Unpacking Ukrainian Work Talk: Metaphor, Meaning, and Distinct Cultural Conceptualizations

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Abstract: This study, grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), analyzes professional discourse to address a scarcity of cross-linguistic work, specifically contrasting Ukrainian and English conceptual models. The research analyzes modern Ukrainian professional discourse (forums, business publications, corpora etc.) to identify patterns that reveal unique cultural values within a post-Soviet context. Findings reveal three key conceptual metaphors that structure the work experience: INTEGRATION IS FLOWING IN, *'flow into'* (*влитися*), which defines the team as a CONTAINER where social cohesion is prioritized over individual status; SKILL IMPROVEMENT IS PHYSICAL ENHANCEMENT, *'pump up'* (*прокачати*), a modern metaphor indicating the influence of a self-centered Western mentality focused on tangible, measurable effort for economic security; and AN ABSTRACT CAUSE IS A CALLER *'call out loud'* (*викликати*), which depicts causation as an active, attention-grabbing force that directly summons a response. This comparison demonstrates that while English metaphors emphasize the individual's journey/path, Ukrainian metaphors prioritize the manner of integration and active personal capacity building within the collective, confirming that metaphorical language serves as a critical lens into the distinct cultural values of the modern Ukrainian workplace.

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of metaphor is a dynamic phenomenon which enables us to generate new meanings from old. Everyday metaphors are invisible because we understand them and, therefore, have no need to pay attention to their metaphorical character. Metaphors by and large are conceived and grasped with the same facility as our ordinary literal vocabulary. There is no problem in understanding metaphors: the problem is to explain how we understand them.

Metaphor is a very useful tool in everyday communication. All abstract expressions rely on metaphors, and it seems one can hardly think about communication without them. Metaphor is not only a linguistic phenomenon and a figure of speech used for artistic and rhetorical purposes, but it is also a cognitive mapping, based on a deliberate comparison between two unlike things that share some resemblance.

I aimed to answer my central research question: What are the patterns of metaphor use in Ukrainian to conceptualize key aspects of work, such as career advancement, workplace challenges, and the work process, and how do these patterns, including both similarities and differences in dominant source domains, relate to cultural values in professional settings. To explore this research question my analysis involved examining different data like newspapers, magazines, forums, blogs, and the Ukrainian National Corpus (sketchengine.eu), Ukrainian vocabulary (slovnyk.ua). A particular focus of my research was identifying metaphorical phrases used in Ukrainian professional contexts that are not typical, or perhaps are used differently, compared to common American English professional conversations. This comparative analysis, I believe, is crucial for highlighting potentially unique cultural ways of thinking present in the Ukrainian data. Given this approach, my initial expectation was that Ukrainian professional language would indeed reveal a distinct set of conceptual metaphors for making sense of work including how careers are understood and challenges are approached. I hypothesized that these metaphors would not only contrast with those commonly found in other cultural contexts, such as American English, but would also clearly point to specific Ukrainian cultural values and perspectives on professional life.

My analysis, therefore, focuses on specific work-related phrases that I found to be actively used in current Ukrainian professional settings. After carefully examining materials from diverse sources listed above I identified several key metaphorical expressions for deeper study. My methodological approach involves analyzing these expressions to uncover their underlying conceptual metaphors: how one area of experience (like adapting to a team) is understood in terms of another (such as *“flowing into”* something). I then explore how these identified metaphorical patterns reflect broader Ukrainian cultural values, paying particular attention to how these conceptualizations might differ from those commonly found in American English professional discourse.

2. BACKGROUND

The academic understanding of metaphor has undergone a radical transformation, moving from viewing it as a literary decoration to recognizing it as a fundamental feature of human thought. The earliest idea, set by Aristotle, who defined metaphor “as a purely rhetorical figure - a linguistic device based on a simple resemblance between two items and a skill that could not be taught” *(Aristotle, 1961: 89 from “Kovecses, Z. (2010)”)*. This traditional view treated metaphor as a conscious, artistic tool used primarily to add eloquence. Scholars from this era, such as *Ernest Jones (1918) ‘The theory of symbolism’*, reinforced this traditional view by defining metaphor not as a structure of thought, but as a superficial linguistic device used to overcome a speaker's *'inhibition of feeling'* or *'expressional incapacity’*. However, this conception was challenged by later scholars, including I. A. Richards, who argued that everyone possesses the ability to create metaphors and that metaphor is not an "embellishment or ornamentation, but an omnipresent principle of language" *(Richards, 1938: 48 from “Kovecses, Z. (2010)”)*. Similarly, Max Black dismissed the traditional view that metaphors were more than just simple comparisons. Through his "Interaction View", Black argued that “metaphor served as a powerful shortcut (heuristic tool) that actively creates new meaning, building our conceptual understanding of the world “*(Boers, F. (2003)*.

The definitive shift to the modern perspective came with George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). They, along with Zoltán Kövecses, convinced researchers that metaphor is not an ornamental feature of language but a fundamental property of concepts, structuring how we think and act in our daily lives. Their foundational work demonstrated that entire systems of our abstract thought are subconsciously organized by these underlying metaphors, which are constantly used in both our thinking and our speech.

2.1. The origins of CMT

To lay the groundwork for analysis, Zoltán Kövecses begins his “*Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (2010)” by outlining the widely accepted, traditional view of metaphor. He notes that for most people, metaphor is merely a figure of speech where one thing is compared to another by saying that one is the other, as in *He is a lion.* For example, we would consider the word *lion* to be metaphor in the sentence “Achilles was a lion in the fight” (*Kovecses, 2010)*. Kövecses summarizes this traditional concept by characterizing it with five key features that were common in both academic and popular thought: “metaphor is a property of words; it is a linguistic phenomenon. The metaphorical use of lion is a characteristic of a linguistic expression (*that of the word lion*). Second, metaphor is used for some artistic and rhetorical purposes, such as when Shakespeare writes "all the world's a stage". Third, metaphor is based on a resemblance between the two entities that are compared and identified. Achilles must share some features with lions for us to be able

to use the word lion as a metaphor for Achilles. Fourth, metaphor is a conscious and deliberate use of words, and you must have a special talent to be able to do it and do it well. Only great poets or eloquent speakers, such as, say, Shakespeare and Churchill, can be their masters. For instance, Aristotle makes the following statement to this effect: "The greatest thing by far is to have command of metaphor. This alone cannot be im-parted by another; it is the mark of genius". Fifth, it is also commonly heard that metaphor is a figure of speech that we can do without; we use it for special effects, and it is not an inevitable part of everyday human communication, let alone everyday human thought and reasoning". However, Kövecses immediately presents this traditional view as the foil to his actual focus: the cognitive linguistic theory that proves metaphor is fundamental to thought and indispensable to human conceptual systems.

In their influential 1980 book, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson introduced a new perspective on metaphor that challenged the traditional theory in a consistent and organized manner: *"Metaphors We Live By"* Their conception has become known as the "cognitive linguistic view of metaphor". Lakoff and Johnson challenged the deeply entrenched view of metaphor by claiming that (1) metaphor is a property of concepts, and not of words; (2) the function of metaphor is to better understand certain concepts, and not just some artistic or esthetic purpose; (3) metaphor is often not based on similarity; (4) metaphor is used effortlessly in everyday life by ordinary people, not just by special talented people; and (5) metaphor, far from being a superfluous though pleasing linguistic ornament, is an in-evitable process of human thought and reasoning. Therefore, Lakoff and Johnson convincingly demonstrated that metaphor is widespread in both our thinking and our daily language.

For most people, metaphor serves as a tool for their creative or poetic imagination and is viewed as a characteristic of language that falls into the category of 'extraordinary' rather than 'ordinary'. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson challenge this traditional point of view, arguing instead that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, found "not just in language but in thought and action". Their key finding is that our ordinary conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. This means that the abstract concepts which govern our thought and action like ARGUMENT, are understood and defined in terms of other, more concrete concepts like WAR. This "cognitive linguistic view" outlines that metaphors, which they define as metaphorical concepts, are an inevitable process of human thought.

The conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR is systematically reflected in our language by a wide variety of expressions, demonstrating how the framework of battle is mapped onto the discourse of argument. When we speak, we use the vocabulary of war: "*Your claims are indefensible", "He attacked every weak point", "I've never won an argument*", and "*He shot down all of my arguments*". Obviously, this metaphor is more than just linguistic; it structures the actions we perform in arguing. We can win or lose arguments, we see the other person as an opponent, we defend our own points of view, and lastly, we

plan and use strategies. The structure of an argument: attack, beat, defense, counterattack, win etc. reflects this pervasive conceptual metaphor.

This metaphor, like most structural conceptual metaphors, is highly systematic: expressions from the vocabulary of war "form a systematic way of talking about the battling aspects of arguing". This means a "portion of the conceptual network of battle partially characterizes the concept of an argument, and the language follows suit" *(Ch. 2, p. 11)*. Because the metaphorical concept is systematic, the language we use to discuss that aspect of the concept is also systematic. This coherence confirms that the metaphor is in our very concept of an argument, structuring both the activity and the language used to describe it. As Lakoff and Johnson conclude, the language of argument is perceived as literal and, in reality, not that poetic because we form an idea of arguments this way. To achieve this fundamental cognitive structure, the metaphor relies on three core operational mechanisms: the source domain, the target domain, and the systematic mapping that links information between them.

2.2. Source and Target Domains: The Mechanics of Mapping

In the article *"Thibodeau et al. (2019). The role of metaphor in communication and thought"*, the authors demonstrate using the illustration how a metaphor functions by systematically connecting an abstract target concept to a more concrete source concept via a *mapping* of features. This process allows for both efficient communication and persuasive influence.

In Figure 1. "Thibodeau, Matlock, Flusberg (2019). The role of metaphor in communication and thought", a caricature shows President Donald Trump standing over a swamp, metaphorically representing the U.S. government. As Trump prepares to pull the plug,

figures and concepts are caught in a churning whirlpool, visually illustrating a forced removal or cleansing.

The metaphorical phrase, *DRAIN THE SWAMP,* often used in political discourse, perfectly illustrates these components:

Source Domain: The familiar, physical concept from which meaning is drawn, which is '*the swamp'*.

Target Domain: The abstract, complex concept being understood, which is **'***the political establishment'* (U.S. government).

Mapping: The specific links that systematically transfer the logic and language of the source to the target. For instance, '*swamp water'* maps *onto 'people and structures in government',* and to *'drain'* maps into *'remove'*.

A crucial feature of metaphorical mappings is that they are always partial, not total. The metaphor selectively highlights certain features of the source while ignoring others. The metaphor highlights the negative aspects of a swamp which is its murky nature, stagnation, and the harmful creatures (like some government people possibly involved in misuse of their power and corruption etc.). It deliberately downplays or backgrounds the positive features of a real swamp, such as its ecological functions (e.g., purifying water or providing a habitat for valued life forms). This deliberate highlighting and obscuring seriously influences how people think about the issue, framing the conversation around specific problems like political corruption while ignoring others, such as treaties and trade. The image makes this clear by showing abstract concepts like *corruption*, *crime*, and *lies* being literally pulled into a vortex labeled DRAIN THE SWAMP!

To support the idea that metaphorical mapping is partial and holds ideological power, the article by *Greavu (2018)" Metaphors for Brexit in the European public discourse"* strongly reinforces the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). Greavu's research analyzed metaphors used in the public discourse surrounding Brexit. She demonstrates how the *state-as-a-person* metaphor was used by UK negotiators to project positive traits like courage and bravery onto Britain, while the EU team used the same metaphor to portray Britain as a villain and Brexit as an act of aggression. This study showed that by using different and often contradictory metaphors, such as *BREXIT IS DIVORCE* or *BREXIT IS A JOURNEY*, each side selectively highlighted aspects to justify their policies.

2.3. Metaphors in Discourse Analysis.

To research the topic of cognitive linguistic view of metaphor deeper, Christopher Hart in his article, "Critical discourse analysis and metaphor" (2008), connects metaphors with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to show that language isn't just used to describe the world, but to build it. And metaphors aren't just neutral; they serve as powerful tools that

shape how we think and act by highlighting certain ideas while hiding others. Traditionally, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has used tools like Halliday's systemic functional grammar to analyze how language constructs power. Other methods have focused on passive sentence structures, nominalizations and argumentation theory to examine things like racist discourse. However, mainstream CDA has largely overlooked the role of metaphor.

Some scholars, like Charteris-Black (2004) p. *28*, argue that metaphor is crucial to CDA because it helps create a coherent view of reality. Metaphors are ideological structures that define what we see as real and can privilege one understanding of reality over others. Analyzing this ideological meaning requires a cognitive approach, which considers that language use and the construction of knowledge happen in the minds of individuals.

Cognitive approaches, including metaphor analysis, are used as an effective tool to address metaphors within CDA because it explores the connections between language, thought, and culture. It provides insights into how widespread and persuasive metaphors can be.

2.4. Crosslinguistic Theory

The way conceptual metaphors are elaborated can differ significantly by language and culture. These cross-linguistic differences are important to pay attention to when analyzing languages other than English, as they reveal unique cultural conceptualizations.

Frank Boers in his article" Applied linguistics perspectives on cross-cultural variation in conceptual metaphor (2003)" synthesizes applied linguistic perspectives on cross-cultural variation in conceptual metaphor, highlighting how Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT**)** is practically applied in foreign language learning and cross-cultural communication. He focuses on how CMT is applied by giving coherence and motivation to clusters of figurative idioms, identifying three primary ways conceptual metaphors vary and are studied across cultures:

I. *Differences in Source-Target Mappings* (when cultures use a different source domain for a common target concept).

Culture-Specific Mapping: While most primary metaphors (like MORE IS UP) are universal because they are grounded in shared physical experience, complex metaphors are more likely to be culture-specific. For example, the metaphor THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS (Without *a solid foundation, your theory* will soon collapse) combines primary metaphors like ORGANIZATION IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE. These complex domains often elaborated through unique cultural experience; an isolated community in the Andes wouldn't likely develop many sailing metaphors like those found in English (*She sailed through her exams*).

Culture-Specific Locations: Even the seemingly universal metaphor, THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS can vary. While Western cultures locate higher emotions in the heart (*She's broken my heart*), Malay culture commonly associates them with the liver.

The investigation of how metaphors vary across languages is central to modern cognitive linguistics. Zoltán Kövecses's research on cross-linguistic metaphor (Kovecses, 2010) confirms that many conceptual metaphors are near-universal (TIME IS SPACE, HAPPINESS IS UP), deriving from a "universal bodily experience" (embodiment) shared across diverse cultures and language families. However, Kövecses emphasizes that this universality exists mainly at a generic level (a conceptual schema). Cultural variation arises because different communities apply a "differential experiential focus," meaning they choose to single out and emphasize different components of that universal bodily experience. This process results in *congruent metaphors* that are filled with unique cultural content at a specific level. For instance, while the generic metaphor of AN ANGRY PERSON IS A PRESSURIZED CONTAINER is widely shared, each culture focuses on a different aspect of the physiological experience to detail the metaphor: English and Hungarian focus on heat and pressure (*anger was boiling inside him),* Chinese focuses on *pressure and qi* (energy/gas) , and Zulu focuses on the heart as a container of limited capacity. This shows that while the abstract conceptual structure is universal, the specific metaphorical details are shaped by local culture.

II. *Differences in Productivity and Conventionality* (when two languages share a metaphor, but one culture uses it much more frequently and diversely than the other). For instance, American English produces more baseball-based metaphors *(I couldn't even get to first base*) than European languages because the sport is more culturally popular in the US.

This type of variation can even reflect a country's history (the high number of sailing metaphors in British English). (*Boers, F. (2003). Applied linguistics perspectives on cross-cultural variation in conceptual metaphor, p. 4)*

Furthermore, the productivity of a conceptual system is demonstrated by the sheer volume of source domains used for a single target. For example, the abstract concept of LOVE is conventionally understood in Anglo-American (and Western) culture through numerous highly productive source domains, including FIRE (*burning with love*), ILLNESS (*She has it bad*), WAR (*She eventually surrendered*), and GAME (*She's playing hard to get*). The wide array of these age-old, deeply entrenched conventional metaphors highlights the high degree of systematicity and productivity within this conceptual domain. (*Kovecses 2010; p.56-57)*

III. *Differences in Value-Judgments* (when cultures share a metaphor but attach different connotations or emotional values to it). For example, describing government using a machine metaphor might be intended as positive in a country that values its effective institutions, suggesting it is "*smooth-*

running", but it could imply the government is "*too impersonal and inflexible*" to a different audience.

To sum it up, Boers' research confirms that awareness of these metaphorical differences can serve as a "*window onto a community's culture*" and is essential for effective cross-cultural communication.

2.5. Metaphor Research on Career Discourse

In several past studies, researchers have consistently applied CMT to look at how people metaphorically make sense of their careers, recognizing that the language used reflects underlying cognitive models. Studies explore these topics by showing that metaphors shape how we understand our professional life.

The article *"Making sense of careers through the lens of a path metaphor" by Theresa Smith-Ruig* is a practical demonstration of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), applying its principles to understand modern career development among Australian accounting professionals.

The study is based on the core principle of Conceptual Metaphor Theory that metaphors are pervasive in everyday life and function as a "basic structural form of experience through which human beings engage, organize, and understand their world". In this research, participants frequently and spontaneously used the metaphor of *CAREER IS A JOURNEY/PATH/ROAD* to describe their career progression without being asked by the interviewer about it. Crucially, the metaphor was derived from the participants' own explanation of their career trajectories and was not a structure imposed by the researcher, confirming its cognitive and conceptual reality within the professional domain.

The metaphor provided a coherent framework for analyzing the complex shift toward "boundaryless careers" by categorizing professional experience through different "path" types:

Traditional path: This model views a career as a *pre-designed path* (ascending an organizational hierarchy to partner), requiring an individual to follow a sequential, structured route.

Boundaryless path: This contrasting model defines a career as a *unique path* carved out proactively by the individual, often motivated by personal goals like the pursuit of a better work-life balance.

Beyond the core organizing metaphor of *CAREER IS A PATH/JOURNEY*, a critical and salient metaphor emerged spontaneously from the participants' discourse to describe moments of internal conflict: the *"crossroads," "turning point,"* or *"t-junction"*. This metaphor

functions as a powerful *cognitive tool* used by professionals to conceptualize and manage complex professional dilemmas:

- ✓ *Function as a Re-evaluation Trigger:* Participants consistently reached this "crossroads" during their late 30s or early 40s, often after achieving senior positions and reaching a "plateau". The metaphor captures feelings of *discontent, boredom, and vulnerability*, prompting them to re-evaluate their entire career direction.
- ✓ *Defining the Dilemma:* The crossroads visually represents the core conflict driving the modern professional: the struggle over whether to continue following the structured, *traditional career path* (which offers clear progression) or to develop their own unique *boundaryless career path*. This choice was primarily motivated by the desire for a better work-life balance and more fulfilling, stimulating work.
- ✓ *Positive vs. Negative Crossroads:* The article notes that while many saw the crossroads negatively (as a point of crisis), others experienced a positive *"turning point"* that helped "accelerate their future career development". These positive turning points were often linked to acquiring new skills or successfully tackling a particular challenge, demonstrating how the metaphor accounts for both stagnation and accelerated growth.

The emergence of the *"crossroads"* metaphor strongly demonstrates how language is used not just to describe reality, but to structure complex professional dilemmas into understandable choice points. This practical implementation demonstrates that CMT is an effective tool to use in qualitative social science research, helping study to understand the complexity of career development.

To support the idea that metaphor research reveals underlying cognitive models for career discourse, the work of *C. Fisk (2005)" Knowledge Work: New Metaphors for the New Economy"* demonstrates an alternative to the Smith-Ruig study. Fisk demonstrates how metaphors are deliberately used as *'currency of complex systems'* to simplify and frame the modern workplace. Specifically, she stresses out the shift away from the outdated *ladder* metaphor for career progression and the traditional *'master and servant'* terminology, which could no longer capture the reality of professional work. AT&T's spokesperson used the *"parking lot"* metaphor to quickly change how employees were seen, labeling them *"vendors of skills"* (or temporary workers). This action immediately pushed the financial risks of a bad economy from the company onto those workers. This clever use of language proves that metaphors don't just describe reality; they actively shape the legal and cultural rules of work, making Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) an essential way to understand complex careers.

3. METHODOLOGY

For this study I have applied a simple, descriptive method based on *Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)* to analyze professional language specific to Ukrainian culture.

I began by collecting the language used in everyday life today. The core data consists of modern Ukrainian professional discourse, collected from multiple modern sources: *lively online forums and blogs* dedicated to career advice and challenges, *formal business publications*, and analysis of linguistic patterns in the *Ukrainian National Corpus* (*sketchengine.eu*) and vocabulary sites (*slovnyk.ua*). The final data includes the metaphorical words, phrases, and any associated mixed-media components that frame professional concepts.

With this data, I scanned all content systematically through these distinct stages:

1) *Metaphor Identification*: I systematically read the discourse to pinpoint recurring metaphorical verbs and idioms: *влитися (flow into)*, *прокачати (pump up*), *викликати (call out loud)* related to professional life.
2) *Mapping*: For each metaphor identified, I determine its underlying conceptual mapping, classifying it by its Source Domain (concrete concept) and Target Domain (abstract concept). I then group the expressions by their dominant metaphor.
3) *Systematicity Analysis*: A key step involves analyzing the adverbs and modifiers (*гармонійно*, *швидко*) used with these key verbs. This reveals the metaphor's cultural systematicity, clarifying how the conceptual frame is uniquely "filled in" by the local context, as described by Kövecses.
4) *Cultural Interpretation*: Finally, the identified conceptual structures are interpreted to reveal underlying Ukrainian cultural values (social harmony) and contrasted with generalized English metaphors, ensuring the unique cultural story is clearly shown.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The way we talk and think about work involves many common metaphors. These aren't just words; as Lakoff and Johnson show in "Metaphors We Live By," such metaphors shape how we understand important things like career, any problems we face at work, and even the routine aspects of our job. Because these metaphors reflect how we think, I believe that looking closely at them can tell us a lot about the cultural ideas present in a workplace. Therefore, in this project, I explore how people in Ukraine today use metaphors when they discuss work, aiming to understand the unique cultural views that their language reveals.

A conceptual metaphor is a way we understand one main idea, often something abstract like *time* or *an argument*, by thinking about it as if it were another, more concrete thing, like *money* or *a war*. These metaphors are not just in the words we use, but are a fundamental part of how we think, and even the way we act. This understanding works because our minds make connections, or 'mappings', between the familiar concept (*the source*) and the one we are trying to understand (*the target*). For that reason, many common phrases we use come from these deeper ways of thinking.

While many of our basic human experiences are universal, like how our bodies are oriented in space, leading to some near-universal metaphors. Their culture plays a very significant role in shaping which aspects of these experiences become truly important and are chosen as the main sources for the concepts. As Zoltán Kövecses discusses in his work *"Metaphor and Culture" (2010),* even if a general metaphorical idea, such as ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER, seems common across many languages, different cultures will "fill out" this broad idea with their own unique cultural details at a more specific level. For example, the Hungarian metaphor ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER differs from English in minor ways, literally *"anger was boiling inside him";* Japanese culture would link it to the belly "*the intestines are boiling"*, Chinese culture links it to energy "*qi" – "the anger qi in one's heart"*, and Zulu culture to the *heart* - "*he has a small/short heart"(impatient or intolerant).* Each of those local concepts show how culture directly shapes the specifics of the source idea. However, cultures can also develop entirely different main metaphors for the same topic, Kövecses (2010) provides example as well of the Hmong metaphor LIFE IS A STRING which varies significantly from many common Western ways of understanding life.

To explain how such cultural variations can develop from shared human experiences, Kövecses (2010) introduces the important idea of "differential experiential focus". This means that even though our basic bodily experiences are universal, different cultures can choose to emphasize or focus on different components of those experiences when they form their metaphors. Basically, the culture selects which part of our common human experience becomes the primary source for a particular way of thinking. Building on this, Lakoff and Johnson, in "Metaphors We Live By", tells us that the cultural system itself

guides which metaphors become more in use and more suitable with existing certain beliefs and practices. For example, in popular metaphor TIME IS MONEY shows how a metaphor can be closely attached to cultural practices around work and how it's measured in many Western and some Eastern countries.

My main findings reveal that Ukrainians often understand workplace adaptation as a process of *'влитися' (flowing into)* a collective, with significant emphasis on the *manner* of this integration. Skills crucial for career advancement are frequently conceptualized as needing to be *'прокачати' (pumped up),* framing abilities as tangible qualities that can be enhanced through direct effort. Furthermore, impactful events or workplace challenges are often described as *'викликати' (calling out),* personifying situations as active forces that demand a response. These distinct patterns collectively point to specific Ukrainian cultural perspectives concerning social harmony, the proactive nature of personal and professional development, and the direct, attention-grabbing way cause and effect is often perceived in their work life.

In this section, I show these metaphors, starting with *'влитися' (flow into)*, showing examples of how they are used with different meanings. I'll first explain my approach, then look closely at these key metaphors and discuss what they might tell us about Ukrainian work culture, before finishing up.

4.1. *Влитися* [vlytysya] – flow into

To illustrate the patterns mentioned, the first one for detailed analysis is *влитися [vlytysya]* **(***flow into)*, literally meaning *'to flow into'* (used with liquids similar in use as in English language). In professional Ukrainian contexts, this verb is actively used to describe the process of *adapting to, getting used to, or fitting into* a new working environment or team. What's particularly interesting is how the specific *way* someone *'flows into'* the environment – the ease, speed, or harmony of their integration – is often expressed through the adverbs used with the verb. These examples underscore the importance of the accompanying adverbs, showing that *how* one *'flows into'* the social space – the very nature of the adaptation – is defined by these modifiers, which can substantially alter the conceptualized experience:

- *Органічно влитися* у новий колектив [orgʌnitʃn̂ɔ vlytysya u novyj koləkt'yv] – *organically flow into* new working team/ *organically adapt to / fit into* new working team
- *гармонійно* [garmoniʏnɔ] - harmoniously
- *плавно* [plavnɔ] - smoothly
- *чудово* [tʃ̂ùdovɔ] - wonderfully
- *повноцінно* [povnotsijnɔ]/ повністю [‘povnistju] - fully
- *непогано* [nepo'gɑnə] – not bad
- *вдало* [vdɑlə]/ успішно [us’piʃnə] - successfully
- *назавжди* [na'zavʒdy] – forever

- *згодом* [zgodɔm] – in time
- *важко* [vaʒkɔ]/ складно [skladnə] – with a lot of difficulties
- *легко* [legkɔ] / просто [‘prostə] - easily
- *швидко* [ʃvydkə] / швидше [ʃ’vydʃə] – fast/faster
- *відразу* [vid’razu] – at once
- *активно* [ak’tyvnə] – actively

Phrases Actively Used in Modern Discourse:

1) Українці швидко *влилися* в систему працевлаштування
    a. [ukra'yintsi ʃvydkə *vlylysya* u systemu pratsev'laʃtu'vaŋya]
    b. Ukrainians fast *flowed into* the system of employment
    c. Ukrainians *adapted to* the employment system very fast.

2) Дівчина повноцінно адаптувалася та *влилася* в новий колектив
    a. ['divt͡ʃ͡ʃyna povno'tsiŋo adaptuvalasya ta *vly'lasya* v no'vyj kolek'tyv]
    b. The young girl fully *adapted* and *flowed into* new team.
    c. The young girl fully *adapted to* the new working team.

3) Жінка прокоментувала, що колектив підприємства їй добре знайомий, отож, *влилася* до команди легко та із задоволенням
    a. [zhinka prokomentu’vala ʃt͡ʃo kolek’tyv pidpry’yemstva yij ‘dobre zna’yomyj i otozh *vly’lasya* do ko’mandy ‘legko ta iz zado’volеŋ’: yam]
    b. The woman commented that the work team of the company is very familiar to her, that’s why she *flowed into* the team easily and with pleasure.
    c. The woman commented that she was well acquainted with the company’s staff, so she *joined* the team easily and with pleasure.

In modern Ukrainian professional discourse, the verb *влитися (vlytysya),* literally meaning *‘to flow into’*, serves as a key metaphor trigger. The target domain being described is INTEGRATION / ADAPTATION, specifically referring to the process where an individual joins and becomes part of a new work team, environment, or system. This process is understood through the source domain of LIQUID FLOW / MOVEMENT OF FLUIDS. Thinking of the person joining a team as a single drop of water trying to mix into a bigger pool of water is a great way to understand the *"flow into" (влитися)* metaphor phrase. The constructed metaphorical image clearly shows the one new person compared to the larger group they're joining. It also shows the main goal: for the *'drop' (the person)* to blend in and become part of the *'pool' (the team)*. This image really fits the idea of *flowing into* something. It helps us see how the way the drop mixes easily or with trouble is just like how easy or hard it is for the person *to fit into* their new workplace.

Illustration 2.

This image was generated using a contemporary Artificial Intelligence platform and visually maps the Ukrainian concept of joining a team *влитися (to flow into)*. The illustration was generated to represent the key metaphorical components:

The Target Domain (The Team): The work team/new environment is clearly presented as a CONTAINER (the transparent cube). This highlights the idea that the team is a fixed, cohesive social entity.

The Source Domain (The Individual): The new employee (the figure on the left) is depicted as a single silhouette, whose edges appear fluid and dissolving into a liquid substance as they approach the group.

The Process: The visible mixing of colors and fluid shapes within the cube emphasizes the necessary fluid, harmonious transition, which reflects the cultural priority placed on achieving social cohesion when adapting to a new workplace.

Mapping:

Source Domain: LIQUID FLOW	*Target Domain: INTEGRATION/ADAPTATION*
The Larger Body of Liquid	New Work Environment/Work Team
The act of flowing	The Process of Integrating / Adapting / Fitting In
Manner of flow	The Manner integration/adaptation
Ease of flow (absence of obstacles)	Ease of Integration/Adaptation
Difficulty of flow (presence of obstacles)	Difficulty of integration
Complete Merging	Full integration
Speed of Flow	Speed of Adaptation

In my analysis of the Ukrainian metaphor *влитися (to flow into),* where INTEGRATION / ADAPTATION IS LIQUID FLOW / MOVEMENT OF FLUIDS, I find strong resonance with concepts from Lakoff and Johnson's "Metaphors We Live By". They extensively discuss ontological metaphors where abstract experiences are conceptualized as entities, substances, or containers (Chapter 6), which is highly relevant to my findings. Just as they explain that we view ourselves as containers and project this onto abstract concepts like states leading to metaphors like STATES ARE CONTAINERS seen in examples such as *"He's in love"* or *"He entered a state of euphoria"*. Ukrainian speakers seem to understand the new team or work environment in my *'влитися'* examples as a conceptual CONTAINER. The process of integration is understood as the act of an individual '*flowing into*' this metaphorical container. Another thought is that it is compared to their mapping of

ACTIVITIES ARE CONTAINERS as in *"He's immersed in washing the windows*", as the *new working team* or *employment system* can be conceptualized as activity space one enters.

A crucial aspect of my research on '*влитися' (to flow into)* is the importance of modifiers, particularly the adverbs like *smoothly, with difficulty* etc. that accompany the verb, and Lakoff and Johnson's work provides a theoretical framework for this. According to their concept of Metaphorical Systematicity: Highlighting and Hiding (Chapter 3), a metaphorical concept allows us to focus on certain aspects of a concept while hiding others. In the data the adverbs I've listed and provided examples function as linguistic tools that help highlight specific aspects of the *'flowing'* (INTEGRATION) process that the LIQUID FLOW source domain makes available; for instance, *"flowing smoothly"* highlights the ease of mixing, whereas *"flowing with difficulty"* emphasizes resistance. These modifiers specify *how* the flowing occurs, detailing facets of the integration experience that the basic metaphor itself allows for but doesn't fully detail.

Furthermore, Lakoff and Johnson's ch.20 "How Metaphor Can Give Meaning to Form" discusses broader language patterns that supports my focus on adverbs: our word choices aren't just random when a metaphor is active. To my opinion, the specific adverbs that have been examined are a type of linguistic form. These adverbs get their detailed meanings from the INTEGRATION IS LIQUID FLOW metaphor because they help describe *particular aspects/ manner* of that conceptual flow.

From the sociolinguistic perspective what's noticeable is how much emphasis Ukrainian speakers uses on *how* a person *flows into* a new team or work environment. This process is often described by adding words like *organically, harmoniously, smoothly, easily, successfully, fully,* and *fast*. This frequent use of these positive descriptions tells us something important about the culture. It suggests that people really value *harmony and cohesion* meaning they like it when newcomers fit in easily without causing any disruption. It also shows they appreciate *smooth transitions,* hoping people can join successfully and without much effort. Finally, it highlights the importance of *social compatibility,* stressing that it's good for the new person to naturally get along well and mesh with the people already there.

4.2. *Прокачати* [proka' t͡ʃaty] – pump up.

In modern English discourse, the verb "*pump up*" is most frequently used to: inflate something physically (*pump up a tire*); create a feeling of energy and excitement in a person (*pump up the crowd*); refers to the sensation of muscles becoming temporarily larger and firmer during intense physical activity like weightlifting.

The context usually makes the intended meaning clear. In the Ukrainian language, this verb is used literally for inflating something physically and traditionally appears in sports

discourse. However, a key finding from reviewing professional language data is that it is now frequently used metaphorically to mean improving something, specifically enhancing intellectual or professional skills. An interesting fact that highlights the linguistic evolution of this term is that this metaphor is the most modern of the three examined in this research, having only entered everyday use within the last 15 to 20 years.

Phrases Actively Used in Modern Discourse:

4) Експерти допоможуть *прокачати* скіли з планування бізнесу, маркетингу, міжнародної торгівлі.
    a. [eks'perty dopo'mozhut' *proka' t͡ʃaty* skily z planu'vaɳ:ya 'biznesu, mar'ketyngu, mizhna'rodnoyi tor'givli]
    b. Experts will help to *pump up* the skills at business planning, marketing and international trading.
    c. Experts will help you to *improve* your skills at business planning, marketing and international trading.

5) Крім того, це можливість *прокачати* професійні навички.
    a. [krim togo tse mozh'lyvist' *proka' t͡ʃaty* profe'siyni navyt͡ʃky]
    b. In addition, it is an opportunity to *pump up* professional skills.
    c. In addition, it is an opportunity to *improve* professional skills.

6) Мені треба *прокачати* навичку перемовин, щоб попросити вищу зарплату.
    a. [meni 'treba *proka' t͡ʃaty* navyt͡ʃky pere'movyn ʃt͡ʃob popro'syty 'vy ʃt͡ʃu zarp'latu]
    b. I need to *pump up* my negotiation skills in order to ask for higher salary.
    c. I need to *improve* my negotiation skills in order to ask for higher salary.

In my analysis of Ukrainian professional discourse, the verb *прокачати (to pump up)* frequently appears in contexts of improving skills, particularly intellectual or professional ones such as business planning or negotiation capabilities. This usage is deeply connected to a series of other interconnected conceptual metaphors. At the most fundamental level, it evolved from potentially near-universal conceptual metaphor MIND IS BODY, a concept discussed in Kövecses (2010) as a common way humans understand mental phenomena in terms of physical experiences. Then it connects us with more specific metaphorical understandings, such as the one I initially identified, THE BRAIN IS A MUSCLE, which naturally leads to the core metaphor for this expression: SKILL IMPROVEMENT IS PHYSICAL ENHANCEMENT.

The choice of "pump up" as the linguistic manifestation is heavily influenced by its highly salient use in the *sports domain*, where athletes literally *pump up* their muscles through intense exercise, leading to visible enhancement, increased strength, and successful performance. This familiar source domain of physical enhancement and its tangible results in sports provides a powerful model for conceptualizing the effortful process of skill

development in professional contexts. Furthermore, the directional particle "UP" in "*pump* UP" is itself highly significant, it is structural metaphor, where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another, or *orientational metaphor* in Lakoff and Johnson discussed in "Metaphors We Live By". It is also connected with fundamental primary metaphors, such as MORE IS UP and GOOD IS UP, which Kövecses (2010) discusses as being widespread due to common human experiences. Therefore "pumping skills UP" signifies an increase in the quantity or level of skill (MORE IS UP) and a movement towards a better, more desirable state of competence (GOOD IS UP followed by extension A HIGHER LEVEL OF SKILL IS UP). Therefore, the metaphorical conceptualization of *"прокачати скіли" (pump up skills*) is multi-layered: it involves understanding the mind as a bodily entity whose capacities (skills) can be physically enhanced, drawing imagery from the intensive efforts and visible results in sports, all while signaling a desired upward trajectory towards greater proficiency. This complex metaphorical framing strongly reflects and reinforces the cultural values I've identified in my research, such as an appreciation for proactive and intense effort, a view of skills as tangible qualities that can be actively and measurably strengthened, and a focus on achieving clearly discernible, improved results. The metaphor doesn't just describe skill improvement; it frames it as a dynamic, almost athletic endeavor aimed at reaching a higher, more powerful state of capability.

Mapping:

Source Domain*: PHYSICAL ENHANCEMENT*	Target Domain: *SKILL IMPROVEMENT / ENHANCEMENT*
Muscle being exercised	Skill / Ability / Competence / Proficiency
Pumping Process (exercise, effort, pressure).....	Process of Active Skill Development (training, practice, studying)
Increased Size / Strength / Pressure / Volume	Increased Level of Skill / Competence / Effectiveness / Proficiency
Tools / Equipment for Pumping (weights, pump)	Methods / Resources for Skill Development (experts, courses, experience)
Effort / Energy Expended	Effort / Time / Resources Invested in Skill Development
The Person Doing the Pumping	The Person improving their skills (someone possibly helping them)
Goal State (bigger muscles)	Desired Level of Skill / Competence ("needed level", improved negotiation)

In Ukrainian professional discourse when people use the physical action word *'pump up'* (*прокачати*) for improving thinking or professional skills, it shows an interesting cultural view about getting better at things. It suggests that improvement requires *real, active work*; you can't just wait to learn, you have to make an effort to *'pump up'* your skills. Talking this way also makes skills seem like *real, solid things* you can actually build up and measure, similar to building muscles. Plus, saying *'pump up'* sounds *more intense and focused on getting clear results* compared to just *'learning*' or '*developing'*. This might connect to the common idea that *the brain is like a muscle* – suggesting that just like exercise makes muscles stronger, focused effort helps *'pump up'* brainpower and abilities

The use of the physical action verb *'pump up' (прокачати*) in Ukrainian professional discourse for enhancing cognitive or professional skills reveals an interesting cultural perspective on self-improvement. This usage suggests that achieving such improvement necessitates genuine, active engagement, individuals feel they cannot passively wait to learn but must proactively strive to *'pump up'* their abilities. Such phrasing also describes skills as tangible, almost solid attributes that can be systematically built up and measured, like physical muscles. Furthermore, the expression *"pump up"* focuses on achieving visible results rather than simpler terms like *"learning"* or "*developing".* This framing might connect to the prevalent notion that THE BRAIN IS A MUSCLE, implying that, similar to how physical exercise strengthens muscles, focused mental effort effectively *pumps up* cognitive power and professional capabilities."

4.3. *Викликати* [vykly'katy] – call out for something in a very loud way

Literally, *"to call out for something in a very loud way"* describes an audible request, often made by someone who is in need, distress, or otherwise unable to obtain something themselves. This concept can also extend metaphorically to indicate a strong need or requirement, as when a situation or object clearly '*calls out for'* a particular action, for instance (*The messy room called out for a good cleaning).* In Ukrainian, while the literal sense of an audible request is used similarly, the verb *"викликати" (vykly'katy),* which embodies this action, frequently takes on a broader metaphorical meaning in professional contexts. There, it is often used to mean attracting certain circumstances, causing particular events, or eliciting specific emotional reactions.

Phrases Actively Used in Modern Discourse:

7) Рішення *викликало* негайну реакцію на біржах і змінило баланс на ринку.
    a. ['riʃe ɳ:ya '*vyklykalo* ne'hajnu re'aktsiyu na birzhah I zmi'nylo balans na 'rynku]
    b. The decision *called out* loud an immediate reaction on the stock markets and changed the balance in the market.
    c. The decision *caused* an immediate reaction on the stock markets and changed the balance in the general market.

8) Made in UA Support Project *викликав* значний інтерес серед українських підприємців.
    a. Made in UA Support Project [*vykly'kaje* znatʃn'yj interes 'sered ukrayins'kyh pidpry'jemtsiv]
    b. Made in UA Support Project *calls out* loud *significant interest* among Ukrainian businesspeople.
    c. Made in UA Support Project *aroused* significant interest among Ukrainian businesspeople.

9) Нові спроби звертатися до емоцій *викликатимуть* дедалі більше роздратування в наших партнерів.
    a. [no'vi sproby zvert'atysya do emotsiy *vykly'katymut'* de'dali 'bil'ʃe rozdratu'va ŋ:ya v 'naʃyh part'neriv]
    b. New attempts to appeal to emotions will *call out* loud more and more *irritation* in our partners
    c. New attempts to appeal to emotions will *cause* more and more *irritation* in our partners.

10) Крім того, ця справа пов'язана з енною кількістю складових, які вже *викликають* запитання у спеціалістів.
    a. [krim togo ts'ya sprava pov'yazana z 'en:oyu 'kil'kist'u sklado'vyh ya'ki vze *vykly'kayut'* zapyta ŋ:ya u zpetsia'listiv]
    b. In addition, this case is associated with a large number of components that are already *calling out* loud *questions* among specialists.
    c. In addition, this case is associated with a large number of components that are already *raising* questions among specialists.

11) Ситуація *викликала* зрозумілі суперечки.
    a. [sytu'atsiya *'vyklykala* zrozy'mili supe'retʃ͡ky]
    b. The situation has *called out* loud understandable *controversy*.
    c. The situation has *caused* understandable *controversy.*

12) Ситуація *викликає* у покупців питання: чому саме зараз ціни підскочили.
    a. [sytu'atsiya *vykly'kaye* u pokup'tsiv py'taŋ:ya tʃ͡o'mu 'same zaraz 'tsiny pids'kotʃ͡yly]
    b. The situation *calls out* loud among buyers *questions*: why have prices jumped now?
    c. The situation *raises* questions among buyers: why have prices jumped now?

Looking at the examples from recent Ukrainian work conversations in this draft, we see the phrase *викликати (vykly'katy)* – which literally means *'to call out loudly'* used in a special metaphorical way. It's used when one thing causes or attracts another thing to happen, like a project *викликати (causing*) interest or a situation *викликати (raising)* questions. This way of talking uses *personification*; it gives human qualities to things that aren't human.

The idea seems to come from the image of someone shouting loudly to get attention. It treats events or situations as if they are people who can actively *call out loudly* for a reaction even though, of course, a situation can't literally shout or demand things. So, the basic metaphorical idea is that *causing something is like a person calling out loudly for it*. This pictures cause and effect as very active and hard to ignore, like an event *shouting for a reaction*. What this pattern in the language samples might show about the culture is a view that actions often have very clear, direct *results that grab attention*, that certain situations naturally *demand a response,* and that important things happening at work tend to *get noticed and discussed publicly.*

Illustration 3.

This image was generated using an Artificial Intelligence platform after the metaphorical concept, including the mapping of the abstract cause as an active, personified agent, was described. The image effectively captures how the language *shifts the focus* from the people involved to the *instrument itself* (like a *decision or project),* emphasizing that the cause and effect is *direct, strong, and hard to ignore*

When I examined at how Ukrainians talk about work, interesting feature became salient for me: *instruments* like decisions, projects, or situations often become the direct *causers* of effects when the verb *'викликати' (to call out loudly*) is used. I find that this way of speaking often shifts the focus from the people behind these things to the *instruments* themselves, making it seem like these subjects caused all that. I believe this happens because of a special *mix of metaphor and metonymy*.

The first layer is a metaphor: I see an ABSTRACT CAUSE (like a decision or project) AS AN AGENT, and more specifically for *"викликати,"* I see it as AN ABSTRACT, a type of personification metaphor *(a person who can make a vocal action)*. This idea of personification is key because it gives these non-human *instruments* the ability '*to act*' and allows them to be the grammatical subject of "*викликати."* Once I think of a decision or project metaphorically as something that can *'call'*, using the verb *"викликати"* makes perfect sense because its literal meaning *("to call out loudly")* directly matches this idea of a human vocal action.

Then, within this metaphorical view, the specific, clear action of "calling out" (which is what '*викликати'* literally describes) is used, in my analysis, as a metonymy. It essentially stands in for or represents the whole, often more complicated, process of that now-personified *'instrument' causing an effect*, like a reaction, interest, or controversy. Therefore, I view it as a two-step process: first, the decision or project is metaphorically imagined as an active *"caller";* second, the specific action of *'calling out'* is used metonymically to show the broader impact of this *'caller'* causing something. This explains my observation that *'it seems like these subjects caused all that',* like the metaphor gives them power, and the verb choice shows a very direct, almost demanding, way they bring about an effect.

This way of speaking, I believe, has important cultural meanings. It tends to focus on the event or the *'instrument'* itself as the main force, more so than the people involved. This can make the cause feel very direct, strong, and almost independent, as if the 'decision itself' or the 'project itself' has its own power to create a response. This might lead to a cultural tendency to see these professional *'instruments'* as active forces, not just passive tools. As a result, I assume that *causation* is shown as something very active and attention-grabbing that directly '*calls for'* or summons a response, which could also help explain why often the *'unpredictable reactions'* I've noted can occur, as a strong *'call'* can lead to different interpretations by different audiences. Therefore, while a metaphor first helps us picture an abstract cause (like a decision) as *'an active caller'* that can do things, the main way I argue *"викликати" (to call out)* actually means *"to cause"* is through metonymy. The distinct, clear action of *'calling out'*, which this now personified cause can do, it essentially stands in for the whole process of causing something and the effect it produces (like a reaction or interest). This is like using a key part of an event (the *'calling out'*) to have a clear starting action to talk about the bigger event or its outcome. This idea fits well with how metonymy often works: *by highlighting important parts of a situation to make the overall meaning clearer and easier to grasp*.

5. SUMMARY

My analysis of Ukrainian professional discourse reveals distinct metaphorical patterns used to conceptualize key aspects of work, notably through the *verbs 'влитися' (to flow into), 'прокачати' (to pump up), and 'викликати' (to call out)*. The metaphor INTEGRATION IS FLOWING IN, lexicalized by *'влитися',* stands out as the most common; its meaning is significantly nuanced by a diverse array of modifiers, reflecting a richness that often requires a variety of different English verbs to translate accurately, depending on the specific manner of integration being described, a significant amount of Ukrainian modifiers correspond to many potential English verb choices. In contrast, the metaphoric use of *'прокачати' (pump up)* for skill enhancement is a more modern phenomenon, having appeared in Ukrainian work-related discourse only in the last 15-20 years, possibly transitioning from discussions in fields like neurolinguistic studies where cognitive improvement is sometimes framed in terms of physical enhancement. The main metaphor concept MIND IS BODY, followed by BRAIN IS A MUSCLE, underlying fundamental directional particle 'UP' in *'pump UP'.* And finally, perhaps, the most unique and authentic to Ukrainian conceptualization is *'викликати'(call out)* for causation, I would identify it simply as AN ABSTRACT CAUSE IS A CALLER; its meaning is often challenging to convey succinctly to an English-speaking audience, as finding an exact English synonym is difficult, frequently requiring an analysis of the entire sentence or broader context to grasp its full complexity of interpretation of an event or situation actively *'calling forth'* a response. These metaphors, which use unique source domains and show distinct characteristics in how they are used, reflect deeply rooted Ukrainian cultural values. These values include an emphasis on fitting in smoothly with others (harmonious integration), taking active steps to build real and measurable skills (proactive and tangible skill development), and a particular view of cause and effect as being direct and attention-grabbing with ability of eliciting specific emotional reactions. Overall, these ways of understanding work are often different from common American English metaphors, highlighting the unique cultural views present in Ukrainian professional language.

6. CONCLUSION

This study suggests that analyzing linguistic data could be a useful tool for discovering the unique ways Ukrainians think about their professional experience. The analysis of three metaphors: *‘влитися’* (*flow into*), ‘*прокачати’* (*pump up*), and *‘викликати’* (*call out*) reveals deeply rooted cultural values concerning social dynamics, professional development, and causation.

The overall pattern in Ukrainian professional language reflects a post-Soviet culture that prioritizes collectivism and social cohesion, which stands in stark contrast to the individualistic models prevalent in the Western culture.

In the Western model, English metaphors structure career entirely as a JOURNEY/PATH/ROAD (as seen in the Australian context). This model focuses on individual success, linear progression (*climb the ladder*), and self-focus, where a successful career satisfies *“your own ambitions and what you are trying to achieve"*. A popular phrase that makes complete sense in English but don’t frequently appear in the Ukrainian language data, is the focus on *measurable career progress* and *high rank* within an organization or profession.

The Ukrainian metaphors, however, reveal a fundamentally different cognitive experience. While English might use *"onboarding*" or *"finding your feet"* (implying individual action), the Ukrainian *“влитися” (flow into)* metaphor avoids path language for integration. Instead, it relies on the CONTAINER metaphor to define the team as a contained, cohesive entity one must seamlessly merge into. This reflects a post-USSR context where group security and acceptance are often seen as more vital than isolated individual status. The Ukrainian (Collectivist Heritage) emphasizes that the value placed on *social harmony and cohesion* is of greatest importance**.** The ‘*влитися’ (flow into)* metaphor frames joining a team as achieving *fluid social merging* (like a drop of water merging into a pool), which is the ultimate goal of integration. The frequent use of positive modifiers like ‘*гармонійно’ (harmoniously)* reinforces the cultural importance of adapting smoothly and avoiding disruption within the group. This stands in marked contrast to the Western personal achievement culture, where career discourse typically focuses on individual competition and achievement (such as climbing the corporate *"ladder"* or charting one's own *"path")*. For this cultural model, integration is viewed less as *social fusion* and more *as gaining a secure position or making a unique contribution* to the organization.

While the basic shared concepts are universal, the Ukrainian system highly favors metaphors of *physical enhancement* (‘*прокачати’*) and *direct summoning* (‘*викликати*’), moving away from the purely organizational focus often found in English. The Ukrainian emphasis on *measurable exertion (*tangible effort) directly supports the individual's economic security, which is vital in a post-transition economy. The metaphor of *direct summoning* ‘*викликати*’ (call out loud) acts as a crucial indicator of *self-awareness* in one's professional life: it implies that a person's actions are understood to directly *cause clear consequences* that affect both themselves and the surrounding collective. This

strong association between personal action and inevitable, public consequence reflects an older, more authentic cultural mentality rooted in *collectivism*.

However, the newest metaphor '*прокачати' (pump up)* is a product of Post-Soviet Pragmatism and Western Influence. Crucially, this metaphor is the most modern of the three, appearing in professional discourse only in the last 15-20 years. This development indicates the influence of a self-centered Western mentality, where individuals focus intensively on working on their own skills and relying solely on themselves in a fast-changing environment. This focus on visible labor (concrete effort) and proactive, intense work is self-initiated, serving the security of the individual, which is vital in a post-transition, often volatile economy. The mindset is that *"you can't just wait to learn; you have to make an effort to be competitive on the job market"*.

These comparisons demonstrate that although the basic framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory is universal, the metaphorical details are not interchangeable. The unique patterns found in Ukrainian professional language highlight that while the English system emphasizes *where* you are going on the path, the Ukrainian system prioritizes *how* you are integrating and *how* you are actively building yourself up for security within the collective. These findings confirm that metaphorical language serves as a critical lens into the distinct cultural values structuring the modern Ukrainian workplace.

Even though Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) clearly shows how culture and thought are linked, there's a big gap in research that this study addresses. Most studies look at other European languages, but few have done a focused cross-linguistic analysis of professional language between Ukrainian and English. Crucially, academic research often misses how language about work and careers has changed in a post-Soviet context, where new ideas about teamwork, effort, and social inclusion are constantly shifting. This language data metaphor research fills this gap by focusing specifically on Ukrainian work metaphors and how they contrast with English, offering a vital comparative view on how language reflects and drives cultural change globally.

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