

The Role of Agricultural Activity in the Formation of the Human Concept: A Cognitive and Sociolinguistic Perspective

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Abstract:

This study examines the conceptualization of human personality through agricultural and economic metaphors in phraseological units, adopting an integrated cognitive and sociolinguistic approach. While Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson) has extensively documented metaphorical mappings such as Human as Plant and Labor as Value, existing research has largely focused on single-language analyses or isolated metaphor types. What remains insufficiently explored is a systematic cross-linguistic comparison of how historically grounded agricultural practices shape evaluative models of personality across different socio-economic and cultural traditions. This study addresses this gap by providing a comparative analysis of Azerbaijani, English, and German phraseology.

The dataset comprises phraseological units drawn from authoritative phraseological dictionaries and verified against national language corpora in the three languages. Units were selected based on explicit semantic links to agriculture, farming, animal husbandry, and production processes, as well as their use in characterizing human traits, behavior, or social value. Methodologically, the study combines qualitative cognitive-semantic analysis with comparative sociolinguistic interpretation. Conceptual Metaphor Theory is applied to identify dominant metaphorical models, while sociolinguistic analysis examines how these units function as evaluative social codes reflecting labor ethics, social hierarchy, and culturally embedded norms.

The analysis reveals distinct cross-cultural patterns. Azerbaijani phraseology predominantly encodes emotional, ethical, and genealogical values (e.g., *kökü dərinde olmaq*), reflecting collectivist orientations and ancestral continuity. English idioms foreground productivity, selection, and pragmatic efficiency (e.g., *to separate the wheat from the chaff*), whereas German units emphasize order, discipline, and systematic labor organization (e.g., *den Acker bestellen*). Despite ongoing urbanization and digitalization, these metaphorical “agricultural codes” remain productive in contemporary discourse.

Beyond its theoretical contribution, the study demonstrates that these culturally specific metaphorical patterns pose concrete challenges for Natural Language Processing and sentiment analysis, particularly in cross-linguistic metaphor recognition, evaluative language detection, and translation. By linking phraseological analysis to observable corpus data, the findings offer empirically grounded insights relevant to discourse studies, translation and interpreting research, and multilingual NLP development.

Keywords:

Phraseological units, agricultural activity, cognitive linguistics, sociolinguistics, human concept, conceptual metaphor, Azerbaijani language, comparative analysis.