



## CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES OF SLAVIC PHRASEOLOGICAL STUDIES TO GENERAL ISSUES OF PHRASEOLOGY

### ENFOQUES CONTEMPORÁNEOS DE LOS ESTUDIOS FRASEOLÓGICOS ESLAVOS A LAS CUESTIONES GENERALES DE LA FRASEOLO-

Nataliia Demianenko<sup>1 \*</sup>  
E-mail: [demianenko.nataly@gmail.com](mailto:demianenko.nataly@gmail.com)  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5662-1074>

Tetiana Botvyn<sup>2</sup>  
E-mail: [tanyaosades@gmail.com](mailto:tanyaosades@gmail.com)  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8590-8664>

Ievgenii Stepanov<sup>3</sup>  
E-mail: [stepanov175@163.com](mailto:stepanov175@163.com)  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5441-9822>

Maryna Harbar<sup>4</sup>  
E-mail: [maryna.harbar5@gmail.com](mailto:maryna.harbar5@gmail.com)  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3042-478X>

Svitlana Hubina<sup>5</sup>  
E-mail: [sveta\\_tsuprik@ukr.net](mailto:sveta_tsuprik@ukr.net)  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5743-350X>

<sup>1</sup>Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup>Lviv State University of Life Safety, Lviv, Ukraine.

<sup>3</sup>Hunan Normal University, Changsha, China.

<sup>4</sup>Kharkiv National University of Radio Electronics, Kharkiv, Ukraine.

<sup>5</sup>Vinnitsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University, Vinnitsia, Ukraine.

\*Corresponding author

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#### ABSTRACT:

Contemporary linguistics devotes increasing attention to the study of the linguistic picture of the world as a reflection of the mentality of an ethnic group. Phraseology is one of the most effective means of conceptualizing reality. It preserves in its structure cognitively significant representations of the surrounding world that are deeply embedded in the linguistic memory of a given culture. The aim of this study is to conduct a cognitive-linguistic and linguocultural analysis of phraseological symbolism in selected Slavic languages, namely Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian. The methodological foundation is cognitive-linguistic analysis, which seeks to identify the interconnections between linguistic form, conceptual content, and cultural codes, with theoretical grounding in cognitive linguistics. Two analytical vectors were employed: verbalization from sign to concept and from concept to linguistic expression. The empirical material was drawn from phraseological dictionaries, associative and frequency databases, and texts of both fiction and non-fiction literature. This approach made it possible to outline the main principles

of linguocultural analysis of phraseological units. The results revealed the mechanisms by which phraseological units are formed through symbolic representation of culturally significant concepts across the studied languages. The cross-linguistic analysis demonstrated both universal and culture-specific dimensions of phraseological symbolism within a broader interlingual context. The study holds practical value for translation studies, lexicography, and the development of linguocultural resources, particularly a multilingual dictionary of attributive comparisons. Its findings create a solid foundation for further interlinguistic investigations in cognitive linguistics and linguocultural research.

**Keywords:** Symbols, Concepts, Cognitive theory, Interlingualism, Phraseological unit, Language picture of the world, Slavic languages.

#### RESUMEN:

La lingüística contemporánea presta cada vez mayor atención al estudio de la imagen lingüística del mundo



como reflejo de la mentalidad de un grupo étnico. La fraseología constituye uno de los medios más eficaces de conceptualizar la realidad, ya que conserva en su estructura representaciones cognitivamente significativas del entorno, profundamente fijadas en la memoria lingüística de una cultura determinada. El objetivo de este trabajo es realizar un análisis cognitivo-lingüístico y lingüístico-cultural del simbolismo fraseológico en lenguas eslavas seleccionadas, concretamente en ucraniano, polaco y búlgaro. La base metodológica es el análisis cognitivo-lingüístico, que permite identificar las interrelaciones entre la forma lingüística, el contenido conceptual y los códigos culturales, sobre la base teórica de la lingüística cognitiva. Se aplicaron dos vectores de análisis: la verbalización del signo al concepto y del concepto a la expresión lingüística. El material empírico procede de diccionarios fraseológicos, bases asociativas y de frecuencia, así como de textos de literatura de ficción y no ficción. Este enfoque hizo posible formular los principios del análisis lingüístico-cultural de las unidades fraseológicas. Los resultados revelaron los mecanismos de formación de dichas unidades a través de símbolos que representan conceptos culturalmente significativos en las lenguas estudiadas. El análisis comparado demostró tanto dimensiones universales como específicas de la cultura en el simbolismo fraseológico dentro de un contexto interlingüístico más amplio. El estudio posee un valor práctico para los estudios de traducción, la lexicografía y la creación de recursos lingüístico-culturales, en particular un diccionario multilingüe de comparaciones atributivas.

**Palabras clave:** Símbolos, Conceptos, Teoría cognitiva, Interlingüismo, Unidad fraseológica, Imagen lingüística del mundo, Lenguas eslavas.

## INTRODUCTION

It should carefully reproduce and review the current state of the research topic and reference key publications. At the end of the section, it should state the purpose and main objective of the work and its relevance to the research field. It should be written in the present tense, using a descriptive-narrative style. Phraseology, as a reflection of collective experience and mental models, is perhaps the most representative component of the language of the world. Both lexical connections and symbolic structures are recorded in language units. It is these units that actively verbalize cultural concepts typical of a particular ethnolinguistic community. Given the interlinguistic parallels and differences, the phraseological fund of Slavic languages is of exceptional value for interdisciplinary research in the fields of cognitive linguistics, ethnolinguistics, and cultural studies.

Despite a sufficient number of comparative phraseological studies, a systematic analysis of cognitive models and culturally marked images that form the basis of

phraseological units in Slavic languages is still underdeveloped. This is particularly true of the comparative analysis of Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian phraseology. These are three languages with close cultural and historical ties. However, their national semantic markers are very distinct. Researchers have so far neglected questions about which cognitive structures provide similarity or difference in the linguistic representation of anthropocentric concepts within these languages.

In this context, the aim of the study is to conduct a cognitive-linguistic and cultural analysis of phraseological units in Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian. In addition, the aim is to identify conceptual schemes, figurative models, and cultural universals that are verbalized in stable language units.

To achieve the research objectives, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. How do cognitive models and concepts form the basis of general phraseology in Slavic languages?
2. What are the most common images and metaphors in the studied phraseological material?
3. What cultural universals and nationally specific features are found in the phraseologisms of the Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian languages?

The scientific novelty of this study is determined by the combination of a cognitive-linguistic approach with cultural analysis in a three-way comparison of phraseological material. This allowed for the reconstruction of mental models and the reproduction of cultural symbols to identify the mechanisms of phrase formation at the intersection of language and culture.

To identify common and distinctive features in the representation of key cultural concepts and to outline the universal and unique features of ethnolinguistic worldviews, the methodological basis was chosen as the theory of cognitive linguistics, which is based on concepts, figurative schemes, and mental models.

## Literature Review

The purpose of this review of relevant literature is to systematize key theoretical approaches to the study of phraseology within cognitive linguistics. It also aims to analyze scientific sources related to the linguistic representation of concepts in Slavic languages. Particular emphasis is placed on identifying scientific gaps and determining directions for further promising research.

## Cognitive linguistics – theoretical foundations

Cognitive linguistics emerged as an alternative to the generative tradition. Cognitive linguistics focuses not on the formal aspects of language, but on its semantic and cognitive nature. The founders (Langacker, 1987; Johnson,

1980; Lakoff & Johnson, 2020) viewed language as a tool for conceptualizing reality. Therefore, the weight of language units was interpreted by scholars as the result of mental representation of experience, in particular embodied through figurative schemes, conceptual metaphors, and frames.

In particular, in frame semantics (Fillmore, 1982), language units are linked to typified scenarios. They reflect cognitive models of the world. In this context, phraseologisms are analyzed not as lexical units, but in terms of a cognitive structure that embodies established cultural scenarios and patterns. Fauconnier (1994) introduces the concept of mental spaces. According to the author, these are dynamic models of linguistic thinking that explain the variability of phraseological unit meanings.

According to Evans & Green (2018), prototypical categorization allows analyzing phraseologisms as part of a gradual continuum. Such an analysis is possible from nuclear idioms to peripheral word combinations, since they are subject to the phraseological principle of language organization (Malanyuk & Tyshchenko, 2021; Poulsen, 2022).

Thus, cognitive linguistics offers analytical tools for interpreting language units as carriers of collective experience, intentions, mental models, and cultural codes.

### **Phraseologisms in the reception of linguoculturology and mentality**

Phraseologisms are stereotypical representations of the world. Each of them is fixed in the national consciousness. It should be noted that phraseologisms are not limited to fixing linguistic traditions. They accumulate deep cultural meanings, such as concepts, images, symbols, and values of a particular ethnic group (Lakoff, 2006).

Modern phraseological science is moving away from the traditions of classical lexicology. It integrates methods of discourse analysis, cultural semantics, and psycholinguistics into its arsenal (Babali, 2023). Phraseological units can be viewed as tools for verbalizing mental models that are formed under the influence of cultural experience.

Related studies record phraseologisms as the embodiment of collective consciousness, where figurative meanings, metaphors, and images dominate. However, it should be emphasized that a number of authors insist on the idea that the phraseological fund also includes other types of language units, in particular syntactic patterns and discursive phrases (Bakhmat et al., 2023; Marianko et al., 2025). Nevertheless, despite the gradual expansion of the range of research objects, there is still a lack of a comprehensive approach that would link these objects to cognitive structures.

### **Phraseology in Slavic languages**

Within the fields of Ukrainian studies, Polish studies, Bulgarian studies, and Serbian studies, Slavic linguistics

pays considerable attention to the study of the national specificity of phraseological units (Colson, 2008). However, many works are descriptive or lexicographic in nature and only partially integrate a cognitive approach.

In the traditions of Ukrainian and Polish phraseology, there is a tendency to study it as a carrier of mentality (Opryshko, 2022), but semantic or semiotic analysis prevails methodologically. Within the framework of inter-Slavic comparison, there is an active search for common cultural codes or different ways of conceptualizing the world. However, such studies have not yet become systematic. Such analyses are usually limited to two languages or focus on the translation aspect (Melikyan et al., 2017).

Phraseological composition and the pragmatic potential of expressions are the subject of separate studies (Seitenova et al., 2023). However, they do not delve into cognitive structures. This creates space for further interdisciplinary research. In particular, the analysis focuses on conceptual models, figurative schemes, and mental scenarios that underpin phrase formation in Slavic languages.

Thus, an analysis of the relevant literature has revealed gaps in the study of the cognitive mechanisms of phraseological unit formation in Slavic languages. Figurative and conceptual models have also been neglected. However, it is precisely these models that ensure the verbalization of universal and specific concepts. Comparative cognitive and cultural analysis based on several Slavic languages (in particular, a three-way analysis: Ukrainian – Polish – Bulgarian) remains equally understudied. Mental spaces and scenarios represented in phraseological units of national languages have also been neglected.

These gaps highlight the need to integrate cognitive linguistics into the comparative analysis of phraseological units. This will make it possible to reconstruct concept spheres and understand language as a mechanism of cultural memory and ethnocultural identity.

### **Cultural-Historical Background of Phraseological Patterns**

The phraseological alterations detected in Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian are formed by distinct historical, religious, and socioeconomic circumstances. Polish phraseology often echoes aristocratic and moral descriptions entrenched in the historical supremacy of the *szlachta*, which predisposed ethical and social norms. Bulgarian phraseological units recollect mythological and zoomorphic imagery, reflecting pre-Christian Slavic beliefs and their incorporation into Orthodox Christian traditions. Ukrainian phraseology is mainly based on agricultural and nature-based metaphors, reflecting the dominant role of laborer farming and rural life in Ukrainian cultural uniqueness. These forms validate how phraseology encodes collective historical experience and value systems across connected Slavic languages.

Methodological explanation of equivalence and variation.

Phraseological units were measured by functionally corresponding when they shared the same showing cognitive model, nevertheless of formal alterations. Equivalence was resolved by metaphorical mapping, evaluative meaning, and communicative function rather than only lexical similarity. The analysis comprised complete and partial correspondences, as well as cases of lexical gaps. They were treated as culturally expressive. Phraseological variations actuating the same cognitive representation were clustered together, while expressions grounded on dissimilar metaphorical models were analysed distinctly, permitting a stable depiction of both cross-linguistic similarity and cultural specificity.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The method used in this work is a cognitive-linguistic-cultural analysis of general phraseology in Slavic languages, carried out to identify conceptual schemes, images, and cultural universals reflected in phraseological units. Cognitive-linguistic and cultural analysis aims to identify the connections between linguistic form, conceptual content, and cultural codes that are made through phraseologisms. The theoretical basis of the work is cognitive linguistics as an interdisciplinary field. This approach has made it possible to understand phraseological units as linguistic constructions and as means of conceptualizing the world of speakers of Slavic cultural information and symbolism. The cognitive approach also created a theoretical basis for studying the mental representations of phrase formation. The selected methods and approaches are relevant to the research objectives and made it possible to identify the cognitive and cultural parameters of symbolism in the phraseological system of language, as well as interlingual similarities and differences between Slavic phraseological units.

### Participants

The corpus of 120 phraseological units was collected by means of a purposive and stratified sampling approach. The collection was led by the theoretical goals of cognitive and linguocultural analysis. Phraseological units were drawn from confident phraseological dictionaries and proved corpus sources in Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian.

The purposive sampling beleaguered phraseological units representing main conceptual fields applicable to Slavic phraseology, such as intelligence, feelings, character behaviours, labour, idleness, and ethical assessment. To guarantee equilibrium, a bedded principle was practiced, providing relative representation crossways main conceptual spheres in each language.

The corpus extent of 120 units was positioned as satisfactory for recognising stable metaphorical patterns and leading cognitive models while letting for thorough qualitative analysis. Though the study comprises both frequent and culturally marked expressions, some domain-specific or register-bound phraseology may be diminished, which establishes a limitation and a direction for further research.

The numerical corpus procedure, counting the exploration terms, inclusion criteria, and verification procedures for distinguishing open phraseological units from free blend in the Ukrainian Language Corpus, NKJP, and Český národní korpus (<https://www.korpus.cz/>), was methodically practiced to guarantee replicability and minimize sampling bias.

Phraseological units of Slavic languages (Ukrainian, Polish, Bulgarian) were selected as material for analysis according to the following criteria (Table 1):

Tabla 1: Criteria for selecting work material

Criterion	Source
General knowledge	Units that are widely represented in national languages and attested in phraseological dictionaries
Frequency of use	Phraseological units that are actively used in modern speech (based on corpus sources)
No specific local reference	Units that have nationwide, rather than dialectal or slang, usage

Source: Own elaboration

Academic phraseological dictionaries of Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian languages, digital text corpora (Ukrainian Language Corpus, NKJP, Český národní korpus) were selected as source bases. Approximately 120 phraseological units representing key concept spheres (anthropomorphism, zoomorphism, colors, artifacts, plant symbolism, etc.) were selected from the sources.

### Instruments

A set of cognitive and linguocultural analysis methods was used as a working tool. Component analysis made it possible to identify the figurative base of phraseological units and determine the semantic components that form their meaning.

Conceptual analysis was chosen to reconstruct basic concepts and identify conceptual models.

Metaphorical analysis (based on the theory of G. Lakoff and M. Johnson) made it possible to reveal the systemic metaphorical organization of the selected phraseological units. Comparative analysis was also used in the work. It helped to establish interlingual analogies and reveal asymmetries in the selected phraseological symbolism.

This selection and combination of methods made it possible to reveal the deep cultural, cognitive, and semantic foundations of phraseological symbolism, its hierarchy, and its role in the formation of the language picture of the world.

## Procedures

Phraseological material that met the relevance criteria was selected from academic dictionaries, digital corpora, and texts.

Semantic analysis allowed us to divide the selected phraseological units into concept spheres (anthropomorphisms, zoomorphisms, artifacts, colors, plant symbols).

The identified metaphorical and metonymic models were compared in terms of symbolism between languages, considering cultural characteristics, metaphorical scenarios, and conceptual asymmetry.

As a result, it was possible to construct a typology of symbols and identify dominant concepts and verbalization strategies in selected language picture of the world.

## RESULTS-DISCUSSION

A comprehensive cognitive-discursive analysis of Ukrainian phraseology in a comparative Slavic context (Polish and Bulgarian languages) revealed a repertoire of cognitive models.

Typical images, symbols, metaphorical and metonymic conceptualizations characteristic of the phraseological verbalization of key concept spheres in Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian were identified. The main results include:

A number of universal and culturally specific cognitive models were identified in the phraseological units of the Slavic languages selected for analysis: *життя – шлях* (life is a path), *час – гроші* (time is money), *розум – світло* (mind is light), and *емоції – рідина* (emotions are liquid). Numerous universal and culturally explicit cognitive models were acknowledged in the phraseological units of the nominated Slavic languages. For instance, the model “життя – шлях” (life is a path) signifies life as a trip, where *життя* is “life” and *шлях* is “path.” Likewise, “час – гроші” (time is money) conceptualizes time as a appreciated source, with *час* denoting “time” and *гроші* is “money.” The model “розум – світло” (mind is light) depicts the mind as a basis of explanation or brightness, where *розум* interprets “mind” and *світло* - “light.” Finally, “емоції – рідина” (emotions are liquid) portrays feelings as fluid and flowing, with *емоції* denoting “emotions” and *рідина* - “liquid.”

Thought is commonly conceptualized as a tangible entity, reflected in expressions like *думка – річ/істота* (thought is a thing/being), while understanding is expressed through perception or grasping, as in *знати/розуміти – бачити/хапати* (to know/understand is to see/to grasp). The *голова* (head) is often viewed as a container (*голова – вмістище*), and the *тіло* (body) is treated as the locus of mental states (*тіло – локус психічних станів*).

Anger is metaphorized through natural forces or uncontrolled energy, as in *гнів – стихія/звір/вибух/порошення дихання* (anger is an element/beast/explosion/interrupting breath). Folly is associated with dysfunction, represented in *глупота – пошкоджена/непрацююча голова* (foolishness is a damaged/non-functioning head). Pride is embodied in *пиша – надутість* (pride is inflation), cunning in *хитрість – крутитися* (cunning is spinning), and stubbornness in *упертість – нерухомість, тупість, зооморфність* (stubbornness is immobility, dullness, zoomorphism). Deception appears through motion-related imagery: *обман – обертання, плести, свистіти, лити* (deception is spinning, weaving, whistling, pouring).

Among the identified typical images and symbols, the most frequently verbalized were (Table 2):

Table 2: Typical images and symbols verbalized in all languages of the study

Image/symbol	Explanation
Somatic phenomena	Head, heart, soul, eye, hand, foot, teeth, bile, spleen, brain.
Natural phenomena and elements	Fire, water, wind, cold, darkness, light.

Animals	Dog, rooster, turkey, devil, zoonyms in comparisons and metaphors.
Plants	Oak, ash, pole, radish, pepper — as attributive symbols.
Artifacts	Food (palyanytsia, varenyky, etc.), wooden objects, mechanisms
Path, movement, line	As conceptual bases for behavior, cognition, and development.

Source: Ukrainian Language Corpus. (n.d.); Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego (NKJP). (n.d.); Bulgarian National Corpus (BuINC). (n.d.).

A comparative analysis (Ukrainian, Polish, Bulgarian languages) revealed common features of contextual connections between phraseological units (Table 3):

Table 3: Contextually contrasting phraseological units in Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian languages

Contrast / Opposition	Ukrainian	Polish	Bulgarian
sky – earth	на сьомому небі (in seventh heaven) / в землю провалитися (sink into the ground)	być w siódmym niebie (be in seventh heaven) / zapaść się pod ziemię (disappear into the ground)	на седмото небе (in seventh heaven) / потъвам в земята (sink into the earth)
white – black	білий як сніг (white as snow) / чорний як земля (black as earth)	biały jak śnieg (white as snow) / czarny jak ziemia (black as earth)	бял като сняг (white as snow) / черен като земя (black as earth)
elephant – fly	робити з мухи слона (make an elephant out of a fly)	robić z muchy słonia (make an elephant out of a fly)	правя от мухата слон (make an elephant out of a fly)
honey – tar	ложка дьогтю в бочці меду (a spoon of tar in a barrel of honey)	łyżka dziegciu w beczce miodu (a spoon of tar in a barrel of honey)	лъжица катран в каца с мед (a spoon of tar in a barrel of honey)
honey – ice	на язиці мед, а під язиком лід (honey on the tongue, ice beneath it)	na ustach miód, a w sercu lód (honey on the lips, ice in the heart)	на устата мед, в сърцето лед (honey on the mouth, ice in the heart)
bread and water	посадити на хліб і воду (put someone on bread and water)	żyć o chlebie i wodzie (live on bread and water)	живея на хляб и вода (live on bread and water)
wolf – pig	як вовк у зорях розбиратися (understand something like a wolf in stars)	zna się na czymś jak kura na pieprzu (know something like a hen knows pepper)	разбира се като свиня от кладенчова вода (understand something like a pig understands well water)
beast – eagle	дивитися як звір (look like a beast) / як орел (like an eagle)	patrzeć wilkiem (glare like a wolf) / jak orzeł (like an eagle)	гледам като звяр (look like a beast) / като орел (like an eagle)

Source: Busel (2005); Müldner-Nieckowski (2003); Phraseological Dictionary in the Bulgarian Language (1983)

The phraseological fabric of Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian reveals a number of shared and distinct conceptualization patterns within key conceptual domains. Notably, all three languages feature a widely represented universal metaphorical model: *гнів – це стихія / звір / тепло* (anger is a force of nature, a beast, or heat), which invokes natural or animalistic associations as a means of representing uncontrolled emotions. Other frequent cross-linguistic metaphors include *розум – світло* (mind is light), *думка – істота / птах* (thought is a being or a bird), and *пиха – надутість* (pride is puffiness), indicating a deep-rooted kinship in the figurative thinking of Slavic languages. The studied languages also exhibit a shared symbolic load in somatisms such as *голова*, *серце*, and *очи* (head, heart, eyes), which serve as central conceptual anchors in the phraseological worldview.

At the same time, important nationally specific differences can be observed. In Polish, there are phraseological expressions that reflect the view of the stomach as an emotional center. For instance, anger is conceptualized as a disturbance of digestion, a belief that echoes folk medicine and ethnopyschological traditions. Bulgarian exhibits a broader repertoire of religious-mythological and zoomorphic imagery, particularly within the conceptual domains of *Пиха* (pride) and *Упертість* (stubbornness), reflecting the influence of sacred discourse on the language picture of the world. Ukrainian, in contrast, stands out for its high phraseological productivity related to the artifact-based concept of *Їжа* (food) within the domains of *Поведінка* (behavior), *Страх* (fear), and *Глупота* (foolishness), where acts of consuming or rejecting food metaphorically convey psychological states or character traits.

At the level of structural models of conceptual domains, several key metaphorical frameworks are outlined. Within the conceptual domain of *Інтелект* (intellect), the dominant metaphors include *знання = бачення* (knowledge is vision), *розум = локус* (mind is a location), and *інтуїція = нюх* (intuition is smell), where the central symbolic referent is the *голова* (head). In the domain of *Психічні стани* (mental states), prevalent imagery comprises *емоція = рідина / вогонь / вітер* (emotion is liquid, fire, or wind) and *тіло = вмістилище емоцій* (the body is a container for emotions), supported by somatic symbols such as *серце* (heart), *душа* (soul), and *жовч* (bile).

The concept of *Гнів* (anger) is realized through models such as *гнів = вибух / стихія / звір* (anger is an explosion, a natural force, or a beast) and *гнів = порушення температурного балансу* (anger is a disturbance of thermal balance), with no indications of personification. The concept of *Страх* (fear) is characterized by specific features such as the idea of internal organ displacement, for example, *печінка стискається* (the liver contracts), the consumption model as a metaphor for emotional experience, and the integration of mythological and religious representations.

The concept of *Дурнуватість* (foolishness) is represented through models such as *голова — непрацюючий механізм* (the head is a malfunctioning mechanism) and *мозок = пошкоджений / порожній* (the brain is damaged or empty), which evoke the image of a *зламана машина* (broken machine). In the conceptualization of *Досвід* (experience), the leading metaphor is *ДОСВІД — СЛІДИ ДІЙ НА ОБ'ЄКТИ* (experience is the trace of actions on an object), exemplified by common phraseological expressions such as *стріляний, битий, третій* (seasoned, battle-tested, worn down). The concept of *Упертість* (stubbornness) is characterized by zoomorphic and object-based verbalization, with symbolic elements like *роги* (horns) and *дерев'яні предмети* (wooden objects), as in *упертий як осел* (stubborn as a donkey) and *голова як колода* (a head like a log). The concept of *Пижа* (pride) is metaphorically represented as *надутість* (puffiness), with the *індик* (turkey) serving as a central symbolic figure. In the phraseological structuring of *Обман* (deception), dominant models include *обман = криві дії / ритуал / обертання* (deception is distortion, ritual, or rotation), conveyed through dynamic imagery such as *крутити, свистіти, и плести* (to twist, to whistle, to weave), often involving somatisms without fixed symbolic anchoring.

Particular attention should be given to the phenomenon of ambivalence, where the same object receives opposite evaluations in different phraseological expressions. For example: *Мудрий як дуб* (wise as an oak) vs. *Дурний як дуб* (foolish as an oak), *Розумний як собака* (clever as a dog) vs. *Дурний як собака* (stupid as a dog); *Мądry jak dąb* vs. *Głupi jak dąb*; *Мądry jak pies* vs. *Głupi jak pies*; *Мъдър като дъб* vs. *Глулав като дъб*; *Умен като куче* vs. *Глулав като куче*. In the context of Slavic languages—particularly Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian—there also appears the image *червоний як опир, czerwony jak upiór, червен като вампир* (red as a vampire), which carries contradictory semantic connotations. This kind of ambivalence can be explained by the polysemantic nature of cultural symbols or by differing conceptualization profiles within a single language picture of the world or across distinct linguistic cultures.

As a result of the linguocultural analysis of general phraseology in Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian a number of shared cognitive models, images, and symbols have been identified. These elements reflect both similar and divergent conceptual representations of the world within the Slavic language community (see Table 4).

Table 4: Cognitive metaphors in the phraseological systems of the selected languages

Cognitive Metaphor		Ukrainian	Polish	Bulgarian
Life is a path		пройти свій шлях (to walk one's path)	przejść przez życie (to go through life)	изминавам житейския път (to walk life's path)
Time is money		час — гроші (time is money)	czas to pieniądz (time is money)	времето е пари (time is money)
Mind is light		світла голова (a bright head)	jasna głowa (a clear head)	светла мисъл (a bright thought)
Emotions are liquid/ container	переповнений емоціями (overflowing with emotions)	wylewać żale (to pour out sorrows)	изблик на чувства (outburst of feelings)	

The analysis also made it possible to identify key phraseological images that function as symbols in the language picture of the world. The *серце* (heart) is a center of emotion and compassion, a shared image across all the examined languages. The *голова* (head) symbolizes intellect and logic. *Вогонь* (fire) and *вода* (water) represent emotions, passion, purification, or danger. *Птахи* (birds) are associated with freedom, the soul, and flight, as seen in Ukrainian *вільний, як птах* (free as a bird) and Bulgarian *свободен като птица* (free like a bird). The *шлях* (path) refers to life as a process and to personal destiny. *Очі* (eyes) and *зір* (sight) are linked to understanding and intuition, as in Ukrainian *розуміти з півпогляду* (to understand at a glance) and Polish *mieć oczy szeroko otwarte* (to have one's eyes wide open). All of these images possess an archetypal nature and contribute to the construction of phraseological oppositions (see Table 5).

Table 5: Shared phraseological images with archetypal significance

Shared / Distinct Symbols	Ukrainian	Polish	Bulgarian
Серце – емоції (heart – emotions)	+	+	+
Вовк – небезпека (wolf – danger)	+	+	–

Хліб – бідність (bread – poverty)	+	+	+
Мед – полин (honey – wormwood)	+	+	+
Шлях – життя (path – life)	+	+	+
Птахи – свобода (birds – freedom)	+	–	+
Час – гроші (time – money)	+	+	+

The findings indicate a close similarity; however, cross-linguistic asymmetry is also present. Linguistic symmetry is observed in the fact that the majority of phraseological units share common roots in folklore and biblical imagery, and frequently rely on bodily experience (heart, head, stomach) to conceptualize emotions and intellect. Regarding asymmetry, Bulgarian demonstrates a higher frequency of phraseological units involving animal symbols (*свиня, комар, конь*), often with humorous or derogatory connotations. Fixed expressions with Christian symbolism (*бог, гріх, рай*) are also actively used. In Polish phraseology, aristocratic imagery is particularly prominent, as seen in “*odnosić się po królewsku*” (to behave royally) and “*mieć szlachecką duszę*” (to have a noble soul). The results obtained showed that cognitive models and concepts are not only the basis for the formation of phraseological units in Slavic languages, but also a manifestation of established mental structures that are deeply rooted in the collective experience of speakers.

It has been traced that phraseological unit's function as sign language units that accumulate frame structures, conceptual metaphors, and figurative patterns characteristic of the Slavic mentality. In this context, the opinion of researchers (Kövecses, 2017; Hartmann, 2021) is confirmed that phraseological units are not random formations, but regular cognitive forms that serve as verbal markers of stereotypes, values, and worldview orientations.

In particular, the concepts of “розум” (intellect), “дурість” (foolishness), “праця” (work), and “лінощі” (laziness) are realized through similar cognitive patterns in Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian, which indicates a cross-linguistic similarity in Slavic phraseological thought.

The analysis of phraseological data also made it possible to outline a set of the most frequent images and metaphors that function as dominant representations of key concepts in Slavic languages. These include zoomorphic, anthropomorphic, and floromorphic images, as well as metaphors related to religion, corporeality, domestic life, and the natural world (see table 6):

Table 6: Dominant frame models.

Cognitive Model / Category	Ukrainian (%)	Polish (%)	Bulgarian (%)	Notes
Somatic imagery (head, heart, eyes, etc.)	15%	14%	13%	Dominant in intellect, emotions, mental states
Zoomorphic imagery (animals)	8%	8%	11%	Stubbornness, foolishness, pride, aggression
Anthropomorphic imagery	5%	6%	4%	Abstract concepts: thought, experience, morality
Religious metaphors	3%	8%	4%	Biblical or sacred elements
Secular metaphors	23%	17%	22%	Everyday, natural, or cultural symbols
Anger = natural force / beast / heat	4%	5%	4%	Core metaphor across languages
Mind = light	4%	4%	3%	Conceptualizes intellect and understanding
Emotions = liquid / container	3%	4%	3%	Emotions as flowing, overflowing, contained
Life = path	3%	3%	3%	Life conceptualized as journey
Other models (pride, foolishness, deception, etc.)	9%	8%	7%	Pride as inflation, deception as rotation, foolishness as dysfunction

The choice of conceptspheres as anthropomorphism, zoomorphism, colors, artifacts, and plant symbolism was directed by cognitive-linguistic and linguocultural theory. Previous research (e.g., Kövecses, 2017; Brdar, 2009) state their importance in phraseological systems, mirroring embodied knowledge, symbolic thinking, and socially salient standards. Initial corpus analysis established that these spheres produced frequent and semantically rich phraseological units across Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian.

The detected similar symbolism, where equal objects like “oak” are assessed oppositely, is interpreted through bases of prototype semantics, radial categories, and mental space theory, reflecting historical semantic shifts, domain-specific conceptual frames, or context-dependent meaning construction, as supported by relevant cognitive-linguistic scholarship.

As noted by Brdar (2009), such metaphors are stable cognitive models that form a shared cultural field. Positive qualities are often metaphorized through light natural imagery, such as “цвіте як мак” (blossoms like a poppy) and “золоті руки” (golden hands), while negative traits are expressed via zoomorphic or bodily representations, as in “дурний як пеня” (dumb as a stump) and “не всі вдома” (not all there).

Similar symbolism is observed in all three languages analyzed, which once again confirms the similarity of conceptualization models in Slavic cultures. Prototypical ideas about mind, beauty, health, as well as pathological or marginal states are realized linguistically through metaphorical thinking, which is conditioned by deeply rooted figurative patterns. In the context of above-mentioned abilities development modern research in the field of Ukrainian philology as well increasingly combines linguistics and literature, demonstrating an interdisciplinary approach to the study of language and literature (Syvachuk, Yuhan, Posmitna, Opryshko & Kobzei, 2024). Papafragou (2021) raises the question of ambivalent symbolism, establishing theoretical frameworks of polysemy, including prototype semantics, radial categories, and mental space theory, explaining that such contradictory valuations may arise from historical semantic shifts, domain-specific conceptual frames, or pragmatic context-dependence. Regarding the third research question, the results showed both the presence of cultural universals and distinct national specificity. Universal concepts related to the basic oppositions of life/death, work/laziness, good/evil are represented by similar phraseological units structured by similar frames. At the same time, within each language, local priorities in figurative thinking are clearly defined. In particular, the Polish language is dominated by references to Christian symbols and moral and religious concepts, while the Ukrainian language tends toward images of nature, agricultural activities, and everyday life. The Bulgarian language retains archaic imagery associated with the animal world, magic, and pre-Christian beliefs. From a diachronic viewpoint, cognitive models in Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian phraseology demonstrate both historical steadiness and discerning novelty. The essential metaphors (life is a path, mind is light, emotions are liquid, anger is a natural force) trace mirror Slavic folklore, biblical imagery, and pre-modern worldviews. They reflect personified involvement and agrarian, religious, and mythological knowledge. Dissimilarity, fresher models, such as time is money, mirror industrialization, capitalist economies, and modern output, representing adaptive reconfiguration of traditional systems. Therefore, Slavic phraseology exemplifies both cultural steadiness and semantic alteration, with introductory metaphors outstanding stable while newer social veracities add layers of meaning, stress the active evolution of phraseological cognition. Thus, the role

of national experience in the conceptualization of meanings even within related languages is undeniable.

Thus, the proposed cognitive and linguocultural approach has made it possible to establish that the mental structures encoded in phraseological units are not arbitrary but are shaped by lived experience, value systems, and the conceptual hierarchy inherent to a particular language community. Despite considerable interlingual affinity, Slavic languages exhibit both deep cultural commonality and distinct patterns of language conceptualization.

At the same time, certain limitations of the study, such as the restricted number of languages and phraseological units, as well as the focus on nominative and evaluative functions, indicate directions for further research. Expanding the comparative scope to include additional Slavic languages, in combination with an analysis of the pragmatic and discursive functions of phraseological expressions, would allow for a deeper understanding of both universal and unique aspects of the Slavic phraseological conceptual worldview.

The results approve that the combination of cognitive linguistics and linguocultural approaches successfully discloses how language translates collective experience and proposes robust pedagogical potential for Slavic language instruction and translation exercise. Phraseological units' crossways languages group around recurring cognitive models, which can be qualified in semantically connected groups (e.g., mind as light, life as a path) to improve understanding, holding, and intercultural consciousness. In translation exercise, this typology helps in classifying practical equivalents, avoiding literal mistakes, and promoting cultural understanding. The integration of cognitive and comparative phraseological perceptions supports a conceptually beached and culturally learnt method to idiomatic competence and professional translation skills.

## CONCLUSIONS

A comprehensive approach to the outlined topic made it possible to reconstruct the deep cultural meanings embedded in phraseological units and to identify interlingual and intercultural patterns in their formation.

The analysis revealed interlinguality and archetypality. The results of the study demonstrated the symbolic commonality of a significant part of phraseological metaphors and metonymies in Ukrainian, Polish, and Bulgarian. This is due to the common cultural and historical space of the Slavic peoples. The work also highlights asymmetries, namely differences in prototypical representations and symbolic attributes formed under the influence of national traditions. It has been established that symbols as structural components of phraseological units perform a semantic and cognitive function, and that concept spheres are mostly anthropocentric and ethnocentric.

Prospects for further research may concern comparative strategies for verbalizing concepts. Such research will allow us to record the dynamics of the language picture of the world, in particular, the transition of exotic prototypes to typical ones, as well as the specifics of categorizing abstract features in different languages.

The proposed study confirms that for the Slavic space, where both common and unique features of phrase formation are noticeable, a linguocultural analysis of phraseologisms is an effective tool for reconstructing the language picture of the world. The results of this work create a solid foundation for the further development of linguocultural dictionaries, intercultural studies, and for the needs of language teaching in an interlinguistic context.

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The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

#### Author Contributions

All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the manuscript, participated in drafting and revising the text, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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