

Somatic Metaphors In The Uzbek And English Languages

Sotvoldiyeva Muattarxon Ikromjon qizi

PhD student at Fergana State University, Uzbekistan

Received: 10 August 2025; **Accepted:** 06 September 2025; **Published:** 08 October 2025

Abstract: Somatic metaphors are being studied based on human body. They are widely used in language and culture to express human inner experiences, emotions, thoughts, or behaviors. Somatic metaphors represent one of the most vivid manifestations of the interaction between language, cognition, and culture. In linguistics, metaphors connected with human physiology and their meanings have been studied and analyzed by many scholars. The human mind initiates certain actions through the sensations of the body.

Keywords: Metaphor, somatic, physiology, cognitive metaphor theory, cognition, culture, idea, human body.

Introduction: Somatic metaphors represent one of the most vivid manifestations of the interaction between language, cognition, and culture. Derived from the Greek word *soma* meaning "body," these metaphors are based on human bodily organs, physiological processes, and sensations, which are used metaphorically to conceptualize abstract phenomena such as emotions, thoughts, social relations, and moral values. Because the human body is a universal and tangible experience, somatic metaphors serve as a powerful cognitive and linguistic tool for expressing complex mental and emotional states in an accessible and culturally specific way. G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, in several of their works, have expressed their views on cognitive metaphor and its connection with human physiology. "In linguistics, the issue of metaphor has begun to be thoroughly investigated in recent decades on the basis of the cognitive approach. According to the theory of cognitive metaphor, metaphorical concepts are closely related to human bodily experience, that is, to physiological states and the functioning of the sensory organs". According to this theory, in perceiving the environment and reality, as well as in expressing thought, humans make use of metaphorical concepts and notions related to the human body and its physiology. When metaphorical concepts are expressed through bodily organs, a person's conceptual systems emerge directly from experiences

connected with the body itself. For example, they are shaped by physiological processes such as being conscious or unconscious, standing upright, or falling. In their works, linguists have employed metaphors reflecting human physiology, such as "HAPPY IS UP / SAD IS DOWN" – "I'm feeling up today / I am depressed" – "Bugun kayfiyatim yaxshi / Kayfiyatning tushishi". The metaphors in these examples are not merely simple linguistic units but are based on human physiology and physical states.

METHOD

Z. Kövecses, has also provided comprehensive views and analyses regarding metaphors connected with human physiology. "Most speakers, in fact, do not even realize that they are using metaphors: for example, the use of the verb 'defend' with 'argument', the verb 'construct' with 'theory', the phrase 'go our separate ways' in relation to 'love', the verb 'grow' with 'company', the verb 'digest' with 'ideas', or the phrase 'head start' in relation to 'life'. For native speakers of English, such expressions are the simplest and most natural ways to talk about these topics, and they are considered ordinary linguistic units". Through these statements, the linguist emphasizes that some metaphorical expressions in English have become so conventionalized that people do not even recognize them as metaphors. For English speakers, such expressions are perceived as simple and natural ways

of expression.

For example, if we link the metaphorical expression “construct a theory” to human physiology, it is based on the physical act of constructing something with human hands, metaphorically transferred to the process of building a theory. In Uzbek, there is a similar metaphorical expression used in the sense of “laying the foundation of scientific views”. Another metaphorical expression, “grow a company”, draws on physiological experience by comparing the development of a company to the growth of a human or living organism.

Russian linguists have also expressed numerous ideas in their works about metaphors that represent human physiology. Analyzing the metaphors used by V. Zhelezников and V. Rasputin, it becomes clear that the organs of the human body are often employed to convey strong emotional states. For instance, in the passage “Lena pressed her face to Nikolai Nikolaevich’s chest, wishing to hide, if only for a moment, from all the misfortunes that had befallen her...”, the metaphor “pressed her face to his chest” expresses the character’s emotional state — namely, “suffering” and a “need for safety”. These are vivid examples of cognitive metaphors.

Another passage from the work — “She wanted to fly away from this small town to a place where joy and peace awaited her” — reveals that the act of “flying” denotes a physical movement of the body, yet metaphorically it conveys “spiritual escape,” symbolizing a yearning for freedom and inner peace.

In English, somatic metaphors also reflect universal human experiences while maintaining distinct cultural nuances. Phrases such as “cold-hearted”, “warm-hearted”, “keep your head”, or “lose your head” show how bodily organs represent emotional or psychological states. The metaphorical association of the heart with love and emotion, and the head with rationality and control, demonstrates a shared conceptual structure across languages, grounded in the body but shaped by culture.

Somatic metaphors in the Uzbek language are regarded as the conceptual representation of the human body in linguistic expression.

According to linguists, the names of human body parts (such as *ko'ngil* “heart/soul,” *yurak* “heart,” *bosh* “head,” *qo'l* “hand,” *ko'z* “eye”) function not only in their biological sense but also as metaphorical units expressing various psychological, social, and emotional states. “Somatic vocabulary occupies a central place in the conceptual system of the Uzbek language. Through these units, a person’s inner world, feelings, moral and social values are expressed”. The idea emphasizes that

somatic vocabulary forms a conceptual bridge between physical experience and abstract understanding, allowing language to represent not only the body but also the moral, social, and emotional dimensions of human life in Uzbek culture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

“In the field of cognitive science, the concept of embodiment refers to understanding the role of the human body in the process of thinking that takes place in everyday, context-specific situations” For a person to think and comprehend abstract realities, not only the mind but also the sensory organs and physical actions are involved. Despite the great importance of physiological processes in cognitive science, some scholars have rejected this theory. However, the linguist R.W. Gibbs emphasized that separating the body from thinking is a mistake, since the processes of thought and perception are closely interconnected with the body. As the linguist notes: “Bodily experience may not provide the sole basis for all thinking and language processes, but it constitutes an essential part of the perceptual and cognitive mechanisms that help us make sense of our experiences in the world”. From these ideas, it is understood that bodily experience is one of the crucial factors in how humans perceive and interpret the world. In the English and Uzbek languages there are somatic metaphors which have similar meaning. For example:

1. Big-hearted- *saxiy*
2. Head in the clouds- *boshi osmonga yetdi, xursand*
3. Hot-blooded / Blood boiling- *g'azablandi*
4. My heart sank- *umidsizlik*
5. Heavy-hearted / Downhearted- *g'amgin, tushkun*”

Findings show that many somatic metaphors are universal due to shared human physiological experiences, e.g., “*Yuragi keng*” (Uzbek) – “Big-hearted” (English), both meaning generous and kind. However, some metaphors exhibit culture-specific meanings, e.g., “*Yuragi joyidan chiqib ketdi*” (literally “the heart jumped out of its place,” meaning scared) vs. “My heart sank” (meaning disappointment or sadness).

Somatic metaphors are metaphorical units that express inner emotional experiences and psychological states through parts of the human body, physiological conditions, or physical movements. They serve as a means of connecting a person’s emotional experience with bodily perception within the language system”. Somatic metaphors also as a product of national thinking, reflect the worldview, values, and emotional experiences of the people. For example, expressions

such as “yuragi tosh” (“stone-hearted”), “ko’ngli oppoq” (“pure-hearted”), and “bosh egmoq” (“to bow one’s head”) also embody the moral and ethical values of the Uzbek people.” In the cognitive approach, somatic metaphors are interpreted as a means of understanding abstract concepts through human physical experience. Therefore, the component “heart” is most often associated with the concepts of love, courage, and compassion.”. From this perspective, somatic metaphors represent the intersection of language, cognition, and culture, where bodily organs (e.g., heart, head, eyes, hands) act as cognitive models reflecting not only biological functions but also emotional, ethical, and social meanings encoded within a linguistic community.

Thus, in the cognitive approach, somatic metaphors are viewed as a conceptual mechanism by which speakers map concrete bodily experiences onto abstract domains of human thought—demonstrating how physical embodiment shapes the structure and interpretation of linguistic meaning. Uzbek linguists interpret somatic metaphors as:

- a conceptual representation of human experience,
- a means of expressing cultural and emotional values,
- and a mechanism for explaining abstract concepts through cognitive models.

CONCLUSION

This article explores somatic metaphors in Uzbek and English languages, focusing on their linguistic, cognitive, and cultural dimensions. Somatic metaphors are metaphorical expressions derived from human bodily organs, physiological processes, and sensory experiences, reflecting the close connection between language, thought, and the human body. The analysis also highlights similarities and differences between the two languages, showing that while many somatic metaphors share universal bodily origins, their usage often reflects culture-specific perceptions and linguistic traditions. As a result, somatic metaphors provide valuable insights into cross-cultural semantics, cognitive linguistics, and the embodiment of thought. Somatic metaphors are a key phenomenon in cognitive linguistics that reflect the interaction between language, the human body, and thought. They use names of body parts (such as heart, head, soul, eyes, hands) to express emotions, moral values, and cultural perspectives. In the Uzbek language, somatic metaphors are viewed as the product of national mentality, conveying people’s emotional depth, ethical norms, and spiritual values. In English, somatic metaphors serve as conceptual models of human

experience. Phrases such as “cold-hearted”, “warm-hearted”, “head over heels”, and “keep an eye on” illustrate how bodily terms are used to describe emotional states, attitudes, and cognitive processes. In both languages, somatic metaphors act as cognitive instruments that help people understand abstract ideas through physical embodiment.

REFERENCES

1. Lakoff, George & Johnson, Mark. *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago Press, 1980.
2. Kövecses Z. *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. — Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. — 285 p.
3. Gibbs R. W. *Embodiment and Cognitive Science*. — Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. — 357 p.
4. Чашкина И. Ю. *Телесные метафоры в повседневной речи: исследования и примеры*. — М.: Языки славянской культуры, 2014. — 256 с.
5. Evans V., Green M. *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction*. — Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006. — 830 p.
6. Gibbs, R. W. *Embodiment and Cognitive Science*. — Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. — 3 b.
7. Железников В.К. *Чучело*. — М.: Детская литература, 2005. — С. 26.
8. Баранов, А. Н., Добровольский, Д. О. Аспекты теории фразеологии. — М.: Знак, 2008. — 312 с.
9. Евсеев, В. П. *Когнитивная лингвистика: учебное пособие*. — М.: Флинта: Наука, 2012. — 368 с.
10. Фесмир, С. *Этическое воображение и метафора эмоций* // *Journal of Social Philosophy*. — 1994. — Vol. 25, No. 1. — P. 22–44.
11. Qo’chqorova, M. *Kognitiv tilshunoslikda metafora hodisasining o’rni* // *O’zbek tili va adabiyoti*. — 2020. — №5. — B. 45–52.
12. Abdurahmonova, D. “The Semantics of Somatic Phraseological Units in the Uzbek Language”, Tashkent, 2018, p. 45.
13. Tursunov, U. “*Frazeologik birliklarda somatik komponentlarning semantik funksiyasi*”, *O’zbek tili va adabiyoti* jurnali, №3, 2020, 56-bet.