METAPHORS AND METONYMIES
IN LATVIAN AND ENGLISH PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS
WITH THE KEYWORD *HEAD*

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Abstract

Phraseology, often considered a supplementary discipline in the past, now occupies a central place in many fields as an object of interdisciplinary research for cross-cultural and cross-linguistic studies in general and cognitive linguistics, pedagogy, translation, corpus and computational linguistics, lexicography, and psychology.

Two databases in Latvian and English are used to extract phraseological units (PUs) with the keyword "head". The article aims to identify, compare and contrast metaphorical and metonymic Latvian and English phraseological units, discussing the similarities and differences in meanings of the base form of a phraseological unit (PU) and its use in every analysed case. Since metaphor and metonymy are central thought patterns in cognitive linguistics, testing their function in PUs is crucial. Metaphorical and metonymic Latvian PUs and their English counterparts are examined in the cognitive linguistic framework, analysing conceptual metaphors and conceptual metonymies.

Corresponding pairs of PUs are studied as one set to establish if they will function similarly. It can be concluded that pairs of PUs in both languages have the same structure, convey equivalent meanings and even have the same type of conceptual metonymy: A PART STANDS FOR THE WHOLE, for instance, *divas*

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galvas (*ir¹*) *gudrākas nekā viena* (two heads (are) smarter than one) and its English counterpart: "two heads are better than one".

Introduction

It is often believed that phraseology as a discipline is primarily represented by the European Society of Phraseology (EUROPHRAS), with a research tradition from Europe, Russia, and the German-speaking countries. EUROPHRAS was founded in Bielefeld in January 1999 and currently sits in Zurich. The EUROPHRAS president is a German phraseology scholar, Kathrin Steyer [EUROPHRAS 2022].

Phraseology today means interdisciplinary studies as a developing field expanding in various directions. For instance, to mention a few researchers: the Spanish scholar Antonio Pamies-Bertrán is a general linguist exploring phraseology and translation; the Croatian researcher Marija Omazić is studying idiom processing from a cognitive perspective and translation, using corpus-based methods; the Polish academic Joanna Szerszunowicz is working in the field of contrastive linguistics and contrastive phraseology from a cross-cultural perspective. A particular field closely related to phraseology is the research of proverbs, i. e., paremiology. Wolfgang Mieder is a German world-renowned proverb expert and a long-standing editor of *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*. He has written numerous books, including two volumes of *the International Bibliography of Paremiology and Phraseology*. American scholar Raymond W. Gibbs Jr. does research in experimental psycholinguistics and cognitive science, including understanding of figurative language like metaphor, irony, and idioms.

The theoretical framework for the article consists of studies in phraseology, especially contrastive phraseology (Dobrovol'skij, Naciscione, Piirainen, and Kunin) and studies in cognitive linguistics (Lakoff and Johnson, Gibbs, and Kövecses).

One of the past leading scholars on phraseology was the Russian linguist A. V. Kunin (Александр Владимирович Кунин), whose definition of a PU as *a stable combination of words with a fully or partially figurative meaning*² can still be used as a stepping stone for one's research in this discipline [Kunin 1970: 210]. Stability and figurative meaning distinguish these units from free word combinations and set expressions that are stable but have no figurative meaning.

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¹ Both versions exist with *ir* (EN: is) and without *ir*.

² In the original: Фразеологическая единица — это устойчивое сочетание слов с полностью или частично переосмысленным значением [Kunin 1970: 210].

There are many parallel terms of PU: idiom, fixed phrase, fixed expression, phraseologism, phraseme, phrasal lexical item, phraseological item, multiword unit, multiword lexical unit, multiword expression, polylexical[1] expression, etc[2] [Corpas Pastor and Colson 2020: 2; Wray 2002: 9]. Andreas Langlotz describes these terms as Cheshire cats: *Given this state of affairs, one has to develop a suitable strategy to find one's way through the terminological jungle to become capable of providing a systematic account of the Cheshire-cat-like nature of these curious linguistic phenomena* [Langlotz 2006: 2]. In their recent publication in 2022, Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij and Elisabeth Piirainen state that they prefer the term *phraseme* because PU does not sound natural in English and is a calque from Russian [Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen 2022: 36–37]. It can be disputed that PU is an acceptable term in English, and it will take some time for the terminological variety to stabilise; however, if the number of phraseology scholars who prefer the term *phraseme* rises sharply, it might be used in the future[3].

Latvian, unlike English, which is an analytic language, is a synthetic language where word order is less critical in meaning construction than inflexions; therefore, it might also affect PUs and their functioning in language.

Research question and methodology

Through qualitative analysis, the article aims to identify and compare metaphorical and metonymic phraseological units with the keywords *galva* in Latvian and "head" in English. The article's central **research question** explores whether Latvian and English PUs with the keyword *head* have similar or different conceptual metaphors and metonymies.

The following **methodology** is applied in this article: select appropriate Latvian and English databases; search the database for the necessary PU in Latvian and English; excerpt the most salient examples for detailed analysis; select appropriate Latvian and English monolingual dictionaries for the **base form** PU definitions; and draw a comparison of PU meanings, stylistic patterns and their use in both languages.

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[1] This term is used in the book *Computational Phraseology* edited by Gloria Corpas Pastor and Jean-Pierre Colson [Corpas Pastor and Colson 2020]. The term *polylexicality* appeared already in 2005 in French studies of semantics by Salah Mejri [Mejri 2004].

[2] In her book *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon*, Alison Wray gives many terms that are used to mean PUs [Wray 2002: 9].

[3] Latvian has no terminological difficulties, and the most common term is *frazeoloģisms* (phraseologism). *Frazēma* (EN phraseme) has a narrower meaning in Latvian than *frazeoloģisms* [VPSV 2007: 120–121].

It is important to note that the **base form** is a dictionary form of a PU. Naciscione defines the base form as *an archetypal conception. It is a decontextualised unit of language, stored in the dictionary or the long-term memory of the language user, accessed when a discourse situation calls for it* [Naciscione 2010: 8].

The selected language corpora with real use examples in media and literature are *The Balanced Corpus of Modern Latvian Texts* (*Līdzsvarotais mūsdienu latviešu valodas tekstu korpuss*) (LVK2018) [LVK2018 2016–2018] and *The British National Corpus* (BNC) [BNC 2009] in English. Unless indicated differently, these online dictionaries are used to verify the meanings of PUs, which are given in Tables 1–4: online contemporary Latvian dictionary to confirm the Latvian meanings [MLVV 2003–2023]; online English dictionary represented by Random House Unabridged Dictionary is used to verify the English meanings [Dictionary.com 2023].

A **corpus-based method** is employed to automatically extract PUs in context from databases. This method relies on a technique that uses a collection of texts, i. e., a corpus, as a source from which linguistic data can be extracted computationally via **keyword search** [Corpas Pastor and Colson 2020: 1–3].

In the identification of PUs, the **method** developed by Anita Naciscione has been applied: **recognition**: recognise that the expression is fully or partially figurative; identify the PU; **verification**: confirm the PU and identify it as a metonymy or metaphor in figurative meaning construction; **comprehension**: define the PUs in Latvian and English; and **interpretation**: examine the interaction of metonymy and metaphor in context [Naciscione 2010: 43–55].

Metaphor and metonymy in cognitive linguistics and stylistics

Metaphor and metonymy are two basic patterns of thought in cognitive linguistics. In 1980, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson published a book *Metaphors We Live By* [Lakoff and Johnson [1980] 2003]. It became one of the essential elements for a new branch in linguistics – cognitive linguistics, spawning the *conceptual metaphor theory* that, more than 40 years later, remains one of the most influential theories in figurative language research despite various critiques.

The crucial difference between the classical approach to stylistic techniques and the cognitive linguistic approach lies in the treatment of figurative language either as a merely decorative and rhetorical tool (the classical approach) or patterns of thought that first exist in the mind and only then are expressed in language (the cognitive linguistic approach) [Aristotle [1941 Random House] 2001; Lakoff and Johnson [1980] 2003; Gibbs [1994] 2002; Kövecses 2002]. Zoltán Kövecses, in his newest book *Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory,* published in 2020, expresses a proposition: *It may be that there is no literal language at all* [Kövecses 2020: xii].

Conceptual metaphor can be explained by the formula **A** is **B**, where **A**[1] and **B** represent two conceptual domains that share some similarity or analogy in human experience. **A** is more abstract or the *target domain* that is understood in terms of **B**, which is more concrete or the *source domain*. Vyvyan Evans describes conceptual domains as *relatively complex knowledge structures which relate to coherent aspects of experience. For instance, the conceptual domain journey is hypothesised to include representations for things such as traveller, mode of transport, route, destination, obstacles encountered on the route and so forth* [Evans 2007: 61–62]. The systematic correspondences across conceptual domains are called metaphorical mappings [Lakoff and Johnson [1980] 2003: 246].

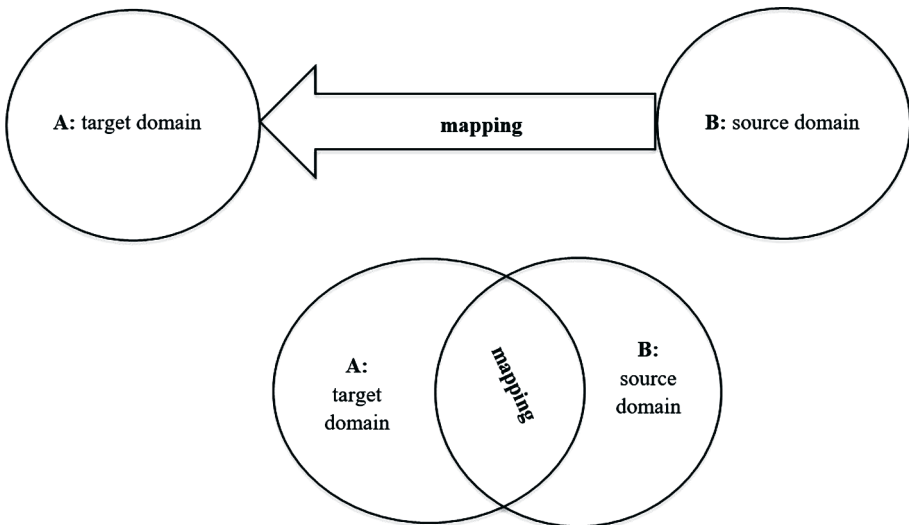Conceptual metaphor can be represented graphically as follows (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Graphic representations of conceptual metaphor in cognitive linguistics[2].

One could visualise conceptual domains as a memory cabinet with a set of shelves where, on every shelf, one keeps experiences related to a specific concept (Figure 2).

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[1] Any two different letters can be used in this formula. It is often **A** and **B** because, in the Western tradition, we follow Aristotle, who first introduced these letters, defining metaphor [Aristotle [1941 Random House] 2001: 1476–1477].

[2] All figures have been designed by the author of the article – E. V., based on *Conceptual Metaphor Theory*.
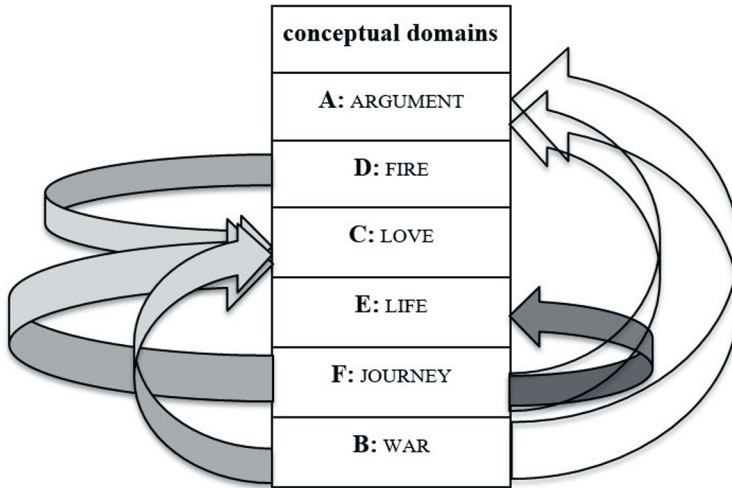
Figure 2. Conceptual domains: A memory cabinet with experience shelves.

This figure includes classical conceptual metaphors discussed in cognitive linguistics: AN ARGUMENT IS A JOURNEY, AN ARGUMENT IS WAR, LOVE IS FIRE, LOVE IS WAR, LOVE IS A JOURNEY, and LIFE IS A JOURNEY [Lakoff and Johnson [1980] 2003; Kövecses 2002; Gibbs 2005]. The arrows represent metaphorical mappings from source domains to target domains. Conceptual metaphors are written in small capitals to emphasise their existence in our minds to distinguish them from linguistic metaphors, which allow us to perceive the underlying conceptual structure. Conceptual metaphors might not be expressed in language in the given phrasing [Kövecses 2002: 4]. For instance, the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS FIRE is perceived from linguistic metaphors, such as *he/she is hot, there are sparks between us, Mike is my old flame, when the flames of love become ashes,* etc.

Metonymy is based on associations of contiguity or closeness, and one can use a formula **A1** stands for or is a part of **A** or vice versa[1] [Veinberga 2014], and there is only one conceptual domain involved.

According to Kövecses, *metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain, or idealized cognitive model* (*ICM*) [Kövecses 2002: 145]. Metonymies *are characterized by a particular relationship between one kind of entity and another kind of entity.* Kövecses suggests using the terms *vehicle entity* and *target entity* [Kövecses 2002: 145]. The *vehicle entity* is the one *that directs attention, or*

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[1] Any letter can be used here: **A** has been chosen only for convenience to indicate one conceptual domain since **A** and **B** are used for metaphor.

provides mental access, to another entity, and the *target entity* is *the kind of entity to which attention, or mental access, is provided the target entity* [Kövecses 2002: 145]. Similar to conceptual metaphor, conceptual metonymy is also written in small capitals: THE WHOLE STANDS FOR A PART, A PART STANDS FOR THE WHOLE, or A PART STANDS FOR A PART.

The following letters and numbers will be used to denote three types of conceptual metonymies (Figure 3):

1) type **A1** stands for **A** (part stands for whole): *I need a helping hand*: hand ⇨ person;

2) type **A** stands for **A1** (whole stands for part): *Canada has many wins in ice hockey*: country ⇨ team;

3) type **A1** stands for **A2** (part stands for part): *Putin bombed Kyiv*[1]: the president of Russia ⇨ Russian air force under the orders of the president, who is the supreme leader of the army ⇨Russian army invading Ukraine.
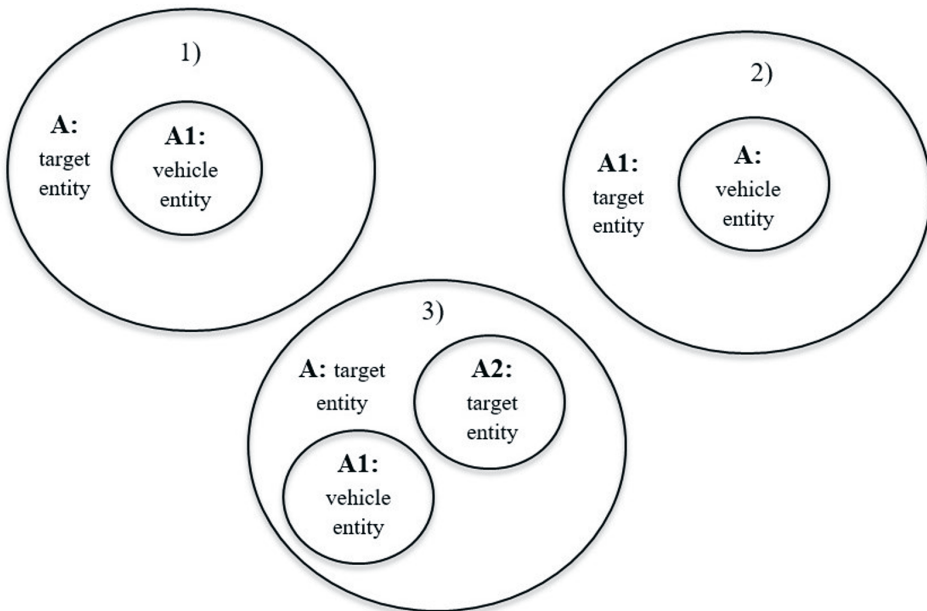
Figure 3. *Graphic representations of three conceptual metonymy types.*

In 3) **A1** (part) ⇨ **A2** (part) ⇨ **A** (whole), there are two target entities because **A1** stands for **A2**; however, **A1** and **A2** are both part of the whole conceptual domain **A**.

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[1] According to Kövecses, such an expression can be described as a conceptual metonymy: THE CONTROLLER STANDS FOR THE CONTROLLED [Kövecses 2002].

Kövecses believes that *metonymies are, in a sense, "more primary" than primary metaphors[1]* [Kövecses 2020: xii]. It means that metonymy might be even more important than metaphor.

Comparison of Latvian and English PUs

In total, 160 matching strings of language containing PUs with keyword "head" were examined, 45 found in LVK2018; and 115 – in BNC [LVK2018 2016–2018; BNC 2009]. Eight PUs, the most appropriate and equivalent cases, were chosen for detailed analysis: four pairs of PUs with the keyword "head": (*turēt*) *galvu augšā* and "hold (one's) head (up) high"; *divas galvas ir gudrākas nekā viena* and "two heads are better than one"; *no galvas līdz kājām / no galvas līdz papēžiem* and "from head to toe"; and (*par*) *galvas tiesu* and "head and shoulders above".

For the analysis of the first pair, two results were found in LVK2018 and seven in BNC with this PU (Table 1).

Table 1. PUs (*turēt*) *galvu augšā* and "hold (one's) head (up) high".[2]

PU base form	meaning	example	stylistic pattern
(*turēt*) *galvu augšā*	people say it when encouraging someone to muster one's courage or to pluck up one's spirit, not to lose heart, faith, not to give in to weakness	*Dzīve turpinās, un viss būs labi.* **Galvu augšā** (*Pēc kaislīgajām attiecībām Diānu Pīrāgu ārstē trīs psihologi. 03.04.2016. Slavenības, populārā periodika*).	**conceptual metonymy**: **A1 ⇨ A**: PART ⇨ WHOLE *galva ⇨* ķermenis **A1 ⇨ A2**: PART ⇨ PART *galva ⇨ attieksme* **conceptual metaphor**: *LABAIS/KONTROLE IR AUGŠĀ*
hold (one's) head (up) high	behave proudly; maintain one's dignity, especially in times of difficulty, failure, or embarrassment	When you walk through a storm **hold your head up high** (The Daily Mirror 1985–1994).	**conceptual metonymy**: **A1 ⇨ A**: PART ⇨ WHOLE head ⇨ body **A1 ⇨ A2**: PART ⇨ PART head ⇨ attitude **conceptual metaphor**: HAPPY/ CONTROL IS UP

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[1] It is a term coined by Joseph Grady. Raymond Gibbs explains that *A primary metaphor is a metaphorical mapping for which there is an independent and direct experiential basis that can be expressed within language*, e. g., DIFFICULTIES ARE BURDENS, KNOWING IS SEEING, MORE IS UP [Grady 1997; Gibbs 2017: 29–30].

[2] All tables have been designed by the author of the article – E. V. The references in the examples have been preserved as indicated in the databases – LVK2018 and BNC [BNC 2009; LVK 2018 2016–2018].

The meanings of the PUs in Latvian and English are alike, focusing on being strong when times are hard, although there is more stress on endurance and being brave in Latvian. In contrast, in English, there is more emphasis on pride and dignity. There is also an additional word in English – "high" which underlines the idea of upholding a body position proudly. Stylistic patterns of the PUs (*turēt*) *galvu augšā* and "hold (one's) head (up) high" are identical. They are both metonymy and metaphor. When human beings hold their heads up high, their bodies are in an upright position. Thus, it is a conceptual metonymy: A PART STANDS FOR THE WHOLE, a head stands for the whole body. It is also a primary conceptual metaphor: HAPPY/CONTROL IS UP because "holding your head up high"/*turēt galvu augšā* means one's confidence, spirit and positive attitude, trying to project a positive attitude in an unpleasant situation. In the examples in both languages, there are situations when someone needs to be strong in a complicated situation in their lives: in the Latvian example, a lady has ended a personal relationship and is devastated, while in the English example, there is general advice on how to act in a challenging period of one's life.

For the second pair of PUs, there is one result in LVK2018 for *divas galvas ir gudrākas nekā viena* and one result for *salikt galvas kopā* as well as eight results for "two heads are better than one" in BNC (Table 2).

**Table 2. PUs *divas galvas ir gudrākas nekā viena* and
"two heads are better than one".**

PU base form	meaning	example	stylistic pattern
divas galvas ir gudrākas nekā viena / salikt galvas kopā[1]	try to figure something out, solve something together; by combining the knowledge and skills of several people, you can do more and better[2]	*Abiem potenciālajiem orķestra līderiem ir vieni un tie paši mērķi (..) un **divas galvas ir gudrākas nekā viena** (LNSO galvenais diriģents būs Šišons. 24.05.2008. Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze, nacionālā periodika).*	**conceptual metonymy**: **A1 ⇨ A** PART ⇨ WHOLE *galvas ⇨ cilvēki*
two heads are better than one	it is helpful to have the advice or opinion of a second person; two people can come up with better solutions	(..) part of it has you as the chief designer and you have to accept the notion that **two heads are better than one** (Interview with Roger Black (1985–1994)).	**conceptual metonymy**: **A1 ⇨ A** PART ⇨ WHOLE heads ⇨ people

[1] It means "to put heads together", and is synonymous with PU *divas galvas ir gudrākas nekā viena.*

[2] This explanation is given in a reading task for the Latvian language exam level C2 [Valodu portfelis 2015].

The words "one", "two" and "heads" are the same in both languages; however, the word *gudrāks* means "smarter" in Latvian. It does not imply that a smarter person is better, while smart decisions can be considered better than the ones that are not smart. In the Latvian example, two orchestra conductors must work together to achieve better results. In contrast, in the English example, the chief designer has to accept their team's help to work better, so both situations are similar. Equally, in Latvian and English, the PUs are conceptual metonymies of the same type: A PART STANDS FOR THE WHOLE, when heads stand for people.

LVK2018 contains 30 results of PU *no galvas līdz kājām* and four results of PU *no galvas līdz papēžiem*, and there are 73 results of PU "from head to toe" in BNC (Table 3).

**Table 3. PUs *no galvas līdz kājām / no galvas līdz papēžiem*
and "from head to toe".**

PU base form	meaning	example	stylistic pattern
no galvas līdz kājām / no galvas līdz papēžiem[1]	covering the whole body, throughout, completely; to look at someone curiously, also shamelessly	*Meitene dažus brīžus klusēja, mani vēlreiz cieši noskatīdama* **no galvas līdz kājām**, *tad atkal jauki pasmaidīja* (*Lukjanskis, Egils. 2006. Kam neskanēs zvans. Rīga, Zvaigzne ABC*).	**conceptual metonymy**: **A1 / A2 ⇨ A** PART ⇨ WHOLE *galva /* kājas ⇨ *cilvēks* **conceptual metaphor**: *CILVĒKS IR OBJEKTS* (*ar sākumpunktu* **galva** *un beigupunktu* **kājas**)
from head to toe	all over one's body	The likes of Naomi Campbell and Linda Evangelista were clad **from head to toe** in leather, rubber, latex and PVC (Clothes Show. 1991. London: Redwood Pub., periodical).	**conceptual metonymy**: **A1 / A2 ⇨ A** PART ⇨ WHOLE head / toe ⇨ person **conceptual metaphor**: A PERSON IS AN OBJECT (with a starting point *head* and an end-point *toe*)

The examples of the PUs are the cases of partially figurative meaning: in Latvian, a girl looks at someone literally directing her gaze all over their body and figuratively evaluating the person in a curious and flirtatious manner; in English, the supermodels are literally wearing the clothes of certain materials, and figuratively

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[1] It means "from head to heels", and is synonymous with PU *no galvas līdz kājām*.

it is an exaggeration to say that their whole bodies are clothed because usually, it is not the case. The difference in meaning in these PUs is that in Latvian, there is an additional meaning of looking at the other person curiously or shamelessly. In contrast, in English, there is no additional meaning. The PUs in both languages are conceptual metonymies: A PART STANDS FOR THE WHOLE, and in this case, there are many body parts, starting with the head and ending with toes, that includes the whole body; thus, body parts stand for people. There is also a case of an underlying conceptual metaphor: A PERSON IS AN OBJECT as the person has a starting point and an endpoint. There is only a slight difference – in Latvian, the endpoint is "feet"; however, in English, it is "toe".

In the fourth set of PUs seven results appear for *galvas tiesu* in LVK2018 and 27 results for "head and shoulders above" in BNC (Table 4).

Table 4. PUs (*par*) *galvas tiesu* and "head and shoulders above".

PU base form	meaning	example	stylistic pattern
(*par*) *galvas tiesu*	far superior (compared to someone else)	*Lai kā es mīlētu un cienītu savas komandas spēlētājus, kanādieši ir **galvas tiesu pārāki** (Ar cīņassparu vien nepietiek. 06.05.2008. Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze, nacionālā periodika).*	**conceptual metonymy**: **A1 ⇨ A2 ⇨ A** PART ⇨ PART ⇨WHOLE *galvas tiesa ⇨ galva ⇨ cilvēks* **conceptual metaphor:** LABAIS IR AUGŠĀ
head and shoulders above	greatly superior to	Though short, he stands **head and shoulders above** most. He is one of those characters whose personality is somehow several sizes too large (Leonard Cohen: Prophet of the heart. 1990. Dorman, Loranne S. and Rawlins, Clive L. London: Omnibus Press).	**conceptual metonymy** : PART ⇨ WHOLE head / shoulders ⇨ person **conceptual metaphor:** GOOD IS UP

There is conceptual metonymy in English: A PART STANDS FOR THE WHOLE. A head and shoulders stand for a person; however, in Latvian, A PART STANDS FOR A PART, and A PART STANDS FOR THE WHOLE conceptual metonymy. In both languages, a primary conceptual metaphor: GOOD IS UP, can be construed, implying that the top parts are better, thus generating a similarity – the quality of some people is better than others. In the Latvian example, the sports team of the competitors is better than one's own team despite one's affection, whereas in the English example,

there is an individual whose personality is more notable than others despite being physically small. These PUs demonstrate their usage when something is objectively outstanding, regardless of one's beliefs or feelings.

Conclusions

Both Latvian and English databases contain media and literary texts. Nevertheless, there are more results in English, which can be explained by the fact that BNC contains a larger corpus collected over many years. LVK2018 contains more 21st-century examples than BNC, with mostly 20th-century examples. In English, there is also the database CORE: Corpus of Online Registers of English; however, language registers are outside the scope of this research.

PUs are known in phraseology under different names; nevertheless, terminological issues do not hinder the identification and analysis of their essence.

Metaphor involves two conceptual domains, which can be identified as **A** and **B**; in contrast, metonymy operates within one conceptual domain, which can be identified as **A**, and three types of conceptual metonymy exist. Metonymy dominates as it is present in all the analysed examples, Tables 1–4, whereas metaphor is present in Tables 1–3.

The main conclusion that can be drawn is that matching pairs of PUs can be analysed together and yield similar results despite the differences between synthetic and analytic languages. The PUs are used in analogous circumstances in Latvian and English: a difficult life situation, working together to accomplish something, wearing specific garments or looking at someone, and being objectively better despite one's feelings.

The following **similarities** with the keyword "head" were identified in Latvian and English pairs of PUs: fully or partially figurative meaning in all PUs; related meanings in all pairs of PUs; the most widespread conceptual metonymy is PART STANDS FOR WHOLE: Tables 1–4; analogous functioning in three pairs of PUs: Tables 1–3.

The subsequent **differences** were observed: three primary conceptual metaphors in Tables 1, 3 and 4; differences in the type of conceptual metonymy in two pairs of PUs in Table 1 and 4: PART STANDS FOR PART conceptual metonymy is identified.

In the future, performing a comparative analysis of PUs with other body parts, for instance, "heart", "skin", "hand", "foot", and others, would be worthwhile, including the PUs' etymology. Methodologically, creating one's own corpus using a corpus manager and text analysis software such as Sketch Engine could be invaluable.

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