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VERNACULAR METAPHORS AS SOMATIC CULTURAL CODE

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The article explores vernacular dialectal metaphors with a somatic component in the context of the 19th-century British linguistic landscape. This type of metaphor serves as a highly significant cognitive tool that reflects deep-rooted models of popular worldview. Somatism, as the names of human body parts, are actively used in the formation of metaphorical images that convey a wide range of concepts, phenomena, emotions, and evaluations. The study focuses on dialect material from across Great Britain, particularly Scottish, Northern English, Southern, and other regional varieties. Linguocultural modelling of dialectal metaphors reveals the interconnection between language, culture, and collective experience through somatic imagery. A key analytical approach is based on the principle of anthropocentrism, which regards the human being as the central measure of the world. The body, as the closest and most comprehensible object, becomes the basis for interpreting more abstract phenomena. In folk dialects, somatic metaphors function not only as linguistic constructions but also as carriers of cultural memory, shared experience, and the value systems of specific speech communities. One of the mechanisms of vernacular units formation is metaphor. They often act as a secondary means of expressing a concept. The most productive way of creating expressive colouring of words and expressions is associative and figurative reinterpretation of meanings. Metaphor traces 'the very origin of thought and its realisation in language'. The research demonstrates that somatic metaphors in British dialect speech act as distinctive cultural markers. They preserve traditional views on morality, social norms, emotions, and interpersonal relationships. Through them, it is possible to trace how local models of worldview developed across various British regions – models that, despite their diversity, are rooted in a common human experience: the experience of the body. Particular attention is given to interpreting these metaphors within the framework of the linguistic worldview that emerged in British culture. The author emphasizes that somatic images embedded in folk metaphors serve as a kind of "mirror" of mental processes, reflecting both individual perceptions and collective identity. These metaphors represent a specific type of thinking – concrete, sensory, figurative, emotionally charged – and serve as a vital source for understanding the cultural and linguistic heritage of Great Britain.

Keywords: vernacular language, metaphorical thinking, metaphor, dialect, somatism.

Defining the problem and the consideration topicality argumentation. The study of nominal units denoting human body parts is important for linguistic and cultural anthropology, as they reveal special ideas about human nature and its interaction with the world around us. Today, the study of linguistic units is becoming increasingly relevant in the theory of linguistics, as they reflect deep social, psychological and cultural meanings, as well as verbalise physical and metaphorical dimensions of the human body. The body part language uses both the designation of anatomical objects and symbols

to convey stereotypes, moral evaluations, worldviews, and behavioral standards. Therefore, it is important to study the internal form of these lexemes, their etymology and cultural motivation, as it provides a clearer understanding of how linguistic units reflect the unique experience of a particular people and their interaction with the physical and cultural aspects of life.

Recent research and publications analysis. In modern linguistic and cultural studies, the topic of conceptual structures denoting human body parts is relevant. On the other hand, the issue of body parts'

interaction with cultural and social ideas that form the semantics of such units is poorly understood in Ukrainian linguistics. Contemporary linguistic and cultural studies (Palchevska, 2024a; Vasko, 2016) examine the etymological and metaphorical aspects of body parts lexemes. They also study how they influence national perceptions of the human body. However, there has been no comprehensive study of these groups in terms of their cultural context. This could provide a deeper understanding of the reasons that determine the formation of lexemes in each country.

At the same time, the study of body parts semantics from the perspective of the anthropocentric paradigm helps to understand how language reflects deep socio-cultural ideas about humans. This is highlighted by many studies that examine the metaphorical transformations of body lexemes. For example, studies have shown that body parts in language not only denote but also embody physical, emotional, moral and social characteristics.

Somatisms have long been studied by linguists in various aspects. One aspect of these studies is to identify their possibilities in metaphorical denotation of emotions. The formation of somatic metaphor is closely connected with magical actions and archetypal representations of people who are in the power of mythological thinking. Immersed in the world of myth, man, perceiving the reality around him, is looking for similarities; he compares the world with the most accessible and well-known object – his body (Semashko, 2017).

Earlier studies were devoted to the phenomenon of the human body, in particular, the national-cultural specificity of somatisms such as hand, head, heart, and eye (Daulet et al., 2019) were researched. The symbolic value of somatisms as components of phraseological units was considered. However, many questions remain open, which leaves the field open for study.

Therefore, the study of semantic units that include body parts is important for understanding not only the lexical composition of the language, but also the social, cultural and psychological factors that influence the formation of linguistic units. The study of this topic provides an opportunity to better understand the language phenomena and to identify nationally specific motivations that determine the formation of linguistic images.

The purpose and objectives of the article. The purpose of the article is to examine the semantic units denoting individual parts of the human body in terms of their internal form and linguistic and cultural codes. The main focus is on the etymology, semantics and cultural motivation of these lexemes. This allows us to determine how physical body

parts acquire new meanings through metaphorical transformations that express certain social, cultural and psychological ideas. We pay attention to how body parts in linguistic units become signs that symbolise various features of human nature and behaviour in society.

The main material outline. In English, semantic units with human body parts convey social, cultural and psychological aspects of human perception (Palchevska, 2024 b). The metaphorical use of body parts expresses not only physical characteristics, but also the connection with character, emotions and social roles. We suggest considering the semantic units that associate different body parts with the corresponding human traits or characteristics.

Metaphors denoting human intellectual activity

Very often, body parts are used to form metaphorical expressions that indicate a lack of intelligence or stupidity. For example, expressions such as *blockhead* or *bonehead* contain the component head, which symbolises the brain or mind (Wright, 2025). Such expressions are often associated with a certain part of the body that is considered to be a symbol of intelligence (the head), and its inadequacy or “emptiness” is emphasised. In expressions such as *dough-head*, *the dough* reflects softness and shape, which is associated with a lack of character or mental clarity (Wright, 2025).

This metaphor type also includes less common, often dialectal or folk lexemes that contain the component *head*, which emphasises stupidity or lack of intelligence: *Bluffe-headed* is a person with a big head, looking stupid (Wright, 2025). The word creates the idea of a meaningless “bloat-ed” head (Wright, 2025). *Chuckle-head* – a fool or a foolish person. Probably derived from *chuckle* (giggle), which alludes to the ridiculous giggling characteristic of a foolish person (Wright, 2025). *Bunny-headed* – a foolish or stupid person. The expression is based on the idea that a bunny is associated with lightheadedness or naivety (Wright, 2025). *Daft-head* – a stupid person. The word *daft* indicates mental instability or stupidity. *Duber-head* – stupid or uneducated. It comes from the Scottish lexeme *dubber*, which means a clumsy person (Wright, 2025). *Dunklehead* is a stupid person. Here, ‘dunkle’ is associated with darkness or ignorance (Wright, 2025). *Jummer-head* – a dummy. In English dialects, *jummer* can refer to someone who mumbles without meaning (Wright, 2025). *Yommer-head* – an idiot or fool. Similarly, *yommer* conveys an inarticulate mumble or stupid expression (Wright, 2025). *Ass-head* – a jackass, a dummy, a dolt (Wright, 2025). The nomination part *ass* is historically associated with stubbornness or

stupidity. *Banana-head* – an idiot, a stupid person (Wright, 2025). *Banana* is used here as a symbol of something comical and ridiculous (Wright, 2025). *Cabbage-head* – a dummy, a fool (Wright, 2025). The vegetable cabbage symbolises something “empty” or “a vegetable” – as a hint of the lack of intelligence (Wright, 2025). *Clot-head* – a dummy, a fool, a dolt, where *clot* means a clod of earth (Wright, 2025). *Deadneck* – a knucklehead (Wright, 2025). In the composite *a lamebrain* the combination of *lame* and *brain* suggests a dysfunctional mind (Wright, 2025). A *log-head* / *loggerhead* denotes a foolish person (Wright, 2025). *Soft-headed* means stupid, dumb (Wright, 2025). *Soft* conveys the idea of softness, and therefore, unreadiness for logical thinking. *Empty-headed* – empty-headed, uneducated. An obvious comparison with an ‘empty head’ that does not contain knowledge (Wright, 2025). The *pudding-head* nomination implies the idea of a head as soft as pudding (Wright, 2025). *A timberhead* means stupid, dumb (Wright, 2025). *Timber* (wood) symbolises hardness and impenetrability, which indicates stupidity.

All of these expressions have a common semantic basis: they focus on mental retardation by using symbols that represent either a physical obstacle or an emptiness that prevents reasoning.

Nominal units denoting physical features

Nominal units that describe physical features are often used to depict certain appearance traits. For example, a *bushel-head* (a head like a basket of grain) alludes to a large, heavy head (Wright, 2025). Here, body parts (head, face) are associated with a person’s appearance, where physical features have become metaphorical markers of character or intellectual potential. A characteristic feature of such nominations is the somatic component, which emphasizes the importance of a certain physical feature.

This type of vocabulary also includes the following words and expressions:

A bushel-head is a clumsy or big-headed person; *bushel* is a measure of volume (grain basket) that conveys the idea of “redundancy” or “weight” in speech, indicating a disproportionately large head (Wright, 2025). *A chub-headed* person is a person with a short, broad head (Wright, 2025). *A chub* is a kind of thick fish, which is associated with volume, or roundness (Wright, 2025). *A clutter-headed* person is a slow or dull individual. The word *clutter* means disorder or confusion, so the expression hints at confusion in thoughts or an inability to think clearly (Wright, 2025). *A dollface* or a *doll*, an attractive person, usually a woman. The expression is based on external cuteness, idealised as in a porcelain doll (Wright, 2025). If a person is called

a four-eyes, a childish or derogatory nickname for a person wearing glasses, with a hint of an “excessive” number of eyes, is meant (Wright, 2025). *A pudding face* is a thick, indistinguishable physiognomy. Here, a pudding means a soft, amorphous shape, hinting at the inconspicuity or flabbiness of the face (Wright, 2025). *Thin-faced man* is a person with subtle facial features. Such a description often has a neutral-evaluative or aesthetic connotation (Wright, 2025). If someone is *lantern-jawed*, it means that he or she has inflamed cheeks and an elongated lower jaw. The image of the flashlight hints at the elongation or sharpness of the features (Wright, 2025). *Beetle-browed* – with overhanging eyebrows, which creates a gloomy or severe impression. The component *beetle* conveys the idea of “inflammation”, “roughness”, Fig. *Bandy-legged*. The word indicates a deformation or non-standard shape of the legs (Wright, 2025). *A hard-faced* person is a severe, unpleasant person in appearance (Wright, 2025). Often associated with emotional callousness. *A black-mouth* is a slanderer. It can be used literally (with a black mouth – unclean), as well as a metaphor for an evil or deceitful person (Wright, 2025). *A rat-face* – cunning, disgusting physiognomy. The image of a rat is associated with insidiousness, dirt, and pettiness (Wright, 2025). *A pudding-heart* is a coward (Wright, 2025). In this case, pudding is a metaphor for softness, the lack of hardness in the character, which well conveys weakness, fear.

The above language units have clearly demonstrated how the English language uses physiological and zoomorphic images to create vivid, metaphorical descriptions of not only appearance, but also character, temperament, intellectual or emotional abilities of a person.

Words related to social behaviour

Body parts are often used to express a person’s social roles or behaviour. Expressions like *brown-nose* or *sticky-fingered* associate are associated with certain physical characteristics. In this case, the parts of the body – a nose, fingers – act as symbols of certain social qualities, such as cunning, greed, or a tendency to lasciviousness.

For example: *A belly-ribe* – a feast, a gluttony. The expression literally means “rupture of the abdomen”, which metaphorically indicates overeating or excessive consumption of food (Wright, 2025). *Croghon-belly* is a sweet tooth, especially for fruit (Wright, 2025). Here, “belly” is used as a symbol of insatiability or gastronomic pleasure. *A black-leg* is a traitor or “matchmaker”, often used in a slang or historical context. The word has no direct attachment to the foot, but indicates an insidious or unreliable individual (Wright, 2025). *A brown-*

noser is a bastard. The expression is based on a metaphor that indicates excessive approximation to an influential person, up to and including loss of dignity (Wright, 2025). *A roughneck* is a bully, a person with rude manners (Wright, 2025). The part of the body here symbolizes strength, rigidity, and a tendency to conflict. A red-neck – a villager (scornfully) (Wright, 2025). Comes from the description of the red neck from the sun in agricultural workers. It has a socio-cultural connotation. Sticky-fingered is a thief (Wright, 2025). The nominal unit indicates those whose fingers “stick” to other people’s things. *A loudmouth is a shouter, talker* (Wright, 2025) and characterises a person who talks a lot, especially in a rude or intrusive manner (Wright, 2025). The words *highbrow / egghead/longhair/pointy-head* denote an intellectual, sometimes dismissive (Wright, 2025). Body parts (forehead, head, hair) symbolize “intelligence”, but often with irony or sarcasm. Metaphors, *lazybones / lazyboots / lazylegs*, mean a lollipop (Wright, 2025). Body parts here express passivity, unwillingness to move or work. If someone is said to be *square-toed*, he is a formalist or old-fashioned (Wright, 2025). A hint of old-fashioned footwear or gait; an idiom denotes a conservative, inflexible individual. *Rubberneck* is inquisitive, someone who stares (Wright, 2025). The expression literally means “rubber neck” – a metaphor for a person stretching out their neck to peek at something. *A dirty neck* is a rural farmer (colloquial form) (Wright, 2025). It has the connotation of simplicity, neglect or poverty, which is displayed in the form.

Such expressions convey not only appearance, but also deep social roles, cultural stereotypes and emotional characteristics. The language of corporeality here becomes a means of social analysis and satirical depiction.

In all these expressions, body parts are not only physical designations, but also metaphorical markers of a person’s psychological, emotional, or so-

cial characteristics. They make up a kind of “linguistic portrait” of a person through bodily images that are rooted in the cultural experience of vernacular speakers.

Having considered these units, it can be concluded that the use of body parts in metaphorical expressions demonstrates social norms and cultural stereotypes that establish a relationship between a person’s appearance, internal qualities and behaviour. Parts of the body, such as the head, eyes, arms, or legs, reflect deep psychological, moral, and emotional features of human nature, not just physical characteristics. Metaphors based on body parts can quickly convey important social and cultural meanings, creating vivid, sometimes humorous or negative images.

Conclusions and directions for further research. By examining the semantic units associated with parts of the human body, we see how language reflects the deep cultural, psychological, and social connections between bodily aspects and other areas of human life. By analysing these units, it is possible to understand how a person’s worldview, feelings and thoughts are transmitted through metaphors, phraseological units and other linguistic structures. The etymology of these idioms helps us understand how the function and meaning of body parts changed over time, and how these changes reflected social and cultural changes.

A detailed study of the metaphorical and symbolic meanings of parts of the human body, especially in the context of language and its connections with other socio-cultural phenomena, is a promising area of research. It is also important to examine the connections between the language structures describing body parts and other cognitive concepts such as emotions, social roles, and interpersonal relationships. In the future, it will be interesting to study semantic units in the light of globalisation and cultural transformations, as well as their impact on the formation of different language practices.

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НАРОДНІ МЕТАФОРИ ЯК СОМАТИЧНИЙ КОД КУЛЬТУРИ

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У статті досліджено народні діалектні метафори з соматичним компонентом у контексті британського мовного простору XIX століття. Такий тип метафор є надзвичайно важливим інструментом пізнання, що відображає глибинні моделі народного світосприйняття. Соматизми – назви частин людського тіла – активно використовуються у формуванні метафоричних образів, які передають різноманітні поняття, явища, емоції та оцінки. Увага в роботі зосереджена на діалектному матеріалі Великобританії, зокрема на шотландських, північних англійських, південних та інших регіональних варіантах. Лінгвокультурне моделювання діалектних метафор розкриває взаємозв'язок мови, культури та колективного досвіду через соматичні образи. Ключовим у підході до аналізу таких метафор є принцип антропоцентризму, який передбачає розуміння людини як головного вимірювача світу. Саме тіло – як найближчий і найбільш зрозумілий об'єкт – стає основою для інтерпретації більш абстрактних явищ. У народних діалектах соматичні метафори функціонують не лише як мовні конструкції, а й як носії культурної пам'яті, колективного досвіду та ціннісних уявлень певної мовної спільноти. В дослідженні продемонстровано, що соматичні метафори в діалектному мовленні Великобританії виконують роль своєрідних культурних маркерів та зберігають у собі традиційні погляди на мораль, соціальні норми, емоції, міжособистісні стосунки. Завдяки їм можна простежити, як у межах різних британських регіонів формувалися локальні світоглядні моделі, що, попри розмаїття, ґрунтуються на спільному для всіх людському досвіді – досвіді тіла. Особливу увагу приділено інтерпретації цих метафор у контексті мовної картини світу, яка склалася у британській культурі. В роботі підкреслено, що соматичні образи, закладені у народні метафори, виступають свого роду «дзеркалом» ментальних процесів, в якому відображаються як індивідуальні переживання, так і колективна ідентичність. Ці метафори репрезентують певний тип мислення – конкретно-чуттєвий, образний, емоційно насичений – і є важливим джерелом для розуміння культурно-мовної спадщини Великобританії.

Ключові слова: народна мова, метафоричне мислення, метафора, діалект, соматизм.