

TAPA ILDIKÓ**Body-Part Images in the English Language****1. Introduction**

I have chosen this topic as I noticed that so we come across the names of body parts in everyday language and in all aspects of life so many times. They are worked into our language so deeply that we often do not even realize that the image of a human body part has been used in communication.

It is very interesting to see how body parts are used to express feelings, thoughts and activities, and are used as parts of objects or as a person. Sometimes we cannot see the connection between the two images (between the body part and what it is referred to), but if we have a deep look into the images and structures, we can see that, for example: a mountain has *a foot*, or *hand* or *head* is used to describe a person's work-role. The images have become customary and we use them without thinking about why they are said in a conversation and why it is possible to use body parts for parts of other things or people. Our body is so expressive that we borrow the names associated with it.

2. The concept of metaphor

Dirven has defined the concept of metaphor in two ways. According to him, in a broad sense, the metaphor is a process of transference. During this process "a relationship between two entities, qualities, states or processes is established on the basis of an association of given attributes of the one with attributes of the other."¹ In a narrow sense, according to Dirven, the metaphor is a process of transference in which the connection "between the two entities, qualities, processes or states is no longer a contiguous one."²

Sometimes words are created from figures of speech. The metaphor is used at least as many times in everyday speech as in poetry or literature. It is the most often used and most significant figurative expression. It is based on content analogy (which can be external, internal or functional) or emotional conformity between two concepts or ideas. The external content analogy means that it creates a connection between two images whose external characteristics are the same or very similar. In the following example, we use *sea* to express a large quantity. As *sea* consists of a huge amount of water, the street can be full of a large number of people. If we are at *sea*, we cannot see further because of the amount of water. The same happens to us if we stand in a big crowd. We cannot see far because there are a lot of people around us. *There are a sea of faces in the street* means that there are a lot of people in the street. The common feature is *sea* and *a lot of*. The internal content analogy means that it creates a connection between two images whose internal characteristics are the same or very similar. *He is an angel* means he is very good, kind and good-hearted. The common feature is *angel* and *good, kind and good-hearted*, as we know that angels possess these internal characteristics. Functional similarity means that a part of one expression is used for a part of another, as the two parts operate the same way. The *hand of a watch* means the indicator of the watch. The *hand* of the human body is used to mean the *hand* (indicator) of a watch as both operate the same way. They can indicate, show or point at things: their roles agree functionally.

¹ DIRVEN, R. 1985. Metaphor as a basic means for extending the lexicon. *The Ubiquity of Metaphor*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia/ Benjamins. p. 96.

² DIRVEN op. cit. p. 98.

Metaphor creates a picture in our minds to make the meaning more effective. It is like a comparison, but without the words “as” or “like”, which are used in simile. People try to express their feelings and thoughts appropriately and expressively to evoke revealing images in the listener’s mind. As it is mentioned above, this can be realized with the use of figures of speech such as the metaphor. When we hear the words *a sea of* or *angel*, the picture of the sea or that of an angel will appear in our minds for a moment. But as these pictures do not fit into the context, the occasional meaning of *sea* and that of *angel* will come into the mind so that we know that the concepts *huge* or *enormous* and *goodness* are being spoken about. Our knowledge of language confronts the two images, and it will identify the basic meaning and image with the new one on the basis of the similar characteristics discovered. So the new meaning of the same word will be substituted for the meaning of a commonly used word. Therefore, the role of metaphor is to represent two totally different images and meanings and identify them as having the same meaning. This gives an opportunity for a concept to be introduced into an environment in which it has never occurred before. In such a case, two semantic ranges are simultaneously in effect: the identified (the term whose meaning is extended by another word) and the identifier (the term which extends the meaning of another word). Thus, the concept will contain several new elements; it will be given the features of the image.

It is also realized that in some areas of life such as politics, economics, science and business, words have been invented, or words which already existed have been put together to create new words, forming “ex-metaphors”. These words are so necessary that they cannot be substituted for. They are like metaphorical terms. They can hide aspects of reality. As Lakoff has stated, metaphors in politics and economics matter more because they constrain our lives³. Lakoff gives an example of this: *labor*, which now refers not just to work itself but also to the people who work. *Labor is a resource*. Some words created by a definite group of people can be understood only by that or other groups of people who work in the same area, or are in the social scale. As the world is changing and developing, new terms have to be made up to be able to express and define that progress or a new creation.

Another type of figure of speech that we need is metonymy. This term comes from a Greek word which means “change of name”. Metonymy is a metaphorical process in which the name of a thing is given to something else “due to their various intrinsic relationships”⁴. Thus, metonymy is based on the connection between two concepts. This connection can be:

- local and spatial (the name of the place is used for the people who live there);
- between a symbol and the person it stands for;
- between container and contained (*delicious dish* means *delicious food*);
- between the name of a producer or place and the product (to *hoover* means *Hoover’s vacuum cleaner*);
- between an article of a dress and a person who wears it (*monokini* means a *girl* or a *woman*);
- between the name of an author and his work (to read *Shakespeare* means a *work by him*).

In the fifth case, the relationship is not constant; that is, the articles of dress are changing all the time.

Synecdoche also belongs to the figures of speech. It is a subcategory of metonymy and also comes from a Greek word, which means “understanding together, to mean with it”. In synecdoche, the part stands for the whole or the whole

³ LAKOFF, G. and JOHNSON, M. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago, Chicago University Press p. 236.

⁴ DIRVEN, R. op.cit. p.96.

for the part. *They need a new hand* means they need a new person. Fábíán, Szathmári and Terestyéni have identified two more types of synecdoche. In synecdoche the genus can stand for the species or vice versa, or the singular can stand for the plural.⁵

Johnson and Lakoff distinguish orientational metaphors and ontological metaphors. Orientational metaphors include spatial orientation like up-down, in-out. “These spatial orientations arise from the fact that we have bodies of the sort we have and that they function as they do in our physical environment, for example: *happy is up*”.⁶ Understanding our experiences in terms of objects and substances allows us to pick out parts of our experience and treat them as discrete entities or substances of a uniform kind. Once we can identify our experiences as entities or substances, we can refer to them, categorize them, group them and quantify them. Our experiences with physical objects, especially our own bodies, provide the basis for an extraordinarily wide variety of ontological metaphors, that is, ways of viewing events, activities, emotions and ideas as entities and substances, for example the mind is a machine: *my mind just isn't operating today*.

3. Body part metaphors

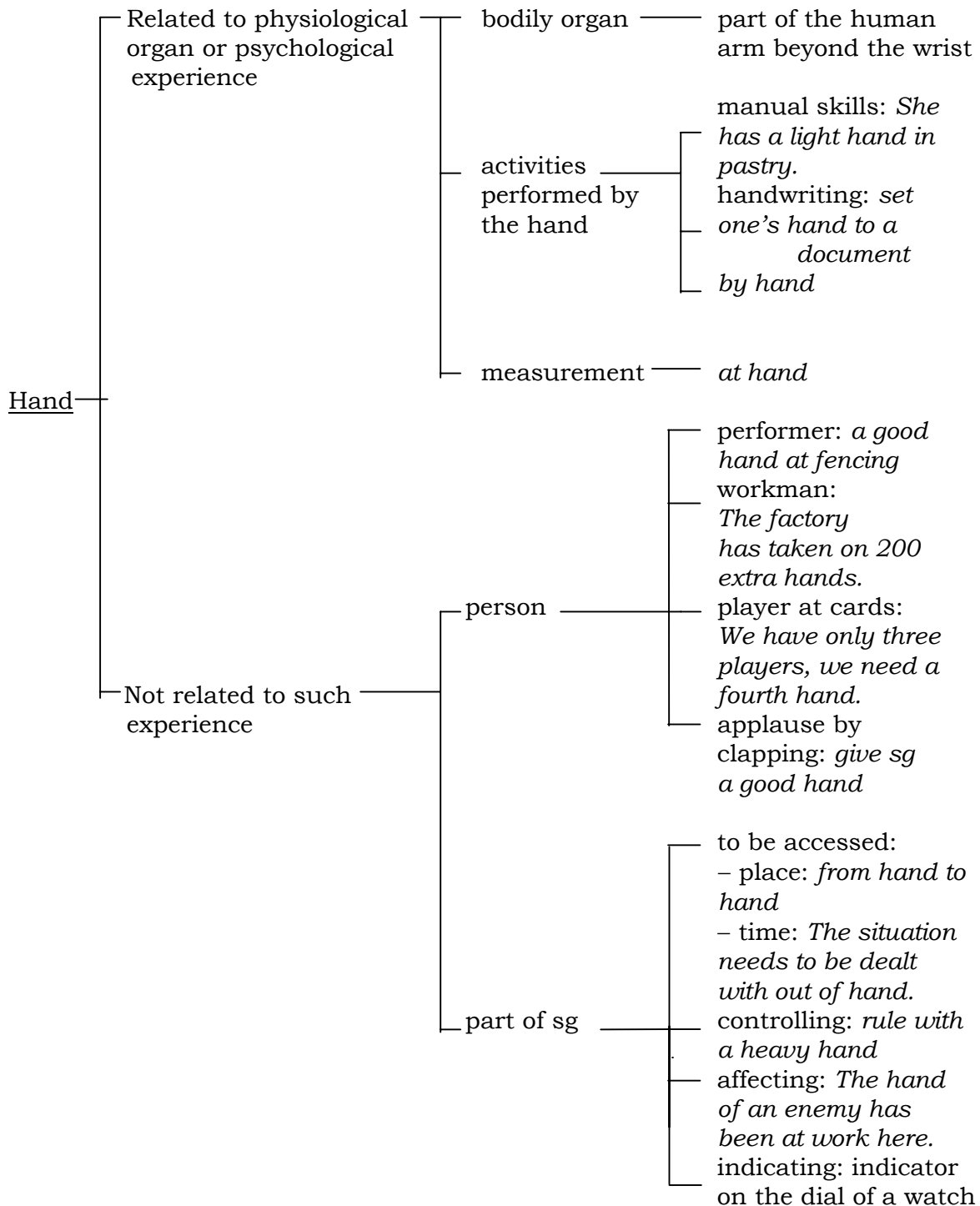
Expressions using names of body parts occur in every aspect of life. Not surprisingly, there are many body metaphors in everyday language. When a child is born, he/she tries to get to know his or her body first. The infant watches his fingers, toes, legs, and experiences the outside world with his/her body. In life, there are many other things that possess such parts whose shapes are similar to those of the body. The other thing is that we act and think with the help of our bodily organs and parts of our body. Without using our body, we could not achieve our goals. So our body is a kind of tool for us, which we can rely on and which will support us. The parts of our body operate differently, that is why we can do so many different things. By using body parts, we cause situations to take place. The following tables are drawn up according to Dirven's table⁷ showing the meanings of *heart*.

⁵ FÁBIÁN, P., SZATHMÁRI, J., TERESTYÉNI F. 1977. The outline of Hungarian stylistics. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó p. 111.

⁶ LAKOFF, G. op.cit.p. 14.

⁷ DIRVEN, R. op. cit.p. 108.

3.1. Limbs
3.1.1. Hand

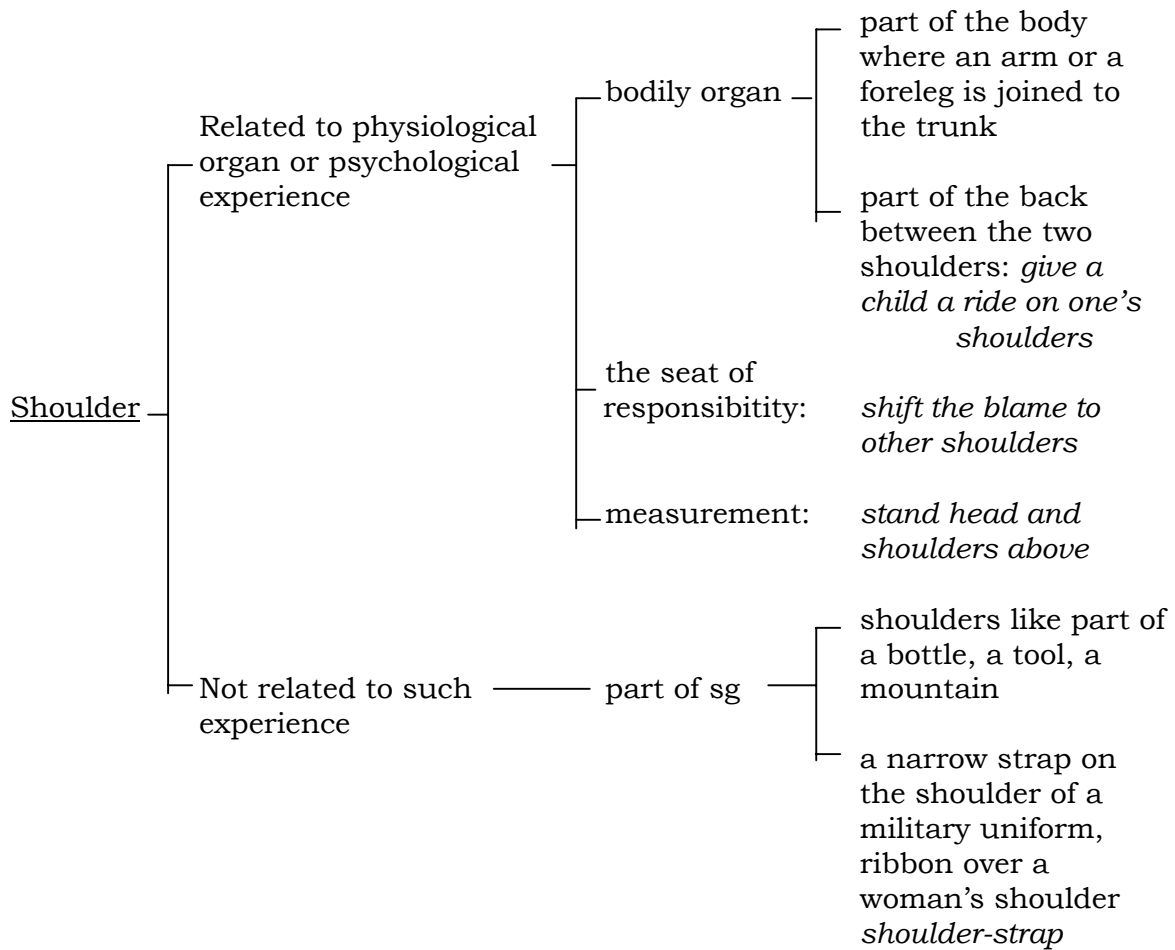


The *hand* is a very popular word that appears in several figures of speech to express different things. It can be a synecdoche when *hand* means a person in an expression: *new hand* refers to new person or workman. As a metaphor, it can occur in such cases when the part of an object or an animal looks like the shape of a hand as it happens to the indicator of a watch that is called *hand*, or the *hand* of a monkey. It also means 'help': *give sy a hand*; possession: *have a hand in sg*; cooperating: *join hands with sy*; participation: *take a hand in sg*; care: *have sg on one's hands* and many other things. It is also used as a measurement unit: the

breadth of the hand which equals about four inches. The *hand* is present in many situations which are about controlling and ruling. As we usually make things with our hands, we influence our environments with our hands, it is not by chance *hand* substitutes for words and expressions dealing with control and government. Even the king, to symbolize the power, holds a sceptre and an orb in his hands. Whatever the king does with his hands, it has to be followed as it is sacred. When the king raises his hand, everybody knows what one has to do as the hand is the symbol of power.

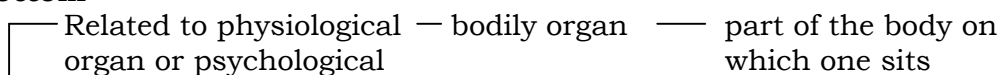
3.2. Supporting parts of the body

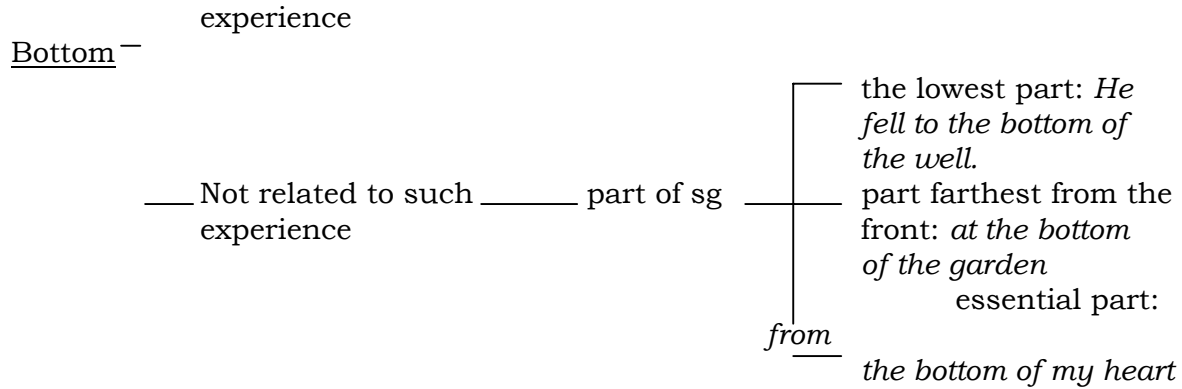
3.2.1. Shoulder



The shoulder can be the part of a mountain, a road, a gun or a letter. The term can express the object on which we hang our coat. It can be used for a measurement unit: *stand head and shoulders above the rest*, as well as for mental and physical strength: *his shoulders are broad enough*; indifference: *shrug one's shoulders*; responsibility and hard work: *he always has a good deal on his shoulders, don't take too much on your shoulders* and *shift / take the responsibility on somebody's shoulders* or *lay the blame on somebody's shoulders*.

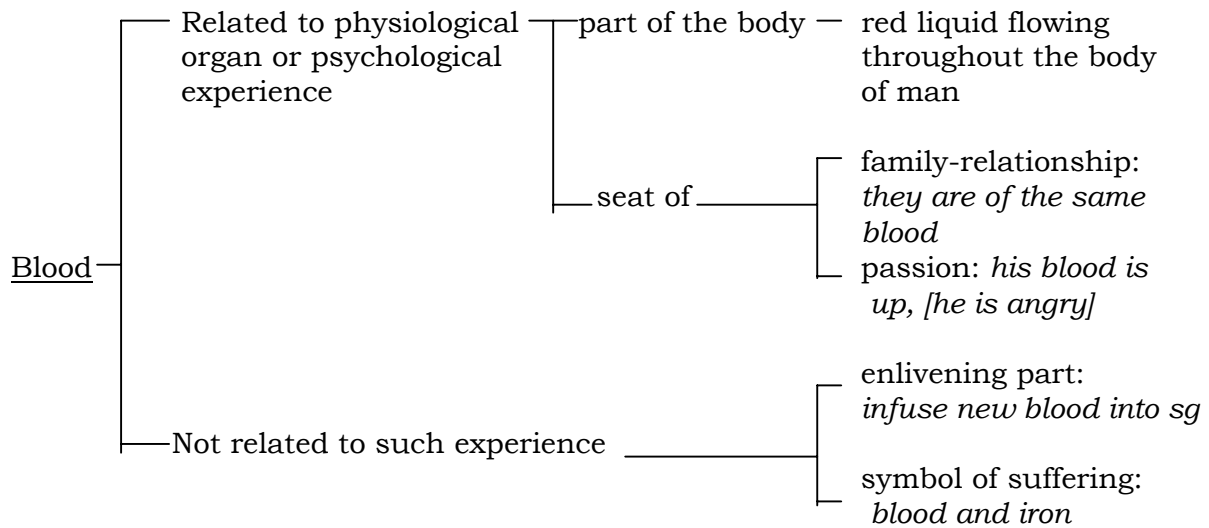
3.2.2. Bottom





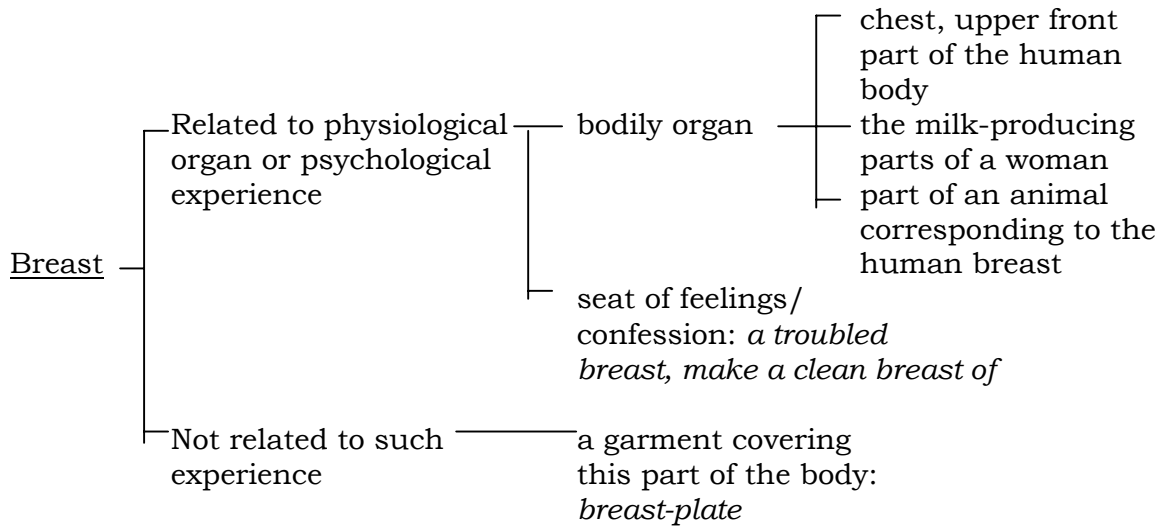
The bottom is the lowest part of the human body. Everything that has a body also has a bottom. A lake has a *bottom* as well as a plate, a glass, a chair, a ship has. The bottom is in the lowest position. The same situation happens to a street or a garden: *at the bottom of the garden, at the bottom of the street* which means at the end of the garden, at the end of the street. It represents a kind of distance from the main part in a body. Behind reasons, thoughts and feelings there is a base, an important part on which reasons are based. There is a main cause around which other things are grouped. If we have a problem and we want to solve it we have to search or examine to the bottom of it. We have to find where the problem originates from, what caused it.

3.3. Blood



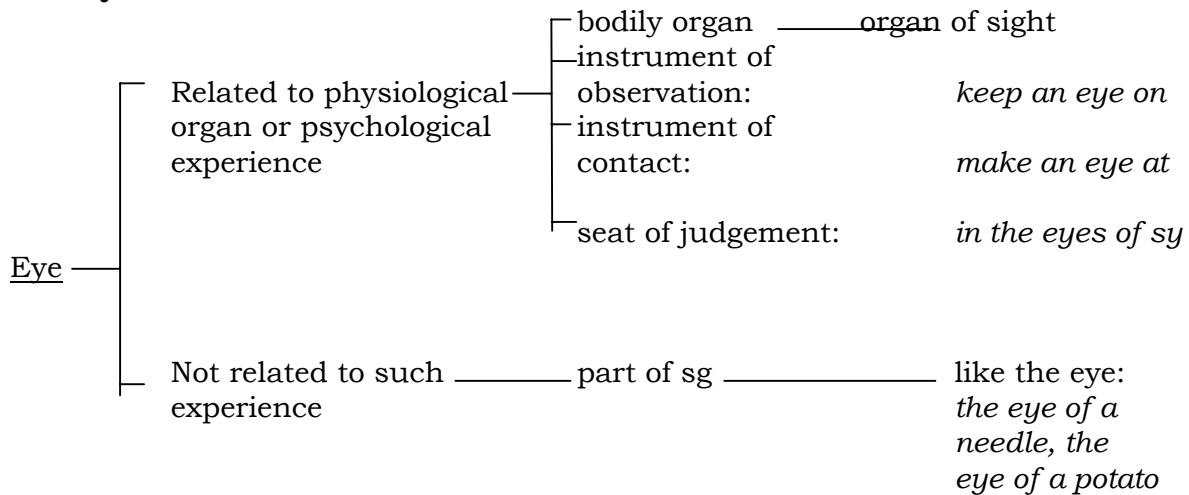
Without blood we could not live. We can feel dizzy, can become ill, if our blood pressure is too high or too low. Our feelings can depend on our blood pressure. If we are afraid to tell the truth, we are cowardly, *we have no blood in our veins*. By using blood in an expression, it can refer to our emotions, anger: *his blood was up, it makes my blood boil* or can express fear: *his blood runs cold, my blood turns*. These are all metonymies. Blood can also express relationship, family connection, birth of people as we are born from our parents, we inherit their blood, some of their characteristics: *they are near in blood, blue blood* refers to an elit person from a royal family. It can refer to a person who is new in a given surroundings: *new blood. The company needs new blood* which means the company needs new people who are more talented and skilful. So *blood* can stand for the whole person, which is a synecdoche.

3.4. Breast



Every female human being and mammal has a breast with which they feed their little ones. So with a breast they can give life in a way. The breast contains one of the most important organs, the heart which is the seat of emotions in metaphorical human thinking. If we are sad, we feel pain in our heart or breast. If we are happy or glad to see someone, we *press that person to our breast* to show our feeling. The breast is also the seat of conscience: *make a clean breast of it*. *Breast* is used as a metonymy.

3.5. Eye



The eye is one of our bodily organs which can be used for many different actions, situations. The eyes are the window of the soul. They reflect what is going on in our mind, it reveals our feelings. As it senses the external world, we come to a conclusion through our eyes. We have an opinion, we judge people, actions, objects around us. The outside world has effects on us, and as we can see and experience this world we decide whether we like it or not, if it is agreeable to the eye or not. Our eyes are like a mirror, they can show our decisions, opinions about what we have experienced. The following expressions show how we use *eye* referring to opinions and judgements: *have an eye for, in my eye, in the eyes of somebody*, which mean in the judgement of somebody, in one's opinion, from the point of view of somebody. These examples are called metonymy. Eyes can be used to express the

presence or the state to be well known: *under/before one's very eyes* and *to be in the public eye*. Though it belongs to observation, care and concern can also be referred to: *keep an eye on*, or *to give an eye to* since if we want to look after or take care of someone or something we have a look at it and see what is happening to it. The expressions *with dry eyes* or *with jealous eyes* also show our feelings. If we are sad, we cry, so we are sensitive, but those who cannot be hurt, and no matter how hard we try to offend them, will not cry, their eyes will remain dry. These people are indifferent and insensitive. The same happens in the case of *with jealous eyes*. So the eye is a container of our thoughts, feelings and care. If we go further, we can see that different objects have eyes, as well. Needles, potatoes, some tools and hammers have eyes which are holes in reality. These holes look like the eyes as they have the shape of the eye.

If I want to summarize the roles of the body parts, we can read it from the tables that the limbs are used for measurement units, they express power and control, skills, act as a tool or an instrument, as well as they substitute for a person. By using limbs, we can differentiate higher positions from lower ones.

The next group of the body parts are used to express support, they are like containers. The *bottom* can even be used for people as a synecdoche. These body parts are the main parts of a human being and they symbolize this fact in the case of parts of other objects as well. As these parts of the body are the main ones, they will support us. These parts carry the heavy things and do the hard work not only physically but mentally as well as in the case of the *shoulder*, which can be used for 'responsibility'.

All the remaining body parts I mentioned in the tables above are the seat of something. Blood and the breast are the seat of emotions, the eye is the seat of judgement and opinion. What is common among these body parts is that they are all instruments of something.

4. Conclusion

As we can see, the body parts are used in many ways of life. They express different things, emotions and so on. As life progresses, we will need more and more words. We create new body-type metaphors and might omit or keep the old ones. There are several objects that are given the name of a body part and we are sure that we cannot use another word for them as their shapes or operational systems are similar to that of our body parts. It is also noticeable that a body part used for something else does not mean anything if it stands alone, only if it is in a sentence. If we only say *butt*, we would think of a bottom but not of a whole person. But if we put the *butt* in a sentence: *get your butt over here*, we would realize that the *butt* means a person. This can be an example of slang, as well, which shows what a colourful and different language there can be even in one culture. With the help of the body parts, we can dramatically extend the lexicon.