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Book reviews
Rezensionen

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Andreas Langlotz. 2006. *Idiomatic Creativity: A Cognitive Linguistic Model of Idiom-Representations and Idiom-Variation in English*. Amsterdam - Philadelphia: John Benjamins. xii, 315 pp. €120- ISBN: 902722370X.

The book under review grew out of the author's 2003 PhD thesis at the University of Basel, Switzerland. The book is organised into eight chapters. The common thread running throughout all chapters is the cognitive-linguistic perspective from which idiomatic creativity is dealt with. In Chapters 5 and 7 the cognitive-linguistic model of idiom representation and variation proposed in preceding chapters is tested against empirical data and all results from the analysis in these two chapters are presented in detail in the electronic appendix: www.idiomatic-creativity.ch.

This review might be introduced by a general impression regarding the comprehensive and extensively detailed structure of the book which becomes vital when presenting complex cognitive processing behind the heterogeneous nature of linguistic constructions such as idioms. The book is intended to set the foundations for the central hypothesis pursued in this book, namely, that "many idioms can be attributed a figurative semantic structure that is motivated and analysable" or to put it differently, "they are claimed to be *intrinsically creative*. This intrinsic creativity is claimed to support *variational creativity*, i.e. the variable use of idioms in discourse" (p. 93). Crucial in that regard is that all aspects regarding the phenomenon of idiomatic creativity are being progressively addressed. The author gathers linguistic and psycholinguistic controversies relevant to the topic pursued in his book by examining substan-

tial literature on idiomaticity and successfully provides the reader not only with essential theoretical basis but with abundant empirical support. Moreover, investigating deeper into the structural characteristics of idioms the author explains cognitive mechanisms underlying idiom-representation and idiom-variation. The book finally attains its primary goal and proposes a coherent and systematic cognitive-linguistic model which provides a basis on which the phenomenon of idiomatic creativity can be explained.

The book starts with an introduction in which the author states the main concern of his book, namely, the creative structure and use of idioms which have been a pivotal problem in phraseological analysis. He illustrates the nature of idiomatic expressions which are characterised by heterogeneity regarding not only the abundance of linguistic terminology but also difficulties in providing an appropriate definition as well as explanation of their grammatical behaviour. According to Langlotz, “it is impossible to capture the linguistic anatomy of idioms without relying on a set of different definitory dimensions.” Therefore, the author opens the first chapter with a preliminary definition of idioms he will depend on throughout the book, by presenting a table which “summarises these definitory features and patterns them along the semiotic dimensions of form, meaning and grammatical status” (p.3), and by claiming that “idiomatic constructions can be described as complex symbols with specific formal, semantic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic characteristics” (p.3).

This book primarily deals with the phenomenon of idiomatic creativity from a cognitive-linguistic perspective, therefore, Langlotz compares language and linguistic production for which he claims to be creative processes with creativity in general, which is defined as mental ability to develop or invent new or original ideas. He further contrasts the traditional definition of idioms as “non-creative, pre-constructed and reproduced linguistic material” with the notion of creativity which he labels as *idiomatic creativity* (p. 8), implying that idioms can be varied in discourse. This suggests that “idioms cannot merely be described as lexical items; rather, they seem to occupy a position between the lexicon and syntax, leading to a fuzzy dividing line between the productive and reproductive aspects of linguistic competence” (p. 9).

Furthermore, Langlotz emphasises that the central aim of his book is to show that the phenomenon of idiomatic creativity is respected to reflect general cognitive abilities and principles that determine what we perceive as human intelligence; in other words “idiom variation is claimed to reveal intelligent creative behaviour that exploits basic knowledge-resources and the information processing capacities of the human mind” (p. 10).

Hence, the introduction announces a new cognitive-linguistic model which is supposed to shed more light on the linguistic controversy centred around the representation and variational behaviour of idioms and account for diversity of idiomatic language. Furthermore, this chapter announces that the book will explore the hypothesis that many idioms can be attributed an intrinsically creative semantic structure. In addition, it is claimed that the degree to which an idiom's intrinsic creativity remains accessible to language user or, in other words, a degree to which a structure can be (re)motivated by the language user is the effect of manipulating an idiomatic construction relative to the underlying conceptual correspondences that shape its creative, internal semantic structure.

In Chapter 2, the author reviews one of the principal questions of this book – “whether idioms can be attributed a motivated internal semantic structure and if this structure influences their syntactic and lexical flexibility” (p. 15) – stating that it summarizes an ongoing linguistic and psycholinguistic controversy centred around the representation and processing of idioms, the status of idioms in grammar and mental grammar of actual speakers. This controversy centres around two contrasting views: the traditional or orthodox view¹ and the compositional view². The author illustrates both views by confronting the two counterparts including both linguistic and psycholinguistic viewpoints into his discussion and shows that the linguistic and psycholinguistic approaches to idiom representation and variation have provided striking insights into heterogeneous semantic nature and grammatical behaviour of idioms.

The author further shows evidence which support, as he terms it, a “hybrid” (p. 39) view of idioms as complex constructions and argues that such a hybrid view can best account for the fact that the form as well as the internal semantic structure of idioms can be very diverse. It is further asserted that this diversity must be accounted for by a model of idiom representation, which does not reduce these linguistic units to long words, but regards them as complex mental representations that have the potential of unfolding various levels of structural and semantic representation.

However, Langlotz claims that comprehensive models to explain these phenomena have not been produced yet; therefore, he concludes this chapter with a proposal that idiom representation and variation can be tackled with the help of

¹ “Idioms must be regarded as non-compositional, unanalysable, and unmotivated semantic units. Therefore, idioms have the status of lexical units and they are processed non-compositionally by means of direct lexical retrieval” (p.16).

² “A great number of idioms can be attributed an internal semantic structure which makes them semantically motivated and/or analysable. Such idioms do not constitute semantic units and can therefore be processed compositionally” (p.16).

a cognitive-linguistic approach. Although Lakoffian school of conceptual metaphor has not been left unquestionable (Glucksberg et al. 1993; Cacciari and Glucksberg 1995; Glucksberg and Keysar 1993, Glucksberg and Mcglone 1999; Keysar and Bly 1999; Burger 1998), Langlotz suggests that Lakoff's (Lakoff 1987) model of cognitive-linguistic motivation "is a first programmatic attempt to explain the semantic motivation of idiomatic constructions in a cognitive-linguistic framework" (p. 54). Therefore, it is suggested that an application of this cognitive-linguistic heuristics to model the phenomenon of idiom representation and variation is well-motivated.

In Chapter 3, Langlotz meticulously presents the cognitive-linguistic background by integrating concepts from Langacker's (Langacker 1987) Cognitive Grammar, Lakoff's (Lakoff 1987; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; 1999) Cognitive Semantics and his framework of experientialist realism as well as some basic concepts from Relevance Theory.

Langlotz attempts to reinterpret the phenomenon of idiom representation and variation by proposing a new systematic cognitive-linguistic model. By characterising human cognition and basic processes that underlie the cognitive organisation of knowledge, Langlotz outlines the cognitive architecture of knowledge and illustrates how cognitive construction of mental representations is shaped, claiming, in addition, that this architecture is extended by processes of semantic extension such as metaphor, metonymy and blending (see Lakoff 1987; Johnson 1987; Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Gibbs 1994; Fauconnier and Turner 1998; Turner and Fauconnier 2000). The author then argues that the phenomenon of cultural and linguistic symbolism in idiomatic expressions is ignored in the cognitive-linguistic literature, however, since he is of the opinion that it plays an important role for the semantic structuring of idioms he includes it in his framework using the term *emblem*³ as a substitute for Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen's (1997) notion of *symbol*. The author assumes these processes of semantic extension to be of particular importance for the mental representation of idioms.

Finally, the author outlines the basic principles from Langacker's Cognitive Grammar and the central viewpoint of cognitive linguistics, i.e. that grammar is

³ "An emblem is a stereotypical conceptual prototype that works as the material representation of a very abstract quality or attribute. Expressions *man is a wolf, he is such a pig, she is wise like an owl*, rather than reflecting the general conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS, these expressions derive their meaning from the conventionalised emblematic values attributed to the animal concepts. In other words, the status of these animal concepts as emblems consists in their function to work as figurative vehicles to represent the stereotypical attributes ascribed to them within a given cultural system" (p.72).

organised by the same cognitive processes as all other mental representations. Following these principles of Cognitive Grammar, Langlotz describes idioms as *complex symbolic units*.

In a nutshell, this chapter establishes a cognitive-linguistic model of the mental representation of idiomatic constructions. The author integrates Langacker's view of grammatical composition with the cognitive linguistic theory of semantic extension (metaphor, metonymy, blending and emblems) and proposes a model which attempts to capture the complex and heterogeneous semantic structures of idioms.

In Chapter 4, Langlotz extensively explains his novel model of idiom motivation which reinterprets the formal and semantic structure of idioms cognitively by characterising them as complex mental activation sets or *idiomatic activation-sets*, the term used by Langlotz to refer to "the mental network that can be potentially activated when an idiom is used" and "that consists of a structured set of symbolic and conceptual substructures" (p. 95). This cognitive-linguistic model of idioms as mental activation sets is claimed to "provide a descriptive framework that is powerful enough to capture qualitatively different idiomatic expressions and to explain their variable use in discourse" (p. 95).

In what follows, the author outlines the formal dimension of idiomatic activation sets and focuses on reinterpretation of *institutionalisation* which is "the result of collective cognitive entrenchment spreading over the mental lexicon of the members of a given speech community in a process of conventionalisation" (p. 99), contrasts it with *lexicalisation*, which is stated to "describe the further qualitative stage in the process of cognitive entrenchment, the stage at which an entrenched construction loses its regularity and, when being (re)produced becomes more and more subject to direct stipulation, similar to the direct retrieval of a word" (p. 99), and concludes that "in their diachronic development, idioms first emerged as creative, i.e. non-conventional metaphors, metonymies, blends or emblems and then became entrenched as linguistic units through institutionalisation and lexicalisation" (p. 100).

Langlotz then turns to insightful cognitive linguistic investigation into the complex conceptual organisation that shapes the semantic structure of idioms. The semantic organisation of idiomatic activation-sets is explained with reference to the cognitive patterns of figuration. By means of the idiomatic-activation-set model, different but salient idiomatic types and subtypes of figuration can be established. Finally, on the basis of the cognitive-linguistic model of idioms as complex mental activation-sets, Langlotz reconsiders their discursive functions in cognitive-linguistic light, claiming that an "explicit descriptive and

implicit explanatory function is attributed to idioms (Nunberg et al. 1994)” and that “these functions are characteristically mirrored in the tendency of idioms to associate abstract with more concrete situations” (p. 136). Therefore, Langlotz accounts for idioms as *cognitive-micro-models*, i.e. “idiomatic expressions function as pre-coded cognitive micro-models to concretise and evaluate a great number of abstract target-constellations” (p. 137):

In a nutshell, idioms fixate complex conceptual micro-models in the mode of institutionalised and lexically-rich figurative constructions. In this way, idiomatic language perpetuates conventionalised and generally accepted models of the world. (p. 137)

It is further claimed that different idiomatic constructions reflect different degrees and types of transparency and opacity and that these differences have a great influence on the cognitive functionality of idioms. Comparing opaque idioms to transparent ones Langlotz concludes this chapter by describing the potential range of variation with regard to the function of idioms as cognitive micro-models and offers four classes and belonging subclasses of idioms as cognitive micro-models which “must be regarded as heuristic tools, to assess the potential ideational functions that different idioms can fulfil in discourse” (p. 141). These four classes are: *Explanatory micro-models* (with two subclasses: *Symptomatic models*; *cause-effect models* and *Ontologising models*), *Descriptive micro-models*, *Schematic reformulations*, and *Alternative symbolisations*. Each class and its subclasses are followed by an explanation and an example of an idiom belonging to these classes.

Presenting the first analytic part of the book, in Chapter 5, the author gives an analysis of approximately 600 standard British English idioms denoting SUCCESS, PROGRESS or FAILURE (SPF) which were extracted from the *Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Idioms (CCDI)* (1995). Langlotz aims to find out to which “extent idioms can be motivated and structured by well-entrenched patterns of semantic extension, particularly conceptual metaphors” (p. 143). For the purpose of showing how conceptual backgrounds form the semantic organisation of idioms, the author claims to have modelled a distinct set of idioms by means of the cognitive-linguistic architecture of conceptual knowledge discussed in previous chapters.

Beginning with his analysis, Langlotz states that the literal scenes of most SPF-idioms can be related to six general source domains: COMPETITION, STRUGGLE, LIFE, EATING, PHYSICAL MOVEMENT and MACHINE. He claims that the specific ontologies and structures of these conceptual bases are mapped onto the SPF-target-domain to structure, conceptualise and concretise it. Moreover, he is of the opinion that the global source-domains underlying the motivation of SPF-

idioms have overlapping areas which is in line with the view that conceptual organisation of knowledge is not characterised by strict boundaries between semantic domains. Each of the presented metaphorical models represents a complex system, or as he calls it “a conceptual network” consisting of more specific subordinated metaphors that represent and elaborate it. Furthermore, he claims that the network involves the low-level mappings established between the ontologies and structures of the sources and targets of the individual metaphors. Hence, each metaphor-system represents a network with conceptual connections between source and target domains and between individual conceptual metaphors. Moreover, the author emphasises that the motivation of specific SPF-idioms in relation to these conceptual backgrounds is shaped by metonymic links, emblematic associations, blending and complex interactions between them. Representing different types of frames (e.g. GAME-RELATED-frame, BATTLE-frame, JOURNEY-frame etc.) the author shows powerful conceptual source domains (PHYSICAL MOVEMENT IN SPACE, COMPETITION, MACHINE, LIFE, EATING STRUGGLE) to make vital awkward actions in purposeful activities. The metaphorical models discussed are “frame-based” and “script-based extensions” (p. 161) of rich conceptual knowledge.

However, according to Langlotz, in line with the global architecture of cognitive structures, very basic, image-schematic archetype-concepts can also serve as meaningful resources to make structurally poor target-domains more concrete. In order to distinguish them, Langlotz calls such fundamental image-schematic metaphors “archetype metaphors” (p. 161) constructing concepts such as GOOD/BAD or POSITIVE/NEGATIVE. Following the principle of metaphor-composition, these archetype metaphors are combined with all the metaphorical models previously discussed. Nevertheless, Langlotz claims that not all motivated SPF-idioms can be related to extensive metaphor-systems to motivate their internal semantic structure, he therefore reminds of the fact that idioms may also be motivated by *one-shot* and *image-metaphors*.

Furthermore, the author mentions another important factor for the motivation of SPF-idioms – metonymy. According to Langlotz, it appears predominantly in combination with conceptual metaphor to create metaphoric motivation in terms of *metonymy within metaphor*. He claims that the presence of metonymic shifts has a strong influence on idiom analysability. Since the idiom has “the status of a motivated but non-isomorphic semantic unit” (p. 168), this provides further evidence for the influence of metonymic shifts on the semantic structure of an idiom. Langlotz did not forget to mention *motivation by emblem* being in interaction with different metaphors. Nevertheless, the author also states that there are a considerable number of SPF-idioms that cannot be motivated because their literal scenes cannot be related to a domain of knowledge

that would make sense relative to the idiomatic meaning. According to Langlotz these constructions (e.g. *bite the dust*, *take a bath*, *drop your bundle*) belong to the class of *opaque idioms* with a compositional meaning.

As hypothesized, it is also pointed out that the specific ICMS encoded by SPF-idioms show considerable variation along the dimensions of culture-specific experience vs. universal experience. In addition, he claims that the relationship between frame-specific motivation and motivation on the basis of general bodily experience is particularly striking with archetype metaphors. Conceptual metaphors thus play a decisive role for the motivation of idioms. The systematicity of SPF-idioms indicates that conceptual metaphors play an important structuring function. For Langlotz this, clearly, also speaks against the Glucksbergian school of metaphor and idiom analysis, which does not see a place for conceptual metaphor in the analysis of idiomaticity (cf. Gluckberg 2001). The author claims that, in analogy to Lakoff and Johnson's (1987) phrasing, idioms constitute linguistically "pre-configured cognitive micro-models we live by" (p. 173).

Rather than substantiating the view of idiomatic constructions "as unmotivated, unanalysable and idiosyncratic units", Langlotz's cognitive-linguistic analysis points to their systematic nature:

If one avoids an overly narrow, atomistic description of idioms relative to the principle of compositionality, and if one broadens the semantic perspective to include conceptual domains, image-schematic structures and complex patterns of semantic extension, idiomatic subsystems turn out to be far more organised than was assumed in their traditional grammatical description. (p. 174)

Summing up, the author states that the traditional or orthodox views of idioms have been negated in this chapter and that this new understanding makes it possible to reveal the conceptual motivation and cognitive functionality of these "pre-coded cognitive micro-models" (p.172) that can be related to a complex architecture of alternative metaphorical, metonymic and emblematic ICMS.

After having shown that idioms are complex linguistic creations which are mentally represented as idiomatic activation-sets, in Chapter 6, Langlotz illustrates how these configurations are activated in actual discourse, i.e. he presents a cognitive-linguistic model of idiom use and variation discussing its range in cognitive-linguistic terms. He aims at finding an explanatory framework for systematic idiom-variation based on a cognitive-linguistic model of idiom-representation.

In the first part of the chapter he explains the concept of frozenness and variability which constitutes two counterparts that determine the lexicogrammatical

behaviour of idioms (cf. Burger 1998a: 25; Keil 1997: 68). According to Langlotz, it is necessary to assume the existence of a neutral form in order to define the concepts of frozenness and variation. In his opinion, the term *neutral use* can be employed as a heuristic concept to define the standard usage of an idiom according to its base-form. Uses that deviate from this standard are defined by Langlotz as *variations* or *alterations*.

Firstly, Langlotz gives a technical classification of idiom alterations appearing on the surface and consisting of formal and semantic variation. The formal variation includes morphosyntactic variation, syntactic variation, and lexical substitution. Thus, the semantic variation concentrates on polysemous idioms, ambiguity, and meaning adaptation. With the help of this classificatory scheme Langlotz aims at reinterpreting idiom use and variation in terms of Langacker's (1987) usage-event model. The author looks at idiom variation and variability in cognitive-linguistic terms claiming that "idiom-variation is the creative computation of a novel idiomatic standard for the purpose of encoding a given target conceptualisation" (p. 187). Following Carter's (2004) concept, the author is of the opinion that idiom variation thus reflects an idiomatic form of *pattern re-forming*. Since idioms are complex scenes, the choice of an idiom for coding is motivated by its cognitive and discursive functionality. Furthermore, Langlotz attempts to answer the question to what extent idiomatic constructions are open to creative coding decisions and to what extent such alternatives are blocked claiming that not all idioms have the same variation potential. Stating the basic claim of his study, Langlotz points out that the potential creation of an idiom variant seems to be determined by the idiom's formal and semantic organisation and the way this complex configuration is adapted to a concrete discursive situation. These two basic organisations define its variation potential and constrain how the idiom's base-form can be modified in a concrete context emphasising that in the absence of motivating conceptual bases, an idiom's potential for systematic variation is restricted.

Being led by the question how the distinction between conventional, usual occasional variation and wordplay can be delineated in cognitive-linguistic terms, the author gives an overview on the subtypes of idiom variation aiming to "carve out a cognitive idiom-variation grammar that can account for the systematic variability of idiomatic constructions" (p. 194). Thus, he has to find the criteria to define the notion of this, as he tends to call it, *systematic variability*. He emphasises that it is important to outline the indistinct area between systematic and non-systematic idiom-variation because, in his opinion, the notion of wordplay is often misused to exclude idiom-variation data from grammatical analysis if they are not in line with the theoretical apparatus. He claims that idiomatic wordplay is a weak form of communication depending on the speaker's subjec-

tive evaluation of the received message and that the interpretation of alternative forms of idiomatic creativity are also dependent on the cognitive environment. Aiming at giving points of orientation for distinguishing systematic variation and wordplay, Langlotz proposes a number of parameters (including the degree of *conventionality*, the degree of *frequency and institutionalisation* and the degree of *intentionality*) that can help to classify a given variational token. In addition, he proposes the following subtypes of idiom-variation claiming that they can structure the continuum of idiom variation: *usual and occasional variation* and *intentional vs. non-intentional variants*. Reminding us of the fact that Dobrovol'skij stresses *intentionality* as one of the most important parameters, the author proposes, on the basis of this criterion, three general variation classes: *systematic variation*, *wordplay* and *erroneous variants*. He believes that with the help of this classification, it is possible to make a general distinction between systematic and non-systematic variation. Moreover, representing the criteria (*stylistic markedness/conspicuousness*, *ambiguity* and *context-dependency*) for measuring idiomatic wordplay, the author gives his preliminary definition of idiomatic wordplay which makes it possible to draw the distinction between systematic variation and wordplay:

Idiom variation must be regarded as wordplay if a given idiom alternant is used to trigger a series of weakly-implicated semantic or stylistic effects that go beyond the systematic contextual integration of the idiomatic meaning in discourse. Wordplay can also be effected without affecting the integrity of the idiomatic meaning through parasitic elaboration. (p. 203)

Furthermore, offering a table showing the distinction between *systematic vs. non-systematic* and *usual vs. occasional variants*, respectively, on a cline of idiomatic creativity, Langlotz emphasises one more time that these classes “constitute landmarks on a gradual continuum rather than fully clear-cut distinction” (p. 205).

In addition, the author proposes alternative idiom-variation principles to complement the activation-set model and to show the distinction between systematic variation and wordplay. He is of the opinion that it is necessary to describe alternative idiom-variation strategies because systematic occasional idiom-variation and idiomatic wordplay do not follow uniform patterns. Following Sabban (1998), the author calls these variation strategies – *variation principles*. Slightly modifying Sabban's classification, he discusses five basic variation principles in terms of his cognitive-linguistic account of idiomatic creativity: *constructional adaptations*, *literal-scene manipulation*, *topic indication*, *topic-related literal-scene manipulation*, *ambiguation* and *punning*. Langlotz points out that in cognitive-linguistic terms, these five principles reflect five prototypi-

cal alternatives of how an idiomatic activation-set can be manipulated in the process of coding and that “these principles define salient areas on a cline of idiomatic creativity that ranges from fully systematic alternations to strikingly conspicuous forms of wordplay” (p. 288). But, although the principles are salient, he concludes that there is some degree of overlap between them as well. The first three of these principles are claimed to be systematic. Concluding, Langlotz claims systematic idiom-variation to be motivated as well as constrained by the international organisation of idiomatic activation-sets. Since this organisation is itself dependent on the presence of underlying patterns of semantic extension, systematic idiom-variation is hypothesised to be dependent on the speaker’s ability to (re)motivate a given idiom in relation to these underlying conceptual bases.

Global constraints on the variation potential of idioms are also outlined in detail. He illustrates how multiple factors work as constraints on idiom variation, giving an overview of the following relevant constraints: *recognisability* (as the most fundamental constraint for idiom variation), *functionality* (limiting the intentional adaptation of an idiom to fulfil a specific communicative purpose in a given communicative situation), *compatibility* (as the most important constraint for the creation of systematic variants), and finally, *grammaticality* (highlighting the fact that any variation of the formal structure of any idiom must be in accordance with the grammar of the language in consideration). To set off systematic variation from idiomatic wordplay, three further constraints are postulated including *non-ambiguity*, *non-conspicuity* and *evocational autonomy*.

In Chapter 7 the author deals with *the lexicogrammatical variation of idioms denoting SUCCESS, PROGRESS and FAILURE*, representing the second analytic part of the book. The aim is to reveal the creative interplay of the motivated or unmotivated semantic structure with the context-specific variation strategies. For systematic idiom-variation, constructional adaptations, topic indication and weak forms of literal-scene manipulation are of particular interest to the author. This chapter aims “to develop a cognitive-linguistic idiom-variation grammar which explains the lexicogrammatical behaviour of SPF-idioms as a reaction on their systematic conceptual structuring” (p. 226).

Following the inductivists’ insight, Langlotz chose the *100-million-word BNC World Edition* as a database for the selection of actual tokens of idiom variation trying to systematise and explain the corpus-data qualitatively rather than quantitatively. To extract corresponding usage-tokens for representatives of the overall set of 600 SPF-idioms, several tools were used to help with the process of extracting valuable usage tokens, including SARA-32 version 0.98, Query Builder, the customary search tool supplied with the *BNC World Edition*, and to include

all morphological inflections the *Lancaster Lemma-scheme* was used. Langlotz conducted approximately 800 searches which generated idiom-usage tokens for each of the following structures: V + NP, V + NP + PP, V + NP to-V and P + NP. To develop the cognitive-linguistic idiom-variation grammar, the following dimensions of lexical and grammatical alternation have been considered: *variation within idiom noun-phrases* (article variation, number variation, adnominal modification, including premodification by adjectives, participles and nouns as well as postmodification by prepositional phrases and relative clauses), *clause-level transformations* (passivisation), and *general lexical flexibility through lexical substitution* (including topic-indicating lexical substitution, synonyms, antonyms and perspectival variants). As hypothesised and expected Langlotz concludes that these phenomena reflect the influence of the internal semantic structure of idioms on their malleability, or in other words, strong conceptual motivation seems to support systematic lexical flexibility, while opacity blocks such variation. His analysis points to “straightforward qualitative trends for the correlation of idiom-transparency-type and lexicogrammatical variability” (p. 283). He succeeded in showing that the lexicogrammatical behaviour of these SPF-idioms is in line with how the metaphorical backgrounds organise their semantic structure internally. To put it differently, he proved that the activation-sets of idioms, rather than autonomous syntactic rules, are responsible for idiomatic variation.

Langlotz dedicates the last part of his book, Chapter 8, to an overview of his study giving extensive suggestions for future research. Summing up the insights and results gained from the cognitive-linguistic approach to idiom representation and variation, he suggests taking a look at the limitations and the corresponding implications for further research, and highlights some desiderata for deeper research into the (cognitive-)linguistic and psycholinguistic field.

Overall, Langlotz’s model and theory is a valuable contribution to the field of cognitive linguistics and phraseology and although further analyses in the future may be able to complement his findings, this book should unquestionably be indispensable for anyone engaged in the study of idioms and cognitive mechanisms behind idiom-representation and idiom-variation. Including both theoretical and empirical data, this book represents a convincing attempt to prove how idioms, idiom variation and human cognitive mechanism are connected and aims to explain the idea of idiomatic creativity refuting traditional views which have denied it.

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