

# A multi-dimensional semantic analysis of the literal and the idiomatic meaning of kinegrams

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Kinegrams are expressions such as "shake hands" ('greet') or "nod one's head" ('show one's approval') which literally describe a movement of a body part and idiomatically refer to the meaning conventionally associated with this movement.

Most formal treatments of idioms have little to say about the relation between the literal and the idiomatic meaning of an expression. Kinegrams, however, will allow us to address this phenomenon as their literal and the idiomatic meanings are clearly identifiable and distinguishable from each other. They also provide the source of naturally occurring examples of simultaneous uses of literal and idiomatic reading as in the "conjunction modification" examples from Ernst 1981 as in (1).

(1) He bit his thirst-swollen tongue.

= He stopped himself from saying something AND he has a thirst-swollen tongue.

Such examples cannot be treated if we only focus on the idiomatic reading, ignoring the literal.

I will show that the kinegram data can be modelled using the tools of multi-dimensional semantics (Potts 2005). There, we can distinguish between the asserted content and conventional implicatures. I will assume that the literal and the idiomatic meaning of kinegrams can be distributed over these two dimensions