

***RECENZJE, OMÓWIENIA, SPRAWOZDANIA,  
KOMUNIKATY***

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***Formulaic Language and New Data.  
Theoretical and Methodological Implications.***  
**Ed. by Elisabeth Piirainen, Natalia Filatkina,  
Sören Stumpf and Christian Pfeiffer.**  
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The recent decades have witnessed a significant increase in the scholarly interest in fixed multiword expressions of various kind, with usage-based approaches to Construction Grammar and corpus linguistics as well as cognitive and discourse studies (Pawley 2007). Nowadays, the language items in question are investigated from different perspectives, often in an interdisciplinary approach, which contributes to offering an insight into the issues analysed and opening new prospects of studies.

It has to be admitted that there is no widely accepted definition of the basic unit in analyses of fixed polylexical word combinations, which is attested by the coinage of a large number of terms such as *idiom*, *idiomatic expression*, *phraseological unit* and *phraseme*, to name but a few<sup>1</sup>. In the broad approach to phraseology, the expression *formulaic language* serves as a useful umbrella term that allows for the inclusion of multiword language units which exhibit the property of reproducibility, even those out of scope of traditionally understood phraseology, for instance non-idiomatic conversational routines (Aijmer 1996; Altenberg 1998)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Burger (2015: 14–15) views phrasemes as polylexical units composed of at least two lexical items, having a form which is stable to a different degree and frequently reproduced by language users as opposed to multiword expressions created ad hoc in the process of communication. For a presentation of terms for multiword expressions see Miller (2020).

<sup>2</sup> See the *Introduction* in Corrigan, Moravcsik, Ouali, Wheatley (2009: xi–xxiv) and Wray (2002, 2008).

The focus of formulaic language provides for new research possibilities, thus requires theoretical and methodological proposals which will contribute to more comprehensive analyses. It is of particular importance in the light of the need for discussing new data. Therefore, the reviewed collected monograph titled *Formulaic Language and New Data. Theoretical and Methodological Implications* edited by Elisabeth Piirainen, Natalia Filatkina, Sören Stumpf and Christian Pfeiffer is a valuable work, filling in a gap in modern phraseological studies<sup>3</sup>.

The book contains papers based on selected talks given at the international conference *Europhras 2016. Word combinations in the linguistic system and language use: theoretical, methodological and integrated approaches* held at Trier University, Germany in 2016. The conference showed that there is relatively little interest in what the editors call “new data”, thus conference papers are supplemented by several invited articles. The initial idea of focusing on “new data” in the Europhras 2016 was inspired by Elisabeth Piirainen’s multiaspectual and in-depth research on phraseology and the volume is dedicated to her<sup>4</sup>.

The volume is composed of four parts which are preceded by the introduction written by Natalia Filatkina, Sören Stumpf and Christian Pfeiffer. The foreword contains two subchapters whose titles, *Preliminary Remarks: What Do We Know?* and *Where Do We Go from Here – This Volume*, reflect the nature of the papers collected in the book. The authors emphasise the importance of the “new understanding of the constitutive role of formulaic patterns” and stress that bearing in mind the importance of corpus studies (p. 1), the volume goes beyond this concept. The new data come from four areas: languages which are either areally limited or lesser-spoken; languages used outside Europe; varieties which can be described as typically spoken and/or “conceptually oral”; languages of a given historical period of language development. The introduction also contains the presentation of the volume contents.

The first part of the book titled *Lesser-Used and Areally Limited Languages* consists of three papers. It opens with an article written by Elisabeth Piirainen *Lesser-Used Languages and their Contribution to the Study of Formulaic*

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<sup>3</sup> The volume is available in Open Access at: *Formulaic Language and New Data* (degruyter.com). It is the third book of the *Formelhafte Sprache / Formulaic Language* series. For an overview see *Formelhafte Sprache / Formulaic Language* (degruyter.com).

<sup>4</sup> Elisabeth Piirainen, an internationally recognised phraseologists, died in December 2017. An obituary, including the scholar’s brief biography and a presentation of her work, was published in the journal “Yearbook of Phraseology” (Dalmas, Dobrovol’skij, Pamies, Szerszunowicz 2018: 137–140).

and *Figurative Language*. The scholar focuses on three underestimated aspects, i.e. body-part semiotizations, conceptual metaphors and pragmatic functions of figurative units, which can contribute to studies on formulaic language. The first one is discussed on the example of Kilivila and Basque. The discussion of the second involves the investigation of universality, as illustrated by TIME IS NATURE and UNDERSTANDING IS HEARING. As for pragmatic functions, the author presents “secret languages” and “authority”. In concluding remarks, it is emphasised that the analyses of non-Western languages, including varieties existing in oral form, may allow for determining new peculiarities in phraseology.

The aim of the paper by Stephan Elspaß *Areal Variation and Change in the Phraseology of Contemporary German* is to discuss phraseological change in German, an issue that has not been investigated so far. The author presents the recent research project on areal linguistics which uses Internet surveys and large corpora, viewing these methods as appropriate for obtaining reliable data concerning the distribution of phrasemes in modern German. The exemplification is excerpted from *Atlas zur deutschen Alltagssprache* and *Variantengrammatik des Standarddeutschen*. Furthermore, the paper presents a comparison of recent material from the first of the aforementioned sources with that from *Wortatlas der deutschen Umgangssprachen* compiled in the 1970s and 1980s. The case studies offered in the article illustrate how online surveys and corpus studies can be implemented in order to advance phraseological studies.

Zuriñe Sanz-Villar’s contribution *An Analysis of Basque Collocations Formed by Onomatopoeia and Verbs in a Translational Corpus of Literary Texts* investigates one type of phrasemes from a translational German-Spanish-Basque perspective. On presenting the introductory remarks on the Basque language and its phraseology, the author depicts the object of the study, emphasising the role of Basque onomatopoeia. Then, research methodology is detailed: the digitized, parallel and multilingual corpus and semi-automatic extraction procedure are described. The translation analysis shows that the translation option *No PU-Collocation* predominates, with numerous subtleties resulting from such translators’ choices.

Part Two, *Languages Spoken outside Europe*, is composed of three articles. Andreas Buerki’s paper *(How) is Formulaic Language Universal? Insights from Korean, German and English* proposes an “empirically founded universal concept for formulaic language” and discusses its implications for the theoretical approach to formulaic language (p. 103). It is emphasised that the nexus of formulaic language concept cannot be set at any structural level and includes elements whose schematicity is specified at varying levels.

As research material, the author uses a novel data set of topically matched corpora in three typologically different languages, which ensures a solid basis for his investigation and discussion as well as provides interesting insights into universality of formulaic language.

Arabic phraseology and its specifics are focal issues of the paper written by Abdullah Eisa. The article titled *Marḥaban: Reconsidering the Criteria of an Arabic Phraseme* discusses the difficulties occurring when the criteria proposed by Gries are applied to Arabic phraseological units and related challenges<sup>5</sup>. The main reasons for the problems are twofold: pronouns in Arabic are one-letter nouns and many one-word phrasemes are in use. In the paper, special attention is paid to the number of phraseme constituents. The author introduces the concept of one-word + zero-element fixed expression in Arabic which can be considered an innovative and useful solution.

Another paper on Arabic phraseology is the one titled *Formulaic Expressions of Politeness in Jordanian Arabic Social Interactions* by Muhammad A. Badarneh. The author investigates politeness formulaic expressions in colloquial Jordanian Arabic. The research corpus is composed of ethnographically observed ninety-four units used in everyday social interaction. Methodologically, the study is based on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory<sup>6</sup>. The analysis allows for distinguishing two kinds of formulaic units: the first group is composed of positive politeness formulae used in interactional and transactional contexts which are carriers of solidarity and exponents of belonging, while the other contains negative politeness formulae that express deference and non-imposition. The main findings concern speakers' greater concern with positive politeness formulae and transmission of fixity and continuity of social norms and traditions. It is highlighted that such formulae contain numerous references to God, so formulaicity is a vehicle of emphasising the religious and fatalistic character of the users of Jordanian Arabic.

Part Three is titled *Linguistic Varieties Used in Spoken Domains and/or Regarded as 'Conceptually Oral'* and contains two texts. In the paper *New Pragmatic Idioms in Polish: An Integrated Approach in Pragmateme Research*, Joanna Szerszunowicz focuses on phraseological units which tend to be rather neglected in phraseological studies as used predominantly in spoken language, mainly routine formulae. The article proposes a comprehensive analysis, including not only linguistic features, but also others, for instance

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<sup>5</sup> For details see Gries (2008).

<sup>6</sup> In their monograph, Brown and Levinson (1987) offer a comprehensive theory of politeness.

cultural embedment<sup>7</sup>. The issue is exemplified with the implementation of the proposal to selected recent Polish idiomatic expressions of pragmatic character.

In turn, Mareike Keller's paper titled *Compositionality: Evidence from Code-Switching* discusses compositionality on the material of bilingual data, German-English informal conversation. It should be stressed that such data are rarely analysed in phraseological studies of theoretical nature. The article presents a qualitative analysis of verb-based phrasemes, with a focus on structural and semantic features of code-switching patterns observed in phrasemes. Methodologically, the MLF model is applied for the language-mixing patterns<sup>8</sup>. The observation on the mixing patterns inside collocations and the resistance to mixing units exhibiting a higher degree of idiomaticity allow for concluding that in bilingual speech, the surface realisations of phrasemes is conditioned by morphosyntactic constraints and the impact of the meanings of the constituents of a given unit on its combined meaning.

Part Four, *Earlier/Historical Stages of Language Development*, is also composed of two articles. A diachronic perspective is adopted by Marie-Luis Merten who in her paper *Insights into a Changing Communal Construction. Legal Writing in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period* analyses a corpus of 13 Middle Low German urban law codifications from 1227 to 1567 in order to discuss language elaboration processes. The author applies a constructionist approach with a view to discussing evolving and changing constructions in legal written texts. The investigation offers interesting findings: first, the repertoire becomes complex and literate over time; second, language elaboration is related to language usage.

A historical approach is also taken by Christian Pfeiffer and Markus Schiegg who investigate the use and functions of religious formulae in lower-class letters. Their paper *Religious Formulae in Historical Lower-Class Patient Letters* analyses the Corpus of Patient Documents from German psychiatric hospitals. The analysis of occurrences of religious formulae in the corpus allows for differentiating between their explicit and implicit uses, determining the functions they perform (argumentation, parallelisation, expression of a shared ethos, text-structural function) and discussing the variations and modifications of the units in question.

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<sup>7</sup> On various approaches to pragmateme research see Ajimer (1996), Lüger (2007), Mejri (2012).

<sup>8</sup> The patterns are presented in Myers Scotton (2002) and Myers Scotton and Jake (2017).

From the perspective of pragmatic studies, the reviewed volume offers an insight into several crucial issues. First, it sheds light on formulaic units in a variety of languages, like those which are lesser-used and areally limited or spoken outside Europe, which is of importance, since formulaic research studies tend to be focused on several standard languages. Second, it discusses new data, since it brings novel findings concerning formulaic units in spoken domains, showing their dynamic and culture-bound character. Third, by drawing attention to diachronic aspects of formulae, on one hand, the volume contributes to the studies of the underinvestigated areas, while on the other, it enables viewing the phenomenon of formulaicity as a continuum to be researched. Thus, it can be concluded that the approaches adopted go beyond traditional studies on formulaic patterns in terms of theory and methodology.

It is worth emphasising that the issues discussed by the authors show who many aspects of phraseological studies need further elaboration. The material analysed in the papers is varied and interesting. The choice of subjects made by respective scholars can be viewed as an illustration of the richness of the field to be explored from different angles in the next decades. Thus, the volume may inspire both well-established scholars to broaden the scope of their research and those who are planning or beginning to be involved in phraseology to undertake a particular course of studies on multiword expressions, crossing the boundaries of traditionally understood research on fixed polylexical units.

Undeniably, formulaic patterns are important both in terms of theoretical studies and communication approach. Thus, they are of interest to representatives of various disciplines, far beyond phraseology. Therefore, this collected monograph addresses a wide readership comprising scholars and students whose research areas are not only phraseology, phrasematics and paremiology, but also ethnolinguistics, discourse studies, corpus linguistics, lexicography, contrastive studies, natural language processing, stylistics, sociolinguistics, linguo-cultural analyses and pragmatics. In particular, this volume is highly recommendable for all scholars who undertake the effort to investigate the phenomenon of formulaic pattern in their research, irrespective of their scholarly approach, because of the novelty of the studies presented in the book. The papers show clearly that there are still many aspects that have to be analysed in order to give an insight into formulaic patterns viewed as complex linguo-cultural items.

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