

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 移花接木

*yi2 hua1 jie1 mu4*

A team from Harbin Medical University was reported to have successfully completed an experiment to transplant a human head.

The transplant was said to have been performed on a corpse in an 18 hour operation which successfully connected the spine, nerves and blood vessels of two people. The lead doctor has successfully grafted a head onto the body of a monkey last year.

The next step would be to attempt the procedure on a living human being who was paralyzed from the neck down.

The technique, an exciting development in medical science, is also controversial. Organ transplant is now performed every day around the world. But when it comes to transplanting heads, it is, somehow, a little scary, probably because it reminds the

layman of the dreadful experiment of the fictional Victor Frankenstein.

But transplants, in fact, has been successfully performed for hundreds of years in plants. The procedure is called “移花接木” (*yi2 hua1 jie1 mu4*).

“移” (*yi2*) is “to move,” “to shift,” “to change,” “花” (*hua1*) “flower,” “接” (*jie1*) “to connect,” “to receive,” and “木” (*mu4*) “wood,” “a tree.” “移花接木” (*yi2 hua1 jie1 mu4*), literally, is “to graft flowers onto a tree,” “to graft one twig on another,” “to graft.”

But the idiom is mostly used in its figurative sense, which is “to stealthily (偷偷地; 不知不覺地) substitute one thing for another,” “to surreptitiously (祕密地; 暗中地) substitute one thing for another,” “to place a substitute by subterfuge (耍花招),” like switching a document from a file with another one.

### Terms containing the character “移” (*yi2*) include:

移民 (*yi2 min2*) – an immigrant; emigrate

移植 (*yi2 zhi2*) – to transplant; to graft

遷移 (*qian1 yi2*) – to migrate; to move house

移動 (*yi2 dong4*) – to move