



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SOMATIC PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN ENGLISH

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Abstract: This article examines phraseological units containing names of body parts, commonly referred to as somatic idioms, and classifies them according to their semantic functions. The study highlights the role of body-related metaphors in structuring cognitive, emotional, social, and moral meanings in English phraseology. Special attention is given to idioms involving such components as head, heart, eye, hand, foot, back, face, and mouth, demonstrating their polysemy and conceptual richness. The research emphasizes the principles of embodied cognition and conceptual metaphor, showing how physical experience shapes abstract thinking and communication. Furthermore, the article explores cultural, historical, and cross-linguistic aspects of somatic idioms, as well as their significance in language teaching, translation, and intercultural communication.

Key words: somatic idioms, phraseological units, body parts, conceptual metaphor, embodied cognition.

Introduction

Phraseological units containing the names of body parts: classification by meaning.

Somatic phraseological units, encompassing idiomatic expressions that incorporate lexical elements denoting human body parts such as head, hand, heart, eye, foot, back, face, and mouth, occupy a central and particularly productive niche within English phraseology. These idioms extend beyond mere lexical constructs; they function as complex semantic entities that encode physical, psychological, moral, social, and cultural information. The human body serves not only as a literal anatomical reference but also as a conceptual and metaphorical framework that informs cognitive representation, social cognition, and cultural understanding. Consequently, somatic idioms offer linguists and language practitioners a window into the intersection of embodiment, thought, and communicative practice, revealing how human experience shapes the development, usage, and evolution of idiomatic language.



From a semantic and cognitive perspective, somatic units operate as conceptual metaphors through which abstract phenomena are mapped onto concrete bodily experience. For instance, the head is frequently associated with intellect, rationality, reasoning, judgment, and decision-making. Idiomatic expressions such as *to lose one's head*, *to keep one's head*, *to have a good head for figures*, and *to put one's head together* illustrate how this bodily metaphor systematically structures conceptualizations of cognitive processes, social reasoning, and collaborative problem-solving. Moreover, head-related idioms can convey evaluative or emotional states, as in *to bite someone's head off*, demonstrating that idioms often integrate multiple semantic domains, encompassing cognition, emotion, and social interaction. These examples underscore the principle of embodied cognition, where in physiological experience provides a scaffolding for conceptual understanding, reasoning, and interpersonal communication. The heart occupies another prominent semantic domain, representing emotions, moral disposition, courage, empathy, and affection. Idioms such as *to have a big heart*, *cold-hearted*, *to speak from the heart*, *to take heart*, and *to have a heavy heart* exemplify the richness of heart-related metaphorical extensions [1; 65p]. These idioms illustrate how bodily imagery conveys affective, moral, and evaluative meanings while simultaneously reflecting cultural norms regarding virtue, courage, and emotional expression. Heart-related phraseological units not only capture individual emotional experiences but also encode collective moral and cultural values, revealing the integral role of somatic metaphor in structuring social cognition and moral reasoning. Perceptual and evaluative idioms are frequently associated with the eye, symbolizing observation, perception, vigilance, judgment, and aesthetic discernment. Expressions such as *keep an eye on*, *the apple of one's eye*, *an eye for detail*, *turn a blind eye*, *catch someone's eye*, and *in the public eye* demonstrate the versatility of ocular imagery, which extends from literal vision to metaphorical evaluation, attention, social judgment, and public scrutiny [2; 63]. Idioms containing hands perform multiple roles, including action, agency, cooperation, social responsibility, and ethical evaluation. Idiomatic expressions such as *to lend a hand*, *to have one's hands full*, *to wash one's hands of something*, *to give someone a hand*, and *to keep one's hands clean* demonstrate how manual experience is systematically mapped onto cognitive, social, and moral domains. Hands metaphorically link physical activity to social engagement, ethical behavior, and relational responsibility, highlighting the embodied and socially embedded nature of idiomatic expression. The diverse semantic functions of hand-related idioms illustrate the multidimensionality of somatic metaphor in conveying complex human experiences, including cooperation, accountability, and social



recognition. Somatic idioms involving foot and back are central to conceptualizing movement, social positioning, support, and effort. Foot-related idioms, including *to put one's foot down*, *to get off on the right foot*, and *to drag one's feet*, signify authority, initiation, hesitation, and progress in both literal and metaphorical senses. Back-related idioms, such as *to have someone's back*, *to break one's back*, and *behind someone's back*, denote support, labor, responsibility, and secrecy. These idioms illustrate the cognitive principle of projection, wherein physical actions and postures are extended to social, moral, and relational contexts. Face-related idioms play a particularly important role in representing social interaction, identity, reputation, and emotional resilience. Expressions such as *to save face*, *to lose face*, *to put on a brave face*, and *to show one's true face* encode culturally salient norms regarding social status, dignity, courage, and authenticity [2; 109]. Face idioms exemplify how somatic imagery mediates interpersonal relations, social evaluation, and self-presentation. In combination with other bodypart idioms, they provide a multidimensional representation of human experience, integrating cognitive, emotional, social, and moral perspectives. The mouth constitutes another salient category within somatic phraseology, representing speech, communication, persuasion, and interpersonal influence. Idioms such as *to put one's foot in one's mouth*, *to have a big mouth*, *to hold one's tongue*, and *to speak one's mind* link physiological function to social and communicative action [3; 87]. These expressions demonstrate how bodily experience informs metaphorical understanding, enabling speakers to articulate cognitive, emotional, and social states effectively. Mouth-related idioms are especially significant for their evaluative and interactive dimensions, reflecting both individual agency and culturally embedded norms regarding speech and propriety. Individual body-part terms generate multiple idiomatic expressions spanning diverse domains of meaning, including cognition, emotion, perception, morality, social positioning, and agency. For example, *head* may denote rationality, leadership, or emotional response; *heart* may signify emotion, courage, or moral disposition; *eye* may represent perception, vigilance, or social evaluation; *hand* may indicate physical action, cooperation, or ethical responsibility; *foot* may convey authority, progress, or hesitation; *back* may signify support, labor, or betrayal; *face* may denote social identity, reputation, or emotional resilience; *mouth* may signify speech, persuasion, or discretion. This polysemy allows speakers to employ somatic idioms creatively, flexibly, and contextually, facilitating nuanced expression across genres, registers, and communicative situations [4; 65]. Cultural, historical, and literary influences are central to the formation, propagation, and interpretation of somatic idioms. Literary sources, such as Shakespeare, enriched English phraseology with



idioms like *green-eyed monster* and *a fool's paradise*, embedding cultural, moral, and emotional meanings. Biblical texts, including *thorn in the flesh* and *salt of the earth*, contribute ethically and metaphorically charged idioms, while historical events, folklore, and social practices inform culturally specific usage. Such sources demonstrate that somatic idioms are repositories of collective knowledge, encoding the interaction of human cognition, social norms, moral principles, and historical context [5; 154]. By analyzing these idioms, linguists can trace patterns of semantic extension, cultural salience, and metaphorical productivity. While the human body is a universal referent, the symbolic meaning of specific organs or parts varies across linguistic and cultural contexts [1; 90]. For instance, the English heart denotes emotion and moral quality, whereas in some East Asian cultures, the liver or stomach may serve analogous metaphorical functions, representing courage, fortitude, or balance. Comparative and contrastive analyses of somatic idioms thus illuminate the interaction of universal embodiment and culturally specific conceptualization, highlighting the role of language in structuring thought, social cognition, and moral reasoning. In applied linguistics, somatic idioms are critical in language teaching, lexicography, translation, and intercultural communication [6; 25]. Their semantic opacity, cultural specificity, and idiomaticity present challenges for learners and translators, requiring both linguistic competence and cultural literacy. Instructional approaches may include corpus-based analysis, contextualized examples, semantic mapping, and comparative studies to enhance understanding and usage. Lexicographers use somatic idioms to illustrate semantic richness, polysemy, and metaphorical extension in dictionaries, reference works, and educational resources, emphasizing their importance for comprehensive language learning and intercultural competence. Functionally, somatic idioms fulfill multiple roles: cognitive, enabling abstraction of mental, social, and emotional concepts; expressive, allowing vivid and nuanced communication; evaluative, conveying moral, social, or interpersonal judgment; stylistic, enhancing literary and rhetorical effect; and communicative, facilitating pragmatic meaning and social interaction [3; 89]. These roles reflect the embeddedness of idioms in cultural knowledge, cognitive schemas, and social practices. The systematic nature of somatic idioms, their metaphorical productivity, and their semantic and functional versatility underscore their centrality in both theoretical and applied linguistics, including psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics, and phraseological studies. Somatic phraseological units not only encode abstract, emotional, and social concepts but also play a crucial role in cognitive economy, allowing speakers to convey complex ideas concisely. In literature, idioms such as *heart of gold* or *green-eyed monster* enrich narrative



characterization and thematic exploration, while in journalism, phrases like *eyes on the prize* or *hand on approach* provide evaluative or motivational emphasis. Digital media often leverage these idioms for humor, emphasis, or social commentary, showing how SPUs evolve and remain relevant in contemporary linguistic landscapes. From a sociocultural perspective, somatic idioms preserve historical and ethical values, reflecting cultural norms about emotion, social hierarchy, and interpersonal behavior. Idioms like *save face*, *turn one's back*, or *give someone a hand* communicate not only action but also embedded social expectations, guiding interaction and reinforcing community values. Their continued usage indicates the deep entrenchment of bodily metaphors in English conceptualization and the role of idiomatic language in cultural continuity. Pedagogically, somatic idioms provide learners with insight into both language structure and cultural reasoning. Teaching these idioms with contextualized examples from literature, media, and everyday communication helps learners interpret figurative meaning accurately, apply idioms appropriately, and develop pragmatic competence. Corpus-based approaches further enhance understanding by revealing frequency, collocational patterns, and register variation, ensuring learners can recognize and produce idioms effectively in diverse contexts. In conclusion, somatic phraseological units represent a complex, highly productive, and culturally salient domain of English phraseology. Their classification by body-part metaphor, semantic function, and cultural origin illuminates the interplay of embodiment, cognition, social interaction, moral evaluation, and communicative function. Idioms associated with head, heart, eye, hands, foot, back, face, and mouth exemplify the systematic use of bodily imagery to structure understanding, express emotion, and regulate social behavior [7; 170]. By studying somatic idioms, scholars gain critical insight into cognitive metaphor, semantic extension, polysemy, cultural knowledge, and language evolution. Their study has practical applications in pedagogy, lexicography, translation, and intercultural communication, demonstrating that somatic units are far more than linguistic ornamentation.

Conclusion In conclusion, somatic phraseological units play a significant role in English by linking bodily experience with abstract meaning. They reflect cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of human life through conceptual metaphors. Their polysemy and cultural relevance make them important for effective communication, language learning, and intercultural understanding.

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