

A Comparative Analysis of Body Idioms in Two Romance Languages and in English Aiming at Vocabulary Teaching and Learning

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Abstract : Before the advent of Cognitive Linguistics, metaphor was considered a stylistic issue, but now it is viewed as a critical component of everyday language and a fundamental mechanism of human conceptualizations of the world. It means that human beings' conceptual system (the way we think and act) is metaphorical in nature. Another interesting hypothesis in Cognitive Linguistics is that cognition is embodied, that is, our cognition is influenced by our experiences in the physical world: the mind is connected to the body and the body influences the mind. In this sense, it is believed that many conceptual metaphors appear to be potentially universal or near-universal, because people across the world share certain bodily experiences. In these terms, many metaphors may be identical or very similar in several languages. Thus, in this study, we analyzed some somatic (also called body) idioms of Italian and Portuguese languages, in order to investigate the proportion in which their metaphors are the same, similar or different in both languages. It was selected hundreds of Italian idioms in dictionaries and indicated their corresponding idioms in Portuguese. The analysis allowed to conclude that much of the studied expressions are really structurally, semantically and metaphorically identical or similar in both languages. We also contrasted some Portuguese and Italian somatic expressions to their corresponding English idioms to have a multilingual perspective of the issue, and it also led to the conclusion that the most common idioms based on metaphors are probably those that have to do with the human body. Although this is mere speculation and needs more study, the results found incite relevant discussions on issues that matter Foreign and Second Language Teaching and Learning, including the retention of vocabulary. The teaching of the metaphorically different body idioms also plays an important role in language learning and teaching as it will be shown in this paper. Acknowledgments: FAPESP - São Paulo State Research Support Foundation -the financial support offered (proc. n° 2017/02064-7).

Keywords : body idioms, cognitive linguistics, metaphor, vocabulary teaching and learning

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