

## THEORY AND PERSPECTIVES OF PHILOLOGY

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### BODIES OF SPEECH: UNRAVELING THE LINGUISTIC DNA OF SOMATIC PHRASEOLOGISMS IN UKRAINIAN AND ENGLISH

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**Abstract.** The study of somatic phraseologisms in language plays a crucial role in understanding the intricacies and nuances of linguistic expression. In both English and Ukrainian languages, these idiomatic expressions rooted in human anatomy not only reflect cultural beliefs but also shed light on how language shapes our perception of the world. Recent linguistic researches have delved into the significance of somatic phraseologisms, emphasizing their impact on language comprehension and cultural identity. By exploring the functioning of somatic phraseologisms in English and Ukrainian, this study aims to unravel the complexities of these expressions, analyze their cultural implications, and contribute to a deeper understanding of linguistic phenomena in a cross-cultural context. This paper focuses on the functioning of somatic phraseologisms in English and Ukrainian, two languages from different language families, to explore cross-linguistic similarities and differences in their usage and conceptual underpinnings. Thus, the research under review contributes to cross-linguistic and cross-cultural studies, highlighting both universal and language-specific features in phraseological units.

**Key words:** phraseology, contrastive linguistics, cross-linguistic analysis, somatic phraseologisms, linguistic universals.

**Introduction.** The study of phraseology remains a vital area of linguistic research, offering insights into the cognitive, cultural, and linguistic aspects of language use. Phraseologisms are key to understanding the depth and nuances of a language, making them crucial for both linguistic theory and practical applications such as language teaching and translation. Within this field, somatic phraseologisms – idiomatic expressions containing body part terms – have garnered significant attention due to their ubiquity across languages and their role in reflecting human conceptualization of the world.

Recent linguistic research has made significant strides in the analysis of phraseologisms, including somatic expressions (Lakoff, 1980; Colson, 2008; Granger, 2008; Hamanz, 2017; Kovács, 2007; Pamies, 2011). Kovács explored the cognitive linguistic aspects of English body part idioms, highlighting their metaphorical nature and cultural significance (Kovács, 2007: 122). In the Ukrainian context, V. Uzhchenko, L. Savchenko, N. Skorobagatko, O. Selivanova, M. Vakuryk, L. Koval conducted a comprehensive analysis of somatic phraseologisms, focusing on their semantic and structural features. Cross-linguistic studies, such as that by Peeters, have emphasized the importance of comparative approaches in uncovering both universal and language-specific patterns in phraseology (Peeters, 2020: 17–21).

Despite these advancements, there remains a gap in the literature regarding a systematic comparison of somatic phraseologisms in English and Ukrainian, particularly in terms of their functional aspects in contemporary language use. This study aims to address this gap by examining the semantic, pragmatic, and discourse functions of somatic phraseologisms in both languages. The overarching goal is to provide a comprehensive analysis of how somatic phraseologisms function in English and Ukrainian, contributing to our understanding of phraseology, cognitive linguistics, and cross-cultural

communication. By examining these linguistic phenomena, we seek to shed light on the intricate relationship between language, body, and culture in human cognition and expression.

The relevance of this research lies in its potential to contribute to our understanding of universal and culture-specific aspects of language, cognition, and communication. By comparing somatic phraseologisms in English and Ukrainian, we can gain valuable insights into how speakers of these languages conceptualize and express abstract concepts through bodily references. Furthermore, this study has practical implications for translation, language teaching, and intercultural communication.

British National Corpus for English, Corpus of Ukrainian Language for Ukrainian that have been used in the research, enabled us to search for somatic phraseologisms and analyze their frequency, context, and usage patterns. Etymological Research has been used to investigate the origins and historical development of selected somatic phraseologisms in both languages. That could provide insights into cultural influences and semantic changes over time. Applying conceptual metaphor theory was meant to understand how body parts are metaphorically used in both languages, and investigate how the physical experience of the body influences the formation and understanding of somatic phraseologisms. When investigating somatic phraseologisms in Ukrainian and English, several statistical methods have been employed to analyze the data effectively, namely, descriptive and inferential (hypothesis testing, t-tests) that involved formulating and testing hypotheses about the differences or similarities between somatic phraseologisms in Ukrainian and English, and comparing the means of two groups (e.g., usage in Ukrainian vs. English) to see if there are significant differences.

**Recent Research Review.** Phraseological units containing components referring to the names of human body parts and organs are called somatic phraseological units (SPU). The term ‘somatic’ comes from the Greek word ‘σωματικός’ and means ‘bodily’.

SPUs are anthropocentric in nature, since they use human body organs as images and symbols to convey various ideas and concepts. Thus, they reflect the central position of the human being in the linguistic culture and express its worldview and social values. After all, it is the human being who is the centre of our attention and perception of the world. According to Firuza N., “... the individual, being a thinking and creative being, reflects the world in a special way in his/her mind and determines his/her place in it, becoming at the same time the starting point from which everything existing is perceived” (Firuza, 2020: 95).

F. Vakk was the first to propose this term in his studies of Estonian phraseological units with names of human body parts, emphasizing that somatisms are one of the oldest and most widespread types of phraseological units (Vakk, 1964: 12).

Recent linguistic research has increasingly focused on the cognitive and cultural underpinnings of phraseology (Melcus, 1995; Kovács, 2007; Chaienkova, 2020; Savchenko, 2011, 2018; Selivanova, 2006; Skorobahatko, 2008; Uzhchenko, 2012). Scholars such as Dobrovol’skij and Piirainen have emphasized the role of cultural and cognitive models in the formation and use of idiomatic expressions (Dobrovol’skiy & Piirainen, 2005: 34). Other studies, like those by Kövecses on metaphor and culture, have provided insights into how body-related expressions reflect underlying metaphors that are common across languages but manifest differently depending on cultural contexts. This comparative approach helps in understanding how different languages utilize somatic components in their phraseology, shedding light on both shared human experiences and unique cultural perspectives.

Cross-linguistic studies, like Maalej and Yu, have examined similarities and differences in somatic phraseologisms across diverse language families, while historical linguists have investigated the evolution of these expressions over time, tracing changes in form and meaning. The latter even proposed their own diachronic classification, categorizing somatic phraseologisms as, a) archaic b) contemporary c) neologistic (Langlotz, 2006: 120). Some of them reflect specific cultural or historical contexts, e.g., “*to lose face*” (in English comes from Chinese culture); “*to be caught red-handed*” (originates from old laws about butchering animals).

Somatic phraseologisms often exhibit semantic opacity, meaning their overall meaning can't be directly derived from the meanings of their individual components. For example, the English expression *"to give someone a hand"* doesn't literally mean to provide a body part, but to offer assistance. Basing on SPUs' semantic properties and considering the degree of idiomacity, Rajendra Singh breaks somatic phraseologisms into:

- a) fully idiomatic: the meaning is completely non-literal (e.g., *"to lose face"*);
- b) partially idiomatic: some elements retain their literal meaning (e.g., *"to keep an eye on"*);
- c) literal: the meaning is more easily inferred (e.g., *"hand in hand"*) (Hamans, 2017: 18–22).

Somatic phraseologisms can vary in their syntactic flexibility. Some are completely fixed (e.g., *"by the skin of one's teeth"*), while others allow for some variation (e.g., *"to give someone a hand/to lend a hand"*). The degree of fixedness often correlates with the level of idiomacity.

Many somatic phraseologisms are grounded in conceptual metaphors (e.g., *"the body is a container"* in *"to pour one's heart out"*) or metonymies (e.g., *"hand"* standing for the whole person in *"all hands-on deck"*) (Antonio Barcelona, 2000: 58).

These classifications demonstrate the multifaceted nature of somatic phraseologisms, and the various approaches scholars have taken to understand and categorize them.

Analyzing semantic and structural features of SPUs, Ukrainian linguist Olena Levchenko notes that somatic phraseologisms often have similar structures in Ukrainian and English, but may differ in their semantic content. For example, Ukrainian *«мату голову на плечах»* (literally: to have a head on one's shoulders) and English *"to have a good head on one's shoulders"* (Levchenko, 2019: 47). Both expressions use the same body parts but have slightly different connotations. The Ukrainian version implies general intelligence, while the English one suggests good judgment specifically.

According to N. Skorobahatko, some somatic phraseologisms are culture-specific and may not have direct equivalents in other languages (Skorobahatko, 2021: 65–68). Compare: Ukrainian: *«показати, де раки зимують»* (literally: to show where crayfish hibernate) has no direct equivalent in English, but similar in meaning to "to teach someone a lesson". This Ukrainian expression involves a body part (showing), but the English counterpart does not.

Ukrainian linguists have contributed significantly to the study of phraseology, including somatic phraseologisms. The diversity of approaches proposed by Ukrainian scholars reflects the complexity of somatic phraseologisms and their importance in Ukrainian language and culture. Each classification offers unique insights into how body-related concepts are integrated into idiomatic expressions and how these expressions function in communication. Vasyl Uzhchenko's classification is based on the degree of somaticity, highlighting the varying degrees of explicitness in somatic references, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how body-related concepts are integrated into phraseology:

- a) primary somatic phraseologisms: denote body part names (e.g., *"руки опускаються"* – hands are falling, meaning to lose hope);
- b) secondary somatic phraseologisms: use words derived from body part names (e.g., *«безрукий»* – handless, meaning clumsy);
- c) tertiary somatic phraseologisms: implicitly refer to body parts without naming them (e.g., *«як без ока»* – like without an eye, meaning indispensable) (Uzhchenko, 2007: 87–92).

Mariya Vakuryk categorizes somatic phraseologisms according to their functional-semantic properties: a) descriptive phraseologisms; b) comparative phraseologisms c) evaluative phraseologisms; d) modal phraseologisms. This approach highlights the diverse functions that somatic phraseologisms serve in communication, from describing situations to expressing attitudes and evaluations.

L. Savchenko's classification is particularly valuable for its comprehensive approach to categorizing somatic phraseologisms based on their semantic content and the aspects of human experience they describe. It provides a detailed framework for analyzing how body-part terms are used metaphorically to express a wide range of concepts related to human life and society. Savchenko divides

somatic phraseologisms into several semantic-thematic groups based on the body parts they reference: *бити ноги* – йти кудись даремно; *hand and glove* – працювати разом; *до самих кісток* – цілком, повною мірою; *to be in one's bones* – те, що відчувається на рівні інтуїції; *в'їдатися в печінку* – сильно набриднути; *heart of gold* – добра людина; *кров холоде у жилах* – про почуття сильного страху; *bad blood* – недружні почуття між людьми; *внести у вуха* – проінформувати; *to have one's nose in the air* – зазнаватися (Savchenko, 2011: 78–80).

She further classifies somatic phraseologisms based on their grammatical structure that is preferred in Ukrainian phraseology:

a) Verbal phraseologisms (e.g., «*новісити носа*» – to hang one's nose, meaning to become discouraged);

b) Nominal phraseologisms (e.g., «*світла голова*» – bright head, meaning an intelligent person);

c) Adjectival phraseologisms (e.g., «*з відкритим серцем*» – with an open heart, meaning sincerely);

d) Adverbial phraseologisms (e.g., «*рукою подати*» – to give by hand, meaning very close)

Functional-stylistic categories, such as a) neutral phraseologisms; b) colloquial phraseologisms; c) literary phraseologisms; d) dialectal phraseologisms, acknowledge the diverse contexts in which somatic phraseologisms are used, from everyday conversation to literary works. They underscore the role of these expressions in different registers of language use.

L. Savchenko's classification of somatic phraseologisms is a robust framework that offers detailed insights into the structure, function, and usage of idiomatic expressions involving body parts. Its strengths lie in its precision, semantic depth, and pragmatic relevance, making it a valuable tool for linguists, language educators, and cultural researchers. However, like any classification system, it faces challenges related to overlap, the dynamic nature of language, and the need for continual updates. Enhancing this framework with cognitive and psychological perspectives could further deepen our understanding of somatic phraseologisms in the Ukrainian language.

When analysing the Dictionary of Phraseology of the Ukrainian Language compiled by V. Bilonozhenko, the presence of 43 somatic lexemes-components of phraseological units of the Ukrainian language was determined, namely:

*брова, долоня, голова, горло, груди, живіт, зуб, кишки, коліно, кров, кулак, лікоть, лице, лоб, мізинець, мозок, ніготь, ніс, око, п'ята, палець, печінка, плече, плоть, пузо, ребро, рука, серце, шия, шкіра, спина, тіло, ухо, вічі, волосина/волос, чоло, щока, хребет, язик* (Bilonozhenko, 1993: 3–234).

In comparison, the English-Ukrainian Phrasebook compiled by K. Barantsev contains 59 somatic lexemes-components of phraseological units of the English language:

*ankle, arm, back, belly, blood, body, brain, cheek, chest, chin, ear, elbow, eye, eyebrow, eyelash, face, finger, fist, flesh, foot, forehead, hair, hand, head, heart, heel, hip, jaw, joint, kidney, knee, knuckle, lap, leg, limb, lip, liver, lung, moustache, mouth, muscles, nail, neck, nose, palm, rib, shoulder, skeleton, skin, skull, spine, stomach, thigh, throat, thumb, toe, tongue, tooth, wrist.*

This quantitative difference depends on several factors. Firstly, it may be related to the specifics of each language, i.e. to which body organs are more important in metaphorical use. In addition, the number of somatic lexemes identified so far as part of phraseological units may differ depending on how widely and in detail somatic phraseological units have been studied in each language. The main reason for the difference is the degree of detail of the studies and the way they are recorded in dictionaries.

The quantitative analysis (t-tests, correlation and regression analysis) of 522 English phraseological units and 471 Ukrainian ones with a somatic component, showed that the largest group consists of phraseological units with the component *hand/рука* (73/61) and *eye/око* (63/58). The number of phraseological units with *head/голова* (57/56) and *heart/серце* (56/38) was lower, but still noticeable and predominant. They are followed by phraseological units with *ear/вухо* (24/27) and *foot/нога* (25/24). The smallest share is made up of phraseological units with the components *nose/нос* (20/22), *tongue/*

язук (23/24) and *mouth/pom* (12/11). The percentages of frequency of use of somatic components in phraseological units in both languages are very similar. The analysis has shown which components are the most common and which have the least number of phraseological units.

Referring to the Academic Explanatory Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language in 11 volumes (SUM-11) and the Cambridge Dictionary we can consider in more detail the semantic interpretation of the most commonly used somatisms in English and Ukrainian.

Among the collected material, SPUs with somatism *hand/рука* are the largest group of units: “*to keep one’s head*” (stay calm); “*to be head over heels*” (deeply in love); “*to have a good head on one’s shoulders*” (be intelligent and sensible) or «*голова варить*» (literally: head is cooking; meaning: to be smart); «*морочити голову*» (to confuse someone, to bother); «*голова йде обертом*» (head is spinning; feeling dizzy or overwhelmed). This can be explained by the variety of functions performed by the hand in everyday life, from physical functionality to symbolic use. The following values are recorded in the sources used:

- 1) each of the two upper limbs of a person from the shoulder joint to the tips of the fingers;
- 2) each of the human upper limbs as an instrument of activity, labour;
- 3) the manner of writing, handwriting;
- 4) labour force, workers;
- 5) a person who is related to what is being discussed;
- 6) a symbol of power, dominance.

Thus, in many cultures, *hand* is considered an important symbol that can represent power, human activity, support, friendship, etc. Such symbolic meanings are often used in phraseological expressions.

When it comes to HEAD, the idea of human activity usually arises: “*to lend a hand*” (to help); “*to have the upper hand*” (to have an advantage); “*to be caught red-handed*” (to be caught in the act). In the traditions of the Ukrainian people, HEAD has a symbolic meaning associated with the importance of this part of the body, supremacy, intellectual development of a person, and is seen as the centre of vitality, the seat of the soul and intellect: «*мати руку*» (to have a hand; to have connections or influence); «*опустити руки*» (to lower one’s hands; to give up); «*прикласти руку*» (to apply one’s hand; to contribute to something).

Thus, the semantic structure of the lexeme HEAD includes the following meanings:

- 1) the upper part of the body, including the brain, eyes, mouth, etc;
- 2) the mind and thoughts themselves;
- 3) the leader of a group of people;
- 4) the top/front of something – unique to the English language.

Different cultures may have different ideas about the meaning of the head, but in general, its symbolism is associated with intelligence, thoughts and mental activity. The presence of a ‘head’ indicates the presence of positive qualities, while its absence can be assessed as a negative trait.

Among the collected material, phraseological units with EYE somatism constitute perhaps the most numerous group in terms of the number of units. This is due to the fact that approximately 90% of all information is received by a person through the organs of vision. These often relate to perception, attention, or emotions: “*to keep an eye on*” (to watch carefully) (CD, 2018: 12); “*in the blink of an eye*” (very quickly) (CD, 2018: 12); “*to see eye to eye*” (to agree) (CD, 2018: 12) or Ukrainian «*око за око*» (an eye for an eye) (FSUM, 1993: 65); «*мати гостре око*» (to have a sharp eye; to be observant) (FSUM, 1993: 65); «*очі розбігаються*» (eyes are running apart; to be overwhelmed by choices) (FSUM, 1993: 65). The eyes are the expressions of the human inner world, the intermediary conductor that connects the human soul with its external reality. According to dictionaries, the following values of this component are recorded:

- 1) the organ of sight in humans, all vertebrates and some invertebrates;
- 2) a glance (figuratively);

- 3) the ability to see, vision;
- 4) care, nurturing;
- 5) a dark spot on a potato or similar part of a plant from which a new stem and leaves will grow;
- 6) a hole in a needle through which you thread a thread – typical for English; interestingly, the Ukrainian word for this concept is ‘*вухо*’.

Heart-related phraseologisms often express emotions, especially love, courage, or sincerity. Compare the English somatisms “*to have a heart of gold*” (to be very kind) (CD, 2018: 23); “*to break someone’s heart*” (to cause emotional pain) (CD, 2018: 12); “*to wear one’s heart on one’s sleeve*” (to show emotions openly) (ibidem, 346) with Ukrainian «*від щирого серця*» (from a sincere heart; sincerely) (FSUM, 1993: 34); «*серце не камінь*» (the heart isn’t stone; expressing sympathy) (FSUM, 1993: 65); «*кам’яне серце*» (heart of stone; being cruel or unfeeling) (FSUM, 1993: 65).

Research by Ukrainian linguist O. Selivanova suggests that the prevalence of these groups is similar in both languages, with head, eye, and hand-related phraseologisms being the most common. However, there are some differences. According to O. Selivanova, Ukrainian tends to have more phraseologisms related to internal organs (e.g., liver, kidneys) than English: «*сидіти в печінках*» (to sit in the liver; to annoy greatly), while English has more phraseologisms related to fingers and toes as separate from hands and feet: “*to be all thumbs*” (to be clumsy) (Selivanova, 2018: 46–54). Besides, Ukrainian often uses diminutive forms in somatic phraseologisms, which is less common in English: «*прикусити язичка*» (to bite one’s little tongue; to stop talking) (ibidem, 48). The prevalence of certain body parts in these expressions often correlates with their perceived importance in cognitive, emotional, and social functions.

**Conclusions.** Thus, given the information provided, we can conclude that the meanings of the lexemes-components of the SPUs vary depending on the context and linguistic tradition. The semantic meaning of somatic lexemes is mainly related to their physical and symbolic functions that they perform in the human body and everyday life. Ukrainian and English can use different lexemes to denote the same concept.

All the examined SPUs are divided into the following phraseological semantic groups: mental and physical states; character traits and behaviour; external and psychological characteristics; mental abilities (perception, transmission, receipt, reproduction of information).

The semantic and grammatical analysis of all the selected phrases shows that the most numerous semantic and grammatical category is verbal SPUs – 68% (675), followed by substantive SPUs – 16% (158), adjectival SPUs – 12% (119) and adverbial SPUs – 4% (41).

This fact can be interpreted in such a way that Ukrainian and English prefer verbs as the main means of expressing action and process, what is happening in the text. This, in turn, indicates the dynamism and activity of the speech of native speakers of these languages.

The analysis of the systemic relations of the SPUs revealed many examples of variation (*to keep one’s lips tight/tongue still*; *вітер у голові свистить/грає*), синоніму (*to be head over heels – to have butterflies in one’s stomach*; *набрати води в рот – язика проковтнути*), антоніму (*to flap one’s mouth – to have one’s lips sealed*; *зарубати на носі – викинути з голови*) and polysemy (*about one’s ears – коли щось не вдається або той, що завдає клопоту*; *колоти очі – викликати роздратування або соромити когось*).

Most of the studied SPUs, according to the semantic classification, belong to phraseological units and phraseological combinations that are part of the lexicon with somonymous and splanchnonymous meanings.

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