

CONCEPTUAL NETWORKS OF INSANITY IN ROMANIAN AND ENGLISH PROVERBS

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Abstract: *This paper aims to analyse the interconnections of the concept of INSANITY as expressed in Romanian and English proverbs. It highlights the similarities and differences in how INSANITY is represented in these two cultures, as well as the implications of these representations for understanding the concept within each cognitive environment. The corpus consists of 147 conceptual metaphors of INSANITY identified as a result of a semantic and structural survey of Romanian, English, and equivalent proverbs dealing with the concepts of INSANITY. The approach involves conducting a comparative analysis that examines these conceptual metaphors to identify both similarities and differences in how each language conceptualises INSANITY. This examination aims to demonstrate how diverse linguistic contexts influence metaphorical usage and conceptual frameworks. The results prove that both cultures conceptualise INSANITY through metaphors that involve impairment, danger, and distortion, underscoring a shared cognitive framework that perceives mental disorder as a deviation from normative rationality. However, they diverge in emphasis, as the Romanian metaphors foreground moral judgment, punishment, and hierarchical spatial metaphors, whereas the English metaphors focus on emotional states, social roles, and internal processes.*

Keywords: *Conceptual metaphors; Romanian paremiology; English paremiology; equivalent proverbs; the concept of INSANITY; conceptual interconnections*

1. Introduction

The research comes as a continuation of my PhD thesis, a work in the field of Conceptual Metaphor Theory applied in paremiology, entitled *Conceptual Metaphors of Health and Illness in Romanian and English Paremiology*. The thesis aimed to yield valuable insights into the specific conceptual perspectives by scrutinising the conceptual metaphors within proverbs, as the research endeavoured to identify the similarities and differences in the representation of the concepts of HEALTH and ILLNESS across the two languages. Hence, an in-depth analysis of the detected set of metaphors appeared necessary in the context of the conceptualisation of the proverbs and their interconnections. The current article aims to expand upon this research in the current study by conducting a more in-depth analysis of the conceptual relationships to expose the connections, similarities, and differences that exist between the two cultures. Interpretations of the representations of the concepts of HEALTH and ILLNESS have already been devised in the thesis, but the complete set of metaphors has not been approached,

specifically, the concept of INSANITY, and consequently, further outcomes can be displayed.

2. Literature review

A systematic literature review of studies in the fields of research is the key to a successful outcome, specifically to reveal novel similarities and differences regarding the concepts of INSANITY in Romanian and English paremiology and to provide a proper understanding of conceptual similarities and differences.

The term *conceptual metaphor* was introduced in 1980, marking a significant development in cognitive linguistics when Lakoff and Johnson developed the Conceptual Metaphor Theory in their book, *Metaphors We Live By*. In this revolutionary work, the authors assert that linguistic evidence demonstrates that “most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature”¹. They argue that our everyday thinking, understanding, and perception are fundamentally shaped by metaphorical structures embedded within language and cognition. Moreover, Lakoff and Johnson explain that they crafted a systematic method for identifying and analysing these metaphors in detail, specifically, to uncover “what the metaphors are that structure how we perceive, how we think, and what we do”². This methodological approach enables researchers to dissect complex cognitive processes and reveal how deeply metaphors influence our perspective on the world.

Moreover, Zoltan Kövecses (2017) provides a clear and helpful definition of conceptual metaphors, describing conceptual metaphors as “a figure of speech that represents one (usually abstract) domain of experience in terms of another, usually concrete domain”³. Additionally, the scholar regards Lakoff and Johnson’s *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) as the foundational text for the development of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Nevertheless, he discusses the significant evolution of the approach since its inception by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), as outlined in the introduction to his article, *Conceptual Metaphor Theory*. While Kövecses acknowledges that *Metaphors We Live By* marks the beginning of the theory, he emphasises that contemporary understandings differ because subsequent research has extensively confirmed, expanded, and sometimes redefined Lakoff and Johnson’s original ideas. As a result, today’s Conceptual Metaphor Theory is not simply a reiteration of what was presented in *Metaphors We Live By*, but rather a more nuanced and developed approach. Critics, however, assume that the current methodology remains identical to Lakoff and Johnson’s initial framework, which is an oversimplification of the theory’s evolution. Kövecses’s insights are also elaborated across two influential works: *Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation* (2005) and *Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling* (2000). In *Metaphor in Culture. Universality and Variation* (2005),

¹ George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago/London, the University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 4.

² George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago/London, the University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 4.

³ Z. Kövecses, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, in E. Semino & Z. Demjén, *Routledge Handbook of Metaphor and Language*, New York, Routledge, 2017, p. 14.

he investigates how conceptual metaphors are intertwined with culture and individual cognition.

Conceptualisations that shape the use of language play an essential role in understanding how individuals communicate and interpret meaning, and the focus will not be on the cultural aspect of the metaphor. The Conceptual Metaphor Theory posits that our thoughts are inherently metaphorical in their nature and suggests that concepts are interconnected through cross-domain mappings. Specifically, it emphasises the mental organisation of concepts based on relationships between the target domain, i.e. what is being described, and the source domain, i.e. what is used to understand or conceptualise the target. Evans and Green (2006) dedicate an entire chapter to exploring the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, highlighting the contributions of various linguists who have advanced this field within cognitive linguistics. Their examination provides a comprehensive overview of how conceptual metaphors function and their significance in language and thought, and it links the Conceptual Metaphor Theory to core principles of cognitive linguistics.

The concept of INSANITY is, in fact, a sub-concept of ILLNESS, and linguists brought their attention to specific types of diseases, as well. Thus, building upon Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Potts and Semino (2019) devise seven distinct categories of concepts that they identified through comprehensive analyses of various corpora in their work *Cancer as a Metaphor*. Even though the corpus examined in the current article diverges significantly from the corpora analysed by Potts and Semino in *Cancer as a Metaphor*, the theoretical approach remains relevant and insightful as it underlines the importance of understanding how metaphors shape our perceptions and attitudes toward illness across different contexts and cultural backgrounds.

Regarding the connection between the Conceptual Metaphor Theory and proverbs, Popescu (2021) emphasises the importance of applying the theory to paremiology as "people continue to refer to the wisdom in metaphorical proverbs even in the twenty-first century"⁴, highlighting the persistent relevance of these linguistic artefacts. This enduring usage demonstrates that metaphorical proverbs remain vital tools for understanding cultural perceptions and conceptualisations of INSANITY and their corresponding conceptualisations.

In conclusion, applying the Conceptual Metaphor Theory in paremiology to reveal similarities and differences across various linguistic environments is significant as scholars continue to explore ancestral wisdom and seek to identify contemporary thinking patterns. In this context, examining metaphors related to INSANITY can provide valuable insights into how different cultures interpret and represent mental health issues.

3. Research methodology

⁴ Teodora Popescu, Conceptualisations of WORK in Romanian, French, Russian and English Proverbs, in *Journal of Linguistic and Intercultural Education – JoLIE*, 14 (2), Alba Iulia, Editura Aeternitas, 2021, p. 108.

This study intends to examine the interrelations of the concept of INSANITY as reflected in proverbs from Romanian and English. It underscores both the similarities and distinctions in the portrayal of INSANITY within these two linguistic contexts and explores their implications for comprehending the concept in each cognitive framework. The objectives to be achieved are:

- to categorise the set of conceptual metaphors according to their target and source domains;
- to compare and contrast the Romanian and English representations of the concepts of INSANITY as revealed by the findings;
- to connect and interpret the findings to reveal similarities and differences between the Romanian and English conceptual representations of INSANITY.

Consequently, to address these objectives, a qualitative methodology is employed, and thus, the research begins with the analysis of the set of conceptual metaphors containing conceptual relations of equivalent, Romanian and English proverbs. There were situations in which a proverb generated more than a relation, displayed more than one variant, or the conceptual metaphor was subjected to further conceptualisation. Specifically, there are 147 relations for 28 equivalent proverbs, 43 relations for 27 English proverbs, and 31 relations for 26 Romanian proverbs, all dealing with the concept of INSANITY. Using qualitative analysis, each metaphor is analysed and classified based on its source and target domains, providing a foundation for subsequent comparative analysis. The next step involves a comparative analysis of the Romanian and English representations. This entails examining the target and the source domains to identify similarities and differences in how each language conceptualises INSANITY through metaphors to uncover how different cultural and linguistic contexts shape metaphor usage and conceptualisation. The analysis of the findings reveals the manner in which the concept of INSANITY is comprehended, as well as which concepts are delineated through it.

4. Results and interpretation

The comparative examination of the conceptual metaphors of the equivalent proverbs provides essential perspectives of the cross-cultural and linguistic conceptualisations of INSANITY through metaphor. These metaphors clarify underlying cognitive schemas concerning mental states, social relationships, moral evaluations, and emotional experiences, thereby revealing both universal patterns and culturally specific nuances.

The equivalent proverbs subjected to analysis displayed more than one variant, and in some cases, the Romanian and English proverbs resulted in different relations due to their semantic and syntactic features and were annotated accordingly. Similarly, the double, triple, quadruple and further conceptualisations are also marked for a clear understanding of the results. Thus, the conceptual metaphors of INSANITY as the target domain come first, followed by the relations in which other concepts are understood in terms of INSANITY. They are listed below, and to facilitate reference when interpreted, they are numbered as well.

1. EN: PREVIOUS DEFAMATION BY ACCUSATION OF INSANITY IS THE DEATH OF COMPANIONSHIP
 RO: VOLITIONALLY LIMITED DEFAMATION BY ACCUSATION OF INSANITY IS THE DEATH OF COMPANIONSHIP
 EN: DEFAMATION BY ACCUSATION OF INSANITY IS THE DEATH OF COMPANIONSHIP
2. EN: INSANITY IS A HARMFUL RELATIONSHIP
 RO: POSSIBLE INSANITY IS A HARMFUL RELATIONSHIP
 RO: INSANITY IS AN EXPECTEDLY HARMFUL RELATIONSHIP
3. EN: WISDOM IS EVIDENT TEMPORARINESS
 RO: WISDOM IS TEMPORARY INSANITY
 EN: INSANITY IS UNIVERSAL TEMPORARINESS
4. RO/EN: INSANITY IS POVERTY
 RO: WISDOM IS WEALTH
 RO: INSANITY IS POVERTY
5. RO/EN: INSANITY IS ENGAGEMENT IN INSANITY
6. RO: INSANITY IS USELESS MOTION
 EN: INSANITY IS USELESS SPEECH
7. RO/EN: INNATE INSANITY IS UNTREATABLE
8. RO/EN: INSANITY IS NOURISHMENT TO WISDOM
9. RO: INSANITY IS NOURISHMENT TO WISDOM
 EN: INSANITY IS SHELTER TO WISDOM
10. RO/EN: INSANITY IS HARDSHIP TO WISDOM
11. RO: INSANITY IS HONESTY
 JUVENILITY IS HONESTY **double conceptualisation**
 INSANITY IS JUVENILITY **further conceptualisation**
 EN: INSANITY IS HONESTY
 FOOLISHNESS IS HONESTY **double conceptualisation**
 INSANITY IS FOOLISHNESS **further conceptualisation**
 RO: JUVENILITY IS HONESTY
 INSANITY IS JUVENILITY **double conceptualisation**
 INSANITY IS JUVENILITY **further conceptualisation**
12. RO/ EN: INSANITY IS HONESTY
 JUVENILITY IS HONESTY **double conceptualisation**
 INSANITY IS JUVENILITY **further conceptualisation**
 EN: INSANITY IS HONESTY
 INEBRIATION IS HONESTY **double conceptualisation**
 INSANITY IS INEBRIATION **further conceptualisation**
13. RO: INSANITY IS OVERCOMING CONFUSION
 EN: INSANITY IS OVERCOMING DOWNWARD MOTION
14. RO/EN: INSANITY IS CONFUSION TO WISDOM
15. EN: INSANITY IS POSSIBLE WISDOM
 RO: INSANITY IS IMPERATIVELY MEMORABLE
 RO: INSANITY IS A MEANS OF IMPROVING WISDOM
16. RO/EN: INSANITY IS EXTREME DANGER

17. RO: RESTRAINT IS A QUALITY

INSANITY IS UNRESTRAINT

INSANITY IS A FLAW **triple conceptualisation**

EN: RESTRAINT IS HONOUR

INSANITY IS UNRESTRAINT

INSANITY IS DISHONOURABLE **triple conceptualisation**

18. RO: ANGER IS INWARD MOTION TO INSANITY

EN: ANGER IS TEMPORARY INSANITY

19. RO/EN: LOVE IS INSANITY

20. RO: INWARD PLEASURE IS OUTWARD INSANITY

EN: INEBRIATION IS BETRAYAL

EN: PROGRESSIVE INEBRIATION IS INSANITY

21. RO: FOOLISHNESS IS INSANITY

EN: OUTSIDE CHANGE IS A LACK OF INSIDE CHANGE

22. EN: KNOWLEDGE IS INSANITY

RO: KNOWLEDGE IS QUANTITY-RELATED INSANITY

23. EN: PROMISING IS INSANE COMFORT

RO: WISE PROMISING IS INSANE HOPE

24. EN: CRAVING FOR WEALTH IS COMPANIONSHIP WITH INSANITY

RO: CRAVING FOR WEALTH IS A RELATIONSHIP WITH INSANITY

25. RO: EXTREME KIND-HEARTEDNESS IS INSANITY

EN: KIND-HEARTEDNESSES IS INSANITY

RO: KIND-HEARTEDNESSES IS EXPOSURE

26. RO/EN: CHANGING LEADERSHIP IS ENCHANTING INSANITY

CHANGE IS INSANITY **further conceptualisation**

27. RO/EN: DBAUCHERY IS INSANITY

RO: DEBAUCHERY IS HARM

EN: DEBAUCHERY IS DAMNATION

RO/EN: DEBAUCHERY IS BAD REPUTATION

28. RO/EN: HIDING HATRED IS INSANITY

RO/EN: SLANDER IS INSANITY

A central common feature is the recurrent association of INSANITY with social and moral dimensions. For instance, metaphors such as DEFAMATION BY ACCUSATION OF INSANITY leading to THE DEATH OF COMPANIONSHIP (1), as well as references to HIDING HATRED or SLANDER ASSOCIATED WITH INSANITY (28), underscore the perception of insanity as a social threat or moral failing. Both Romanian and English conceptualisations frame INSANITY in terms of damaging social bonds, reputation, or moral integrity. Additionally, metaphors linking mental states to social capital, such as POVERTY (4), WEALTH (4), and HONESTY (11, 12), indicate a shared cognitive framework where mental health is intertwined with social and moral valuation.

Furthermore, metaphors relating to emotional and cognitive states, such as CONFUSION (14), ANGER (18), and LOVE (19), are prevalent in both linguistic

environments, suggesting a common embodied understanding that mental disturbances are closely linked to emotional turbulence and internal disorder. The conceptualisation of KNOWLEDGE as INSANITY or QUANTITY-RELATED INSANITY (22) exemplifies a cognitive pattern associating mental overload or excess with disorder, reflecting a universal tendency to equate mental capacity with stability.

Despite these predominant similarities, differences emerge in emphasis and conceptual framing, indicative of distinct cultural paradigms. Romanian metaphors frequently incorporate concepts of innateness, inevitability, and moral judgment. For example, INNATE INSANITY IS UNTREATABLE (7), INSANITY IS NOURISHMENT TO WISDOM (8, 9, 10), and EXTREME KINDNESS IS INSANITY (25), highlighting a worldview where mental traits are perceived as intrinsic, with potential for moral or ontological significance. These metaphors imply a cognitive pattern in which mental health is linked to morality, personal growth, and societal judgment, often framing INSANITY as a trait that can be either corrected or morally condemned.

In contrast, English metaphors tend to emphasise transience, emotional states, and social consequences. For example, INSANITY IS UNIVERSAL TEMPORARINESS (3), INSANITY IS A HARMFUL RELATIONSHIP (2), and PROMISING IS INSANE COMFORT (23), which underscores the fluidity of mental states and their relational and societal implications. The emphasis on betrayal, damnation, and disrepute (27) reflects a moral valuation rooted in social reputation, but with less focus on innate traits or moral culpability.

Another difference pertains to metaphors related to control, restraint, and disorder. The Romanian relations, such as restraint as a quality versus INSANITY as unrestraintment (17), reflect a moral valuation of self-control, whereas the English metaphors frame restraint as honour and disorder as dishonour, emphasising societal ideals of moderation and discipline.

The conceptual metaphors reveal that both linguistic communities conceptualise INSANITY as a disruption of social harmony, moral order, and emotional equilibrium. The Romanian metaphors frequently embed an ethical and ontological dimension, perceiving certain mental traits as innate or inevitable, with potential for moral correction or growth. For example, the metaphors of INSANITY in connection to WISDOM (8, 9, 10) suggest a cognitive model that regards disorder as a potential precursor to moral or intellectual development. Conversely, English metaphors tend to portray INSANITY as a transient, relational, and emotionally driven state, emphasising the internal turbulence associated with mental disturbances and their external social ramifications. The embodied schemas underlying these metaphors underscore the perception of mental health as a dynamic and context-dependent construct.

The conceptual metaphors of the proverbs specific to the Romanian and English cultures were analysed differently, i.e. the comparison was performed according to the criterion of the target and source domain. The lists are presented below, and the annotation used above is maintained, firstly the Romanian relations, followed by the English metaphors.

1. INEBRIATION IS POVERTY **triple conceptualisation**

INEBRIATION IS INSANITY

INEBRIATION IS ILLNESS

2. DECEITFULNESS IS INSANITY **double conceptualisation**

EVIL IS INSANITY

3. PRIDE IS INSANITY

4. NOBLE ASSURANCE IS INSANE HOPE

5. SELF-INTEREST IS INSANITY

6. IMPAIRMENT IS INSANITY

7. EXCESSIVENESS IS INSANITY **quadruple conceptualisation**

EXCESSIVENESS IS ILLNESS

EXCESSIVENESS IS DAMNATION

EXCESSIVENESS IS DEATH

8. INEBRIATION IS DEFINITE INSANITY

9. INEBRIATION IS WILLING INSANITY

10. INEBRIATION IS POVERTY **double conceptualisation**

INEBRIATION IS INSANITY

11. INEBRIATION IS ANGER **quadruple conceptualisation**

INEBRIATION IS INSANITY

INEBRIATION IS A SIN

INEBRIATION IS EMPTINESS

12. EXPOSED DECEITFULNESS IS INSANE HAPPINESS

13. NOBLE BOLDNESS IS GOODNESS **double conceptualisation**

EVIL BOLDNESS IS INSANITY

14. INSTANT ANGER IS MOTION TOWARDS INSANITY

15. HASTE IS INSANITY **double conceptualisation**

IGNORANT OMNISCIENCE IS INSANITY

16. INEBRIATION IS A TOOL FOR AGE **double conceptualisation**

INEBRIATION IS INSANITY

17. PUNISHING INSANITY IS HEALING

18. INSANITY IS DOWNWARD HARM

19. INSANITY IS DOWNWARD EMPLOYMENT

20. INSANITY IS REMOTENESS

21. INSANITY IS DISTORTED TRUTH

22. WISDOM IS CONFIDENTIALITY **double conceptualisation**

INSANITY IS BETRAYAL

23. INEBRIATION IS IMPOSSIBLE CONCILIATION **double conceptualisation**

INSANITY IS IMPOSSIBLE CONCILIATION

INEBRIATION IS INSANITY **further conceptualisation**

24. AVOIDING INSANITY IS AVOIDING DANGER

25. AVOIDING INSANITY IS ADVISABLE

26. EXPOSED DECEITFULNESS IS INSANE HAPPINESS

27. NOBLE ASSURANCE IS INSANE HOPE

1. INSANITY IS DIVINE DESTRUCTION

2. INSANITY IS POSSIBLE WISDOM
3. INSANITY IS NOISE
4. INSANITY IS A LUCKY CARD
5. INSANITY IS EXPECTABLE
6. INSANITY IS UNIVERSAL TEMPORARINESS
7. INSANITY IS LUCK DESTRUCTION
8. A SOLE INSANITY ACT IS SANITY
9. IMPAIRMENT IS INSANITY
10. INSANITY IS A CERTAIN HARM **double conceptualisation**
- INSANITY IS CHILDISH BEHAVIOUR
11. INSANITY IS DELAY **double conceptualisation**
- INSANITY IS A LACK OF ACHIEVEMENT
12. INSANE SPEED IS SLOWNESS
13. INSANITY IS DESIRED TURMOIL
14. INSANITY IS A RARE CERTAINTY
15. HEALING IS DECEITFUL INSANITY
16. LOVE IS MIND IMPAIRMENT **double conceptualisation**
- LOVE IS IMPAIRMENT
- LOVE IS INSANITY **further conceptualisation**
17. REVENGE IS PREFERABLE TO INSANITY
18. CONFESSION TO THE ENEMY IS INSANITY
19. LOVE IS INSANITY
20. PASSION IS MOTIONED INSANITY
21. PRAISE IS INSANITY
22. WOMANHOOD IS SANITY **double conceptualisation**
- IGNORING WOMANHOOD IS INSANITY
23. BEAUTY IS INSANITY IN A RELATIONSHIP
24. EXCESSIVE CHEERFULNESS IS CERTAIN MOTION TOWARDS INSANITY
25. INNER SPEECH IS INSANITY
26. INSANE SPEECH IS ADVISABLE IMPAIRMENT

The comparative analysis of the Romanian and English lists of conceptual metaphors related to INSANITY reveals both convergences and divergences rooted in cultural, linguistic, and cognitive frameworks. Both cultures reflect shared human experiences and cognitive patterns, yet they also exhibit distinct emphases shaped by cultural values and linguistic nuances.

An obvious similarity across both languages is the conceptualisation of INSANITY as a form of impairment or damage. The Romanians explicitly equate impairment with INSANITY (6), a pattern also evident in the English list (9). This shared metaphor underscores the universal perception of mental disturbance as a deviation from normal functioning. Additionally, both lists incorporate moral and evaluative dimensions: Romanian metaphors regarding DECEITFULNESS (2, 12, 27) and EVIL (2, 13) align with the English metaphor INSANITY IS NOISE (3), which may symbolise chaos or disruption. Furthermore, some metaphors connect excessive behaviour with INSANITY, i.e. the Romanian EXCESSIVENESS IS INSANITY, whereas

the English conceptual metaphor *INSANITY IS DESIRED TURMOIL* reflects the tendency to link overindulgence or extremity with mental instability, emphasising the cognitive association between imbalance and madness.

Despite these similarities, significant differences occur. The Romanian conceptual metaphors emphasise insobriety (1, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16) and associate drunkenness with moral and existential states, such as poverty, wilful or definite *INSANITY*. These metaphors reveal a cultural perspective where intoxication symbolises loss of control and moral degradation. Conversely, the English metaphors do not explicitly reference alcohol or drunkenness, instead framing *INSANITY* through more abstract or universal concepts such as the divine destruction (1), possible wisdom (2), or a lucky card (4), which suggest a broader and more philosophical or existential interpretation. Another dissimilarity lies in the scope of the conceptual metaphors. The Romanian list contains multiple-layered metaphors, specifically, proverbs with double, triple or even quadruple conceptualisations, indicating a detailed mapping of specific emotional or situational states to *INSANITY*. Conversely, the English list features metaphors, such as *INSANITY IS A LUCKY CARD* or *INSANITY IS A RARE CERTAINTY*, which carry probabilistic or paradoxical connotations, reflecting different cultural attitudes towards unpredictability and randomness.

Furthermore, the Romanian conceptual metaphors frequently embed moral judgments such as *SELF-INTEREST* (5), *PRIDE* (3) and notions of virtue or nobility (4, 13, 27), indicating an ethical evaluation of mental states. The English metaphors, however, seem to focus more on the nature and perception of *INSANITY* itself, with less overt moral valuation, emphasizing chaos, noise, or paradoxes.

Nevertheless, both lists reveal that individuals tend to conceptualise *INSANITY* through embodied and moral metaphors, associations with impairment, excess, or moral failings, highlighting the universality of these mental models. The Romanian metaphors' emphasis on drunkenness and moral failings suggests a cultural framing where alcohol and moral virtue are central to understanding mental stability. The detailed layered metaphors indicate a nuanced conceptualisation of *INSANITY* as multifaceted, involving emotional, moral, and existential dimensions. The English metaphors focus on randomness, destruction (1, 7, 13), and paradoxical notions such as *A SOLE ACT OF INSANITY IS SANITY*, which reflects a cultural inclination towards viewing *INSANITY* as intertwined with unpredictability and existential ambiguity. The metaphors encapsulate a perspective in which *INSANITY* challenges normative categories, emphasising its complex and sometimes paradoxical nature.

Moreover, a prominent similarity across both lists is the association of *INSANITY* with notions of damage, impairment, or distortion, but in the Romanian list, metaphors evoke a sense of disconnection from reality through distorted truth and remoteness (22, 20), emphasising the loss of coherence or proximity to rational understanding and the English list includes the concept of love (19), passion (20), and inner speech (25) as understood in terms of *INSANITY*, also being related to mental states, movement, impairment, or internal disorder. Furthermore, both lists

feature metaphors framing INSANITY as a form of danger or threat, such as the Romanian metaphors AVOIDING INSANITY IS AVOIDING DANGER (24) and INSANITY IS DOWNWARD HARM (18), which highlight the perilous nature of mental disorder. The English list echoes this with the idea that REVENGE IS PREFERABLE TO INSANITY (17), implying that INSANITY is undesirable and potentially destructive. These metaphors reflect a cultural valuation of mental stability as essential for safety and social harmony.

Despite these similarities, notable differences appear as the Romanian metaphors emphasise the moral and social dimensions of INSANITY, such as PUNISHING INSANITY IS HEALING (17) and INSANITY IS BETRAYAL (22). These metaphors suggest a moral judgment, associating INSANITY with moral failure or social disloyalty, and propose that correction or punishment can restore health. Conversely, the English list predominantly conceptualises INSANITY in relation to emotional states and social roles, exemplified by the concepts of LOVE (19) and WOMANHOOD (22), which infuse mental states with gendered and relational connotations. Another dissimilarity pertains to the conceptualisation of healing and recovery. The Romanian metaphor (17) frames correction as a form of moral or social redemption, whereas the English metaphors do not explicitly address healing but focus more on the destructive or impairing aspects of INSANITY (15, 26). This reflects differing cultural attitudes toward mental health management, i.e. the Romanian metaphors emphasising rectification, whereas the English expressions tending to depict INSANITY as a negative state to be avoided or condemned.

The conceptual metaphors reveal underlying cognitive models about mental health, as the Romanian metaphors (19, 20) suggest a spatial and hierarchical framework, where mental health is associated with proximity and proper functioning within social or moral hierarchies. In contrast, the English metaphors highlight emotional and social roles (19, 22), implying that mental states are intertwined with gendered and relational identities. Moreover, they point to the internal dialogue as a source of mental disorder (25), emphasising the cognitive process itself as a site of potential dysfunction.

These differences may stem from cultural attitudes toward mental health, morality, and social roles. Thus, the Romanian conceptual metaphors often frame INSANITY within moral and social correction, aligning with cultural values emphasising social order and moral rectitude, whereas the English metaphors tend to focus on emotional experiences and relational dynamics, reflecting perhaps a more individualistic or affective perspective. Additionally, the Romanian metaphors often involve moral and social correction, punishment, and hierarchical spatial metaphors, while English metaphors tend to focus on emotional states, internal processes, and relational roles.

5. Conclusions

The comparative analysis of the Romanian and English lists of conceptual metaphors related to INSANITY reveals both convergences and divergences rooted in cultural, linguistic, and cognitive frameworks. These metaphors serve as

cognitive tools that shape how each language community conceptualises INSANITY, often through embodied experiences, social values, and shared cultural narratives.

Moreover, both the Romanian and English metaphorical conceptualisations of INSANITY are rooted in shared cognitive schemas that associate mental disturbance with social, moral, and emotional dimensions. Nonetheless, they diverge in emphasis: the Romanian metaphors often embed moral valuation, emphasising innate traits, moral flaws, and potential for ethical or ontological transformation, while English metaphors focus more on transient emotional states, relational dynamics, and societal implications. These differences have profound implications for societal attitudes toward mental health, morality, and social cohesion within each linguistic and cultural context.

Last but not least, both Romanian and English metaphorical frameworks for INSANITY underscore universal cognitive patterns, linking mental states with impairment, excess, and moral judgments, while also reflecting specific cultural attitudes towards intoxication, morality, and existential uncertainty. These differences highlight how language and culture shape the metaphoric conceptualisation of complex phenomena of insanity. Thus, these differences highlight how cultural values and linguistic structures shape the metaphorical conceptualisation of mental health, revealing underlying cognitive models that inform societal attitudes toward INSANITY.

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