

Body Idioms - A Fountain of Cultural Information

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Abstract

Idioms and idiomatic expressions which have in their structure a noun denoting a part of the human body are probably common to every language on Earth. In modern linguistics, such types of idioms are referred to as somatisms or somatic constructions (from gr. soma - body). The present paper deals with semantic and social aspects of such constructions bringing forward examples from several different languages. A special focus shall be put on cultural facets and folk etymology, trying thus to tackle idioms from various, but obverse angles. Nevertheless, the utmost scholastic purpose of our research is to analyze whether body idioms pertaining to different languages, and consequently to different cultures, meet on a common mental and linguistic ground and can therefore call for the idea of a universal cultural tradition.