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THE USAGE OF SOMATISMS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK PROVERBS

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Abstract: This study explores somatic phraseological units, or somatisms, in English and Uzbek proverbs, highlighting their cultural significance and linguistic intricacies. Somatisms, expressions involving body parts, not only enrich language but also serve as a reflection of societal values, beliefs, and emotional landscapes. Through a comparative analysis of proverbs in both languages, this research investigates to uncover similarities and differences in the use of somatic idioms, illustrating how these expressions encapsulate cultural perceptions of the human body and experience.

Keywords: culture, proverbs, phraseological units, linguistic features, somatisms, comparative analysis, metaphor, lexical, semantic meanings, anthropocentric paradigm.

Introduction: Culture is deeply intertwined with the phraseological units of a language, making it difficult to imagine any language without somatic expressions. Each country incorporates somatic elements into its phraseology, reflecting unique cultural nuances and values. Somatic phraseological units, or somatisms, are word combinations with multiple meanings that form one of the oldest layers of vocabulary in any language. The growing scholarly interest in somatic phraseology stems from its dual nature: it embodies both abstract concepts and concrete physical experiences.

Somatic phraseological units highlight two contrasting aspects: they convey abstract ideas while remaining closely tied to human physicality. Their components and overall meanings are intricately connected to descriptions of people and their activities, underscoring their role in expressing cultural values, emotions, and lived experiences. Studying somatic expressions in English and Uzbek provides valuable insights into how different cultures perceive and articulate the relationship between the body and the broader human experience.

In both English and Uzbek, somatisms are frequent and exhibit diverse structural patterns. This prevalence reflects the fundamental human tendency to understand oneself as part of a larger, interconnected worldview. Such expressions simplify the articulation of complex ideas, emotions, and experiences by linking them to physical imagery.

The high frequency of somatic phraseological units underscores their central role in everyday communication, where they help individuals navigate social and cultural realities. By analyzing the structural models of these units, we gain insight into how different cultures use somatic expressions to encapsulate shared human experiences and perceptions. This exploration not only enhances our understanding of language but also deepens our appreciation of cultural diversity

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Literature analysis: The term “soma,” originating from the Greek word for “body,” serves as the foundation for the linguistic concept of “somatic.” Estonian scholar F. Vack was the first to introduce the term “somatic” into the field of linguistics. Today, it is widely used to refer to idiomatic expressions involving body parts, commonly known as somatic phrases or somatisms. These expressions serve as a vital area of study in linguistics due to their unique ability to bridge language, culture, and human experience. They reveal how societies conceptualize the body and its relationship to abstract notions like identity, emotion, and social interaction¹.

The concept of “phraseological somatism” was first introduced by E.M. Mordkovich in his seminal work *Semantic-thematic Groups of Somatic Phraseologisms*, which examined body-related expressions in Russian. Mordkovich highlighted the significance of somatic phrases in understanding linguistic structures and cultural dynamics, noting that these expressions often reflect a society’s worldview. Building on this idea, English scholar Logan Smith studied similar expressions in English, arguing that somatisms enrich the language by adding layers of figurative and emotional depth. Together, these studies underscore the universality of somatic expressions while highlighting the cultural specificity in their use.

Both English and Uzbek languages exhibit a rich inventory of somatic expressions, although their cultural contexts and metaphorical associations may differ. English somatisms often emphasize individualistic traits, reflecting the cultural importance of personal agency and emotional expression. For example, “*keep your chin up*” reflects resilience and optimism. Conversely, Uzbek somatisms often emphasize collectivism, respect, and shared values, as seen in phrases like “*bosh qo ‘shmoq*” (to unite heads, meaning collaboration).

By analyzing these expressions, researchers can gain deeper insights into how language captures shared human experiences and cultural distinctions. For instance:

The prevalence of *heart-related idioms* in both languages reflects the universal association of the heart with emotions and virtues, but the specific usage and context can differ significantly.

Hand-related expressions often symbolize action, control, or relationships in both languages, yet the cultural values tied to these actions may vary.

Discussion: Somatic phraseological units, or somatisms, are among the most versatile and frequent elements in language, forming an integral part of its idiomatic and figurative expressions. Among somatisms, “*hand*” is the most commonly used term, appearing frequently across multiple languages and cultures. Other highly used somatisms include “*head*,” “*eye*,” “*face*,” “*foot*,” “*nose*,” “*finger*,” and “*heart*.” Less frequent but equally significant in their phrase-forming potential are terms such as “*leg*,” “*arm*,” “*back*,” “*bone*,” “*brain*,” “*ear*,” “*tooth*,” “*skin*,” “*shoulder*,” “*neck*,” and “*tongue*.” These body-related expressions are not merely linguistic ornaments but reflect the physical, emotional, and cultural dimensions of human experience².

According to researchers M.A. Pekler and A.D. Rakhshstein, a comparative analysis of somatisms in Russian and English reveals a remarkable overlap in their frequency and usage. In Russian, 17 of the most frequent lexical items in phraseological units refer to body parts, while in English, 11 out of the top 17 items are somatisms.

¹ Narmetova Z. Somatic Phraseological units in English and languages. International Conference on Advance Research in Humanities, Applied Sciences and Education <https://conferencea.org> Sep. 28th 2022.

² Yusifov E.G. On the study of the somatic phraseological compounds in german and English languages. East European Scientific Journal #1(65), 2021

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Human body organs can be categorized in various ways, depending on different criteria, each classification serving to highlight unique functions or attributes. One widely recognized distinction divides the body's organs into sensory and non-sensory categories. Sensory organs, including the eyes, ears, and nose, are directly involved in receiving and processing stimuli from the external environment, such as visual input, sounds, and smells. On the other hand, other organs such as the stomach, shoulders, and legs do not participate in sensory perception, but instead perform essential physiological functions like digestion, mobility, and structural support. This functional distinction is not just a biological consideration, but also plays a significant role in how language, metaphor, and culture utilize somatic imagery to represent abstract concepts and complex human experiences.

The relationship between bodily functions and linguistic expression is especially evident in the use of somatisms—body-related expressions that convey complex ideas and emotions. These expressions often use body parts as metaphors, serving as vehicles to articulate thoughts about perception, action, emotion, and interaction with the world. By embedding these metaphors within everyday language, speakers convey nuanced and layered meanings that resonate deeply across cultures, emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between physical experience and linguistic expression.

A prime example of the versatility of somatisms can be seen in the phraseological use of the mouth. In both English and Uzbek, expressions involving the mouth often center around the concept of speech, whether that be speaking, remaining silent, or refraining from speaking altogether. For instance, in English, the expression "keep one's mouth shut" metaphorically conveys the idea of silence, self-restraint, or refraining from unnecessary speech. In Uzbek, "*tilini tiyib yurmoq*" similarly conveys this act of self-discipline. The phrase "*open one's mouth*" (English) or "*og'zini ochmoq*" (Uzbek), in contrast, denotes the act of initiating speech or expressing one's thoughts verbally. These expressions highlight how the mouth, a body part primarily used for communication, can symbolize broader concepts like control, expression, and social interaction.

Exploring somatisms also allows us to reflect on how the metaphors embedded in language serve as a reflection of human experiences across different contexts. The use of bones and teeth, for example, often connects to themes of strength, endurance, and vitality in both English and Uzbek. In English, phrases like "*Bone of contention*" or "*Put your teeth into something*" emphasize conflict, effort, and determination. Similarly, in Uzbek, "*Tishini tishiga qo'ymoq*" (*To grit one's teeth*) symbolizes resolve and perseverance, highlighting the importance of strength in overcoming challenges. These expressions reveal the universality of human struggles and the ways in which physical endurance is linked to emotional resilience and perseverance.

The metaphorical use of hair in both languages further illustrates the richness of somatic imagery in communication. In English, expressions like "*one's hair stood on end*" convey heightened emotional responses such as fear, awe, or extreme surprise, while in Uzbek, "*teppa sochi tikka bo'lmoq*" similarly captures this sense of intense emotional reaction. The act of "*tearing one's hair out*" (English) and "*sochini yulmoq*" (Uzbek) both symbolize frustration, desperation, or overwhelming emotional strain, often in the face of an unsolvable problem. Additionally, the metaphorical use of individual strands of hair serves to represent insignificance or precision, as seen in the English expression "*to split hairs*"—a phrase that refers to focusing on minute, often trivial details. This idea translates into Uzbek as "*mayda-chuyda narsalardan ayb topmoq*", "*tirnoq orasidan kir qidirmoq*" emphasizing the concept of nitpicking or excessive attention to insignificant points. Here, hair is not just a physical feature, but also a powerful symbol for the act of scrutinizing or exaggerating trivialities.

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Expressions involving the lower limbs—the feet and legs—add another layer of metaphorical meaning, particularly related to movement, resistance, and social interaction. In both English and Uzbek, phrases that involve the feet or heels often convey notions of obstinacy or immovability. For example, the phrase “dig in one’s heels” (English) translates to “*qat’iy rad javobini bermoq*” (Uzbek), symbolizing a steadfast refusal to change one’s position, indicating both determination and stubbornness. Similarly, the expression “stick in one’s heels” (English) or “*qaysarlik qilmoq*”, “*ikki oyog’ini bir etikka tiqmoq*” (Uzbek) reflects a sense of resistance, suggesting that one is unwilling to budge from their standpoint. These expressions underscore the connection between physical resistance in movement and emotional or intellectual immovability. Conversely, “*on a friendly footing*” (English) or “*do’stona munosabatda*” (Uzbek) conveys the idea of being in amicable or neutral terms with someone, emphasizing the stability and equality of a relationship without referencing physical movement.

The torso—comprising parts like the neck, shoulders, chest, and back—features prominently in metaphorical expressions, often linked to strength, responsibility, and social roles. For example, in both English and Uzbek, the expression “*put something on someone’s shoulders*” reflects the idea of burdening someone with a responsibility or duty. In English, “*put something on someone’s shoulders*” is paralleled by the Uzbek phrase “*birovning zimmasiga yuklamoq*”, both conveying the image of a weight being borne by the individual. Additionally, the expression “*stand up with your chest*” (English) and “*ko’kragini kerimoq*” (Uzbek) metaphorically communicates confidence, pride, and emotional fortitude, suggesting that one can stand tall or face challenges with assurance and self-respect.

The widespread use of somatic metaphors in both English and Uzbek phraseology reveals a deep-seated cultural and linguistic connection to the human body as both a literal and figurative source of meaning. Through somatisms, speakers are able to express a range of emotions, behaviors, and interpersonal dynamics in ways that resonate with universal human experiences. By tapping into the commonality of bodily functions and expressions, language becomes a conduit through which individuals articulate complex psychological states, social relationships, and philosophical ideas, bridging the physical and the metaphorical with remarkable precision and depth.

This interplay between physicality and language not only enriches communication but also strengthens the cultural fabric of societies. The pervasive role of somatisms in everyday language serves as a reminder of how deeply intertwined our perception of the body is with our understanding of the world around us. By using bodily imagery, we not only communicate our thoughts but also embody the very experiences we seek to share, reinforcing the idea that language is not merely a tool for expression but an integral part of how we engage with and make sense of the world.

The study of somatic phraseological units in English and Uzbek proverbs provides a fascinating exploration of how language reflects cultural values, human experiences, and universal themes. Somatisms, which are expressions that incorporate body-related terminology, serve as rich linguistic tools that allow speakers to convey a wide range of complex emotions, social interactions, and cultural norms in a manner that is vivid, powerful, and often deeply metaphorical. By utilizing parts of the body—such as the head, heart, hands, feet, and eyes—these expressions create meaningful

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connections between physical experiences and abstract human concepts, enabling speakers to communicate layered ideas that resonate on both personal and collective levels³.

Conclusion : Proverbs are one of the most popular, widespread, and ancient traditional genres in both English and Uzbek literature. The use of somatisms, or body-related expressions and metaphors, is a prominent feature in proverbs across both languages. Somatisms in proverbs serve to encapsulate deeper meanings and reflections on human nature, emotions, and life experiences, offering insights into how physical body parts and sensations are used to communicate abstract concepts.

The use of body-related terms in proverbs acts as a powerful tool for expressing abstract and complex ideas. By associating physical body parts with intangible human qualities and societal norms, somatisms allow for the conveyance of deeper meanings, making the message of the proverb more relatable, memorable, and impactful. For instance, proverbs often link body parts such as the *head/bosh*, *mouth/og'iz*, *beard/soqol*, *tooth/tish*, *foot/oyoq*, *hand/qo'l*, *ear/quloq*, *bone/suyak*, and *eye/ko'z* with universal themes like family, loyalty, honesty, kindness, deceit, and competence. The human body, through these expressions, becomes a symbolic vehicle for exploring complex social and emotional dynamics, offering vivid imagery that transcends mere physicality.

When examining the role of somatisms in proverbs, we see that certain body parts are repeatedly used to represent specific moral, emotional, or social concepts. For example, *the eye/ko'z* and *heart/yurak* are often associated with loyalty and disloyalty, with the eye symbolizing perception, insight, and the ability to see truth, while the heart represents the emotional core, often linked to sincerity and genuine affection. These metaphors underscore the emotional depth embedded in body-related expressions, highlighting the interconnection between physical and emotional experiences.

In addition, the comparative analysis of English and Uzbek somatic phraseological units reveals both striking similarities and distinctive differences in how cultures conceptualize the body and its relationship to the world. While certain somatic expressions may have overlapping meanings across the two languages, others present unique cultural nuances that reflect divergent perceptions of emotions, social roles, and human experiences. These variations in somatic language offer valuable insights into the ways different cultures shape their understanding of bodily metaphors and their application in daily life.

Moreover, the study of somatic phraseological units in English and Uzbek proverbs expands our understanding of how language operates within a broader cultural framework. It encourages a deeper appreciation of the complex ways in which bodily imagery is interwoven with human interactions, emotions, and social relationships. These expressions are not simply linguistic constructs but reflect the underlying values, beliefs, and emotional landscapes of the cultures they emerge from. They reveal how physical experiences and the body's role in shaping human behavior are intimately connected to the broader social and cultural fabric.

³ Spirina T.S. Phraseological units of the English, Russian and German languages, characterizing power, with components - somatisms. Linguistics and translation. No. 3 (41), 2013.

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