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## Editorial: Where does phraseology actually begin?

After several decades of research on phraseology, one of the most controversial topics of this multi-faceted discipline remains the borderline between ordinary constructions (what John Sinclair called the open-choice principle) and phraseology (Sinclair's idiom principle). Consider a phrase such as *take the example*: is this just an open choice between a number of possibilities, in this case rather limited, or are we already dealing with some kind of communicative routine? The criterion of frequency might be invoked, but then you would have to conclude that 'take the third exit' is also a set phrase, because it is particularly frequent (on the Web at least). And what do you do with other borderline cases such as *take the form*, *take the time*, *take the lead*, *take the necessary action*, *take the offensive*, *take the risk*, *take the same approach*, *take the train to*, etc.? Sweeping some of those cases aside by calling them light verb constructions does not solve the whole problem, because what is at stake here is probably a complex interplay between frequency and fixedness, that needs to be further explored.

Posing the question of *where* naturally leads to *when*: many phrasemes (in the sense of fully idiomatic phrases) can be traced back to a specific period or even an incident. According to French dictionaries (Le Robert / Trésor de la langue française), for instance, the French phrase *un empêcheur de danser en rond* (also *empêcheur de tourner en rond*), a spoilsport, originated from a political pamphlet in the 19th century, when the local authorities wanted to prevent the inhabitants of a village from dancing. Society and culture seem to be also interwoven with the creation of phrasemes, and this gives a partial answer to the question of *how*.

It remains a daunting challenge, however, to identify a construction as being (even partly) phraseological, as dictionaries are not exhaustive, and also because native speakers will not always agree with each other. As a result, many opponents of phraseology as a separate discipline still argue that the growing tendency to see phraseology everywhere is dangerous. There is nothing new under the sun: I remember attending an international conference in 1991, during which one of the speakers took the view that, if you are to believe researchers on phraseology, *then everything is phraseological*. If proved, the omnipresence of phraseology has indeed far reaching implications for a general theory of language.

In the first article of this volume, Sören Stumpf addresses a central issue in this debate: the relationship between valence (also called valency) theory and phraseology. If there is a missing theoretical link between syntax and phraseology,

it is perhaps to be found in valence theory. Most interestingly, the author argues that such an approach is only feasible by having recourse to linguistic corpora.

The second article, by Sandra Issel-Dombert and Marie Serwe, is a contribution to the cultural and historical facet of phraseology, as they provide evidence for the fact that many formulaic expressions that were invented during the French *préciosité* period (in the 17th century) are still used today. The French language offers a particularly interesting example in this respect, because of its rich cultural past and of France's well known interaction between literature and nation-building.

We are also happy to publish, as a third article, a contribution by a well-known figure of the discipline, Igor Mel'čuk, who throws new light on the fuzzy borderline between open-choice and phraseology, by giving pride of place to another category of phrasemes: clichés, and their different subclasses. The author's subtle semantic and logical analysis sheds new light of underlying principles of phraseological structures, all the more so as he has applied the same framework elsewhere to all categories of set phrases, and even to morphemes.

This volume also welcomes an article devoted to a language that hasn't attracted much phraseological attention so far, Hindi, one of the three or four most spoken languages of the world, depending on the classification used. Sunil Sharma analyzes in her paper the metaphorical imagery of honour and dishonour in Hindi phraseology.

The issue of the interplay between society, recent history and phraseology is at stake in the fifth article, in which Joanna Szerszunowicz investigates the changes in Polish phraseology following the political transformations in the country after 1989.

Finally, the former Managing Editor and founder of the Yearbook of Phraseology, Koenraad Kuiper, gives us in a short article an insight into a fascinating conundrum of phraseology, Pawley's conjecture that the frequency of lexical items in text corpora is positively correlated with the number of phrasal lexical items having those lexical items as heads of phrase.