

101 Turkish Idiomatic Expressions

Yıldıray Erdener

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Foreword

The objective of this book is not to provide comprehensive coverage of Turkish idioms. It is rather a small sample of idioms which are frequently used in spoken and written Turkish.

This book can be used by classroom teachers and by students of Turkish outside of the classroom. It presents one hundred and one idiomatic expressions in alphabetical order. Some of the idioms are in the third person, but most are in the infinitive form. I give the literal and figurative meaning of each idiom, and then a humorous illustration of a literal interpretation. I have identified passages from modern Turkish literature that use the particular idiom, and written short explanatory notes that set the context for the passages. On the next page there is a list of vocabulary used in the Turkish passage. One can also find an English translation of the explanatory notes and of the illustrative passages from Turkish literature. The book serves not only to teach language, but is a window into contemporary Turkish literature and culture.

I would like to say a few words about the evolution of the book that you are holding in your hands. For years I have been collecting idiomatic expressions from both oral and written sources. I had initially collected a large number of expressions about eyes and was planning to publish a book with only eye expressions. Later, I changed my mind and broadened the book to include expressions referring to various parts of the head, such as the eyebrow, ear, mouth, teeth, tongue, nose, head, forehead, chin, face and the mind. I have ultimately included some idioms about the neck and the heart. Idioms about the eyes, however, still make up a third of the book. This is due in part to my early interest in eye idioms and because eyes are culturally important organs. There are many more Turkish idioms about the eyes, for example, than there are about the forehead or the nose.

The decision of which idioms to keep and which ones to eliminate was simple: I kept those idioms whose literal meanings were easy to illustrate in a humorous way. For example, the literal meaning of the expression "gözüm seni ısırıyor" or "my eye bites you" (see page 128) could be illustrated by a biting eye, so that expression was certain to be included.

In everyday life one can sometimes hear a particular idiom differently both syntactically and semantically. For example, one can hear "gözü açık bir adam" or "açık gözlü bir adam." I did not include all variants of those idiomatic expressions in the book.

Idiomatic expressions are extremely common in colloquial Turkish. In a way, idioms are a code, a language within a language, designed to mystify outsiders. In general, idioms are a puzzling linguistic phenomenon because they are ambiguous and sometimes even ungrammatical. In normal sentences the meaning generally arises from its compositional parts but idioms are semantically and syntactically peculiar. In an idiomatic expression knowing the meaning of its compositional parts is not enough to figure out its full meaning. For instance, the example "gözüm seni ısırıyor" "my eye bites you" would mystify and confuse non-native Turkish speakers. I hope this book will help you clarify and demystify those Turkish idioms and that it will be a profitable and enjoyable study of some commonly used idiomatic expressions in Turkish.

Yıldırım Erdener

March, 2004

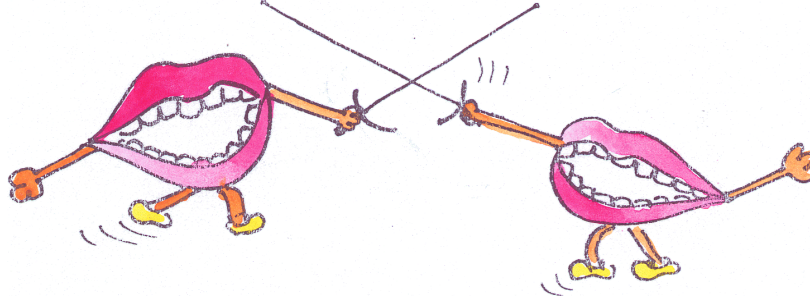
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Deyim 1

Ağız Dalası Yapmak

Literal: to make a mouth quarrel or dispute

Figurative: to have a vehement argument or dispute



Yazar ve arkadaşları Amerikalı Redmavs Hanım'a İstanbul'un değişik yerlerini göstermek için yola çıkarlar. Bir mahallede çeşmeden su almak için sıra bekleyen insanların birbirleriyle nasıl kavga ettiklerini görürler.

İlkin *ağız dalasıydı*, derken *ağız dalası* itiş kakışa döndü. Sicim inceliğinde akan çeşme musluğunun başındakiler, birbirleriyle sıra kapma kavgasına girişmişler, *ağız dalası* sövmelere, sövmeler kavgaya dönüştü.

Ağız Dalaşı Yapmak

Vocabulary

çeşme fountain
dalaşmak to quarrel violently
ilkin first
incelik thinness
itiş kalkış to push and shove one another
kavga etmek to fight
mahalle neighborhood, district
sicim string
sıra kapma cutting in line
sırada beklemek to wait in line
sövmek to curse, swear

Translation

The author and his friends set out to show Redmavs, an American woman, different sites in Istanbul. In one neighborhood, they saw some people fighting while waiting in line to get water from a fountain.

At first it was a verbal dispute, then the dispute turned into pushing and shoving. Those who were around the faucet of the fountain, from which water was running in a fine stream, got into a fight with each other because some people had cut in line. The dispute turned into swearing and swearing into a fight.