

AN INSIGHT INTO THE SEMANTICS OF SELECTED BODY-PART IDIOMS IN BAMANANKAN

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ABSTRACT :

Idioms are phrases whose meanings are arbitrary. That is why understanding them is very challenging, particularly for novice language users. This paper examines the meaning of some idiomatic expressions relating to body parts in Bamanankan. Body parts are a very productive source for idiomatic expressions having specific lexical meanings. The corpus for this study is collected from casual conversations and family deliberations. Specifically, the collected idioms pertain to body parts: the head, ears, eyes, tongue, the leg, the hand, and the heart. The qualitative analysis of data provides insight into how idioms are understood in terms of their figurative meaning. Riemer's (2010) approach to idioms was adopted in the interpretation of data. Detecting the meaning of idioms such as "jinkuru" or "**tuloba**" is difficult if the context of use is not taken into account. The study also concludes with the submission that idioms can be classified as positive and negative, which confirms Al-Adaileh and Abbadi's (2012) investigation of the pragmatic implications of conventional body-based idioms in Jordanian Arabic. It is further suggested to include idioms in the syllabus of Bamanankan learning which can be devoted both to their semantic and pragmatic aspects. This could be done at the university level in the faculties of languages.

Keywords: semantics, idioms, Bamanankan, lexical meaning, constituent elements, opacity

RÉSUMÉ :

Les locutions sont des expressions dont les sens sont arbitraires. C'est pourquoi les comprendre est un réel défi surtout pour les utilisateurs novices de la langue. Cette étude s'intéresse au sens de certaines expressions idiomatiques dérivées des parties du corps en Bamanankan. Les parties du corps sont une source très productive d'expressions idiomatiques ayant des sens lexicaux spécifiques. Le corpus de cette étude a été collecté à partir de conversations informelles et des délibérations familiales. En particulier, les expressions collectées ont trait à la tête, les oreilles, les yeux, la langue, le pied, la main, et le cœur. L'analyse qualitative des données donne un aperçu sur comment les locutions sont comprises en terme de leur sens figuratif. L'approche de Riemer (2010) est adoptée dans l'interprétation des expressions idiomatiques. Il est difficile de deviner le sens des locutions telles que "jinkuru" ou "**tuloba**" si le contexte dans lequel elles sont employées n'est pas pris en compte. Aussi, l'étude conclut que les expressions idiomatiques peuvent être classées comme positives et négatives ; ce qui confirme la recherche d'Al-Adaileh et Abbadi (2012)

sur les implications pragmatiques des locutions conventionnelles basées sur les parties du corps en Arabe jordanien. De plus il est suggéré d'inclure les expressions idiomatiques dans les manuels d'apprentissage du Bamanankan qui peuvent être à la fois dédiés à leurs aspects sémantiques et pragmatiques. Cela pourrait se faire au niveau universitaire dans les facultés de langues.

Mots clés : sémantique, locutions, Bamanankan, sens lexical, éléments constitutifs, opacité

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of meaning in any language is technically referred to as semantics. It includes the study of the meaning of words, phrases, clauses, sentences and discourse. Moreover, the study of semantics means knowing fixed phrases, consisting of more than one word with meaning that cannot be inferred from the meaning of individual words. Our concern of idioms from a semantic perspective is the possibility of lexical substitution with regard to meaning. For example, in the idiom **bag of bones**, meaning 'very thin person', 'bones' cannot be replaced by 'yam'. "Bag of yam" bears some literal meaning and has nothing to do with 'thin person'. In the same way, the Bamanankan idiom which goes as "aw ye **dugu tulobaw** ye" literally translating "you are well informed" does not refer to "village" or "big ear", but simply to people who are well informed.

Idiomatic expressions are widespread in different languages and their understanding is of paramount importance for smooth communication. Idioms are expressions whose meaning is not predictable from the literal meanings and arrangement of their constituent elements. For example, the English idiom **under the weather** meaning 'not feeling well, sick' cannot be understood in terms of what we know of weather. In the same way, Bamanankan abounds expressions the senses of which cannot be inferred by simply referring to the meaning of the individual words composing such expressions. They are referred to as '**kolekan**', that is, a group of words that can designate something other than what is meant by individual words composing it. "Bambara, also called Bamanankan or Bamanan, is a member of the Manding group of Central-Southwestern Mande" (Green, 2015, p.4). With regard to fixed expressions – idioms, proverbs, and sayings – of that language, Bailleul (2005) opines that most sayings in Bamanankan are in the form of two juxtaposed clauses which are opposite in meaning. One distinguishing feature of these clauses is the use of "**nka**" (but) linking them as in:

Don bæ ye nson ta ye, (nka) don kelen ye fentigi ta ye. This literally translates that "everyday belongs to the thief, (but) one day belongs to the owner".

This opposition in meaning differentiates idioms or '**kolekan**' in Bamanankan from proverbs which are the expression of people's wisdom generally stated to give advice or moral truth. An instance of idiom in Bamanankan is 'n sen ka teli' translating "I am in a hurry" but not *my foot is quick. The sentence 'n tɛ taa **fɔ piki ni pelu**' (I will not leave before pike and shovel) should be understood as 'I stay up to death'. Though idioms are viewed as opaque expressions, some of them are easy to understand.

In order to shed light on the opacity of idiomatic expressions, this study aims at exploring idioms from a semantic standpoint. In this end, the paper presents some idioms relating to body parts such as the head,

the eyes, the hand, the tongue, and the heart (1) and the question of the interpretation of body-parts based idioms in Bamanankan (2). To meet the set objective, the following research questions have been formulated: What are the idiomatic expressions derived from body parts? (1); how do Bamanankan speakers interpret these idioms? (2)

2. DEFINING IDIOMS

It is a real challenge for linguists to define idioms due to the difficulties in deciding what should be considered as an idiom. For example, in the eyes of Wadepuhl (1928, p.68), “any construction that could not be translated literally from one language into the other has been considered an idiom” Besides the possibility of being regular and logical, Seidl and McMordie (1978, p.4) opine that “an idiom is a number of words which, taken together, mean something different from the individual words of the idiom when they stand alone. The way in which the words are put together is often odd, illogical or even grammatically incorrect”. Seidl and McMordie also subdivide idioms into short and long idioms. The first group is composed of adjectives + nouns combinations; for example: *French leaves, black market, cold war, a snake in a grass, etc.* The second group is in the form of verbal phrases; for example: *to fish in troubled waters, to take something to heart, to get the upper hand.* Likewise, Palmer’s (1986) is of the view that an idiom is a phrase covering more than one word, whose meaning is unpredictable from the individual constituent words. Additionally, he notices that even though idioms behave like single words in semantic perception, grammatically they cannot be recognized as such units since idioms normally do not undergo changes (e.g. cannot form the past tense). The semantic opacity of idioms is also highlighted by O’Dell and McCarthy (2010) who postulate that idioms are fixed expressions whose meanings are not predictable from looking at the individual words composing them.

Drawing from the above definitions, it can be postulated that an idiom is a group of words where the constituent elements, taken together, have a meaning that is different from the dictionary definitions of the individual words. Simply put, idioms are semantically opaque phrases the senses of which cannot be guessed from their constituent words. This paper adopts Everaert’s (2010, p.77) construct that idioms are “all formulaic expressions including sayings, proverbs, collocations”.

Interestingly, authorities in the study of idioms find them as an interesting issue to be investigated deeply in that idioms “carry more impact than non-idiomatic expressions because of their close identification with a particular language and culture” (Nida 2001, p. 28). For example, euphemisms are specific types of idioms. An idiom is a word or phrase where the meaning cannot be guessed from its constituent words, whereas a euphemism is specifically a pleasant way of saying unpleasant things. In this regard, Alego (2005) points out that euphemisms often appear in contexts referring to unhappiness of human life, like death or diseases, but they also refer to very emotive events such as birth. Idiomatic expressions, on the other hand, are idiosyncratic ways to mentioning concepts without necessarily saying them more pleasantly. The only thing idioms and euphemisms have in common is that they have a figurative meaning. This figurativeness is particularly highlighted by Glucksberg (2001) Hinkel (2017), Kovecses and Szabete (2017) in that the meanings of idiomatic expressions are unpredictable from their constituent parts. Idioms also differ from

proverbs because the latter are short, well known sentences expressing a general truth or a piece of advice in which the meanings of the words are literal (Rumide, 2013). Based on O'Dell and McCarthy (2010), the category of fixed expressions includes clichés which are defined as routine informal expressions used in advertising slogans and newspaper headlines. O'Dell and McCarthy provide the following example of cliché: *There are plenty more fish in the sea / pebbles on the beach* (p. 30). According to the authors, this idiomatic expression is used to tell someone whose relationship has ended with a friend that there are many other people with whom they could have a relationship. It can be inferred, therefore, that the word 'idiom' is an umbrella term used to refer to memorized strings such as parts of poems, title of songs, lyrics, and any other sequence of words (proverbs and sayings) represented and distributed in lexicon (Hinkel, 2017 and Cacciari and Tabossi, 1988).

3. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON BODY PARTS IDIOMS

A substantial body of researches has been devoted to the study of idioms. Lazarus (1991) classified Judeo-Spanish and Turkish proverbs and idiomatic expressions in relation to positive and negative emotions. He posits that negative emotions include disgust / hate, fright / anxiety, shame / guilt, sadness, jealousy / envy, and anger. By contrast, positive emotions encompass happiness / joy, relief, pride, and love / affection. The statistical analysis revealed that more Judeo-Spanish proverbs and idioms employ the eyes and ears in order to express disgust / hate, and only the eyes to express jealousy / envy and love / affection, whereas more Turkish proverbs and idioms employ the nose to express sadness, anger, and pride, and the tongue to express disgust / hate and sadness for some socio-cultural reasons. On the basis of Lazarus' research, Agis (2007) also investigated the use of different facial sensory organs in Judeo-Spanish and Turkish proverbs and idioms to express certain emotions from a cognitive pragmatic perspective. He utilized various proverb and idiom dictionaries indicating negative and positive emotions through facial organs: the eyes, the ears, the nose, and the tongue. Unlike Lazarus (1999), Agis (2007) addressed his attention to the similarities and differences between the uses of the Judeo-Spanish and Turkish proverbs and idioms that express negative and positive emotions among the Jews of Spain and the Turkish.

In a similar vein, Turpin (2002) addressed the question of how feelings are expressed in Kaytetye, a language spoken in Central Australia. She explored the extent to which specific body part terms relate to different types of feelings, based on linguistic evidence in the form of lexical compounds, collocations and the way people mention feelings. Her investigation highlighted that particular body part terms collocate with different feeling expressions for different reasons. This collocation is either due to the fact that the body part is the perceived locus of the feeling, or a lexicalized polysemy of a body part term, a metonymic association between a body part, a behavior, and a feeling.

The claim that body part terms relate to feelings and actions is underlined by Charteris-Black (2004) who noted a high frequency of body part metaphors in American Presidential Speeches. Like Turpin (2002), she pointed out that several parts of the body were metaphorically used to refer to particular actions. Thus, "the hand is metonymically associated with all types of physical action, the heart with feeling, the head with thinking and the eyes with seeing and metaphorically with understanding)" (p.105).

In a different register, Almajir (2013) directed his attention to the study of the head with its sub-parts which are the eyes, the ears, the nose, the mouth, the face, and the forehead in the Hausa language. To do so, he used the model of descriptive lexical semantics. His study sets out with the assumption that the head and its sub-parts are a rich repertoire for metaphorical meanings. For example, with respect to eyes, he postulates that “An eye is an opening for information to reach into the heart. Raw information received has to be processed by the heart before it can turn into knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, eyes are windows into the mind and can be a source of polysemy when used in various expressions” (Almajir, 2013, p.103). He came to the conclusion that the figurative use of body part terms represents a rich source of metonymic and metaphoric expressions in everyday language use.

Lusekelo and Kapufi’s (2014) study was concerned with the investigation of the way names of body parts are artistically used to convey meanings and messages in Kifipa, a Bantu language of Tanzania. They focused on the metaphoric expressions relating to foot, waist, heart, eye, breast, finger, head, brain, and mouth. Their study revealed that the metaphoric use of names of body parts in Kifipa relies on Watts’s (2003) construct of politeness, stylistic, and cognitive hypotheses (Jilala, 2012). These expressions are also beneficial in word economy. The authors further postulated that the context of use alongside the background knowledge was determinant in decoding metaphors related to names of body parts.

Contrary to Lusekelo and Kapufi, Hsieh and Lu (2014) made a cross-linguistic cognitive and semantic investigation of eye expressions in Chinese, Spanish, and German. The analysis of the data collected from corpora and dictionaries revealed that the verbs of eye expressions were of paramount importance in expressing emotion. They also demonstrated that the verbs deriving from other body parts, such as the hand and the mouth, were extended to the sight domain and assist in communicating emotions effectively.

The abovementioned investigations relate body part expressions to emotions, feelings, and actions. In a different register, Lasater et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study to examine the ways in which rural Malian women expressed mental distress with regard to pregnancy and childbirth. Their survey revealed that women articulated various idioms of distress which include *geleya* (difficulties), *toro* (pain, suffering), *hamin* (worries, concerns), and *dusukasi* (crying heart) occurring within a context of poverty, interpersonal conflict, and gender inequality. They came up with the conclusion that the distress idioms were context-dependent.

Overall, the aforementioned studies echo similar characteristics of the terms derived from body parts in that they are a source for metaphoric use. However, these investigations did not view body parts expressions from a semantic perspective. Therefore, the present study focuses specifically on the semantic aspect of idiomatic expressions based on the heart, the head and its subparts as they are used in Bamanankan.

Several theories have been propounded with regard to body idioms. For example, cognitive linguists such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), Kövecses (2002) and Musolff (2004), claim that the functioning of our bodies is crucial for the structure of our conceptual system. In particular, Lakoff and Johnson’s (1999) concept of embodiment implies that body metaphors use body parts as source domain to describe other things. This means that body functions are mapped onto other objects in the process of body metaphors formation. Moreover, Ibarretxe (2006) suggests the compositional polysemy model in the analysis of body part idioms. This framework relies on the interaction between a lexeme denoting a body part and co-occurring elements leads to the emergence of numerous senses that are different from the notion of body

(Almajir, 2013). Nevertheless, these theories, though widely used by numerous researchers to explore idioms, are not applied in the current research because of “the problem of determining the core meaning and the indeterminate and speculative nature of the analyses” (Riemer, 2010, p.255). As a result, the theoretical framework that supports this investigation is Riemer’s (2010) approach to idioms. Riemer’s construct postulates that idiomatic expressions are non-compositional phrases whose overall meaning is not the same as the combined meaning of the individual parts, though “it is often possible to advance an interpretation of the individual words of an idiom which removes its idiomatic or non-compositional character” (p.21). The rationale for this approach is that it makes a clear distinction between utterance meaning and sentence meaning. Riemer describes the latter as being compositional, that is, its meaning stems from the meanings of the individual lexemes composing it. The former is “the meaning which the words have on a particular occasion of use in the particular context in which they occur” (p.22). Since idioms are viewed as a specific category of non-compositional phrases, Riemer’s approach is quite applicable to this research insofar as most of the idioms under study come as sentences.

4. METHODS

The author of this paper conducted a qualitative analysis of the different expressions deriving from body parts. The corpus is made up of idioms drawn from diverse discourse contexts including radio commercials, casual conversations, and family deliberations in which I was a participant. Data were collected from October to December 2020 in Bamako, the capital city of Mali. The transcription used in this paper is based on the alphabet of Bamanankan put forward by Konta and Vydrine (2014). In addition, the electronic dictionary Inkey Lexique Pro BambaraMali was used to cross-check validity of the transcription.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

For the purpose of analysis, the idioms are classified in terms of the selected body parts. Consequently, the forthcoming analysis has been performed with regard to the semantic fields of the head alongside its sub-parts and the heart.

5.1. The head and ears

Idiomatic expressions	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
kunkolo gelen	Head hard	Stubborn
Kunfin	Head black	Ignorant, illiterate
a kunkolo tijëna	His head has spoilt	he has gone mad
kunkoloto	Someone having head	Crazy person
kun salen	Head dead	Slow/listless person
kun këne	Head healthy	Very active person
A kunkolo b’a kan dala	His head is on his shoulders	he is realistic
Kuloba	Ear big	Well informed
Den kulogelen/ jalen	Child with hard ear	Naughty child

The idiomatic expressions derived from the head are the reflection of people's different attributes which are mostly negative as it is manifested in the sentences below:

- (1) Musa banna ka d' a kan a **kunkolo ka gɛlɛn**.
Musa refuse-past part. put pron. on his head is hard.
Musa refused because he is stubborn.
- (2) **kunfin** ka ko man di.
Head black poss thing neg good.
It is not easy to deal with an illiterate.
- (3) Bana y' a **kunkolo pagami**.
Disease aux his head mix up.
The disease made him go crazy.
- (4) don o don **tulo bɛ taa kalanso**
Day rep day ear aux go school.
We learn new things every day.
- (5) I ka denw **kulo ka gɛlɛn** kojugu!
You poss child+pl ear aux hard very!
Your children are very naughty!

Sentences (2) and (4) are instances of the metonymic use of the head and the ear in referring to people. (1), (3), and (5) are interpreted in terms of the attributes ascribed to different persons.

5.2. The eyes

Idiomatic expressions	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
A ɲɛ jalen do	his eye is hard	impolite
ɲɛngo	eye bad	egoist
ɲɛtugu ni ɲɛwɛlɛ cɛ	eye close and eye and eye open between	very fast = in a blink of eye
n y' a ɲɛ ko	I washed his eyes	I tricked him
nin ko in ma ne ɲɛ fa	this matter did not fill my eye	I did not appreciate
a ɲɛ yɛlɛlɛn do	his eye is open	he is wise/alert/prudent
ɲɛgan	eye suffer	suffering
ɲɛnɔɔduga	eye light extinguish	being blind
ɲɛdimi	eye pain	that must be done instantly
ɲɛjugu	eye bad/evil	be envious
a ɲɛ ka di	his eye is sharp/sweet	he is observant

The manner the eyes blink (unnoticeably) should correspond to the way the activity is carried out. The 'eye' is "the organ of sight, which is responsible for converting light into impulses and that are transmitted to the brain for interpretation" (Almajir, 2013, p. 102). In this respect, the eye is responsible for the metonymic representation of the person. Among the eye-based idioms ɲɛngo and ɲɛjugu can be understood as being near in meaning though there is a nuance in use. The former indicates a negative personal feature, while the latter refers to greediness. This can be exemplified in the sentences below:

(6) **ɲɛngoya** kosɔn, a ma ne fo.
 Eye bad because of s/he neg past me greet
 He did not congratulate me because of egoism.

(7) Demisen **ɲɛjugu** ši ma ca.
 The child eye bad life neg many
 The child who always wants to eat what other people eat does not live long.

(8) **ntolatan tɛ kɔdimi ye, ɲɛdimi don**
 football neg. back pain aux. eye pain
 the result of football is instant.

The examples in sentences (6) and (7) are instances of idioms describing negative human attributes (egoism and greed, respectively). In opposition, (8) refers to a situation where the outcome of an activity is felt straightaway.

5.3. The tongue

Idiomatic expressions	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
ɲɛjan	tongue long	a gossip
Nɛ fila b' a da	tongue two in her/his mouth	He is a liar
A nɛ ka di	his tongue is sweet/sharp	He is eloquent

The tongue, being one of the organs of speech, is used with different adjectives to express specific practices of language users. The **nɛ** idioms are understood as either positive (eloquence) or negative (gossip, lie) human characteristics. This could be seen in the examples below:

(9) **Nɛ fila b' a da**
 Tongue two be pron. mouth
 He is a liar.

(10) **A ka kuma diyara mɔgɔw ye sabu a nɛ ka**
 His poss mark speech good+post pos people+pl postpos because pron tongue part **di**.
 sweet.
 People appreciated his speech because he was eloquent.

Having ‘two tongues’ in (9) is interpreted as ‘saying something and its opposite’ as if tongues in the same mouth cannot move in a coordinate manner to produce identical utterances. Hence the concept of saying two different things comes to the fore. Sentence (10) informs that when the tongue is ‘sweet’, it produces speech that sounds good to hear. That is why being eloquent equals uttering words sounding pretty good to listeners.

5.4. The leg and the hand

Idiomatic expressions	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning
n b'a don i ko n tɛgɛci	I know him as the lines of my hand	I know him very well (in detail)
a bolo bɛ a kɔ sɔɔ	his hand reaches his back	he is in a state of sufficiency
a bolo tɛ a kɔ sɔɔ	his hand does not reach his back	he is not sufficient (financially)
bolo jan	hand long	one receiving help from those on top
A tɛgɛ wusulendo	his hand is smoked out	he is a thief
n sen bɛ kirikɛ la	my foot is in a saddle	I am about to travel
ka sen do a la	to enter leg in something	to support
ka sen bɔ	to withdraw leg	to withdraw support
ka mɔgɔsɛbɛ sen ta	to take a serious person's leg	to be serious
ka bolo don a la	to put hand in something	to support, to help

Note that *bolo* (hand/ arm) and *tɛgɛ* (hand/palm) are interchangeable as in *a bolo ka di* (he is adroit) which could be articulated as *a tɛgɛ ka di*. Some of the idioms under study are the combination of the leg and hand expressions (sentence 11) and others encompass the ears and the eyes (sentence 12). Such instances are presented below:

(11) Nci ma sɔn, ola n ye n **sen ni bolo** bɔ a ka kow la.
 Nci aux accepɛt so I aux poss leg and hand go out pron part thing+pl post post
 Ntji refused, so I totally withdrew my support from all his activities.

(12) I bɛ i **kulo ni** jɛ ci walasa I ka sigi bɛ diya.
 you aux you ear and eye break so as your poss settlement pred. good
 You should ignore everything around in order to live peacefully in your marital home.

In the sentence “An ka jɔkɔn **bolo** mine, ka jɔkɔn **sen** bila” should not be comprehended in terms of ‘taking hand’ and ‘leaving leg’. Among the Bamanan and many others ethnic groups, hand shaking is culturally a sign of mutual respect and friendliness. Accordingly, the expression simply translates “**let’s unite the efforts**”.

(13) a **bolo** bɛ a kɔ sɔɔ
 poss hand aux poss back reach
 He is rich.

(14) a **bolo** tɛ a kɔ sɔɔ
 poss hand aux poss back reach
 He is poor.

The idiom in (13) means “he is rich” and its negative form in (14) means “he is poor”. The image of hand that can “reach the back” and “cannot reach the back” is a reference to a person’s wealth or poverty. The

implication is that the person being described is rich enough to carry out concrete acts. The contrary is expressed in sentence (14) which refers to the person’s incapability to participate in an activity because of lack of money.

5.5. The heart

Idiomatic expressions	Literal Meaning	Meaning
Ka dusu labo	to make his heart go out	to make someone angry
a dusu bora	his heart went out	he got angry
Dusu saalo	his heart has been massaged	to comfort
A dusu kasilendo	his heart has been made cry	he is very sad, grieving
Dusukasi	the cry of the heart	grief

The understanding of the heart-derived expressions arises from the idea that the heart of an angry person beats so strongly and quickly that there is the impression that it comes out of the chest. Utterances like “a dusu bora”, which literally translates “his heart has gone out”, are the interpretation of the heart beat which might be equated to a disease as illustrated in the sentence below.

- (15) **Dusukasi** y’ a dama bana ye.
 Heart cry aux pron itself disease post pos
 Distress is by itself a form of disease

Idioms are traditionally perceived as compositional (idiomatically combining expressions) and non-compositional idioms (idiomatic phrases) (Nunberg 1978, Nunberg et al. 1994, Jackendoff 1997, Sag et al. 2002) as cited in Chae (2015). The components of a compositional idiom are supposed to keep their own meanings and are separated from each other syntactically. On the other hand, the constituents of a non-compositional idiom have no separate meanings. They are semantically non transparent. On the basis of this classification, some of the selected idioms are compositional, that is, their meanings are apparent. For example, ‘**n sen ka teli**’ contains the concept of “quick step” which conveys the idea of hurriedness. Thus, its meaning is very close to the one of the individual words composing it. By opposition, others are semantically opaque such as *jinkuru* and **Tegewusulen**. In terms of their interpretation, some of the idioms under study are classified as positive and others as negative due to the fact that they cast either positive or negative images onto the person being described.

The positive idioms include *ne ka di* (he is eloquent), *a bolo be a ko soro* (he is in a state of sufficiency), *dususaalo* (comfort), *kun kene* (very active person), *kuloba* (well informed), *a ne yelelen do* (he is wise/alert), *a ne ka di* (he is observant), and *a kunkolo b’a kan dala* (he is realistic). Instances of negative idiomatic expressions are *nejan*, (a gossip), *ne fili b’a da* (he is a liar), *a bolo te a ko soro* (he is not financially sufficient), *ka dusu labo* (make somebody angry), *dusukasi* (grief), *tegewusulen* (thief), *a ne jalen do* (he is impolite), *negan* (suffering), *nengo* (egoist), *nejugu* (envious), *kunfin* (illiterate), *kun salen* (listless person), and *kunkoloto* (crazy person).

6. CONCLUSION

The concern of this study was to present some idioms relating to body parts such as the head, the eyes, the hand, the feet, and the heart. The analysis of data revealed that the idioms pertaining to the head are understood in terms of the biological functions of this body part alongside its sub-parts. Parts of the expressions are easy to decipher, hence their meanings are apparent. The senses of others are very challenging; accordingly they are opaque idioms. Besides, the meanings of some idioms are viewed as negative because they cast concepts and attributes which are socially repellent among the Bamanan people. Accordingly, the majority of the idioms relating to the eye, the tongue, and the head are labeled as negative. The analysis equally showed that a limited number of the terms deriving from the hand, the leg, the eye, and the tongue are positive because they refer to positive attributes or actions. Interestingly, the investigation revealed that the head is a prolific producer of idioms in Bamanankan.

Idiomatic structures are usually encountered in everyday language and acquired in the process of communication, be it oral or written (Hinkel, 2017). Specifically, regular, frequent, and common word combinations that occur repeatedly can help learners identify and establish linguistic patterns that can be then stored and accessed in both language reception and production (Arnon & Snider, 2010; Cowie, 1988, 1998). Idioms have most of the time presented an area of difficulty. For instance, L2 users may misinterpret non-literal meanings of words and phrases, as well as misuse them in various contexts—often due to limitations or shortfalls in their L2 vocabulary. That is why, this study will help Bamanankan learners (both first and second languages learners) to identify, use, and understand idiomatic expressions with confidence. This could be realized by including the study of idioms in the syllabus at the university level in the faculties of languages.

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