



LEXICO-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF PHRASEOLOGISMS FORMED USING THE VERBS "HAVE" AND "TO BE" IN FRENCH

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Abstract

This article offers a lexico-semantic analysis of French phraseological units constructed using the verbs "avoir" (to have) and "être" (to be). These two verbs, due to their high frequency and polysemy, constitute productive nuclei in the formation of fixed expressions. The study highlights the conceptual distinction between possession (associated with "avoir") and identity (linked to "être"), while demonstrating how these structures reflect the French conceptualization of states, emotions, and behaviors. Through cognitive and stylistic analysis, the article illustrates the expressive richness of French and the way in which the lexicon reflects culture and linguistic thought.

Keywords: Phraseological unit, semantics, verb, metaphor, possession, identity, fixed expressions.

Introduction

Phraseologisms constitute a major field of study in modern French linguistics, as they shed light on the mechanisms of lexical creativity and the cultural dimension of language. The verbs "have" and "to be", because of their frequency, polysemy and syntactic versatility, play a central role in the formation of a large number of fixed expressions. These phraseological units reflect the French conceptualization of states, emotions, qualities, and social relations. The analysis of these expressions allows us to better understand the dynamics of the lexicon and the way in which French structures thought through metaphorical schemes. The objective of this

article is to propose a lexico-semantic analysis of phraseologisms formed with the verbs "have" and "to be", by examining their structure, their semantic values and their fields of use, using representative examples from contemporary and literary French.

ANALYSIS

Now we are going to analyze the lexico-semantics of phraseologisms with the verb "to have". The verb "to have" plays a double role in the French language: a grammatical aid and a lexical support with a figurative meaning. It expresses possession, sensation, emotional state or symbolic qualities. The majority of phraseologisms constructed with "having" are based on a metaphor of possession: the state or feeling is perceived as an object that one holds. Thus, "to be afraid" or "to be hungry" does not refer to true possession but to an internal experience. Like what:

- Hunger/thirst — Express physiological needs that are considered temporary possessions; hunger and thirst become 'internal objects' that the subject experiences.
- Fear — Reflects an emotional experience; fear is metaphorically perceived as a possessed entity.
- Be lucky — Luck is conceptualized as a rare and random good that one benefits from temporarily.
- To be cold / to be hot — Express physical sensations represented by the possession of a thermal quality.
- To be right/to be wrong — Indicate the symbolic possession of a truth or error in an argumentative situation.
- Feeling the blues — A colloquial expression meaning to be melancholic; the 'cockroach' personifies sadness or gloom.
- Avoir la peach / avoir la patate — Contemporary expressions for vitality; the metaphor associates energy with nourishing fruit.
- To have a quarrel with someone — An old expression meaning to be in conflict; 'Maille' alludes to a small coin and symbolizes material discord.
- Good-hearted — Expresses the metaphorical possession of a valued moral quality.
- To have the upper hand / to have the lower — Express hierarchical relationships or symbolic domination.



Thus the verb "to be" also requires a lexico-semantic analysis of phraseologisms. The verb "to be" expresses the existence, identity, and relationship between the subject and a quality. In phraseologisms, it becomes a figurative support translating human states, conditions or behaviors. These expressions are often based on spatial, existential, or moral metaphors.

- Tired/sick — Express temporary physical or physiological states attributed to the subject.
- Being angry — Refers to an intense emotional state; anger is represented as a place where the subject is.
- To be aware — Metaphor of the current as a flow of information; signals knowledge of a fact.
- To be in trouble — A pictorial expression meaning to be in difficulty; 'kneader' refers to the container where the dough is kneaded, symbolizing a sticky situation.
- Being in the moon — A spatial metaphor for distraction or reverie; the subject is depicted as distant from reality.
- Being in heaven — A religious expression expressing extreme joy, as if the subject were sharing the space of the angels.
- Being in trouble — An old ironic expression for an embarrassing situation.
- Being on the same page — A technical metaphor from radio, meaning the intellectual or emotional agreement between people.
- Be in a good mood / be in bad faith — Express moral or psychological dispositions.
- To be at the end of your rope — A colloquial expression indicating a state of total exhaustion.

Comparison and semantic interpretation. The comparison between phraseologisms formed with "to have" and those with "to be" reveals two conceptual logics: that of possession and that of identity. Expressions based on "having" reflect internal states considered temporary and subjective, while those with "being" express qualities, behaviors or identity situations. Both categories show how French conceptualizes human experiences through metaphor. Thus, "being hungry" and "being tired" reflect similar states but according to distinct cognitive frameworks.

Literary illustrations of phraseologisms with "to have" and "to be"

The use of phraseologisms is not limited to everyday language; It is deeply rooted in French literature, where these expressions become vectors of symbolic and aesthetic meaning. Writers find in it a way to express states of mind, emotions or moral values through fixed lexical forms, carrying a strong cultural charge. First of all, phraseologisms with have:

In Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, the expression "to be afraid" takes on an existential dimension: "He was afraid of himself; fear is still the shadow of God." Fear, conceived as a possessed entity, becomes the sign of an inner conflict.

In Émile Zola's *L'Assommoir*, "to be hungry" translates material and moral misery: "They were hungry for bread, hungry for happiness, hungry for everything." Repetition amplifies the metaphorical scope of the vital need.

In Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*, "having a good heart" illustrates the moral nobility of the character: "He had a good heart, but life had hardened him." Phraseology here takes on a positive axiological value.

Finally, Flaubert uses **avoir de la chance** in **Madame Bovary** to emphasize the romantic illusion: the apparent possession of luck masks an intimate disappointment. These literary uses show that the verb **have** retains its metaphorical value of possession while taking on a psychological and moral dimension depending on the narrative context.

The verb **to be**, on the other hand, is often used to express the character's existential condition or mental disposition. In **Du côté de chez Swann**, Marcel Proust uses **être dans la lune** to evoke reverie and inner distance, a symbol of the contemplative life.

For Maupassant, **to be aware** in **Bel-Ami** refers not only to knowledge but also to social mastery: expression becomes a marker of power in the journalistic and social sphere.

In **Les Fleurs du mal**, Baudelaire gives **être aux anges** a mystical and loving scope, revealing the fusion of feeling and the sacred.

Finally, Albert Camus, in **The Fall**, uses **to be at the end of his rope** to signify existential weariness: moral exhaustion becomes a metaphor for the spiritual fall of modern man.

Thus, phraseologisms based on **being** translate in French literature a tension between being and appearance, between lived experience and the human condition.



These literary uses confirm that phraseologisms are not just a matter of common language: they constitute veritable stylistic instruments, capable of expressing the complexity of French subjectivity and culture through the permanence of fixed lexical forms.

CONCLUSION

The study of the phraseologisms constructed with the verbs "have" and "be" highlights their structuring role in the French language. These two verbs convey multiple metaphorical meanings, organizing the human experience along two major axes: possession and existence. These fixed expressions constitute a rich linguistic heritage and a nuanced tool for expression, requiring special attention in the teaching of French as a foreign language and research in applied linguistics.

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