

Metaphoric idioms with the lexeme SOUL in Georgian and English languages and cultures¹

**Manana Rusieshvili-Cartledge¹, Rusudan Dolidze², * Mariam Keburia³ and Sopio
Totibadze⁴.**

^{1,2,3,4} *Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia*

*Corresponding author

manana.ruseishvili@tsu.ge

Abstract

As Kövecses & Szabó (1996) point out, An idiom arises from our more general knowledge of the world (embodied in our conceptual system). Based on this theory, idioms are conceptual items based on certain cognitive mechanisms, including cultural background knowledge materialised in conceptual semantic fields, including metaphor and metonymy.

This paper aims to explore the semantic potential of idioms containing the lexeme *soul* and making up conceptual metaphors. The data have been taken from the Georgian and British National Corpora and electronic media. The methodology of the research was based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), Z. Kövecses' theory of cultural metaphors and universal and variant models and M. Rusieshvili's semantic-pragmatic model of conventional metaphor. The research was conducted in three stages. In the first stage, relevant idioms with the lexeme *soul* were identified and collected. In the second stage of the work, the data were grouped into conceptual metaphor models. At the final stage of the research, the identified metaphoric models were compared and contrasted cross-culturally and universal and variant models were identified.

Keywords: CMT, cultural metaphors, universal and variant models; Georgian, English

¹ This research is financed by the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia (FR-21-563)

1. Introduction

According to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, metaphor facilitates the process of human perception of the world and thus can be classed as one of the most effective tools regarding the cognitive conceptualization of the world (Lakoff & Johnson (1980). As metaphors represent human experience, they may vary according to social dimensions rooted in “people's experiences.” Therefore, the cultural-cognitive view of metaphor is a natural and necessary complement to the experiential view (Kövecses, 2005). In CMT, a conceptual metaphor is defined as a set of correspondences between its source and target domains (Kövecses, 2010). Being abstract, the target domain cannot be experienced directly, while the source domain is specific and thus can be manifested through bodily interactions and social experiences. This makes the target concept easily accessible and its properties more pronounced.

In addition, some conceptual metaphors appear to be near-universal or potentially universal as they reflect certain common experiences constituting universal embodiment on which many conceptual metaphors are based. However, conceptual metaphors are also cultural-specific and thus form variant models (Kövecses, 2010).

An idiom can be defined as a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words (e.g. see the light - suddenly understand something that one did not understand before [OED]). Idioms' semantic structures contain metaphors and arise from a general knowledge of the world embodied in our conceptual system (Kövecses & Szabó, 1996, 330). Somatic idioms that this research focuses on are classed as referencing body parts or internal organs and have been studied in many languages and from various perspectives (Kapanadze & Rusieshvili, 2018; Rusieshvili-Cartledge & Dolidze, 2020).

This paper aims to explore the potential of somatic idioms containing the lexeme SOUL to construct metaphoric models in Georgian and English languages. The choice of the research problem is conditioned by the fact that the lexeme *soul* can be considered one of the basic elements constituting a linguistic picture of the world emerging in cultures (Štrkalj Despot *et al*, 2012).

The relevant data for the research were selected from the Georgian and British National Corpora, the database of Georgian idioms and proverbs (with their English, Russian, German, French, Turkish and Arabic equivalents) and electronic media.

2. Theorising the theoretical framework employed in the paper

As is well-known, in terms of the degree of idiomaticity, two types of expressions are distinguished in the theory of phraseology: idiomatic expressions (phrasemes) that contain both idiomatic and non-idiomatic parts and that are fully idiomatic. This difference serves as a demarcation line for distinguishing between idiomatic expressions” and “idioms” (van der

Linden. 1992, 8) and “phrasemes” and “idioms” (Amosova, 2010; Rusieshvili-Cartledge & Dolidze, 2015, amongst others). Thus, an idiom can be defined as a metaphoric unit whose overall meaning cannot be inferred from the sum of the lexical meanings of its components. It is also well acknowledged that the human conceptual system is heavily metaphorical and that we use metaphors spontaneously in everyday communication (Kövecses, 2015: ix). Besides, some conceptual metaphors make up universal models while others are culturally specific and thus construct variant models.

According to the semantic-pragmatic model of conventionalised, trite metaphor suggested by Rusieshvili (2005, 2023), a metaphor has a three-layered structure. On the surface layer, the verbal form of the metaphor is fixed, which reveals its metaphoric meaning. On the middle layer, the contextual parameters of the metaphor are clarified and irrelevant metaphorical associations are filtered out. The third, upper layer contains the linguistic-conceptual model of the world depicted by the metaphor based on the social, cultural or historical experience of a person or society. Interestingly, the nature and type of the link between the domains of metaphor are also fixed on the third layer. The background knowledge layer becomes especially important when decoding a cultural conceptual metaphor. For example, in the following sentence, არავინ იგრძნო, რომ შეგუბებული სული საცაა ცრემლებად გადმოეფრქვევა (aravin igrdzno, rom shegubebuli sulisatsaa tsremlebad gadmoepkrkeva - nobody felt that the dammed-up soul would soon explode in tears), the source domain of the idiom is connected to the dammed water kept in a reservoir and potentially presenting a danger. The metaphor is presented in the first layer of the semantic model, in the second layer, its literal meaning and contextual parameters are actualised and in the third, upper layer, the linguistic model of the metaphor, connecting the metaphoric associations of the dammed water (source domain) and the target domain (sadness conceptualized as a dammed-up soul) are actualised. The semantic-pragmatic model of the metaphor allows the singling out of universal metaphors which coincide on all of the layers of the structure and variant models, which coincide only on the middle layer and thus share the meaning.

Based on the theories discussed above, this paper focuses on the following questions:

1. What semantic models of conceptual metaphors do the idioms with the lexical item *soul* construct in Georgian and English languages and cultures?
2. What universal and variant models can be distinguished in Georgian and English concerning the idioms with the component *soul* and what can be the reasons behind them?

3. The data and methodology

The methodology of the research is based on the general assumptions of CMT and Kövecses' theory of cultural metaphors described above. As well as this, the conventional

metaphors in the semantic structure of idioms with the lexeme soul are identified based on the pragma-semantic model of metaphor by M. Rusieshvili.

The data considered in this research (135 Georgian and 135 English metaphoric somatic idioms with the lexeme *soul*) were randomly selected from the following sources: corpora (Georgian National Corpus and British National Corpus), the Database of Georgian idioms and proverbs (with their English, Russian, German, French, Turkish and Arabic equivalents) and electronic media.

In the first stage of the research, the relevant idioms were identified in both languages and then 135 idioms from Georgian and English data were selected at random, grouped into models based on their source domain and compared regarding their target domains. In the final stage of the study, universal and variant models were singled out in Georgian and English languages.

4. Findings of the research

4. 1 Metaphoric models with the component *soul* in the Georgian and English Languages and Cultures

I. Universal metaphoric models of the idioms with the component *soul* attested in both languages

The Soul is a container metaphor

1. SOUL IS A CONTAINER

- a. სული სიყვარულით აევსო (suli sikvarulit aevso - his/her soul became full of love).
- b. The boy's soul was brimming with love and appreciation
- c. ვცოცხლობთ, ღვთის მადლით, ჯერ კიდევ სული გვიდგია (Vtsotskhlobt, ghvtis madlit, jer kidev suli gvidgia - We still have our souls inside us [we are still alive], by God's grace).
- d. ჩემს ცოლსა და შვილებს თუ არ მივხედე, შიმშილით სული ამოხდებათ (chems tsilsa da shvilebs tu ar mivkhede, shimshilit suli amokhdebat - If I don't look after my wife and children, their souls will be taken out of their bodies [they will die]).

2. SOUL IS A PRESSURIZED FLUID IN A CONTAINER

- e. არავინ იგრძნო, რომ შეგუბებული სული საცაა ცრემლებად გადმოეფრკვევა (Aravin igrdzno, rom shegubebuli suli satsaa tsremlebad gadmoepkrkveva - Nobody felt that the dammed-up soul would soon explode in tears).

f. Samantha poured out her soul to me last night about how grief-stricken she's been since her father passed away.

3. PUTTING THE (HEART AND) SOUL INTO A CONTAINER IS MAKING AN EFFORT

g. მთელი სული და გული ჩადო ამ საქმეში და წარმატებას მიაღწია (mteli sul da guli chado am sakmeshi da tsarmatebas miaghtsia - He put his soul and heart in this case and succeeded).

h. We've put our hearts and souls into developing a truly revolutionary way of staying in touch with our loved ones.

II. The Soul is a physical object metaphor

4. TO OPEN/BARE ONE'S SOUL IS TO SHARE EMOTION

i. სული და გული გადაუშალა მეგობარს (suli da guli gadaushala megobars - He opened his soul and heart to his friend).

j. I don't know Adam that well, so I was surprised that he bared his soul to me.

5. SOUL IS MADE OF A SOLID SUBSTANCE

k. მისი სიტყვები გულში და სულში აღეზედა (misi sitqvebi gulshi da sulshi aghebechda mudmivad - His words were imprinted on his soul).

l. It is a memory indelibly engraved upon her soul.

6. BE THE (HEART/LIFE AND) SOUL OF SOMETHING IS TO BE CENTRAL TO SOMETHING.

m. თქვენ უნდა იყოთ შეხვედრის სული და გული, სიხარულის ცრემლი მოერია თვალში ბერაძეს (tkven unda ikot shekhvedris sul da guli, sikharulis tsremli moeria tvalshi beradzes - You must be the soul and heart of this meeting, Beradze had tears of happiness in his eyes).

n. Hunter was the 'life and soul' of the founding and development of the London Veterinary College.

o. Being very friendly, he was the real heart and soul of the party.

9. TO KEEP SOUL AND BODY TOGETHER IS TO BE BARELY ALIVE

p. სული და ხორცი მძლავს ერთად უჭირავს (suli da khorsti mdzlivs ertad uchiravs
suli da khortsi mdzlive ertad uchiravs - he can barely keep soul and flesh together).

q. It must have been hard for men in the late 18th century to keep body and soul together.

10. TO SELL ONE'S SOUL (TO THE DEVIL) IS TO BE WILLING TO ACHIEVE A GOAL

r. უნდა ეშინოდეს, ვინც სული ეშმავს მიჰყიდა (unda eshinodes, vints suli eshmaks
mihqida - those who sold their soul to the devil must be horrified).

s. They bring their new version of Marlowe's classic tale of a man who sells his soul to the
devil for knowledge and power.

III. The *soul* is a person metaphor

11. SOUL IS THE DETERMINANT OF PERSONALITY/MOOD/STATE

t. ეგ კეთილი სული არ უნდა იყოს (eg ketili suli ar unda ikos - He does not seem to
be a kind soul).

u. David, being the sensitive soul that he is, burst into tears.

v. What have you been doing to this poor soul?

12. SOUL IS A PERSON

w. გარშემო ერთი სულიც კი არ ჩანდა (garshemo erti sulits ki ar chanda - Not a
single soul was visible around).

x. Oh I won't tell a soul, " promised the delighted Cassowary." Bend your head down here

**Variant metaphoric models of the idioms with the component *soul* attested only in one
of the languages**

**Variant models of the idioms with the component soul in the Georgian language and
culture**

The container metaphor

1. TO PUT SOMEONE IN THE CONTAINER (SOUL) IS TO LOVE THEM

A) დიდი და პატარა, ვინც კი იცნობდა, ყველა სულში იძვრენდა დიტოს (didi da patara, vints ki itsnobda, qvela sulshi idzvrenda Ditos - Everybody who knew Dito, loved him put him in their souls).

2. TO PUT THE SOUL INTO A CONTAINER IS TO GIVE LIFE

B) ჩვენმა თეატრმა თავისით ჩაიდგა სული, გარ ედან შემწეობა არავისგან ჰქონია (Chvenma teatrma tavisit chaidga sul, garedan shemtseoba aravisgan hkonia - Our theatre put soul in itself independently, there was no help from outside).

The *soul* is a physical object metaphor

3. TO DISPOSSESS THE SOUL IS DEATH

C. სულს გამოემშვიდობა (suls gamoeshvidoba - He said farewell to his soul he died).

D. სულს გაეყარა (suls gaeqara - He said parted with his soul).

4. TO HOLD ONE'S BREATH IS TO BE SCARED

E. გიომ შეხედა ვანოსა და შემდეგ დაუსვა ხანჯალი ყელსა. ხალხმა სული განაბა და შიშით შეხედა (Giom shexeda vanosa da shemdeg dausva khanjali dzroxis jelsa. Khalkhma sul ganaba da shishit shexeda gigos - Gigo looked at Vano and then cut the cow's throat. People held their breath and looked at Gigo with horror).

5. TO HOLD BREATH IS TO BE PLEASED

F. ეთერის მამამ და გადიამ სული განაბეს და მართლაც გარედან ოდნავი, ნაზი, შორეული ეთერის ხმა მოისმოდა (Eteris mamam da gadiam sul ganabes da martladats garedan odnavi, nazi, shoreuli Eteris xma modioda. – Eter's father and her nurse held their breath and listened to Eter's tender, soft and far-away voice).

6 TO BARE ONE'S SOUL IS TO FEEL INSECURE

G. ადამიანებს აშინებთ სულის გაშიშვლება და უსაფრთხოებისთვის ნიღბებს ივარებენ (adamianebs ashinebt sulis gashishvleba da usaprkhoebistvis nighbebs ipareben - People are scared of baring their souls and put up masks for security purposes).

7. TO OPEN ONE'S SOUL (AND HEART) IS TO ACCEPT SOMEONE WITH LOVE

H. სული და გული გაუღო (suli da guli gaugho - He opened his soul and heart to someone).

8. TO HAVE A CLEAN SOUL IS TO BE PURE/INNOCENT

I. ბალები სუფთა იბადებიან, ადამიანებს მერე გვემღვრევა სული (balghebi supta ibadebian, adamianebs mere gvemghvrevs suli - Babies are born clean, people's souls become murky later).

9. TO HAVE SOUL IS TO HAVE AN IDENTITY

J. ოღონდ ამ ხალხს რუსული სული ჩავბეროთ და სხეული ისევ თავიანთი შერჩეთი (oghond am khalkhs rusuli suli chavbrerot and skheuli isev tavianti shercheso - If only we could blow a Russian soul into these people and retain their bodies as they are).

10. TO HAVE A HEAVY SOUL IS TO BE IN A BAD MOOD

K. სული დამძიმებული აქვს დარდით (Suli damdzimebuli akvs - He/she has a heavy soul).

11. TO HAVE A HEAVY SOUL IS TO BE SINFUL

L. ცოდვით დაუმძიმდა სული (tsodvit daumdzimda suli - His soul became heavy with sins).

12. TO HAVE A THIN SOUL IS TO BE IMPATIENT

M. სული გამიწვრილდა ლოდინისგან (suli gamotsvrilda lodinisgan - My soul became thin because of waiting long).

13. TO HAVE A CHATTERING SOUL IS TO BE IMPATIENT

N. სული უკაწკაწებდა, რომ სადმე პროვოკაცია ყოფილიყო (suli ukatskatsebda, rom sadme provokatsia qopiliqo - His soul was chattering to find a provocation anywhere).

Variant models of the idioms with the component soul in the Georgian language and culture

The soul is a container metaphor

P. TO ENTER THE SOUL IS TO ENTER A CONTAINER

Q. I could feel the iron entering my soul each day when I passed the building of my previous school.

The *soul* is a physical object metaphor

1. SEARCHING THE SOUL IS BEING HONEST

R. I know you're hurt right now, but search your soul - you know that breaking up was the right thing to do.

2. TO BE BUSY IS LOSING SOUL

S. Now that I've started working overtime four days a week, I really can't call my soul my own.

The Soul is a person metaphor

3. SOUL IS INNER WORLD OF A PERSON

T. His soul was romantic and searching

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Following Lakoff & Johnson's approach to the disembodied mind, Štrkalj Despot *et al.*, describe the disembodied soul, which is also metaphorical. In addition, the authors single out the General disembodied *soul* metaphor with the following specific manifestations: the soul is the locus of various emotions as well as properties, the soul is an object and the soul is a person metaphor. Our data revealed the above-mentioned general metaphoric models in the metaphoric idioms and phraseological units in both Georgian and English.

The models in our data were analysed based on the source and target domains of the metaphor. For instance, the group of container metaphors revealed universal models represented in three sub-models: SOUL IS A CONTAINER, SOUL IS A PRESSURIZED FLUID IN A CONTAINER and PUTTING THE (HEART AND) SOUL INTO A CONTAINER IS MAKING AN EFFORT.

As can be seen, in examples (a) and (b), the source domains of the metaphors are connected to the conceptualization of the soul as a container, full of love. In example (c), the soul is presented as a liquid in a container the absence of which means the end of life ("drinking the soul" means finishing life which leads to death). Interestingly, (e) presents the soul as a dammed-up liquid which can spray out in tears whereas (f) also draws a picture of an excessive liquid overflowing the container. In the next sub-model of the container metaphor, in examples (g) and (h), the source domain indicates the container into which a lot of effort (as heart and soul) is put. The target domains of metaphors are respectively love, life and death, and, presumably, negative emotions (sadness). In the process of metaphoric mapping, relevant associations are transposed from the source domain to the target domain. For instance, sadness is seen through the dammed-up liquid (soul), the pressure on which can be discharged through tears.

The model SOUL IS A PHYSICAL OBJECT reveals several universal sub-models. Example (i) presents sharing emotions and thoughts through opening a soul whereas (j) shows the same process through baring a soul. The examples in the sub-model SOUL IS MADE OF A SOLID SUBSTANCE, although making up similar metaphoric images (k, l), reveal some differences through the meaning of the verbs “imprint” and “engrave”. On the other hand, the sub-model of this model TO BE THE (HEART/LIFE AND) SOUL OF SOMETHING IS TO BE CENTRAL TO SOMETHING, presents the soul (and heart) as a central part of something- examples (m), (n) and (o). The source domain of the next model (TO KEEP SOUL AND BODY TOGETHER IS TO BE BARELY ALIVE) emphasizes the significance of the *soul* for staying alive whereas in the Biblical examples (r) and (s) the *soul* is presented as the most precious commodity which can be “sold” only when a person wants to achieve or acquire something essential for their well-being. In addition, the model SOUL IS A PERSON personifies conceptual metaphorization by indicating the metonymic transfer of *pars pro toto* (part for the whole) or the whole body of a person. In this respect, the lexeme *soul* is used to denote a range of emotions and positive or negative properties of a person.

The data revealed that Georgian reveals interesting examples of variant metaphors which specify the semantic potential of the lexeme *soul* in this language and culture. For instance, examples A and B present two different cases of container metaphor. In A, putting someone in the soul (container) means loving them. On the other hand, in example B, the soul is considered as the substance in the container, whereas the target domain is giving life. In the sub-model TO DISPOSSESS THE SOUL IS DEATH, death is conceptualized as saying goodbye to the soul. Interestingly, several sub-models in the Georgian material revealed more than one meaning. For instance, holding one’s breath may denote positive or negative emotions: (E and F). Other examples of such polysemy are the sub-models 6 and 7, presenting the act of opening the soul as negative (feeling of insecurity) and positive (love) emotions. Also, the heaviness of the soul in the source domain of the metaphor is conceptualized as being in a bad mood as well as being sinful (K and L). On the other hand, impatience is expressed by the source domains indicating having a thin soul and a shattering soul (M and N). In example (J), the soul indicates the national identity.

. Our data have not revealed many examples of the variant models in English as each group of disembodied soul metaphors of the soul is represented by one metaphor. For instance, the concept of becoming emotionally cold is described by the source domain containing the image of the iron entering the soul (K) while searching one’s soul indicates being honest with oneself.

It can be seen that this kind of research discloses interesting facts regarding the conceptualization of the surrounding world by different languages and cultures based on the experience accumulated over centuries.

References

Amosova, N. (2010). *Fundamentals of English phraseology*. Moscow. Knizhnyy dom Librokom.

Kapanadze, N., & Rusieshvili, M. (2018). Contrastive analysis of the ethno-psychological concept of *blood* in the German, English and Georgian languages. *Humanities and Social Sciences Review*, 08 (02): 165-178

Kövecses, Z. (2005). *Metaphor in culture: Universality and variation*. Cambridge University Press.

Kövecses, Z. (2010). Metaphor and Culture, *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica*, 2, 2 197-220.

Kövecses, Z & Szabó, P (1996). Idioms: A View from Cognitive Semantics, September *Applied Linguistics* 17(3)

Lakoff, G. and M. Johnson (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rusieshvili, M (2025). *The Proverb*. Lomisi Press

Rusieshvili-Cartledge, M & Dolidze, R. (2020), Chapter seventeen, A contrastive study of metaphoric idioms in English, Georgian, Russian and Turkish. *Contrastive Phraseology: Languages and Cultures in Comparison* Edited by P. C. Ramusino and F. Mollica. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Rusieshvili, M (2023). The Semantic Model of the Metaphor Revisited (2023). *Scripta Manent*, N1 (55)

Štralj Despot, K, Skrynnikova, I, Ostanina Olszewsjska, J (2012). Cross-linguistic analysis of metaphorical conceptions of душа/dusza/duša ('soul') in Slavic Languages (Russian, Polish, and Croatian). *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society Published by Linguistic Society of America*

Van der Linden, Erik-Jan (1992). Idioms, non-literal language and knowledge representation. In ITK Research Memo. Tilburg: *Institute for Language Technology and Artificial Intelligence, Tilburg University*

Online resources

British National Corpus (<https://www.english-corpora.org>)

Georgian National Corpus (<https://armazi.uni-frankfurt.de/gnc/gnc.htm>)

The database of Georgian idioms and proverbs (with their English, Russian, German, French, Turkish and Arabic equivalents (<https://idioms.tsu.ge>))