

The Metaphorical Conceptualization of Phraseological Units with *Water*: a Contrastive English-Bulgarian Analysis

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Abstract. The aim of the present article is to report the results of an analysis of the phraseological units (PUs) with *water* in English and Bulgarian. The differences and similarities in the metaphorical conceptualization of such PUs are outlined. The analysis of the data set yields three groups of PUs: 1. (Pseudo-)Identical PUs (the lexical unit *water* appears in both languages, but the PUs are subdivided into ones where the inherent conceptualization coincides and ones in which there are differences in conceptualization, 2. English PUs which contain the *water* component, but their Bulgarian equivalents are based on different source domains (SD) and the conceptualization is different and 3. Bulgarian PUs which contain the *water* component, while their English equivalents do not contain it and therefore a difference in conceptualization is observed. Such analyses contribute to mastering the difficult sphere of translation, since PUs are traditionally one of the most difficult units to translate.

Keywords: phraseological units (PUs), conceptual metaphors (CMs), Source domain (SD), Target domain (TD), conceptualization

Росица Ишпекова. МЕТАФОРИЧНАТА КОНЦЕПТУАЛИЗАЦИЯ НА ФРАЗЕОЛОГИЧНИ ЕДИНИЦИ С *ВОДА*: АНГЛО-БЪЛГАРСКИ КОНТРАСТИВЕН АНАЛИЗ

Резюме. Целта на настоящата статия е да се направи анализ на фразеологичните единици (ФЕ) с *вода* в английски и български език. Търсят се разликите и приликите в метафоричната концептуализация на фразеологизмите. Анализираният набор от ФЕ е разделен на три групи: 1. Такива, които и в двата езика съдържат лексикалната единица *вода* и при които се наблюдават както съвпадения, така и разлики в кон-

цептуализацията, 2. Английски фразеологизми, които съдържат компонента *water*, но българските му еквиваленти са базирани на други сфери-източници (СИ) и съответно концептуализацията е различна, и 3. Български ФЕ, които съдържат компонента *вода*, а английските им еквиваленти не го съдържат и при които очаквано се наблюдава различна концептуализация. Анализът би помогнал в превода от единия език на другия, тъй като фразеологизмите са традиционно едни от най-трудно преводимите изрази.

Ключови думи: фразеологични единици (ФЕ), концептуални метафори (КМ), сфера-източник (СИ), сфера-цел (СЦ), концептуализация

Introduction

The paper aims to examine *water*-based idioms in English and Bulgarian and their respective equivalents in the two languages. The research interest is motivated by both theoretical considerations and language-oriented practices. The first group of considerations pertains to establishing similarities or differences in the conceptualization of various phenomena in the English-speaking and Bulgarian-speaking communities and how such analyses may help the more adequate comprehension of PUs with different conceptualizations, conditioned by various aspects of situated social cognition. The second group of considerations encompasses the following challenges related to translating idioms:

- Finding the Bulgarian equivalent or rendering the meaning of English idioms and proverbs in translation into Bulgarian in the most effective way;
- Finding the English equivalent or rendering the meaning of Bulgarian idioms and proverbs in translation into English in the most effective way;

These problems are directly reflected in the **aims** of the suggested piece of research, which are as follows:

1. To describe *water*-containing English idioms and their Bulgarian equivalents (near-equivalents or lack of any) and the English equivalents of Bulgarian idioms with *water* and establish the possible cognition-based factors for correspondences or mismatches.

2. To suggest how uncovering underlying conceptualisations of PUs can be fruitfully applied in translation, since idioms are transparent to native speakers, but a source of perplexity to those who are translating them in another language.

Idioms and Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

Phraseological units (PUs), or *idioms*, as they are called by most western scholars, represent what can probably be described as the most picturesque, colourful and challenging part of a language's vocabulary. The creation of idioms reflects people's conceptions of the world, the ways in which individuals construct socially and culturally motivated, embodied mental models of the world and ways to convey their contents vividly in a symbolic system such as human language.

Phraseology can be loosely defined as “the study of the structure, meaning and use of word combinations” (Cowie 1994). Traditionally PUs are treated on the lexical level as equivalent to the lexeme. That is, their meaning is claimed to be nondecomposable, just as the meaning of individual, simple, underived either morphologically or semantically, lexical items. They are inflexible in syntactical form and vary in the degree of arbitrariness in their semantics (Koonin 1996, Amossova 1962, Vinogradov 1986, etc.).

According to the traditional view, idioms are stipulated as stored ready-made in the mental lexicon, just as individual words are, and native speakers must learn the meanings of the idioms by heart. With the appearance of cognitive linguistics, and CMT in particular, idioms have been proven to be motivated by conceptual metaphors (CMs), metonymies and conventional wisdom. The motivation of idioms comes from sets of conceptual mappings between a concrete, physically-delineated Source Domain (SD) and an abstract, not clearly delineated Target Domain (TD) (Lakoff and Kövecses, 1987; R. Gibbs, 1994, Kövecses and Szabó, 2010, to name just a few). As Marija Omazić justifiably argues:

In contrast to the traditional view of idiom opacity, cognitive linguistics treats the phenomenon of understanding or processing idioms differently. From the cognitive perspective, even seemingly opaque idioms can be interpreted based on the cognitive concepts and mechanisms speakers intuitively use when they analyze the meanings of utterances. Many authors have stressed and recorded the systematic clustering of figurative expressions around conceptual metaphors and metonymies. (Omazić 70–71).

Moreover, contrary to the traditional view that idioms are non-decomposable, many idiomatic phrases appear to be decomposable or analyzable, with the meanings of their parts contributing independently to their overall figurative meanings. For instance, in the phrase *pop the question*, it is easy to infer that *question* refers to a marriage proposal and the verb *pop* is used to refer to the act of uttering it (1994). Gibbs exposes the fallacy of the “dead metaphor view of idiomaticity”. The author argues that many idioms are “very much alive metaphorically”, and that people are able to make sense of the figurative meaning of many unfamiliar idioms precisely because they can rely on the metaphorical interpretation of these expressions. As Gibbs justifiably argues, “[p]eople’s preexisting metaphorical understanding of many basic concepts provides part of the motivation for why people see idioms and proverbs as having the figurative meanings they do” (318).

The traditional, non-compositional approach to idiomatic meaning has been criticized and the view that the meaning of the constituent lexical items does play a role in comprehension has been gaining ground among cognitive scientists

(Glucksberg 1993; Cacciari, Tabossi 1993). So, the present study tries to show to what extent the meanings of some PUs are decomposable semantically and how this is based on the CMs and conventional wisdom that motivate their meaning, associated with a lexical item denoting a SD.

Data and Method

The data set has been harvested from the *Longman Dictionary of English Idioms* (1991) and *Фразеологичен речник на българския език* (1974) (Phraseological Dictionary of the Bulgarian Language). About 70 idioms have been manually extracted and classified in the respective groups.

The method employed is that of the already traditional, applied CMT. The qualitative approach to analyzing the PUs in the data set uncovers the SDs which underlie the surface linguistic expressions and the concomitant conceptualizations which predetermine the conceptual structuring of the TDs and the valuations associated with them. The method involves detecting the CM which projects the mapping form the SD onto the TD.

Analysis

‘Water’ PUs are classified in three groups according to the TD they structure: those denoting conventional wisdom and assessment of situations, those denoting personal and physical qualities and those denoting interpersonal interactions and behavior. All set phrases in the data set are highly colloquial, but may be used in different types of discourses.

We will first see what differences and similarities in conceptualization are shown by English and Bulgarian equivalent PUs that both employ the lexical item *water*. Presumably, these would be based on more or less similar conceptualizations and would therefore be easier to master by translators. However, in some cases the conceptualizations are different.

1. Idioms based on conventional wisdom and assessment of situations

This group includes idioms the TD of which is conventional wisdom and people’s assessment of different situations, based on their cultural and biological experience. The first group can be further subdivided into first, idioms that are equivalent in meaning yet are based on different conceptualizations such as: ***Blood is thicker than water*** and its Bulgarian equivalent ***Кръвта вода не става***, both meaning that family relationships are stronger than friendships. Although equivalent, the two set phrases in English and Bulgarian are based on different conceptualizations. *Thicker* in the English proverb metaphorically stands for “more powerful” or “stronger.” One of the meanings of the adjective *thick* is ‘made up of a large number of things or people close together’, which through metaphoric and

metonymic extensions has come to stand for “friendly,” which meaning is activated in the comparative phrase *to be as thick as thieves* (very close). The meaning of *Blood is thicker than water* is that friendships are like weak ‘water’ compared to the strength of family relationships. The Bulgarian set phrase is motivated by the image of the impossibility to turn (valuable) blood into (cheap) water, i.e. family ties, unlike friendship, cannot be severed.

The set phrase *murky waters* and its Bulgarian equivalent *подмолни води*, both of which mean ‘a situation or circumstance that is foreign, unclear or unfamiliar and which may be dangerous or difficult as a result’ are also based on different conceptualizations. The set phrase in English is *to be in murky waters* and it refers to people who are behaving in morally and ethically questionable ways. In the English idiom *murky* presents a transfer from the SD of DARKNESS, connected with the negatively evaluated member of the primary LIGHT– DARK opposition. Lakoff’s home page features light-related metaphors, such as HOPE IS LIGHT, IDEAS ARE LIGHT SOURCES and INTELLIGENCE IS A LIGHT SOURCE, which are all positively marked target concepts. Charteris-Black (2005) observes that the “cognitive linguistic treatment of light metaphors has been traced to the association between light and life (plants rely on a light source) and between darkness and death” (Charteris-Black 50). He further concedes that in Christian religious discourse light is linked to faith, goodness and Jesus, while darkness is equivalent to spiritual ignorance, evil and Satan (ibid 51). Therefore “within Christian discourse, ‘light’ carries a positive evaluation as being prototypically good while ‘dark’ carries the negative one of being prototypically bad” (ibid). The Bulgarian set phrase is based on the meaning of ‘secretive, hidden’, which is the member of the OPEN-HIDDEN opposition with negative markedness.

The second subgroup includes idioms based on absolutely the same conceptualizations such as: *Fish in troubled/muddy waters* and its Bulgarian equivalent *Ловя риба в мътна вода*, which mean ‘to take advantage of a shaky or unstable situation’. Both of them are motivated by the conventional knowledge that fish bite more readily when seas are rough. This knowledge is metonymically transferred to the TD of situations: when people are panicked, they are more likely to be fooled by others, than when they are calm.

2. Idioms denoting human personal and physical qualities

The only pair of PUs in this subgroup that are absolutely equivalent in terms of their meanings and conceptualizations is *Still waters run deep* and *Tuxume води са най-дълбоки*. The English set phrase is of Latin origin now commonly taken to mean that a timid exterior hides a passionate or subtle nature. The Bulgarian equivalent has a similar meaning, which is a calque in Bulgarian too, namely that those who are quiet and don’t try to attract attention are often more interesting than people who do try to get attention. Both idioms are semantically analyzable

(Gibbs 1994) since *Still waters/muxume води* in the SD stand for the people in the TD while *run deep/са най-дълбоки* for the human quality (being interesting or in some contexts being secretive).

3. English and Bulgarian PUs denoting interpersonal interactions and behavior

Again the examples are subdivided into those that show the same conceptualization and those based on different conceptualizations. The first subgroup includes, among others, *Fish out of water* and its Bulgarian equivalent *Като риба на сухо*. They convey the same meaning, namely to be placed in a situation that is completely untypical to you and confuses you and therefore you behave awkwardly. Both set phrases are motivated by the biological fact that fish need water in order to live and, once placed out of water, they get confused and later die¹. Therefore in a hostile and awkward situation you feel perplexed, just like human beings without air.

Two English *water* PUs denote 'getting into trouble' – *to be in hot water/deep water*. The Bulgarian equivalent *Да нагазиш в дълбоки води* contains the same linguistic elements as the second English set phrase. Both idioms are based on the same conceptualizations, namely on the dangerous aspect of deep/hot water. *Hot water* was used five hundred years ago to mean 'be in trouble'². When you enter in deep water you have to have the ability to swim well, in order to get out of the difficult situation.

Muddy the waters and its Bulgarian equivalent *размътвам водата* both mean 'to make the situation more complex or less clear' and are based on the same conceptualization. You deliberately try to complicate the situation and make things unclear, thus trying to hide the mistakes you have made. Both set phrases are based on the same CM – DARK IS BAD/DANGEROUS.

Another pair of equivalent PUs in English and Bulgarian is based on people's conventional knowledge of the dangerous nature of high water. If someone says they'll do something *come hell or high water*, they mean that nothing will stop them, no matter what happens. This is a colloquial set phrase that may be used in both positive and negative contexts. For instance in *He is determined to finish the job come hell or high water*, the meaning is positive, while in *He will not tell him the truth come hell or high water*, it is negative. Interestingly, the Bulgarian equivalent *След мен – и номон* is used only in negative contexts, meaning that the person uttering these words does not care at all what the consequences of his actions will be. The Bulgarian set phrase refers to the biblical deluge, that is, the end of the

¹ This metaphor is quite old. Chaucer used a version of it in *The Canterbury Tales: Prologue*:...a monk, when he is cloisterless; Is like to a fish that is waterless.<https://futsi-movies.com/s/stream-fish-out-of-water-full-hd>.

² One story says it got that meaning from the custom of throwing extremely hot water down on enemies attacking a castle.<https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/words-and-their-stories-water-expressions/1627062.html>.

world. However, as already mentioned, the conceptualization of both set phrases is based on the dangerous image of impending high water. This confirms Chevalier and Geerbrand's words that water can sometimes be a symbol of death and that high water is a forewarning of trials in the Bible (Chevalier and Geerbrand 165).

The last pair from this subgroup is *a watershed* and *водораздел* both of which mean 'the turning point', 'the beginning of change'. Both expressions are based on the CM CHANGE IS A WATER DIVIDE. They denote a point of no return, a Rubicon

The second subgroup includes set phrases based on different conceptualizations. For instance, *Like a duck to water* means 'to have a natural talent for something and enjoy it', while *като риба във вода* means 'to be fit, in good shape, to feel well'. The Bulgarian equivalent of the English set phrase is *плувам в свои води*, which shows a different conceptualization, the SD of which is swimming in a water basin that is familiar to one. The CM that underlies the latter PU is FAMILIAR/KNOWN IS GOOD.

Keep your head above water and its Bulgarian equivalent *успявам да изплувам* both mean 'to manage to survive financially' or 'to manage to survive in a critical situation.' However they are based on slightly different conceptualizations. In English it is based on the image of being in deep water and managing to survive by keeping your head above the water, while in Bulgarian on the image of managing to keep your body above water.

I. The second group of PUs includes those where the English PUs contain the lexical unit *water*, while their Bulgarian equivalents do not. All set phrases in this group are based on different conceptualizations. They are once again subdivided into

1. Based on conventional wisdom and assessment of situations
2. Denoting personal and physical qualities
3. Denoting interpersonal interactions and behavior

1. The first group includes a pair of proverbs *You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink* and its Bulgarian equivalent *Насила хубост не става* [beauty cannot be created by force], meaning 'you can offer something to someone, like good advice, but you cannot make them take it.' Moreover, by compulsion and coercion you cannot achieve anything. While the English proverb is based on SDs of animals and water, the Bulgarian proverb is based on different CMs – BEAUTY IS A PHYSICAL ENTITY and BEAUTY CANNOT BE CREATED BY FORCE.

Another pair of set phrases in this group is *dead in the water* and *задънена улица*, both meaning 'something isn't going anywhere or making any progress' 'ineffective efforts,' 'stalemate', 'deadlock', 'dead end'. The conceptualizations are again different. The English set phrase is based on the image of not being able to

move in the water³. The Bulgarian PU is based on a different conceptualization – of a street that has no exit. That is, the obstacles are different, but both lead to lack of motion. Thus both refer back to the same image schema of SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, which instantiates different conceptualizations, with different variables in the two cultures and respectively surface with different expressions in the two symbolic systems (English and Bulgarian).

Water-cooler talk and *празни приказки* also belong to this group and again show different conceptualizations. The English PU is used to refer to the type of informal conversation among office workers that takes place around a water cooler. Its Bulgarian equivalent *празни приказки* is not based on such a concrete image, but rather on the CM TALKING IS A CONTAINER and TALKING ABOUT IR-RELEVANT THINGS IS AN EMPTY CONTAINER.

Throw the baby out with the bathwater means ‘to get rid of useful things when discarding inessential things.’ Like all proverbs, it contains good advice: in your haste to discard something unpleasant or undesirable, don’t throw away something worth keeping. The Bulgarian equivalent *покрай сухото гори и суровото* [wet things burn together with the dry ones] is based on a different conceptualization – the CM LOSING IS BURNING and BURNING VALUABLE THINGS IS BURNING WET THINGS. Applied to people, it conveys the meaning that sometimes people who are innocent suffer together with those who are guilty.

Water under the bridge, just like *Water over the dam* denotes something that is over and done with, especially an unfortunate occurrence. This metaphoric phrase alludes to water that has flowed under a bridge and thus is gone forever. The Bulgarian equivalent *изпята песен* is based on the SD of singing, namely on the CM SOMETHING THAT IS OVER IS A SONG THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN SUNG. Something remains in the past and no longer attracts our attention.

2. Set phrases denoting personal and physical qualities.

Water off a duck’s back and its Bulgarian equivalent *през едното ухо влязло, през другото излязло* share the meaning that people aren’t affected by criticism in the slightest. However, the English set phrase is based on the SD of Animals, while the Bulgarian one is based on the SD of Human body parts and the CM NOT PAYING ATTENTION TO CRITICISM IS PASSING FROM ONE EAR TO THE OTHER. That is something leaves no trace in the mind (the space between the two ears).

³ “The English PU was used to refer to sailing ships that stopped moving because the wind stopped blowing (they were “becalmed”). It now refers to any floating vessel that can’t propel itself because of an engine malfunction, damage, or lack of fuel. The phrase has been used to describe any project or team activity that has lost funding or bureaucratic support such that it can no longer continue even if the team membership or project components have not been disbanded.” <https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-etymology-of-the-expression-dead-in-the-water>.

If someone *spends money like water*, they spend too much. In this PU the “flowing” property of water seems to be utilized. Since water as a substance “flows easily,” spending money naturally seems to be equated to flowing water. The CM is MONEY IS FLOWING WATER. The Bulgarian equivalent is *с широкі пръсти* – it utilizes the SD of the human body to render the same idea, namely the CM SPENDING MONEY LAVISHLY IS MONEY FLOWING THROUGH ONE’S FINGERS IF THEY ARE WIDE OPEN.

Someone who *could talk under water* has a lot to say in any situation, is very talkative and the PU is used mainly in negative contexts. So is its Bulgarian equivalent *дървен философ* [wooden philosopher]. The English set phrase is based on a non-existent referent, one cannot talk under water in reality so that the hyperbole that one can conveys the meaning. The Bulgarian set phrase is based on a different conceptualization – the CM OBSTINATE/LOQUACIOUS IS WOODEN, which also motivates *дървена глава*.

If someone is *treading water*, they are making no progress. This PU seems to be based on our physical experience, since it is hard to keep walking if you are in water. The Bulgarian equivalent *тъпча на едно място* does not employ the lexical unit *water*, but is based on the same conceptualization as the English one. The CM that motivates the meaning of these PUs are MAKING PROGRESS IS STEPPING AHEAD. Goatly (2007) provides detailed vocabulary for the metaphorical theme ACTIVITY IS MOVEMENT FORWARDS and the related DEVELOPMENT/SUCCESS IS MOVEMENT FORWARD and SUCCESS/EASE IS SPEED metaphors (Goatly 51). As the author justifiably argues “These [conceptual metaphors] themselves are offshoots of the very basic metaphor theme CHANGE IS MOVEMENT. If development/success is paired with the source of movement forward, and change shares this source of movement, there is a possibility of equating the two targets into the equation CHANGE=SUCCESS/DEVELOPMENT, which makes change seem a positive thing” (ibid 170). Therefore the metaphorical lexical items for the CHANGE IS MOVEMENT metaphor and the closely related UNCHANGING IS STATIC betray a bias in favor of movement/change (ibid 170). The metaphors for resistance to change are predominantly negative in their connotations.

3. *Interpersonal interactions and behavior*

Test the waters and *Dip your toes in the water*⁴ show a slight difference in meaning. In the first case you experiment to see how successful or acceptable something is before implementing it. In the second you try something tentatively because you are not sure whether it will work or not. The Bulgarian equivalent in both cases is *опипвам почвата*. That is, the Bulgarian set phrase is based on the SD of SOIL and the CM EXPERIMENTING IS FEELING THE SOIL.

Water something down means ‘to make something weaker’, the Bulgarian equivalent of which is *разклащам основите*. Maybe the meaning is based on a metaphorical transfer from the meaning of the phrasal verb *to water down* (‘thin out, make thin’), namely the CM THINNER IS WEAKER, the opposite of THICKER IS STRONGER. The Bulgarian equivalent is based on the SD of buildings, namely on the CM SHAKING THE FOUNDATION OF A BUILDING MAKES IT WEAKER.

If someone *pours oil on troubled waters* they try to calm things down. The Bulgarian equivalents are *гася пожара* [extinguish the fire], *уталожвам страстите* [calm down passions]. The meaning of the English set phrase has an experiential basis. *Troubled* has been used to mean agitated and disturbed, either of mind or in reference to physical elements like water or sky, since at least the 14th century. Simon and Garfunkel in their single *Bridge over Troubled Water* use the singular *water*, rather than *waters* thus harking back to the original usage. This phrase makes reference to the calming effect that oil has on the waves as it spreads over the surface of the sea. The two Bulgarian set phrases are based on different conceptualizations. *Гася пожара* is based on the CM AGITATION IS FIRE and CALMING DOWN IS EXTINGUISHING FIRE. *Уталожвам страстите* is based on an ontological CM PASSIONS ARE PERSONS.

If someone *goes through fire and water*, they experience many difficulties or dangers in order to achieve something. The Bulgarian equivalents are *минавам през огън и жупел*; *минавам през ада*. The English phrase originally referred to the medieval practice of trial by ordeal which could take the form of making an accused person hold or walk on red-hot iron or of throwing them into water. One of the Bulgarian equivalents utilizes the SD of FIRE more specifically the CM EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES IS PASSING THROUGH FIRE, while the other is based on the SD of HELL, more specifically the CM EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES IS PASSING THROUGH HELL.

⁴ “The origin is based on literal meaning of the idiom: to put your toes into water to see how cold water is, before plunging in it. Another explanation is derived from the act of bathing a child: while bathing a child you mix in a quantity of hot and cold water into a bucket/vessel and then dip your hand to test the water to make sure that it is not too hot or too cold.”<https://www.quora.com/What-does-testing-the-waters-mean-What-is-the-origin-of-that-phrase>.

Blow something/someone out of the water means ‘to destroy or defeat something or someone completely,’ the Bulgarian equivalents of which are *празя/разбивам на пух и прах* [make mincemeat out of your enemies]. – The English expression describes a competitive situation where one side has done so well compared to the other that they are said to have blown the other out of the water. The Bulgarian set phrase is based on the SD of INANIMATE OBJECTS and the CM DESTROYING/DEFEATING SOMEONE IS MAKING A MINCEMEAT OUT OF THEM.

Make someone’s mouth water means ‘to feel pleasure at the thought of something particularly beautiful or good,’ the Bulgarian equivalent of which is *помучат ми лизите*. Both set phrases have an experiential basis, based on the physiological effect one feels at the sight of something delicious. That is, both set phrases are based on the conceptual metonymy THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF EMOTIONS STAND FOR THE EMOTIONS.

Deep water and hot fire means ‘very deep misery,’ the Bulgarian equivalent of which is *кучешки живот* [to live a dog’s life]. As for the English idiom, we already commented on the meaning of deep water, meaning trouble, and hot fire is added to this idiom to render the meaning of something unbearable (since fire is in principle hot, but the adjective *hot* further enhances the degree). The Bulgarian expression is based on the SD of ANIMALS and the CM LIVING IN MISERY IS LIVING A DOG’S LIFE.

If something *flows like water* it means that it flows ‘lavishly; abundantly; freely,’ the Bulgarian equivalent of which is *лее се като по мед и масло*. Both the English and the Bulgarian set phrase have an experiential basis – unimpeded, water/honey flows freely.

II. The third group includes PUs that are based on the SD of “water” in Bulgarian, but their English equivalents are not. Again, the conceptualizations in the two languages are different.

The set phrases are once again subdivided into the already specified groups:

1. *Based on conventional wisdom and assessment of situations*

От девет дървета/кладенеца вода носи [carries water from nine wells], the English equivalent of which is *Overegging the pudding* has an experiential basis. The meaning is to provide too many arguments in support of an opinion. If you bring water from different wells, it means that you try to bring arguments from many different sources to prove that you are right. The English idiom is based on a different conceptualization, involving the SD of FOOD, namely that putting too many eggs in the pudding will spoil it.

Да ти върви като по вода [may luck come as easily to you as flowing water] also has an experiential basis. The English equivalent is *Fair wind and a following tide! Break a leg!* Here again the image of unimpeded flowing water, which makes

movement easier, is evoked in the Bulgarian PU. The first English set phrase is motivated by the conventional knowledge that if the wind blows in the direction you are heading in, it will be easier for you to walk, which also motivates the Bulgarian set phrase *попътен вятър*, used when you wish someone success. The second English PU *Break a leg!*, which is used to wish a performer good luck “originated with the superstition that it was back luck to wish someone good luck” (Gibbs 274).

Да откриеш топлата вода [inventing hot water] means that you say nothing new. The Bulgarian set phrase is based on the SD of water, while the English *Reinventing the wheel* – on the SD of inanimate objects. Both set phrases are based on the CM SAYING NOTHING NEW IS (RE)INVENTING WATER/THE WHEEL, although different things are (re)invented.

2. Set phrases denoting personal and physical qualities

The Bulgarian PUs with *water* denoting negative human qualities also show interesting conceptualizations. *Света вода ненанума*, the English equivalent of which is *holier than thou* (not formal, derogatory, acting as though one is better, e.g. more moral than others) is based on the Bible⁵. The colloquial Bulgarian phrase *Гола вода* [pure water] corresponds to the English *x-double minus* (extremely poorly done, bad, inferior), *be a dime a dozen* (to be common or of very little value). Here again the conceptualizations are different – the Bulgarian is based on the low price of water, while the English set phrases are based on emphasizing that no matter how many times you repeat something of low value, it will remain worthless.

The Bulgarian idiom *С решето вода носи* [carrying water in a colander] is equivalent to the English *to be chasing your tail*. The conceptualizations are again different – the Bulgarian is based on the image of carrying water in a vessel with holes, which is ultimately useless, while the English is based on the SD of ANIMALS and that chasing your own tail is ultimately useless.

There is one set phrase with *water* in the Bulgarian data set that denotes physical qualities – *Като две капки вода* [to resemble each other as two drops of water], the English equivalent of which is *Like two peas in a pod*. The English set phrase is based on the SD of PLANTS.

3. There is only one pair in the data set that denotes human interactions and behavior: *Да подлееш вода на някого* [pour water in front of someone], the English equivalent of which is *put a spoke in somebody's wheel*. Both set phrase mean ‘to play a dirty trick on someone,’ but the conceptualizations are different – the Bul-

⁵ In Numbers 5:12-31 it is said what you should do when a man accuses his wife of adultery. The ritual starts in the following way: the priest should take the wife to face God and take holy water in a pottery vessel and take earth from the ground of the tent and place it in the water.

garian is based on the image of spilling water in front of someone which can make them slip, while the English is based on the SD of BICYCLES and that putting a spoke in the wheel may impede its movement.

Conclusions

CMT reveals the essence and conceptual motivation of idioms. In translation, developing translators' awareness of CMs and their ability to recognize them provides them the chance to better understand idioms and render the meaning in the target language.

The analysis of PUs with *water* in English and Bulgarian showed that there are both cross-cultural similarities and differences in terms of conceptualization. This is indicative of the fact that although the cognitive processes that human beings use are universal, their symbolizations are different. Differences in social-cultural experiences can lead to variation in CMs that are used to structure abstract conceptual domains and motivate the symbolic units in different languages.

The first group of idioms, those that employ the lexical item *water* in both languages and are equivalents in the two languages, reveal the same conceptualizations in some cases and different in other cases. Presumably, where there is coincidence of conceptualizations, the PUs will not cause great problems in translation. On the other hand, for the set phrases that show different conceptualizations, explaining and rationalizing the differences would help translators better interpret the meanings of the idioms and find the best equivalents in the respective language.

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The second and third group of PUs, that is, the cases when either English or Bulgarian employ the lexical item *water*, yet the equivalents in the respective language do not, would give rise to problems in translation. Therefore pinpointing the differences in conceptualization and becoming aware of them would ease the translation process and make it more effective.

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