# THE COGNITIVE LINGUISTIC ENTERPRISE IN ROMANIA

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**Abstract:** The paper focuses on some cognitive linguistic topics (e.g. categorization, polysemy, motivation of idioms, etc.) approached by Romanian linguists in the last two decades. The selection of contributions that this paper presents is intended to offer an overview of the main attempts to introduce and develop cognitive linguistics in Romania. The claims put forward for English (especially American English) have been contrasted and checked against data from Romanian. Generally, Romanian studies from a cognitive linguistic perspective shed light on various linguistic phenomena at both a theoretical and a practical level. Theoretically, they are relevant through their comparative and contrastive analyses, while practically they contribute insights to language acquisition and translation studies.

**Keywords:** category, conceptual metaphor, conceptual metonymy, conventional knowledge, motivation

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of the present paper[1] is to bring to the fore Romanian contributions in the field of cognitive linguistics, an area not very well known in this country till late 1990s, due to the difficulty of accessing the major theoretical works written by the founding scholars of cognitive linguistics: George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, Leonard Talmy, Charles Fillmore, Gilles Fauconnier, Ronald Langacker, Eve Sweetser.

Though our enterprise to is not at all an easy one, considering factors such as the effort to gather various data into a coherent whole, the time to get feed back from some colleagues and also the risk of overlooking significant contributions undeliberately, we find our undertaking a necessary one, for at least two reasons.

First, cognitive linguistic literature has to be enriched after so many years of focus on English, and then on Polynesian and Amerindian languages, by taking a serious look at Romance languages, by considering data not only from French and Spanish, but also from Romanian. The second reason (though it may sound equally idealistic) is to create a sense of solidarity, of belonging to the same scholarly community among Romanian linguists who have devoted more or less of their lives to research in the field of cognitive linguistics.

The paper is structured in three sections. The first section takes up the question of categorisation, the mental process of classification which first concerned Eleanor Rosch in the 1970s. This part deals with concrete categories (natural kinds and artefacts), abstract categories (emotions) and linguistic categories such as prepositions, verb particles and nouns. The second section deals with idioms, discussing the cognitive mechanisms that contribute to their motivation (conceptual metaphor, conceptual metonymy and conventional knowledge) and providing data that confirm the links between embodied action and cultural experience. The third section looks at how metaphor is exploited in different types of discourse and points out the source domains for metaphors most commonly found in political discourse, literary discourse, scientific discourse, economic discourse, etc. This section closes with conceptualizations and linguistic realizations of the basic metaphorical concept of TIME in Romanian.

[1] I would like to thank Professor Alexandra Cornilescu, my former PhD advisor who, in 1992, suggested doing my research in the field of cognitive linguistics.

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## 2. From categories of the world to linguistic categories

A comparative approach to categorization in English and Romanian is provided by Ionita (2006) who, in her PhD dissertation, provides experimental data on the way Romanian categories display regularities, similarities and differences versus the English model. Trying to outline a general cognitive approach to the theory of categorization, Ioniță (2006) focuses on two types of categories: (a) categories of the world and (b) categories in language.

Analysing *concrete categories* (*natural kinds* such as birds, vegetables, fruits and *artefacts* such as furniture, tools, toys, weapons, clothing, vehicles), the author's main finding is that prototype members were in 40% of the cases the same in Romanian as in English; the marginal members were found to be in 45% of the cases the same in English and Romanian. As for the middle-ranked items, they "bring the most interesting information on how categorization varies from language to language, or within the same community". For example, *păpădie* 'dandelion' is considered a peripheral member of the VEGETABLE category by subjects from Bucuresti, but a good example of vegetables by informants from other parts of Romania.

Relying on the model provided by Wierzbicka (1992), Ioniță (2006) further analyses *abstract categories*, focusing on emotions in English and Romanian. She observes that "in English, DISTRESS has a present orientation, a personal character, an active and less resigned attitude. In Romanian, these active and less resigned components are less obvious in terms such as SUFERINȚĂ/DURERE" (Ioniță 2006: 179). Another difference concerns the abstract category SORROW which suggests a degree of resignation, of semi-acceptance, lending SORROW an air of dignity. In Romanian, AMĂRĂCIUNE seems to suggest acceptance and passivity, lacking the air of dignity. The conclusion to this part is that abstract categories, in most cases, can most clearly be understood through semantic fields with a polycentric structure, each of them subcategorizing its own field, while all the members of the category cohere around one particular concept, topic or thing.

*Categories in language* (*spatial* and *temporal prepositions* in English and Romanian) are investigated with a view to discuss lexemes as examples of categories, attempting to ascertain whether they offer a coherent internal structure. The author's comparative analysis between English and Romanian shows that "there are strikingly similar instances of the SPs as regards their locative use, whereas dissimilarities occur when we expand the locative use to non-locative (temporal and metaphorical) ones. Making a comparative analysis of the prepositions OVER/PESTE and IN/ÎN, Ioniță demonstrates that these spatial prepositions are family resemblance linguistic categories. She shows that in spite of the lack of correspondence (i.e. a preposition in one language rarely has a single translation equivalent in another language) among English and Romanian, the meaning chain model of polysemy associated with SpPs is a powerful tool for explicating the structure of such highly complex lexical items in the two languages. The explanatory power of cognitive linguistics is also emphasized in a study devoted to *causal senses of prepositions* in English and Romanian (Neagu 2003), where the author tries to prove that prepositional usage is not as chaotic as it appears at first sight and that the principles that govern language acquisition are part of more general principles of cognitive developments. Focusing on emotional causality expressed by prepositional phrases in English and Romanian, Neagu uses central concepts in cognitive linguistics such as image schema, trajector, landmark, emotion category, conceptual metaphor and conceptual metonymy. The term "trajector" is used in the sense of a resultant situation and "landmark" is used to denote the emotional state causing that situation. For example, in *The child trembled in fear/Copilul tremura înfricoşat*, the trajector is lexicalized by

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"trembled" and the landmark by "in fear". Discussing landmarks of the Container type (e.g. *in fear, in terror, in anger, in triumph, in pain, in despair* the author observes that Romanian also conceptualizes emotions as containers, using past participles prefixed by *in/im-* (e.g. *înfricoşat, îngrozit, înspăimântat, înfuriat, îndurerat, înciudat, întristat*). While lexicalizations of container landmarks occur more often in colloquial Romanian, encodings of companion landmarks (lexicalized as "with" phrases) seem to be favoured in Romanian literary discourse (*se stinse cu durere* 'with pain he faded out'). The cognitive approach to prepositions offers a more systematic account that, in turn, provides the basis for a more coherent and learnable presentation of what was believed to be an arbitrary aspect of English grammar. From this point of view, the studies by the Romanian scholars mentioned above may also provide insights to anyone involved in teaching and translation.

Even more difficult than prepositional usage in the acquisition of English (especially for speakers whose mother tongue is a Romance language such as Romanian) is *verb particle* usage. The usefulness of a cognitive linguistic approach is demonstrated in a study devoted to English verb particles and their acquisition (Neagu 2007) where the author revisits the issue of English phrasal verbs from the perspective of particles and the meaning they contribute to the composite meaning as a whole. The question it addresses is "whether particles are purely idiomatic (i.e. arbitrarily or chaotically used) or whether they rather consist of clusters of related and transparent meanings so that they can be used in a quite motivated, logical way." (Neagu 2007: 121). The author discusses the meanings of two of the most frequently used particles in English: OUT and UP. The spatial domain is considered the source for a large variety of semantic extensions to non-locative domains through metonymy and metaphor. The analysis demonstrates that English verb particles disclose figurative related meanings derived from a central/prototypical locative meaning. For example, typically, spatially, UP means motion from a lower to a higher place or it shows that the position of the object mentioned is higher than others (e.g. *Our department room is two floors up*). The extended senses of UP include the following: (i) aiming or reaching a goal, an end, a limit (e.g. *Go up to the window and see what is going on*); (ii) positive evaluation, which is generally involved by upward orientation (e.g. *brush up, brighten up, cheer up*); (iii) the accessibility/visibility sense (e.g. *He was determined to bring up the issue at the department meeting*); (iv) not only an abstract limit has been reached, but a whole object has been affected by an action (e.g. *Running can burn up a lot of calories*).

Neagu (2007: 137) stresses the idea that particles are important clues in the acquisition not only of phrasal verbs, but also of other vocabulary items, such as phrasal (compound) nouns and adjectives where particles also contribute their meaning to the whole. Thus, the meanings of compound nouns such as *dropout, fallout, outburst, outlook*, etc., as well as the meanings of a number of deverbal adjectives formed with *out* (*outdated, outgoing, outrageous*) can be associated with the general meanings of the verb particle OUT discussed by the author.

The hypothesis that language users find it easier to learn an extended meaning than learn a meaning that is unrelated to a familiar one, lies at the basis of the cognitive linguistic approach of polysemy. In her study of nominal polysemy in English and Romanian, Neagu (1999) shows that nouns belonging to the same frame (semantic/conceptual field) have the same type of semantic extension. In this view she discusses a corpus including terms from very different fields: (i) animal nouns; (ii) deverbal nouns; (iii) social status nouns.

The first type of polysemantic nouns is investigated in terms of "perspectivisation", i.e. the process of foregrounding or highlighting some element or elements within a frame. The author argues that the frame for animal concepts can be perspectivised in two ways, relative to

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(i) the appearance of the animal, and (ii) the behaviour of the animal. She points out that different aspects of appearance are encoded by terms denoting animals in their primary meanings, whereas in their derived meanings they refer to things, human beings, plants, other animals. The animal behaviour perspective or the ethological perspective highlights behavioural properties of animal concepts; this perspective focuses on the behaviour component suggested by Wierzbicka (1992) in her definition of the animal concept. The main finding concerning the first type of nouns is that animal nouns favour metaphor as a polysemy creating mechanism.

The second type of polysemantic nouns, i.e. deverbal nouns forms a quite different, noncentral, peripheral subcategory; they are the least "nouny" nouns. What the author wants to find out is whether metaphoric extensions are still at work or they are replaced by the metonymic type of extension.

Assuming that the polysemy of deverbal nouns or nominals can be interpreted in terms of the semantic roles assigned by the base verb, (e.g. RESULT, INSTRUMENT, AGENT, LOCATION), Neagu applies Grimshaw's (1992) theory of argument structure and finds that English and Romanian deverbal nouns have result, instrument, agent and location readings (meanings). She demonstrates that deverbal nouns develop metonymic meanings in which one participant (conceptual role) stands for another participant. For example, the AGENT-for-INSTRUMENT metonymic pattern can be noticed in a deverbal noun like *reader* where S1 denotes "a person who reads, especially one who spends much time in reading" and S2 designates "a book intended to give students practice in reading".

Concerning the differences between English and Romanian, Neagu (1999: 198) provides evidence for the following: (i) ambiguity is much more frequent in the English nominal system than in the Romanian one (hence, the richer polysemy of English nominals in comparison with Romanian nominals); (ii) Romanian can disambiguate an ACTION reading from a RESULT reading due to the existence of *infinitivul lung* and *supinul substantivizat* (not infrequently Romanian provides different lexical items for the derived senses); (iii) LOCATION meanings are not developed by the same deverbal nouns in English and Romanian.

The last type of polysematic nouns analysed by Neagu (1999), differs both grammatically and semantically from the previous two types; they are social kind terms, that is, terms that denote people with particular functions and positions in the social hierarchy. The aim of the analysis is to show to what extent predictability is possible at the level of diachronic analysis. It is argued that English and Romanian social terms disclose similarities in their semantic evolution due to the existence of hierarchical political and social models in both cultures. For example, the English *villain* is comparable to the Romanian *mojic* (its semantic evolution is quite similar to the Russian term) in the sense that in time, they acquired negative moral implications. The dissimilarities identified by the author concern terms of foreign origin in Romanian (e.g. *crai*, *jupân*, *cucoană*) that initially denoted high social rank and which normally had to undergo amelioration of meaning. The explanation for their semantic degradation lies in correlating historical changes and changes in people's mentality with linguistic changes, or, in more general terms, in the relation between social reality and human categorization.

### 3. The cognitive linguistic view of idioms

Starting from the cognitive linguistic hypothesis that idioms are conceptual, not linguistic in nature and that their meanings can be seen as motivated, and not arbitrary,

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(Kövecses 2002: 201), Trantescu (2007) analyses and compares body-part idioms in English and Romanian in terms of conceptual metaphor, conceptual metonymy and conventional knowledge.

*A conceptual metaphor* consists of two conceptual domains in which one domain is understood in terms of another, while *conceptual metonymy* is the cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same conceptual domain. *Conventional knowledge* is "information that is widely known and shared between members of a speech community, and is thus likely to be more central to the mental representation of a particular lexical concept" (Evans and Green 2006: 217). The author subdivides conventional knowledge into (i) knowledge relative to POSITION, (ii) knowledge relative to the SHAPE, and (iii) knowledge relative to the FUNCTION of the body-part analysed.

In her PhD dissertation, Trantescu (2007) focuses on idioms containing four main body-part terms: HEAD, HEART, EYE and HAND. Concerning the motivation of body-part idioms, the author rightly emphasizes that they are motivated not by one of the three cognitive mechanisms mentioned above: there are cases when a combination of them underlies them. For instance, in the idiom *the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing,* the HAND FOR ACTIVITY conceptual metonymy combines with the HAND FOR PERSON metonymy and equally with the conceptual metaphor COOPERATION IS SHAKING HANDS (Trantescu 2007: 319). In general, HEAD, HAND, EYE and HEART idioms do not display significant differences in the two languages considered by Trantescu (2007). However, there are instances when English idioms do not have comparable idiomatic equivalents in Romanian: *off the top of one's head, in good heart*, *not to see eye to eye*, *take a hand in sth, make sth with one's own fair hands*. The author also identifies and comments on Romanian body-part idioms lacking English idiomatic equivalents*: o dată cu capul*/*în ruptul capului* 'not for the world', *să-ţi fie de cap* 'go and be hanged', *a-şi vărsa focul inimii* 'to unburden one's heart', *a avea inima largă* 'to be kind-hearted', *a închide ochii* 'to ignore, to sleep, to die', *a deschide ochii* 'to be born', *a privi cu ochi buni/răi* 'to look favourably/unfavouraby'.

One of the conclusions of this study point to the difference in register between English and Romanian body-part idioms: while in English they belong to colloquial language, in Romanian they are mostly characteristic of folk usage. The author finally suggests an analysis of body-part idioms in several languages, implying the possibility of a draft of a dictionary of such idioms.

Another cognitive linguistic study on idioms discusses the influence of cultural traditions on Romanian conceptualizations of *soul*. Neagu (2005) argues that the Romanian *suflet*, 'soul', like the Russian *duša*, (see Wierzbicka 1992) is semantically closer to the English *heart* than the English *soul,* due to its focus on moral values and emotions. The concept of SOUL, presupposing domains such as *body, mind, heart, life, death, essence, immortality, God,* is a cultural construct as it reflects differences in the ethno-philosophies associated with different languages. A valuable theoretical framework combining the quest for cognitive approaches and an interest in the semiotics of culture is Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen's "conventional figurative language theory", where conventional figurative language is regarded as "a subsystem of the lexicon, as opposed to figurative adhoc expressions produced in discourse" (Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen 2005: 3). Using empirical data (idioms and lexicalized metaphors) from various languages, the two authors suggest that many significant properties of figurative language can only be explained on the basis of specific conceptual structures generally referred to as "cultural knowledge".

In Romanian linguistics, some approaches to idioms are concerned with differences in conceptualizations. These differences show up in the case of the four basic element idioms,

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i.e. idioms containing terms such as WATER, AIR, EARTH and FIRE. For example, not all the basic level objects involved by the category FIRE (i.e. spark, flame, blaze, fume, smoke, ashes) are conceptualized alike in Romanian and English. In Romanian, the idea of intensity of a state or condition is conveyed by a wide range of FIRE idioms, usually pointing to intense love (*îndrăgostit foc* 'head over heels in love'), anger (*a se face foc şi pară* 'fly into a rage'), jelousy (*gelos foc* 'extremely jealous') and EARTH idioms, expressing condition (*sărac lipit pământului* 'as poor as a church mouse'), physical and moral qualities (*frumusețea pământului* 'divinely beautiful', *bunătatea pământului* 'extremely kind-hearted') which do not always have corresponding idioms in English (Neagu 1996 and 1999).

Last but not least, the cognitive linguistic approach has been applied in the description and interpretation of Romanian proverbs pointing to the importance of speech (Milică 2008b). Using the cognitive linguistic hypothesis according to which there are correspondences between mind and language, Milică (2008b) identifies various source concepts corresponding to the target concept of speech and emphasizes the idea that proverbs reflect fundamental patterns of human thought.

## 4. Applications of conceptual metaphor theory

As it is known, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) challenged the classical view of metaphor by claiming that: (i) metaphor is a property of concepts and not of words; (ii) the function of metaphor is to better understand certain concepts and not just some artistic purpose; (iii) metaphor is often not based on similarity; (iv) metaphor is used effortlessly in everyday life by ordinary people, not just by special talented people; (v) metaphor, far from being a superfluous though pleasing linguistic ornament, is an inevitable process of human thought and reasoning (see also Kövecses 2002). The comprehensiveness as well as the generalized nature of the cognitive view of metaphor is confirmed by scholars' interest in applying the new theory to a wide range of different kinds of discourse. In Romania, various linguists applied the cognitive approach of metaphor to the political discourse (Lungu 2005), the economic discourse (Lungu 2005, Dobrotă 2007), the literary discourse (Ciugureanu 1997, Beldiman 2005, Merilă 2005, Şorcaru 2005, Milică 2008a and 2008c), and the scientific discourse (Muşat 2005).

In her PhD dissertation, Lungu (2005) argues that metaphors are necessary to political discourse as they simplify and reify abstract, intangible concepts, making them understandable to the general audience. The focus of the author is to discuss how metaphors are used as persuasive devices in politics. For example, the British Prime Minister Lloyd George made a speech in 1911 in Birmingham which describes him as an ambulance man driving a "wagon" (the Insurance Bill) through "the twisting and turnings and ruts" (complicated procedures, bureaucracy, etc.) of the "Parliamentary roads" (Lungu 2005: 88).

One of the most fundamental and ancient metaphor systems employed for the conceptualization of socio-political entities is provided by the BODY-HEALTH-ILLNESS source domain. As regards its use in everyday political discourse, especially in the media, the author shows that the mapping of BODY, LIFE and HEALTH concepts onto the domain of state and society have remained active up to the present time. Using a corpus selected from *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *The Economist*, Lungu discusses metaphorical expressions pertaining to the source domain mentioned above. Here is an example taken from *The Times*, January 25, 2000, instantiating the conceptual metaphor EU IS AN ORGANISM THAT SUFFERS FROM HEALTH PROBLEMS: "In the real world, it is far better for the UK to avoid eurosclerosis […] than to join the euro at a rate we would rue."

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The idea of cultural variation of the metaphorical source domain is emphasized when Lungu approaches the house metaphor introduced by Michael Gorbachev in his 1985 speech (interview) on a French TV channel. In Gorbachev's discourse, the house metaphor, i.e. EUROPE IS A HOUSE, was elaborated in terms of its structural aspects (ontological correspondences) as well as in terms of functional aspects, i.e. the rules of living together in the house, with these functional aspects being more important than the structural ones, unlike in the British political discourse (especially in the second half of the 1980s, where the structural aspects dominated in the argumentation, determined by the features of the prototypical English house (there are references to detached and semi-detached houses to fences, and to questions such as who is to live, in which room, etc.

In time, the Common European House metaphor lost its force and was reduced to a conventional metaphor. The explanation for this can be found in the new political developments in Europe, the changing boundaries and alliances influencing the existing metaphors, creating new ones that could accommodate the new developments. So, the EUROPE IS A HOUSE metaphor was modified to the EUROPEAN UNION IS A HOUSE, with potential new entrants from central and Eastern Europe "knocking at its door". With this example we see how the end of the heyday of the European house metaphor came actually with the fall of the Berlin Wall, when the new realities no longer fitted certain conceptualizations of the house. One last remark worth mentioning is the predominance of dead metaphors in the American political discourse (e.g. Ronald Reagan in 1986). Lungu (2005: 143) provides two interesting explanations for this: (i) politicians, more precisely those metaphor makers in political speeches do not have a real linguistic creativity and imaginative power to create live metaphors, and (ii) political writers may fear the consequences of a live metaphor which excites imagination, drawing the public's attention more to themselves than to the content or message of a political text.

The approach to literary metaphor from a cognitive linguistic perspective offered new insights to Romanian colleagues concerned with translation studies. As Lakoff and Turner (1989: 214) rightly maintain, "poetry, through metaphor, exercises our minds so that we can extend our normal powers of comprehension beyond the range of the metaphors we are brought up to see the world through." Merilă (2005) views the interpretation, the critical analysis of a literary work as a metaphor in itself because it is "the result of the mapping of the literary work onto the domain of one's personal experience." She assumes that metaphor targets such as death, life, consciousness, etc. are main coordinates in a literary text that stand for its themes, while metaphor source domains are closely related to the writer's art of combining concepts. Trying to answer the question "How should original metaphors be handled when translated in the target language?", Şorcaru (2005) believes that besides artistic skill, the translator should have some intuitive knowledge of preserving the conceptual mappings in the translated text. She supports this idea by showing how the interplay of the LOVE IS FIRE metaphor and LOVE IS LIGHT metaphor in the source text (Mihai Eminescu's *Luceafărul*, the most famous poem in Romanian literature) is beautifully transposed in the target text (C. M. Popescu's English version of *Luceafarul*). Beldiman (2005) discusses conceptual metaphors in Samuel Beckettt's plays, *Waiting for Godot* and *Happy Days* and in their French versions. The mappings identified by the author (e.g. BEING ALIVE IS BEING HEARD, LIFE IS BEING HERE, DEATH IS BEING BURIED IN A MOUND, DEATH IS FIRE) stand for evidence of the ways in which literary thought goes beyond the ordinary way we use conventional metaphoric thought.

Non-literary metaphor in the form of scientific metaphor is approached by Muşat (2005) who tries to prove the existence of metaphor in scientific thinking and terminology. Out of

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the three classes of metaphor identified by Boyd (1993), namely (i) theory constitutive metaphors, (ii) terminological metaphors, and (iii) pseudo-scientific metaphors, the author concludes that the second class, that of terminological metaphors, is the most difficult to translate, because it requires expertise.

Finally, metaphor in the domain of economics is discussed by Dobrotă (2005 and 2007) and Lungu (2005). The complexity and the highly abstract economic processes with no physical activity or direct experiential or perceivable phenomena account for metaphorical mappings (projections) which abound in the domain of economics. Using Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) classification of conceptual metaphors in terms of their cognitive function, Dobrotă (2005: 184) illustrates each type with instantiations in which the target belongs to the language of economics and the source pertains to basic human experiences. The first class, structural metaphors i.e. cases where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another, is exemplified by BUSINESS IS WAR, instantiated in *the battle for the control of the market*). The second class is represented by orientational metaphors, i.e. cases that give concepts a spatial orientation: up-down, in-out, front-back, on-off, centre-periphery. Expressions of increase and decrease are very common in economics texts (e.g. *inflation rises, unemployment falls*, etc.). The third class, ontological metaphors, serves the purpose of understanding our experiences in terms of objects and substances (Neagu 2005: 71). For example the TIME IS MONEY (A VALUABLE RESOURCE) metaphor shows up in *I've invested a lot of time in that,* the MONEY IS LIQUID metaphor underlies the phrase *liquid assets*. In her PhD dissertation, Dobrotă (2007: 90) identifies conceptual metaphors common to both English and Romanian economic discourse, one of the most productive being ECONOMY IS A SHIP, e.g. *the whole economy could sink*, *marea agitată a investiţiilor străine de capital* 'the troubled sea of foreign investments'. Other conceptual metaphors shared by English and Romanian economic discourse are COMPETITION IS WAR: *Specialized banks will attack rural market* 'Băncile specializate vor ataca segmentul pieţei rurale' (Dobrotă 2007: 101) and BUSINESS IS A SPORT (*The dollar is in a remarkably good shape*, *Dolarului i se pregăteşte o noua trambulină* 'New impetus for the dollar' (Dobrotă 2007: 102).

Patterns of conceptualization are shared by languages due, in part, to the constraining influence of common experiences and cognitive structures. In the domain of TIME, there are similarities between English and Romanian, but also some degree of cross-linguistic variation. Milică (2008a) highlights the contributions of outstanding Romanian scholars (Lucian Blaga, philosopher, and Solomon Marcus, mathematician and computational linguist) to the understanding of time and then, using the cognitive linguistic paradigm (Evans and Green 2006), discusses eight senses associated with the lexeme *time* in English and Romanian: (i) the duration sense (e.g. *time drags/a trage de timp*), (ii) the moment sense (e.g. *time is approaching/se apropie timpul să*), (iii) the instance sense (e.g. *five times/de cinci ori*), (iv) the event sense (e.g. *her time is approaching/i-a venit sorocul*), (v) the matrix sense (e.g. *time flows on for ever/timpul curge neîncetat*), (vi) the agentive sense (e.g. *time devours/timpul nu iartă*), (vii) the measurement-system sense (e.g. *time is moving toward 10/se apropie ora 10*), and (viii) the commodity sense (e.g. *to save time/a economisi timp*). Cross-linguistic variation in the domain of time seems to show up at the level of the two general metaphors for time, e.g. the Moving Ego Model (in this case temporal events are conceptualized as locations with respect to which the experiencer moves) and the Moving Time Model (in this case the Ego is conceptualized as stationary and moments of time move from the future towards the ego before going past and disappearing behind the ego. Neagu (2008) assumes that Romanian displays more instances of the use of the Time-moving metaphor, unlike English, where the Ego-moving metaphor is somehow easier or more natural

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for English speakers. The author correlates the small number of linguistic realizations of the Moving Ego Model in the Romanian culture with a more passivity-oriented attitude to time and life in general.

## 5. Conclusions

In this paper I have tried to clarify a number of cognitive linguistic issues by referring to Romanian contributions in the field. To this end, I have followed two paths: (i) the analysis of conceptual structure using linguistic evidence (e.g. idioms) and the reverse, and (ii) the conceptual analysis of cognitive linguistics applied to other domains (literature, politics, computing, etc.). Most of the research presented so far pertains to lexical semantics, language acquisition and discourse analysis.

For reasons of space (and cohesion) I could not include the domain of grammar, pragmatics and simultaneous interpretation to which other Romanian colleagues contributed valuable studies (Cehan's 2000, Sorea 2007 and Ionescu 2007).

In spite of the various approaches within it, cognitive linguistics is unified by common assumptions and Romanian scholars, both in the country and abroad (e.g. Cornelia Ilie, Andreea Calude, Mihaela Popa, Camelia Dascălu, Alexandra Stavinski) take a growing interest in applying the cognitive paradigm to the study of Romanian.

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