

Introduction

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Stylistic Use of Phraseological Units in Discourse

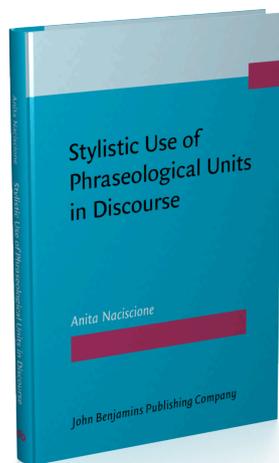
Anita Naciscione

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generations of scholars and students of phraseology. It is not easy to write a comprehensive and at the same time truly innovative study of an entire research field and yet go far beyond the present state of scholarship. But the book *Stylistic Use of Phraseological Units in Discourse* accomplishes exactly that, and its author Anita Naciscione has every reason to be proud of her scholarly achievement in the service of phraseology.

Wolfgang Mieder
University of Vermont, 2010

Introduction

The purpose of this book is to disclose stylistic discourse-level features of phraseological units from a cognitive perspective. A discourse-based view allows me to examine phraseological units in a broader context, not just in single phrases or sentences. This angle of vision is important, as discourse studies tend to overlook stylistic use of phraseological units. For instance, *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Schiffrin et al. [2001] 2004) does not deal with phraseology in discourse at all.

A cognitive approach to stylistic use of phraseological units in discourse is a new research area. It is, of necessity, an interdisciplinary field, since these issues cannot be addressed through the knowledge resources of any single discipline. I rely on the findings of cognitive linguistics on figurative thought and language. Use of figurative language, including phraseological units, has been recognised as part and parcel of human cognition, a revealing cognitive mechanism.

Recent decades have witnessed increasing interest in various aspects of phraseology, especially after the foundation in 1999 of the European Society of Phraseology (EUOPHRAS), which has become a centre of phraseological research, organising regular conferences and other activities. Additionally, an increasing number of publications now exist on various aspects of phraseology. Here I should mention two weighty volumes on theoretical issues of phraseology that will certainly boost further studies in the area: *Phraseology: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Granger and Meunier [2008] 2009) and *Phraseology in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching* (Meunier and Granger [2008] 2009). In turn, research in phraseology has promoted studies in corpus linguistics and in compilation of corpus-based dictionaries.

This book attempts to explore the benefits of a cognitive approach to the stylistic aspects of phraseology both in the system of language and in actual texts. Use of phraseological image in verbal and visual discourse is of stylistic and cognitive interest for studies of both thought and language.

New findings

- My major task has been to work on elaboration of key terminology and theoretical concepts in phraseology in general, and in stylistic use of phraseological units in discourse, in particular in the face of an abundance of various existing controversial terms. For the purposes of stylistic analysis, I introduce new basic terms in English: *the base form*, *core use*, and *instantial stylistic use*. To study phraseological units at the level of discourse, it is essential to draw a distinction between the stock of phraseological units and phraseological units in actual use, which fall into core use and instancial use. Hence the importance of the distinction between: *the base form vs core use vs instancial use*. The following are theory constitutive concepts in stylistic use of phraseological units.
 - Definition of *the phraseological unit* as the most significant concept for phraseology. I argue that the phraseological unit is a stable, cohesive combination of words with a fully or partially figurative meaning.
 - *The base form* of the phraseological unit is an archetypal conception. It is a decontextualised unit of language, stored in the dictionary or the long-term memory of the language user, accessed when a discourse situation calls for it. It is generic to all manifestations of a particular phraseological unit in discourse.
 - *Core use* is use of a phraseological unit in its most common form and meaning. In core use the phraseological unit does not acquire additional stylistic features and does not exceed the boundaries of one sentence. Core use is largely predictable; it presents neither novelty nor surprise.
 - By *instantial stylistic use* I understand a particular instance of a unique stylistic application of a phraseological unit in discourse resulting in significant changes in its form and meaning determined by the thought and the context. These are stylistic instances of naturally occurring phraseological units in discourse. Instancial stylistic use explores experiences far beyond the possibilities of core use, is more sophisticated and therefore requires a greater amount of processing and analysis than core use, especially for L2 learners. Both core use and instancial use are equally valid manifestations in discourse: they are language in use. The instancial form has been created for a particular purpose; however, the term *instantial* refers only to textual manifestation. It does not refer to the base form exploited in the given context or to pattern, which are language means applied to achieve a novel stylistic effect in discourse. Instancial use is a boundless resource for writer or speaker creativity.

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- *Stability of phraseological units* is an inherent, categorial feature not only in the system of language and but also in stylistic use. I argue against use of some terms which currently prevail in research on phraseology, such as *fixedness*, *frozenness*, *dead metaphors*. Stability in the system of language and flexibility in discourse do not contradict each other. Quite the contrary, they contribute to each other as a set of dialectic opposites.
 - *Phraseological cohesion* derives from the figurative meaning of the PU and the structure of the unit. However, phraseological cohesion is not only part of the meaning of the base form, it is also the unity of phraseological meaning in instantial use; not only a semantic but also a stylistic relationship, realised in discourse by virtue of ties with the base constituents. Stylistic cohesion provides continuity and helps to create a narrative.
 - I introduce the concept of *the pattern of stylistic use* as a reproducible mental technique. It is a set of common features and rules of instantial use of phraseological units. I have attempted to show that far more regularity exists in the instantial stylistic use of phraseological units than has been previously believed. In discourse, phraseological units secure cohesive ties to meet discourse needs by means of such patterns as extended metaphor, punning, allusion, or reiteration and their innumerable combinations. Patterns of instantial use are frequently achieved at the level of a certain length of text, larger structural units such as chapters, or at the level of a whole literary work. Texts show that instantial stylistic use of phraseological units has persisted since OE. The same basic stylistic patterns recur in discourse across centuries with varying degrees of frequency and density.
 - *Sustainability of phraseological image in discourse* is the spread of a phraseological image over a length of text in sequential segments as part of the interrelated web of the discourse. Instantial use is sustainable and contributes to creation of coherence and cohesion in discourse. A phraseological unit may extend across sentence boundaries and even larger stretches of text, creating continuity, a network of unique interrelationships of figurative and direct meanings, and associative links. Sustained stylistic use reflects extended figurative thought and contributes to perception of the text as a cohesive and coherent entity.
 - Cognitive insights. The study of phraseology cannot be separated from general cognitive processes. I challenge some prevailing assumptions about phraseological units in use. Clearly, instantial stylistic use cannot be discarded as a mere deviation, a distortion, a violation, or a strange exception. The reason is cognitive: instantial stylistic changes reflect the development of thought in

discourse, which is closely linked with creativity in language use. The book also explores other cognitive aspects of instantial use, such as access and recall, the role of long-term memory and working memory, and the process of identification: perception, recognition, comprehension, and interpretation. The whole process of emergence of instantial use is a cognitive performance, a pathway leading from long-term memory, which provides a base form and an instantial pattern, to creativity, which yields instantial form and meaning. Phraseological metaphor exists not only in thought and language; it also exists in visual representation and its perception. Phraseology is a mode of figuration, and a cognitive linguistic approach to figurative language is a tool that helps to perceive, understand, and appreciate stylistic use of phraseological units, and draw inferences.

- A diachronic insight into stylistic use of phraseological units, going back to the OE, MiE, and ENE periods (Shakespeare) up to Modern English, discloses cross-century stability of patterns of figurative use. Diachronic development of patterns is a development in complexity and scope. The same basic stylistic patterns recur in discourse across centuries with varying degrees of frequency and density. Diachronic changes do not contradict stability. Texts show that instantial use of phraseological units has persisted since the OE period.
- Applied stylistics. In the book, I argue in favour of the need for applied stylistics as a field of special interest: use of stylistic competence of the language user in the fields of teaching language and literature, translation, lexicography, visual representation, and advertising. I see applied stylistics as an area which explores practical use of the principles, discoveries, and theories of language, literature, and stylistics. Training in stylistic awareness will lead to significant gains in stylistic literacy, including visual literacy, which will result in functional ability to use stylistic skills sufficiently well for applied purposes and activities.

Scope of the book

The book explores key issues in stylistic use of phraseological units and offers both theoretical and applied research; it falls into two main parts. Part I is devoted to theoretical research, which is concerned with elaboration of technical terms, key concepts, and key processes. Part I offers a new approach to key terminology and basic concepts, and provides a comprehensive discourse-based treatment of phraseological units from a cognitive perspective. The book examines patterns of stylistic use of phraseological units and the role of cohesion in the sustainability of a phraseological image in discourse. Exploration of phraseological meaning