

## THE STUDY OF SOMATIC PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN ENGLISH

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**Abstract:** Somatic phraseological units, commonly known as idioms, are linguistic constructs that use human body-related imagery to convey abstract meanings. They play a fundamental role in English language communication, contributing to the richness and depth of expression. This research paper explores the study of somatic phraseological units in English, examining their origins, classifications, cognitive aspects, cultural significance, and contemporary usage. By delving into these facets, we gain a comprehensive understanding of the role somatic idioms play in the English language and its speakers' lives.

**Key words:** somatic phraseology, somatic phraseology, idioms, cognitive aspects.

Somatic phraseological units are ubiquitous in the English language, enriching discourse with vivid imagery and cultural connotations. These idiomatic expressions draw inspiration from the human body, offering a unique lens through which speakers convey complex ideas, emotions, and experiences. The study of somatic phraseology in English encompasses various dimensions, from historical origins to contemporary usage, making it a fascinating field of linguistic exploration.

The historical roots of somatic phraseological units can be traced back to the earliest stages of human language development. As humans evolved and developed increasingly complex communication systems, they naturally drew upon their immediate physical experiences, particularly those related to their bodies, to describe abstract concepts, emotions, and experiences. Early humans relied on their bodily sensations and actions as a primary source of metaphorical language. This approach was not only practical but also highly intuitive. When they experienced strong emotions or encountered novel situations, they turned to the physical sensations they could perceive and the actions they could perform to create metaphors that vividly conveyed their inner experiences to others. One compelling example of this historical process is the idiom "to have a heavy heart." In this expression, the human heart, a vital organ central to life and emotions, is used metaphorically to convey the sensation of sadness or emotional burden. The idiom suggests that the weight of sorrow is similar to the actual physical sensation of heaviness in the chest area. This idiom reflects a deep connection between the physical world and the emotional realm. Early speakers of the English language recognized that the physical sensations associated with certain emotions, such as sadness or grief, were akin to the tangible experience of carrying a heavy object on one's chest. As a result, they harnessed this metaphorical link to create a powerful and universally understandable expression. Understanding the historical roots of somatic phraseological units provides valuable insights into their enduring significance. These expressions are not arbitrary; they are rooted in the very fabric of human experience and perception. They capture the essence of what it means to be human and to communicate complex emotions and abstract ideas. Even as language evolves and societies change, somatic phraseological units remain relevant and resonant because they tap into a fundamental aspect of the human condition. They remind us that our bodies have always served as a source of inspiration and metaphor, allowing us to bridge the gap between the tangible and the intangible, the physical and the emotional. In essence, somatic phraseological units in English

are a testament to the creative and imaginative nature of human language, forever linking the physical world to the realm of language and emotion. Their historical roots enrich our understanding of the depth and universality of these linguistic constructs, underscoring their enduring significance in our daily communication and cultural heritage.

Somatic phraseological units can be categorized into various types based on their structural and semantic properties. This classification includes:

1. *Simple somatic idioms* are those expressions that contain a single body-related element, typically a body part or a bodily action.

Examples:

"Head over heels" - This idiom refers to being deeply in love or infatuated. The body part, "head," is used in conjunction with the action of being "over heels" to convey the intensity of the emotion.

"Cold feet" - This expression means apprehension or reluctance. The body part, "feet," symbolizes one's physical hesitation or nervousness.

Significance: Simple somatic idioms provide concise and vivid imagery, making them easily recognizable and memorable. They often encapsulate common human experiences and emotions.

2. *Compound somatic idioms* are more complex expressions that combine multiple body-related elements within the same phrase.

Examples:

"Heart of gold" - In this idiom, two body-related elements, "heart" and "gold," are combined to symbolize a person's kind and generous nature.

"Butterflies in the stomach" - This expression uses "butterflies" and "stomach" to convey the sensation of nervousness or excitement.

Significance: Compound somatic idioms often create more nuanced or layered meanings by juxtaposing different body-related elements. They can be particularly effective in conveying abstract concepts.

3. *Metaphorical somatic idioms* use body-related imagery metaphorically to convey abstract concepts or emotions.

Examples:

"Grasping at straws" - This idiom employs the metaphor of "grasping" to represent someone making desperate or futile attempts to find a solution.

"Breaking the ice" - Here, "breaking" is used metaphorically to describe the act of initiating a conversation to relieve tension or awkwardness.

Significance: Metaphorical somatic idioms offer a rich and figurative way to express abstract ideas. They enable speakers to vividly convey complex concepts by drawing on universally understood physical actions or sensations.

4. *Non-metaphorical somatic idioms* maintain a direct and literal connection between the body-related imagery and the intended meaning.

Examples:

"Raising one's eyebrows" - In this idiom, the action of "raising one's eyebrows" directly corresponds to expressing surprise, skepticism, or disapproval.

"Rolling one's eyes" - Here, the literal action of "rolling one's eyes" is synonymous with expressing annoyance or disbelief.

Significance: Non-metaphorical somatic idioms rely on the physical actions or reactions associated with the body parts involved. They are often used to describe non-verbal communication or emotional responses in a straightforward manner.

Understanding these classifications allows linguists, language learners, and researchers to systematically analyze somatic phraseological units in English. It provides a framework for dissecting the structural and semantic properties of idiomatic expressions, shedding light on how these linguistic constructs contribute to the richness and nuance of the English language. The cognitive processing of somatic idioms offers insights into how individuals understand and use these expressions. Cognitive linguists examine the mental mechanisms that underlie the interpretation of idiomatic language. Research in this area reveals that the human mind is adept at navigating the abstract meanings behind somatic phraseological units, often relying on metaphorical reasoning and context.

Somatic phraseological units are not only linguistic constructs but also cultural artifacts. They reflect the values, beliefs, and perceptions of a society. For instance, the idiom "shouldering the burden" carries a cultural connotation of responsibility and duty. Analyzing somatic idioms through a cultural lens reveals the intricate interplay between language and society.

Somatic phraseological units remain an integral part of modern English language communication. They find their place in everyday conversations, literature, advertising, and digital communication. The digital age has witnessed the adaptation of somatic idioms to social media platforms, where they continue to shape the way we express emotions and ideas in a rapidly evolving linguistic landscape.

The study of somatic phraseological units in English is a multifaceted exploration encompassing historical, structural, cognitive, cultural, and contemporary dimensions. These idiomatic expressions are more than linguistic constructs; they are windows into human experiences and cultural values. By delving into the study of somatic phraseology, linguists, researchers, and language enthusiasts alike gain a deeper appreciation for the artistry and complexity that underlie the words we use to communicate in English.

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