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A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT *WIDOW* IN GERMAN, UKRAINIAN, AND ENGLISH LINGUOCULTURES

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Abstract

The paper presents the research of ethnic peculiarities of conceptualization of reality, objectified with the help of culturally marked words denoting a widow, which form the corresponding parts of the German, Ukrainian, and English language world models. The purpose of the research is to give a contrastive analysis of the verbalizations of the concept WIDOW in the German, Ukrainian, and English linguocultures.

The paper uses a comprehensive methodology that combines the following methods: contrastive – to identify common and distinctive features of the concept WIDOW in the languages under comparison; conceptual-semiotic analysis – to reveal the cognitive mechanisms of the embodiment of the concept; contextual-interpretive analysis – to clarify the peculiarities of the representation of the concept in paremiae.

In the highlight of contrastive ethnolinguistic studies and theory of conceptual analysis, a structure-semantic reconstruction of the concept WIDOW is performed, and the principles of its semantic-conceptual organization in the German, English, and Ukrainian language pictures of the world are revealed. The set of the conceptual and semantic marks is determined, due to the concept structure constituents (conceptual proper, imagery-associative and value), the main ideographic conceptual domains are revealed, the analyzed concept being axiologically marked and its associative linkage, due to the scope of its conceptual correlates, are determined. Factors that influence the conceptualization of the objective reality by the given ethnic groups are determined. Certain ethnocultural and ethnolinguistic peculiarities and general characteristics of verbalization of the concept WIDOW peculiar to the languages under study are found out.

The analyses of widow nominations showed the allomorphy of national peculiarities of conceptualization of reality, which are influenced by archetype types, historical and cultural actuality. It is shown that WIDOW in Ukrainian culture can be viewed as a taboo concept which content is marked by negative axiological status due to the socio-cultural views formed in the period predetermining the inadmissibility of its direct naming in relevant social situations.

Keywords: concept WIDOW, culturally marked words, taboo, ethnic mentality, conceptual mark.

1. Introduction.

Recent advancements in linguistic science indicate that researchers within the cognitive-discursive paradigm are currently focused on reconstructing fragments of the world picture, investigating linguistic ethnic consciousness, identifying cultural and linguistic national stereotypes, and determining the mutual influence of language and culture. However, the interaction of psychological, cultural, and historical factors involved in the verbalization of concepts remains inadequately studied.

The significance of this study is determined by the general trend in modern linguistic studies towards the examination of common and distinct characteristics in language systems while taking into account the impact of psychological mechanisms that reflect the unique aspects of ethnic consciousness, national character, and people's mentality. The study of concepts is a critical aspect of comparative linguistics in today's world, where globalization has resulted in increased cultural interaction and the emergence of a global community. Consequently, understanding how different societies conceptualize and verbalize similar ideas has become more relevant.

One concept that is of particular interest in comparative linguistics is WIDOW, which is an essential part of human experience. The way this concept is expressed in different languages and cultures can reveal significant differences in values, beliefs, and attitudes towards widowhood.

In this paper, we will focus on the ethnolinguistic characteristics of the concept WIDOW in the English, German, and Ukrainian linguocultures. The study of these languages is especially relevant because they belong to different linguistic families and have distinct cultural and historical backgrounds. Therefore, by comparing how the concept of widowhood is verbalized in these languages, we can reveal differences in the perception and experience of widowhood in diverse cultural and linguistic contexts.

WIDOW is a concept deeply rooted in many cultures worldwide, often associated with various emotional and social connotations. This comparative linguistics study aims to explore the ethnospecific features of the concept WIDOW in the English, German, and Ukrainian linguocultures. Specifically, we will examine the ways in which the concept of widowhood is verbalized and expressed in these three distinct cultural contexts, with a focus on the linguistic and cultural factors that shape our understanding and experience of this concept. Through analyzing the similarities and differences between these three linguistic and cultural contexts, we hope to gain a deeper understanding of the complex ways in which language and culture interact to shape our perception of crucial concepts such as widowhood. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to a broader understanding of the impact of language and culture on our perception of the world around us, emphasizing the unique contributions of each linguistic and cultural context to our collective understanding of the concept of widowhood.

2. Literature Review.

Analyzing concepts in linguistics is a topic of great interest for researchers from different theoretical and methodological backgrounds. One of the most influential theories of concept formation is the prototype theory proposed by Rosch and colleagues (Rosch et al.,

1976). This theory argues (states) that concepts are formed based on a central prototype, which represents the most typical or representative member of a category.

Another approach to concept analysis is the cognitive linguistics perspective, which emphasizes the role of language and culture in shaping concepts (Lakoff, 1987; Johnson, 1987). According to this perspective, concepts are not static or fixed entities but are actively constructed and negotiated through our linguistic and cultural experiences. Lakoff (1987) argues that our conceptual systems are inherently cultural and linguistic, and that language plays a crucial role in shaping our conceptual categories.

A related approach to concept analysis is the cognitive semantics framework, which emphasizes the role of mental imagery and perceptual experience in shaping concepts (Langacker, 1987; Talmy, 2000). According to this framework, concepts are grounded in our sensory-motor experiences and are organized into networks of related ideas or schemas.

More recent research on concepts in linguistics has focused on topics such as metaphor and metonymy, conceptual blending, and the role of emotions in shaping concepts. For example, Forceville (2013) examines how metaphors are used in visual and multimodal communication, while Fauconnier and Turner (2002) propose a theory of conceptual blending, which emphasizes the dynamic nature of concept formation and the role of cognitive processes in creating new meanings.

Other researchers have investigated the role of emotions in shaping concepts, the influence of emotional valence on word processing (Abend, 2019; Eklund, 2013; de Vega, 2014; Kirchin, 2019; Kyle, 2016; McGlone, 2007; Väyrynen, 2016), some studies have focused on analyzing how concepts are represented in different languages or cultural contexts (Boroditsky, 2001).

Analyzing concepts is a critical aspect of linguistics, and researchers have explored this topic from various perspectives. Giora (2017) explored the role of figurative language in concept formation, arguing that metaphors and other types of figurative language help create and shape concepts. Haser (2016) explored the intersection between language and conceptualization, highlighting the ways in which language shapes our conceptual systems. Holubovska (2004), Winter (2014) investigated the relationship between culture and concepts, highlighting the ways in which cultural factors shape our conceptual systems. Boroditsky (2017) explored the ways in which language influences our conceptualization of time, arguing that different languages may shape our temporal concepts in different ways. Barsalou (1995), Lakoff (1987), McGlone (2007) investigated the role of metaphor in concept formation, arguing that metaphors play a crucial role in shaping our concepts by providing a way to map abstract domains onto more concrete domains. De Vega (2014) explores the relationship between concepts and emotions, arguing that our emotional experiences and expressions play a crucial role in shaping our concepts.

Ethnospecific features of thick concept verbalization have received considerable scholarly attention. Thick concepts are the ones that encompass both descriptive and evaluative aspects, making them crucial for ethical discourse and evaluation. Recent studies have emphasized the descriptive aspect of thick concepts and the relationship between the evaluative and descriptive components (Katz, 2018; Kirchin, 2019; Kyle, 2016; McGlone, 2007; Väyrynen, 2016; Zangwill, 2019).

Overall, recent studies on concepts have highlighted the importance of considering cultural and linguistic factors in their conceptualization and verbalization. Future research should continue to explore these factors and their impact on people's understanding and use of thick concepts in different domains and contexts.

3. *Aim and Objectives.*

The object of the study is the lexical and semantic means of expressing the concept WIDOW in German, English, and Ukrainian in the onomasiological and semasiological aspects.

The subject matter of the study is the linguistic and cultural features of the verbalisation of the concept WIDOW in German, English, and Ukrainian in a comparative aspect.

The *aim* of this paper is to conduct a contrastive analysis of the verbalizations of the concept WIDOW in German, Ukrainian, and English linguocultures to identify the common and distinctive features of the concept and to reveal the cognitive mechanisms of its embodiment. The *objectives* of the research are the following:

- to perform a structure-semantic reconstruction of the concept WIDOW and identify the principles of its semantic-conceptual organization in German, Ukrainian, and English language pictures of the world using contrastive ethnolinguistic studies and the theory of conceptual analysis.
- to determine the set of conceptual and semantic marks based on the structure constituents of the concept (conceptual proper, imagery-associative, and value) and reveal the main ideographic conceptual domains.
- to identify the ethnocultural and ethnolinguistic peculiarities and general characteristics of verbalization of the concept of WIDOW, including the factors that influence the conceptualization of the objective reality by the given ethnic groups and the associative linkage due to its conceptual correlates.

4. *Methodology.*

The research methodology used in this paper is comprehensive and combines several methods, including contrastive analysis, conceptual-semiotic analysis, and contextual-interpretive analysis.

The contrastive method is used to identify common and distinctive features of the concept WIDOW in the languages under comparison, namely German, Ukrainian, and English. This method allows for a detailed examination of the linguistic and cultural differences and similarities between the three languages in terms of the conceptualization of the concept WIDOW.

The conceptual-semiotic analysis is used to reveal the cognitive mechanisms of the embodiment of the concept. This method is employed to examine the relationship between language and thought and to uncover the underlying structures and patterns of meaning that shape the concept WIDOW in each language.

The contextual-interpretive analysis is used to clarify the peculiarities of the representation of the concept in proverbs. This method is used to analyze proverbs and idiomatic expressions related to the concept WIDOW in each language, which allows for a more nuanced understanding of how the concept is understood and represented in each cultural context.

Overall, the combination of these three methods allows for a more comprehensive and detailed analysis of the ethnic peculiarities of conceptualization of reality, objectified with the help of culturally marked words denoting a widow, which form the corresponding parts of the German, Ukrainian, and English language world models.

5. *Results and Discussion.*

A concept is “a set of characteristics or features that are commonly associated with a certain class of objects or entities and that distinguish them from other classes” (Croft, 2004,

p. 17). The results of human perception of the world and cognitive activity are reflected in the form of a certain fragment of the cognitive system, separated in the language world pictures, through which access to the structures of human consciousness is realised. According to modern scientific views, the set of concepts of a particular culture reflects the worldview of native speakers and correlates with mentality as a way of seeing the world around us. Since the construction of cognitive models involves the consideration of language as a psychological, mental and cultural phenomenon, the description of nominations representing widowhood is carried out through the concept. In the study, the term concept is understood as a mental construct that is reflected in ideas and knowledge, associated with ethnic culture and stored in the national memory of native speakers in a verbal form (Croft & Cruse 2004; Jackendoff, 1990; Talmy, 2000).

In the formation of the linguistic and cultural content of the language, one of the main components is figurative reference stereotypes of perception and comprehension of reality (linguistic and cultural or, according to Holubovska (2004), *national intellectual and evaluative concepts*). Such concepts determine the nature of the national mentality, being implemented at the lexical level of the language system in the form of certain images, reference stereotypes and symbols.

A common term in recent decades for this kind of concept is a “thick concept”. A thick concept is a term that carries both evaluative and descriptive meanings, and it is difficult to separate the two. In other words, thick concepts are those that cannot be fully understood without considering both their descriptive and evaluative aspects (Kirchin, 2013; Väyrynen, 2016).

“Widow” is a term that carries both descriptive and evaluative meanings. Descriptively, a widow is a woman whose husband has died, and evaluatively, being a widow is associated with feelings of loss, sadness, and loneliness. The evaluative aspect of the concept is what makes it thick.

To understand the evaluative aspect of the concept, we must consider the cultural and social meanings attached to being a widow. In many cultures, widows are seen as vulnerable, powerless, and in need of protection. In some cases, widows are even stigmatized and ostracized from their communities. These cultural and social meanings contribute to the evaluative aspect of the concept WIDOW.

Additionally, the evaluative aspect of WIDOW can also vary depending on the individual’s personal experience. For example, some widows may view their status as a source of strength and resilience, while others may struggle with feelings of grief and isolation. This variability in the evaluative aspect of the concept further supports its thickness.

In conclusion, the concept WIDOW is a thick concept because it carries both descriptive and evaluative meanings that cannot be fully understood without considering both aspects. The evaluative aspect of the concept is influenced by cultural and social meanings as well as individual experiences, making it a complex and multifaceted term.

Furthermore, the thickness of the concept WIDOW also implies that it is difficult to apply universal standards or criteria to evaluate a widow’s situation. This is because the evaluative aspect of the concept is influenced by various factors, such as cultural norms, individual experiences, and personal values. Therefore, judgments about the experiences of widows must be made in light of the unique circumstances surrounding each individual case.

The concept WIDOW, along with the concepts of WOMAN and MOTHER, belongs to linguistic and cultural concepts, or “key words of culture”, which are interpreted as culturally determined mental formations that have a direct bearing on the values, ideals and

attitudes of ethnic groups, and which reflect the peculiarities of national character and perception of the world to the fullest extent.

Studies of the psycholinguistic aspects of the semantics of a linguistic sign confirm the reduction of the language of perception and verbal language to a certain “deep” semantics, i.e. to a certain figurative correlate. In the consciousness of society, there are so-called collective images that are transmitted from generation to generation and do not depend on the existence of an individual. This knowledge acts as a standard that accumulates the empirical knowledge of an ethnic group. Cf. for example, the stereotypical idea of a *widow* as a personification of grief, black mourning and hopelessness and the stereotype of a *bride* as a bright image of happiness, love and hopes for the future.

The concept WIDOW has been a topic of interest in linguistics due to its cultural significance and social implications. The name of the concept is the lexeme ‘**widow**’ / ‘**witwe**’ / ‘**вдова**’. We find the following definitions in dictionaries: **Widow** (Latin *vidua* (feminine of *viduus* deprived), Sanskrit *vidhavā*) is a woman whose husband died while she was married to him and has not remarried. **Вдова (удова)** – жінка, яка після смерті чоловіка не одружилася вдруге. In the German language, the word **Witwe** is used to refer to a woman whose spouse has died.

The word ‘Witwe’ comes from the Old High German “widewa”, which means “bereft”. It is derived from the Proto-Germanic word “widwō”, which means “empty”. The word has been used in the German language since the Middle Ages and has retained its original meaning throughout history.

The concept WITWE in the German language is lexicalized through a variety of words and phrases. For instance, “*Witwenschaft*” refers to the state of being a widow, while “*Witwenrente*” is the term used for a widow’s pension. “*Witwengehalt*” refers to the allowance or income that a widow receives after her spouse’s death. Additionally, the word “*Witwentracht*” refers to the black clothing that a widow traditionally wears after her husband’s death.

The concept WITWE in the German language is often associated with mourning and grief. The phrase “*Witwe sein*” (to be a widow) is a commonly used expression that implies a woman’s loss and emotional suffering. Furthermore, the concept of “widow” is often associated with financial struggles, as widows historically faced financial hardship after their spouse’s death.

The concept WITWE in the German language shares similarities and differences with other languages. However, the semantic associations and cultural significance of the concept may vary across different languages and cultures.

The word ‘*widow*’ and the concept it denotes correlate with the concepts GRIEF, DEATH, FEAR, LIFE, and LONELINESS.

The concept WIDOW as a quantum of knowledge and a cultural imprint originates from the possible world of archaic mythological consciousness. Its centuries-long existence permeates various cultural layers of human memory, reaching the modern mass culture. The linguistic and cultural specificity of the studied concept is revealed within each particular culture.

Based on Vezhbytska’s thesis about the “indistinguishability” of extralinguistic, psychological and social realities in language, it can be argued that all linguistic meanings are subjective and ethnocentric (Vezhbytska, 2001).

A comparative study of the concept WIDOW in the linguistic and cultural aspect requires a special approach to the analysis, since it is related to the phenomenon of a linguistic personality and reflects his/her emotional and psychological state. The linguistic

embodiment of the concept WIDOW is greatly influenced by ethno-cultural, geographical and historical factors.

People have long treated widows with caution and even fear. In many countries, there is a custom that when a woman becomes a widow, she seems to fall out of society. The attitude towards her changes. Certain prohibitions are imposed on her. In addition, you cannot use a widow's belongings; she is treated like a leper. It is still considered bad luck to invite a widow to a wedding. In many countries, widows were shaved head. According to the customs of a number of nations, after the death of her husband, a widow committed suicide. The most famous is the Indian ritual of sati, when a woman is burned alive next to her husband's body. Some women do this voluntarily, but most resist. The latter are beaten, chained to the body of the deceased and set on fire in a ritual pyre.

The social status of a woman is inextricably linked to that of her husband, and in the event of his death, a woman loses her protection and social status. Widows are often expelled from their homes and subjected to physical violence. To regain her social status, a widow has to marry one of her husband's relatives, often against her will. For many, the loss of a husband is only the first blow in a series of trials.

Very high demands have always been placed on a widowed woman. Remarriage was frowned upon in Europe: it was believed that after the death of her husband, a woman should focus on religion and charity.

Patriarchal society looks down on widows. 90% of them lose any hope of a second marriage, and in most cases, their refusal to remarry does not depend on their desire. In most cases, the deceased husband's relatives, friends and children accuse widows of betraying the memory of their late husbands, so they choose a lonely black and grey life, fearing condemnation.

The analysis of concept WIDOW in German, English, and Ukrainian has demonstrated both isomorphic and allomorphic means of verbalising this conceptual category and socio-cultural phenomenon.

Thus, the common conceptual features include "grief", "misfortune", "despair", "hopelessness", "mourning", "loneliness". For example:

Die Witwe lebte zurückgezogen und sprach selten mit anderen Menschen.

Die Witwe erinnerte sich mit Wehmut an die gemeinsamen Jahre mit ihrem verstorbenen Ehemann.

Вдовіти – горе терпіти.

Вдовине горе кожен знає, а не кожен про вдову дбає.

Удівонька – бідна голівонька.

Colourless clothes, colourless world, and colourful pictures. Widow's life.

For many women, becoming a widow doesn't just mean the heartache of losing a husband, but often losing everything else as well.

A widow is like a frigate of which the first captain has been shipwrecked.

The structure of the Ukrainian concept ВДОВА includes the features "a widow lives badly", "a widow cries", "a widow is like an orphan", "God protects a widow", which have no parallel in the English and German concepts and are nationally specific:

Живе вдова на подолі, та й плаче свій вік по гіркій долі.

У багатих ростуть діти – верби при долині, а у вдови одним одно, та й те, як билина.

While in the Ukrainian language community the main features of the concept WIDOW are "grief" and "hopelessness", in English and German it is "loss of a partner" and "the possibility of remarriage". For example:

Eine neue Ehe für eine Witwe ist wie eine neue Blüte für eine verwelkte Blume.

*Wer als **Witwe** lebt, hat das Recht auf ein neues Glück.
Eine **Witwe** ist keine Gefangene ihrer Vergangenheit.
Drying a **widow's** tears is one of the most dangerous occupations known to man.
Widows comfort themselves when they remarry, widowers take revenge.
You must marry a **widow** while she is still mourning.*

The possibility of remarriage, which has always been condemned in Ukrainian culture, is considered quite normal in English culture and is even encouraged. In the structure of concept WIDOW, there are conceptual features of “rich widow” and “remarriage”. For example:

***Widows** are always rich.
Rich **widows** are the only second-hand goods that sell at first-class prices.
A rich **widow** weeps with one eye and signals with the other.
Widows weep but they look for another husband.*

In modern German society, the attitude towards remarriage of widows has become more accepting and less stigmatized compared to the past. While traditional values still exist in certain regions, the general perception has shifted towards recognizing the right of a widow to pursue love and companionship again after the loss of a spouse. The idea that a widow should remain single for the rest of her life has become increasingly outdated. Today, widows are viewed as individuals with the same right to seek happiness and fulfillment in their personal lives as anyone else. Society recognizes that the loss of a spouse does not necessarily mean the end of one's capacity for love and companionship, and that the decision to remarry or not is a personal one. In the structure of the concept WITWE in German, the conceptual attributes “financial well-being”, “inheritance received by a widow”, “remarriage” are highlighted. For example:

*Eine reiche **Witwe** findet immer einen neuen Ehemann.
Der Tod des Mannes ist das Glück der **Witwe**.
Die Liebe ist kein Verbrechen, auch nicht für eine **Witwe**.
Wer liebt, verdient ein neues Glück, auch als **Witwe**.
Das Glück kann zweimal im Leben kommen, auch für **Witwen**.*

Language acts as a way of recording the social experience of society and the individual, so ethnocultural markers of linguistic consciousness can be interpreted as cultural signals of society recorded in linguistic units. Such culturally determined non-equivalent linguistic units, such as **dowager** (a widow with a title or property derived from her late husband), are ethnocultural markers of linguistic consciousness and are caused by the divergence of the structures of conceptual and perceptual knowledge about specific objects and concepts in the compared ethnolinguistic cultures.

The most famous widow in the history of Ukraine, Princess Olha, is an exception, not the rule. She is a vivid character who attracts a lot of attention, but she did not represent all Ukrainian women. Nationally specific in the Ukrainian linguistic and cultural tradition is a negative attitude towards widows, which is manifested by the presence of conceptual features such as “witch”, “sorceress”, “immoral behaviour”, “debauchery” in the structure of the studied concept.

The Ukrainian patriarchal society applied double standards to young widows: on the one hand, encouragement and permission to remarry; on the other hand, the actual impossibility of its implementation. Instead, any manifestations of sexuality or hints of sexual activity outside of marriage were severely condemned, and the “violator” was branded as an immoral person (Ihnatenko, 2020).

According to traditional Ukrainian morals, it was not allowed to have sex outside of marriage. And even the very status of a single woman cast a shadow on the morality of a widow:

*Що на небі хмара, на **вдівоньку** слава
Тим на небі синя хмара, що вітру немає –
Тим на **вдову** худа слава, що мужа не має.*

As a means of penetrating into the mental world of the studied language communities, it is fruitful to study samples of folk art that indirectly reflect conceptual transpositions of ethnocultural nature. For example:

*У **вдови** хліб готов, та не кожному здоров.
Хто бере **удівоньку**, зсушить йому головоньку.*

In proverbs and songs, a widowed woman is often portrayed as an immoral, lustful temptress, a sorceress who is ready to do anything to seduce a naive and inexperienced young man (Ihnatenko, 2020). For example:

***Вдова** вміє чарувати: чарувала мужа свого, причарує сина мого.*

The Ukrainian people have long believed in the supernatural and even prophetic power of the widow's words, and her curses were bound to come true. There was even a saying: "Впадуть на голову вдовині сльози". It was a great sin to offend a widow. Even criminals tried not to hurt a widow. A Ukrainian folk song says:

*Ішла **вдова** долиною
З маленькою дитиною.
Сіла **вдова** оддыхати;
Коли ж іде три бурлаки,
Один каже: уб'єм **вдову!**
Другий каже: ще й дитину!
Третій каже: не вб'єм вдови,
Маленької дитини.*

The study of the means of objectification of the concept ВДОВА in modern Ukrainian linguistic culture shows that this concept belongs to the taboo ones. A **taboo concept** is understood as a quantum of structured knowledge of a certain linguistic and cultural community, the content of which is marked by a negative axiological status due to the evaluative nature of the cognitive processes of an ethnic group within a unique coordinate system: its own system of thoughts, assessments, values, stereotypes, which determines the inadmissibility of direct naming of certain objects and phenomena in appropriate social situations.

The ban on a taboo concept has no linguistic justification, as it is extra-linguistically conditioned, and linguistic taboo turns out to be a sociolinguistic phenomenon that varies from society to society and determines the degree of stigmatisation of a taboo concept (Pedraza, 2018).

Thus, in the modern Ukrainian linguistic tradition, the use of the lexeme "вдова" is, in a way, taboo. Both widows themselves and the media try to avoid using this word. In connection with the events in Donbas, modern media often cover topics related to the deaths of ATO participants, and in materials of this kind, the phrases "дружина загиблого військового" / "wife of a deceased soldier", "дружина загиблого учасника АТО" / "wife of a deceased ATO participant", "дружина загиблого Героя" / "wife of a deceased Hero", "дружина загиблого добровольця" / "wife of a deceased volunteer", "кохана загиблого" / "beloved of the deceased" are found, which indicates the euphemistic lexicalisation of a taboo concept in Ukrainian linguistic culture. For example: *У Львові дружина загиблого Героя АТО народила сина. Малюк ніколи не побачить тата...*

Official documents regulating the rights, benefits and social guarantees for widows of participants in armed conflicts, for example, the Law “On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection” uses the phrases “*дружина учасника бойових дій*”, “*дружина учасника АТО*”, “*член сім’ї загиблого військовослужбовця/учасника АТО*” (“*wife of a combatant*”, “*wife of an ATO participant*”, “*family member of a deceased serviceman/ ATO participant*”). In English, the term **widow** is used in legislative documents. For example:

A widow has rights over her deceased spouse’s estate.

*You may be entitled to a War **Widow’s** or **Widower’s** Pension if your wife, husband or civil partner died as a result of their service in Her Majesty’s (HM) Armed Forces or during a time of war.*

The most common term for a widow in German is “**Witwe**”, which is widely used in both formal and informal contexts and is generally considered to be neutral in terms of its connotations. However, there are also several other terms that are used to refer to a widow in German, each of which carries its own set of connotations and nuances. For example, the term “**Trauernde**” (literally, “mourner”) is often used to refer to someone who has lost a loved one, including a spouse, but it is not specific to widows. Similarly, the term “**Alleinstehende**” (literally, “single standing”) can be used to refer to a widow, but it can also refer to someone who is unmarried or living alone for other reasons. Another term that is used to refer to a widow in German is “**Hinterbliebene**”, which literally means “those left behind”. This term is often used in legal contexts, such as when referring to inheritance rights or pension benefits, and it emphasizes the fact that the widow is the surviving member of a couple who has been left behind after the death of her spouse.

In German legislative documents and media, the term “**Witwe**” is commonly used without any negative connotations or taboos attached to it. The concept WITWE is not seen as a taboo in German society and is considered a natural part of life. In legislative documents, the term “**Witwe**” is used in various laws and regulations that deal with inheritance, social security, and other legal matters concerning widows.

Similarly, in German media, the term “**Witwe**” is commonly used in news reports and articles to describe women who have lost their husbands. There is no stigma attached to the term, and it is used in a matter-of-fact manner to describe the situation of a widow. For example:

*Das Erbrecht besagt, dass **die Witwe** des Verstorbenen einen Teil des Nachlasses erbt, wenn keine anderen Erben vorhanden sind.*

*Der Witwenrentenanspruch erlischt, wenn **die Witwe** wieder heiratet oder eine neue Lebenspartnerschaft eingeht.*

Since 2014 and the beginning of the Russian aggression in Donbas, the Ukrainian media avoided using the word “*widow*”. In 2022, with the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, when the number of deaths and, consequently, widows started to count in the tens of thousands, the Ukrainian-language media had no time for euphemistic paraphrases. For example:

***Вдова загиблого вертолітника:** “Майже рік минув, а я й досі відмовляюсь у це вірити”.*

***Вдова загиблого військовослужбовця** зареєструвала петицію про присвоєння звання “Герой України” її загиблomu чоловіку.*

In contrast to the Ukrainian linguistic and cultural tradition, the WIDOW / WITWE concept is not taboo, as evidenced by the significant word-formation potential of the lexeme widow and the newly created words in recent years.

For example: **widow's weeds** – *the black dress and veil traditionally worn by a widow while mourning the death of her husband*; **widow's benefit** – (in the British National Insurance scheme) *a former weekly payment made to a widow*; **war widow** – *a woman whose husband was killed while he was in the armed forces during a war*; **golf widow** – (informal, humorous) *a woman whose husband spends a lot of time playing golf*; **Internet widow** – (informal, humorous) *a woman whose husband spends a lot of time on the Internet*; **widow's cruse** – *an endless or unfailing source of supply*; **widow's walk** – *a railed observation platform atop a usually coastal house (observation platform with a railing on the roof of a house)*; **merry widow** – *a woman's undergarment combining a bra, often strapless, a corset ending just below the waist, and garters for stockings (corset)*.

The word-formation activity of the lexical unit widow in English is also demonstrated by the neologisms of recent years – **trans widow** and **Covid widow**: A trans widow is a woman (usually heterosexual) whose male partner or husband believes that they have a gender identity other than “man” or who cross-dresses.

During the year of the Covid-19 pandemic (2020-2021), the neologism **Covid widow** (*a woman whose husband died of Covid-19*) appeared in the English-speaking linguistic community.

For example: *These young Covid widows are grieving during lockdown through a Facebook group.*

Common to the languages under comparison are the following means of lexicalising the concept under study. For example:

black widow – a woman who buried (killed) many of her husbands. Cf.: *чорна вдова, Schwarze Witwe.*

grass widow – a woman whose spouse is regularly away for short periods. Cf.: *солом'яна вдова, Strohwitwe.*

widow's mite – a small monetary contribution from someone who is poor. Cf.: *вдовина лепта (вдовичина лепта), Witwenmilbe.*

The means of linguistic objectification of the axiological content of the concept WIDOW are divided into conventional (associated with a female referent on the basis of their meaning) and discursive (associated with a female referent through explicit/implicit attribution of evaluative characteristics to her in discursive contexts). The symbolic content of the concept WIDOW is represented by chains of associative meanings closely related to the conceptual and figurative meanings that are actualised in the minds of an average German-, English- and Ukrainian-speaking individual as Grief, Death, Loneliness, Mourning. A powerful means of forming national intellectual and evaluative concepts is the evaluative-expressive metaphor, which is a carrier of certain nationally determined associative stereotypes. For example:

Die Stadt ist die Witwe des Krieges.

А ти, моя Україно, безталанна вдово.

The winter sky is a widow's sky, bedarkened and weeping.

The identified semantic characteristics in their totality constitute an integral system of models of representations of a widow inherent in ethnic consciousness.

6. Conclusions.

The concept WIDOW is a complex and multifaceted one that is deeply ingrained in many cultures. Lexicalization, which refers to the process of creating a lexicon or vocabulary for a given concept, plays a crucial role in understanding how a culture conceptualizes and represents the concept WIDOW.

WIDOW can be considered a thick concept because it conveys both descriptive information and evaluative significance, and reflects a complex interplay of social, cultural, and moral values and beliefs. Descriptively, it refers to a woman whose husband has died. However, it also carries evaluative significance, as it implies a sense of loss and vulnerability, as well as the expectation of certain social and cultural norms and practices regarding the treatment of widows.

The concept WIDOW / WITWE / ВДОВА in the English, German, and Ukrainian languages has a rich history and cultural significance. Through its lexicalization and semantic associations, the concept embodies themes of loss, mourning, and financial hardship. The study of the linguistic aspects of the concept WIDOW in the analyzed languages provides insight into the cultural and social perceptions of widowhood in German-, English-, Ukrainian-speaking societies.

The analysis of concept WIDOW in German, English, and Ukrainian has demonstrated both isomorphic and allomorphic means of verbalising this conceptual category and socio-cultural phenomenon. Compared to German and English, in the Ukrainian picture of the world, the concept ВДОВА has a stronger connection with archetypes and a wider range of negative connotations, which is explained by the archetypal memory of the position of women in the traditional patriarchal Ukrainian culture, the facts of discrimination and the low level of gender culture. In English and German, the axiological component of the studied concept is expressed much less, which explains the significant (compared to Ukrainian) word-formation potential of the lexeme *widow*. The analysis of the peculiarities of the objectification of the concepts WITWE / ВДОВА / WIDOW allows us to conclude that they are stereotyped by the respective linguistic societies. The linguistic stereotypes of each individual linguistic and cultural community contain an idioethnic element of world conceptualisation. Idioethnicity is manifested through the allomorphy of linguistic interpretations of reality. The specificity of the ethnic mentality of German, English and Ukrainian speakers and a number of extralinguistic factors are the main sources of allomorphy in the studied linguocultures.

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These young Covid widows are grieving during lockdown through a Facebook group: URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/01/29/us/young-covid-19-widows-grieving/index.html>

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Анотація

Стаття присвячена вивченню етнічних особливостей концептуалізації дійсності, об'єктивованих у культурно маркованих лексичних одиницях на позначення жінки-вдови, що утворюють відповідні фрагменти німецької, української та англійської національно-мовних картин світу. Метою роботи є зіставний аналіз засобів вербалізації концепту WITWE / ВДОВА / WIDOW у німецькій, англійській та українській лінгвокультурах.

Крізь призму зіставної лінгвокультурології та теорії концептуального аналізу здійснено структурно-семантичну реконструкцію концепту WITWE / ВДОВА / WIDOW та виявлено принципи його семантико-концептуальної організації в німецькій, англійській та українській мовних картинах світу. Визначено набір концептуальних та семантичних ознак аналізованого концепту з урахуванням складових його структури (понятійної, асоціативно-образної, ціннісної), виявлено основні семантико-ідеографічні сфери концепту ВДОВА; з'ясовано аксіологічну маркованість та визначено асоціативні зв'язки досліджуваного концепту з урахуванням його концептуальних корелятивів; розглянуто семіотичні механізми стереотипізації уявлень етносів про вдову, виявлено їхню детермінацію культурними та психоментальними чинниками.

Аналіз особливостей об'єктивації концепту WITWE / ВДОВА / WIDOW в англійській, німецькій та українській лінгвокультурах дозволив зробити висновок про стереотипність сприйняття жінки-вдови відповідними лінгвосоціумами та показав аломорфізм національних особливостей концептуалізації дійсності, на які впливають типи архетипів, історичні та культурні реалії.

Ключові слова: концепт ВДОВА, національно маркована лексика, табу, етнічна ментальність, концептуальна ознака.