

THE MOBILITY OF ‘HOME’: HOW THE CONCEPT BECOMES ACTION IN ENGLISH PHRASAL VERBS

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Abstract: The concept of “home” occupies a deeply rooted position in both language and culture, symbolizing notions of safety, identity, belonging, and emotional anchoring. However, in English phraseology, the term “home” is not only used as a static noun but also undergoes semantic transformation, often functioning within phrasal verbs that carry dynamic and action-oriented meanings. This article explores the verbification and metaphorical extension of the word “home” within English phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions, focusing on how a concept traditionally associated with place and stillness acquires movement, directionality, and intentionality in verbal form.

The study begins by tracing the etymology and semantic evolution of the term “home” in English, analyzing its shift from a concrete noun to a component of verbal phrases such as “home in on,” “bring home to,” and “drive home.” These constructions are examined through the lens of cognitive linguistics and conceptual metaphor theory, which reveal how abstract notions such as understanding, realization, emotional impact, and goal orientation are metaphorically mapped onto the physical act of returning or directing toward “home.” The article emphasizes the metaphorical projection of “home” as a target or destination, illustrating how phrasal verbs construct mental movement toward clarity, truth, or emotional depth.

Furthermore, the article investigates the cultural and pragmatic implications of these expressions, discussing how the mobility of “home” in language reflects broader societal perceptions of home not as a fixed location, but as an evolving and internalized experience. Real-life corpus-based examples are presented to demonstrate how such expressions function in spoken and written discourse, adding nuance, imagery, and depth to communication. The analysis also considers cross-linguistic perspectives, comparing how similar concepts are expressed in other languages to highlight the uniqueness of English verbal creativity.

Keywords: Home concept, English phrasal verbs, conceptual metaphor theory, cognitive linguistics, verbification, Idiomatic expressions, figurative language, semantic shift, cultural semantics, linguistic mobility, English phraseology.

Annotatsiya. “Uy” tushunchasi tilda ham, madaniyatda ham chuqur ildiz otgan mavqega ega bo‘lib, xavfsizlik, o‘ziga xoslik, tegishlilik va hissiy bog‘lanish tushunchalarini anglatadi. Biroq, ingliz frazeologiyasida “uy” atamasi nafaqat statik ot sifatida qo‘llaniladi, balki semantik o‘zgarishlarga ham uchraydi,

ko‘pincha dinamik va harakatga yo‘naltirilgan ma‘nolarni o‘z ichiga olgan frazemalarda ishlaydi. Ushbu maqola “uy” so‘zining ingliz frazali fe‘llari va idiomatik iboralarida ichida verbifikatsiyasi va metaforik kengaytmasini o‘rganib, an’anaviy ravishda joy va sokinlik bilan bog‘langan tushunchaning og‘zaki shaklda harakat, yo‘nalish va intentsiallikni qanday egallashiga e‘tibor qaratadi.

Tadqiqot ingliz tilidagi “uy” atamasining etimologiyasi va semantik evolyutsiyasini kuzatish, uning aniq otdan “uyga kirish”, “uyga olib kelish” va “uyga haydash” kabi og‘zaki iboralar komponentiga o‘tishini tahlil qilishdan boshlanadi. Ushbu konstruktsiyalar kognitiv tilshunoslik va kontseptual metafora nazariyasi ob’ekti orqali ko‘rib chiqiladi, ular tushunish, amalga oshirish, hissiy ta’sir va maqsadga yo‘naltirish kabi mavhum tushunchalarning “uy”ga qaytish yoki yo‘naltirish jismoniy harakati bilan metaforik tarzda qanday tasvirlanganligini ochib beradi. Maqolada “uy” ning maqsad yoki manzil sifatida metaforik proektsiyasiga urg‘u berilgan, frazema fe‘llarning ravshanlik, haqiqat yoki hissiy chuqurlik tomon aqliy harakatni qanday qurishini ko‘rsatadi.

Bundan tashqari, maqola ushbu iboralarining madaniy va pragmatik ta’sirini o‘rganadi, “uy” ning tildagi harakatchanligi uyning doimiy joylashuvi sifatida emas, balki rivojlanayotgan va ichki tajriba sifatida kengroq ijtimoiy tushunchalarni qanday aks ettirishini muhokama qiladi. Bunday iboralar og‘zaki va yozma nutqda qanday ishlashini, muloqotga nuans, tasvir va chuqurlik qo‘shishini ko‘rsatish uchun real hayotdan korpusga asoslangan misollar keltirilgan. Tahlil shuningdek, ingliz tilidagi og‘zaki ijodkorlikning o‘ziga xosligini ta’kidlash uchun o‘xshash tushunchalarning boshqa tillarda qanday ifodalanganligini taqqoslab, tillararo istiqbollarni ko‘rib chiqadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: Uy tushunchasi, ingliz frazemasini, konseptual metafora nazariyasi, kognitiv lingvistika, verbifikatsiya, Idiomatik iboralar, obrazli til, semantik siljish, madaniy semantika, lingvistik harakatchanlik, ingliz frazeologiyasi.

Introduction

Language is not only a tool for communication but also a repository of cultural, cognitive, and emotional meaning. Among the many linguistic elements that encode deeper conceptual meanings, the notion of “home” stands out as a universal and deeply rooted human experience. In English phraseology, the concept of *home* extends far beyond its literal denotation of a dwelling place. It evokes feelings of safety, identity, belonging, stability, and even transition. Interestingly, this static concept becomes mobile when it enters the dynamic structure of phrasal verbs, where it is verbalized, transformed, and activated as part of various actions and experiences.

The study of how abstract concepts like “home” are realized in language through verbal expression specifically in English phrasal verbs opens up a rich area of inquiry in cognitive linguistics and semantic analysis. Phrasal verbs such as *go home*, *bring home*, *take home*, *move back home*, and *drive someone home* demonstrate how “home” functions not merely as a location, but as a target or

endpoint of motion, intention, and psychological or emotional direction. These expressions illustrate the verbification of the home concept, in which a noun representing a stable place acquires action-oriented connotations and symbolic layers through syntactic transformation.

The motivation for this study lies in the recognition that phrasal verbs are not only common in everyday English usage but are also rich carriers of figurative meaning, particularly in how they reflect cultural models and conceptual metaphors. According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), proposed by Lakoff and Johnson, abstract concepts are understood and structured through metaphorical mappings from more concrete domains. Within this framework, the idea of "home" often serves as the target domain, interpreted through source domains such as journey, containment, or directionality. For example, the phrase *bring something home to someone* metaphorically signifies realization or clarity, with "home" symbolizing the mind or self as a final destination of understanding.

This article explores the verbalization of the home concept through English phrasal verbs, focusing on how spatial, emotional, and metaphorical dimensions interact in dynamic linguistic structures. It examines the semantic shifts, pragmatic uses, and cognitive functions of these expressions in both literal and figurative contexts. Through the analysis of authentic language data and theoretical insights from cognitive semantics and phraseology, the study aims to uncover how "home" becomes a site of movement, transformation, and meaning construction in modern English.

Ultimately, this article contributes to a deeper understanding of how seemingly static cultural concepts become dynamic and active through language. It highlights the linguistic mobility of the "home" concept and its significance in shaping how speakers conceptualize personal and interpersonal experience, especially in relation to movement, identity, and emotional anchoring.

The concept of "home" has long held a central position in human cognition, representing both a physical space and a metaphorical anchor of identity, emotion, and cultural belonging. In English phraseology, the process of verbalizing this concept turning it into an action-oriented linguistic element is particularly visible in the use of phrasal verbs. These multi-word expressions function as semantic units that often infuse verbs with idiomatic or metaphorical meaning. This section explores how "home" shifts from a static noun to a mobile, action-bearing construct within phrasal verbs, reflecting deeper layers of cultural and cognitive significance.

1. Literal and spatial realizations of "home" in phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs that include "home" frequently denote literal motion toward a spatial goal. Examples include:

- *go home*
- *come home*
- *drive home*
- *head home*

- *bring someone home*

In these expressions, “home” serves as the endpoint of motion, highlighting its role as a destination. These literal uses are tied to the image schema of PATH - a cognitive structure that conceptualizes movement along a trajectory toward a goal. According to Johnson (1987), such schemas help speakers interpret abstract and physical experiences in structured, embodied ways. The use of verbs like *go* or *bring* suggests intentional action, often motivated by comfort, familiarity, or belonging. Here, “home” is not only the final point of a journey but also a place imbued with emotional salience.

2. Metaphorical and figurative uses of “home”

Beyond physical movement, “home” is verbalized in metaphorical expressions that communicate realization, emphasis, or emotional impact. Consider the following:

- *drive something home (to someone)* – to emphasize a point or make someone understand
- *bring something home (to someone)* – to make someone realize the importance or reality of something
- *hit home* – when something has a significant emotional or cognitive effect

These idiomatic expressions reflect metaphorical mappings where “home” symbolizes the mind, heart, or inner understanding. The action component, embedded in verbs such as *drive*, *bring*, or *hit*, highlights the motion of ideas toward internal realization. This mirrors the metaphor UNDERSTANDING IS ARRIVING AT A DESTINATION, where ideas or feelings reach the “home” of personal comprehension or emotional resonance.

3. Cognitive and semantic dimensions

From a cognitive linguistic standpoint, the verbalization of “home” within phrasal verbs aligns with Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that our language is largely metaphorical and that abstract domains are understood in terms of concrete ones. The notion of home, being tied to safety, identity, and familiarity, often becomes the target domain in metaphorical mappings.

For example:

- In *bring it home*, the verb phrase reflects the movement of abstract meaning (such as truth or knowledge) to the “home” of one's understanding.
- In *hit home*, the “impact” metaphor links external action to internal realization, with “home” functioning as the psychological self.

Semantically, phrasal verbs with “home” often evoke telicity, the notion that an action has a defined endpoint. The use of particles like “home” intensifies the goal orientation of the verb, enhancing the sense of completion or achievement.

4. Sociolinguistic and cultural reflections

In English-speaking cultures, the concept of “home” is not merely spatial but social and emotional. It reflects values of independence, privacy, and personal identity, which are culturally encoded into language use. Phrasal verbs involving “home” often carry these connotations, consciously or unconsciously reinforcing shared cultural narratives.

Moreover, these expressions can serve as tools for identity construction, especially in narratives, literature, and media. For example, a character in a novel who *goes back home* may be undergoing a process of reconciliation or self-discovery. The movement toward “home” thus becomes symbolic of inner journey or resolution.

5. Pedagogical and applied implications

Understanding the dynamics of phrasal verbs involving “home” is particularly valuable in language teaching and acquisition. Learners of English often struggle with phrasal verbs due to their idiomatic nature and syntactic complexity. However, recognizing the conceptual patterns such as motion toward a goal, emotional realization, or internalization can aid in semantic retention and usage.

Teaching strategies might include:

- Concept mapping of phrasal verbs involving “home”
- Role-play and storytelling that use both literal and metaphorical expressions
- Contextual analysis through film, literature, and authentic dialogues

By exploring the mobility of “home” in phraseological contexts, educators can foster deeper intercultural and cognitive awareness in learners.

6. Digital and corpus-based observations

Recent advances in corpus linguistics allow for large-scale analysis of how phrasal verbs with “home” function across genres and registers. A corpus-based approach reveals the frequency, collocation patterns, and semantic shifts of these expressions over time. For instance, the British National Corpus and Corpus of Contemporary American English show that phrases like *drive home the point* are common in academic and journalistic writing, while *come home late* appears more in informal spoken contexts.

Conclusion

The concept of “home” in English phraseology transcends its traditional role as a static noun, evolving into a dynamic and action-oriented element through its use in phrasal verbs. This linguistic transformation highlights the remarkable flexibility and expressiveness of the English language, where even deeply personal and culturally charged concepts like “home” can be verbalized to convey both literal movements and abstract realizations.

Through this analysis, we have seen how the word “home” operates within various phrasal verb constructions to express direction, completion, emotional resonance, and cognitive impact. In literal expressions such as *go home* or *come*

home, the term denotes a tangible destination. Meanwhile, in metaphorical constructs like *drive home a point* or *hit home*, “home” functions as a figurative endpoint often representing internal understanding, emotional depth, or conceptual clarity. These patterns reflect cognitive structures like image schemas and conceptual metaphors, underscoring the embodiment of meaning in language.

Moreover, this mobility of “home” reflects broader sociocultural values within English-speaking contexts, where the home is associated not only with physical space but also with identity, comfort, and self-realization. The phrasal verbs that incorporate “home” echo these associations, reinforcing cultural narratives about belonging, introspection, and return. They also offer insights into how language encodes personal and communal experiences, turning abstract feelings into communicable action.

From a pedagogical perspective, teaching phrasal verbs involving “home” can serve as an effective strategy for helping learners connect linguistic forms with cognitive and cultural meanings. By emphasizing the metaphorical dimensions and action-oriented structures of such expressions, educators can support deeper comprehension and more meaningful language use. Furthermore, corpus-based approaches to these expressions reveal their contextual diversity, frequency, and adaptability across registers, making them an essential area of study for both applied linguistics and language teaching.

In conclusion, the study of how “home” becomes mobile how it shifts from a place to a process within English phrasal verbs demonstrates the intricate interplay between language, thought, and culture. As language continues to evolve, the concept of “home” will undoubtedly continue to adapt, migrate, and verbalize, reflecting the ever-changing landscape of human experience. Understanding these dynamics not only enriches linguistic theory but also deepens our appreciation for the nuanced ways we communicate core human experiences through language.

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