

EQUIVALENT SYNTACTIC PATTERNS IN THE IDIOMATIC EXPRESSION OF EMOTION

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Abstract: *This paper provides a contrastive study of idioms with a verbal base that convey emotional or mental states. My aim is to show that a typology of psych idioms can be outlined along a syntactic criterion, namely the position held by the Experiencer argument in the thematic grid of the idiom. To demonstrate this, I bring evidence from four languages: English, German, Romanian and Italian and highlight instances of equivalence.*

Keywords: *equivalence, experiencer, psych idiom, thematic grid, verbal idiom*

1. Introduction

According to Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994), two types of idiomatic expressions can be distinguished: idiomatic phrases (IdPs), which comprise idioms with an idiomatic interpretation not derived from the meaning of their constituent elements (e.g. *kick the bucket* - “to die”) and idiomatically combining expressions (ICEs), which refer to idioms with a derivable idiomatic interpretation (e.g. *pull strings* - “to use connections”). In other words, the global meaning of the idiom, whether unpredictable or predictable, helps us distinguish between pure idioms and partial idioms. In a pure idiom, the meaning of the whole idiom is totally different from the meaning of the components, while in partial idioms certain components preserve their literal meaning.

Focusing on psychological idioms, Dabrowska (2018: 151) argues that both psych-verbs and their idiomatic counterparts are related to the same emotion domains, i.e., HAPPINESS, SADNESS, ANGER, FEAR, and DISGUST, which are assumed to be stable across cultures. She examines the most canonical type of verbal idioms, i.e., idioms consisting of a lexical verb and a direct object, and the syntactic patterns that she identifies are:

Type (A): V + NP (no open position) *paint the town (red)*

Type (B): V + NP + PP *carry a torch for X*

Type (C): V + NP + PP *hold X in contempt*

Type (D): V + possessor + N + PP *lose Y's heart to X*

Type (E): V + NP + NP (Double Object Construction) *give Y the blues*

These idioms almost invariably contain agentive verbs that always have an object-noun phrase (NP), followed or not by a prepositional phrase (PP).

In contrast to Dabrowska’s account, my research aims to highlight the importance of the thematic roles in outlining a typology of psych idioms in four

languages. I apply the three-class typology of psych verbs elaborated in Belletti and Rizzi (1988) to the study of psych idioms, which are idiomatic expressions that have a meaning equivalent to that of psych predicates. Both idiomatic phrases and psych-verbs refer to the presence of a human participant, experiencing a particular emotional or mental state, i.e., an *Experiencer*, and a *Stimulus/ Causer/ Cause/ Target*, which has triggered this specific state or has become a target of it.

For the analysis of psych idioms, I mainly rely on O’Grady (1998: 294-309), who deals with the thematic roles of the NPs in idioms and predicts the thematic grids in verbal idioms in English:

- transitive verbs <Agent, Theme> *kick the bucket*
- <Agent, Location> *skate on thin ice*
- intransitive verbs <Theme, Location/ Goal> *be in hot water*
- ditransitive verbs (with a PP) <Agent, Theme, Goal> *feed x to the lion*
- <Agent, Theme, Location> *pull the rug out from under x*
- ditransitive verbs (in Double-Object constructions)
- <Agent, Recipient, Theme> *lend x a hand*

Thus, verbal idioms can be grouped according to the verb on which they are based and the thematic roles assigned to their arguments.

I also intend to check whether there are equivalent idioms in the four languages. Within the framework of contrastive phraseology, Korhonen (2007: 577) discusses interlingual phraseological equivalence, which can be approached quantitatively or qualitatively.

Quantitative equivalence is based on the number of phraseological equivalents found in the languages under consideration. Three types can thus be distinguished: mono-equivalence, poly-equivalence and zero equivalence, when one, several or no phraseological equivalent is available in the languages examined.

Qualitative phraseological equivalence, on the other hand, relies on similarity of denotative meaning, structure (or morpho-syntactic features) and lexical realisation. Three types of qualitative equivalence are explored: full, partial and replacement equivalence. Full equivalence is defined as identity of phraseologisms at all levels of analysis: denotative meaning, structure and lexical realisation. The majority of totally equivalent phraseologisms are internationalisms derived from a common cultural background. Partial equivalence implies similar denotative meaning, but differing morpho-syntactic and/or lexical realisation. Replacement (or zero) equivalence means that there is no phraseological equivalent in one language for a phraseological unit in another language and the meaning of a phraseologism can only be rendered by non-phraseological counterparts, like a free word combination or a lexeme in the other language. I will use the qualitative approach to phraseological equivalence in my examination of psych verbal idioms.

2. A typology of psych idioms

In this paper, I intend to demonstrate that psych idioms, just like psych verbs, always encode an Experiencer in their thematic grid; I shall support this assumption with illustrative data, selected from four languages: English, German, Romanian, and Italian. The paper incorporates the key findings of previous research on this topic, by Bejan, Vråmuleț (2021), Bejan (2019), and Bejan (2014),

in which we applied O'Grady's analysis to the group of verbal idioms of emotion, contrastively, in pairs of languages.

I shall summarise the data on idiomatic phrases in section 2.1., and on idiomatically combining expressions that comprise a [+part of the human body] NP in section 2.2.; in addition, I shall identify patterns of equivalence. The examples are selected from monolingual dictionaries of idioms (Cowie et al. 1994; Schemann 2012; Dumistrăcel 2011; Zingarelli 2013). For the sake of clarity, idioms in German, Romanian and Italian are followed by their literal (often simplified) translation into English, and by their semantic equivalent in English in a non-idiomatic or, if available, in an idiomatic form, between simple inverted commas.

2.1. The Experiencer as an argument in idiomatic phrases

The Experiencer argument in psych idioms, like that of psych verbs, can appear in subject position or in object position, thereby dividing psych idioms into Subject Experiencer idioms and Object Experiencer idioms.

2.1.1. Subject Experiencer idioms

In this group, I include psych idioms built on stative verbs with two arguments. The subject position is occupied by the Experiencer and the object position by an argument, with the theta-role of Locative in [1], Goal in [2] or Source in [3]:

<Experiencer, Location> (stative verbs)

[1]

- [E] *be over the moon* ('be very happy')
- be in the seventh heaven* ('feel extremely happy')
- [G] *im siebten Himmel sein* (lit. 'be in the seventh heaven')
- [R] *a fi în al nouălea cer* (lit. 'be in the ninth heaven')
- [I] *essere/ sentirsi/ stare/ al settimo cielo* (lit. 'be/ feel/ stay in the seventh heaven')

As it can be noticed, the verbal idiom *be in the seventh heaven* has full or total equivalents in several European languages (including French *être au septième ciel* and Spanish *estar en el séptimo cielo*) and may, therefore, be added to the group of Europeanisms, in terms of Piirainen (2005), who proposed a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural study of widespread idioms in Europe and beyond.

On the other hand, with non-stative verbs, the Experiencer argument in subject position can co-occur with a Goal or Path argument in the following partially equivalent idioms:

<Experiencer, Goal/ Path> (non-stative verbs)

[2]

- [E] *hit the roof/ ceiling* ('lose one's temper')
- go up the wall* ('become very angry')
- [G] *an die Decke gehen* (lit. 'go to the ceiling'; 'lose one's temper')
- auf die Palme gehen* (lit. 'go up the palm tree'; 'lose one's temper')
- an den Wänden hochgehen* (lit. 'climb on the walls'; 'lose one's temper')
- die Wände hochgehen* (lit. 'climb the walls'; 'lose one's temper')
- [R] *a se urca pe pereți / pe tavan* (lit. 'climb on walls/ on ceiling'; 'lose one's temper')
- [I] *andare in orbita* (lit. 'go into orbit'; 'lose one's temper')

Semantically, these idioms with a motion verb (*go, climb, hit*) denote a quick shift in emotional state, namely suddenly becoming angry. The Goal argument is realised by a PP with the noun *ceiling* in English, German and Romanian or *walls* in Romanian. The noun *walls* bears the thematic role Path in the Romanian idiom *a se urca pe pereți*, literally translated as ‘climb on walls’ and in its German equivalent, *an den Wänden hochgehen*, but also the Patient role in the German variant *die Wände hochgehen* (lit. climb the walls) or in the English idiom *go up the wall*.

The following thematic grid covers verbal idioms that take, in addition to the Experiencer argument in subject position, a second argument that bears the thematic role of Source of movement:

<Experiencer, Source> (non-stative verbs)

[3]

[G] *aus dem Häuschen geraten* (lit. ‘come out of the cottage’; ‘become angry’)

[R] *a-ți ieși din balamale/ țâțâni/ din pepeni* (lit. ‘get out of one’s hinges/ melons’; ‘become very angry’)

[I] *uscire dai gangheri* (lit. ‘get out of hinges’; ‘lose one’s temper’)

The Source argument is realised by home-related nouns, such as *Häuschen* ‘cottage’ in German, or *hinges* in Romanian and Italian. Though these idioms are semantically similar, as all denote a shift of emotions – suddenly losing one’s temper, they are not equivalent lexically (the Source argument can have alternative NP realisations in Romanian: *balamale/ țâțâni* ‘hinges’ or *pepeni* ‘melons’). The noun *hinges* also occurs in the English idioms *be/ go off one’s hinges* but they convey loss of control or rationality in a person, rather than an emotional state.

The verbs on which these idioms are based denote motion, *get/ go/ come out of*, and typically occur in intransitive configurations; additionally, in Romanian, the Experiencer argument in subject position co-occurs with a reflexive pronoun (*își/și*) in the Dative case, with a possessive meaning, which is a language specific feature. Since these psych idioms are slightly divergent morpho-syntactically and lexically, they are partially equivalent.

In broad lines, the selection of Subject Experiencer idioms clearly shows that these thematic grids allow for a certain degree of similarity in the realisations of the NP arguments, which results in psych idioms that are semantically equivalent, most of them expressing emotions such as: happiness, annoyance or anger.

2.1.2. Object Experiencer idioms

With this group of psych idioms, the argument with the thematic role of Experiencer occurs as object, in the Accusative case in [4], [5] or in the Dative case in [6], [7] in Romanian and German:

<Agent, Experiencer, Goal/ Path>

[4]

[E] *drive sb. up the wall* (‘annoy sb. continually’)

drive sb. round the bend (‘annoy sb.’)

[G] *jemanden. auf die Palme bringen* (lit. ‘bring sb. up a palm tree’; ‘make sb. angry’)

jemanden. in Harnisch bringen/ jagen (lit. ‘bring/ hunt sb. to armour’; ‘annoy sb.’)

[R] *a băga pe cineva în draci/ în boală* (lit. ‘put sb. in devils/disease’; ‘annoy sb.’)

These psych idioms have different lexical and syntactic realisations and are, therefore, partially equivalent, but they convey the same idiomatic meaning, expressing annoyance or anger.

<Agent, Experiencer, Source>

[5]

[E] *drive sb. out of one's mind* ('make sb. feel very annoyed')

[G] *jemanden aus dem Häuschen bringen* (lit. 'take sb. out of the small house'; 'make sb. angry')

[R] *a scoate pe cineva din pepeni/ balamale/ țâțâni* (lit. 'to take sb. out of melons/ hinges'; 'enrage sb.')

[I] *fare uscire qualcuno dai gangheri* (lit. 'make sb. get out of hinges'; 'enrage sb.')

mandare fuori qualcuno dai gangheri (lit. 'take sb. out of hinges'; 'make sb. angry')

These idioms, built on causative verbs, have similar meanings, namely 'making sb. angry'. There is lexical equivalence between the Romanian idiom *a scoate pe cineva din balamale/ țâțâni* (lit. to take sb. out of hinges) and the Italian idiom *mandare fuori qualcuno dai gangheri* (lit. take sb. out of hinges), but the English and the German idioms grouped under this thematic grid are lexically and syntactically different. The Romanian and the Italian verbal idioms in [5] can be analysed as Object Experiencer counterparts of the Subject Experiencer idioms illustrated in [3].

Additionally, there are several Object Experiencer idioms with a fixed subject, expressed by a unique NP, and an Experiencer in indirect object position. Such idioms can be grouped under two thematic grids, for which sample idioms are available in German and Romanian, but, apparently, not in English and Italian:

<Theme, Experiencer>

[6]

[G] *jemandem geht der Hut hoch* (lit. 'the hat goes up to sb. '; 'lose one's temper')

jemandem platzt/reißt die Hutschnur (lit. the hat cord bursts/ tears to sb.; 'lose one's temper')

jemandem platzt der Kragen (lit. 'the collar bursts to sb. '; 'lose one's temper')

jemandem gehen die Pferde durch (lit. 'the horses go through to sb. '; 'lose one's temper')

[R] *a i se îneca cuiva corăbiile* (lit. 'the ships sink to sb. '; 'become sad')

a-i sări cuiva muștarul (lit. 'the mustard jumps to sb. '; 'lose one's temper')

<Theme, Experiencer, Location>

[7]

[G] *bei jemandem ist Feuer unterm Dach* (lit. 'fire is at sb. under roof'; 'be nervous')

[R] *a nu-i fi toți boii acasă* (lit. 'all oxen are not at home to sb. '; 'be upset')

The analysis of the psych idioms with a fixed subject reveals that all denote a sudden shift of emotion, mostly anger or sadness, but their lexical and syntactic realisations are different in these two languages. As can be noticed, the translation of the German and Romanian Object Experiencer idioms in [6], [7] into English is rendered by a Subject Experiencer verb or idiom, which points to zero equivalence in English.

2.2. The Experiencer in idiomatically combining expressions with a [+part of the human body] NP

In all languages, there are idiomatically combining expressions, in which one component denotes a part of the human body, very often *heart* or *blood*, that is typically associated with or affected by an emotional state. Since the body part nouns retain their regular, emotion-related meaning, I will refer to such expressions as ‘partial idioms.’ According to Palmer (1976:99), in a partial idiom, one word maintains its usual meaning, while the other word has a meaning that is peculiar to a certain sequence.

In English, the Experiencer has a non-argument status, being realised as a possessive adjunct attached to a [+part of the human body] NP that occurs in subject position, as in [8a], or object position, as in [8b]:

- [8]
 a. *One’s heart is in one’s mouth.* (‘one suddenly feels very afraid’)
 b. *make somebody’s flesh/ skin crawl / creep* (‘scare/frighten and revolt/ disgust sb.’)

In what follows I shall examine another type of idiomatically combining expressions, namely those that take an Experiencer in argument position and include a [+part of the human body] NP that bears the thematic role of Location, Patient or Goal.

2.2.1. Location

With such idiomatically combining expressions, the [+part of the human body] NP is assigned the theta-role of Location or Locative, while the Experiencer occurs in subject position in the thematic grid given in [9], [10] or in object position in [11]:

Subject-Experiencer partial idioms
 <Experiencer, Patient, Location>

- [9]
 [E] *keep/ have sb. in one’s heart*
 [G] *jemanden im Herzen tragen* (lit. ‘carry sb. in the heart’; ‘have sb. in one’s heart’)
 [R] *a avea pe cineva în /la inimă* (lit. ‘have sb. in/at heart’; ‘have sb. in one’s heart’)
 [I] *avere qualcuno nel/ a cuore* (lit. ‘have sb. in the/ at heart’; ‘have sb. in one’s heart’)

These idiomatically combining expressions are fully equivalent in the four languages, with a minor difference in English, where a possessive form obligatorily precedes the body part noun.

The following thematic grid includes an argument with the thematic role of Instrument, realised by nouns like *nail/ thorn* that are suggestive of the cause of the state of anxiety.

- <Experiencer, Instrument, Location>
 [10]
 [R] *a avea un cui în/ la inimă/ în coastă* (lit. ‘have a nail in/at heart/ in rib’; ‘worry about sth.’)
 a avea/ a simți un ghimpe la inimă (lit. ‘have/ feel a thorn at heart’; ‘be upset’)
 [I] *avere una spina nel cuore/ fianco* (lit. ‘have a thorn in the heart/ side’; ‘be upset’)

The Italian partial idiom *avere una spina nel cuore/ fianco* (lit. have a thorn in the heart/ side) has a different lexical realisation in Romanian. However, English also makes available a partial idiom with the noun *thorn*, *be a thorn in sb's side/ flesh*, but the Experiencer occurs in an adjunct phrase, not as an argument in subject position. In German, the corresponding partial idiom with the equivalent of the English noun *thorn* is *jemandem ein Dorn im Auge sein* 'lit. be a thorn in the eye to sb.' and it belongs to the class of Object Experiencer partial idioms. Thus, while the Italian and the Romanian partial idioms evince a certain degree of structural and lexical similarity, the English and German counterparts are syntactically different and cannot be subsumed under the same thematic grid.

Object-Experiencer partial idioms

<Cause, Experiencer, Location>

[11]

[G] *jemandem an der Leber nagen / fressen* (lit. gnaw/ eat at the liver to sb.; 'gnaw at sb.')

[R] *a-l roade (pe cineva) la ficați* (lit. 'to gnaw sb. at liver'; 'cause sb. anger/ regret')

a-l seca (pe cineva) la ficați/ la inimă (lit. 'to dry sb. at liver/ heart'; 'worry sb.')

a-l ustura (pe cineva) la ficați (lit. 'to smart/ itch sb. at liver'; 'cause sb. anger/ regret')

This thematic grid includes a Cause in subject position and an Experiencer argument as an object, in the Dative case in German or in the Accusative case in Romanian. There is variation in the choice of the verb, which belongs to the *chew* class of ingestion verbs (Levin 1993: 42), but the meaning of these idioms is identical.

2.2.2. Patient

Idiomatically combining expressions included in this group take a Patient argument, expressed by a NP with the semantic feature [+part of the human body]. The Experiencer argument occurs in subject position in two-place predicate constructions [12], [13] or in object position in three-place predicate configurations [14], [15].

Subject-Experiencer partial idioms

<Experiencer, Patient>

[12]

[E] *tear one's hair out* ('be extremely worried about sth.')

[G] *sich (Dat.) die Haare raufen* (lit. 'pull the hair'; 'tear one's hair out')

[R] *a-și smulge părul din cap* (lit. 'pull the hair out of head'; 'tear one's hair out')

[I] *strappare i capelli* (lit. 'pull the hair'; 'tear one's hair out')

[13]

[E] *eat one's heart out* ('be very sad')

[R] *a-și face inimă rea* (lit. 'make one's heart bitter')

[I] *farsi sangue cattivo/ amaro/ marcio* (lit. 'make one's blood bad/ bitter/ rotten')

The idiomatically combining expressions in [12], based on the verbs *tear/ pull* that belong to the *hurt* class in Levin's (1993: 225) classification, are equivalent in all languages examined. However, there is a difference related to the thematic grid of

the Romanian idiom, which, in addition to an Experiencer and a Patient, also includes a Source argument, expressed by the noun *cap* ‘head’. The partial verbal idioms in [13] have identical meanings, but they are structurally and lexically divergent.

The following two thematic grids take an Experiencer argument in object position in the Dative case and a [+part of the human body] NP with the thematic role of Patient.

Object-Experiencer partial idioms

<Agent, Experiencer, Patient>

[14]

[G] *jemandem das Herz brechen/ zerreißen* (lit. ‘break/ smash the heart to sb.’)

[R] *a-i răni/ frânge/ rupe/ zdrobi cuiva inima* (lit. ‘hurt/ break/ smash/ crush the heart to sb.’)

[I] *spezzare/ spaccare/ schiantare il cuore a qualcuno* (lit. ‘hurt/ break/ crush the heart to sb.’)

These idiomatically combining expressions allow the same variation in the lexical verb and are, therefore, total equivalents in German, Romanian and Italian. A semantically similar partial idiom is also available in English *break sb.’s heart*, but there are no other lexical options for the verb and the Experiencer occurs in adjunct position, in a two-place, not in a three-place predicate configuration.

<Cause, Experiencer, Patient>

[15]

[R] *a roade cuiva ficatul* (lit. ‘gnaw the liver to sb.’; ‘gnaw at sb., be a source of worry or concern’)

[I] *rodere il fegato a qualcuno* (lit. ‘gnaw the liver to sb.’; ‘cause sb. feel continual anxiety, concern’)

These Object Experiencer partial idioms are lexically and structurally identical in the two languages. Their idiomatic meaning conveys negative emotions, such as anxiety, envy, worrying, etc.

2.2.3. Goal

In the following idiomatically combining expressions, the noun with the semantic feature [+part of the human body] is assigned the thematic role of Goal, whereas the Experiencer argument functions either as subject, in [16], or as indirect object in [17], [18]. The verbal basis is always a three-place predicate.

Subject-Experiencer partial idioms

<Experiencer, Theme, Goal>

[16]

[E] *take sth. to heart* (‘be deeply affected’)

[G] *sich (Dat) etwas zum Herzen nehmen* (lit. ‘take sth. to heart’; ‘be deeply affected’)

[R] *a pune ceva la inimă* (lit. ‘put sth. to heart’; ‘be deeply affected’)

[I] *mettere qualcosa nel cuore* (lit. ‘put sth. to the heart’; ‘be deeply affected’)

These Subject Experiencer idiomatically combining expressions are another instance of partial idiomatic equivalence, with an identical verb, *take*, in English and German, but a different verb, *put*, in Romanian and Italian. There is also a

minor syntactic difference concerning the predicate configuration in German, where the lexical verb occurs as a reflexive verb with an obligatory Dative pronoun (*sich*).

Object-Experiencer partial idioms

The [+part of the human body] NP with a Goal theta-role can also be found in the thematic grid of the Object Experiencer idioms shown below:

< Theme, Experiencer, Goal >

[17]

[G] *etwas fährt/ steigt jemandem in die Nase* (lit. 'sth. gets/climbs to sb. in the nose'; 'to get a noseful of sth.')

etwas geht jemandem an die Nieren (lit. 'sth. gets to sb. at the kidneys'; 'sth. bothers sb.')

[R] *a-i merge cuiva ceva drept la inimă* (lit. 'sth. goes to sb. straight to heart'; 'sth. goes straight to sb.'s heart')

<Agent, Experiencer, Theme, Goal >

[18]

[R] *a-i pune cuiva venin la inimă* (lit. 'put to sb. poison to heart'; 'upset sb.')

a da cuiva cu piper pe la nas (lit. 'give sb. with pepper about nose'; 'annoy sb.')

The idiomatically combining expressions illustrated in the thematic grid in [17] are available in Romanian and in German. They are built on motion verbs, but they have different meanings and are lexically and structurally divergent. The Romanian psych partial idioms in [18] do not have equivalents in the other three languages.

Idiomatically combining expressions with a fixed subject also deserve attention. The [+part of the human body] NP, functioning as unique subject, bears the theta-role of Theme in [19] or Goal in [20]. In both patterns the Experiencer occurs in dative object position:

<Theme, Experiencer >

[19]

[G] *jemandem kommt die Galle hoch*, (lit. 'the bile goes up to sb. '; 'become angry or bitter')

jemandem sträuben sich die Haare (lit. 'the hair bristles to sb. '; 'sb's hair bristles')

[R] *a-i îngheța cuiva ficatii* (lit. 'the liver freezes to sb. '; 'get frightened')

a i se înmuia cuiva picioarele (lit. 'the legs weaken to sb. '; 'get scared')

a i se rupe cuiva băierile inimii (lit. 'the heart straps break to sb. '; 'get upset')

These Object Experiencer partial idioms, available in German and Romanian, are syntactically and lexically divergent and are, therefore, an illustration of zero equivalence. Moreover, their translation into English is rendered by a Subject Experiencer predicate.

< Theme, Experiencer, Goal >

[20]

[G] *jemandem schiesst/ steigt das Blut ins Gesicht/ in den / zu Kopf* (lit. 'the blood shoots/ rises to sb. in the face/ the head'; 'one's blood rushes to one's head')

[R] *a i se urca cuiva sângele la cap* (lit. 'the blood rises to sb. to head'; 'one's blood rushes to one's head')

The German and the Romanian partial idioms in [20] evince identity in meaning, but differences in the predicate configuration (reflexive in Romanian) and in the lexical realisation (in the German idiom there is a choice between two verbs and two body part nouns).

Within the thematic grid configuration in [21], the fixed subject can also be expressed by nouns like *mustard*, *pepper*, *fly*, that connote annoyance, anger or anxiety:

- [21]
 [R] *a-i veni cuiva muștarul/musca la nas* (lit. ‘the mustard/ fly comes to nose to sb.’; ‘become angry’)
a i se sui /a-i veni cuiva) piperul la nas (lit. ‘the pepper goes/ comes to nose to sb.’; ‘become angry’)
 [I] *venire la senape/ mostarda/mosca al naso a qualcuno* (lit. ‘mustard/ fly comes to nose to sb.’; ‘become angry’)
- [22]
 [R] *a-i intra cuiva un cui la inimă* (lit. ‘a nail enters/ goes into heart to sb.’; ‘worry sb.’)
a i se pune cuiva un ghimpe la inimă (lit. ‘a thorn sticks/ goes into heart to sb.’; ‘worry sb.’)

All idiomatically combining expressions with a fixed subject in [21] are built on motion verbs like *come*, *enter*, *climb*, *rise*; the idiomatic meaning is identical, but there are minor differences in the lexical realisation and in the syntactic configuration of such idioms in the two languages.

The Romanian idioms in [22] have a unique subject realised by nouns like *cui* ‘nail’, *ghimpe* ‘thorn’ that suggest tormenting anxiety; syntactically, these idioms behave like Object Experiencer counterparts of the Subject Experiencer pure idioms illustrated in [10].

2.3. Equivalence patterns in the idiomatic expression of emotion

My research results show that the theory of thematic grids allows us to establish subclasses of idioms and to deal with similarities and differences between or among groups of idioms in the languages under investigation. The table below gives a clear synopsis of the conclusions I have reached regarding idiomatic phrases:

Psych idiom type	Thematic grid	E	G	R	I
SubjExp	<Experiencer, Location>	v	v	v	V
	<Experiencer, Goal/Path>	v	v	v	V
	<Experiencer, Source>		v	v	V
ObjExp	<Agent, Experiencer, Goal/ Path>	v	v	v	
	<Agent, Experiencer, Source>	v	v	v	V
	with fixed subject <Theme, Experiencer>		v	v	
	with fixed subject <Theme, Experiencer, Location>		v	v	

Table 1. Thematic grids shared by IdP (idiomatic phrases)

These thematic grids have made it possible for us to notice that there is equivalence in the group of Subject Experiencer idioms and Object Experiencer idioms in all four languages, but idioms with a fixed subject are richly represented only in German and Romanian.

The parallel examination of the thematic grids of psych idioms also points to the unavailability of Object Experiencer idioms with simple transitive verbs in all four languages, i.e., the lack of thematic grids with only two theta-roles. This gap can be accounted for by the fact that idioms need an internal argument with a figurative meaning and the Experiencer argument cannot qualify for such an interpretation.

[+ body part] NP	ICE	Thematic grid	E	G	R	I
Location	SE	<Experiencer, Patient, Location>	v	v	v	v
	OE	<Experiencer, Instrument, Location>			v	v
Patient	OE	<Cause, Experiencer, Location>		v	v	
	SE	<Experiencer, Patient>	v	v	v	v
	OE	<Agent, Experiencer, Patient>		v	v	v
Goal		<Cause, Experiencer, Patient>			v	v
	SE	<Experiencer, Theme, Goal>	v	v	v	v
	OE	<Theme, Experiencer, Goal>		v	v	
		<Agent, Experiencer, Theme, Goal>			v	
		with fixed subject <Theme, Experiencer>		v	v	
		with fixed subject <Agent, Experiencer, Goal>		v	v	v

Table 2. Thematic grids shared by ICE (idiomatically combining expressions)

Table 2 provides a tentative inventory of the thematic grids associated with the idiomatically combining expressions with a [+part of the human body] NP. The thematic grids are organised on two criteria: the position of the Experiencer argument and the thematic role assigned to the [+ part of the human body] NP, which can be viewed as Location, Patient or Goal.

The research results, schematically shown in the two tables above, provide the following:

- a typology of psych pure idioms (IdP) based on the position of the Experiencer argument;
- a typology of psych partial idioms (ICE) with a [+part of the human body] NP argument (except for English ICE, where the Experiencer appears in argument or adjunct position);
- a set of semantic, syntactic and/or lexical idiomatic equivalents;
- a range of verbal idioms with a unique subject (and with an empty slot for the Experiencer).

3. Conclusion

Taking the existence of the Experiencer thematic role in the thematic grid of an idiom as a guiding principle, I argued in favour of a typology of psych verbal idioms in four languages. The results of the research have been given in clearly organized tables that demonstrate that there are some patterns in the idiomatic expression of emotions, available in several languages, while others are language specific.

The schematic representation of the thematic grids of psych verbal idioms across the four languages is relevant for further research on idioms. It can be expanded to include other thematic grids in the same languages or data from other languages. It is also useful in creating an inventory of widespread psych verbal idioms that can be labelled as Europeanisms or internationalisms.

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