

# Cultural Linguistic Approach to Cultural Symbols

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## Abstract

The study adopts the theoretical framework of Cultural Linguistics, particularly the notion of cultural conceptualizations developed by Farzad Sharifian. Cultural conceptualizations are understood as shared culturally construed systems of meaning that shape and reflect how members of cultural groups understand the world around them and speak about it. Cultural symbols are semiotic signs that members of a cultural community attach specific meanings and emotions to based on shared values, beliefs, and/or expectations. Cultural symbols make these members think and behave in certain ways, and are often seen as defining a particular cultural group, as, for example, flags are identified with certain nations. Language as a symbolic system serves as a medium through which cultural symbols are expressed by simultaneously presenting something directly, as frankincense is an aromatic type of resin, and figuratively, as when frankincense becomes a symbol of prayer in Orthodox Christianity. I am to discuss how cultural symbols could be analyzed from the perspective of Cultural Linguistics as both linguistic and conceptual resources that reflect shared cultural knowledge. I examine cultural symbols, such as a cross on top of a grave, as manifestations of collective conceptual structures embedded in language, discourse and multimodal communication practices. The approach emphasizes qualitative analysis of how cultural symbols are multimodally constructed and interpreted within specific cultural contexts.

I present 2 case studies: (1) cross as a cultural symbol in the representation of mass media reporting of the Iziun tragedy in Ukraine in 2022; and (2) Bat'kivshchyna Maty (Mother Land) monument as a cultural symbol in the representation in social media discourse. The analysis shows how those cultural symbols work as condensed representations of culturally shared knowledge, values and experiences expressed verbally through metaphorical language, narratives and symbolic references and visually through indexical signs, enabling the producers of messages to communicate complex cultural meanings. Understanding cultural symbols requires examining the interaction between language, cultural cognition and discourse practices. Such a perspective contributes to broader discussions on how language reflects and shapes cultural knowledge within communicative practices.