

Book reviews

Sylvia Jaki: *Phraseological substitutions in newspaper headlines: “More than meats the eye”*. John Benjamins Publishing Company: Amsterdam, 2014. xvi, 243 pp. ISBN 978 90 272 2400 2.

One of the joys of being a sub-editor on a newspaper is being able to construct arresting and often humorous headlines. How much that depends on knowledge of the phrasal lexicon is the subject of this book along with, and centrally, the converse perceptual question of whether and what the readers of such “artistic” deformations (Mel’čuk 1995) understand to be going on when they read the headlines. Such creative efforts have been traversed previously in a variety of domains by Cowie (1998) in the case of newspaper writing in general, by Fiedler (2010) in the case of bank advertisements and Kuiper (2007) in the case of cartoons. The emphasis on perception is relatively uncommon, particularly within an experimental paradigm, and so welcome as is the range of techniques used to investigate it.

“Artistic” deformation can take a variety of forms. This book is restricted to deformations where a substitution of a word in a phraseological unit has been made.

After an introductory chapter outlining the structure of the work, Chapter 2 contains a survey of the properties of phraseological units as they are understood in continental phraseology, and the ways they can be artistically deformed. This is a well-structured, fully informative and amply documented account. The first section covers polylexicity, fixedness, and idiomaticity as general properties of phraseological units, and then specific types of such units including stereotypical comparisons such as *as long as your arm*, irreversible binomials such as *the long and short of it*, winged words, these being quotations which have entered the phraseological lexicon, such as *Go ahead, make my day* from the film *Dirty Harry*, titles, slogans and commonplaces, and routine formulae which are phraseological units with associated contexts of use, such as conventional greetings and apologies. There are also patterns such as *time after time*, *year after year* where the slots allow a variety of semantically defined fillers, light verb constructions, such as *make use of*, cf *use*, collocations or restricted collocations such as *catch the bus* and proper names which are phrasal such as *The United States*.

The second half of the chapter covers in considerable detail the ways in which the base forms of such phraseological units can be modified and the purposes those who perform such modifications might have for doing so. Jaki takes it that modifications are intentional and situationally determined but not conventional.

For example many proverbs are conventionally modified by clipping, such as in *too many cooks (spoil the broth)*. These cases are not considered as modifications. Modifications cover the following processes. 1. substitutions where a constituent of the phraseological unit is replaced by another. 2. The relationship of the substituted item and what is substituted for it can be of various kinds such as on the basis of a phonological or semantic properties of the two items. In newspaper headlines context always plays a part in which item is selected for replacement and the selection of the item that replaces it. 3. A phraseological unit can also have an item inserted. For instance when a swearword is added as in *I would not give George the bloody time of day*. 4. Conversely phraseological units may also be clipped. 5. Items in a phraseological unit may be permuted as in *heels over head*. 6. Blends are also possible where two phraseological units are combined into one as in *burn that bridge when we come to it* based on *cross that bridge when we come to it* and *to burn one's bridges*. 7. Literalization involves the literal use of a figurative expression as in when the expression *take one's hat off to someone* is used when one actually takes one's hat off. Then, of course, a number of these modification types can be combined.

At this point Jaki makes a useful set of distinctions between modifications which are intentional and context dependent, and a those which are conventional or a result of speech errors.

Chapter 3 provides background analysis of the way modification is to be found in newspaper headlines. It looks at headlines as a text type, lexical substitutions as way of creating humour and the research questions and corpus used for the study of substitutions. Jaki is clear that headlines are not part of the text type newspaper language. Perhaps even newspaper language is not a text type given the large variety of text types sheltering under the newspaper's umbrella such as weather reports and obituaries. Jaki notes that headlines not only are formally different from other kinds of texts in newspapers but also have different functions from other newspaper text types. On that basis headlines might be considered a genre rather than just a text type. Headlines are a very common locus for phraseological modification and that has some interesting consequences notably as regards the way in which the meaning of the modified phraseological unit in the headline may or may not depend on the retrieval by readers of the unmodified unit and hence its meaning.

Substitutions can also be humorous. Jaki looks therefore at some theories of humour in general and verbal humour and word play in particular. This is useful section for those who are interested in verbal humour.

Finally the chapter deals with the three major research questions, research materials and selection methods. The questions are: what are the factors which are

conducive to the recognition of the canonical form of the modified phraseological unit, how are the meanings created by substitution in a phraseological unit created and how are phraseological units containing substitutions interpreted. The print data selected to answer these questions were drawn from newspapers in German, English and French. The phraseological units were of many different types with a preponderance in the 'winged words' category but selection was not made to control for different types of phraseological unit.

Chapter four deals with the receptive aspects of modified phraseological units. It is thus a study in text perception. After a clear discussion of development of psycholinguistic testing of the perception of phraseological units in general (as compared with their literal counterparts) and particularly of figurative uses in general and the various models which have been proposed to explain such processing, the chapter presents the research protocol and its results.

The aims of the protocol were to investigate the ratio of associations respondents had linked to the canonical form of the phraseological unit and its recognition, the extent to which associations were based on the substituted item or the item for which it was substituted, the effect of the literal and figurative readings of the phraseological unit on the associations generated by the respondents, the extent to which comprehension of the modification is possible without context and the extent to which associations are individual.

The protocol itself was administered to 100 respondents. It required them to respond to a stimulus in the form of a modified phraseological unit, half with and half without written context. 18 stimuli were used, nine modified cases from the database of authentic newspaper headlines and nine distractors. The test had two phases. In the first respondents were asked to note down four to six associations which occurred to them immediately on the presentation of the stimulus with or without contextual information. In the second phase stimuli were presented without contextual information. The respondents were asked to note if there was a modification and if so what the canonical form of the modified expression was.

The results of the experiments were complex but are summarised at the end of the chapter as follows. When a phraseological unit is modified, associations draw more on its literal than its figurative reading. Written context is also vital for meaning construction. Although readers do usually recognise the canonical form, they do not universally connect it with the modified form. Lastly, responses tend to be personal with considerable variation among the population of respondents.

Chapter 5 is an in depth analysis of the results of the protocol administered in Chapter 4. The earlier data is reanalysed and there is a literature review on the kinds of factors which may be investigated. The results of the experiment in Chapter 4 suggested that systematic relationships between the two items had a

strong effect on recognition of the phraseological unit although there were other factors involved

A new protocol is introduced whose aim was to find which factors in the relationship between the substituted item and the item substituted for it have an effect on whether the canonical form of the phraseological unit was recognised. Again the test was by means of associations. The second data set was created for the purpose rather than using natural data. The aim was to control for as many factors as possible. The major relationships between the substituted item and its replacement were 1. paronymy, 2. antonymy, 3. co-hyponymy/hyponymy and hyperonymy, and 4. the number of syllables. Finally the relationship could be 5. purely contextual. Fifty phraseological units of a variety of kinds including film titles and proverbs were selected. Fifty distractors were also included in the experiment. Each was modified by 5 different substitutions as detailed above. Respondents were shown each item one at a time and ten modifications of each type were shown to each respondent.

The results showed that the likelihood of respondents recognising the canonical form of a phraseological unit increased in order from a purely contextual relationship through having an equal number of syllable, co-hyponymy, antonymy, with paronymy having the highest likelihood for retrieval of the canonical form. However these were not the only relevant factors. Familiarity with the canonical form, the length of the canonical form, the position of the substituted word also had an effect as did the lexico-syntactic environment.

Chapter 6 is an interpretation of the data from the previous chapters using Fauconnier and Turner's Conception Integration Theory (CIT). This is a brave chapter since Jaki is well aware of the critiques of the theory but also is prepared to see how successful it is in dealing with her data. She uses it to outline a way in which the associations with the phraseological unit for which a word has been substituted are activated. After outlining the nature of CIT, Jaki presents a set of case studies drawn from 30 examples to show how the activation patterns might be understood. This is done by means of diagrams with linking arrows from distinct domains such as the original phraseological unit. Each of these domains has associations with others. The proposal is that that is how the substitutions are understood. However each case is different and the associations also differ from person to person. So while CIT provides a framework for how each case may be understood, it provides little by way of generalisations. This is a welcome finding since it is tempting when looking at particular phenomena to search for generalisations at the expense of the local detail.

Chapter 7 presents a simple but careful flow chart for the way in which hearers process phraseological units with substitutions based on the analyses

of Chapter 6. They must recognise that there has been a manipulation of the original phraseological unit and then activate the knowledge they have associated with that unit. Then there is an attempt at resolving the clash between the underlying phraseological unit drawn from memory and its modification. Once the reader has begun to read the article of which modified phraseological unit is a headline, further information becomes available to enrich the meaning of the headline and to further resolve the clash between the canonical form and its altered current form in the newspaper headline. This additional context also enables more meaning to be made from the alteration.

Chapter 8 offers a conclusion and some suggestions for where additional work may be done. The most significant of these is a call for more psycholinguistic research. Certainly more experimental work is possible and there is also room for the proposals of the book to find their way into more articulated psycholinguistic theories of speech perception.

In all this is a fine book full of carefully conducted research. It does not over claim and is sensitive to the detail of the data. The author is also aware of the limitations of her research and has useful things to say about what might be done with those. Given its genesis, it can be recommended to anyone who is considering working on phraseological units and their use in genres like newspaper headlines. It is a fine model of how such work should be done.

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