

I. ROZPRAWY I ANALIZY

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The body in mind, language, and culture: A lexicon of Czech somatic concepts *in spe**

Ciało w umyśle, języku i kulturze: Leksykon czeskich pojęć somatycznych *in spe*

Abstract: This paper outlines the initial conceptual framework for a forthcoming dictionary: an ethnolinguistically and linguaculturally oriented lexicon of somatic concepts, the first of its kind in the Czech linguistic and cultural sphere. Drawing inspiration from the lexicographic traditions of the Lublin and Moscow ethnolinguistic schools, the study highlights the distinctive features of this type of lexicon and presents a preliminary methodological model for individual entries, exemplified by the concept PATA / PATY [HEEL / HEELS]. Particular attention is paid to phenomenologically salient and culturally significant aspects of the concept, as well as to its linguistic representations within the human experience, shaped by specific linguistic and cultural systems. The semantic analysis, based on lexicographic and corpus data, as well as on studies of folklore, is introduced by a broader cultural context and structured around four conceptual profiles, namely those of MANIFESTATION, LOCALIZATION, FUNCTION, and COMMUNICATION, alongside several narrative types and spheres of reality, associated with the somatic concept under investigation.

Keywords: lexicon, body, somatic concepts, ethnolinguistics, cognitive and cultural linguistics, cognitive definition, *pata* ('heel')

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I. Introduction: Embodiment in the Context of Cognitive Ethnolinguistics and Linguophenomenology

Inspired by contemporary ethnolinguistics, particularly by the concepts behind two ethnolinguistic dictionaries associated with the names of Nikita Tolstoy (*Slavjanskije drevnosti*, *SD*) and especially Jerzy Bartmiński (*Słownik stereotypów i symboli ludowych*, *SSSL*), a project titled *Lexicon of Czech Somatic Concepts* (*LCSP*) is gradually taking shape in Prague. It is intended to be the first concept-based dictionary in the Czech context grounded in cognitive, cultural, anthropological, and ethnolinguistic approaches to language. The authors' aim is to focus specifically on the body as the starting point of human experience with the world, and on the language-cultural images of its parts.

Embodiment, by its very nature, points to the fundamental semantic structures of language. It is also characteristic that various references to the body are manifested not only in language – most visibly in its vocabulary and phraseology – but analogously in other non-verbal semiotic systems and, more broadly, throughout culture. The *Lexicon of Czech Somatic Concepts* (*LCSP*) aims to take this broad cultural context into account as well, in accordance with the two dictionaries mentioned above.

The fact that we have a “body in the mind” (Johnson 1987) has many facets and consequences, as we know from the broad context of cognitive linguistics (cf. also the phenomenon known as embodiment). But not only from there. The fundamental significance of embodiment for human anchoring in the world is also affirmed by phenomenological philosophy. According to the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka (1995), “the self is possible only as embodied,” and the body represents the foundation of human affectivity, sensuality, and activity in the broadest sense. The capacity for intentional movement associated with the body (e.g., the ability to walk or manipulate objects) also establishes the elementary possibility of exercising human will, freedom, and responsibility. Memory, experience, and the ability to speak (or more broadly, the ability to communicate at all) are tied to the body, and through bodily visibility and sensory perception, we can enter into relationships with others —perceiving them and being perceived by them. All of this is specifically reflected in language, and the study of somatic concepts as part of the linguistic image of the body can lead not only to a deeper understanding of language, but also of the human world in general.¹

¹ In this regard, we speak of *linguophenomenology* (cf. Vaňková 2007, and more specifically in connection with embodiment and the image of the body in language, Vaňková 2012).

In folk culture, the body is a central concept, “situated at the intersection of the macrocosm and microcosm,” and represents a “universal tool for understanding and describing the world” (cf. the entry *BODY* in *SD*). As a cultural subject, a person projects themselves (and their body) into the surrounding world, anthropomorphizes it, and evaluates it through a human lens – and this is reflected in language. For example, in naming phenomena based on body parts (*hrdlo láhve* [bottle neck]), in comparisons (*tenký jako vlas* [as thin as a hair]), or in expressing measurements (*hrst fazolí* [a handful of beans]), but also in a broader, more abstract and general sense. The world of folk culture can be structured through semantic oppositions such as life – death, health – illness, male – female, clean – unclean, etc., which are primarily anchored in the body, taking into account the orientation of the human body in space, cf. also spatial oppositions (up – down, front – back, right – left). One term in each pair is typically perceived as positive, while the other as negative;² the linguistic worldview has an axiological character, and values are also associated with body parts (e.g., those located at the bottom or back are evaluated negatively and subject to taboo, as are those associated with “unclean” functions).³ The body as a whole, as well as its individual parts, is thematized in various contexts – for example, in folk healing or in love and fertility magic—and features in corresponding rituals, whether in verbal or physical form, or even as material or artistic representations (cf. for instance wax votive offerings shaped like specific body parts, such as a wax foot given in thanks for healing a leg, see *LV*

The focus is on how the lived, perceived human world is reflected in language (as a human creation), and how its components can be studied through language. In this context, we refer to the sample entry on *PATA / PATY* [*HEEL / HEELS*], which reflects aspects relevant to the heel in this sense, such as its rounded shape, vulnerability, role in walking, and its position at the bottom and back of the body. Through typical narratives, the entry also illustrates the situations or areas of life in which the heel is thematized in various ways, for example, in connection with injuries and defects, physical exercise or dance, or in relation to footwear. Culturally specific uses of the heel include, for instance, making a small pit before playing marbles, performing the basic polka step etc., see below).

² Even in this context, the relevance of Mark Johnson’s bodily image schemas (1987) becomes evident, along with their axiological dimension, which Krzeszowski (1994) highlights.

³ Similarly, the disruption of bodily integrity and deviation from its natural appearance are evaluated negatively. This creates an opposition between normality (the typical form of the body and its parts, which is considered desirable in the folk worldview) and “non-normality,” which is associated with deficiency (cf. for example, the absence of a limb, excessive or insufficient height, red hair, etc.). An unusual appearance of the body or its parts is also perceived as a sign of the demonic, the supernatural, or the non-human – as in the case of giants or dwarfs in fairy tales, or the devil, who has a hoof instead of one foot and horns on his head – animal attributes combined with human features. Similarly, the water goblin (*vodník*) differs physically from humans by having green skin and hair.

2021: 34).⁴ Embodiment, often with emphasis on particular body parts, also plays a role in children's games, folk dances, and other activities, and body parts appear in verbal folklore as well.⁵

Somatisms, names of human body parts,⁶ belong to the basic vocabulary in all languages, both in ontogenetic and phylogenetic terms. The most fundamental ones (cf. the five most frequent in Czech phraseology: *ruka* [arm / hand], *hlava* [head], *oko* [eye], *srdce* [heart], *noha* [leg / foot], see Mrhačová 2000: 8) are among the first words acquired by children.⁷ Etymologists confirm that somatisms form part of the oldest layer of vocabulary. These are highly frequent lexemes with numerous secondary meanings, many derivatives, and a wide range of occurrences in phraseology. Key somatisms play an important role in language,⁸ and the corresponding concepts function as stereotypes and symbols in culture. Since ancient times, they have been prominent in myths and rituals, appear in folklore, and are represented across various forms of art – verbal, physical, performative, and visual.

In this article, we highlight several aspects of the emerging concept for the lexicon, primarily using the example of the currently developed

⁴ In this context, particularly in relation to the body, contagious and imitative magic play a significant role.

⁵ The human body (e.g. in its transformations across the lifespan), both as a whole and in its individual parts (mouth with teeth and tongue, nose, eyes, etc.), is frequently thematized in Slavic riddles (cf. Kazancewa 2006; in relation to the Czech context also Boháčková 2013). Body parts also appear in nursery rhymes for small children, often combining verbal and physical codes, for example, in a clapping game from an old folklore collection: *Pací, pací, pacičky / dal nám Pánbůh ručičky, / aby hodně dělaly, / a nožičky běhaly* [Clap, clap, little hands / God gave us our hands / So they can work a lot / And our feet can run a lot] (Bartoš 1898: 18). These rhymes anchor in the child's mind the connection to the prototypical functions of hands and feet (notably expressed in diminutive form).

⁶ The term *somatism*, used only very rarely in the Anglo-American linguistic tradition, is known primarily from the Slavic linguistic context (Russian, Polish, and to a lesser extent Czech). It denotes a lexeme referring to a part of the human body. It is frequently employed in connection with (somatic) phraseology and has recently been used especially in cognitively oriented linguistics, cultural linguistics, and ethnolinguistics (see further Vaňková 2012, Zanářina 2012, Vodrážková 2026). In our research, we consistently distinguish it from the somatic concept.

⁷ In the broader context of a child's cognitive development, the drawing of the human figure – both in terms of its complexity and the ability to depict the whole body and its details – is understood as one way of assessing the child's overall maturity, as well as potential developmental (or other) disorders or specificities. This relates to the gradual formation of the “body schema” at different stages of development (Cognet 2024: 113).

⁸ Body parts play a role in generating further meanings, whether through the development of polysemy or derivations. It is also frequently noted that body parts have long served as tools for counting and measuring—cf. the decimal system derived from the fingers of the hand, as well as old units of length such as the *ell*, *foot*, *inch*, etc. (see Pajdzińska 1990; Vaňková et al. 2005: 61).

entry NOHA / NOHY [FOOT / FEET – LEG / LEGS] (cf. already Čurďová 2011), and especially its sub-entry PATA / PATY [HEEL / HEELS].⁹ At the same time, we raise (at varying levels of explicitness) more general questions related to the lexicographic treatment of these concepts, such as the delimitation of body parts (and “parts of body parts”) and the overall approach to their categorization, with particular emphasis on the internal structuring of meaning through profiles. In doing so, we build on previously published studies devoted to embodiment and somatic concepts (especially Čurďová 2012, 2014, 2015; Vaňková 2012, 2018, 2020; Vaňková, Čurďová 2014; Vaňková, Vitkovskaya 2014; Vodrážková 2016, 2017, 2020), as well as on master’s theses focused on this topic (Černá 2015, Čížková 2015, and Čurďová 2011). Of particular importance in this respect is the recently submitted doctoral dissertation by one of the authors of the present article, devoted precisely to the above-mentioned lexicon; the methodology for processing a data-rich entry is demonstrated there on the concept NOHA / NOHY [FOOT / FEET – LEG / LEGS], including the associated concepts PATA / PATY [HEEL / HEELS], and CHODIDLO / CHODIDLA [SOLE / SOLES] (cf. Vodrážková 2026).

II. On the Prague Dictionary of Somatic Concepts

It should be noted that the basic units presented in the entries of LCSP will not be linguistic expressions, “words” (as in standard language dictionaries), nor real objects or things corresponding to and represented by words (as is typical in encyclopedias), but concepts (*or* stereotypes) – that is, their correlates stored in collective memory and culture. Thus, this will be a dictionary based on ideographic and onomasiological principles, referred to as an (ethnolinguistic) lexicon (cf. Bartmiński 2018).

As is typical for an ethnolinguistic lexicon, *LCSP* is intended to be an intensive rather than extensive dictionary – that is, it does not aim to include all items from the given thematic domain, but only selected entries (based on the semantic and cultural relevance of the respective somatic concepts). These entries, however, will be treated in considerable detail (drawing inspiration from the methodology of *SSSL* and *SD*). We will begin with prototypical somatic concepts – those that are most frequent and most prominent in language and culture. Which concepts these are, and which

⁹ With regard to the concept PATA / PATY [HEEL / HEELS], we may refer to a comparative study on the image of the heel in Slovak and Hungarian phraseology, which was developed in connection with the theory of profiles presented here (Huťková 2025).

will form the macrostructure of the lexicon, and in what order they will be processed, remains an open question. At present, preparatory work is being finalized for the entry NOHA / NOHY and for the corresponding (sub)entries related to parts of the leg. As an example, we include in the appendix a substantial portion of the future entry PATA / PATY [HEEL / HEELS].

III. On the Structure of the Entry: Focusing on Conceptual Profiles and Narratives

The overall structure of the entry can only be outlined briefly on this platform. What we aim to present in more detail is the core of the entry: profiles and narrative scenarios that contribute to the structure of the stereotype (see below). It is important to mention, however, that the introductory part of the entry will summarize the broader cultural context associated with the stereotype and symbol of the given body part, especially with regard to its biblical and classical associations (which have been integrated into the Czech worldview primarily through phraseology), and also Slavic ones (drawing especially on *SD*), as well as, where relevant, the more specific context of Czech cultural tradition.

The material basis for reconstructing somatic stereotypes consists of three types of sources: Czech dictionaries (explanatory, etymological, phraseological, etc.),¹⁰ language corpora (made accessible by the ČNK),¹¹ and key collections of Czech folklore – both traditional (minor folklore genres, songs, fairy tales, legends) and modern (jokes, urban legends, children's folklore, etc.).¹² As supplementary material, symbol dictionaries will be used (e.g., Lurker 2005, Kopaliński 1990, and also Souzenelle 2010, among others), especially sources mapping biblical and classical symbolism, and of course also *SD* as a source of knowledge about traditional Slavic culture.

The core of the entry will be a description of the stereotype of the given body part as a structure of connotations linked to four conceptual profiles.¹³ In reconstructing the conceptual profiles present within somatic concepts,

¹⁰ A special place among them will be occupied by ideographic dictionaries, in more recent Czech lexicography cf. especially Haller 1969–1987 and Klégr 2007.

¹¹ E. g. *SSJČ* (1969–1987); Rejzek 2015; Čermák et al. 2009–2016) etc.

¹² E. g. *Naše děti* or other folklore collections by František Bartoš (1898), Karel Jaromír Erben (1937) etc.

¹³ According to Bartmiński, Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2007, and Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2020, the notion of profile is central. As for the specific structuring of the semantic content of a concept, we also draw inspiration from other works by scholars from Lublin and beyond (Piekarczyk 2004, Wierzbicka 1985, etc.). It would certainly be possible (and perhaps even more appropriate) to use the term domain or facet in this context; however, in

we could also draw inspiration, for example, from the semantic structuring of concepts related to animals or flowers in the *SSSL* or related works.

Parts of the human body, however, have a different character than animals or flowers, and in their images, or rather stereotypes, different profile characteristics appear (although appearance and sensory-perceived properties are important in their case as well). Our previous cognitive-cultural research on Czech somatic concepts has led to the formulation of four profiles that are relevant in connection with them: these are *MANIFESTATION* (both external and internal), *LOCALIZATION*, *FUNCTION*, and finally *COMMUNICATION* (for more detail and application to specific linguistic material cf. Čurďová 2015; Vaňková 2012, Vaňková 2018, Vaňková 2020, Vaňková, Čurďová 2014; Vaňková, Vitkovskaya 2014, etc.).¹⁴

The importance of most of these in relation to somatic concepts is confirmed in one way or another by other linguistic literature devoted to corporeality – especially with emphasis on localization and functions of body parts (cf. Maćkiewicz 2006, Filar, Głaz 1996, Krawczyk-Tyrpa 1987, Wierzbicka 1985). Even in this literature, territoriality or localization appears as a key categorization factor for body parts (i.e. where on the body and in relation to surrounding space a given body part is located – e.g. the head is at the top, the legs are at the bottom, the back is at the rear) or function (what functions it performs – the head, naively speaking, serves for thinking, while the legs for walking, the back for carrying burdens, etc.). These profiles are realized through specific narratives (on narratives in relation to the formulation of cognitive definition cf. Bartmiński 2014, and see further). What we call profiles, however, we try to grasp in a broader and more differentiated context.

The mode of **manifestation** of individual body parts is related to the specific nature of corporeality, phenomenologically perceived as the correlation between the body-as-object and the body-as-subject. External manifestation is associated with how a given body part (one's own or another person's) can be registered through the senses, especially sight (a bald head, red cheeks), but also touch (a hard head, a soft palm, a punch with a fist). In the case of legs, it is primarily their shape and size that are profiled (cf. idioms *nohy jako sirky* [legs like matches], *nohy do O* [O-shaped legs], *sloní*

our usage, the term profile has ultimately become established. This term also appears in the context of somatic concepts in Slovakia (Hrivnák Pastorková 2025; Huťková 2025). We do not associate profile (only) with the perspective of the profiling subject, but understand it more broadly – rather as a semantic subcategory or meaning domain.

¹⁴ In earlier phases of research (and in all our previous works referenced here), we used the term *GESTURE* instead of *COMMUNICATION* in the name of the profile.

noha [elephant leg], or synonyms such as *fajfky* [pipes] or *jedenáctky* [elevens]. By internal manifestation we mean the perception of a given body part by the experiencer, i.e. its subjective sensation, often painful or generally unpleasant: *třeští mu hlava* [his head is throbbing], *zdřevěněla mu noha* [his leg stiffened, became wooden] (cf. the specific function of the dative).

From the perspective of **localization**, a given body part is profiled with regard to its placement within the body complex, especially on the vertical axis: *má vlasy do pasu*, *bylo tam vody po ramena* [her hair reaches her waist, the water was up to the shoulders], but also in connection with the orientation of the body in space: *šel přímo za nose* [he went straight ahead, “straight for the nose”], *bylo to po jeho levé ruce* [it was on the left-hand side]. Legs (and their parts) are located at the bottom of the body axis and serve as indicators of quantity, or rather measure (possibly metaphorically also of quality): *nesahat někomu ani po kolena / po kotníky* [not even reaching someone’s knees/ankles];

Within the profile of **function**, as already indicated, what a given body part is used for is profiled. For legs, a typical function is movement, i.e. walking (*jít co noha nohu mine* [to walk one foot after the other]) and also maintaining the body’s stability in space (*stát na vlastních nohou* [to stand on one’s own feet]).¹⁵

The profile of **communication** is evident from the following examples verbalizing certain human behavior with symbolic value. This includes, for example, a gesture described by the idiom *klepat si na čelo* [to tap one’s forehead, i.e. to suggest that someone is behaving foolishly], or expressions that metonymically point to a certain emotion or bodily state, which is perceived only by the experiencer but, as a bodily symptom, has symbolic value reflected in a specific idiom, e.g. *buší mu srdce* [his heart is pounding, i.e. he feels fear], *kručí mu v břiše* [his stomach is growling, i.e. he is hungry]. These are so-called **kinograms** (see Burger 1997, in the Czech context Bendíková 2017), cf. e.g. *nastavit někomu nohu* [to set someone’s foot, i.e. to deliberately cause someone to fall (in both physical and metaphorical sense)], or *třásla se mu kolena* [his knees were shaking, i.e. he got scared], or *ležet někomu u nohou* [to lie at someone’s feet, i.e. to be completely devoted to someone].¹⁶

¹⁵ This applies both to the direct designation of situations in which the actual process of standing is thematized (e.g. after illness or injury, a person is again able to stand up and walk independently), and to the figurative use of the phrase in the sense of becoming independent: *syn dostudoval a postavil se na vlastní nohy* [the son graduated and stood on his own feet]).

¹⁶ We regard the profile of COMMUNICATION in relation to somatic concepts as entirely

The specificity of somatic concepts also lies in the fact that they are associated with image schemas (cf. Johnson 1987), which are closely linked to their axiological dimension (cf. Krzeszowski 1994). In the study of profiles, their application in the imagery of body parts (and the body in general) is clearly observable, logically especially within the profile of localization; schemas are, by their nature, tied to human, i.e. bodily experience of space. Similarly to the concept NOHA / NOHY, the concept PATA / PATY also involves, for example, the schema FRONT – BACK (see further).

In addition to the discussion of the four basic conceptual profiles, the relevant part of the entry should also take into account other aspects important for describing the given somatic concept. In accordance with the methodology of the *SSSL*, these are primarily so-called complexes, collections, or oppositions, and (as already indicated) especially complex narrative structures in which the concept prototypically appears, i.e. scenarios and scenes (see more in Vodrážková 2020),¹⁷ which we now, for simplicity, summarize under the term *narrative*. So far, we examine them primarily on the basis of collocations found in the ČNK.

It appears that the narratives conveyed by these collocations are connected to certain spheres of life, or rather the lived world – the world of basic human experience, which unfolds within a particular culture and language. Currently, we are assessing to what extent the connection between these narratives and the spheres thematizing body parts can be understood as general. According to recent research, there are three basic spheres of human experience:

a) **defects, illnesses or injuries of the given body parts and their treatment or care:** *zlomená ruka* [broken arm], *rozbité koleno* [bruised knee]; *vbočený palec* [bunion]; *zalehlé ucho* [blocked ear]; *bradavice na chodidlech* [warts on the soles], *puchýře na patách* [blisters on the heels]; *hlava bolí* [headache], *hlava třeští* [throbbing head], *v hlavě hučí* [buzzing in the head]; *masírovat záda* [massage the back], *mít nohu v sádře* [have a leg in a cast], etc.¹⁸

b) **physical exercise, sport, dance, and play:** *podřep s mírně pokrčenými koleny* [a squat with slightly bent knees], *paty k sobě, špičky od*

specific. It might be possible to integrate it under the profile of FUNCTION, but due to its particular nature, we present it separately.

¹⁷ Earlier research also discusses conceptual metaphors and image schemas (especially the PATH schema) in which the concept NOHA / NOHY [FOOT / FEET – LEG / LEGS] appears in broader contexts (Čurdová 2012, Čurdová 2014, Vodrážková 2016, Vodrážková 2017).

¹⁸ The source of collocations and narratives, as in all examples in the sample analysis of the somatic concept PATA / PATY [HEEL / HEELS], is the corpus SYN2020 (Křen et al. 2020).

sebe [heels together, toes apart], *sed na patách* [sitting on the heels], *stoj na rukách* [handstand], *dát ruce do pasu* [put hands on hips].

c) **clothing, footwear and accessories** tied to particular body parts: *boty* ([shoes] are associated with *nohy* [legs, feet] and their parts; *klobouk* [hat] or *čepice* [cap] with *hlava* [head]; *náušnice* [earrings] or *sluchadla* [hearing aids] with *uši* [ears]; *bryle* [glasses] and *čocky* [contact lenses] with *oči* [eyes]; *mašle* [ribbons] with *vlasý* [hair].

A specific issue is the **aesthetic evaluation** of a given body part – how “beautiful” or conversely “unattractive” it is: *křivé zuby* [crooked teeth], *smyslné rty* [sensual lips], *pevné boky* [firm hips], *štíhlé nohy* [slim legs], *velký zadek* [big butt].

And finally, there is the (often closely related) **erotic aspect** or the context of sexual attractiveness, or more broadly, the context of **physical contact** between two people – whether positive or negative: *cuddling* or *hitting*, *aggression* – *dal mu pěstí do nosu* [he punched him in the nose], *dostal herdu do zad* [he got a blow to the back] – or expressions of affection – *hladil ji po tváři* [he stroked her cheek].

The lexical entry for a somatic concept is a concrete realization of the fundamental goal of the *LCSP*, i.e. to capture in a structured and vivid way the conceptualization of the given body part and to provide its cognitive definition. The cognitive definition should ideally take into account everything that is culturally relevant to the given community in connection with the subject under study. It represents, in a certain sense, a comprehensive description of meaning; it reflects the shared dimensions of the image of the object in the minds of speakers of the given language and has a dynamic character.¹⁹

According to Bartmiński, not only our thinking and conceptual structures have a narrative nature, but a specific type of generalizing narrative – or rather a structure of narratives about the subject under study – is also represented by the cognitive definition itself. This structure includes both its static properties (especially visual ones) and dynamic ones (manifestations of the subject in their sequence, actions or functioning, stereotypical possibilities of the subject’s involvement in certain situations and scenarios). The cognitive definition itself is thus a specific kind of “storytelling” through which the linguist attempts to reconstruct the concept or stereotype; in doing so, they apply the perspective of collective worldview – since the creator

¹⁹ „Situating the idea of the object within the entire network of semantic relations associated with its designation should lead to the reconstruction of its cognitive structure and show its place in the context of other signs that shape the language of culture” (Bartmiński 2016: 31).

of the stereotype is the collective speaker, i.e. a particular language-cultural community (cf. Bartmiński 2014).

Below we present a sample analysis of the somatic concept PATA / PATY [HEEL / HEELS]. It includes all the above-mentioned components – from broader cultural context through (some of the most important) linguistic data to the profile-based characterization of the stereotype of heel in Czech, shown primarily through phraseology, and the narratives associated with it, confirmed both by corpus data and culturally relevant, esp. folkloric texts. This analysis essentially constitutes the cognitive definition itself, expanded in greater detail. For clarity, however, we begin the entry with a so-called summarium, encapsulating the key semantic features in a compressed form.

IV. PATA / PATY [HEEL / HEELS]: notes on the forthcoming entry (subordinate to the basic entry NOHA / NOHY [FOOT / FEET – LEG / LEGS])

Summarium. The heel is the rounded part of the human foot located at the very bottom, marking the boundary between the body and the ground. It is the opposite of the head. Although the heel is a peripheral part of the body, it plays an important role in maintaining bodily integrity and normal function. As the rear part of the foot, the heels are essential for walking and running. The Czech concept PATA / PATY (HEEL / HEELS) – primarily due to its position at the bottom of the body and its role in locomotion—frequently overlaps with the concept NOHA / NOHY (FOOT / FEET or LEG / LEGS). This overlap is evident in linguistic expressions, such as contextual interchangeability in phrases (e.g., *běhá, div si paty neuběhá* [he runs so fast that he almost wears out his heels/feet]). The heel is a vulnerable area, prone to abrasions, bruises, and blisters—often caused by wearing unsuitable footwear that puts pressure on it. Like the entire foot, the heel is important in sports and physical activity (e.g., weight transfer, footfalls, sitting on the heels), as well as in dance (e.g., footfalls, turns, alternating heel and toe in polka).

The wider cultural context. The heel appears in the Old Testament story of the twins Esau and Jacob, the younger brother (Hebrew *akev*, ‘who holds the heel’, ‘twin’), and especially in the myth of the Greek hero Achilles, who was vulnerable only at the heel—where his mother held him when she dipped him into the River Styx after his birth (hence the Czech expression *Achillova pata* [Achilles’ heel], meaning ‘weakness, vulnerable spot’). In Vedic religion, the heels symbolize stability; in yoga, they represent

grounding. In Chinese medicine, the reflex points on the heels correspond to the small pelvis and reproductive organs. Ancient Slavic culture emphasized that the heels (or the entire soles of the feet) are located at the boundary between the body and the earth. This is a point of transfer, a site of contact with the world of chthonic forces. Illness may enter the body through this point—but may also exit through it with the help of a healer. Numerous commands, prohibitions, and rituals relate to walking barefoot.

The linguistic data. Etymological dictionaries list two possible motivations for the Czech (and pan-Slavic) expression *pata* [heel]. Both derive from Indo-European roots and relate semantically to the function of the heel in walking: (*s*)*pen*- ‘to stretch’—the part of the foot that stretches (Holub, Kopečný 1952), or *pent*- ‘to go’ (Rejzek 2001). The term *pata*—and the conceptualization of walking as movement from back to front along a path—is also associated with the expressions *zpět* [back], *opět* [again], and *vzápětí* [immediately].

Dictionaries of contemporary Czech (cf. *SSJČ*) define its primary meaning as ‘the rear part of the foot’. In older Czech, it also had a metonymically extended meaning: ‘the lower part of the leg’ (cf. Jg). An analogous meaning appears in zoological terminology (‘insect foot segment’). Newer dictionaries include the metonymic sense ‘part of a stocking, shoe, etc., that covers the heel’ (*mít díru na patě* [to have a hole in the heel]). The next meaning—‘lower, back, or terminal part of an object; lower part of a building or its component’ (*pata hory* [foot of a mountain], *pata sloupu* [foot of a column]) – is metaphorical.

Similar meanings appear in derivatives, especially in the diminutives *patka* or *patička*. These are metaphorically derived from the notions of ‘below’ or ‘behind’, or from the rounded shape of the heel (*patka chleba* – *skrojek* [bread heel – crust], *patka písmene* [letter heel], *patkové písmo* [heel font] in polygraphy). Metonymically, the heel is also associated with the *heel pass* (*patička*, from football slang).²⁰

The concept profiles. In terms of manifestation, the heel is profiled by its rounded shape (*patička*, *patka* ‘bread crust’, etc.). It is also understood as an exposed, vulnerable place, sensitive to pain (*každý (nejlíp) ví, kde ho pata / bota tlačí* [everyone knows best where the heel/shoe pinches them] – ‘everyone knows their own weaknesses best’; *vytrhnout někomu trn z paty* [to pull a thorn out of someone’s heel] means ‘to help someone out of trouble’).

²⁰ The text does not aim to cover all linguistic data related to the term *pata*, e.g., complete word formation aspects. The entry will certainly mention derivatives such as *podpatek* [raised part of the sole of a shoe under the heel], *podpatěnka* [shoe insert under the heel], expressions such as *zápatí* [footer] or *úpatí* [foothill], as well as other dictionary data.

The heel is located at the very bottom of the body, at the boundary between the body and the ground, and also at the back, which becomes noticeable when moving forward. In terms of location, it conveys the meaning of peripherality, especially in contrast to the head (*ani v patě mu to neleží* [it doesn't even lie in his heel]; *má víc rozumu v patě než jiný v hlavě* [he has more sense in the heel than others have in the head]). Compare the peripherality of the heel (as the edge of the body) with the phrase *nevytáhnout (ani) paty (z domu)* [not lifting one's heels (from the house)] 'not going out', or *sotva vytáhne paty z domu, už...* [barely lifting one's heels from the house, already...].

The heel is directly involved in the basic functions of the foot, i.e., walking and running (the interchangeability of the foot and heel is significant: *co není v hlavě, musí být v nohách / v patě* [what is not in the head must be in the feet/heel]; 'those who remember little must often go back for forgotten things'). In connection with walking and running, speed and intensity are profiled at the heel, e.g., in phrases such as: *běží / utíká / uhání, jako by mu paty / nohy namydlil / namazal* [he runs / flees / rushes as if his heels / feet were greased / lubricated]; *běží / utíká / uhání, jako když mu paty namaže* [he runs / flees / rushes as if his heels were greased]; *běží / utíká / uhání, jako by mu paty hořely* [he runs / rushes / hurries as if his heels were on fire]; *běží / utíká / uhání, jako by mu paty / nohy zapálil / podpálil* [he runs / rushes / hurries as if his heels / feet were set alight / set on fire]. For the intensity of movement (or its purpose – e.g. arranging something), compare *mocť si paty ušoupat / uběhat / ubrousit* [to go around all possible places without success]; *paty si utlouci* [to run around].

Another function of the heel is related to standing and stability (cf. gymnastics terminology: *stoj spatný* [a back stand] – 'standing with the heels together and the toes apart'), and marginally also *sed na patách* [sitting on the heels].

It is not unusual for profiles of somatic concepts to overlap to a certain (sometimes significant) extent – in the case of heels, for example, there is a strong localization at the back with simultaneous profiling of the function of movement. This is evident, for example, in the connection between the heels and leaving or running away (leaving something or someone behind): *ukázat někomu paty / záda* [to show someone your heels/back] 'to walk away from someone'; *otočit se na patě a jít pryč* [to turn on your heel and walk away]; *zaplatit někomu patama* [to pay someone with your heels] 'to run away from someone without paying'.

Heels also feature in situations where someone is being followed, walking behind them (with some intention): *jít někomu v patách* [to walk behind

someone, behind their heels] ‘to walk right behind them, to pursue them’; *šlapat někomu na paty* [to tread on someone’s heels] ‘to follow someone closely’; *věšet se / pověsit se / přilepit se někomu na paty* [to hang on / stick to someone’s heels] ‘to follow someone intrusively’; *být někomu v patách* [to be behind someone’s heels] ‘to chase someone, to catch up with them’. The phrase *lepit se někomu na paty* [to stick to someone’s heels] is also used in reference to bad luck or misfortune.

With the meaning ‘behind, at the back’, the most prominent image schema associated with heels is PATH, which is also fundamental to the superordinate concept NOHA / NOHY [FOOT / FEET – LEG / LEGS] and typical for it.

Heels (like legs in general)²¹ are primarily associated with walking and standing in the linguistic worldview, but they also metaphorically refer to a person’s attitude or behavior, including communicative behavior. The profile referred to as communication (originally a gesture) includes, for example, the kinegram *sklapnout / srazit paty* [clicking heels together], meaning ‘to obey orders without protest, to submit’. This phrase imitates the physical movement of ‘clicking heels together’, which is how a subordinate responds to a commander’s order in the army. The meaning of subordination (also associated with placing the heels down – see the LOCALIZATION profile above) is also related to ‘sucking up’ to an influential person, cf. the kinegram *líbat / lízat někomu paty* [kiss / lick someone’s heels] or the compound word *patolízal* [bootlicker].²²

The typical narratives. Narratives in which the heel, or heels, play a significant role are based on three spheres of human reality, each linked to a context in which this body part functions as a prototype. In short, these are: (A) the domain of health and physical defects, (B) the domain of exercise and physical activity, and (C) the domain of clothing and footwear.²³

²¹ Certain somatic concepts appear to be frequently interchangeable. This often involves the substitution of a body part with a subpart (e.g., foot – heel), or two adjacent body parts. For instance, the Czech word *pusa* may refer, depending on context, either to the mouth or to the entire face, while *tvář* may denote either the whole face or just its side. (For metonymies in the linguistic worldview of the human body, see Mačkiewicz 2006.)

²² Some corpus examples also carry symbolic meaning—or at least suggest it—by describing a particular movement of the feet while simultaneously conveying an emotion or attitude. In the example below, the movement expresses rejection: „*Takhle to neděláme, když jsi v mé třídě,*” řekla jsem a sevřela její paži pevněji. „*Jdeme zpátky do školy.*” Zabořila paty do trávy. „*Ne, jdeme zpátky do školy. Je vyučování.*” [„We don’t do that when you’re in my class,” I said, squeezing her arm tighter. „We’re going back to school.” She dug her heels into the grass. „No, we’re going back to school. It’s class time.”]

²³ Other scripts discovered in connection with the heel are quite specific. They pertain to reflexology, in which the heel is considered an area suitable for massaging certain points

(A) **In the domain of health and body care**, the heel appears primarily in scripts concerning lubrication, softening, and bathing of the skin on the heels, which has hardened, mostly due to walking, and (painfully) cracked: *Budete-li chodidla pravidelně mazat a ošetřovat, nemusí vás trápit popraskané paty* [If you lubricate and treat your feet regularly, you don't have to worry about cracked heels]; *Nohy také můžete minimálně čtvrt hodiny namáčet v horké vodě, aby kůže na patách změkla* [You can also soak your feet in hot water for at least 15 minutes to soften the skin on your heels]. Other typical heel problems include blisters and calluses: *V létě přijdou vhod voděodolné gelové náplasti, které ošetří puchýře na prstech i na patách* [In summer, waterproof gel plasters are useful for treating blisters on the toes and heels]; *Růžové paty překrývaly bílé mozoly, jak všude chodil bos* [His pink heels were covered with white calluses from walking barefoot everywhere]. The heel may also be injured, infected, or painful: *Navíc teď nejspíš tráví čas se svou matkou, které se zatím podebraná pata nezhojila tak rychle, jak si představovala* [In addition, he is probably spending time with his mother, whose infected heel has not healed as quickly as she had hoped].

(B) **In exercise-related scripts**, the heel is the point where weight is—or is not—transferred: *Tělo je v mírném náklonu, váha na špičkách, paty jsou odlepeny od podložky* [The body is in a slight tilt, weight on the toes, heels are lifted off the mat]. The heel may also define overall body position: *Vleže na zádech, nohy pokrčené, paty co nejblíže k hýždím, dlaně dejte do úrovně uší s prsty nasměrovanými k ramenům* [Lying on your back, legs bent, heels as close to your buttocks as possible, palms at ear level with fingers pointing toward your shoulders]; or serve as the point for assuming a seated posture: *Přejděte do kleku a posaďte se s výdechem na paty* [Kneel and sit down on your heels as you exhale]. Closely related is the role of the heel in sports, e.g., theories of foot strike during running, jumping, etc.: *Základní chyby: běh v záklonu, záklon hlavy, krátký běžecký krok s nedostatečným zvedáním kolen, běh po plných chodidlech nebo po patách, přílišné vytáčení chodidel při došlapu* [Basic mistakes: running with the upper body leaning backward, head tilted back, short running stride with insufficient knee lift, running on the balls of the feet or heels, excessive turning of the feet when landing]; *Pata švihové nohy jde těsně nad překážkou a ihned za ní začíná švihová noha aktivně zašlapovat a připravovat se na došlap* [The heel of the swing leg goes just above the obstacle and immediately behind it, the swing leg begins to actively step down and prepare for landing]. Heels also play

that are therapeutic for other corresponding parts of the body: *Celá pata pak odkazuje na spodní část střev, konečník a dělohu* [The entire heel refers to the lower part of the intestines, rectum, and uterus].

a role in dance, where footwork is essential: *Obrat o 90 stupňů provádíme na pravé patě a levé špičce* [We perform a 90-degree turn on the right heel and left toe]; *Tanečníci si podají obě ruce a tančí pata – špička (pán levou a dáma pravou nohou) a cval dovnitř* [The dancers join hands and dance heel-toe (the man with his left foot and the woman with her right foot) and gallop inward].

(C) Heels, as part of the feet, are not only **covered (with stockings, socks, etc.) but also enclosed in shoes**. Wearing shoes and contact with them is associated with defects (abrasions, blisters, etc.), which also fall under domain A: *Ta prokletá bota mi rozedřela patu!* [That damn shoe rubbed my heel raw!]; *Také platí, že při došlapu na špičku (jako při běhu naboso) se vyhnete nárazům do pat, které umožňují odtlumené boty a které mohou vést k rozličným zraněním kloubů a šlach* [It is also true that when stepping on the toes (as when running barefoot), you avoid impacts to the heels, which are absorbed by cushioned shoes and which can lead to various injuries to the joints and tendons].²⁴

Based on corpus analysis, the term PATA / PATY [HEEL / HEELS] also carries significant connotations in the **erotic sphere**, e.g. *Jemně jsem mnul v dlani její bosou nohu, patu a chodidlo, dívala se mi na ruku* [I gently rubbed her bare foot, heel, and sole in my palm, she looked at my hand], as well as in the **aesthetic sphere**, where the beauty of feet is notably emphasized: *Její bílé paty svítí na asfaltu a stříbrné náramky cinkají na štíhlých zápěstích* [Her white heels shine on the asphalt and silver bracelets jingle on her slender wrists].

Typical narratives also reveal the most frequent **co-occurrences or pairings of the heel with other entities** (in terms of sets and oppositions), whether these are other body parts (*pata – hlava* [heel – head], *pata – špička* [heel – toe]) or relevant items of clothing or footwear (*noha – bota* [foot – shoe], etc.).

Czech cultural context. The narratives that Czech speakers associate with this somatic concept are embedded in a broad, often specifically Czech cultural context. Some of them can also be found in folklore collections and fiction, cf.:²⁵

²⁴ The strong connection between feet and shoes also gives rise to secondary meanings, in which parts of the shoe are named metonymically after parts of the foot. The heel, as the part of the shoe that rests on the heel of the foot, is no exception: *Pata sandálu je mírně utopená tak, aby se achilovky dostatečně prokrvovaly* [The heel of the sandal is slightly recessed so that the Achilles tendon is sufficiently supplied with blood]; *Lodičky ženy nikdy neomrzí, letošní kolekce Humanic nebude ochuzena ani o lodičky projmuté mezi patou a špičkou* [Women never tire of pumps, and this year's Humanic collection will not be without pumps with a curve between the heel and toe].

²⁵ We do not present the narratives obtained from folklore systematically here, but only

Playing marbles. The term PATA / PATY [HEEL / HEELS] also carries connotations related to playing marbles, cf.: *Kuličky, nejoblíbenější hra mého dětství. Patou se udělal důlek a už se hrál tukec* [Marbles, my favorite game as a child. A dent was made with the heel and the game began] (post on Facebook, August 2025). An example appears under the entry *důlek* [dent] in the dictionary: ‘make a dent in the ground with your heel’ (SSČ). The scenario of making a dent for playing marbles also appears in examples under the entries *točiti* and *vytočiti* [turn] in the SSJČ: *točiti důlek patou* [to turn a dent with your heel], *vytočiti patou v zemi důlek* [to turn a dent in the ground with your heel].

The Dance *Česká beseda* [The Czech Dance Suite].²⁶ The characteristics of the polka – or more precisely, the basic footwork in this folk dance—are clearly illustrated in the lyrics of *Česká beseda: Pata, špička, celá noha, tak se tančí polka nová. / Pata, špička, celá noha, polka nová je*. [Heel, toe, whole foot, that’s how you dance the new polka. / Heel, toe, whole foot, that’s the new polka.]

The Children’s rhyme *Kovej, kovej, kovářičku* [Forge, forge, little blacksmith]. The analogy between the human foot and its parts (including the sole and heel) and animal limbs can be observed in children’s games, including traditional ones that have survived to the present day. One such rhyme, accompanied by an adult tapping a child’s foot, is documented by Bartoš: *Nožka se dítěti kuje jako koníčkoví. Vezme se do ruky a pěstí se na patičku zlehka potlouká, říkájíc: Kovej, kovej, kovářičku, okovej mi mou nožičku, okovej mi obě, zaplatím já tobě*. [The child’s heel is forged like a horse’s. It is taken in the hand and lightly tapped with the fist, saying: Forge, forge, little blacksmith, shoe my foot, shoe both of them, I will pay you.] (Bartoš 1898: 21)

The God’s heels. The narrative related to the heel touches on a now obscure superstition, recalled by the main character in Božena Němcová’s canonical novel *Babička* [Grandmother]. When her grandson asks to cut deeper into the crust of bread—considered sacred by her—Grandmother replies: “Haven’t you heard that when you cut into bread, you are cutting off God’s heel?” (Němcová 2017: 15). Here, the heel is understood as the rounded part of the foot, metaphorically resembling the end piece of a loaf of bread created when the loaf is first sliced (cf. the Czech expression *patka chleba* [bread heel], still commonly used today).

selectively—in order to illustrate how their (in many ways culturally specific) character complements the attributes of the given body part in the construction of a cognitive definition.

²⁶ *Česká beseda* is a well-known salon dance suite composed of segments from Czech folk songs and dances, popular among Czech patriots since the 1860s.

V. Conclusion

The planned *Lexicon of Czech Somatic Concepts*, inspired by contemporary ethnolinguistic lexicography, is presented here only in a condensed form. This is due to the limited scope of the present article. The same applies to the model entry PATA / PATY [HEEL / HEELS], whose structure is therefore outlined only briefly. A more detailed account of the projected dictionary and the methodology underlying its compilation, including the extensive and empirically rich entry NOHA / NOHY [FOOT / FEET – LEG / LEGS], along with the subentries PATA / PATY [HEEL / HEELS], and CHODIDLO / CHODIDLA [SOLE / SOLES], will be made available at a later stage. At present, this material forms part of a recently submitted doctoral dissertation (Vodrážková 2026).

It is to be hoped that, in the future, a way will be found to publish the first part of the ethnolinguistic dictionary and, building on the methodology developed, to continue the elaboration of further somatic concepts.

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Streszczenie: W artykule prezentowane są wstępne założenia koncepcyjne projektowanego słownika: etnolingwistycznie i językowo-kulturowo ukierunkowanego leksykonu pojęć somatycznych, pierwszego tego typu w czeskim kontekście językowym i kulturowym. Odwołując się do tradycji leksykograficznych szkół lubelskiej i moskiewskiej, autorki wskazują na swoistość takiego leksykonu oraz proponują wstępny model metodologiczny dla poszczególnych haseł, zilustrowany na przykładzie pojęcia PATA / PATY (PIĘTA / PIĘTY). Szczególną uwagę poświęcają fenomenologicznie istotnym i kulturowo relevantnym aspektom analizowanego pojęcia, jak również jego językowym reprezentacjom w obrębie ludzkiego doświadczenia kształtowanego przez określone systemy językowe i kulturowe. Analiza semantyczna, oparta na danych leksykograficznych, korpusowych oraz źródłach folklorystycznych, poprzedzona jest szerszym kontekstem kulturowym i zorganizowana wokół czterech profili konceptu: MANIFESTACJA, LOKALIZACJA, FUNKCJA i KOMUNIKACJA, uzupełnionych o wybrane typy narracyjne oraz sfery przeżywanej rzeczywistości związane z badanym pojęciem somatycznym.

Słowa kluczowe: leksykon; ciało; pojęcia somatyczne; etnolingwistyka; lingwistyka kognitywno-kulturowa; definicja kognitywna; pięta