

# Structural And Semantic Properties Of Somatic Idioms In English And Uzbek

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**Abstract:** This article examines the structural and semantic properties of somatic idioms in English and Uzbek. Somatic idioms, which include lexical units referring to parts of the human body, represent an important component of phraseological systems in many languages. The study analyzes their grammatical patterns, semantic motivations, figurative meanings, and cross-cultural similarities and differences. The research is based on comparative linguistic analysis of selected idioms from English and Uzbek phraseological dictionaries and scholarly studies. The findings demonstrate both universal cognitive mechanisms and culturally specific features in the formation and use of somatic idioms. The paper contributes to contrastive linguistics, phraseology, and intercultural communication studies.

**Keywords:** Somatic idioms, phraseology, English language, Uzbek language, semantic motivation, structural patterns, contrastive linguistics, metaphor.

**Introduction:** Phraseology occupies a central position in modern linguistics because idiomatic expressions reflect not only linguistic structure but also the cultural worldview of a speech community. Among phraseological units, somatic idioms — expressions containing names of body parts — are especially productive and semantically rich. Linguists note that the human body serves as one of the most universal sources of metaphorical conceptualization across languages [1, p. 45].

In English, expressions such as *keep an eye on*, *lose one's head*, and *cold feet* demonstrate how bodily experience is mapped onto abstract meanings. Uzbek likewise shows high productivity of somatic phraseology through units such as *ko'z-quloq bo'lmoq*, *boshini yo'qotmoq*, and *qo'li ochiq*. According to phraseological research, somatic components constitute one of the largest semantic groups in both Turkic and Indo-European phraseological systems [2, p. 112].

Despite numerous separate studies of English and Uzbek phraseology, comparative analysis of their structural and semantic properties remains insufficiently systematized. This article aims to fill that gap by examining how somatic idioms are formed, structured, and semantically motivated in both languages.

## METHODOLOGY

The research employs a contrastive descriptive method combined with semantic and structural analysis. The material was collected from authoritative phraseological dictionaries and linguistic studies of English and Uzbek.

The methodological framework includes:

- componential analysis to identify somatic lexemes;
- structural classification of idioms according to grammatical patterns;
- semantic grouping based on figurative

meaning;

- comparative analysis to reveal similarities and differences.

Approximately 120 somatic idioms (60 English, 60 Uzbek) were selected through continuous sampling from phraseological dictionaries [3, p. 78; 4, p. 56]. Only well-documented idioms recognized in academic sources were included to ensure factual reliability.

The theoretical basis of the research draws on works in phraseology, cognitive linguistics, and Turkic linguistics, particularly the studies of Kunin, Mamatov, and Cowie.

## RESULTS

The analysis revealed several structural and semantic regularities in the formation of somatic idioms in both languages.

Structurally, English somatic idioms most frequently appear in the following patterns:

- Verb + possessive + somatic noun (shake one's head)
- Verb + somatic noun (face the truth)
- Prepositional phrases (under one's nose)

Uzbek somatic idioms show different dominant models:

- Somatic noun + auxiliary verb (ko'z tashlamoq)
- Possessive constructions (qo'li uzun)
- Compound verbal phrases (bosh egmoq)

Quantitative analysis indicates that verb-centered constructions dominate in both languages, though Uzbek demonstrates higher productivity of possessive descriptive models [5, p. 93].

Semantically, somatic idioms in both languages cluster around several conceptual domains:

- emotional states
- intellectual activity
- character traits
- social relations
- control and observation

For example, English lose one's head and Uzbek boshini yo'qotmoq both denote loss of self-control, demonstrating cross-linguistic metaphorical convergence.

## DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis confirms that somatic idioms in English and Uzbek are grounded in universal principles of embodied cognition, whereby human bodily experience provides a primary source for metaphorical conceptualization. Cognitive linguistics has consistently demonstrated that abstract reasoning

is often structured through metaphorical extensions of physical experience, particularly those related to the human body [6, p. 102]. The material examined in this study strongly supports this theoretical position. At the same time, the data reveal important typological and cultural differences that influence the structural realization, semantic transparency, and pragmatic usage of somatic idioms in the two languages.

From a structural perspective, English somatic idioms typically exhibit relatively rigid syntactic patterns. Many English idioms are verb-centered constructions that include possessive pronouns and fixed word order, such as keep your head, have cold feet, shake one's head, and turn a blind eye. This structural rigidity reflects the analytic nature of English grammar, where grammatical relations are primarily expressed through word order and function words rather than inflectional morphology. As noted in phraseological research, English idioms tend to resist internal modification, and their stability is an important criterion for idiomaticity [5, p. 93].

In contrast, Uzbek somatic idioms demonstrate greater morphological compactness and flexibility due to the agglutinative structure of the language. Uzbek frequently encodes idiomatic meaning through verbal suffixes and derivational morphology, producing constructions such as ko'z tashlamoq, bosh egmoq, qo'li uzun, and yuragi keng. In many cases, the somatic component is integrated directly into a verb phrase without the need for auxiliary elements. For example, ko'z-quloq bo'lmoq ('to become eyes and ears') expresses surveillance and attentiveness through a morphologically unified predicate [7, p. 64]. This typological difference confirms that phraseological structure is closely connected with the overall grammatical profile of a language.

Despite structural differences, the semantic motivation of somatic idioms in both languages reveals a high degree of universality. The analysis identified several core metaphorical mappings that are shared cross-linguistically. Among the most productive are:

HEAD → intellect, reason, control

HEART → emotions, courage, morality

EYE → attention, perception, supervision

HAND → power, action, possession

These mappings correspond closely to the conceptual metaphor framework proposed by Lakoff and Johnson, who argue that many abstract domains are systematically structured through bodily experience [6, p. 118]. The empirical material from English and Uzbek strongly supports the cross-linguistic stability of these metaphorical patterns.

For instance, English have a good head on one's shoulders and Uzbek boshi ishlaydi both conceptualize intelligence through the metaphor HEAD AS A SEAT OF REASON. Similarly, English keep an eye on and Uzbek ko'z-quloq bo'lmoq both rely on the metaphor SEEING IS MONITORING. These parallels indicate that many somatic idioms emerge from shared human cognitive experience rather than purely language-specific developments.

However, the study also reveals culturally conditioned variation in metaphorical focus and semantic nuance. One illustrative example is the expression of fear or hesitation. English commonly uses cold feet, where the somatic focus is on the feet. Uzbek, by contrast, typically uses heart-based expressions such as yuragi orqaga tortdi. This suggests that while the underlying emotional concept is universal, different cultures may select different bodily loci to represent similar psychological states. Such variation aligns with cross-cultural phraseological findings reported in comparative studies [9, p. 59].

Another significant point of divergence concerns idiomatic opacity. English somatic idioms often display a higher degree of semantic non-compositionality. Expressions such as pull someone's leg, cost an arm and a leg, and under someone's nose cannot be interpreted through literal analysis of their components. Their meanings are conventionalized and must be learned as fixed phraseological units. As Fernando notes, English idioms frequently undergo semantic bleaching that obscures the original metaphorical motivation [8, p. 141].

Uzbek somatic idioms, while clearly figurative, tend to preserve greater semantic transparency, especially in colloquial usage. Many Uzbek expressions allow speakers to infer the figurative meaning from the literal components. For example, bosh egmoq ('to bow the head') transparently conveys submission or respect, and qo'li ochiq ('open-handed') clearly suggests generosity. This relative transparency may be connected to the productive derivational mechanisms of Uzbek and the continued semantic motivation of many phraseological units. Nevertheless, fully opaque idioms also exist in Uzbek, particularly in older or highly idiomatized expressions.

Cultural symbolism plays a particularly important role in shaping the semantic profiles of somatic idioms. In Uzbek linguistic culture, the concept of yurak (heart) occupies a central position in the expression of moral and emotional qualities. Idioms such as yuragi keng (generous), yuragi toza (pure-hearted), and yuragi dovmadi (lost courage) demonstrate the strong association between the heart and ethical evaluation.

This pattern is consistent with broader Turkic phraseological traditions noted in Uzbek linguistic scholarship [2, p. 113].

English also makes extensive use of heart-based metaphors, but the semantic distribution differs somewhat. English frequently employs heart for emotions (broken heart, kind-hearted) but often uses hand metaphors for social behavior and agency (give someone a hand, in safe hands). Uzbek, by comparison, relies more heavily on qo'l (hand) for power, reach, and social capability (qo'li uzun, qo'lidan keladi), though the boundaries between semantic domains are not identical across the two languages.

Frequency analysis of the corpus confirms that certain somatic lexemes function as phraseological centers in both languages. In English, the most productive components are head, hand, eye, and heart. In Uzbek, the dominant elements are bosh, qo'l, ko'z, and yurak. This correspondence strongly supports the hypothesis that certain parts of the human body serve as universal cognitive anchors for metaphorical extension. Similar findings have been reported in cross-linguistic phraseological research [9, p. 59].

From a pragmatic perspective, somatic idioms significantly enhance the expressiveness and emotional coloring of speech. In both English and Uzbek, these units are especially frequent in informal communication, literary discourse, and journalistic writing. Their use allows speakers to convey complex psychological states and social evaluations in a compact and culturally resonant form. Moreover, somatic idioms often function as markers of linguistic fluency and native-like competence, since their appropriate use requires both semantic knowledge and pragmatic sensitivity.

An important applied dimension of the analysis concerns translation equivalence. The data confirm that somatic idioms fall into three main categories from a translation standpoint.

First, full equivalents exist where both languages share similar imagery and meaning. Examples include:

- lose one's head — boshini yo'qotmoq
- keep an eye on — ko'z-quloq bo'lmoq

Second, partial equivalents occur when the meaning is similar but the somatic imagery differs. For example:

- cold feet — yuragi orqaga tortdi

Here the translator must choose between literal imagery and functional equivalence.

Third, culture-specific idioms lack direct counterparts and require descriptive or adaptive translation strategies. This category includes highly opaque idioms

whose metaphorical basis is not shared cross-culturally. As Baker emphasizes, idiom translation often involves managing asymmetry between phraseological systems [10, p. 87].

The findings of this study therefore reinforce the importance of integrating cognitive, structural, and cultural perspectives in phraseological research. Purely formal analysis cannot fully explain the behavior of somatic idioms without considering embodied cognition and cultural semantics. At the same time, cognitive universals do not eliminate language-specific variation; rather, they provide a shared foundation upon which culturally distinctive phraseological patterns develop.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study demonstrates that somatic idioms in English and Uzbek share a common cognitive foundation rooted in human bodily experience, yet they differ in structural realization, semantic transparency, and cultural symbolism.

The main conclusions are:

- Somatic idioms constitute one of the most productive phraseological groups in both languages.
- English idioms tend toward fixed syntactic patterns, while Uzbek idioms show greater morphological integration.
- Core metaphorical mappings (head, heart, hand, eye) are largely universal.
- Cultural factors influence semantic nuance and idiom distribution.
- Translation of somatic idioms requires careful consideration of equivalence types.

The findings contribute to contrastive phraseology, cognitive linguistics, and translation studies. Further research may expand corpus-based analysis and explore pragmatic functions in discourse.

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