Léxico y cognición en los modismos de sentimiento

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The root of the term *idiom* is the Greek lexeme *idios*, meaning «own, private, peculiar» (*OED*). The same underlying form can be found in the prefix *idio-* as well as in *idiot* and its derivatives. The term *idiot* underwent semantic specification and pejoration. The *OED* and the *Supplement to the OED* contain the following entry on the term «idiom»:

> 1a. The form of speech peculiar or proper to a people or country; own language or tongue.
> 1b. In narrower sense: The variety of a language which is peculiar to a limited district or class of people; dialect.
> 2. The specific character, property or genius of any language; the manner of expression which is natural or peculiar to it.
> 3. A form of expression, grammatical construction, phrase etc., peculiar to a language; a peculiarity of phraseology approved by the use of a language, and often having a significance other than its grammatical or logical one.

Sense 1 is to be found in most standard dictionaries such as Hornby, Longman, Onions etc. Sense 3 is the most interesting and complex for linguistic purposes. For a vast number of linguistic approaches to idiomaticity it is the underlying notion, still leaving a wide scope for different interpretations.

Idiomaticity is not a new subject in linguistic study; it cannot be defined any clearer than the term idiom itself. What is generally meant is the syntactic and semantic properties of idioms as seen by different linguists. There are hardly any studies dealing with a theory of idiomaticity and it is astonishing to see how many linguists have steered almost completely clear of idioms (Ullmann, Lyons, Saussure, Bloomfield).

Only in the Soviet Union we find a completely different situation. Weinreich (1969) mentioned that phraseology, a subbranch of Lexicology, «has enjoyed a particular boisterous growth in the past few years».

Most Soviet phraseologists base their studies on V.V. Vinogradov's studies. Vinogradov considered phraseological units and lexemes as unit of language. They only differ in their structure. The meaning of both types of units is compact and integral.

A phraseological unit in Vinogradov's sense could be called a *polylesemic lexeme* and the main concept of his theory is motivatedness, according to the definition given by de Saussure and the same definition was later used by Ullman.

Vinogradov categorizes phraseological units into three different classes: a) completely unmotivated phraseological collocations; b) completely motivated but in metaphorical re-interpretation unmotivated phraseological units: to hit the hay/sack; c) completely motivated phraseological

combinations, the components of which are only restrictedly linkable: to take exception to; to run a risk.

It is very difficult to see what motivatedness really means, and fro whom certain idioms are motivated and for whom they are not, so we can say that this classification is too vague an too interdependent.

Reichstein, was the first phraseologist who abandoned Lexicology and established a new theory. For him, two different qualities have phrasal collocation: regularity in usage and irregularity in their structural, semantic organization.

The later has two components, *idiomaticity* and *frozenness*, where idiomaticity is the semantic irregularity, frozenness the syntactic one, i.e. the absence of regularity in paradigmatic and syntagmatic transformations. Idiomaticity is the prerequisite for frozenness, for the fact that the meaning of an idiom is not deducible from its constituents entails certain barriers to structural changes. Examples for idiomaticity, then are: «To have *on cloud nine*»; «*To have on cloud ninth/To have on cloud seventh», «She seems to have *on cloud nine* these days [extremely pleased/happy]» (<The phrase originally appeared in the form *on cloud seven*, and is perhaps connected with the seven Heaven. In Jewish literature, the Seven heaven is the highest of all the heavens and the one in which God exists), «Parece estar en el séptimo cielo» (=muy contento). Examples for frozenness, then are: *To keep one's chin up / *His chin was kept up* (Not to show feelings or fear, sadness, etc when faced with disappointments, worries or difficulties. It's sometimes shortened to *chin up* = «No desanimarse»).

The fundamental elements for Reichstein's theory (1973: 218) are three different aspects: a) lexical aspect, consisting of lexemes which denote single elements of an objective situation; b) structural-syntactical positions and their interrelation; c) communicative-grammatical aspect, relating the utterance to the speech act, establishing an objective-subjective quality.

The first attempt to deal with idioms within a transformational grammar was «Semantic Interpretation of idioms and sentences containing them» (Katz and Postal, 1963). Katz and Postal define two types of idioms: *Lexical idioms* and *Phrase idioms*.

> The characterization of an idiom as any concatenation of two or more morphemes whose compound meaning is not compositionally derived from the meanings of the concatened morphemes does not differentiate those idioms that are syntactically dominated by one of the lowest syntactic categories, i.e. noun, verb, adjective, etc., from those whose syntactic structure is such that no single level syntactic category dominates them. Let us call the formers type 'lexical idioms', the latter 'phrase idioms' (Katz/Postal, 1963: 275-6).

Lexical idioms are of less interest for Katz and Postal; their paper is mainly concerned with phrase idioms. They suggest dividing the dictionary into two parts, *a lexical-item part* and *phrase-idiom part*. Although they have not developed their theory any further we should bear in mind that they were the first «To suggest a separation of the dictionary into a lexical item part [... and...] to point out transformational deficiencies as well as a possible way to overcome them».

Idiom Structure in English is a very extensive work written on idioms by Makkai. He gives a survey on all major approaches to idiomaticity. For Makkai, an idiom is not one, but two phenomena of a language. The first phenomenon belongs to the lexemic stratum, the second to the sememic but both phenomena lead to incorrect decoding. Makkai questions whether there is a third idiomaty area (hypersememic stratum); lexemic idioms as the base, sememic idioms as the middle and hypersememic as the top of the idiomaticity pyramid. This view is a logical result of his stratificational framework.

Recent research in psycholinguistics shows that the meanings of many idioms are motivated by people's conceptual knowledge, which includes metaphorical and metonymic schemes of thought. In this way, the study of idioms reveals significant aspects of how people ordinarily think.

The first step has been to demonstrate that idioms are partially analyzable. The analyzability of idioms has significant implications for explaining the syntactic and lexical properties of these phrases in addition to how idioms might be processed.

Many idiomatic phrases appear to be analyzable, with the meanings of their parts contributing independently to their overall figurative meanings. All that matters for an idiom to be viewed as analyzable is for its parts to have meanings, either literal or figurative, that contribute independently to the phrase's overall figurative interpretation.

The idea of analyzability opens up the possibility that the internal semantics of idioms might be correlated in similar ways with the concepts to which idioms refer.

The figurative meaning of idioms may well be motivated by people's conceptual knowledge, which itself is constituted by metaphor:

> When we think that the idiom *Let off steam* [deshogarse] is analyzable, we are finding some relationship between the components *let off* and *steam* with their figurative referents "release" and "anger". There is some relationship between the noun *steam* and the concept of anger, because anger is metaphorically understood in terms of heat and internal pressure (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Another group of idioms might be identified as being decomposable because their individual components have a different relationship to their idiomatic referents for example we can identify the figurative referent in the idiom: *to carry a torch for somebody* («seguir enamorado de uno, a pesar de no ser correspondido») only by virtue of our knowledge of torches as conventional metaphors for descriptions of warms feelings.

The semantic analyzability of idioms influences people's intuitions about their lexical flexibility. Some idioms appear to be lexically flexible in that their individual lexical items can be changed without altering the figurative meanings of their phrases. As examples we may have: *to fall over backwards to help somebody* («desvivivirse por ayudar a uno»); *to bend over backwards* («try in every possible way to please someone»). The lexical flexibility of idioms shows that words in analyzable idioms can be changed without altering the meaning of their phrases.

The analyzability of idioms also plays an important role in their interpretation. Because the individual components contribute to the figurative meanings of these phrases we process idioms in a compositional manner where the semantic representation of each component is combined according to the syntactical rules of the language.

Linguistic analyses of idioms provide some evidence for believing that idioms do not exist as separate semantic units within the lexicon but actually reflect coherent systems of metaphorical concepts. There are two major theories for storing and processing idioms: *The Idiom List Hypothesis* and *The Lexical Representation Hypothesis*.

The Idiom list Hypothesis claims that idioms are stored in a special idiom list which is separate from the ordinary lexicon. In a processing model we therefore need an idiom mode to gain access to the idiom list. The essential criterion is than in the idiom List Hypothesis there is always a literal analyses of a string of elements before the idiom mode comes into operation. This hypothesis entails that processing idioms must take longer or at least as long as processing literal string of elements.

The second model is the lexical Representation Hypothesis, which claims that idioms are stored in the same way as ordinary lexemes, and the structural analyses is carried out in the same way. In other words, idioms are considered to be long lexemes. This hypothesis entails that processing idioms must take a shorter time than processing literal string of elements.

CONCLUSION

In my analysis we have seen that idioms are not as irregular as semantic and syntactic analyses claim. Idioms not only form a group because of their irregularities but also because of their regular functional behaviour.

In the course of the development of theories of idiomaticity the starting point has been paradigms in which idioms had the status of anomalies.

In Semantic theories idioms are always considered to be parasitic on literal meaning.

What is common to all points of view mentioned is the fact idioms work on the basis of an idealized, competent native speaker.

We can state the two concepts which need a closer investigation: literal meaning for the semantic component and the competence of the native speaker for the syntactic one. Idioms are not only lexemes which capture complex everyday situations semantically, but also linguistic units that reduce the complexity of social interactions.

People's metaphorical understanding of basic concepts provides part of the motivation for why they see idioms as having the figurative meaning the do. This metaphorical knowledge influences the linguistic behaviour of idioms and also motivate people's use and understanding of metaphoric expressions.

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