

FUNCTIONAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL  
UNITS WITH A HUMAN COMPONENT IN ENGLISH

*Toshtemirova Zulfiya Toshtemirovna,*

*Master student, Faculty of Foreign languages Institute of Pedagogy,  
Belgorod State National Research University, Russia*

*Aleksei Anatolievitch Kolesnikov ,*

*Candidate of Philological Sciences,  
Associate Professor, Department of Foreign Languages,  
Belgorod State National Research University, Belgorod, Russia*

**Abstract.** This article analyses English phraseological units that contain a human component, meaning a lexical element naming a part of the body, a mental faculty, or a socially recognizable human feature such as face, heart, hand, tongue, blood, brain, backbone, and the like. Such units are not only stable combinations of words but also compact carriers of cultural knowledge, evaluation, and pragmatic force. The study argues that human component phraseology functions as a bridge between embodied experience and cultural interpretation.

**Keywords:** phraseology, idiom, human component, somatic component, cultural semantics, pragmatics, evaluation, metaphor.

## INTRODUCTION

Phraseological units occupy a special place in language because they combine stability with expressive power. Speakers use them to name situations economically, to evaluate people and events, and to position themselves socially. Among the most productive and culturally revealing groups are units containing a human component. This category includes expressions with body part nouns and human related lexemes such as head, eye, face, heart, hand, tongue, blood, bone, skin, nerve, brain, and similar elements. These units are deeply rooted in embodied cognition because the body provides an immediate and universally accessible source of experience. At the same time, they are culturally shaped because each linguistic community selects, highlights, and conventionalizes particular bodily images to represent moral judgments, emotional states, social roles, and communicative norms. As a result, human component phraseology becomes a linguistic archive of cultural meanings and values, preserved in forms that are memorable and widely shared.

The relevance of this topic is practical as well as theoretical. In everyday communication, human component idioms perform clear discourse functions. They can intensify praise and blame, soften criticism, signal solidarity, create humor, and compress complex social situations into a short recognizable formula. In academic and

professional contexts, they appear in headlines, political commentary, marketing, and informal workplace talk, often shaping how audiences interpret an event. For language learners, these units are frequently a source of misunderstanding, since literal reading produces incorrect interpretations and since cultural connotations are not always transparent. Therefore, the study of functional and cultural aspects is essential for descriptive linguistics, intercultural pragmatics, translation, and language teaching [1].

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

A useful starting point is classification of the human component itself. In English phraseology, the most frequent components are somatic nouns such as head, eye, face, heart, hand, tongue, mouth, back, shoulder, foot, stomach, blood, bone, skin, and nerve. Another set includes mental and moral lexemes such as mind, soul, conscience, and spirit. A third set includes social human descriptors such as man, woman, child, friend, enemy, and names of roles. The present discussion emphasizes the somatic and mental components because they show the clearest link between embodied experience and cultural meaning, and because they form dense networks of expressions that are widely used across registers.

From the functional perspective, human component phraseology serves nomination and categorization. Language needs compact labels for recurrent situations, and idioms provide them. Expressions like keep an eye on something, get something off your chest, have a change of heart, or bite your tongue name typical patterns of attention, confession, emotional shift, and self restraint. They function like ready made semantic packages [2]. This nominative role is not merely convenience. It also structures perception. When a speaker chooses a phraseological unit instead of a neutral description, the speaker frames the event through a culturally conventional image. For example, get something off your chest frames the act of telling as removal of a burden from a bodily location associated with emotion and pressure. The listener receives not only the information but also an evaluative script: silence is heavy, disclosure is relief.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Another major function is characterization and evaluation of persons. English uses the human component to assign traits and moral judgments with a high degree of expressiveness. A person can be described as having a good head on their shoulders, being thick skinned, having a sharp tongue, being two faced, being cold hearted, or having backbone. In these units the body acts as a map of character. Head is associated with reason and good judgment, skin with sensitivity to criticism, tongue with speech style and social aggression, face with honesty or duplicity, heart with empathy, backbone with courage and principles. Such phraseological units are evaluative by default. They do not simply describe. They praise, blame, or warn. This is why they are frequent in interpersonal talk, workplace feedback, and social media commentary where speakers negotiate reputations and alignments quickly [3].

Human component idioms also function as emotional and expressive devices. Emotions are notoriously complex to describe with literal vocabulary, and idioms offer conventional emotional scripts. Heart sinks signals sudden disappointment, butterflies in the stomach signals nervous excitement, blood boils signals anger, lose your nerve signals fear, be in high spirits signals elevated mood. These expressions draw on bodily sensations that often accompany emotions, and by doing so they provide a socially recognized way to communicate inner states. This is culturally important because it regulates emotion talk: it makes private experience publicly intelligible and socially manageable. In English, the heart is the most productive component for representing sincerity and empathy. Heart of gold strongly praises moral goodness, from the bottom of my heart intensifies sincerity, take something to heart signals sensitivity and personal involvement. Through these units, culture reinforces the idea that genuine feeling is located in the heart and that moral worth can be measured by heart related metaphors [4].

A further function is intensification and rhetorical impact. Many human component idioms strengthen an utterance without requiring explicit quantifiers. Give someone a hand functions as praise and support, with a strong positive evaluative force. Cost an arm and a leg expresses extreme expense by invoking the loss of essential body parts, creating a vivid hyperbole that is instantly understood. Work your fingers to the bone intensifies the idea of exhaustion. In public discourse, such idioms are used to make messages memorable and persuasive. Political rhetoric can frame effort, sacrifice, or betrayal through the body. Marketing can portray comfort, confidence, or speed through bodily images. The body becomes a rhetorical amplifier.

### **CONCLUSION**

Phraseological units with a human component are more than decorative idioms. They are functional instruments that help speakers manage meaning, emotion, evaluation, and interaction efficiently. Functionally, they support nomination of recurrent situations, characterization of persons, intensification of statements, expression of emotion, and negotiation of social relations in discourse. Culturally, they encode shared models of the person and society. Head highlights rationality and control, heart highlights sincerity and morality, face highlights reputation and authenticity, hand highlights agency and cooperation, and other components such as tongue, blood, skin, and nerve map speech, passion, sensitivity, and courage. These units rely on conventional metaphor and metonymy rooted in bodily experience, yet shaped by cultural norms and values.

### **REFERENCES**

1. Kunin A. V. English-Russian Phraseological Dictionary. Moscow: Russkii yazyk, 20184. 944 p.

2. Cowie A. P., Mackin R., McCaig I. Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English. Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. 736 p.
3. Gläser R. The Stylistic Potential of Phraseological Units in the Light of Genre Analysis. In: Cowie A. P., ed. Phraseology: Theory, Analysis, and Applications. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2018. P. 125–143.
4. Dobrovolskij D., Piirainen E. Figurative Language: Cross-Cultural and Cross-Linguistic Perspectives. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2005. 373 p.
5. Kövecses Z. Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 314 p.