

Metaphors Underlying Idiomatic Expressions in Trilingual Perspective: Contributions to the Teaching of Lexicon and to Materials Development

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Abstract : Idiomatic expressions are linguistic phraseologisms present in natural languages. Known to be metaphorical linguistic combinations, a good majority of them provide elements that reveal important cultural aspects of their linguistic community through their metaphors. With the advent of Cognitive Linguistics (more specifically of Cognitive Semantics), the metaphor ceased to be related to poetic language and rhetorical embellishment and came to be seen as part of simple everyday language, reflecting the way human beings think, act and conceive reality, i. e., a fundamental mechanism of human conceptualizations of the world. In this sense, it came to be conceived as an inevitable mechanism for representing the nature of thought and language. The speakers, in conceptualizing reality, often use metaphorically parts of the body in expressions known as somatic. Several conceptual metaphors appear to be potentially universal or near-universal, because people across the world share certain bodily experiences. In these terms, many linguistic metaphors may be identical or very similar in several languages. These similarities, according to the Theory of Conceptual Metaphor, derive from universal aspects of the human body. Thus, this research aims to investigate the nature of some metaphors underlying somatic idiomatic expressions of Portuguese, Italian and English languages, establishing a pattern of similarities and differences among them from a trilingual perspective. The analysis shows that much of the studied expressions are really structurally, semantically and metaphorically identical or similar in the three languages. These findings incite relevant discussions concerning mother and foreign language learning and aim to contribute to the teaching of phraseological Lexicon as well as to materials development in mono and multilingual perspectives.

Keywords : idiomatic expressions, materials development, metaphors, phraseological lexicon, teaching and learning

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