

LEXICAL FEATURES OF SOMATISMS

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Abstract: This article is dedicated to the study of the lexical features of somatisms. The research deeply analyzes the formation of words, word combinations, and phrases related to body parts, as well as their linguistic characteristics. Furthermore, relevant examples are provided to reveal the semantic flexibility, metaphorical richness, and cultural specificity of somatisms. The article highlights the importance of somatisms in understanding language and culture, emphasizing their role in cognitive and linguistic research.

Keywords: somatisms, lexical meaning, semantics, artistic language, metaphor, phraseological expression.

Introduction: Language is deeply intertwined with the human body, both as a source of direct reference and as a foundation for metaphorical and figurative expressions. Somatisms, linguistic units that involve references to parts of the human body, represent a significant and ancient layer of vocabulary in any language. These expressions go beyond their literal meanings, offering insight into human cognition, culture, and communication.

Somatismes encompass a wide range of lexical features, including their semantic flexibility, metaphorical richness, and cultural specificity. From simple descriptions of physical attributes to complex idiomatic expressions, somatisms serve as a powerful tool for expressing emotions, ideas, and societal norms.

Somatismes are one of the universal lexical groups in any language and have become one of the most frequently studied objects in comparative historical and linguo-cultural works by both local and foreign linguists. These studies often highlight how somatisms reflect the richness and diversity of a language's lexical system.

Somatismes are linguistic expressions that use body-related terms or concepts to convey meaning, often through metaphors or figurative language. These expressions reflect the way physical experiences, sensations, and body parts are used to represent

emotions, states of being, or abstract ideas. Somatisms are a way of mapping human experiences onto the body, which helps in understanding the emotional or conceptual aspects of life. The linguistic features of somatisms refer to the specific ways in which body-related terms are used in language to convey meaning, particularly through metaphors, idiomatic expressions, and figurative language. These features highlight the connection between physical experiences and abstract concepts, and they reflect both universal and culturally specific aspects of language.

Somatisms play a significant role in proverbs, as they convey complex meanings in a compact and memorable form.

Literature review: Somatisms have long been an important subject of study in linguistics, particularly in the fields of lexical semantics, cognitive linguistics, sociolinguistics, and linguocultural studies. Linguists examine somatisms to better understand how languages use the human body as a metaphorical tool to represent abstract concepts, emotions, and social values. Researchers have studied somatisms from various perspectives, focusing on their cultural, historical, and psychological aspects, as well as their role in idiomatic expressions and proverbs.

In the field of cognitive linguistics, scholars like George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have profoundly influenced our understanding of how somatisms fit into the broader framework of conceptual metaphors. These are the mental structures that allow humans to connect abstract concepts with concrete physical experiences. The idea of embodied cognition, central to their work, emphasizes that our bodily experiences significantly shape how we think, perceive, and express ideas. To illustrate this point, “*Having a strong mind*” suggests mental strength or clarity by associating cognitive capacity with physical strength. “*A warm heart*” warmth is associated with love, compassion, and kindness, it is used metaphorically to express emotional warmth.

Scholars like Viktor Zhirmunsky and Eugene Nida have studied how body-related metaphors, or somatisms, appear in different languages and cultures. They found that certain body parts, such as the heart, head, and hands, are often used in metaphors, but their meanings can differ depending on the culture. For instance, “*the head*” often symbolizes thinking, intelligence, or leadership in many cultures. It is seen as the place where thought and reason come from. But in different cultures, the head can also represent wisdom or authority. To exemplify, in some African cultures, the head is a symbol of respect and status. “*The hands*” are typically associated with action, help, or control. We use expressions like “*lend a hand*” (to help) or “*hands-on*” (actively involved). However, in some cultures, *hands* can symbolize work or creativity.

Scholars like William Labov and Deborah Tannen have explored how social and regional factors influence the use of somatisms (body-related metaphors) in language. Their research shows that the way people use body-related expressions can vary depending on their social class, occupation, or cultural context. "*He's got strong hands*" describes someone who works hard with their hands or is physically capable. "*She's got a big heart*" might describe someone who is emotionally generous or compassionate.

Discussion: The lexical features of somatisms refer to the linguistic characteristics of words and phrases related to the human body, particularly in their structure, meaning, and usage. Somatisms typically have a concrete, literal meaning related to body parts, functions, or states. These meanings are universal but can vary slightly across languages due to cultural or anatomical perspectives. The metaphorical and figurative use of somatisms is a key lexical feature, as they transform references to body parts into symbols for abstract ideas, roles, or emotions. *The heart* is a powerful metaphor for human emotions, often symbolizing love, compassion, sincerity, and vulnerability. It is one of the most universally recognized somatisms used to express deep emotional states. "*Heartbroken*" describes intense sadness or emotional pain, often due to loss or disappointment (*She was heartbroken after the breakup*).

"*Heartfelt*" indicates something genuine, sincere, and deeply felt (*He gave a heartfelt apology*). "*Wear your heart on your sleeve*" Refers to openly displaying emotions or being emotionally transparent (She wears her heart on her sleeve, so you always know how she feels). "*With all my heart*" phrase used to convey complete sincerity and emotional investment (*I support you with all my heart*). "*A heart of gold*" describes a kind, generous, and compassionate nature (*She has a heart of gold and is always helping others*).

Somatisms frequently form collocations are integral to fixed expressions, making them stylistically rich and widely applicable. These combinations enhance the expressive power of language and are often metaphorical or idiomatic. "*Shoulder Responsibility*" means to take on or accept responsibility or blame. *She shouldered the responsibility for the team's failure*. This collocation implies an act of carrying a burden, emphasizing effort and accountability. "*Give Someone the Cold Shoulder*" means to intentionally ignore or show indifference to someone. *After the argument, she gave him the cold shoulder for days*. This collocation evokes emotional distance and rejection, with "cold" reinforcing the lack of warmth.

The fixed phrases formed by somatisms demonstrate their versatility and importance in both everyday communication and literary expression. Their strong collocations provide stylistic depth, making language more expressive and impactful.

One of the most striking features of somatisms is their polysemy—the ability of a single somatism to carry multiple meanings. For example, the word *head* denotes a physical body part but also extends metaphorically to concepts like leadership (head of the team) or intellect (use your head).

Somatisms frequently form the backbone of idiomatic expressions, contributing to the richness of language. Expressions like *cold feet* or *turn a blind eye* demonstrate how somatisms encapsulate abstract concepts such as fear or intentional ignorance.

Somatisms contribute to literary richness, enhancing imagery and emotional depth. Authors and orators frequently use somatic expressions to evoke vivid mental pictures or create strong emotional connections. We can identify this point with the following examples: “*Break her heart for her love*” (expressing sorrow and longing). “*Her hands trembled as she clutched the letter*” (indicating fear or anticipation).

The lexical features of somatisms showcase the richness of language, blending physicality with metaphor, culture, and creativity. They are indispensable for nuanced expression but require careful attention to context and culture for effective use.

Conclusion: Somatisms, as language expressions grounded in the human body, reveal the profound link between physical sensations and abstract thinking. Their versatility, metaphorical depth, and cultural uniqueness make them a vital component of any language’s vocabulary. By turning references to body parts into symbols for emotions, ideas, and societal values, somatisms demonstrate the shared and varied ways humans process and communicate their experiences.

Whether in idioms, proverbs, or everyday speech, somatisms enrich language with complex meanings that go beyond literal interpretations. They serve not only as reflections of cultural beliefs and societal norms but also as vehicles for artistic expression and personal connection. Scholars like Lakoff, Johnson, and Labov have highlighted their significance in shaping our understanding of embodied cognition and cultural linguistics, stressing their relevance in both universal and culture-specific contexts.

By examining somatisms, we gain a deeper understanding of how language links human experience with the body, revealing the dynamic relationship between physical reality and abstract concepts. This exploration reinforces the idea that language is a powerful tool for both cognitive and cultural expression, with somatisms

acting as a vivid representation of our shared humanity and the richness of linguistic communication.

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