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OF PLOVDIV
FACULTY OF PHILOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL LINGUISTICS
AND HISTORY OF THE BULGARIAN
LANGUAGE**

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**THE CONCEPT “AIR” IN BULGARIAN AND ENGLISH
THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL
LINGUISTICS**

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION SUMMARY

for the acquisition of a PhD educational and scientific degree

Field of Higher Education: 2. Humanities

Professional Area: 2.1. Philology

Doctoral Programme: General and Comparative Linguistics

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Plovdiv

2025

The present doctoral thesis was discussed and its public defence was decided upon at a department meeting of General Linguistics And History Of The Bulgarian Language at the Faculty of Philology of Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv on 09.01.2025.

The dissertation consists of 391 pages in total - an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion, three appendices and a bibliography.

The public defense of the doctoral thesis will take place on 15.04.2025 at 14:00.

All materials pertaining to the defence have been made available at the University Library, Rectorate Building at 24 Tsar Asen Str., Plovdiv.

CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

INTRODUCTION	6
CHAPTER 1: METHODOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE RESEARCH	13
1.1.1. Lexicographic Excerption	14
1.1.2. Theoretical Generalization	14
1.1.3. Descriptive Analysis	14
1.1.4. Conceptual Analysis	14
1.1.5. Semantic and Componential Analysis	15
1.1.6. Comparative Analysis	15
1.1.7. Associative Experiment	15
1.1.8. Psycholinguistic Experiment	16
1.2. The Essence of Cultural Linguistics	18
1.2.1. Approaches to the Status of the Discipline as a Cognitive Research Phenomenon	23
1.2.2. Linguo Conceptology	25
1.2.3. Concept and Conceptual Metaphor	26
1.2.4. Aspects of Concept Content	27
1.2.5. Key Terms Used in the Study	29
1.2.6. Brief Overview of Publications on Cultural Linguistics, Definitions, and Core Concepts	30
1.2.7. Naive vs. Linguistic Worldview	38
1.3. The Concept as a Unit of Study in Cultural Linguistics as a Cognitive Research Phenomenon	41
1.3.1. Aspects of Interpreting the Concept	44
1.3.2. Types of Concepts and Conceptual Metaphors	46
1.3.3. The Word-Concept Relationship. Connotation	50
1.3.4. Methods Applied in Concept Research	51
1.4. Conclusion	54
CHAPTER 2: NOMINATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CONCEPT 'AIR' IN THE LEXICAL-SEMANTIC FIELD OF BULGARIAN AND ENGLISH	57
2.1. Systemic Relations. Types	57
2.1.1. Systemic Relations in the Lexical Field (Derivatives and Compound Names) of the Lexemes 'Air,' 'Soul,' 'Spirit,' 'Breath,' 'Breathe,' and Their English Equivalents. Thematic Groups in the Lexical Fields of 'Air,' 'Soul,' 'Spirit,' 'Breath,' 'Breathe,' and Their English Equivalents	60
2.1.2. Word-Formation Systems of the Verbs "Дишам" (to Breathe) and "Breathe"	63

2.2. Specific Features in the Verbalization of the Concepts "Air," "Soul," "Spirit," "Breath," and "Breathe" in Bulgarian and English	65
2.2.1. Comparative Analysis of the Semantics of the Lexemes "Въздух" (Air) and "Air"	78
2.2.2. Comparative Analysis of the Semantics of the Lexemes "Душа" (Soul) and "Soul"	82
2.2.3. Comparative Analysis of the Semantics of the Lexemes "Дишам" (to Breathe) and "Breathe"	84
2.2.4. Comparative Analysis of the Semantics of the Lexemes "Дух" (Spirit) and "Spirit"	85
2.2.5. Comparative Analysis of the Semantics of the Lexemes "Дъх" (Breath) and "Breath"	86
CHAPTER 3: VERBALIZATION OF THE CONCEPTS "AIR," "BREATH," AND "BREATHE" IN BULGARIAN AND ENGLISH PHRASEOLOGY AND PAREMIOLOGY	87
3.1. On Phraseological Units in Bulgarian and English	87
3.2. Phraseological Units in the Context of Culture	88
3.3. Paremiology as Part of the Phraseological Fund of the Language	89
3.4. Folklore as a Source of Cultural Insights	91
3.5. Comparison of the Concepts "Air," "Breath," and "Breathe" Verbalized in Bulgarian and English Phraseology	92
CHAPTER 4: CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE IDEAS OF "SOUL" AND "SPIRIT" IN THE BULGARIAN AND ENGLISH WORLDVIEW	101
4.1. Significance and Cultural Marking of the Concepts "Душа" (Soul) and "Soul"	107
4.2. Significance and Cultural Marking of the Concepts "Дух" (Spirit) and "Spirit"	121
CHAPTER 5: AIR AS A SECONDARY INDICATOR OF THE CONCEPTUAL FIELD "WIND"	125
5.1. Word Formation	125
5.2. Derivation	126
5.3. Composition	127
5.4. Conversion	128
5.5. Compound Names	133
5.6. Types of Connections Between the Components of Substantive Attributive Syntagms with the Lexeme "Wind"	156

5.7. Systemic Relations in the Lexical Field of the Lexeme "Вятър" (Wind) and "Wind" – Thematic Groups, Synonymy, Antonymy, Polysemy	159
CHAPTER 6: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SEMANTICS OF THE LEXEMES "Вятър" (Wind) AND "Wind"	170
6.1. "Вятър" (Wind) and "Wind" in Bulgarian and English Explanatory Dictionaries	170
6.2. Verbalization of the Concept in Bulgarian and English Phraseology	173
CONCLUSION	192
APPENDICES:	
1. Lexicographic Information on the Lexemes: "Въздух" (Air), "Вятър" (Wind), "Душа" (Soul), "Дух" (Spirit), "Дъх" (Breath), "Дишам" (to Breathe), and Their English Equivalents Based on Data from Explanatory, Synonymic, Translation, and Phraseological Dictionaries	195
2. Thematic Groups	353
3. Psycholinguistic Experiment – Sample Surveys in Bulgarian and English	379
REFERENCES	381

INTRODUCTION

Cultural Linguistics is an interdisciplinary science. As part of contemporary linguistic studies, it explores the connection between language, culture, consciousness, and ethnicity, among other factors. The use of the term "concept" in scholarly literature is steadily increasing. Various methods exist for studying and classifying concepts, making their interpretation complex due to their intricate structure. Representatives of the cultural linguistic approach to concept studies, V. I. Karasik and G. G. Slyshkin, asserts that "the interaction between language and culture takes place in consciousness, which is why any cultural linguistic study is simultaneously a cognitive study" (Karasik, Slyshkin 2001: 76). Research into concepts often employs a comprehensive approach to facilitate a multifaceted examination.

The study of the naive worldview, the essence of the concept as its integral part, and the linguistic means for expressing it in different languages, as well as the development of methods for conceptual analysis and the advancement of conceptology as an independent branch of science, are considered pressing issues in contemporary linguistics. The widely adopted cultural linguistic approach to language study lacks a sufficiently developed methodology and sufficient publications on the topic, driving interest and attention toward such research. The anthropocentric paradigm of modern linguistics necessitates examining the semantic content of concepts from a cultural linguistic perspective.

According to Yu. Apresyan, every natural language reflects a specific way of perceiving and organizing (conceptualizing) the world. The meanings it expresses form a unified system of views—a kind of collective philosophy imposed as mandatory for all speakers of the language (Apresyan 1995: 38–39). In some studies, researchers use the term

"conceptosphere," introduced by Academician D. Likhachev, which denotes the aggregate of concepts for a given nation. It is shaped by all forces of the language, and the richer a nation's culture, folklore, literature, science, visual arts, historical experience, and religion, the richer its conceptosphere (Likhachev 1993: 5).

The study of concepts aims to examine the essence of linguistic consciousness and understand the basis of cultural differences. Concepts are linguistic units whose meanings constitute the content of national linguistic consciousness and shape the naive worldview of language speakers. They are the lexemes that reveal the manner of semantic representation. The cultural linguistic approach specifically associates concepts with semantic formations marked by cultural linguistic specificity, reflecting the mindset of the linguistic personality within a particular ethnoculture.

This dissertation explores the concept of "air" in Bulgarian and English through the perspective of cultural linguistics, presenting the perspectives of the Bulgarian and English ethnos by analysing illustrative material from both languages. The study is comparative in nature and includes other related concepts in the parallel between Bulgarian and English.

The cultural linguistic approach to language study is a current trend in contemporary linguistics, yet the cultural linguistic investigation of the language's conceptosphere remains underdeveloped. The relevance of this study is further justified by its alignment with the anthropocentric orientation of modern linguistics and the need to examine the semantic content of the concept of "air" through the perspective of cultural linguistics. This dissertation represents the first such study of the concept of "air," without claiming exhaustiveness, but it lays the groundwork for future research on the two cultures.

Object

The object of this study is the concept of "air" in Bulgarian and English linguocultures, as well as the lexemes whose semantics reflect the concept of "air" in Bulgarian and English. The conceptsphere of a nation forms the foundation of its national and spiritual culture, and among its most significant elements are the concepts related to natural phenomena and occurrences.

Subject

The subject of this comprehensive study is the comparison of concepts for the Bulgarian and English ethnos through the perspective of cultural linguistics. Linguistic units are examined and analysed step by step to achieve an in-depth and thorough comparison of the significance and value of the concepts in both languages. The excerpted linguistic material in Bulgarian is compared with its English counterpart, identifying parallels, correspondences, and drawing comparisons to establish universal similarities and culturally specific characteristics of the two cultures.

Goals

and

Objectives

The primary goal of this dissertation is to model the structures of the concepts "въздух" (air) and "air" based on a systematic description of the linguistic means used to objectify these concepts in Bulgarian and English. Achieving this goal involves the following objectives:

1. **Analysis of Key Approaches:** Examine the main approaches to studying concepts in contemporary linguistic research.

2. **Lexicographic Analysis:** Provide a comprehensive description of the meanings of the words that are key representatives of the concepts "ВЪЗДУХ" (air) and "air."
3. **Verbalization Analysis:** Analyse the verbalization of the concepts as reflected in the lexemes studied in this research.
4. **Value Characteristics:** Identify the value characteristics of the concepts.
5. **Phraseological Representation:** Investigate the representation of the concepts in the phraseological repertoire of Bulgarian and English, focusing on phraseological activity, imagery, proverbs, and the value attitudes of the speakers of the two languages.
6. **Word-Formation Activity:** Study the word-formation activity of the concepts "дишам" (to breathe) and "вятър" (wind).
7. **Experimental Study:** Experimentally establish associative connections between the lexemes "ВЪЗДУХ" (air) and "air" in the linguistic consciousness of Bulgarian and English speakers.

Methods

This study employs a combination of diverse methods to ensure comprehensive and multidimensional results. For examining the meanings and etymology of the lexemes, lexicographic research and theoretical generalization were applied. To trace these lexemes in their contemporary stages, to delineate different layers of the concepts, and to establish universal and specific traits in the paremiological repertoire, various analyses were employed: **Descriptive Analysis, Conceptual Analysis, Comparative Analysis, Semantic Analysis, Componential Analysis.** These methods collectively help identify and systematize the shared and unique characteristics of the Bulgarian and English linguocultures.

Sources

The material for this study has been excerpted from accessible lexicographic sources. Some of the most frequently used are as follows:

1. **Andreychin, row. 2018:** Andreychin, L., Georgiev, L., Ivanova, K., Ilchev, St., Kostov, N., Lekov, Iv., Stoykov, St., Todorov, Ts. *Bulgarian Explanatory Dictionary*, Sofia: Science and Art, 2018.

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12. **Andreychin 2016:** Andreychin, L., et al. *Bulgarian Explanatory Dictionary*, Sofia: Science and Art, 2016.
13. **McCarthy 1999:** McCarthy, M. *Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms*, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
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I. Research Program. Theoretical Aspects of Cultural Linguistics. Key Concepts

Cultural Linguistics unites the efforts of linguistics and cultural studies, enabling the examination not of language and culture separately, but of their multidimensional interrelations and mutual influences: language as a conduit of cultural data; humans creating culture through language; and cognitive and conscious processes expressed through linguistic phenomena. As a new research paradigm emerging from the scientific and cultural discourse on language and culture, it expands the scope of research ideas and allows for multifaceted and deeper understanding due to the wide range of issues, methods, subjects, and research objectives it addresses. Within this scientific paradigm, researchers shift their focus "from the object of knowledge to the subject, i.e., analysing humans in language and language in humans" (Maslova 2001: 6). In this dissertation, the method of cultural linguistic analysis is predominantly employed, enabling the extraction of cultural information from linguistic data and their specific manifestations.

As a result of the interaction between language and culture (two semiotic systems), cultural information is encoded within linguistic means, enabling these means to act as cultural signs (Telia 1999: 14). Within the scientific terminology related to the study of concepts, the notions of quasi-symbol and quasi-standard are also distinguished. Both represent linguistic symbols formed through the means of natural language, but the quasi-standard conveys representations of human qualities, whereas the quasi-symbol reflects stereotypical perceptions of the surrounding world (Tokarev 2009: 92–93). According to V. N. Telia, the quasi-symbol is a verbalized symbol used to differentiate the symbolic function of reality from the symbolic function of the linguistic sign (Telia 1996: 243). The content plane is characterized by potentiality—the possibility of realizing one meaning or

another in a specific context and the permissibility of various interpretations of a given meaning (Tokarev 2020: 274).

The naive worldview is considered a reflection of reality in human consciousness, shaped by cultural and linguistic attitudes. Information about the world at the conceptual level is obtained precisely through language. It turns out that we do not exist and live with objects and items per se, but rather with the notions and perceptions that we ourselves create. The reflected representations in the semantics of language simultaneously carry specific attitudes that we, as speakers, internalize. In this way, the peculiarities of the extralinguistic reality are significant for cultural bearers. Furthermore, by acquiring a language, we perceive the world through its prism and conceptualize reality in a direction determined by our culture.

The issue of the connection between language and culture is certainly not a novelty in academic circles. Key approaches and methods for understanding cultural linguistics have been established in the works of both foreign and some local researchers from various fields such as ethnology, philology, anthropology, and others. The interest in the complex relationships between language, ethnos, culture, and consciousness is growing in Bulgaria, with new studies in the Bulgarian language contributing to the development of this science. The interdependence of language and culture is now entirely evident.

The methodological foundation of this study is based on the perspective that language is a tool of cognition, a means of transmitting culture and experience, and a product of creative activity. "Just as no concept is possible without language, so without it, no object exists for our soul, because every object outside our soul becomes a complete reality only through the concept." (Humboldt, as cited by Ramishvili 2000: 80).

II. Nominative Characteristics of the Concept "Air" in the Lexical-Semantic Field of Bulgarian and English

Air is a central concept for all peoples, occupying a significant place in the conceptosphere. From a contemporary perspective, and within the context described earlier regarding the development of sciences, understanding and systematizing such concepts as "air" is crucial, especially considering their global nature. Related lexemes to the central concept "air" also serve as valuable and important sources of information for the purposes of this study.

The second chapter examines the nominative characteristics of the concept "air" in the lexical-semantic field of Bulgarian and English. It explores:

- The various types of systemic relations, including those in derivational fields and among compound names of the lexemes *въздух* ("air"), *душа* ("soul"), *дух* ("spirit"), *дъх* ("breath"), *дишам* ("to breathe"), and their English equivalents.
- Thematic groups in their lexical fields and their English counterparts.
- The word-formation systems of the verbs *дишам* ("to breathe") and *breathe*.
- The specificity of verbalizing the concepts *въздух* ("air"), *вятър* ("wind"), *душа* ("soul"), *дух* ("spirit"), *дъх* ("breath"), and *дишам* ("to breathe") in Bulgarian and English.
- Air as a universal concept.
- Lexicographic representation of the lexemes and a comparative analysis of their semantics with their English counterparts.

The study of word-formation systems clearly demonstrates the richness of human speech and reveals the pathways of human thought.

Through word formation, we uncover complex linguistic phenomena and succeed in identifying patterns in the development of different languages.

It is particularly intriguing how words in a given language are grouped based on the extralinguistic commonality of the objects or concepts they denote. This leads to their classification into specific thematic groups (classes) of lexemes, with some naming tangible objects from daily life or the surrounding reality, while others denote abstract concepts.

Thematic groups of linguistic means from the lexical fields of the examined concepts provide insight into the areas of life most prevalent and significant for the two ethn. According to G. Tokarev, "cultural-linguistic competence is closely linked to the laws of semantics, which are not explicitly formulated for speakers of the language." He refers specifically to its expression in the systemic relationships between linguistic units, such as synonyms, antonyms, thematic groups, and others (Tokarev 2009: 51).

The proposed classification of thematic groups reveals a progression from concreteness to abstraction in both languages. This movement starts with air as a physical substance and advances to soul and spirit as immaterial entities, with a predominance of religious themes in Bulgarian, shaped by the inherited Byzantine cultural traditions.

According to G. V. Tokarev, cultural information can also be objectified through word-formation types and models. "The relevance of the phenomenon is emphasized by the diversity of word-formation types and morphological models used to represent meanings associated with it" (Tokarev 2009: 101). For instance, illustrative material related to the concept *диуам* ("to breathe") in Bulgarian and English demonstrates a greater variety of formants in the former language and greater polysemy in the latter.

Semantic similarities are highlighted through componential analysis of the key lexemes in both languages. The shared characteristics are as follows:

- **Air (въздух):** gaseous substance; atmosphere.
- **Soul (душа):** quality; human traits; individual; immaterial form; a combination of thoughts, feelings, psyche, spiritual essence.
- **Spirit (дух):** way of thinking, feeling, behaving; inner characteristics of a person; immateriality, supernaturalness; ghost.
- **Breath (дъх):** exhaled and inhaled air; scent; aroma.
- **Breathe (дишам):** to inhale and exhale air using the lungs.

Common to all of these is the predominant presence of the semantic features *immaterial* and *intangible*.

Given the significantly larger number of linguistic examples in Bulgarian that link *soul* and *spirit* to the religious thematic group—and the assertion that the nominative density of a concept is culturally conditioned and indicative of the importance of a particular phenomenon for the linguocultural community (Tokarev 2009: 80)—the concepts "soul" and "spirit" in Bulgarian culture are strongly influenced by Christian religion and its ancient understanding of the necessity of preserving human spiritual purity. An increasing level of abstraction is observed, progressing from air to soul and spirit.

During the Anthesteria festival (in honor of Dionysus), revelry and indulgence alternated with prohibitions and mourning. On the third day of the Anthesteria, food was left in pots on graves for the dead. This custom likely transitioned into the Christian “*Zadushnitsa*” (All Souls' Day) in the Balkans (Bogdanov 2007: 54). In the English worldview, *spirit* does not exist as a distinct concept but is primarily associated with spirits and ghosts as immaterial beings from the afterlife.

Ethnospecific concepts (including "air," as it is among the most ancient cultural concepts) can be instrumental in studying the cultural characteristics of a particular ethnic group (Wierzbicka 1999: 209). According to A. Wierzbicka, "key words" are those that are particularly significant and indicative of a specific culture (Wierzbicka 2001: 289), and from the perspective of linguocultural competence, they reflect the needs of a particular linguocultural community.

In English, *air* carries meanings such as manner—a distinctive quality, appearance, or style; atmosphere; aura; behaviour; impression; demeanour; or mood. For example:

- *air of confidence* – a confident appearance or confidence
- *air of importance* – an important demeanour
- *air of finality* – decisiveness, a decisive demeanour
- *air of mystery* – mysteriousness
- *air of innocence* – innocence, an innocent manner or look
- *determined air* – a determined appearance
- *friendly air* – a friendly atmosphere
- *hostile air* – a hostile atmosphere

Another meaning not found in Bulgarian is that of a melody, with synonyms such as *song* and *aria* (evidently linked to the Latin *aer* and Greek *aēr*, and the Italian *aria*, meaning air). For example:

- *martial air* – a military tune
- *mournful air* – a sad or mournful melody
- *plaintive air* – a lamenting tune
- *stirring air* – an inspiring or moving melody

In English, *air* is a typical example of conversion—it functions both as a noun and as a verb. As a verb, it carries meanings such as:

- *broadcast* – to transmit or spread

- *publicize* – to expose to air for drying or ventilating

Through affixation, the derived verb *aerate* emerges, meaning to ventilate or aerate. In Bulgarian, the equivalent derived verb is *обезвъздушавам* ("to remove air"). In Bulgarian, the concept of ventilation, in the sense of exposing something to air, falls within the derivational field of the lexeme *вятър* ("wind").

III. Phraseology. Verbalization of the Concepts "Air," "Breath," and "Breathe" in Bulgarian and English Phraseology and Paremiology

The third chapter is dedicated to phraseology and examines the verbalization of the concepts "air," "breath," and "breathe" in Bulgarian and English phraseology. It also explores phraseological units in the cultural context and proverbs as part of the phraseological repertoire of language.

Phraseological expressions encapsulate the evaluations and emotional attitudes of language speakers, as well as nationally specific information. They often include lexemes that denote concepts, thereby associating particular idiomatic expressions with the nominative field of the corresponding concept. This field also includes synonymic series, fixed comparisons, derivational fields, associative fields, and paremiological fields, as well as uses in literary and journalistic texts. Analysing their meanings helps identify the key features of these concepts. According to a fundamental principle of cognitive linguistics, the concept as a mental unit can be described by analysing its linguistic realizations.

Studying the phraseological repertoire of a language allows us to uncover and describe culturally significant understandings and interpretations that reflect, transmit, and shape the cultural self-awareness of a people. Both the material and spiritual culture of humanity are most fully revealed through phraseological expressions, which form part of the core

lexical repertoire of any language. On a broader level, these expressions reflect the value orientations of a society in relation to its moral system, ethics, and aesthetic preferences, illustrating the mentality of the specific (linguocultural) community.

Phraseological units, as a subject of linguocultural studies, are a valuable and important source of information for linguocultural analysis. Examining the linguistic means of verbalizing the selected concepts is particularly valuable for this study, which draws parallels between the contemporary stages of Bulgarian and English societies.

According to G. Tokarev, cultural codes are linked to the most ancient archetypal representations and can be classified into types such as biomorphic, fetishistic, animistic, actional, and others, with primary images corresponding to humans, objects, plants/animals, and actions. These codes trace their origins to the earliest forms of religion (Tokarev 2009: 40).

It is especially noteworthy that phraseological expressions in both languages are predominantly related to human activity and character traits. Nearly all Bulgarian expressions have English equivalents, often involving the transmission of *air* through *air*-related idioms or descriptive translations. Furthermore, English has distinctive idiomatic expressions due to the broader semantic range of the word *air*. This underscores the significance of the concept in both Bulgarian and English cultures, reflecting their attitudes toward life.

In both languages, the primary evaluative characteristic of the concept of *air* as expressed in phraseology is its negative connotation, associated with something uncertain, unreliable, or unreal. As a positive trait, one can point to the beneficial influence of being in the open air—expressed in Bulgarian as *вземам въздух* or *на чист въздух* and in English as *be in the*

open air or *get some fresh air*. This positive connotation is also encapsulated in the English proverb, *Fresh air keeps the doctor poor*.

The origin of the idiom *build castles in the air* is particularly interesting. In Bulgarian, it is used as a literal translation (*строя въздушни замъци*) with the same implied meaning: to think about an impossible task, make plans, or hope for something with minimal chances of happening. The idiom was first recorded in the 11th century and appears to have evolved from the original phrase *build castles in Spain* (*строя замъци в Испания*). Much of Spain at the time was under Moorish rule, and the idea of building a castle there represented an unattainable dream. The chapter also examines the English phrase *in (a state of) limbo*, which is synonymous with *(up) in the air*. This phrase signifies a state of uncertainty or unresolved situations and is equivalent to the Bulgarian idiom *вися във въздуха* (to hang in the air).

The evaluative representation of air in the Bulgarian and English linguistic worldviews has an ambivalent nature—it is perceived predominantly as a negative phenomenon but also as a positive one. Attitudes toward air combine various emotions. Even today, humans remain unable to control nature and its manifestations. Air is an unpredictable force that introduces ambiguity into human life.

IV. Conceptualization of the Ideas of Soul and Spirit in the Bulgarian and English Worldviews

The fourth chapter provides a brief cultural-historical overview of the development of the Bulgarian and English ethne, focusing on their cultural-religious connections and the enduring presence of the concepts of *soul* and *spirit* in human life over the centuries. To this end, the foundational and

subsequently key moments from ancient times to their modern development are examined. This cultural-historical perspective serves as a stage in comparing these concepts through the perspective of Cultural Linguistics.

The analysis highlights potential points of convergence in the cultures of the two ethnoses, as well as the differences between Western European culture, to which Great Britain belongs, and Bulgarian culture, the heir to Byzantine traditions. The material and spiritual cultures and the engagement of the two ethnoses, from today's perspective, are the result of distinct historical justifications. From the 18th century onward, processes of Western influence (including British) can again be observed in Bulgaria. Tracing the formation of these two cultures, it becomes evident that they exhibit both shared and unique features and traits, stemming from somewhat similar pasts.

The analysis allows us to delve into the inner world of language speakers through their words, leading to the conclusion that *soul* is a key concept in Bulgarian culture. "Certain feelings, emotions, and human activities provoke specific reactions in organs and parts of the body. This enables humans to perceive a particular organ as 'responsible' for a specific system or activity, serving as a repository for emotions. In language, this is expressed in the description of human spiritual and material life through expressions and phrases involving lexemes such as 'heart,' 'head,' 'blood,' and others" (Nuzhdina 2004: 15).

The study of phraseological expressions containing concepts significantly expands the nominative field, as they encapsulate the primary perceptions of the examined ethnoses about various phenomena of life, daily routines, leisure, relationships with the surrounding world, and interpersonal connections—all elements of the linguistic worldview. The uses of the lexemes *soul* (*dyua*) and *spirit* (*dyx*) are classified according to their semantic-cognitive characteristics, revealing nearly all aspects of human

behaviour across different spheres in the Bulgarian examples. The state of the soul is key to the state and quality of life. The abundance of expressions for naming various emotions, along with their evident numerical superiority compared to English, serves as evidence of the dominant significance of this concept in Bulgarian culture. In the English linguistic worldview, the soul does not hold the same prominence as in Bulgarian. Instead, the concepts of *mind* (*ум*) and *heart* (*сърце*) dominate in expressing emotional states and feelings.

V. Air as a Secondary Indicator of the Conceptual Field "Wind"

The fifth chapter presents air as a secondary indicator of the conceptual field "wind." The following aspects are explored:

- Word formation in Bulgarian and English, including the derivational field and compound names within the lexical field of the lexemes *вятър* ("wind") and *wind*.
- Types of connections between components of substantive attributive syntagms involving the lexeme *wind*.
- Systemic relations in the lexical field of the lexeme *вятър* and *wind*, such as thematic groups, synonymy, antonymy, and polysemy.

The derivational fields and compound names of the lexemes under examination represent collections of lexical units reflecting all their derivatives and word combinations in the current stage of language development. As representatives of the lexical-semantic field of the concept, they provide valuable information about its nominative characteristics. Observations are based on examples excerpted from accessible lexicographic sources, such as monolingual explanatory and translation dictionaries.

To describe the word-formation system, various methods of word formation are used as classification elements. Two main methods are distinguished based on the tools and their combinations: morphological and non-morphological. The former utilizes morphological units such as prefixes, suffixes, connecting vowels, and roots, while the latter involves word formation without affixes. In Bulgarian, new words and their grammatical forms are created using morphemes.

The most productive word-formation methods in English are affixation (derivation), conversion (zero derivation), and compounding. Results from the study indicate that, in the contemporary stage of language development, the derivational field of the lexeme *wind* is dominated by derivatives formed through compounding. Relatively fewer new words result from affixation or conversion.

As a result of compounding, many new words have entered the lexical inventory of the English language, with *wind* predominantly serving as the first component of these compounds. Affixation, in this context, appears to be less productive.

The emergence of nests and word-formation series serves as an indicator of the development of the word-formation system for a given concept. The lexeme *wind* serves as the peak of its word-formation nest; however, a secondary nest can also be identified with *window* as its peak, as a notable number of derivatives, particularly in the thematic group of "Architecture," are formed from it. The significant number of synonym groups for the English lexeme *wind* reflects the importance of the concept *wind* for the English ethnos—life on the island has led to the creation of numerous terms associated with the crucial role of wind.

In Bulgarian, the most productive methods of word formation are affixation and compounding. The results of this study indicate that, at the

current stage of language development, the lexical field of the lexeme *вятър* ("wind") features an almost equal number of words formed by both methods. There are no lexical units formed through conversion in Bulgarian.

Through affixation and compounding, new words have been created that enrich the lexical inventory of the Bulgarian language. In all examples, *вятър* serves as the first component of compounds, indicating its dependent role in these constructions.

The United Kingdom, as an island nation with a strong maritime tradition, is marked by the defining characteristics of a maritime climate. The highly variable weather results from the interaction of air masses with different temperatures, and the constant oceanic winds are the cause of the rainy weather England is known for. The words forming the lexical field of this study exhibit a rich paradigm of thematic groups, indicative of the importance and widespread presence of the concept *wind* across various spheres of life in the English ethnos. Based on the data from the excerpted material and its volume, it cannot be stated that *вятър* ("wind") holds the same strong influence in Bulgarian life.

The concept of *wind* (and related terms) is universal in intercultural terms, holding an important place in both the English and Bulgarian linguistic worldviews.

VI. Comparative Analysis of the Semantics of the Lexemes "Вятър" (Wind) and "Wind"

The sixth chapter examines the concepts of *air*, *breath*, and *breathe* as verbalized in Bulgarian and English phraseology, alongside their evaluative characteristics. It also addresses the translation of phraseological expressions (PEs) into English. Illustrative material in both English and Bulgarian, excerpted from lexicographic sources, is analysed.

The primary meaning of *wind* is the movement of air masses. Interestingly, the studied lexemes share the semantic feature "gases." In Bulgarian, this meaning is marked as outdated, whereas in English it is not. Similarly, the meaning "air" is considered archaic and dialectal in Bulgarian, while the online English-Bulgarian dictionary WoordHunt.ru also identifies *air* (въздух) as an archaic meaning.

In Bulgarian, the unreliability of wind is well expressed—semantic features such as emptiness, frivolity, uselessness, doubt, distrust, disapproval, dissatisfaction, and disdain are prevalent in the articles. Conversely, in English, wind is associated with power and influence (including political power). The word conveys trends, movements, and the sense that if something is "in the wind," it is approaching or about to happen. This meaning likely derives from the significance of wind in the life of the English ethnos. In derivatives such as *windbag*, *windiness*, and *windy*, we find frivolity, but only in the context of speech (cf. the Bulgarian phrase *вятър работа* [wind work]), specifically referring to verbosity. Shared semantic features among these three English lexemes include: chatterbox, talkativeness, verbosity, emptiness, and superficiality.

Over the centuries, varying perceptions of natural phenomena have shaped the linguistic worldview. "The four elements—air, water, fire, earth—are considered primordial elements of the universe in the worldview of various peoples" (Tolstaya 2002). These concepts have been known since ancient times in pre-Christian religions, philosophical teachings, myths, and folklore. The notions of natural elements and the ideas associated with them are universal, present in every culture. From ancient times, humans have understood themselves through nature, attributing human, and often magical or supernatural, qualities to its processes and manifestations.

Air, as an elemental force, holds an important place in human life and possesses particular cultural value. Phraseological expressions involving this concept often include the component *wind*, a natural phenomenon that manifests its power through the horizontal movement of air masses, beyond human control. The exploration of its evaluative aspect is of particular interest, as this distinguishes the linguocultural concept from other cognitive units reflecting cultural values among language speakers. This contributes to uncovering and understanding the worldview of the Bulgarian and English ethnoses. For this study, comprehensive illustrative material from phraseological expressions containing the lexeme in question has been utilized.

The compilation of a paremiological field is essential for uncovering the cognitive characteristics of the studied concept. It provides valuable insights into how a concept is understood through the arrangement of proverbs containing the word representing the concept, its synonyms, or descriptively related units. Sources for paremiological material include various dictionaries, which offer a reliable means of obtaining not only an extensive linguistic picture but also general cultural information. According to Krasavskiy, lexicographic descriptions compactly present the results of how certain ethno-objective and subjective elements of the world are assimilated by language speakers (Krasavskiy 2001: 209). The evaluative representation of the studied concept reveals ambivalent characteristics—wind is perceived as both a positive and a negative phenomenon.

A special focus in this dissertation is given to Irish proverbs, which call for the preservation of Irish traditions. These are notable for the rich history of the Irish language. Filled with countless meanings and lessons, they have preserved over the years much wisdom, humour, and knowledge, conveyed through intriguing blessings or friendly warnings on how one

should or should not act. Irish proverbs uniquely capture the spirit and heritage of the Irish people. Often connected to the natural landscapes, they reflect Ireland's greenery and its associated agriculture. Rich with metaphors and subtle humour, these proverbs convey lessons or advice in a refined and nuanced manner.

Through conceptualization, culture has transformed wind from a natural element into its own concept. The air element is presented through the multifaceted existence of wind via images characteristic of various cultural and symbolically loaded meanings, often expressed in the form of metaphors. In the languages examined here, negative traits predominate, with the most general being instability and unreliability. In English, these traits often take on a preventive meaning, as the natural force of wind is associated primarily with transience, danger, recklessness, and imprudence.

The cultural significance of wind is further evidenced by the existence of numerous names for its various types, including proper names of winds from different origins.

Wind is also depicted as a unique agent capable of performing diverse actions. It is predominantly unfavourable to its surroundings—breaking, pushing, and so forth. There is a rich synonymy for its two main actions: intensifying or weakening, as well as a variety of sounds it produces. The wind even approaches mythological proportions. For instance, the existence of the legendary Greek strong wind called the Etesian wind, originating from the Aegean Sea, is a notable example.

It is no coincidence that the phraseological repertoire of a language is regarded as one of the primary sources for cultural linguistic analysis of cultural concepts, making it a frequent object of study.

Phraseology is a key fragment of the thematic field within the conceptosphere. Frequently in English, words denoting natural phenomena

are incorporated into idiomatic expressions featuring active lexemes from the macroconcept *natural phenomena*. These expressions reflect the English people's perceptions of their surrounding world, where wind plays a defining role in determining the mutual relationship between all other natural phenomena.

In both Bulgarian and English, the studied units are connected to people, their qualities, and their actions. In the semantics of the Bulgarian examples, more adverbial modifiers appear in the idiomatic expressions, with only three proverbs identified. In contrast, English features a greater number of proverbs that characterize human activity in more varied ways.

The conceptsphere of each language contains the central notions of national and cultural significance for a given people. Identifying and describing its key concepts requires systematic exploration, as the consistent study of cultural content within each fragment of the conceptsphere is a subsequent step in understanding the specific linguistic worldview. In this research, the focus is the concept of *air*, which has emerged as a fundamental concept in both Bulgarian and English cultures.

The present dissertation, "*The Concept of 'Air' in Bulgarian and English through the Perspective of Cultural Linguistics*", is an attempt to investigate the perceptions of the Bulgarian and English ethnics regarding the concept of *air* and related notions. Aligned with the priorities of the evolving world and the accelerating processes of globalization, the study of the concept of *air* and its related terms in English and Bulgarian represents a step toward uncovering national character, broadening knowledge of the linguistic worldview, and gaining a deeper understanding of the unique features of foreign cultures. This underscores the significance of research in this field, such as the current study.

The **Conclusion** summarizes the results of the study.

Appendix 1 provides essential lexicographic information about the lexemes that objectify the examined concepts.

Appendix 2 contains the most numerous thematic groups from their lexical fields.

Appendix 3 includes sample survey forms in Bulgarian and English.

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CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION

1. This research is the first study dedicated to the concept of *air* through the perspective of cultural linguistics in a comparative context between Bulgarian and English.
2. It can serve as a basis for future research, without claiming exhaustiveness.
3. The work enriches the field of comparative studies with a focus on the interaction between language, culture, and cognition.
4. The dissertation text and its appendices contain valuable and practical data for teaching Bulgarian and English.
5. The findings are useful for translation training and in compiling a bilingual phraseological dictionary.
6. The conclusions and observations contribute to the overall description of the Bulgarian and English linguistic worldviews.
7. Comparative studies in the field of cultural linguistics are still relatively rare, making this dissertation of interest to the linguistic community and addressing contemporary research needs.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS ON THE TOPIC OF THE DISSERTATION

1. **Petkova, Pavlina.** *Verbalization of the Conceptosphere "Wind" in English Phraseology and Paremiology*, in *Yearbook of Shumen University "Episkop Konstantin Preslavski"* with materials from the Jubilee International Scientific Conference "*Humanities – Traditions and Challenges*," Volume XXXIII A/1, XXXIII/2022; ISSN 1311-7300 (print), ISSN 2603-512X (online), pp. 211–220.
2. **Petkova, Pavlina.** *The Derivational Field of the Lexeme "Wind" in Foreign Language Education* by AZ Buki Publishing, Issue 49/2022; ISSN 0205–1834 (print), ISSN 1314–8508 (online), pp. 366–376.
3. **Petkova, Pavlina.** *On Compound Names with the Lexeme "Wind,"* in *Proceedings, Vol. 1*, from the 10th International Conference "*Language, Science, Communications, and Sports – 60 Years of Academic Education*" at the Medical University "Prof. Dr. P. Stoyanov," Varna, 2023; ISBN 978-619-221-454-8 (print), ISBN 978-619-221-452-4 (online), pp. 445–452.
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