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# Somatic Lexis as a Means of Expressing Emotions in English, Uzbek and Russian key words

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**Abstract**

Emotions constitute an essential component of human communication and are frequently expressed through linguistic units associated with the human body. Somatic lexis, including words denoting body parts, serves not only a nominative function but also plays a significant role in conveying emotional states, attitudes, and cultural values. This study examines the role of somatic lexis as a means of expressing emotions in English, Uzbek, and Russian from a comparative linguistic perspective. The research analyzes lexical items, idiomatic expressions, phraseological units, and conceptual metaphors containing somatic components that represent both positive and negative emotions. A comparative and descriptive methodology, supported by semantic and cognitive analyses, was employed to identify similarities and differences in the linguistic representation of emotions across the three languages. The findings indicate that while many somatic expressions share universal cognitive motivations rooted in human physiology, each language also reflects unique cultural traditions and national worldviews through its figurative use of body-related vocabulary. The study demonstrates that somatic lexis functions as an effective linguistic mechanism for conceptualizing emotions and contributes to the preservation of cultural identity within language. The results enrich the fields of cognitive linguistics, phraseology, semantics, and cross-cultural communication, and may be applied in translation studies, foreign language teaching, and intercultural discourse analysis.

**Keywords**

somatic lexis, emotional expression, body-part terms, conceptual metaphor, phraseology, cognitive semantics, cross-linguistic analysis, comparative linguistics, English, Uzbek, Russian.

## Introduction

Language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a powerful instrument for expressing human thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Among the numerous lexical resources available in every language, somatic lexis—words and expressions related to parts of the human body—occupies a special position because it reflects both the physical and psychological experiences of human beings. Throughout history, body-part terms have developed beyond their literal meanings and have become important components of figurative language, idioms, and phraseological units used to express emotional states, personal attitudes, and interpersonal relationships.

The connection between the human body and emotions has attracted considerable attention in modern linguistics, particularly within the fields of cognitive linguistics, semantics, phraseology, and cultural linguistics. Researchers argue that emotional experiences are often conceptualized through bodily sensations, making somatic vocabulary one of the primary linguistic tools for representing emotions. For example, expressions involving the heart, head, eyes, face, hands, and stomach frequently symbolize love, happiness, fear, anger, sadness, shame, and anxiety. Such linguistic phenomena demonstrate that human cognition is deeply rooted in bodily experience, supporting the principles of embodied cognition and conceptual metaphor theory.

Although many somatic expressions appear to be universal because they originate from common human physiology, their semantic development and figurative meanings are strongly influenced by cultural, historical, and social factors. Different linguistic communities interpret emotional experiences through culturally specific conceptualizations of the human body. Consequently, similar body-part terms may convey different emotional meanings in different languages, while distinct expressions may perform equivalent communicative functions. This interaction between universal cognitive mechanisms and culture-specific linguistic traditions makes comparative studies of somatic lexis particularly valuable.

English, Uzbek, and Russian represent three languages belonging to different language families and cultural traditions. English, a Germanic language, has accumulated a rich inventory of idiomatic expressions containing somatic elements

through centuries of linguistic development. Uzbek, a Turkic language, preserves numerous culturally significant phraseological units that reflect traditional values, social norms, and national identity. Russian, a Slavic language, likewise possesses an extensive system of somatic idioms and metaphorical expressions that reveal characteristic features of Russian linguistic culture. A comparative analysis of these three languages provides an opportunity to identify both universal and language-specific patterns in the linguistic representation of emotions.

Recent developments in cognitive linguistics emphasize that emotions are not merely psychological phenomena but are conceptual structures shaped by language and culture. According to conceptual metaphor theory, abstract emotional experiences are frequently understood through concrete bodily experiences. This explains why body-part vocabulary has become one of the most productive sources of metaphorical and idiomatic expressions across languages. Somatic lexis therefore serves as an important link between physical perception, cognitive processing, and linguistic expression.

Despite the growing number of studies devoted to emotion vocabulary and phraseology, comparative investigations involving English, Uzbek, and Russian remain relatively limited. Existing research often focuses on individual languages or specific emotional concepts without providing a comprehensive cross-linguistic comparison of somatic lexical units. Therefore, further research is necessary to identify shared semantic patterns, culturally specific conceptualizations, and the mechanisms through which somatic vocabulary contributes to emotional expression in multilingual contexts.

The present study aims to examine the role of somatic lexis as a means of expressing emotions in English, Uzbek, and Russian. The research seeks to identify common and distinctive semantic features of somatic lexical units, analyze their metaphorical and phraseological functions, and explain how cultural and cognitive factors influence their emotional meanings. The findings are expected to contribute to comparative linguistics, cognitive semantics, phraseology, intercultural communication, and translation studies while providing useful insights for language teaching and cross-cultural understanding.

## Methods

This study employed a qualitative comparative linguistic approach to investigate the role of somatic lexis in expressing emotions in English, Uzbek, and Russian. The research integrates descriptive, semantic, cognitive, and contrastive methods to identify similarities and differences in the use of body-part vocabulary across the three languages. Since the objective of the study is to examine the conceptual and linguistic representation of emotions rather than to measure statistical frequency, qualitative analysis was considered the most appropriate methodological framework.

The research corpus consists of lexical items, idiomatic expressions, phraseological units, and proverbs containing somatic components collected from authoritative monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, phraseological dictionaries, academic publications, and electronic linguistic resources in English, Uzbek, and Russian. Additional examples were obtained from literary texts, newspapers, online language corpora, and authentic communication in order to ensure that the analyzed expressions represent contemporary language use. Only those lexical units in which a body-part term functions as the central semantic element in expressing an emotional state, attitude, or psychological reaction were selected for analysis.

The study focused primarily on the most productive somatic components occurring in the three languages. These include lexical units referring to the heart, head, eye, face, hand, tongue, mouth, ear, nose, blood, skin, soul, and stomach. These body-part terms were selected because they frequently participate in metaphorical and phraseological constructions associated with emotional expression. Expressions containing these components were classified according to the type of emotion they convey, including happiness, love, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, shame, anxiety, pride, disappointment, and compassion.

The first stage of the research involved the identification and collection of somatic lexical units from the selected sources. During this stage, each expression was examined to determine whether its emotional meaning was literal or figurative. Expressions functioning solely as anatomical descriptions without emotional meaning

were excluded from the analysis. This selection process ensured that the corpus consisted exclusively of emotionally relevant linguistic units.

The second stage involved semantic analysis. Each lexical unit was examined to determine its denotative and connotative meanings. Particular attention was paid to semantic extension, metaphorical transfer, emotional intensity, stylistic value, and contextual variation. The analysis also distinguished between direct emotional descriptions and indirect emotional conceptualizations expressed through figurative language. This approach made it possible to identify the semantic mechanisms through which body-part vocabulary acquires emotional meanings.

The third stage consisted of phraseological analysis. Idioms and fixed expressions containing somatic components were analyzed according to their structural characteristics, lexical stability, figurative meaning, and communicative function. Phraseological units were grouped according to the dominant emotional category they represent. Their degree of lexical equivalence and semantic correspondence across English, Uzbek, and Russian was subsequently evaluated.

A comparative linguistic method was applied to identify similarities and differences among the three languages. Lexical units expressing comparable emotional meanings were compared with respect to their semantic structure, metaphorical motivation, lexical composition, and cultural associations. The comparison also considered whether equivalent expressions shared the same somatic component or employed different body-part terms to conceptualize similar emotions. This procedure enabled the identification of universal cognitive patterns as well as language-specific conceptualizations.

The cognitive linguistic framework played a central role in interpreting the collected material. The study was based on the assumption that abstract emotional experiences are conceptualized through concrete bodily experiences. Consequently, conceptual metaphor analysis was employed to explain how physical sensations and body organs become symbolic representations of emotional states. Special attention was given to metaphorical models such as THE HEART IS THE SEAT OF LOVE, ANGER IS HEAT, FEAR IS PHYSICAL WEAKNESS, HAPPINESS IS LIGHT, and

SHAME IS DOWNWARD MOVEMENT, together with their linguistic realizations in English, Uzbek, and Russian. These conceptual models provided a theoretical basis for explaining the cognitive motivation behind many somatic expressions.

To ensure the reliability of the findings, each lexical item was verified through multiple lexicographic sources whenever possible. Expressions exhibiting ambiguous meanings were interpreted within their authentic contextual environments. Cross-linguistic equivalence was determined through semantic correspondence rather than literal translation, since many phraseological units possess culturally specific meanings that cannot be translated word for word. Contextual interpretation therefore constituted an essential element of the analytical procedure.

The analytical framework combined several complementary methods. Descriptive analysis was used to characterize the lexical and phraseological properties of somatic expressions. Semantic analysis identified the emotional meanings and connotative features of lexical units. Comparative analysis revealed similarities and differences among the three languages. Cognitive analysis explained the conceptual mechanisms underlying metaphorical extensions, while cultural analysis interpreted the influence of national traditions, historical development, and social values on emotional expression.

The findings were organized into thematic categories according to the represented emotions and the corresponding somatic components. Similar expressions were grouped together to facilitate cross-linguistic comparison, whereas culturally unique expressions were analyzed individually in order to demonstrate language-specific conceptualizations. This methodological procedure enabled a systematic examination of universal cognitive tendencies alongside culturally determined linguistic variation.

Overall, the methodological design provides a comprehensive framework for investigating the relationship between somatic vocabulary and emotional expression. By integrating comparative linguistics, cognitive semantics, phraseological analysis, and cultural interpretation, the study offers a reliable basis for identifying both

universal and language-specific features of somatic lexis in English, Uzbek, and Russian.

## Results

The comparative analysis of somatic lexis in English, Uzbek, and Russian demonstrates that body-part vocabulary constitutes one of the most productive linguistic resources for expressing emotions. The collected corpus revealed that emotional meanings are conveyed not only through individual lexical items but also through idiomatic expressions, phraseological units, proverbs, and metaphorical constructions. Although the three languages belong to different language families and possess distinct cultural traditions, they exhibit a considerable degree of similarity in conceptualizing emotions through the human body.

One of the most significant findings concerns the predominance of the heart as the principal somatic component associated with emotions. In all three languages, the heart functions as the symbolic center of love, kindness, compassion, courage, sorrow, and emotional suffering. English expressions such as broken heart, from the bottom of one's heart, and lose heart correspond semantically to Uzbek expressions such as yuragi ezildi, chin yurakdan, and yuragi orqasiga tortdi. Similar conceptualizations are found in Russian through expressions such as разбитое сердце, от всего сердца, and пасть духом. Despite lexical differences, these expressions share the same cognitive model in which the heart represents the primary location of emotional experience.

The analysis also revealed that the eyes constitute another highly productive somatic component. In all three languages, the eyes symbolize both emotional perception and internal psychological states. Happiness, sadness, surprise, fear, anger, and affection are frequently communicated through changes associated with the eyes. English expressions such as tearful eyes, eyes full of joy, and to look with love have close semantic equivalents in Uzbek (ko‘ziga yosh keldi, ko‘zlari quvnadi, mehr bilan qaramoq) and Russian (глаза наполнились слезами, глаза сияют от радости, смотреть с любовью). These findings indicate that visual perception plays a universal role in emotional conceptualization.

The face was found to function primarily as an indicator of externally observable emotions. Expressions involving facial appearance represent emotional reactions such as embarrassment, shame, anger, fear, and happiness. English phrases including lose face, red-faced, and keep a straight face demonstrate functional similarities with Uzbek expressions such as yuzi qizardi, yuzini yorug‘ qilmoq, and yuzini yashirmoq. Comparable Russian constructions include потерять лицо, лицо покраснело, and сохранить лицо. Although the semantic nuances differ across cultures, facial expressions consistently serve as visible manifestations of emotional states.

Another important result concerns the metaphorical use of the head. In the analyzed languages, the head primarily symbolizes rationality, self-control, confusion, and psychological pressure rather than emotional experience itself. English expressions such as lose one's head, keep a cool head, and head spinning correspond to Uzbek expressions like boshini yo‘qotmoq, sovuqqon bo‘lmoq, and boshi aylanmoq. Russian equivalents such as потерять голову, холодная голова, and голова идёт кругом reveal similar conceptual patterns. The results suggest that the head represents the interaction between cognition and emotion rather than serving as the direct source of emotional experience.

The study further demonstrated that somatic expressions involving the hands are closely associated with emotional attitudes and interpersonal behavior. Hands symbolize support, affection, helplessness, responsibility, and emotional involvement. Expressions such as give a helping hand, hands are tied, and hold someone's hand correspond semantically to Uzbek phrases including qo‘l uzatmoq, qo‘li bog‘langan, and qo‘lidan ushlamoq, as well as Russian expressions протянуть руку помощи, руки связаны, and держать за руку. Although these expressions often describe actions, they simultaneously communicate emotional relationships between individuals.

The comparative analysis identified several universal conceptual metaphors shared by the three languages. Positive emotions are commonly associated with upward movement, light, warmth, and openness, whereas negative emotions are linked to heaviness, darkness, downward movement, pressure, and physical pain. Happiness is frequently expressed through metaphors of elevation, while sadness is

conceptualized through lowered posture and bodily weakness. Anger is associated with internal heat, increased blood circulation, and facial redness. Fear is represented through trembling, coldness, weakness, and loss of physical control. These metaphorical patterns appear consistently in English, Uzbek, and Russian, indicating common cognitive mechanisms rooted in human physiology.

Despite these universal tendencies, the research also revealed substantial language-specific and culture-dependent features. Uzbek somatic phraseology contains numerous expressions reflecting traditional values such as respect, honor, modesty, and family relationships. Emotional meanings are often conveyed indirectly through culturally established idioms emphasizing social harmony and interpersonal respect. Russian somatic expressions display greater emotional intensity and frequently employ vivid metaphorical imagery to describe psychological experiences. English idioms, by contrast, tend to exhibit greater semantic flexibility and are widely used in both formal and informal communication.

The degree of phraseological equivalence varies considerably among the three languages. Some expressions possess complete semantic and structural correspondence, while others demonstrate only partial equivalence or require descriptive translation. For instance, many heart-related idioms share nearly identical meanings across the three languages, whereas expressions involving the soul, liver, blood, or stomach often reflect culture-specific conceptualizations that lack direct lexical equivalents. These observations confirm that emotional expression is shaped simultaneously by universal cognitive processes and language-specific cultural traditions.

The findings also indicate that metaphorical meaning predominates over literal interpretation in the majority of somatic expressions. Most analyzed lexical units have undergone semantic extension through metaphorization, enabling body-part terms to express abstract emotional concepts. This semantic transformation illustrates the dynamic relationship between physical experience and linguistic meaning and supports the principles of embodied cognition.

Overall, the results demonstrate that somatic lexis represents a highly productive and cognitively motivated subsystem of vocabulary in English, Uzbek, and Russian. The similarities identified across the three languages confirm the existence of universal patterns in the conceptualization of emotions, while the observed differences highlight the influence of national culture, historical development, and linguistic tradition on emotional expression. These findings provide valuable evidence for comparative linguistics, cognitive semantics, phraseology, translation studies, and intercultural communication.

## Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated that somatic lexis constitutes one of the most significant linguistic resources for expressing emotions in English, Uzbek, and Russian. The comparative analysis revealed that body-part vocabulary extends far beyond its primary anatomical function and serves as an effective means of conceptualizing emotional experiences through metaphorical and phraseological expressions. The findings confirm that emotional meanings are closely connected with human bodily experience, supporting the principles of cognitive linguistics and embodied cognition.

The analysis showed that the heart, eyes, face, head, and hands are the most productive somatic components in the three languages. Among these, the heart functions as the principal symbol of emotional life, representing love, compassion, sorrow, courage, and psychological suffering. The eyes primarily reflect perception and internal emotional states, while the face serves as an external indicator of visible emotions. The head is generally associated with cognitive control and emotional regulation, whereas the hands symbolize interpersonal relationships, support, responsibility, and emotional involvement. These shared conceptualizations indicate that many emotional metaphors originate from universal human physiological experience.

At the same time, the study identified important cross-cultural differences in the use of somatic expressions. Although English, Uzbek, and Russian share numerous conceptual metaphors, each language reflects its own historical development, cultural

traditions, and communicative values. Uzbek somatic phraseology emphasizes respect, modesty, and social harmony; Russian expressions frequently display emotional intensity and vivid imagery; while English idioms demonstrate considerable semantic flexibility and adaptability in different communicative contexts. These differences illustrate how universal cognitive mechanisms interact with culture-specific linguistic traditions.

The research further established that metaphorical extension is the primary semantic mechanism through which body-part vocabulary acquires emotional meanings. Most analyzed expressions no longer function merely as literal anatomical descriptions but have developed abstract meanings through conceptual metaphor and phraseological fixation. This process enables speakers to communicate complex psychological experiences in a concise, expressive, and culturally meaningful way.

The findings contribute to several areas of linguistic research, including cognitive linguistics, semantics, phraseology, comparative linguistics, intercultural communication, and translation studies. Understanding the similarities and differences in somatic lexis across languages enhances the interpretation of figurative language, improves translation accuracy, and facilitates more effective foreign language teaching. The results also provide useful material for lexicographic research and cross-cultural discourse analysis by demonstrating how emotions are encoded in different linguistic systems.

Despite the valuable findings, the study has certain limitations. The analysis focused primarily on lexical and phraseological units in three languages and did not include extensive corpus-based quantitative analysis or spoken discourse. Future research may expand the corpus by incorporating additional languages, larger electronic corpora, psycholinguistic experiments, and computational linguistic methods to investigate the frequency, productivity, and cognitive processing of somatic expressions in natural communication.

In conclusion, the study confirms that somatic lexis represents a universal yet culturally specific mechanism for expressing emotions. The comparative investigation of English, Uzbek, and Russian demonstrates that body-part vocabulary reflects both

shared human cognitive experience and the unique cultural worldview of each linguistic community. Consequently, somatic lexis should be regarded not only as a lexical subsystem but also as an important indicator of the interaction between language, cognition, culture, and human emotion.

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