

New Trends in Applied Phraseology

Languages and Cultures in Comparison

Edited by Paola Maria Cotta Ramusino,
Tatsiana Maiko and Jekaterina Nikitina



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New Trends in Applied Phraseology.

Introduction

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In recent decades, phraseology has developed into a central area of linguistic inquiry, attracting sustained attention across theoretical, descriptive, and applied domains. Advances in corpus linguistics, pragmatics, and cognitive approaches have contributed to a reassessment of traditional classifications and analytical frameworks, while also opening new perspectives on the treatment of phraseological units in translation, lexicography, and language teaching. Against this backdrop, the present volume addresses a gap in contemporary research. Despite the abundance of studies devoted to phraseology, there remains a need for contributions that examine its expanding role across different domains through a contrastive perspective and grounded in specific case studies. Such a contrastive approach has proved particularly productive, as it is rooted in the close analysis of phraseological units across languages and brings theoretical and practical issues to the fore simultaneously (Colson 2008, 192, Cotta Ramusino and Mollica 2020, Nikitina 2018).

The volume is structured into three main thematic areas: phraseography, translation of phraseological units, and teaching phraseology in a second language. These three strands are closely interconnected, and some contributions engage with issues relevant to more than one section.

The first section, *Phraseography*¹, addresses core issues in contemporary phraseological research. A deeper theoretical understanding of phraseological units enables their increasingly comprehensive and holistic description, a process further supported by the new possibilities offered by online dictionaries.

The article opening this section focuses on a highly specific and so far understudied type of dictionary, namely lexicographical resources for children. In her ongoing study, Pinnavaia examines how authors approach the relationship between literal meaning – particularly as it is staged in picture books – and actual meaning, as well as the strategies used to describe the latter. Pinnavaia highlights the highly individual nature of the authors' approaches and points to the absence of shared, contemporary methodological frameworks.

Two contributions address the integration of phraseological components into dictionary entries. Berthemet proposes several methods for introducing the image component in French learners' dictionaries, including semantic explanations, etymological notes, and visual representations. Dal Maso, building on a pilot research project conducted at the University of Venice, focuses on the issue of inflectional fixation in verbal idioms. Although highly relevant for language acquisition, this phenomenon is frequently overlooked in phraseographic practice. The article presents the author's proposal on the basis of a case study, namely the Spanish idiom *quitar de la boca*.

The role of brand names in the creation of new phraseological units is examined in Grezka and Soler Cifuentes' contribution. The aim of the project is the development of a non-standardized corpus of such units. The authors discuss the methodological constraints and challenges involved in constructing this type of resource, most notably the limited availability of data. One possible response to these difficulties may lie in the use of AI-based tools, which could be fruitfully exploited in this area. Just as the advent of corpus linguistics provided a new distributional and pattern-based input to the study of phraseology, including collocations, multi-word lexical units and lexical bundles (Granger and Paquot 2008, 28-32), the introduction of AI tools – largely exploring the conventionalization of language – represents another turning point.

As these contributions demonstrate, a contrastive approach is still among the most widespread perspectives in phraseography. It offers both conceptual insights and concrete proposals for integrating theoretical advances and new methodologies into phraseographic practice, with the aim of improving the accuracy and usability of dictionaries.

Although contrastive and cross-linguistic phraseology is a well-established line of study (see e.g. Piirainen 2008), translation of phraseology receives

1 For a detailed discussion and an overview of phraseography in different languages, see the section *Phraseographie/Phraseography* (909-1025), in Burger *et al.* 2007, vol. 2.

less scholarly attention (Colson 2008, 200). The second section, *Translation of Phraseological Units: Theory and Practice*, addresses two fundamental issues related to the translation of phraseological units. On the one hand, translation brings to the fore discrepancies between languages; on the other, it is required to address these discrepancies by developing methods and strategies aimed at bridging them.

Against this background, if the question of equivalence lies at the heart of translation practice in general (Dobrovol'skij 2011, 2014), it becomes even more crucial in the translation of phraseological units. Schafroth's contribution to this volume engages with this issue from both theoretical and methodological perspectives. Drawing on linguistic data from three languages, the author demonstrates the multilayered nature of equivalence, placing particular emphasis on the role of context and pragmatic factors, while also underscoring the importance of a holistic approach to the description of phraseological units.

The issue of interlinguistic non-equivalence is addressed in Alekseyeva's contribution, which is situated at the intersection of phraseography and translation. The author highlights the importance of bilingual diachronic dictionaries based on corpora of translated texts. Identifying differences in the use of phraseological units across languages, and time, and determining the most appropriate ways of rendering the meaning of a given expression from L1 into L2 are essential for addressing key challenges in both translation and phraseographic practice. The analysis is illustrated through a case study drawn from the author's dictionary of non-equivalent units in the works of Dostoevskij, based on a diachronic parallel corpus compiled specifically for this purpose. On this basis, Alekseyeva discusses the conceptual design, structure, and guiding principles underlying this novel type of dictionary.

Pragmatic aspects are examined in Meterc's contribution, which focuses on unconventional, joke-like replies to formulaic expressions. The analysis centres on the witty response *Time to get a watch* to the question *What time is it?*, as attested in several Slavic languages (Slovenian, Slovak, Polish, and Russian). Other contributions address specific translation issues on the basis of *ad hoc* corpora. Bramati, for instance, examines the strategies adopted in the translation of verbal idioms (*locutions verbales*), drawing on a French–Italian literary corpus. Starting from a definition of this category of idioms, the author proposes an inventory of the techniques employed, including the use of a corresponding verbal idiom, semantic paraphrase, calque, and the creation of a new verbal idiom. Murelli likewise investigates the translation of phraseologisms occurring in comics. The study covers three languages – French, Italian, and German – and adopts both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The analysis focuses on specific strategies such as compensation, dephraseologization, and defrosting.

While the issues addressed in this section are highly relevant to both translation theory and practice, the relatively limited number of contributions devoted

to them in the present volume also points to the need for further, sustained research in this area. This gap is particularly significant in view of the close relationship between contrastive phraseology and translation studies, for which phraseology represents one of the most translation-sensitive areas of language. Research in contrastive phraseology has developed systematic typologies of equivalence, analytical tools for identifying asymmetries between source and target languages, and a strong emphasis on semantic analysis as a means of avoiding misleading equivalence relations (Korhonen 2007). These approaches directly address central concerns of translation studies and provide a solid descriptive and methodological basis for translation-oriented research.

The third area of contrastive applied phraseology explored in this volume concerns language teaching. The importance of phraseology in language education has been well established over the past two to three decades (e.g. Granger 1998 among others). Nevertheless, while phraseology plays a crucial role in language acquisition, its potential remains underutilized in many educational contexts. For example, early studies on Languages for Specific Purposes were dominated by lexical approaches, and only relatively of recent have scholars acknowledged the challenge and the opportunity in teaching phraseology (see e.g. Garzone 2007, 218-219 on teaching legal phraseology). The contributions in this final section address a wide range of issues, highlighting the role of phraseological units in language learning and offering educators practical strategies for integrating phraseological knowledge into teaching practice. All articles share a strong applied orientation: the analyses are grounded in experimental studies involving learner groups of varying sizes and proficiency levels, thereby ensuring that the theoretical and pedagogical issues discussed are supported by solid empirical evidence.

The role of the image component in the memorization of phraseological units is examined in Albano's contribution, which draws on experimental studies conducted with groups of university students. An experimental case study on the comprehension and acquisition of discourse formulas is presented by Maiko. By means of pre-tests, post-tests, and delayed post-tests, the author assesses learners' ability to recognize these formulas following targeted instruction, while also identifying the difficulties involved in achieving productive mastery.

In their contribution, Hallsteinsdóttir and Chrissou likewise address vocabulary enhancement in the learning of phraseology. Building on an evaluation of Peter Kühn's phraseodidactic three-step model – identification, encoding, and active use of phrasemes – they show that this framework is no longer sufficient as a stand-alone didactic principle and propose alternative approaches that can significantly improve the learning of phraseology in foreign languages. A more strongly applied perspective characterizes Bergerová's article, which presents

computer-based learning materials developed as the outcome of an international Bachelor-level project involving students of German as a foreign language, aimed at enhancing phraseological competence. Primary school learners are the focus of Tark's contribution, which emphasizes the importance of phrases not only as linguistic units but also as cultural assets. Their introduction in *DaZ* contexts, the author argues, fosters language awareness and contributes to greater educational equity at the primary level.

Šichová's closing article adopts a perspective closer to language acquisition than to formal instruction, investigating the phraseological competence of German university students with Czech as a heritage language. Based on a series of tests, the study examines which types of Czech phrases heritage speakers retain in their mental lexicon, the strategies they employ, and the role played by the dominant language.

Like the previous volume (Cotta Ramusino and Mollica 2020), the present collection is situated within a multilingual contrastive perspective that is attentive to the plurality of theoretical traditions and descriptive practices. Rather than pursuing uniform models, it seeks to promote and foster the advantages of language-specific and culture-specific studies, treating phraseology as a privileged site for observing the interaction between linguistic structure and cultural knowledge. This perspective is reflected in the volume's three main areas – phraseography, translation, and language teaching – which collectively demonstrate the relevance of contrastive analysis across different levels of phraseological inquiry.

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PART 1: ADVANCING PHRASEOGRAPHY

Explaining metaphorical motivation of idioms in French learners' dictionaries

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ABSTRACT

Idioms are challenging for non-natives because what is said differs from what is communicated. It has been demonstrated that the inner form is an important part of idiom semantics and, consequently, “any attempt to analyse figurative language by itself, without the inclusion of extralinguistic knowledge, is doomed to failure” (Dobrovol’skij and Piirainen 2022). The explanation of the image component should therefore receive a description in learners’ dictionaries. However, French dictionaries poorly represent the inner form in their semantic definition. This paper addresses the following question: How can the explanation of metaphorical motivation in learners’ dictionaries be improved? Three possibilities to explain the image component in dictionaries are discussed: a semantic explanation, etymological notes and pictures.

Keywords: etymological notes; image component; inner form; pictures; semantic definition

1. Introduction¹

For a native speaker, the meaning of idioms is inferred rather than explicitly stated, and its acquiring is a passive – in other words, “subconscious” – process (Telija *et al.* in Cowie 1998, 56). However, learners of a new language need to understand the connotations behind the image components. How to describe the metaphorical motivation in learners’ dictionaries? In order to answer this question, I will start by explaining the importance of understanding the inner form in Section 2 *On the importance of understanding the inner form*. Section 3 *Motivation* is devoted to connotations, which are considered as a “semantic bridge” (Iordanskaja and Mel’čuk 1980, 191-210) between the phraseological meaning and the inner form. Section 4 *Conventional Figurative Language Theory* presents the model developed within the *Conventional Figurative Language Theory*

1 I am grateful to Pascale Chamerois and anonymous reviewers for helpful comments on an earlier draft.

(Dobrovolskij and Piirainen 2005), whose main idea is that the inner form is an important part of idiom semantics. The analysis of the examples cited in Section 5 *Case study* proves that idioms' inner form is poorly described in French dictionaries. Finally, Section 6 *Alternatives for explaining the inner form* considers three possibilities to explain the image component in dictionaries: a semantic explanation, etymological notes and pictures. The point is illustrated by French idioms written in *italics* and followed by an English translation and a definition, e.g. *être copains comme cochons*, lit. 'to be buddies like pigs', meaning 'to be good friends'.

2. On the importance of understanding the inner form

Before we discuss what is the *inner form* of an idiom, and how it is presented in dictionaries, we need to take a brief look at three reasons why understanding the image components is essential for the learner: first, to avoid misunderstandings; secondly, to develop intercultural competence, and thirdly, to better memorise idioms.

If learners do not understand the imagery, what strategies can they employ to infer the meaning? First, they can draw on the context to understand what is said; nevertheless, the context is not always enlightening. Secondly, they can transfer the knowledge of the languages they already know to the new language, but this may lead them to attributing an inappropriate meaning to an idiom in L2, based on wrong *connotations*. For example, *être copains comme cochons*, lit. 'to be buddies like pigs', which means 'to be good friends' may be wrongly interpreted as 'to be bad friends' because in European culture pigs have negative connotations. Another problem is the risk of understanding idioms literally. Thus, the French idiom *faire un malheur*, lit. 'to cause misfortune', meaning 'to have a great success', actually means the opposite of its literal meaning.

The image components can be viewed both as products and as measures of values, social norms and conventions, stereotypes, emotions and feelings. They are a component of cultural identity, a "kind of collective philosophy which becomes obligatory for all speakers of that language" (Apresjan 2000, 103). A conscious reflection on motivation gives us a different perspective on our own culture, because "the strange [becomes] familiar and the familiar strange" (Byram *et al.* cited in Liddicoat and Scarino 2013, 58). Thus, idioms help us overcome "cross-cultural deafness" (Telija *et al.* in Cowie 1998, 75) and achieve "human intersubjective understanding" (Morin 2000, 114).

Finally, idioms are motivated lexical units. Cognitive semantics holds that "it is (...) easier to remember and use motivated knowledge than arbitrary knowledge" (Lakoff cited in Szczepaniak and Lew 2011, 326). Therefore, idioms should best be learned through the explanation of their *inner form*, a concept which will be thoroughly developed in the next section.

3. Metaphorical motivation of the inner form

The term *inner form* may refer to different phenomena². In this work, it will be used to refer both to *the image component* and its *motivation*³. The *inner form* is an important part of idiom semantics (Baranov and Dobrovol'skij 2014, 2009; Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen 2005; Telija 1998). According to Apresjan, the main feature of idiomatics as a specific area of the lexical system is that the semantics of idioms is usually based on conventional metaphors⁴ (Apresjan 2004, 80). Leaving out high level conceptual metaphors, this paper concentrates on “the basic level of rich mental images” (Piirainen 2007, 536).

It is acknowledged that metaphorical motivation is analogical in nature. According to Apresjan, a word with *connotations* has the potential to be metaphorized. Thus, “an insignificant and pragmatic feature of the original meaning of the word becomes significant and semantic, [making connotations] one of potential sources of semantic and lexical renewal”⁵ (Apresjan 1995, 169, see similar ideas in Gak 2006, 98). *Connotations* function like a “semantic bridge” (term borrowed from Iordanskaja and Mel'čuk 1980, 191-210) or “semantic associations” (Krongauz 2005, 151) between the image component and the phraseological meaning. *Connotations* should receive a consistent description in a dictionary because they: (1) are an element of lexical and phraseological meaning, (2) function within a specific linguo-culture, and (3) have cultural value.

From a synchronic perspective, I distinguish three types of idioms⁶:

1. *motivated* idioms with a “living”, clearly perceived, inner form, e.g. *être comme chien et chat*, lit. ‘to be like cat and dog’, meaning ‘to fight all the time’;
2. *partially motivated* idioms containing words that do not exist in modern French (Gak, 2006, 20), e.g. *à la queue leu leu*, lit. ‘in a *tail/*queue’⁷, meaning ‘in a line’;

2 In (Zaliznjak 2006, 48), for example, *inner form* is the “trace” of the process by which the language created the word. For the detailed distinction between *image component*, *inner form*, and similar concepts such as *etymological memory*, and *literal reading*, see (Dobrovol'skij 2016).

3 “The inner form of a lexical item is the image fixed in its content plane as well as the motivation of its lexicalized meaning, which the speakers derive from the meaning of its constituents” (Dobrovol'skij 2016, 23).

4 «Главная особенность идиоматики как специфической области лексической системы состоит в том, что в основе семантики идиом, как правило, лежит конвенциональная метафора и лишь в редких случаях метонимия» (Apresjan 2004, 80).

5 «Несущественный и прагматический признак исходного значения слова становится существенным и семантическим ... [Коннотации] являются одним из потенциальных источников семантического и лексического обновления [языка]» (Apresjan 1995, 169).

6 Roughly, *motivated* and *partially motivated idioms* correspond to Vinogradov's *frazéologičeskije edinstva*, lit. ‘phraseological unities’, whereas *unmotivated idioms* to *frazéologičeskije srašenija*, lit. ‘phraseological fusions’.

7 Since the imagery is hardly perceptible from a synchronic perspective, it is unfortunately not easy to provide a literal translation of this type of idioms.

3. *unmotivated* idioms are deprived of their inner form, i.e. their imagery is not perceptible, e.g. *il y a belle lurette*, lit. ‘there is a good *hour’⁸, meaning ‘a long time ago’.

From a diachronic perspective, while all of these types were motivated when they were created, their inner form has become dimmed, sometimes even to the point of being completely lost, as in the second and third types⁹. In fact, idioms, like other language units, tend to lose motivation. Thus, most neologisms, while they were initially motivated, become unmotivated over time (Saussure cited in Gak 2006, 20).

Usually, native speakers only have a synchronic view of motivation. Their role in the explanation of the living *inner form* turns out to be decisive: it is what distinguishes *inner form* from *etymology* (Baranov and Dobrovol’skij 2014, 130)¹⁰. Those naïve explanations are also called *folk etymology* or “semantic etymology” (Iordanskaja and Mel’čuk 1980, cited in Apresjan 1995, 169), and result from “quiproquos, meta-analysis or re-analysis” (Béguelin 2016, 18). For Saussure, it takes precedence over scientific etymology, because it provides access to the speaker’s linguistic representations, and to their epilinguistic knowledge¹¹ (Béguelin 2016, 20). And even if this pseudo-etymology has some disadvantages such as subjectivity¹² and non-predictability¹³, it has to be explained to students.

Before exploring how *inner form* is explained in French dictionaries, I will outline some relevant aspects of *Conventional Figurative Language Theory*.

4. Conventional Figurative Language Theory

Conventional Figurative Language Theory studies single-word and multi-word units based on indirect nomination that are part of the language system, are highly conventional, and are recognized by users of a given linguo-culture (Dobrovol’skij and Piirainen 2005, 2022). Its main idea is that the image component functions as a semantic bridge between what is said and what is meant.

8 As in the previous example, the imagery is not perceptible at all from a synchronic perspective, therefore, it is not easy to provide its literal translation. According to TLFi, *lurette* vient du mot *heure*, *heurette* (time, hour).

9 «со временем внутренняя форма может затемняться и даже полностью утрачиваться» (Apresjan 2003, XXV).

10 «Роль носителя языка [...] оказывается решающей: именно этим внутренняя форма отличается от этимологии» (Baranov and Dobrovol’skij 2014, 130).

11 «Saussure disqualifie [...] l’étymologie savante ; en contrepartie, il réhabilite l’étymologie populaire qui [...] donne accès aux représentations linguistiques du locuteur, à son savoir épilinguistique» (Béguelin 2016, 20).

12 For the subjectivity, see, for example, (Dobrovol’skij and Piirainen 2022; Szczepaniak and Lew 2011, 325).

13 In fact, “semantic motivation of idioms [...] can only be established a posteriori” (Weinreich 1969 cited in Kuiper 2007, 55).

The authors distinguish four types of motivation: semantic, syntactic, intertextual, and index-based¹⁴. Here, only *semantic metaphorical motivation* will be discussed.

The problem is that “usually, in phraseological dictionaries the image-metaphor is not included in the explanation”¹⁵ (Baranov and Dobrovol'skij 2009, 8). To solve this problem, Dobrovol'skij (2007, 798) introduced the image component into lexical definitions by “operators such as ‘like X’, ‘is perceived as X’, ‘is associated with X’, ‘is analogous to X’, ‘is described as X’, etc.”. Thus, the explanation of the Russian idiom *vodit' za nos*, lit. ‘to lead by the nose’ in Table 1 (Baranov and Dobrovol'skij 2009, 352) comprises two parts:

Table 1: *Водить за нос* (to lead by the nose)

ВОДИТЬ ЗА НОС (кого-л.) [-з'ангъс]. Говорить что-л. кому-л., скрывая истинное положение дел, своё истинное мнение или намерение — часто обещать сделать что-л. кому-л. и не выполнять обещанного, что осмысливается как совершение над этим лицом некоторого очевидного действия, которое его унижает и ставит в беспомощное положение и которое, тем не менее, им не замечается.

It begins with a traditional semantic definition: “to tell something to somebody, hiding the real state of affairs, the real opinion or intention, frequently, not to accomplish the promised thing”. The second part is devoted to the image component and is introduced by the operator ‘what is perceived’: “what is perceived as an action humiliating the person and putting him/her in dependent position, but the person does not notice it”.

5. Case study

How is the image component described in French dictionaries¹⁶? I started by selecting four idioms from the list of idioms which were not understood by my international European and Asian students, but which I expected to find in printed dictionaries (Gaston 2009, DesRuisseaux 2009, Rey and Chantreau 1993, Vigerie 1992 and Galisson 1984):

1. *vache à lait*, lit ‘milk cow’, meaning ‘someone or something being exploited’;
2. *avoir d'autres chats à fouetter*, lit. ‘to have other cats to whip’, meaning ‘to have other things to do’;
3. *mener en bateau*, lit. ‘to lead on a boat’, meaning ‘mislead, trick someone’;
4. *mouton noir*, lit. ‘black sheep’, meaning ‘a person rejected by others’.

14 More about types of motivation in (Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen 2022, sect. 4.4).

15 «Обычно во фразеологических словарях образ-метафора не включается в толкование» (Baranov and Dobrovol'skij 2009, 8).

16 Our aim is not to undermine the value of dictionaries, but rather to address and improve their weaknesses.

I looked up the four idioms in the five above-mentioned dictionaries, and it turned out that while each idiom was included in at least one of the dictionaries, none of the four idioms was included in all of the five dictionaries (see Table 2):

Table 2: Idiom representation in dictionaries

Dictionary	<i>vache à lait</i> , lit. 'milk cow'	<i>avoir d'autres chats à fouetter</i> , lit. 'to have other cats to whip'	<i>mener en bateau</i> , lit. 'to lead on a boat'	<i>mouton noir</i> , lit. black sheep
Rey 1993	+	+	+	-
Gaston 2009	+	+	-	+
Galisson 1984	-	+	+	-
Vigerie 1992	+	-	-	-
DesRuisseaux 2009	+	-	-	-

The first one, *vache à lait*, is included in four out of five, whereas the last one, *mouton noir*, is described only in one dictionary. I have therefore limited my choice to the idiom that is best represented, the first one. Let us consider how it is defined in four dictionaries (Table 3):

Table 3: Definitions of *vache à lait*, lit. 'milk cow' in paper dictionaries

Dictionary	Definition
DesRuisseaux, 2009, 471	VACHE À LAIT. <i>Être une vache à lait.</i> Se faire exploiter.
Gaston, 2009, 221	<i>Une vache à lait</i> : personne exploitée ; aussi activité lucrative.
Rey, Chantreau, 1993, 777	Fam. Vache à lait "personne qu'on exploite, qui est une source de profit pour d'autres". Se dit aussi des choses, des entités.
Vigerie, 1992, 170	Vache à lait. Personne ou chose qu'on exploite, dont on tire profit continu; allusion à la vache laitière.

What the analysis of those definitions indicates is that the above-mentioned dictionaries provide learners only with the traditional semantic explanation, which is 'someone or something being exploited'. It should be pointed out that the last one explains the metaphor: 'allusion to the milk cow' (bottom line). However, this explanation is circular because the explained word *à lait*, lit. 'milk' is defined through the same word *laitière*, lit. 'milk cow'. It follows that none of the four explanations helps learners to understand the image component.

This raises the following question: how could metaphorical motivation be presented in learner's dictionaries?

6. Alternatives for explaining the inner form

In my opinion, the best way to explain the metaphorical motivation is through semantic explanation (cf. Sect. 4. *Conventional Figurative Language Theory*). Let us compare this approach with etymological notes and illustrations.

6.1 Semantic explanation

Following the principles of *Conventional Figurative Language Theory*, a metaphor could be included in a definition and receive the following explanation:

Table 4: Image component in semantic definition

(être une) <i>vache à lait</i> – une personne ou une chose dont on tire régulièrement profit, comme d'une bonne vache placide donnant beaucoup de lait sans contrepartie.

The proposed definition contains both the traditional explanation in the first part: 'someone or something regularly used to another's advantage', and the explanation of the inner form in the second part: 'like a good placid cow that gives a lot of milk without receiving anything in return'.

6.2 Etymological notes

The second alternative concerns etymology. Some studies show that etymological notes do not have a positive effect on idioms retention (Szczepaniak and Lew 2011). In fact, they can pose different problems for learners. Let us consider the idiom *mener quelqu'un en bateau*, lit. 'to lead someone on a boat' meaning 'mislead, trick':

Table 5: *Mener quelqu'un en bateau*, lit. 'to lead someone on a boat' meaning 'mislead, trick' (Rey and Chantreau 1993, 59-60)

Mener (emmener) qqn en bateau "tromper, duper". [...] La forme <i>bateau</i> , dans ce contexte, s'explique par la confusion initiale avec les mots de la famille de <i>bateleur</i> [...] [C]omme le fait remarquer Wartburg, l'expression (attestée en 1867) continue d'anciennes locutions comme estre estonné du bateau, être étourdi du bateau (du XVIe au XIXe s.), où <i>bateau</i> est en réalité l'ancien mot <i>baastel</i> "instrument de l'escamoteur" (qui a donné <i>baasteler, baasteleur. bateleur</i>).

The definition consists of two parts: first, the semantic explanation – 'mislead, cheat' – and then the etymology – "The form *bateau*, in this context, can be explained by the initial confusion with words in the *bateleur* (swindler) family [...] [A]s Wartburg points out, the expression (attested in 1867) is a continuation of the old expressions such as *estre estonné du bateau, être étourdi du bateau* (from the 16th to the 19th centuries), where *bateau* is actually the old word

baastel “instrument of the swindler” (which gave rise to *baasteler*, *baasteleur*: *bâteleur*)” (my translation). I must point out that the metalanguage used in this example may prove confusing not only for beginning learners, who have a limited vocabulary, but also for native speakers.

The second problem with etymology is that it is not systematically indicated in all dictionaries and may also differ from one dictionary to another. Thus, for *vider son sac*, lit. ‘to empty one’s bag’ ‘to say all the reproaches accumulated for a long time’ dictionaries offer two etymologies: (1) ‘the bag where in the old days, all the exhibits for a trial were piled up’¹⁷; and (2) ‘in classical times, the phrase had a precise physiological meaning: ‘to defecate or purge’ (*bag* = ‘belly, stomach’)¹⁸. Which one is the authentic etymology? Which one will facilitate the memorization of the image component: the literal meaning of *sac*, lit. ‘bag’ (which refers to the object), or its metaphoric *sac*, lit. ‘stomach’ use?

The metalanguage used, as well as the difficulty to ascertain the authenticity of the etymology, may disorient students. However, can we conclude that the etymology is of very little help for international learners? I do think that, on the contrary, it can be useful in some cases, especially for idioms with illogical inner forms like (1) *faire un malheur*, lit. ‘to cause misfortune’ ‘to have a great success’ and (2) *être copains comme cochons*, lit. ‘to be buddies like pigs’ ‘to be good friends’, where the imagery and the meaning are contradictory. Thus, Rey and Chantreau (1993) point to an antiphrase for the first and to a misunderstanding for the second example (i.e. *cochon*, lit. ‘pig’ is not an animal, but (latin) *socius* ‘comrade, associated’). This kind of etymological notes could help learners understand and memorise idioms.

6.3 Pictures

My last point concerns pictures¹⁹. The French multiword unit *faire un dessin*, lit ‘to draw a picture’ has two meanings: a literal one, ‘to draw a picture’, and a figurative one, ‘to explain clearly, comprehensibly and unequivocally’. Thus, when the hearer does not understand what the speaker is saying, the latter may say *Tu veux que je te fasse un dessin?*, lit. ‘Do you want me to draw you a picture?’, implying that pictures are more explicit than words. To what extent can pictures be useful for students? Some studies “point to a facilitative role of pictorial illustrations on short- and long-term retention of both form and meaning of idioms” (Szczepaniak and Lew 2011, 323, 330). Let us consider how nouns and verbs can be drawn.

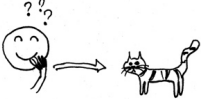
17 « Le sac, c’est celui dans lequel, autrefois, on entassait toutes les pièces d’un procès » (Cellard 1986, 34).

18 « La loc. a eu à l’époque classique un sens physiologique précis : « déféquer ou se purger » (*sac* = « ventre, estomac ») » (Rey, and Chantreau 1993, 710).

19 Studies on the role of images in understanding and learning idioms are extensive, see among others (Dobrovol’skij and Piirainen 2022, Szczepaniak and Lew 2011, Boers and Lindstromberg 2008, Caillies and Butcher 2007, Littlemore and Low 2006, Glucksberg 2001 and Gibbs and O’Brien 1990, 1993).

It is relatively easy to draw and to recognise concrete animate and inanimate objects existing in real or fictional worlds. Verbs can have one (e.g. *casser sa pipe*, lit. ‘to break his pipe’ ‘to die’) or several actants²⁰ (e.g. *donner sa langue au chat*, lit. ‘to give his/her tongue to the cat’ ‘not know the answer to a question, to a riddle, and to ask the person who knows the solution’ (Table 6):

Table 6: Examples of illustrations of one- and bi-actant idioms

Picture	Idiom
	<i>Casser sa pipe</i> ‘mourir’
	<i>Donner sa langue au chat</i> ‘ne pas savoir la réponse à une question, une devinette et demander la solution à la personne qui le sait’

However, some nouns, such as collective nouns, are difficult to represent and/or to identify on drawings because of their visual characteristics. Let us consider the picture for *chercher la petite bête*, lit. look for a small beast’, ‘to be too fussy, too meticulous’ (Table 7):

Table 7: Example of wrong interpretation of pictures

Picture	Idiom
	<i>Chercher la petite bête</i> ‘être trop pointilleux, trop méticuleux’

The bug on the picture could be interpreted as a louse and also correspond to the idiom *chercher des poux*, lit ‘look for lice’ meaning ‘seek to provoke conflict’, and it could therefore be a misleading picture.

20 I think that idioms that have two or more illustrated actants increase chances to be recognised by natives.

Another problem arises when the referent is used in an unusual lexical or syntactic environment. Thus, a soup cannot be made from a grimace, as in the idiom *soupe à la grimace*, lit. ‘grimace soup’, referring to someone who ‘expresses dissatisfaction by behaving in an unpleasant manner’ (Table 8). Similarly, it is difficult to convey in a drawing the presence of the definite article in *porter LA culotte*, lit. ‘wear THE pants’, ‘the person, usually the woman, who is in charge within the couple’, and how it affects the meaning of the noun *culotte*, lit. ‘the pants’ (Table 8). Today, in French, *une culotte*, lit. ‘the pants’ most often means ‘an undergarment’: women and men wear panties under their clothes. Only rarely now is *une culotte*, lit. ‘pants’ used meaning ‘an outer garment, generally worn by men’ (TLFi). In the phrase *porter LA culotte*, lit. ‘wear THE pants’, the presence of the definite article *LA*, lit. ‘THE’ implies that only the head of the family wears *LA culotte*, lit. ‘THE pants’, and that the woman who wears it therefore takes on the “male role”. Thus, the meaning changes according to the use of the definite article.

Table 8: Example of unusual lexical and syntactic environment

Picture	Idiom
	<i>Soupe à la grimace</i> ‘manifester son mécontentement en se comportant de manière désagréable’
	<i>Porter la culotte</i> ‘la personne, généralement la femme, qui commande au sein du couple’

A number of challenges arise when it comes to representing idioms graphically: How is it possible to incorporate a grimace in a soup? How is it possible to convey the presence of definite article *LA culotte*, lit. ‘THE pants’, which is an essential element in the phraseological meaning? How can we draw the reader’s attention to the objects that need to be interpreted rather than on objects that are not significant? How can we draw image components that are not clearly perceptible, such as obsolete words (e.g. *à la queue leu leu*, lit. ‘in a *tail/*queue’²¹,

21 Since the imagery is hardly perceptible from a synchronic perspective, it is unfortunately not easy to provide a literal translation of this type of idioms.

'in a line')? In constructions consisting of *adjective* (tertium comparationis) + *comme*, lit. 'like' + *noun* (comparatum) how can we draw comparisons (tertium comparationis)? For example, how can we draw and recognise the sweetness of a lamb in *doux comme un agneau*, lit. 'sweet as a lamb', meaning 'extremely kind'?

Moreover, a number of idioms rely on verbs for the construction of meaning. I believe that the grammatical information is important not only to understand the meaning, but also to use idioms, and that therefore, both nouns and verbs must be graphically represented. Let us consider some examples.

Verbs are often more difficult to represent than nouns. The first difficulty can be illustrated by the verb *raconter*, lit. 'to tell' in *raconter des salades*, lit. 'to tell salads', 'to tell well-argued lies to convince the other person' (Table 9):

Table 9: Drawing verbs

Picture	Idiom
	<i>Raconter des salades</i> 'dire des mensonges argumentés afin de convaincre l'interlocuteur'

In fact, it is difficult to graphically represent the verb *raconter*, lit. 'to tell' in a clear way. The problem is that pictures are rarely suitable for illustrating certain verbs, such as verbs of perception (e.g. *n'y voir que du feu*, lit. 'to see only fire', 'believe everything is said') and verbs denoting repetitions (e.g. *reprendre du poil de la bête*, lit. 'to take again the hair of the beast' 'to regain strength and courage').

Another problem that raises a number of challenges is how to draw verbs like *avoir*, lit. 'to have' and *être*, lit. 'to be'. Let's take two examples: *avoir un coup de foudre*, lit. 'to have a thunderbolt', 'to fall in love at first sight', and *être fleur bleue*, lit. 'to be a blue flower', 'to be an overly sensitive person'. We could draw only objects, i.e. *un coup de foudre*, lit. 'a thunderbolt', and *fleur bleue*, lit. 'a blue flower'. However, pictures of a thunderbolt and a blue flower without verbs may not be sufficient to interpret them as an idiom. Learners need to know that these nouns acquire phraseological meaning only in presence of the verbs *avoir*, lit. 'to have' and *être*, lit. 'to be'. They also need to know that these verbs cannot be substituted by another verb.

Illustrating becomes even more complicated for the following verbal forms:

- negative: *ne pas avoir les yeux en face des trous*, lit. 'not to have one's eyes in front of one's eyeholes', 'not being wide awake': if we draw the eyes next to the eyeholes, there is a good chance that the reader will fail to identify the eyesockets; moreover, as explained earlier, only the verb *avoir*, lit. 'to

- have' – not another verb – can be used in this idiom, and it is difficult to represent graphically;
- passive: *se faire rouler dans la farine*, lit. 'to be rolled in the flour', 'be manipulated': if we draw a person who is rolling in flour, it won't be enough, because s/he is not involved in the action, but s/he is subjected to it. In fact, it seems difficult to represent an action which the subject receives rather than performs;
 - past: *poser un lapin*, lit. 'to put a rabbit', 'not to come to an appointment', usually used in past: it is not enough to draw a rabbit, because we would have to represent the rabbit being put there by someone who is no longer there.

Idioms are difficult to recognise and to interpret through pictures. Pictures can hardly be used to make the meaning of idioms clear and explicit. One of the reasons for that probably lies in the discrepancy between the complexity of idiom semantics on the one hand and the simplicity and the staticity of pictures on the other hand. Moreover, idioms are non-compositional, while pictures are compositional. This means that pictures allow at best to illustrate all of the lexical components of the idiom separately. Finally, they are not predictable: limited to retrospective use, they do not guarantee access to the idiom. Therefore, pictures cannot be considered as a key component in explaining the imagery but can merely complement the semantic definition and be useful as a mnemonic technique.

7. Conclusion

What can be concluded from this study? Idioms are semantically complex and cannot, therefore, be fully described in purely semantic terms without taking into account their inner form. It is important for learners to understand the motivation of idioms to develop intercultural competence, to avoid misunderstandings, and to better memorise idioms. Therefore, the inner form should receive a rigorous and systematic description in dictionaries.

Three strategies to explain the *image* component in dictionaries have been explored: a semantic explanation, etymological notes and pictures. It seems that each of them provides an additional channel for memorising the inner form and can help learners understand and remember metaphorically motivated idioms. However, this analysis indicates that explicit techniques of the *Conventional Figurative Language Theory*, which consist in explaining the metaphorical motivation in the semantic explanation, are the best means to convey the inner form of idioms.

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Inflectional fixation in verbal idioms: a lexicographical proposal for a Spanish–Italian digital repository

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the concept of *inflectional fixation* (Montoro del Arco 2020a, 2020b) and presents a methodological proposal for the lemmatisation of verbal idioms within a Spanish–Italian/Italian–Spanish digital repository. Despite the significant impact that varying degrees of inflectional variability in verbal idioms can have on the acquisition of foreign language phraseology, current Spanish–Italian lexicographical resources lack a systematic approach to providing clear and concise instructions for language production. To address this gap, this article describes a pilot study conducted as part of the *Dizionario Fraseologico Multilingue Digitale* (DFMD) research project at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. After introducing the theoretical framework of inflectional fixation, the paper explores the inflectional preferences of the verbal nucleus of the idiom *quitar de la boca* (lit. 'to take from the mouth') and proposes lexicographical entries for the project's bilingual repository.

Keywords: inflectional fixation; phraseology; digital lexicography; Spanish; Italian.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, various scholars (Campos Souto and Pérez Pascual 2003; Castillo Carballo 2003; Nomdedeu-Rull and Tarp 2018; Peñín Fernández 2021, among others) have highlighted the essential contribution of dictionaries to the teaching of foreign languages and the consequent necessity of transforming these resources into not just reference tools, but also effective learning instruments that foster both comprehension and production in the target language. Whilst this perspective is widely accepted at the theoretical level, there is a noticeable gap in lexicographical practice where the evolution of dictionaries from primarily passive works to active resources is concerned.

From this perspective, the deficiencies in the current lexicographical landscape become even more apparent when one delves into phraseology, which

is often associated with information that, in many cases, proves to be both qualitatively and quantitatively insufficient for the development of phraseological competence in non-native speakers. A relatively unexplored aspect, both theoretically and lexicographically, is *inflectional fixation* (IF), a form of fixation identified by Montoro del Arco (2020a, 44) and defined by the author as «la suspensión de una o varias oposiciones paradigmáticas inscritas en la variabilidad flexiva potencial de un componente que puede considerarse nuclear dentro de un fraseologismo, o bien la existencia de marcadas preferencias en dicha variación potencial»¹. As Montoro del Arco (2020b, 205–206) highlights, in the case of verbal idioms the degree of inflectional variability in the verb gives rise to a continuum: at one end, there are sequences with maximum IF, displaying an almost fixed form in speech, and, at the other end, idioms with little or no IF, with no a priori restrictions or preferences in the selection of the inflectional form of the verb. Between these extremes there are phraseological units that often favour specific inflectional variants, while still allowing for the use of other forms. As regards Spanish and Italian lexicography, the neglect of this aspect is glaringly apparent. An illustrative example is provided by the expression *llover sobre mojado* (lit. ‘to rain on the wet’): although predominantly used with the conjugated verb in present indicative (*llueve sobre mojado*)², most monolingual and bilingual dictionaries fail to provide any usage instructions regarding this preference³.

With the aim of contributing to lexicographical discourse on the IF of the nucleus of verbal idioms, this paper presents a pilot study conducted within the framework of the research project *Dizionario Fraseologico Multilingue Digitale* (‘Digital Multilingual Phraseological Dictionary’, henceforth *DFMD*)⁴. This study seeks to incorporate examples and usage instructions that consistently represent the degree of IF exhibited by verbal idioms. Focusing on *quitar de la boca* (lit. ‘to take from the mouth’), the research is divided into two phases: the first, pre-lexicographical, involves the extraction and analysis of data from selected dictionaries and textual corpora (Section 2). The second, lexicographical,

1 ‘The suspension of one or more paradigmatic oppositions inherent in the potential inflectional variability of a component that can be considered nuclear within a phraseological unit, or the existence of marked preferences in such potential variation.’ (Author’s translation).

2 According to the data at our disposal, *llueve sobre mojado* is documented in 62.7% of the items which contain this idiom in CORPES XXI (RAE 2013, v. 1.0), 82.4% in the Corpus del español NOW (Davies 2018), and 75% in the Spanish Web 2018 (Sketch Engine 2018).

3 Examples are provided in Seco, Andrés and Ramos (2004) and Penadés (2019). In these works, the idiom appears in the present indicative (Seco, Andrés and Ramos 2004; Penadés 2019) and the imperfect indicative (Penadés 2019).

4 This research project is being conducted at Ca’ Foscari University of Venice in collaboration with the University of Zadar (Croatia). It was launched in 2020, following the ministerial designation of the Department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies as a ‘Department of Excellence’ for the 2018–2022 period. For further details on the project’s development, see Valero, Dal Maso and Lončar (2021) and Dal Maso (2020, 2021, 2022, 2024).

entails the development of a methodological proposal for the creation of entries for the bilingual Spanish–Italian/Italian–Spanish repository of the *DFMD* project (Section 3).

2. *Quitar de la boca* in dictionaries and textual corpora

2.1. Methodology

The analysis conducted considers the current usage of *quitar de la boca* in standard Peninsular Spanish. To extract data regarding this idiom, six lexicographical reference works were consulted: three general dictionaries – the *Diccionario de uso del español* (Moliner 2007, 3rd ed.), the *Diccionario de la lengua española* (RAE 2014, 23rd ed., v. 23.7), and the *Diccionario del español actual* (Seco, Andrés and Ramos 2023, 2nd ed.) – and three phraseological resources – the *Diccionario fraseológico del español moderno* (Varela and Kubarth 1994), the *Diccionario fraseológico documentado del español actual* (Seco, Andrés and Ramos 2004), and the *Diccionario de locuciones idiomáticas del español actual* (Penadés 2019). Particular attention was paid to the lemma, the form of the verbal nucleus in the examples provided, and the possible presence of any instructions concerning the IF.

The lexicographical information obtained was subsequently compared with data from three primary textual corpora: the Corpus de referencia del español del siglo XXI (RAE 2013, version 1.0; henceforth CORPES XXI), the Corpus del español – News On the Web (2012–2019) (Davies 2018; henceforth CE NOW), and the Spanish Web 2018 (Sketch Engine 2018, henceforth esTenT-en18). This process enabled us to ascertain the degree of IF exhibited by the verbal nucleus in written and spoken texts of various genres. Additionally, it sheds light on the meaning of the idiom, as well as on the correlation between specific inflectional variants and the pragmatic value attributed to the idiom in discourse.

2.2. Results

In all the monolingual works consulted, the idiom under examination is recorded with the lemma *quitar de la boca* and is defined as «anticiparse a decir lo que iba a decir otra persona» (‘to preemptively say what another person was about to say’) (*DLE*)⁵. In phraseological dictionaries, alongside the definition and the diaphasic marker (informal or colloquial), the following examples are presented:

1. Cuando dijo que ya era hora de comer, parece que **me quitó de la boca** esta frase, porque yo tenía un hambre terrible y no deseaba otra cosa.

5 In Seco, Andrés and Ramos (2023, 2nd ed.) and Moliner (2007, 3rd ed.), the following definitions are provided: «adelantarse[le] a decir[lo]» (‘to forestall [someone] in saying [it]’) and «anticiparse a decirlo» (‘to anticipate saying it’), respectively.

- ‘When he said it was already time for lunch, it seems he took the words right out of my mouth, as I was starving and desired nothing else.’ (Varela and Kubarth 1994)
2. – Y si Amadeo es un tío fresco que se nos ha metido en casa. – **Me lo has quitado de la boca.** ‘—And what if Amadeo is a cheeky fellow who has forced his way into our home? —You’ve taken the words right out of my mouth.’ (Seco, Andrés and Ramos 2004)
 3. [...] Halcón pensó que **se lo había quitado de la boca**, porque él iba a decirle lo mismo. ‘[...] Halcón thought he had taken the words out of his mouth, because he was going to say the same thing to him.’ (Penadés 2019)
 4. – Ya vendrán tiempos en que nos toque obsesionarnos con cómo limitar las pérdidas. – Jajaja, **me lo has quitado de la boca.** Es lo que iba a decir. ‘—The time will come when we’ll have to obsess over how to limit losses. —Hahaha, you’ve taken the words right out of my mouth. That’s exactly what I was going to say.’ (Penadés 2019)
 5. Lola Bennasar es escuela y centro en Barcelona. Me atendió ella misma, ventajas de un congreso profesional. Le iba a explicar lo que quería pero **me lo quitó de la boca:** «Ya veo, son cortas». Me explicó cómo se trabaja para alargar unas cejas cortas. ‘Lola Bennasar is the head and heart of the centre in Barcelona. She attended to me herself, one of the perks of a professional conference. I was about to explain what I wanted, but she took the words out of my mouth: «I see, they are short». She then explained how to work on lengthening short eyebrows.’ (Penadés 2019)

In four of these instances, *quitar de la boca* is employed in conjunction with the neuter pronoun *lo*, referencing what the interlocutor said. Moreover, in two cases (examples 2 and 4), the usage of this idiom with the verb in the second person singular of the present perfect (*has quitado*) and preceded by *lo* appears to convey – in addition to the meaning documented in dictionaries – a clear agreement on the part of the speaker with the idea expressed by the interlocutor. This illocutionary value does not seem to be associated with the use of *quitar de la boca* in other forms (e.g., example 3).

Within the three selected corpora, a total of 135 occurrences of *quitar de la boca* were identified: 7 in CORPES XXI, 40 in CE NOW, and 88 in esTenTen18. Beyond this quantitative disparity, the analysis revealed a varying distribution of non-literal uses: 2 examples in CORPES XXI, 37 in CE NOW, and 57 in esTenTen18⁶. The resulting 96 non-literal occurrences are associated with three distinct idiomatic meanings:

- a. To preemptively articulate what another person intended to say: «Hola RACHEL GREEN: Hoy **me lo has quitado de la boca**, estoy totalmente

6 As a result, in the three corpora 35 examples of literal use are registered (5 in the CORPES XXI, 3 in the CE NOW and 31 in esTenTen18).

de acuerdo contigo» ‘Hello RACHEL GREEN: You’ve taken the words right out of my mouth today; I completely agree with you’. (esTenTen2018, RTVE blog, accessed 22 March 2024)

- b. (Preceded by the adverb *no*) Not to refrain from using a word or phrase or talking about something or someone: «[...] aquellos que **no se quitan de la boca** el término *suelo ético* no han sido capaces de decir nada ante las vulneraciones de derechos de las últimas semanas» [...] those who never stop talking about the term *ethical floor* have been unable to say anything regarding the rights violations of recent weeks’. (CE NOW, *El País* 13/04/2013)
- c. To deprive someone of something (goods, money, etc.) to give it to someone else: «[...] y en definitiva, pensar todos en todos, y saber que lo que robo yo, **se lo quito de la boca** a otro» [...] and ultimately, to think of everyone, and to know that what I steal, I am taking out of someone else’s mouth’. (CE NOW, *El Economista*, accessed 25 March 2024)

The examples gathered from the corpora were analysed by distinguishing the three identified meanings and observing potential usage preferences with respect to verbal inflection. Concerning meaning A, in the majority of instances – 2/2 (100%) in CORPES XXI, 14/21 (70%) in CE NOW and 21/28 (75%) in esTenTen18 – *quitar de la boca* takes the form *Me lo has quitado de la boca*:

Table 1: IF of meaning A of *quitar de la boca*

Tense	Items		
	CORPES XXI	CE NOW	esTenTen18
<i>Me lo has quitado de la boca</i>	2	14	21
Other tenses	/	7	7
Total	2	21	28

In the remaining documents – 7/21 (30%) in CE NOW and 7/28 (25%) in esTenTen18 – verb tenses such as the simple past and the infinitive are used, as well as the present perfect with a different person–number inflection (e.g., *Me lo ha/han quitado de la boca*).

Meaning B is expressed through the use of the idiom preceded by the adverb *no*. In a considerable number of cases – 11/12 (91%) in CE NOW and 6/11 (55%) in esTenTen18 – the verb is conjugated in the present indicative:

Table 2: IF of meaning B of *quitar de la boca*

Tense	Items		
	CORPES XXI	CE NOW	esTenTen18
No + present indicative	/	11	6
No + simple past indicative	/	1	2
No + other tenses	/	/	3
Total	/	12	11

In contrast to the observation for meaning A, in this case, the present indicative is employed with different inflectional variants in number and person (*quito, quita, quitamos, quitan*). In other documents, however, this meaning is conveyed with the verb in the simple past or, in three cases in esTenTen18, in the past perfect indicative (*había quitado*), imperfect subjunctive (*quitase*), and simple infinitive (*quitar*).

Finally, meaning C is present in CE NOW and esTenTen18 in 4 and 18 cases, respectively. The verbal nucleus does not appear to exhibit clearly oriented tendencies towards the selection of specific inflectional variants:

Table 3: IF of meaning C of *quitar de la boca*

Tense	Items		
	CORPES XXI	CE NOW	esTenTen18
Present indicative	/	1	5
Infinite	/	1	2
Gerund	/	2	7
Other tenses	/	/	4
Total	/	4	18

Considering these data, it is plausible to hypothesise a high degree of IF in the case of meaning A, which seems closely linked to the structure *lo* + 2nd pers. sing. of the present perfect. Meaning B exhibits a moderate degree of IF, tending to prefer the present indicative with variable inflection in number and person, while meaning C is associated with a minimal degree of IF.

3. Lemmatisation of *quitar de la boca* in the DFMD

Based on the findings from Section 2, specific strategies were employed in the development of lexicographical entries for the DFMD to promote the accurate usage of *quitar de la boca* and the selection of the appropriate Italian equivalent⁷. Due to the consistent presence of the adverb *no* when this idiom is used to convey meaning B, it was decided to incorporate the three identified idiomatic meanings into two distinct entries, one for *quitar de la boca* (meanings A and C) and another for *no quitarse de la boca* (meaning B). Both entries provide two examples for each meaning, extracted from the consulted corpora. Where a high degree of IF is present, the examples included in the entry are representative of the inflectional preferences exhibited by the idiom in actual discourse. Consequently, the entry for *quitar de la boca* is structured as follows:

Quitar de la boca

Locución verbal

1. Anticipar algo que otra persona iba a decir

– Para elegir esta selección / supongo / de los mejores temas de todo lo publicado / eh eh habréis tenido que sufrir mucho ¿no? / porque sois unos grandes aficionados al género / lo publicado es mucho y se habrán dejado muchos cuentos en el cajón supongo que para otros volúmenes.

– Pues / en efecto **me lo has quitado de la boca** realmente mmm somos mmm muy aficionados a edición // desde hace dieciséis años éramos / compradores y lectores compulsivos de este tipo de literatura y también de la literatura general. (CORPES XXI, *Telemadrid Radio*, 09/09/2003)

La verdad es que los 2 comentarios anteriores **me lo han quitado de la boca**. (CE NOW, *El Mundo*, consulta: 25/03/2024)

2. Privarle a una persona de algo (comida, bienes, etc.) para dárselo a otra persona

Sobre los “productos de temporada” habría que educar desde la más tierna infancia. Porque ahora ves en el mercado los mismos productos todo el año, lo que significa que vienen de lugares lejanos, muchas veces **quitándoselos de la boca** a los consumidores locales. (CE NOW, *El Mundo*, Blog, comentario de un usuario del 06/04/2013)

En esas publicaciones menores gasta Rivero lo que les **quita de la boca** a los niños que van a clase sin haber desayunado. (*El Día. La Opinión de Tenerife*, 08/07/2013)

= 1. Togliere [una persona] le parole di bocca [a qualcuno]

– Valerio, **mi hai tolto le parole di bocca**, ma non volevo intramettermi..... vorrei comunque dire, che recentemente è apparsa una ricerca circa la propensione all’egoismo nell’infanzia. (itTenTen20, *La Repubblica*, Blog *OdiFreddi*, comentario de un usuario del 13/07/2011)

– Bravo Alberto **mi ha tolto le parole di bocca** ma qui va di moda sempre e solo pensare e scrivere al negativo!! (itTenTen20, *Il Corriere della Sera*, *Forum*, comentario de un usuario del 01/03/2010)

7 Correspondences in Italian were identified through the consultation of monolingual works (Treccani 2008; De Mauro 1999–2007; Quartu and Rossi 2012; Sorge 2011) and bilingual dictionaries (Iam 2004; Arqués and Padoan 2012; Sañé and Schepisi 2013), followed by a subsequent verification in the Italian Web 2020 corpus (Sketch Engine 2020; henceforth itTenTen20).

= 2. Togliere / levare [una persona] il pane di bocca [a qualcuno]

– Così il sindaco prende carta e penna e scrive da “italiano deluso” al presidente della Repubblica Giorgio Napolitano per salvare il suo paese, minacciando le dimissioni. «[...] io non ci sto ad essere usato contro la gente, contro i miei concittadini che tribolano per mettere insieme il pranzo con la cena, che lavorano onestamente per essere poi “derubati” da uno Stato onnivoro che arriva, ormai, a **togliere il pane di bocca** a chi lavora». (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 20/02/2013)

– Invito anche a gente comune ad aprire gli occhi e a pensare due volte prima di **togliersi il pane di bocca** per finanziare ricerche che non verranno mai effettuate e i viaggi-vacanza di molti “eminenti” scienziati italiani. (*La Repubblica*, commento di un usuario, consulta: 27/03/2024)

OBSERVACIONES

Acepción 1: *Quitar de la boca y toglere le parole di bocca* se emplean con frecuencia en conversaciones orales, chats y foros para expresar el acuerdo del hablante con respecto a lo que acaba de afirmar su interlocutor. Como resultado, adquieren a menudo la forma *Me lo has quitado de la boca / Mi hai tolto le parole di bocca*.

→ **No quitarse de la boca**

Fig. 3.1. Entry for *quitar de la boca*

The final section of the entry offers instructions that elucidate the high degree of IF manifested by the Spanish idiom and its Italian equivalent *togliere le parole di bocca* when conveying the pragmatic value of attunement with the interlocutor. This results in the specific form *Me lo has quitado de la boca / Mi hai tolto le parole di bocca*. Moreover, it includes a cross-reference to the entry for *no quitarse de la boca*, where users will find the following data:

No quitarse [alguien] [algo] de la boca

Locución verbal

No dejar de usar una palabra o de hablar de un tema o una persona

– No ayuda en nada a la idea de país solvente que genera confianza que **no se quitan de la boca** muchos miembros del Gobierno, con su jefe a la cabeza. (esTenTen18, *ABC*, 30/12/2013)

– El Gobierno no **se quita de la boca** la palabra “justa”. Se trata de finiquitar un privilegio de unos pocos, vienen a decir. El alcalde de Pau y líder centrista aliado, François Bayrou, lo expuso así en la TV: «¿Por qué los conductores de los autobuses de Pau se jubilan diez años más tarde que los de París?». (*El Mundo*, 04/12/2019)

= Avere sempre in bocca [una parola, una frase, qualcuno o qualcosa]

– Cosa c’è di strano nel chiedere, senza far morale, che i “richiami” ai valori cristiani, abbiano più impegno e rigore, come esempio? Ho il diritto di pensare che Bergoglio è solo “strumentalizzato” da quelli che **hanno sempre in bocca** i moniti all’amore e all’accoglienza inviatici con regolarità? (itTenTen20, *Il Giornale*, comentario de un usuario del 25/04/2016)

– Ma qualcuno ascolterà mai le idee sane che non sono mero mercato? Questo magari quando sarai assessore? Ci hai mai pensato veramente? – (ride) Ovvio, quello scherzo è servito per punire dei giornalisti che mi **avevano sempre in bocca** a sproposito e mi avevano inserito nel toto assessori. (itTenTen20, *Senza Soste*, consulta: 27/03/2024)

Fig. 3.2. Entry for *no quitarse de la boca*

In the Italian–Spanish section of the repository, the Italian equivalents are lemmatised as three separate entries. Each contains the corresponding Spanish counterpart and examples that are representative of the IF detected in each case. The resulting entry for *togliere le parole di bocca* is structured as follows:

Togliere le parole di bocca [a qualcuno]

Locuzione verbale

Anticipare qualcosa che stava per dire un'altra persona

– Valerio, **mi hai tolto le parole di bocca**, ma non volevo intrmettermi..... vorrei comunque dire, che recentemente è apparsa una ricerca circa la propensione all'egoismo nell'infanzia. (itTenTen20, *La Repubblica*, *Blog Odifreddi*, commento di un utente del 13/07/2011)
 – Bravo Alberto **mi ha tolto le parole di bocca** ma qui va di moda sempre e solo pensare e scrivere al negativo!! (itTenTen20, *Il Corriere della Sera*, *Forum*, commento di un utente del 01/03/2010)

= Quitar [algo] de la boca [a alguien]

– Para elegir esta selección / supongo / de los mejores temas de todo lo publicado / eh eh habréis tenido que sufrir mucho ¿no? / porque sois unos grandes aficionados al género / lo publicado es mucho y se habrán dejado muchos cuentos en el cajón supongo que para otros volúmenes
 – Pues / en efecto **me lo has quitado de la boca** realmente mmm somos mmm muy aficionados a la literatura fantástica de terror / de hecho es un poco el leitmotiv que nos ha traído al mundo de la edición // desde hace dieciséis años éramos / compradores y lectores compulsivos de este tipo de literatura y también de la literatura general. (CORPES XXI, *Telemadrid Radio*, 09/09/2003)

La verdad es que los 2 comentarios anteriores **me lo han quitado de la boca**. (CE NOW, *El Mundo*, consultazione: 25/03/2024)

OSSERVAZIONI

Togliere le parole di bocca e *quitar de la boca* si usano con grande frequenza in conversazioni orali, chat o forum per esprimere accordo nei confronti di ciò che ha appena affermato l'interlocutore. Per questo motivo, acquisiscono spesso la forma *Mi hai tolto le parole di bocca* / *Me lo has quitado de la boca*.

→ **Quitar las palabras de la boca**

Fig. 3.3. Entry for *togliere le parole di bocca*

Similarly to the observations made for the entry for *quitar de la boca*, the final section of this entry also includes usage instructions regarding the frequent selection of the structure *Mi hai tolto le parole di bocca* / *Me lo has quitado de la boca* in association with the aforementioned illocutionary value. Furthermore, it includes a cross-reference to *quitar las palabras de la boca*, identified as a partial synonym of *quitar de la boca* and lemmatised as a distinct entry⁸.

8 For further information concerning the lexicographical treatment of synonymic idioms in the DFMD, see Dal Maso (2020).

The entry for *avere sempre in bocca* introduces the equivalent *no quitar de la boca*, as in both cases the conveyed meaning is ‘to talk incessantly about someone or something, or to repeatedly use a certain word or phrase’:

Avere sempre in bocca [una parola, una frase, qualcuno o qualcosa]

Locuzione verbale

Continuare a usare una parola, una frase o a parlare di qualcuno o qualcosa

- Cosa c’è di strano nel chiedere, senza far morale, che i “richiami” ai valori cristiani, abbiano più impegno e rigore, come esempio? Ho il diritto di pensare che Bergoglio è solo “strumentalizzato” da quelli che **hanno sempre in bocca** i moniti all’amore e all’accoglienza inviatici con regolarità? (itTenTen20, *Il Giornale*, commento di un utente del 25/04/2016)
- Ma qualcuno ascolterà mai le idee sane che non sono mero mercato? Questo magari quando sarai assessore? Ci hai mai pensato veramente?
- (ride) Ovvio, quello scherzo è servito per punire dei giornalisti che mi **avevano sempre in bocca** a sproposito e mi avevano inserito nel toto assessori. (itTenTen20, *Senza Soste*, consultazione: 27/03/2024)

= No quitar [algo] de la boca [a alguien]

- No ayuda en nada a la idea de país solvente que genera confianza que **no se quitan de la boca** muchos miembros del Gobierno, con su jefe a la cabeza. (esTenTen18, *ABC*, 30/12/2013)
- El Gobierno no **se quita de la boca** la palabra “justa”. Se trata de finiquitar un privilegio de unos pocos, vienen a decir. El alcalde de Pau y líder centrista aliado, François Bayrou, lo expuso así en la TV: «¿Por qué los conductores de los autobuses de Pau se jubilan diez años más tarde que los de París?». (*El Mundo*, 04/12/2019)

OSSERVAZIONI

No quitar algo de la boca si usa molto spesso con il verbo al presente indicativo.

Fig. 3.4. Entry for *avere sempre in bocca*

The examples confirm this correspondence, and the instruction provided in the final section explicitly highlights the preference of this idiom for the present indicative.

Lastly, in the entry for *togliere il pane di bocca*, examples featuring different inflectional variants are provided. In the concluding section, no specific instructions are given regarding preferences in the selection of verb tense or person–number inflection, reflecting the low degree of IF associated with this meaning:

Togliere il pane di bocca [a qualcuno]

Locuzione verbale

Privare qualcuno di qualcosa (beni, denaro, ecc.) per darlo a un'altra persona

– Così il sindaco prende carta e penna e scrive da “italiano deluso” al presidente della Repubblica Giorgio Napolitano per salvare il suo paese, minacciando le dimissioni. «[...] io non ci sto ad essere usato contro la gente, contro i miei concittadini che tribolano per mettere insieme il pranzo con la cena, che lavorano onestamente per essere poi “derubati” da uno Stato onnivoro che arriva, ormai, a **togliere il pane di bocca** a chi lavora». (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 20/02/2013)

– Invito anche a gente comune ad aprire gli occhi e a pensare due volte prima di **togliersi il pane di bocca** per finanziare ricerche che non verranno mai effettuate e i viaggi-vacanza di molti “eminenti” scienziati italiani. (*La Repubblica*, commento di un utente, consultazione: 27/03/2024)

= Quitar [algo] de la boca [a alguien]

Sobre los “productos de temporada” habría que educar desde la más tierna infancia. Porque ahora ves en el mercado los mismos productos todo el año, lo que significa que vienen de lugares lejanos, muchas veces **quitándoselos de la boca** a los consumidores locales. (CE NOW, *El Mundo*, Blog, comentario de un utente datato 06/04/2013)

En esas publicaciones menores gasta Rivero lo que les **quita de la boca** a los niños que van a clase sin haber desayunado. (*El Día. La Opinión de Tenerife*, 08/07/2013)

Fig. 3.5. Entry for *togliere dalla bocca*

4. Conclusions

The pilot study conducted demonstrates the significance of inflectional fixation in the field of phraseography, by showing how the tendency of an idiom to select specific verbal forms is a crucial element to consider when compiling a dictionary aimed at active foreign language learning. With respect to verbal idioms, observing preferences or constraints in the selection of the nucleus form – and subsequently incorporating appropriate examples and usage instructions – can significantly enhance foreign language production and, more specifically, learners’ phraseological competence. For this reason, it is essential to delve deeper into the study of IF. This research should not be limited to the nucleus of verbal idioms but should also extend to other morphological manifestations. For instance, the gender and number inflection that nouns, adjectives and determiners exhibit in phraseological units should be considered: a non-native speaker might encounter challenges when using *sudar como un pollo* (lit. ‘to sweat like a chicken’) with a plural subject, potentially questioning whether the plural form should be *sudar como pollos* or *sudar como unos pollos*. In this regard, it is to be hoped that the application of new technologies to the lexicographical field will lead to the creation of resources more geared towards language production and capable of systematically integrating data and aspects that have hitherto been underrepresented in dictionaries.

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Les noms de marque dans les unités phraséologiques : enjeux méthodologiques d'un corpus franco-espagnol non normé. Quelle place pour l'intelligence artificielle ?

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ABSTRACT

Brands are part of our lexiculture and their names are constantly circulating in our everyday discourses. The phenomenon of genericization of brand names leads to the emergence of new phraseological units (PU) that speakers establish to codify meanings and achieve linguistic economy or to bring more expressiveness (such as *avoir une tête de Playmobil* in French and *tener un pelo Pantene* in Spanish). To date, few researchers have focused on PU containing a brand name. The reason is undoubtedly the lack of available data, since the lexicographical treatment of these PU is almost nonexistent. These expressions mainly appear in oral communication or on social networks, grounds conducive to phraseological innovation. This study aims to analyze the methodological challenges involved in the constitution of a non-standardized corpus of PU containing a brand name in French and Spanish. The orthotypographical variability of brand names, coupled with the lack of available resources, makes this corpus a challenging winning combo for the linguist. The use of artificial intelligence has been explored to extract these PU (semi-)automatically, but these language models reveal their limitations when applied to such heterogeneous, non-standardized corpora.

Keywords: phraseological units; brand names; artificial intelligence; IA; French; Spanish.

RÉSUMÉ

Les marques commerciales font partie de notre lexiculture et leurs noms circulent en permanence dans nos discours quotidiens. Le phénomène de lexicalisation des noms de marque (NdM) conduit, à terme, à l'apparition d'unités phraséologiques (UP) que les locuteurs mettent en place afin de codifier des signifiés, dans le but de réaliser des économies linguistiques ou d'apporter plus d'expressivité (*avoir une tête de Playmobil* en français ; *tener un pelo Pantene* en espagnol). À l'heure actuelle, peu de chercheurs se sont intéressés aux UP comportant un NdM, sans doute en raison du manque de données disponibles, car le traitement lexicographique de ces UP est quasi inexistant. Ces UP se retrouvent principalement à l'oral ou sur les réseaux sociaux, des terrains propices à l'innovation phraséologique. L'objectif de cette étude est d'analyser les enjeux méthodologiques liés à la constitution d'un corpus non normé d'UP comportant un NdM en français et en espagnol. La variabilité orthotypographique des NdM, associée au manque de ressources disponibles constitue un véritable défi pour le linguiste. La voie de l'intelligence artificielle a été explorée afin d'extraire ces UP de manière (semi-)automatique, mais les modèles linguistiques montrent leurs limites lorsqu'ils sont appliqués à des corpus hétérogènes et non standardisés.

Mots-clés : unités phraséologiques ; noms de marque ; intelligence artificielle ; IA ; français ; espagnol.

1. Nom de marque, lexicalisation et unités phraséologiques

Le nom de marque (NdM) constitue une pièce lexicale intéressante pour le linguiste en raison de son statut polyphonique qui fait converger plusieurs voix à l'intérieur d'un même signe : celle du marketing, celle du droit et celle de la linguistique (Petit 2000, 2006 ; Vaxelaire 2014). Les NdM sortent de leur tanière publicitaire pour ensuite trouver refuge au plus profond de notre patrimoine lexiculturel (Tonti 2020). Ils sont un condensé culturel au même titre que les noms de fêtes, d'institutions, de personnages historiques, etc.

Lorsqu'un NdM se lexicalise dans la langue, il devient la dénomination générique de la catégorie de produits dans laquelle il s'inscrit : *Kleenex* pour « mouchoir jetable en papier », *Rimmel* pour « fard pour les cils », etc. Il perd ainsi sa fonction distinctive première — désigner une offre commerciale spécifique et la distinguer de celles des concurrents — et, par là même, le fondement de son existence juridique. L'enjeu est majeur pour son titulaire, qui encourt la déchéance de ses droits exclusifs¹.

En linguistique, la lexicalisation du NdM est décrite comme un phénomène graduel, qui peut aller du simple emploi métonymique (une [voiture] *Renault*) à une définition lexicale, attestée par son entrée dans le dictionnaire (Soler

1 « Le titulaire d'une marque devenue, de son fait, la désignation usuelle dans le commerce du produit ou du service encourt la déchéance de ses droits » (Article L. 714-6, a) du Code de la Propriété Intellectuelle).

Cifuentes 2021). Dans cette échelle, où le NdM oscille entre individualisation et catégorisation, certains emplois témoignent d'un haut degré de lexicalisation. Tel est le cas de la création de nouvelles unités phraséologiques (UP) dont les locuteurs se servent pour codifier des signifiés (*jeter comme un Kleenex*). Ces UP contenant un NdM ne sont pas des usages marginaux limités à un groupe social spécifique : une simple recherche sur Google permet de confirmer qu'elles sont assez répandues et peuvent même être considérées comme relevant d'un argot commun.

Malgré l'essor des études phraséologiques de ces dernières décennies, force est de constater que les UP avec NdM n'ont pas attiré l'attention des chercheurs. Cela peut s'expliquer pour plusieurs raisons, dont nous soulignons les contraintes juridiques du traitement lexicographique des NdM², ainsi que le fait que ces UP voyagent incognito dans nos discours quotidiens — surtout à l'oral. Il faut les saisir au vol et les répertorier, faute de quoi on se retrouve face au néant en termes de données, puisqu'à ce jour aucun ouvrage ne leur est consacré.

De tous ces constats est né le projet *Phrasmark* (Soler Cifuentes, Grezka et Garcia Flores 2024), un projet pluridisciplinaire dont l'objectif est de bâtir une base de données d'expressions figées contenant des NdM afin de :

1. Étudier la manière dont chaque communauté linguistique codifie ses référents culturels à travers les UP.
2. Analyser les processus d'encodage / décodage avec les marques en tant qu'élément central.
3. Développer un outil de travail pour traducteurs, interprètes, professeurs, lexicographes, etc.

2. Constitution d'un corpus non normé : enjeux méthodologiques et traitement lexicographique

Dans le cadre du présent article, nos langues de travail sont le français hexagonal et l'espagnol péninsulaire. Ce sont donc les marques présentes dans ces deux marchés qui font l'objet de notre recherche. Dans un premier temps, nous avons établi une liste de marques susceptibles de donner lieu à une UP. Le choix des marques repose sur deux critères : son potentiel phraséogénique et sa notoriété. Le potentiel phraséogénique de la marque correspond à sa capacité à véhiculer des sens figurés à travers ses attributs (matériels ou immatériels) et l'imaginaire qui s'est construit autour d'elle. À priori, toute marque peut subir

2 Conformément au droit de marques de l'Union européenne, il est requis qu'un NdM figurant dans un dictionnaire ou tout autre ouvrage académique soit assorti d'une mention indiquant qu'il s'agit d'une marque déposée. (RÈGLEMENT (UE) 2017/1001 DU PARLEMENT EUROPÉEN ET DU CONSEIL du 14 juin 2017 sur la marque de l'Union européenne.) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32017R1001>

d'un détournement de son sens initial sous l'effet de divers processus cognitifs. Le fait que seules certaines marques parviennent à figer ces significations secondaires dans une UP dépend de leur degré de circulation dans les discours. Les marques à forte notoriété sont davantage ancrées dans le système linguistico-culturel, ce qui se traduit par une circulation plus fréquente et intense, favorisant la création d'UP.

À partir d'une liste de plusieurs centaines de NdM, nous nous sommes lancées dans la collecte d'UP les contenant. Après plusieurs tentatives infructueuses de recherche dans des ouvrages et corpus de référence, nous avons fini par adopter une méthodologie d'extraction manuelle, basée sur deux méthodes complémentaires : d'une part, la collecte des données sur les réseaux sociaux, notamment sur X (anciennement *Twitter*) ; d'autre part, une collecte directe auprès de locuteurs natifs (tout âge et sexe confondus), qui ont permis d'attester l'existence et l'usage réel de ces UP. Il en résulte un corpus bilingue composé de 38 UP en langue française et 31 UP en langue espagnole.

Le principal obstacle de ce corpus tient à la nature non normée des NdM, qui entrave une automatisation de l'extraction des données. En effet, ces noms ne forment absolument pas une classe homogène avec des critères distinctifs, ce qui les rend spécialement sensibles à la manipulation orthotypographique par les locuteurs. Ainsi, elles fluctuent entre minuscule et majuscule initiales, entre adaptation et emprunt pur, entre trait d'union et espace. Cela donne lieu à plusieurs variantes d'un même NdM, aussi bien en français (*Flamby* et *Flanby*, le deuxième nom étant le NdM original qui défie les normes orthographiques habituelles et est « corrigé » par les locuteurs) qu'en espagnol (*clínex* par *Kleenex*, la première forme étant l'emprunt adapté préconisé par l'académie de la langue espagnole).

Outre les problèmes de variations graphiques, l'indisponibilité d'ouvrages de référence répertoriant des UP avec NdM complexifie davantage la constitution de notre corpus. Elles ne sont majoritairement pas dans les dictionnaires traditionnels, qu'ils soient normatifs ou descriptifs, pas non plus que dans les ouvrages spécialisés, comme les dictionnaires ou recueils phraséologiques. Ces UP, qui sont principalement employées à l'oral ou sur les réseaux sociaux, figurent rarement dans les ressources lexicographiques à cause de leur statut juridique et linguistique particulier. En tant que noms propres protégés par la loi, les NdM sont généralement absents des dictionnaires, à l'exception de ceux qui sont devenus génériques et, de ce fait, des noms communs à part entière.

À titre d'exemple, nous avons mis à l'épreuve un dictionnaire unilingue de référence pour chacune des langues (pour le français, *Le Grand Robert* ou LGR ; pour l'espagnol, le *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* ou DLE) et nous y avons cherché les UP qui composent notre corpus. Il faut préciser que certaines UP contiennent le même NdM (*être beurré comme un Petit Lu* et *tremper son Petit Lu*) et d'autres ont le même signifiant, mais une signification différente (*dar vaselina*,

lit. ‘donner de la vaseline’, dans le sens de ‘adoucir une critique par des compliments préalables’).

Les résultats sont sans appel : tandis que le LGR compte 6 UP de notre corpus français, soit 15 % des UP, le DLE n’en compte qu’une seule. Nous précisons que tout type de locution (*blanc comme un cachet d’aspirine*) ou sens métaphorique susceptible d’être utilisée en tant qu’UP (*être blanc comme un cachet d’aspirine*) a été comptabilisé.

Tableau 1 : UP avec NdM présentes dans le dictionnaire

Le Grand Robert (LGR)	Diccionario de la Lengua Española (DLE)
- <i>blanc comme un cachet d’aspirine</i> - <i>bébé cadum</i> - <i>passer comme une lettre à la poste</i> - <i>décrocher, attraper la queue du Mickey</i> - <i>beurré comme un petit Lu</i> - <i>être, rester scotché</i>	- <i>estar alguien o algo más visto que el tebeo</i> (lit. ‘être plus vu que le tebeo’, signifie ‘être très répandu et ne plus susciter d’intérêt’)

Faute de sources disponibles, nous avons donc constitué notre corpus « à l’œil » et « à la main », en observant les différentes occurrences sur les réseaux sociaux, et en croisant ces données avec celles fournies par des locuteurs natifs de l’espagnol et du français. Or, la méthode de collecte manuelle s’avère longue et pas toujours fructueuse, car ces UP se fondent dans la masse des discours quotidiens et les marques qui les composent ne sont parfois pas reconnues comme telles. Ces difficultés nous ont amenées à réfléchir à la possibilité d’utiliser le potentiel de l’intelligence artificielle afin d’élargir notre corpus de façon automatique ou semi-automatique. Un tel outil peut-il réellement convenir à la création d’un corpus non normé ?

3. Vers une extraction supervisée d’UP contenant des NdM ?

L’intelligence artificielle (IA) est un terme générique qui désigne la capacité de machines ou de logiciels à simuler certaines fonctions cognitives humaines, telles que le raisonnement, l’apprentissage, la résolution de problèmes ou encore la compréhension du langage. Elle englobe plusieurs domaines technologiques, dont l’apprentissage automatique (*machine learning*), où des algorithmes apprennent à partir de données et s’améliorent au fil du temps sans être explicitement programmés pour chaque tâche.

Parmi les avancées les plus marquantes de ces dernières années figure l’IA générative, une branche spécifique de l’intelligence artificielle capable de produire automatiquement du contenu inédit, qu’il s’agisse de textes, d’images, de vidéos, de musique ou même de code informatique. Ces systèmes s’appuient

sur des modèles entraînés sur de vastes ensembles de données pour identifier des régularités, reproduire des styles, ou générer de nouvelles créations cohérentes et pertinentes. Popularisée fin 2022 par le lancement de ChatGPT, un agent conversationnel développé par OpenAI, reposant sur l’architecture GPT (*Generative Pre-trained Transformer*, soit « transformeur génératif pré-entraîné »), cette technologie a très rapidement trouvé un large public. ChatGPT s’est notamment distingué par sa capacité à produire du texte de qualité, à comprendre des requêtes formulées en langage naturel, et à simuler un dialogue fluide. L’engouement mondial pour ce type d’outil a marqué un tournant dans la perception et l’usage de l’IA générative, notamment dans les domaines de l’éducation, de la création de contenu et de la recherche linguistique.

Il était donc tout naturel de tester l’extraction d’UP avec NdM avec ChatGPT. Nous nous sommes appuyés sur la version gratuite et « grand public », plus simple à utiliser que le modèle de langage GPT-3³, mais dans lequel le modèle et les données d’entraînement sont les mêmes. La formulation du prompt est cruciale parce qu’elle détermine la qualité, la pertinence et la créativité des réponses obtenues, surtout quand il s’agit de recherches linguistiques fines comme les expressions idiomatiques avec des marques. Nous avons donc soumis le prompt suivant : « Donne-moi une liste d’unités phraséologiques utilisant des NdM (passées dans le langage courant), sur le modèle de “*beurré comme un petit Lu*” ou “*être, rester scotché*” et précise pour chaque expression ce qu’elle signifie ». Nous avons obtenu pour le français et l’espagnol les résultats suivants, accompagnés de leur signification :

Tableau 2 : UP contenant des NdM en français générées par ChatGPT

Amazon	<i>Être dans la zone Amazon</i>	Être totalement absorbé par une tâche ou une activité en ligne.
Blackberry	<i>Avoir un Blackberry dans la poche</i>	Être en mesure de rester en contact avec les autres à tout moment.
Coca-Cola	<i>Être le Coca-Cola de quelque chose</i>	Être le leader incontesté dans un domaine.
Colgate	<i>Avoir un sourire Colgate</i>	Avoir un sourire brillant et propre.
Facebook	<i>Avoir la boule de cristal de Facebook</i>	Avoir une grande capacité à prévoir l’avenir ou à prédire les tendances.

3 Pour l’instant, la version de base de ChatGPT s’appuie précisément sur le modèle de langage GPT-3.5. En mars 2023, OpenAI a sorti GPT-4, qui reste encore aujourd’hui réservé aux utilisateurs de ChatGPT Plus, un modèle bien plus puissant et performant, mais payant.

Ferrari	<i>Avoir la Ferrari des ordinateurs</i>	Posséder un ordinateur extrêmement puissant et performant.
Google	<i>Être sur la même longueur d'onde que Google</i>	Être d'accord avec quelqu'un, avoir la même compréhension ou la même opinion.
Nike	<i>Être le Nike de quelque chose (affaires)</i>	Être le leader ou le meilleur dans un domaine particulier.
Starbucks	<i>Faire un Starbucks run</i>	Aller chercher des boissons ou des collations chez Starbucks.

Tableau 3 : UP contenant des NdM en espagnol générées par ChatGPT

Coca-Cola	<i>Ser la Coca-Cola de los refrescos</i> (lit. 'être le Coca-Cola des sodas')	Être le leader du marché dans sa catégorie.
Colgate	<i>Tener una sonrisa Colgate</i> (lit. 'avoir un sourire Colgate')	Avoir un sourire éclatant et blanc.
Duracell	<i>Ponerse las pilas como Duracell</i> (lit. 'se mettre des piles comme Duracell')	Se mettre en action avec énergie et détermination.
Ferrari	<i>Ir como un Ferrari</i> (lit. 'aller comme une Ferrari')	Aller à grande vitesse ou avec beaucoup d'énergie.
Ikea	<i>Estar más perdido que un turista en el IKEA</i> (lit. 'être plus perdu qu'un touriste chez IKEA')	Être très confus ou désorienté.
McDonald's	<i>Hacer un McDonald's</i> (lit. 'faire un McDonald's')	Accomplir une tâche ou une action rapidement.
Red Bull	<i>Ir a toda pastilla como Red Bull</i> (lit. 'aller à toute vitesse comme Red Bull')	Aller à toute vitesse.
Renault	<i>Estar hecho un Renault</i> (lit. 'être une Renault')	Être en bon état, fonctionner correctement.
Telefónica	<i>Hablar por los codos como Telefónica</i> (lit. 'parler par les coudes comme Telefónica')	Parler beaucoup ou sans interruption.

Sur la forme, les réponses données par ChatGPT sont très convaincantes... mais en grande majorité fausses. Pour 89 % des expressions proposées par ChatGPT, soit 16 sur 18, nous n'avons pas pu attester d'un usage réel, ni sur le Web ni auprès des locuteurs. Il se pourrait qu'il s'agisse d'hapax, mais aucune trace n'a été retrouvée en ligne. Seules les expressions *avoir un sourire Colgate* et *tener una sonrisa Colgate* (lit. 'avoir un sourire Colgate') constituent de véritables UP, dont l'usage est attesté sur Internet.

ChatGPT fait ici de la « confabulation ». La confabulation est un phénomène psychologique où une personne remplit des lacunes dans sa mémoire en inventant inconsciemment des histoires ou des détails pour expliquer des événements ou des situations dont elle ne se souvient pas correctement. Ces créations peuvent sembler cohérentes et convaincantes pour la personne qui les énonce, mais elles ne sont basées sur aucun fait réel. Bien que ChatGPT ne fonctionne pas comme le cerveau humain, le terme « confabulation » est sans doute la meilleure métaphore pour caractériser ce principe créatif de comblement des lacunes⁴ (Huang *et al.* 2023 ; Shah 2023). Le modèle génère ici du texte basé sur des connaissances inexistantes ou des déductions incorrectes. Il génère du texte en fonction des modèles statistiques qu'il a appris et ne possède pas de compréhension ou de conscience réelles comme le font les humains.

Les chercheurs construisent, entraînent de grands modèles linguistiques comme GPT-3 en utilisant un processus appelé « apprentissage non supervisé », ce qui signifie que les données qu'ils utilisent pour former le modèle ne sont pas spécialement annotées ou étiquetées. Le modèle doit donc découvrir la structure inhérente des données par lui-même. Au cours de ce processus, le modèle est alimenté par un grand nombre de textes. Ces textes sont ensuite éclatés en fragments de mots ou « tokens » au cours d'un processus d'apprentissage complexe. Lorsqu'une phrase est soumise, les mots sont séparés. Chaque mot est caractérisé par sa proximité ou sa distance mesurée statistiquement avec d'autres mots, ce qui se traduira par une suite de nombres. Le modèle essaie à plusieurs reprises de prédire le mot suivant dans chaque séquence de mots. Si la prédiction du modèle est proche du mot suivant réel, le réseau neuronal met à jour ses paramètres pour renforcer les modèles qui ont conduit à cette prédiction. Inversement, si la prédiction est incorrecte, le modèle ajuste ses paramètres pour améliorer ses performances et réessaie (cela permet au modèle d'apprendre de ses erreurs et d'améliorer progressivement ses prédictions pendant le processus de formation). En conséquence, GPT apprend les associations statistiques entre les mots et les concepts connexes dans l'ensemble de données. C'est ce qui apparaît très clairement dans nos deux tableaux. Le modèle a ici construit ses UP sur les grandes propriétés qui caractérisent les marques (Ferrari = puissance ; Nike = leader ; etc.).

Il reste donc, à l'heure actuelle, délicat de s'appuyer sur un modèle de langage pour extraire des UP avec NdM (Soler Cifuentes, Grezka et García Flores 2024). Les modèles s'améliorent avec le temps et savent de mieux en mieux

4 Mikhail Parakhin, PDG de Advertising & Web Services chez Microsoft, qui travaille sur Bing Chat, a tweeté et reconnu la possibilité pour les grands modèles de langage (LLM) comme Bing « d'inventer des choses » : « This is what I tried to explain previously: hallucinations = creativity. It tries to produce the highest probability continuation of the string using all the data at its disposal. Very often it is correct. Sometimes people have never produced continuations like this » (X, 24 février 2023).

s'abstenir de répondre lorsqu'ils n'ont pas l'information. Cependant, en dehors des questions simples, un modèle de langage peut facilement inventer une réponse avec une explication tout aussi inventée et approximative (ici la définition de l'expression).

4. Marque et lexiculture : origine des UP contenant NdM

Si ChatGPT n'est pas capable de fournir des exemples réels d'UP contenant un NdM, ce n'est pas en raison de leur rareté, bien au contraire, ces UP appartiennent à la langue courante partagée par la majorité des locuteurs. En effet, la marque a vocation à être omniprésente et connue du plus grand nombre de consommateurs, et sa nature universelle se manifeste également dans la phraséologie. Les limites de ChatGPT concernent le type de diffusion de ces expressions, qui sont majoritairement utilisées à l'oral ou dans des productions écrites qui sont imprégnées d'oralité, particulièrement les productions sur les réseaux sociaux.

Bien que les UP avec NdM relèvent de nos discours les plus courants et quotidiens, elles passent inaperçues pour ChatGPT, car elles se propagent furtivement, souvent sans laisser des traces écrites. Elles font partie de notre lexiculture, terme que nous empruntons à Galisson (1998, 2000) pour rendre compte de « la culture en dépôt dans les mots », une culture implicite sous-jacente au lexique, connue et reconnue par les natifs, mais opaque et inaccessible pour étrangers et apprenants.

Le rôle de la publicité dans la création d'UP avec NdM est indéniable : slogans, spots publicitaires ou personnages de marque constituent autant de sources d'innovation phraséologique. Toutefois, l'analyse de notre corpus révèle que, dans la majorité des cas, ce sont les locuteurs eux-mêmes qui en sont à l'origine, soit par une création spontanée, soit par le détournement d'UP préexistantes. Cette tendance s'observe aussi bien en français qu'en espagnol, avec 84 % des unités en français (32 UP sur 38) et 74 % en espagnol (23 UP sur 31) attribuées aux locuteurs. Ainsi, on peut établir une première classification des UP en deux catégories en fonction de leur origine, selon que le moteur de la création phraséologique est le discours publicitaire ou bien les propres locuteurs.

4.1 Publicité

La publicité est un terrain fertile pour la création de nouvelles UP, et cela, en raison des slogans et d'autres énoncés qui, à force d'être répétés, s'implantent dans les esprits telle une comptine. Son pouvoir réside notamment dans sa capacité à créer une culture commune et inclusive. La publicité s'adresse le plus souvent à un large public et diffuse ainsi ses slogans, que chacun perçoit comme lui étant directement destinés.

Le français connaît la création d'UP directement de l'assimilation d'un slogan, comme dans *être comme le Port-Salut*. *Port-Salut* est une marque fromagère qui, à

partir des années soixante, va utiliser le slogan « C’est comme le Port-Salut, c’est écrit dessus » pour indiquer que les fromages produits par cette marque sont facilement identifiables, puisque le NdM est écrit sur l’emballage. Ce slogan est passé dans la langue courante pour indiquer l’évidence de quelque chose.

L’espagnol a fait de même avec *tener un pelo Pantene* (lit. ‘avoir des cheveux Pantene’, signifie ‘avoir de jolis cheveux, sains et brillants’). *Pantene* est une marque de produits capillaires qui a basé sa stratégie publicitaire en Espagne sur le slogan « pelo Pantene », en référence à des cheveux sains et brillants après l’utilisation des produits de la marque.

Dans d’autres cas, c’est le personnage de la marque qui contribue à la création d’une UP, comme c’est le cas pour *être un bébé Cadum* — dont le personnage de marque est un bébé joufflu, à la peau rose, lisse et douce —, et *durar más que el conejito de Duracell* (lit. ‘durer plus que le petit lapin de Duracell’, signifie ‘avoir beaucoup d’énergie’) — dont la mascotte est un lapin rose avec une énergie débordante.

4.2 Locuteurs

1. Propriétés physiques ou immatérielles de la marque

Les consommateurs peuvent interpréter les caractéristiques physiques ou symboliques que la marque véhicule pour créer de nouvelles UP. Ce sont les caractéristiques propres à chaque marque dont ChatGPT se sert pour faire de la confabulation, comme dans *être le Coca-Cola de quelque chose*. Cette UP, qui signifierait être le leader dans un domaine particulier, montre que ChatGPT base sa confabulation sur ses connaissances de *Coca-Cola* en tant que marque leader dans la catégorie des sodas. Ce qui est d’autant plus intéressant, c’est que les locuteurs espagnols ont codifié cette notion de succès commercial dans l’UP *triumfar como la Coca-Cola* (lit. ‘trionpher comme le Coca-Cola’, dans le sens de ‘rencontrer un grand succès’). C’est la preuve que ChatGPT n’était pas très loin dans ses suppositions, mais la différence réside dans le fait que l’expression figée proposée par le modèle de langage n’est pas issue d’un usage réel mais d’une invention.

La force créative des locuteurs se concrétise en français par l’emploi d’unités comme *avoir une tête de Playmobil* ou *avoir un corps d’Orangina*, dans lesquelles la caractéristique physique du produit que signe la marque est à l’origine des UP (la coupe carré de la figurine *Playmobil* ou l’allusion à la morphologie corporelle en forme de poire de la bouteille d’*Orangina*). En espagnol, nous retrouvons ce même mécanisme, mais cette fois-ci appliqué au personnage de la marque, comme dans *ser (un) Don Limpio* (lit. ‘être (un) Mr. Propre’, signifie ‘être chauve’), qui fait référence à un homme chauve tel que le personnage *Mr. Propre*.

2. UP existante

L’emploi des expressions figées est une spécificité de la publicité, à tel point que Berthelot-Guiet (2013, 89) affirme que « le message publicitaire aime la

formule figée pour mieux la détourner ou la “défiger” ». Des slogans célèbres comme *En avril, ne te découvre pas d’un Dim* ou encore *Les chiens aboient, les Lee Cooper passent* (cités par Grésillon et Maingueneau 1984, 117) en sont de bons exemples. Or, nous nous intéressons à un cas particulier d’UP existantes que les consommateurs détournent par substitution (ils remplacent une partie de l’expression par un NdM) ou par addition (ils ajoutent un NdM).

En langue française, l’expression *être mou comme un Chamallow*, variante d’*être mou comme une chiffre (molle)*, est employée pour décrire une personne de faible caractère ou dépourvue d’énergie. *Chamallow* est une marque de pâte de guimauve dont la consistance est moelleuse. *Chiffre* étant un vocable tombé en désuétude, il a été remplacé par une référence culturelle plus transparente pour des locuteurs du XXI^e siècle.

Le caractère pusillanime est également codifié en espagnol dans *tener Chufi en las venas* (lit. ‘avoir du Chufi dans les veines’, expression familière pour décrire quelqu’un de très calme, qui manque d’initiative), qui est une déformation de l’expression originale *tener borghata en las venas* (lit. ‘avoir de l’orgeat de souchet dans les veines’). L’orgeat de souchet est une boisson blanchâtre typique de la région de Valence, très consommée pendant la période estivale. Dès qu’une personne montre un caractère timoré, sans vie, sans énergie, on dit qu’elle n’a pas de sang dans les veines ou que ce sang est de l’orgeat. L’expression prend un nouveau tournant expressif quand le terme orgeat est remplacé par *Chufi*, marque espagnole leader de boissons d’orgeat de souchet.

5. Conclusions

L’influence de la marque transperce le domaine marchand et se glisse dans nos discours courants, en s’érigeant comme un messenger privilégié de notre lexiculture. Le phénomène de lexicalisation des NdM conduit en dernière instance à l’apparition de nouvelles UP qui font surface lors de nos échanges quotidiens.

À l’heure actuelle, les UP comportant un NdM restent peu étudiées, sans doute en raison du manque de données disponibles dans les ouvrages de référence (dictionnaires, recueils phraséologiques). Nous avons suivi une méthodologie d’extraction manuelle d’UP contenant NdM, en collectant des données sur les réseaux sociaux ou auprès de locuteurs natifs. Cette méthode reste néanmoins limitée par les nombreuses variations orthographiques que subissent les NdM, ainsi que par la non-reconnaissance de ces expressions qui passent inaperçues dans la masse d’échanges de la vie courante.

La constitution d’un corpus non normé constitue un défi pour le linguiste, défi que nous avons tenté de relever à l’aide de l’intelligence artificielle afin de constituer notre corpus de façon (semi-)automatique. Les résultats ont montré, pour le moment, les limites des modèles de langage dans ces cas de figure, car l’IA a recours à la confabulation.

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Specialized lexicography for children: dictionaries and picture books of idioms

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the largely understudied field of children's idiom lexicography by analysing two principal categories of resources: dictionaries and picture books. It critically examines a sample of each, including works by Beal (1993), Terban (2006), Amoroso (2008), Oelschlager (2011), and Ringstad (2012), to evaluate the selection, presentation, and explanation of idioms intended for young readers. Through textual and comparative analysis, the study reveals that these resources are largely author-driven rather than corpus-based, often reflecting subjective choices and inconsistent levels of complexity. While some works aim to entertain and inform children directly, others appear to rely on adult mediation due to the intricacy of content or presentation. The findings underscore the lack of standardized lexicographical methodologies for children and call for further research and guidance in this domain. Ultimately, the study highlights the cultural and educational importance of idioms and the potential of well-crafted lexicographical materials to support children's language development and cognitive growth.

Keywords: children; idioms; lexicography; dictionaries; picture-books.

1. Introduction

“A children's dictionary must be attuned to the child user or it will be unreadable and unread. Even more than an adult dictionary, it needs to align with the age, place and culture of its young readers in order to deserve their attention” (Rennie 2022, 3). While highlighting the added requirements that child as opposed to adult lexicography must account for, Rennie (2022, 4) strongly underlines that as yet there is no manual devoted to explaining how children's dictionaries in English should be compiled. Indeed, the lexicographers who work on children's dictionaries are the ones who also work on adult lexicography and whose thoughts and methodologies simply adjust to suit the needs of their young readership. Notwithstanding the lack of a clear-cut methodology and a general lexicographical practice, children's dictionaries go back a long

way and are a resilient genre, with new dictionaries that are continuously being compiled and others revised (Rennie 2022, 9).

John Withals' *A Shorte Dictionarie for Yonge Begynners* (1553) is an example of an early English-Latin bilingual dictionary that was specifically addressed to children (Considine 2022). That the first lexicographical works were often written for young learners is indeed a well-acknowledged fact by histories of lexicography (see Béjoint 2010; Shapiro 2017), with the nineteenth century being a particularly prolific time (see Iversen 2011, 2012, 2014, 2018, 2020, 2022). It was not, however, until the twentieth century that "children's dictionary publishing was given a huge boost" (Banerji 2022, 80). The importance placed upon spelling and vocabulary learning at school by the National Curriculum in the 1990s pushed the publication of lexicographical works aimed at children to multiply exponentially (Banerji 2022, 80). Nowadays, the market offers a wide range of dictionaries and thesauri for children of all ages and school levels.

Though probably not as numerous as those for general use, children's idiom dictionaries are also plentiful. Along with being able to read and spell single words, children at an early age are also expected to become familiar with chunks of words many of which are not simply literal. The understanding and use of idiomatic expressions from an early age has in fact been seen to make a difference in conversational skills. It contributes to achieving a good command of the language which is still considered as being a strong sign of intellectualism, wit and creative thinking¹. That being able to comprehend and reproduce idiomatic expressions is one of the characteristics of fluency is proven by the contents of the syllabi for the English language certifications aimed at foreign students. Indeed, to obtain the highest grades that are often likened to a native- or a near-native speaker's knowledge of the language, a good grounding in idiom-aticity is required (see, for instance, the syllabi for the IELTS and Cambridge Proficiency examinations). Without using such features in speech, Lazar-ton (2001, 103) claims that "learners are apt to sound bookish". Indeed, idioms are not appendages of language, but rather central and effective instruments of communication. Notwithstanding the importance of the idea that "children may grow up familiar with words and idioms" in order that they might learn to read, write, speak fluently as well as gain psychological maturity (Rennie 2022, 9), little to no metalexigraphical appreciation of such works exists. Within a more elaborate investigational project, it is the aim of this article, therefore, to try and begin to present some information of this kind. It will be done, firstly, by presenting an overview of the type of lexicographical material on the market, and secondly by attempting to appraise a sample of the materials collected.

1 See English Path at <https://www.englishpath.com/blog/master-english-language-idioms-and-phrases/>.

2. Methodology

To carry out this research, materials devoted to idioms for children were searched on the websites Amazon.com; Archive.org; JStor.org; and WorldCat.org using the keywords “children”, “dictionary/ies”; “idioms”, “juvenile literature”, “kids”. The material retrieved in response to my research needs consisted primarily of picture books and dictionaries. On the two typologies of works I chose to address the following research questions a) what are the authors’ intentions; in other words, what information do the authors provide in their prefaces? b) what contents are included; in other words, what type of idioms have been selected? c) how are the idioms presented and explained; in other words, what type of meaning is conveyed and how is it conveyed?

3. Results

The works on idioms addressed to children in the databases were found to belong to two principal categories of reading materials: dictionaries and picture books. Although not considered dictionaries in the strictest sense, the picture books, just like the dictionaries, list and explain idioms. For this reason, I decided to consider them lexicographical products to analyse along with the ones actually entitled “dictionaries”. What will follow is therefore the presentation of these two categories by means of the examination of a sample of two/three products for each. To illustrate the dictionary category, *The Kingfisher book of words: A-Z guide to quotations, proverbs, origins, usage, and idioms* by George Beal (1993) and *A Scholastic Dictionary of Idioms* by Marvin Terban (2006) were chosen. To illustrate the picture books, *Go fly a kite* by Cynthia Amoroso (2008), *Life is a bowl full of cherries* by Vanita Oelschlager (2011), and *The bizarre origins of kangaroo court and other idioms* by Arnold Ringstad (2012) were chosen.

3.1 The idiom dictionaries and the authors’ intentions

The two dictionaries chosen to exemplify this category are, as mentioned above, *The Kingfisher book of words: A-Z guide to quotations, proverbs, origins, usage, and idioms* by George Beal (1993) and *A Scholastic Dictionary of Idioms* by Marvin Terban (2006). Although the titles of the two dictionaries do not include the word “children” or “kids”, the book covers surely mean to catch the attention of a young readership. While the colorfully illustrated covers of the two dictionaries might suggest that they are addressed to a very young readership, the prefaces of both works hint at a readership that goes to school, as the term “scholastic” in Terban’s title indeed expresses. That said, neither dictionary really explicitly states who the readers are. In the prefaces, there is no indication of the age of the intended readership. Only from the authors’ statements regarding the purpose of their works can this be gained. In the preface to his

Dictionary, Terban (2006, vi) states that his work “will explain the meanings and origins behind more than 700 idioms that you might hear and read in English every day”. Similarly, Beal (1993, 8) points out that by listing common idioms and proverbs, his work is “a useful learning tool that contains important information regarding the English language”. More importantly still, they both underline the usefulness of their dictionaries for learning the three skills, reading, writing, and speaking. “This book can help you read and speak with new understanding”, writes Terban (2006, vi); “*The Book of Words* explains how the language is used and offers help in writing it and speaking it correctly”, writes Beal (1993, 8). The assumption to be made is that the intended user can read and not only.

This becomes evident when the user opens the works. The layout of the entries and the information imparted reflects the tradition of dictionary-making. Indeed, as one would expect, the entries are listed in alphabetical order.

(1) Apple

The apple of someone’s eye: someone most dear to a person. (Beal 1993, 76)

(2) Apple of your eye

Katey is the apple of my eye

Meaning: a person or thing that is greatly loved, treasured and adored

Origin: This saying is used in the Bible. Ancient people thought that the pupil of the eye was solid and shaped like an apple. The pupil (“apple of the eye”) was precious because without it, you couldn’t see. (Terban 2006, 5)

Beal introduces the idiom under what he considers to be the keyword of each idiom. As can be seen from example (1), in the case of *apple of someone’s eye*, the idiom is entered under the headword “apple”. In Terban’s work, the headwords are the idioms themselves, as can be seen in example (2). To be able to access such works, children therefore need not only to be able to read, but also to know how to look up words. To do so they must have an awareness of what an alphabetical order is, and more importantly, they need to have the skill of singling out the keyword(s) of each idiom. This is something that needs to be taught and therefore confirms that both dictionaries are suitable for children who not only go to school but have quite a sound understanding of language too.

These dictionaries are in fact both lengthy and rich in information. Beal’s dictionary is 203 pages long and is divided into six parts. Besides listing and explaining quotations, proverbs, and idioms in the manner seen in example (1) above, it devotes a section to explaining the meaning of root words of Anglo-Saxon, Greek, and Latin origin (e.g. “ac” (‘oak’) from Anglo-Saxon origin, “acoustos” (‘hearer’) from Greek and “animo” (‘life’) from Latin (p.107)), a section to explaining the origins of words that have entered the English

language from other languages (e.g. “alcohol” from Arabic (p. 139)), another to the differences in usage between homophones or similar sounding words (e.g. “acetic” vs. “ascetic” / “accept” vs. “except” (p.172)), and another section devoted to providing the American English equivalents of British English words (e.g. “elevator” and “lift” (p.132)). Terban’s dictionary is 298 pages long, and even though it focusses on idioms and sayings alone, for each it provides not only the meaning but also an example of use, and an etymological explanation, as shown in example (2) above. It is clear that to be able to use these works successfully, the user needs to be prepared to acknowledge that English words and idioms have origins of some sort, can have differing forms while having similar meanings, and have meanings that are not obvious at first glance. Although the intended age of the readership is not expressed, there is clear reason to believe that both reference works are meant for children aged at least 9 years old (as is actually stated on the Amazon.com website).

3.2 The content of the dictionaries and the choice of idioms

In the opening page of the section on idioms, Beal (1993, 75) writes:

(3) Idioms are phrases and expressions that are commonly used. Most are familiar, some are amusing, but the majority are not to be taken literally. If you say, “My heart sank”, you do not mean that your heart actually sank, but that you felt depressed because something had gone wrong.

In the Introduction to his work, Terban (2006, v) writes:

(4) Idioms appear in every language, and English has thousands of them. They are often confusing because the meaning of the whole group of words taken together has little, often nothing, to do with the meanings of the words taken one by one. [...]. In order to understand a language, you must know what the idioms in that language mean. If you try to figure out the meaning of an idiom literally, word by word, you will get befuddled. You have to know its “hidden” meaning.

In English, the term “idiom” can point to two different types of phraseological unit. On the one hand, it can generically refer to “any phraseological unit [that] does not necessarily have to be metaphoric” (OED: s.v. Idiom 3a); on the other, it can refer to “group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of the individual words” (cf. OALD online s.v. Idiom). Judging by the statements reported in examples (3) and (4) above, the type of phraseological unit that Beal and Terban deal with is the more specific one. The authors do not include collocations or phrasal verbs in the works, neither do they imply quotations with the word “idiom”: Beal, indeed, devotes a separate section of his dictionary to quotations as he does to proverbs, unlike Terban who by referring to idioms as sayings and expressions accounts for proverbs too. In sum,

the idioms that Beal and Terban include in their dictionaries are semi-idioms, made up of some literally interpreted elements (e.g. *to cry over spilled milk* (meaning ‘to cry over something that has already happened’), and pure-idioms, whose elements are all non-literal in meaning (e.g. *to kick the bucket* (meaning ‘to die’).

The idioms included are also claimed by the authors as being the most frequently used ones in the English language. They express this by referring to them as the most “common[ly]” used ones (Beal 1993, 8); the ones “you might hear or read in everyday English” (Terban 2006, vi). This seems to suggest that the dictionaries were therefore compiled following a corpus-driven approach, whereby the authors selected the idioms based on “the data collected by computer” (Sinclair 1991, 4). A close but restricted investigation on a select semantic area (food and drink) in both dictionaries, however, seems to exclude this. Indeed, a comparison of the results of earlier research that pinpointed the most frequently used food and drink idioms in English in the period 1964-2009 (Pinnavaia 2018) with the idiom wordlist in both dictionaries seems to suggest that both Terban and Beal played an important part in determining “what should or should not be selected for inclusion” (Sinclair 1991, 4).

According to the results retrieved from the British National Corpus and Collins Wordbanks Online, of the 276 food and drink idioms attested in English language dictionaries published in the years that range from 1964 to 2009, the following 64 (listed vertically in increasing order of frequency) are the most commonly used (cf. Pinnavaia 2018, 140-141).

Table 1: The 64 most commonly used food and drink idioms.

<i>daily bread</i>	<i>the best/ bottest thing since sliced bread</i>	<i>as like/ different as chalk and cheese</i>	<i>variety is the spice of life</i>	<i>pie in the sky</i>	<i>have egg on one's face</i>	<i>bear fruit</i>
<i>go bananas</i>	<i>dead duck</i>	<i>the world is one's oyster</i>	<i>a piece of cake</i>	<i>make a hash of</i>	<i>to be/ go nuts</i>	<i>the icing on the cake</i>
<i>break bread with</i>	<i>salt of the earth</i>	<i>old chestnut</i>	<i>first fruits</i>	<i>share/ slice of the cake</i>	<i>take with a pinch/ grain of salt</i>	<i>the cream of</i>
<i>earn/ make one's bread</i>	<i>a bite at/ of the cherry</i>	<i>take the biscuit</i>	<i>small beer</i>	<i>red herring</i>	<i>a bone of contention</i>	<i>the fruit(s) of</i>
<i>in the soup</i>	<i>a hard/ tough nut to crack</i>	<i>clever/ tough/ smart cookie</i>	<i>make a meal of/ out of</i>	<i>have/ put all one's eggs into one basket</i>	<i>sour grapes / the grapes are sour</i>	
<i>chew the fat</i>	<i>go/ sell like hot cakes</i>	<i>hard/ tough nut</i>	<i>have one's cake and eat it</i>	<i>(not) be one's cup of tea</i>	<i>the toast of</i>	
<i>full of beans</i>	<i>eat humble pie</i>	<i>hot potato</i>	<i>the apple of someone's eye</i>	<i>spill the beans</i>	<i>fair game</i>	

<i>easy meat</i>	<i>forbidden fruit</i>	<i>rotten/ bad apple</i>	<i>chicken and egg (situation)</i>	<i>make no bones about</i>	<i>bread and butter</i>	
<i>drive someone nuts</i>	<i>have a finger in the pie</i>	<i>the proof of the pudding is in the eating</i>	<i>not worth one's salt</i>	<i>couch potato</i>	<i>food for thought</i>	
<i>(a) curate's egg</i>	<i>turn to jelly</i>	<i>(the land of) milk and honey</i>	<i>crumbs of comfort</i>	<i>rub salt into someone's wound</i>	<i>carrot and stick</i>	

Comparing this list to the idioms included in the two dictionaries under observation, we saw that Terban includes only 33 of the above, excluding the following 31:

Table 2: The 31 food and drink idioms excluded by Terban (2006)

<i>daily bread</i>	<i>a curate's egg</i>	<i>as like/ different as chalk and cheese</i>	<i>variety is the spice of life</i>	<i>crumbs of comfort</i>	<i>the toast of</i>	<i>the fruit(s) of</i>
<i>Break bread with</i>	<i>best thing since sliced bread</i>	<i>the world is one's oyster</i>	<i>first fruits</i>	<i>share/ slice of the cake</i>	<i>fair game</i>	
<i>earn/ make one's bread</i>	<i>a bite at the cherry</i>	<i>old chestnut</i>	<i>small beer</i>	<i>make a hash of</i>	<i>bread and butter</i>	
<i>in the soup</i>	<i>forbidden fruit</i>	<i>clever/ tough/ smart cookie</i>	<i>make a meal of/ out of</i>	<i>sour grapes</i>	<i>carrot and stick</i>	
<i>easy meat</i>	<i>turn to jelly</i>	<i>the land of milk and honey</i>	<i>chicken and egg</i>	<i>a bone of contention</i>	<i>bear fruit</i>	

Beal excludes even more because he only includes the following 17:

Table 3: The 17 food and drink idioms included by Beal (1993).

<i>go bananas</i>	<i>hard nut to crack</i>	<i>the world is one's oyster</i>	<i>a piece of cake</i>	<i>red herring</i>	<i>make no bones about</i>
<i>full of beans</i>	<i>sell like hot cakes</i>	<i>rotten apple</i>	<i>have one's cake and eat it</i>	<i>put all one's eggs into one's basket</i>	<i>food for thought</i>
<i>salt of the earth</i>	<i>eat humble pie</i>	<i>the proof of the pudding is in eating</i>	<i>make hash of</i>	<i>spill the beans</i>	

What stands out from both wordlists is the exclusion of all the idioms that include the headwords regarding *bread* and *fruit* that are renowned for being idiomatically productive (Pinnavaia 2018, 25). Such idioms are, moreover, not just common in the English language: their connection with the biblical tradition

explains why verbatim equivalents of the original biblical expressions exist in all countries that have a Christian culture, thus making them very popular worldwide (see Piirainen 2012). The same could be said for the expression *sour grapes* which, by stemming from Aesop's fables, is as popular as biblical idioms are. Its exclusion from both dictionaries in fact comes somewhat as a surprise.

If food and drink idioms are to be taken as a measure of the level of objectivity as far as the selection of idioms is concerned, then it might be safe to say that the wordlists in both dictionaries were not compiled by selecting the idioms that English speakers use more frequently. Indeed, the frequency-based method seems not to have informed the lexicographical plan of either dictionary. By stating that a "panel of teachers helped [him] choose the most commonly confusing idioms", Terban (2006, vi) in fact confirms that the process of idiom selection was a concerted effort among English language teachers and thus author- rather than corpus-driven. Even though Beal does not state how he carried out the idiom selection, it is unlikely he used the corpus-driven approach given he includes even fewer idioms than Terban. Besides wishing to help children disentangle the meanings of some of the more "commonly confusing" idioms – as stated by Terban, the authors also hope to entertain them. Beal (1993, 8) makes this clear in the preface when he claims his work is "also a fun book to read, for it contains many whimsical illustrations that will make you laugh while you learn". Instead of simply listing the idioms that are considered as being the most frequent in the English language, both authors seem to carefully select what they consider to be above all the more interesting and the more entertaining ones to explain to and to exemplify for children.

3.3 The presentation and explanation of the idioms in the dictionaries

That the two dictionaries are author-driven can be seen even more clearly in the way the idioms are presented and explained. Besides having wordlists of differing lengths, also the information provided for each idiom is very different in each dictionary, as shown by the two examples below.

(5) p's and q's

to mind your p's and q's: to be polite and well-behaved. (Beal 1993, 94)

(6) Mind your p's and q's

Please try to mind your p's and q's when the princess visits the school

Meaning: to be extremely exact; be careful not to say or do anything wrong;

Origin: This term was beginning to be used in the 1600s, and by the late 1700s it was very popular. The letters "p" and "q" can often be confused, so children learning to read and printers selecting type have to be careful with these letters. Another possibility comes from old English pubs where a list of pints ("p's") and quarts ("q's") a drinker consumed were written on a blackboard to be paid later.

Finally, *pieds* and *queues* are dance steps that a French dancing instructor would teach his students to perform with care. There's no proof as to where this catchy saying originated, though. (Terban 2006, 148)

As we can see in example (5), Beal provides only the meaning for every idiom, whereas, as illustrated in example (6), Terban also provides an example of use as well as some information regarding the origins of the expression.

As far as the meanings are concerned, both authors provide succinct definitions made up of one or more simple sentences. As exemplified by the definition of *mind one's p's and q's* reported above, Beal tends to explain the meaning of the idiom using one single sentence; Terban usually explains it using two, sometimes even three sentences. Indeed, whether they opt for one or more sentences, both try to provide as much information as possible and not in a circular manner². Beal often provides more than one synonym in the same sentence so as to make the meaning clearer: for instance, he not only explains *to mind one's p's and q's* with the adjective “polite”, but also with the adjective “well-behaved”. Similarly, by adding a second or third sentence, Terban makes explicit what he means by the first. As can be seen in example (6): “to be extremely exact” is further explained by the second sentence “be careful not to say or do anything wrong”. To ensure that children will understand the meaning of every idiom, Terban goes even further. He also includes an example of use that normally describes a situation with which children ought to be familiar. His examples of use refer principally to home settings that depict parents, siblings, close relatives, and pets or school settings that involve teachers and friends. The formal school environment, chosen by Terban to clarify the meaning of the idiom *to mind one's p's and q's*, is indeed appropriate for children. Both authors are thus concerned to unveil the meaning of idioms as concisely but at the same time as precisely as possible and they do this by using simple or core vocabulary (see Fontenelle 2009; Kamiński 2021; West 1953), avoiding turns of phrase, or circular definitions, typical of many dictionaries addressed to adults in which “more than a quarter of all definitions are written using words whose definitions ultimately refer back to the word being defined” (Bullock 2011, 226).

Possibly not as basic are the words Terban uses to explain the origins of idioms. In example (6), he includes the terms “consumed”, “catchy”, and “instructor”, with which children may not be very familiar. Moreover, the second explanation for the origins of *to mind one's p's and q's* stemming from the world of pubs might also be difficult for children to comprehend. The discrepancy between the words and situations chosen to explain the meaning of idioms

2 A circular definition is a description of the meaning of a lexeme that is constructed using one or more synonymous lexemes that are all defined in terms of each other e.g. *fast*—adj. ‘swift; quick; speedy’; *swift*—adj. ‘rapid; fast’ (see a glossary of linguistic terms available at <https://glossary.sil.org/term/circular-definition>).

and those to explain their origins is evident. It seems to point to two different approaches: the examples of use and meanings come from the author himself; the etymological information does not. As Terban (2006, v) clearly states, the explanations he includes are the most “accepted” ones offered by “word experts who study origins of idiomatic expressions”. Just like Beal, who includes etymological information regarding words – not idioms mind, Terban includes etymological explanations, some of which are suitable solely for young adults. Even though research has shown that an awareness of the origins of words and idioms is important for lexical comprehension and retention (Boers 2001; Boers *et al.* 2004a, 2004b, 2007; Boers and Lindstromberg 2009; Nation 2013), it is important to modulate it in order to meet children’s needs. While exhaustive and complex etymological information could be useful and interesting for adults, it could be discouraging for younger children and thus counter-productive in the learning phase.

The shift between the familiar and complicated communicative situations and between the simply- and laboriously-worded descriptions to explain the meaning of idioms supports the initial claim that the intended readership in both Beal and Terban’s dictionaries is neither obvious nor unique. Whilst they may appear as easy-reading children’s idiom dictionaries, they are actually much more complicated works. Despite their colourful appearance that makes them seem suitable for younger children who presumably cannot read very well, Beal and Terban’s dictionaries are intricately structured and have an information load that is more appropriate for older children who are presumably good readers. This contrast is summarized by the Terban himself in the last line of the introduction to his book: “whether you’ve been speaking English all your life or are just learning, this book can help you read and speak with new understanding and a lot more fun” (vi). With these introductory words, he underlines the real nature of his dictionary, which holds true for Beal’s too: on the one hand, they make excellent reference works for older readers who are already competent speakers of English and possibly accustomed to using idioms; on the other hand, they can be useful aids for younger children – who are learning to read and write – to broach the subject of idioms on the condition that they be assisted by someone who can help decipher some of the more complex linguistic and semantic notions.

3.4 The picture books and the authors’ intentions

The assistance of a parent or a teacher is just as important for children when they have a picture book about idioms to read, as we will see with the three books chosen to exemplify this category. *Go fly a kite* by Cynthia Amoroso (2008), *Life is a bowl full of cherries* by Vanita Oelschläger (2011), and *The bizarre origins of kangaroo court and other idioms* by Arnold Ringstad (2012) are colourful and beautifully illustrated books. They look like typical picture books for young or very young children who presumably cannot read, with titles that sound like

children's stories. These books are not story books, however: they are collections of idioms. Indeed, below the main title, Amoroso (2008) adds "and other sayings we don't really mean", just as Oelschlager (2011) and Ringstad (2012) point out that "Life is a bowl full of cherries" and "The bizarre origins of kangaroo court" are one of many other idioms. In actual fact, each book is not only a collection of a select number of idioms, but also one in a series of books devoted to idioms that each of these three authors have written³. So, while the pictorial characteristics hint at books that are clearly meant for young children (see Kümmerling-Meibauer 2021), they deal with a topic that is not easy for this kind of readership to understand by themselves. Given that none of the authors indicates what the intended age of the readership should be, we must assume that the authors leave it to parents or to accompanying adults to decide how to use the book and for what age group.

As far as the authors' intentions for writing the books are concerned, Cynthia Amoroso (2008, 3) includes the following statement in the preface to her work:

(7) This book will help you understand some of the most common idioms. It will tell you how you might hear a saying or phrase. It will tell you what the saying really means. All these sayings and short phrases – even the silly ones – are an important part of our language.

As we can see from this quotation, Amoroso's intent is to explain the meaning of and how to use idioms. This is also very clearly shown in the layout of her book and all her other books in the series in which, besides a picture that accompanies each idiom, she provides quite a long example of use, followed by its meaning. The layout of Ringstad's books is also similar to the one we find in Amoroso. Although Ringstad, unlike Amoroso, does not include a preface to explain the purpose of his work, the layout of every page of his books reflects the same intent that Amoroso expresses, with the added difference that besides the meaning and example of use, he also provides etymological information.

While Vanita Oelschlager's books do not have an introductory declaration of intent, they do all include a page, either in the middle or at the end, in which she points out what idioms are. And yet, although she explains that idioms have "hidden" meanings (2011, 36), she does not give prominence to such meanings. Oelschlager concentrates much more on the picture that depicts the idiom's literal meaning than anything else. That is not to say that she does not care to provide information regarding what the idiom means and how it can be used in a communicative situation. She does, but only in a very discrete manner, written in very small print, upside down, and at the bottom of the page. Corroborated by the claim that idioms show "a language's sense of humour, [...] your language's ticklish spots" (2011, 36), Oelschlager's prime concern is

3 See archive.org for all the other picture books in the series published by these authors.

simply to introduce idioms to children in a fun way. While the entertaining aspect is clearly not to be underestimated in Amoroso and Ringstad's works, their intentions are primarily to teach children the meaning and the use of idioms.

The amount of explanatory information and the way it is introduced in the three books seems therefore to suggest that the three authors have slightly differing intentions and readerships in mind. Oelschlager's books are suitable for very young children whose parents or accompanying adults may just want them to look at the pictures without necessarily understanding what idioms are and how to use them. The other two books that are clearly focused on the meanings, the use, and – in the case of Ringstad – the origins of idioms are surely more appropriate for older children who can read by themselves, and who might not necessarily require the aid of an adult to understand what they are and how they work in language.

3.5 The content of the picture books and the choice of idioms

The idioms the three authors include in their books are the same types of phraseological units that we find in Beal and Terban's dictionaries, and that is semi- and pure-idioms. Amoroso (2008, 6) states this in the front matter of all her books by describing idioms as "sayings and phrases with meanings that are different from the actual words". In her 27-page book, *Go fly a kite*, she includes 37 idioms that are both semi-idioms, such as the similes *dead as a doornail*, *as easy as falling off a log*, and pure-idioms, such as *beat around the bush* and *spill the beans*⁴. The 15 idioms that Oelschlager includes in the 38 pages of her book, *Life is a bowl full of cherries*, are also metaphorical expressions, which she admits are difficult to understand because "the group of words has little, often nothing to do with the meaning of the words taken one by one" (36). The idioms comprise semi-idioms such as *as flat as a pancake* and *packed in like sardines* and pure-idioms such as *the goose is cooked* and *cold turkey*⁵. Similarly, Ringstad includes semi-idioms such as *as happy as a clam* and *pass with flying colours* and pure-idioms such as *the crow flies* and *magic bullet*. Even though he does not have a front matter in which to explain the nature of idioms, the 28 expressions he includes in the 32-page *The bizarre origins of kangaroo court* are of the same type we find in the other picture books and in the dictionaries under scrutiny⁶.

4 The idioms in Amoroso (2008) are: *an apple a day keeps the doctor away*, *an axe to grind*, *back to square one*, *beat around the bush*, *beggars can't be choosers*, *behind the scenes*, *below the belt*, *bite the bullet*, *a bolt from the blue*, *burning the midnight oil*, *bury the hatchet*, *catch 22*, *caught red-handed*, *a chip on your shoulder*, *dead as a doornail*, *down the hatch*, *easy as falling off a log*, *face the music*, *a flash in the pan*, *full of beans*, *go fly a kite*, *have your cake and eat it too*, *ignorance is bliss*, *keep a stiff upper lip*, *make ends meet*, *miss the boat*, *on cloud nine*, *out of the blue*, *pit stop*, *pull your hair out*, *read the riot act*, *a shot in the dark*, *spill the beans*, *through the grapevine*, *turn the tables*, *wet blanket*, *X marks the spot*.

5 The idioms in Oelschlager (2011) are: *as flat as a pancake*, *big cheese*, *couch potato*, *to cry over spilt milk*, *food for thought*, *sweet tooth*, *life is a bowl of cherries*, *packed in like sardines*, *the whole enchilada*, *one bad apple*, *you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar*, *your goose is cooked*, *pie in the sky*, *cold turkey*, *eat your words*.

6 The idioms in Ringstad (2012) are: *behind the eight ball*, *no spring chicken*, *bite the bullet*, *ballpark figure*, *extend an olive branch*, *according to Hoyle*, *put a sock in it*, *batting a thousand*, *as the crow flies*, *read*

If we were to consider the frequency of use of the food and drink idioms as a metre, as was done for the dictionaries earlier, we might say that Oelschlager and Ringstad are less sensitive to usage. The two food and drink idioms – *happy as a clam* and *from soup to nuts* – that Ringstad includes in his book are in fact among the more rarely used in English (Pinnavaia 2018, 138-139). Similarly, in Oelschlager's *Life is a bowl full of cherries*, which is devoted solely to food and drink idioms, the only three idioms that can be considered among the more frequently used are *couch potato*, *food for thought*, *one bad apple* (see Pinnavaia 2018, 140-141). Possibly a little more focused on usage is Amoroso. In actual fact, she is the only one to refer to the idioms included in her books as the “most common” and the ones people use “everyday” (2008, 6), which may explain why we find *full of beans*, *have your cake and eat it*, and *spill the beans* that are among the most frequently used food and drink idioms in English (Pinnavaia 2018, 140-141).

However, since these books are only one of a series, it makes little sense to try and ascertain whether the idioms included are the more or the less frequently used ones in English. Because in each book only a select number of idioms are presented, to be able to truly gauge the authors' awareness of what people really do or do not say, we would have to examine all the idioms in all the books of each series, which clearly goes beyond the scope of this work. Without the necessary reference data, and just at a glance, the selection of the idioms in each of these books does, nonetheless, seem to be arbitrary. There does not seem to be a greater plan behind the selection in each book except that of presenting as many idioms as possible in the whole series, and of course in the most entertaining manner possible for the readership in mind.

3.6 The presentation and explanation of the idioms in the picture books

That Amoroso and Ringstad's books are best for children who can read seems to be confirmed by the way the idioms are presented and explained. And of the two, Ringstad's book is probably the one that is the most suitable for older children who presumably have a better understanding of their mother tongue. This is because he includes etymological information that is, as we said earlier when looking at Terban's dictionary, the most difficult to understand from both a conceptual and a lexical perspective. However, compared to the etymological information provided by Terban, Ringstad uses much simpler vocabulary, thus allowing him to engage better with children.

(8) STEALING SOMEONE'S THUNDER

MEANING: when you steal someone's thunder, you can use their idea or invention to your own advantage.

the riot act, kangaroo court, make hay while the sun shines, think tank, magic bullet, the cards are stacked against me, in a nutshell, as happy as a clam, clean someone's clock, dyed in wool, rule of thumb, the coast is clear, pass with flying colours, close but no cigar, from soup to nuts, pencil pusher, burn the candle at both ends, stealing someone's thunder, at a drop of a hat.

ORIGIN: In the 1700s, an actor invented a way to make thunder noises for stage plays. When he heard his noise at a different play, he complained that they had stolen his thunder.

EXAMPLE: Rosa felt that Kirk had stolen her thunder. The day after she brought the principal an apple, he brought a whole fruit basket. (Ringstad 2012,30)

Just as the information regarding the origins of the idiom *steal one's thunder* exemplifies above, Ringstad always uses basic lexical items in no more than two sentences. Moreover, unlike Terban, he is careful to express it in his own words so that it is comprehensible to children who must nonetheless be competent readers. That Ringstad is concerned with making himself understood can be further gained by the way he explains the meaning of idioms. Not only does he provide concise one-sentence long definitions, using core vocabulary, but he also addresses the readers by using the pronoun “you”. This strategy helps strike up a relationship between himself and his readers (Machin & Mayr 2021, 62), with the aim of heightening their concentration in favor of a better understanding of what is being said.

Acknowledging the presence of the young reader is also what Amoroso does in her books. She also explains idioms in very simple terms as shown in the example below.

(9) TURN THE TABLES

Paul had been disappointed for the past three weeks. His friend Rob had got the lead in the class play. Paul only had a small part. But Paul tried to be happy. He worked hard to try and do his best at his small part.

But everything had changed today. Rob was sick and the play was next week. Their teacher picked Paul to take Rob's place in the lead role. Paul ran home. He excitedly told his Dad what had happened.

“Good for you Paul”, said Dad. “I guess you turned the tables this time”.

MEANING: when a situation changes and becomes either much better or much worse. (Amoroso 2008, 23)

As we can see, the meaning of the idiom *turn the tables* is expressed in one short and concise sentence using basic vocabulary in order to facilitate comprehension. Even though, unlike Ringstad, she does not use the “synthetic personalization” strategy (Fairclough 1992) in which she addresses the reader directly with the pronoun “you”, she does, like Ringstad, engage directly with her young readers by providing examples of use that have a story-like nature to them. These consist in invented settings that children are likely to be familiar with. As shown in example (9), they describe situations at school or at home with friends, teachers, parents, and grandparents that children will recognize. In actual fact, Amoroso's examples of use remind us of the ones Terban includes in his dictionary that – as was said – are surely child-friendly.

What undoubtedly helps to make both Ringstad's and Amoroso's books particularly attractive to children are of course the pictures. Both authors illustrate their pages with illustrations that depict the idioms' literal meanings. Compared to Amoroso's, Ringstad's stand out more: they take up the top half of the page and are more precisely drawn and coloured. Amoroso's pictures are less rigorously positioned: sometimes they are on the right-hand or left-hand side of the page next to the idiom, sometimes below it. Moreover, because she often includes two idioms on the same page, the illustrations are not only smaller but also not as clear cut as Ringstad's. It is, however, Oelschlager's books that have the largest, brightest, and most captivating illustrations.

Oelschlager's pictures take up two pages. Each picture represents what may seem to be a very simple story based on the idiom's literal meaning. In the case of the idiom *pie in the sky*, the picture depicts a little girl who asks the pie that has replaced the moon in the sky where it has gone. It apparently has very little to do with the real meaning of the idiom ("this is something you think you can do that is unrealistic" (Oelschlager 2011, 31)) and how to use it ("Being an astronaut at 13 is a pie-in-the sky dream" (Oelschlager 2011: 31)). However, given that research has shown that the relationship between literal and metaphoric meanings of idioms is hardly ever arbitrary (see Casadei 1994,1996,1997; Gibbs 1992; Gibbs *et al.* 1997; Kovesces and Szabo 1996; Langlotz 2006; Nayak and Gibbs 1990; Prandi 1999), there may be much more underlying information to Oelschlager's pictures than one might think. If we take the case of *pie in the sky*, talking to a pie in the sky that looks like the moon is in fact unrealistic, thus disclosing – albeit in a concealed manner – the real meaning of the idiom. To expect a child to understand this, however, would be impossible and in contradiction with the size and motif of the picture. Oelschlager's pictures are clearly meant to draw the attention of the very young, but the underlying meanings of these pictures can only emerge with the guidance of an adult. In contrast to Ringstad and Amoroso's books, Oelschlager's are in fact not really addressed to children at all but rather to adults, who are expected to read the books to their children. This would explain why, albeit in small print and upside down at the bottom of the page, the meanings and examples of uses that Oelschlager includes are short, simple, and familiar enough for children to understand if read aloud by an adult. Of the three types, Oelschlager's picture books might indeed seem to be the most appropriate for younger children wishing to learn about idioms, but given the intricate nature of idioms and the underlying information that each picture 'hides', they are only truly useful if this young readership is assisted by an adult.

4. Conclusions

Because “lexicography for children is [...] a vibrant industry full of creative, careful, and caring thinkers”, but surprisingly “woefully understudied” (Murphy 2022, vii) and especially for the acquisition of idioms, I have begun to address the issue with the appraisal of two major categories of lexicographical material that abound in this area – dictionaries and picture books. It is clearly not possible to draw wide and generic conclusions given the restricted sample of material examined, but we might be able to start advancing some tentative ones that I hope to confirm as this project evolves.

The most evident finding that emerges from having examined Beal and Terban’s dictionaries, as well as Amoroso, Oelschlager and Ringstad’s picture books on idioms is the authors’ self-determination. In the absence of a met-alexicographical tradition, the authors seem ‘to do their own thing’. Each author approaches his/her work from an introspective point of view, focusing on what they consider as being the more interesting and entertaining features for children. This explains the marked ideational, textual, and interpersonal features (in Halliday & Matthiessen’s 2004 terms) that distinguish these works from one another and in general from lexicographical works for adults.

As far as the ideational aspect is concerned, or in other words, what idioms the dictionaries and the picture books hold, it is clear that – unlike lexicographical material for adults (see Jackson 2022) – Corpus Linguistics does not inform the selection. Not being lexicographers in the strictest sense of the term, each author includes his/her own selection of semi- and pure-idioms and, of course, as writers of “dictionaries” Beal and Terban can include many more in each of their works than can Amoroso, Oelschlager, and Ringstad in each of their books. That said, because the picture books examined are only one of a series, to expose young readers to a good number of idioms that the authors consider worthy of note, regardless of their frequency of use, seems to bring together both categories of works.

The analysis of the works has shown, however, that the way the authors expose idioms to children is quite different not only between the dictionaries and picture books, which is to be expected, but also between the works in each category. It is rather surprising how little information Beal provides compared to Terban, even though his work is classified as a dictionary. While Terban provides a meaning, an example of use, and etymological information for each idiom, Beal provides only a meaning. This may be explained by the fact that Beal’s *Book of words* is only in part devoted to idioms. His work features many other types of phraseological units along with a great deal of historical information on the English language. Differences are evident between the picture books too. We saw how, unlike Amoroso and Oelschlager, Ringstad adds etymological information, just as, unlike in Ringstad and Amoroso’s books, in

Oelschlager's the explanatory information is inconspicuous. These textual differences between the works in each category not only underscore the absence of one unique lexicographical model, but also the authors' inclination to follow their own personal lexicographical plan, with the risk of running into textual inconsistencies.

Beal, Terban and Oelschlager's works may be a testimony of this. In Beal's work the richness and complexity of the sections devoted to the historical and linguistic notions of the English language contrast greatly with the brevity and simplicity of the idiom meanings. Similarly, in Terban's work the elaborately formulated etymological information is not consistent with the simply expressed meanings and example of uses. These textual inconsistencies suggest that the intended age of the readership might not be restricted to children alone. After all, the historical and etymological facts seem more appropriate for (young) adult readers. A similar hypothesis seems plausible for Oelschlager's books too. The textual inconsistency between the two-page illustrations and the 'difficult-to read' explanatory information seems more suitable for an adult-cum-child readership: adults who might just want their children to enjoy the pictures or adults who might want to try to begin to explain what idioms are by reading the meanings and examples of use to them.

Given that none of the works studied here express what age the intended readership is, the presence of such textual inconsistencies may help us understand who the real readers of the works should be and what type of interpersonal relationship the works foster. We would normally expect lexicographical material for children to address children directly. It is the case of Amoroso and Ringstad's books, whose intelligible contents and easy syntactic constructions make them suitable for children to read alone. Because they do not manifest textual inconsistencies, the authors speak straight to their child readers, thus creating a direct interpersonal relationship between themselves and the presumed readers.

The textual inconsistencies present in Beal and Terban's dictionaries as well as Oelschlager's books instead suggest that the interpersonal relationship between author and child, for whom the books are meant, is not direct. The skills needed to use a dictionary (see a.o. Beech 2004; Lew & Galas 2008; Wingate 2004) along with the linguistic competence to be able to understand complicated historical and semantic notions necessarily imply the mediation of an adult. The interpersonal relationship that Beal and Terban's dictionaries favour is therefore not a direct one between author and presumed reader but an indirect one through an adult mediator. As an author, Oelschlager is even more removed from her readership. The younger children for whom the books are meant can only truly understand what they are looking at if a parent or older sibling can guide them in understanding the pictures and what they mean. Thanks to her books, Oelschlager therefore fosters the creation of that strong

interpersonal relationship between the older child/adult reader and the child listener, which – as research has shown – is so important for the development of language in children (a.o. Knauer *et al.* 2020; Montag *et al.* 2015; Tompkins *et al.* 2017).

In sum, the ideational, textual, and interpersonal characteristics of the works belonging to the two categories summarily explored here – the dictionaries and the picture books on idioms – certainly seem to reflect the absence of metalexicographical studies in this area of lexicography. Unlike the dictionaries and books on idioms for adults that are compiled following a similar method, also owing to the fact that they are derived products from general lexicographical works (see, for instance, all the idiom dictionaries created from the general and learner's dictionaries by Cambridge, Collins, Longman, Macmillan, Merriam-Webster, and Oxford), each work examined here discloses the author's autonomy in the selection, presentation, and explanation of idioms. There is clearly need of further investigation on a wider sample of material and to examine all the aspects contained in the material more deeply to support this statement. In the meantime, however, I would like to conclude by underlining that the number and types of works devoted to teaching children idioms are indicative of how important idioms are not only for linguistic purposes but also for cultural ones. If there is any chance that we might save our planet and its inhabitants, it can only be by educating its youngest members. The wisdom and insight that idioms hold could indeed be an excellent starting point for routing our children and consequently humanity.

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PART 2: IMPROVING TRANSLATION OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Kontrastive Phraseologie: zwischen Äquivalenzsystematik und gebrauchsbasierter holistischer Beschreibung

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ABSTRACT

This article first critically examines the concept of equivalence between languages in general, before focusing on contrastive phraseology. This topic is introduced with a brief overview of recent research in this field. The discussion begins by examining two opposing positions: 1) languages are so idiosyncratic at all levels that contrastive phraseology is futile (e.g. Hausmann 1997; Taylor 2012; Schafroth 2020d), and 2) equivalence relations can be postulated a priori, even between phrasemes (cf. bilingual lexicography, including idiomatic dictionaries). Three phraseme types (formulas, schematic idioms and verbal idioms) will then be subjected to fundamental contrastive analysis (cf. Dobrovol'skij 2022; Mellado Blanco, Mollica and Schafroth 2022). This will result in a plea for an onomasiological perspective in contrastive phraseology (cf. Korhonen 2007; Schafroth 2019) and, on the other hand, a corpus-based (initially monolingual) holistic description with a semantic, pragmatic and culture-sensitive focus (cf. Sabban 2007). The aim is to demonstrate how, based on given categories (e.g. semantic fields/frames, speech acts and restrictions of use) and principles of construction grammar (e.g. Ziem 2018), a lexicographic and digital implementation can be achieved for each phrase pair, as demonstrated in the FRAME and GEPHRI projects (cf. Benigni *et al.* 2015; Schafroth 2019; Schafroth & Imperiale 2019). Individual linguistic differences between onomasiologically comparable phrasemes (e.g. in syntactic, referential, semantic, pragmatic, or cultural domains) can be summarised in a semasiological annotation apparatus. The article concludes with an outlook on possible future lexicographical representation formats, applications in foreign language teaching and the exemplary and critical integration of ChatGPT as an alternative to corpus research. Examples are given for German, English, French and Italian.

Keywords: contrastive phraseology; context; corpus linguistics; holistic description; ChatGPT

ABSTRACT

Im vorliegenden Artikel wird zunächst der Begriff der Äquivalenz zwischen (zwei) Sprachen im Allgemeinen kritisch untersucht, bevor das Hauptaugenmerk auf die kontrastive Phraseologie gerichtet wird. Das Thema wird mit einem kurzen Überblick über die jüngsten Forschungen auf diesem Gebiet eingeführt. Die Diskussion nimmt in einem ersten Schritt die beiden gegensätzlichen Positionen auf, denen zufolge 1. Sprachen auf allen Ebenen so idiosynkratisch sind, dass auch eine kontrastive Phraseologie aussichtslos erscheint (etwa Hausmann 1997, Taylor 2012, Schafroth 2020) bzw. 2. Äquivalenzbeziehungen auch zwischen Phrasemen *a priori* postuliert werden (vgl. grosso modo die zweisprachige Lexikographie inkl. idiomatischer Wörterbücher). Sodann werden verschiedene Phrasentypen (verbale Idiome, Phrasem-Konstruktionen, Sprichwörter, Formeln) einer grundsätzlichen kontrastiven Betrachtung unterzogen (vgl. Dobrovol'skij 2022; Mellado Blanco, Mollica und Schafroth 2022). Die daraus gezogenen Schlussfolgerungen münden in ein Plädoyer für eine onomasiologische Perspektive in der kontrastiven Phraseologie einerseits (vgl. Korhonen 2007; Schafroth 2019) und eine rigoros korpusgestützte (zunächst einzelsprachliche) holistische Beschreibung mit semantisch-pragmatischem und ggf. kultursensitivem Fokus andererseits (vgl. Sabban 2007). Es soll gezeigt werden, wie auf der Grundlage vorgegebener Kategorien (semantischer Felder/Frames, Sprechakte, Gebrauchsbeschränkungen) und unter Rekurs auf konstruktionsgrammatische Prinzipien (z.B. Ziem 2018) für jedes Phrasempaar *tertia comparationis* erstellt werden können, die sich, wie bereits in den Projekten FRAME und GEPHRI gezeigt wurde, lexikographisch-digital umsetzen lassen (vgl. Benigni *et al.* 2015; Schafroth 2019; Schafroth & Imperiale 2019). Die einzelsprachlichen Unterschiede zwischen den onomasiologisch vergleichbaren Phrasemen (z.B. im syntaktischen, referentiell-semantischen, pragmatischen oder kulturellen Bereich) lassen sich in einem semasiologischen Annotationsapparat zusammenfassen. Mit einem Ausblick auf künftige mögliche lexikographische Repräsentationsformate, fremdsprachendidaktische Anwendungen und der exemplarischen und kritischen Einbindung von ChatGPT als möglichem Ersatz für eigene Korpusrecherchen schließt der Beitrag. Es werden Beispiele für Deutsch, Englisch, Französisch und Italienisch gegeben.

Schlüsselwörter: kontrastive Phraseologie; Kontext; Korpuslinguistik; ganzheitliche Beschreibung; ChatGPT

1. Einleitung

Im Folgenden sollen einige Desiderata der Kontrastiven Phraseologie¹ diskutiert werden. Diese liegen, um es vorweg zu sagen, in der unzureichenden

1 Gemeint sind hier die Gemeinsamkeiten und/oder Unterschiede zwischen zwei oder mehreren Sprachen bezüglich ihres Phraseminventars oder einzelner Phrasemklassen. Zur Terminologie s. Dobrovol'skij (2002). Zu einzelnen Aspekten und Problemen (Auswahl): Gréciano (1989), Földes (1996), Gréciano (2000), Osthus (2000), Korhonen (2004, 2007), Dobrovol'skij und Piirainen (2009, 143-181), Konecny (2010), Steyer (2012), Mollica (2015), Gautier, Modicom, Vinckel-Roisin (2018), De Knop und Hermann (2020), Kösters Gensini und Schafroth (2020), Mellado Blanco *et al.* (2020), Cotta Ramusino und Mollica (2019), Cotta

Berücksichtigung der Komplexität der phraseologischen Bedeutung², die in der Lexikographie und Phraseologie zu dem geführt hat, was, beeinflusst durch strukturalistisches Denken, als sogenannte „Systembedeutung“ verstanden wird. Dieses Postulat ist lexikographisches Prinzip sowohl der einsprachigen als auch der zwei- und mehrsprachigen Wortschatzerfassung unter Einschluss der Phraseme (Dobrovol'skij 2006, Koesters Gensini 2013, Basile 2019, Andree 2020).

Die empirischen Analysen der Korpuslinguistik, besonders in Zusammenhang mit theoretischen Zugängen wie demjenigen der sprachgebrauchsbasierten Ansätze der Konstruktionsgrammatik (Ziem und Lasch 2013) haben jedoch das untermauert, was vorher zwar schon bekannt war, aber noch nicht anhand umfangreicherer sprachlicher Daten vor Augen geführt werden konnte: nämlich, dass die Systembedeutungen erheblich semantisch unterspezifiziert sind – und der Kontext *de facto* ausgeblendet wird.

Bevor ich auf diese Dinge eingehe, möchte ich die Struktur meines Artikels skizzieren. Zunächst gehe ich auf den Begriff der Äquivalenz ein (Kap. 2). Im Anschluss daran zeige ich Richtungen auf, die die kontrastive Phraseologie in den letzten 10 bis 15 Jahren genommen hat (Kap. 3). Sodann stelle ich zwei Konzeptionen des phraseologischen Sprachvergleichs vor: diejenige der Äquivalenzhypothese von Phrasemen und diejenige, die die kontrastive Lexikologie und mit ihr die kontrastive Phraseologie als äußerst schwieriges, wenn nicht sogar unmögliches Unterfangen betrachtet (Kap. 4). Der nachfolgende Abschnitt schlägt eine vermittelnde Position zwischen diesen beiden Sichtweisen vor und rückt die Notwendigkeit der ganzheitlichen Beschreibung des verstehensrelevanten Wissens von Phrasemen in der Ausgangssprache in den Vordergrund, welches Voraussetzung ist für die Suche nach dem *tertium comparationis*, das den Sprachvergleich ermöglicht. Diese Überlegungen werden anhand einiger Fallstudien illustriert. Um diese Vorstellungen verwirklichen zu können, bedarf es neuer digitaler Formate, die dieses komplexe Wissen umsetzen, um somit die Basis für die Suche nach funktional vergleichbaren Phrasemen in der Zielsprache zulassen. Auf diese wird ebenfalls kurz eingegangen werden (Kap. 5). Anschließend an die Schlussfolgerungen (Kap. 6) soll abschließend ein aktuelles Thema aufgegriffen werden (Kap. 7), das uns alle noch ziemlich im Ungewissen lässt: Was haben wir von der Künstlichen Intelligenz bezüglich phraseologischer Analysen und Erkenntnisse zu erwarten?

Ramusino und Mollica (2020), Dobrovol'skij (2022), Mellado Blanco, Mollica, Schafroth (2022), Schreiber (2023, 96-100), Wolf und Gruber (2025).

2 Das Problem der Komplexität der phraseologischen Bedeutung entsteht freilich nicht durch die denotative (deskriptive) Bedeutung, sondern vor allem durch die expressive, am Rande auch durch die soziale Bedeutung (Löbner 2003, 43-50). Die in vielen Phrasemen mitschwingende Äußerung von Emotionen, Illokutionen und „kulturellen Assoziationen“ (ib., 48) macht ihren „konnotativen“ und „pragmatischen Mehrwert“ aus (Burger 2015, 77), die beide schwer zu beschreiben sind. Vgl. Kap. 2.

2. ‚Äquivalenz‘

Die Auffassung Korhonens, dass das „primäre Ziel der kontrastiven Phraseologie im engeren Sinne in der Herausarbeitung von Übereinstimmungen, Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschieden von Phrasemen verschiedener [...] Sprachen besteht“ (Korhonen 2007, 575), ist nach wie vor gültig. Dreh- und Angelpunkt ist jedoch bei der Frage der Übereinstimmungen und Ähnlichkeiten immer das Problem gewesen, inwieweit von Äquivalenz die Rede sein kann bzw. welche Äquivalenz überhaupt gemeint ist³ – generell und in jedem einzelnen Fall des Sprachvergleichs. Ich möchte bei der Etymologie von Äquivalenz ansetzen, die lateinisch AEQUUS ‘gleich’ und VALERE ‘wert sein’ voraussetzt und somit auf die ursprüngliche Bedeutung *aequivalens* ‘den gleichen Wert habend’ zurückgeht. Man muss kein Saussurianer sein, um dieser Etymologie bei der Wichtigkeit, die dem Terminus Äquivalenz zukommt, einen entsprechenden Stellenwert einzuräumen und den Begriff der ‚valeur‘ (des systemischen Wertes) ins Spiel zu bringen: Der Wert eines sprachlichen Zeichens beruht demnach auf den „Beziehungen und Unterschieden“ zu anderen sprachlichen Zeichen, zu denen es in Opposition steht (Saussure 1916/2013, 244). Lexeme und Phraseme sind also abzugrenzen von anderen Lexemen und Phrasemen, mit denen sie formale und/oder semantische Beziehungen eingehen, etwa innerhalb eines semantischen Feldes oder Frames. Mit anderen Worten, der Inhalt eines verbalen Idioms wie *chercher midi à quatorze heures* (wörtl. ‚[den] Mittag um 14 Uhr suchen‘), das so viel bedeutet wie ‚etwas sehr Einfaches unnötig verkomplizieren‘ kann nur adäquat erfasst werden, wenn er gegenüber den anderen gebräuchlichen – scheinbar quasisynonymen – Idiomen (aber auch Lexemen) desselben Frames – nennen wir ihn Genauigkeit – abgegrenzt wird, z.B. gegenüber *couper les cheveux en quatre* (wörtl. ‚die Haare in vier [Teile] schneiden‘, Bedeutung ‚Haarspalterei betreiben‘) oder *chercher la petite bête* (wörtl. ‚das kleine Tier suchen‘, Bedeutung ‚ein Haar in der Suppe finden/suchen‘). Und zwar nicht nur semantisch (denotativ und konnotativ), sondern nach allen weiteren grammatikalischen, pragmatischen und ko- bzw. kontextuellen Selektionsbeschränkungen und Verwendungspräferenzen. Dass dies in keinem lexikographischen Werk möglich ist, leuchtet ein, und dass ein solches Verfahren auch erst seit kurzem in der Lexikologie bzw. Phraseologie exemplarisch durchgeführt wird (z.B. Hümmer und Stathi 2006, Andree 2020), ist ebenfalls nicht überraschend, auch wenn das Desideratum an sich in der Forschungsliteratur schon längst formuliert wurde. Dennoch wird in der Lexikographie und Phraseographie, auch der kontrastiven, weiterhin im großen Stil mit einer Systembedeutung gearbeitet und auf deren Basis Äquivalenz konstruiert – wohlgemerkt meist mit *einer* Bedeutung (anders bei Dobrovolskij und Filipenko 2007). Diese ist jedoch – vor allem bei

3 Zum Äquivalenzbegriff in der Phraseologie vgl. etwa auch Eismann (1989), Dobrovolskij (2002), Schafroth (2020d).

Idiomen, aber auch bei Gesprächsformeln – vage, introspektiv gewonnen und empirisch nicht legitimiert.

Das Zweite, das ich zur Äquivalenz anmerken möchte, hängt unmittelbar mit dem ersten Punkt zusammen: Es geht um die Komplexität der phraseologischen Bedeutung und den damit verbundenen Faktoren. Es wird in der Phraseologie und Übersetzungswissenschaft seit Jahrzehnten betont, dass die denotative Bedeutung im Vordergrund stehe und darüber hinaus „konnotative Dimensionen“ (Koller und Henjum 2020, 251f.) hinzutreten können – ich ergänze: und kulturspezifische Faktoren (Dobrovol'skij 1999, Dobrovol'skij und Piirainen 2022, Sabban 2008, Rada 2013):

Ein zentrales Anliegen der kontrastiven Phraseologie ist es, den Sprachvergleich auf der Ebene der *langue* durchzuführen. Das Interesse der kontrastiven Phraseologie gilt primär dem denotativen und dem strukturellen Aspekt, während konnotative und pragmatische Gesichtspunkte nur am Rande eine Rolle spielen. (Korhonen 2004, 581)

Das Problem ist nur, dass eine dementsprechende Systemäquivalenz sehr oft ins Leere läuft, weil die unterspezifizierte *langue*-Bedeutung im konkreten Fall, d.h. in einem spezifischen Kontext, einfach nicht passt. Den Kontext in der Praxis des Übersetzens in den Vordergrund zu rücken, ist natürlich legitim, da dort, wie Carmen Mellado Blanco (2010, 277) treffend schreibt, „das Augenmerk auf kulturelle, situationelle, intralinguistische und -textuelle Unterschiede [gerichtet wird]“. Eine Verabsolutierung der formal-semantischen Äquivalenzbeziehungen ist in der Translation also nicht gefragt – es kommt stattdessen auf die Beibehaltung von Funktion und Bedeutung des Ausgangstextes an. Oder, um es noch einmal mit Korhonen (2004, 581) zu sagen: Beim Sprachvergleich – also in der kontrastiven Phraseologie und besonders Phraseographie – „muss man die Phraseologismen als Einheiten des Sprachsystems beschreiben, d. h. von einem konkreten Kontext isolieren“. Diese methodologisch geleitete Zweiteilung führt jedoch dazu, dass nicht nur Polysemie in der phraseologischen Beschreibung – abgesehen von Einzelstudien – weitgehend ausgeklammert wurde (und wird), sondern dass die nicht-referentielle (nicht-denotative) Bedeutung praktisch nicht erfasst wird. Diese beinhaltet eine soziale und eine expressive Bedeutung, also die „Anzeige sozialer Beziehungen und [den] Vollzug spezifischer sozialer Interaktionen“ sowie den „unmittelbare[n] Ausdruck persönlicher Gefühle, Empfindungen, Bewertungen [und] Einstellungen“ (Löbner 2003, 39, 43). Die letztgenannte Dimension der komplexen lexikalischen Bedeutung wird nicht selten mit dem Begriff der ‚Konnotation‘ abgedeckt, welche unter Umständen in Gang gesetzt bzw. realisiert werden kann. Geschieht dies, führt das beim Rezipienten zur Aktivierung verschiedener Assoziationen, die persönlich-individueller aber auch sozial-kultureller Art sein können und das Verständnis sowie die Interpretation steuern.

Diese nicht-denotative Dimension müsste also gerade lexikographisch von besonderer Bedeutung sein, da durch sie das gewaltige pragmatische Potenzial von Phrasemen deutlich wird, wie zahlreiche Autoren betont haben, z.B. Kühn (1994), Burger (2015), Jesenšek (2021).

Angesichts der semantisch-pragmatischen Komplexität von Phrasemen erscheint es geradezu simplifiziert, davon auszugehen, es gäbe ohne weiteres so etwas wie eine totale oder Volläquivalenz zwischen Phrasemen zweier Sprachen. Die Unterschiede liegen oft bereits im inkongruenten Bedeutungsumfang (z.B. zwischen deutsch *mit jemandem/etwas auf dem Kriegsfuß stehen* und italienisch *essere sul piede di guerra con qualcuno/qualcosa*), oder die phraseologischen Einheiten bedeuten einfach nicht exakt das Gleiche, wie italienisch *essere un'acqua cheta* und deutsch *ein stilles Wasser sein*. Welche Faktoren alle berücksichtigt werden müssten, um ein verbales Idiom wie *faire un malheur* (wörtl. ‚ein Unglück machen‘, Bedeutung ‚eine Szene machen‘ oder ‚Erfolg haben‘) adäquat zu beschreiben, zeigt Katrin Andree (2020). Neben pragmatischen Aspekten wird die Bedeutung dieses polysemen Phrasems sozusagen kontextuell getriggert durch das gemeinsame Auftreten mehrerer Merkmale, wie z.B. der semantischen Klasse der Aktanten, der negativen bzw. positiven Polarität des Kontexts und grammatikalisch-syntaktischer Verwendungspräferenzen.

3. Neuere Arbeitsfelder der (Kontrastiven) Phraseologie

In diesem Abschnitt soll eine kurze Standortbestimmung der rezenten und aktuellen kontrastiven Phraseologie vorgenommen werden, vor allem bezüglich ihrer Arbeitsschwerpunkte. Wie bereits im vorherigen Kapitel angeklungen ist, hatte sich die vergleichende Sprachbetrachtung durch das Festhalten an der systemlinguistisch konzipierten Orientierung zunehmend in eine Sackgasse manövriert – diese existiert in der Lexikographie selbstredend noch immer – und hat sich daher in den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten vermehrt den Sprachgebrauchsanalysen zugewandt. Beflügelt durch die Korpuslinguistik und den ganzheitlichen Beschreibungsansatz der Konstruktionsgrammatik, die nach und nach auch kompositionelle, jedoch irgendwie – und sei es nur durch die Frequenz geprägte – idiosynkratische Konstruktionen untersuchte und zudem auf die rigorose Unterscheidung zwischen Lexikon und Syntax verzichtet, entdeckten die Einzelphilologien nicht nur den Kontext neu, sondern mit ihm auch das sprachgebrauchsbasierte Zusammenwirken formaler und inhaltlicher Restriktionen von Konstruktionen, zu denen von Anfang an auch Phraseme gehörten, wie wir in Fillmore, Kay, O'Connor (1988) nachlesen können. Durch diese konstruktionsbasierte Brille **gesehen**, wurden dann Phrasem-Konstruktionen entdeckt oder neu entdeckt, wie z.B. die Reduplikationsstrukturen des Typs Tag für Tag, Arbeit über Arbeit, X hin, X her (Ziem 2018), die in keinem Wörterbuch und in keiner Grammatik zu finden

sind. Alexander Ziem beschreibt eine Auswahl von Konstruktionen – darunter auch Phrasem-Konstruktionen – für das Deutsche in seinem frame-netbasierten Konstruktikon (Ziem (dir)).

Entlang dieser neuen Impulse rückten die Begriffe ‚Muster‘, ‚Musterhaftigkeit‘ und ‚Formelhaftigkeit‘ immer mehr ins Zentrum der Aufmerksamkeit (Stumpf 2015, Gautier, Modicom, Vinckel-Roisin 2018, Steyer 2018, Stein und Stumpf 2019). Aber auch detaillierte facettenreiche Gebrauchsbeschreibungen zu Idiomen und Phrasem-Konstruktionen sind in den letzten 10 bis 15 Jahren entstanden⁴. Gleichzeitig wurden die korpusbasierten Analysen immer öfter auf zwei oder mehrere Sprachen bezogen, womit sie der Kontrastiven Phraseologie neues Leben einhauchen konnten.

4. Postulierte Äquivalenz vs. „tout est idiomatique“

Die Kapitelüberschrift spielt auf zwei sprachwissenschaftliche Positionen an, die unterschiedlicher nicht sein könnten. Zum einen diejenige, die ich im Titel meines Artikels als *Äquivalenzsystematik* bezeichnet habe und die sich auf die in der Lexikographie gewöhnlich zugrunde gelegte Theorie der strukturellen Semantik bezieht, die Bedeutung als etwas wahrnimmt, was sich in isolierbare Einheiten aufspalten lässt – von Fillmore etwas verächtlich *checklist* (bzw. „Checklist-Semantik“) genannt (Fillmore 1975):

A critical defect in this approach is that, if in the normal way of talking some word has a meaning which requires or invites a particularly rich and detailed accounting, much of that information would have to be left out of the lexicon in principle, just in case it is redundant from the point of view of the minimal definition principle. (Fillmore 1978, 151)

Das heißt: Die traditionelle praktische Lexikographie kann gar nicht anders, als nach dem Merkmal-Listen-Modell vorzugehen, weil sie, zumindest im semasiologischen Wörterbuch, linear und nach diskreten Einheiten untergliedert vorgehen muss, obwohl doch die Bedeutungen von Wörtern nicht-lineare und nicht-diskrete Phänomene sind, wie Dobrovol'skij (2006) bemerkt. Jedoch ist es bei Phrasemen, insbesondere bei Idiomen, so, dass diese oft semantisch unscharf sind und sich unter Beibehaltung des evozierten Bildes auf die verschiedensten konkreten Situationen anwenden lassen, so dass sich nicht ohne weiteres einzelne Sememe „herauspräparieren“ lassen, wie es Fleischer (1997, 168) treffend nennt. Deshalb bleibt es meist bei der Beschränkung auf *eine* Bedeutung.

4 Etwa die *Sprichwort-Plattform*, Steyer (2012), FRAME, GEPHRI, IDEFITs, De Knop, und Hermann (2020), Mellado Blanco, Holzinger, Iglesias Iglesias, Mansilla Pérez (2020), Dobrovol'skij 2022, Mellado Blanco, Mollica, Schafroth (2022), die Arbeiten des Groupe de Lexicographie Franco-Allemande (o.J.).

– Ich füge an dieser Stelle hinzu: in herkömmlichen Printwörterbüchern, denn neue digitale Formate würden einen systematischen Einbezug des Kontexts sehr wohl ermöglichen.

Damit komme ich zum gegensätzlichen Standpunkt, der durch den Titel eines Aufsatzes von Franz Josef Hausmann treffend ausgedrückt wird: „Tout est idiomatique dans les langues“. Analog zu dem, was Sinclair das *idiom principle* nennt, schlussfolgert Hausmann kompromisslos:

Je le répète, dans une langue étrangère presque tout est différent, presque tout est idiomatique. C'est le parallélisme qui est l'exception, non la spécificité. L'idiomaticité n'est pas à la périphérie des faits de langues, elle est au cœur. Elle est l'essence même de la langue. (Hausmann 1997, 284)

Idiomatisch ist hier zu verstehen als ‚idiosynkratisch‘ im Sinne aller einfachen und komplexen Lexeme (z.B. it. *fede* ‚Glaube‘ aber auch, metonymisch, ‚Ehering‘ – nicht so im Deutschen, Französischen und Englischen, oder etwa das italienische Kompositum *rompiscatole* ‚Nervensäge‘) sowie Mehrwortverbindungen (z.B. Idiome wie it. *patata bollente* (wörtl. ‚heiße Kartoffel‘) ‚heiße Eisen, heikle Sache‘, it. *arrampicarsi sugli specchi* (wörtl. ‚auf die Spiegel klettern‘) ‚verzweifelt Ausflüchte suchen‘, oder binäre Phraseme wie it. *lì per lì* (wörtl. ‚da für da‘) ‚sofort‘, u.a.m.), die eine semantische und/oder syntaktische und/oder pragmatische Irregularität aufweisen, die also nach den semantischen und syntaktischen Verknüpfungsregeln einer Sprache weder vorhersagbar noch ableitbar oder pragmatisch maximal konventionalisiert (fest) sind (wie z.B. in *In bocca al lupo!* (wörtl. ‚Dem Wolf ins Maul!‘, Bedeutung ‚toi, toi, toi!‘) oder *pasta e fagioli* (‚Nudeln und Bohnen‘) [und nicht **fagioli e pasta*] im Italienischen)⁵.

Von einem *idiosyncratic usage* sprach bereits John Sinclair (1991, 62) und stellte klar: „We would not produce normal text simply by operating the open-choice principle“ (ib., 110):

The principle of idiom is that a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analyzable into segments. (Sinclair 1991, 110)

Solche *semi-preconstructed phrases* sind mehr oder weniger feste sprachliche Einheiten und Strukturen, die nicht frei zusammengesetzt und nicht frei kombiniert werden können und somit mehr oder weniger strengen semantischen und syntaktischen Restriktionen unterliegen. Sie werden in der Forschungsliteratur auch *Halbfertigprodukte*, *prefabs*, *Muster*, *formulaic sequences* oder *chunks* genannt, zu denen etwa Kollokationen und Phraseoschablonen zählen. Zählt man hierzu

5 Zum Begriff der Idiosynkrasie in der Phraseologie, zu seiner Genese und seiner Bedeutung als Definitionskriterium für Phraseme siehe ausführlich Imperiale, Autelli, Schafroth (2025) und darin Schafroth (2025a).

noch die durch größere Festigkeit und Idiosynkrasie bzw. Idiomatizität gekennzeichneten Einheiten oder Verbindungen hinzu, so lassen sich all diese Erscheinungen mit dem Terminus *Phraseme* zusammenfassen (vgl. Schafroth 2015, 319f.; 2023a, 235-240).

Das Prinzip der wiederholten Rede, des rekurrenten Sprechens, gehört also zum Wesen unserer Kommunikation, allein schon aufgrund der sprachlichen Ökonomie. Erinnern wir uns an Coseriu:

Die ‚wiederholte Rede‘ umfaßt [...] all das, was in der Tradition zu ‚Ausdrücken‘, ‚Phrasen‘ oder ‚Redewendungen‘ erstarrt ist und dessen konstitutive Elemente gemäß den geltenden Regeln der Sprache weder ersetzbar noch frei kombinierbar sind. (Coseriu 1978, 219)

Und dass der Bestand an wiederholter Rede – hier an allem, was „idiomatisch“, sprich phraseologisch ist –, beträchtlich erscheint, haben Fillmore, Kay, O’Connor in ihrer unmissverständlichen Abgrenzung zur „Appendix“-Metapher der generativen Grammatik, mehr als deutlich gemacht: „This ‘Appendix to the Grammar’ can be thought of as the repository of what is IDIOMATIC in the language. One of our purposes in this paper is to suggest that this repository is very large” (Fillmore, Kay, O’Connor 1988, 504).

In noch drastischer Weise positioniert sich John Taylor, der, wie Hausmann, das mit Regeln Bildbare, Kompositionelle, für die Ausnahme hält:

It turns out that the idiomatic reaches into every nook and cranny of a language, so much so that it might not be outrageous to claim that just about everything in a language is idiomatic to a greater or lesser degree and in some way or other. If anything, it is the fully regular, the fully compositional, that is exceptional. (Taylor 2012, 71f.)

Ob der Grad an Phraseologie in einem Text oder gar im lexikalischen Inventar einer Sprache messbar, also empirisch nachweisbar ist, erscheint mir zumindest fragwürdig. Versuche gibt es einige, z.B. von Mel’čuk, Fonagy, Schemann und Lafon, wie die hier zitierte Zusammenfassung in Gréciano (2000) zeigt:

Laut Mel’čuk (1994) trifft [sic] Phraseologie 90% des Wortschatzes, was zur Erstellung kombinatorischer ein- und zweisprachiger Wörterbücher zwingt. Auf 100.000 Stichwörter zählt Fonagy (1997) 5000 Pragmateme (pragmatische Phras) und Schemann (1994) 15000-20000 Idiome (semantische Phras). Mel’čuk setzt die privilegierten Kollokationen/usuellen Kookkurrenzen/Quasi-Phras bei 40000 an. Im Rahmen seines Lexikometrie-Projekts zeigt Lafon (1997) anhand von optischen Visualisierungen, daß Phraseologie 20% einer Seite und 40% eines mittleren Textes ausmachen (Gréciano 2000, 235).

Wenn man mit der *idiom search*-Software von Jean-Pierre Colson Texte verschiedener Textsorten durchsucht, so ergeben sich, hier bezogen auf britische und US-amerikanische Zeitungen, Werte zwischen 30 und 55% an phraseologischem Gehalt (Colson 2017, 21), d.h. die *PT ratio*, also der Anteil an Phrasemen im Text, beträgt zwischen 0.30 und 0.55, wobei von den Algorithmen bei weitem nicht alles erfasst wird, was wir zur Phraseologie zählen würden. Und Anderes wird gezählt, was völlig kompositionell ist.

Wie mein Überblick über die jüngsten Arbeitsgebiete in der Phraseologie gezeigt hat, wird inzwischen – beflügelt durch Korpuslinguistik und theoretische Ansätze wie die *Pattern Grammar* und *Construction Grammar* – auch semantisch kompositionellen und syntaktisch regulären, aber dennoch distributionell oder situationell konventionalisierten und deshalb sehr wohl pragmatisch idiosynkratischen Mehrwortverbindungen (s. oben) beträchtliche Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt. Zu diesen gehören rekurrente Kookkurrenzen, usuelle Wortverbindungen und formelhafte Sequenzen (wie im folgenden Zitat von Wray sichtbar wird – bei Stumpf 2015 „formelhafte Regelmäßigkeiten bzw. Irregularitäten“) ebenso wie andere „Vorgeformtheitsphänomene“ (siehe Stein und Stumpf 2019), die auch Texte, Textsorten und Argumentationsmuster miteinschließen.

Our working definition of the *formulaic sequence* will be as follows; a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar. (Wray 2002, 9)

Der Kontext ist dabei stets der dominante Faktor schlechthin: Hans Schemann sieht Ende der 1980er Jahre ein gravierendes Defizit der Phraseologie, und zwar in zweierlei Hinsicht: Zum einen bleiben außer dem sprachlichen Kontext (falls dieser überhaupt erfasst wird) andere Kontexte – wie der „nichtsprachliche Text-Kontext, der situative Kontext [...], der soziale Hintergrundkontext von Sprecher und Hörer“ sowie „Sprecher- und Hörereinstellung“ – unberücksichtigt. Zum anderen wird nicht erkannt, dass mindestens einer dieser Kontexte, mitunter auch mehrere, fixiert ist (Schemann 1987, 32).

Und Helmuth Feilke spricht, anknüpfend an Schemann, von *idiomatischer Prägung*, womit er *de facto* ‚pragmatische Prägung‘ im Sinne dessen meint, dass „das *gesamte* Sprachwissen letztlich nur aus einem Gebrauch heraus aufgebaut werden kann“ (Feilke 1996, 214). Diese pragmatische Prägung oder Bindung manifestiert sich grundsätzlich, so Feilke, in historisch gewachsenen Distributionsbeschränkungen sprachlicher Formen (*Kaffee und*

*Kuchen*⁶, nicht **Kuchen und Kaffee*) und in verbindlich gewordenen usuellen Verwendungskontexten (Feilke 1996, 220, 274ff., *pass.*), z.B. bei „Wir müssen draußen bleiben“ (Hunde-Frame).

Das bedeutet, dass kompetente Muttersprachler/innen in der Regel genau wissen, was man in einer bestimmten Situation sagen kann, üblicherweise sagen sollte oder sogar muss, wenn man keinen sozialen Fauxpas oder sprachlichen Lapsus begehen möchte. Selbst der semantisch und syntaktisch völlig reguläre Ausdruck *ti amo* ist insofern pragmatisch gebunden, als Sprecher/in und Hörer/in den üblichen Gebrauchszusammenhang und den tieferen Sinn dieses Satzes als Liebeserklärung innerhalb einer Paarbeziehung oder als emotionale Äußerung eines nahen Verwandten kennen (und gegebenenfalls auch erwarten) und sie diesen Satz außerhalb eines solchen Kontexts (und, kognitiv gesehen, außerhalb des Frames *Liebe*) als befremdlich oder künstlich empfinden würden. Ein „Napoli, ti amo“ (Neapel, ich liebe Dich) oder „Amici, vi amo tutti“ ([Meine] Freunde, ich liebe euch alle) ist ein anderes *ti amo*, ebenso wie das englische *I'm loving it* (ursprünglich als Werbeslogan für McDonald's), welches primär der Effekthascherei dient.

Mit diesem Ansatz versteht man gleichzeitig auch, warum Formeln wie *permesso?* (Darf ich?), *pazienza!* (wörtl. ‚Geduld!‘, Bedeutung ‚Tja!/So ist es eben!‘), *capirai!* (wörtl. ‚Du wirst verstehen!‘, Bedeutung ‚Na toll!/Na bravo!‘), *speriamo bene* (Hoffen wir das Beste), *speriamo di no* (Hoffen wir nicht) oder selbst die nicht-lexikalisierte prosodisch markierte Interjektion *öh* ([ø:] oder auch [ø::]), die deutliche Zustimmung oder starke Intensität oder große Quantität bzw. Qualität ausdrückt (Schafroth 2018, 224), bedauerlicherweise kein Thema für die traditionelle Phraseologie und größtenteils nicht einmal für die Lexikographie sind, nach wie vor meist auch nicht für die kontrastive Sprachwissenschaft.

Halten wir als Übergang zum nächsten Kapitel fest: Phraseologische Beschreibungen ohne angemessene Berücksichtigung der Summe aller involvierten Kontexte sind sinnlos. Mir ist bewusst, dass dies längst bekannt ist, aber es müsste eben auch lexiko- und phraseographisch – und als Extrakt daraus fremdsprachendidaktisch – umgesetzt werden. Darum wird es bei meinen folgenden Überlegungen gehen.

6 Der Ausdruck *Kaffee und Kuchen* bezeichnet nicht einfach die Kombination eines Heißgetränks mit einem süßen Gebäck, sondern ist in deutschsprachigen Ländern als Zwischenmahlzeit (à la *merenda*) institutionalisiert und somit allein schon durch Konvention pragmatisch (idiomatisch) geprägt.

5. Kontrastive Phraseologie: Verstehensrelevantes Wissen und *tertia comparationis* – Fallstudien und Projekte

Ich verwende den Ausdruck *verstehensrelevantes Wissen* im Sinne von Dietrich Busse (z.B. 1997, 2005, 2012), der damit wiederum an Fillmores *Semantics of understanding* (z.B. 1985) anknüpfte. Das *verstehensrelevante Wissen* eines Phrasems im Kontext unterscheidet sich wesensmäßig nicht von dem anderer sprachlicher Äußerungen und umfasst neben Weltwissen, situationstypischem und situationsspezifischem (also aktuell-perzeptivem) Wissen auch sprachliches Wissen im engeren Sinne, ebenso wie Erfahrungswissen (z.B. über den Gesprächspartner, über interpersonelle Relationen oder über für die Äußerung relevante ideologische Kontexte). Und natürlich sprachliches Wissen im weiteren Sinne, also Wissen über gesellschaftliche Handlungs- und Interaktionsformen, die kommunikativ relevant sind, z.B. Sprechakttypen, Kommunikationsmaximen. Mit anderen Worten: Wenn A zu B sagt „Da hast Du aber den Vogel abgeschossen“, wird – je nach Situation – der Wissensrahmen Lob oder Kritik evoziert, der neben den erwartbaren Standardwerten (z.B. bei Lob die Präsupposition, dass die von B vollzogene Handlung oder das von B Gesagte bei A – und nicht nur bei ihm/ihr – Gefallen gefunden hat) auch die konkreten Füllwerte enthält, die sich auf die jeweilige Situation bzw. auf den jeweiligen Sachverhalt beziehen, um es framesemantisch auszudrücken. Damit ähnelt diese Konzeption der von Schemann und Feilke angesetzten absoluten Kontextabhängigkeit sprachlicher Äußerungen. Busses Ausrichtung kommt wissenschaftsgeschichtlich nur aus einer anderen Tradition.

Gleichgültig, welchen theoretischen Ansatz man zugrunde legt, ob Verstehenssemantik oder Konstruktionsgrammatik, oder ob man einfach nur solide korpuslinguistische Arbeit leistet: Es geht darum, alle Phrasemtypen korpusbasiert und möglichst ganzheitlich auf allen Sprachebenen, d.h. durch Analysen der involvierten Kontexte und der bestehenden *constraints*, also aller Gebrauchsbeschränkungen, zu beschreiben. Wenn ich *alle Phrasemtypen* sage, meine ich neben Idiomen auch Idiomatiche Sätze, Sprichwörter, Phrasem-Konstruktionen und Formeln – Routine- und Gesprächsformeln. Denn auch diese sind in einer Fremdsprache ohne Kontextwissen nicht zu verstehen und erst recht nicht mit einer semantisch-pragmatisch adäquaten Form in der Zielsprache wiederzugeben.

5.1 Das Desiderat kontrastiv-kontextsensitiv untersuchter Routine- und Gesprächsformeln

Man unterschätzt die Komplexität von Formeln, aber es ist eben kein Zufall, dass wir uns schwertun, diese kommunikativ höchst effizienten Phraseme in einer Fremdsprache zu verstehen, geschweige denn situativ passend anzuwenden. Bei Routineformeln funktionieren solche Entsprechungen noch am ehesten,

weil die getriggerten Sprechakte erwartbare verbale Reaktionen auf einen verbalen oder nicht-verbalen Stimulus darstellen, die zwar kulturell gebunden, aber doch recht gut in einer anderen Sprache in den Griff zu bekommen sind: Vergleiche zwischen Italienisch und Deutsch: *Cin Cin!* / *Zum Wohl!*, *Salute!* / *Gesundheit!*, *In bocca al lupo!* (wörtl. ‚Dem Wolf ins Maul!’) / *Toi toi toi!*

Wesentlich mehr *constraints* sind mit den Gesprächsformeln verknüpft, die zwar nicht wie die Routineformeln an eine bestimmte Situation gebunden sind, jedoch an eine prototypische Gesprächskonstellation oder Gemütslage. Z.B. *Wird's bald?*, *Na, wer sagt's denn?*, *Du bist gut!*, oder das in letzter Zeit grassierende *Alles gut!* mit fallender Intonation, das eine Art A-priori-Kompromissbereitschafts- oder Dissens-Vermeidungs-Signal darstellt. Wie so eine belanglos erscheinende Formel in den diversen Fremdsprachen versprachlicht wird, ist gar nicht unbedingt so einfach. Nicht einmal die Formel *Alles gut?* mit steigender Intonation ist ohne weiteres 1:1 in die Fremdsprachen zu übertragen, da sie primär als Gruß fungiert und pragmatisch stark gebunden ist (an die Vertrautheit der Sprechenden, an eine nächsprachliche Situation und vielleicht auch noch an das Alter der Gesprächspartner). Ein Gruß also. Der nicht wie ein Gruß aussieht, sondern wie eine Frage, ähnlich wie *Ça va?*, aber semantisch-pragmatisch doch wiederum anders⁷.

In all den genannten Fällen wird jedenfalls ein Sprechakt ausgedrückt, weshalb Maurice Kauffer (2011, 2019) die Formeln auch *actes de langage stéréotypés* nennt (stereotype Sprechakte). Bemerkenswert ist, dass ein solcher ganzheitlicher korpusbasierter Ansatz aus diesem wissenschaftlichen Umfeld an der Université de Lorraine nun in einem Wörterbuchprojekt für das Sprachenpaar Deutsch-Französisch umgesetzt wird – Näheres findet sich auf der Projektseite der Forschergruppe *Axe Lexicographie franco-allemande*. Es geht um Formeln wie *la belle affaire !, tu parles !, penses-tu !, cause toujours !, ben voyons !, faut voir, c'est tout vu* im Französischen oder *das ist die Höhe!, na warte!, wennschon, dennschon* im Deutschen. Diese pragmatischen Phraseme sind entweder erst gar nicht in den ein- und zweisprachigen Wörterbüchern zu finden oder werden nur sehr rudimentär semantisiert oder durch ein, zwei kontextlose Äquivalenzvorschläge abgespeist.

Die Beschreibungen deutscher Gesprächsformeln, die etwa Anja Smith in dem in Fortsetzungen erscheinenden *Petit dictionnaire permanent des actes de langage stéréotypés* vornimmt, berücksichtigen alle Sprachebenen (zunächst semasiologisch) und betten diese sodann in zahlreiche authentische Korpusbelege in der Ausgangssprache mit authentischen Übersetzungen (auch der Kontexte) in der anderen Sprache ein (vgl. Smith 2014, 2022, 2024). Zudem – und dies entspricht auch meiner Vorstellung von Phraseographie – gibt es eine onomasiologische Perspektive, die von den unterschiedlichen illokutiven Funktionen,

7 Zu den Grußformeln im Deutschen und Italienisch vgl. die korpusbasierte Untersuchung von Koesters Gensini und Schafröth (2020).

die zum Beispiel eine Gesprächsformel wie *ach was* haben kann, ausgeht. Im Falle von *ach was* können dies fünf Illokutionstypen sein – in römischen Ziffern (Übersetzung durch mich):

- I. DEN WAHRHEITSWERT EINER BEHAUPTUNG ODER VERMUTUNG BESTREITEN
- II. ABLEHNUNG AUSDRÜCKEN
- III. ERMUTIGEN UND BERUHIKEN
- IV. UNGLÄUBIGKEIT AUSDRÜCKEN UND UM BESTÄTIGUNG DER RICHTIGKEIT DES VERSTANDENEN BITTEN
- V. EINE KORREKTUR ODER EINE UNTERBRECHUNG DER REDE MARKIEREN

(aus: Smith 2014, 120)

Nehmen wir den ersten Sprechakttyp. In dem zitierten Korpusbeispiel kann man mit der Formel *ach was* einer Behauptung oder Vermutung, die eine negative Bewertung oder Zweifel beinhaltet, die Grundlage entziehen und die Autorität des Sprechers als Experte (oder jemand, der es besser weiß) festigen. In dem hier angezeigten Kontext passt im Französischen *Mais qu'est-ce que c'est que ça !* (wörtl. ‚Aber was ist das, was das ist?‘) anscheinend sehr gut. In anderen Kontexten – innerhalb desselben Sprechakttyps wohlgemerkt – kann *ach was* mit *mais non*, *mais enfin* oder *mais pas du tout* wiedergegeben werden (Smith 2014, 121):

SOHN: Du, . . . du Papa, wenn die Schreibers noch viel mehr Rauch zum Schornstein rauslassen, können die dann auch noch viel reicher werden?

VATER: Nein. Wie kommst du darauf?

SOHN: Wenn alle Leute, die da wohnen, krank werden, müssen die doch die Tabletten von den Schreibers kaufen . . .

VATER: **Ach was**. Das ist ja Unsinn. Außerdem gibt es Gesetze, die bestimmen genau, wieviel Rauch eine Fabrik an jedem Tag hinausblasen darf, was gefährlich ist oder tödlich, oder eigentlich, was nicht so schädlich ist. (PCG1 82/-)

FILS : Dis, Papa...si les Schreiber rejetaient encore plus de fumée de leurs cheminées, est-ce que comme ça ils pourraient devenir encore plus riches ?

PERE : Non. Qu'est-ce qui te fait penser ça ?

FILS : Si tous les gens qui vivent là tombent malades, il faudra bien qu'ils achètent des médicaments des Schreiber.

PERE : **Mais qu'est-ce que c'est que ça !** Tu dis vraiment n'importe quoi. En plus, il y a des lois qui prévoient la quantité exacte de fumée qui peut s'échapper d'une usine, qui indiquent ce qui est dangereux ou mortellement toxique, ou plutôt, en fait, ce qui n'est pas si néfaste que ça.

Abb. 6.1: Auszug aus dem Artikel *ach was* im *Petit dictionnaire permanent des actes de langage stéréotypés* (Smith 2014, mit freundlicher Genehmigung der Autorin)

5.2 Das Desiderat kontrastiv-kontextsensitiv untersuchter Phrasem-Konstruktionen

Sprachvergleiche auf der Basis eines semantisch-pragmatischen *tertium comparationis* lassen sich natürlich auch bei Phrasem-Konstruktionen (engl. *schematic idioms*) anstellen⁸. Konkret habe ich hierzu die *What's X doing Y*-Konstruktion, kurz *WXDY*, in Augenschein genommen und nach funktional analogen Pendants in anderen Sprachen gesucht, wobei eine – bisher nicht beschriebene – italienische Konstruktion dieser am nächsten kommt (Schafroth 2023b). Wie bekannt, bringt die (Pseudo-)Frage *What's this fly doing in my soup?* die Kritik an der als unangemessen bzw. mindestens erklärungsbedürftig empfundenen Situation zum Ausdruck – bei Kay und Fillmore (1999) wird der semantisch-pragmatische Gehalt als *incongruity* („Unangemessenheit“) bezeichnet. Die *WXDY*-Konstruktion tritt in zwei Varianten in Erscheinung, als (a), mit nur einem Lexem (*do*), und als (b), neben *doing* mit einem weiteren Lexem, ebenfalls in der *-ing*-Form (Schafroth 2023b, 84):

- (a) What is this fly doing in my soup?
- (b) What are you doing sitting there reading this?; What am I doing waking up before the freaking alarm?

Die semantische Repräsentation dieser syntaktisch äußerst komplexen Schablonen-Konstruktion ist im Allgemeinen die Erwartung einer Erklärung für ein Verhalten, eine Handlung oder eine Situation und die Bewertung dieses Sachverhalts als ungewöhnlich oder „unangemessen“. Dementsprechend sind die Sprechakte, die mit dieser Konstruktion ausgedrückt werden, diejenigen einer (unangenehmen) Überraschung, Entrüstung, Missbilligung, Kritik (auch Selbstkritik), Resignation oder eines Vorwurfs. Die Sprechereinstellung ist durch eine negative Haltung gekennzeichnet, die zudem durch Ironie oder Sarkasmus angereichert sein kann. Die Referenz kann dabei auf den/die Gesprächspartner, auf Dritte oder auf den Sprecher bezogen sein.

Ohne hier näher auf das grundsätzliche (und umstrittene) Problem der Vergleichbarkeit von Konstruktionen in verschiedenen Sprachen eingehen zu können (Croft 2001, Boas 2010), erscheint es mir gerechtfertigt, ein *tertium comparationis* anzusetzen, das in der Existenz einer expressiven *Warum*-Frage besteht, die neben anderen *Warum*-Fragen im Mikrosystem dieses Fragetyps in vielen Sprachen vorhanden ist. Die Expressivität muss sich in der illokutiven Funktion der Gereiztheit oder Resignation ausdrücken und unmittelbar Bezug nehmen auf die angesprochene Situation. Idealerweise sollte ferner eine nicht-kompositionelle

8 Zur Terminologie (insbesondere zu *Phrasem-Konstruktion* vs. *Phraseoschablonen*) s. Dobrovol'skij (2011, 2022) und Schafroth (2024b). Wichtige kontrastive Arbeiten zu diesem Phrasemtyp sind in Schafroth (2024b, 29) zitiert. Zusammenfassend zu diesem Thema s. Piuino (2025).

Phraseoschablone mit offenen Slots (à la X und Y in $WXDY$) vorliegen, was bedeutet, dass sie produktiv sein muss, wie es bei $WXDY$ der Fall ist.

Diese Prämissen haben zu folgenden Ergebnissen für das Spanische (c), Französische (d und e) und Italienische (f) geführt, wobei ausdrücklich betont werden soll, dass hier nicht von *Äquivalenzen* gesprochen wird und es durchaus noch weitere phraseologische oder nicht-phraseologische Möglichkeiten in diesen Sprachen geben mag, dieselbe illokutive Funktion auszudrücken:

(c) ¿qué HACER_{INFL} V_{GERUNDIO}? (z.B. ¿Qué hago (yo) estudiando? (wörtl. ‘Was mache ich studierend?’)); (ähnlich wie engl. What am I doing studying? (wörtl. ‘Was mache ich studierend?’))

(d) Qu’est-ce que SUBJ avoir_{FINIT} à INF (z.B. Qu’est-ce que vous avez à rire comme ça? (wörtl. ‘Was haben Sie so zu lachen?’))

(e) Qu’est-ce qui PRON_{IND.OBJ} prend de INF? (z.B. Qu’est-ce qui te prend de me harceler à cette heure? (wörtl. ‘Was nimmt dich, mich zu dieser Stunde zu belästigen?’))

(f) Che VP a fare? (z.B. Che me lo chiedi a fare? (wörtl. ‘Was fragst du mich das zu tun?’); Che studi a fare? (wörtl. ‘Was lernst du zu tun?’); Che cosa corro a fare? (wörtl. ‘Was laufe ich zu tun?’))

Am nächsten kommt der englischen Konstruktion die italienische, weil mit ihr eine illokutive Funktion realisiert wird, die genau das zum Ausdruck bringt, was die $WXDY$ -Konstruktion zu bewirken vermag: Überraschung, Irritation, Verwunderung, Ironie, Sarkasmus⁹.

5.3 Das Desiderat kontrastiv-kontextsensitiv untersuchter Idiom¹⁰

Strikt *usage-based* und kontextbezogen sind auch die folgenden digitalen phraseologischen Projekte, die hier nur zusammenfassend skizziert werden können: zu den verbalen Idiomen¹¹ des Italienischen das bereits mehrmals vorgestellte Wörterbuch GEPHRI (z.B. Schafroth und Imperiale 2019, Schafroth 2020b, 2024a) und ein französisches Pendant IDEFITS, welches erst seit kürzerer Zeit besteht. Das dritte – aufgrund schwieriger Ressourcenlage

9 Zur italienischen Konstruktion, die in exakterer konstruktionsgrammatischer Notation wie folgt dargestellt wird, s. auch Schafroth (2014): [(Che) Cosa/Che [(OBJ1) (OBJ2) [V [a fare]] COMPL]].

10 Selbstverständlich betreffen diese Desiderate auch andere Phrasentypen wie z.B. Komparative Phraseme, Sprichwörter, Funktionsverbgefüge, idiomatische Sätze, Gemeinplätze und ähnliche Erscheinungen. Damit soll nicht der Eindruck erweckt werden, es gäbe nicht bereits fundierte kontrastive Arbeiten zu diesen Themen, z.B. Mollica und Schafroth (2018), Schafroth (2020c).

11 Zu den Idiomen s. Burger (2015), Fleischer (1997), Stathi (2006), Dobrovol'skij (1997, 2016, 2018, 2025), Schmale (2023), Martulli (2025).

unterbrochene¹² – Projekt versteht sich als exemplarische digitale Umsetzung einer idealtypischen Methode für eine alle Sprachebenen umfassende, korpusbasierte semasiologische Beschreibung unterschiedlicher Phrasentypen mehrerer Sprachen bei gleichzeitiger Integration eines *onomasiologisch* konzipierten Recherchetools, das es erlaubt, Phraseme nach mehreren Parametern in verschiedenen Sprachen zu suchen. Konzeptionelle Grundlage ist dabei die onomasiologische Klassifizierung in Bárdosi, Ettinger, Stölting (2003), die im Rahmen von FRAME ins Italienische übertragen wurde, weil die Metasprache für die Beschreibung des Italienischen ist (Benigni *et al.* 2015; Schafroth 2019, 2020b, 2024a).

Aus Sicht des Benutzers läuft eine Suchabfrage in der Datenbank wie folgt ab: Auf der Ebene der Suchmaske sind die relevanten Beschreibungsparameter (und zugleich Abfragemöglichkeiten) dargestellt:

Sprache – funktionales Äquivalent – Phrasenvariante – *Phrasentyp* – Formalitätsgrad – Thesaurus Lexeme – Thesaurus synonymischer Phraseme – Thesaurus antonymischer Phraseme – Thesaurus Kollokationen – *semantisches Feld* – *Konnotationen* – *Beziehung zwischen den Gesprächspartnern* – *hierarchisches Verhältnis zwischen den Gesprächspartnern* – *Sprechakt*.

Die kursiv markierten Parameter sind mögliche *tertia comparationis*, die einzeln oder zusammen aktiviert werden können. Die Deskriptoren *semantisches Feld* und *Sprechakt* sind die wichtigsten Informationstypen, um eine semantisch-pragmatische Vergleichbarkeitsbasis herzustellen, von der aus die erfassten Phrasentypen der gewünschten Einzelsprachen genauer in Augenschein genommen werden können.

Die anderen beiden phraseologischen Projekte sind kontrastiv für zwei Sprachen – Italienisch-Deutsch, Französisch-Deutsch – angelegt, wobei GEPHRI auch rein italienisch-italienische Semantisierungen enthält. In beiden digitalen Wörterbüchern wird das verstehensrelevante Wissen zu den häufigsten 300 verbalen Idiomen im Italienischen und einer repräsentativen Auswahl im Französischen auf der Basis von Korpusanalysen erfasst – und zwar nach konstruktionsgrammatischen Prinzipien der ganzheitlichen Beschreibung: formseitig Syntax, Morphologie (und Morphosyntax) und Prosodie, dort wo sie von Belang wäre, z.B. bei einigen Formeln und Phrasem-Konstruktionen, und inhaltsseitig semantische, pragmatische und diskursfunktionale Merkmale. Hervorheben möchte ich die folgenden Besonderheiten¹³:

12 Ziel ist es, anhand einiger weniger Phraseme (verschiedener Phrasemklassen) die Methode des Projekts für drei oder vier Sprachen musterhaft zu illustrieren.

13 Zur besseren Illustration des funktionalen Leistungspotenzials von GEPHRI wird empfohlen, in der Datenbank die beiden Idiome *sfondare una porta aperta* (wörtl. ‚eine offene Tür einschlagen‘, Bedeutung ‚offene Türen einrennen‘) und *voltare le spalle* (wörtl. ‚die Schultern

a) Die Semantisierung erfolgt nicht nach dem strukturalistischen Prinzip der Systembedeutungen, sondern auf der Basis gründlicher Kontextanalysen hinsichtlich kontextsensitiver Bedeutungen, die rekurrent auftreten oder als konventionalisiert gelten können und durch Kontextfaktoren wie den situativen Rahmen, die Illokution oder die lexikalisch-semantische Besetzung von Aktanten getriggert werden. Wie bei diesem Beispiel *voltare le spalle a qualcuno/qualcosa* deutlich wird, dessen Bedeutungsspektrum weit über ein simples ‚jemandem den Rücken zuwenden‘ hinausgeht.

b) Weitere Besonderheiten werden anhand der italienischen Quasi-Äquivalente (aber nur *quasi*) des deutschen Idioms *offene Türen einrennen* illustriert.

c) Zudem werden nicht nur der syntaktische Valenzrahmen der Idiome erfasst, sondern auch Kollokationen oder Kookkurrenzen der inneren Syntax sowie Charakteristika der externen Syntax (zu den beiden Termini verweise ich auf Schafroth und Imperiale 2019; Mollica 2025).

d) Die Pragmatik jedes Idioms wird hinsichtlich der bedeutungsabhängigen situativen Rahmen, der illokutiven Funktionen und des sprachlichen Registers beschrieben.

e) Die Rubrik „Didaktik“ unterstreicht den Lernerfokus, den die Projekte von Anfang an *auch* hatten: Gebrauchshinweise weisen auf subtile semantisch-pragmatische Unterschiede zwischen den beiden Sprachen hin, auf falsche Freunde oder Verwechslungsgefahren italienischer Redewendungen.

f) Videos veranschaulichen die Verwendung eines Idioms *in actu* und geben somit ein Maximum an Kontext.

g) Ferner sind die onomasiologischen Komponenten hervorzuheben: Jedem Idiom wird ein semantisches Feld zugeordnet (oder auch zwei), das auch, neben dem Alphabet, dem Suchwort (oder Schlagwort) und dem Volltext, als Suchparameter fungiert. Darüber hinaus wird jedes Idiom in analogische Beziehung gesetzt zu anderen Phrasemen und Lexemen („Thesaurus Lexeme“ und „Thesaurus Phrase“).

h) Und schließlich ermöglicht die kontextsensitive semasiologische Bedeutungs differenzierung die onomasiologische Suche nach Äquivalenten oder Quasi-Äquivalenten, wie die folgende Grafik widerspiegelt:

wenden‘, Bedeutung ‚den Rücken (zu)kehren‘) zu suchen und sich durch die Rubriken SEMANTIK, SYNTAX, PRAGMATIK, DIDAKTIK und DOWNLOADS durchzuklicken.

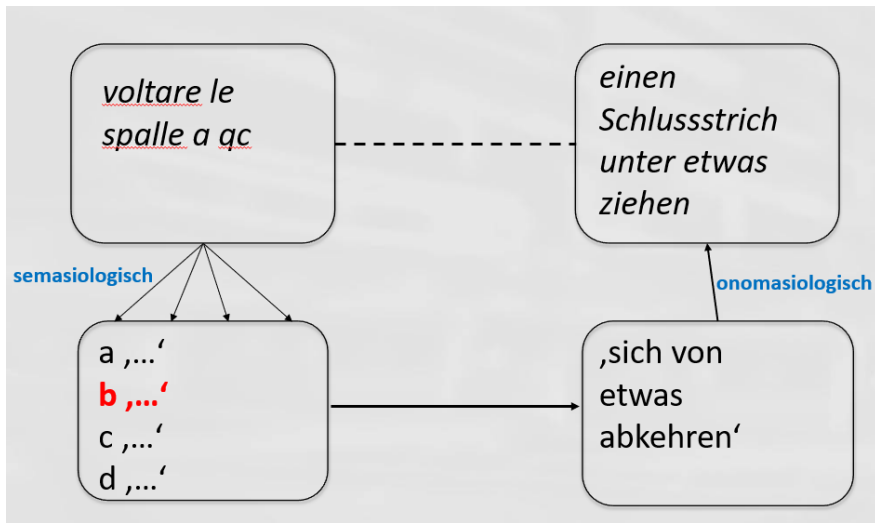


Abb. 6.2. Blickrichtungen kontrastiver Phraseologie (zunächst semasiologisch [Italienisch], danach, ausgehend von einer oder mehreren idiomatischen Bedeutungen, onomasiologisch [Deutsch])

Was IDEFITs betrifft, so beschränke ich mich im Rahmen dieses Aufsatzes auf den Hinweis, dass es auch Fälle gibt, wie das französische Idiom *mettre un bémol*, die im Sprachgebrauch vermehrt in Bedeutungen auftreten, die von der gesamten französischen Lexikographie bisher gar nicht erwähnt werden (z.B. ‚zurückrudern‘, ‚zu bedenken geben‘, ‚Abstriche machen‘). Geschweige denn, dass die ein- oder zweisprachigen Wörterbücher Luxusinformationen wie diejenige zur lexikalischen oder morphologischen Variabilität oder gar zu Valenzanschlüssen geben.

Hier stellt sich ganz konkret die Frage: Wie sollen Lernende des Französischen eine solche Verbindung verstehen – vom Erlernen will ich erst gar nicht sprechen –, wenn sie nirgends Aufschluss über ihren Bedeutungsumfang bekommen?

6. Schlussfolgerungen

In meinem Artikel sollte hervorgehoben werden, dass Phraseme sprachlich und sozial-kommunikativ viel zu komplex und vielschichtig sind, als dass sie mit einer halbzeiligen Bedeutungsparaphrase oder einem, manchmal zwei Äquivalenzvorschlägen, in ein- und zweisprachigen Wörterbüchern abgefertigt werden können. Es ist klar, dass die Verlagslexikographie nicht wesentlich mehr leisten kann. Jedoch sollte sie zumindest in der Lage sein, in jährlich neu aufgelegten Definitionswörterbüchern den Bedeutungswandel von nicht

gerade seltenen Phrasemen zu registrieren (z.B. *mettre un bémol*). Dass grundsätzlich kontextbezogene Polysemie zur Maxime werden könnte, davon ist ohnehin nicht auszugehen.

Kein Verlag wäre heute in der Lage, die Kosten für die notwendige Vorarbeit und die Ausführung, d.h. Darstellung in gedruckten Wörterbüchern, zu übernehmen. Dennoch stehen wir hier vor einem grundsätzlichen Problem, welches weder die Lexikologie noch die Lexikographie ignorieren darf, ohne ihre Glaubwürdigkeit zu verlieren. (Koesters Gensini 2013, 180)

Eine bessere lexikographische Erfassung der phraseologischen Bedeutung ist somit Aufgabe der Phraseologieforschung, der praktischen Lexikographie bzw. Phraseographie, der Korpuslinguistik und der Wörterbuchbenutzungsforschung. (Jesenšek 2021, 33)

Die beiden Zitate bestätigen dieses Defizit, wobei inzwischen klar sein dürfte, dass die Zukunft ohnehin nicht mehr der lexikographischen Printkultur gehören wird. Dennoch ist der Zustand für uns Phraseologen denkbar unbefriedigend und es bewahrheitet sich nach wie vor das, was Franz Josef Hausmann schon Ende der 1980er beklagte: dass die Verlage die Forschungsergebnisse der Universitäten nicht zur Kenntnis nehmen.

Ich habe ferner versucht zu verdeutlichen, dass ich unter einer *kontrastiven Phraseologie* nicht die mechanische und unbedingte Suche nach Äquivalenten in der Zielsprache verstehe, schon gar nicht nach Systemäquivalenten, sondern die Bereitstellung von differenziertem, gebrauchsbasiertem phraseologischem Wissen in den Einzelsprachen, um überhaupt verstehen zu können, wie und warum ein Idiom oder eine Formel von Muttersprachlern verwendet wird. Erst auf dieser Grundlage kann dann nach vergleichbaren Kontexten in der Zielsprache gesucht und so können die Bedeutungen und Illokutionen ermittelt werden. Wir benötigen also möglichst viele große Projekte, in denen mehrere Sprachen nach ein und derselben Methode phraseologisch beschrieben, digital erfasst und onomasiologisch-kontrastiv durchsucht werden können. Für die Sprichwörter und präpositionalen Konstruktionen wurde bereits Einiges vorgelegt, für die Formeln könnte das Sprachenpaar Deutsch/Französisch um weitere Sprachen erweitert werden, und so weiter.

Die Fremdsprachendidaktik wäre dankbar, wenn die Phraseologie systematisch und gebrauchsbasiert erarbeitetes und digital verfügbares Material bereitstellen würde. Erst dann kann überhaupt daran gedacht werden, Phraseme in die Curricula, Lehrwerke und den Unterricht an Gymnasien einzubauen. Der Weg, der seit einigen Jahren beschritten wird, Linguistik und Didaktik nicht nur einander näherzubringen, sondern Synergien zwischen beiden zu suchen, ist gerade im Hinblick auf das Erkennen der Konstrukthaftigkeit von Sprache einerseits und andererseits der Einsicht in die Unzulänglichkeit der

Vorstellung, Lexikon und Grammatik grundsätzlich zu trennen (vgl. Langacker 1987, 35; Cotta Ramusino und Mollica 2019, Schafroth 2021a), ausdrücklich zu begrüßen¹⁴.

7. Ausblick mit KI (?)

Ich möchte zum Schluss noch einige Gedanken zur maschinellen Übersetzung und zur künstlichen Intelligenz aufgreifen. DeepL, so heißt es, verwende „neuronalen Netze“, die mittels einer großen Menge von frei verfügbaren Sprachübersetzungen trainiert werden. Wir arbeiten inzwischen wohl alle damit und staunen mitunter darüber, wie gut diese Anwendung schon syntaktische Strukturen erkennt und im Lexembereich einigermaßen gute Ergebnisse erzielt. Das Phraseologische liegt noch größtenteils im Argen, vor allem wenn es um metaphorisch-metonymisch oder durch Wortspiel entstandene semantische Kontextvarianten geht oder irgendwie die Prosodie einen pragmatischen Mehrwert leistet.

Was die künstliche Intelligenz betrifft, so vermag ich noch nicht zu ermessen, was da alles an Neuem bzw. Verheißungsvollem oder Gefährlichem auf uns zukommt. Ich habe deshalb ein Experiment durchgeführt, dessen Quintessenz die ist, dass das Ergebnis sehr bemerkenswert war. Die folgenden Ergebnisse beziehen sich auf die folgenden Fragen an ChatGPT vom 19. Mai 2023 (eine am 21.1.2025 erfolgte identische Abfrage hat im Wesentlichen die gleichen Antworten ergeben). Im Folgenden sollen jedoch die Resultate vom 19.5.2023 präsentiert werden:

Frage an ChatGPT:

Can you give me different contexts in which the French idiom “mettre un bémol” has a different meaning? You can give the explanations in English, but the contexts must be French.

Antworten (Hervorhebungen und Formatierung von mir):

Certainly! Here are different contexts in which the French idiom “mettre un bémol” can have different meanings:

1. *Context:* A musician discussing a performance.

Meaning: “Mettre un bémol” is used to indicate that the musician wants to lower the intensity or tone of a musical piece, suggesting a need for moderation or restraint.

2. *Context:* A person giving feedback on a proposal.

Meaning: In this context, “mettre un bémol” means to express reservations or raise

14 Rezente bzw. anstehende Publikationen, die diese beiden Ansätze weiterverfolgen, sind etwa Bürgel, Gévaudan, Siepmann (2021), daraus Herbst (2021), Schafroth (2021b), Wolf und Gruber (2025), daraus Schafroth und Schafroth (2025) sowie Pustka und Reimann (2026).

a cautionary note regarding certain aspects of the proposal, suggesting the need for some adjustments or limitations.

3. *Context*: A conversation about someone's achievements.

Meaning: When used in this context, "mettre un bémol" indicates the act of downplaying or tempering someone's accomplishments or success, emphasizing the need to maintain modesty or humility.

4. *Context*: Reviewing an event or situation.

Meaning: "Mettre un bémol" is used to signify the act of highlighting certain negative or mitigating factors, providing a balanced perspective, and avoiding overly optimistic or idealistic interpretations.

5. *Context*: Discussing a decision or plan.

Meaning: In this context, "mettre un bémol" implies the act of adding a caveat or expressing caution, suggesting that there may be limitations, risks, or unforeseen circumstances that need to be considered.

Please note that the meaning of "mettre un bémol" can vary depending on the specific context and usage. These examples aim to provide you with an understanding of how the meaning can change, but there may be additional contexts and interpretations as well.

Weitere Frage an ChatGPT:

Can you also give me contexts in French for each of the meanings?

Antworten (Hervorhebungen und Formatierung von mir):¹⁵

Certainly! Here are different contexts in French for each of the meanings of the idiom "mettre un bémol":

1. *Contexte* : Un musicien discute d'une performance.

Sens : « Mettre un bémol » est utilisé pour indiquer que le musicien souhaite atténuer l'intensité ou le ton d'une pièce musicale, suggérant ainsi la nécessité de modération ou de retenue.

Exemple : « La partie finale était un peu trop énergique, je pense que nous devrions *mettre un bémol* et la jouer de manière plus douce. »

2. *Contexte* : Une personne donne son avis sur une proposition.

Sens : Dans ce contexte, « mettre un bémol » signifie exprimer des réserves ou émettre une note de prudence concernant certains aspects de la proposition, suggérant la nécessité d'apporter des ajustements ou de fixer des limites.

Exemple : « Ton idée est intéressante, mais je *mettrais un bémol* quant au coût élevé de sa mise en œuvre. Nous devons trouver un moyen de le rendre plus économique. »

3. *Contexte* : Une conversation sur les réussites de quelqu'un.

15 Die Antworten, die auf Französisch gegeben werden, entsprechen, was die Angaben zu Kontext und Bedeutung betreffen, denen in englischer Sprache (als Antworten auf die erste Frage). Zusätzlich werden nun aber Verwendungsbeispiele gegeben, die für die phraseologische Beschreibung entscheidend sind. Die Verwendung des Idioms *mettre un bémol* ist jeweils kursiv hervorgehoben.

Sens : Lorsque utilisé dans ce contexte, « mettre un bémol » indique l'acte de minimiser ou tempérer les réalisations ou le succès de quelqu'un, mettant l'accent sur la nécessité de maintenir modestie et humilité.

Exemple : « Il a accompli beaucoup de choses dans sa carrière, mais *mettons un bémol*, il n'est pas encore arrivé au sommet. Il doit continuer à travailler dur. »

4. *Contexte* : Revue d'un événement ou d'une situation.

Sens : « Mettre un bémol » est utilisé pour signifier l'acte de mettre en évidence certains facteurs négatifs ou atténuants, offrant une perspective équilibrée et évitant des interprétations trop optimistes ou idéalistes.

Exemple : « Le discours du président était inspirant, mais *mettons un bémol* sur l'absence de mesures concrètes pour mettre en œuvre ses idées. »

5. *Contexte* : Discussion d'une décision ou d'un plan.

Sens : Dans ce contexte, « mettre un bémol » implique l'acte d'ajouter une réserve ou d'exprimer de la prudence, suggérant qu'il peut y avoir des limites, des risques ou des circonstances imprévues à prendre en compte.

Exemple : « Je suis d'accord avec votre proposition, mais *mettons un bémol* concernant les éventuels obstacles juridiques qui pourraient se présenter. »

J'espère que ces exemples en français vous aideront à mieux comprendre les différents sens de l'expression « mettre un bémol » dans différents contextes.

Auf meine letzte Frage ("Did you invent the French examples yourself or did you find the sentences like those on the Internet?") wurde folgende (unzureichende) Antwort gegeben:

The responses I provide, including the French examples, are generated based on a combination of licensed data, data created by human trainers, and publicly available data. In the case of the French examples I provided, they are not directly sourced from specific sentences found on the internet or from a particular text. Instead, they are generated by the language model based on its understanding of the idiom "mettre un bémol" and its ability to generate contextually appropriate sentences.

Fazit dieses Experiments: Angesichts der Tatsache, dass das jährlich neu aufgelegte Definitionswörterbuch des Französischen, der *Petit Robert*, das Bedeutungsspektrum des im Chat-Bot abgefragten verbalen Idioms *mettre un bémol* zwar mit ‚parler moins fort; radoucir son ton, ses manières; être moins arrogant, moins exigeant‘ (‚leiser sprechen; seinen Tonfall und seine Manieren mäßigen; weniger arrogant und weniger fordernd sein‘) angibt, also durchaus eine gewisse Polysemie einräumt, jedoch die meisten der aktuell üblichen Bedeutungen nicht erfasst, war das Ergebnis dieses Experiments doch überraschend. Mit anderen Worten: Wir bekommen von einem technischen KI-gesteuerten Hilfsmittel Wissen über ein lexikographisch nur unzureichend beschriebenes Phrasem mitgeteilt, welches einem fast perfekten kontextsensitiven und korpusbasierten Wörterbucheintrag, wie er mir vorschwebt, gleichkommt.

Denn was wir als Resultat bekommen haben, lässt sich wie folgt zusammenfassen: 1. Die Kontextbedeutungen sind besser differenziert als in jedem (selbst einsprachigen) Wörterbuch. 2. Die Beispiele illustrieren die Bedeutungen in ausreichender Weise, auch wenn die Beispielsätze zum Teil stereotypisiert zu sein scheinen und die Quellen ihrer Herkunft unklar bleiben, was jedoch auch auf selbstgemachte Beispielsätze in Wörterbüchern zutrifft. Insgesamt sind wir in IDEFITTS zwar zu einer ähnlichen Beschreibung gelangt (s. den dortigen Eintrag unter dem Schlagwort *bémol*), aber nach Wochen mühsamer empirischer und lexikographischer Arbeit¹⁶.

Die naheliegende Frage, die ich hier nur zur Diskussion stellen möchte, muss also lauten: Könnte die Künstliche Intelligenz tatsächlich eines Tages aufwändige Verfahren interpretativer textbasierter Wissenschaften ersetzen, zumindest partiell? Ich denke, erst einmal müssen wir lernen, wie wir die KI gewinnbringend nutzen könnten. Was dann kommt, kann niemand wissen.

Literatur

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In diesem Beitrag wurden die folgenden Tools verwendet: ChatGPT, <https://chatgpt.com/>; DeepL, <https://www.deepl.com/de/translator>.

Phraseological non-equivalence: Possibilities of lexicographic fixation in bilingual dictionaries

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion of the problem of interlanguage equivalence, which remains challenging in the modern theory of translation. One promising solution is to use bilingual diachronic dictionaries based on parallel translation corpora, containing both authentic texts in the source language (L1) and professional translations of the same texts into the target language (L2). Drawing on the materials of two Russian-German dictionaries, this study addresses the nature of interlanguage phraseological non-equivalence in diachrony and explains the rationale behind creating a diachronic corpus of parallel translations. It presents a corpus-based diachronic translation phraseological dictionary, which is based on a series of investigations into the technique and quality of 30 parallel translations of five major novels by F.M. Dostoevskij into German performed between 1882 and 2003. The concept, structure and principles of building such a novel type of dictionary are described and illustrated by using fragments of the Russian-German diachronic translation dictionaries of lexical and syntactic phraseological units. The provisions underlying the development of a diachronic corpus of parallel translations are formulated. The importance of relying on translation techniques in the development of a diachronic corpus of parallel translations is substantiated.

Keywords: translation; non-equivalence; bilingual dictionary; phraseography; lexical and syntactic phraseological units

1. Introduction

Interlinguistic non-equivalence remains one of the central issues in the modern theory of translation. It cannot be embraced in its entirety, for non-equivalence is among perennial questions, which preserve their meaning and timeliness at all stages of translation development, and which are constantly redefined as factual material and new knowledge gained. However, this does not mean that the problem is impossible to solve. Progress in understanding the lack of direct

equivalents is becoming visible in terms of strategies: in refocusing on new aspects, presenting new theoretical justifications, searching for possibilities of lexicographic registration of non-equivalent units.

In solving the problem of non-equivalence, bilingual diachronic dictionaries based on corpora of translated texts are of particular value. Recently, scholars have repeatedly emphasized the usefulness of parallel corpora for retrieving evidence of lexical non-equivalence not from the intuition of dictionary makers, but from authentic sources in the original language and their professional translations into the target language (Baranov and Dobrovol'skij 2009, 41). The present study highlights the need to create translation dictionaries that present non-equivalence in synchronic and diachronic aspects and introduces a new type of resource – a diachronic translation dictionary.

Lexicographers point out that non-equivalent units are often overlooked in teaching and translation practice (Devkin 2005, 372). To address the practical challenges of teaching foreign languages, translation and compiling dictionaries, it is essential to identify and describe the differences in the use of phraseological units and to determine the most appropriate way to convey the meaning of a given expression in L1 by means of L2 (Baranov and Dobrovol'skij 2009). It is therefore useful to compile bilingual dictionaries of non-equivalent words, expressions, and structures that show possible translation variants for source-language units lacking direct equivalents, based on large corpora of parallel translations produced in different periods.

This paper presents a dictionary compiled by the author, focusing on the translation of non-equivalent units in the works of F. M. Dostoevskij. The choice of Dostoevskij's texts as source material is deliberate: he is among the most translated authors in the world. The Romanian scholar Kovach (2008) emphasizes that according to the world citation frequency, F. M. Dostoevskij's works come second only to the Bible and Shakespeare's plays; notably, most of these citations come from translations. Despite being thoroughly studied in their receptive aspect, translations of Dostoevskij's works have not been given due attention in terms of the technique and quality of translation. Only at the end of the 20th century, did Translation Studies start to develop, including the analysis of translation strategies, the quality of communicating the author's style and other factors influencing translators' choices and solutions. At the beginning of the 21st century, this aspect is still being actively developed. A stimulus for developing this approach, at least in the Russian theory of translation, has been provided by Dobrovol'skij, whose corpus-based analyses of literary translation (Dobrovol'skij 2009) provide the theoretical and methodological foundation of the current study.

The appearance of parallel corpora has revolutionized linguistic research, making it possible to set and solve completely new tasks related to the examination of large arrays of texts, and the study of language change dynamics

(Plungjan 2009). They allow us to study linguistic units of any level in their real use in discourse (Zacharov and Bogdanova 2011, 147). A new “corpus era” in translation lexicography has begun. Parallel translation corpora are now used to select translation options for bilingual dictionaries.

Currently, the focus in bilingual phraseography has shifted towards identifying individual features of the functioning of comparable phraseological units in discourse and improving their lexicographic representation in dictionaries (Dobrovol'skij 2011). Of particular interest is bilingual historical phraseography (Filatkina 2012). The corpus-based methodology makes it possible to expand the boundaries of translation studies and bilingual phraseography (Alekseyeva and Pavlova 2019; Dobrovol'skij 2020; Mellado Blanco 2021; Olimpio 2016). By means of a diachronic corpus of translations it is possible to see new non-standard solutions to the problem of phraseological non-equivalence. The lexicographic documentation of non-equivalent units in diachrony reveals a wide range of strategies for conveying phraseology in L2, and highlights both the possibilities and boundaries of the target language, as well as the evolution of translation techniques over time. In this paper, I present my experience of using a diachronic corpus in the development of a Russian-German diachronic phraseological dictionary.

2. Theoretical background of the research

The creation of a diachronic corpus of parallel translations has a long history, as multiple studies have examined the technique and quality of 30 parallel translations of five major novels by F.M. Dostoevskij from 1882 to 2003 (Aleskeyeva 2007, 2008, 2013, 2016, 2021; Alekseyeva and Pavlova 2019).

Since there are no complete correspondences in the system of the target language, non-equivalent units are fixed in bilingual dictionaries in different ways. The method depends on the type of phraseological units, being either lexical (descriptively, using substitutions with close correspondences, using words with a narrower or wider meaning, etc.) or syntactic (calquing with preservation of the image, translation through a sentence similar to a construction, using a modal meaning, a particle, an adverb).

In bilingual lexicography, the search for methods of representing non-equivalent units continues (Balabanova 2004; Schafroth 2014; Schafroth and Imperiale 2019; Zolotareva and Nguyen 2018). I propose a new method – recording non-equivalent units by means of diachronic, corpus-based translation dictionaries and reference books. Due to the lack of equivalents at the level of the two language systems, it is advisable to rely on professional translators' experience. Such experience is essential, as multiple translations provide a wealth of material for bilingual lexicography and allow a deeper study of the phenomenon of non-equivalence, covering the work of several generations of

translators. The works of classical world literature are especially well-suited as a material for creating such dictionaries.

The data for this study were drawn from phraseological units used in five most famous novels by F.M. Dostoevskij: *Demons*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *The Idiot*, *The Gambler*, *Crime and Punishment*, and 30 parallel translations of these works into German, made from the late 19th to the early 21st century¹. Interestingly, changes in the translation technique occurred roughly every 20 years. Table 1 illustrates the periods that reveal the dynamics of these changes: the 1880-1890s, 1900-1920s, 1920-1930s, 1950-1960s, 1970-80s, and 1990-2000s.

Table 1: Parallel diachronic corpus of Dostoevskij's translations into German (1882-2003)

Title of the novel	Translations into German					
	1880-90s	1900- 1920s	1920-30s	1950-60s	1970-80s	From 1990s
<i>The Gambler</i> , 1866	L.A. Hauff, 1890	E.K. Rahsin, 1910	H. Röhl, 1921	H. Lorenz, 1958	W. Creutziger, 1971	E. Markstein, 1992
<i>The Idiot</i> , 1868	A. Scholz, 1889	E. Rahsin, 1912	H. Röhl, 1923	H. Lorenz, 1958	H. Herboth, 1986	S. Geier, 1996
<i>Demons</i> , 1873	H. Putze, 1888	E.K. Rahsin, 1906	H. Röhl, 1921	M. Kegel, 1961	G. Dalitz, 1985	S. Geier, 1998
<i>The Brothers Karamazov</i> , 1880	H. von Samson – Himelstjer-na, 1884	E.K. Rahsin, 1906	R. von Walter, 1930	H. Ruoff und R. Hoffmann, 1958	W. Creutziger, 1981	S. Geier, 2003
<i>Crime and Punishment</i> , 1866	W. Henckel, 1882	H. Röhl, 1909	W. Bergengrün, 1935	R. Hoffmann, 1960	M. Bräuer und R. Bräuer, 1984	S. Geier, 1994

As a result, the first diachronic Russian-German dictionaries of realia appeared: two printed diachronic Russian-German dictionaries of realia (Alekseyeva 2007, 2016), an electronic, colour-illustrated diachronic Russian-German reference dictionary of realia (Alekseyeva 2008), and a diachronic Russian-German dictionary of non-equivalent lexical phraseological units, and a diachronic Russian-German dictionary of non-equivalent syntactic phraseological units, currently under development.

¹ All cited text fragments and translated examples are reproduced in accordance with scholarly quotation standards and copyright exceptions for research and criticism. Each example includes clear attribution to the original author, translator, and publication year. No complete passages or commercially sensitive material are reproduced in full, and all examples serve solely to illustrate linguistic and translational phenomena discussed in this study.

3. Findings

The structure of the diachronic translation dictionary is as follows. Each dictionary entry includes six translation equivalents for an input unit from parallel translations that belong to different periods and thus reflect a particular stage of translation history. For each period, the equivalent chosen represents the most frequent or contextually representative variant occurring in that translation. If several variants appeared within one period, the most salient idiomatic form was selected. These dictionaries show translation multiplicity: a large variety of possible translation decisions, trends in translation practice, diachronic lexical and phraseological changes.

The phraseological units are arranged alphabetically by the first letters of the reference components, provided with interpretations, if necessary, historical references-comments, stylistic marks, and parallel translations in chronological order. Also, the frequency of use of phrases in speech is indicated in accordance with the data of the main corpus of the *Russian National Corpus*.

A dictionary entry of the diachronic translation dictionary comprises a lemma with parallel translation equivalents, explanations, and illustrations. It consists of a dictionary unit, an explanation of the meaning of the word taken from definition dictionaries, a context with the page number and asynchronous parallel translations with the specification of the translator, the year of publication, and the number of the page containing this word. The entry word and its German variants of translation are given in bold.

Thus, each dictionary entry comprises the following main parts:

- lemma (an entry word or word combination);
- semantization (a definition of the meaning of the entry word);
- illustration area (the entry word in the context of the original work);
- equivalent area (variants of translation in the context of a particular translation of the work).

As distinct from bilingual dictionaries of the main type with the structure “lexeme of the input language → lexeme of the output language”, the diachronic translation dictionary contains six parallel variants of translation in context with comments.

3.1 Diachronic Russian-German dictionary of non-equivalent lexical phraseological units

The microstructure of the dictionary contains several clear-cut areas:

- area 1 – a dictionary unit: a phraseological unit (and its variants, if available);
- area 2 – explanations of the meaning of a word taken from the explanatory dictionaries of the Russian language (if necessary, historical references-comments are introduced), stylistic labels, indications of the frequency of use in written and oral speech (w/o) based on data from the main corpus of the *Russian National Corpus* (RNC);

- area 3 – the dictionary unit in the context of the writer's novel (equal to one sentence) in the original language with the indication of the page, which allows, if necessary, referring to a broader context;
- area 4 – six parallel translations indicating the initials of the translator, the year of the first publication of the translation, and the page on which the word is located; this is followed by the German translation options in chronological order;
- area 5 (optional) – translation explanations (if available) are entered immediately after the translation, indicating their form: page footnotes or endnotes.

Below is a fragment from the Russian-German dictionary of lexical phraseological units:

(1)

Phraseological unit	<i>glaza zagorelis</i> ²
Dictionary	kogo-libo strastno chočet imet', polučit' čto-libo ³
Style	colloquial style, occas. disapproval or humor
Frequency	w/o 84/high
Russian context	On pokrasnel, glaza ego zagorelis', guby vzdrognuli (“The Brothers Karamazov”, p. 143). ⁴
Translation 1:	Sein Antlitz rötete sich, die Augen flammten, die Lippen zitterten (S. H. 1884, 183).
Translation 2:	Er wurde rot, seine Augen flackerten auf, und die Lippen erbeben (E. R. 1906, 224).
Translation 3:	Er wurde rot, seine Augen brannten, die Lippen bebten (R. W. 1930, 117).
Translation 4:	Er war rot geworden, seine Augen glühten, die Lippen zitterten ihm (H. R. und R. H. 1958, 191).
Translation 5:	Röte war ihm in die Wangen geschossen, in seinen Augen war etwas aufgeflackert, seine Lippen zuckten (W. C. 1981, 221).
Translation 6:	Er wurde rot, seine Augen flackerten, die Lippen zuckten (S. G. 2003, 224).

As (1) shows, professional translators perfectly cope with their task, selecting units (words or phrases having a metaphorical meaning) with a similar meaning in the absence of formal similarity, or conveying them descriptively, by various means of the translation language using a free combination of words, while the choice of translated equivalents varies widely. But descriptive translations are not units of the phraseological system of another language. This dictionary

2 *Lit.* ‘eyes lit up’, meaning ‘has developed a strong desire to definitely obtain somebody, appropriate something.’

3 *Lit.* ‘has developed a strong desire to definitely obtain, appropriate something.’

4 *Lit.* ‘He flushed, his eyes lit up, and his lips twitched.’

outlines the possibilities and boundaries of the language, shows possible translation techniques, the dynamics of changes in translation techniques in diachrony, and the creative individuality of translators. It helps us identify the most appropriate ways to convey a phraseological unit by means of another language using an idiom, sometimes a free combination, a single word, an occasional figurative expression, or a paraphrase.

Dictionary entries are ordered alphabetically by the basic constituent of the phraseological unit, which is highlighted with an underscore (for example, *dva aršina s malym*, lit. 'two yards with a small one'). When choosing a reference constituent, we rely on the concept proposed in the "Phraseological Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language" based on the following hierarchy by Baranov and Dobrovol'skij (2009, 16): a noun, an adjective, an adverb, a numeral, a verb, a pronoun, a preposition, a conjunction, a particle, and an interjection.

If there are two constituents of the same level, ordering is carried out according to the first of them. For example, the phraseological unit *ne ostalos' v duše i sleda*, lit. 'not left in the soul and even a trace', should be searched for by the reference word *duša*, lit. 'soul'. If there are no nouns, then adjectives should be chosen, etc.

Optional constituents in square brackets are not taken into account when establishing the order of succession. So, for example, the phraseological unit *v maline [byt' / žit']*, lit. 'in raspberry [to be / live]' is ordered in the dictionary under the word *malina*, lit. 'raspberry'.

The sequence number of the phraseological unit is determined by the first letter of the reference constituent and then the order of idioms for this letter is taken into account, as illustrated in (2):

(2)

A – 1. *dva aršina s malym*⁵,

D – 1. *ne ostalos' v duše i sleda*⁶,

D – 2. *duch zamiraet*⁷,

D – 3. *duch zachvatyvaet*⁸.

Variants of phraseological units' constituents are given next to the main one using a slash, for instance: *glaza žagorelis' / razgorelis' u kogo-to na čto-to*, lit. 'eyes lit up/flared up at somebody for something.'

The morphological features of the dependent constituents of a phraseological unit are indicated in italics (without bold), for example: *znat' čto-libo / kogo-libo kak pjat' pal'cev*, lit. 'to know something/somebody like five fingers.'

5 Lit. 'two yards with a small one'

6 Lit. 'not left in the soul and even a trace'

7 Lit. 'breath is seizing'

8 Lit. 'breath is captured'

Verbs are introduced in the infinitive, , except for verb phraseological units that occur in a fixed personal form, for example: *sletelo s jazyka*, lit. ‘flew off the tongue’; *sled prostyl*, lit. ‘the trace is gone.’

Notations are also shown in italics, see (3):

(3)

ševelit' mozgami

*prost. ekspres.*⁹

The frequency of phraseological units in written and oral discourse (W/O frequency) is determined according to the data from the main corpus of the *Russian National Corpus* comprising 389,471,513 tokens. For written discourse, the number of occurrences in the main corpus search results is indicated.

The comment area is used when it is necessary to provide additional information about the functioning or origin of a phraseological unit. Several types of comments are introduced in the dictionary:

- grammatical, for example, ‘to be used only as part of an exclamation sentence’; implemented in the infinitive form or in the form of the 2nd, less often the 1st person singular in the future tense;
- cultural and historical: about the origin;
- compatibility, for example, is usually used with the words *neobchodimo*, lit. ‘necessary’; *nužno*, lit. ‘needed’; or in the form of an imperative;
- pragmatic – when commenting on individual meanings, for example, when referring to a non-literary work, the effect of irony is possible.

Comments include information about the fixed order of constituents, stating, for example, that word order change is impossible.

3.2 Diachronic Russian-German dictionary of non-equivalent syntactic phraseological units

Syntactic phraseological units are stable multi-word grammatical forms that are usually partially filled with “small” (more often service) words (“anchors”) and open vacant positions (“slots”), which are filled directly in speech by various lexemes or combinations of lexemes. Such constructions are idiomatic, as their meaning is not deducible from the sum of grammatical and lexical meanings of their constituent elements.

For example, in order to adequately understand the expression *vsem gorodam gorod*, lit. ‘to all cities city’, meaning ‘the best city’; or *vsem učiteljam učitel*, lit. ‘to all teachers teacher’, meaning ‘the best teacher’, it is not enough to know the possible grammatical meanings of the nominative and dative case and the lexical meanings of the words *all*, *city*, *teacher*. It is required to perceive and understand the construction as a whole, possessing its own special meaning, not deducible

9 Lit. ‘to move your brain *uneducated speech, expressive*’

from its elements and their sum, even though concrete nouns in the dative plural and in the nominative singular in this construction are dependent on the meaning of the elements and their sum.

This construction generally means appreciation, praise and is used in the syntactic role of the predicate. The pronoun *all*, the repetition of the noun following it, its use first in the Dative plural and then in the nominative singular are constant, so the construction model immediately emerges: *vsem*, lit. 'to all' N1dat.pl. N1nom.sg., where N1dat.pl. is a noun in the dative plural and N1nom.sg. is the same noun in the nominative singular.

Such stable syntactic models, which are constantly reproduced and filled in speech with concrete lexicon, are retrieved from memory not element by element, but as a whole, and have, as already mentioned, idiomatic character. They reveal all the features of phraseological units (stability, reproducibility, idiomaticity, fixed prosodic contour) and syntactic constructions (multicomponent, presence of constant and variable components, and fulfilment of a certain syntactic role in a sentence):

A syntactic phraseme is a surface-syntactic tree containing no full lexical nodes (its nodes are labelled with either lexemic variables or structural words) but possessing a specific signified, having as its signifier a specific syntactic construction, and a specific prosody, and featuring as well a specific syntactics. (Meřčuk 1995, 215)

The structure of the Russian-German dictionary of syntactic phraseological units is the same as that of the previous dictionary. The microstructure contains the same clear-cut areas: lemma (syntactic phraseological unit), semantization (a definition of the meaning of the entry unit), illustration area (syntactic phraseological unit in the context of the original work) and equivalent area (variants of translation in the context of a particular translation of the work).

Below is a fragment from the Russian-German dictionary of syntactic phraseological units (4):

(4)

Phraseological unit	Da kakoj (-aja, -oe, -ie) + [že / ž/ už] + eto + N1! ¹⁰
Dictionary	expresses scepticism or implicit denial
Style	colloquial style, occas. disapproval or humor
Frequency	high
Russian context	Sonja vsplesnula rukami. - Da neužel', neužel' eto vse vžpravdu! Gospodi, da kakaja ž eto pravda! Kto že etomu možet poverit? ("The Brothers Karamazov", p. 199) ¹¹

10 Lit. 'what a + [same / w/ already] + this is + N1!'

11 Lit. 'Sonja threw up her hands. - Yes, really, really, it's all real! My God, what a truth it is! Who can believe it?'

Translation 1:	Sonja schlug die Hände zusammen. «Ist es denn wirklich, wirklich möglich? Herr Gott, wie war denn das möglich! Wer kann das glauben?...» (S. H. 1882, B. II, 153).
Translation 2:	Not translated (E. R. 1906).
Translation 3:	Sonja schlug die Hände zusammen. «Aber ist denn das alles wirklich wahr? Herr Gott, wenn das wahr wäre! Wer soll das denn glauben?...» (W.B. 1930, 496).
Translation 4:	Sonja rang die Hände. «Aber ist es denn wirklich wahr, ist es wirklich wahr? O Gott, wie kann das nur wahr sein! Wer vermag das zu glauben?...» (H. R. und R. H. 1960, 528).
Translation 5:	Sonja rang die Hände. «Ist denn das wirklich, wirklich alles wahr? Großer Gott, wie soll das wahr sein! Wer kann so etwas glauben?...» (M.B. and R.B. 1984, B. I, 529).
Translation 6:	Sonja schlug die Hände zusammen. «Kann denn das wirklich, wirklich alles wahr sein? Mein Gott, was ist das für eine Wahrheit! Wer kann das glauben?...» (S. G. 2003, 558).

Translation options are presented in chronological order. The first publication of each translation was taken into account.

3.3 The purpose of the dictionary

The purpose of the dictionary is to provide information about the meaning of the input unit, suggesting variants of translation, compactly and vividly demonstrate the traditions of its translation, and thus help the translator either to make their own decision in a particular context on the basis of the experience accumulated by many generations of translators, or to use one of the correspondences provided in the dictionary.

This dictionary is designed primarily for specialists in the field of the theory, practice, history, and lexicography of translation, as well as for practicing translators, university students, teachers of foreign languages, translation, and a wide range of foreign language learners.

4. Conclusion

Adequate translation of the idiomatic meaning remains one of the most difficult tasks of bilingual phraseography, since the lemma and its foreign-language correspondences must preserve the syntactic and lexical structure, meaning and internal form. The development of diachronic translation dictionaries is a promising direction in bilingual phraseography, as the study of a large number of translated equivalents can shed light on temporary changes in the language, the possibilities of translating phraseological units, as well as translation strategies, translation preferences and translation quality.

The problem of non-equivalence remains one of the central problems in modern translation theory. It is impossible to cover it in its entirety since non-equivalence is one of the eternal questions that retain their significance and relevance at all stages of the development of translation theory and lexicographic theory, being constantly reconsidered as the accumulation of factual material and new knowledge. This, however, does not mean that the problem is unsolvable. Progress in its understanding is manifested in a strategic attitude: re-orientation to new aspects, presentation of new theoretical justifications, search for opportunities for lexicographic fixation of non-equivalent lexical units.

The development of the type of dictionary described in this paper can help address this problem. This study highlights the need to create bilingual dictionaries that represent the phenomenon of non-equivalence in both synchronic and diachronic perspectives and proposes the concept of a dictionary functioning as a reference work for non-equivalent lexical units. Such dictionaries demonstrate how the problem of non-equivalence at the level of the language system is solved at the level of discourse – in translation practice. Translators use different methods; in this way, it becomes possible to analyze multiple recurring equivalents, determine the most successful translation solutions and trace the dynamics of changes in translation technique and language use over time.

These dictionaries can serve both as dictionaries and reference works on phraseology of the late 19th century. The translation experience, compactly and systemically presented in diachronic translation dictionaries, can provide valuable illustrative and research material for further studies in translation practice.

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Translating phraseologisms in comics. The example of an Asterix album

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ABSTRACT

This paper will examine how phraseologisms found in a comic book may be rendered in translation. The database will consist of a comic album from the Asterix series. First, a classification of possible correspondences between phraseologisms in a source and a target language will be proposed; then, the phraseologisms identified in the original and in the German and Italian translations will be analysed from a quantitative and a qualitative perspective; particular attention will be paid to such phenomena as compensation, dephraseologization and defrosting.

Keywords: phraseologism; comics; French; German, Italian

1. Introduction

This paper aims to investigate and discuss how phraseologisms found in comics are rendered in translation. An Asterix album (*La rose et le glaive*, Uderzo 1991a)¹ will serve as a corpus; the French original will be compared with its Italian and German versions (Uderzo 1991b, Uderzo 1991c).

Comics constitute a stimulating field of analysis for linguistic studies. On the one hand, they combine language and images: it may prove insightful to explore in which respect the presence of images can influence the way the linguistic component is rendered in another language (Packard *al et.* 2019, 9), especially from the point of view of phraseological units². On the other hand,

1 A short summary of the plot: the bard moves out of the Gaulish village and is replaced by a woman-bard from Lutetia, who tries to bring feminist ideas to the village women — much to the displeasure of the men, who also move into the forest. At the same time, Caesar sends a women's centuria to the Gaulish village: he hopes to defeat the Gauls, as he knows that their gallantry forbids beating women. But the plan does not work out — the bond between the village women and their men is at least as strong as female solidarity.

2 Since comics are a multimodal type of narrative combining both a visual and a textual component, one issue that may be addressed is the interplay between these two levels — namely, how multimodal cohesion (van Leeuwen 2005, 248; Schubert and Sanchez-Stockhammer

comic authors typically rely on a language variety close to conceptional orality (Fiedler 2004; Rodríguez Abella 2020; Kern 2022), although this orality is purely fictitious (*fingierte Mündlichkeit*, Berg-Henjum 2004). Asterix albums are also particularly rich in quips, puns, and idiomatic expressions. So, we may expect to encounter instances of phraseologisms, as suggested by Naciscione (2010, 92): “[a]s PU [phraseological units, A.M.] are figurative, cohesive combinations of words, they easily lend themselves to word play for every figurative constituent invariably has a literal meaning at the same time”. As for the state of the art, there are a few studies investigating how word plays or proper nouns in Asterix albums were translated into other languages (see a review in Zanettin 2014), but no paper focusing on the translation of phraseologisms could be found.

The structure of this contribution is as follows: after some theoretical premises (Section 2), a quantitative and a qualitative analysis will be carried out (Section 3). The issue of compensation will be dealt with separately in Section 4, followed by concluding remarks and further research perspectives (Section 5).

2. Theoretical premises

To identify and classify phraseologisms in the Asterix album, we will rely on a broad definition, taken from Gries (2011):

[...] a phraseologism is [...] the co-occurrence of a form or a lemma of a lexical item and one or more additional linguistic elements of various kinds which functions as one semantic unit in a clause or sentence and whose frequency of co-occurrence is larger than expected on the basis of chance. (Gries 2011, 6)

This definition includes idioms, collocations, light verb constructions as well as proverbs and catchphrases: this allows us to cover the whole spectrum of idiomatic expressions.

The analysis of the phraseological units will be carried out following an onomasiological approach, as suggested in Korhonen (2007, 575): given that semantic equivalence between the source and the target text should be possibly preserved, we will concentrate on the formal means that translators resorted to in order to achieve it. The original French text was first searched for phraseologisms; then, the corresponding items in the Italian and German translations

2022) is created and maintained throughout the narrative itself. This issue becomes even more crucial in translation, as typically only the textual component changes while the visual one remains unchanged. Due to space reasons, the question cannot be explored in depth; however, we will cursorily point out instances where translators prioritize the preservation of multimodal cohesion, i.e. the relationship between text and image, over equivalence or analogy of phraseological units, i.e. the textual level alone.

were filed³. Once the data were gathered, the question was addressed whether the constructions used in the target text (TT) were to be considered equivalent to those occurring in the source text (ST). This requires defining what is meant by ‘equivalence’ in the realm of phraseologisms in translation. For the purposes of this study, the tripartition ‘full vs. partial vs. no equivalence’ described e.g. in Korhonen (2004), Kollner (2007) and — much earlier — in Dobrovolskij (1992) served as a theoretical reference point and was rearranged to distinguish between four types of correspondence: equivalence, analogy, “phraseologism at all costs”, and no equivalence.

If we regard phraseologisms as constructions, that is, according to Goldberg’s definition, as “combinations of form and meaning” (Goldberg 2006, 1), the four types differ in the way the relationship between both sides of the construction in the ST is preserved (or not) in the TT. Equivalent phraseologisms show a 1:1-correspondence in form and meaning in the original and the translation, the form side possibly displaying some minor structural or lexical divergences; instead, analogous phraseologisms exhibit a different form, but have the same meaning. In (1)⁴ the German translation is equivalent to the original French with slight syntactic differences and a different sentence polarity (negative vs. affirmative: ‘We should not scream before it hurts.’ vs. ‘We should only scream when it hurts.’); instead, the Italian counterpart relies on a formally different phraseologism (lit. ‘We should not bandage our head prematurely.’), which, however, has the same meaning as the original one. So, the Italian translation of (1) would be an example of analogy.

(1)

Bah ! Ne crions pas avant d’avoir mal, Astérix ! (16)

Bah! Non fasciamoci la testa anzitempo!

Na na! Erst schreien, wenn es wehtut, Asterix!

As Korhonen (2007) remarks, equivalence is often ‘naturally’ given when phraseologisms in different languages are based on famous quotations or catch-phrases, which may hint at a shared cultural background. This can be found in our data, too: the sentence in (2), uttered by the woman-bard, is a modified quotation from the film *Spartacus* by Stanley Kubrick (1960), «Slaves you were and slaves you remain», whereas (3) recalls the translation in the three languages of *All’s well that ends well*, a play by William Shakespeare.

3 The following sources were used, among others, as references to identify and classify phraseologisms: TLFi (n.d.) for French, Treccani (n.d.) for Italian and Quasthoff (2011), Schemann (2011) for German.

4 In the examples, the original French is quoted first, followed by the Italian and the German translation. The page number given in brackets refers to Uderzo (1991a, 1991b, 1991c): it is the same in the original and the translations.

(2)

Pff !!! Esclaves vous étiez, esclaves vous resterez ! (32)

Tzè!... Schiave siete e schiave resterete.

Pfff!!! Sklavinnen seid ihr gewesen, Sklavinnen werdet ihr bleiben!

(3)

Tout est bien qui finit bien. (48)

Tutto è bene ciò che finisce bene!

Ende gut, alles gut.

The third type of correspondence between phraseologisms was provisionally labelled “phraseologism at all costs”: this category includes occurrences in which the translators’ priority was to insert a phraseologism in the TT – e.g. one containing a particular lexical item – irrespective of the fact that the phraseologism they selected had the same form and meaning as the one in the ST. For instance, in (4) a villager is commenting on the fact that the chief of the village was hit by his wife and now has a black eye. In French, the phraseologism *taper dans l’œil* is used, which can have two readings, a literal (‘to hit in the eye’) and a figurative one (‘to catch someone’s eye’). Also, it contains the word *œil* ‘eye’ with direct reference to the picture, in which the chief appears with a black eye. So, both meanings of the phraseologism are realised: the chief’s wife hit him in the eye and – as a consequence – she must have caught his attention.

(4)

On dirait que Bonemine lui a tapé dans l’œil ! (20)

A quanto pare Beniamina gli ha dato nell’occhio!

Das sieht aus, als wär’s ins Auge gegangen!

The German and Italian translators were keen on recreating the cohesion between image and words of the original: both chose phraseologisms containing the word ‘eye’: *dare nell’occhio* (lit. ‘to give in the eye’, meaning ‘to attract someone’s attention’) and *ins Auge gehen* (lit. ‘to go in the eye’, meaning ‘to take a bad turn (of situations)’). Both have a figurative meaning; a literal meaning is not given but is somewhat forced by the presence of the chief having a black eye in the picture⁵: this way the double meaning of the original can be regarded as be-

5 In the Italian translation, the literal meaning may also be hinted at by the insertion of an indirect object (*gli*), which is actually not part of the valency of the phraseological unit and in some way contributes to dephraseologising the idiom.

ing preserved in the translations through picture-induced dephraseologisation, i.e. the actualisation of the literal (i.e. compositional) meaning of the idiom⁶.

The last type is the absence of correspondence between ST and TT. In some cases, neither the form, nor the (exact) meaning are rendered through a phraseologism in the TT, like in (5), where *pas de quartier* ‘no mercy’ is translated as ‘no exceptions’ in Italian and ‘Do not think! Sink the ships!’ in German: in neither language a phraseologism is used⁷.

(5)

César a dit pas de témoins, donc, pas de quartier ! (19)

Cesare ha detto niente testimoni... perciò niente eccezioni!

Cäsar hat gesagt, keine Zeugen, also nicht denken! Schiffe versenken!

In other cases of no equivalence, the form is not rendered through a phraseologism, but the meaning is preserved, as in (6): instead of using a corresponding idiom, the Italian and German translators paraphrase the meaning of the original (‘this is not fair’) through a non-idiomatical expression⁸.

(6)

Ouais! Si les Romains s’assomment entre eux, ça c’est pas du jeu ! (28)

Sissì, ma non è mica giusto che si faccian fuori tra di loro!

Jau! Wenn die Römer sich gegenseitig verprügeln, ist das ungerecht!

3. Analysis

After introducing the categories used to classify phraseologisms, in this section it will be observed how they were rendered in translation. From a quantitative point of view, the majority of phraseologisms in the ST appear as equivalent or analogous phraseologisms in the TT. Italian shows a higher percentage

6 We distinguish between phraseologisation as a process leading frequently co-occurring lexical items from compositional to idiomatic meaning (i.e. creating a semantic unit, as in Gries’s (2011) above citation) and dephraseologisation (or dual actualisation) as the opposite process, re-actualizing the compositional meaning of the combination of co-occurring lexical items, i.e. semantically disassembling the semantic unit into its constituents (Polyakova 2017, 384). Dephraseologisation is potentially intrinsic to any phraseologism and may particularly occur in literature, journalism, advertising, and any text genre in which the sender aims at catching the receiver’s attention (Jaki 2015, 70).

7 On the other hand, both translators try to preserve the parallelism *pas de...*, *pas de...* in some way: in Italian we have the parallelism *niente... niente...* as well as the nearly-rhyme *testimoni/ eccezioni*; in German we only have rhyming words, *denken/ versenken*.

8 We may notice that the Italian translation of (6) contains an idiomatic expression (*far fuori*, lit. ‘to make out’, meaning ‘to kill’), which may be regarded as an instance of compensation (see section 4).

of equivalents (see Table 1). In fact, only in few cases do we have a parallel correspondence (i.e. a phraseologism is rendered through an equivalent or an analogous one both in Italian and in German). This does not surprise: as mentioned above, perfect equivalence is most likely given when quotations or catch-phrases are involved which derive from works with broad diffusion within a (socio)cultural space, as it may be the case with the Bible.

We may notice as well that about one third of the phraseologisms show no equivalence in German, whereas this percentage in Italian is about 20%. The reasons behind these cases remain inscrutable, as we cannot know the translators' intentions: still, we may suppose that they could not find a suitable equivalent phraseologism and decided to render the plain meaning of the original in order to preserve semantic equivalence between the ST and the TT; also, they may have selected an alternative rendering for stylistic reasons or because they found a phraseologism would not be the best translatory solution in a given linguistic, situational, or figurative context.

Table 1: The rendering of the phraseologisms in the TT

	Italian		German	
	Occurrences	Percentage	Occurrences	Percentage
Equivalence	20	37,7%	15	28,3%
Analogy	14	26,4%	12	22,6%
Phraseologism at all costs	8	15,1%	9	17%
No equivalence	11	20,8%	17	32,1%
Total	53	100%	53	100%

As Table 1 shows, “phraseologisms at all costs” constitute the least frequent occurrences. Still, they will be granted particular attention in the following: the translators' choice to give up semantic equivalence between ST and TT to preserve the mere presence of a phraseologism must have had quite compelling reasons, which may have to do with contextualisation. Kollner (2007) and Dobrovolskij (2011) state that phraseologisms cease to exist as isolated units when they are embedded in a text: they enter a relationship with the co-text and the context, which may eventually lead to dephraseologisation or defrosting⁹. Concerning comics, this relationship may be of textual and/or extra-textual

⁹ The term ‘defrosting’ (Yakubovich 2015) is used in this contribution to refer to a phraseologism undergoing structural changes but preserving, at least on a subtextual level, its original meaning: it can be regarded as successful if the receiver can recognize it as a modified version of a phraseological unit. So, whereas dephraseologisation changes the meaning side of a phraseological construction, making it compositional, defrosting plays with its form side, but leaves its original meaning basically untouched.

nature, i.e. it may involve multimodal cohesion. One example has already been discussed in section 2: in (4), three different phraseologisms containing the word ‘eye’ were used to maintain the link between the figurative and the linguistic dimension. The same holds true for cases like the one reported in (7).

(7)

On me tape dessus *à tout bout de chant* et en plus, on me remplace par une étrangère ! (6)

Visto che senza un... motivo mi piazzano in un... canto e mi rimpiazzano con una straniera, [...]

Beim geringsten Ton zieht man mir eins über, und dann ersetzt man mich noch durch eine Fremde!

The bard is complaining that when he begins singing, he is immediately hit by some of the villagers. The expression *à tout bout de chant*, literally meaning ‘at any beginning of singing’, contains a phonetic-phonological pun, as it has the same phonetic realisation as the phraseologism *à tout bout de champ* ‘all of the time, at all times’: the bard contextualizes (defrosts) it by referring it to himself and his experience (he immediately – i.e. *at all times* – gets thumped when *he starts singing*). The non-defrosted phraseologism has analogous counterparts in Italian and German: *a ogni piè sospinto* (lit. ‘at every step’, meaning ‘at every moment’) and *beim geringsten Anlass* (‘on the slightest pretext’). While the Italian one doesn’t lend itself to defrosting, the German translator changes *Anlass* with *Ton* ‘sound’, thus adapting the idiom to the context on the one side – the phonetic-phonological pun cannot be preserved, though – and preserving a direct link to the original, non-defrosted phraseologism on the other. The Italian translator gives up semantic equivalence (lit. ‘Without a reason they put me aside’, instead of ‘I get thumped at all times (when I begin singing)’) but plays with homonymy: *motivo* and *canto* can mean respectively ‘reason’/‘melody’ and ‘side, corner’/‘singing’¹⁰. Additionally, *gettare in un canto* ‘to put aside’ is a phraseologism in Italian, so this can be eventually regarded as an instance of “phraseologism at all costs”, as the translator preserves the link between words and the (figurative) context: the bard, i.e. the village’s official singer, is speaking.

Example (7) is not the only instance of a “phraseologisms at all costs” used to maintain puns and wordplays: in (8) Obelix (O) is complaining that he is feeling *rouillé*, i.e. ‘rusty, not fit’, because he gets continuously wet due to frequent rainfalls in the forest; a Roman soldier (S) answers that, in spite of this, the Romans are being beaten, which in French sounds as *nous dérouillons* ‘we are

¹⁰ The intended multiple readings are highlighted by three dots of suspension in the Italian translation.

getting a hammering'. So, the French original has a wordplay based on the figurative meaning of two lexemes sharing the root *rouille* 'rust'.

(8)

O: Je me sens un peu rouillé ! S: En attendant, c'est nous qui dérouillons ! (44)

O: Mi sento ancora un po' a pezzi [...] S: Figurati noi!

O: Ich fühl' mich ein bisschen eingerostet! S: Alte Hiebe rosten nicht!

To preserve the wordplay, the German translator relies on the same expression as the original, *eingerostet* 'rusty', when Obelix speaks; in the soldier's answer, instead, a phraseologism is defrosted and adapted to the context of the soldiers being beaten: instead of *Alte Liebe rostet nicht* 'old love never rusts' it reads *Alte Hiebe rosten nicht* 'old strokes never rust'. The Italian translator gives up reference to 'rust' and plays with possible readings of the idiom *sentirsi a pezzi* (lit. 'to feel in pieces', meaning 'to feel broken'): in Obelix' utterance it can be interpreted as 'My strength is not back yet (and I cannot fight as hard as I would like)', in the soldier's reply (lit. 'Imagine us', meaning 'Imagine how we feel in pieces!') as 'We are feeling broken (because we are being beaten)'. This way, multimodal cohesion is successfully rendered in translation as both the phraseological link between the utterances of the two characters on the linguistic level and reference to the narrative context on the figurative level are preserved.

Another interesting instance of defrosting-based "phraseologism at all costs" is the following one: in (9) a woman is commenting on the fact that the bard moved to the wood, leaving his hut empty, and that the hut itself will be assigned to the new woman-bard.

(9)

Qui joue des flûtes perd sa hutte! (9)

Chi va al bosco perde il posto!

Das ist des Sängers Fluch!

In the woman's utterance a phraseologism is defrosted and adapted to the narrative context: instead of *Qui va à la chasse perd sa place* (lit. 'Go hunting and you'll lose your place', meaning 'Leave your place and you'll lose it') an alternative (non-idiomatical, but still rhyming) expression is used (lit. 'Play flute and you'll lose your hut'), which better suits the visual-narrative context. Although the form of the idiomatic expression is different, readers can grasp its meaning through a connection to the non-defrosted, original phraseologism, which is still present at a subtextual level. In the Italian translation the phraseologism *Chi va via perde il posto all'osteria* (lit. 'Go away and you'll lose your place in the tavern', with the same meaning as the original French) is defrosted, obtaining

a modified, assonant version (lit. ‘Go to the wood and you’ll lose your place’). Both in French and in Italian defrosting is used to create a reference to the narrative context. The German translator could have used a semantic equivalent of the original French idiom, *Weggegangen, Platz vergangen* ‘Go away and you’ll lose your place’, adapting it to the context. Instead, she opted for a quotation, the last line of a poem by Ludwig Uhland (1787-1862) meaning ‘This is the singer’s curse’. Although formally identical to the original quotation, the meaning is slightly different: while in the poem we have a subjective genitive (the singer curses a town, i.e. semantically he plays the agent role), the context of the comic album forces an objective genitive interpretation (the singer, i.e. the bard, will be cursed in that he will be taken away his hut, a tangible consequence of his decision to leave the village: in this sense he plays the patient role), more adherent to the original French.

This is not the only case in which the German translator relies on so called “winged words”, i.e. famous sayings or quotations. In (10) the original French and the Italian translation are equivalent (‘Wash your own (dirty) linen at home’).

(10)

Lavez votre linge en famille ! (18)

Lavateli in famiglia i panni sporchi!

Macht euren Dreck alleine!

German possesses a similar idiom, *seine schmutzige Wäsche vor anderen Leuten waschen* ‘to wash one’s own dirty linen in public’, which, though, has the opposite meaning, i.e. someone talks of private matters in front of other people. So, one solution would have been to use this idiom in the negative form; instead, the translator relied on a saying allegedly uttered by the last king of Saxony, Friedrich August III, when he abdicated in 1918: he wanted to have nothing more to do with ruling, so he invited his successors to make their “dirty work” by themselves. As in the previous example, the meaning of the German-specific winged words is close, but not identical to the original phraseologism. In both cases, we may regard the translator’s choice as an attempt to adapt the original to the target language not only on a mere linguistic level, but also from a cultural point of view.

We may sum up the main results of the analysis as follows: while the quantitative analysis revealed that most phraseologisms are preserved as equivalent or analogous ones in the translation, it was interesting to observe from a qualitative perspective how the translators proceeded when they felt compelled to preserve a phraseologism but could not find any equivalent or analogous ones; additionally, it emerged that dephraseologization and defrosting may act as solutions to

ensure textual and multimodal cohesion and coherence and that this, too, has to be taken into account when translating phraseologisms in comics.

4. Some remarks on compensation

One last remarkable point – both from a quantitative and qualitative perspective – concerns cases of compensation. For the sake of this study, “compensating” will be understood as weaving phraseologisms into a text in passages where there is no phraseologism in the original, so as to make up for cases of no equivalence. To detect instances of compensation, the Italian and German translations of *La rose et le glaive* were searched separately for phraseologisms, irrespective of their presence in the original: as a result, 13 occurrences in Italian and 10 in German were spotted. If we compare these figures with the row “no equivalence” in Table 1 above, we notice that the Italian translation compensates for all cases of non-equivalence in terms of number, though not necessarily in contextual or semantic equivalence, while the German one only compensates about two thirds of non-equivalent phraseologisms.

Again, the question remains open as to whether this was a deliberate choice of the translators: we cannot know which reason may lie behind their translatory decisions. However, since compensation is acknowledged as one of the strategies translators may revert to in order to obtain a text of equal impact as the ST (Baker 2011, 86), we may suppose that those choices were not made by chance. For instance, in (11) the German version shows the phraseologism *jemandem schwillt der Kamm* ‘someone’s comb is swelling’, a metaphor taken from the behaviour of poultry, to convey the meaning of the original (non-idiomatic) *être coléreux* ‘to have a temper’.

(11)

Regardez-moi ce fier petit Gaulois, comme il est coléreux ! (18)

Schaut mir diesen stolzen kleinen Gallier an, wie ihm der Kamm schwillt!

In (12), the Italian translator renders the original (non-idiomatic) *avoir envie de donner des baffes* ‘to feel like slapping people’ through *a qualcuno prudono le mani* ‘someone’s hands are itching’, which idiomatically conveys the same meaning.

(12)

Astérix, j’ai une énorme envie de donner des baffes ! (21)

Asterix, mi prudono le mani in un modo...

5. Conclusions

We may summarize the main points made in this paper as follows: from a quantitative perspective, most phraseologisms were rendered through equivalence or analogy. In German, we have a higher number of cases of no equivalence (over 30%) than in Italian (20%); however, cases of compensation could be found in the translations that make for the totality of occurrences of no equivalence in Italian and for about two thirds of the occurrences in German. From a qualitative point of view, discussing instances of “phraseologisms at all costs” as well as defrosted phraseologisms proved quite insightful: it was possible to show that the decisions made by the translator may be tightly knitted with the relationship between words and images on the one side and with the need to stick to the narrative context on the other. The aim to preserve puns and wordplays, too, may influence translators’ choice: again, strategies like dephraseologisation or defrosting may prove to be useful tools to achieve this goal. Taking a broader view, the comparison of translations for the same comic album across different languages has surfaced several thought-provoking questions and issues. However, these could be only superficially addressed: additional research would be needed in this domain. For instance, expanding the scope to include more translations in various languages would allow us to identify common patterns in the translation of individual phraseologisms. Also, exploring the connection between translators’ choices and the reading audience’s cultural background may deserve more thorough investigation, just like the textual, extra-textual and translatory implications of phenomena like dephraseologisation and defrosting. Finally, given the inherently multimodal nature of comics — where meaning arises from the interaction of verbal and visual elements — the role of phraseological strategies should be further examined within both linguistic and semiotic contexts.

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A contrastive study of intersubjective phrasemes: Unconventional phraseological replies to *What time is it?* in Slovenian, Slovak, Polish, and Russian

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ABSTRACT

Unconventional phraseological replies such as ‘Time to get a watch’ to a question *What time is it?* are based on different mechanisms to establish a link with the target statement of person A (a stimulus). Recently, some contrastive phraseological studies have been conducted on unconventional replies in Slavic languages. This article shows the potential of such studies using the example of phraseological replies to stimuli with the same meaning (‘What time is it?’) in Slovenian, Slovak, Polish, and Russian.

Keywords: phraseology; paremiology; intersubjective phraseme; Slavic languages; unconventional phraseological reply

1. Unconventional phraseological replies from a theoretical and paremiographical point of view

The reason why this type of expression has not been systematically analyzed (except for some research in recent years) is related to the difficulty of obtaining this type of phraseological material. I illustrate this problem using the example of the absence of phraseological replies in Slovenian paremiographical sources. When such replies do appear in the sources, they are often barely noticeable, difficult to identify, and therefore tend to escape scholarly attention. To begin with, let us take a look at rare examples of typological definitions of phraseological replies.

1.1 Examples of typological definitions

Norrick (1984, 196-198, 1993, 26, 2007, 304-305) describes phraseological replies such as *Not if I see you first* to *See you later* as “retorts” (punning and

non-punning) and also as “responses to standard requests” and includes them in his classification of set phrases in conversational humour as stock conversational witticisms.

Grigorij Permjakov (1988, 89) counts the so-called “humorous reply” among the paremiological genres. He gives an example of the Russian answer *Potomu što potomu končaetsja na ‘u’* (lit. ‘Because *because* ends with a ‘u’.) to the question *Počemu?* (‘Why?’) but does not define it.

František Čermák (2007, 432-433) classifies phrasemes according to whether one speaker is sufficient for their realization (monosubjective phrasemes) or whether they require the participation of at least two speakers (intersubjective phrasemes). Among intersubjective phrasemes, there are different types of phraseological replies.

Dobrovol’skij and Baranov (2003, 39-40) call this type of phraseme an “answer formula” and indicate that the main pragmatic function of responses of this type is to highlight the inappropriateness of the previous speech act of the communication partner, but that they can also introduce additional meanings into the situation.

This type of phraseme has been studied most systematically in the Slavic context by Viktor Bondarenko (2012, 2013), who also published a dictionary of Russian phraseological replies in 2013. However, his dictionary contains both conventional replies (pragmatic phrasemes) and unconventional replies. Bondarenko (2012, 287) describes statement A (which is not part of a phraseme) as a “stimulus” and explains that the reason why statement A becomes a stimulus is that person B finds it undesirable, inappropriate, provocative, or stupid and thus uses a phraseological reply as a source of parody.

Unconventional phraseological replies have been defined as “inadequate, mostly humorous or absurd replies by person B to person A’s statement” (Meterc and Pallay 2019, 166). The target statements of unconventional phraseological replies are conventional, frequent, or even fixed everyday one- or multi-word utterances such as *What?*, *Why?*, *What time is it?*, *What’s for lunch?* (Meterc and Pallay 2019, 166).

1.2 The absence of phraseological replies in collections of phraseological and paremiological material - the example of Slovenian

In 2022, the Institute of Slovenian Ethnology at the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts published an open access paremiological collection entitled *Pregovori* (‘Proverbs’) (Babič *et al.* 2022). It is organized as a language corpus and contains around 37,000 forms of Slovenian paremiological expressions, which includes different recorded variants. In addition to proverbs, this paremiological collection encompasses a small number of wellerisms and antiproverbs. Unconventional replies were sought not only within the corpus itself but also in the materials excluded from it. The excluded

material is heterogeneous in nature and therefore warrants analytical attention. In many collections of Slovenian paremiological material, one also encounters expressions that do not qualify as paremiological units, such as comparative idioms. Almost none of the unconventional replies were found, despite the fact that over 75% of Slovenian speakers are familiar with some of them (Meterc and Pallay 2019, 175). It seems that Slovenian collectors of folk material and paremiographers have not paid much attention to this genre. An exception is the expression *Skoraj še ni zajca ujel* (lit. 'Almost never catches a rabbit.'). which, by personifying the expression *skoraj* (meaning 'almost'), can serve as a phraseological reply to the statement in which someone uses this word, such as *Skoraj sem napisal pismo* ('I had almost written the letter.'). Surveys and language corpora suggest that this expression is a kind of amphibian: it is used both as a mono-subjective phraseme and as an intersubjective phraseme (unconventional reply). It is found in eight different variants in the *Pregovori* collection.

Compared to the Slovenian situation, the Slovak situation is quite different thanks to the rich paremiological collection of Adolf Peter Zátúrecký from the end of the 19th century. Zátúrecký (1896, 265-268) presented more than 140 unconventional replies in his work. He named them "humorous answers" and described them as "mostly humorous child's answers or answers to child's serious statements or questions with some cases in which the statements of person A are already humorous." Among them two replies were found to the question with the meaning 'What time is it?' – (28) *O jednu viac ako predtým* (lit. 'One hour more than before.'). and (18) *Jedny* (lit. 'One.'). (Zátúrecký, 1896, 266) – described in section 2.2. These two utterances represent an exception within the material analyzed in the article, as all other cited expressions come from contemporary sources.

2. A contrastive study of unconventional phraseological replies to *What time is it?* in four Slavic languages

Slovenian, Slovak, and Polish phraseological replies were first collected using short surveys in which respondents were presented with a list of common stimuli (such as *What time is it?*) and asked to report frequent and humorous responses to them. These expressions are difficult – but not impossible – to find in written texts. Internet users sometimes use them when replying to each other in forums and social networks (Meterc and Pallay 2019, 171).

According to the results of surveys on the familiarity of these expressions, it was found that even very familiar replies in language corpora are very rare compared to equally familiar proverbs – nevertheless, the corpus search is also worthwhile (Meterc and Pallay 2020, 171). The most successful way of obtaining material was through surveys. A total of 192 Slovak and 209 Slovenian participants, all of whom were university students or secondary school pupils

from Bratislava and Ljubljana, took part in the survey (Meterc and Pallay 2019, 175-179). Additional material was collected by Leskovar Jereb (2022, 112-119), who included phraseological replies in two online surveys: the Polish survey was completed by 691 respondents, and the Slovak survey was completed by 432 (Leskovar Jereb 2022, 21). An internet survey on the variety and familiarity of 250 Slovenian phraseological replies was completed by 1533 Slovenian speakers in 2023 (Meterc 2023, 73-77). The Russian material comes from the dictionary of Russian phraseological replies (Bondarenko, 2013). Two Slovak phraseological replies come from Záturecký's collection (1896, 265-268).

When comparing unconventional phraseological replies in different languages, it is useful to first compare the stimuli (statements by person A) for them. After comparing the stimuli, the phraseological replies will be compared according to their mechanisms for establishing a link with the target statement.

2.1 Comparison of stimuli (target statements)

Stimuli with the meaning 'What time is it?' differ considerably in their lexical structure in the four Slavic languages:

- (1) Polish: A1: *Która godzina?* (lit. 'What hour?')
- (2) Slovak: A1: *Koľko je hodín?* (lit. 'How many hours is it?')
- (3) Slovak: A2: *Koľko máš hodín?* (lit. 'How many hours do you have?')
- (4) Slovak: A3: *Aký je čas?* (lit. 'What is the time like?')
- (5) Slovenian: A1: *Koliko je ura?* (lit. 'How much is the hour?')
- (6) Russian: A1: *Kotoryj čas?* (lit. 'Which hour?')
- (7) Russian: A2: *Skol'ko vremena?* (lit. 'How much time?')¹

The Polish A1 (1) and Russian A2 (6) stimuli are constructed similarly. Slovak (A1) (2), Russian (A2) (7) and Slovenian A1 (5) replies are also similar, but in Slovak, the noun is plural, and in Slovenian and Russian, it is singular. The Slovak stimulus A3 (4) is less frequent than the other two (A1 and A2), but its use can be confirmed with the help of language corpora and internet searches, and phraseological replies that respond to this stimulus were also found in Slovak and are presented below. One of the Slovak replies is similar to the English reply to the same question:

- (8) Slovak: A3: *Aký je čas?* (lit. 'What is the time like?')
B: *Čas si kúpiť hodinky.* (lit. 'Time to buy a watch.')
- (9) English: A: *What time is it?*
B: *Time to get a watch.*

1 The stimulus in the Russian example reflects colloquial usage and does not conform to standard grammatical norms.

To illustrate how questions about the time can differ in different languages, I should also mention a stimulus in English, as quoted by Norrick (1984, 197):

- (10) A: What does your watch say?
B: Ticktock, ticktock.

A statement with the same structure (and meaning) was not found in the Slavic languages analyzed, so it cannot serve as a stimulus. I did not consider stimuli from the dialects of the four languages included in the analysis. Many phraseological replies not only have many phraseological variants – many of them only exist in dialects because the condition of a precisely defined stimulus structure is only fulfilled for them in the dialect. Here, for example, is a stimulus and a reply from the dialect of the area around the town of Bovec in Slovenia:

- (11) Slovenian A2: *Kaj je ura?* (lit. ‘What is the hour?’)
B: *Naprava za merjenje časa.* (lit. ‘A time measuring device.’)

Speaker B, who knows that the stimulus in the dialect means ‘What time is it?’, takes advantage of this by answering the question as if it would be formulated in standard Slovenian with the meaning ‘What is a clock?’. The use of the reply (11) can be intended for mutual teasing between speakers from different parts of the language area, but it can also be added to replies that have a corrective function in certain situations (Meterc and Pallay 2019, 167).

2.2 Comparison of the mechanisms for establishing a link with the stimulus

I will examine and analyze the mechanisms identified so far in Slovak, Slovenian and German for establishing a connection with the stimulus (Meterc and Pallay 2019, 2025, 232–233), which arise from different types of relations between the reply and the meaning of the stimulus. The way in which the mechanism is implemented in different replies varies precisely because of the differences between stimuli that were highlighted in the previous section. I will focus on the mechanisms that were identified as the most common, mainly by analyzing the Slovak and Slovene phraseological material. The replies to the selected stimulus are categorized according to the mechanism by which a connection to the stimulus is established: 1. a direct criticism of statement A; 2. a laconic response; 3. a misinterpretation of the target statement based on a play on words using homonymy or polysemy; 4. a seemingly correct response that is not true to the target statement. 5. A seemingly correct answer that provides no information to person A; 6. Pure nonsense; 7. An addition to utterance A in such a way that, together with reply B, a completely different meaning is created (Meterc and Pallay 2019, 167–169, 2023, 71, 2025, 232–233).

The last of these mechanisms has so far occurred only in the following Slovak reply (Meterc and Pallay 2025, 233), in which speaker B, by adding *koláda*, creates the word *čokoláda* (meaning ‘chocolate’):

(12) Slovak: A: *Čo?* (What?) B: *Koláda*.

This mechanism cannot function in replies to stimuli with the meaning ‘What time is it?’ in the analyzed languages due to the very length of the stimulus. Since some mechanisms are extremely rare, we may assume that other rare mechanisms have not yet been identified at all. Attention should therefore be paid not only to identifying rare mechanisms, but also those that have not yet been attested. Among the replies to the selected stimulus, no new mechanisms have been confirmed.

However, some types of mechanisms prove to be highly productive. The following replies to the stimulus *What time is it?* represent a direct criticism of statement A:

(13) Slovak: A3: *Aký je čas?* (lit. ‘What is the time like?’)

B: *Čas si kúpiť hodinky.* (lit. ‘Time to buy a watch.’)

(14) Polish: A: *Która godzina?* (lit. ‘What hour?’)

B: *Dla biednych zegar w ratuszu.* (lit. ‘For the poor, the clock is in the town hall.’)

(15) Slovenian: A1: *Koliko je ura?* (lit. ‘How much is the hour?’)

B: *Za reveže je na zvoniku.* (lit. ‘For the poor, the clock is on the bell tower.’)

(14) and (15) are related; they have the same motivation: instead of providing an answer, they offer information about where a publicly accessible clock can be found and proceed to ridicule and mock the questioner.

Laconic answers to the stimulus *What time is it?* in the four Slavic languages were not confirmed. In the materials available to us, there is only one example of a Slovak reply in the form of a laconic response, which answers a differently structured prompt but requests the same information:

(16) A: *Neviete, koľko je hodín?* (lit. ‘You don’t know how many hours is it?’)

B: *Viem.* (lit. ‘I do know.’)

Example (16) is basically not a reply to the stimulus “What time is it?” but an unconventional phraseological reply to the stimulus *Do you know...*, which can contain various questions (the question about the current time is only one of the possible ones). In the Slavic languages analyzed, there are many phraseological replies with a seemingly incorrect interpretation of the target statement. In Slovak, the mechanism for establishing a link with the target statement in some replies – as in (17) and (18) – is based on the similarity of the words *hodina*

(meaning ‘hour’) and *bodiny* (meaning ‘clock’); the genitive plural form of these two nouns (*bodín*) is homonymous:

- (17) A1: *Kolko je bodín?* (lit. ‘How many hours is it?’)
 B: *Veľa, a ešte sa aj vyrábajú.* (lit. ‘A lot, and they are still being produced.’)
 (18) A2: *Kolko máš bodín?* (lit. ‘How many hours do you have?’)
 B: *Jedny.* (lit. ‘One.’)

In Slovenian, the mechanism for establishing a link with the target statement in some replies is based on the polysemy of the word *ura* (1st meaning ‘hour’, 2nd meaning: ‘clock’):

- (19) A1: *Koliko je ura?* (lit. ‘How much is the hour?’)
 B: *Sto evrov.* (lit. ‘One hundred euros.’)

A question in the sense of ‘What time is it?’ can also be asked in a more indirect way; in Slovenian, for example, we can ask if someone has a watch. In this case, the stimulus is the broader formula *Do you have X?*, when X is an object from which the questioner wants to obtain information or borrow the object (like a lighter in the second case):

- (20) A: *Imaš uro?* (lit. ‘Do you have a watch?’)
 B: *Ja.* (lit. ‘Yes.’)
 (21) A: *Imaš vžigalnik?* (lit. ‘Do you have a lighter?’)
 B: *Ja.* (lit. ‘Yes.’)

Norrick (1984, 197) quotes an English stimulus that has a similar structure to the Slovenian stimulus (20) but is less literal, so the contrast between the stimulus and the reply is greater, and the reply appears absurd:

- (22) A: Do you have the time?
 B: If you have the place.

The following Slovak reply (and its variants) (23) also involves pretending that person B misinterpreted the purpose of the question in statement A – the reply responds to the stimulus by answering it literally, which is not a conventional reply to a given question:

- (23) A3: *Aký je čas?* (lit. ‘What is the time like?’)
 B: *Dobry.* (lit. ‘Good.’)/*Najlepší.* (lit. ‘The best.’)/*Výborný.* (lit. ‘Splendid.’)

Some Slavic phraseological replies represent an accurate answer which gives no information to the person A:

- (24) Slovenian: A1: *Koliko je ura?* (lit. 'How much is the hour?')
 B: *Toliko kot včeraj ob istem času.* (lit. 'As much as yesterday at the same time.')
- (25) Slovenian: A1: *Koliko je ura?* (lit. 'How much is the hour?')
 B: *Minuto več kot pred eno minuto.* (lit. 'A minute more than one minute ago.')
- (26) Russian: A1: *Kotoryj čas?* (lit. 'Which time?')
 B: *Pervyj posle davesbnego.* (lit. 'First after last.')
- (27) Slovak: A1: *Kolko je hodín?* (lit. 'How many hours is it?')
 B: *Tolko, kolko bolo včera o takomto čase.* (lit. 'As much as it was yesterday at the same time.')
- (28) Slovak: A1: *Kolko je hodín?* (lit. 'How many hours is it?')
 B: *O jednu viac ako predtým.* (lit. 'One hour more than before.')

Most of the replies to the stimulus *What time is it?* in the four analyzed languages express pure nonsense. A very common mechanism in such replies is rhyme; either it is rhyming a word from the stimulus with a word from the reply, or it is a rhyme between the words in the reply itself (rhyming words have been underlined):

- (29) Polish: A: *Która godzina?* (lit. 'What hour?')
 B: *Wpół do komina, komin otwarty, jest wpół do czwartej.* (lit. 'Half of the chimney; the chimney is open, so it is half past three.')
- (30) Polish: A: *Która godzina?* (lit. 'What hour?')
 B: *Pękła sprężyna.* (lit. 'The spring broke.')
- (31) Polish: A: *Która godzina?* (lit. 'What hour?')
 B: *Dla takiego smarka nie ma zegarka.* (lit. 'There is no watch for such a snout.')
- (32) Slovak: A1: *Kolko je hodín?* (lit. 'How many hours is it?') / A2: *Kolko máš hodín?* (lit. 'How many hours do you have?')
 B: *Kolko vládzem, tolko chodím.* (lit. 'I walk as much as I can.')
- (33) Slovak: A1: *Kolko je hodín?* (lit. 'How many hours is it?') / A2: *Kolko máš hodín?* (lit. 'How many hours do you have?')
 B: *Plný komin.* (lit. 'A full chimney.')
- (34) Slovak: A1: *Kolko je hodín?* (lit. 'How many hours is it?') / A2: *Kolko máš hodín?* (lit. 'How many hours do you have?')
 B: *Tri štvrť na troju smrť.* (lit. 'A quarter before your death.')
- (35) Slovenian: A1: *Koliko je ura?* (lit. 'How much is the hour?')
 B: *Pet rac in ena kura.* (lit. 'Five ducks and one chicken.')
- (36) Slovenian: A1: *Koliko je ura?* (lit. 'How much is the hour?')
 B: *Toliko, da se mačka polula.* (lit. 'So much so that the cat peed.')
- (37) Russian: A2: *Skol'ko vremja?* (lit. 'How much time?')
 B: *Vremja ne dremja.* (lit. 'The time is not sleeping.')

As already noted, the stimulus in (37) reflects colloquial usage and does not conform to standard grammatical norms. In normative Russian, the genitive form *vremeni* would be required; however, this would disrupt the rhyme scheme. Similarly, the form *dremja* in the reply is also not used in accordance with the rules of standard Russian. In the Slovak reply (33), the lexeme *komin* is used with the same meaning ('chimney') for the rhyme as *komin* in the Polish reply (29). Some of the rhymed replies given (e.g. (29), (34) and (35)) mimic to a certain extent the conventional replies to the question about the time by mentioning numbers (five, half past, a quarter), etc. In this respect, the replies in Slavic languages are similar to the English phraseological reply (38):

- (38) A: What time is it?
B: Half past the monkey's ass.

In the following, let us look at replies that are pure nonsense in terms of their message but do not rely on rhyme, like the examples above. As I have already mentioned, some of the rhymed replies given mimic, to a certain extent, the conventional replies to the time question by mentioning numbers. Such a structure is also productive in nonsensical replies that do not rhyme:

- (39) Slovenian: A1: *Koliko je ura?* (lit. 'How much is the hour?')
B1: *Tri četrt na pol.* (lit. 'A quarter to half.') B2: *Tri četrt na čarovnijo.* (lit. 'A quarter to magic.')
(40) A1: *Kolko je hodín?* (lit. 'How many hours is it?')
B1: *O päť minút plné vedro.* (lit. 'Five minutes to a full bucket.') B2: *Tri štvrte na odštiepenú.* (lit. 'A quarter to a split.')

In (41) and (42), absurdity is achieved with the help of the idea of a straw clock hand, and the false belief that covering one clock hand with another makes it impossible to tell the time. With such absurd replies, it does not matter what form the stimulus takes; it only matters what it asks for:

- (41) Russian: A1: *Kotoryj čas?* (lit. 'Which hour?')
B: *Na moich solomennych korova strelku s'jela/slizala.* (lit. 'A cow ate/licked the clock hand on my straw clock.')
(42) A2: *Skol'ko vremja?* (lit. 'How much time?')
B: *Strelka na strelku zalezla – ne vidno.* (lit. 'The clock hand has covered the clock hand - it is not visible.')

3. Conclusions²

Although this is a phenomenon that has received little attention in phraseological studies compared to other types of phrasemes (Meterc and Pallay 2019, 166), the systematic collection of unconventional phraseological replies through questionnaires, informant interviews, and other respondent-based methods show that there are many more of these expressions than it seems at first glance and that many of them already have a rich range of phraseological variants within the standard language, and the study of dialects can provide even more material. Let us add that the surveys yielded the information that some phraseological replies are known to a very large proportion of speakers: for example, the Slovenian phraseological reply *Toliko kot včeraj ob istem času* (lit. 'As much as yesterday at the same time.') was known to 89.2% of 1533 respondents in an extensive online survey (Meterc 2023, 73-77) and the Polish phraseological reply *Wpół do komina* (lit. 'Half of the chimney') was declared to be familiar by 97% of 691 respondents in a survey of Polish native speakers (Leskovar Jereb 2022, 44). For the above reasons, they are not a negligible part of the language and are also interesting from other points of view, not only contrastively but also, for example, from a phraseodidactic point of view.

The contrastive study of unconventional phraseological replies is a very promising field of research. In this article, I have shown that, in some cases, there may already be sufficient material for contrastive research in order to analyze replies to stimuli with the same meaning. Unconventional phraseological replies are strongly dependent on the structure of their stimuli (target statements), as I have shown when comparing the situation in different languages. I have demonstrated that replies to the question *What time is it?* can vary even within a language, and when compared across languages, these differences become even more apparent. Despite the differences between the compared Slavic languages, the stimuli and their answers also have some similarities; they follow the same mechanisms for establishing the link between the stimulus and the answer, and in some cases, even similar phraseological motivation for the reply in the compared languages was found (e.g., the reply with the bell tower motif and the town hall in Slovenian and Polish and the replies with a chimney in Polish and Slovak).

Slovak, Slovenian, Polish, and Russian replies are based on similar mechanisms of establishing a link between the reply and the stimulus. No new mechanism was found in the analyzed material compared to previous analyses of replies in Slovak, Slovenian and German (Meterc and Pallay 2019, 167-169; Meterc 2023, 71; Meterc and Pallay 2025, 233), although it must be emphasized that the search for new (rare) mechanisms is meaningful and important, since

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there are also extremely rare mechanisms that have so far been confirmed in only one case in a single language (Meterc and Pallay 2025, 233). Just as until now findings have only been made based on the analysis of replies to various stimuli within a single language (Meterc and Pallay 2019, 168), also in the contrastive analysis of replies to stimuli with the same meaning, the most commonly used mechanisms include rhyme, homonymy or polysemy.

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Les locutions verbales : techniques de traduction du français vers l'italien

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ABSTRACT

Among the *expressions figées* that exist in French, the category that presents the greatest difficulties for translators from French to Italian is verbal idioms, both because of their frequency and their expressive charge. Starting with a corpus of verbal idioms from ten contemporary French texts, this study aims to verify which strategies were actually used to translate French idioms into Italian. After defining the syntactic-semantic properties of verbal idiom in French, the study will present the four techniques used by the Italian translators of the ten texts: 1) the corresponding verbal idiom; 2) the semantic definition; 3) the calque; 4) the creation of a new verbal idiom. Finally, in the last part, the two most important modes of *défigement* will be illustrated: wordplay and the use in the co-text of one of the terms of the idiom in its proper meaning.

Keywords: idioms; verbal idioms; French-Italian translation; *défigement*; wordplay.

RÉSUMÉ

Parmi les expressions figées du français, la catégorie qui présente le plus de difficultés pour les traducteurs vers l'italien est celle des locutions verbales, tant en raison de leur fréquence que de leur opacité sémantique. À partir d'un corpus de locutions issues de dix textes français contemporains en prose, cette étude vise à vérifier quelles stratégies ont été effectivement utilisées pour traduire les locutions françaises en italien. Après avoir défini les propriétés syntaxiques et sémantiques des locutions verbales en français, cette étude illustrera les quatre techniques utilisées par les traducteurs italiens des dix textes sélectionnés : 1) la locution verbale correspondante ; 2) la définition sémantique ; 3) le calque ; 4) la création d'une nouvelle locution verbale. La dernière partie de cette étude sera, en revanche, consacrée à deux typologies de *défigement* : le jeu de mots et le réemploi d'un élément de la locution dans le contexte avec son sens propre.

Mots-clés : figement ; locutions verbales ; traduction français-italien ; *défigement* ; jeu de mots.

1. Le double problème du traducteur

Le problème de la traduction des expressions figées est un problème ancien.¹ Pour éviter de commettre des contresens, tout traducteur doit, en effet, résoudre un double problème : d'abord, il doit repérer l'expression figée ; ensuite, il doit en établir le sens :

En effet, d'une part, le traducteur doit reconnaître la séquence figée dans la langue étrangère pour en cerner le périmètre afin de la traiter globalement comme une seule unité signifiante et, d'autre part, il doit en construire la signification en prenant appui sur des indices présents dans le contexte et en les exploitant dans un processus inférentiel. (Durieux 2008, 325)

Une fois que le sens de l'expression figée a été établi, il s'agit pour le traducteur de repérer les ressources linguistiques en mesure de l'exprimer dans la langue cible. Les études traductologiques proposent généralement trois stratégies : 1) la recherche d'une expression correspondante dans la langue cible ; 2) la traduction d'une expression figée par sa définition sémantique ; 3) le calque, i.e. la traduction littérale de l'expression figée dans la langue cible.

Notre étude vise à vérifier les stratégies adoptées par les traducteurs professionnels dans la traduction de locutions verbales du français vers l'italien. Le choix de cette classe d'expressions figées se justifie à la fois pour leur fréquence et pour leur charge expressive. Pour atteindre notre objectif, nous avons donc constitué un corpus de 256 locutions verbales tirées de textes français contemporains en prose, dont nous avons étudié les traductions en italien.² Mais avant de présenter en détail les résultats de notre recherche, il nous faut donner une définition précise de ce qu'on entend par « locution verbale ».

1 C'est Leonardo Bruni qui, à notre connaissance, a attiré le premier l'attention sur cette difficulté spécifique : voir son traité *De interpretatione recta* (1420 env.), notamment aux §§ 6-8.

2 Les textes constituant notre corpus correspondent à la bibliographie fournie sous le titre *Corpus* dans Bramati, 2025. Voici les références bibliographiques essentielles des dix textes, dont ont été tirés les exemples présentés dans cet article : Arasse D. 2013 [2000]. « La toison de Madeleine ». In *On n'y voit rien*. Tr. it. A. Dell'Aricecia, A. Robino Rizzet, 2005 ; Beauvoir S. 1964. *Une mort très douce*. Tr. it. C. Lusignoli 2015 [1966] ; Beauvoir S. 2015 [1958]. *Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée*. Tr. it. B. Fonzi, 2014 ; Beckett S. 2016 [1946]. *Premier amour*. Tr. it. F. Quadri, 1979 ; Boileau-Narcejac, 2010 [1952]. *Celle qui n'était plus*. Tr. it. F. Di Lella, G. Girimonti Greco, 2014 ; Cendrars B. 1996 [1925]. *L'or*. Tr. it. R. Maccagnani, 2001 ; Gary R. 2018 [1980]. *Les cerfs-volants*. Tr. it. G. Bogliolo, 2017 ; Mauvignier L. 2000. *Apprendre à finir*. Tr. it. A. Bramati, 2008 ; Sansal B. 2014 [2008]. *Le village de l'allemand*. Tr. it. M. Botto, 2009 ; Quint M. 2004 [2000]. *Effroyables jardins*. Tr. it. Y. Melaouah, 2001.

2. Les locutions verbales du français : définition et propriétés

En français, une locution verbale est une construction verbale dont l'un des arguments au moins est figé (le plus souvent, c'est l'un des objets du verbe). Les locutions verbales ont la même structure syntaxique que celle des constructions verbales libres, d'où la possibilité de les confondre. En règle générale, les locutions verbales ont des structures syntaxiques assez simples, avec deux ou trois arguments.³

1) N0 V C1	Nhum <i>prendre la mouche</i>
2) N0 V prép. C1	Nhum <i>tomber dans les pommes</i>
3) N0 V C1 prép. N2	Nhum <i>graisser la patte à Nhum</i>
4) N0 V N1 prép. C2	Nhum <i>tenir Nhum à l'œil</i>
5) N0 V C1 prép. C2	Nhum <i>prendre des vessies pour des lanternes</i>

Les locutions verbales se distinguent des constructions verbales libres par deux propriétés : la fixité syntaxique et l'opacité sémantique.⁴ La fixité syntaxique consiste d'abord en l'absence de paradigmes : si l'on prend la locution « *faire d'une pierre deux coups* », il est facile de vérifier qu'on ne peut modifier ni les noms, ni les déterminants des noms, ni les modificateurs des noms.

**Luc a fait d'un rocher deux tirs*

**Luc a fait de cette pierre trois coups*

**Luc a fait d'une petite pierre deux bons coups*

Par ailleurs, les locutions verbales n'acceptent pas les transformations syntaxiques (passivation, pronominalisation, dislocation, extraction, interrogation, relativation) qui sont normalement possibles avec les constructions verbales libres.⁵

La seconde propriété des locutions verbales est l'opacité sémantique : puisque le sens d'une locution verbale n'est pas compositionnel, i.e. il n'est pas le résultat de la somme des signifiés des mots qui composent la séquence figée, son sens est opaque et par conséquent imprévisible (p. ex., « *tomber dans les pommes* » ne signifie pas faire une chute au milieu des fruits, mais s'évanouir).

Quelle est donc la fonction des locutions pour les locuteurs d'une langue ? Autrement dit, pourquoi les locutions existent-elles ? Les linguistes insistent beaucoup sur la fonction sociale des locutions, qui permettent à la fois d'enrichir

3 Le symbole C désigne un argument figé.

4 Nous reprenons ici Gross 1996.

5 Si une transformation est syntaxiquement possible, la séquence retrouve son sens compositionnel.

l'expressivité de la parole du locuteur et de créer un lien affectif et culturel avec ses interlocuteurs. D'après Antonella Capra, les expressions figées

sont porteuses de plus de valeurs, culturelles, affectives, sociales, et remplissent donc la fonction d'enrichir le besoin d'expression du locuteur. [...] il y a une sagesse populaire, une connaissance partagée avec ses destinataires, qui servira [au locuteur] à communiquer sa pensée, à convaincre l'autre que son discours est valable, puisque certifié par toute une culture. (Capra 2010, 2)⁶

Dans une opération de traduction, il est donc important de reproduire dans le texte cible, autant que possible, les locutions présentes dans le texte source.

3. La traduction des locutions verbales du français vers l'italien

L'étude des locutions verbales tirées des dix textes composant notre corpus montre qu'il existe au moins quatre solutions pour traduire en italien une locution verbale française :

1. une locution verbale correspondante.
2. une définition sémantique.
3. un calque.
4. la création d'une nouvelle expression.⁷

3.1 La traduction par une locution correspondante

La solution la plus fréquente dans notre corpus est la traduction de la locution verbale française par une locution verbale italienne ayant le même sens. Même si cette solution est souvent possible, le traducteur doit néanmoins tenir compte des relations lexico-syntaxiques qu'entretiennent les deux locutions en présence. On peut en effet distinguer quatre types de relation :

1. homologie totale.
2. homologie quasi-totale.
3. homologie partielle.
4. locution différente.⁸

L'*homologie totale* correspond à une identité totale sur le plan lexico-syntaxique entre la locution verbale française et la locution verbale italienne, « développant les mêmes significations, littérale et métaphorique » (Valli et Villagenes Serra 1998, 187). Dans l'ex. 1, la locution française « perdre la raison » a été traduite

6 Pour des idées similaires, voir Mogorrón Huerta 2008, 378.

7 Nous ne traiterons pas dans cet article des erreurs de traduction.

8 Nous reprenons ici, avec quelques modifications, le classement que nous avons proposé dans Valli et Bramati 2011 et dans Bramati 2020.

en italien par la locution homologue « perdere la ragione », les deux locutions ayant le même sens (devenir fou).

Tableau 1 : *Perdre la raison / perdere la ragione*

[...] les Allemands ne se méfiaient pas de moi, parce qu'ils savaient que j' avais perdu la raison et pourtant cela aurait dû les inciter à tirer sur moi à vue. (Gary 2018, 197)	I tedeschi non diffidavano di me perché sapevano che avevo perso la ragione e invece questo avrebbe dovuto indurli a spararmi a vista. (Gary 2017, 183)
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L'*homologie quasi-totale* correspond, elle, à une identité de structure lexico-syntaxique à une différence près, l'élément discordant concernant un mot grammatical (article, possessif, préposition, etc.) qui n'affecte pas la cohérence du texte cible. Dans l'ex. 2, la seule différence entre la locution française « y laisser sa peau » et la locution italienne « lasciarcì la pelle » concerne le déterminant du nom objet direct, un possessif en français, un article défini en italien.

Tableau 2 : *Y laisser sa peau / lasciarcì la pelle*

Ce trafic était tel qu'une maison new-yorkaise commença la construction d'un chemin de fer. On déversa des tonnes de terre et de gravier dans les marais, des milliers d'ouvriers y laissèrent leur peau , mais la voie fut terminée. (Cendrars 1973, 98)	Il movimento era tale che una ditta newyorchese iniziò la costruzione di una ferrovia. Tonnellate di terra e ghiaia furono rovesciate nelle paludi, migliaia di operai vi lasciarono la pelle , ma il percorso fu terminato. (Cendrars 2001, 68)
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Les relations d'homologie totale ou quasi-totale ne posent aucun problème au traducteur.

Par *homologie partielle*, nous entendons, en revanche, une différence de structure qui affecte un ou plusieurs mots pleins (noms, adjectifs, verbes) : tout en gardant le même sens, les deux locutions peuvent différer à plusieurs niveaux. Dans l'ex. 3, la locution verbale « tenir bon » a pour correspondant la locution italienne « tenere duro », qui a la même structure syntaxique [tenir + adj] : dans ce cas, le changement lexical concerne l'adjectif *bon* qui est remplacé en italien par l'adjectif *duro*.

Tableau 3 : *Tenir bon / tenere duro*

« Un bon Français, par le temps qui court, c'est celui qui tient bon . » (Gary 2018, 213)	« Un buon francese, con i tempi che corrono, è quello che tiene duro . » (Gary 2017, 199)
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Dans l'ex. 4, la relation entre la locution française « passer un savon à qqn » et la locution italienne « dare una lavata di capo a qno » est plus complexe,

le changement lexical concernant aussi bien le verbe que le nom objet direct. Pourtant, comme les deux locutions expriment le même sens (réprimander qqn) par la même métaphore (lavage avec un détergent), il s'agit bien d'une homologie partielle.

Tableau 4 : *Passer un savon à qqn / dare una lavata di capo a qno*

[...] ce jour-là, elle reprochait aux infirmières de ne lui avoir fait la veille que trois pansements au lieu de quatre : « Le docteur N. était furieux, le soir » me dit-elle. « Il leur a passé un savon ! » (Beauvoir 1964, 94)	[...] quella volta, rimproverò l'infermiera di averle fatto, il giorno prima, tre medicazioni invece di quattro: – Ieri sera, il dottor N. era furibondo, – mi disse. – Le ha dato una buona lavata di capo ! (Beauvoir 2015, 56)
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Dans d'autres cas, la locution italienne ayant le même sens que celui de la locution française a une structure lexico-syntaxique tout à fait différente : c'est le cas de la locution « rouler qqn dans la farine » traduite, dans l'ex. 5, par la locution italienne « menare qno per il naso ». Il s'agit ici d'un cas de traduction par une locution différente.

Tableau 5 : *Rouler qqn dans la farine / menare qno per il naso*

Il avait son sourire à la Laurel, plissait l'œil de m' avoir roulé dans la farine en dévoilant le plus tard possible le plus beau de l'histoire, le rôle de Nicole, et il goûtait l'alangui du dimanche finissant. (Quint 2004, 71)	Aveva il suo sorriso alla Stanlio, strizzava l'occhio per avermi menato per il naso rivelando il più tardi possibile il bello della storia, il ruolo di Nicole, e si gustava la mollezza della domenica che finisce. (Quint 2001, 59)
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À la différence des homologies totales ou quasi-totales, qui ne posent aucun problème de traduction, les homologies partielles et, plus encore, les traductions par une locution ayant une structure lexico-syntaxique différente peuvent entraîner des problèmes de cohérence textuelle, les mots pleins composant la locution italienne pouvant s'avérer peu vraisemblables dans le contexte : dans ce cas, le traducteur sera amené à chercher une autre solution.

Un autre problème dont il faut tenir compte lorsqu'on traduit une locution par une autre locution, ce sont « les niveaux de langue, les usages régionaux, générationnels et la fréquence d'usage, etc. » (Mogorrón Huerta 2008, 398), qui caractérisent chaque expression dans sa propre langue. On le voit dans l'ex. 6, où la locution verbale « tirer le diable par la queue », d'usage commun en français, a été traduite par la locution « tirarle verdi », qui n'a en italien qu'une diffusion régionale (notamment au Piémont) : bien que sémantiquement correcte, la traduction s'avère donc difficilement compréhensible pour la plupart des lecteurs italophones.

Tableau 6 : Tirer le diable par la queue / tirarle verdi

[...] comme soldat de deuxième classe, mon père gagnait cinq sous par jour et nous tirions le diable par la queue . (Beauvoir 2015, 65)	[...] come soldato di seconda classe, mio padre guadagnava cinque soldi al giorno e noi le tiravamo verdi . (Beauvoir 2014, 50)
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3.2 La traduction par une définition sémantique

En l'absence d'une locution correspondante en italien ou si la locution italienne n'est pas cohérente avec le texte source, une locution française peut se traduire par sa définition sémantique. L'effacement de la locution dans le texte cible entraîne, cependant, une perte au niveau expressif : même si le sens de la locution est correctement transmis, « la métaphore, la valeur affective et traditionnelle de l'expression ne seront pas rendues » (Capra 2010, 5). C'est pourquoi cette solution ne devrait être adoptée qu'en dernier ressort : alors que dans l'ex. 7, la locution française « prendre sur soi », qui signifie « ne pas se laisser aller à une impulsion, en se dominant »,⁹ ne pouvait se traduire en italien que par une définition sémantique telle que « essere responsabili », dans l'ex. 8, la locution française « calmer le jeu » aurait pu être mieux traduite par la locution italienne « calmare le acque », bien plus expressive que le verbe *tranquillizzare*.

Tableau 7 : Prendre sur soi / essere responsabili

Je ne voulais pas me retrouver à parler de moi, de nous, de nos petits problèmes domestiques, de ce qu'il faut faire pour prendre sur soi , alors que j'étais face à quelque chose qui me dépasse, qui nous dépasse, qui nous dépassera toujours. (Sansal 2014, 65)	Non volevo ritrovarmi a parlare di me, di noi, dei nostri piccoli problemi domestici, di ciò che si deve fare per essere responsabili , mentre avevo di fronte qualcosa che è più grande di me, che è più grande di noi, che sarà sempre più grande di noi. (Sansal 2009, 42)
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Tableau 8 : Calmer le jeu / tranquillizzare

Pour calmer le jeu et rassurer les dévots, je n'aurais qu'à dire qu'ils montrent l'impudeur de la pénitence. C'est une belle formule, ça, bien trouvée, et, en plus, elle n'est pas fausse. (Arasse 2013, 116)	Per tranquillizzare e rassicurare i devoti dovrei solo dire che mostrano l'impudicizia della penitenza. È una bella formula, questa, ben indovinata e, in più, non è falsa. (Arasse 2005, 58-59)
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9 Définition tirée de l'article *prendre* du *Dictionnaire des expressions et locutions* (1997).

3.3 La traduction par un calque

La troisième solution consiste à traduire la locution française par un calque, i.e. par une traduction littérale des mots qui la composent : cette solution, prônée par Antoine Berman,¹⁰ ne fait pas l'unanimité. Alors que pour certains spécialistes, le choix « de reproduire trop directement des aspects culturels, historiques qui n'ont souvent aucune relation avec l'autre langue et dans ces cas avec l'autre culture » ne peut amener qu'à un rejet « par l'autre communauté culturelle et/ou linguistique » (Mogorrón Huerta 2008, 392), pour d'autres,

l'opacité de ces expressions calquées se dissipe grâce au contexte, qui permet d'en saisir facilement le sens : sans entraver la compréhension du passage, le calque encourage la circulation des séquences figées d'une langue à une autre. (Piacentini 2019, 77)

Il reste que, dans notre corpus, le calque apparaît comme une solution marginale, rarement adoptée par les traducteurs italophones. Dans l'ex. 9, la locution verbale « se tirer une balle dans le pied », très commune en français, a été traduite en italien par l'expression, proche du calque, « *spararsi nel piede* »,¹¹ dont la compréhension en contexte ne devrait poser aucun problème.

Tableau 9 : *Se tirer une balle dans le pied / Spararsi in un piede*

D'après lui, foutre un imam au trou c'est comme introduire un détraqué du bidule dans un pensionnat de filles et se tirer une balle dans le pied . (Sansal 2014, 142)	Secondo lui, sbattere dentro un imam è come introdurre uno fuori di testa in un collegio femminile e poi spararsi in un piede . (Sansal 2009, 97)
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3.4 La traduction par une invention linguistique

La dernière ressource à la disposition d'un traducteur est l'invention linguistique. Cette solution, qui n'est que rarement exploitée par les traducteurs, peut prendre des formes assez différentes.

Dans l'ex. 10, la locution française « avoir la tripe + adj. » a été traduite en italien par la construction libre « *essere + agg.* » suivie de la locution adverbiale à valeur intensive *fino al midollo* : il s'agit d'une compensation par recatégorisation du figement. Cette invention linguistique a permis au traducteur d'exprimer le même sens par le biais d'un autre nom de partie du corps (la tripe étant remplacée en italien par la moelle).

10 Berman parle d'une « conscience du proverbe » qui, d'après lui, permettrait au lecteur du texte cible de percevoir tout de suite « dans le nouveau proverbe, le frère d'un proverbe du cru. » (Berman 1999, 65).

11 Le calque exact de l'expression française aurait été « *spararsi una pallottola nel piede* ».

Tableau 10 : *Avoir la tripe* + adj / *essere* + agg + *fino al midollo*

La notoriété d'Ambroise Fleury ne cessait pas de grandir, mais ne lui tourna pas la tête, pas même lorsque sa Grande Demoiselle en bonnet phrygien – il avait la tripe fortement républicaine – reçut le premier prix au meeting de Nogent. (Gary 2018, 15)	La notorietà di Ambroise Fleury continuava a crescere, ma lui non si montò la testa, nemmeno quando la sua Grande Demoiselle con il berretto frigio – era repubblicano fino al midollo – ottenne il premio al raduno di Nogent. (Gary 2017, 13)
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4. Le défigement : deux cas de figure

La tâche du traducteur est quelquefois compliquée par la présence d'un *défigement*. Il en existe deux variantes : le jeu de mots et le réemploi d'un élément de la locution dans le contexte.

4.1 Les jeux de mots

Dans le premier cas, on parle de défigement lorsqu'une locution « est défigurée et transformée pour donner lieu à des doubles significations qui interagissent le plus souvent avec le discours environnant » (Capra 2010, 2-3) : en remplaçant un des éléments qui composent la locution, la nouvelle expression ainsi obtenue exprime à la fois le sens de la locution traditionnelle, toujours visible en filigrane, et le nouveau sens produit par le nouveau mot. Il s'agit donc de ce qu'on appelle généralement un jeu de mots.

Dans l'ex. 11, la locution verbale « dépasser la mesure », qui signifie exagérer, a été remplacée par la construction libre « dépasser la masure », qui, dans son sens propre, décrit exactement la situation des deux personnages, Mercier et Camier, qui, à cause d'un épais brouillard, craignent d'avoir dépassé la maison délabrée où ils comptaient passer la nuit. La superposition des deux sens est confirmée par la perplexité de l'interlocuteur. Dans ce cas, le traducteur a réussi à reproduire en italien les deux sens du jeu de mots, l'expression « *andare oltre* » pouvant signifier à la fois aller trop avant et exagérer.

Tableau 11 : *Dépasser la masure* / *andare oltre*

Je dis que j'espère que nous n'avons pas dépassé la masure , dit Mercier. Camier ne répondit pas tout de suite. La vie a de ces occasions où les mots les plus simples et limpides mettent quelque temps à dégager tout leur bouquet. Et masure prêtait à confusion. (Beckett 2006, 54)	Dico che spero che non siamo andati oltre , disse Mercier. Camier non rispose immediatamente. La vita ha di quelle occasioni in cui le parole più semplici e limpide ci mettono un po' di tempo a sprigionare tutto il loro aroma. E andare oltre prestava a confusione. (Beckett 2015, 122)
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4.2 Le réemploi d'un élément de la locution dans le contexte

Dans le deuxième cas, l'un des mots pleins qui composent la locution verbale est réemployé dans le contexte avec son sens propre : « Il s'agit d'un procédé se fondant en partie sur la démétaphorisation, car les deux sens de l'expression sont mis en évidence » (Capra 2010, 7). La possibilité de reproduire en italien le même procédé linguistique tient aux éléments qui composent la locution correspondante.

Dans l'ex. 12, la locution verbale « couper les cheveux en quatre » est défigée aussi bien par la dislocation à droite de l'objet direct du verbe (« je les coupe, les cheveux ») que par l'emploi dans le contexte du nom cheveux avec son sens propre : le discours porte en effet sur les cheveux de Marie Madeleine, qui constituent son attribut de sainte dans la peinture occidentale. Dans ce cas, puisqu'en italien la locution correspondante est en relation d'homologie quasi-totale (« spaccare un capello in quattro »), le traducteur a pu reproduire sans difficulté le même procédé linguistique.

Tableau 12 : *Couper les cheveux en quatre / spaccare i capelli in quattro*

Bon. Alors, ce qu'il faudrait savoir maintenant, c'est pourquoi ce sont justement ses cheveux qui sont devenus son attribut de femelle. Vous trouvez que je les coupe en quatre, ses cheveux ? Je ne pense pas [...] (Arasse 2013, 102)	Bene. Allora, quello che bisognerebbe sapere ora è perché sono proprio i suoi capelli ad essere diventati i suoi attributi di femmina. Trovate che li sto spaccando in quattro, i suoi capelli ? Non penso [...] (Arasse 2005, 53)
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Dans l'ex. 13, en revanche, la locution italienne « avere qno sulle spalle » est en relation d'homologie partielle avec la locution française « avoir qqn sur les bras » : pour reproduire le même procédé, le traducteur a dû remplacer dans le contexte le nom de partie du corps *bras* (« ils te casseront tes bras ») par le nom de partie du corps *spalle* (« saranno loro a spezzarti le spalle »), présent dans la locution italienne.

Tableau 13 : *Avoir qqn sur les bras / avere qno sulle spalle*

[...] tu seras seule avec tes deux gosses sur les bras , et ils te les casseront à leur tour, tes bras , tes enfants te casseront les bras et le vide dans la chambre étouffera tes cris [...] (Mauvignier 2000, 96)	[...] tu resteras sola con due figli sulle spalle e saranno proprio loro a spezzartele, le tue spalle , saranno proprio i tuoi bambini a spezzarti le spalle e il vuoto nella camera soffocherà le tue grida [...] (Mauvignier 2008, 66)
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Dans l'ex. 14, enfin, c'est la référence au garagiste qui oblige le lecteur à interpréter le nom *pédale* à la fois dans son sens propre (pour bien conduire, il faut que les pieds soient bien appuyés sur les pédales) et comme un élément de

la locution verbale « perdre les pédales », qui signifie *perdere ses moyens*. Dans ce cas, le traducteur a choisi la locution italienne « andare fuori giri » qui, dans son sens propre, renvoie au monde du garagiste (elle indique que le moteur tourne à une vitesse excessive) mais qui, dans son sens figuré (*sentirsi disorientato*), est très proche du sens de la locution française.

Tableau 14: *Perdre les pédales / andare fuori giri*

Ravinel pousse un peu la porte, en tremblant. [...] Voyons ! Ne pas se laisser aller. Ne pas perdre... C'est le garagiste qui dit cela : ne pas perdre les pédales. (Boileau-Narcejac 2010, 169)	Con mano tremante, apre un po' di più la porta. [...] Forza! Deve resistere. Non deve andare... Com'è che dice quello del garage?... Ah sì: non deve andare fuori giri. (Boileau-Narcejac 2008, 66)
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En présence d'un défigement, la traduction va donc dépendre des ressources lexicales de la langue cible ainsi que de la créativité linguistique du traducteur.

5. Conclusion

Dans son analyse du texte source, le traducteur doit d'abord identifier les expressions figées et ensuite en établir le sens en fonction du contexte. Pour traduire une locution verbale en italien, il peut avoir recours à au moins quatre solutions :

1. une locution verbale correspondante.
2. une définition sémantique.
3. un calque.
4. la création d'une nouvelle expression.

Quelquefois, à la difficulté de traduire une locution verbale s'ajoute la présence dans le texte source d'une opération de défigement, qui peut prendre deux formes différentes : un jeu de mots ou le réemploi d'un élément de la locution avec son sens propre dans le contexte. Dans les deux cas, la traduction va dépendre aussi bien des outils lexicaux de la langue cible que de la créativité linguistique du traducteur.

En conclusion, nous prôtons la même « attitude négociatrice » que propose Antonella Capra :

Entre l'équivalence, qui obligerait les personnages source à s'exprimer par des expressions qui ne leur appartiennent pas, et le calque, qui oblige le lecteur à un effort culturel majeur, cette approche consiste à analyser cas par cas plusieurs facteurs et à trouver une solution adaptée selon le texte, le destinataire, le contexte. (Capra 2010, 5)

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PART 3: ENHANCING LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Phraseologie digital: am Beispiel eines webbasierten Lehr- und Lernmaterials für DaF-Studierende

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ABSTRACT

Long before the coronavirus pandemic, didacticians dealing with phraseology were already pointing out the advantages of computer-based teaching and learning materials and calling for freely accessible online tools. The pandemic made the call for such materials even louder. This article introduces phraseology teaching material for Bachelor-level GFL students developed as part of the Erasmus+ project *Germanistik digital* funded by the European Commission. We spell out the content, explain the selection, and present the digital interaction forms, tasks and exercises, with reference to existing online tools and relevant websites.

Keywords: web-based teaching and learning material; phraseology; German as a foreign language

ABSTRACT

Schon lange vor der Corona-Pandemie wurde von Phraseodidaktikerinnen und Phraseodidaktikern auf die Vorteile computergestützter Lehr- und Lernmaterialien verwiesen und nach frei zugänglichen Online-Tools gerufen. Durch die Pandemie ist der Ruf nach solchen Materialien noch lauter geworden. Dieser Beitrag stellt ein im Rahmen des von der Europäischen Kommission geförderten Erasmus+-Projektes *Germanistik digital* entstandenes Unterrichtsmaterial zur Phraseologie für DaF-Studierende auf der Bachelorstufe vor. Es werden die Inhalte des Kurses beleuchtet, deren Auswahl begründet, die angewendeten Formen digitaler Interaktion unter Rückgriff auf bereits existierende Online-Tools und einschlägige Webseiten präsentiert sowie die Aufgaben- und Übungstypen vorgestellt.

Schlüsselwörter: webbasiertes Lehr- und Lernmaterial; Phraseologie; Deutsch als Fremdsprache

1. Ausgangspunkte

Schon lange vor der Corona-Pandemie wurde das Potenzial digitaler Technologien zur Verbesserung des Lernens und Lehrens von Sprachen erkannt, gewürdigt und gefördert. Durch die Pandemie ist die Entwicklung von digitalen Lehr- und Lernmaterialien in einem bis dahin ungewohnten Ausmaß rasch vorangetrieben worden. Beigetragen hat dazu u.a. ein Antragsaufruf der Europäischen Kommission vom August 2020 (Näheres dazu in Europäische Kommission 2020, 117-126). Im Rahmen Strategischer Partnerschaften zur Förderung der Bereitschaft für digitale Bildung (Leitaktion 2, KA 2) wurden u.a. solche Aktivitäten gefördert, deren Ziel die Implementierung digitaler Instrumente und Methoden war, „um online/virtuell hochwertige und integrative Bildung zu liefern, darunter auch gemischte Unterrichts-, Ausbildungs- und Lernprozesse“ (ebenda 120). Sechs germanistische Institute aus sechs Ländern Mittel-, Südost- sowie Nordosteuropas haben auf den Aufruf reagiert und unter der Leitung des Lehrstuhls für Germanistik an der Universität der hl. Cyril und Methodius in Trnava (Slowakei) einen Antrag gestellt. Das Ergebnis ist das transnationale Projekt Erasmus+ 2020-1-SK01-KA226-HE-094271 mit dem Titel *Germanistik Digital*, das im April 2023 erfolgreich abgeschlossen wurde. Koordiniert wurde das Projekt von der bereits genannten slowakischen Universität, weitere Projektpartner sind die Universität Maribor (Slowenien), die Universität Belgrad (Serbien), die Universität Vilnius (Litauen), die Universität Ventspils (Lettland) und die Jan-Evangelista-Purkyně-Universität in Ústí nad Labem (Tschechien).



Abb. 1. Startseite des Projektes *Germanistik digital*

Das Bild wurde mit Genehmigung des Lizenzinhabers der Webseite <https://gedi.germanistik-ucm.eu/> abgedruckt

Die zentralen intellektuellen Outputs des Projektes stellen webbasierte frei zugängliche Lehr- und Lernmaterialien samt methodischer Empfehlungen für ausgewählte Kurse dar, die an den Partneruniversitäten einen Bestandteil des Bachelorstudiums in germanistischen Studiengängen darstellen, bspw. Lexikologie, Morphologie, Syntax, Textlinguistik, DaF-Didaktik oder Sprachkontaktforschung (Näheres zum Projekt in Hornáček Banášová 2022, 54-61). Die digitalen Kursmaterialien sollen zum einen in der (Präsenz-, hybriden oder Online-) Lehre zum Einsatz kommen, zum anderen aber auch dem Selbststudium der Studierenden dienen. Seit Mai 2023 steht allen Interessierten die Projektwebseite zur Verfügung, insbesondere die darin enthaltene Lernplattform *GERMANON* (Hornáček Banášová *et al.* 2023). Eines der in diesem Projekt erstellten Kursmaterialien widmet sich der Phraseologie des Deutschen als Fremdsprache und wird im Mittelpunkt der folgenden Ausführungen stehen.

2. Digitale Lehr- und Lernmaterialien zur Phraseologie: der gegenwärtige Stand in einem kurzen Überblick

In diesem Abschnitt werden einige bereits existierende digitale Projekte vorgestellt, deren Ziel es ist, den Deutschlernenden Teile aus dem Gesamtbereich des deutschen Phraseminventars zu vermitteln.

Seit fast zwei Jahrzehnten machen vereinzelte digitale Projekte zur Vermittlung von Phrasemen im DaF-Unterricht immer wieder von sich reden, dennoch konstatieren Mena Martínez/Strohschen/Hallsteinsdóttir (2022, 75), dass die Erstellung und der Einsatz digitaler Werkzeuge innerhalb der phraseodidaktischen Ansätze derzeit immer noch wenig Berücksichtigung finden, obwohl der Einsatz digitaler Lehrwerke und Tools innerhalb des allgemeinen Fremdsprachenunterrichts bereits zum Alltag Lehrender und Lernender gehöre.

Zu den Pioniertaten auf diesem Gebiet gehörten das EU-Forschungsprojekt EPHRAS – *Ein mehrsprachiges phraseologisches Lernmaterial auf CD ROM* (Jesenšek *et al.* o.J.), die Internetseite von Stefan Ettinger (Ettinger o.J.) oder die Internet-Lernplattform *SprichWort* (Jesenšek *et al.* o.J.). Bedauerlicherweise kann die Demo-Version des erstgenannten Materials nicht mehr abgerufen werden. Sein Ziel war es laut der Projektkurzbeschreibung auf der Webseite, einen akuten Mangel an phraseologischen Lernmaterialien in den am Projekt beteiligten Sprachen (Deutsch, Slowakisch, Slowenisch, Ungarisch) zu beheben und dem Bedarf an mehrsprachigen Lernmaterialien nachzukommen. Stefan Ettinger bietet auf seiner Webseite *Phraseologie und Phraseodidaktik* „Anregungen und Hinweise zum Lernen und Lehren von Phrasemen bzw. Idiomen [...] für die Sprachen Deutsch, Französisch und Portugiesisch“. Die weit über 1.000 in der Sammlung besprochenen Phraseme können alphabetisch und/

oder onomasiologisch über Schlüsselbegriffe wie Belästigen, Beleidigen oder Benachteiligung erschlossen werden. Somit kann die Sammlung nicht nur als ein rezeptives, sondern auch als ein produktives Wörterbuch genutzt werden. Die *SprichWort*-Plattform ist schließlich das Ergebnis eines EU-Projektes, das Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede im heutigen Sprichwort-Gebrauch in fünf Sprachen und Kulturen untersuchte. Die Datenbank dokumentiert den aktuellen Gebrauch von 300 Sprichwörtern in fünf miteinander verlinkten Sprachen, heißt es im Vorwort. Vertreten sind die Sprachen Deutsch, Slowakisch, Slowenisch, Tschechisch und Ungarisch.

Zu den neusten Lernportalen gehören *PHRAS.EU* (Mena Martínez/Strohschen *et al.* o.J.) und *ReDeWe* (Strohschen o.J.). *PHRAS.EU* enthält digitale Lernaktivitäten zur Phraseologie für Lernende des Deutschen als Fremdsprache, die „im plurilingualen Ansatz des GER mit dem Ausgangspunkt verankert [sind], dass man das Lernen der deutschen Phraseologie unabhängig von der Erstsprache der Lernenden auf der Grundlage von Äquivalenzbeziehungen zwischen englischen und deutschen Phrasemen fördern kann“ (Mena Martínez/Strohschen/Hallsteinsdóttir 2021, 76). Die Lernplattform „wurde für Lehrkräfte und Lernende entwickelt, die ihre Kenntnisse in Englisch als (erste) Fremdsprache beim Lernen der deutschen Phraseologie anwenden wollen“ (ebenda 88), wobei die Autorinnen betonen, dass Englischkenntnisse mindestens auf einem mittleren Niveau vorausgesetzt werden (ebenda 82). Ihr Ansatz fußt auf der Überzeugung, dass durch die Parallelen zwischen dem Englischen und dem Deutschen der Lernprozess bei Deutschlernenden mit Englischkenntnissen effizienter verläuft (s. das Prinzip der Ökonomisierung des Lernprozesses in der Tertiärsprachendidaktik nach Neuner 2003, 31). Durch Aktivitäten, bei denen Verbindungen zwischen deutschen und englischen Idiomen explizit angesprochen werden, wollen sie das Sprachbewusstsein und Sprachlernbewusstsein der Lernenden entfalten (s. das Prinzip der Ökonomisierung des Lernprozesses in der Tertiärsprachendidaktik nach Neuner 2003, 28). Im Mittelpunkt der Lernplattform stehen Idiome. Deren Auswahl erfolgte auf der Grundlage von Äquivalenzbeziehungen und deren Gruppierung nach Äquivalenzgraden (totale Äquivalenz, partielle Äquivalenz I mit kleinen Unterschieden in lexikalischen Komponenten und partielle Äquivalenz II mit vielen Unterschieden im lexikalischen Bestand). Das Ziel des Projektes ist es, den Deutschlernenden sowie -lehrenden ein flexibles didaktisches Werkzeug an die Hand zu geben, das sowohl für den gesteuerten Fremdsprachenunterricht als auch für Selbstlernsituationen geeignet sei, so die Autorinnen (Mena Martínez/Strohschen/Hallsteinsdóttir 2021, 89).

ReDeWe: Redewendungen besser lernen (Strohschen o.J.) ist eine dreifunktionale Lernplattform, die eine Multisuchmaschine, eine Phrasemdatenbank und ein Lernportal vereint. Die Multisuchmaschine „ermöglicht die Suche in den wichtigsten phraseologischen Datenbanken und Wörterbüchern, die online verfügbar sind, ohne zwischen den verschiedenen Websites wechseln zu

müssen“ (Strohschen 2021, 102). Zu jedem verzeichneten Phrasem wird eine Reihe von Angaben geliefert. Neben zu erwartenden Angaben zur Bedeutung, Stilschicht, Synonymen oder formalen Varianten erscheinen hier aber auch Angaben zur empfohlenen Niveaustufe, zu Lehrwerken, in denen das konkrete Phrasem gefunden wurde, sowie ein in einem der Lehrwerke entnommenes Beispiel. Geplant sind ebenfalls Äquivalente in anderen Sprachen (Englisch/Französisch/Spanisch). Die dritte Komponente der Lernplattform bildet eine Übungsplattform. Mit Hilfe des Plugins H5P entwickelt die Autorin vielfältige Übungsformen wie Memory, Drag-and-Drop-Übungen mit Text und/oder Bild, Flashcards, interaktive Videos oder Multiple-Choice-Übungen. Ohne Zweifel erfüllt diese Lernplattform die Ziele, die ihre Autorin anstrebt: anderen Forschenden und Lehrenden Anstöße zu geben, ähnliche Materialien zu erstellen oder die hier vorgestellten weiterzuverarbeiten und im Unterricht einzusetzen (Strohschen 2021, 106-107).

3. Phraseologie digital im DaF-/Germanistik-Studium – ein Kursmaterial stellt sich vor

3.1 Konzeptionelle Ausgangsüberlegungen

Im Unterschied zu den im Abschnitt 2 vorgestellten Lernplattformen geht es auf der in diesem Beitrag fokussierten Lernplattform vordergründig um ein Lehr- und Lernmaterial zur Phraseologie als linguistischer Teildisziplin¹. Die Lernplattform *GERMANON* im Allgemeinen und das hier vorgestellte Material im Besonderen stellen ein fakultatives Angebot dar, das a) als Stütze für die Lehrkräfte bei der Unterrichtsvorbereitung gedacht und b) für autonomes Lernen oder selbstständiges Wiederholen des behandelten Stoffes seitens der Studierenden geeignet ist. Es wird davon ausgegangen, dass jede Lehrkraft dieses fakultative Angebot mit eigenen Materialien kombinieren und durch sie ergänzen kann. Es wird ferner vorausgesetzt, dass die Studierenden bereits das Niveau B1 erreicht haben.

1 Eine ähnliche Zielsetzung verfolgen die Phraseologie-Videotutorials von Elmar Schafroth (2019). Unter kontinuierlicher Bezugnahme auf die Phraseologie der Sprachen Englisch, Spanisch, Französisch und Italienisch sowie deren kontrastiver Analyse geht dort der Autor auf die wichtigsten Grundbegriffe, Theorien und die Haupttypen der Phraseologie ein (vgl. <https://phraseologie.phil.hhu.de/ueber-das-projekt/>). Nennenswert ist in diesem Zusammenhang auch das Projekt *FrameNet-Konstruktion des Deutschen* von Alexander Ziem. Das Projekt „erforscht und dokumentiert Form-Bedeutungsstrukturen der deutschen Gegenwartssprache im Kontinuum von Lexikon und Grammatik. Übergeordnetes Ziel ist es zunächst, ein möglichst repräsentatives Inventar an Konstruktionen zur Standardvarietät des Deutschen aufzubauen“ (<https://framenet-constructicon.hhu.de/project/about>). Unter den dort beschriebenen Konstruktionen erscheinen auch zahlreiche phraseologische Konstruktionen (vgl. <https://framenet-constructicon.hhu.de/constructicon/constructionindex>).

Der Kurs verfolgt zwei Ziele: zum einen die Vermittlung theoretischen Grundwissens zur Phraseologie als linguistischer Disziplin und zum anderen den Ausbau der phraseologischen Kompetenz der Studierenden. Bei der Erklärung theoretischer Inhalte werden den angehenden DaF-Lehrenden bzw. Germanistinnen und Germanisten zahlreiche Phraseme vermittelt, denn Theoretisches wird an konkreten Phrasemen erläutert und gefestigt. Dadurch wird die Kenntnis von deutschen Phrasemen erweitert und vertieft und die phraseologische Kompetenz der Studierenden ausgebaut und verbessert.

In den konzeptionellen Vorüberlegungen war von Anfang an der Ansatz leitend, dass das Kursmaterial in einem hohen Maße bereits existierende einschlägige und online zugängliche Quellen implementieren wird: u.a. Internet-Wörterbücher, Videos auf YouTube oder die im Abschnitt 2 genannten Lernportale. Ein Teil der Aufgaben und alle Übungen sind auf den digitalen Raum zugeschnitten: Quiz in der App wordwall.net zur Wiederholung und Festigung der besprochenen Phraseme, Recherchieren in Online-Wörterbüchern und auf anderen digitalen Plattformen, Arbeit mit Podcasts oder mit Kurzvideos vom Videoportal YouTube. Die Einbeziehung multimedialer Ressourcen ermöglicht mehrkanaliges Lernen und die Differenzierung zwischen Schriftlichkeit und Mündlichkeit. Zum Beispiel ist die Prosodie und deren Zusammenhang mit dem richtigen situativen Gebrauch von so manchen Phrasemen ohne den Einsatz von gesprochenen Texten schwer vermittelbar und kommt in der Lehre oft zu kurz.

Ein weiteres Prinzip, das während der Erstellung des Materials verfolgt wurde, ist das vernetzende Lernen im Sinne von „Herstellung von Vernetzungen zwischen den erlernten Sprachen“ (Candelier *et al.* 2009, 5). Die metasprachliche Reflexion der eigenen phraseologischen Kompetenz nicht nur in der L1, sondern auch in anderen gelernten Sprachen kann dem Erwerb der Phraseologie des Deutschen ausgesprochen förderlich sein. Deshalb werden an vielen Stellen des Materials Phraseme in verschiedenen Sprachen gegenübergestellt und die Studierenden zur Reflexion über Phraseme (nicht nur) in ihrer Erstsprache motiviert und zur Verknüpfung von Neuem mit dem vorhandenen Vorwissen angeregt. Dadurch werden günstige Bedingungen für nachhaltiges Lernen geschaffen. Solche Aktivitäten sind besonders in sprachlich heterogenen Gruppen ertragreich. Ihr weiterer Vorteil besteht darin, dass sich dabei die Studierenden als autonom und kompetent erleben, was ihr inhaltliches Interesse am Gegenstand und ihre Bereitschaft zur Mitwirkung steigert.

Schließlich lag der Konzeption des Kursmaterials die Überlegung zugrunde, dass es zur aufgabenorientierten Lehre beitragen soll. Unter einer Aufgabe verstehe ich in Anlehnung an Portmann-Tselikas (2001, 17) solche Aktivitäten, bei denen die Studierenden allein, zu zweit oder in einer Gruppe eine Aufgabenstellung unter Zuhilfenahme von empfohlenen und/oder durch eigene Recherchen ermittelten Quellen selbständig bearbeiten und deren

Ergebnis in der Gruppe präsentieren und ggf. mit den anderen diskutieren. So wird zum Beispiel in der Einheit 3 des Kursmaterials die Idiomatizität anhand des Phrasems *jmdm. einen Korb geben* erläutert. Die anschließende Aufgabe stellt ein Beispiel für ein aufgabenorientiertes und lernendenzentriertes Vorgehen dar und leistet einen Beitrag zum entdeckenden Lernen.

Aufgabe 2

Vielleicht haben Sie sich gefragt, warum man eine Ablehnung mit einem Korb verbindet. Wahrscheinlich können Sie es sich nicht erklären. Eine Erklärung muss man in der Vergangenheit suchen. Dazu passt dieses Bild.



Googeln Sie nach der Herkunft dieses Phrasems und erklären Sie Ihren Studienfreunden, wie die heutige Bedeutung mit dem Bild zusammenhängt.

Abb. 2. Aufgabe zur historischen Herleitung eines Phrasems (Einheit 3, Aufgabe 2)
Das Bild wurde mit Genehmigung des Lizenzinhabers der Webseite <https://gedi.germanistik-ucm.eu/> abgedruckt

Übungen, im Sinne von Aktivitäten zur Automatisierung von Form und Bedeutung, kommen in diesem Kursmaterial hingegen seltener vor. In einigen Einheiten findet man einen Link zur App wordwall.net, wo die in der Einheit besprochenen Phraseme geübt werden können (mit Multiple-Choice-Übungen, Drag-and-Drop-Übungen, Anagrammen und Flash-Karten). Die Multiple-Choice-Übung aus der Abbildung 3 folgt nach einem Kurzvideo, in dem das Idiom *jmdm. einen Bären aufbinden* in einer Geschichte gebraucht wird.



Abb. 3. Multiple-Choice-Übung (Einheit 3, Quiz 2)

Das Bild wurde mit Genehmigung des Lizenzinhabers der Webseite <https://gedi.germanistik-ucm.eu/> abgedruckt

3.2 Zum Inhalt des Kursmaterials

Der Kurs möchte den Studierenden die ganze Bandbreite phraseologischer Einheiten vorstellen: von Idiomen über Sprichwörter, Kollokationen, Routineformeln bis zu sog. strukturellen Phrasemen (mehrteilige Präpositionen und Konjunktionen). Die letzteren werden jedoch nur gestreift. Am Anfang wird den Studierenden durch den Rückgriff auf bereits vorhandenes Vorwissen nicht nur aus der Erstsprache, sondern auch schon aus der Fremdsprache Deutsch gezeigt, wie viel Kompetenz sie auf diesem Gebiet eigentlich schon mitbringen. Denn von Redewendungen und Sprichwörtern haben sie im sprachpraktischen Unterricht schon einiges gehört, in der Regel erinnern sie sich auch an verschiedene Beispiele dafür. Dass Routineformeln wie *Wie geht's?*, *Alles gut?*, *Herzlichen Glückwunsch* oder *Schönen Tag noch* ebenfalls feste Wortverbindungen und somit Gegenstand der Phraseologie sind, wird eher mit Überraschung aufgenommen. In den ersten drei Einheiten des Kursmaterials wird deshalb detailliert auf die Wesensmerkmale von Phrasemen eingegangen, insbesondere auf die Festigkeit und die Idiomatizität. Bei jeder sich bietenden Gelegenheit werden kurze authentische Texte oder Testausschnitte in die Erklärungen einbezogen, um Phraseme im Gebrauch – einschließlich Beispiele für Sprachspiele aufgrund von okkasionellen formalen und/oder semantischen Modifikationen – zu zeigen und zu diskutieren. So bspw. in der Einheit 2, wenn anhand von einer Textlektüre der Unterschied zwischen *Cellulite geht durch Dick und Dünn* und *60 Jahre durch dick und dünn* erläutert werden soll. Ein Anti-Drogen-Spot mit dem ehemals international erfolgreichen deutschen Basketballspieler Dirk Nowitzki eignet sich, um eine Diskussion über die Übersetzbarkeit von modifizierten Phrasemen anzuregen.

Die Botschaft des Spots wird durch zwei Sätze zusammengefasst, die Phraseme enthalten: *Triff deine Entscheidung. Gib Drogen einen Korb.* In der englischen Fassung heißt es: *Make your own decision. Say no to drugs.* Anschließend wird diskutiert, ob die Botschaft des deutschsprachigen Spots ihre Wirkung genauso gut entfalten könnte, wenn anstelle des Basketballers Dirk Nowitzki ein bekannter Fußballer, Schwimmer oder Skispringer auftreten würde.

In den Einheiten 4-7 werden die wichtigsten Gruppen der Phraseme (Idiome, Sprichwörter, Routineformeln und Kollokationen) behandelt. Nach einer kurzen theoretischen Einleitung folgen jeweils Aufgaben, die Theorie mit Praxis verbinden. Das Vorgehen soll am Beispiel der Einheit 5 verdeutlicht werden, die die Überschrift *Kollokationen im Fokus* trägt. Nach einer theoretischen Einleitung, untermauert durch prototypische Beispiele wie zum Beispiel *Zähne putzen, Fahrrad fahren, Tisch decken, unsterblich verliebt* oder *wunschlos glücklich*, wird der Bezug zur Lebenswelt der Studierenden dadurch hergestellt, dass Kollokationen in den Mittelpunkt gestellt werden, die etwas mit dem Studium zu tun haben, bspw. *die Bachelor-/Master-Arbeit fristgemäß/gebunden/paginiert/in elektronischer Form einreichen, sich zu einer Prüfung melden, eine Prüfung ablegen/bestehen, jmdm. auf Antrag Einsicht in die Prüfungsprotokolle/... gewähren, einen Antrag auf Zulassung stellen, die Zulassung ablehnen, Unterlagen beglaubigen*. Als Ausgangspunkt werden dabei Texte von den Homepages zweier deutscher und einer österreichischen Universität genommen (Studien- und Prüfungsordnung bzw. Informationen über das Zulassungsverfahren). Es wird selbstverständlich auch eine Gegenüberstellung von bedeutungsgleichen Formulierungen aus ähnlichen Dokumenten oder Homepages der Heimatuniversität der Studierenden angestrebt. An diesen Teil schließen sich zwei Aufgaben zu Kollokationen aus dem Bereich Sport an, denn es wird angenommen, dass auch Sport im Leben vieler Studierender eine wichtige Rolle spielt, das Wissen um einschlägige deutsche Kollokationen aber über *Sport treiben* kaum hinausgeht. In den authentischen Texten aus dem Internet kommen Kollokationen *den Torwart bezwingen, den Ball einnetzen, in Rückstand geraten, die Gold-/Silber-/Bronze-Medaille holen* und viele andere mehr vor.

Die Einheiten 8 und 9 thematisieren Phraseme als Spiegel ihrer Zeit und stellen somit auch kulturelle Aspekte in den Vordergrund. Da sich der zwischen-sprachliche Vergleich wie ein roter Faden durch das ganze Material zieht, ist es nicht verwunderlich, dass die letzte zehnte Einheit die kontrastive Phraseologie fokussiert und dabei die oben erwähnte Lernplattform *PHRAS.EU* einbezieht.

3.3 Zwei weitere Fallbeispiele/Kostproben

3.3.1 Routineformeln

In Anlehnung an Lüger (2007, 445) werden Routineformeln (RF) in der Einheit 6 als sprachliche Mittel definiert, „die sich in der Sprachgemeinschaft für die Erfüllung bestimmter kommunikativer Aufgaben eingespielt haben und die für die Sprecher/Schreiber als vorgeprägte Muster abrufbar sind“.

Darauf aufbauend wird den Studierenden erklärt, warum RF auch als kommunikative Phraseme bezeichnet werden. Der Rückgriff auf bewährte Muster entlastet die Sprecher/Schreiber sowohl in der mündlichen wie auch in der schriftlichen Kommunikation, indem er ihnen ermöglicht, „verschiedene kommunikative Aufgaben zügig und ohne allzu großen Aufwand [zu] bewältigen“ (Lüger 2007, 445). Bereits in der kurzen theoretischen Einführung werden über 20 Routineformeln beispielhaft angeführt, die den Studierenden nur zum Teil geläufig sein dürften. Deshalb zielt die Aufgabe 1 darauf, den Gebrauch der unbekannten RF durch Recherchen der Studierenden zu klären und alle wichtigen Informationen tabellarisch zusammenzufassen (Nennung der RF, ihre Funktion, ggf. weitere Gebrauchsbedingungen und gefundene Belege/Beispiele). Es wird dabei auf die vier Funktionstypen der RF nach Lüger (2007, 450) Bezug genommen: die phatische (d.h. kontaktknüpfend und -erhaltend), die expressive Funktion (d.h. ausdrucksstark, ausdrucksbetont), die direktive (d.h. von einer übergeordneten Stelle gegebene Weisung, Verhaltensmaßregel) und schließlich die kognitive Funktion (d.h. das Wahrnehmen, Denken, Erkennen betreffend). Wie bereits oben erwähnt, ist für den richtigen Gebrauch vieler RF die Prosodie entscheidend. Deshalb wird in dieser Einheit verstärkt auf Audio- und Videoaufnahmen zurückgegriffen, zum Beispiel auf den YouTube-Kanal *Deutsch mit Rieke*. Die Redakteurin und Projektmanagerin Rieke Petter bietet auf ihrer Homepage neben Beiträgen zu verschiedenen Themen aus dem Bereich Wortschatz und Grammatik auch 21 Videos (Stand 25.07.2025) zu Redewendungen an, unter denen auch zahlreiche RF vertreten sind. Ausgegangen wird vom Video zu *von wegen*. Anschließend sollen die Studierenden selbst im Inhaltsverzeichnis auf der Webseite der Autorin recherchieren, sich mit weiteren RF bekannt machen und einige RF ihrer Wahl in der Gruppe vorstellen.

3.3.2 Phraseme als Spiegel ihrer Zeit und Vermittler zwischen Sprache und Kultur

In den Einheiten 8 und 9 wird den Studierenden gezeigt, dass Phraseme das Spiegelbild der jeweiligen Kultur und ein Bestandteil des Sprachwandels sind. Es wird zwar festgestellt, dass Fremdsprachenlernende Sprachen primär in ihrem synchronen Gebrauch wahrnehmen und die diachrone Perspektive interessiert sie – wenn überhaupt – nur am Rande. Andererseits wird aber betont, dass die diachrone Perspektive unter Umständen eine willkommene Lernstütze bieten kann. Nämlich dann, wenn sie ein aus synchroner Sicht undurchsichtiges sprachliches Element durchsichtig macht und den Lernenden hilft, den dahinterstehenden Sachverhalt zu verstehen. Erklärt wird es an einigen Idiomen, bei denen uns die historische Erklärung ihrer Motivationsbasis helfen kann, ihre heutige Bedeutung besser zu verstehen, z.B. an *jmdm. etw. in die Schube schieben* oder *etw. auf dem Kerbholz haben*. Die Studierenden sollen anhand ausgewählter Phraseme selbst beurteilen, ob ihnen die Kenntnis der Motivationsbasis für

das Behalten der heutigen Bedeutung der Phraseme nützlich erscheint. Zum Einsatz kommt hier u.a. ein Podcast des Senders *Deutsche Welle* (*DW Deutsch lernen*) aus der Podcastreihe *Wort der Woche* zur Etymologie von *Hinz und Kunz*. Andererseits wird gezeigt, dass bei der Dekodierung der Bedeutung von Phrasemen oft unser Weltwissen ausreicht: zum Beispiel unser Wissen über Fußball (*jmdm. die rote Karte zeigen*) oder über die Beschaffenheit eines Orchesters (*die erste/zweite Geige spielen*).

Beim Thema Neues im phraseologischen Wortschatz kann man auf das Neologismenwörterbuch des IDS Mannheim zurückgreifen. Seit 1991 wurden dort 135 Einträge zu neuen Phraseologismen erstellt: 54 für die 1990er Jahre, 59 für das 1. Jahrzehnt des 21. Jhs. (Nullerjahre) und 21 für die Zehnerjahre (2010-2019). Am Beispiel des Phrasems *hätte, hätte, Fahrradkette* werden die Studierenden zuerst mit der Struktur der Einträge in diesem Wörterbuch bekannt gemacht. Später sollen sie dort selbst nach vorgegebenen Kriterien recherchieren und Neuphraseologismen ihrer Wahl in der Gruppe vorstellen. Eine so konzipierte Aufgabe lautet: „Recherchieren Sie in den thematischen Reihen im Neologismenwörterbuch und ermittelten Sie, in welchen drei es die meisten Phraseme gibt und wie viele es sind. Wählen Sie aus jeder der drei thematischen Reihen ein Phrasem Ihrer Wahl aus und stellen Sie es vor.“ (Einheit 9, Aufgabe 3).

4. Schlussbemerkung

Ich hoffe, mit meinem Beitrag Neugierde nicht nur auf das hier im Mittelpunkt stehende Lehr- und Lernmaterial zur Phraseologie geweckt zu haben, sondern auch auf das gesamte Projektportal von *Germanistik digital*. Auf der im Rahmen des Projektes entstandenen Lernplattform *GERMANON* stehen aktuell allen Interessierten 36 Kursmaterialien zur Verfügung. Der Wunsch aller Projektpartner ist, dass von den Ergebnissen unserer gemeinsamen Bemühungen möglichst viele Germanistinnen und Germanisten insbesondere an Universitäten außerhalb des deutschsprachigen Raums profitieren mögen. Wir würden uns freuen, wenn wir dadurch internationalen Meinungs- und Erfahrungsaustausch über die Digitalisierung der Hochschullehre im Fach Germanistik/DaF sowie eine weitere Vernetzung über die Grenzen unserer strategischen Partnerschaft hinaus anregen könnten.

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The Didactics of French Polylexical Sequences in the Light of “Imageability”

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the importance of imageability in French phraseodidactics is highlighted. The paper presents the results of a study conducted in French as a Foreign Language classes (CEFR level B2.2) at the University of Cagliari. Drawing on research in cognitive semantics and phraseology, the methodologies adopted are examined, together with the types of tests administered, the skills targeted, the learner profile addressed, and the learners' language proficiency level. The study aims to contribute not only to the teaching of polylexical sequences but also to the development of memorization strategies in French as a foreign language instruction.

Keywords: didactics; imageability; French as a Foreign Language; phraseology; categorization.

1. Introduction

Studies on access to polylexical sequences have shown that an in-depth study of categorization and, consequently, of the ability to memorize could be fundamental to improve learning and teaching strategies.

On the one hand, there is a significant relationship between polylexical expressions and memory. Bybee and Hopper (2001), for example, suggest that those sequences which appear very frequently in common language are likely to be better remembered (Bybee and Hopper 2001, 17).

Barlow and Kemmer (2000), Townsend and Bever (2001) and Wray (2002) emphasize the importance of use and repetition to memorize these sequences.

The discovery of the cognitive strategies involved in the processing phase of a polylexical expression such as, for example, naming of an object (Bonin *et al.* 2002), lexical decision (Cacciari and Tabossi 1988; Keuleers *et al.* 2012), word reading (Ferrand *et al.* 2011) or idiom comprehension time (Bonin *et al.* 2013), could help teachers create didactic sequences more suited to learners.

In our opinion, alongside all this research, we should also emphasize the importance of another process which has never received particular attention

from phraseology theorists. This is “imageability”, the fact that certain “words elicit a sensory experience” (Paivio *et al.* 1968, 4) and, being “more concrete”, imply in the speaker a greater capacity to imagine the referent. In this article, we formulated and tested our hypothesis based on observations carried out in third and fourth year French as a Foreign Language classes at the University of Cagliari. Our article presents two parts: the first introduces the concept of “imageability” by relating it to the learning of polylexical expressions and the second part describes the tests proposed in French language classes and the results of our research.

2. Learning polylexical expressions and imageability

Imageability, as highlighted before, is a psycholinguistic variable that indicates the extent to which a word gives rise to a mental image or sensory experience. This term, first used by Paivio *et al.* (1968) and, subsequently, by several theorists (Paivio 1986; Tyler and Moss 1997; Paivio 2007; McDonough *et al.* 2011; Lind *et al.* 2012), shows “the degree of ease or difficulty in imagining an object starting from a word” (Aliffi and Albano 2023, 196). In hindsight, “table is a highly imaginative word in that its meaning is associated with many sensory properties (size, shape, etc.) while hope is low in imageability” (Tyler *et al.* 2002, 476).

Paivio (1968, 1979 [1971], 2007; Paivio *et al.* 1988) confirms that sometimes even certain abstract words can have a high degree of imageability, being able to evoke concreteness, and this depends on the fact that speakers give an emotional and affective connotation (Paivio *et al.* 1968, 7).

In this regard, Paivio argues that the difference between concrete and abstract words depends on dual coding (1979 [1971]), 1986), which represents the way of storing words in memory: concrete words present a verbal representation and a picture; differently, abstract words only show a verbal representation. So, “concrete words are processed faster because they have a high number of semantic properties” (Aliffi and Albano 2023, 196). This hypothesis was highlighted by Jones (1985) and de Groot (1989), who showed that the use of concrete words gives rise to a greater number of sentences and mental associations.

In this regard, Lind *et al.* (2012, 1) argue that imageability “can influence the storage and processing of words in the mental lexicon, as well as other factors such as age of acquisition, frequency, word length and phonological properties”.

Several studies have shown that the imageability factor can influence and facilitate lexical decision tasks (Bleasdale 1987; de Groot 1989), sentence comprehension (Haberlandt and Graesser 1985), memorizing names (Lind *et al.* 2012) or recognizing sentences (Holmes and Langford 1976; Jorgensen and Kintsch 1973).

In our opinion, imageability can also represent an innovative factor for the access, processing and memorization of polylexical sequences. In fact, our hypotheses are: 1) The majority of figurative polylexical expressions show a more

evident imageability factor than non-figurative expressions; 2) While imageability may facilitate semantic activation in free expressions as well, it plays a crucial role in polylexical expressions, where at least one concrete constituent can serve as a cognitive anchor for accessing the global meaning of the unit; 3) A more concrete word could represent an aid in recognizing the idiomatic key of a sequence; 4) Improved memorization of phraseology could take into account the imageability factor.

First, we observed that a good part of polylexical expressions not only show a major agency compared to non-compositional expressions (Albano in press), but they also reveal concreteness. Let us imagine, for example, the French expression *interrompre une relation*, literally translated into English as ‘to interrupt a relationship’ (TLFi 2025). The situation is encoded by means of an abstract noun and a terminative verb which, despite its actional semantics, does not evoke a concrete, imageable referent.

On the other hand, let us think of the idiomatic expression *couper les ponts*, lit. ‘to cut bridges’, meaning ‘cutting ties, to burn one’s bridge’ (TLFi 2025), where we can already observe a more agentive verb, a more concrete noun and, consequently, a greater virtual presence of referents.

Although both verbs are telic, the fixed expression appears to elicit a more vivid sensory mental image than the non-fixed one, as its phraseological fixation promotes a more immediate and holistic conceptualization of the event.

Secondly, we suggest the hypothesis that a fixed expression makes it possible to quickly activate the semantic information of real referents compared to a non-fixed expression. In fact, the scenarios evoked by the fixed expressions establish a conceptual framework in which the dynamics between body, action, space and otherness act.

Moreover, a more concrete word may facilitate the recognition of the idiomatic key of a sequence. As pointed out by Cacciari (1989), the idiomatic signified requires longer processing time in memory, and the identification of an idiomatic key plays a crucial role in idiom comprehension.

Based on studies conducted with Italian-, Spanish-, German- and Turkish-speaking learners (Albano 2016, 2020), we advance the hypothesis that the imageability of a concrete word can support the recognition of this key by activating a broad network of mental associations and visual analogies. While such processes are not specific to fixed expressions, in phraseologisms they acquire a particular relevance, as the activation of multiple mental scenarios may prompt the speaker to move beyond a purely compositional interpretation and to recognize the lexicalized nature of the expression. In free combinations, these associations contribute to meaning construction, whereas in fixed expressions, they may act as a cue for idiomaticity.

Finally, reflection on the imageability of fixed expressions could lead to an improvement in learning and teaching strategies.

3. Test imageability in French as a Foreign Language class

3.1. The sample of learners

Our sample comprises 70 Italian-speaking adult learners who study French within the third year of a degree in *Lingue e Culture per la Mediazione Linguistica* (50 students with a CEFR B2.2- level, as attested by examination results) and the first year of a Master in *Lingue e Letterature Moderne Europee e Americane* and *Traduzione Specialistica dei Testi* at the University of Cagliari (a sample of 20 students whose CEFR B2.2 proficiency level was attested through examinations). These students know and study several languages: Italian as a mother tongue, Sardinian as a mother tongue, English as a foreign language (around 5 years) and French as a foreign language (an average of nine years of study at Master's level and eight and a half years at Bachelor's level). They have also studied linguistics. In addition, the teacher introduced the learners to phraseology and cognitive semantics within the French linguistics curriculum.

3.2. Criteria for sampling expressions

Our study focuses on two phraseological categories: collocations and idiomatic expressions. We selected them based on the following criteria: 1) a high degree of metaphoricity (Gréciano 1982; Gibbs 1994; Moon 1998); 2) the difficulty of translation (Hussei 1990; Danell 1993; Lorentzen 1994; Svensson 2004) and 3) the presence of complex scenarios (Langacker 1987, 141; Langlotz 2006, 117).¹

As González Rey (2021, 62) states, “metaphor, as a figure of speech, is present in the semantic displacement of the constituents of a phraseological unit as well as in the interpretation of its overall meaning”. Adopting the point of view of Lakoff and Turner (1989, 57), a concept is considered figurative when it is understood and structured through the importation of a conceptual structure from a different conceptual domain.

The translation difficulty concerns the impossibility of translating the entire expression or some of its constituents into a foreign language.

Finally, the presence of complex scenarios concerns the conceptual framework within which the dynamics between body, action and otherness operate and the status of the action depends on the type of negotiation between the body and otherness, the degree of intentionality or agency of the subject (Albano in press).

To construct the tests, we selected 17 idiomatic expressions and 10 collocations in French based on multiple criteria: metaphoricity, translation difficulty,

1 By *complex scenarios*, we refer to conventionalized conceptual configurations that involve multiple participants, relations, and event phases, and that require the activation of a structured scene rather than a single, isolated image.

and the presence of complex scenarios (see Table 1). These items were confirmed to correspond to CEFR B2/C1 level (González Rey 2007). In addition to dictionaries (Rey and Chantreau 2003 [1989]; TLFi 2025), the selection process involved consulting authentic corpora and French as a Foreign Language teaching materials, ensuring that choices were supported by empirical data rather than intuition alone.

The idiomatic expressions are listed below (see Table 1):

Table 1: The idiomatic expressions

No.	French expression	Literal translation	Meaning
1	mettre de l'eau dans son vin	to put water in one's wine	to moderate one's stance
2	parler français comme une vache espagnole	to speak French like a Spanish cow	to speak French very badly
3	filer à l'anglaise	to leave in the English way	to leave discreetly
4	tourner sept fois sa langue dans sa bouche	to turn one's tongue seven times in one's mouth	to think before speaking
5	avoir un bœuf sur la langue	to have an ox on the tongue	to keep a secret
6	rompre le pain avec quelqu'un	to break bread with someone	to end a relationship
7	casser du sucre sur le dos de quelqu'un	to break sugar on someone's back	to criticize someone behind their back
8	fermer son parapluie	to close one's umbrella	to die
9	avoir un haut-le-cœur	to have a high heart	to feel nauseous
10	avalier sa gaffe	to swallow one's blunder	to die
11	plier bagage	to fold luggage	to leave
12	dévisser son billard	to unscrew one's billiard	to die
13	voir trente-six chandelles	to see thirty-six candles	to see stars (after a hit or shock)
14	boire en Suisse	to drink in Switzerland	to drink alone
15	être un rat d'hôtel	to be a hotel rat	to be a hotel thief
16	faire son beurre	to make one's butter	to make a profit
17	faire feu sur quelque chose ou sur quelqu'un	to fire on something or someone	to attack at something or someone

Below are the ten selected collocations and/or terminological collocations relating to different specialized fields (cycling, navigation, economics) (see Table 2):

Table 2: The collocations and terminological collocations

No.	French Expression	Literal Translation	Meaning
1	donner un coup de fer	to give a hit of iron	to iron
2	parler chiffons	to speak rags	to talk about clothes
3	chercher querelle	to seek quarrel	to pick a fight
4	couper les ponts	to cut the bridges	to cut ties, to burn one's bridge
5	franchir un obstacle	to cross an obstacle	to overcome an obstacle
6	mordre dans son guidon	to bite into one's handlebar	to pedal hard
7	veiller au grain	to watch over the grain	to be vigilant
8	couper les vivres	to cut the living	to cut financial support
9	ranger le vent	to put away the wind	to adjust to the wind (navigation)
10	empannage chinois	Chinese tacking	to change tack by passing through a tailwind (sailing)

The free and semi-free verbs and expressions, showing the paraphrase of the selected phraseologisms, are:

Table 3: The selected free and semi-free verbs and expressions

No.	French Expression	Literal Translation
1	se modérer	to moderate oneself
2	parler très mal le français	to speak French very badly
3	fuir discrètement	to flee discreetly
4	réfléchir avant de s'exprimer	to think before speaking
5	garder fermement un secret	to hold a secret firmly
6	cesser la relation avec quelqu'un	to cease a relationship
7	critiquer une personne absente	to criticize an absent person
8	achever de vivre	to finish living
9	avoir un spasme œsophagien	to have an oesophageal spasm
10	mourir	to die
11	s'en aller	to go away
12	être bouleversé	to be upset
13	voler	to steal
14	mettre à profit	to make (good) use of
15	rechercher la dispute	to seek argument
16	repasser	to iron
17	parler à propos de vêtements	to talk about clothes
18	interrompre une relation	to interrupt a relationship

19	dépasser une difficulté	to overcome difficulty
20	se courber en avant pour un pédalage forcé	to bend forward for forced pedalling
21	changer d’amure en passant par le vent arrière	to change tack by passing tailwind
22	cesser d’alimenter financièrement	to cease financial support
23	se rapprocher de la direction de la brise	to move closer to the wind direction
24	tomber	to fall

We have also added false paraphrases (isolated verbs or verbal expressions) to these examples, which act as distracters:

Table 4: The false paraphrases

No.	French Expression	Literal Translation	Meaning
1	avalier un liquide	to swallow a liquid	to swallow a liquid
2	être très vigilant	to be very vigilant	to be very vigilant
3	prêter attention	to lend attention	to pay attention
4	écouter	to listen	to listen
5	déménager	to move house	to move house
6	être prudent	to be careful	to be careful
7	faire une chute	to take a fall	to fall
8	s’en prendre violemment à quelque chose ou quelqu’un	to take yourself violently to something or someone	to attack something or someone violently
9	pédaler sans style	to pedal without style	to pedal without style

3.3 The tests

To understand the contribution of imageability on students’ correct responses and the relationship between imageability and lexicalization, we conducted a survey based on three tests, using a psycholinguistic approach (Levorato 1993) and inspired by the test proposed by Albano (2014). The tests include 27 expressions (idiomatic expressions and collocations) (see Table 1).

Test 1 asked students to rate each expression in terms of imageability using a 10-point Likert scale, where 1 represented “low imageability” (i.e., the expression evokes very few or vague mental images) and 10 represented “high imageability” (i.e., the expression evokes vivid and detailed mental images).

Test 2 required students to evaluate the degree of conventionalization (fixedness) of each expression, also on a 10-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponded to “low fixedness” (i.e., the expression is highly flexible and can be freely modified) and 10 to “high fixedness” (i.e., the expression is highly conventionalized and resistant to modification).

In both tests, participants indicated their judgment by assigning a numerical value from 1 to 10 to each expression, thereby allowing a fine-grained measurement of perceived imageability and fixedness.

Test 3 was divided into two parts. In the first part, students completed a multiple-choice exercise, selecting the most appropriate paraphrase for each item from six options: one correct answer, four distractors, and one open-response option allowing them to propose their own paraphrase. In the second part, students were asked to justify their choice, providing a written explanation of the cognitive reasoning behind their answer (Albano 2020). This design allowed us to assess both the learners' recognition of fixed expressions and their understanding of the underlying conceptual mechanisms.

Test 3 asked students to indicate the meaning of each proposed expression and to justify their choice in Italian or French. The test focused on 15 items, including idiomatic expressions, collocations, and semi-free expressions (e.g., fr. *parler chiffons*, lit. 'to talk rag', meaning 'to talk about clothes'; fr. *dévisser son billard*, lit. 'to unscrew one's billiard table', meaning 'to die'; fr. *mordre dans son guidon*, lit. 'to bite down on one's handlebars', meaning 'to pedal hard'; fr. *tourner sept fois sa langue dans sa bouche*, lit. 'to turn seven times his/her tongue in his/her mouth', meaning 'to think before speaking'; fr. *avalé sa gaffe*, lit. 'to swallow one's blunder', meaning 'to die'; fr. *filer à l'anglaise*, lit. 'to go away in the English style', meaning 'to leave discreetly'; fr. *être un rat d'hôtel*, lit. 'to be a hotel rat', meaning 'to be a hotel thief'; fr. *donner un coup de fer*, lit. 'to give an iron shot', meaning 'to iron'; fr. *boire en Suisse*, lit. 'to drink in Switzerland', meaning 'to drink alone'; fr. *casser du sucre sur le dos de quelqu'un*, lit. 'to break sugar on the back of someone', meaning 'to criticize someone behind their back'; fr. *avoir un haut-le-cœur*, lit. 'to have a high hearth', meaning 'to feel nauseous'; fr. *plier bagage*, lit. 'to bend luggage', meaning 'to leave'; fr. *faire une chute*, lit. 'to do a fall', meaning 'to fall'; fr. *faire feu sur quelque chose ou sur quelqu'un*, lit. 'to shoot someone', meaning 'to attack something or someone violently'; fr. *ranger le vent*, lit. 'to put away the wind', meaning 'to catch the wind').

Idioms, collocations, and semi-free expressions were mixed to evaluate learners' sensitivity to the phenomenon of fixedness, i.e., the degree to which a multiword expression is conventionalized and resistant to modification (González Rey 2021).

Moreover, Test n. 3 arises from an integration of the approaches of Bally (1951 [1909], II, 51), Lüger (1999), Lewis (1993), Ettinger (2001), González Rey (2007) and Cavalla *et al.* (2009). Our test is not intended to represent a didactic sequence but rather addresses the need to understand how to construct a didactic sequence for an adult Italian-speaking audience in a university context.

3.4 Results and data analysis

The analysis of the data showed that, in most cases, learners tended to perceive idiomatic expressions, collocations, and terminological collocations as “more visual”. This is illustrated in the graph below, where students’ assessments indicate a high degree of imageability for expressions such as fr. *parler français comme une vache espagnole*, lit. ‘to talk French as a Spanish cow’, meaning ‘to speak French very badly’; fr. *tourner sept fois sa langue dans sa bouche*, lit. ‘to turn seven times his/her tongue in his/her mouth’, meaning ‘to think before speaking’; fr. *avoir un bœuf sur la langue*, lit. ‘to have a beef on the tongue’, meaning ‘to keep a secret’; fr. *rompre le pain avec quelqu’un*, lit. ‘to break the bread with someone’, ‘to end a relationship’; fr. *casser du sucre sur le dos de quelqu’un*, lit. ‘to break sugar on the back of someone’, meaning ‘to criticize someone behind their back’; fr. *voire trente-six chandelles*, lit. ‘to see thirty-six candles’, meaning ‘to be stunned (after a hit)’; fr. *faire son beurre*, lit. ‘to do his/her butter’, meaning ‘to make a profit’.

It should be noted that these results reflect students’ subjective perceptions rather than an intrinsic visual quality of the expressions themselves.

Figure 2 shows the results of the second test concerning the degree of frozenness of each expression. In this regard, learners are perfectly aware of the difference between free expression and fixed expression. Highly fixed expressions include, for instance, fr. *filer à l’anglaise*, lit. ‘to go away in the English style’, meaning ‘to leave discreetly’; fr. *dévisser son billard*, lit. ‘to unscrew one’s billiard table’, meaning ‘to die’ et fr. fr. *voire trente-six chandelles*, lit. ‘to see thirty-six candles’, meaning ‘to be stunned (after a hit)’. It can also be observed that certain expressions, such as fr. *se courber en avant pour un pédalage forcé*, lit. ‘bending forward for forced pedalling’ or fr. *changer d’amure en passant par le vent arrière*, lit. ‘to change tack by going downwind’, receive a substantial number of “more fixed” responses. This tendency can be explained by the presence of semi-free elements, namely terminological sequences (fr. *pédalage forcé*, lit. ‘forced pedalling’; fr. *changer d’amure*, lit. ‘to change tack’; fr. *vent arrière*, lit. ‘tailwind’) that are conventionalized within specialized domains (cycling and navigation). While the expressions as a whole remain compositionally transparent, the relative lexical stability of these elements may have led learners to perceive them as more fixed.

Regarding Test 3, a total of 1,050 responses were collected (70 students × 15 items), of which 64.9% (682/1,050) were correct, 31.2% (328/1,050) incorrect, and 3.8% (40/1,050) omissions. The results suggest that performance in Test 3 may have been facilitated by the tasks carried out in Tests 1 and 2. It should be noted that these earlier tests did not provide definitions or paraphrases; rather, they required learners to assess degrees of imageability and fixedness. Such tasks likely promoted the formation of stable mental associations between expressions and conceptual representations, which were subsequently mobilized during the paraphrase-recognition task in Test 3.

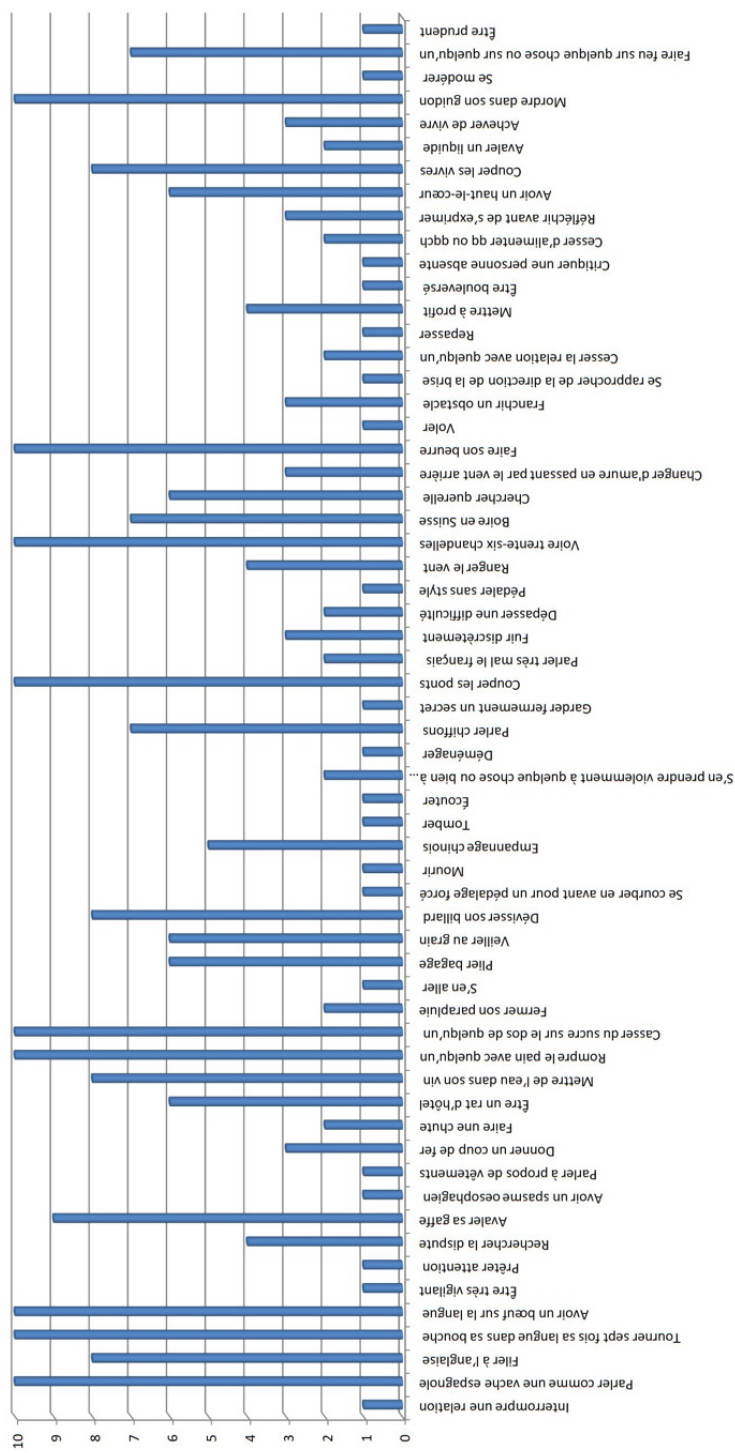


Fig. 1: The results of Test 1

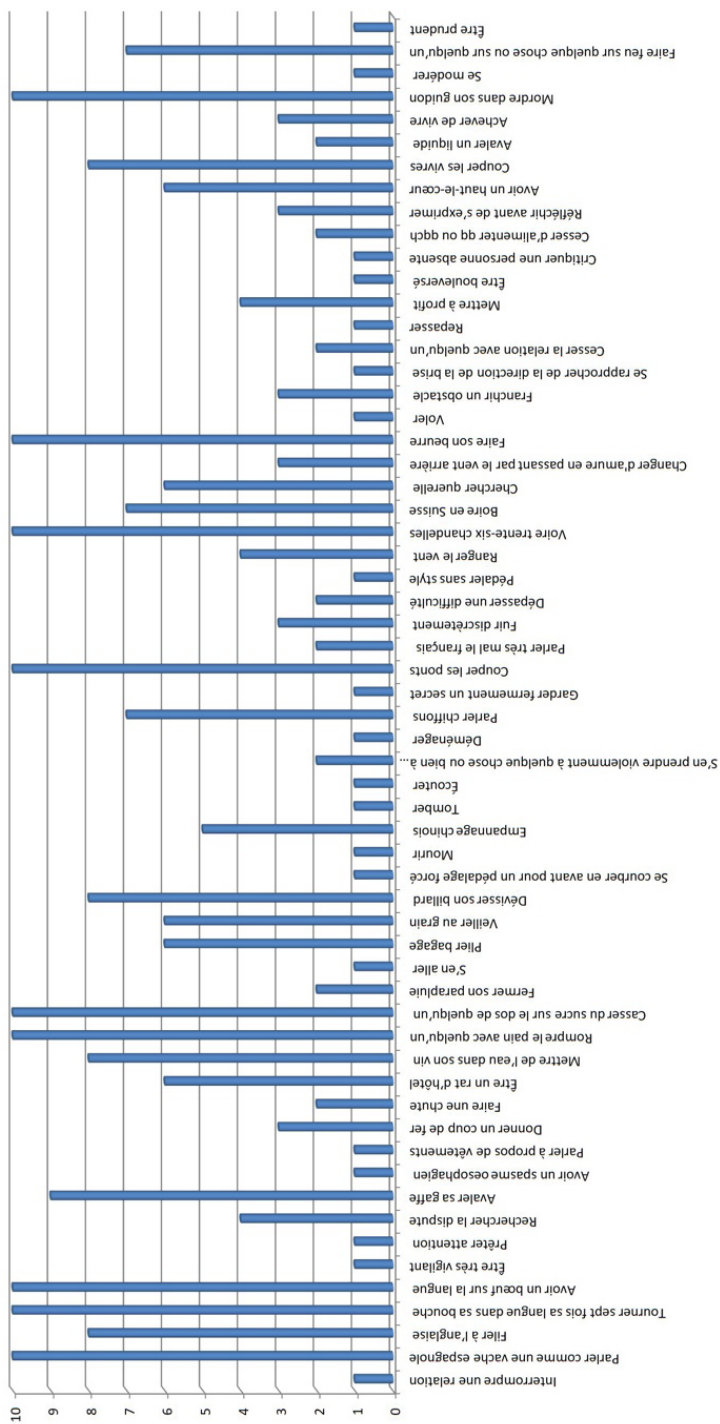


Fig. 2: The results of Test 2

In the majority of cases, learners appeared to combine metaphorical, metonymic, and analogical cognitive operations with contextual cues and cross-linguistic analogies (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999; Kövecses 2006; Boers and Lindstromberg 2008; Monneret 2018). This is illustrated by the idiomatic expression fr. *mordre dans son guidon*, lit. ‘to bite down on one’s handlebars’, meaning ‘to pedal hard’ as shown by student 32 (“I see the image and I chose the answer which gave me this image”) and student 41 (“I saw the mental scene of someone destroying the handlebars”).

Concerning the interpretation of fr. *tourner sept fois sa langue dans sa bouche*, lit. ‘to turn seven times his/her tongue in his/her mouth’, meaning ‘to think before speaking’, we can observe an analogical reasoning. In this regard, student 10 states that “meaning is thinking before expressing because we turn the tongue to find the words”. Likewise, the expression fr. *avaler sa gaffe*, lit. ‘to swallow one’s blunder’, meaning ‘to die’ gives rise to reasoning of a “visual” nature: student 14 affirms that “to die because swallowing a blow, a mistake, something that hurts us = a little bit of dying”.

A final example of analogy is the expression fr. *ranger le vent*, lit. ‘to put away the wind’, meaning ‘to catch the wind’, which obtained good results on the interpretative level. Student 54, for example, states that the expression means “to approach the direction of the breeze, it gives me the feeling of running with a tailwind”, and student 62 shows that the meaning is linked to the “idea of confusion of the wind which is put away, reorganized, we find the direction, the route”.

We have also observed that interpretation is influenced by the mother tongue or by other languages. This is, for example, the case of student 2, who, while interpreting the expression fr. *filer à l’anglaise*, lit. ‘to go away in the English style’, meaning ‘to leave discreetly’, says “to flee discreetly because I thought of the Italian defilarsi [lit. ‘to sneak away’]” or the case of student 33 who states that “prendere i bagagli e partire [lit. ‘take your bags and leave’] such as in Italian”.

In Test n. 3, errors concern the literal translation, due to cross-linguistic influence. Students translate the expression using their mother tongue, relying on lexical, phonetic and conceptual analogy relationships. We observe, for example, certain cases of word transparency for the semi-free expression fr. *faire une chute*, lit. ‘to do a fall’, meaning ‘to fall’ commented by student 36 “to be without style and in Italian fare una caduta di stile [lit. ‘to do a fall of style’, meaning ‘faux pas’]”; for the idiomatic expression fr. *faire feu sur quelque chose ou sur quelqu’un*, lit. ‘to shoot someone’, meaning ‘to attack something or someone violently’ translated by student 25 “to shoot at someone, it reminds me of Sardinian *mettere fuoco* [lit. ‘to put on fire’, meaning ‘to shoot’]” and for the phraseologism fr. *être un rat d’hôtel*, lit. ‘to be a hotel rat’, meaning ‘to be a hotel thief’, paraphrased by student 63 as “study too much, such as *topo di biblioteca* [lit. ‘a mouse of library’, meaning ‘a bookworm’] in Italian”.

The incorrect answers are linked to conceptual analogy, allowing learners to create relationships between two conceptual domains.

This is the case of the idiomatic expression fr. *faire feu sur quelque chose ou sur quelqu'un*, lit. ‘to shoot someone’, meaning ‘to attack something or someone violently’, which was paraphrased “to attack so violently and therefore to burn, to have an exaggerated reaction” by student 41. We also take into account fr. *avoir un haut-le-cœur*, lit. ‘to have a high hearth’, meaning ‘to feel nauseous’ where the cultural references linked to the nobility of the heart are highlighted by student 37 who affirms that the meaning is “to be proud, when the heart beats very strongly it is high, it is what happens when we are proud” or by student 12 who affirms “to be generous who has a high heart, high feelings”.

Other students activated, on a conceptual level, characteristics related to certain cultural domains: student 24, who affirms that the expression, fr. *être un rat d'hôtel*, lit. ‘to be a hotel rat’, meaning ‘to be a hotel thief’, means “travel a lot because mice move quickly” and student 2, who interprets the expression fr. *donner un coup de fer*, lit. ‘to give an iron shot’, meaning ‘to iron’, as “to fight because iron is a weapon”.

The motivations given by the learners show that pre-knowledge linked to mental images influences translation.

4. Conclusion

In this work, our main objective is to formulate a preliminary hypothesis in order to understand the contribution of imageability to the interpretation of phraseologisms in the French language.

The results obtained from the three tests highlighted that the students subjected to meta-reflection on imageability and on lexicalization correctly translated the proposed expressions.

What emerges from this study is that students are aware that phraseologisms are culturally motivated. They try to activate their linguistic, cultural and historical knowledge relating to the target language in order to translate the expression. Indeed, students focused their attention on the specificity of the conceptual relationships of the expressions, and they arrived at new inferences, showing how conceptual metaphors work and operate in the dynamics of an imaginative nature.

The work of meta-reflection on the conceptual associations that emerge during the process of delimitation, identification and translation of a phraseologism must be explained in French as Foreign Language classes by promoting the didactization of the mental process of memorization.

In our opinion, memorization process needs several conditions. It is necessary, firstly, to highlight the process of observing the form of expression; secondly, to work on the process of decoding the expression; then, stimulate

learners to look for analogies and similarities through a process of narrativization and creation of mental scenarios. Finally, it is desirable to give rise to a global memorization of expressions by transmitting a method of constructing mental images by allowing the learner a certain creativity and freedom, so that learning becomes an individual act in an open and active process.

This article cannot be exhaustive and in no way claims to provide definitive answers to the questions asked. Although the number of students is not sufficient to draw generalizable conclusions, it may nevertheless provide a good starting point for asserting the explicitness of imageability and underlying mental images may indeed prove an asset in the appropriation of phraseology.

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The phraseodidactic potential of newer approaches to foreign language teaching and learning

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ABSTRACT

An important task of foreign language teaching is to promote the lexical competence by initiating acquisition in the field of phraseology. One of the most influential models in the design of phraseology-related vocabulary teaching and learning is Peter Kühn's phraseodidactic three-step model of identification, encoding and active use of phrasemes. In this article, we introduce the three-step model and then discuss its theoretic and didactic implications and usability in relation to a selection of newer didactic approaches. Our hypothesis is that the three-step model is not sufficient as a didactic principle, and that other didactic approaches, such as the plurilingual approach and task-based learning, can contribute significantly to improve the teaching and thereby the learning process of phraseology in foreign languages.

Keywords: Phraseology; phraseodidactics; three-step model; plurilingual approach; task-based learning.

1. Introduction

Today, the consensus in didactics of German as a foreign language (GFL) is that phraseology is an integral part of the vocabulary and, therefore, important for language teaching and learning (Hallsteinsdóttir 2011). German language teaching today partially – and increasingly – adapts to this view (Kacjan, Enčeva, and Jazbec 2023, 196). Even though textbook analyses show that phraseology still lacks consideration in learning materials for GFL, phraseology is indeed increasingly being included in textbooks and other educational materials, e.g.,

the chapter on formulaic language in Barkowski *et al.* (2017). Also, the incorporation of phraseology (i.e. fixed expressions) into the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) back in 2001, as one of three groups of vocabulary elements belonging to the lexical competence (Council of Europe 2001, 110-111), provides an essential basis for the incorporation of phraseology in language teaching. Phraseology in the CEFR, though, is a subject of an ongoing controversial debate and the accompanying volume of the Framework of Reference (Council of Europe 2020) contains hardly any innovations on phraseology. Furthermore, in contrast to the growing focus on the relevance of phraseology in learning materials and curricula documents for GFL, training programmes do not always promote the phraseological competence of language teachers accordingly.

Our text is a contribution to the development of an integrative framework for vocabulary learning.¹ It is partly based on the results of the theoretical work on a learning platform for multiword units of the project *Plurilingual Phraseology: Learning multiword units through English* which was funded by the Erasmus+ program of the EU² and the ongoing follow-up project *PhraseoLab 2.0* (<https://phraseolab.org>).³

There is already a wide variety of didactic approaches, materials, learning and teaching concepts for teaching languages that are applicable to phraseology but not implemented in phraseodidactics yet. In this contribution, we will discuss some of those approaches and how they can point the way towards a more integrative ways of foreign language teaching. First, we explore the potential(s) – but also limitations – of step or phase modelling of training vocabulary. Then we discuss how newer language didactic approaches, such as plurilingualism in the sense of the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures (Candelier *et al.* 2009), as well as task-based and form-focused activities can contribute to teaching phrasemes, i.e. extend the existing step models. Our discussion is implemented in the framework of the communicative approach to language teaching as in the CEFR, which focuses on promoting communicative competencies and preparing the learners for real-life communication (Council of Europe 2001, 2020).

1 Parts of this text have been published in German in Hallsteinsdóttir and Chrissou (2024; 2025).

2 Erasmus+ project 2021-1-ES01-KA220-HED-000023469.

3 For the theoretical orientation and examples from the project, see Hallsteinsdóttir and Chrissou (2024, 2025).

2. Phraseology in German as a foreign language (GFL)

2.1 Step models for training phrasemes

Phraseodidactics, defined as didactic approaches to phraseology, includes a broad variety of aspects that are relevant in relation to the systematic teaching of phrasemes in both first and foreign languages (Ettinger 2001, 87). Since its publication, the three-step model of training phrasemes by Kühn (1992) has been regarded as the phraseodidactic approach par excellence. The first version of the model, based on an approach to vocabulary learning in English as a foreign language (Doyé 1971, quoted in Haß 2021, 86), divides the learning process into the two phases of receptive analysis and productive use. Receptive analysis involves the first two steps, identifying a combination of words as a lexicalized unit, i.e. phraseme, and decoding its meaning from the text. The third step includes adequate use of the phraseme in communication (Kühn 1992, 184).

Kühn himself describes the learning processes when using the three-step model as time-consuming and labor-intensive learning (Kühn 1992, 185). Nevertheless, his model has been implemented in several didactic frameworks. Accordingly, many variations on the modelling of identification, decoding of meaning, and active use of phrasemes in texts as steps in the learning process exist (e.g. Lüger 1997, 2019, 73; Ettinger 2019, 100; Laskowski 2010; Bergerová 2011). What the models have in common is that they serve as highly instructive guidelines that structure and control the learning process. As an example of newer approaches, Kacjan, Enčeva, and Jazbec set the three-step model – in a variation with four steps – as the overall framework that constitutes the micro-level of teaching phraseology in foreign languages (Kacjan, Enčeva, and Jazbec 2023, 180) and thus controls the internal influencing factors determining phraseology in the classroom.

Kühn developed the three-step model for teaching and learning phraseology in the narrow sense, i.e. idioms. But the increasing interest in phraseology in a broad sense in recent research requires new phraseodidactic approaches, as e.g. already implemented in collocation didactics (Reder 2006; Ďurčo 2017; Reder 2023; Targońska 2023), or in didactic approaches to linguistic routines and chunks that even go beyond lexical units (Aguado 2015; Hallsteinsdóttir 2024). We follow this development and take the opportunity to advocate for integrative vocabulary training and thereby fall back on yet another model by Peter Kühn and its further developments.

2.2 Step models for training vocabulary

In addition to his three-step model of training phrasemes, Kühn (2000, quoted in Kühn 2013) introduces a three-step model for training single words in L1 teaching. The first step is the semanticization of the word in the given text, then, in the second step, its acquisition and processing by connecting the word

to other elements in the mental lexicon, and, as a final step, the “(re)activation of the vocabulary in its addressee, intention and situation-specific use in texts and text types, especially in writing processes” (Kühn 2013, 160).⁴ A few years later, Feilke (2009) expands Kühn’s model and thereby includes both single words and phrasemes. He divides the model into the three phases of reception, reflection, and production, and specifies those in terms of tasks, goals, and methods in the classroom that contribute to the development of the learners’ lexical competence (Fig. 1).

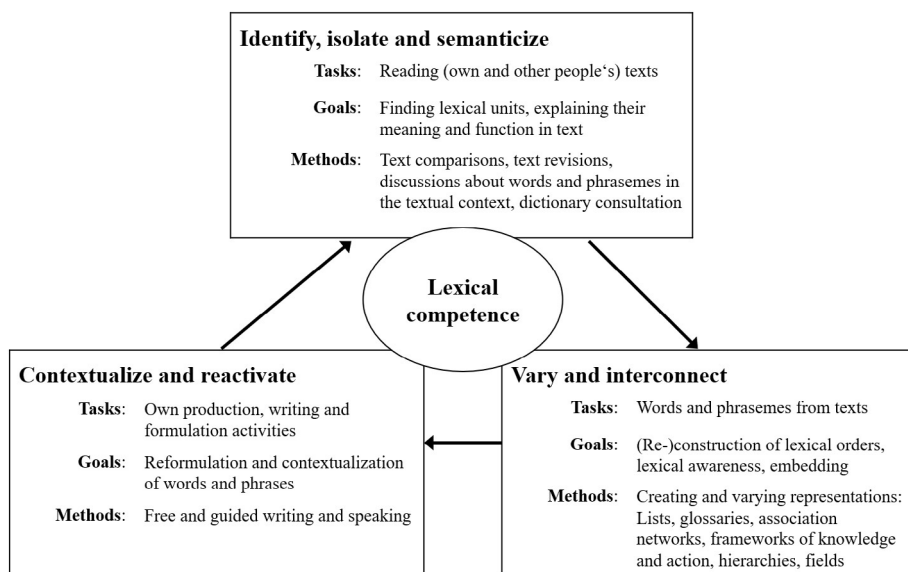


Fig. 1. Feilke’s three-step model of training vocabulary (Feilke 2009, 10)

The vocabulary training is text-based and thereby the learners identify both unknown and already known relevant words and phrasemes, examine them thoroughly and finally are able to apply them in their own texts (Feilke 2009, 10).

To begin with, we would like to emphasize two aspects that deviate from the phraseodidactic three-step model. Firstly, the model has a reflection phase, in which the learners carry out exploratory work as a part of the learning process. Secondly, the model provides both for the expansion of vocabulary through the learning of unknown lexical units and its consolidation through the training of (already known) relevant words and phrases (Kilian 2016, 2021, 36-37). The main innovation of the model, however, is that it lays the foundation for an integrative approach to vocabulary teaching. With such an approach, vocabulary

⁴ All direct citations and figures in German have been translated into English by the authors.

is viewed holistically, and phraseological competence is understood as part of lexical competence as in the CEFR. Even though a holistic-integrative approach has been present in phraseology for some time (Hallsteinsdóttir 2007, 2023), Feilke's model has hardly been discussed in GFL phraseodidactics.

However, the model is well known in approaches to vocabulary teaching in German as L1 today and it is considered an effective model for the successful expansion of vocabulary (Kilian 2021, 96-97) and the development of lexical competence (Kilian 2021, 164). Newer frameworks based on Feilke's model implement an integrative approach to vocabulary also in a broader sense including both single words and phrasemes, although not always in an explicit or systematic way (Kilian 2021, 25 and 160; Haß 2021; Haß and Hoffmann 2019, 7; on L1 phraseodidactics Juska-Bacher 2023).

One of the most elaborate versions of Feilke's model with a sequence of a total of six steps was developed by Haß and Hoffmann (2019) in the project *Wortschatzwissen* (Vocabulary Knowledge⁵). They relate the steps to their relevance in the phases of reception, reflection, and production (Fig. 2). In the model, reception and production refer to the type of learners' activity in each step, whereby the learning process is defined as an active engagement with the vocabulary, whether it is training awareness through decontextualization or re-contextualization or testing in own language use. Ideally, reflection should take place in all steps.

Already in Feilke's model, the phases of reception, reflection and production are no longer arranged in a linear fashion but connected in a circle with arrows. Haß and Hoffmann also emphasize that all steps should "promote receptive and productive learning activity as much as possible" (Haß and Hoffmann 2019, 10). In order to grasp this non-linearity, we propose to classify the learning aspects of reception, reflection and production as bundles of learners' knowledge and skills that intertwine and constitute vocabulary competence (Fig. 3) (Kilian 2021, 30-33).

In this way, in particular, the "metalinguistic vocabulary reflection" (Kilian 2021, 98), and aspects of "language-reflexive competence" (Juska-Bacher 2023, 95), and the interconnections of lexical units, words and phrasemes, can be made tangible in the mental lexicon.

5 *Wortschatzwissen* (www.wortschatzwissen.de) is being developed as an Open Educational Resource at the University of Duisburg-Essen and is currently still in progress. The project is aimed at secondary school teachers, trainee teachers, and students in grades 5–10. It combines an accessible online platform for exploring and learning vocabulary with a range of instructional resources for classroom use. The site offers a curated core vocabulary enriched with contextualized examples to support effective language use and foster independent learning (see: https://duepublico2.uni-due.de/receive/duepublico_mods_00070806).

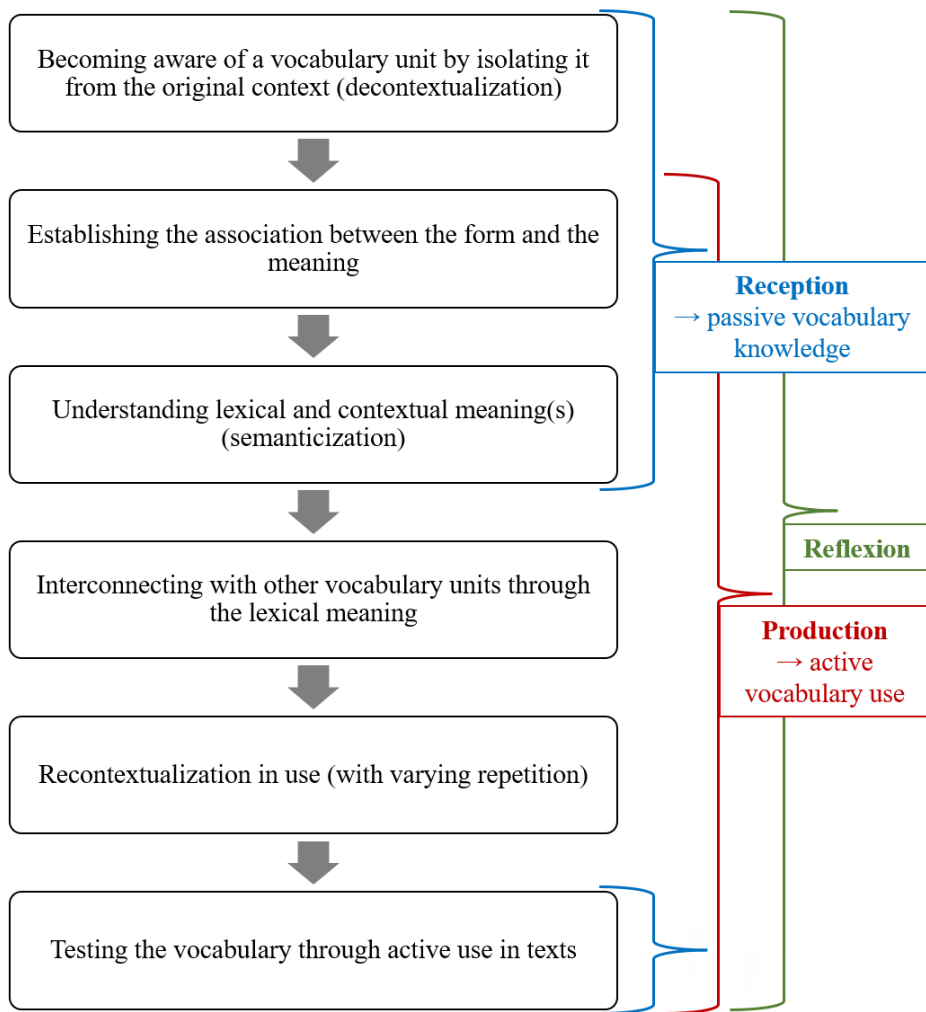


Fig. 2. The vocabulary training steps of Haß and Hofmann (2019, 10-11) in a modified presentation with a visualization of the phases of *reception*, *production* and *reflection*.

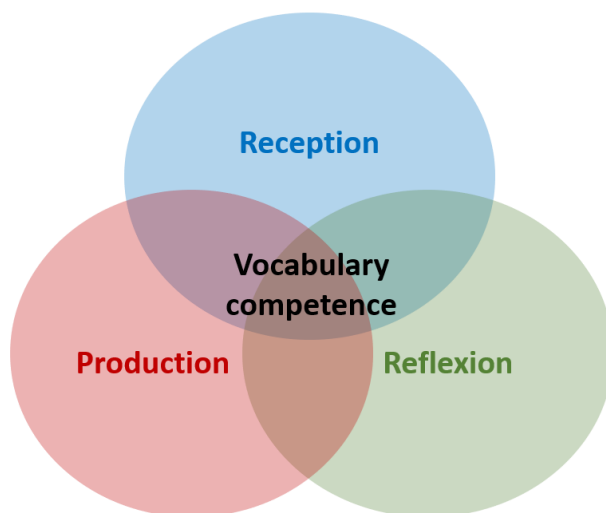


Fig. 3. Reception, production, and reflection as components of vocabulary competence

Haß and Hoffmann (2019) also differentiate between teaching as a process controlled by the teacher and learning as learners' activities aiming at building and strengthening lexical competence. We believe this distinction is essential for understanding and implementing models for vocabulary learning because structuring teaching as a linear sequence of steps is a methodological approach that is indeed on a different level than the modelling of the learners' process of learning languages.

It is the vocabulary competence of the learners, in combination with the didactic approaches of the teacher that enables reflection, reception, and production. On the one hand, existing lexical competence, i.e. vocabulary and metalinguistic vocabulary knowledge, is the prerequisite for learning, including metalinguistic awareness and reflection, to take place. On the other hand, the instructional support of the receptive and active knowledge of vocabulary and the competence to use it (Ulrich 2013, 524, quoted in Kilian 2021, 30; Reder 2023, 134) is also the (preliminary) result of the learning process.

Guided vocabulary learning is regarded as the process of four central learning steps that lead to the storage of vocabulary units in the mental lexicon (Börner 2000, 30-31, quoted in Kilian 2021, 94). The learning objective is to build up vocabulary competence. Step models can therefore be regarded as a (simplified) representation of the steps in the learning process with the aim of storing a lexical unit in the mental lexicon and thus serve as a starting point for

the linear structuring of the teaching. However, this does not mean that the learning process itself is always strictly linear, or that vocabulary learning must take place by working through a fixed sequence of steps. Thus, the linearity of phraseodidactic step models should be relativised in favour of a variety of methods.

However, there is no one-size-fits-all in vocabulary learning. Instead, the goals of vocabulary teaching can be achieved in several ways. “A combination of direct and indirect paths, of approaches to object-language word learning with approaches to meta-linguistic vocabulary reflection” (Kilian 2021, 99) can be considered particularly effective. We therefore emphasize that successful vocabulary training requires varied interplay of different methods over a longer period as e.g. in robust vocabulary training (Kilian 2021, 104; Reder 2023; Vasylyeva/Kurtz 2015), and their implementation in didactic frameworks.

3. Newer approaches in language education

In view of newer developments in the field of language didactics, we believe that the following didactic approaches are suitable for enriching step models in the field of phraseology, but also vocabulary learning in general.

3.1 The plurilingual approach

Contrastive phraseology has always been an essential framework for the teaching and learning of phraseology in foreign languages (Breindl, Dalmas, and Dobrovol'skij 2023, 197). In phraseodidactics, the contrastive approach manifests on different levels in relation to phraseology in the first, second or already learned foreign languages, e.g.

- in the equivalence-based selection of phrasemes to be learned, assuming that similar phrasemes are easier to learn,
- in the determination and description of similarities and differences in meaning and language-specific contexts of use based on corpus data,
- in the implementation of phraseology in educational materials and in the classroom, e.g. in the determination of learning progression (Hallsteinsdóttir, and Chrissou 2024, 20; Sulikowska 2024, 113-114),
- in the implementation of phraseology in the teacher training and,
- in didactic research, e.g. on interlingual aspects of phraseological competence.

The plurilingual approach is based on the fact that learning generally takes place through the integration of new knowledge into existing concepts. Thus, the linguistic knowledge and competencies already acquired in other languages are the fundamental basis for the acquisition of more languages. Learning languages can therefore be promoted by using connections to other languages (Candelier *et al.* 2009, 5). The plurilingual approach aims to develop “methods

for cross-linguistic learning” (Bradlaw and Schmorré 2021, 16) using transfer mechanisms between the language to be learned by linking new linguistic input with already existing knowledge structures. Thus, it implies the necessity of enabling learners to learn vocabulary not only by drawing on knowledge from the L1 – most contrastive phraseodidactic approaches are based on research on the role of L1 in foreign language learning (Hallsteinsdóttir 2007), – but also from English as the L2 for most learners today, and other languages (L3 etc.). Based on this assumption, the use of existing phraseological knowledge in L1 and L2, is of particular importance for the initiation of new learning processes to “strengthening and expanding the connections in the learners’ mental lexicon” (Bradlaw and Schmorré 2021, 16).

The benefits of the plurilingual approach to teaching and learning vocabulary are not limited to the advantages of positive transfer from other languages. At the interface of language and culture, affective aspects can be explored based on the plurilingual repertoire of the learners and in connection with the (comparative) reflection of cultural phenomena. Due to their metaphorical-metonymic motivational basis and expressive-judgmental function, particularly “culture-sensitive phrasemes” (Reder 2023, 143) have a strong affective potential. Phraseology therefore is an interesting phenomenon in relation to “affective connotations” (Kilian 2021, 104), that traditionally do not get much attention in vocabulary training, as well as the activation of emotionality and humour in the learning process. Furthermore, the integration of affective aspects opens an interface with intercultural competence.

3.2 Task-based learning and focus on form

Task-based learning has its roots in the Anglo-American foreign language didactic tradition of the 1980s. It is essentially linked to communicative approaches to foreign language didactics as it uses language for extra-linguistic purposes to achieve communicative goals. A task introduces an action-orientated learning opportunity based on a work instruction or a question, which “requires a whole series of different but interrelated situations of negotiating, planning, writing, reading etc”. (Portmann-Tselikas 2001, 17) and thereby motivates authentic action and stimulates the heuristic examination of content in the sense of scenario didactics (Piepho 2003, 65; Roche and Terrasi-Haufe 2017).

Legutke (1997, 106) argues for the bundling of form-focused exercises and content orientated tasks in sequences which comprise different, partly differentiated strands of action. The form-focused exercises thereby serve as an introductory phase and lead to a smooth transition to more complex communicative tasks. In this function, form-focused learning activities purpose is to enrich the training of partial linguistic competencies such as the lexical competence, e.g. by working with phrasemes (and single words) in relation to a given topic, defined situation, or a semantic field, using dictionaries and databases to explore

correct linguistic forms and add unknown vocabulary. Then, in following activities, the learners use the vocabulary to solve a communicative task.

It is noticeable that most variants of Kühn's three-step model support the learning process through form-focused exercises with more or less strict instructions without considering other forms of learning activities. Form-focused learning activities, e.g. automatization of form and meaning, are useful for strengthening linguistic accuracy. However, for the implementation of the principle of learner-centred teaching, they cannot stand alone, but need to be combined with subjectively meaningful communicative tasks focusing on content in language reception and production activities and enabling individual initiative and creativity (Chrissou 2022, 133; Reder 2023, 145).

4. Conclusion

One – somewhat surprising – result of the evaluation of existing research is that phraseology is discussed in L1 vocabulary didactics, albeit still somewhat inconspicuously and unsystematically. Meanwhile, phraseodidactics in GFL has remained stuck in multiple variations of linear step models focusing on phrasemes only. Due to their linearity, these models do not provide for recursive practice sequences, i.e., they do not account for the possibility of using non-authentic linguistic material to aid the teaching process or to repeat learning activities in the classroom, e.g. to practice automatization in language use or train vocabulary extension. Besides, the strict requirement that working with phraseology should always take place in authentic texts also leaves little room for decontextualised exercises for reflection or task-based activities. We, in contrast, argue that an integrative approach to vocabulary learning, including both single words and phrasemes (with a broad definition of phraseology) is a more suitable basis for an effective language education.

In this contribution to the development of an integrative framework for vocabulary learning, we have brought together and discussed existing step models and a selection of newer didactic approaches. Our conclusion is that the three-step model should be complemented or even replaced by other didactic approaches in some contexts. We suggest developing an integrative theoretical and methodological framework for teaching and learning vocabulary that includes both single words and phrasemes in systematic vocabulary training and a variety of methods and vocabulary training activities. Further work on the framework should integrate and further develop the models presented as well as generate new concepts.

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The effect of explicit instruction on comprehension and production of discourse formulas

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of explicit instruction on the comprehension and production of discourse formulas among L2 Russian learners. Discourse formulas, as fixed expressions with pragmatic functions, present challenges for learners due to their non-compositional meaning and language specificity. The study focuses on the effectiveness of an online course *Kak skazhetsya*, which offers corpus-referred instructional materials designed to enhance learners' pragmatic competence.

The research involved 29 students divided into an experimental group, which completed the course, and a control group, which did not receive any explicit instruction. Participants were assessed through pre-, post-, and delayed post-tests that evaluated their recognition, comprehension, and production of discourse formulas. Results indicated a significant improvement in the experimental group's ability to recognize and comprehend the target formulas, with gains sustained over time. However, production proved to be more challenging, with only moderate progress observed. The study highlights the need for further research into enhancing productive competence in teaching discourse formulas.

Keywords: discourse formulas; corpus-referred instructional materials; pragmatic competence; L2 Russian.

1. Introduction

Formulaic language has received considerable attention in language learning research in recent decades. While the research has focused mainly on the acquisition and use of idioms (De Knop and Mollica 2016; Eyckmans and Lindstromberg 2017), collocations (Granger and Bestgen 2014; González Fernández and Schmitt 2015; Gablasova, Brezina and McEnery 2017), and multiword expressions in general (Ådel and Erman 2012; Siyanova-Chanturia and Spina 2020), there are still relatively few studies investigating discourse, or

speech, formulas – a particular class of formulaic expressions used as verbalized reactions to another participant's utterance in a conversation:

(1) - *Davaj zavtra schodim v kino* 'Let's go to the movies tomorrow'.

- *Ja žal* 'I'm up for it!' / *Toľko ne ěto* 'No way'.

These fixed utterances with non-compositional meaning and pragmatic functions can pose a challenge for second language learners, especially when exposure to the target language is limited. Discourse formulas are highly idiosyncratic and language-specific, and they are often overlooked in lexicography and language teaching.

This study examines the effectiveness of an online course (*Kak skazet'sja*) that incorporates corpus-based instructional materials on discourse formulas, assessing its impact on the development of pragmatic competence among L2 Russian learners.

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a brief overview of what is referred to as discourse formulas and their key characteristics. Section 3 presents the instructional materials on discourse formulas in Russian, along with the test developed to address the research questions. In Section 4, the study's results and limitations are discussed. Finally, conclusions are drawn.

2. Discourse formulas

Due to diachronic processes that can be referred to as pragmaticalization (Diewald 2011, Heine 2013), Russian multiword units like *eshe čego* (meaning 'not a chance'), *a kak že* (meaning 'you bet'), and *da ladno* (meaning 'seriously/ok') have lost the original meanings of their individual components and acquired a pragmatic function. These expressions have become fixed, independent utterances that lack free slots and do not allow for transformations¹, such as element replacement (2)-(3), pluralization (4), introduction of new elements (5), modification (6), or rearrangement of elements (7):

(2) *Uch ty* (lit. 'wow you', meaning 'wow')

**Uch my* (lit. 'wow we')

(3) *Počemu by i net* (lit. 'why and not', meaning 'why not')

**Počemu by i da* (lit. 'why and yes')

1 In some cases, minor variations can occur, such as adding one or more particles (*gde tam* meaning 'far from it' – *da gde už tam* meaning 'far from it') or replacing an element with another (*da gde už tam* meaning 'far from it' – *da kuda už tam* meaning 'far from it').

- (4) *Ne to slovo* (lit. ‘not that word’, meaning ‘tell me about it!’)
 **Ne te slova* (lit. ‘not those words’)
- (5) *I ne govori* (lit. ‘and don’t say’, meaning ‘you can say that again’)
 **I ne govori eto* (lit. ‘and don’t say that’)
- (6) *Ne vopros* (lit. ‘not a question’, meaning ‘no problem’)
 **Ne važnyj vopros* (lit. ‘not an important question’)
- (7) *Von ono čto* (lit. ‘over there it what’, meaning ‘oh, that figures’)
 **Ono čto von* (lit. ‘it what over there’)

Discourse formulas can presumably be found in any language. They are used in response to a preceding utterance and serve to express various pragmatic meanings, such as surprise (*Nado žel* meaning ‘Wow!’, *Ne možeš byt’!* meaning ‘No way!’), indifference (*Mne to čto!* meaning ‘Who cares!’, *Kak žnaeš* meaning ‘As you wish’), agreement or confirmation (*Vot imenno!* meaning ‘Exactly!’, *I ne govori!* meaning ‘You can say that again!’), disagreement or negation (*Ne skaž!* meaning ‘I wouldn’t say that’, *Ničego podobnogo!* meaning ‘Nothing of the kind!’), consent to a request or invitation (*Ja ne protiv!* meaning ‘I don’t mind!’, *Ja za!* meaning ‘I’m up for it!’), refusal or prohibition (*Ni za čto!* meaning ‘No way!’, *I reči byt’ ne možeš!* meaning ‘Absolutely not!’), requests for clarification (*V smysle?* meaning ‘What do you mean?’, *Čego-čego?* meaning ‘Come again?’), and expressions of discontent or devaluation (*Tože mně!* meaning ‘Oh, please!’, *Kto by govoril!* meaning ‘Look who’s talking!’). They generally express either a negative reaction (disagreement, refusal, or discontent) or a positive reaction (agreement or consent).²

For the first time, attention to these formulaic expressions with a pragmatic function was brought by Charles Fillmore (1984), who referred to them as “speech formulas”. He noted that the preceding utterances made by another participant determine the choice of a specific formula. Rachilina *et al.* (2021) suggested that when describing discourse formulas, it is necessary to rely on the classification of speech acts (Searle 1976) and consider the correlation between the semantics of the stimulus speech act and the reaction formula:

[...] typy predšestvujuščich replik dialoga - t.e. vyskazyvanij, proiznosimych drugim učastnikom, - vypolnjajut dlja DF tu že rol’, čto pustye sloty/peremennye dlja konstrukcij: tak že, kak dlja konstrukcij, oni obespečivajut kogerentnost’ teksta, soedinjaja raznye ego fragmenty meždu soboj i, čto osobenno važno, opredelajut vybor toj ili inoj edinicy³ (Rachilina *et al.* 2021, 15-16).

2 An exception is represented by formulas expressing a request to clarify the preceding utterance. Formulas of surprise and indifference can take on both negative and positive meanings depending on the context.

3 ‘[...] the types of preceding dialogue remarks – i.e., utterances spoken by another participant – perform the same role for DF as empty slots/ variables do for constructions: just as for

For instance, the formula for disagreement or negation, (*Nu*) *ne skaž(i)te*! (lit. ‘don’t say’, meaning ‘I wouldn’t say that’), is used exclusively in response to evaluative hypotheses, judgments, or opinions (8)–(9), but not to questions (10), proposals (10), or requests (11).

(8) *U nas budet men'se raboty, vot i vsë. – Ne skaži, – vozrazil Bočkin. – Sovsem ne men'se, a daže naoborot* ‘We’ll have less work, that’s all. – I wouldn’t say that, – Bočkin objected. – Not less at all, but quite the opposite.’ (Arkadij Macanov. *Master i podmaster’e*, 2016).⁴

(9) – *Ty ž u nas melancholik/pravil'no?* ‘You’re a melancholic/right?’

– *Nu ne skaži/ne skaži...* ‘Well, not exactly/not exactly...’ (Oral corpus of NKRJA).

(10) – *Ty byla v bufete?* ‘Did you go to the cafeteria?’

– *Net (*ne skaži)/ja že nedavno tol'ko prišla.* ‘No (*I wouldn’t say that)/I just got here’.

– *Da/ja zabyla. Možet, schodim?* ‘Oh, I forgot. Shall we go?’

– *Da nu/eščë ne chočetsja (*ne skaži)* ‘Nah, I don’t feel like it yet (*I wouldn’t say that)’ (Oral corpus of NKRJA).

(11) *Mudryj sverčok: Poslušaj/Buratino. Broš' baloval'sja. Idi v školu.* ‘Wise Cricket: Listen, Buratino. Stop fooling around. Go to school.’

*Buratino: Eščë čego! (*Ne skaži) Daj mne žit' spokojno!* ‘Buratino: Not a chance! (*I wouldn’t say that) Let me live in peace!’ (Leonid Nečae, Inna Vetkina. *Priključenija Buratino*, 1975).

Discourse formulas need to be distinguished from other classes of pragmatic units. Unlike discourse markers (e.g., *bezuslovno* ‘certainly’, *na moj vzgljad* ‘in my opinion’, *na etom vsë* ‘that’s all’), which ensure the coherence of discourse (Baranov *et al.* 1993, 7) and are integrated into the syntactic structure of a sentence, discourse formulas (DF) function as autonomous utterances used as responses in dialogue. Another class of formulaic expressions is represented by routines (Bardovi-Harlig 2006); however, unlike DF, these expressions are bound to specific circumstances, such as greetings (*dobryj den* ‘good afternoon’) or other expressions of courtesy and social exchange (*spasibo* ‘thank you’ or *pozdravljaju* ‘congratulations’). Additionally, similar but broader classes of units have been identified in Russian linguistic literature, which only partially overlap with the class of discourse formulas: *kommunikativny* (Šaronov 2012), *kommunikemy* (Melikjan 2021), and *pragmatemy* (Bogdanova-Beglarian 2014).⁵

constructions, they ensure the coherence of the text by connecting its different fragments and, most importantly, determine the choice of a particular unit’.

4 The examples (8)–(11) are extracted from the main and the oral subcorpora of the *Russian National Corpus* (*Nacionalnyj korpus russkogo jazyka* NKRJA), available at: <https://ruscorpora.ru/>

5 For a detailed review, see (Žukova 2021).

3. Russian discourse formulas in language learning

Mastering discourse formulas can be challenging for L2 Russian learners. Due to their non-compositional and opaque meaning, learners often attempt to translate these expressions literally, which can result in communicative misunderstandings. Moreover, the correct use of these formulas is closely tied to the nature of the preceding remark, making their acquisition particularly difficult.

Discourse formulas are underrepresented in dictionaries because they are multi-word units with specific usage contexts. Additionally, they are rarely included in textbooks for learners of Russian as a foreign language, where phraseological units in general tend to be overlooked.

3.1 Description and instruction of DF in Russian

Recently, a systematic description of the inventory of DFs in Russian, based on data from spoken and multimedia corpora, has been carried out within the project *Pragmaticon*. The results of this project are integrated into the free online course *Kak skazhets'*. This course, designed for B1+ level students, introduces some of the most common discourse formulas of spoken Russian, divided into eight pragmatic classes (seven formulas for each class), such as indifference, disagreement, refusal, request to clarify the preceding utterance, discontent, agreement, surprise, consent. Each module of the course focuses on a specific semantic class of discourse formulas and includes 3-4 exercises, featuring a variety of tasks such as short videos with follow-up completion tasks, drag-and-drop exercises, matching exercises, and multiple-choice questions where students must choose the correct meaning of a DF or select the appropriate DF for a given preceding turn. To the best of my knowledge, this is the only Russian language course that explicitly addresses discourse formulas.

3.2 Case study: effectiveness of explicit instruction on discourse formulas

There is still little empirical research on the effects of instructional materials on the acquisition of pragmatic competence by learners of Russian. Some studies have focused on the acquisition of specific speech acts (Artoni *et al.* 2020 on requests and advice; Artoni and Rylova 2021 on requests), discourse markers (Benigni and Nuzzo 2018, Stoyanova 2020, Bernasconi and Giampietro 2022), and vague language (Maiko 2022, 2023). However, research specifically targeting the acquisition of discourse formulas is virtually nonexistent, with only one exception (Furniss 2016), which investigated routine formulas, including some discourse formulas. Studies have proposed various treatments for teaching elements with pragmatic functions in different languages, utilizing authentic language data or innovative techniques like input flood (Ferroni 2020, Hernández 2011). Explicit instruction that includes metapragmatic information has been shown to be the most effective approach in teaching pragmatics (Ishihara 2010, Jones and Carter 2014).

This study examines the effectiveness of the online course *Kak skažeš'* and addresses the following research questions:

1. Does the course, which incorporates explicit instruction on discourse formulas, help students improve their understanding and use of these units (compared to a group that does not receive explicit instruction on the topic)?
2. Does the intervention have a lasting impact on learners' awareness of the targeted units?

To address these research questions, pre-, post-, and delayed post-tests assessing comprehension and use of the discourse formulas were administered to both experimental and control groups, consisting of first-year Master's degree program students (B1→B2) at the University of Milan. The experimental group ($n = 16$) completed the course during the academic year, while the control group ($n = 13$) did not receive any explicit instruction on the topic. The pre-test was administered at the beginning of the academic year (October 2022), the post-test at the end of the second semester (April 2023), and the delayed post-test five weeks after completing the post-test.

3.2.1 Test's composition

The test consisted of four tasks: three assessed receptive skills, while one evaluated productive skills using a total of 24 targeted formulas introduced in the course. At the beginning of the test, students received a brief explanation of what discourse formulas are, along with some examples in their native language, Italian.

In the recognition task, students were asked to select the expressions they were familiar with. This task included 8 targeted formulas and 4 distractors. The distractors were modified versions of discourse formulas in which a lexical element was altered. For example, in the case of *počemu by i net* (lit. 'why and no', meaning 'why not') the final element *net* 'no' was replaced with its opposite, creating the nonce phrase *počemu by i da* (lit. 'why and yes'). Similarly, the discourse formula *kak znaeš'* (lit. 'as you know', meaning 'as you wish') was changed by replacing the adverb *kak* 'as' with *tak* 'so'.

The second task assessed comprehension. Students were presented with 8 mini-dialogues (one for each pragmatic class of discourse formulas) and asked to choose the option that best described what the speaker intended to express using a discourse formula (12):

(12) *Julja*: *Peredaš' Ole ètu knigu?* 'Will you pass this book to Olja?'

Anton: *Ne vopros!* 'No problem!'

A) *Anton ne soglašajetsja* 'Anton does not agree'.

B) *Anton nedovolnen tem, što govorit Julja*. 'Anton is unhappy with what Julja is saying'.

B) *Anton soglasen* 'Anton agrees'.

The third task, which tested both comprehension and use, was a multiple-choice gap-fill exercise. It included 8 mini-dialogues with a missing formula, followed by three options: one correct formula and two pragmatically inappropriate ones. Learners had to select the formula that fitted the context of the dialogue (13):

(13) - *Možeš dat' mne svoj komp'yuter?* 'Can you lend me your computer?'

- *Ne mogu, on mne samoj nužen!* 'I can't, I need it myself!'

- _____

A) *Nu i ladno* 'Oh well'.

B) *Vot imenno!* 'Exactly!'.

B) *Ne skazh!* 'I wouldn't say that'.

In the production task, students were asked to write the missing formulas in 8 mini-dialogues (14). Since the targeted formulas appeared in the other tasks, this task was administered first to prevent students from being exposed to potential responses beforehand.

(14) - *Nemedlenno poprosi proščenja u brata!* 'Immediately apologize to your brother!'

- _____ *On sam vinovat! Èto on pervyj menja udaril!* 'It's his own fault! He was the one who hit me first!'

3.2.2 Results

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of the recognition task scores for the instructed and control groups. The maximum possible score was 12 points.

Table 1: Results of the recognition task

Group	Pre-Test		Post-Test		Delayed Post-Test	
	Mean	Population standard deviation	Mean	Population standard deviation	Mean	Population standard deviation
Instructed group	4,31	1,04	8,75	1,2	8,63	1,32
Control group	4,15	1,03	4,07	0,73	-	-

The pre-test results of the instructed and control groups are comparable, demonstrating a very limited knowledge of Russian discourse formulas. The post-test results indicate that the instructional intervention significantly enhanced the learners' awareness of the targeted formulas, whereas the control group showed no improvement from pre-test to post-test. Additionally, there

is no significant difference between the post-test and delayed post-test scores in the instructed group, suggesting that the improvement had a lasting effect.

Tables 2 and 3 present the results of the comprehension tasks, with a maximum possible score of 8 points.

Table 2: Results of the task on comprehension

Group	Pre-Test		Post-Test		Delayed Post-Test	
	Mean	Population standard deviation	Mean	Population standard deviation	Mean	Population standard deviation
Instructed group	2,38	1,05	6,13	1,05	6.19	0,81
Control group	2,54	1,08	2,69	0,94	-	-

Table 3: Results of the task on comprehension and use

Group	Pre-Test		Post-Test		Delayed Post-Test	
	Mean	Population standard deviation	Mean	Population standard deviation	Mean	Population standard deviation
Instructed group	2,5	1,32	3,8	0,65	4,23	
Control group	2,38	0,86	2,87	0,81	-	-

In terms of comprehension, the experimental group showed significant improvement in the task where the formulas were provided, and they had to indicate their meaning. However, improvement was only marginal in the task in which students were required to select pragmatically appropriate formulas.

As expected, the production task proved to be the most challenging for the students, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Results of the production task

Group	Pre-Test		Post-Test		Delayed Post-Test	
	Mean	Population standard deviation	Mean	Population standard deviation	Mean	Population standard deviation
Instructed group	0,13	0,34	2,88	1,17	2,5	0,87
Control group	0,06	0,24	0,38	0,63	-	-

During the pre-test, both groups struggled to produce any discourse formulas. In the post-test, some improvement was observed in the instructed group; however, given the maximum possible score of 8, this improvement was not substantial.

Regarding the qualitative analysis of the results, some trends emerged. First, based on the most frequent errors, it appears that the students tended to analyze discourse formulas as compositional units or relied on the literal translation of specific components. For example, in (15), the students chose the option *vot èto da* 'oh wow' instead of *a kakè že* 'you bet', likely due to the presence of *da* 'yes':

- (15) - *Ty priděš' ko mne na den' roždenija?* 'Will you come to my birthday party?'
 - **Vot eto da!* 'Oh wow!' (lit. 'this is yes')

Another example of this strategy is illustrated in (16), where 70% of students in both groups selected the second option incorrectly in the pre-test. In the post-test, 31% of the instructed group and 69% of the control group made the same mistake, likely due to the literal translation of the formula *i ne govori* 'and don't say'.

- (16) *Nataša: Kakaja u tebjā chorošaja mama!* 'What a great mom you have!'
Vika: I ne govori! 'You can say that again!' (lit. 'and don't say')
 A) *Vika nedovol'na tem, što govorit Nataša* 'Vika is unhappy with what Nataša is saying'.
 B) *Vika soglasna s tem, što govorit Nataša* 'Vika agrees with what Nataša is saying'.
 B) *Vika ne soglasna s tem, što govorit Nataša* 'Vika disagrees with what Nataša is saying'.

The students demonstrated difficulty in distinguishing between units with similar forms but different meanings. For example, *nu i ladno* 'so be it,' which expresses indifference, and *nu ladno* 'okay,' which expresses agreement (17). The difference between these two units lies only in the conjunction *i* 'and':

- (17) - *Davaj zavrta schodim v kino* 'Let's go to the cinema tomorrow'.
 - [**Nu i ladno* 'So be it'.]
 - *Chorošo, togda ja napišu tebe, gde i vo skol'ko vstretimsja* 'Alright, then I'll text you where and what time we'll meet'.

Similarly, the formula *èch ty!* 'oh, come on!', which expresses disappointment or mild reproach, was mistakenly used in a context where a formula of surprise or amazement, such as *uch ty!* 'wow!', was required (18). These two formulas

differ in form only by the interjections *èch*, which expresses regret or reproach, and *uch*, which conveys a strong emotional reaction.

- (18) - *Ugadjaj, kogo ja videla včera v našem supermarketu! Aktrisu iz seriala "Kuchnja"*
 'Guess who I saw yesterday at our supermarket! The actress from the tv show "Kuchnja"!'

- *Ogo!* [**Èch ty!* 'Oh, come on!']

Another example of the difficulty learners faced in distinguishing between two formulas with similar forms involves two discourse formulas with synonymous verbs: the aforementioned *ne govori* and *ne skaži*. Although both can be literally translated as 'don't say', their meanings differ significantly. The first one, *ne govori*, expresses a confirmative meaning ('You can say that again'), while the second, *ne skaži*, conveys disagreement ('I wouldn't say that'). In example (19), the preceding utterance contains an evaluation, which allows for either formula as a reaction, depending on the speaker's perspective. However, in the test task, the speaker's reaction was clarified by the phrase *Ja čut' ne usnul* 'I almost fell asleep', making the use of *ne govori* incorrect in this context:

- (19) - *Ja očen' rada, što my schodili na ètot fil'm! Kakoj on klassnyj!* 'I'm so glad we went to see this movie! It's so great!'

- [*Ne skaži* 'I wouldn't say that' / **Ne govori* 'You can say that again']. *Ja čut' ne usnul* 'I almost fell asleep'.

One of the biggest challenges for the students was distinguishing between groups of discourse formulas that have similar meanings but are used in response to different types of speech acts. In example (20), the students incorrectly used the formula *vot imenno* 'exactly', which expresses solidarity with the interlocutor and should be used in response to a statement containing an evaluation. Instead, they should have used a formula that indicates agreement to a suggestion or acceptance of an invitation, such as *počemu by i net'* 'why not', *ja za* 'I'm in', or *ja ne protiv* 'I don't mind':

- (20) - *Davaj zavtra schodim v kino* 'Let's go to the cinema tomorrow'.

- [**Vot imenno!* 'Exactly!']

- *Chorošo, togda ja napišu tebe* 'Alright, then I'll text you where and what time we'll meet'.

In a similar way, the students confused formulas of refusal and negation. In example (21), in response to a request some students chose formulas of negation (*ničego podobnogo* 'nothing of the sort', *vряд li* 'hardly'), which can only be used after a polar question, assumption, or opinion:

- (21) - *Nemedlenno poprosi prošćenija u brata!* 'Immediately apologize to your brother!' - [**Ničego podobnogo* 'Nothing of the sort' / **Vrjad li* 'Hardly'] *On sam vinova! Èto on pervyj menja udari!* 'It's his own fault! He was the one who hit me first!'

According to our data, the students rarely used the strategy of creating calques from their native language. This occurred only in a few instances in the control group, such as in example (22), where *ne govori mne èto* is a word-for-word calque of the Italian discourse formula of surprise *non me lo dire!*

- (22) - *Ugadaj, kogo ja videla včera v našem supermarkete! Aktrisu iz seriala "Kuchnja!"* 'Guess who I saw yesterday at our supermarket! The actress from the tv show "Kuchnja"!'
- *Ogo!* 'Wow!' [**Ne govori mne èto!* (lit. 'don't tell me this')]

This may be due to the students' perception of these formulas as idiosyncratic, which led them to avoid translating them directly from Italian.

4. Conclusions

The test results indicate that the instructional intervention increased students' awareness of Russian discourse formulas, particularly in their ability to recognize and understand these expressions in context. However, this improvement did not translate into a significant enhancement of the students' productive skills. The challenges observed in distinguishing between formulas with similar forms and meanings, and in producing contextually appropriate responses, suggest that a more nuanced approach is necessary for teaching these units effectively.

A more intensive intervention that combines increased oral input, opportunities for oral production, and structured cross-linguistic comparisons could potentially lead to greater progress in the acquisition of discourse formulas. Integrating more interactive and communicative tasks would allow students to practice these expressions in a variety of contexts, thereby deepening their understanding and use.

This study has some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. One major limitation is the small sample size, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, important variables such as the time each student dedicated to studying the materials and their overall exposure to Russian input, particularly in spoken form, were not systematically controlled. These factors could have influenced the outcomes of the intervention.

Conducting a delayed post-test at a later stage could help further evaluate the long-term retention of the targeted formulas, offering a more comprehensive

view of the intervention's effectiveness over time. Future studies could also include a larger and more diverse sample to validate the findings and explore the role of individual differences in the acquisition of discourse formulas.

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Phraseological Competence in Second-Generation Heritage Speakers: The Case of Czech with German as the Dominant Language

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ABSTRACT

The topic of this article is the phraseological competence of second-generation heritage speakers of Czech with German as their dominant language. The respondents of the survey are university students. The phraseological material analyzed in this study consists primarily of Czech strongly idiomatic phraseological comparisons, weakly idiomatic collocations, phrasemes with numbers, proverbs, and iconic movie quotes. Using data obtained from cloze tests, a translation task, exercises on phraseology meaning, and interviews, the study examined which types of Czech phrasemes heritage speakers retain in their mental lexicon and, where applicable, how firmly. A central question was which strategies they employ when their phraseological competence in the heritage language is required for the reception or production of phrasemes. The initial results showed, among other things, that the dominant language (German) plays a significant role and that the strategies used are individual, but also differ for the same person when the experiment is repeated later.

Keywords: Czech; German; heritage language and speakers; language ideology; phraseology.

1. Introduction

With globalization and the increasing migration, the number of bilingual and multilingual speakers is also growing. This is accompanied by a rising interest of linguists in language contact phenomena (Riehl 2018) and other aspects related to bilingualism (cf. Grosjean and Li 2019). So-called *heritage speakers* are also increasingly becoming the focus of linguistic, didactics and cultural research (Bergmann and Brüggemann 2021; Brehmer and Mehlhorn 2018; Cope 2021; Mertins and Delucchi 2022; Polinsky 2015).

However, research into bilingual speakers and speakers of heritage languages has so far been neglected from a phraseological perspective (cf. Keller 2014; Krumbholz 2012). There is hardly any phraseological research on heritage speakers with the language-pair German and Czech (cf. Šichová 2021, 2024).

Against this background, the present study investigates how heritage speakers mentally store and process phrasemes. Drawing on data from adult heritage speakers of Czech whose dominant language is German, it illustrates the phraseological competence of second-generation bilinguals. A central question concerns the mental representation of phraseological units in heritage speakers; here, both the form and the meaning of such units are examined in a differentiated manner. The study further seeks to identify the strategies heritage speakers employ when their phraseological competence in the heritage language is called upon. In doing so, it summarizes findings from my earlier research alongside new empirical data.

2. Heritage speakers

The terms *heritage language* and *heritage speakers* are defined differently in the literature (for our purposes cf. Polinsky 2015, 7; Brehmer and Mehlhorn 2018, 17). When talking about heritage speakers, it is important to specify which generation is being referred to. The experiences and data presented here come from second-generation immigrants (approx. 40 in total) who have lived in Germany since birth or early childhood in bilingual/multilingual families. Born between 1993 and 2001 in Bavaria, they were studying at university at the time of data collection (2006–2024). They have acquired Czech as the language of their ancestors (one or both of their parents left for Germany before 1989 or in the early 1990s) from birth in the family, (more or less) simultaneously with German. They were educated and socialized in Germany, and German, as the majority and official language of the country, has become their dominant, unmarked language.

They never had a school education in Czech. Concerning the heritage language Czech, we can speak here of uncontrolled and incomplete language acquisition, which is reflected, among other things, in their phraseological competence. The degree of Czech language acquisition varies among these speakers and is directly proportional not only to the speaker's linguistic talent, diligence, motivation, etc., but also to their family constellation and the length, intensity, and nature of their contact with the Czech environment. In general, it can be said that listening and speaking skills prevail over reading and writing skills. Regarding the grammatical correctness of their speech, it can be said that the speakers observed show a high degree of instability, especially in phenomena that are less frequent in spoken communication (for the language profile of these speakers, cf. Šichová 2024a).

3. Phrasemes

My understanding of *phraseme* follows Čermák (2007, 82–83). He also considers single-word units and propositional constructions to be phrasemes if they exhibit phraseological characteristics. The central feature that distinguishes phrasemes from units of “regular language” is their varying degrees and shades of anomaly. The most important characteristics include stability and idiomaticity (Burger 2003, 32); these characteristics are also relevant for the subsequent analysis.

For the purposes of this study, it is important to address the “psycholinguistic stability” of phrasemes (Burger 2003, 17). This property implies that a phraseme – despite possible surface variation – functions, like a word, as a single entity and is stored in the mental lexicon as such. Speakers retrieve it holistically rather than constructing the syntagm anew according to syntactic rules; instead, they reproduce it as a “ready-made” lexical unit (Fleischer 1997, 63).

Phrasemes vary in their degree of idiomaticity. This semantic irregularity arises from the syntagm’s semantic and functional indivisibility: the overall meaning cannot be fully derived from the meanings of its components because of the absence of compositionality. According to Piirainen and Dobrovolskij (2007), certain phrasemes nevertheless exhibit *semantic motivation*, resulting from the relationship between the phraseological meaning and the mental image evoked by the lexical structure of the expression. As will be shown below, such conceptual representations are present in the lexicon of bilingual speakers.

4. Analysis

Knowledge of the following types of phrasemes was tested in various ways: 1. weakly idiomatic collocations, 2. strongly idiomatic phraseological comparisons, 3. different metaphorical verbal and nominal phrasemes, 4. proverbs, 5. iconic movie quotes. Even though no representative and statistically relevant results were achieved due to the small number of respondents and differing methodologies, I nevertheless believe that the summary of my experiments and observations presented here can shed some light on the hitherto unexplored questions of the phraseological competence of heritage speakers.

The individual experiments (number of respondents, data collection, etc.) are described in the respective studies (Šichová 2016, 2021, 2024a, 2024b, 2025). Overall, it can be said that the number of respondents ranged between 5 and 12, amounting to a total of around 40 different individuals. The phraseme samples examined were obtained either from the Czech National Corpus, based on frequency, from Čermák 2013, or from a textbook (Holá and Bořilová 2009; Hradilová *et al.* 2019). The experiments were conducted between 2006 and 2024.

4.1 Weakly idiomatic collocations

An experiment (cf. Šichová 2021, 121–130) conducted with fifteen adjective phrasemes that occur most frequently in the Czech National Corpus and are only slightly idiomatic consisted of a translation task (*mateřská škola* (meaning ‘nursery school’), *volný čas* (meaning ‘leisure time’)). The units were part of short sentences, so there was minimal context. The task was to translate the fixed phrasemes into Czech.

Almost all respondents correctly translated almost all units (or with minor formal deviations such as *nic jinébo* instead of the correct *nic jiného* (lit. ‘nothing else’), or *ten zdravotný stav* instead of the correct *zdravotní stav* (lit. ‘state of health’). This was certainly due to the high degree of equivalence between the given phrasemes in Czech and German, as well as to the fact that they are short syntagms, i.e., they consist of a small number of components, show no major structural anomalies, and are composed of elements that occur with very high frequency in non-phraseological contexts.

In this context, pragmatic phrasemes should also be briefly mentioned. No study has been conducted with my respondents specifically on this group of phrasemes. However, when teaching this group of respondents, I repeatedly observe that the phraseological expression of politeness in some generally definable situations (contact function, greetings, wishes, responses to thanks/requests, etc., e.g. *Tak se měj!* (meaning ‘Take care!’), *Všechno nejlepší!* (meaning ‘Happy birthday!’ / ‘All the best!’), *Není zář!* (meaning ‘You’re welcome!’ / ‘No problem!’) is well developed even among speakers with less developed competence in their heritage language.

4.2 Strongly idiomatic phraseological comparisons with adjectives

In another experiment (cf. Šichová 2021, 131–134), eleven respondents were asked to fill in an adjective that is part of a given phraseme in a short sentence. This cloze test with 15 units also focused on knowledge of the form of the phraseme, based on one of the most important characteristics of phrases, namely their lexicalization and reproducibility (psycholinguistic stability), i. e. *jako mávnutím ____ proutku* (*jako mávnutím kouzelného proutku*) (lit. ‘like a wave of a magic wand’), *jako na ____ pásu* (*jako na běžícím pásu*) (lit. ‘on an assembly line’).

Similes are generally less frequent in language, which, in combination with their semantic complexity, made this task more challenging for heritage speakers. A Czech control group consistently supplied adjectives attested in the Czech National Corpus and the dictionary, whereas the heritage speakers often left gaps unfilled or inserted inappropriate items (orthographic and grammatical deviations were not counted as errors). Overall, only one-third of respondents correctly supplied approximately half of the adjectives, while the remainder achieved even lower completion rates, despite the given context.

4.3 Metaphorical verbal and nominal phrasemes

In two experiments, in total seven students were asked about the meaning of the phrasemes presented to them. The first study (cf. Šichová 2021, 137–140) concerned phrasemes with numerals from the textbook *Česky krok za krokem 2* (Holá and Bořilová 2009), while the other (conducted in 2024) concerned different types of phrasemes from the textbook *Czech It Up* (Hradilová 2019). The students' responses, which were recorded, provide insights into the strategies used for mental processing of phrasemes. The strategies mentioned below can be seen in the recognition and subsequent comprehension of phrasemes, but also in tasks where the aim is to know the correct form that has been actively requested. Not all respondents use the same strategy for the same phraseme.

Similar to native speakers, heritage speakers recall the form and meaning of a phrase from their mental lexicon (as reflected in respondents' answers to the question *How did you arrive at that answer?* for example: *to bylo první, co mě napadlo* ('that was the first thing that came to my mind'), *to jsem měla v hlavě* ('that's what I had in my head'), *to je fráze, co sem slyšela už častěji v češtině* ('that's a phrase I have heard more often in Czech')).

In other cases, the speaker derives the overall (phraseological) meaning of the Czech phraseme from the literal meaning of the components or the entire syntagm. It should be noted that such answer does not have to be correct. This is demonstrated by respondent's statement on one exercise to the phraseme *dát si dvacet* (lit. 'to give twenty by oneself'). This phraseme expresses the meaning: 'to lie down (after lunch) for a short nap'. Of the meanings offered (*A. I eat twenty pieces of cake. B. I run for a while. C. I sleep for a while.*), the respondents chose options A and B because "the numeral twenty refers to the number of pieces of cake or the number of laps around a sports stadium".

Sometimes the speaker derives meaning from the metaphors of the individual components of the phraseme or the phraseme as a whole (respondents' answers to the question *How did you arrive at that answer?* to the phraseme *být jak(o) utržený ze řetzu* (lit. 'as if torn off a chain'): *ten obraz, který jsem měla v hlavě* (meaning 'the image I had in my head), more in Šichová 2021, 138–139, 2024b). This corresponds to the theory of the figurative meaning component ("bildliche Bedeutungskomponente", Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen 2009, 13).

If the heritage speaker does not have a suitable solution in the heritage language, he or she turns to the dominant language for a solution: *to jsem rychle nevěděla, tak [...], pak mně to jde do té němčiny, když to nevím česky* (meaning 'I didn't know that right away, so [...], then it goes into German when I don't know it in Czech.').

In some cases, the assumption based on the analogy in the second language is further confirmed by the literal meaning of the components. It is possible that in such "situations of misunderstanding" he or she is in a so-called bilingual language mode (Riehl 2018, 15). However, the influence of the dominant language can also be a source of interference.

The indicated mental processes can also take place in parallel. For instance, when determining the meaning of the phraseme *jako zmoklá slepice* (lit. 'like a watered hen'), the respondent first gave the equivalent phraseme in German *wie ein begossener Pudel* (lit. 'like a watered poodle'). She then added: *úplně jako zmoklý takový trošku že s ním máme že ten člověk nám je ji líto, já to vidím že prostě mi přijde obraz v hlavě* (meaning 'like a wet one, we feel a little sorry for the guy, I can see it, it is just the image in my head').

4.4 Proverbs

As a cloze test (conducted in 2015, 2016, and 2023) had shown, the heritage speakers have basically not stored the proverbs that are among the most common in written texts (Čermák 2013, 132; Kopřivová and Šichová 2023) in their mental lexicon, except for a few that appeared in their Czech language textbook *Tschechisch kommunikativ* (Maidlová and Nekula 2009). This clearly shows that the presence of proverbs in language classes and books is very important.

Most students knew the proverb *Oko za oko, zub za zub*. (meaning 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'), which is fully equivalent in German (*Auge um/für Auge, Zahn um/für Zahn*). Some answers also suggest that students are familiar with the proverb, although often based on German, but are unsure of its exact formal form in Czech: *Oko za oko, zub v zubu*. (lit. 'An eye for an eye, a tooth in a tooth'), correct *Oko za oko, zub za zub*.; *Šaty dělají lidi*. (lit. 'Clothes make the people.'), correct *Šaty dělají člověka*.; *Kdo hledá, ten najde*. (lit. 'He who seeks he shall find.'), correct *Kdo hledá, najde*., *Stará láska nerezne*. (lit. 'Old love never rusts.'), correct *Stará láska nerezaví*.

When students were given texts in which a proverb was omitted and several proverbs were offered as choices, they completed 90-100% of the items correctly. It seems that heritage speakers can infer the meaning of the proverb from its lexical form if the context in which the proverb appears is given and clear.

4.5 Famous Film Quotes

Catchphrases are very popular in Czech culture. Quotes from Czech TV fairy tales and comedies are often used in everyday conversation, and this is common across all generations. This type of phrasemes is also used a lot in the media. Some of these units have even found their way into the dictionary of the Czech language (cf. Šemelík 2024).

A total of ten students completed a questionnaire as part of a small experiment (academic years 2023/24 and 2024/25) in which they were asked to complete the ten most famous film quotes according to Kopřivová and Chen (2023) and to mark those they knew from a list of 30 other well-known film quotes. Respondents were also asked whether they were familiar with the phenomenon of famous film quotes and whether they could give examples from English or other languages.

While all students are familiar with the phenomenon and can give examples from German and English, they were unable to complete almost any Czech sentences and knew hardly any famous film quotes.

These findings are consistent with the results of another study (Šichová 2025) that focused on knowledge of Czech realia: Second-generation heritage speakers have relatively large gaps in their knowledge of culture (such as literature, films, history, etc.), while they are very familiar with everyday aspects of their ancestors' country.

5. Phraseological competence

Phraseological competence and its development vary from speaker to speaker. It cannot be postulated that all speakers have the same quantitative and qualitative prerequisites for recognizing, understanding and using phrasemes, and studies show that many speakers have major deficits in the phraseological competence of their mother tongue (Burger 2003, 125; Korhonen 1987). This also applies to the heritage speakers.

Researchers agree that phraseological competence as a kind of knowledge of the specific features of the phraseological units of the language on the one hand and the mastery of a certain set of frequently used phrasemes on the other is part of the linguistic competence of native speakers (Burger *et al.* 1982, 172; Hallsteinsdóttir 2001, 11f.). Annelies Häcki Buhofer (2007, 856) postulates several “acquisition dimensions” for phrasemes, which “just as little as any other phenomenon of language acquisition – are acquired one hundred percent at a certain moment in the sense of adult language competence”. Between these dimensions “years or decades of the individual language biography” can lie.

The last two dimensions of acquisition, those relating to the meta-level and reflections on language contexts (understanding ambiguity, language awareness), first appear during primary school age. Since the respondents were adults and university students, it can be assumed that the meta-part of phraseological competence, i.e. the knowledge of phraseological specificity, is known to the heritage speakers and they can make use of it in both or all their languages. Sometimes students explicitly want to learn phraseological units in the heritage language, which indicates that they are aware of the phraseological specifics (*Naučte nás ty Redewendungen* (meaning ‘Please teach us the idioms.’), *My ty český přísloví moc neumíme* (‘We don’t know Czech proverbs very well.’) (Šichová 2024, 227). Incidentally, this interest goes hand in hand with the desire to learn the heritage language as comprehensively as possible, including for professional purposes (cf. Nekula 2021).

Furthermore, studies show that different groups of phrasemes are acquired differently. For example, children acquire frequent collocations or pragmatic phrasemes at a very early age (Häcki Buhofer 2007, 855). The results of one

of the tests (see above) also point to this. Heritage speakers develop their phraseological competence in both languages only up to a certain point (and not necessarily in a symmetrical manner). In the case of my informants, their acquisition of Czech was limited in comparison to German, as it was neither consolidated nor further deepened through reading exercises or systematic teaching at school. Consequently, the processes of expanding phraseological competence to include more complex or less frequently used units continued predominantly in German, while in Czech it either stagnated, slowed down or declined both quantitatively and qualitatively. From this stage onwards, the individual linguistic development paths and biographical experiences of the speakers seem to exert a decisive influence.

6. Conclusions

The studies described above have shown, using the example of second-generation heritage speakers with the language pair German and Czech, that phraseological competence in the heritage language exhibits specific characteristics. It appears that phrasemes from the heritage language which are frequently used, consist of few components, display little or no idiomaticity, and are syntactically simple are more securely stored in the mental lexicon. Moreover, phrasemes with a high degree of cross-linguistic equivalence can often be retrieved or understood in the dominant language, although this may give rise to phenomena of language mixing. Heritage speakers also actively possess several phrasemes that serve primarily to guide oral communication. This indicates, among other things, a domain-specific control of the language by speakers of Czech as a heritage language. These observations still need to be examined.

Heritage speakers employ a range of strategies – sometimes simultaneously – for the mental processing of phrasemes, particularly in the case of unfamiliar syntagms whose meaning cannot be inferred from context. These processing strategies show parallels to those described in research on both native speakers and foreign language learners (Hallsteinsdóttir 2001; Wray 2007). Finally, the communicative situation itself also plays a crucial role in shaping the phraseological competence of heritage speakers. Further research is needed to describe the strategies in greater detail.

Another applicable goal could be to develop appropriate teaching methods to improve the phraseological competence of heritage speakers. Experience from teaching and the experiment with proverbs outlined above show that, similar to morphosyntax or spelling, explicit teaching of phraseology and working with specifically selected texts can also have a positive influence on phraseological competence. The existing research on phraseodidactics for heritage speakers is still quite limited and should be expanded in view of the growing number of such speakers, regardless of their specific languages.

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Phraseology and Phraseodidactics in German as a Second Language (DaZ) Classes in Primary School: Opportunities and Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of idiomatic expressions (phrasemes) in primary school German as a second language (DaZ) instruction. It posits that engaging with phrasemes contributes not only to literary-aesthetic education and pragmatic skill development but also to linguistic abilities through reflection, hypothesis formation, creativity, and aesthetic perception. The article emphasizes the importance of treating phrasemes as cultural assets and integrating them into DaZ instruction to expand learners' linguistic resources. Through sensitization to idiomatic expressions, learners are encouraged to explore diverse linguistic realization possibilities. The article advocates for a holistic approach to teaching phrasemes, combining language reflection, exploration paths, and creative learning methods. It suggests that integrating phraseme instruction fosters language awareness and contributes to equality in primary school education. Ultimately, the article underscores the importance of phraseme instruction in DaZ classrooms for developing language proficiency and cultural competence.

Keywords: Primary school; phraseology; didactics; L2; German.

1. Introduction

The question of whether, when and how idiomatic expressions should be taught in German as a second language (DaZ)¹ instruction is non-trivial and is linked to vocabulary acquisition in primary education (Juska-Bacher 2023, 94) and equality of educational opportunities for all children.

¹ DaZ is a common abbreviation in Germany for German as a second language.

In Germany, primary school (*Grundschule*) typically encompasses grades 1 to 4, serving children approximately aged 6 to 10. Only in two federal states – Berlin and Brandenburg – does it extend to grade 6. Idiomatic expressions are occasionally addressed in secondary education (*Sekundarstufe I and II*), but the systematic teaching of phrasemes is not common even there. Introducing idiomatic expressions in primary school is not about mastering them for productive use, but rather about early sensitization, especially when such expressions appear in texts used in class. The goal is to foster linguistic awareness and comprehension in an age-appropriate and exploratory manner, not to expect full mastery.

The complexity of this topic is already evident in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which is also used in the field of German as a second language. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR 2001²) emphasises in multiple instances the importance of mastering idiomatic expressions, etc., which are part of linguistic competence and thus communicative language competences, including socio-linguistic and pragmatic competences (CEFR 2001, 24).

However, in German didactics and consequently in DaZ classes in primary school, phrasemes are not given any special attention (Ehrhardt 2014).

This paper aims to address the question of how phrasemes can be taught (for example through language comparison) in DaZ classes in primary school and what strategies and methods could be conceivable and feasible in this context. The central research questions guiding this paper are: (1) What role can idiomatic expressions play in DaZ instruction in primary schools? (2) Which idioms are appropriate for this age group and how can they be selected? (3) How can these expressions be taught effectively through age-appropriate, culturally sensitive, and exploratory methods?

Therefore, the goal of this paper is to stimulate discussions about the topic of phraseology in primary school.

2. Language didactics as interlocking Cultural Sciences

Hereafter, I utilize the terminology and phraseme classification according to Burger (2015, 31–35). In my discussion, I confine myself to a specific subclass of referential, propositional phrasemes³ – namely, fixed idiomatic expressions and proverbs as a subclass of topical formulas within the framework of referential, propositional phrasemes.

In this article, I use the terms idiomatic expressions, fixed phrases, and phrasemes interchangeably, with a focus on expressions characterized by both

2 I am referring to the German-language version of the reference framework.

3 Phrasemes and idioms are used synonymously in the following.

semantic opacity and structural fixedness. While all idiomatic expressions are fixed phrases, not all fixed phrases are idiomatic. My focus lies on idiomatic expressions whose figurative meanings diverge significantly from their literal interpretation.

These phrasemes are typically sentence-like in structure and include both idiomatic expressions (e.g., *etwas aus dem Ärmel schütteln*, lit. ‘to shake something out of one’s sleeve’, meaning ‘to pull something out of a hat’) and proverbs (e.g., *Viele Köche verderben den Brei*, lit. ‘too many cooks spoil the porridge’, meaning ‘too many cooks spoil the broth’). Both serve a pragmatic and referential function in communication and appear frequently in oral and written discourse. However, for learners of German as a second language, they often remain opaque – especially when encountered without contextual cues.

Phrasemes of these subclasses are indeed present in elementary school texts and teaching materials; however, unlike, for instance, routine formulas, collocations, phrasal verbs, and structural phrasemes, they are scarcely addressed or only touched upon, which can be partially attributed to their complexity and diffuse terminology.

In the CEFR, it is assumed that “the cognitive organization of vocabulary and the storage of idiomatic expressions, etc., depend, among other things, on the cultural characteristics of the language community or language communities in which a person has grown up and been socialized” (CEFR 2001, 25).

Thus, acquiring idiomatic expressions poses a linguistic, cultural, and cognitive challenge for learners in terms of decoding and storing them. Regarding the German native-speaking domain, the educational standards for the subject German in the primary school level, as of June 23, 2022, mention only “phrasemes and formulation patterns” without further specification (2022, 21). However, this should not give the false impression that phraseology in the primary school level is negligible and only gains significance in the German as a Foreign Language (DaF) domain. For instance, in the curriculum framework for primary education in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (*Rahmenplan für die Primarstufe* 2020, 18-19), under “Hints and Suggestions” for teaching in grades 1 and 2, “playing with idiomatic expressions” is mentioned in the competence area of Reading – dealing with texts and media. In grades 3/4, students are expected to engage with idiomatic expressions during “Listening and Understanding” activities. Ultimately, idiomatic expressions and proverbs are to be addressed in German classes for grades 3 and 4 in relation to the competence of “Having reading experiences” and in the context of epic, lyric, dramatic, and linked digital texts. The focus is on texts with historical, regional, and international references.

Therefore, phraseodidactics in the domain of German as a Second Language domain must inevitably navigate and align with these requirements. Evidently,

since phraseology is also addressed in German as a First Language (DaM⁴) instruction in elementary school, it logically follows that, to ensure equal opportunities in school education, it should also have a prominent place in DaZ didactics for elementary school. In this regard, it would be beneficial to briefly outline the understanding of German didactics as an intervening cultural science, as proposed by Kepser in 2013, as a theoretical framework and justification for phraseology in DaZ.

To facilitate a transition to this understanding, I employ a syllogism: language is part of a culture, phrasemes are part of a language, therefore phrasemes are part of a culture.

If German instruction (especially German as a second language) is viewed as a (cross-linguistic) framework (Bräuer, 2011), wherein various (origin) languages and consequently cultures not only coexist but are also utilized as resources in the learning process, collaborating and intertwining, this corresponds to the understanding of German didactics as an intervening cultural science according to Kepser (2013). Similar to cultural sciences, German didactics operates across disciplines.

Kepser concludes that “the school in particular must be considered as a cultural field in which teaching and learning take place as cultural practices” (Kepser 2013, 56). This is important for modeling German didactics as an intervening cultural science, as it prepares children in (elementary) school, for instance, to apply language, literature, and media as culture-specific and, since DaZ didactics is part of German didactics, transcultural symbol systems. Inter- and transculturality, as well as methodological diversity, are further aspects that German didactics shares with cultural sciences. Kepser understands this construct as a stage for interdisciplinary exchange, with one of the core tasks being to introduce children and adolescents to the diverse cultural space, significantly shaped by the German language, as their living environment (Kepser 2013, 57).

The relevance of phraseodidactics in the DaZ domain of elementary school can be justified, among other reasons, by this understanding of German didactics as an intervening cultural science.

3. Aesthetics and play in childhood education and their relevance to idioms

In the DaZ domain of elementary school, aesthetic education plays a significant role in supporting aesthetic world exploration as a fundamental learning principle for children. This exploration occurs through aesthetic-sensory,

4 DaM is used as an abbreviation for “Deutsch als Muttersprache,” which translates to “German as a First Language.

physical, and sensorimotor (perceptual) experiences, as well as internal processing (cf. Schier 2014, 15; Schäfer 2014, 37).

Aesthetic perceptions play a crucial role in competency acquisition. The aesthetic experiences gained therein can restructure subsequent perceptions and experiences. Such restructuring is associated with increased attention and emotional involvement, which are reinforced by irritation (Schier, 2014). These attributes are necessary to foster critical questioning and reflection through curiosity and resistance in the reception of (literary) texts and verbal interactions.

The combination of art, linguistic, and literary-aesthetic learning is considered highly motivating and conducive to competency acquisition in research (cf. Moraitis 2018; Okonska *et al.* 2018; Bryant and Zepter 2022). The pedagogical-didactic potential of images is particularly evident in situations where “verbal communication is only possible to a limited extent” (Bryant and Zepter 2022, 138). Engaging with images helps to mitigate linguistic and cognitive differences among students to some extent (Spinner 2020, 46–47; Bryant and Zepter 2022, 139). Therefore, they are a helpful medium for phraseodidactics in elementary school.

The identification and/or perception of phrasemes cannot be readily assumed in DaZ instruction in elementary school. Nevertheless, children with German as a Second Language can be introduced to the exploration of full and partial idiomatic phrasemes through familiar forms of world exploration such as images and play⁵. In light of the above, phrasemes can be linked to play in that they allow for two interpretations. They can be interpreted literally or non-literally (Juska-Bacher 2023, 91). These interpretations are possible, among other reasons, due to the imagery of linguistic devices. With their help, a so-called expectation breach and thus the appropriate incongruity⁶ effect (cf. Oring 2003, 1–5) is caused, which is typically found in humorous speech acts. This effect, with appropriate (attention-directing) didactic preparation, is intended to provoke irritation. Irritation leads to a need for clarification. The teacher guides the children step by step towards the correct resolution in deciphering the meaning of a phraseme, without directly revealing the meaning of the phraseme. Discovery learning resembles the playful learning character, which in turn strengthens motivation in language learning, as play is the mode of world exploration for children.

5 Play itself is not only a familiar way for children to process new information and try out alternative solutions. As an interactive form within the social environment, with the social environment and oneself, and as a tool for combining new and existing experiences (Schäfer 2014, 33), play also carries a significant motivational factor. This is rooted in the understanding that the play has no immediate consequences in reality.

6 Appropriate incongruity can be seen as a form of communicative play that does not require participation. In this sense, it is the result of human interactions, the implications of which can be surprising, intriguing, and profound.

4. Which phrasemes should be chosen?

The question of which phrasemes should be chosen for DaZ instruction in elementary school, if at all, is by no means trivial. Full and partial idiomatic phrasemes⁷ can be overwhelming for non-native children in German classes at the elementary level. The challenge can be compounded by the dual interpretations of such phrasemes, where the idiomatic meaning may remain inaccessible without assistance from the teacher. Additionally, the question arises as to whether phrasemes are even relevant for DaZ in elementary school. It cannot be assumed that children can successfully acquire and use full or partial idiomatic units in everyday language use.

However, these considerations can be countered with the following arguments. Firstly, it is about equality of opportunity in school. All children, regardless of their first language, should be treated equally. This means, among other things, that if idiomatic phrasemes appear in literary texts read in class, their meanings must be made accessible to all children. Especially since such texts explicitly or implicitly point out the ambiguity of such phrasemes, as seen, for example, in the picture book *Der Ernst des Lebens. Den Schulweg gehen wir gemeinsam* (2021), where the interpretations of the phraseme *etwas hinter den Ohren schreiben*, lit. ‘to write something behind one’s ears’, meaning ‘to make sure to remember something’ or ‘to take something to heart’, are played with in the text. The idiomatic interpretation is illustrated through the text and, among other things, through the contextually inappropriate literal understanding playfully implemented. This “language game” aims to sensitize children to the imagery of language on one hand and, on the other hand, to stimulate linguistic attention through contextual appropriate incongruity, that is, through the breach of expectations, by questioning what is said and understood. This process of interpretation resembles play and can be further encouraged in the classroom through a playful approach.

Furthermore, when working with phrasemes in elementary school—especially in the DaZ domain—the primary goal is not necessarily for children to actively use the learned phrasemes in everyday life. After all, how often do native-speaking children of that age use full and partial idiomatic phrasemes? Rather, the aim here is to implicitly expand vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. There is also the hope that the phrasemes will become increasingly retrievable from passive vocabulary over time.

Therefore, the question of which phrasemes should be chosen for DaZ instruction in primary school can be answered flexibly. The selection of idioms

7 Full idiomatic phrasemes refer to expressions whose figurative meaning cannot be deduced from their components—e.g., “*ins Gras beißen*”, lit. ‘to bite the grass’, meaning ‘to die’). Partial idiomatic phrasemes, by contrast, retain some literal connection to their figurative meaning—e.g., “*eine lange Leitung haben*”, lit. ‘to have a long cable’, meaning ‘to be slow on the uptake’).

should be responsive to classroom conditions—such as the content being taught, the learners’ linguistic background, the frequency of the idiom in input texts, and the children’s age and proficiency level. By classroom conditions, I refer to contextual variables such as the thematic focus of the lesson, the linguistic background and proficiency of the learners, curricular requirements, available teaching materials, and specific situations arising from classroom discourse or literary texts. Phrasemes should be chosen primarily based on their authentic occurrence in instructional materials and in everyday communication relevant to the learners. This flexible, context-sensitive approach naturally reduces the number of such phrasemes, thus keeping the level of challenge for non-native children at least in terms of phrases relatively low.

At the same time, it enables learners to encounter idioms as meaningful linguistic and cultural elements rather than as isolated items.

5. How can idioms be taught and learned in DaZ remedial instruction?

The phraseodidactic four-step process (Juska-Bacher 2023, 95) of recognizing, deciphering, consolidating and using phrases that cannot be inferred from context is not feasible from the perspective of DaZ didactics for elementary school. It cannot be expected that DaZ children of that age have developed their language reflexive competencies to the extent that they can recognize, decipher, let alone use phrases independently in elementary school. It can be assumed, however, that children of elementary school age, who at least in their L1 are familiar with initial idioms (Juska-Bacher 2023, 93), could under certain circumstances – such as teacher-mediated cross-linguistic comparisons, structurally similar idioms in L1 and L2, or contextually supported usage in texts or classroom discourse – retrieve their knowledge and transfer it to L2, as with the German phrase *auf großem Fuß leben*, lit. ‘to live on a big foot’, meaning ‘to live in grand style’, and its Russian equivalent *žiť na širokuju nogu*, lit. ‘to live on a wide foot’, meaning ‘to live in grand style’, which are lexically and syntactically almost identical. However, this potential expectation seems to be too demanding for this age group.

Vocabulary acquisition theories suggest that children first form hypotheses about new word material, whether individual words or idioms, based on which meanings are then developed (Juska-Bacher 2023, 92). However, it seems rather unlikely that such hypotheses would significantly contribute to an adequate or better understanding of phrases in non-native German-speaking children of elementary school age or even be formed at all.

In some children's books, phrases can indeed be inferred from context and visual material. However, this applies by no means to all texts that can be used in the classroom.

Another reason for this is the pragmatic-linguistic thematic complexity, which especially comes into play when proverbs or idiomatic expressions are presented out of context in some textbooks aimed at native speakers. Consequently, the focus in the classroom should only be on the fact that phrases belong to the comprehension and not the usage vocabulary of DaZ children of elementary school age, as age-appropriate phrase competence in the target language is still largely lacking. Primary learning objectives should therefore be linked to the expansion of language skills in a broader sense. A crucial basis for this is vocabulary work, which accompanies the expansion of the mental lexicon (Steinhoff 2009), as well as the implicit acquisition of grammatical forms (e.g., the use of prepositions with certain nouns) that accompanies this work. Furthermore, the phraseological and literal meanings of phrases can be related, facilitating linguistic attention and critical thinking.

A combination of the holistic approach, where phrases are learned as a whole, and the analytical approach, where phrases are first broken down into parts followed by the exploration of their meanings (Burger 2006, 343; Häcki Buhofer 2007, 866; Juska-Bacher 2023, 92-93), appears promising in this work⁸.

To operationalize idiom instruction effectively in primary DaZ classrooms, a blended, methodologically diverse approach is recommended, one that is fully aligned with the developmental stages of young learners. Core principles include:

1. Multimodal scaffolding: Utilizing rich visual (e.g., picture cards, comic strips, animations), auditory (songs, chants), and kinaesthetic (role play, dramatization) cues to support comprehension beyond literal text. These forms of representation help close the gap between figurative language and learners' comprehension by making abstract ideas more concrete and accessible.
2. Playful and exploratory learning: Incorporating discovery-based tasks, such as guessing idiom meanings from images or contexts, dramatizing idiomatic usage, and creative expression (drawing, storytelling), strengthens motivation and supports active engagement.
3. Guided metalinguistic noticing: Teachers model and highlight idiomatic language use explicitly, offering metalinguistic commentary to direct attention to discrepancies between literal and figurative meanings. This process sensitizes learners to language patterns and pragmatics.

⁸ Therefore, this approach would also be a symbiosis of the three theories presented by Dobrovolskij (1997): the theory of lexical representation, the configuration hypothesis, and the decomposition hypothesis.

4. Cross-linguistic comparison: Where appropriate, parallel idioms in learners' L1 can be contrasted with German equivalents to leverage existing linguistic knowledge, promote transfer, and foster intercultural competence. Such comparisons must be carefully scaffolded based on individual student backgrounds.
5. Task-based active processing: Employing interactive tasks such as matching games, sequencing idiomatic narratives, or collaborative dialogues embeds idioms in communicative, meaningful use, encouraging gradual movement from receptive recognition to productive familiarity.
6. Spaced repetition and a spiral curriculum approach ensure that idioms are revisited regularly across different lessons and contexts. This supports gradual language acquisition, strengthens retention in the mental lexicon, minimizes cognitive overload, and improves long-term recall.

This composite approach balances holistic exposure (learning idioms as meaningful wholes) with analytical exploration (breaking down components and meaning), thereby catering to diverse learning needs and maximizing the likelihood of durable idiomatic competence (Bryant and Zepter 2022; Häcki Buhofer 2007; Juska-Bacher 2023).

As an alternative to the phraseodidactic four-step process mentioned earlier by Juska-Bacher, which seems more suitable for native language instruction, I propose the following steps:

Encounter Phrases: Identification of phrases is guided by the teacher.

1. Sensitize and Motivate: The teacher stimulates linguistic attention, for example, by asking what the phrase might mean or by drawing attention – after clarifying the literal meaning – to the discrepancy between the literal meanings of the individual components and the phrase as a whole.
2. Hypothesis Formation: If a phrase appears in a literary text, the context can be used to understand the phrase. Otherwise, this intermediate step can be skipped. In some cases, the teacher may draw comparisons with the L1⁹.
3. Isolation and Analysis or Didacticization: In this intermediate step, the meaning of the phrase is introduced in a playful manner. A possible approach is exemplified below. This step activates the actual vocabulary work. The format of discovery learning and performative task methods (Bryant and Zepter 2022) is suitable for playful implementation.
4. Memorization is implemented holistically-analytically, meaning that depending on the circumstances, the phrase is learned or practiced holistically,

9 This must be done with care, as the teacher needs specific biographical learning information, for example, to shed light on how well linguistic competencies in L1 are developed. The teacher can actively utilize AI for this purpose (see example below). Contrasting L1-L2 can also be carried out in other steps.

analytically, or as a mix of both. Playful interactions are best suited for this purpose (Schäfer 2001). Memorization should occur in loops, meaning that already familiar phrases are revisited after a certain period. This not only activates and optimises the mental lexicon but also relieves the working memory (Schachl 2018, 131-132).

5. Transfer: Over time, familiar phrases should become easier to identify and transfer to daily life. Transfer also involves the identification and use of phrases in everyday situations.

This approach possesses a certain flexibility, which lies in the overlaps between individual steps and in the possibility of skipping certain steps.

6. Didacticization: An approach to understanding the meaning of the phrase through vocabulary work

In the context of this article, however, the analytical approach is not understood as a process of deciphering the meanings of the individual parts of an idiom and thereby the meaning of the entire idiom. It is rather about a kind of didacticization of idiomatic expressions, which will be briefly outlined below. This possible approach is not the only solution and can be combined with others or replaced by them.

In the didacticization of idiomatic expressions and proverbs, the path to understanding their meanings can be approached as exploratory, performative, i.e., linguistic and aesthetic learning. It aims to strike a middle ground between deciphering idiomatic expressions from context and searching for similarities or overlaps in the idiom system of the first language. Consolidation in the comprehension vocabulary occurs alongside an explicit engagement within a didacticization framework through repeated encounters with an idiom or proverb in creative and aesthetically appealing learning contexts (projects, creative teaching-learning methods).

The idiom *auf großem Fuß leben*, lit. 'to live on a large foot', meaning 'to live extravagantly/to live beyond one's means', which I took from a textbook for German language instruction (Delamain and Spring 2006), is presented without context and visual support for deciphering, by choosing the correct meaning from a selection of three variants. Based on observations in university seminars with prospective primary school teachers, it appears that such tasks can be challenging even for native German-speaking students training to become teachers. In one of my seminars, third-semester students in a primary school teacher education program performed the task from the book for training purposes. It was noted, among other things, that by no means all students, whose first language is German, correctly understood the idiom. For example, one student indicated that he was not familiar with the idiom and initially understood it to

mean ‘someone travels a lot, so they have big feet and consequently live on a large scale’.

What happens now when this idiom is didacticized?

In the first phase of *activation and deconstruction*, learners are activated through the illustrated basic vocabulary. Thematically and semantically, the vocabulary is related to the idiom, but it includes elements such as antonyms that do not appear in the idiom itself but can be helpful for understanding its meaning. The increasing complexity is intended to guide the children toward understanding the meaning.

The following figures exemplify two antonyms for “poor” and “rich” (Fig. 1 and 2):



Fig. 1. *Poor*. Illustration by the author



Fig. 2. *Rich*. Illustration by the author

In the following step of *semanticization*, phrasemes like *to save money* and *to spend/waste money* (Fig. 3 and 4) are explored. The increasing complexity of the lexical-semantic component is intended to increase the variation in interpretations.



Fig. 3. *To save money.* Illustration by the author



Fig. 4. *To spend/waste money.* Illustration by the author

The examples should be “tested” in communicative situations or tasks. For DaZ learners in primary school, communicative tasks involving these idioms must be carefully scaffolded to match their linguistic and cognitive development. Such tasks can involve presenting a simple illustrated story with two characters—one frugal, the other extravagant. Using cut-out images showing different lifestyles (e.g., saving, spending, luxury items), students discuss in small groups which phrases from a list (such as *Geld sparen*, lit. ‘to save money’, *Geld ausgeben/Geld verschwenden*, lit. ‘to spend money/to waste money’, and idiomatic expressions) fit each character. Alternatively, role-play scenarios can be used where students engage in dialogues embedding idioms, prompting their peers to infer meaning from context and visual cues. The emphasis is on exploration, fostering discussion, and encouraging critical thinking rather than immediate mastery. In this process, the focus should not be on correct or incorrect usage, but rather on encouraging students to approach appropriate usage and fostering critical thinking. Therefore, an approach to understanding the meaning of an idiom occurs through familiar and new vocabulary and their meanings, as well as through visual prompts and exploratory learning within a task. The visual-aesthetic component aims to facilitate a *transfer* of negotiated meaning and contribute to the consolidation of both the idiom as a whole and its components (Fig. 5). In the illustration, this transfer is represented through the visual linking of previously introduced lexical items and semantic oppositions, such as poor/rich and saving/spending, to the target idiom *auf großem Fuß leben*, lit. ‘to live on a big foot’. The individual visual elements are not intended as isolated decorative components. Rather, they function as didactic cues that guide learners from concrete, familiar vocabulary toward the more abstract figurative meaning of the idiom. In this sense, the image visualizes a transition: from literal and contextually accessible meanings to an emerging understanding of figurative phraseological meaning.



Fig. 5. *Transfer*. Illustration by the author

The final visual prompt can be effective insofar as the literal meaning of the individual elements has been realized beforehand (cf. Juska-Bacher 2023, 97). More specifically, the image presupposes that learners have already worked through the semantic building blocks shown in the previous figures. Only on this basis can the final illustration serve as a meaningful prompt for transfer, that is, for connecting the learners' understanding of wealth, spending practices, and social lifestyle to the idiomatic meaning 'to live extravagantly / beyond one's means'. The image therefore does not explain the idiom automatically but supports an inferential process that has been prepared step by step. Group work or individual work with guidance from the teacher is an appropriate social form, followed by a discussion in the plenum. Regarding the didactic preparation, phraseodidactics can be beneficially connected to vocabulary, reading, speaking, listening, and interdisciplinary art didactics for learners with German as a second language.

7. Conclusion

The article proceeds from the assumption that engaging with idiomatic expressions in the primary school DaZ context contributes not only to literary-aesthetic education and the development of pragmatic skills but also to the expansion of linguistic abilities through language reflection, playful hypothesis formation, exploration paths not predetermined, creativity, and aesthetic perception (cf. Hille and Schiedermaier 2021).

In summary, the following can be noted: Idioms should be considered cultural assets in DaZ instruction and should become a permanent task of expanding

registers, occurring to the extent they are selected and taught in respective native German instruction. This is important for children with *DaZ* for several reasons. They are sensitized to idiomatic expressions in primary school, which also encourages language reflection. Through this sensitization, the diversity of linguistic realization possibilities is highlighted and expanded. Imagery and metaphor are intended to contribute to creative language use and literary learning, as well as to expand learners' linguistic resources. This is intended to contribute to equality and fairness in primary school education and to foster language awareness for the children's future learning pathways.

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New Trends in Applied Phraseology

Languages and Cultures in Comparison

Edited by Paola Maria Cotta Ramusino, Tatsiana Maiko and Jekaterina Nikitina

This book explores the evolving role of phraseology across three interconnected domains—phraseography, translation, and language teaching—from a contrastive and multilingual perspective. Addressing the need for case-study-driven research that bridges theoretical and applied dimensions, the book explores the relationship between semantic and syntactic levels of meaning, cognitive processes, and cultural dimensions. The contributions highlight key challenges such as the representation of phraseological units in dictionaries, translation-related equivalence, and the role of context, pragmatics, and diachronic perspectives. The section on language teaching zooms on phraseology in acquisition and empirically grounded strategies that enhance learners' phraseological competence. This book contributes to the broader field of linguistics, offering valuable insights for researchers and educators.

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