

## A FOCUS ON THE ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN LEXICONS: THE CASE OF COGNATES<sup>1</sup>

Raluca-Andreea PETRUȘ

West University of Timișoara, Romania

e-mail: [raluca.petrus@e-uvv.ro](mailto:raluca.petrus@e-uvv.ro)

### Abstract

In terms of language acquisition and use, cognates are linguistic elements that pose difficulties for language learners and are an essential theoretical category to include in teaching processes. Through a qualitative descriptive approach, this article defines and illustrates the various types of cognates and proposes a classification of cognates into three categories (proper, partial, and deceptive), exemplifying the linguistic concept by focusing on two languages: English, a Germanic language, and Romanian, a Romance language, through targeted sampling. This article precedes an applied linguistics study on the challenges posed by deceptive cognates, particularly in the field of translation, as identified in the TERRA corpus (Translation Error Analysis).

**Keywords:** deceptive cognates; lexicology; partial cognates; cognates proper; semantics.

### 1. Introduction

In linguistics and language acquisition studies, *cognates* (from the Latin term *cognatus*) represent a theoretical category that poses both opportunities and difficulties for learners of new languages. Broadly speaking, cognates are words with a common etymology in different languages, i.e., words that share phonetic and orthographic similarities, and may or may not have similar meanings (Crystal, 2008; Sabino, 2016). For instance, the Latin word *animal* gave *animal* in English and *animal* in Romanian: the two words share phonetic, orthographic, and semantic traits. However, the evolution of the Latin word *libraria* resulted in semantic discrepancies between English and Romanian. *Library* in English and *librărie* in Romanian differ drastically in terms of semantics: the English word *library* and the Romanian word *librărie* have different meanings. In Romanian, the English word *library* translates into *biblioteca*, whereas *librărie* means *bookshop*. This type of uneven semantic correspondence is a consequence of how etyma (words/morphemes from which other words are formed in languages; word ancestors) have developed within languages over time, independent of how a word with the same etymology evolves in another language, through processes such as the extension and narrowing of meaning (Frățilă, 2011).

Thus, cognate word pairs with a common word ancestor (called an *etymon*, pl. *etyma*) are similar in form (phonetic, orthographic) but, in terms of semantics, may or may not have the same significance, as a result of diachronic change. Although they may be similar in spelling, the difficulty for learners of multiple languages arises from the connections between similar words in the different languages they aim to learn and utilize. Speakers make

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<sup>1</sup> Article History: Received: 12.01.2026. Accepted: 25.02.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. ACKNOWLEDGMENT: The publication of this article was supported by the West University of Timișoara with funding from the Start Grant project.

associations between words in their native language (L1) and words in other languages (L2, L3) based on the principle of analogy. When learning two or more languages simultaneously, students often draw analogies between the lexicons and grammatical structures of the studied languages, which may ease language acquisition or hinder it, especially when etyma have developed differently in semantics across the target languages.

In the field of contrastive linguistics, Rod Ellis and Gary Barkhuizen (2005) indicate that learning another language is directly affected by one's skills in their native or L2 language: "Already learned habits interfere with the learning of new habits as a result of proactive inhibition. Thus, the challenge facing L2 learners [...] is to overcome the interference of L1 habits" (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 54). When code-switching or communicating in their non-native language, learners make assumptions about the meaning of words, connecting a similarly spelled word to what they presume is of a similar/exact meaning. According to Liliana Tronea-Ghindel (2024), "cognate words can ease the second language acquisition process due to the similarities between cognates in [the] native and second language" (2024, pp. 572-573). However, in some cases, although the words share a common etymology and a similar form, their meanings differ entirely, posing challenges for learners. Cognates have a decisive role in vocabulary acquisition and language teaching and learning, as observed by Manuel Rubén Chacón Beltrán (2006), Javad Gholami, Parviz Alavinia, and Siros Izadpanah (2015), Silvia Aguinaga Echeverría (2017), Agnieszka Otwinowska (2016), Levent Uzun (2024), and Liliana Tronea-Ghindel (2024). Given that cognates are key elements in language development and acquisition, reviewing their types, differences, and similarities is a focus of interest.

In tertiary education, in the case of English language acquisition in Philology, Romanian students learn about this linguistic concept during their first year of Bachelor's studies, for instance, in Contemporary English Classes at the West University of Timișoara. As students improve their English language proficiency and considering that their background in language acquisition varies, students learn to communicate *in English* and *about* the English language, acquiring theoretical and practical concepts in linguistics, including introductory notions on the topic of Lexicology, the development of the English lexicon, word formation processes, word meaning, multi-word units, and English lexical strata (Frățilă, 2011). At this point, students are instructed to properly use and understand the concept of cognates and their various types, despite semantic shifts that may have occurred during their diachronic evolution. A particular problem is the category of deceptive cognates, which will be discussed throughout this article as part of the cognate categories in applied linguistics and lexicology. To contribute to scholarly work on cognates, the present article analyses current research on the topic to clarify theoretical concepts and provide clear examples of cognates to use in English language learning and teaching processes. The current article precedes an ongoing practical-based research study on English-Romanian cognates in English-Romanian and Romanian-English translation studies, which will investigate cognate use and cognate familiarity in English and Romanian across a broader corpus of texts, the TERRA corpus (Translation Error Analysis), aiming to identify the impact of cognate instruction and its correlations on appropriate cognate use and accurate student translations.

## **2. Theoretical Framework: Defining Cognates – Towards A Typology of Cognates and Their Definitions**

On the topic of cognates, scholars have proposed various definitions, classifications, and examples, traced their linguistic origins and current use, and drawn parallels between languages from the different language families' branches. For instance, Marilei Amadeu Sabino (2016) explains cognates in terms of the semantics of the Latin term and the importance

of etymology. According to Sabino, the Latin word *cognatu(m)* signifies “the junction of cum [=with] and nātus [=born], meaning therefore ‘born together’, or ‘belonging to the same lineage, family parentage’” (Sabino, 2016, p. 746). Grzegorz Kondrak also emphasizes the importance of shared etymology in the case of cognates. He claims that cognates are “words in related languages that have developed from the same ancestor word” (Kondrak, 2001, p.1). Uban et al. (2025) also contribute to these definitions and provide a similar theoretical perspective, indicating that the words in one’s native language, A, and the words in language B represent cognates, meaning “words that derive from the same etymon in language C” (Uban et al., 2025, p. 15310). Clémentine Fourrier and Syrielle Montariol define cognates, indicating that they “are words which descend from the same ancestor word (their proto-form) belonging to a shared common direct parent language” (2022, p. 97). In addition, David Crystal (2008) also distinguishes a cognate as “a linguistic form which is historically derived from the same source as another language/form” (2008, p. 83). Thus, a recurrent observation stands out: for two words to belong to the linguistic category of cognates, they must share common word etymology, through what is known as a word ancestor, i.e., an etymon.

As cognates are linguistic elements that share common word etymology, the relationships established between L1 and L2 differ in terms of semantics. In terms of typology, cognate word categories are classified based on a set of criteria, with the following elements considered: orthography, phonetics, and semantics. To offer an overview of the different types of cognate categories, this article will rely on research authored by Victoria Abou-Khalil, Brendan Flanagan, & Hiroaki Ogata (2018), Silvia Aguinaga Echeverría (2017), Ruslan Mitkov, Viktor Pekar, Dimitar Blagoev, & Andrea Mulloni (2007), Manuel Rubén Chacón Beltrán (2006), and Levent Uzun (2024), who classify cognates into various categories, which will be explained below.

For instance, Victoria Abou-Khalil, Brendan Flanagan, and Hiroaki Ogata (2018) discuss the importance of cognates in the teaching and learning process, classifying them into the following subtypes: true friends, false friends, and partial false friends. They claim the existence of true friends, false friends, and partial false friends in relation to the languages L1 speakers want to learn, and that false friends constitute one linguistic type that poses difficulties for learners. In their assertion, true friends are cognate words in L1 and L2 that exhibit similarities in orthography, phonetics, and semantics (p. 1). False friends (the second category) represent words in L1 and L2 that share similar orthography and pronunciation but have different, deceptive meanings (p. 2). The authors indicate the existence of a third type, partial false friends, in which words in L1 and L2 share meanings in some contexts but differ in others (p. 2), thus, explicit contexts are essential in the translation process, for instance, as context dictates the cognate equivalents in the target language (TL). In the context of polysemantic words, the authors describe that context is extremely important with respect to the category of partial false friends (pp. 1-3).

In an applied linguistics study on students’ ability to recognize cognates, researcher Silvia Aguinaga Echeverría (2017) also provides categories of cognates and highlights the existence of false friends/false cognates and the different types of non-false cognates, mentioning the following categories: identical, similar, and partial cognates. Identical cognates, she explains, are words in L1 and L2 that exhibit orthographic equivalence. Similar cognates share orthography but, as she indicates, may differ by one or two consecutive letters in spelling. Partial cognates are the third category identified by Silvia Aguinaga Echeverría (2017), who defines them as L1 and L2 cognates that share two or more letters (consecutive or non-consecutive) in their written forms (p. 29). Thus, her proposed category focuses on the form of cognates, providing rules for classifying these words based on their spelling.

Ruslan Mitkov, Viktor Pekar, Dimitar Blagoev, and Andrea Mulloni (2007) underscore the importance of cognates in language acquisition studies, translation, and lexicography, and note the existence of cognates and false friends (or *faux amis*). While building on previous studies of cognates, the authors emphasize the importance of considering the semantics of cognates alongside orthographic and phonetic similarities, noting that false friends pose difficulties for students and warrant attention in Natural Language Processing (NLP) research and teaching. To explain, cognates, in their assertion, represent words in different languages with similar meaning and spelling. In contrast, false friends, or *faux amis*, represent “pairs of non-equivalent expressions that have etymologically motivated similarity in their orthography” (Mitkov et al., 2007, p. 31), a fact that causes learners to make mistakes in their pursuit of language acquisition and communicative uses. As false friends represent a distinct category of cognate words, in which meaning is deceptive and may mislead polyglots, the researchers also highlight their importance in translation studies. Considering the fact that false friends represent pairs of orthographically similar but semantically different words across languages, they are, therefore, a key aspect to consider in the context of translation equivalence and non-equivalence (p. 44). In their assertion, false friends are “words that have etymologically motivated similarities of their orthography, but whose meanings have diverged so much that they are not translationally equivalent” (p. 44).

Manuel Rubén Chacón Beltrán (2006) also distinguishes between true friends (also called true cognate words) and false friends concerning the classification of cognates. In his research, Beltrán (2006) emphasizes the importance of studying cognate words and the difficulties these pose for language learners. Beltrán (2006) classifies cognate words into true cognates and false friends, while assigning notable importance to the latter, which he further divides into two categories. As he explains, true cognates are words in different languages that share orthography and meaning, whereas false friends are words that share orthography but differ in terms of semantics. False friends, he describes, can be split into two categories: total false friends and partially deceptive false friends. Total false friends represent cognate words with different meanings. In contrast, partially deceptive false friends represent words that share/ are similar in one meaning, but are misleading in another sense, a consequence of polysemous words (Beltrán, 2006, p. 32).

Levent Uzun (2024) also discusses cognate classifications, identifying three categories of cognate words: true, partial, and false cognates. In his assertion, cognates can be split into the following typology: true cognates (also called full cognates), partial cognates (semi-cognates), and false cognates (also known as false friends). In this classification, the researcher considers the criteria of etymology, orthography, and semantics and indicates that true cognates (or full cognates) are words that share similar spellings in distinct languages. The second type, partial cognates (or semi-cognates), can be defined as “words that share a common root but have different meanings in different languages” (Uzun, 2024, p. 4) as a result of extension or narrowing of meaning. False cognates or false friends (the third type) share similar spellings but have different meanings in two different languages.

Considering the theories and cognate typologies presented above, it is indicated that cognates represent etymologically related words that mainly share orthographic features and, depending on the cognate type, they may have similar, partial, and different meanings in different languages. As such, etymology, form, and meaning are core elements mentioned by previous research in linguistics, where the importance of cognates is highlighted in the study of cognate words, language acquisition, translation studies, and NLP. Research on the topic of cognates classifies them into distinct categories, often relying on typologies such as: *true friends vs. false friends* (see Beltrán, 2006; Mitkov, Pekar, Blagoev, & Mulloni, 2007; Abou-Khalil, Flanagan, & Ogata, 2018), *true cognates vs. false cognates* (see Beltrán, 2006; Uzun,

2024), and adding a third category where true and false cognates/true or false friends are intertwined: *partially deceptive false friends* (Beltrán, 2006), *partial false friends* (Abou-Khalil, Flanagan, & Ogata, 2018), and *partial cognates* (Echeverría, 2017; Uzun, 2024).

### 3. Methodology

This article reviews the literature on cognates as linguistic elements, an essential theoretical category for teaching and, often, a source of errors observed in student translations. Through a qualitative descriptive approach, the article reviewed scholarly works on cognates by examining relevant research on the topic of cognates (historical and applied linguistics, lexicology, and language acquisition). As the article proposed to describe and outline cognate types and establish correspondences between the Latin etyma, i.e., the original word-ancestors, and their current development in English and Romanian cognate words by depicting similarities and differences in terms of meaning, pronunciation, and spelling, it indicates different typologies in terms of cognate categorizations, demonstrating the current terminology on the topic of cognates.

In addition to synthesizing relevant work on cognates and their categories, the article proposes to align itself to a typology relevant to the study and teaching of cognate words, as applied to English and Romanian, addressing one of the challenges encountered by Romanian students who learn English as a second language, with a focus on translation studies (Cozma & Dejica-Cartiș, 2013, p. 896): the improper use of lexico-semantic translation equivalents (non-equivalents). As translations represent “the factual transformation of the source text into the target language, with emphasis on linguistic precision and cultural nuances” (Pașcalău, Stiegelbauer, & Pantea, 2025, p. 148), appropriateness in terms of register (Mureșan & Șerban, 2023), and translation quality assessment (self-reflection), the duty of the language user and translator is so mediate among these factors and render the appropriate form, meaning, and effect in the target language. To enable effective student translations, instructors ought to develop five broad competence types discussed by Mihaela Cozma (2019): linguistic knowledge, cultural adequacy, discursal adequacy, methodological ability, and professional expertise (Cozma, 2019, p. 87). Cognates are included in the first type, i.e., *linguistic knowledge*, as translation errors often occur due to errors concerning partial or deceptive cognates. In this sense, it is important to discuss cognates as theoretical linguistic elements, distinguishing cognate types, and explaining their use in real-world class-based practice, considering their etymology, form, and meaning.

In the case of cognates, given their role in language learning and acquisition studies, it is necessary to note that they may either ease or complicate language learning, as spelling and meaning pose challenges, as indicated by Manuel Rubén Chacón Beltrán (2006), Javad Gholami, Parviz Alavinia, and Siros Izadpanah (2015), Silvia Aguinaga Echeverría (2017), Agnieszka Otwinowska (2016), Levent Uzun (2024), and Liliana Tronea-Ghindel (2024). To address this fact, the article employs a targeted sampling approach, providing relevant and seminar-based examples for each cognate type, indicating their Latin etyma in order to showcase etymological interconnections, providing the readership with the English and Romanian cognate words in current use, and focusing on their spelling and on semantic similarity or divergence (semantic divergence).

Building upon research on the topic of cognates, classifications, and evaluating the criteria of etymology, orthography, and semantics (Beltrán, 2006; Echeverría, 2017; Mitkov, Pekar, Blagoev, & Mulloni, 2007; Abou-Khalil, Flanagan, & Ogata, 2018; Uzun, 2024), the article highlights the need to maintain the classification of cognates into three types: cognates proper, partial cognates, and deceptive cognates. Through the method of targeted sampling, the

article aims to illustrate the aforementioned categorization by explaining relevant English-Romanian cognate words, as observed during Lexicology seminars taught to Romanian students studying English as a foreign language. To elaborate on cognate categories, in the classification below, proper, partial, and deceptive cognates share a common word ancestor, the etymon. In terms of orthography and meaning, *cognates proper* are words with a similar spelling and the same meaning in L1 and L2. *Partial cognates* have similar spelling, one shared meaning, and at least one different meaning. *Deceptive cognates* are words with similar spelling, but which differ entirely in their semantics, having different meanings. By looking at word semantics, the following table gives examples of how meaning is shared or not concerning cognates in English and Romanian:

<b>Cognate Types. The Case of English and Romanian</b>				
English Cognate	Romanian Cognate	Cognate Type	Meaning	Observations on the English-Romanian Cognate Pairs
<i>animal</i>	<i>animal</i>	cognates proper	identical meaning	En. <i>animal</i> and Ro. <i>animal</i> have an identical meaning.
<i>memory</i>	<i>memorie/ amintire</i>	partial cognates	shared & additional meaning	En. <i>memory</i> and Ro. <i>memorie</i> have a shared meaning, but En. <i>memory</i> can also mean <i>amintire</i> in Romanian.
<i>commodity</i>	<i>comoditate</i>	deceptive cognates	different meaning	<i>Commodity</i> and <i>comoditate</i> have different meanings: in English, <i>commodity</i> means <i>goods, belongings</i> , while in Romanian, <i>comoditate</i> means <i>starea de a fi comod</i> .

**Table 1.** *Cognates proper, partial cognates, and deceptive cognates*

#### 4. Shared Latin Etyma: The Case of English and Romanian Cognates

This article explores the relationships between English-Romanian cognates with common Latin etyma, identifying and illustrating cognates from all three categories indicated in the table above: *cognates proper, partial cognates, and deceptive cognates*. For context, Romanian is a direct descendant of Latin, while English is a Germanic language that Latin has influenced throughout the centuries. To contextualize, the English lexicon developed decisively during the following stages: Old English (450-1066), Middle English (1066-1500), Early Modern English (1500-1800), and Modern English (1800 - onwards). In the early period, English developed from Germanic tribes, Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, and was heavily influenced by the Roman conquest, the Vikings' Old Norse, and then by the Norman conquest. Loredana Frățilă explains the context of the Old English period, indicating that,

The first Old English (OE) manuscripts were nothing more than a few inscriptions, unable to offer much information about the characteristics of the language, brought by the Anglo-Saxons in the fifth and the sixth centuries. Only after the arrival of the Christian missionaries from Rome (587), did the literary age modestly begin, with a number of glossaries of words from Latin and their translation in OE, and a few inscriptions and poems (Frățilă, 2011, p. 17).

In terms of the Latin influence on the English language, Albert Baugh and Thomas Cable (1993) also stress the importance of the Roman conquest and the impact of Latin on early

English and the development of the language, as follows: “The Roman Christianizing of Britain in 597 brought England into contact with Latin civilization and made significant additions to our vocabulary” (p. 1). Since then, the English language has evolved gradually and, in the contemporary era, English has become an international lingua franca. In terms of speakers, Statista provides recent figures on the topic of English speakers, published in 2025, where English is present at the top of the worldwide chart, with approximately 1,53 billion speakers of English in 2025, followed by Mandarin Chinese, with 1,18 billion, Hindi with 609 million, and Spanish with 558.5 million speakers worldwide (Statista, 2025). The statistics include both native speakers and L2 or L3 learners of English.

While English is spoken by billions worldwide, Romanian is spoken by millions, predominantly in mainland Romania and Moldova, and with high concentrations of speakers in Western Europe. Romanian, on the other hand, is spoken by 28 million people, native Romanians and L2/L3 learners of Romanian (TVRinfo, 2022). Today, 29 million speakers of Romanian (Trandabăț, Rehm, & Uszkoreit, 2012, p. 2), where at least 25 million are native speakers of Romanian (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2009). Romanian is a Romance language formed through the intertwining of the Dacian population and the Roman conquerors, thus, through a Romanization process which took place in the first centuries AD. Early trade and the Roman Conquest led to the development of Romanian from Vulgar Latin (Latin vulgaris; limba latină comună, non-standard). Today, it is recognized as a Romance language, surrounded by Slavic languages in the Eastern part of the European continent.

Alexandru Rosetti’s observation explains the spread of the Romanian language and the Daco-Romanian linguistic development and continuity: “Romanian is the Latin language spoken uninterruptedly in the Eastern Roman Empire, which includes the Romanised Danubian provinces (Dacia, South Pannonia, Dardania, Upper and Lower Moesia), from the penetration of Latin into these provinces until nowadays” (Rosetti, 1985, p. 75). Due to Romanian emigration waves emerging especially post-1989, Rosetti’s observation can be extended to today’s language reach, considering that the Romanian language is being spoken further than these aforementioned borders indicated by Rosetti: studies indicate that the Romanian diaspora comprises around 4-5 million Romanians, who live abroad and communicate in their native language (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2025; Dumitrescu, 2025).

In terms of English spread and English proficiency levels among Romanians, it is relevant to mention that in an *English First English Proficiency Index test* (EF Education First, 2025), which included 2.2 million test takers, a number of 123 countries, 54% of the respondents were women, while 46% were men. The average age of the respondents was 26. Users of English were ranked according to proficiency bands: very high, high, moderate, low, and very low. In the 2025 EP EPI, Romania is classified as having a very high level of English proficiency and English use. Romanian speakers of English rank 11<sup>th</sup> among 123 countries included in the test and maintain the same rank in Europe, where the Netherlands, Croatia, and Austria rank first in the English Proficiency hierarchy.

Although the two languages differ in genealogy and the number of worldwide speakers, for instance, English and Romanian share several similarities, one of which is a common set of words of Latin origin, i.e., cognates, words that developed differently in the two languages. Considering that cognates indicate etymologically moderated similarities in the shape of a common etymon (word ancestor), it is notable to mention that the Latin etyma do suffer semantic changes throughout time, as they develop differently across languages. Thus, a change in meaning may occur across the different languages in which a particular etymon has developed over time, and, as shown above, this development may maintain semantic similarities or may trigger uneven semantic correspondences, as seen, for instance, in the case of partial and deceptive cognates. As presented before, in terms of semantics, cognates can be

classified into three categories: 1. cognates proper (identical in meaning), 2. partial cognates (share partial meanings with their L1, L2, or L3 counterparts), 3. deceptive cognates (the cognate words have different meanings).

To ensure a clear understanding of cognates and their proper use, language users should consult both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, especially during translation processes, so as to convey the appropriate meaning of the source text into the translated text, avoiding lexicosemantic alterations (Cozma, 2010, p. 65), i.e., non-equivalents which, in turn, distort the meaning of the translated text, rendering it ineffective and inaccurate. Suggestions for English dictionaries include *the Cambridge Dictionary*, *the Oxford English Dictionary*, and *the Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, all of which are available online. For Romanian, language users should consult *Dicționarul Explicativ al Limbii Române* (2016) or its online version, *DEX Online* (dexonline.ro), for both language acquisition and translation endeavors. Additionally, to track the etymology of words and avoid errors regarding the aforementioned types of cognates, language users and researchers could consult etymological dictionaries, such as *A Copious and Critical English-Latin Dictionary* (Smith & Hall, 1871), *the Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages* (de Vaan, 2008), *An Etymological Dictionary of the Latin Language* (Valpy, 2018), and *An Etymological Dictionary of the Romanian language* (Paliga, 2024). Online sources are also available, including *Etymonline.com* (n.d.) and *the Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Glare, 1968), and *the American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots* (n.d.), including the latter's *Appendix* (The American Heritage Dictionary Indo-European Roots Appendix, n.d.).

As the article proposes a descriptive qualitative approach to the study of cognates and brings a contribution to the scholarly research on English-Romanian cognate use and meanings, the following sections provide the readership with relevant English-Romanian cognates in each of the three aforementioned categories: cognates proper, partial cognates, and deceptive cognates. Due to the typology of partial and deceptive cognates, there is a necessity to devote special attention to illustrating the semantic similarities, respectively, the semantic divergence occurring between word pairs in English and Romanian. Thus, for partial and deceptive cognates, the article provides original explanations in both languages, mentioning language traps and lexical translation errors. The words included throughout this research were selected through the targeted sampling method, resulting in a series of samples discussed in theoretical and practical contexts in Lexicology classes for L1 Romanian speakers and for L2 and L3 English speakers (first-year Bachelor students). As the English-Romanian cognate words were purposefully selected, allowing for an in-depth detailed of each selected case, it is notable to mention that the tables of contents presented in this article (Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4) are not exhaustive and will be further developed in ongoing research projects, through sample-based corpus research, particularly with respect to the translation errors made by EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students regarding the category of partial and deceptive English and Romanian cognates (the TERRA corpus).

In this sense, for the first category, the table below lists a series of English and Romanian *cognates proper*, i.e., words in different languages with a common Latin etymon and identical meanings, arranged in alphabetical order. In the first column, readers will observe that the table lists the original Latin etyma, the ancestor-words of the selected cognates proper. In the following columns, the table presents the English and Romanian cognates derived from Latin ancestral words. The table also notes that cognates exhibit minor or no formal changes in word spelling, as illustrated in English and Romanian. In this case, language users associate words in their native language (L1) and words in other languages (L2, L3) based on the principle of analogy: as this category of cognates highlights formal and semantic similarity, the words are easily recognizable for EFL students. As depicted below, it is worth noting that the

semantic values of the English and Romanian cognates are shared and preserve the meanings of the original Latin etyma.

<b>Cognates Proper - Cognate Type Category 1</b>			
<b>Latin Etymon</b>	<b>English Cognate</b>	<b>Romanian Cognate</b>	<b>Spelling</b>
<i>animalis</i>	<i>animal</i>	<i>animal</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>accidens</i>	<i>accident</i>	<i>accident</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>campus</i>	<i>campus</i>	<i>campus</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>causa</i>	<i>cause</i>	<i>cauză</i>	<i>minor changes</i>
<i>documentum</i>	<i>document</i>	<i>document</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>elementum</i>	<i>element</i>	<i>element</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>error</i>	<i>error</i>	<i>eroare</i>	<i>minor changes</i>
<i>forma</i>	<i>form</i>	<i>formă</i>	<i>minor changes</i>
<i>fragmentum</i>	<i>fragment</i>	<i>fragment</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>importans</i>	<i>important</i>	<i>important</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>index</i>	<i>index</i>	<i>index</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>officialis</i>	<i>official</i>	<i>official</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>opinion</i>	<i>opinion</i>	<i>opinie</i>	<i>minor changes</i>
<i>methodus</i>	<i>method</i>	<i>metodă</i>	<i>minor changes</i>
<i>naturalis</i>	<i>natural</i>	<i>natural</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>perfectus</i>	<i>perfect</i>	<i>perfect</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>proba</i>	<i>probe</i>	<i>probă</i>	<i>minor changes</i>
<i>publicus</i>	<i>public</i>	<i>public</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>sensus</i>	<i>sense</i>	<i>sens</i>	<i>minor changes</i>
<i>universalis</i>	<i>universal</i>	<i>universal</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>textus</i>	<i>text</i>	<i>text</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>virus</i>	<i>virus</i>	<i>virus</i>	<i>no changes</i>

**Table 2.** *Cognates Proper (English and Romanian)*

For the second category, the table below lists a series of *partial cognates* in English and Romanian, arranged alphabetically. Partial cognates represent words in distinct languages, words with a common Latin etymon, similar spelling, one shared meaning, and additional meaning(s) across languages. As in the previous example, the table includes the original Latin etyma and the present-day English and Romanian cognates that they developed into. In contrast to the previous table, which illustrates English-Romanian cognates proper, the table below includes mentions concerning the shared meaning of the cognates and the additional meanings in English and Romanian. As explained previously, due to the fact that over time the Latin etymon acquires new meanings in the languages in which it develops, and due to processes such as extension or narrowing of meaning (Frăţilă, 2011), semantic differences or semantic overlap can occur between cognates in languages such as English and Romanian, as illustrated below.

<b>Partial Cognates - Cognate Type Category 2</b>				
<b>Latin Etymon</b>	<b>English Cognate</b>	<b>Romanian Cognate</b>	<b>Shared Meaning</b>	<b>Additional Meaning</b>
<i>arrestare</i>	<i>arrest</i>	<i>arrest</i>	<i>to detain legally</i>	<i>En. stop - (heart) arrest, while Ro. stop cardiac</i>
<i>character</i>	<i>character</i>	<i>caracter</i>	<i>symbol/letter; behavioral traits</i>	<i>En. character = person (fictional or non-fictional); Ro. personaj</i>
<i>data</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>dată</i>	<i>calendar day</i>	<i>En. date = Ro. întâlnire; En. date = Ro. curmală (fruit)</i>
<i>figura</i>	<i>figure</i>	<i>figură</i>	<i>symbol, figure of speech</i>	<i>En. figure = Ro. cifră; En. figure (body figure, aspect) = Ro. figură (En. face); Ro. o figură (fam.) = En. a real character/ En. a piece of work; En. figure (see key figure) = Ro. persoană importantă</i>
<i>ordinem</i>	<i>order</i>	<i>ordin</i>	<i>command/ request</i>	<i>En. order = Ro. ordine (sequence) En. order = Ro. comandă (a customer's order of goods)</i>
<i>motionem</i>	<i>motion</i>	<i>moțiune</i>	<i>formal proposal (governmental/ parliamentary motions)</i>	<i>En. movement (see motion pictures = films) – Ro. mișcare</i>
<i>maior</i>	<i>major</i>	<i>major</i>	<i>important, effective</i>	<i>En. major = Ro. specializare (studies)</i>
<i>memoria</i>	<i>memory</i>	<i>memorie</i>	<i>faculty of remembering</i>	<i>En. memory = Ro. amintire (recollection of someone or something, remembrance)</i>
<i>sententia</i>	<i>sentence</i>	<i>sentință</i>	<i>statement of authority, judgment</i>	<i>En. sentence – Ro. propoziție (grammatical unit)</i>
<i>terminus</i>	<i>term</i>	<i>termen</i>	<i>deadline, a period of time</i>	<i>En. term = Ro. semestru (academic semester)</i>

**Table 3.** English and Romanian Partial Cognates

The table below lists a series of *deceptive cognates* in English and Romanian to illustrate the typology of this third category: words in different languages that share a common Latin etymon, similar spellings, but different meanings. Table 4 identifies deceptive cognates as words in different languages that share a common ancestor (in this case, Latin), have similar or identical spellings, but differ in meaning across languages, as indicated by their present-day usage. To highlight these distinctions, the table illustrates the semantic differences between English and Romanian cognates, presenting descriptions, translations, and synonyms for the selected English-Romanian word pairs that share a common ancestor word, i.e., a common etymon. Notably, partial cognates, exemplified in Table 3, and deceptive cognates, shown below, constitute an issue in language acquisition and translation studies due to their misleading written form and either partial differences in meaning (as in the case of partial cognates) or different meanings (as in the case of deceptive cognates). Table 4 aims to provide a descriptive comparison of English and Romanian deceptive cognates to highlight the importance of lexical accuracy in language acquisition and translation studies.

<b>Deceptive Cognates - Cognate Type Category 3</b>			
<b>Latin Etymon</b>	<b>English Cognate</b>	<b>Romanian Cognate</b>	<b>The Different Meanings of the English and Romanian Cognates</b>
<i>actualis</i>	<i>actual</i>	<i>actual</i>	<i>En. actual = existing in fact, authentic</i> ≠ <i>Ro. current, care există sau se petrece în prezent; de actualitate</i>
<i>commoditas</i>	<i>commodity</i>	<i>comoditate</i>	<i>En. = goods, belongings</i> ≠ <i>Ro. starea de a fi comod, confortabil</i>
<i>genialis</i>	<i>genial</i>	<i>genial</i>	<i>En. = pleasant, friendly</i> ≠ <i>Ro. highly intelligent (genius)</i>
<i>miseria</i>	<i>misery</i>	<i>mizerie</i>	<i>En. = condition/ state of grievous affliction, misfortune, profound unhappiness</i> ≠ <i>Ro. sărăcie extremă, aspect care denotă mizerie, dezordine, sărăcie</i>
<i>evenire</i>	<i>eventually</i>	<i>eventual</i>	<i>En. finally</i> ≠ <i>Ro. possibly</i>
<i>petroleum</i>	<i>petrol</i>	<i>petrol</i>	<i>En. petrol (gasoline) = Ro. benzină</i> ≠ <i>Ro. petrol = En. petroleum, crude oil</i>
<i>enervare</i>	<i>to enervate</i>	<i>a enerva</i>	<i>En. to weaken someone, to be drained of vitality/energy</i> ≠ <i>Ro. to annoy/stress someone</i>
<i>libraria</i>	<i>library</i>	<i>librărie</i>	<i>En. library = Ro. bibliotecă</i> ≠ <i>Ro. librărie = En. bookshop</i>
<i>sensibilis</i>	<i>sensible</i>	<i>sensibil</i>	<i>En. reasonable, having good judgement</i> ≠ <i>Ro. persoană care resimte puternic la factori externi, simțitor</i>
<i>sympathia</i>	<i>sympathy</i>	<i>simpatie</i>	<i>En. a feeling of understanding and caring for others, compassion/pity</i> ≠ <i>Ro. afinitate pe care cineva o simte față de o altă persoană (En. fondness towards someone)</i>

**Table 4.** English and Romanian Deceptive Cognates

## 5. Conclusion

Considering the important impact of cognates in learning foreign languages, as observed by Beltrán (2006), Gholami, Alavinia, and Izadpanah (2015), Aguinaga Echeverría (2017), Otwinowska (2016), Uzun (2024), and Tronea-Ghindel (2024), it is evident that there is a considerable need for the correct use of linguistic terminology and a classification of cognates. As researchers employ different terminology when dealing with cognates, classifications include word ancestry, form (phonetic/orthographic), and semantics. Classifications may vary, including *true friends vs. false friends* (see Beltrán 2006; Mitkov, Pekar, Blagoev, & Mulloni, 2007; Abou-Khalil, Flanagan, & Ogata, 2018), *true cognates vs. false cognates* (see Beltrán, 2006; Uzun, 2024), and adding a third category where true and false cognates/true or false friends are intertwined: *partially deceptive false friends* (Beltrán, 2006), *partial false friends* (Abou-Khalil, Flanagan, & Ogata 2018), and *partial cognates* (Aguinaga Echeverría, 2017; Uzun, 2024).

Upon reviewing research on cognates and building on these observations, a similar categorization into three subtypes is indicated: cognates proper, partial cognates, and deceptive cognates, with particular emphasis on the importance of semantic similarity or difference. The article identified, in short, cognates can be simply defined as words in different languages

which can be very similar in form (spelling and/or pronunciation included), but, in terms of semantics, may be: identical in meaning, such as the case of cognates proper), partially identical in meaning (partial cognates), or different in terms of meaning, such as the case of deceptive cognates. As such, the proposed terminology and classification can provide a comprehensive framework for classifying the linguistic concept of cognates, helping language users investigate the various relations that can be established between ancestor words that have developed in diverse languages and have adapted in form, pronunciation, and meaning. The current study aimed to explain and categorize the concept of cognates, contributing illustrative correspondences between English and Romanian cognates.

To address the limitations of this article and to indicate future research directions, it is necessary to highlight the importance of conducting a more extensive investigation of partial cognates and deceptive cognates, the two cognate subtypes that pose challenges for Romanian students of English. To address this limitation, the present research will be developed and continued in a subsequent study that aims to collect data on incorrect translations and their suitable equivalents, as observed in the Translation Error Analysis corpus (TERRA), which currently comprises 55 texts translated from English into Romanian. The study will investigate cognate use and cognate familiarity in English and Romanian across a broader corpus of texts, aiming to identify the impact of cognate instruction and its correlations on proper cognate use and accurate translation.

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