

**DCCD 2020****Dialogue of Cultures - Culture of Dialogue: from Conflicting to Understanding****LINGUOCULTURAL POTENTIAL OF ANIMALISTIC  
METAPHOR IN THE PRACTICE OF PROFESSIONAL  
COMMUNICATION**

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***Abstract***

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate the linguistic and cultural capabilities of animalistic metaphors in business communication. On the example of English and French the definition of the cognitive metaphorical model “animal world → business world” is given. It is stressed that a person gets the opportunity to comprehend the distinctive characteristics of concepts that reflect his world through metaphors and the experience of previous generations enshrined in the collective unconscious in the form of cultural codes. Metaphors based on associations with the animal world arose from the first human attempts to categorize abstract entities. These two worlds are easily combined: people have always existed next to animals whose appearance and habits have become the basis for creating the cultural foundation of the nation. In the modern economic vocabulary assimilation of cultural codes of European countries is observed. The article provides examples of a metaphorical representation of the concepts of management and marketing. Metaphorical contexts and terms extracted with the method of continuous sampling from leading foreign editions of the “Economics” column, Internet platforms as well as dictionary entries are used as factual material. The role of the cultural factor in understanding animalistic metaphors of the business language, their general and specific features in the languages under consideration are shown. It is concluded that the metaphorical model of “animal world → business world” is not only universal, although there are some differences in maintaining the cultural context, it is indispensable for ensuring productive business communication and is unique in choosing a way to present a metaphorical picture of the world of economics.

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## 1. Introduction

Modern views on animalistic metaphor are correlated with the advent in linguistics of new methods and theories of meaning analysis, which appreciate a connection with culture. The cognitive-pragmatic paradigm aims the philological research to identify the linguo-cognitive basis of meaning, to search for the internal form of the lexical unit, to substantiate the pragmatic meaning of the statement. The cognitive approach has linked the understanding of metaphor with the mental processes that accompany the generation and perception of speech, including the categorization and conceptualization of abstract entities. A concept has become the central notion of modern scientific research. It is activated in consciousness in the process of mental or speech activity which allows a person to distinguish conceptual characteristics that reflect the conceptualized features of an object, phenomenon (Gardes-Tamine, 2011; Jeanneret, 2009; Maslen & Zinken, 2017). The need to convey inexhaustible conceptual content leads to the use of secondary meanings which include metaphors. Based on the experience and meanings developed by ordinary consciousness a person through metaphors sees hidden distinctive characteristics of concepts that are familiar to him. It is this fact that makes it possible to transfer meaning to any sphere of cognition of the surrounding world, including the sphere of economic relations. This is obvious since the animalistic world easily fits into the everyday picture of the human world in which people have always existed next to animals, their appearance and habits are the basis for creating the cultural foundation of the nation.

The **scientific novelty** of the survey is based on the fact that for the first time on the material of English and French presenting heterogeneous language systems - the data obtained as a result of the content analysis of the actual material are systematized, general and national-cultural features are compared in the model “animal world → business world”. It is shown that this model is widely used in the economic terminological system, as well as in the everyday communication of managers and marketers.

The leading foreign editions of the heading “Economics”, Internet platforms (blogs, forums, etc.), as well as dictionary definitions served as the empirical material.

## 2. Problem Statement

The basis of theoretical and methodological approach to the study was formed by leading works in the field of the metaphor and metaphorical modeling theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Vandaele & Lubin, 2005; Proulx, 2007), cognitive linguistics and pragmalinguistics (Borodulina & Makeeva, 2018; Zinken, 2004), linguistic and cultural studies and intercultural communication (Boldyrev & Dubrovskaya, 2019; Musolff, 2017).

The definition of a metaphor as the interpenetration of two conceptual areas (source and goal) explains that it is impossible to comprehend the metaphorical meaning without resorting to cultural codes which are clues that guide the recipient to interpret the nuances that underlie the transfer of meaning. In today's globalized world these cultural codes direct the recipient's mind to an adequate perception of the metaphor. Moreover, in professional communication assimilation of metaphorical views is observed which facilitates communication within the framework of a narrow activity specialization (Nicaise, 2013; Rossi, 2014). Existing works devoted to the analysis of animalistic metaphors, as a rule, study individual areas of the economy (often exchange terminology), or the analysis is carried out on the basis of a specific language:

English, Russian, French (Barbe et al., 2015; Beliakov, 2006; Guédon, 2015; Nicaise, 2013; Rossi, 2015). They note the high proportion of animalistic metaphors in the language of business, the diversity of metaphor sources and the suggestive capabilities of this model.

Since the metaphor is the basis of our thoughts, actions and emotions, it is inevitably present in economic life, in particular, in the way of doing business, organizing an enterprise and building relationships among employees. Any enterprise is an object of multi-level symbolic representations in which a metaphor is widely involved. Animals, or rather, the animal world occupies a very important place in business-related strategies where the characteristics of animals can exemplify human behavior.

### 3. Research Questions

Animalistic metaphors of the English and French business languages are subjected to detailed analysis, which will allow not only to see the presence of the metaphorical model of “animal world → business world” in the economic vocabulary, but also to trace the constant replenishment of this model with new sources of meaning transfer, and hence new content, emphasizing those or other characteristics of subjects, objects and events of the surrounding economic reality, their assessment and expression of the producer's attitude to the described phenomena. At the same time, the presence of common metaphors in the economic term system and in the communication of business representatives promotes mutual understanding between professionals. Theoretical business analysts and practical entrepreneurs, saves language resources by using images that are usually common to European consciousness and characterize complex processes of economic life. The study of associations helps to penetrate into the “piggy bank” of the cultural fund of the nation, to understand the internal form of word formation, as well as the potential ability of the metaphor to connect the accumulated cultural codes with the external characteristics of the represented concepts of the business world.

### 4. Purpose of the Study

The authors of this article set as their **goal** the study of linguistic and cultural characteristics in animalistic metaphors that combine two worlds in their structure: the world of business and the world of animals. The authors believe that such a structure is an ideal model that demonstrates the relationship of language and culture. Understanding the justification of metaphorical transfer, penetration into the semantic core of the source of the metaphorical model “animal world → business world” will make it possible to realize the role of cultural connotations, the validity of the nominative process, the desire of nations to come closer through linguistic forms, as well as the expression of various external manifestations of the human personality with the help of these forms.

### 5. Research Methods

The choice of factual material as well as the cognitive direction of its interpretation, determined the choice of analysis methods and techniques. In addition to traditional methods (descriptive, analytical, comparative, comparative method of continuous sampling), we used methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis, a conceptual analysis of figurative paradigms, and also a diachronic analysis method, which

allowed us to trace cultural codes that have lost touch with modernity, but have reached our days without changing the meaning, or with its assimilation to the challenges of the present.

## 6. Findings

As shown by numerous studies of scientists (Borodulina et al., 2019; Jeanneret, 2009; Hodique, 2015; Rousselle, 2016) in all cultures through animalistic metaphors the following is estimated:

- sound management,
- long-term vision,
- openness and desire to act,
- the desire to constantly improve and update,
- dignity of employees.
- The following associations serve as the basis:
  - there are animals such as zebras, wildebeests, giraffes and ostriches that form a real team to survive in the savannah;
  - crows are examples of innovation when it comes to finding a solution to a new problem;
  - African hyenas share their knowledge with younger ones and put a collective interest on the individual;
  - anthill, wolf pack, viper nest, flight of wild geese are codes of social life and suggest analogies with modalities and problems of social activity in the company;
  - ants effectively exchange information and learn from their mistakes;
  - exemplary behavior and managerial qualities of an elephant inspire any leader who wants to build a trusting relationship.

Thus, the analysis of metaphorical strategies and behavioral patterns used and operating at the enterprise definitely can demonstrate the features of the metaphorical model “animal world → business world” in English and French, percept the general and national-cultural specifics.

As the analysis of factual material demonstrates, managers and marketers use strategies based on “metaphorical stories” in their practice that illustrate associations with the animal world when describing relationships in an enterprise, in particular when discussing and resolving conflict or difficult situations. Thus, the theory of Taleb (2007) considers difficult-to-predict and rare events that have significant consequences. In business language, this theory was conceptualized as “*black swan*” theory (*theory of black swan events*) / *théorie du cygne noir*. Through the metaphor of the black swan, Taleb (2007) calls for being prepared for events that are not statistically predictable: a major financial crisis, natural disaster, revolution, etc. Taleb (2007) calls for sustainability in this regard to benefit from chaos (pp.4-6). Drawing on the experience of linguistic cultures, Taleb (2007) gives a colorful and convincing metaphor for the life of naive people majority in the form of Thanksgiving turkey. According to this metaphor livestock life consists of the following steps:

- 1 birth and acquaintance with the world;
- 2 adoption of a simple law - a person brings food;
- 3 food appears daily - this has been happening for many years;
- 4 there is every reason to predict a positive future and further feeding;

5 thanksgiving - the moment when the forecasts did not come true and the “black swan” came (the turkey went to the dinner table) (Karapinar, 2016).

Marketing consultants also have their own “metaphorical stories.” One of them is the famous Hindu fable about blind wise men and the elephant *blind sages and elephant / les aveugles et l'éléphant*, which became popular in the USA and Europe thanks to the verse of the American poet J. G. Sachs. Translated into the marketing language, the parable suggests that the truth is sometimes very difficult to understand, but it is not relative. Blind people fall into error, drawing conclusions, not having at their disposal sufficient information. The mission of the consultant is to take on the role of a sage, listen to everyone, collect as much information as possible to make a decision (Zinken, 2004).

Once upon a time, famous fabulists used animals to educate people, and artists - cartoonists of the 19th century showed that the whole world is a menagerie. And today, the business environment is compared with the *jungle* due to the similarity of concepts: conditions and relationships, close to the life of “wild” animals; superiority of power; the presence of strong leaders, etc.

The metaphor *alpha male / mâle alpha* carries a new semantic connotation as a designation for a top manager who strives for market power, the share and influence of his products:

Alpha males are the embodiment of masculinity. They’re the guys who always seem to be the leader of the pack, projecting casual authority in any situation. If you want to be seen as an alpha male, try emulating the qualities you see in other natural leaders, like their posture and mannerisms. (How to become an Alpha Male, 2019)

Conversely, *donkey / âne* metaphors personify workers and enterprises based on associations with the stupidity and stubbornness of these animals. The characteristics are based on the famous parable of the Buridan donkey, which, languishing from hunger and thirst, stood exactly in the middle between a bucket of water and a feeder with oats. The donkey could not make a choice and died of hunger and thirst. The fable about the buridan donkey seems absurd, but remains relevant (Rousselle, 2016).

Animal characteristics are often obtained by the workers themselves. So, at the enterprise, we can meet *young wolves / jeunes loups*, a new, successful generation of people doing business, compared to the cautious *old fox / les vieux renards*.

It is much easier to analyze the staff behavior and enterprise situation if a connection is made with already known and understandable objects, to which the animal world definitely belongs.

Animalistic animals are firmly entrenched in the economic terminological system. Sometimes they differ in exotics as the connection with the choice of cultural code has erased over time. An example is the metaphorical term *yellow dog contract* (from “yellow dog” - “hireling at heart”) / *le contrat de (chien) jaune*. The term was born in English when the semantics of cowardice was introduced into the semantics of yellow colour. A yellow dog contract is an agreement that used to be used in the USA to get employees to pledge that they would not join a union while working for their employer. If they did join a union during their employment, they would be fired (Yellow dog contract, 2017). In the 1920s the term “yellow dog” began to appear as a metaphor that is used to refer to the employee who is signing the document, as in “What person would be such a *yellow dog* as to reduce himself to signing away his constitutional rights just to have a job.” At the moment both the term and the English idiom continue to exist but have little in common with the trade union struggle. In more modern terms, a yellow dog clause refers to a non-complete

clause that an employer can put into an employment contract. By signing such a contract, the employee agrees not to work for a direct competitor in the future – something that would ultimately harm his current employer.

Another metaphorical term *dead cat bounce / rebond du chat mort* is borrowed from the English proverb “even a dead cat will bounce if it falls from a great height”. A trader trading on “the dead cat bounce” strategy watches the price fall and when it starts to bounce, he prepares to enter the short. Why short? Because this “cat” is still “dead”. A rebound is the second chance for frightened investors to throw off their stocks pushing prices down (Chen, 2019).

Today the economic “zoo” is inhabited by the most diverse representatives of the animal world, both domestic and wild, both real and mythological. Associations are built on the basis of the appearance and behavior of the animal as well as living conditions and the combination of animals into “families”. In each case one of the conceptual features of the source of the metaphorical model is updated which serves as the basis for the transfer to the goal area - the business sphere. Thus, we are talking about cognitive (conceptual) metaphors involved in the complex process of linguistic representation of the conceptual field of “business”. At the same time, links to culture are important. Thus, the English language is very actively referring to animalistic metaphors which are almost often traced by European languages. At the same time, in the French language (which for a long time resisted English influence and interference) the term is often demetaphorized. Thus, in both English and French an investor who expects a recession and a fall in the market is metaphorically referred to as *bear / ours*: like a bear he tramples his victim pushing it down. A metaphor in the English language has given rise to numerous constructions that have not taken root in the French language, for example: *bull market / marché haussier*. High-risk investors looking for the one big score in a short period of time are represented in English as *pigs*. *Pigs* buy on hot tips and invest in companies without doing their due diligence. They get impatient, greedy, and emotional about their investments (as in the English proverb “*as greedy as a pig*”). The French language in this case resorts to the phraseology *les casse-cou* (Borodulina et al., 2019, p.18).

Sometimes economists have a humorous attitude to difficult situations in the stock markets inventing such funny metaphors as *panda bear market / le marches de panda* (bonds denominated in RMB): “*les marchés de panda étaient, expression que l'on retrouvait dès 2009 mais dont l'usage s'est intensifié ces dernières semaines*” (Pottier, 2015, p. 1); *Globe spooked by China's panda bear market: Don Pittis .... But in many ways the outside reaction to the panda's growl said far more about the state of markets in the developed world than it said about the Chinese economy* (Pittis, 2015, p. 8); “*U.S. stocks have some powerful negatives tugging at them, not the least of which are the Shanghai “panda bear” market and a global commodities rout*” (Domm, 2015, p.1).

It should be added that the situation in the team can be shown through the so-called “collective” animalistic metaphors which add an estimated value to the characteristic of the described situation, often negative. For example: *mob / troupeau* or more specifically *mob of sheep / troupeau de moutons* to indicate market participants making the same wrong decisions.

In the analyzed languages metaphors-terms verbalize various aspects of economic activity:

*European currency snake, snake in the tunnel / serpent monétaire européen* – agreement on the coordination of actions of EU Member States regarding the regulation of possible currency fluctuations.

*galloping inflation / inflation galopante* – is a fast-paced inflation that is out of control;

*winter sleep / hibernation* – inaction, passivity; a period of reduced activity when the economy wakes up returning to activity;

*cash cow / vache à lait* – the conventional name used in foreign literature for a product, enterprise or investment that steadily continues to bring profit.

A mythological / isoteric / fairy-tale / extinct animal can also be used as a source:

*white elephant / un éléphant blanc* – loss-making transaction;

*dinosaur / dinosaure* – an old, dysfunctional enterprise;

*the Lernean Hydra / Hydre de Lerne* – a disaster (such as a crisis) that is increasing despite all efforts to end it;

*mammoth / mammouth* – the oldest enterprise that is able to survive a crises;

*a Trojan horse / cheval de Troie* – the symbol of betrayal;

*the Ouroboros / Ouroboros* – the symbol of crisis;

*chimera; / chimère* – an unrealistic idea or a hope that is unlikely to be fulfilled.

All these metaphors in the economic context, as a rule, are accompanied by a negative connotation and are based on knowledge of the world or national culture. In the economic context they create vivid images, being examples of interdiscursive switchings to the corresponding fields of knowledge.

Mythological metaphors tend to intensify during a crisis.

## 7. Conclusion

Analysis of animalistic metaphors in the language of business helps to streamline and systematize the areas of experience accumulated by the human consciousness and elementary knowledge playing the role of clues in the implementation of the complex process of human cognitive activity. Metaphors accompany new knowledge with evaluations and expressions of attitude to the described situation which is formed under the influence of imposed producer associations.

Despite the differences caused by the national-cultural worldview, the norms and traditions that have developed in a particular society and reflected in the source concept, we can talk about the convergence of metaphorical views and the formation of a European worldview through the use of metaphors common to the European languages. Similar metaphors include those that form the metaphorical model of “animal world → business world”.

A detailed analysis based on a representative corpus of examples of metaphors of the language of economics indicates that the latter can be characterized as having a clear tendency towards metaphorization. A huge layer of phenomena and objects of the world of the economy is verbalized by words and phrases that denote the realities of another world, the animal world, which, if we ignore its utilitarian side, has nothing to do with the economy. However, by updating certain characteristics in the surrounding context – often under the influence of extralinguistic factors – these nominations change the reference domain to an economic one. And today we can talk about the large-scale investment of animalistic metaphors, metaphor-terms and metaphors-not terms in the professional language of economists.

The study based on the material of two European languages demonstrated the following trends in the process of metaphorization of the language of business. First of all, we are talking about the tendency

towards a common language of professionals which is manifested through the presence of common metaphor-terms. Borrowing from the English language is activated in the process. Secondly, the wide possibilities of metaphorical variation that is better attributable to the English language should be noted. Thirdly, in such a “dry” as it seems the language of business the metaphor is a figurative lexical tool that ensures the availability of representations, the dynamism of professional communication and the possibility of expressing an emotional attitude to what is happening.

The analysis shows that the animalistic metaphor is universal, although there are some differences in preserving the cultural context, it is productive and unique in choosing a way to present a metaphorical view of the world.

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