

On the Mechanisms of Conceptual Metaphor and Metonymy: The Case of Albanian Postmortem Phraseology

Abstract: *This paper aims to examine the cognitive processes that bring into existence phraseological expressions in Albanian, with a special focus on postmortem units. Although in recent decades the study of the metaphors and metonymies as conceptual constructions that both occur separately and in combination has received considerable attention in linguistic theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987, Lakoff & Turner 1989, de Mendosa et al. 2002, Croft & Cruse 2004, de Mendosa & Masegosa 2012, de Mendosa et al. 2014 etc.), there are a few studies dealing with Albanian (Rakiplari 2019, Stojku & Tahiri 2020, Deda, Hoshafi & Genesin 2023, Kananaj 2024). Seeking to fulfill this void, the present study will investigate quantitatively and qualitatively the mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy in phraseological units intertwined with ethno-cultural components that influence these cognitive processes in Albanian language.*

Keywords: *cognitive process; postmortem phraseology; metaphor; metonymy; ethnicity.*

1. Introduction

As lexical components, phraseological units are related to elements of the mental, spiritual, and cultural realms of a certain language-speaking community. Language-specific apparel, or the assortment of language components designated for the expressions of spiritual, mental, and cultural life, contains a wealth of data and expertise that both characterize and shape the people of this community's understanding. It is a cultural fact that natural language is the most fundamental human reality that forges our way of thinking (Laplantine 2006: 13). Because language is the foundation of all collective memory, tradition, habit, culture, and history, it plays a major role in shaping the entirety of our cognitions, including how we think (Rrokaj 2007: 206). As a result, language represents the best carrier of the social archetype of a community and the best tool for its reconstruction.

The quest to attain, quantify, assess, and scrutinize the portrayal of human experience inside the phraseological unit is a quest to discover

the rationale behind the phraseological unit's designation and continued existence. Why is the system in need of a unit like this? Why is there a requirement for a unit that by construction and expression, belongs to one subsystem and by value to another subsystem? The question of the unit's purpose must be addressed in the first place, as part of the discussion about the function of the language in general. However, there are also special functions to be considered, ones that are not related to the system as a virtual and abstract unit of investigation, but also to the discourse and to communication as an action (Ponzio 2007: 62).

In addition to being shaped by social and historical experiences, human behavior is also 'a doubled experience', meaning that it first manifests as the creation of models before becoming an actual action (Ponzio 2007: 63). We consider phraseological units to be the result of the language's need to revitalize its lexicon. In these linguistic units, there is a psychological-linguistic tension between labeling a new object that arises in the experience of a social group and reformulating it, renaming it, rediscovering it, and marking oneself to the object through assessments, attitudes, the nature of recognition, etc.

Regarding postmortem phraseological units, death is both a link in a long chain of meanings that connects it to life and a transition that every community emphasizes through rites of passage from one state to another. Therefore, death is not just about the afterlife; it is also an event that is part of life's processes, starting with conception, which is known as the process that is opposite to death itself (Ciattini et al. 1992: 223). One of the most significant institutions in a people's spiritual life are postmortem ceremonies. Because of this, the terminology used to describe these ceremonies or procedures is extremely significant. Death is a continuous cycle and ceases at the time of passing away. However, this cycle then enters a new phase that lasts for an even longer period of time and is determined by the length of natural cycles. Changes in the way phraseology conceptual models are created structurally affect how such models function in various languages (Heine 2014).

There are numerous phraseological elements in the Albanian language that denote postmortem processes. Studying how a human community represents its experiences in its own language is an examination on marking, research on how the individual group has selected a set of markers to convey, preserve or convey a certain meaning or content. The linguistic unit's motivation – or, more accurately, the first cause that conceives a sign – is explained by the relationship that is obtained between the signifiers and the signified content. The operating laws of arbitrariness and temporality both have an impact on this cause. Important linguistic processes, such as the economics of language, memory, nomination, and

even the institutionalization of the sign, its dissemination, and its triumph over the geographical and cultural milieu that gave rise to it, would not be conceivable if the signifier did not sever relations with the signified.

2. Theoretical apparatus

The two essential elements of phraseological constructs are metonymy and metaphor. In contemporary linguistics, metonymy and metaphor are acknowledged as cognitive mechanisms. They are thought of as conceptual mappings. While metonymy is considered a mapping inside a cognitive domain, metaphor is seen as a mapping from one conceptual domain to another (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff and Turner 1989: 103). Speakers use cognitive processes to generate new metaphors whenever they want to introduce novel concepts or viewpoints. The assumption that underlying mental structures exist and are utilized by the apparatus that produces language is the foundation of perceiving metaphor as a cognitive process. The existence of deep structures does not imply unique biological mechanisms, but rather the logical reconstruction of several semantic notions in accordance with a mental hierarchy. In this aspect, language is not perceived as an autonomous cognitive ability (Lakoff 1987, Goldberg 1995, Taylor 2002). Surface language is crucial because it offers interpretation context. Since language use is the source of all information about a language, input from surface language is essential to understanding the semantic components of a metaphor's referents (Croft & Cruise 2004). Researchers' opinions on the examination of metaphor and metonymy processes vary, nevertheless.

Mac Cormac (1985) claims that metaphor is the outcome of a cognitive process in which two or more referents that are not normally associated with one another are confronted. This produces a conceptual semantic abnormality, which typically shows itself as emotional tension. The truth value of the metaphor is also determined by how similar or unlike the referents are.

In conventional understandings, metonymy is viewed as a figure that emphasizes continuity within the same domain, while metaphor is thought of as a figure that depends on similarity of two things. Scholars define metonymy as, in the broadest sense, the relationship between a linguistic sign and its referent, or between form and meaning within a sign. Signifying is a creative process in and of itself; it creates a new element in language that gives the item it symbolizes a sense. It originates from a primary cause, just like any other creature. In our situation, the phraseological unit reflects an experience, and the sign denotes a reality. The marking process – that is, the process of creation – is not a frantic and ever-changing one. This procedure adheres to a set of guidelines, organizing all of the real-

world knowledge required for the marking process. Investigating these patterns in the formation of phraseological units is also an investigation into the ways in which a certain form represents a particular content. In a narrower perspective, Croft (1993: 348) views metonymy as a function of the domain of highlighting. He claims that metonymy transforms a literally secondary domain into a principal one.

Within metonymy, contiguity relations have been noted by a number of academics (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Kövecses and Radden 1998). Furthermore, it is observed that the prototypical instances of metonymy and metaphor are situated at opposing extremes of a spectrum, with no discernible boundary separating them (Radden 2000, Ruiz de Mendoza and Díez 2002, Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal 2002). Many researchers have looked at the common qualities that overlap between metonymy and metaphor, meaning that they don't meet the requirements to be classified as either one alone. To differentiate between the two, particular theoretical models have been presented (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987, Goossens 1990, Ruiz de Mendoza and Díez 2002, Taylor 2002, Kövecses 2002, Riemer 2002, Geeraerts 2002, Barcelona 2003, Croft and Cruse 2004, Barnden 2010, Ruiz de Mendoza 2011, Sanzharova 2021).

When metonymy and metaphor happen simultaneously, some academics refer to this as *metaphtonymy* (Goossens 1990, Ibáñez, José and Masegosa 2012: 153-184). This study will mostly adopt the approaches of Constructivist Grammar (Fillmore 1988, Goldberg 1996) and Cognitive Grammar (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Langacker 1987, 1991, 2002, Lakoff 2006). These models treat the speaker's linguistic repertoire as an extensive database of form-meaning correspondences.

2.1 Method

The corpus of phraseology explored in this study was collected from *Fjalor i gjuhës së sotme shqipe – Dictionary of Contemporary Albanian Language* (Kostallari et al. 1980), *Fjalor frazeologjik i gjuhës shqipe – Phraseological Dictionary of Albanian Language* (Gjevori 1980), *Fjalor frazeologjik i gjuhës shqipe – Phraseological dictionary of Albanian* (Thomai 1999), *Fjalor i gjuhës shqipe – Dictionary of Albanian Language* (Thomai et al. 2006). Undoubtedly, the *Phraseological Dictionary* (Thomai 1999) provides the best and most complete presentation of phraseology in the Albanian language.

The identification of postmortem phraseological units was done manually. We have identified 97 units. Following the construction of the study's corpus, phraseological expressions were categorized into five conceptual subgroups according to the meaning they convey and the key words they employ to derive metonymy and metaphors, as well as for the

examination of ethno-cultural components that play a role in the figures' creative processes. We shall analyze these groupings both quantitatively and qualitatively.

3. Results and discussions

Quantitatively speaking, our corpus contains twenty-three phraseological expressions centered around the earth/soil element, twenty-eight phraseological expressions centered around the human body and its components, twenty-four phraseological expressions centered around the house and its contents, eight phraseological expressions centered around food, and fourteen phraseological expressions pertaining to funeral ceremonies and ethnic elements (Fig. 1).

Phraseological units referring to the human body and its parts predominate, making up 29% of the overall phraseological corpus of this study. Phraseological expressions that basically relate to the house and its elements come next, with 24% and 23%, respectively, nearly on par with phraseological expressions that refer to earth/soil. Funeral rites comprise 14% of the corpus and are strongly ethnically oriented. Remarkably, phraseological units related to food make up the least amount of the corpus overall, only 8%, as shown in Figure 2.

From a conceptual standpoint, these statistics demonstrate how the Albanian community views the afterlife in terms of the human body, the land, the home, the food, and the rituals involved in burial.

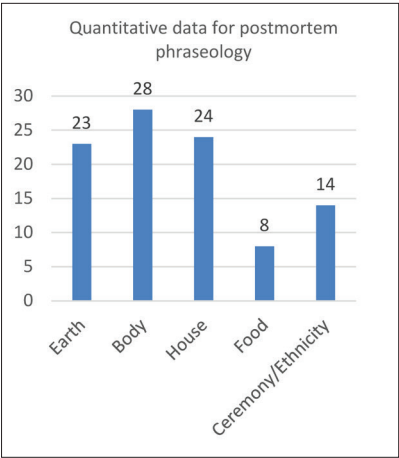


Fig. 1

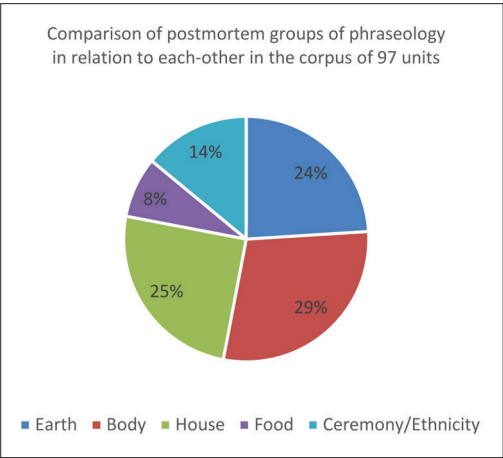


Fig. 2

In the next sections, a qualitative analysis of the postmortem phraseological corpus will be provided, with segments based on the relevant groupings displayed in the above graphs.

3.1 The elements of earth and the soil

Phraseologies containing the elements of soil and earth make up a sizable microsystem. Words like 'world' and 'mud', which establish metonymic associations with them, are important components. This section contains the phraseological units listed below.

E bëri dheun (sheshin) breg. – lit. *Someone made the soil (the square) a bank.*

It indicates that someone is dead. The figurative meaning is closely connected to English idioms like 'he kicked the bucket' or 'he bit the dust.' This idiom metaphorically refers to making the earth or public space a last resting place; it points to the way a death is considered a return to or a merging with the ground.

Hëngri (kafshoi) dhe. – lit. *Someone ate soil.* Stylistically, this unit carries a contemptuous tone. In English, there is a similar idiomatic expression, 'he bit the dust'.

Të futsha në dhe! – lit. *May I put you in the ground!* In English, it carries the meaning of 'May you rot in the ground!' or 'May the ground swallow you whole!'.

T'u haptë dheu (në këmbë)! – lit. *May the earth be opened underneath (your foot)!* It conveys the meaning 'May the ground open up and swallow you!' in English.

Të ngrëntë (të përpiftë) dheu! – lit. *May the earth eat (swallow) you!* It is a traditional Albanian curse that could loosely be translated to English as one of the following expressions of meaning and usage: 'May the earth devour you!' or 'May you be swallowed by the earth!'. It basically means someone is wishing for a person's disappearance or death, and it can be used especially as an emotional reaction, or when cursing.

S'e tret dheu. – lit. *The earth does not dissolve him/her.* A similar phraseology in English would be 'the ground won't accept him/her'. This idiom shows that someone is so hopeless or unwanted that even death or the earth will push them away. A related English phraseology with the same idea is 'even hell wouldn't want him/her', which also suggests that the person cannot be accepted by anyone, even in death or afterlife.

Mos e trettë dheu! – lit. *May the earth not dissolve him/her!* This unit functions like a curse, calling to mind endless trouble, pain, or punishment. It means 'May the earth never dissolve him/her!', which shows a wish for that person not to find peace in death. In English, similar phrases are 'May the earth never claim him!' or the usual curse, 'May he never rest in peace!', usually aimed at foes or people seen as bad.

I qoftë dheu i lehtë! – lit. *May the earth be light on him/her!* This is an old phraseology used as a wish after death, showing a hope and a wish for the dead to find peace and soft sleep in life after. In English, this feeling is often

expressed as 'May he/she rest in peace!', but a fancier way to say it is 'May the earth sit lightly on him/her!', which also shows respect and hope for calmness in death.

Të pafsha shtatë pashë në dhe! – lit. *May I see him/her seven arm spans under the earth!* This unit is a curse, and it expresses a strong desire for the death and burial of the addressee. It is equivalent in meaning to the English idiom 'May you be buried six feet under!', in which 'six feet under' is a standard euphemism for being dead and buried and expresses finality and death in both common and literary usage.

I ha shpina dhe. – lit. *Someone's back eats soil.* This unit is used when an individual is nearing death, typically due to old age or serious illness. It conveys the image of someone whose body is metaphorically turning toward the grave. In English, a similar phraseology is 'he has one foot in the grave', which suggests that a person is approaching the end of life.

I vuri shpatullat dheut. – lit. *Someone put his/her shoulders to the ground.* This phraseology means that someone has died and his/her body is now laying next to the ground. There are similar phrases in English such as 'he laid down in the earth', which maintains the burial image and the more idiomatic 'he gave up the ghost', an old phrase used to mark the moment of death, particularly the leaving of the soul from the body.

Mbuloi balta baltën. – lit. *Mud covered the mud.* The stylistic and semantic implications of this unit are complex. In a religious context, its emphasis on returning to earth after death will give it a meaning akin to the biblical proverb 'dust to dust, ashes to ashes'. Outside of this setting, though, it assumes a quite different tone. The statement alone has a disdainful meaning, and the repeated use of the element *baltë* – mud – produces a demeaning underlying meaning similar to 'scum covered the scum'. It is typically used to describe the passing of someone who was seen as socially useless, repulsive, or morally repugnant, hoping that their passing does not cause any harm to the world. By thinking that one type of filth is covered by another, it not only suggests the end of life but also does so in a disparaging manner.

The Albanian component that is mostly used in these phraseological units is *dhe* which can be translated as either *soil* or *earth*. At least three levels or states are seen in these units: the surface (above the surface), inside the soil/earth and becoming one with the soil.

E bëri dheun breg. – lit. *He/she turned the soil into a shore.* This phraseology contains a dead metaphor, it means someone died and it is used with disregard towards the dead person.

The concepts of being within the soil and becoming one with the soil have metonymic metaphors at its core. The state of being inside the soil/earth is described by expressions like '*hyri në dhe*', '*iu hap dheu (nën*

këmbë'), 'i vuri shpatullat dheut', 'e hëngri (e përpiu) dheu', 'i ha shpina dhe'. 'hëngri (kafshoi) dhe', 's'e tret dheu', and 'Mos e trettë dheu!'. They all contain the key-word *dhe* – soil, and they all mean someone is dead.

Phraseologies '*hëngri (kafshoi) botë*' and '*hëngri baltë*' are complete synonyms. It is the identical linguistic structure that places words in such synonymous semantic relationships. What distinguishes them is the semantic nuance of the words *dhe* – soil, *tokë* – earth, and *baltë* – mud.

Hyri në dhe. – lit. *He/she entered the soil.* This is a polysemantic unit. In one sense it is related to death, meaning someone died and was buried. Stylistically, it carries a neutral tone. Its approximate English translations are 'he/she was laid to rest' or 'he/she was buried'. It illustrates the way metaphorical language mirrors a community's harmony with nature and death. The use of 'soil' as a terminal point, at the same time a return to the earth, symbolizes the continuity with nature. These words demonstrate the convergence of language, cultural beliefs, and perceptions of life and death.

E hëngri (e përpiu) dheu! – lit. *The soil ate him/her (swallowed him/her)!* This is a striking example of a metaphor for death. By depicting the ground as an active, consuming entity, it communicates the irreversible nature of mortality. This image is consistent with conventional burial beliefs and the cyclical relationship between life and the natural world. The English idiom 'he perished' conveys the same essential idea. The Albanian unit on the other side views nature in an anthropomorphic way, perceiving death as an action performed by the earth itself rather than as a passive occurrence.

Iu hap dheu (në këmbë). – lit. *The earth opened up (at his/her feet).* This dramatic expression, which in a sense frequently connotes death, is used to indicate abrupt or unexplained absence. The expression suggests an almost supernatural intervention or an irreparable disappearance, conjuring a potent image of the earth physically opening to engulf someone. 'He/she vanished into thin air' is a similar phrase in English, but it lacks the visceral, earthly imagery found in the Albanian original. Similar to the English phrase 'I wish the ground would swallow me up', this unit can also in another sense represent feelings of humiliation, remorse, or dread that are so intense that one might wish the ground would open and engulf them. The Albanian unit is used in the perfect tense and not in the future tense, which gives the impression that these imaginary actions have already happened and are not any more a future desire.

Hëngri/kafshoi botë. – lit. *Someone ate/bit (a) world.* It means someone died. It is stylistically marked by disdain.

I ka mbirë/i ka dalë bari në faqe (në sy). – lit. *Grass has sprouted on his/her cheek (in his/her eyes).* The meaning of this unit is that someone has long been dead, so much time has passed that the body has been decomposed, and naturally the grass has grown on the face or within the eyes of the deceased. Although there is no direct counterpart in English,

the basic concept may be represented by 'he/she has been dead and buried for ages'. The Albanian unit transmits the idea that death is not considered a definitive end but rather a transformation that physically connects the deceased to the natural cycle, a notion strongly rooted in Albanian folklore.

The concept of 'man is formed from dust/clay and to dust/clay he will return' is referenced in these units, where the event of death is so great that the individual is connected to the earth. There is an early tradition that speaks in favour of this interpretation. When a sick person in the Albanian village of Gjocaj is on the verge of death and his condition worsens and he is unable to find medication, family members, usually the son who looked after him during his old age, take him and lay him on the ground to release his soul, as the soul can only be readily released from the body when it comes into contact with the soil (Toska, 2014: 210). After that, the person closes his eyes and his body cools down. This ethno-cultural setting shows the unique significance and value that the earth has in a person's life as well as in his death.

To present the conceptual scheme of this group, we are taking as a representative unit the phraseological expression *I ka mbirë bari në faqe*.

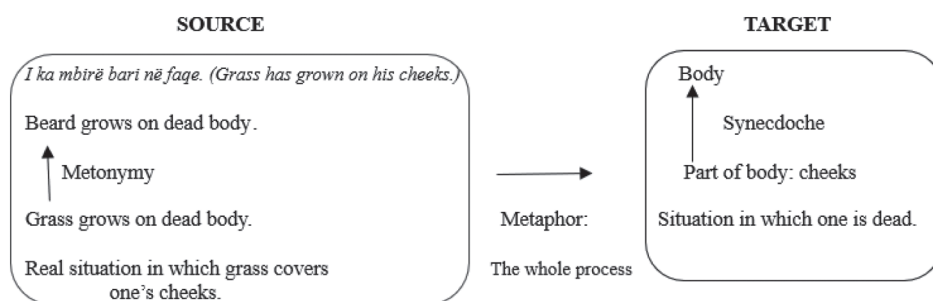


Fig. 3

3.2 The human body

The body as a complete unit, as the most important element in marking the end-of-life phraseological units, no longer appears literally in this group. It is however implied in the overall meaning of the expression. The name, the star and the seal, are the most usable elements in these expressions. The human body, so to speak, has disappeared. There are five phraseological units build around the verb *humb* which could be translated as *lose*, *extinguish*, *wipe off* or *disappear*.

T'u shoftë (t'u harroftë, të humbtë) emri! – lit. *May your name be wiped off (forgotten, lost)!*

T'u shkimtë carani! – lit. *May his hearth stone disappear! (May everyone in your family be dead!)*

T'u shoftë ylli! – lit. May your star extinguish!

Të humbtë vula! – lit. May your seal be lost!

Të humbtë mandata! – lit. May the bad news about your death disappear!

These are all maledictive phraseological units that express profound cultural beliefs about memory, identity, and social life. Examples such as *'T'u shoftë (t'u harroftë, të humbtë) emri!'* (lit. *May your name be erased/forgotten/lost!*) are intense sayings intended to delete a person's name or being from collective memory.

'T'u shkimtë carani!' (lit. *May your hearthstone disappear!*) is used as a curse, not just for the person but for the whole family, where the hearth is a symbol of familial continuity and domesticity. The curse *'T'u shoftë/të humbtë ylli!'* (lit. *May your star extinguish!*) also calls for the extinguishing of one's fate or destiny, which are represented by *ylli* – star.

Phraseologies *'Të humbtë vula!'* (lit. *May your seal be lost!*) and *'Të humbtë mandata!'* (lit. *May the bad news about your death be lost!*) also express a curse for complete erasure, either through the loss of an individual's identity, represented by *vula* – seal, or through the desire that even the memory of his/her death is lost.

The schematic conceptual presentation for the phraseological expression *T'u shoftë ylli!* 'May your star extinguish!' is as follows.

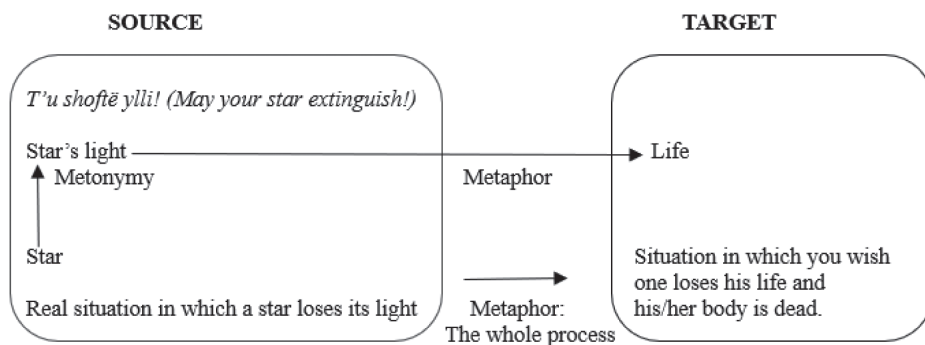


Fig. 4

Within this group, there are a few expressions created with the word 'grave' or with the metonymy on 'pit', because the conveyed meaning is about something that happens after someone's life ends.

Ia bëri (i hapi) gropën (dikujt). – lit. He/she opened someone's pit.

Ia bëri (i hapi) varrin. – lit. He/she made/dug someone's grave.

These units are synonyms and mean: a) someone badly defeated, and destroyed him/her; someone killed him/her; b) someone plotted great evil against him/her; someone set a trap or a snare for him/her to destroy him/her. Approximate idioms in English would be 'he dug his own grave',

normally used reflexively to mean someone caused their own ruin, but can also imply someone led them into it, and 'he set him up to be destroyed' or 'he sealed his own fate'.

Të bëfsha gropën! – lit. *May I dig your pit!*

Të bëfsha varrin! – lit. *May I dig your grave!*

The words *gropë* – pit, and *varr* – grave – convey the basic meaning here. These words are in a relationship of complete synonymy. The expressions are curses; they are derived as metonymies, and the source of emotionality derives from key words as well as the verbs used in the optative mood. They are very emotive and a literal verbal attack that implicates the speaker's intention, or even will, towards the addressee. In English, similar phrases in tone and function would be 'I'll put you in your grave!' or 'I'll be the death of you!', either of which has the effect of a direct threat or expressing a wish for the other person's death.

The phraseologies '*i lau (i qëroi, i ndreqi) hesapet*' and '*i lau (qëroi) llogaritë*' are synonyms. They literally translate: 'he/she settled the accounts'. The meaning conveyed is that someone is dead, metonymically representing death as the ultimate settling of one's account. The sentences symbolically refer to life as a set of transactions that must come to balance, suggesting a moral accounting at death. Correspondent idioms in English would be 'he settled his accounts' or 'he paid his dues'. These units preserve a connection to ideas of honor, duty, and social obligation, where death is not seen so much as an end but as the paying off of one's life debts. Thus, the business metaphor of 'account-settling' becomes culturally relevant to discuss mortality. Another interpretation could be linked to the payment of sins, thus justice being made. In this sense they could be seen as an act of revenge.

A similar idea is carried out in the expressions '*na mori të keqen*' (lit. *he/she took the bad/evil with him/her*) and '*Më marrsh të keqen!*' (lit. *May you take my bad/evil with you!*). Their base concept is that death is a release, either from pain and misfortune for one's self, or for another person by means of death. These units communicate the idea that death removes the evil or the bad things. We could not find an English equivalent, but the closest idiom would be 'he/she is better off now' or 'Good riddance!', which conveys the idea of relief from someone unwanted.

The phraseological units '*fle gjumin e madh*' (lit. *he/she sleeps the big sleep*) and '*Fjettë të mirën!*' (lit. *May he/she sleep the good!*) are euphemistic allusions to death using the metaphor of sleep to soften the harsh idea of death and to convey the passing in a peaceful manner into the afterlife. Equivalents in English for '*fle gjumin e madh*' are 'he/she is in eternal sleep', 'he/she dwells in eternal rest' or 'he/she has gone to sleep forever'. Equivalent English translations of '*Fjettë të mirën!*' might be 'May he/she

rest in peace!' or 'May he or she rest!', used poetically or euphemistically. Sleep symbolizes death as a gentle, sweet and rest process.

A contrasting phraseology regarding the stylistic marking is '*vajti me të shumtët*' (lit. *he/she went with the most*), meaning that someone is dead like all the other people. In Thomai (1999), it is indicated as disrespectful.

The expressions '*zuri hendekun*' (lit. *someone caught the ditch*) and '*zuri përruan/ledhin*' (lit. *someone caught the stream/dam*) are completely idiomatized. Their meaning derives from the animal world. Dogs or horses are thought to fall into the ditch or into the stream immediately after they die. The connection with the animal is about the inappropriate fact of placing the dead body into a ditch or into a stream, thus signifying the lack of a grave for that person, and of course, no burial ceremony at all.

Within the phraseological terms that denote the postmortem process, the elements of conception, resumption of life, natural transformation, and natural continuity of the living universe constitute a microsystem. This microsystem is made up of several phraseological units, among which the ones focused on grass as a natural element may be distinguished. By highlighting the physical stillness and finality of death through natural overgrowth, the idioms '*i ka dalë bari në faqe*' and '*i ka mbirë bari në faqe*' (lit. *grass has grown/sprouted on his/her cheek*) refer to someone who has been dead for a long time.

'*I zëntë shtëpia bar!*' (lit. *May grass overrun his/her house!*) is used as a curse, wishing for someone's death, while '*e ka mbuluar bari*' (lit. *the grass has covered him/her*) alludes to someone who is buried and forgotten. Although there are no exact correspondents for these units in English, there are close idioms: '*he/she has been in the ground a long time*', '*he/she is long buried*'. Also, '*pushing up daisies*' is a euphemism or comical way of saying that someone has died and been buried. '*gone and forgotten*' denotes both passing away and memory loss. '*May your house fall into ruin!*' or '*May your name and home be forgotten!*' are similar expressions for the curse '*I zëntë shtëpia bar!*'

These idioms show how mortality, memory, and social absence are framed in both languages through images of nature and domestic space.

Within this subgroup, the stylistic figure of metonymy is also expressed through synecdoche, where the element of cheek marks the human body as a whole, in parallel with the element of grass.

In contrast, the direct object in the idiom '*e ka mbuluar bari*' (lit. *the grass has covered him/her*) is indicated in an ambiguous way by the clitic element 'e', an accusative clitic that denotes a male or female body in this context. As a metaphor, the house also alludes to the human body. In a religious view, the human body is seen as a temporary home of the human spirit. The word *shtëpi* means both house and home in Albanian. This

metaphor also connotes a metonymy. The growing vegetation signifies the human life cycle. The human body is interpreted metaphorically as a model of cognition in the anthropomorphism of the dwelling by Cardona (2011: 49-52). Thus, the house could be considered an alter ego of man.

The subgroup of phraseologies examined in this paragraph is characterized by a symbiotic relationship between metonymy and metaphor.

3.3 The element of house

The house as a component of phraseological units denotes the family and provides a foundation for metonymy. The house, as well as a series of physical and conceptual elements related to it, forms a special microsystem and serves as a source of relevant metonyms. Hence, the door, hearth, threshold, fireplace, and *caran* – hearthstone, are considered components of the house and serve to identify the family as a social unit and the entire house as a physical unit. In Albanian traditional culture, the house is more than its material existence as a structure; it embodies notions of family continuity, social existence, and intergenerational inheritance. This cultural meaning is nicely encapsulated in a series of idiomatic phrases that metaphorically describe the extinction of a family line or the death of a household. Phraseological phrases like *'e mbylli derën'* (lit. *he/she closed the door*), *'e mbylli shtëpinë'* (lit. *he/she closed the house*), *'i vuri kyçin shtëpisë'* (lit. *he/she locked the house*), and *'iu mbyll dera/shtëpia'* (lit. *the door/house was closed to him/her*) indicate that the last member of a family has died, implying that the household is also destroyed.

Likewise, the idioms *'iu shua dera/oxhaku/pragu/vatra'* (lit. *the door/chimney/threshold/fireplace was extinguished*) and *'iu shkulën carafanjtë e vatrës'* (lit. *the stones of the hearth were removed*) evoke strong images of the disintegration of home life, symbolizing the complete erasure of family life and heritage. The maledictive forms have an even stronger severity, as seen in phrases like *'T'u mbylltë dera!'* (lit. *May your door close down!*) and *'T'u shoftë pragu!'* (lit. *May your threshold be extinguished!*). These are curses that wish for the destruction of a person's family and home. The disappearance of the family as a result of fatalities is implied by all of these phraseological units. They signify the house's closure and the end of its natural and social purpose. The verbs *close*, *shut*, *lock*, and *lock down* are synonyms that paint a really intriguing picture. The weight of man and his death is discerned in these units. The metonymy stands in the description of an activity that represents one of the aspects of the event of death. In English, there are no direct equivalents that encapsulate the domestic and lineage-based symbolism of these Albanian idioms, but approximate formulations include *'his/her line has died out'*, or *'the family name is*

extinct'. In a cursing context, English might use 'May your name die out!' or 'May your house fall into ruin!'. The following is the conceptual framework for the phraseological expression 'iu shua oxhaku'.

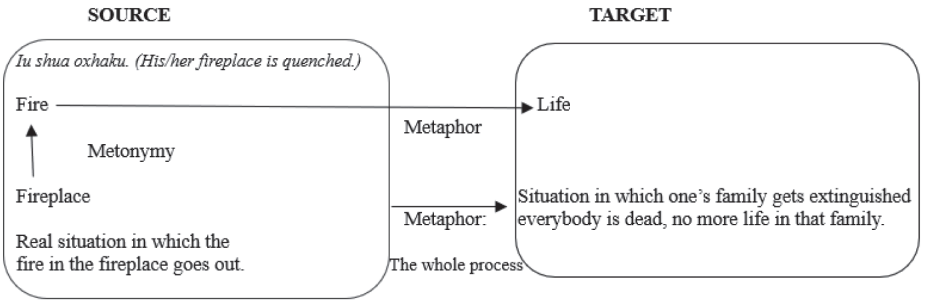


Fig. 5

Within the microsystem, the recently examined phraseological units utilize archaic, regional, and other linguistic means to interpret and motivate one another. The word 'caran' thus means 'each of the two stones placed on the side of the hearth, between which the wood is placed to burn'. 'Caran' means 'hearth' in the expression where it appears, making identification easier. It is obvious that we are dealing with an epenthesis, which adds sounds to produce an assonant rhythmic pattern or even the illusion of greater plurality.

The last units in the home microsystem are those that we discussed in the first microsystem, namely those that use vegetation as a sign that the family is about to die and become extinct.

The phraseological expressions 'ia mbylli derën me ferrë' (lit. someone shut his/her door with a thorn), 'iu bë hithërishtë shtëpia' (lit. his/her house grew over with nettles), and 'Të mbiftë ferra në derë!' (lit. May thorns grow at your door!) constitute metaphorical constructions that express abandonment, desolation, and ultimate cessation of life in a home environment. The nettles and thorns covering the doorway of the home signify not merely a physical condition of disrepair, but also the lack of human occupancy, thereby designating the structure as a place associated with death, decay, or familial breakdown. These idioms come after the death of the last remaining family member or total withdrawal from social life, and can also be used as curses, hoping someone's home becomes lifeless and useless. In English, while there are no precise synonyms using the identical botanical imagery, such phrases as 'the house fell into disrepair', 'the home fell into neglect', or, more metaphorical and scornful, 'May your house fall into ruin!' are similar.

3.4 Food

Expressions pertaining to food and eating constitute a unique subgroup in the phraseology of the postmortem units. Food like *fodder*, *pie*, *syrup*, etc. are mentioned in these Albanian postmortem idioms, which are used symbolically to denote death or the end of life. The food in three phraseological units refers metonymically to human life, while only in one case there is an allusion to an animal: '*e hëngri tagjinë*' (lit. *someone ate the fodder*). It should be emphasized that the animal reference only makes one appearance in the whole corpus of postmortem units. The other units involve process of food cooking:

Ia poqi byrekun. - lit. *Someone bakes his/her byrek*. The element 'byrek' is a special Albanian pie.

E piu sherbetin. - lit. *Somebody drank the sherbet*. 'Sherbet' is a kind of very sweet syrup for desserts.

Shkoi për (të bërë) vorba. - lit. *Somebody went to cook a dish*. It is used ironically to say that somebody is dead.

The food names have a generalizing character and serve as metonyms for the act of eating itself. The first two, namely *byrek* and *sherbet*, are metonyms that mark the end of the process of dying. *I shpëlau enët.* - lit. *Someone rinsed the dishes*. This unit means that somebody is dead.

In terms of beverages, Shkurtaç (2001) argues that in the Albanian culture, in both the North and South, coffee has a symbolic meaning in guest hospitality, but there is a significant difference between the two regions. Up North, sweet coffee is a sign of health and good tidings with the traditional blessings for both; bitter coffee marks a quieter sorrow in badged mourning. In the south, on the other hand, visitors offer coffee after the meal, signifying the end of a visit, jokingly called 'sikter coffee' in Berat and other places.

The conceptual framework represented by the idiom '*Ia hëngri hallvën*.' is shown below.

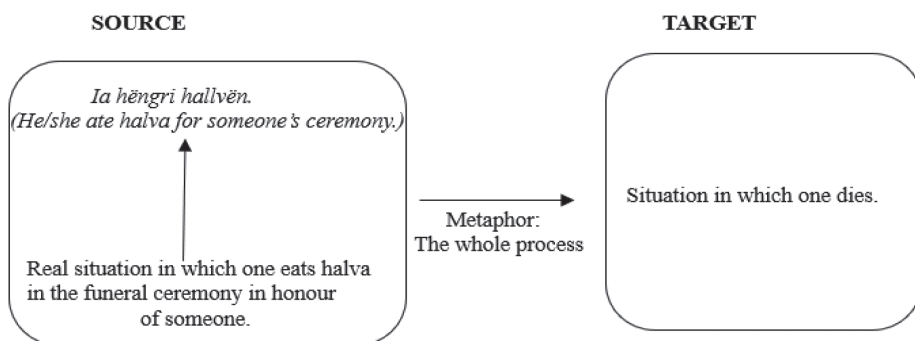


Fig. 6

The phraseological expression '*(e pagoi) si ujku me lëkurë*' (lit. *someone paid like the wolf with his skin*) seems to be a typified situation or conventionalized story. It means that someone paid with his/her life.

The phraseologies '*na la shëndetin*' (lit. *someone left us his/her health*) and '*na la bukën*' (lit. *someone left us the bread*) symbolize death metaphorically. These expressions emphasize what the dead person leaves behind after he/she passes away, with bread standing for nourishment and health for the essence of life. These two idioms are grouped together because of the common verb *lë* – leave. It is possible that the word *bread* here may symbolize the meal eaten in honor of the dead person.

Lastly, the expression '*mbeta kalli*' (lit. *I was left like an ear of corn*), means 'I am all alone, everyone else related to me is dead'. This idiom is unique to this group.

3.5 Funeral ceremonies

Part of someone's post-death is what happens in the funeral ceremony. In general, the units of this group carry strong elements of ethnicity. In the conceptual aspect, in these units we distinguish the lunch that is eaten among the family members of the deceased as an expression of a tradition of Albanian culture.

For instance, in '*Të ngrënça drekën!*' (lit. *May I eat your lunch!*), lunch is a metonymy of death. Interestingly, the same syntactic structure is used for marriage: '*Të ngrënça dasmën!*' (lit. *May I eat at the banquet of your wedding!*). At the end of the funeral luncheon, wheat is served according to the Christian tradition, thus the expression '*Të ngrënça grurin!*' (lit. *May I eat your wheat!*). In the Muslim community, halva is served, producing hence the expression '*Të ngrënça hallvën!*' (lit. *May I eat your halva!*). All these phraseological units formed in Albanian with the verb in the optative mode are curses that mean 'May I see you dead! May you die!'

There are also traces of the funeral rites in '*Të mbledhshin me çarçaf!*' (lit. *May they wrap you up with a sheet!*), where the sheet serves as a metonymy for the funeral garments. It is evident that this phraseological unit refers to the funeral ceremony because the verb in the plural especially shows that many individuals are doing the deed. The process of covering the deceased's body with a sheet before burying it in a casket illustrates distinctive aspects of Albanian society and culture, which are amply demonstrated by this phrase.

The spiritual aspects of passing are reflected in a collection of Albanian idiomatic phrases about dying that are strongly associated with religious ritual and liturgical language. Indirect ways of announcing or wishing for someone's death include phrases like '*Të këndoftë (të foltë) hoxha!*' (lit. *May the imam sing/speak to you!*) and '*Të këndoftë (të foltë) prifti!*' (lit.

May the priest sing/speak to you!), which refer to the performance of final religious rites, namely the recitation of funeral prayers. In the same way, *'i këndoi fermanin'* (lit. *he sang the decree to him/her*) expresses death as an unchangeable, divinely approved edict, frequently given by a religious leader. The gentler euphemism *'na la uratën'* (lit. *he/she left us his/her benediction*), meaning 'he/she left us in peace' or 'he/she gave us their final blessing', frequently suggests a peaceful death in which the departed has figuratively left behind their blessing or farewell.

The following are some units with obvious signs of ethnicity.

I mbeti pushka në gozhdë. – lit. *His rifle was left hanging on the nail.*

This unit is used when a man, the only male of the house, capable of carrying a rifle, passes away. It denotes that the man of the household is gone (has passed away), but his rifle is still hanging on the wall, and there is no one else to use his gun.

I dha gjysmën e lekut (e pushkatoi). – lit. *He gave him half of lek.* This expression means somebody shot him, and now he is dead.

Vajti te molla e kuqe. – lit. *Somebody went to the red apple.*

'Shkoi si qeni në rrush (në vresht)' is akin to this unmotivated opaque unit *'vajti te molla e kuqe'*, which means that someone died in vain and that no one knows or recognizes him. Features like the red apple have become standardized and conventionalized, losing their link to the extralinguistic context, thus making the semantic motivation impossible. The phraseological units of this subgroup do not have metonymy in the mechanism of combining words into constructs. These phraseological expressions are dead metaphors.

Të këndoftë qyqja (mbi krye)! – lit. *May the cuckoo sing (over your head)!*

This is an expression where ethnic elements clearly appear. For Albanians, the cuckoo is a bird associated with mourning and is thus an omen of death. This bird and its song accompany the dead in the mindset of Albanians. This is also seen in the phraseological unit *'i ka kënduar kukuvajka'* (lit. *the owl has sung to him/her*), meaning that things go very badly for someone, bad things come one after the other for him or her. Although not specifically related to a bird or cultural setting, an analogous expression in English might be 'May the bell toll for you!' Since tolling a bell has historically been connected to funerals and the end of life, it conveys a similar sense of imminent death or dread. The phrase 'your days are numbered' could also be an English equivalent, suggesting that someone's death is certain or is approaching.

The expression *'Të matsha me hardhi!'* (lit. *May I measure you with a vine!*) is found in the discourse of a village in Central Albania. It essentially contains the metonymy of an action that was performed in this village by a family with a Christian tradition during the funeral ceremony. In order

to prepare the body of the dead for the burial ceremony, it had to be measured, and the measurements were taken by means of the vine. This unit therefore implies a curse in terms of death and its certainty. Closer to the tone of the phrase, which is disrespectful and ominous, would be 'May you see your reckoning!' This would be more to say a little about the figurative meaning of 'measuring' one's life or activity prior to death, such as the symbolic measurement of the deceased.

The symbolism of the vine for Albanians and Christians has a special importance, but what we want to emphasize in this case is the importance of the social and cultural environment in the motivation of the phraseological unit. This custom will soon be lost under the influence of the changes that are taking place today in society concerning funeral ceremonies, but this expression will remain for a long time, thus preserving the traces of Albanian culture and the spiritual world.

The expression '*s'i këndon më gjeli në shtëpi*' is also included in this group. There is not a direct phraseology in English correspondent to it, but its meaning can be captured by explaining its symbolic language. Literally it means 'the rooster no longer sings in her house', which signifies an additional type of extinction or closure. The rooster is a symbol that represents both the vitality of the domestic economy and the man (the masculine presence) of the house. The death of the head of the house, usually the husband, is understood as the extinction of the household. In this context, an English equivalent might be 'the man of the house has passed away, and the household is no more'.

It is also necessary to note that there are gender differences present in certain Albanian phraseological terms. Generally speaking, the house is more of a metaphor for the man than the woman. Similarly, the loss of a husband closes the house in general for Albanians.

The expression '*Të këndoftë qyja mbi krye!*' has been used as a representative of its group. The construction of its conceptual mechanism is reflected below.

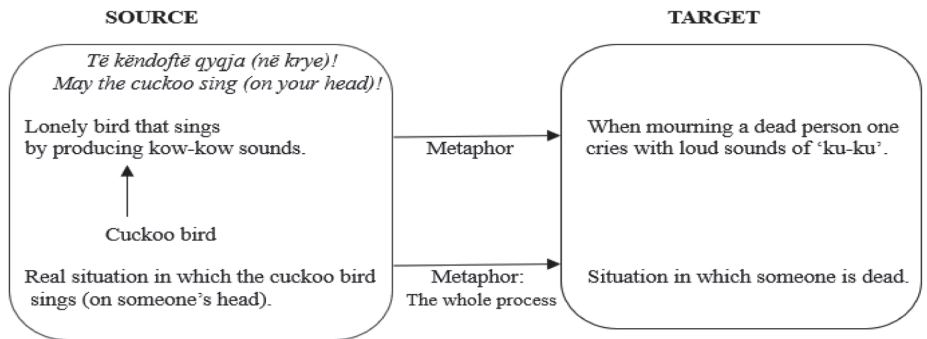


Fig. 7

4. Conclusions

This study examined the cognitive processes involved in 97 death-related phraseological units in Albanian, which were investigated quantitatively and qualitatively, with a special focus on the ethno-cultural components.

Quantitatively speaking, units referring to the human body and its parts make up 29% of the overall corpus of these phraseologies. Phrasal expressions that center around the elements of the house come next in this group, with 24% and 23%, respectively. Funeral rites constitute 14% of the corpus and are strongly ethnically oriented. Phraseological units related to food make up the least amount of the corpus, with only 8%.

From a conceptual standpoint, death-related phraseology demonstrates how the Albanian community perceives the afterlife in connection to the human body, the home, the earth/soil, food, and burial customs. The cognitive processes involved in postmortem phraseologies were illustrated in Figures 3-7, in accordance with every thematic group. In each of them we have identified the source domain and the target domain that yield the metaphor, the synecdoche, or metonymy, which often work together simultaneously to create the phraseological unit. An English equivalent or synonym idiom was provided whenever it was possible; otherwise, the central meaning of the Albanian phraseological expression was explained.

The corpus of phraseologies used in this study was divided into five major thematic groups, as summarized below.

1. *The elements of earth and the soil* are basic to the first subgroup analyzed. Nouns like *world*, *mud*, *soil*, and *earth* and verbs like *eat*, *bite*, *swallow*, and *dissolve* are central components that work together through metonymy, synecdoche, and metaphor to create these phraseologies.

2. *The human body* does not appear literally in the relevant subgroup of phraseologies. Nouns like *name*, *seal*, *star*, and *hearthstone*, but also *grave* and *pit*, and verbs like *lose*, *extinguish*, *wipe off*, or *disappear* are important for this phraseological microsystem where metonymy and metaphor come into existence simultaneously.

3. *The element of house* serves as a source component of the third subgroup of phraseological units taken under investigation. The house or its elements provide a strong foundation for metonymy. Nouns like *door*, *hearth*, *threshold*, *fireplace*, and *hearthstone* are components that serve to identify the family as a social unit and the entire house as a physical unit. Their destruction signifies the destruction of the family, which makes metaphors very vivid in these phraseologies.

4. *Food phraseologies* are expressions build around food like *fodder*, *pie*, *syrup*, etc., and closely related to the processes of eating or drinking. Ethno-cultural elements of Albanian society have strongly impacted this microsystem that is build around metaphor.

5. *Funeral ceremonies* are the last subgroup analyzed in this study. They all carry strong elements of ethnicity. Elements of tradition, culture and religion form the source domain of the metaphors that are used to create these phraseologies.

Overall, the stylistic and semantic implications of postmortem phraseologies are complex and specific to each unit. Stylistically speaking, some of them convey a neutral tone, some are used ironically, and some are used to express disrespect, or even a curse in Albanian. As is typical with phraseologies, the emotional tone is very powerful. The ethno-cultural setting is unique for each and every subgroup and for each phraseological expression. It is precisely this setting that explains the source domain of the cognitive process of metonymy, synecdoche, and/or metaphor involved in the creation of death-related phraseologies in Albanian.

Lastly, this study does not aim to be exhaustive; other studies in the future could expand the corpus with data from Albanian dialects and could delve deeper into the analysis of the cognitive processes involved in the creation of metaphors, metonymies, and other mechanisms that operate within these units.

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