



## SOMATIC PHRASEOLOGISMS AS A REFLECTION OF SOCIAL NORMS AND VALUES IN CONTEMPORARY GERMAN SOCIETY

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### ABSTRACT

*Somatic phraseologisms, which are fixed expressions involving body-related metaphors, play a significant role in reflecting the cultural norms and values of contemporary German society. These idioms encapsulate collective experiences, social attitudes, and traditional beliefs, offering insights into how emotions, authority, and interpersonal relationships are perceived in the German-speaking world. This article explores the linguistic functions of somatic phraseologisms, their role in shaping communication, and their evolution in response to societal changes. By analyzing common expressions and their meanings, the study highlights the deep-rooted connection between language and culture, emphasizing the importance of phraseology in understanding national identity and value systems. Additionally, the research examines how globalization and digital communication impact the usage and transformation of these expressions in modern contexts.*

**Introduction.** Language is a dynamic entity that reflects the culture, history, and values of a society. In particular, phraseologisms—fixed expressions with metaphorical meanings serve as linguistic markers of collective experiences and social norms. Among them, somatic phraseologisms, which involve body-related expressions, are especially significant as they convey deeply ingrained cultural meanings. These expressions are widely used in everyday communication, literature, and media, making them an essential component of linguistic identity [2, 17-33].

Furthermore, somatic phraseologisms not only enhance linguistic expressiveness but also reveal how different cultures conceptualize human experiences. In the case of the German language, such expressions often reflect cultural attitudes toward work ethics, emotions, authority, and interpersonal relationships. Understanding these idiomatic expressions provides deeper insights into the social fabric of contemporary German society. Therefore, this article examines how somatic phraseologisms in contemporary German society reflect its social norms and values.

### The Role of Somatic Phraseologisms in Language

To begin with, somatic phraseologisms are commonly used to express emotions, attitudes, and judgments. For instance, the German expression "mit Herz und Seele dabei sein" (to be



involved with heart and soul) highlights dedication and passion. Similarly, "eine lange Nase machen" (to thumb one's nose at someone) conveys mockery and disdain. Consequently, these expressions illustrate how language encodes emotions and interpersonal relationships.

Moreover, German phraseologisms often contain references to specific body parts, such as the head, hands, or heart, to symbolize intellectual capacity, action, and emotions. For example, "den Kopf verlieren" (to lose one's head) indicates a loss of control, whereas "die Hände in den Schoß legen" (to lay hands in one's lap) signifies passivity. Thus, these expressions provide insight into how German society perceives and categorizes human behavior.

Additionally, somatic phraseologisms serve a cognitive function by shaping the way people conceptualize abstract ideas. In many cases, these expressions bridge the gap between physical experience and metaphorical understanding. For example, "kalte Füße bekommen" (to get cold feet) illustrates how physiological reactions can metaphorically represent fear or hesitation. Likewise, "das Herz auf der Zunge tragen" (to wear one's heart on one's tongue) signifies emotional openness and honesty. These idioms highlight how bodily references help speakers structure their thoughts and emotions through language.

Furthermore, these expressions contribute to the richness of communication by allowing speakers to convey complex meanings succinctly. Instead of describing a situation in detail, idioms offer a cultural shorthand that enables efficient and expressive communication. Because phraseologisms are deeply embedded in everyday speech, they enhance discourse by fostering a shared understanding among speakers. As a result, somatic phraseologisms play a crucial role in maintaining linguistic cohesion and cultural identity in German-speaking communities [5].

### Reflection of Social Norms and Values

Since phraseologisms originate from collective experiences, they inherently reflect societal values. The German language, like any other, encodes cultural priorities, expectations, and social behavior through idiomatic expressions. In particular, somatic phraseologisms provide valuable insights into how Germans perceive work ethic, emotional expression, authority, and interpersonal relationships.

One of the most prominent cultural values in Germany is diligence and perseverance, often referred to as *Fleiß* and *Durchhaltevermögen*. This emphasis is evident in expressions like "*sich die Beine ausreißen*" (to tear one's legs out), which conveys the idea of making an extraordinary effort to achieve something. Similarly, "*mit beiden Beinen fest im Leben stehen*" (to stand with both legs firmly in life) signifies stability and reliability—qualities that are highly regarded in professional and personal life. These phraseologisms reinforce the notion that hard work and persistence lead to success and respect in society.

Another key aspect of German social norms is honesty and moral integrity. The phrase "*das Herz am rechten Fleck haben*" (to have one's heart in the right place) emphasizes the importance of being a good and trustworthy person. Additionally, "*die Wahrheit liegt auf der Hand*" (the truth lies on the hand) reflects the German appreciation for directness and transparency in communication. These expressions highlight the cultural expectation of sincerity and ethical conduct in both private and public life.

Hierarchy and authority also play a role in German phraseology, reflecting the structured and disciplined nature of society. The expression "*jemandem unter die Arme greifen*" (to lend



someone a hand) conveys the idea of support, often coming from a higher position to assist someone in need. Likewise, "*den Kopf hoch halten*" (to keep one's head up) implies resilience and self-confidence, reinforcing the importance of maintaining dignity even in difficult circumstances. These idioms demonstrate Germany's cultural emphasis on discipline, self-reliance, and respect for structured social roles [4].

Furthermore, social interactions and emotional expression are encapsulated in various somatic phraseologisms. The idiom "*jemandem auf der Nase herumtanzen*" (to dance on someone's nose) describes a situation in which a person is taken advantage of, reflecting the expectation that individuals should set clear boundaries and demand respect. On the other hand, "*sein Herz auf der Zunge tragen*" (to wear one's heart on one's tongue) represents emotional openness, though in a culture that values control over emotions, this phrase can sometimes carry a negative connotation of excessive expressiveness.

In summary, German somatic phraseologisms offer a linguistic reflection of social norms and values, emphasizing diligence, honesty, hierarchy, and emotional expression. These idioms serve not only as linguistic tools but also as cultural markers that define the expectations and principles guiding behavior in contemporary German society.

### **Evolution and Contemporary Usage**

As language evolves, somatic phraseologisms adapt to modern contexts while preserving their metaphorical significance. The digital era has influenced their interpretation, with expressions like "*etwas aus dem Bauch heraus entscheiden*" (to decide from the gut) now encompassing both intuition and data-driven decision-making.

Globalization has also shaped phraseology, introducing foreign influences while maintaining traditional expressions deeply tied to German culture. Additionally, societal shifts, particularly in gender roles and mental health awareness, have led to a reevaluation of certain idioms, ensuring they align with contemporary values.

Modern communication styles, especially social media and digital messaging, have further transformed phraseologisms. Expressions are often shortened, creatively modified, or combined with visual elements like emojis, keeping them relevant in everyday discourse. Despite these changes, somatic phraseologisms continue to reflect both historical traditions and evolving societal norms.

**Conclusion.** Somatic phraseologisms play a vital role in reflecting the social norms and values of contemporary German society. These expressions encapsulate cultural attitudes toward emotions, behavior, hierarchy, and resilience, offering insight into how Germans perceive and communicate shared experiences.

Despite linguistic evolution influenced by globalization, digitalization, and societal shifts, somatic phraseologisms remain deeply embedded in everyday language. While some expressions adapt to modern contexts, their core meanings continue to reflect traditional values. Understanding these idiomatic phrases not only enhances comprehension of the German language but also provides a deeper appreciation of its cultural heritage.

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