

Head Idioms in the Georgian and English Languages

Abstract: The article aims to analyze idioms which are connected with the head. The paper intends to explore main characteristics of head idioms in the Georgian and English languages. The study proposes numerous classification of idioms, namely semantic, lexical and lexicographical. The theoretical part focuses on specific features of idioms, their classification and structural patterns. The practical part is devoted to the analysis and comparison of Georgian and English head idioms. We analyzed the data by using a descriptive qualitative method.

Keywords: Idioms, classification, structure.

Studies of idioms in Georgian linguistics have been conducted since the mid-20th century. In 1955, Arn. Chikobava edited Volume IV of the Explanatory Dictionary of the Georgian Language, in which idioms were defined as peculiar expressions of a language that typically cannot be translated literally into another language (Kegl 1955). In the scientific literature, there are varying opinions concerning the definition of an idiom. The term 'idiom' has its origins in ancient Greek, where it meant 'peculiar' and was associated with something one's own or private. The multitude of definitions related to idioms is also connected to the subjective approach in presenting these 'personal features' (Akhaldze 2021:13).

In Georgian, the term "idiom" with the meaning of an idiomatic expression was adopted under the influence of the Russian language, which, like English, frequently used the "-at-" suffix. Consequently, the term "idiomatic" made its way into the Georgian language through emulation of Russian and Western European languages. This is in contrast to the term "idiomuri," which might have been a more natural choice for the Georgian language, as it is directly derived from "idiom" (Lobzhanidze 2012: 30).

A. Takaishvili provides the following definition for an idiom: "An idiom is a semantically inseparable entity with a specific speech form and an expressive function, whose meaning is not equivalent to the sum of the values of its individual components" (Takaishvili 1961:41).

As per T. Gamkrelidze, "idioms or idiomatic expressions conform to free speech in terms of form, but their lexical structure undergoes meaningful transformation." They are distinguished by a general (linked) meaning and have a synthetic function like lexemes. Idioms can be seen as expressive synonyms of lexemes, as their meaning encompasses not only the connotations associated with their individual components but also the symbolic essence of the phrases as a whole. Therefore, the meaning of an idiom is more comprehensive and richer than that of a single lexeme (Gamkrelidze 2008: 376).

R. Sherozia explains it as follows: "An idiom is a product of artistic thought and possesses the same stability and unchanging nature as any individual word. The term 'idiom' encompasses what is expressed indirectly and represents a 'fossilized' metaphor" (Sherozia 2014: 179-181).

According to Kvetko, idioms can be characterized by the following features:

- They have a multi-word structure.
- They are institutionalized and recognized as linguistic entities by the language community.
- They represent a cohesive combination of words.
- Their meaning is imprecise, but entirely iconic, figurative, and unique (Kvetko 2009:103).

The author suggests that in terms of stability, certain idioms remain quite stable and do not undergo change, while other idioms permit some degree of variation – these are considered unstable idioms or idioms with different variations (Kvetko 2009:104).

Kvetko distinguishes between different types of variants in changing idioms, which can be categorized into the following four groups:

- Grammatical variants encompass irregular, limited morphological and syntactic changes within idiomatic expressions.
- Lexical variants involve both mandatory or necessary variants and optional variants in the lexical structures of idioms
- Orthography variants, as a type of variant, encompass changes related to the spelling, capitalization, use of hyphens, periods, and similar orthographic aspects

- Geographic variants are distinct because they encompass all the aforementioned variations, and they are prevalent in specific regions of English-speaking countries (Kvetko 2009:105)

The author's classification of idioms based on their construction includes the following categories:

- Verbal idioms: These idioms have a verbal syntagmatic structure and consist of a verb or subject and a complement.
- The idioms without verbs: These idioms have a different syntagmatic structure without a verb, meaning they lack a verb in their construction.
- Sentence idioms: Sentence idioms are characterized by having a sentence-like structure. They may be longer and more complex in their construction compared to shorter idioms.

Some linguists also discuss the concept of "Minimal idioms," which are idiomatic expressions consisting of at least one lexical word (Kvetko 2009: 105-106).

The author's perspective on idioms from a semantic point of view is intriguing. Semantically, idioms can be categorized based on their level of ambiguity into three groups: pure or demotivated (ambiguous) idioms partially motivated (semi-ambiguous) idioms, and semi-idioms.

- Demotivated idioms are those in which there is no synchronic connection between the meanings of individual words and the meaning of the idiom as a whole.
- Partially motivated idioms are those in which there is some connection between the overall meaning of the idiom and the meanings of its individual words.
- Semi-idioms are characterized by one word being used figuratively while the other retains its literal meaning (Kvetko 2009:106).

Kvetko also discusses idioms in the following section, focusing on their division based on irregularity:

- Idioms with irregular structure, pronunciation, or expression of words, but relatively clear meaning.
- Idioms with correct or proper form, but unclear meaning.

- Idioms in which both the form and meaning are anomalous (Kvetko 2009:107).

Additionally, the author notes that the connection within idioms can be homonymous, synonymous, or antonymous,

- Homonym idioms are two idioms with the same written or spoken form but distinct meanings.
- Synonymous idioms have the same or very close meanings.
- Antonym idioms have opposite meanings (Kvetko 2009:108).

According to the authors, idioms are not limited to colloquial phrases, as many people might assume. They can be found in various forms of language, including formal styles, slang, poetry, works by authors like Shakespeare, and even in the language of the Bible (Seidl & McMordie 1988:12).

Fernando (1996) distinguishes the following types of idioms:

1. Pure idioms - These are conventionalized multi-word expressions with imprecise meanings attached to the idiom as a whole.
2. Semi-literal/exact idioms - These idioms contain one or more exact constituents, with at least one having an imprecise sub-meaning.
3. Literal idioms - These idioms are semantically less complex compared to others.

The authors distinguish different types of idioms based on their form:

1. Verb + Addition
2. Prepositional Phrase
3. Compound
4. Similarity/Comparison (as + adjective + as, or like + noun)
5. Two-Word (word + and + word)
6. Three-Word (word + word + and + word)

7. Main or Dependent Clause or Clause (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2002:6)

In the Georgian scientific literature, it is noted that the structure of Georgian idioms is fundamentally similar to the structure of idioms found in other languages, typically consisting of at least two components (Akhaldze 2021:4). Nevertheless, the material we have researched supports the existence of idioms with composite structures.

Georgian Idioms

- **თავგამოუბმელი** - **Incapable** unhouseed, scatterbrained, profligate, financially dependent, confused, isolated, unmarried (woman). „What does it mean, that I have nothing to do? I have left my family, my harvest without care and you say, I have nothign to do“ (Melan) / Sakhokia, p.217/
- **თავგზიანი** - Capable - smart, perceptive, intelligent, flexible, experienced, skillful. "If he is a “capable” family man, he will achieve something peacefully." /Sakhokia, p. 217/
- **თავდიდება** - Pride - arrogance, self-righteousness, pride, boasting, boasting. "Where are you, Chito (bird), show up, come out, why are you “priding” me" (G. Leonidze) / Sakhokia, p. 217/
- **თავმბიმედმყოფი** - Heavy-headed - someone who is partying and drunk to the point where they feel sluggish and their head becomes heavy. See The Dictionary by T. Razikashvili, "IV" 1900. This condition is often associated with a person's inability to maintain an upright position, causing them to bend down due to the effects of alcohol. (Sakhokia pg.242)

It should also be noted that in both Georgian and foreign scientific literature, a single word taken in isolation is not considered an idiom.

The structure of an idiom does not have a defined maximum number of words; it can consist of one, two, three, or more constituent phrases (Akhaldze 2021:47).

- **თავგამობმული საქმე** - Finished work - completed, finished work. "The case, in which this old man would take part, would undoubtedly be done without a doubt (A. Kazbegi) / Sakhokia, p. 217/
- **თავის გამსუბუქება** - **Easing the head** Giving up on reliability ,not being serious, unwitty. “Don’t ease your head. It's a great failure of a man to lick a spit” (Vazha)

•თავისთავის კითხული - **self-asking** - Independent, acts autonomously, without relying on/asking to others. "A person is most valuable within their own domain, where they are free and self-sufficient" (v. Barnov)

•თავნაზურას გადიდენს - He will work diligently and selflessly.

During airing of the wheat, the larger residue is thrown together with the grains, it is called "Chelkhi", and the smaller ones are named as "Bze". Those, which are not good for cattle feeding and have been removed by the wind outside of the threshing field is called "Bre" or "Nabuari". "He made threshing so well that the "Bre" or "Nabuari" was spread around". "Nabuari" raises in the air during threshing hardly and overflows the thresher.

The idiom means working hard and diligently during threshing, when the „Bze“ turns into dust.

This phrase is used mockingly to describe a person who is both lazy and loafer. People might say this about such an individual, someone who consistently shirks their responsibilities and prefers to avoid work whenever possible. /Sakhokia, p. 242/

•თავზე ბალბა დავადე - To place a mallow on someone's head - I pacified the angry individual, cooled their temper, and softened their mood. For instance, "it's true that your friend was very angry, but I used a gentle approach to calm him down".

Mallow when boiled, is used in folk medicine to apply to wounds, reducing their severity and promoting healing. In the context of human emotions, when someone is angry, it's as if they carry bitterness within them, which can accumulate in their head. To calm an angry person, it's like applying mallow to their head, soothing their emotional wounds.

In this context, "mallow" is used figuratively and is soothing, pacifying a person through spoken words, gentle caresses, and sweet words. It is like applying soothing words to the person's emotions to calm their anger and bitterness,

•თავზე ბყიას მატებს - **He/she raids on my head** - inundating me with relentless reproaches, and he/she is a source of these endless criticisms

•თავზე კაკლის მტვრევა - **Breaking walnuts on the head** To be regarded as a rascal, to be despised, to be oppressed, to be humiliated. "Ilia held one unwavering principle: his absolute refusal to yield to stinginess. When he said 'no,' it was as unmovable as if a walnut had been broken on his head." (I. Mansvetashvili) This act didn't represent physical aggression from a courageous individual or a challenge to engage in fair combat, but rather a symbol of being disregarded or disrespected when caught up in one's own whirlwind, a disregard for his worthiness in the context of a fair fight."

•თავზე მტვრის გადაღწა - **Dust on his head** To beat, to defeat, to turn to dust. Someone said: pay attention (to the enemy) now, it is dust on your head!"

When the enemy defeats the enemy, it means that he wants to destroy him, or turn him to dust

•თავზე ქვა დაიგორა - **A stone rolled on his head** Being persistent in their statements, he should fulfill what he has said

This saying originated from the behavior of a capricious and stubborn individual. It is a baseless claim, exemplified by the person's act of throwing a stone above themselves and declaring, 'Even if this stone fell on me, I wouldn't do anything.' The saying 'a stone rolled on his head' serves as an expression of the stubborn behavior exhibited by such individuals.

•თავზე წნელი მოუჭირეთ - **Twist a twig to his head** Not to lose their mind, they say it mockingly when a person says something stupid but believes they've said something smart.

•თავით მარილის დანაყვა - **Pounding salt with head** - Self-sacrifice for someone, immense respect. It is used to respond to someone's ingratitude, respect - underestimation of someone. E.g., "someone is so ungrateful that even if you pound salt on his head, he would not pay you respect."

•თავის დაღება პირს - **Putting head down (on the ground)** - Suffering, despair, declaring one's obedience to someone, breaking one's heart, bowing before someone. "I was Queen Tamar; I didn't put my head down" (T. Razik.)

•თავზე მამალ ბუზს არ ისვამს - **Does not let a male fly to land in his head** - to emphasize someone's extreme pride, arrogance, and lack of modesty. "His wife Keko is very arrogant, doesn't let a male fly to land on her head" In this case, the male fly, typically considered more courageous, still doesn't dare

to land on the head of the person in question because of their excessive arrogance and lack of humility.

Head idioms and verb idioms are distinguished based on their grammatical features. Here are some examples of head idioms „Finished work“, „Breaking walnuts on the head“, „Dust on his head“, „Easing the head“etc. Verb idioms: To place a mallow on someone's head, He/she raids on my head, Twist a twig to his head; he rolled a stone on his head etc.

The central element of verbal idioms is the verb. Considering the grammatical and stylistic characteristics of the Georgian language, verb idiomatic expressions often follow a specific word order in sentences. In particular, the idiom places the verb at the end, much like a free utterance (Zaalishvili 2018:40)

Based on the theoretical and practical aspects discussed in the work, it can be concluded that in the Georgian language, idioms related to the head, both nominal and verbal, are confirmed, considering the grammatical peculiarities. These idioms are characterized by having two, three, or four components in their structural form. Additionally, the study has identified several idioms with composite production.

English idioms

1. (as) Cross as a bear with a sore head

Definition: exceptionally angry, annoyed, or irritable (<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/head>)

2. Cool head

Definition: the ability to remain calm and rational during stressful situations
(<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/head>)

3. A head-scratcher

Definition: a thoroughly complex or difficult mystery, problem, puzzle, or riddle
(<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/head>)

4. A light bulb goes on in (one's) head

Definition: one is suddenly struck with an ingenious or inspired idea, insight, or revelation
(<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/head>)

5. A still tongue makes a wise head

Definition: Proverb. It is much wiser to speak only when it is appropriate or after one has thought carefully about what one wants or needs to say (<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/head>)

1. All in (one's) head

Definition: not substantial or real, having been imagined or invented
(<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/head>)

7. Build up a head of steam

Definition: to gain momentum or the energy needed to move forward
(<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/head>)

8. Cool heads must prevail

Definition: calm people, thoughts or actions must triumph in the end
(<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/head>)

9. Eyes in the back of (one's) head

Definition: the ability to detect what is going on all around one, even beyond one's field of vision
(<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/head>)

10. Have a fathead

Definition: to be conceited, arrogant or self-aggrandizing
(<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/head>)

11. Have rocks in (one's) head

Definition: to be thoroughly stupid, crazy, absurd, and incorrect
(<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/head>)

12. Heads I win, tails you lose

Definition: A humorous statement, Meaning, “No matter what the outcome is, I still win or benefit”... (<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/head>)

13. Have windmills in (one’s) head

Definition: to be lost in dreams and illusions, rather than rooted in reality
(<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/head>)

14. Get your head out of the clouds

Definition: stop daydreaming or fantasizing and focus on reality
(<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/head>)

15. Heavy hangs the head that wears a/the crown

Definition: the person who has the most power or authority suffers from the largest amount of stress, anxiety, doubt and worry (<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/head>)

The article covers 15 English idioms, examining their construction and semantics. In the discussed examples, we find idioms without verb and idioms with a sentence structure. Semantically, the idioms vary, with some being demotivated, others partial, and some categorized as half-idioms. In terms of irregularity, the majority of the English idioms discussed in the article are regular. These idioms can be classified into two groups: pure idioms and semi-idioms. Regarding their form, idioms in the article include those based on comparison, prepositional phrases, compounds, verb + addition, and sentence structures.

Based on the examples of Georgian and English idioms discussed in the paper, it is evident that there are both similarities and certain differences between Georgian and English idioms in terms of their constituent components. In both languages, idioms can consist of two, three, or four components. However, it is worth noting that English idioms tend to have more components on average compared to Georgian idioms.

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