Health and illness in memes – People's attitudes in words and pictures

Gabriela Corina ȘANTA (CÂMPEAN)[1]

The paper aims to analyse memes dealing with the antagonistic concepts of HEALTH and ILLNESS so as to reveal how the two concepts are perceived and expressed on the Internet. The corpus comprises a set of memes in English dealing with the concepts of HEALTH and ILLNESS retrieved from specific websites dedicated to the topic or social media networks. A conceptualisation of the messages conveyed by the memes represents an objective as memes embody people's attitudes and beliefs rooted in their mental lexicon. The starting point is to detect memes dealing with the concepts of HEALTH and ILLNESS and group them according to the criteria of the concept and conveyed message, followed by a stage of analysis to detect similarities and differences in approaching the two concepts. The semantic meaning of the memes and the relevance of the pictures are considered together and analysed accordingly, as there is an indissoluble connection between words and images in memes. Additionally, the analysis will lead to the stage in which the memes are clustered into conceptual metaphors as they link to the mental lexicon and concepts in people's thoughts. Consequently, the memes are analysed and conceptual metaphors are identified so as to unveil similarities and differences concerning the vocabulary, images and concepts. Finally, the conceptual metaphors are interconnected to reveal additional similarities and differences between the expressions of the concepts.

Keywords: *memes, the concept of HEALTH, the concept of ILLNESS, conceptual metaphor.*

1. Theoretical framework
1.1. Definitions of memes and anti-proverbs

The definition of terms is required in the current paper in order to support the conducted research to clarify the connection among terms and to support the research aim and methodology. Thus, memes and anti-proverbs resemble regarding some aspects of their structure as they both shows change as a result of the new attitudes in people's mentality.

[1] "1 Decembrie 1918" University in Alba Iulia, Romania, gabriela.corina.campean@gmail.com

Firstly, the definition of the word *meme* appears in *Virus of the Mind: The New Science of the Meme* (1996) in which Richard Brodie states that the term was coined by Richard Dawkins, an Oxford biologist, in his work *The Selfish Gene* in 1976. Furthermore, the author adds that the term became subject of investigation for other scientists from different areas of research such as psychology, cognitive linguistics, and philosophy. Douglas Hofstadter and Daniel Dennett, two cognitive scientists, are mentioned for their "effort to flesh out the biological, psychological, and philosophical implications of this new model of consciousness and thought" (Brodie 1996, 26).

Regarding the available definitions of memes Richard Brodie enumerates the following types of definitions: biological, psychological, and philosophical, cognitive. Thus, the biological definition of memes, as framed by Dawkins, presents the meme as "the basic unit of cultural transmission, or imitation. (Brodie 1996, 27), whilst the psychological definition as stated by Plotkin defines the meme as "the unit of cultural heredity analogous to the gene [...] the internal representation of knowledge (Brodie 1996, 28). The meme is compared to the gene in the human body as they are "hidden, internal pieces of information stored in an embryo" (Brodie 1996, 28), while memes are "hidden, internal representations of knowledge that result, again along with environmental influence, in external behaviour and the production of cultural artefacts" (Brodie 1996, 29). Additionally, the cognitive definition of memes by Dennett emphasises the fact that "a meme is an idea, the kind of complex idea that forms itself into a distinct memorable unit" (Brodie 1996, 30). The cognitive aspect is underlined by the fact that they are "spread by vehicles that are physical manifestations of the meme" (Brodie 1996, 30). Finally, Richard Brodie supplies his variant of the definition focusing on the mental processes presenting the meme as "a unit of information in a mind whose existence influences events such that more copies of itself get created in other minds" (Brodie 1996, 32).

Similarly, Anna Litovkina presents the definition of anti-proverbs in her article entitled *Anti-proverbs* in published in *Introduction to Paremiology* (2014) in which she states that the term was coined by Wolfgang Mieder in 1982. The author also emphasises that "they have been perverted and parodied so extensively that their variations have been sometimes heard more often than their original forms" (Litovkina 2014, 326).

1.2. Conceptual Metaphor Theory: Lakoff and Johnson's approach

The Conceptual Metaphor Theory has its roots in the work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) in which two linguists, i.e. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, state the involvement of metaphors in everyday life as "metaphor is pervasive in everyday

life, not just in language, but in thought and action" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:1). Thus, metaphors bears relevance because thinking is perceived in connection to language, and Lakoff and Johnson go further and bring into discussion human beings' metaphorical nature. Subsequently, concepts play a significant role in people's attitudes and beliefs because "most of our conceptual system is metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 4). Moreover, the authors supply a productive method for conceptualisation, along with examples of conceptual metaphors, and characteristics of orientational and ontological metaphors, personification, and metonymy from the cognitive perspective.

1.3. Procedures for the metaphor identification process

Concerning the semantic analysis which has to be performed in order to achieve the aim of the paper, two techniques are considered as they are relevant for the current study, i.e. Pragglejaz Group Procedure as presented in their article *MIP: A method for identifying metaphorically used words in discourse* (2007) and Charteris-Black's approach to metaphor as presented in *Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis* (2004). Thus, MIP Procedure represents a thorough examination of the semantic content to detect if each lexical unit is used metaphorically, whilst Jonathan Charteris-Black's approach consists of three stages, i.e. metaphor identification, interpretation, and explanation, which are presented in detail and examples are provided as well. The work offers a valuable tool for the current paper as it supplies details related to metaphor mappings.

1.4. The mental lexicon

In *Words in the Mind – An Introduction to the Mental Lexicon* (1990), Jane Aitchison makes an attempt to explain the processes that are performed by our brain when it comes to words, drawing a parallel between the human brain and a dictionary in order to supply comprehensible information and clarify the concept of the mental lexicon. The author summarises her achievement in one sentence to ease the understanding of her aim stating that "in brief, it discusses the nature of the human word-store, or 'mental lexicon' (Aitchison vii).

2. Research methodology
2.1. Research hypothesis

If memes regarding the concepts of HEALTH and ILLNESS are analysed and clustered into conceptual metaphors, then they will expose particular positions towards the

concept under scrutiny, characteristic to the people who created them, and subsequently, the transformations in the society and people's mentality.

2.2. Research questions

1) Can the memes regarding the concepts of HEALTH and ILLNESS be grouped, compared, and contrasted so as to unveil the change in people' positions towards the concepts in discussion?
2) What differences and similarities can be established due to the analysis of the self-made corpus comprising English memes regarding the concepts of HEALTH and ILLNESS?
3) What universal and unique conceptual metaphors of HEALTH and ILLNESS can be detected in the analysed memes?
4) What interconnections can be established, and how are they relevant for the change of the people's way of thinking?

2.3. Research aim and objectives

The paper aims to analyse memes dealing with the antagonistic concepts of HEALTH and ILLNESS so as to reveal how the two concepts are perceived and expressed on the Internet. A conceptualisation of the messages conveyed by the memes represents an objective as memes embody people's attitudes and beliefs rooted in their mental lexicon.

The analysis of how the concepts of HEALTH and ILLNESS are reflected in memes shows the changes in the society and the study is performed in order to unveil these transformations in people's mentality. Besides, messages conveyed in the analysed memes are analysed from the cognitive linguistics point of view and clustered into conceptual metaphors so as to reveal further meanings and interconnections among concepts. Moreover, the connection between the pictures and words has to be considered because they define how people's attitude develops along the time considering the concepts of HEALTH and ILLNESS.

The following objectives are listed to be achieved:
a) to comprise a self-made corpus consisting of memes dealing with the concepts of HEALTH and ILLNESS;
b) to analyse the memes from the semantic perspective;
c) to group the meme according to the criterion of the proverb they deal with;
d) to compare and contrast the memes in each group considering their message and image and the original proverb;
e) to identify conceptual metaphors based on the current results;

f)   to link the findings concerning the message, image and concepts in order to unveil the transformation in the people's mentality regarding a specific attitude.

2.4. Corpus description

The corpus comprises a set of twenty-eight memes in English on the concepts of HEALTH and ILLNESS retrieved from specific websites dedicated to the topic or social media networks: Imgflip, Make a Meme, CHEEZeburger, Reddit, Pintrest, Know Your Meme, Ahseet, Meme Generator, and Qickmeme. The memes are grouped according to the concepts they deal with and their message and pictures are analysed and connected. The concepts of HEALTH and ILLNESS are the main criterion for choosing all twenty-eight, whilst the groups are built around five proverbs:
1)   An apple a day keeps the doctor away. (Mieder 2004, 129) – which contains four memes;
2)   Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise. (Mieder 2004, 177) – which contains eight memes;
3)   Laughter is the best medicine. (Simpson 2008, 288) – which contains seven memes;
4)   A stitch in time saves nine. (Simpson 2008, 474) – which contains five memes;
5)   Time is a great healer. (Simpson 2008, 502) – which contains four memes.

2.5. The approach: Methods and tools

The starting point of the research is to collect memes in which people changed their position regarding the attitudes expressed in the proverbs in discussion, followed by a stage of analysis form the semantic point of view to detect the groups they belong to. Thus, the research starts from the English proverbs listed above, which deals with the concepts of HEALTH and ILLNESS, and the semantic analysis leads to five groups consisting of memes related to the proverb, but altered regarding the message they convey. The proverbs are analysed and its memes are compared and contrasted with the proverbs from the semantic perspective. Furthermore, when the memes are analysed, both the meaning and the pictures are considered as they reflect the changes in the attitude of the people who created them as a result of social and technological progress.

According to Wolfgang Mieder (2004) proverbs are metaphorical in their meaning, and thus, they may be approached accordingly, and then turned into conceptual metaphors. Thus, the metaphor identification approach in the current paper consists of a blend of Pragglejaz Group's metaphors identification technique, and Charteris-Black's mapping sampling method. Furthermore, Lakoff and Johnson' approach of metaphors conceptualisation, CMT, occurs as a final stage as the

conceptualisation technique based on general meaning, the source and the target domain. Specifically, the analysis of the proverb in order to transform it into a conceptual metaphor requires the detection of the general meaning followed by a close semantic investigation in order to frame the concepts as target and source domains. Finally, the interpretation of the results also targets to reveal the renewal of the people's approach regarding the specific attitude expressed in the original proverbs.

The following tools are used in order to conduct the research: dictionaries of proverbs, lists of conceptual metaphor and various websites and platforms for retrieving the memes. Thus, the five proverbs are found in two dictionaries of proverbs entitled *Proverbs: A Handbook* by Wolfgang Mieder (2004) and *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* (5th ed.) by John Simpson (2008). However, the online sources are also a valuable instrument, specifically, the websites and platforms used to access the memes, i.e. Imgflip, Make a Meme, CHEEZeburger, Reddit, Pinterest, Know Your Meme, Ahseet, Meme Generator, and Qickmeme. The lists of conceptual metaphors represent the last category of tools and they are available both online and in a printed version. The online version is provide by Berkley University of California and the printed one is supplied by George Lakoff, Jane Espenson, and Alan Swartz (1991).

3. Results and interpretation

The pattern of analysis is applied to all five proverbs and their correspondent memes and it consists of a general meaning detection of the proverb, a semantic analysis of metaphorical terms and conceptualisation. The format of the memes is also considered in the manner it highlights or contradicts the text to detect the change which occurred in people's mentality. The examination of the proverb in order to convert it into a conceptual metaphor requires the detection of the general metaphorical sense followed by a thorough semantic examination to outline the concepts as target and source domains.

3.1. Healthy eating and memes – the proverb, its variants, and conceptualisation

The first proverb, i.e. "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." (Mieder 2004, 129) refers to a healthy eating habit in order to avoid illness, using the term *apple* as a panacea and the noun *doctor* for illness. Subsequently, the phrasal verb *keep away* stands for *avoid* and the phrase *an apple a day* represents a daily habit. The conceptual metaphor of the main proverb is HEALTHY EATING IS AVOIDING ILLNESS and the four correspondent memes deal with the same topic. Thus, they all contain the terms *apple* and *doctor*, but further information is added in the form of a question or a reproach. Therefore, the first meme questions the result of a competition

between a well-trained doctor and an apple, whilst the second is a variant of the first meme with the difference that the text referring to training is replaced by the picture of a beautiful female doctor. The healthy eating habit and illness avoidance are not explicitly expressed and thus, the conceptualisation is changed as it targets the concept of CHOICE resulting in HEALTH IS A CHOICE.

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(7)[3]

The third meme is similar o the previous two as it contains the picture of a doctor and an apple, but it differs as the question is replaced by an accusation made by the doctor, who finds the apple responsible for being out of work and life. However, the personified apple states its surprise at the doctor's reproach and the dialogue takes place on an apocalyptic background expressing a fight. Thus, the conceptual metaphor is HEALTHY EATING IS DEFEATING ILLNESS.

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The last meme in the group resembles to the first two as it contains a question, but the difference is that the pictures of the doctor and apple are replace by a character which appears frequently in memes, i.e. *Philosoraptor*, a profoundly thinking Velociraptor. The dinosaur inquires the result of the moment when the doctor chooses to eat an apple, implying that the latter keeps the former away. The terms *doctor* and *apple* stand for the healthy eating habit and illness avoidance, but the proverb placed above the animal suggests that a problem may occur and thus, the conceptual metaphor is HEALTHY EATING IS PROBLEMATIC.

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[2] https://www.reddit.com/r/memes/comments/ihhf4q/an_apple_a_day_keeps_the_doctor_away/ accessed on August 25, 2022

[3] https://www.reddit.com/r/memes/comments/ihhf4q/an_apple_a_day_keeps_the_doctor_away/ accessed on August 25, 2022
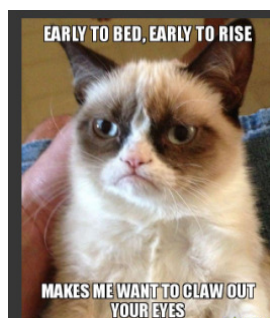
[4] https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/1564187-i-dont-even-know-who-you-are accessed on August 25, 2022

(9)[5]

3.2. Healthy sleep and memes – the proverb, its variants, and conceptualisation

The second proverb, i.e. "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." (Mieder 2004, 177) targets a healthy sleep habit in order to avoid illness, poverty, and achieving wisdom. The expressions *early to bed* and *early to rise* stand for the sleep habit, while health, wealth and wisdom are directly expressed in the proverb. Subsequently, the conceptual metaphor of the main proverbs is HEALTHY SLEEP IS WELL-BEING because the three terms *healthy, wealthy*, and *wise* may be summarised as WELL-BEING.

        Nevertheless, the correspondent memes do not maintain the trend even though they deal with the same topic. Thus, the first meme in the group contains the expressions *early to bed* and *early to rise*, but the state of well-being is replaced by anger supported by the picture of a character which is often met in memes, i.e. the Grumpy Cat. Subsequently, the conceptual metaphor is changed as it targets the concept of ANGER resulting in HEALTHY SLEEP IS ANGER.
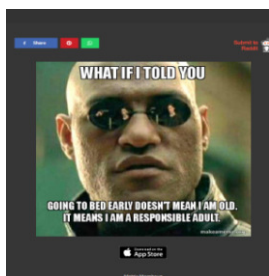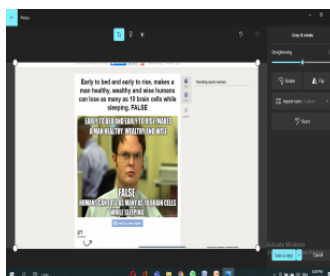
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[5] http://www.quickmeme.com/meme/3tu1j9 accessed on August 25, 2022
[6] https://makeameme.org/meme/early-to-bed accessed on August 26, 2022
[7] https://ro.pinterest.com/pin/309763280619607377/ accessed on August 26, 2022

The lack of a healthy sleep habit is also dealt with in memes in which the characters are cats and the next is an example even if the terms are not used specifically. Thus, the cat's face expression shows the lack of a healthy sleep habit as an answer to the doctor's inquiring question about its sleep habit and its physical appearance suggest illness. Consequently, the picture is part of the conceptual relation which is HEALTHY SLEEP IS VISIBLE.

The third meme about healthy sleep is different both regarding the character, who is Morpheus from the film *Matrix*, and the linguistic aspect. The phrase *what if I told you* underlines the character's statement regarding a healthy sleep habit which is a proof of being a responsible adult in opposition to the presumption of being old. The proverb is not stated precisely, and only the expression *early to bed* is noticed. Thus, the conceptual relation which can be identified is HEALTHY SLEEP IS ADULTHOOD PROOF. Similarly, the next meme displays a film character, i.e. Dwight Schrute from *The Office,* who also expresses his opinion on the healthy sleep habit in discussion. The proverb is not stated entirely, and only the expressions *early to bed* and *early to rise* are used, followed by the character's remark on the effect it has in a relationship, which can be negatively affected. Consequently, the identified conceptual metaphor is HEALTHY SLEEP IS DAMAGE as the words *partner* and *isn't satisfied* are used for a relationship in trouble.
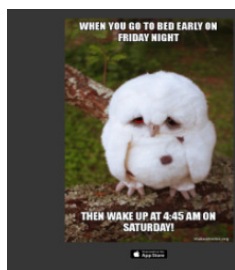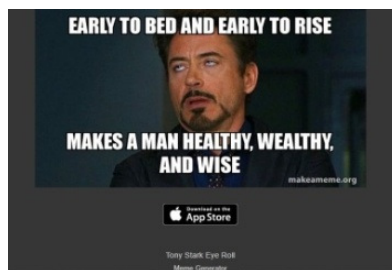
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The next two memes are similar in meaning as they both emphasise that a healthy sleep habit is not beneficial every time, but they differ both regarding the format and the linguistic content. Subsequently, the character in the fifth meme is the Sad Owl, while in the sixth Tony Stark rolling his eyes is noticed. Both state a similar opinion on a healthy sleeping habit and the characters are highly expressive and they contradict the linguistic content presenting the undesired result of the healthy sleep habit. However, the proverb is found only in the meme presenting Tony
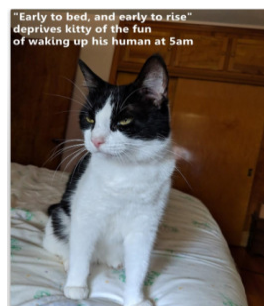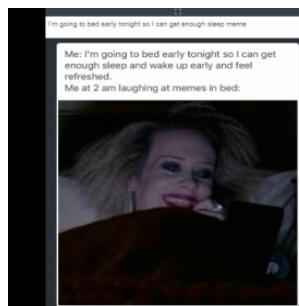
[8] https://makeameme.org/meme/what-if-i-4sqaf3 accessed on August 26, 2022
[9] http://www.quickmeme.com/meme/35cuzi accessed on August 26, 2022

Stark's attitude towards it and the conceptualisation is performed considering both the message conveyed by the pictures and the text, i.e. HEALTHY SLEEP IS OVERRATED.

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(15)[11]

Negative attitudes concerning a healthy sleep habit is also the topic of the next meme in which a cat expresses its dissatisfaction regarding waking up its human as it deprives it from having fun. The former part of the proverb *early to bed* and *early to rise* is continued by the cat's dissatisfaction because it cannot have fun waking its human at 5 a.m. The term *deprive* leads to the concept of FRUSTRATION and the conceptual relation is HEALTHY SLEEP IS FRUSTRATION. Conversely, the last meme emphasises that the lack of a healthy sleep habit is pleasant and it is caused by the pleasure of watching memes. Similarly to the previous memes, the character's face expression contributes to the conceptualisation as it displays joy and the hour *5 a.m.* stands for the impossibility of having a healthy habit of sleep leading to the relation HEALTHY SLEEP IS IMPOSSIBLE.

(16)[12]

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[10] https://makeameme.org/meme/when-you-go-5b8a96 accessed on August 26, 2022

[11] https://makeameme.org/meme/early-to-bed-b6bf4e43a0 accessed on August 26, 2022

[12] https://cheezburger.com/9250672128 accessed on August 26, 2022

[13]   https://ahseeit.com/?qa=73119/im-going-to-bed-early-tonight-so-i-can-get-enough-sleep-meme accessed on August 26, 2022
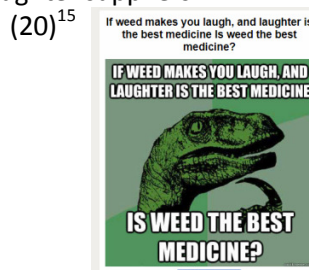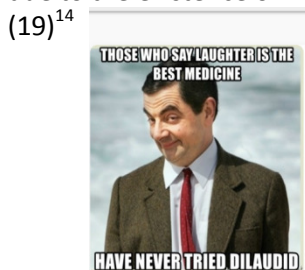
3.3. Healthy laughter and memes – the proverb, its variants, and conceptualisation

The third group consists of the proverb "Laughter is the best medicine." (Simpson 2008, 288) and seven memes are related in their content with its meaning. The term *medicine* targets healing emphasised by the superlative *best*, while the panacea is represented by the term *laughter*. Thus, following the pattern used in the case of the previous proverbs, the conceptual metaphor is HEALTHY LAUGHTER IS HEALING.

(18)[13]

Nevertheless, the conceptualisation is changed in the first meme of the group supported by Dwight Schrute's words, who questions the healing power of laughter. Subsequently, the answer provided by the same character harshly contradicts the proverb, using the term *false* and offering the solution, which is the represented by the physical therapy. The target domain remains HEALTHY LAUGHTER considering the proverb inserted on the top part of the meme, whilst the source domain is changed due to the provided solution and the conceptual relation is HEALTHY LAUGHTER IS OVERRATED.
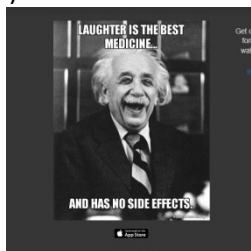
The next two memes have similar meaning as they both inquire the healing effect of laughter, but in a dissimilar design, using different characters and linguistic format. Thus, the former presents Mr. Bean who states that a particular medicine, i.e. Dilaudid, is superior to laughter and the latter considers marihuana instead and it is stated by Philosoraptor. Both memes contain the proverb in their structure, but the former is a statement, while the latter is a question. Furthermore, the question in the latter meme is supported by the statement that weeds produces laughter. Consequently, the identified conceptual metaphor is HEALTHY LAUGHTER IS OVERRATED, due to the existence of more powerful laughter suppliers.

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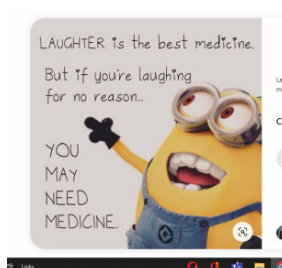[13] https://makeameme.org/meme/laughter-is-the-296645eed8 accessed on August 28, 2022
[14]   https://memegenerator.net/instance/58165119/mr-bean-those-who-say-laughter-is-the-best-medicine-have-never-tried-dilaudid, accessed on August 28, 2022
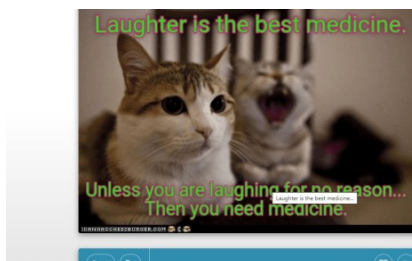[15] http://www.quickmeme.com/meme/35lk5u accessed on August 28, 2022

(21)[16]

The fourth meme in the group resembles to the original proverb with the difference that it brings emphasis to the healing power of laughter with the help of the Einstein's statement that there are no side effects for laughter as a medicine. Thus, the conceptual relation is also altered resulting in the following structure: HEALTHY LAUGHTER IS A SAFE HEALING.

The last three memes in the group are similar regarding the terms used in order to create a relation of opposition to the original proverb, with the help of the conjunctions *unless* and *but*. The format is similar to the first and second memes in this category, i.e. the proverb is used in the meme, followed but a counterargument, while the characters are minions and ordinary cats. Thus, the healing power of laughter is not recommended in case of a digestive disease as it may create problems, or conversely, laugher for no specific reason may require healing expressed by the term *medicine* and it may be considered a brain dysfunction. As a result, the conceptual metaphor is common to all three memes, specifically, HEALTHY LAUGHTER IS PROBLEMATIC.

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(23)[18]

[16] https://makeameme.org/meme/laughter-is-the-mgmls6 accessed on August 28, 2022
[17] https://ro.pinterest.com/pin/676314069017397831/accessed on August 28, 2022

(24)[19]

3.4. Healthy acting and memes – the proverb, its variants, and conceptualisation

The forth proverb around which the group is built, i.e. "A stitch in time saves nine. (Simpson 2008, 474) targets the way people act in order to prevent illness or even death. Thus, the term *stitch* refers to illness prevention or healing support, while the phrase *in time* underlines the fact that health requires urgent action. All in all, the nominal group expresses the idea of precautionary action at the first signs of disease. Furthermore, the verb *save* emphasises that action in time is positive for health completed by the last word of the proverb which refers to an undesired evolution of ignored illness. The conceptual relation identified for the analysed proverb is PRECAUTION IS HEALTH. The importance of precaution is maintained and intensified in the first meme of the group which shows a cat sewing its cuts as it reached its ninth life, a possible end of its existence, considering the popular presumption that cats have nine lives. Thus, the conceptual metaphor is taken further and the source domain is changes resulting in PRECAUTION IS LIFE.

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Conversely, the process of healing as a result of precautious action is considered a slow process by Philosoraptor because of number *nine*, and the character asks itself

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[18] https://ro.pinterest.com/pin/296252481729480966/ https://pin.it/626QhJGaccessed on August 28, 2022

[19] https://cheezburger.com/8990827264/laughter-is-the-best-medicine accessed on August 28, 2022

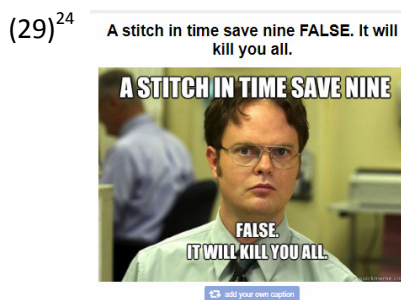[20] https://imgflip.com/i/407gjo accessed on August 28, 2022

why the procedure takes so long leading to the conceptual metaphor PRECAUTION IS A SLOW PROCESS. The original proverb is entirely used in the meme as it is also the case of the previous one. However, the original form of the proverb is altered in the next meme with the help of the expression seven of nine. The picture elucidates the word combination as it shows a character named Seven of Nine from the TV series Star trek: Voyages. Thus, the conceptual metaphor based both on the linguistic content and the picture is PRECAUTION IS LIFE as it links to the verb *save*.

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The last two memes in the group have negative connotations as they consider that precautious action may prevent positive results. Thus, the fourth meme of the group presents a duck which sees precautions as a negative act similar to a rolling stone which gathers no moss i.e. continuous movement is negative. However, the meme deals with a combination of two proverbs which adds to the fact that duck need moss for feeding. Subsequently, the picture enriches the meaning of the lexical content and it leads to the conceptual relation PRECAUTION IS STARVATION. Finally, the last meme in the group shows Dwight Schrute totally disapproving the positive healing power of precaution. Subsequently, the counterargument provided by him harshly opposes the proverb, through the term *false* and it shows the result of precaution, which is death. The target domain remains the concept of PRECAUTION connected to the concept of DEATH resulting in the relation PRECAUTION IS DEATH.
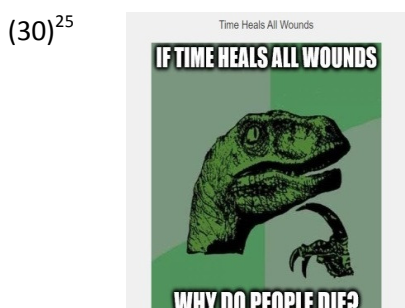
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[21] https://memegenerator.net/instance/44887883/philosoraptor-if-a-stitch-in-time-saves-nine-why-the-heck-did-this-take-so-long accessed on August 28, 2022
[22] https://memegenerator.net/instance/81199903/seven-of-nine-a-stitch-in-time-saves-seven-of-nine accessed on August 28, 2022

(28)[23]

A stitch in time gathers no moss
A STITCH IN TIME GATHERS NO MOSS

(29)[24]

A stitch in time save nine FALSE. It will kill you all.
A STITCH IN TIME SAVE NINE
FALSE. IT WILL KILL YOU ALL.

3.5. Time, health and memes – the proverb, its variants, and conceptualisation

The last analysed proverb, i.e. "Time is a great healer." (Simpson 2008, 502) refers to a healthy effect of time passing in order to cure illness using the terms *time* and *healer,* and in which the adjective *great* emphasises the powerful healing effect which can be obtained because of time's feature of continuous and irrefutable passing. Thus, the detected conceptual is TIME PASSING IS HEALING. Nevertheless, the first two memes in the group question the healing power of time passing, the former through Philosoraptor's inquiring regarding the reason for death in case of wounds as time may cure all, and the latter having SpongeBob as a character, who looked for a proof of the proverb and he stabbed his therapist in order to get it. The terms used in order to express uncertainty are *why* and *wait*, ILLNESS is represented by the noun *wound* and the verb *stab,* while time passing curative effect is specifically expresses by *time heals all wounds.* Consequently, the analysis determines the following conceptual metaphor TIME HEALING POWER IS QUESTIONABLE.
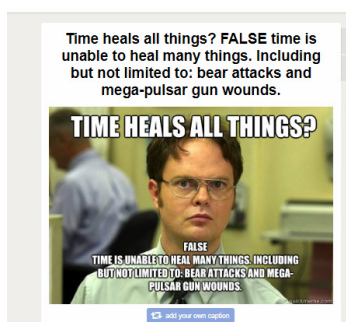
(30)[25]

Time Heals All Wounds
IF TIME HEALS ALL WOUNDS
WHY DO PEOPLE DIE?

(31)[26]

MY THERAPIST TOLD ME TIME HEALS ALL WOUNDS
SO I STABBED HIM... NOW WE WAIT :)

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[23] http://www.quickmeme.com/meme/3p1dn7 accessed on August 28, 2022
[24] http://www.quickmeme.com/meme/3oqn accessed on August 28, 2022
[25] https://imgflip.com/i/1czhtd accessed on August 29, 2022
[26] https://makeameme.org/meme/my-therapist-told-7935f5a97d accessed on August 29, 2022
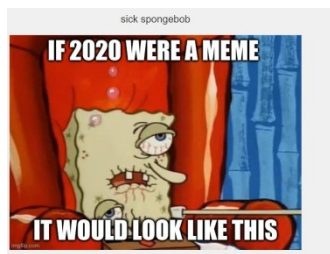
Furthermore, the conceptualisation is changed in the next meme of the group and it is supported by the words of Dwight Schrute who questions the healing power of time passing. Consequently, the reason provided by the character harshly contradicts the original proverb, through the term *false* and he also states specific situations in which the healing process does not work. The target domain remains TIME HEALING POWER as in the previous conceptual metaphor, due to the proverb used in the format of the meme, while the source domain is changed because of the provided examples, and the conceptual relation is TIME HEALING POWER IS OVERRATED.

(32)[27]

The last meme analysed in the group also deals with the concept of TIME and ILLNESS, but it differs because it does not target time passing. Therefore, the character named SpongeBob exemplifies the year of 2020, the year when the pandemic of Covid19 reached its peak, and the conceptual metaphor is TIME IS ILLNESS as the character's physical appearance suggests illness. The term regarding time is *2020* which is completed by the statement *it would look like this* and the image of ill SpongeBob in an armchair. Thus, the meme supports the idea that TIME and ILLNESS often appear in memes and they are representative for the people's attitudes when they create memes.

(33)[28]

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4. Conclusions and recommendations

The conducted research on the five specific proverbs as they occur in memes and their conceptualisation answered the questions raised at the beginning of the study, revealing the change occurred in people's mentality in a different time than the one in which the proverbs were created. Thus, the memes corresponding to the five proverbs under scrutiny could be grouped, compared, and contrasted so as to unveil the change in people' positions towards the concepts of HEALTH and ILLNESS due to the fact that share common elements regarding their format and linguistic content.

Subsequently, both differences and similarities could be established due to the analysis of the self-made corpus and they targeted how the message got altered both regarding the semantic aspect and the enhancement offered by the pictures used on the background. All the memes reveal changes in the message they convey, using humour supported by the image as well, contradicting, emphasising or merely changing the message.

Another common trait of the analysed memes is the character that transmits the message as they are listed below:

✓ Film characters: Mr Bean, Seven of Nine, Morpheus, Dwight Schrute, Tony Stark
✓ Animals: the Grumpy Cat, a sad owl, ordinary cats, a duck,
✓ Cartoon characters: minions, SpongeBob
✓ Philosoraptor

Conversely, the proverb is not stated in all situations, or only a part of it is used to convey the message in the memes. In this situation, the anti-proverb is used instead of the proverb and dissimilar frequency of the memes regarding a specific proverb is also noticed. The contrast between the message and the picture, the anti-proverbs and the additional lexical content detected in the memes structure led to specific conceptual metaphors which differ from the original one. Consequently, the identified conceptual metaphors of the memes in comparison to the conceptual relations of the original proverbs appear to be similar, opposed, or different regarding the concepts of the target and source domain.

All in all, a large corpus containing memes which deal with particular proverbs and anti-proverbs should be analysed to support and enrich the current findings. Additionally, memes in other languages which deal with similar proverbs and character, the same concepts and format should be analysed in order to perform a contrastive analysis and reveal similarities and difference between people from particular cultural background.

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