

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Somatic Phraseologisms As A Reflection Of Human Conceptual And Cognitive Structures

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Abstract

This article explores the cognitive foundations of somatic phraseological units in the Uzbek language and their role within the human conceptual system. From the perspective of the anthropocentric paradigm, the study examines the interrelation between language, cognition, and culture. The paper reveals their semantic and conceptual structures, as well as the mechanisms of meaning formation through conceptual metaphors and cultural-linguistic codes. The results show that somatic phraseological units constitute the core of the Uzbek conceptual sphere, embodying the unity of national cognition and culture.

KEYWORDS

Somatic phraseologism, cognitive linguistics, concept, conceptual sphere, anthropocentric paradigm, linguoculture, conceptual metaphor.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary linguistics, the anthropocentric paradigm has become one of the most influential frameworks for understanding the nature of language [Teliya, 1996; Kubryakova, 2004; Langacker, 2008]. This paradigm views language as a cognitive, cultural, and semiotic phenomenon that reflects the structure of human thought and embodies the mechanisms through which individuals perceive, categorize, and evaluate the surrounding world [Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Evans & Green, 2006]. Within this paradigm, human beings are positioned at the center of linguistic inquiry — language is no longer seen as a neutral tool for communication, but as a mirror of human cognition. The anthropocentric approach gave rise to a new research focus — the human conceptual system, which explores how linguistic forms correspond to mental structures and conceptual frameworks [Kövecses, 2010; Croft & Cruse, 2004]. This approach recognizes that every linguistic unit reflects a conceptual model, grounded in sensory, emotional, and cultural experience. Within this

context, somatic phraseologisms — idiomatic expressions containing names of body parts or actions — represent a unique and fertile field of linguistic study [Boldanova, 2015; Musayev, 2019]. They encapsulate not only physical perception but also metaphorical mappings of moral, psychological, and cultural meanings. Since humans perceive and interpret the world primarily through the body, bodily experience becomes the foundation for conceptual metaphors that structure human thinking [Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Gibbs, 2006].

The human body, therefore, serves as a cognitive model — a prototype for understanding abstract concepts such as emotion, morality, intellect, and social behavior. For instance, idioms like “ko'ngli toza” (pure-hearted), “yuragi keng” (broad-hearted), or “bosh qotdi” (head confused) are not simply linguistic expressions but cognitive projections that connect bodily experience with psychological and ethical

domains. The aim of this study is to analyze the cognitive foundations of somatic phraseologisms in the Uzbek language, determine their role in the human conceptual system, and reveal how they reflect the anthropomorphic worldview embedded in Uzbek linguistic and cultural consciousness [Sharipova, 2017; Ibrohimov, 2020]. The study draws on the works of prominent cognitive linguists such as G. Lakoff, M. Johnson, R. Langacker, Z. Kövecses, E. Kubryakova, and V. Teliya, who have established that linguistic meaning emerges through the interaction of conceptualization, embodiment, and culture [Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010; Langacker, 2008].

METHODS

This research employs a multimethod cognitive-linguistic framework, integrating theoretical and empirical approaches. The primary methods include:

Cognitive-semantic analysis – to reveal how somatic phraseologisms encode conceptual and metaphorical meaning based on bodily experience. Conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) – to identify metaphorical mappings between the source domain (physical body and sensory experience) and target domains (emotions, ethics, social relationships). Linguocultural approach (Teliya, 1996) – to interpret somatic phraseologisms as cultural signs that embody collective values, norms, and worldviews. Associative-semantic analysis (Kubryakova, 2004) – to uncover associative networks and symbolic meanings attached to specific body parts in Uzbek idiomatic discourse. The corpus of analysis was drawn from the Uzbek Phraseological Dictionary, academic works on Uzbek idioms, and oral folklore materials. Approximately 250 somatic phraseological units were examined, focusing on their semantic layers (denotative, connotative, and associative) and their conceptual models.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Human Body as a Cognitive Model

Language and cognition are intertwined through embodied experience — the idea that human understanding originates from bodily interaction with the world [Lakoff & Johnson, 1999]. In Uzbek, somatic phraseologisms reveal this embodiment clearly. For instance, the heart (yurak) often symbolizes sincerity, courage, and emotional warmth (“yuragi keng”, “yuragi orqaga tortdi”). The head (bosh) is associated with intellect and decision-making (“bosh qotdi”, “bosh

ko’tardi”), while the hand (qo’l) is linked to action, work, and generosity (“qo’li ochiq”, “qo’li qattiq”). The eye (ko’z) connotes observation, vigilance, and aesthetic perception (“ko’zi o’ynoqi”, “ko’z qiri bilan qaradi”). Each of these elements functions as a source domain for metaphorical projection into abstract areas such as morality, emotion, or intellect. Thus, somatic phraseologisms serve as bridges between physical experience and conceptual meaning, confirming the core principle of embodied cognition [Gibbs, 2006; Kövecses, 2015].

2. Cognitive Modules of the Conceptual System: The human conceptual system can be divided into three interrelated modules that interact through somatic imagery: The human conceptual system can be divided into three interrelated cognitive modules that interact through somatic imagery: the sensor-perceptual, emotional, and axiological domains.

The sensor-perceptual module reflects the sphere of physical perception and bodily experience. It includes idiomatic expressions that describe physiological or sensory states, which are metaphorically extended to cognitive or psychological experiences. For instance, the Uzbek idiom “Boshi og’ridi” (“his head ached”) literally refers to physical pain, but figuratively it conveys a sense of confusion, anxiety, or mental fatigue, showing how sensory perception becomes a metaphor for cognitive tension.

The emotional module encompasses phraseologisms that express feelings, emotions, and psychological states. Such expressions often use the heart (yurak) or soul (ko’ngil) as conceptual centers of emotional life. For example, “Ko’ngli toza” (“pure-hearted”) represents moral purity, sincerity, and emotional openness, reflecting the cultural belief that the heart and soul are the seats of ethical feeling and emotional authenticity.

Finally, the axiological module covers the domain of ethical and cultural values, where bodily metaphors are used to express moral discipline, respect, and social norms. An example is “Tilini tiygan” (“restrained tongue”), which literally refers to controlling one’s speech but metaphorically signifies self-control, politeness, and cultural restraint. This demonstrates how physical action — restraining the tongue — is cognitively extended into a moral and social value, linking body, behavior, and culture in one conceptual structure. Together, these three modules illustrate the holistic nature of human conceptualization, where perception, emotion, and

ethics are intertwined through bodily imagery. Somatic phraseologisms thus operate as cognitive connectors, integrating sensory experience, emotional expression, and moral understanding into a unified linguistic worldview. This structure demonstrates that somatic expressions interlink perception, emotion, and ethics — showing how the body operates as a cognitive and moral schema.

3. Semantic and Cultural Layers

Each somatic phraseologism consists of three semantic layers [Kubryakova, 2004]:

Denotative – the literal reference to a body part (*bosh*, *qo'l*, *ko'z*)

Connotative – emotional and evaluative meaning (*yuragi keng* = generosity).

Associative – figurative and cultural imagery (*tili achchiq* = sharp-tongued, impolite).

These layers interact dynamically to form complex meanings. For example, in "*bosh ko'tardi*" ("raised the head"), the denotative meaning relates to movement, while connotation implies pride or courage, and the associative meaning refers to freedom or defiance — creating a multi-level semantic structure.

4. Linguocultural and Ethical Dimensions

From a linguocultural perspective, somatic phraseologisms function as cultural codes that encapsulate the moral and ethical values of Uzbek society [Teliya, 1996; Musayev, 2019]. Expressions like "*yuzsiz*" (shameless), "*tilini tiygan*" (restrained tongue), and "*ko'ngli toza*" (pure-hearted) embody the moral principles of modesty, self-restraint, and sincerity — values central to Uzbek cultural identity. Thus, somatic phraseologisms act as linguistic archives of cultural memory, preserving the ethical worldview and social norms of the nation. They also reveal the axiological orientation of the Uzbek language, where bodily metaphors embody moral evaluation and social ideals.

5. Cognitive Dynamics and Conceptual Creativity

Somatic phraseologisms demonstrate the dynamic nature of cognition — how human beings constantly reinterpret bodily experience into new conceptual frameworks. Metaphorical projection allows speakers to extend physical experience into abstract reasoning, e.g., "*qo'li ochiq*" (open-handed) →

generosity; "*bosh qotdi*" (head stuck) → confusion; "*yuragi orqaga tortdi*" (heart pulled back) → fear or hesitation. This ongoing metaphorization process enriches the Uzbek linguistic system, showing that language is not static, but an evolving reflection of human conceptual creativity.

CONCLUSION

The comprehensive analysis of Uzbek somatic phraseologisms confirms that they are multifunctional linguocognitive units reflecting the unity of language, body, and thought. These idioms encapsulate sensory experience, emotional perception, and cultural values, forming a bridge between physical reality and abstract conceptualization. Somatic phraseologisms reveal that human cognition is embodied — grounded in the sensory and emotional experience of the body [Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Gibbs, 2006]. The body thus serves as a central modeling mechanism, transforming physical experience into ethical and social meaning. From a cultural perspective, somatic phraseologisms are repositories of national consciousness, preserving moral ideals and collective memory. They symbolize the Uzbek worldview, where sincerity (*ko'ngli toza*), generosity (*qo'li ochiq*), and restraint (*tilini tiygan*) are core cultural values. In cognitive terms, somatic phraseologisms exemplify how language constructs thought: the human body becomes both the source and reflection of conceptual structures. Through these idioms, language does not merely describe reality but actively shapes it, converting concrete experiences into conceptual knowledge and moral principles. Ultimately, the study of somatic phraseologisms demonstrates that to understand a language is to understand the human being behind it — their body, mind, and culture. Uzbek somatic phraseologisms thus stand as living evidence of the anthropocentric essence of language, revealing the deep unity of cognition, communication, and culture.

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