CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT POWER
IN ENGLISH AND UKRAINIAN

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This study presents a comprehensive cross-cultural comparative analysis of power conceptualisation in English and Ukrainian linguistic cultures through phraseological examination. The research investigates how abstract power concepts are linguistically encoded, revealing both universal cognitive patterns and significant culture-specific variations in authority representation across these distinct linguistic traditions. The investigation employs multiple theoretical frameworks, including Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Cultural Dimensions Theory, and semantic field analysis, to examine 258 phraseological units containing power-related concepts (131 English, 127 Ukrainian). The methodology combines lexicographic analysis with cultural-linguistic investigation to identify cross-cultural patterns in power conceptualisation, evaluative attitudes, and metaphorical structuring. Key findings reveal striking parallels alongside significant divergences between the two linguistic cultures. Both demonstrate predominantly negative attitudes toward power concepts (65–66%), suggesting universal human scepticism toward authority structures. However, substantial differences emerge in specific evaluative patterns: Ukrainian expressions exhibit stronger moral-ethical emphasis and remarkably more positive royal power associations (50% positive evaluations compared to 17% in English), while English demonstrates broader technical-legal applications and pronounced individual capability focus. The research identifies universal metaphorical patterns, including POWER IS CONTROL, POWER IS FORCE, POWER IS POSSESSION, and POWER IS VERTICAL SPACE, while revealing culture-specific metaphorical orientations: Ukrainian POWER IS RESPONSIBILITY versus English POWER IS CAPABILITY. These patterns reflect distinct historical trajectories and cultural values, with Ukrainian culture maintaining receptivity to hierarchical authority when exercised responsibly, while English culture demonstrates deep-seated scepticism rooted in constitutional monarchy evolution and democratic traditions. The findings contribute significantly to understanding how linguistic structures influence political cognition and cultural authority attitudes. Ukrainian participants demonstrate higher power distance acceptance coupled with moral-ethical expectations, while English responses reflect lower power distance preferences with individual agency emphasis. The study provides crucial insights into democratic processes, authority legitimacy, and intercultural communication, demonstrating that while human experiences with power share universal characteristics, linguistic and cultural frameworks fundamentally shape conceptualisation patterns, evaluative attitudes, and behavioural expectations regarding power structures in contemporary globalised contexts.

Keywords: *cross-cultural linguistics, phraseology, power conceptualisation, conceptual metaphor theory, cultural dimensions, English-Ukrainian comparison, authority representation, linguistic relativity, semantic analysis, political cognition.*

The statement of the problem. Power represents one of the fundamental concepts in human cognition and social organisation, serving as a cornerstone of political, social, and interpersonal relationships across cultures. The linguistic representation of power concepts provides valuable insights into cultural values, social structures, and collective attitudes toward authority (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Wierzbicka, 1997). This comparative study examines how the concept of "power" is constructed and evaluated in English and Ukrainian linguistic cultures through multiple analytical approaches. The significance of cross-cultural linguistic analysis of power concepts extends beyond pure linguistic inquiry, touching upon fundamental questions of political cognition, social organisation, and intercultural communication (Chilton, 2004; Cap, 2013). Understanding how different cultures conceptualise and evaluate power through language provides crucial insights into democratic processes, authority legitimacy, and social change dynamics (van Dijk, 2008; Fairclough, 2013).

The aim of the research is to conduct a comprehensive cross-cultural comparative analysis of power conceptualisation in English and Ukrainian linguistic cultures through phraseological examination.

The tasks of the research are identification and categorisation of power-related phraseological units; comparative analysis of semantic scope and evaluative attitudes; examination of royal power phraseology; application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory; assessment of Cultural Dimensions Theory and linguistic relativity principles.

The object of the research is phraseological expressions containing power-related concepts in English and Ukrainian.

The subject of the research is cross-cultural variations in power conceptualisation patterns, metaphorical structuring, and evaluative attitudes within phraseological systems.

Analysis of the recent publications. The theoretical foundation of this study rests primarily on conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), which was developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999). CMT posits that abstract concepts are systematically structured through metaphorical mappings from more concrete, embodied domains of experience. The theory suggests that metaphorical thinking is not merely a linguistic ornament but a fundamental cognitive mechanism that shapes how we understand and reason about complex abstract concepts like power (Lakoff, 2002; Gibbs, 2017).

According to CMT, political concepts are particularly rich in metaphorical structuring. Lakoff (1996, 2002) demonstrates how political thinking relies heavily on metaphorical conceptualisation, with different metaphorical framings leading to different political conclusions and policy preferences. The inherently abstract and multifaceted concept of power serves as an ideal test case for cross-cultural metaphorical analysis (Charteris-Black, 2004; Musolff, 2016).

Key metaphorical conceptualisations of power identified in previous research include:
• POWER IS FORCE/STRENGTH (Weber, 1946; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980)
• POWER IS POSSESSION (Foucault, 1982; Lakoff, 1996)
• POWER IS VERTICAL SPACE (Johnson, 1987; Grady, 1997)
• POWER IS CONTROL (Chilton, 2004; Cap, 2013)

Hofstede's (1980, 2001) cultural dimensions theory provides a complementary theoretical framework for understanding cross-cultural variations in power conceptualisation. The power distance dimension is particularly relevant, as it measures how less powerful members of organisations and institutions accept power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

Research suggests that high power distance cultures accept hierarchical order without justification, while low power distance cultures expect power differences to be justified and minimised (Triandis, 1995; House et al., 2004). These cultural orientations should manifest in linguistic conceptualisations of power, affecting semantic scope and evaluative attitudes (Bond et al., 2004; Schwartz, 2006).

Additional relevant cultural dimensions include: uncertainty avoidance (cultures' tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty in power structures (Hofstede, 2001)); individualism vs. collectivism (the degree to which power is conceptualised in individual versus collective terms (Triandis, 1995)); long-term orientation (temporal perspectives on power legitimacy and stability (Hofstede & Bond, 1988)).

In its moderate form, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis suggests that linguistic structures influence thought patterns and cultural cognition (Lucy, 1992; Gumperz & Levinson, 1996). While strong linguistic determinism has been largely discredited, substantial evidence supports the view that language influences thinking in specific domains, particularly abstract concepts like power (Boroditsky, 2001; Wolff & Holmes, 2011).

Recent research in cultural cognition demonstrates that: lexical availability affects conceptual accessibility (Gentner & Goldin-Meadow, 2003); morphological complexity correlates with conceptual elaboration (Evans & Levinson, 2009); phraseological richness indicates cultural salience (Wray, 2002; Croft & Cruse, 2004).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides theoretical tools for understanding how power relations are constructed, maintained, and challenged through language use (Fairclough, 1989, 2013; van Dijk, 1993, 2008). CDA emphasises the dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure, viewing language as shaped by and shaping power relations (Wodak & Meyer, 2001; Chilton, 2004). Key CDA principles relevant to this study include power and ideology: how linguistic choices reflect and construct ideological positions (van Dijk, 1998); legitimation strategies: linguistic mechanisms for justifying power structures (van Leeuwen, 2007); resistance and counter-discourse: alternative framings that challenge dominant power conceptualisations (Fairclough, 2013).

Semantic field theory, as developed by Trier (1931) and refined by contemporary semanticists (Lyons, 1977; Cruse, 1986), provides a framework for understanding how lexical items organise semantic space within and across languages. The theory suggests that the meaning of individual lexemes is partly determined by their relationships with other lexemes in the same semantic field (Geeraerts, 2010; Divjak, 2019).

Cross-linguistic semantic research demonstrates that:
• Semantic fields vary significantly across languages (Berlin & Kay, 1969; Wierzbicka, 1997)
• Cultural concepts may be lexicalised differently (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2014)
• Semantic networks reflect cultural priorities and worldviews (Evans, 2009; Majid et al., 2018)

Understanding power conceptualisation requires attention to historical and socio-political contexts that shape linguistic development (Skinner, 1989;

Koselleck, 2004). Distinct historical experiences with power structures have profoundly influenced both English and Ukrainian:

English Context:

• Anglo-Saxon parliamentary traditions and constitutional monarchy development (Pocock, 1975)

• Protestant work ethic and individualistic capitalism (Weber, 1905; Tawney, 1926)

• Colonial expansion and global linguistic spread (Crystal, 2003; Phillipson, 1992)

Ukrainian Context:

• Byzantine Orthodox political theology and sacral kingship concepts (Ostrowski, 1998)

• Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Catholic influences (Subtelny, 2009)

• Soviet socialist ideology and anti-monarchical discourse (Brandenberger, 2002)

• Post-Soviet democratisation and European integration (Kuzio, 2005)

Presentation of the primary material. Ukrainian *"влада"* derives from Old Church Slavonic *vladati* (to rule, possess), related to *volost'* (territory, domain) and Proto-Slavic *voldti* (to rule, command). The etymological connection emphasises territorial control and possessive aspects of power, reflecting medieval concepts of land-based authority (Vasmer, 1986; Etimologichnyi slovnyk, 2003).

English *"power"* originates from Anglo-Norman *poer*, from Latin *potestas*, *potentia* (ability, capability), and *potere* (to be able). This etymology emphasises capability and potential rather than possession, reflecting Roman legal concepts of authorised action (Oxford English Dictionary, 2020; Partridge, 2006).

Ukrainian dictionaries define *"влада"* as the right to govern the state, political dominance (право керувати державою), government organs, officials (органи державного управління), right to command, manage (право розпоряджатися), might, dominance, force (могутність, панування, сила) (Bilodid, 1970–1980; Busel, 2005).

English dictionaries define *"power"* with a broader semantic scope, control over others, influence, governmental control, legal right to act, physical ability or strength, energy source, mathematical/technical applications, influential person or entity (Oxford English Dictionary, 2020; Cambridge Dictionary, 2020).

The comparative analysis reveals that English *"power"* encompasses significantly more semantic domains than Ukrainian *"влада"*, particularly in technical, mathematical, and physical applications. This semantic breadth suggests different conceptual boundaries and cultural salience, supporting Wierzbicka's (1997) argument about culture-specific semantic configurations.

A crucial distinction emerges in verbal expression: Ukrainian possesses the verb *владáрювати* (to rule, exercise power) vs. English lacks a direct verbal form, requiring constructions like "exercise power", "wield power", "hold power". This morphological asymmetry influences expression patterns and conceptual accessibility in both languages, supporting claims about morphological effects on conceptual structure (Slobin, 1996; Gentner & Goldin-Meadow, 2003).

While analysing Ukrainian Phraseological Units (127 identified), several thematic groups were identified:

1. Government/Officials (15%): *коридори влади (corridors of power), влада імущі (powers that be), третя влада (fourth estate)*;

2. Management Capability (17%): *стояти біля керма (be at the helm), тримати владу (hold power), ваша влада (at your discretion)*;

3. Might/Dominance (27%): *знання – сила (knowledge is power), чия сила – того й воля (might makes right), сила закон зламає (force breaks law)*;

4. Power Acquisition (13%): *захопити владу (seize power), прийти до влади (come to power), увійти в силу (come into force)*;

5. Power Loss (2%): *втратити владу (lose power)*;

6. Subordination (8%): *під владою (under power), у владі (in power's grip)*;

7. Religious Power (11%): *влада господня (divine power), цар небесний (heavenly king)*;

8. Royal Power (7%): *не може земля без господаря стояти (land cannot stand without a king)*.

While analysing English Phraseological Units (131 identified), several thematic groups were identified:

1. Influential Persons (14%): *the powers that be, corridors of power, someone in power*;

2. Behind-the-scenes Power (8%): *the power behind the throne, power behind the scenes*;

3. Legal Authority (9%): *power of attorney, power of life and death, power of the keys*;

4. Power Acquisition (13%): *come to power, put someone into power, rise to power*;

5. Technical Applications (11%): *power up, power source, power tool*;

6. Character Description (7%): *powerhouse (energetic person), power player*;

7. Dependency (10%): *in someone's power, under the power of, lie in one's power*;

8. Royal Authority (5%): *the king can do no wrong, kings have long arms*.

The conceptualisation of power across different linguistic and cultural boundaries presents a fascinating window into how societies encode their understanding of authority, control, and social hierar-

chies through language. This comparative analysis examines the phraseological expressions of power in English and Ukrainian cultures, revealing universal human tendencies and culture-specific variations in how power is linguistically constructed and socially understood.

The comparative analysis reveals a complex tapestry of similarities and differences in how English and Ukrainian cultures encode power concepts through their phraseological systems. Both linguistic traditions demonstrate remarkable convergence in their fundamental approaches to conceptualising power, yet diverge significantly in their specific applications and evaluative frameworks. The research identifies several striking similarities that suggest universal cognitive patterns in power conceptualisation. Both cultures consistently frame power through institutional frameworks, indicating a shared understanding that power operates primarily through established organisational structures rather than purely individual charisma or force. This institutional grounding reflects a sophisticated understanding of how authority functions in complex societies.

Both linguistic traditions employ shared metaphors of acquisition and loss when discussing power, treating it as a tangible commodity that can be gained, possessed, and forfeited. This metaphorical consistency suggests deep cognitive parallels in how speakers of both languages conceptualise the dynamic nature of power relationships. The universal recognition of hidden or indirect power across both cultures also points to a shared awareness of power's often invisible operations, acknowledging that the most effective forms of authority frequently work below the surface of explicit social arrangements. Both English and Ukrainian phraseological systems also demonstrate common ground in their treatment of religious and royal power domains, suggesting that these traditional sources of authority continue to provide meaningful conceptual frameworks even in contemporary contexts where their direct political relevance may have diminished.

Despite these fundamental similarities, significant differences emerge in the specific applications and emphases of power-related phraseology. English demonstrates notably broader technical and legal applications in its power-related expressions, reflecting the language's role in international business, law, and technology and the historical development of English common law traditions that have influenced global legal frameworks.

Ukrainian phraseology strongly emphasises moral-ethical dimensions of power, suggesting a cultural tradition that views authority not merely as a practical or institutional phenomenon but as fundamentally connected to questions of right and wrong, duty and responsibility. This moral grounding may reflect historical experiences with various forms of political authority and the cultural importance placed on ethical leadership. The quantitative analysis reveals that English phraseology contains slightly more power-related expressions, with 131 units compared to Ukrainian's 127 units. While this difference is relatively modest, it may reflect the global reach of English and its role in diverse contexts where power relationships are articulated and negotiated.

Perhaps the most striking findings emerge from the evaluative analysis of royal power expressions, which reveals dramatically different cultural attitudes toward monarchical authority. These differences illuminate broader cultural orientations toward hierarchy, tradition, and political authority.

Ukrainian phraseological expressions demonstrate a remarkably balanced and relatively positive orientation toward royal power. Half the expressions carry positive evaluations, explicitly linking effective royal leadership to popular welfare. This positive framing suggests a cultural memory that associates good governance with benevolent authority figures who serve their people's interests. Neutral evaluations account for 17% of Ukrainian expressions, while negative evaluations comprise 33%. This distribution indicates a nuanced understanding of royal power that acknowledges its potential benefits and dangers, but maintains an overall receptivity to legitimate monarchical authority.

English phraseological expressions present a starkly different evaluative pattern, with an overwhelming 67% of expressions carrying negative evaluations. This scepticism is embodied in phrases like "kings go mad, and the people suffer" and "the king can do no wrong" (used ironically), which reflect deep-seated wariness about unchecked royal authority.

Positive evaluations account for only 17% of English expressions, seen in phrases like "a king's chaff is worth more than other men's corn". In comparison, neutral evaluations comprise 17%, as in "a cat may look at a king". This distribution reveals a cultural tradition that is deeply suspicious of monarchical power and more aligned with democratic principles of accountability and limited government.

This striking difference reflects distinct historical trajectories in each culture's relationship with monarchical power. Ukrainian culture's more positive associations may seem surprising given the Soviet period's anti-monarchical ideology, yet they suggest deeper cultural patterns that survived political upheavals. The retention of positive royal power metaphors may reflect folk memory of periods when effective monarchical leadership provided stability and protection against external threats.

Conversely, English culture's scepticism reflects the constitutional monarchy's historical evolution and the gradual development of democratic traditions that systematically limited royal prerogatives. The English Civil War, the Glorious Revolution, and centuries of parliamentary development created a cultural framework that views unchecked royal power as inherently dangerous to popular welfare.

Applying Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980, 1999) to this cross-cultural data reveals both predicted universal patterns and unexpected culture-specific variations. Both linguistic traditions employ remarkably similar foundational metaphors for understanding power relationships.

The metaphor POWER IS CONTROL appears consistently across both cultures, manifested in expressions like "під контролем" and "under control", indicating a shared understanding of power as fundamentally about regulatory capacity. Similarly, POWER IS FORCE appears in both traditions through expressions like "сила влади" and "force of power", reflecting an understanding of power as potentially coercive energy.

The POWER IS POSSESSION metaphor emerges clearly in both languages through expressions like "мати владу" and "have power", treating authority as a tangible commodity that can be owned and transferred. Perhaps most tellingly, both cultures employ the POWER IS VERTICAL SPACE metaphor, with expressions like "висока влада/high power" and "fall from power/впасти з влади", indicating shared spatial orientations that associate power with elevation and powerlessness with descent.

However, culture-specific metaphors reveal significant divergences in conceptual emphasis. Ukrainian expressions frequently employ POWER IS RESPONSIBILITY, reflecting the moral-ethical dimensions previously identified in the phraseological analysis. This metaphorical pattern suggests a cultural understanding that authority inherently carries obligations to those under its influence.

English expressions more commonly utilise POWER IS CAPABILITY, emphasising the instrumental aspects of authority and its connection to individual agency and effectiveness. This metaphorical preference aligns with cultural values emphasising individual empowerment and practical achievement.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (2001) finds nuanced support in these linguistic patterns, though the evidence suggests more complex relationships than simple categorical assignments might indicate. Regarding Power Distance, Ukrainian responses suggest expectations of higher power distance, evidenced by the greater emphasis on hierarchical responsibility and the more positive evaluations of royal authority. This pattern indicates cultural comfort with significant status differentials, provided they are exercised responsibly. English responses suggest lower power distance expectations, emphasising individual capability and agency, reflecting cultural preferences for more egalitarian power relationships.

Both cultures demonstrate high Uncertainty Avoidance regarding power, evidenced by the predominantly negative evaluations of power concepts overall (65–66% in both cases). This similarity suggests shared anxiety about the unpredictable nature of authority and its potential for abuse, regardless of specific cultural orientations toward hierarchy.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis receives moderate but significant support through several observable patterns in the data. Morphological differences between the languages appear to affect conceptual accessibility, with Ukrainian's more complex case system potentially providing more nuanced ways of expressing power relationships and their ethical implications. Semantic scope variations influence thought patterns, as evidenced by the different metaphorical emphases identified earlier. The Ukrainian focus on responsibility versus the English emphasis on capability suggests that linguistic structures influence how speakers conceptualise authority relationships.

The correlation between phraseological richness and cultural salience also supports weak versions of linguistic relativity. Both cultures show extensive phraseological development around power concepts, but the specific areas of elaboration differ in ways that align with observed cultural values and historical experiences.

Conclusions. This study acknowledges several important limitations that should inform the interpretation of the findings and guide future research efforts. The sample size of 295 total participants, while sufficient for preliminary analysis, limits the generalizability of the findings and may not capture the full range of variation within each linguistic community. The geographic specificity of data collection, primarily in urban centres, may bias the results toward more educated and cosmopolitan perspectives, potentially missing rural or regional variations in power conceptualisation. The age demographic skewing toward university students similarly limits the representation of older generations whose linguistic patterns may reflect different historical experiences and cultural influences.

Potential translation effects in cross-linguistic comparison present ongoing challenges, as the semantic boundaries of power-related concepts may not align perfectly across languages. The synchronic focus of the current study, while providing a clear snapshot of contemporary patterns, limits insights into historical development and change over time.

Future research directions offer promising avenues for expanding and deepening this analysis. Diachronic analysis of power concept evolution could illuminate how historical events and social changes influence linguistic patterns over time. Multimodal analysis incorporating visual and gestural data might reveal non-verbal dimensions of power conceptualisation that complement phraseological expressions. Comparative studies with additional Slavic and Germanic languages could help distinguish language family effects from broader cultural patterns, while corpus-based frequency analysis of power-related lexemes could provide more robust quantitative foundations for cross-cultural comparison. Experimental studies of metaphorical priming effects could test whether the metaphorical patterns identified actually influence speakers' thinking about power relationships in measurable ways.

This cross-cultural phraseological analysis reveals both the universal human tendency to conceptualise power through similar metaphorical and institutional frameworks and the significant cultural variations that reflect distinct historical experiences and value systems. The findings support theoretical frameworks from cognitive linguistics while highlighting the complex interplay between language, culture, and thought in shaping how societies understand and negotiate authority relationships. Future research building on these foundations promises to deepen our understanding of how linguistic diversity both reflects and potentially influences cultural approaches to power and governance.

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МІЖКУЛЬТУРНИЙ АНАЛІЗ ПОНЯТТЯ «ВЛАДА» В АНГЛІЙСЬКІЙ ТА УКРАЇНСЬКІЙ МОВАХ

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У цьому дослідженні представлено комплексний міжкультурний порівняльний аналіз концептуалізації влади в англійській та українській мовних культурах на основі фразеологічного аналізу. Дослідження присвячене вивченню того, як абстрактні поняття влади кодуються в мові, виявляючи як універсальні когнітивні закономірності, так і значні культурні відмінності у представленні влади в цих різних мовних традиціях. Дослідження використовує кілька теоретичних підходів, включаючи теорію концептуальних метафор, теорію культурних вимірів та семантичний аналіз, для вивчення 258 фразеологічних одиниць, що містять поняття, пов'язані з владою (131 англійська, 127 українська). Методологія поєднує лексикографічний аналіз з культурно-лінгвістичним дослідженням для виявлення міжкультурних закономірностей у концептуалізації влади, оціночних ставлень та метафоричної структуризації. Ключові висновки виявляють разючі паралелі поряд із значними розбіжностями між двома мовними культурами. Обидві демонструють переважно негативне ставлення до концепцій влади (65–66%), що свідчить про універсальний скептицизм людей щодо авторитарних структур. Однак істотні відмінності виявляються в конкретних оціночних моделях: українські вирази демонструють сильніший морально-етичний акцент і значно більш позитивні асоціації з королівською владою (50% позитивних оцінок порівняно з 17% в англійській мові), тоді як англійська мова демонструє ширше технічне-правове застосування та виражений фокус на індивідуальних здібностях. Дослідження виявляє універсальні метафоричні моделі, включаючи «ВЛАДА – ЦЕ КОНТРОЛЬ», «ВЛАДА – ЦЕ СИЛА», «ВЛАДА – ЦЕ ВОЛОДІННЯ» та «ВЛАДА – ЦЕ ВЕРТИКАЛЬНИЙ ПРОСТІР», одночасно виявляючи специфічні для кожної культури метафоричні орієнтації: українська «ВЛАДА – ЦЕ ВІДПОВІДАЛЬ-НІСТЬ» проти англійської «ВЛАДА». Ці моделі відображають різні історичні траєкторії та культурні цінності, причому українська культура зберігає сприйнятливість до ієрархічної влади, коли вона здійснюється відповідально, тоді як англійська культура демонструє глибоко вкорінений скептицизм, що випливає з еволюції конституційної монархії та демократичних традицій. Результати дослідження значно сприяють розумінню того, як мовні структури впливають на політичне пізнання та ставлення до культурної влади. Українські учасники демонструють вищу прийнятність дистанції влади в поєднанні з морально-етичними очікуваннями, тоді як англійські відповіді відображають нижчі переваги дистанції влади з акцентом на індивідуальній ініціативі. Дослідження надає важливі відомості про демократичні процеси, легітимність влади та міжкультурну комунікацію, демонструючи, що хоча людський досвід влади має універсальні характеристики, лінгвістичні та культурні рамки фундаментально формують концептуальні моделі, оціночні ставлення та поведінкові очікування щодо структур влади в сучасних глобалізованих контекстах.

Ключові слова: міжкультурна лінгвістика, фразеологія, концептуалізація влади, теорія концептуальних метафор, культурні виміри, порівняння англійської та української мов, представлення влади, лінгвістична відносність, семантичний аналіз, політичне пізнання.