

## A CONTRASTIVE APPROACH TO ENGLISH AND ITALIAN PROVERBS ON BODY PARTS (TEACHING ACTIVITIES)

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**Abstract:** The richness and frequency of Italian and English proverbs containing terms as *head - testa, capo, eye - occhio, forehead - fronte, nose - naso, mouth - bocca, hand - mano, arm - braccio leg/foot - piede*, etc. all referring to different parts of the body, are well-known. The aim of the present paper is to make a detailed contrastive analysis of the proverbs containing these terms as a dominant term in the two languages, based on their semantic classification. Moreover, the second part of the paper makes some useful suggestions for teaching and learning such proverbs.

**Keywords:** proverbs, body parts, semantic classification, teaching

### 1. Introduction

The present paper aims at identifying and semantically classifying different English and Italian proverbs containing a part of the body, as well as their possible use in various teaching activities. The corpus in discussion has been taken from the following dictionaries of English and Italian proverbs: *Dicționar englez-italian-român de proverbe echivalente* by Flonta (1993), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* by Simpson, Speake (1998), *Dizionario di proverbi italiani* by Lapucci (2007), *Grande dizionario dei proverbi italiani* by Guazzotti, Oddera (2007), and *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* by Speake (2008).

Even though there are proverbs referring to body parts as *hair - capelli, face - volto, ear - orecchio, teeth - denti, throat - gola, nose - naso, shoulder - spale, belly - pancia, breast - seno*, these are not going to be taken into discussion, due to their reduced frequency in both languages. Body parts such as *head/brain - testa/capo, eye - occhio, mouth - bocca, hand - mano and leg - piede* are quantitatively better represented in English and Italian proverbs and therefore they represent the corpus of the present analysis.

### 2. Head/brain – testa/capo/cervello

One of the most representative categories of proverbs with the dominant term *head/brain - testa/capo* may refer to stupidity, authority, intelligence, to people with their head in the clouds, to different individuals, idleness, or it may be just a simple part of the body.

#### 2.1. Stupidity

As a symbol of stupidity, head in both languages appears in numerous proverbs.

The image is associated to a tall person, to people with a big head or a grey head:

- (1) *Tall men had ever very empty heads. – Uomo lungo, testa corta.* (Flonta 1993, 188);
- (2) *Mickle head, little wit. - Capo grosso, cervello magro.* (*Ibid.* 137); *Testa grossa, cervello piccolo; Testa grossa non fa buon cervello; Nelle teste grosse il cervello s'annacqua.* (Lapucci 2007, 1562);
- (3) *The head grey, and no brains yet. – A testa bianca, spesso cervello manca.* (Flonta 1993, 137); *Testa scema non diventa bianca.* (Lapucci 2007, 1560)

Stupid people are also described in both languages with a head of wax or butter, or with no head at all:

- (4) *Be not a baker, if your head be of butter; He that has a head of wax must not walk in the sun. – Chi ha il capo di cera non vada al sole.* (Flonta 1993, 37);
- (5) *He that has no head needs no hat. - Chi non ha testa non ha che far di cappello.* (*Idem*); *Chi non ha capo non ha bisogno di beretta.* (Lapucci 2007, 252)

## 2.2. Authority

*Head* is also used in English and Italian proverbs as a symbol of authority:

- (6) *The husband is the head of the wife. – Il marito sia capo della donna.* (Flonta 1993, 152);
- (7) *Fish begins to stink at the head. (Ibid. 98); The fish always stinks from the head downwards.* (Simpson and Speake 1998, 158) – *Il pesce comincia a putire dal capo; Dal capo vien la tigna.* (Flonta 1993, 98);
- (8) *Better be the head of a dog/mouse/ass than the tail of a lion. - Meglio capo di gatto che coda di leone (Ibid. 136); Meglio capo d'asino che coda di cavallo.* (Lapucci 2007, 252);
- (9) *Better be the head of a lizard than the tail of a lion. - Meglio capo di lucertola che coda di dragone.; Meglio essere testa di formica che coda di leone.; Meglio testa di pidocchio che coda di drago.* (*Idem*);
- (10) *Better be the head of a pike than the tail of a sturgeon.* (Flonta 1993, 136) – *È meglio essere capo di luccio che coda di storione. (Idem); Meglio primo a casa sua che secondo a casa d'altri.; Meglio primo in un villaggio delle Alpi che secondo a Roma.* (Lapucci 2007, 252)

## 2.3. Intelligence/wisdom

Contrary to stupidity, *head* may also suggest intelligence and wisdom in the proverbs of both languages:

- (11) *The wiser head give in. – Al più potente cede il più prudente.* (Flonta 1993, 137);
- (12) *A still tongue makes a wise head. (Simpson and Speake 1998, 158); A wise head makes a close mouth.* (Flonta 1993, 292) – *Una testa savia ha la bocca chiusa. (Idem);*
- (13) *The brains don't lie in the beard. – La sapienza non sta nella barba.* (*Ibid.* 28)

There are more Italian proverbs with *testa* suggesting intelligence:

- (14) *La testa del saggio parla anche dopo la morte.* (Lapucci 2007, 1560) "The head of the wise still speaks after death.";

- (15) *A chi ha testa non manca cappello.* (*Ibid.* 1562) "Who has a head doesn't lack a hat.";
- (16) *Chi ha più cervello l'adopri.* (*Ibid.* 304) "Who has more brains should use it.";
- (17) *Testa alta l'ha detta, testa bassa l'ha fatta.* (*Ibid.* 1560) "Tall head says and low head does.";
- (18) *Per perdere il cervello bisogna averlo.; Il cervello lo perde chi ce l'ha.* (*Ibid.* 304) "To lose the brain you need to have it".

#### 2.4. Head in the air

*Head* is also used to describe people with their head in the air:

- (19) *A forgetful head makes a weary pair of heels.* (Flonta 1993:136) - *A chi falla la memoria soccorre la gamba.* (Lapucci 2007, 304);
- (20) *Little wit in the head makes much work for the feet.* (Flonta 1993, 136) - *Chi è corto di mente sia lungo di piede.* (Lapucci 2007, 304);
- (21) *Who has not understanding, let him have legs. – Chi non ha testa/cervello, abbia gamba.* (Flonta 1993:136); *Chi fa male di capo paga bene di borsa.* (Lapucci 2007, 252); *Chi non pensa corre.* (*Ibid.* 304)

#### 2.5. Individuals

*Head* may also refer to individuals, especially in Italian:

- (22) *So many heads, so many minds. – Tante teste, tante idee.* (Flonta 1993, 137);
- (23) *Ogni testa dura trova il suo scoglio.* (Lapucci 2007, 1561) "Every hard head finds its rock."; *Tante teste/tanti corpi, tanti cervelli.* (*Idem*) "So many heads/bodies, so many brains."; *Tante teste, tante tempeste.* "Many heads, many storms."; *Ogni testa è un mondo.* (*Idem*) "Every head is a world."

#### 2.6. Idleness

*Head* is also a symbol of idleness:

- (24) *An idle brain is the devil's workshop.* (Speake 2008, 37) – *La testa dell'ozioso è l'officina del diavolo.* (Flonta 1993, 28)

#### 2.7. Part of the body

In some of the English and Italian proverbs, *head* is referred to as a simple body part, without any symbolic value:

- (25) *Cover your head by day as much as you will, by night as much as you can. – Di giorno quando vuoi, di notte quanto puoi.* (*Ibid.* 57);
- (26) *When the head aches, all the body is the worse. – Quando la testa duole, tutte le membra languono.* (Lapucci 2007, 1561)

### 3. Eye – occhio

Another representative category of proverbs with the dominant term *eye* –

*occhio* may refer to opposite concepts such as vigilance and ignorance, truth and falsity, but also to love and desire, advice, subjectivity, reciprocity, and to the character of a person.

### 3.1. Vigilance and ignorance

The eye may symbolize vigilance or ignorance in both languages:

(27) *The master's eye makes the horse fat.* (Flonta 1993, 87) - *L'occhio del padrone ingrassa il cavallo.*; *Piede di padrone ingrassa il campo.* (Lapucci 2007, 1042);

(28) *The eye of the master will do more work than both his hands.* - *Vede più un occhio del padrone che quattro del servo.* (*Ibid.* 1043); *La presenza del signore è aumento del lavoro.* (Flonta 1993, 186);

(29) *The buyer needs a hundred eyes, the seller but one.* - *A chi compra non bastano cent'occhi; a chi vende ne basta solo uno; Due occhi per chi vende, ma cento per chi prende.* (*Ibid.* 33);

(30) *Fields have eyes, and woods have ears; The day has eyes, the night has ears; Walls have ears.* - *Il piano ha occhi, e il bosco orecchi.* (*Ibid.* 96);

(31) *Who has a fair wife needs more than two eyes.* - *Moglie bella ti fa far da sentinella.* (*Ibid.* 90);

(32) *He that has but one eye must be afraid to lose it.* - *Chi ha un occhio solo, ben lo guarda.* (*Ibid.* 87);

(33) *Better to have one eye than be blind altogether; A man were better to be half blind than have both eyes out.* - *Meglio losco che cieco in tutto.* (*Ibid.* 24);

(34) *In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king; In the Kingdom of blind men, the one-eyed is king.* - *In terra di ciechi chi ha un occhio è signore.* (*Idem*)

### 3.2. Truth and falsity

Eye may refer to truth as well as to falsity in English and Italian proverbs:

(35) *What the eye sees, the heart believes.* - *Quel che l'occhio vede, il cuor crede.* (Flonta 1993:88); *Quel che l'occhio non vede, il cuore non crede.* (Lapucci 2007, 1041);

(36) *Four eyes see more than two.* (Simpson and Speake 1998, 128) - *Vedono più quattr'occhi che due.* (Flonta 1993, 88);

(37) *One eyewitness is better than ten hear'so's.* - *Gli occhi hanno più credenza che le orecchie.* (*Ibid.* 89);

(38) *To cry with one eye, and laugh with the other.* - *Femmina piange da un occhio e dall'altro ride.* (*Ibid.* 87);

(39) *Chi troppo frena gli occhi vuol dire che li sono scappati.* (Lapucci 2007, 1042) "Those who try too hard to look away have slippery eyes."

### 3.3. Love and desire

Through the eye love and desire make their way to the heart:

(40) *What the eye doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve over.* (Simpson and Speake 1998, 109); *What the eye sees not, the heart craves/rues not.* (Flonta 1993:88); *Occhio non*

*vede, cuore non duole/sente; Occhio non vede, cuore non desidera; Se occhio non mira, cuor non sospira.* (Lapucci 2007, 1041);

(41) *Please your eye and plague your heart.* (Simpson, Speake 1998:110) - *Occhio mira, cuor sospira.* (Lapucci 2007, 1041);

(42) *Lontan dagli occhi, lontan dal cuore.* "Far from the eyes, far from the heart."; *Lontan dagli occhi, vicino al cuore.* (*Idem*) "Far from the eyes, near to the heart.";

(43) *The eye lets in love.* – *L'occhio attira amore; Dove è l'amore, l'occhio corre.* (Flonta 1993, 87);

(44) *The eye will have his parts.* – *Anche l'occhio vuol la sua parte.* (*Idem*)

### 3.4. Advice

A number of proverbs in both languages containing the body part *eye* – *occhio* represent different suggestions or advice:

(45) *Look not to high, lest something fall into thy eye.* – *Non mirar troppo alto, per paura che qualcosa non ti caschi nell'occhio.* (Flonta 1993, 87);

(46) *You should never touch your eye but with your elbow.* – *Gli occhi s'hanno a toccare con le gomita.* (*Ibid.* 88);

(47) *Neither eyes on letters nor hands in coffers.* – *Né occhi in lettera, né mani in tasca.* (*Idem*);

(48) *Breed up a crow and he will tear out your eyes; He has brought up a bird to pick out his own eyes.* – *Nutri il corvo e ti caverà gli occhi.* (Flonta 1993, 53);

(49) *Jest not with the eye, or with religion.* - *Tre cose lascia da per sé: l'occhio, la donna e la fè.* (*Ibid.* 87); *Occhio, fede e onore non toccar mai del signore.* (Lapucci 2007, 1042);

(50) *Due occhi, due orecchi e una bocca sola.* (*Idem*) "Two eyes, two ears and one mouth.";

(51) *Bocca chiusa e occhi aperti.* (*Idem*) "Closed mouth and open eyes."

### 3.5. Subjectivity

*Eye* may refer to people's subjectivity in English and Italian proverbs:

(52) *You can see a mote in another's eye but cannot see a beam in your own; You see the splinter in your brother's eye, but not the beam in your own; The eye that sees all things else sees not itself.* – *Si vede la scheggia nell'occhio altrui e non si vede la trave nel proprio.* (Flonta 1993, 88);

(53) *The eye is bigger than the belly.* – *Piuttosto si satolla il ventre che l'occhio; Lo stomaco non abbraccia quanto l'occhio.* (*Ibid.* 87)

### 3.6. Reciprocity

English and Italian proverbs with the term *eye* - *occhio* may also show reciprocity:

(54) *Crows will not pick out crows' eyes; Hawks will not pick out hawks' eyes* – *Corvi con corvi non si cavano gli occhi.* *Ibid.* 54);

(55) *An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.* (*Ibid.* 86) – *Occhio per occhio, dente per dente.* (Lapucci 2007, 1041)

### 3.7. Character of a person

Last but not least, the eye may reveal the character of a person in the proverbs of both languages:

(56) *The eyes are the window of the soul.* (Simpson and Speake 1998, 110) – *Gli occhi sono lo specchio dell'anima.* (Flonta 1993, 89)

## 4. Mouth – bocca

The English and Italian proverbs containing the term *mouth* – *bocca* in our corpora may be semantically classified in four categories: honesty versus falsity, intelligence versus stupidity, advice and general truth, and politeness.

### 4.1. Honesty and falsity

*Mouth* in the proverbs of both languages is a proof of honesty, but may also show stupidity:

(57) *His heart is in his mouth; What the heart things, the tongue speaks; Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* – *Cuor sulla bocca, la bocca nel cuore.* (*Ibid.* 139);

(58) *Wise men have their mouth in their heart, fools their heart in their mouth.* – *I saggi hanno la bocca nel cuore, e i matti il cuore in bocca.* (*Ibid.* 294);

(59) *He has honey in the mouth and a razor at the girdle.* – *Avere il miele in bocca e il rasoio alla canola.* (*Ibid.* 142);

(60) *Honey is not for the ass's mouth.* – *Il miele non è fatto per gli asini.* (*Ibid.* 143)

### 4.2. Intelligence and stupidity

*Mouth* may also show intelligence as well as stupidity in both languages:

(61) *A close mouth catches no flies.* – *In bocca chiusa non entrano mosche.* (*Ibid.* 197);

(62) *A man cannot have his mouth full of flour and also blow the fire.* – *Non si può tenere la farina in bocca e soffiare.* (*Idem*);

(63) *To think that larks will fall into one's mouth ready roasted; You may gape long enough ere a bird fall in your mouth.* – *A nessuno piovono le lasagne in bocca.* (Flonta 1993, 164);

(64) *The butcher looked for his knife and it was in his mouth.* – *Fare come quello che cercava la pipa e l'aveva in bocca.* (*Ibid.* 197)

### 4.3. Advice and general truth

A number of English and Italian proverbs with the term *mouth* (*lip*) are used as a piece of advice:

(65) *Never look a gift horse in the mouth; Look not a gift/given horse in the mouth; No man ought to look a gift horse in the mouth.* – *A caval donato non si guarda in bocca.* (*Ibid.* 146);

- (66) *Scald not your lips in another man's pottage. – No metter bocca, dove non ti tocca. (Ibid. 173);*  
(67) *Keep your mouth shut and your eyes open. – Bocca chiusa e occhi aperti. (Ibid. 197)*  
or as a general truth:  
(68) *A cool mouth, and warm feet, live long. – Bocca umida, e piede asciutto. (Idem);*  
(69) *God never sends mouth but He sends meat. – Dio non manda mai bocca che non mandi cibo. (Flonta 1993, 139);*  
(70) *The morning hour has gold in its mouth. – Le ore del mattino hanno l'oro in bocca. (Ibid. 148)*

#### 4.4. Politeness

More rarely, *mouth (lip)* in the proverbs of both languages may refer to politeness:

- (71) *Fair words hurt not the mouth. – Le buone parole non rompono i denti. (Ibid. 300);*  
(72) *Lip-honour costs little, yet may bring in much. – Onor di bocca assai giova e poco costa. (Ibid. 173)*

### 5. Hand/arm – mano

Another part of the body, frequently used in English and Italian proverbs is *hand – mano*. This may refer to general truth and advice, the character of a person, reciprocity and team work, politeness and uncertainty.

#### 5.1. General truth and advice

*Hand* is often used in English and Italian proverbs to express general truth:

- (73) *A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. - Un uccello in mano ne val due in bosco. (Ibid. 20);*  
(74) *Better a fowl in hand nor two flying. - Meglio/Val più fringuello in man che tordo in frasca (Idem);*  
(75) *A feather in hand is better than a bird in the air. – È meglio una penna in mano che un uccello in aria. (Idem);*  
(76) *È meglio un uccello in gabbia che cento per aria-al bosco. (Idem) "It is better to have a caged bird than a hundred in the air/wood";*  
(77) *The hand that gives gathers. – La mano che dà raccoglie. (Flonta 1993, 132);*  
(78) *He that is fed at another's hand may stay long ere he be full. – Chi per altrui man s'imbocca, tardi si satolla. (Ibid. 131);*  
(79) *He that is fed at another's hand may stay long ere he be full. – Chi per altrui man s'imbocca, tardi si satolla. (Idem);*  
(80) *Kings have long arms; Kings have many ears and many eyes. – I principi hanno le mani lunghe. (Flonta 1993, 160),*

or a piece of advice:

- (81) *Put not thy hand between the bark and the tree. – Tra l'incudine e il martello, man non metta chi ha cervello. (Ibid. 132);*

(82) *It is ill putting a sword in a madman's hand; Do not put a sword into your enemy's hand. – Non mettere il rasoio in mano ad un pazzo. (Ibid. 180);*

(83) *It is good walking with a horse in one's hand. – Chi ha buon cavallo in stalla può andare a piedi; È facile andar a piedi quando si ha il caval per la briglia. (Ibid. 146)*

## 5.2. Character of a person

*Hand* may also express the character of a person in the proverbs of both languages:

(84) *Cold hands, warm heart; A cold hand and a warm heart. – Freddo di mano, caldo di cuore. (Ibid. 132);*

(85) *An iron hand in a velvet glove. – Mano di ferro e guanto velluto. (Ibid. 131)*

## 5.3. Reciprocity and team work

In some English and Italian proverbs *hand* is a symbol of reciprocity:

(86) *One hand washes another and both the face; One hand washes the other. – Una mano lava l'altra, e tutt'e duelavano il viso. (Idem)*

and team work:

(87) *Many hands make light work. – Molte mani fanno l'opera leggiera. (Flonta 1993, 132)*

## 5.4. Politeness and uncertainty

Last but not least, *hand* is a symbol of politeness (87) and uncertainty (88):

(88) *A man's hat in his hand never did him any harm; Lip honour costs little, yet may bring in much. – Cortesia di bocca, mano al cappello, poco costa, ed è buono e bello. (Ibid. 135)*

(89) *Between the hand and the lip the morsel may slip. - Dalla mano alla bocca spesso si perde la zuppa; Tra la bocca è il boccone mille cose accadono. (Ibid. 131)*

## 6. Leg/foot – piede

Another well represented body part in the English and Italian proverbs is *leg/foot* – *piede*.

### 6.1. General truth

The term *leg/foot* – *piede* is often found in proverbs expressing a general truth:

(90) *Diseases come on horseback, but go away on foot. – Il male viene a cavallo e se ne va a piedi. (Ibid. 68);*

(91) *A horse may stumble that has four legs. - E cade anche un cavallo che ha quattro gambe. (Ibid. 145);*

(92) *The belly carries the legs. – La bocca porta le gambe. (Ibid. 168); (92) Lies have short legs. – Le bugie hanno le gambe corte. (Ibid. 170);*



(93) *Where your will is ready, your feet are light. – Dove la voglia è pronta, le gambe sono leggiere. (Ibid. 289)*

## 6.2. Advice

English and Italian proverbs under the form of a piece of advice often contain the term *leg/foot – piede*:

(94) *Stretch your legs according to your coverlet; Stretch your arms no further than your sleeve will reach. – Chi si stende più del lenzuolo, si scopre i piedi; Bisogna stendersi quanto il lenzuolo è lungo. (Ibid. 167);*

(95) *Keep your feet dry, and your head hot; and for the rest live like a beast. – Asciutto il piede e calda la testa, e nel resto vivi da bestia. (Ibid. 95);*

(96) *Better the foot slip than the tongue. – È meglio sdruciolare coi piedi che colla lingua. (Ibid. 106)*

## 6.3. Intelligence/wisdom and stupidity

*Leg/foot – piede* may be a symbol of intelligence:

(97) *A cat always falls on its legs. – Cascare in piè come le gate. (Ibid. 36);*

(98) *The cat would eat fish and would not wet her feet. - La gatta vorrebbe mangiar pesci, ma non pescare. (Ibid. 37);*

(99) *Wisdom has one foot on land, and another on sea. – Il sapere ha un piede in terra e l'altro in mare. (Ibid. 292),*

as well as of stupidity:

(100) *He that has one foot in the straw, has another in the spittle. – Chi ha un piè in bordello, ha l'altro all'ospedale. (Ibid. 106)*

## 6.4. Unit of measurement, hardworking and vigilance, different personalities

Last but not least, *leg/foot – piede* in the proverbs of both languages may be a simple unit of measurement:

(101) *Six feet of earth make all men equal. – Sei piè di terra ne uguaglia tutti. (Ibid. 95),*

it may reveal hardworking and vigilance:

(102) *The foot on the cradle and the hand on the distaff is the sign of a good housewife. – Piede alla cula e mano al fuso mostrano la buona massaia. (Ibid. 106);*

(103) *The master's footsteps fastens the soil, and his foot the ground. – Il piede del padrone ingrassa il campo. (Ibid. 186),*

or it may refer to different people with different points of view:

(104) *All feet tread not in one shoe; One shoe will not fit all feet. – Non tutti i piedi stanno bene in una scarpa. (Ibid. 95)*

## 7. Some teaching proposals

The second part of our paper is designed for the educational use of the proverbs, not under the form of a lesson built around proverbs, but as a list of

proposals of various types of activities that could be carried out on proverbs in an English or Italian L2 class. The activities may be divided into different categories:

### 7.1. Identifying the characteristics of proverbs

Among the various activities developed for the identification of the characteristics of English or Italian proverbs we could mention: the use of metaphor ((4) *He that has a head of wax must not walk in the sun. – Chi ha il capo di cera non vada al sole.* (Flonta 1993, 137)), brevity ((2) *Mickle head, little wit. - Capo grosso, cervello magro.* (*Idem*); (77) *The hand that gives gathers. – La mano che dà raccoglie.* (Flonta 1993, 132)), rhyme ((35) *What the eye sees, the heart believes. – Quel che l'occhio vede, il cuor crede.* (*Ibid.* 88); (17) *Testa alta l'ha detta, testa bassa l'ha fatta.* (Lapucci 2007, 1560)), the alliteration ((23) *Tante teste, tante tempeste.* (*Ibid.* 1561)), repetition ((55) *An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.* (Flonta 1993, 86) – *Occhio per occhio, dente per dente.* (Lapucci 2007:1041); (23) *So many heads, so many minds. – Tante teste, tante idee.* (Flonta 1993:137)), the use of antonyms (*A long tongue is a sign of a short hand. – Lunga lingua, corta mano.* (*Ibid.* 269); (67) *Keep your mouth shut and your eyes open. – Bocca chiusa e occhi aperti.* (*Ibid.* 197)), the structure of proverbs: one sentence proverbs ((91) *The belly carries the legs. – La bocca porta le gambe.* (*Ibid.* 168)), two-part proverbs ((41) *Please your eye and plague your heart.* (Simpson and Speake 1998, 110) - *Occhio mira, cuor sospira.* (Lapucci 2007, 1041); (28) *The buyer needs a hundred eyes, the seller but one. – Due occhi per chi vende, ma cento per chi prende.* (Flonta 1993, 33)), proverbs with three or more parts ((95) *Keep your feet dry, and your head hot; and for the rest live like a beast. – Asciutto il piede e calda la testa, e nel resto vivi da bestia.* (*Ibid.* 95)), nominal phrase (*A honey tongue, a heart of gall. – Volto di miele, cuor di fiele.* (*Ibid.* 139); (83) *Cold hands, warm heart. – Freddo di mano, caldo di cuore.* (*Ibid.* 132)), relatives with *that - chi* ((4) *He that has a head of wax must not walk in the sun. – Chi ha il capo di cera non vada al sole.* (*Ibid.* 137); (31) *He that has but one eye must be afraid to lose it. – Chi ha un occhio solo, ben lo guarda.* (*Ibid.* 87)), proverbs with correlative conjunctions (*neither/nor – né-né*) ((47) *Neither eyes on letters nor hands in coffers. – Né occhi in lettera, né mani in tasca.* (*Idem*)), proverbs starting with *better...than – meglio...che* ((8) *Better be the head of a dog/mouse/ass than the tail of a lion.* (Flonta 1993:136) - *Meglio capo di gatto che coda di leone* (*Idem*)), proverbs beginning with a time conjunction ((25) *When the head aches, all the body is the worse. – Quando la testa duole, tutte le membra languono.* (Lapucci 2007, 1561)), proverbs with imperative sentences ((82) *Do not put a sword into your enemy's hand. – Non mettere il rasoio in mano ad un pazzo.* (Flonta 1993, 180)).

### 7.2. Finding specific proverbs

Students may be required to find proverbs containing more than one body part in both languages:

(46) *You should never touch your eye but with your elbow. – Gli occhi s'hanno a toccare con le gomita.* (*Ibid.* 88); *To travel through the world it is necessary to have the mouth of a hog, the legs of a stag, the eyes of a falcon, the ears of an ass, the shoulders of a camel, and the face of an ape, and overplus, a satchel full of money and patience. – Per camminar salvo per il mondo convien avere bocca di porco, gambe di cervo, occhio di falcone, orecchie d'asino, spalle di cammello, viso di scimmia, e per giunta, una bisaccia piena di quattrini e pazienza.* (Flonta 1993,

305), contradicting proverbs: *Lontan dagli occhi, lontan dal cuore. Lontan dagli occhi, vicino al cuore.* (Lapucci 2007, 1041).

### 7.3. Identifying proverbial forms in advertising or slogans and other activities

Students should identify proverbs used in commercials, slogans or motivational quotes. For instance, the English proverb *Better be the head of the dog than the tail of a lion* became a leadership motivational quote.

Students, at the same time, might indicate a proverb to summarize some given situations or various stories, they could build an argumentative essay from a proverb, rebuild proverbs with their incomplete elements, etc.

## 8. Conclusion

As mentioned above, the first aim of the present paper was to reveal the richness of English and Italian proverbs containing a part of the body, according to a semantic classification. The analysis was based on a number of 119 English proverbs and 133 equivalent Italian proverbs divided in twelve semantic categories: individuals and character of people, intelligence, stupidity, advice, truth or falsity, general truth, reciprocity, politeness, authority and vigilance, idleness, subjectivity, as well as love. As one could notice, there is a slight quantitative difference between the English and Italian proverbs with a body part. Sometimes English has more proverbs for the same image:

(4) *Be not a baker, if your head be of butter. He that has a head of wax must not walk in the sun.* – *Chi ha il capo di cera non vada al sole.* (Flonta 1993, 137),

sometimes Italian has:

(2) *Mickle head, little wit.* - *Capo grosso, cervello magro.* (*Idem*) – *Testa grossa, cervello piccolo.* – *Testa grossa non fa buon cervello.* – *Nelle teste grosse il cervello s'annacqua.* (Lapucci 2007, 1562).

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