

Phraseological Productivity and Conceptual Profiles of Somatic Components in Modern Standard Arabic: A Corpus-Based Study

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Abstract: *Somatic phraseological units – multiword expressions whose pivotal or dependent component denotes a part of the human body – constitute one of the oldest and most productive layers of the phraseological stock of any language. This article examines the phraseological productivity and the conceptual profiles of somatic components in Modern Standard Arabic on the basis of a purpose-built corpus of 844 somatic phraseological units extracted from a dictionary of idiomatic expression in contemporary Arabic (Dāwūd, 2003), covering 71 distinct body-part lexemes. The study pursues two aims: to establish the productivity hierarchy of somatic components and the distribution of figurative mechanisms across the corpus, and to map the conceptual fields generated by the six most productive components – yad ‘hand’, ‘ayn ‘eye’, qalb ‘heart’, wajh ‘face’, ra’s ‘head’ and lisān ‘tongue’. The quantitative analysis shows that external body parts account for roughly three-quarters of all units, that metonymy outranks metaphor among overtly figurative units, and that the productivity ranking of Arabic somatisms broadly parallels that reported for genetically unrelated languages. The qualitative analysis reveals that each productive component anchors a structured set of conceptual domains – power, perception, emotion, social standing, cognition and speech – confirming that the body functions as a coherent and culturally elaborated source domain in Arabic phraseology. The findings carry implications for bilingual lexicography, translation and the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language.*

Keywords: *Somatism, Phraseological Unit, Modern Standard Arabic, Conceptualization, Metaphor, Metonymy, Phraseological Productivity, Body-Part Lexis*

1. Introduction

Phraseology is among the most culturally saturated subsystems of any language: more vividly than the lexicon, it preserves and transmits from generation to generation the worldview, value system and mentality of a speech community [1]. Within the phraseological stock a special place belongs to units built around names of body parts. Following the term introduced by Vakk in his study of Estonian, such names are called *somatisms*, and a phraseological unit whose pivotal or dependent component is a body-part lexeme is a *somatic phraseological unit* (hereafter SPU). Somatic lexis belongs to the most archaic stratum of vocabulary, a fact rooted in the anthropomorphism of early human cognition – the tendency to endow the surrounding world with human features and, conversely, to construe abstract experience through the familiar reality of one’s own body. Because the human body is the most immediate and universally shared object of experience, body-part names are among the words most actively involved in phraseology formation, and SPUs are estimated to make up between a fifth and a quarter of the entire phraseological stock of a language [2, 3].

The universality of somatic phraseology has made it a productive object of contrastive research across a wide range of languages, from Estonian – in which Vakk introduced the very term ‘somatism’ – to English [4], and across Turkic, Slavic, Caucasian and other families. This body of work has established that, although the inventory of body parts is biologically universal, the way each part is recruited into phraseology and the meanings it generates are shaped by the culture, beliefs and history of the speech community [5].

Arabic occupies a distinctive position in this landscape. Classical Arabic philology did not isolate

phraseology as a separate discipline; idiomatic, fixed, multiword units were treated within the science of eloquence (*‘ilm al-balāgha*) and within lexicology (*‘ilm al-lughā*) [6]. Modern dedicated studies of Arabic somatic phraseology remain comparatively scarce: the structural-semantic description of contemporary Arabic phraseology by Morozova and the comparative work of Ismailova, which sets Arabic alongside Avar and Russian, are among the few systematic treatments [7]. What is still lacking is a corpus-based account of which body-part components are most productive in contemporary Arabic phraseology and of the conceptual content that the most productive components carry [8].

The present study addresses this gap. It pursues two interrelated aims. The first is descriptive and quantitative: to establish, on the basis of a purpose-built corpus of 844 SPUs from a dictionary of contemporary Arabic idiom [9], the productivity hierarchy of somatic components, the typological distribution of the body parts involved, and the relative weight of the figurative mechanisms – metonymy, metaphor, trope and simile – that underlie them. The second aim is interpretive: to map the conceptual profile of each of the six most productive components – *yad* ‘hand’, *‘ayn* ‘eye’, *qalb* ‘heart’, *wajh* ‘face’, *ra’s* ‘head’ and *lisān* ‘tongue’ – that is, the set of semantic fields and conceptual mappings each one anchors. Taken together, the two analyses test the hypothesis that the body operates in Arabic not as a random collection of lexemes but as a structured and culturally elaborated source domain [10].

The notion of phraseology adopted here is the broad one: the object of phraseology comprises all reproducible, semantically complex fixed word-combinations, ranging from fully idiomatic units to fixed collocations and proverbial expressions. Within this broad field the SPU is defined, following Vakk and Mordkovich, as a fixed expression whose leading or dependent component is a word denoting not only an external part of the body (head, hand, eye, nose) but also an element of its internal systems (heart, liver, blood). The prominence of body-part names in phraseology has a cognitive basis: for early human cognition, characterized by anthropomorphism – the full assimilation of natural objects to the human being, both psychic and bodily – the body was the primary instrument for conceptualizing the surrounding world. By using body-part names figuratively, speakers convey thoughts and feelings more fully and make a stronger impression [11]. Mordkovich, studying somatic phraseologisms in Russian, observed that the majority of them function as negative characterizations of the person – a tendency that, as will be seen, also surfaces in Arabic.

Recent cognitively oriented work has shown that the body is represented in language not as raw anatomy but as a *naïve anatomy* – a culturally and linguistically structured model of the body that may differ substantially from the scientific one [12]. Within this model, individual body parts are highly polysemous, generating layered networks of figurative meaning, and the motivation linking the literal body part to its figurative senses is, in the majority of cases, cognitively transparent and reconstructable. It is precisely this motivated polysemy that makes the most frequent somatisms the richest sites of conceptualization, and that justifies treating each productive component as the anchor of a distinct conceptual field.

Arabic offers a historically deep apparatus for describing the figurative mechanisms at work in SPUs, namely the categories of classical rhetoric (*balāgha*): *isti‘āra* (metaphor), *kināya* (metonymy), *majāz* (non-literal usage / trope) and *tashbīh* (simile). These categories, used as analytic labels in the source dictionary and adopted here, correspond closely to the mechanisms that phraseologists describe as the basis of phraseological imagery: the metaphorization of a free word-combination and the associated semantic re-interpretation that turns a literal collocation into a figurative whole. The degree to which the meaning of the whole can be derived from its parts – the distinction between motivated and unmotivated units – likewise tracks the metonymy/metaphor distinction, since metonymically based units, in which the body part stands by contiguity for a related action, faculty or state, are typically more transparent than metaphorically based ones.

2. Material and Method

The empirical basis of the study is a corpus of 844 SPUs compiled from Muḥammad Muḥammad Dāwūd's *Mu'jam al-ta'bīr al-iṣṭilāḥī fī al-'arabiyya al-mu'āṣira* (A Dictionary of Idiomatic Expression in Contemporary Arabic; Dāwūd, 2003), a reference work that documents some three thousand idiomatic expressions of living contemporary Arabic – drawn from the press, broadcasting and literature – with indication of their meanings, attestations and origins in the Arabic heritage. Every expression in the dictionary that contains a somatic component was extracted, yielding 844 units distributed across 71 distinct body-part lexemes.

Each unit was annotated for (a) the somatic component(s) it contains; (b) the typological class of that component; (c) the diachronic-source category assigned by the dictionary; (d) the figurative mechanism underlying the unit; and (e) its dictionary meaning, attesting example and semantic commentary. Six typological classes of somatic component were distinguished: external organs (e.g. *yad* 'hand', *'ayn* 'eye', *wajh* 'face'); internal organs (*qalb* 'heart', *kabid* 'liver', *mi'da* 'stomach'); psychic somatisms (*nafs* 'self/soul', *rūḥ* 'spirit'); tissues and fluids (*dam* 'blood', *'aẓm* 'bone', *'aṣab* 'nerve'); peripheral sensory faculties (*baṣar* 'sight', *sam'* 'hearing'); and animal-organ somatisms recruited into expressions about humans (*janāḥ* 'wing', *dhayl* 'tail').

The diachronic-source category follows the dictionary's own classification of each expression as Qur'ānic (*ta'bīr qur'ānī*), prophetic (*ta'bīr nabawī*), old (*qadīm*), contemporary (*mu'āṣir*), or old-and-contemporary (*qadīm mu'āṣir*), the last denoting an expression of classical origin that remains in living use. The figurative mechanism was coded from the explicit rhetorical indicator (*kināya*, *isti'āra*, *majāz*, *tashbīḥ*) given in the dictionary's semantic commentary; units whose commentary contained no such indicator were left unmarked.

Productivity was operationalized as the raw frequency with which a given somatic component occurs as a component of a unit in the corpus. Frequencies were tabulated for all 71 components and for the six typological classes, and the distribution of figurative mechanisms was tabulated over the whole corpus. For the six most productive components a componential-conceptual analysis was carried out: the meanings and semantic commentaries of all units containing the component were grouped into conceptual fields, and representative units were selected to illustrate each field. Where relevant, the resulting productivity ranking was compared with the cross-linguistic data reported by Ismailova (2011) for Arabic, Avar and Russian. The methods employed are thus descriptive, quantitative-statistical and componential-conceptual.

3. Results and discussion

The 844 units of the corpus are distributed very unevenly across the 71 body-part lexemes. Table 1 reports the fifteen most productive components.

Table 1. *The fifteen most productive somatic components in the corpus (n = 844).*

Somatism	Transliteration	Gloss	n	%	Type
يد	<i>yad</i>	hand	92	10.9	external
عين	<i>'ayn</i>	eye	90	10.7	external
قلب	<i>qalb</i>	heart	82	9.7	internal
وجه	<i>wajh</i>	face	70	8.3	external
رأس	<i>ra's</i>	head	49	5.8	external
لسان	<i>lisān</i>	tongue	43	5.1	external
صدر	<i>ṣadr</i>	chest	28	3.3	external
ظهر	<i>ẓahr</i>	back	28	3.3	external

قدم	<i>qadam</i>	foot	22	2.6	external
نفس	<i>nafs</i>	self / soul	21	2.5	psychic
روح	<i>rūh</i>	spirit	21	2.5	psychic
أذن	<i>'udhun</i>	ear	19	2.3	external
فم	<i>fam</i>	mouth	15	1.8	external
أنف	<i>'anf</i>	nose	15	1.8	external
كبد	<i>kabid</i>	liver	10	1.2	internal

The hierarchy is steep. The six leading components – hand, eye, heart, face, head and tongue – together account for 426 units, slightly over half of the entire corpus (50.5%), while the remaining 65 components share the other half and a long tail is attested only once or twice. This concentration confirms, for contemporary Arabic, the general observation that a small set of salient body parts does the bulk of phraseological work [13].

Two features of the hierarchy deserve comment. First, the leading positions are occupied by the organs most directly implicated in action (the hand), perception (the eye) and the emotional-spiritual life (the heart) – precisely the parts whose functions are most readily projected onto abstract domains. Second, the typological distribution is markedly skewed toward external body parts, as Table 2 shows.

Table 2. *Distribution of the somatic components by typological class.*

Typological class	Example	n	% of corpus
External organ	يد, عين, وجه	626	74.2
Internal organ	قلب, كبد, معدة	100	11.8
Psychic somatism	نفس, روح	42	5.0
Tissue / fluid	دم, عظم, عصب	34	4.0
Peripheral sensory faculty	بصر, سماع	22	2.6
Animal-organ somatism	جناح, ذيل	20	2.4
Total		844	100

The predominance of external, perceptible parts (74.2% of all units) is consistent with the naïve-anatomy hypothesis [14]: the body that the language conceptualizes is first of all the visible, tangible body – the parts a speaker can see and point to. It is instructive to set the Arabic ranking beside the data reported by Ismailova for two genetically unrelated languages. In her counts the most phraseologically productive somatisms are ‘head’, ‘heart’, ‘eye’, ‘hand’ and ‘foot’ in Arabic; ‘head’, ‘heart’, ‘eye’, ‘mouth’ and ‘foot’ in Avar; and ‘head’, ‘heart’, ‘eye’, ‘hand’ and ‘foot’ in Russian. The recurrence of the same small set – head, heart, eye, hand – at the top of three unrelated languages indicates that the salient functions of these organs are projected onto phraseology in a broadly similar way across languages, a finding the present corpus corroborates while adding ‘face’ and ‘tongue’ to the Arabic core. The slight divergence – Ismailova’s smaller Arabic sample places ‘head’ first, whereas the present, larger corpus places ‘hand’ and ‘eye’ first – is itself informative, underscoring the value of a broader empirical base.

Across the corpus, 225 units (26.7%) carry an explicit rhetorical indicator in their semantic commentary, while the remaining 619 are unmarked. Among the marked units the distribution is as follows: metonymy (*kināya*) accounts for 102 units, metaphor (*isti'āra*) for 79, trope (*majāz*) for 24 and simile (*tashbīh*) for 20. Two points follow. First, metonymy outranks metaphor as the explicitly identified mechanism – a result that fits the nature of somatic phraseology, in which the body part

very often stands, by contiguity, for an action it performs, a faculty it houses or a state it manifests (the hand for help, the tongue for speech, the eye for envy). Such contiguity-based units are typically more transparent than metaphorical ones, which accords with the observation that motivated, derivable units predominate in the somatic field (Ushakov, 1996). Second, the high proportion of unmarked units does not mean that those units are non-figurative; it reflects the lexicographic practice of flagging a mechanism only where the commentary makes it salient. Many unmarked units are in fact metaphorically or metonymically motivated, as the conceptual analysis below makes clear.

This section maps the conceptual field of each of the six leading components. Throughout, units are cited in transliteration, followed by the Arabic original and a gloss of the literal sense and the idiomatic meaning.

The hand is the body's primary instrument of action, and its phraseology is organized around the master concepts of agency, power and possession. A first field is help and beneficence: *akhadha bi-yad fulān* (أخذ بيد فلان) 'to take so-and-so by the hand → to help, assist', glossed in the dictionary as metonymy in which the hand, the instrument of action, stands for the giving of aid; and *ayādin baydā* (أياد بيضاء) 'white hands → favours, acts of grace'. A second, closely related field is power, authority and control: *al-amr bi-yadihi* (الأمر بيده) 'the matter is in his hand → it is within his power and disposal'; *aṭlaqa yadahu fī* (أطلق يده في) 'to loosen one's hand in → to give free rein, unlimited authority', which the dictionary marks as *majāz*; and, at the theological apex of this field, *al-a'mār bi-yad allāh* (الأعمار بيد الله) 'lifespans are in God's hand → they are in God's power alone', marked as metaphor. The converse of control is loss of control and submission: *aflata al-zimām min yadihi* (أفلت من يده) 'the reins slipped from his hand → he lost control of the situation' (simile), and *a'tā 'an yad* (أعطى عن يد) 'to give from the hand → to submit, yield'. The hand thus maps a single coherent domain – the capacity to act upon the world – across its positive pole (helping, holding power) and its negative pole (losing power, submitting).

The eye, the principal organ of perception, anchors a field that runs from literal sight to knowledge, vigilance, care and the supernatural. The core field is perception and the removal of ignorance: *azāla al-ghishāwa 'an 'aynayhi* (أزال الغشاوة عن عينيه) 'to remove the veil from his eyes → to make him perceive a hidden truth'; its negative counterpart is deliberate non-perception, *aghmaḍa 'aynayhi 'an* (أغض عينيه عن) 'to close one's eyes to → to ignore, disregard', beside *akhadha bi-'ayn al-i'tibār* (أخذ بعين الاعتبار) 'to take with the eye of consideration → to take into account'. A second field is protection and care, in which the eye stands metaphorically for solicitous attention: *anta 'alā 'aynī* (أنت على عيني) 'you are upon my eye → you are under my care and protection'. A third, culturally salient field is the evil eye, where the eye becomes the locus of a harmful supernatural power born of envy: *aṣābat-hu 'ayn* (أصابته عين) 'an eye struck him', glossed by the dictionary as metonymy for envy (*ḥasad*), and *al-'ayn al-ḥamrā* (العين الحمراء) 'the red eye → a threat, the power to inflict harm', also marked as metonymy. Finally, the eye figures in the domain of justice and retribution: *al-'ayn bi-l-'ayn* (العين بالعين) 'an eye for an eye → just retribution'. The eye therefore concentrates a particularly wide span of meaning – from the epistemic (seeing is knowing) through the affective (watching over is caring) to the magical (the envious gaze that harms) – a polysemy that explains its near-top productivity.

As the only internal organ among the leaders, the heart is the seat of the emotional, moral and spiritual life and – importantly for Arabic – also of understanding. The central field is emotion: love, when it takes root, is conceptualized as a substance absorbed by the heart, *ushriba fī qalbihi* (أشرب في قلبه) 'it was made to be drunk into his heart → its love became fixed and rooted in him' (*majāz*); grief is the wounding of the heart, *admā fu'ādahu* (أدمى فؤاده) 'he made his heart bleed → he caused him deep sorrow'; and the uniting of people is the joining of hearts, *allaḥa bayna al-qulūb* (ألف بين القلوب) 'he brought hearts together → he united people in affection'. A second field is moral character,

encoded through colour and predator metaphors: *aswad al-qalb* (أسود القلب) ‘black-hearted → full of enmity’, against *asad al-qalb* (أسد القلب) ‘lion-hearted → courageous, bold’ (metaphor). A third field is faith and spirituality: *istanāra qalbu* (استنار قلبه) ‘his heart became illumined → the light of faith and serenity shone in him’. A fourth, and from a contrastive standpoint especially noteworthy, field is cognition and insight: in Arabic the heart, not the head alone, is a seat of understanding, so that its impairment is intellectual blindness – *a‘mā al-qalb* (أعمى القلب) ‘blind of heart → ignorant, devoid of wisdom and insight’ (simile). The relation between heart and eye as inner and outer organs is itself thematized: *al-‘uyūn wujūh al-qulūb* (العيون وجوه القلوب) ‘eyes are the faces of hearts → what is in the heart shows in the eyes’.

The face is the seat of personal honour and the principal site of social interaction; its phraseology is organized around dignity, social access and the display of attitude. The central field is honour and social standing, encoded through brightness and colour: *abyaḍ al-wajh* (أبيض الوجه) ‘white of face → noble, honourable, of high standing’, marked as metonymy, against *akhlaqa wajhahu* (أخلق وجهه) ‘he wore out his face → he dishonoured his dignity’ (metaphor). A second field is social access and reception, built on the image of a door confronting the face: *aghlaqa al-bāb fī wajhihi* (أغلق الباب في وجهه) ‘he shut the door in his face → he denied him what he sought’, against *ibtasama fī wajhihi* (ابتسم في وجهه) ‘he smiled in his face → he welcomed him warmly’. A third field is the display of emotion: *ashraqa wajhuhu* (أشرق وجهه) ‘his face shone → joy and contentment appeared on him’, and *irtasama ‘alā wajhihi* (ارتسم على وجهه) ‘it was drawn upon his face → an emotion showed clearly on him’. A fourth field is acceptance versus rejection, with the turning of the face as its central gesture: *a‘raḍa bi-wajhihi* (أعرض بوجهه) and *adāra wajhahu ‘anhu* (أدار وجهه عنه) both marked as metonymy for rejection, aversion and neglect, and the angry *ughrub ‘an wajhī* (اغرب عن وجهي) ‘be far from my face → get out of my sight’. The face thus links the inner value of honour to the outer management of social relations.

The head, the topmost and most salient part of the body, anchors fields organized around two master schemas: the head as seat of thought and the head as topmost, foremost element. The first schema yields the field of intellect and mental activity: *dāra fī ra’sihi* (دار في رأسه) ‘it turned in his head → he thought about it, imagined it’, while disorientation is the spinning of the head, *adāra ra’sahu* (أدار رأسه) ‘it made his head turn → it bewildered or intoxicated him’. The second schema is spatial. The head as the foremost or initial point gives *anta ‘alā ra’s amrika* (أنت على رأس أمرك) ‘you are at the head of your matter → at its very beginning’ and *ra’s al-āya* (رأس الآية) ‘the head of the verse → its end, its extremity’. The head as topmost gives the field of pre-eminence and rank: *tāj ‘alā ra’sihi* (تاج على رأسه) ‘a crown upon his head → something one is proud of’, and *tasāwat al-ru’ūs* (تساوت الرؤوس) ‘heads became equal → people reached the same standing’ – a unit that also illustrates the well-known use of ‘head’ as a counting unit for living beings. The head further serves as the source or origin of something, often harmful: *ra’s al-af‘ā* (رأس الأفعى) ‘the head of the viper → the source of harm and evil’, and the personifying *aṭallat al-fitna bi-ra’sihā* (أطلت الفتنة برأسها) ‘sedition looked out with its head → its signs appeared and its evil began to spread’ (metaphor). Finally, the head figures in expressions of submission and of wilful blindness – *ḥanā ra’sahu li-l-‘āṣifa* (حنى رأسه للعاصفة) ‘he bent his head to the storm → he yielded in an adversity he could not face’, and *dafana al-ru’ūs fī al-rimāl* (دفن الرؤوس في الرمال) ‘to bury heads in the sand → to ignore reality’. It is notable that the head–intellect link is, in Arabic, weaker than the heart–intellect link discussed above, a point of considerable contrastive interest.

The tongue is the organ of speech, and by a pervasive metonymy it stands for language and discourse themselves – indeed the bare lemma *al-lisān* (اللسان) is glossed in the dictionary simply as ‘language’. Its phraseology is organized around the production, quality and moral consequences of speech. A first field is the faculty of speech and its impairment: fluency is the loosening of a knot,

inhallat 'uqdat lisānihi (انحلَّت عقدة لسانه) 'the knot of his tongue came undone → he spoke fluently after stammering', a unit the dictionary connects, as *majāz*, to the Qur'ānic narrative of Moses; loss of speech is the tongue's detention, *u'tuqila lisānuhu* (اعتقل لسانه) 'his tongue was detained → he became unable to speak' (metaphor). A second field is discretion versus its lack: restraint is the holding of the tongue, *amsik 'alayka lisānaka* (أمسك عليك لسانك) 'hold your tongue → guard your speech, say only good or be silent' (metaphor), against the unbridled *aṭlaqa al-'inān li-lisānihi* (أطلق العنان للسانه) 'he gave free rein to his tongue → he spoke without restraint'. A third field is verbal harm, in which the tongue becomes a weapon: *aḥraqahu bi-lisānihi* (أحرقه بلسانه) 'he burned him with his tongue → he wounded him with words' (simile). A fourth field is the revelation of character through speech, captured in the proverbial *al-mar'u makhbū'un taḥta lisānihi* (المرء مخبوء تحت لسانه) 'a person is hidden beneath his tongue → one's true nature is unknown until one speaks'. A fifth field is fame and reputation: *jarā 'alā kull lisān* (جرى على كل لسان) 'it ran upon every tongue → it became widely known'.

Three generalizations emerge from the six profiles. First, the conceptual fields are not idiosyncratic to each component but cluster into a small number of macro-domains that recur across components: power and agency (hand, head), perception and cognition (eye, heart, head), emotion (heart, face, eye), social standing and interaction (face, hand, head), and communication (tongue, mouth). The body, in other words, supplies a coherent and economical set of source domains for the most basic regions of human experience. Second, the division between external and internal somatisms is conceptually meaningful and not merely anatomical: external organs (hand, face, tongue) tend to anchor domains of action, social presence and communication – the person as a visible agent among others – whereas the one internal leader, the heart, anchors the inner domains of emotion, faith, character and understanding. Third, the analysis confirms the negative-characterization tendency noted by Mordkovich [15]: across all six components a substantial share of units encode unfavourable states and evaluations – losing control, being ignored, the evil eye, black-heartedness, dishonour, sedition, verbal wounding – suggesting that this tendency is a cross-linguistic property of somatic phraseology rather than a peculiarity of any one language.

A further, diachronic observation reinforces the cultural embedding of the most productive components. Although the corpus as a whole is dominated by old-and-contemporary and contemporary expressions, the leading somatisms are conspicuously represented among units of Qur'ānic and prophetic origin – the eye, hand, heart, tongue and face all anchor expressions traced by the dictionary to the Qur'ān or the prophetic tradition. The productivity of these components in contemporary Arabic is thus not a recent development but the continuation of a conceptual heritage anchored in the foundational texts of the language and, in the framing of the dictionary itself, deployed in a new garment with new significations.

4. Conclusion

This corpus-based study set out to establish the phraseological productivity of somatic components in Modern Standard Arabic and to map the conceptual content of the most productive among them. On the evidence of 844 SPUs from a dictionary of contemporary Arabic idiom, three main findings stand out. Quantitatively, somatic productivity in Arabic is steeply concentrated: six components – hand, eye, heart, face, head and tongue – account for over half of the corpus, external body parts for roughly three-quarters of all units, and metonymy outranks metaphor among the overtly figurative units. Comparatively, the Arabic productivity ranking broadly parallels that of genetically unrelated languages, supporting the view that the salient functions of a small set of organs are projected onto phraseology in similar ways across languages. Qualitatively, each of the six leading components anchors a structured and partly culture-specific conceptual field – agency and power for

the hand; perception, care and the evil eye for the eye; emotion, faith and, distinctively, understanding for the heart; honour and social interaction for the face; thought, rank and primacy for the head; and speech, discretion and reputation for the tongue.

Two broader conclusions follow. First, the body functions in Arabic phraseology as a coherent source domain: its parts supply an economical inventory of mappings for the most fundamental regions of human experience, with a meaningful division of labour between external organs (action, social presence, communication) and internal ones (emotion, character, understanding). Second, the productivity of the leading somatisms is historically anchored: the same components that dominate contemporary usage also underpin expressions of Qur'ānic and prophetic origin, so that contemporary Arabic somatic phraseology represents a living continuation of a long conceptual tradition.

These findings have practical implications for bilingual lexicography, for translation – where the culture-specific fields identified here, notably the evil eye, the heart as a seat of understanding and the honour-bearing face, are predictable sites of difficulty – and for the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language, where the productive components and their conceptual fields offer a principled basis for sequencing instruction. They also point to further work: a full structural-semantic typology of the corpus along the lines of the classical classification of phraseological units by degree of semantic cohesion, and a systematic contrastive study setting the Arabic conceptual profiles against those of a typologically distant language such as Uzbek.

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