fontaine (17th century), being recorded in British literature one century before. Today, the phrase is usually used in a negative sense.

*Said under the rose*

The German expression is extrapolated from the Latin phrase: sub rosa dicta velata est. In ancient times, the rose was the flower dedicated to Horus, god of silence for the Greeks and Romans. Therefore, when a rose was placed on a table, those present were obliged not to divulge what had been said or heard. Since then the expression sub rosa indicates something that is carried out in secret, confidentially. Interestingly enough, the English dictionary (p.247) considers the origin of this expression to be a German one as evidence of a similar expression being also found in early modern Dutch. For instance, a 1546 State Paper of Henry VIII includes the phrase "under the rosse," accompanied by a gloss that

implies it was a novel or unfamiliar expression at the time. The metaphorical notion of the Latin counterpart "sub rosa" has been widely utilized in English since the mid-17th century. All languages have the same expression, the exception being the Romanian, which has a direct expression, "in taina".

### *Peculiarities*

There are some expressions related to rose which are particular for every language. In Romanian it is present the one: Ai fost floare trandafir, dar acum ești borș cu știr, which is said about mockingly, about not a very beautiful woman. It is recorded for the first time at Negruzzi (cfr. Dex Online- DLRLC). In English we find the expression roses, roses, all the way, found for the first time in a poem of R. Browning – The Patriot (1855) where it is described a moment in which heroes that pass on streets are met with roses. In French we found the expression cueillir la rose, having the meaning of taking the virginity of a girl, and being also connected to other phrasal verbs – perdre/garder sa rose, avoir la rose de.. The German expression Rose Monday even if generally considered to be the name of the penultimate day of the carnival, it might in fact come from the verb "rasen" or the participle "rasend," as indicated by the Lower Rhenish pronunciation with a muffled "a" sound. In the Kölnisch dialect, "rose" is used to convey the meaning of acting nonsensically.

### **Conclusions**

There are two groups of idiomatic expressions related to the word rose: one that refers to the colour, one that reflects the plant/ flower. The group connected to colour has few expressions and the counterparts of the other languages come up as verbs related to colour. The group centered around the plant has similarities in all five languages, many expressions being identical. Each language has its own particular expression, not connected to the others

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