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PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES

ECONOMIC METAPHORS IN LANGUAGE: THE INFLUENCE OF LINGUISTIC STRATEGY ON MARKET BEHAVIORS

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Abstract. Modern economic discourse is deeply rooted in metaphors that function not only as rhetorical devices but as fundamental cognitive tools shaping human thought and behavior. Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), this study examines how the conceptual metaphors “market”, “capital”, and “investments” influence cultural perceptions and actual market behaviors of participants.

The research analyzes dominant metaphorical models in Ukrainian and English economic texts from 2020 to 2025. Three main models were identified: “market as a living organism/battlefield”, “capital as liquid/resource”, and “investments as sowing/gambling”. These metaphors transform abstract economic concepts into emotionally charged images, triggering cognitive biases such as herd behavior and FOMO (fear of missing out).

This, in turn, affects investment decisions, risk assessment, and resource allocation at both individual and macro levels. The findings demonstrate that linguistic strategies are not neutral: they actively construct financial reality. The study also highlights cultural specificities in the Ukrainian context and emphasizes the necessity of conscious metaphor management in media, education, and economic policy to foster more rational and socially responsible financial behavior.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor, economic discourse, market behavior, cognitive linguistics, linguistic strategy, financial decision-making, herd behavior.

Introduction. According to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor is not merely a figure of speech but a basic mechanism of human cognition that structures the way we perceive and understand abstract domains through more concrete ones. In economic discourse, metaphorical models play a particularly powerful role because they directly influence the behavior of market participants — from choosing investment strategies to reacting to crises and volatility.

Aim. The aim of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the conceptual metaphors “market”, “capital”, and “investments” in Ukrainian and English-language economic discourse and to determine their impact on the market behavior of participants. The specific tasks are: 1) to identify the dominant metaphorical models; 2) to establish connections between linguistic images and real financial actions; 3) to assess the cultural specificity of these metaphors in the Ukrainian context.

Materials and methods. The research material consists of a corpus of more than 250,000 words collected from Ukrainian and international sources (2020–2025), including articles from “*Ekonomichna Pravda*”, “*Forbes Ukraine*”, “*The Economist*”, “*Financial Times*”, bank advertising materials, investment company texts, political statements, and social media posts. Methods of cognitive linguistics (conceptual metaphor analysis), discourse analysis, content analysis, and corpus linguistics tools (AntConc) were applied. Quantitative frequency analysis was combined with qualitative interpretation of contexts.

Results and discussion. The analysis revealed three dominant metaphorical models.

First, the “**market as a living organism / battlefield**” metaphor. The market “grows”, “falls”, “gets sick”, “recovers”, or “fights”. In both English and Ukrainian discourse, expressions such as “bull market” and “bear market” are widespread.

These agent metaphors activate emotional reactions like FOMO and herd behavior (Morris et al., 2007). They turn an abstract system into a willful subject, which often reduces critical thinking and provokes irrational decisions during market fluctuations.

Second, the “**capital as liquid / resource**” metaphor. Capital “flows”, “merges”, “freezes”, or “works by itself”. This model creates the illusion of capital as an autonomous entity capable of generating passive income, while downplaying the role of human labor and social relations (Silaški, 2011).

Third, the “**investments as sowing / gambling**” metaphor. Investments can “bear fruit” (organic model, common in Ukrainian media, promoting long-term patience) or be “played” and “won/lost” (gambling model, frequently used in bank advertising, encouraging short-term speculation).

These findings confirm that economic metaphors are powerful linguistic strategies that construct financial reality and significantly influence market behavior by reinforcing cognitive biases and shaping collective economic perceptions.

Conclusions. Economic metaphors “market”, “capital”, and “investments” function as effective linguistic strategies that shape both individual financial decisions and broader cultural understandings of the economy. Their influence extends far beyond rhetoric and becomes a real factor in market behavior. To improve financial literacy and the effectiveness of economic policy, it is essential to consciously manage metaphorical models in media, education, and public discourse. Future research could focus on developing alternative metaphors that promote more rational, socially responsible, and sustainable economic thinking.

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