DE GRUYTER MOUTON DOI 10.1515/phras-2025-0003 — YoP 2025; 16: 5–50

Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij*

Phraseology and Figurative Language: Some Basic Concepts and Future Prospects

Abstract: Phraseology as a distinct linguistic subsystem and the domain of figurative language share common ground, and they are often perceived in popular discourse as nearly identical. However, they are far from being the same. Phraseology—especially as understood today—constitutes a vast and intricately structured part of language, where figurativeness is characteristic of only some phrasemes, i.e., phraseological units. While the notion of figurativeness is intuitively clear, it remains especially difficult to define precisely. It is often associated with metaphor and metonymy, which, though partially correct, is insufficient: metaphorical transfers and metonymic shifts only occasionally give rise to figurative expressions.

This study aims to clarify the relationship between phraseology and figurative language and, more importantly, to outline future directions in phraseology research, particularly that tied to the image component inherent in the semantics of many phrasemes. Additionally, it addresses several related issues, including:

– the interplay between figurativeness and idiomaticity
– the role of idiomaticity in shaping different classes of phrasemes
– criteria for identifying conventional figurative expressions in language

A key focus is developing methods for analyzing the semantics of figurative phrasemes (especially idioms) and examining the underlying conceptual images that often govern not only their actual meaning and semantic associations but also their discursive behavior.

Keywords: phraseology, phraseme, idiom, figurative language, figurativeness, idiomaticity, semantics, motivation, metaphor, blending of mental spaces, cultural symbols, intertextual phenomena, imagery, image component, conventionalization, linguistic creativity

1 Problem statement and theoretical considerations

This article outlines key perspectives on the study of phraseology, which arise from its unique position among linguistic subsystems involved in the expression

*** Corresponding author: Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij**, Vinogradov Russian Language Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences and Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 18/2, Volkhonka, 119019, Moscow, Russia dobrovolskij@gmail.com

of figurative meaning. While phraseological units and items of figurative language belong to fundamentally different domains, they have significant points of intersection.

The fundamental differences between these domains stem from the very essence of the concepts FIGURATIVENESS and PHRASEOLOGY. FIGURATIVENESS is a distinct, cognitively complex way of expressing meaning, whereas PHRASEOLOGY occupies an intermediate space between lexicon and grammar, characterized by its own distinctive features. The points of intersection between these domains can be explained simply by the fact that many set phrases have a clear figurative (*tropéic*) basis. The use of such units in speech renders the discourse figurative to some degree.

Let us consider some fundamental differences between phraseological units (set phrases) and expressions that, by their nature, can convey figurative meanings.

– First, set phrases are part of the lexicon and thus belong to the inventory of linguistic resources that are embedded in a speaker's linguistic competence. In contrast, figurative meanings can be expressed in any way, including through spontaneous, non-conventionalized means. Parallels between phraseological units and figurative expressions that do not fall within the domain of phraseology emerge only when the means of creating figurativeness are conventional: that is, lexicalized. Conventional figurative lexemes, like phraseological units, are elements of the lexical system; they are described in dictionaries rather than grammars. This means that the components of meaning responsible for figurative effects are part of the lexical meaning of such units.[1]
– Second, a distinctive feature of set phrases is their special lexical structure, which means that they consist of more than one word. This feature serves as a defining criterion for distinguishing phraseological units. Unlike single-word metaphors, phraseological units—including figurative ones—have an internal syntax. From the perspective of the combination of lexical and syntactic elements in their structure, these items are an important subject of Construction Grammar (CxG).

Phraseology and CxG (at least in the part that deals with irregular language phenomena) are two different and apparently complementary approaches to the study of non-compositional structures: from lexicon to syntax and from syntax to lexicon. The main difference between Construction Grammar and phraseology is that CxG

1 I use the term *figurative* for a wide range of linguistic phenomena, including both conventional and ad hoc expressions.

is primarily a syntactic theory (although with a claim to cover all levels of linguistic structure), while phraseology theory is a part of lexicology and lexical semantics.

The development of CxG originated from the recognition that syntactic patterns are often sensitive to their lexical content. A comprehensive description of syntax must account for irregular phenomena—which in some cases resemble fixed expressions traditionally analyzed within phraseology—while in other cases necessitating reference to the principles governing the interaction of syntactic structures.

The theory of phraseology studies set phrases, or fixed expressions, as units of the lexicon that have specific meanings and functions. It examines their semantic, pragmatic, and combinatorial properties, as well as their systemic organization and the sources of their origin. Phraseology also considers various aspects of the historical development of phraseological units.

– Third, imagery is not an inherent property of all set phrases. The phraseological system of a language includes entire classes of non-figurative units. Thus, while figurative expressions need not be polylexical, phraseological units need not exhibit imagery. These distinctions appear not only in empirical data but also in the theoretical frameworks used to describe these domains. The objectives of linguistic theories that examine these subsystems—along with their relevance to the phenomena under discussion—will be explored in greater detail in subsequent sections.

Section 2 discusses the main functions of phraseology in general, its relationship with the study of formulaic language, and, most importantly, the constitutive properties of phraseological units. Section 3 will briefly describe the various classes of these units and the types of idiomaticity typical of them. Section 4 will focus on figurative language, paying special attention to contrasting conventional figurative units that are part of the lexicon with expressions created in ad-hoc speech. Idioms, as paradigmatic representatives of conventional figurative units, will be the focus of my discussion.

Section 5 provides a summary of the arguments and observations outlined in the article in order to explore the potential for the development of the theory of phraseology in terms of linguistic imagery. This final section also provides examples of how the principles discussed in the article can be applied to the development of lexicographic and digital resources.

Section 6 includes concluding remarks.

***

This introductory section will outline only some key points regarding the theoretical understanding of phraseology and figurativeness in language.

The current state of the theory of phraseology is characterized by a shift in attention toward multiword items with a low degree of idiomaticity and a lack of imagery. This is understandable, as traditionally the focus has been on set phrases based on *tropéic* transformations, i.e., trope-based expressions, primarily idioms, which are the central class in the phraseological system. These approaches have largely ignored non-figurative set phrases such as multiword discourse markers, phrasemes with a grammatical function, syntactical constructs with open slots, and the like. The development of linguistic approaches such as CxG and access to large text corpora has led to a better understanding of the role of these structures in speech production. Their frequency of use typically exceeds that of idioms, rendering them a critical focus of linguistic inquiry.

This modern trend, for all its significance, has some drawbacks. In particular, figurative phraseological units are what make it possible to explore the relationship between language and culture. The aspects of etymological memory in linguistic structures are most evident in this type of expression; that is, traces of previous linguistic states are preserved in the structure, both formally and semantically.

Another crucial consideration is that figurative set phrases exhibit both semantic complexity and a degree of lexical and syntactic flexibility, making them particularly susceptible to wordplay and punning. The analysis of such creative manipulations raises important questions about: (1) the permissible boundaries of variation in linguistic units, and (2) the dynamic interplay between conventional usage and linguistic creativity. These research questions frequently necessitate examination of figurative phrasemes, with a primary focus on idioms.

These preliminary observations demonstrate that contemporary phraseological theory has not abandoned the study of imagery but rather shifted its focus toward other crucial dimensions, particularly fixed linguistic chunks and multiword units that organize discourse.

The phraseological system comprises distinct components that contribute differently to various theoretical inquiries. This study specifically examines figurative phrasemes, with particular emphasis on idioms. As a core component of phraseology, idioms exhibit distinctive properties that set them apart from other forms of linguistic imagery. The analysis reveals that idioms possess unique characteristics that distinguish them within the broader spectrum of figurative language mechanisms.

The study of figurativeness presents significant theoretical challenges. Within linguistic traditions that prioritize methodological precision and empirically verifiable claims, figurativeness remains an inherently ambiguous category. Only recently has theoretical linguistics begun to examine imagery phenomena using empirical analytical techniques and operational criteria (see Dancygier and Sweetser 2014; Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen [1]2005 and [2]2022 for more information).

The analytical approaches employed in phraseological and figurative expression research exhibit substantial methodological divergence, as will be shown in

Sections 2–4. While these approaches differ fundamentally in their basic concepts and terminology, careful examination reveals noteworthy points of convergence.

Idioms are distinguished from monolexemic figurative units by their structural composition and associated constraints. As phrasal units, they generally conform to grammatical phrase structure rules while operating at a relatively abstract syntactic level. Observed deviations from typical discourse behavior—particularly in syntactic patterning—stem from their semantic properties, encompassing both their actual meaning and the image component of their semantics. This dual nature means that while idioms exhibit irregularity relative to general combinatorial rules, they turn out to be regular or at least explicable in terms of form-function pairings at an appropriate level of abstraction. Like other constructions, they manifest varying degrees of specificity in their form-function mappings.

Establishing a comprehensive model of encoding processes in idiomatic expressions would result in:

– more precise identification and characterization of decoding mechanisms,
– the development of lexicographic representation methods that adequately capture figurative dimensions

2 Phraseology, formulaic language, and basic properties of phrasemes

Phraseology, as a subsystem of a language, encompasses multiword expressions or set phrases of all classes. The theory of phraseology aims to study and describe all these types of multiword expressions. There are many different definitions of the subject area of phraseology. We can distinguish between the widest possible understanding of preconstructed phrases and a narrower interpretation of the phraseological units. A set phrase has been defined as "a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar" (Wray 2002: 9). The term that most accurately reflects such a broad understanding of the object of study is *formulaic language units* or German *usuelle Wortverbindungen* "common word combinations" (Steyer 2000, 2013).[2]

2 This notion correlates with the concept of productive patterns in phraseology and Construction Grammar. For more details, see Mellado Blanco (2022).

This view correlates with the general idea that language usage consists largely of the use of prefabricated chunks. These are either non-compositional and, therefore, have to be memorized as units, or they are high-frequency compositional form-meaning pairs of varying complexity that are not analytically processed with every use (see the definition of the term *construction* in Goldberg 2006).

This article proceeds from a somewhat narrower understanding of phraseological units, using the term *phraseme* adopted in Burger et al. (2007a) and Mel'čuk (2023) to denote them. An additional feature that distinguishes *phrasemes* in this understanding from the *formulaic language units* is a certain degree of irregularity that characterizes phrasemes. Phrasemes are not merely prefabricated chunks of any kind that form "a short cut to production and comprehension" (Wray 1999: 213), but chunks that, being not quite regular, have a status of a linguistic unit in itself. I fully agree that language usage consists primarily of the use of common word combinations and that the formulaic language includes not only irregular word groups but also "phraseological aspects of texts and text patterns" (Burger et al. 2007b: xiii). See also Filatkina (2018) for historic formulaic language—a phenomenon that undoubtedly extends to the structure of the text. However, for the purposes of this article, it is advisable to limit the field of research to units of language related to the lexical system.

Moreover, from this perspective, phraseology should not be regarded as a marginal area of language. On the contrary, it is rather a fundamental component of the lexical system. See the results of Jackendoff's (1995: 136) observations on the role of phrasemes in the formation of vocabulary and the development of these ideas in Mel'čuk (2023: 2–3), who stresses that "holistic multilexemic expressions massively outnumber single words, that is, lexemes: maybe, 10 to 1". Thus, in contemporary linguistics, phrasemes not only attract the attention of researchers but also represent a crucial object of description.

In order to agree on the meaning of the term *phraseme*, it is necessary to identify its main features. The distinguishing features of phrasemes are divided into three groups according to the levels at which they manifest themselves:

– structural features
– semantic features
– usage-based features

Structural features. A phraseme is a phrase in its structure. There are no single-word phrasemes. Thus, the term *Ein-Wort-Phraseologismus* "one-word-phraseologism", which appears occasionally in various works written in German, is misleading and has not received any noticeable distribution. See also the point of view expressed in Burger et al. (2007a: 18): "a fuzzy line between the structurally defined areas of phraseology and word formation is inappropriate in languages such as German

(a term like the German term "Ein-Wort-Phraseologismus" [Engl. "one-word-phraseologism"] is a contradiction in itself)".[3]

Despite its internal logic and persuasiveness, this feature causes some problems in the contrastive study of phraseology. Therefore, quite often the unit that is an idiom in L1 turns out to be a compound; that is, a one-word metaphor in the L2. See Russian *kozel otpuščenija* = German *Sündenbock* = English *scapegoat*; Russian *kamen' pretknovenija* = German *Stolperstein* = English *stumbling block*. It would be wrong to exclude such cases from contrastive analysis just because there are morphosyntactic differences between examples of this kind. On the other hand, it would be equally wrong and theoretically unacceptable to blur the boundaries of phraseology and transform it from a clearly defined subsystem of the language into a set of units of a different nature. If membership of a certain unit in the system of phraseology is determined each time by some criteria of its own, including cross-linguistic parallels, the very existence of such a system is questionable.

How can we solve this problem? To analyze such entities, it is desirable to have a single theoretical format. The simplest and most logically consistent way to address this issue is to introduce an instrument of analysis into the linguistics apparatus. In addition to the theory of phraseology, this instrument allows us to study conventional figurative units (that is, both figurative phrasemes and figurative words), regardless of their structural features. This is precisely the task that conventional figurative language theory takes on (see Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen 2005, 2022).[4] I will discuss some of the features of this theory in more detail in section 4.

Semantic features. Phrasemes of all classes are characterized by a certain idiomaticity, that is, an irregularity of semantic inference.[5] Figurativeness is just one aspect of idiomaticity, and often its consequence.

Therefore, the German idiom *dümmer als die Polizei erlaubt* "(to be) more stupid than the police allow" is perceived as having a vivid image due to the increased complexity of the denotative reference. Rather than directly stating that the person is very stupid, the speaker activates a network of mental spaces (as described in Conceptual Blending Theory, see Fauconnier and Turner 2002). This set includes knowledge about the functions of the police, in particular, that the

3 In certain languages where the demarcation between compound words and multi-word expressions is less distinct, as is the case, for example, in German, English or Russian, concepts such as "one-word phraseme" may not be as inherently problematic. However, this matter warrants a separate discussion.

4 For the sake of simplicity, I will henceforth refer to the first edition of this book. References to the second edition are left only in cases where I mention fragments that are absent in the first edition.

5 It is important that the concept of idiomaticity is much broader than the concept of phraseology. Natural languages are "deeply and first of all idiomatically influenced" (Augst 2017: 11).

definition of the norm of mental development of individuals is not and cannot be included in these functions. The emerging cognitive dissonance at the merging of the mental spaces "human mental abilities" and "police functions" results in the utterance with this idiom being perceived as an extremely complex way to encode meaning. Any deviation from the regularity in expressing the concept makes the statement idiomatic. The figurativeness of this idiom is due to an additional conceptual level in its plane of content, which is generated by the blending of mental spaces from logically disparate domains. In other words, the imagery, expressivity, and emotional richness of a given idiom is a secondary phenomenon derived from its semantic properties.

The analysis of such examples implies the need to determine the essence of idiomaticity and its types, since it is the understanding of the category of idiomaticity that serves as a prerequisite for the analysis of figurativeness. This is a separate task, some aspects of which I will briefly discuss below (for more details, see Dobrovol'skij 2023). It is only important to note here that there are many phrasemes that are not figurative. We encounter non-figurative items even among idioms; see German idioms such as *zu Rang und Ehren, kurz und gut, weit und breit* or English *no ifs and buts, trial and error, by and large, far and wide.*

The idiomaticity of some idioms may be explained by the presence of unique constituents in their structure; for example, *on tenterhooks, at loggerheads, go haywire*.[6] This type of idiomaticity is related to the opacity of the structure rather than to the inclusion of an additional conceptual level in the plane of content; i.e., it does not imply figurativeness.

In general, everything that is figurative should be idiomatic, but not the other way around: there are many irregular (and therefore idiomatic) language structures that do not have any elements of imagery. This means that idiomaticity (and not figurativeness) is a constitutive feature of units related to the field of phraseology.

Usage-based features. As shown above, a crucial characteristic of the formal structure of a phraseme is its multiword character or polylexicality, whereas regarding semantics, it is idiomaticity. However, these two features are not sufficient to separate phrasemes from irregular expressions of any kind. In speech, especially poetic or just creative speech, unique phrases appear to some extent, characterized by an irregular way of expressing meaning. Obviously, such phrases are not phrasemes, since they are not included in the lexical system of

6 That is to say constituents "such that at least one of these does not function in the same way in any other combination or combinations of the kind, or occurs in a highly restricted number of them, or in a single one only" (Čermák 2007: 20).

the language as conventional units: that is, they are not units of the lexicon.[7] Hence, another criterion that makes it possible to describe phrasemes as a special class of word combinations is their conventionality. This feature is usage-based in nature.

In general, the fixedness of phrasemes also has a purely structural aspect. For example, the presence of unique constituents in a phraseme contributes to its stability. This also includes limitations on transformability, defective paradigms, etc. However, the leading aspect is the usage-based aspect of fixedness. This is primarily because there are quite a few phrasemes in different languages that do not have any noticeable structural limitations. The fact that formally unlimited phrasemes are phraseological units is to be explained by usage. They are perceived as fixed expressions and reproduced as such in the linguistic community, i.e., they are conventionalized. Thus, the expression *to kick the bucket* in the meaning of 'to die' is an idiom not only because it is re-interpreted and not completely transparent, but also because it is structurally stable and is constantly reproduced by native speakers in this form (thus being a conventional multiword unit). The stability factor turns out to be one of the constitutive features. If there is no stability, then there is no phraseme. Consider, for example, the idiomatic but not conventionally fixed expression *time is a jet plane, it moves too fast* (Bob Dylan), which is occasionally formed by analogy with the speech formula *time flies*. Clearly, the expression *time is a jet plane, it moves too fast* is not a phraseme.

To sum up, the usage-based aspect of stability is manifested in the regular reproduction of a certain word string by native speakers. The structural aspect of stability is optional. If there is no conventionalization, then it makes no sense to talk about stability from a structural or any other point of view. Thus, the collocations *to make a decision* and *to take a break* are structurally no different than free phrases. Being fixed expressions, they cannot be generated according

7 I am aware that the increasingly popular approaches based on the ideas of Construction Grammar generally do not recognize the presence of two different subsystems in the language: grammar and lexicon. In my research, I continue to proceed from the fact that to preserve the transparency and economy of linguistic description, the allocation of these subsystems is more than appropriate. Additionally, there is a huge number of transitional cases in the language, and the entire phraseology can be attributed to such cases. In general, however, phraseology as a special subsystem of the language remains a part of the lexicon and, accordingly (as already mentioned in section 1), phrasemes are lexical units that can and should be described in dictionaries. There is no doubt that such descriptions involve an appeal to grammatical features and thus resemble the items of the constructicon. However, there is nothing fundamentally new in this. One of the basic postulates of the Moscow Semantic School is that the dictionary should be tuned to grammar, and grammar to lexicon (Apresjan 1995, 2010).

to productive rules and must be recorded in the dictionary. On the other hand, factors of structural stability—defective paradigms, rhyme, limitations on the transformation ability, etc.—in combination with conventionalization reinforce this stability.

Apparently, within the framework of linguistics, it is impossible to identify with certainty the true causes of the formation of fixed expressions. Most often, the reasons for stability are extralinguistic in nature. What may be important here is the cultural significance of the source text, the cultural and historical context, the increased prestige, and/or the expansion of the scope of distribution of certain sublanguages, including slang. However, many of the causes of conventionalization remain completely unclear, and the proportion of purely linguistic factors of conventionalization seems to be extremely small.

***

The considered basic categories of phraseology—multiword character, idiomaticity and stability (see the German terms *Polylexikalität, Idiomatizität, Festigkeit*)—have been repeatedly mentioned in the literature as constitutive features of phraseology. Important for understanding the nature of these features and the nature of their interaction is their distribution across different levels and aspects of the linguistic structure. The fact that one of the features refers to the formal structure of an expression, the other to its semantic structure, and the third is not a structural phenomenon at all but is regulated by discursive practices, explains why there are also expressions for which one or another feature is missing. This also clarifies why such expressions should not be attributed to the field of phraseology, although such attempts have been sporadically encountered in the literature. The fact that different features—multiword character, idiomaticity, and stability—are heterogeneous in nature makes clear why none of them can be reduced to the influence of the others. Thus, only the interaction of all three features ensures the phraseological status of the expression.

Another important point that follows from the features of phraseology discussed here is the amazing dynamism of this subsystem of the lexicon. New phrasemes appear literally before our eyes, and many of those that were perceived as new quite recently almost completely cease to be used. Since one of the constitutive features of phraseology is regulated by usage, the dynamism of phraseology is a natural and fully expected phenomenon. However, polylexicality also contributes to the dynamics. Whereas a word is a stable formation that does not allow spontaneous changes in its structure, the phrase is more fluid in its structure.

The characteristics explored in this section establish some parameters for the classification of phrasemes, which are discussed in the following section.

3 Phraseme classes and their relation to idiomaticity types

Here we need to focus, at least briefly, on the classification of phraseological units, since their features (especially idiomaticity) are present to varying degrees and manifest themselves differently in phrasemes of each specific class.

In Baranov and Dobrovol'skij (2013), the following classification of phraseological units is proposed:

Idioms: *to give someone the cold shoulder, the ball is in your court, to take it with a pinch of salt, come rain or shine, doom and gloom*.

Collocations: *to make a decision, to raise a question, to meet resistance, bosom friend, sworn enemy, a flock of sheep, a school/shoal of fish, a grain of sand.*[8]

Proverbs: *every cloud has a silver lining, all that glitters is not gold, beggars can't be choosers, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.*

Grammatical phrasems: *no matter what, at least; in the course of, as well as; not only..., but also...*

Constructional phrasemes: [*the* X*est of the* X(*est*)]: *the best of the best, the worst of the worst, the wisest of the wise*; [*as if* N *could* VP]: *as if I could forget you, as if he could get enough.*

Situational clichés: *good night; hands up!, no smoking; at ease!, how do you do.*

See also the classifications proposed by Aničkov [1937] 1997 or Vinogradov [1947] 1977 for Russian phrasemes, based on completely different principles,[9] or classifications developed in recent decades and comparable to Baranov and Dobrovol'skij (2013) in terms of basic criteria and objectives. This includes Fleischer (1997) and Burger (2015) for German phrasemes and Mel'čuk (2023) for a variety of languages.

Let us consider these six phraseme-classes in more detail. Primary attention will be paid to idioms, since it is this class of phrasemes that is central from the perspective of the phenomena of imagery and figurativeness.

3.1 Idioms

Idioms include (mostly figurative) phrasemes with a pronounced irregularity in the ratio of form and meaning. This very general definition seems unconvincing from the point of view of operationalization possibilities, but individual structural and

8 In literature, the term *restricted collocation* is used in a similar way. For simplicity, I will only use the term *collocation*.

9 For more details, see Dobrovol'skij and Filipenko (2007).

semantic groups of idioms can hardly be reduced to a common denominator. Within the class of idioms, structural subclasses are traditionally distinguished, primarily binomials (*all skin and bones*, *movers and shakers*, *living and breathing*, *to name and shame*, *in leaps and bounds*) and similes (*drunk as a lord*, *to sleep like a log*, *as dumb as a plug*, *as stubborn as a mule*). Idioms of these two subgroups demonstrate some nontrivial specific features. Among the binomials, there are quite a number of non-figurative expressions, i.e., phrasemes whose idiomaticity is not based on semantic reinterpretation but on opacity; for example, *every now and then*, *rough and ready*, *out and about*. Their idiomaticity arises either from the unpredictability of the semantic result (*by and large*, *to and fro*) or from the combination of unique, albeit motivated forms (*kith and kin* or German *Lug und Trug* "lying and deceit"). Some binomials have traces of their literal meaning in the actual semantics and are therefore perceived as re-interpreted: *touch and go* in, e.g., *a touch and go situation*, meaning that a given situation is uncertain or risky. However, the basis of the reinterpretation is obscured, and opacity turns out to be the main factor of idiomaticity in these cases.

The existence of non-figurative idioms is not limited to the subclass of binomials. There are a lot of non-figurative similes (even if they are not counted among phrasemes), for example, *as white as a sheet*, where all the constituents are used in their direct meanings. However, the fact that this word was chosen as a prototypical comparatum makes the whole word combination idiomatic in the sense of the *single choice principle* (see below for more details). In contrast, a simile such as *as dumb as a doornail* is not only idiomatic, but also figurative. Thus, the only way to find a common constellation of features from the whole realm of idioms with all its subclasses is to point to a high degree of idiomaticity and fixedness.

Here the question immediately arises as to what is considered idiomatic. This issue has already been raised above. I assume that there are several types of idiomaticity that are quite different from each other. Here I will briefly focus on those that relate to the class of idioms, taking our previous work on this issue as a basis (see Baranov and Dobrovol'skij 2008).[10]

As is well-known, **semantic reinterpretation** is one of the central characteristics of idiomaticity. Most of the idioms (but also figurative (i.e., metaphorical) collocations and figurative proverbs) are semantically re-interpreted. The meaning of the idiom *to give someone the cold shoulder* 'to treat someone indifferently' arises

10 As for the degree of idiomaticity, attempts to carry out an approximate weighting of individual irregularity features and to express them in quantitative values have proven to be hardly convincing (see Dobrovol'skij 2016: 56–58). So, this phenomenon remains a more or less intuitive concept.

from a reinterpretation of the word combination in question. The "non-literal-taking" of the form is a mechanism that makes it possible to generate figurative expressions (metaphors, idioms, metaphorical collocations, figurative proverbs, etc.). Since there are no productive rules that could predict which word combinations have to be re-interpreted in which sense, these are irregular phenomena. That is, the process by which the transformation from source semantics to target semantics occurs is neither regular nor productive. Even if the semantic reinterpretation is based on a metaphorical model (in the sense of Lakoff 1987b, 1993)—as, for example, in the case of the idiom *groping in the dark*, which is based on the semi-productive metaphorical model of KNOWLEDGE IS SEEING—it is not possible to predict which word combinations will be re-interpreted according to this principle and which will not. In addition, there are many idioms of the type *to change the record* that do not follow a metaphor model.

Within the category of semantic reinterpretation, there are several types of realizations that have certain peculiarities. A particularly clear example of this is reinterpretation in the narrower sense. Typical examples are idioms such as *the tip of the iceberg* or *to take the bull by the horns*. The lexical unit can be understood literally and figuratively, so the extension of an expression is also part of the process of semantic reinterpretation. This type of reinterpretation also includes words used metaphorically and metonymically.

In contrast, the expansion of the original expression is missing in the intensional reinterpretation. An example of this is the idiom *a fifth wheel (on the carrage / on the cart)*. This phrase has no extension in the literal reading. Those examples whose reinterpretation principles are opaque without knowledge of their etymology or their intertextual references (such as *to kick the bucket*) are on the borderline of intensional reinterpretation. In such cases, literal meaning is veiled. For this reason, we deal here with a combination of reinterpretation and opacity.

Pseudo-exhaustion represents another type of reinterpretation, which explains idioms like *with bag and baggage*. The extension of the meaning of this idiom 'with all one's belongings' (and especially the overall idea 'completely, totally') is not fully captured in the form. The process of pseudo-exhausting is based on the enumeration of certain elements of a total set. Even though they do not exhaust the set, they are interpreted as though the entire set had been recorded. The complexity of the structure can play a significant role in selecting the elements that represent the overall quantity (alliteration, rhythm, rhyme, phonetic similarity, etc.), as in *neither house nor home* or *with bag and baggage*.

Along with the reinterpretation of linguistic forms, **opacity** can be counted among the aspects of idiomaticity that are based on irregularity in the form-meaning-relation. Any expression which is not transparent contains irregular

features. Therefore, the aforementioned idiom *to kick the bucket* (or German *ins Gras beißen* "to bite into grass", also meaning 'to die') is not only semantically re-interpreted but is also opaque, as the basis for motivation is not easily understood. To answer the question why *kicking the bucket* or *biting the grass* means 'dying', it is necessary to look at possible etymological explanations. This idiom is usually not perceived as motivated. However, the opacity lies not only in the lack of a productive rule that allows the listener to discover the meaning behind the linguistic structure, but also because one or more components of the given structure have no entry in the lexicon of the language in question (see the concept of unique idiom constituents).

Consequently, opacity can be caused by two different factors. On the one hand, the fact that inferring the whole from the meaning of its constituents is difficult according to the productive rules of semantics (this type of opacity can be called inference opacity), and on the other the fact that one or more constituent meanings are not a part of the active lexicon; that is, we are dealing with constituent opacity.

It is clear that inference opacity is a typical consequence of reinterpretation. Reinterpretation very often takes place according to unique rules. Thus, the aforementioned examples of reinterpretation show that there are no standard rules by which the current meaning would be derived from the meaning of the constituents. However, re-interpreted expressions are not always opaque. The current meaning can often be revealed through discourse implicature and/or known metaphorical models.

There are overlaps between inference opacity and **non-compositionality**, especially since this type of opacity arises from the unpredictability of the semantic results of reinterpretation. A crucial difference between these facets of idiomaticity is that non-compositionality itself does not imply semantic reinterpretation as a trigger.

Furthermore, the **increased complexity of the denotative reference** of the expression is linked to the irregularities in the form-meaning-relation. If, instead of dying, someone says *to kick the bucket* or *to bite the dust*, *to pop your clogs*, *to go the way of all flesh*, etc., they choose an indirect, more complex reference, which has a simpler direct way of indicating the denotation. The idiomaticity of the expression comes about because it refers to its denotation "in a roundabout way", so to speak.[11] Thus, the increased complexity of denotative references is a special property of the expression that points to the denotation in question. This denotation has a simpler and more common designation. In this sense, the increased complexity

11 Increased complexity of denotative reference, as well as opacity, is not exclusive to idioms.

of the denotative reference correlates with the characteristic of additional naming, which is postulated by Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005) as a criterion of figurativeness. A linguistic expression is figurative only if it is possible to designate something "simply", i.e., not figuratively.

This component of idiomaticity often appears in combination with reinterpretation since there are many instances of reinterpretations that lead to an increased complexity in the description. However, there are also idioms whose idiomatic nature is not based solely on semantic reinterpretation or opacity, but rather on complex denotational reference. An example of this type was briefly discussed in Section 2. The German idiom *dümmer als die Polizei erlaubt* "more stupid than the police allow" shows that in these cases the idiomaticity requires the blending of mental spaces.

Here is another example.

The meaning of the English idiom *to fall off the back of a lorry* is described in (Longman DEI) as 'to be stolen'. Meanwhile, observations of the usage of this idiom reveal that the scope of its functioning is strictly limited.

The idiom *to fall off the back of a lorry* is used in situations where goods are sold (usually on the streets) and the improbably low prices raise suspicions that they were stolen or purchased through illegal channels. Consider an example from (Longman DEI): *these watches were so cheap I think they fell off the back of a lorry*.

The motivation behind this use of the idiom lies in a kind of non-standard euphemistic substitution. The reasoning process in this case can be roughly described as follows: there are two possible reasons for such a low price. Either the product was stolen, or it fell out of the truck during transportation, and the seller picked it up on the road. Although the former is clearly intended, the situation is described as if the latter had occurred, which adds an additional humorous effect.

The described features of using this idiom are based not on the visual image of a truck or an object that has fallen from it, nor on a metaphorical model connecting the source domain (CONTAINER, in this case—the truck body) with the target domain (THEFT). Instead, they are based on more complex operations on knowledge, the starting point of which is a literal reading of the idiom.

All idioms possess the properties discussed above—semantic reinterpretation, opacity, and increased complexity of denotative references—in different combinations. Usually, only one of these properties is present, but sometimes two or even all three are at play at the same time. These three phenomena are interconnected and form a cluster that can be seen as the main characteristics of idioms.

3.2 Collocations

The main feature of a collocation, as understood by Hausmann (1985; 2004)[12], is that it is essentially a two-part expression comprising a base (a constituent with an independent lexical meaning) and a collocate (a constituent whose choice depends on the base).[13]

Collocations differ from idioms primarily in that the reinterpretation process in idioms covers the whole word combination, while in collocations the base and the collocate act as autonomous semantic units. In this respect, collocations can be considered compositional. The choice of the base is "free", i.e., it depends on the speaker's communication intention, while the selection of collocates is constrained, i.e., determined by usage norms. Most collocations are non-figurative and are characterized by a type of idiomaticity different from that of idioms.

The class of collocations includes various types of language constructions, such as light verb phrases with the structure [$V_{semiauxiliary}$ (Det) N], like *to take measures*, *to make a decision*. There are also collocations with the structure [$V_{semiauxiliary}$ P (Det) N]: *to call into question*, *to take into consideration*.[14]

Some collocations have unique and opaque constituents, making them more idiomatic. This can be seen in German expressions like *zugute kommen* und *zugute halten* oder *in Betracht ziehen*. In these cases, the collocate is semantically weakened. In collocations of another type (known as metaphorical collocations), the collocate is semantically re-interpreted (*a worm of doubt*).[15]

Apart from metaphorical collocations, which are a special case and are perceived as a transition type of expression between collocations and idioms, the

12 I adhere to this interpretation, although I am aware that there exist divergent perspectives on the nature of collocations. It is well-known that there is "no universally accepted formal definition of collocations" (Mel'čuk 1998: 24).

13 "But this by no means implies that a collocation consists necessarily of just two lexemes: each of its components can be multilexemic [...]." (Mel'čuk 2023: 113)

14 The study of collocations of this type has a long and rich history. This group of units is actively studied, in particular based on German as a separate category, under the term "Funktionsverbgefüge". Recently, the uniformity of these collocations has become questionable. Many structures that were traditionally considered part of the group actually belong to different types of constructions. See, for example, the recent work by Fleißner and Smirnova (2025).

15 There are many works on collocations of various types. See, for example, the large German collocation dictionary (Häcki Buhofer et al. 2014). There are also monographs dedicated to the study of collocations in different languages (see, for instance, Konecny 2010), as well as papers on the didactics of collocation learning, such as those by De Knop and Mollica (2024). A separate, large international project is dedicated to studying metaphorical collocations in German, English, Croatian, and Italian. For more information, see Stojič, Konecny (2024).

main type of idiomaticity for the class of collocations is the **single choice principle**. According to this principle, one of the possible alternatives for expressing meaning is implemented in the language, whereas other alternatives—for whatever reasons—are hardly accepted by the language community.[16]

Sinclair (1991: 110) also calls this type of idiomaticity the *idiom principle* or *principle of idiom*: "The principle of idiom is that a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analysable into segments. To some extent, this may reflect the recurrence of similar situations in human affairs; it may illustrate a natural tendency to economy of effort or it may be motivated in part by the exigencies of real-time conversation."

The most suitable tool for the formal description of the semantic links between parts of a collocation (base and collocates) is the well-known apparatus of lexical functions presented in the work of Mel'čuk and his colleagues (Mel'čuk 1998). For more details, see Mel'čuk (2023: 129–132).

3.3 Proverbs

Proverbs differ from idioms and collocations not so much because they are sentences (even among idioms, although rather rarely, there are completed sentences or propositional forms with open valences), but because they have the all-quantifier in their logical structure, i.e., they represent statements of general validity. This is often expressed lexically with the help of words like *every, everyone, all, always*; for example: *Every beginning has its end*; *There's a right time for everything*; *All cobblers go barefoot*; *The first time is always the hardest*.

Another specific feature of the proverbs is that they have a recommending or explanatory illocutionary force: e.g., the illocutionary power of the proverb *Practice makes the master* encourages us to practice a lot and not give up or feel discouraged after our initial failures. When using the proverb *The first time is always the hardest*, we understand that starting a new activity can be difficult. However, we are encouraged to see those difficulties as surmountable.

Another significant distinctive feature of proverbs is that they have greater discursive independence than phrasemes from other classes. When analyzing proverbs in terms of their idiomaticity, it is important to distinguish between figurative (*a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, all that glitters is not gold*) and non-figurative proverbs (*no answer is also an answer*, *every beginning has its end*). The

16 The single choice principle remains the leading principle for metaphorical collocations as well.

latter do not have an image component in their meaning; the words that compose them are used in their direct meanings. In some cases, the potential polysemy of the constituents adds complexity to their denotative reference.

All proverbs, including non-figurative proverbs, are idiomatic: they are conventional fixed word combinations and therefore irregular. They do not permit alternative ways of conveying the same content without losing their proverbial status; that is, they follow the **principle of single choice**. The semantics of figurative proverbs is additionally based on the same principles as the semantics of idioms, especially on **semantic reinterpretation**.[17]

3.4 Grammatical phrasemes

These are word combinations with purely grammatical functions, such as double conjunctions like *neither... nor...; either... or*; *not only..., but also...*, or word combinations that serve as text structuring devices like *and so on*; *on the one hand... on the other hand...*; *as well as*; *at least*; *that is*.

The scope and boundaries of this class of phrasemes are somewhat unclear. Overall, grammatical phrasemes can be defined as fixed word combinations which are (1) characterized by idiomaticity (their meaning cannot be calculated according to regular rules), (2) associated with an unusual grammatical meaning, including modal meanings, and (3) consist of auxiliary words.

If these criteria are met, a given word combination belongs to the class of grammatical phrasemes. However, there are often cases where the line between idioms and grammatical phrasemes is blurred. For example, many idioms, such as *by and large*, *first of all*, *first and foremost*, function as discourse markers. In this sense, they are semantically and pragmatically similar to grammatical phrasemes.

Not all grammatical phrasemes are not figurative, but they are all idiomatic. They are prefabricated and fixed—in this sense, they follow the **principle of single choice**—and often opaque. In some cases, the meaning of expressions of this functional class may be clear and based on iconicity, as in the phrase *again and again*. However, these units are still considered phrasemes because they are frequently used in speech and acquire a meaning that goes beyond the literal interpretation of their elements. This means that their conventionality and stability are essential for their status as phrasemes.

17 A vast literature is dedicated to the study of proverbs. Of the publications that contain an overview of the major areas of paremiology and the results in this area, see above all Mieder (2004).

This class of phrasemes still receives insufficient attention in modern research on phraseology. It seems that for the traditional understanding of what the theory of phraseology is about, this type of phrasemes is still somewhat unusual. Meanwhile, these units are extremely common in discourse and are intensively studied in works with a didactic bias.

3.5 Constructional phrasemes

These are also known as phraseme constructions, form a special class within the field of phraseology. Unlike other types of phrasemes, they have open slots that need to be filled in. From the perspective of Construction Grammar, this class of phrasemes has special significance since, in order to describe these units correctly, it is essential to consider the relationship between lexical meaning and grammatical patterning.

Basically, all phrasemes belong to the field of CxG. However, certain types of phrasemes, such as idioms, collocations, and proverbs, can also be described primarily within the framework of traditional phraseology, which sees itself as part of lexicon research.

The set of tools used in CxG is particularly helpful in those areas of language where syntactic patterns are involved that at the same time represent elements of the lexicon. Since these syntactic patterns are language-specific, constructional phrasemes are an important object for contrastive analysis; see Dobrovol'skij and Mellado Blanco (2021); Mellado Blanco (2019). The existence of set phrases of this type in different languages has been pointed out several times. However, within the framework of phraseology, they have always been considered a marginal phenomenon.

Constructional phrasemes can be defined as conventional word combinations that have a lexical meaning. In most cases, certain positions in their syntactic structure are filled with lexical items, while other positions represent slots that need to be filled in. The assignment of these variables is largely free, subject only to certain morphosyntactic restrictions (possibly also semantic or exclusively lexical in nature). In the American research tradition, similar phenomena have often been referred to as *syntactic idioms*; see Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994).

A good example of a constructional phraseme is the pattern [*the* X*est of the* X(*est*)] as in *the best of the best*. Another example is [*not that* P] – *not that he did what I told him*. In German, there is also a similar construction [*nicht dass* P]. For example, *nicht dass ich es gut finde* means 'not that I find it good'. For a corpus-based contrastive study of this construction, see Dobrovol'skij and Steyer (2018).

Recently, there has been a noticeable increase in interest in this class of phrasemes, which is being actively studied in languages such as German, Russian, Spanish, and Italian; see, for example, Dobrovol'skij (2011); Mellado Blanco (2019); Mellado Blanco, Mollica and Schafroth (2022); Baranov and Dobrovol'skij (2024); Mellado Blanco, Ivorra Ordines and Esteban Fonollosa (2024).[18] A promising project to create a German-Russian database of constructional phrasemes is being conducted by Pavlova (2024).

The fact that these units attract the theoretical interest of linguists is due to their special place on the lexicon-grammar axis. Many words are not combined with others according to clear and predictable rules of syntax and semantic compatibility. Instead, they follow certain principles that are difficult to predict and often just reflect people's personal preferences in how they use words. As a result, an increasing number of word groups of various types come within the scope of phraseology.

3.6 Situational clichés

Situational clichés (such as *How's it going?*; *Never mind; Happy birthday*; *Permission to speak freely?*) are non-figurative lexicon units whose idiomaticity is mainly due to the single choice principle. The choice of a cliché in a given situation, despite potential freedom to choose another semantically appropriate phrase, is determined by linguistically relevant cultural norms and usual preferences. Even though there are several ways to describe a particular situation, the native speaker chooses a specific option licensed by usage norms. Some situational clichés are opaque to a certain extent, for instance, German *Gern geschehen* "Willingly happened", which means 'Don't mention it' or 'You're welcome'.

This class of phrasemes is located at the periphery of the phraseological system, but it has been gaining in importance recently. Alternative terms for situational clichés are *formulemes* (Mel'čuk 2015: 74–77) and *pragmatemes* (Mel'čuk 2023).

The fact that situational clichés are to be counted as phrasemes is because they must be learned as whole units and reproduced in corresponding situations. See, for example, *Permission to speak freely?* in English and *Ja mogu byt' s vami otkrovenen?* "Can I be honest with you?" in Russian, or *best regards* in English and *mit freundlichen Grüßen* "with friendly greetings" in German. In most cases, these

18 Additionally, there is a large international collaboration project called "PhraConRep" aimed at creating a multilingual repository of constructional phrasemes in Central and East European languages. This project is supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology). For more information, see Pavlova and Schlund (2024).

situational clichés have a compositional structure, but they also have an additional element of meaning which includes contextual and situation-specific information necessary for their use. In this case, we are dealing with **context-dependent idiomaticity** and **situationally constrained idiomaticity**.

***

This brief characteristic of individual phraseme classes is intended to assist in the further analysis of the mutual influence between phraseology and imagery. In general, we can conclude that phraseology is currently one of the most actively evolving disciplines. It is not a marginal area of language but rather a fundamental component of the lexical system. Modern linguistics is paying increasing attention to irregular phenomena in the structure of language. This has led to the emergence of dynamic and rapidly developing research areas such as Construction Grammar. The focus has shifted from single words to multiword expressions, which are now the main area of theoretical interest.

4 Figurative language and idioms as conventional figurative units

What is figurative language? This question is more complex than it seems at first glance.

To begin with, recall that *figurative* is not the same as *idiomatic*, that is, irregular. There are many ways in a language to express an idea in an irregular way, and, consequently, there are quite a few types of idiomaticity. The specific characteristic of figurativeness is that it is associated with semantic biplanarity. In Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005: 11–14), we point out that a figurative expression has two conceptual levels in its content plane: the actual meaning of the expression, i.e., "what is meant", and its underlying primary meaning, i.e., "what is said". In other words, figurative expressions differ from non-figurative expressions in their semantic structure.

A crucial element of the content plane of figurative expressions is the so-called image component, a specific conceptual structure that mediates between the lexical structure that triggers the corresponding mental image and the actual meaning of a figurative expression. When conducting a detailed linguistic analysis, we need to consider the traces of literal meaning that are inherited by the figurative meaning to accurately describe its content plane. This approach not only helps us better understand the semantics and conceptual structure, but also enables an accurate lexicographic description of lexicalized figurative units (more details in Section 5 below).

Among the various types of idiomaticity discussed above, semantic reinterpretation most effectively aligns with the domain of figurativeness. This alignment is due to the fact that these types of idiomaticity inherently involve semantic biplanarity.

In Dancygier and Sweetser (2014: 4), the semantic biplanarity of figurative units and the connection between two conceptual levels are indicated somewhat differently, although essentially in a similar way: "At a first approximation, then, we might say that **figurative** means that a usage is motivated by a metaphoric or metonymic relationship to some other usage, a usage which might be labeled *literal*".

From the above explanations of the specifics of the concept FIGURATIVE, we see that figurative language is not the same as phraseology. First, not all phrasemes are figurative. Second, besides the fact that there are figurative phrasemes, there are also many figurative words and even pieces of text. In other words, an expression that is figurative is not necessarily a phraseme. This is not even necessarily a conventional unit of the lexicon. Consider the following example from an announcement for a workshop on academic writing:

> (1) Definitions are the linguistic timber that scholarly writers use to undergird their arguments, theories, paradigms, theses, and claims. Definitions are like a building's load bearing beam—the entire weight of a writer's argument rests on them. Without the "load bearing definition," the writer's argument, like a building, would collapse.

This passage is full of vivid figurative expressions. Moreover, it could all be seen as one single figurative expression. This text is a detailed metaphor that implements a well-known metaphoric model: THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS. This example clearly shows that the concept of a figurative expression is broader than the concept of a conventional figurative lexical unit, let alone the concept of a phraseme.

The main goal of this article is to connect the theory of phraseology with the methods and approaches to the study of figurative language. To do so, it is necessary to identify conventional figurative expressions, which differ from other expressions characterized by imagery. The former are primarily those that are spontaneously generated in speech. In other words, we need to distinguish figurative units of the lexicon from occasional, unconventional ways of expressing ideas using imagery. See also the notions of *linguistic* metaphors, that is, those that exist in language, and *dynamic* metaphors (Hanks 2007), or the distinction between *deliberate* and *non-deliberate* metaphors (Steen 2008).[19]

---

19 As for the opposition "*deliberate* vs. *non-deliberate metaphors*", this distinction is not so clear in terms of the conventionality of figurative expressions. Steen (2024) points to the ambiguity of most metaphors regarding deliberate and non-deliberate use. See Section 5 for more details.

The standard criteria for identifying lexical units include their frequency of occurrence in discourse and, consequently, in representative text corpora and lexicographic resources. The following discussion focuses exclusively on conventional expressions—that is, units of the lexicon, which are the basis for analysis.

4.1 Criteria for figurativeness

To establish the scope of our investigation, it is necessary to distinguish between figurative language and other related phenomena. To this end, we require certain heuristic criteria for identifying figurative language units. Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005) propose two heuristic criteria for distinguishing between figurative and non-figurative language units:

– Image requirement
– Additional naming[20]

Both criteria are discussed in detail by Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005: 14–20, especially 2022: 13–24). Here I will only briefly outline the essence of each one.

The essence of the criterion of *image requirement* can be summarized as follows: the content plane of a figurative expression not only consists of its actual, i.e., re-interpreted, meaning; it also contains traces of the literal meaning. The traces of literal meaning shine through the actual meaning and influence the use of figurative expression in speech. This is what distinguishes figurative expressions from non-figurative ones. Figurative expressions have a second conceptual layer associated with the sense conveyed by the literal form of the expression. In general, mental images associated with figurative expressions are individual phenomena, but they also have some intersubjective elements.

Let us take an example. The idiom *to get a foot in the door*—meaning 'to take some activities to achieve a goal by gaining entry into an organization, a group etc., in order that progress may be made later'—points at the same time to the image of 'putting a foot in the door'. It describes someone who puts a foot in the door to prevent it from closing, in order to continue contacting the members of this group. That is to say, the traces of the literal meaning inherited by the figurative meaning must be considered while describing the semantics of a figurative expression.

20 We acknowledge that alternative interpretations of figurative language are possible. Our interpretation is shaped by our objectives and the data at hand.

See some typical examples of the use of this idiom:

(2) **a.** Your aim should be to *get a foot in the door* and gain experience, so don't limit yourself. (The Guardian) **b.** Those connections often help their students *get a foot in the door*—and sometimes a job, too. (The New York Times) **c.** For some, the goal of taking a summer internship is to *get a foot in the door* and gain a full-time role. (The Guardian)

Even if speakers do not think about the links between the mental image and the actual meaning of an expression, they are aware of the specific features that make it different from literal expressions. For example, expressions with no clear motivating links, like *to kick the bucket*, are seen as figurative because they refer to the situation in an indirect way. Speakers know that this expression means something other than its literal meaning. This difference, and the possibility of interpreting the words literally, give speakers the knowledge they are using an idiom when they use such expressions. In addition, even opaque structures can be motivated in specific contexts or individually, as speakers may have their own reasons for the relevant motivations other than the original etymology or even possess knowledge of the etymology. This means that the idiomaticity of opacity does not contradict figurativeness in principle.

The second criterion, *additional naming*, means that the designated situation already has a different, simpler, and more direct name. There exists a more straightforward and cognitively accessible term that roughly corresponds to the same concept (for example, *obstacle (to progress)* vs. *stumbling block, to become angry* vs. *to hit the ceiling*, and *to deal successfully with a problem* vs. *to clear a hurdle*). Figurative expressions, in a sense, serve as supplementary (not primary) means of designating objects, attributes, actions, conditions, occurrences, and so forth. This seems to be a valid criterion that aligns with the traditional view of figurative language as a secondary and optional part of the language system. However, there are practical challenges in applying this criterion.

First, there are many words that have synonyms, some of which may seem more basic that the others. In such cases, having multiple ways of expressing the same idea does not necessarily mean that one expression is literal and another figurative.

Second, there are cases when an idiom does not have a simple and short synonym but is nevertheless undoubtedly figurative. See the German idiom *der lachende Dritte* "the laughing third one", meaning 'someone who benefits from the dispute of two people, parties or the like', or the English *axis of evil*, an 'expression used to describe the bellicose tendencies of Iran, North Korea, and Iraq in the early 21st century'. This means that in certain cases the image may be so vivid, strong, and impactful that it could have linguistic implications, making the expression appear figurative, even if there is no "normal" synonym. Since there are exceptions to any

rule, the presence of such idioms does not negate the fundamental importance of the proposed criterion. How to handle such cases depends more on the specific research goals than on the inherent nature of figurative language.

A similar problem in the application of the criterion of additional naming is that the simple synonym of a figurative expression that exists in most cases does not fully reflect its meaning, for example, in the idiom *to get a foot in the door* discussed above. There is no one-word synonym that even approximately covers the actual meaning of this idiom, and a short phrase (such as *to start moving towards the goal*) that can be considered a simple synonym does not fully reflect the essence of its semantics.

Any additional nomination, especially of a figurative nature, is somehow different from a direct one. This is the main point of the proposed method, and perhaps the main semantic consequence of the tenets of conventional figurative language theory. Since the image component—the traces of the literal meaning inherited by the figurative meaning—is part of the semantics of every figurative expression, it should also be part of the lexicographic definition (for more details see Section 5). The further the theory of semantics and lexicography develops, the more complex and detailed dictionary definitions become, and the further they move away from a simple reference to a near-synonym. It is crucial to acknowledge that lexicographic definitions, i.e., semantic explications, and synonyms are distinct concepts. The presence of intricate definitions does not invalidate the principle of additional naming.

Baranov and Dobrovol'skij (2020) apply the following principle to describe the semantics of Russian idioms. Each idiom is accompanied by a comprehensive explication of its meaning and by one or more synonyms. Definitions, i.e., semantic explications, and synonyms are located in different areas of the dictionary entry.

In general, the combination of the two criteria for identifying figurative language units suggested above—*image requirement* and *additional naming*—works well. If a conventional expression has a more or less strong image and simple synonyms (i.e., it functions as an additional naming), it is perceived as a figurative lexical unit. Of course, there are many borderline cases in this area. The question of whether a given lexical unit is figurative or not depends on how vivid the underlying image is in communication. The stronger the image, the more likely the lexical item will be perceived as figurative.

If only one of both criteria is met, the property of figurativeness is not ensured. Therefore, if only the *additional naming* criterion is active, we will end up with a set of synonyms. Conversely, if only the *image requirement* criterion is active, we will obtain groups of lexical units such as *neck of a bottle* or *leg of a chair*.

Lexical units of this type possess a special status: they are neither literal nor figurative. Considering them literal is strange, not least because the technique

of naming involves images, as the denotata are not named directly by a specifically designated term. In the process of naming, recourse is taken to other terms, thereby invoking different concepts. However, we do not consider such expressions figurative either, as in common everyday language entities such as "neck of a bottle" or "leg of a chair" do not possess alternative designations. Consequently, when these expressions are used, the speaker is not employing a specialized, figurative mode of communication.

Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005: 11–14) distinguish between three categories of use of lexical units: *literal, non-literal* (but *non-figurative*), and *figurative*.

In this trichotomy, the degree of difference between literal and non-literal reading is crucial. If the contrast is minimal, the non-literal use is not perceived as figurative. Moreover, if the categorical shift is not apparent synchronically, especially if there is no alternative way for the speaker to express a concept, we are dealing with non-literal, but not figurative, language. A related question is whether it is appropriate to label such linguistic expressions as metaphors (see Stern 2000: 176).

4.2 Types of lexical units regarding figurativeness

Summarizing the issues discussed here regarding figurative language, we must answer the question about which types of lexical units are included in the category of conventional figurative units. Since the main point of this article is to compare two linguistic areas—phraseology and figurative language—special attention is paid to the characteristics of phraseme classes in terms of their figurativeness.

Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2022: 71–72) present this data in tabular form. Below is a revised and slightly abbreviated version of this table.

Tab. 1: Types of lexical units regarding figurativeness

Term	Examples	Not figurative	Weakly figurative	Figurative
Figurative compound	*scapegoat* *fig leaf*			+
Figurative simplex	*to blacken (someone's reputation)* *snaky*		+	
Figurative idiom	*to lose one's head* *the calm before the storm* *full steam ahead*			+
Non-figurative idiom	*to and from* *by and large*	+		

Tab. 1: (continued)

Term	Examples	Not figurative	Weakly figurative	Figurative
Figurative proverb	*beggars can't be choosers* *when the cat is away, the mice will play* *no rose without a thorn*			+
Non-figurative proverb	*every beginning is hard* *opposites attract each other* *tastes differ*	+		
Non-metaphorical collocation	*to make a decision* *to meet resistance* *a flock of sheep* *a grain of sand*	+		
Metaphorical collocations	*a busy bee* *a worm of doubt* *outburst of indignation* *sworn enemy*		+	
Constructional phraseme	*the* ADJ_{superl} (*simplest* etc.) *thing in the world* *for the sake of* N *to take and* V *to go and* V	+		
Grammatical phraseme	*not only …, but also* *and so on of course*	+		
Phrasal verb	*to carry away* *to shop around*	+		
Situational cliché	*nice to meet you* *how do you do* *beg your pardon*	+		

This table provides to some extent an answer to the question about what kinds of lexical units are part of the realm of conventional figurative language.

The fact that we distinguish between three categories—non-figurative, weakly figurative, and figurative—is motivated by the necessity for a more nuanced and intuitively accessible description of linguistic phenomena. It is more appropriate to consider figurativeness, like many other aspects of language, as a matter of degree. Similar ideas are presented by Dirven (2002: 341):

> The figurative use of language in its various manifestations is then but a consequence of simultaneous mental operations of the sensory organs in synaesthesia, contiguity in metonymy, and

> similarity in metaphor. In all of these, the tension between one element and the other is built upon a different interaction of likeness and difference, of similarity and contrast. The greater the contrast between the two elements, the greater also the degree of figurativity, or in its higher realisation, the higher the degree of metaphoricity.

The central category within the field of conventional figurative language is represented by a group of idioms. Given that non-figurative expressions are relatively infrequent, it can be inferred that idioms serve as prototypical exemplars of the conventional figurative language class.

Regarding one-word metaphors, despite the crucial role that metaphorization plays in language and cognition, there are relatively few one-word units that are perceived to be figurative in a strong sense. Most simplex words among metaphors are either weakly figurative or not figurative at all. Such metaphors are often not recognized as such, let alone possess any indications of figurativeness. For instance, Langacker (2006) points out that almost all conceptualizations of language structure are grounded in metaphorical frameworks, which, incidentally, can be misleading.

> In one way or another, virtually all thinking about language—both on the part of linguists and by ordinary speakers—is metaphorical in nature. This is so even in the most formal and formalized approaches, since mathematics itself is metaphorically constituted. (Langacker 2006: 107–108)

For a simplex word to realize its metaphorical meaning, at least a minimal context is needed. Even then, this meaning is felt as non-literal, but not figurative. For figurativeness to come to the fore, a broader and more specific contextual setting is required, which accentuates the latent figurative components of one-word metaphors. Metaphorical compounds have a higher potential for figurativeness, but they are relatively rare and generally resemble idioms.

Thus, when discussing conventional figurative language, the focus is primarily on idioms. As for other types of phrasemes, their figurativeness is either weak or nonexistent, or they are so similar in terms of imagery to idioms (e.g., figurative proverbs and metaphorical collocations) that they can be considered within the same category. For the sake of simplicity, when referring to idioms in the following discussion, the term will encompass figurative idioms, figurative proverbs, and metaphorical collocations.

4.3 Figurativeness as a facet of idiomaticity

If we decide that idioms constitute prototypical instances of conventional figurative expressions, we can inquire into the factors that determine the specific type of idiomaticity that is perceived as being figurative. It has been previously noted that, among the various idiomaticity types discussed in Section 3, semantic

reinterpretation most clearly corresponds to the concept of figurativeness. The reason for this correspondence is that these types of idiomaticity inherently contain semantic biplanarity.

What are the mechanisms responsible for generating semantic biplanarity and, consequently, the effects of figurativeness?

The most prevalent mechanism underlying semantic reinterpretation is metaphorical projection. This can also encompass other *tropéic* transformations, such as metonymic shifts and appeals to cultural symbols, which are a subtype of metonymy, among others.[21] These transformations are thoroughly elucidated in Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005: 121–144 and 253–351). The ramifications of these mechanisms on idiom motivation are further examined in their subsequent publications (2018 and 2022: 103–145). Consequently, there is no need for further discussion on this matter.

Included among the methods of meaning transformation associated with increased complexity of denotative reference are intertextual phenomena (Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen 2005: 230–235) as well as various types of conceptual blending in the formation of the actual meaning of an idiom.[22] There are several studies dedicated to the blending of mental spaces in idioms, such as Langlotz (2004), Omazič and Delibegovic Džanič (2009), and Jianghua (2019).

Given that most linguistic techniques for generating imagery are predicated on metaphors, it is crucial to comprehend which specific categories of metaphorical mappings are pertinent to idioms. Among the four primary categories of metaphor identified by Lakoff (1987a 194–195), category three—*one-shot rich-image mappings*—is particularly significant.

(i) *complex schema mappings*, where the source ontology is mapped onto the target ontology;
(ii) *image-schema mappings* such as containers, paths, linear scales, centre-periphery, force, links, balance, contact/noncontact, cycles, front/back;
(iii) *one-shot rich-image mappings*, where there is no system of concepts being mapped;
(iv) *Aristotle's metaphor*, following the principle something is what it has salient properties of.

Lakoff (1987a: 195) emphasizes that these categories of metaphor are not mutually exclusive, and that mixed cases are common. This is also true for the realm

21 See the concept of *correlation metaphor*, as opposed to the notion of *resemblance metaphors* by Grady (1999).

22 In addition to semantic reinterpretation, which itself contributes to the enhanced complexity of denotative reference.

of conventional figurativeness. However, the predominant type in this area is *one-shot rich-image mappings*. This term highlights two key characteristics of this category. On the one hand, it is a detailed image based on a concrete frame with all its components and attributes, which is why it is "rich" rather than schematic. On the other hand, this image is a single entity that is based on convention rather than on regular ontological mappings from source to target.

If an idiom is based on an abstract conceptual metaphor, it often has a more concrete explanation that points to the underlying rich image. This means that in most cases, the figurative meaning of an idiom can be understood by considering its connection to the underlying image, which is partly reflected in the idiom's lexical and syntactic structure. The following example illustrates how various types of metaphorical projection can be present simultaneously.

(3) *to throw dust in someone's eyes* 'to deceive or mislead someone by distracting him/her willfully; to make an opponent temporarily unable to assess the situation'

On the one hand, idiom (3) is motivated by *complex schema mappings*. The abstract source concept of 'seeing being disturbed', as represented by the idiom *to throw dust in someone's eyes*, can be mapped onto the target concept of 'deception', which is conveyed by the literal meaning of the idiom. This is due to the similarity between the source and target concepts. We encounter the conceptual metaphor DECEPTION IS DISTURBANCE OF SEEING in various figurative expressions, as will be shown below.

On the other hand, the idiom is motivated by its rich imagery. The literal interpretation of the idiom's lexical structure evokes a concrete image: one can imagine someone throwing dust into another person's eyes. This source frame provides a basis for comparing a person's physical action with the act of deceiving another person.

Therefore, the figurative meaning of the idiom can be formulated as 'to deceive or mislead someone by intentionally distracting them; to make an opponent temporarily unable to assess the situation, which is seen as a deliberate attempt to affect their perception of reality by interfering with their vision'.

In such cases, employing the Lakoffian metalanguage of conceptual metaphors offers clear advantages. Figurative expressions, such as (3), can be grouped together with conceptually similar expressions that would otherwise be analyzed separately within the framework of traditional lexicology.

Together with idioms like *to pull the wool over someone's eyes* (meaning 'to deceive, mislead someone'), *to muddy the waters* (meaning 'to make things more confused by obscuring them'), the metaphor underlying idiom (3) forms a well-developed metaphoric model.

These idioms also belong to a broader metaphoric model, namely KNOWING IS SEEING. There are clusters of realizations of the same conceptual metaphor, not only among idioms but also among all kinds of figurative expressions, across boundaries between taxonomic classes. This allows us to compare idioms with all other metaphoric units, even "dead metaphors" that are fixed in words like *evident* and *obvious* (from the Latin *videre* meaning 'to see'), because they all stem from the conceptual metaphor KNOWING IS SEEING.

Consider also the following idioms (4), based on the conceptual metaphor KNOWING IS SEEING:

(4) *open someone's eyes* 'enlighten someone about certain realities; cause someone to realize or discover something'
shut your eyes to 'be wilfully ignorant of'
half an eye 'a slight degree of perception or attention'
with your eyes open 'in full awareness'
keep your eyes open 'be on the alert; watch carefully or vigilantly for something'

Within the group of figurative expressions based on the metaphoric model KNOWING IS SEEING are idioms where different conceptual elements are also involved in the process of reinterpretation:

(5) *to have eyes in the back of your head* 'observe everything that is happening even when this is apparently impossible'

This idiom is based on an absurd image, but fits into the metaphoric model, since the idea of 'knowing as seeing' is preserved.

It could be hypothesized that all idiomatic expressions with the constituent *eyes*, where the notion of visual perception is already established at the lexical level, adhere to the principles of a metaphoric model that correlates vision with various aspects of cognitive activity. However, this is not always the case. Consider idiom (6).

(6) *to have square eyes* 'habitually watch television to excess'

This idiom captures the idea of an atypical eye shape stemming from deformation: *square* is an attribute ascribed to the eyes of a television fan by analogy with the shape of a TV screen. In a sense, watching TV is also associated with cognitive engagement. However, the hyperbolic imagery inherent in this idiom does not emerge through metaphorical projection but rather through the integration of various mental spaces. The idiom is based on an absurd *one-shot image* and does not conform to any metaphoric model. Deriving its actual meaning from this image requires additional cognitive processing and involves sophisticated techniques for semantic representation,

i.e., increased complexity of denotative reference. In principle, this method of idiom formation does not lend itself readily to classification through analogical reasoning. This exemplifies a *one-shot rich-image mapping* strategy.

***

We can infer from the preceding discussion that figurativeness constitutes a distinctive facet of idiomaticity, characterized not only by the absence of systematic regularity, which is inherent in all types of idiomaticity, but also by a specific mechanism that induces semantic biplanarity. This mechanism is often unpredictable and cannot be reduced to general schemes. This phenomenon is particularly well exemplified by idioms. The methods employed to generate their imagery involve elements of randomness and uniqueness, which are motivated not only by *tropéic* transformations but also by cultural factors. A more detailed examination of this aspect will be provided in the following section.

5 Prospects for future research

Before discussing the prospects for future research, let us recapitulate the principal points from the preceding sections. First, all phrasemes are characterized by idiomaticity, but not all phrasemes are figurative language units. Idiomaticity encompasses various dimensions and can manifest itself in diverse forms. The types of idiomaticity that are associated with figurativeness include primarily semantic reinterpretation and, to a certain extent, increased complexity of denotative reference. These idiomaticity types explicitly refer to an indirect mode of expressing ideas, where the process of naming involves a detour.

This indirect method of thought expression involves the presence of an additional conceptual layer; that is, it is based on semantic biplanarity. One meaning is employed as a vehicle to convey another meaning. This phenomenon represents a typical manifestation of figurativeness.

The opacity combined with reinterpretation also contributes to the imagery of linguistic units in some way. When we encounter expressions whose etymological motivation is unclear, such as the idiom *to kick the bucket*, we perceive an underlying image, albeit one that may not be fully comprehensible to contemporary speakers. This idiom is a clear example of a reinterpreted expression, where the logical progression of the *tropéic* transformation may be indiscernible to speakers, yet they intuitively recognize the presence of an image, even if it is incomprehensible. It can be hypothesized that the opacity of the image enhances its vividness and figurative resonance. In contrast, completely opaque expressions that cannot be

understood because of semantic reinterpretation, such as *by and large*, are not perceived as figurative units.

If the question regarding which types of idiomaticity are linked to figurativeness has been clarified, an additional issue remains to be addressed: Why is it theoretically significant to distinguish between conventional figurative units and spontaneously generated figurative expressions when analyzing linguistic figurativeness? While it is evident that conventional expressions are lexicalized units, whereas ad hoc figurative constructions are not, the deeper theoretical implications of this distinction for the study of figurativeness warrant further examination.

The degree of figurativeness in spontaneous expressions is higher compared to conventional figurative units. What is creatively constructed in discourse is inherently more vivid than lexicalized units, which—at least passively—are known to most speakers. The figurativeness of conventional units (including idioms) "may be a matter of backstage cognition" (Steen 2011: 41) rather than conscious figurative construal. This applies universally to all metaphorical expressions in speech that Steen classifies as instances of *non-deliberate metaphor use*. "As a result, conceptual mappings across domains do not always have to be realized as such in cognitive processing by means of comparison" (Steen 2008: 215).

One might get the impression that occasional (ad hoc) figurative expressions are far more important and should be prioritized in research. Even if this were true, their study would not fall entirely within linguistic methods—at least not those of lexical semantics.

The production of ad hoc figurative utterances is always a unique creative act, tied to a specific situation and context. Analyzing unique figurative expressions in literary works is one of the key tasks of literary studies and narrative semantics. Meanwhile, within linguistics, the problem of creativity has been attracting increasing attention—including from the perspective of Construction Grammar (see Hoffmann 2022). This highly promising research direction clearly extends beyond the scope of phraseology and lexical semantics.

Accordingly, within the framework of the issues discussed here, conventional figurative units occupy a central position. Among this class of units, idioms hold a primary role. Idioms, in fact, may be regarded as the quintessence of figurativeness. The reason for this lies in the specific features of their formal structure. The fact that idioms possess internal syntax leads to more flexible and vivid semantics. Unlike single-word metaphors and metonymies, idioms prompt an engagement with motivational links and enable the interpretation of the image embedded in their semantics.

As demonstrated in Section 4, the image originally inherent in one-word conventional figurative units (primarily single-word metaphors and metonymies) is typically so eroded that reviving it requires specific contextual conditions.

The use of idioms in speech often constitutes *deliberate use* and is accompanied by direct or indirect indications of the speaker's conscious employment of a figurative linguistic unit. Thus, Steen's proposed contrast between *deliberate* and *non-deliberate metaphor* does not fully align with the distinction between occasional utterances and conventional units. Rather, it pertains to the figurative potential of various expressions, including conventional ones—above all, idioms.

The analysis presented in this article and the resulting conclusions point to several promising avenues for future research, thereby outlining a set of open questions that the theory of phraseology is expected to address.

The first set of challenges in phraseological research concerns the semantic peculiarities of idioms, which hold both theoretical and practical significance. On the practical side, these issues are directly relevant to lexicography. The core problem lies in developing a dictionary entry format capable of capturing and representing the unique properties of each idiom. This distinctiveness becomes evident when contrasting idioms with non-figurative, non-idiomatic linguistic means of denoting the same referent. Such non-idiomatic equivalents function as near-synonyms of idioms in the language and are frequently employed in traditional dictionary entries as substitutes for proper definitions.

As demonstrated earlier, idioms—like all conventional figurative units of language—are characterized by an image component of meaning and function as secondary designations. Consequently, their definitions must reflect these two features. Specifically, the semantic explication of an idiom should capture its figurative layer and demonstrate how the unit differs from other expressions denoting the same referent.

Here are a few simple examples. In any language, there exists a well-developed synonymous range of idioms denoting death: *to kick the bucket, to give up the ghost, to meet your maker, to take a permanent vacation*, etc. Intuitively, all of them differ in some way from the verb *to die*, though this distinction is rarely reflected in their dictionary definitions. The assumption that meaningful differences between DEATH idioms and the verb *to die* can be captured through stylistic labels proves to be overly superficial for at least two reasons. First, the stylistic features of linguistic expressions in most cases are grounded in semantic factors and are, in this sense, secondary. Second, a language contains numerous idioms from the same semantic field that belong to the same stylistic register. Nevertheless, they differ in terms of meaning, and these differences stem from the non-identity of the underlying imagery they evoke.

Thus, a more reliable way to capture meaningful distinctions is to explicitly account for the image component in the semantic interpretation of each idiom. Consider the following examples:

– *to give up the ghost* – 'to die, with death depicted as the involuntary departure of a person's immaterial essence from the body that once contained it'

– *to meet your maker* – 'to die, with death likened to a departure from the world of the living and described through a reference to religious and spiritual beliefs concerning the afterlife and a meeting with one's Creator'
– *to join the choir invisible* – 'to die, with death likened to a departure from the world of the living and described through a reference to religious and spiritual beliefs concerning the afterlife and a reunion with the deceased'
– *to take a permanent vacation* – 'to die, with death likened to a departure from the world of the living and framed as an extended vacation, where this shift in focus presents death as something harmless and even amusing'

Semantic and pragmatic distinctions among figurative expressions with near-equivalent denotative meanings frequently arise from variations in their underlying image components.

This approach to definition is adopted in Baranov and Dobrovol'skij (2020). Theoretically, one might argue that the image component does not belong to the proper meaning of a lexical unit and that its inclusion unnecessarily complicates the definition. However, this objection seems unconvincing, not least because different semantic theories interpret the boundaries of meaning differently. Modern linguistic theories are, in fact, characterized by a broad understanding of the scope of meaning—consider, for example, the foundational postulates of Construction Grammar.[23]

As for the concern about overloading definitions, this argument carries little weight in the context of modern electronic dictionaries. Moreover, if lexicographic description aims not only at practical utility but also at reflecting theoretical conceptions of meaning structure, then explicitness becomes a more critical factor than brevity.

The example of synonymous idioms denoting death further demonstrates that the semantics of each individual idiom is inherently unique. Consequently, semantic research on idiomatic expressions does not lend itself to broad generalizations.

Many restrictions on the use of figurative units stem from the specifics of their image components. Consider the Russian idiom *xlebom ne kormi kogo-l., daj (tol'ko) sdelat'* čto-*l.*, which roughly means 'someone likes doing something very much' and translates literally as "give no bread to someone, but allow them to do something".

This idiom cannot be used in contexts involving actual food. For example:

**Ego xlebom ne kormi, daj tol'ko vkusno poest'* (lit. "give him no bread, but allow him to eat delicious food") is semantically anomalous. If the conventional definition ('someone likes doing something very much') were exhaustive, this restriction

23 In this respect, see: Cappelle et al. (to appear) and Leclercq and Morin (2025).

would remain unexplained. Yet intuitively, such constraints emerge naturally from the idiom's deeper meaning.

The idiom's conceptual foundation lies in equating a person's passion for an activity with the primacy of basic sustenance. The idiom does not merely denote strong preference but implies a trade-off: the subject would forego essentials (symbolized by BREAD, a metonym for survival necessities) to pursue the activity. This symbolic association, evoked by the idiom's literal structure, remains cognitively active and must be treated as part of its semantic content. Thus, the restriction against food-related contexts derives directly from the enduring salience of this image component.

Revised definition:

> (7) Russian *xlebom ne kormi kogo-l., daj (tol'ko) sdelat' čto-l.* (lit. "give no bread to someone, but allow them to do something") 'someone likes doing something so much that they would willingly sacrifice vital necessities (symbolized by bread) if required as a condition'.[24]

The image component also proves significant in describing polysemy. While a widely held view suggests that polysemy is generally atypical for idioms (see, for example, Moon's (1998) influential work, which estimates polysemy in phraseological units at just 5%), empirical evidence—particularly corpus data—demonstrates that many idioms do in fact exhibit multiple meanings.

Crucially, the differentiation between the meanings of a polysemous idiom often relies on the underlying image. The same core image can be interpreted in distinct ways, or the actual meaning of the first reading may serve as the figurative basis for subsequent meanings. In such cases, examining the image component becomes essential for untangling the semantic relationships within idiom polysemy.

This aspect is particularly crucial for the "Integrating Bilingual Dictionaries and Parallel Corpora: General Principles" project (RSF 24-18-00155), which we are actively developing. The project is based on data from German and Russian, where the interplay between underlying images and polysemy poses unique challenges for cross-linguistic lexicography.

The primary objective of this project is to establish connections between the dictionary and corpus not only at the lemma level, but also at the level of individual meanings. In other words, when working with a polysemous lexical unit, users should be able to locate corpus examples corresponding to the specific meaning they are investigating at any given moment.

---

24 For further analysis, see Dobrovol'skij (2007: 797–800).

This principle is designed for implementation across various lexical items—not just single words, but phrasemes of different types, including idioms. Such an approach imposes two key requirements:

On the dictionary representation:

Clear identification and precise description of each individual meaning.

On the database annotation (serving as the interface between dictionary and corpus):

Analysis and tagging of textual indicators that signal specific meanings.

The project thus bridges lexicography and corpus linguistics by creating a system where semantic distinctions in the dictionary directly inform corpus querying capabilities, enabling meaning-specific searches even for figurative language.

Another significant challenge in implementing this project involves accounting for various modifications of phrasemes in corpus texts—including creative transformations—to enable effective search and retrieval. Here again, the figurative basis proves crucial, as many creative modifications constitute plays on words that exploit the original imagery.

This phenomenon represents a *deliberate use* of idioms, where speakers manipulate the established form to produce novel, often humorous or rhetorically striking variants. As Sannikov (2002: 33) notes, such deliberate deviations are experiments with form that presuppose the stability of meaning—a principle our project operationalizes through image-based tagging. The deviation from the canonical form remains interpretable precisely because of the shared figurative foundation.

This aligns with Construction Grammar approaches to idiom flexibility (see Bybee 2010), where schematic templates allow for constrained variation. For example, the German idiom *die Katze aus dem Sack lassen* ("to let the cat out of the bag") demonstrates remarkable textual flexibility while maintaining its core imagery. Corpus evidence reveals multiple modified forms, including:

- *Die Katze steckt im Sack* ("The cat is in the bag")
- *Die Katze bleibt im Sack* ("The cat remains in the bag")
- extended creative variants: *Die Katze steckt im Sack, aber der Sack ist noch nicht zugebunden* ("The cat is in the bag, but the bag isn't tied shut yet")

Empirical illustration: A sports article (kicker.de 2011) about Irish football coach Giovanni Trapattoni creatively employs this idiom's potential for elaboration:

„*Die Katze steckt im Sack, aber der Sack ist noch nicht zugebunden*", lässt der Coach der Iren noch keine Gratulationen zu. [...] *Sofern die Katze im Sack bleibt.* ("*The cat is in the bag, but the bag isn't tied shut yet*," the Irish team's coach cautioned against premature celebration. [...] *Provided the cat stays in the bag.*)

This usage demonstrates the creative potential of the underlying image. The "cat/bag" metaphor develops through incremental modifications mirroring the team's uncertain position. The practical consequence is that dictionary-corpus integration must account for:

– canonical form (*aus dem Sack lassen*)
– state-describing variants (*steckt/bleibt im Sack*)
– creative extensions (*aber der Sack ist noch nicht zugebunden*)

Modifications of idioms encountered in actual texts can sometimes be even more complex. For instance, examples of the creative evolution of Russian idioms related to the concept of MONEY demonstrate the predominance of the cognitive schema over the verbal means of its expression—that is, the underlying image proves more significant than the lexical and syntactic structure. See Generalova (2025).

In sum, the analysis of an idiom's underlying image—its conceptual specificity and expressive potential—constitutes a foundational principle for both theoretical understanding and practical lexicographic application. It is a principle crucial for developing meaning-sensitive corpus search tools.

Thus, we have examined in detail the range of issues related to the specific features of idiom meanings and the ways they are represented in dictionaries and digital linguistic resources. The central challenge here lies in determining the role of the image component in idiom semantics.

The second set of issues pertains to culture. It is well known that idioms—like any other conventional figurative unit—are based not only on universal bodily-based metaphorical projections but also on culturally determined concepts and associations, which are often unique to a particular language.[25]

This topic is too complex and extensive to be discussed within a brief section. The triad of *phraseology—figurative language—culture* deserves a separate, in-depth study and should be the subject of a separate publication. Here, we will note only one crucial aspect relevant to this set of questions. When discussing the influence of culture on language, it is essential to distinguish between *culturally specific* and *culturally relevant* effects. It makes sense to speak of culturally specific phenomena only when comparing languages—ideally, a pair of languages. For example, what appears culturally specific in English figurative expressions from a Chinese perspective may not necessarily be perceived as a culturally specific phenomenon from a German or Dutch standpoint.

As for culturally relevant phenomena, they do not necessarily exhibit any specific—let alone unique—features. The fact that an idiom is culturally relevant

25 Recent research conducted within the conceptual theory of metaphor paradigm has likewise highlighted the importance of incorporating cultural factors into analysis. See Kövecses (2020).

simply means that its imagery incorporates a certain cultural element. This could represent material culture (see example 8) or refer to culturally determined worldviews, aspects of social interaction, customs and traditions, or a cultural symbol (example 9).

It may also involve allusions to texts significant within a given culture—that is, an intertextuality phenomenon. Such textual allusions are not inherently specific either. There are texts (the Bible, the Quran, works of world literary classics) whose cultural significance transcends any single language.

(8) English *to be on the same wavelength as someone*
German *auf der gleichen Wellenlänge liegen* "to lie on the same wavelength"
Swedish *att vara på samma våglängd* "to be on the same wavelength"
French *être sur la même longueur d'onde* "to be on the same wavelength"
Finnish *olla samalla aaltopituudella (jkn. kanssa)* "to be on the same wavelength (with someone)"
Greek *εκπέμπουν στο ίδιο μήκος κύματος* "they are on the same wavelength"
Russian *на одной волне* "on the same wavelength".
All of them meaning 'to have similar ideas and opinions (to another person's), to understand each other very well'.

Here we are dealing with widespread idioms (a comprehensive analysis of this concept can be found in the studies by Piirainen (e.g., 2012, 2016). The very existence of idioms such as (8) was contingent upon the invention of radio and its subsequent establishment as an important facet of material culture.

The conventionalization of cultural symbols within idiomatic imagery is particularly evident in the idiom cluster (9).

(9) English: *to take the bread out of someone's mouth* 'to deprive someone of his/her living'
Russian: *заботиться о куске хлеба* "to care about (a) piece of bread" 'to care about how to earn the money you need in order to live'
German: *das ist ein hartes Brot* "that is a hard bread" 'it is a hard way to earn one's living'
French: *ça ne mange pas de pain* "this does not eat bread" 'this does not incur expenses'.
The symbolic meanings of BREAD realized in these idioms are LIVING, LIVELIHOOD; WORK (SOURCE FOR EARNING ONE'S LIVING); MONEY, COSTS.

The analysis of such examples raises an additional theoretical question: How can we demonstrate the presence of symbolic elements in figurative units? Specifically, what evidence supports the classification of BREAD as a cultural symbol?

The most reliable method of verification lies in establishing coherence with other cultural codes. For instance:

– Bread holds significant symbolic value in the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism and Christianity (though notably, it carries less spiritual weight in Islam).
– The "bread and salt" ritual serves as a ceremonial greeting across Slavic, Nordic, Baltic, Balkan, and other European cultures, as well as in Middle Eastern traditions.

***

In summary, let us outline several promising directions to advance phraseology theory in light of figurative phenomena that influence both the organization of phrasemes as linguistic structures and their discursive behavior.

Key theoretical propositions:

Figurativeness as an autonomous phenomenon

Imagery cannot be reduced to idiomaticity or any other linguistic category, representing instead an independent phenomenon requiring dedicated study. This necessitates:

- systematic identification of figurative phrasemes as a distinct research priority;
- recognition that the domain of figurative phraseology cross-cuts existing classifications (e.g., collocations, proverbs) without aligning with their boundaries.

Operational criteria development

The field urgently requires:

- verifiable criteria for detecting figurativeness in phrasemes;
- methodologies adaptable across phraseological classes (including exceptional cases like non-figurative idioms or figurative constructional phrasemes).

Interpretative implications

Figurative phrasemes demand specialized interpretation methods because:

- their meaning exhibits unique semantic properties;
- current approaches (demonstrated here through idioms) require extension to other phraseme types;
- interpretation and definition development themselves constitute a separate research trajectory needing refinement.

Cultural foundations of imagery

Lexicalized images frequently originate not from universal embodied cognition (see embodied perception/interpretation), but rather from:

- culture-specific conventionalized analogies;
- historically contingent associations;
- semiotically arbitrary (yet culturally systematic) correspondences.

6 Concluding remarks

The article examines some basic characteristics of phraseology and that part of language which falls into a somewhat nebulous, yet intuitively graspable, domain known as figurative language. The primary objective of this study is to outline the

prospects for the development of phraseology, particularly in relation to the study of those features that directly stem from the presence of an image component in the meaning of many phraseological units.

Recently, phraseology has increasingly turned its attention to fixed expressions that extend beyond the scope of traditional versions of the theory of phraseology. This is formulaic language in the broadest sense. Importantly, any expression belonging to the field of phraseology—even in the most expansive understanding—is idiomatic, i.e., it exhibits a certain degree of irregularity. At the same time, the very concept of idiomaticity remains far from being exhaustively defined.

One of the key tasks of this article is to bring relative order to this field by linking specific types of idiomaticity to distinct classes of phrasemes. It has been found that *single-choice* idiomaticity is primarily characteristic of collocations, while *context-dependent* idiomaticity and *situationally constrained* idiomaticity are typical of situational clichés. *Non-compositionality* instead appears to be nearly universal. A certain degree of non-compositionality is present in almost all phrasemes, in addition to the specific type of idiomaticity that defines a given class. This can be considered one of the key findings of this study.

Another objective of the article, directly related to its main goal, is to clarify the concept of *figurativeness*. Although connected to idiomaticity, figurativeness is not identical to it. Figurativeness arises because of idiomaticity—but only regarding certain types. Figurativeness is generated by *semantic reinterpretation*, which makes sense: the condition for an expression's figurativeness is its semantic *biplanarity*, where one meaning is employed as a vehicle to convey another meaning.

Interestingly, it is figurative phrasemes (primarily idioms, but also metaphorical collocations and figurative proverbs) that represent the prototypical conventional expressions of figurative language. In this sense, the study of conventional figurative units falls primarily within the domain of phraseology.

The defining feature of idioms, in contrast to near-synonymous literal expressions, is the presence of an *image component* in their semantics, which establishes motivational links. The image component significantly governs both the semantic interpretation and even the syntactic behavior of figurative phrasemes. The underlying conceptual image frequently enables *creative modifications*. If one of the central objectives of the theory of phraseology is to determine the distinctiveness of idioms relative to other lexical units, then the study of motivation must be a primary focus.

The modern cognitive approach to language is grounded in the principle of systematically reconstructing mental structures based on linguistic data. This reconstruction rests on the postulate that linguistic forms are cognitively motivated: to the degree that a form is motivated, it reflects the underlying mental structure that shapes it.

Phraseology demonstrates various types of motivation that cannot be reduced solely to *metaphorical projections*. Motivational links can be established through references to *cultural symbols* and *intertextual phenomena*, as well as through other types of *conceptual blending*. These areas have received far less attention than metaphors have. At the same time, they represent both (1) a distinct technique of semantic development that requires systematic description and (2) an important aspect of the broader field of "language and culture".

One of the main ideas that can be applied to phraseology is the reference to *cultural conventions* that underlie the formation of many conventional figurative units, including idioms, metaphorical collocations and figurative proverbs.

Investigating culturally-grounded linguistic phenomena, particularly in phraseology, matters less as an isolated pursuit than demonstrating how universal patterns of figurative language interact with cross-cultural exchange and unique preservation strategies. This approach provides essential balance to *embodiment paradigms*, countering the distorting effect of overemphasizing metaphorical universals in linguistic modeling.

A crucial theoretical distinction must be drawn between *culture-specific* and *culture-relevant* phenomena. Culture-specific phenomena emerge only in cross-linguistic comparison (requiring contrastive methods), whereas culture-relevant phenomena—rooted in motivational patterns rather than unique naming practices or idiosyncratic imagery— are vital for etymological and cognitive linguistic analysis.

References

Aničkov, Igor Evgen'evič. 1997 [1937]. Idiomatika v rjadu lingvističeskix nauk [Idiomatics among linguistic theories]. In Vladimir Petrovič Nedjalkov (ed.), *Trudy po jazykoznaniju [Works on linguistics]*, 101–145. St. Petersburg: Nauka.

Apresjan, Jurij Derenikovič. 2005. O Moskovskoj semantičeskoj škole [On the Moscow Semantic School]. *Voprosy Jazykoznanija* 1. 3–30.

Apresjan, Jurij Derenikovič (ed.). 2010. *Teoretičeskie problemy russkogo sintaksisa: Vzaimodejstvie grammatiki i slovarja [Theoretical problems of Russian syntax: Interaction of grammar and lexicon].* Moscow: Jazyki slavjanskix kul'tur.

Augst, Gerhard. 2017. Von der idiomatischen Wendung zum Common Sense – Überlegungen zur Phraseodidaktik. *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* 1. 10–19.

Baranov, Anatolij Nikolaevič & Dmitrij Olegovič Dobrovol'skij. 2008. *Aspekty teorii frazeologii [Aspects of the theory of phraseology].* Moscow: Znak.

Baranov, Anatolij Nikolaevič & Dmitrij Olegovič Dobrovol'skij. 2013. *Osnovy frazeologii (kratkij kurs) [Fundamentals of phraseology (short course)].* Moscow: Flinta & Nauka.

Baranov, Anatolij Nikolaevič & Dmitrij Olegovič Dobrovol'skij (eds.). 2020. *Akademičeskij slovar' russkoj frazeologii [Academy dictionary of Russian phraseology]*, 3rd edn. Moscow: Leksrus.

Baranov, Anatolij Nikolaevič & Dmitrij Olegovič Dobrovol'skij. 2024. Diskursivnye praktiki v dinamike sistemy russkoj frazeologii: Na primere frazeologizmov-konstrukcij [Discursive practices in the dynamics of Russian phraseology: A case of constructional phrasemes]. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Language and Literature* 21(3). 655–667.

Burger, Harald. 2015. *Phraseologie. Eine Einführung am Beispiel des Deutschen*. 5th edn. [1st edn. 1998]. Berlin: Erich Schmidt.

Burger, Harald, Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij, Peter Kühn & Neal R. Norrick (eds.). 2007. *Phraseologie: Ein internationales Handbuch zeitgenössischer Forschung = Phraseology: An International Handbook of Contemporary Research*. Vol. 1. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Burger, Harald, Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij, Peter Kühn & Neal R. Norrick. 2007a. Phraseology: Subject area, terminology and research topics. In Harald Burger, Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij, Peter Kühn & Neal R. Norrick (eds.), *Phraseologie: Ein internationales Handbuch zeitgenössischer Forschung = Phraseology: An International Handbook of Contemporary Research*, vol. 1, 10–19. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Burger, Harald, Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij, Peter Kühn & Neal R. Norrick. 2007b. Vorwort / Foreword. In Harald Burger, Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij, Peter Kühn & Neal R. Norrick (eds.), *Phraseologie: Ein internationales Handbuch zeitgenössischer Forschung = Phraseology: An International Handbook of Contemporary Research*, vol. 1, v–xviii. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Bybee, Joan. 2010. *Language, Usage, and Cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cappelle, Bert, Benoît Leclercq, Diogo Oliveira Ramires Pinheiro, Pâmela Fagundes Travassos, Karen Sampaio Braga Alonso, Roberto de Freitas Junior, Samantha Laporte, Marcia dos Santos Machado Vieira, Diego Leite de Oliveira, Rodrigo Garcia Rosa & Marcos Luiz Wiedemer. (to appear). Construction. In X. Wen & C. Sinha (eds.), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388641876_Construction [accessed June 09 2025].

Čermák, František. 2007. Idioms and morphology. In Harald Burger, Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij, Peter Kuhn & Neal R. Norrick (eds.), *Phraseologie: Ein internationales Handbuch zeitgenössischer Forschung = Phraseology: An International Handbook of Contemporary Research*, vol. 1, 20–26. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Dancygier, Barbara & Eve Sweetser. 2014. *Figurative Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

De Knop, Sabine & Fabio Mollica. 2024. Ditransitive Kollokationen: eine konstruktionsgrammatische Untersuchung aus der DaF-Perspektive. *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* 61(1). 14–25.

Dobrovol'skij, Dmitrij. 2007. Cognitive approaches to idiom analysis. In Harald Burger, Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij, Peter Kühn & Neal R. Norrick (eds.), *Phraseologie: Ein internationales Handbuch zeitgenössischer Forschung = Phraseology: An International Handbook of Contemporary Research*, vol. 2, 789–818. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Dobrovol'skij, Dmitrij. 2011. Phraseologie und Konstruktionsgrammatik. In Alexander Lasch & Alexander Ziem (eds.), *Konstruktionsgrammatik III. Aktuelle Fragen und Lösungsansätze*, 111–130. Tübingen: Stauffenburg.

Dobrovol'skij, Dmitrij. 2016. *Kognitive Aspekte der Idiom-Semantik. Studien zum Thesaurus deutscher Idiome*, 2. aktualisierte und erweiterte Auflage. [1st edn. 1995]. Tübingen: Stauffenburg.

Dobrovol'skij, Dmitrij. 2023. Zum Wesen der Idiomatizität in der Phraseologie. *Verbum* 45(1). 49–75.

Dobrovol'skij, Dmitrij O. & Tat'jana V. Filipenko. 2007. Russian phraseology. In Harald Burger, Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij, Peter Kühn & Neal R. Norrick (eds.), *Phraseologie: Ein internationales Handbuch zeitgenössischer Forschung = Phraseology: An International Handbook of Contemporary Research*, vol. 2, 714–727. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Dobrovol'skij, Dmitrij & Carmen Mellado Blanco. 2021. *Von Jahr zu Jahr*. Das Pattern [*von* X_{sg} *zu* X_{sg}] und seine Entsprechungen im Russischen und Spanischen: eine Korpusstudie. *Aussiger Beiträge* 15. 113–138.

Dobrovol'skij, Dmitrij & Elisabeth Piirainen. 2005. *Figurative Language: Cross-Cultural and Cross-Linguistic Perspectives*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Dobrovol'skij, Dmitrij & Elisabeth Piirainen. 2018. Conventional Figurative Language Theory and idiom motivation. *Yearbook of Phraseology* 9. 5–30.

Dobrovol'skij, Dmitrij & Elisabeth Piirainen. 2022. *Figurative Language: Cross-Cultural and Cross-Linguistic Perspectives*, 2nd edn. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

Dobrovol'skij, Dmitrij & Kathrin Steyer. 2018. Не то чтобы X – Nicht dass X. Konvergenz und Divergenz eines produktiven Musters. In Laurent Gautier, Pierre-Yves Modicom & Hélène Vinckel-Roisin (eds.), *Diskursive Verfestigungen: Schnittstellen zwischen Morphosyntax, Phraseologie und Pragmatik im Deutschen und im Sprachvergleich*, 93–107. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Fauconnier, Gilles & Mark Turner. 2002. *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books.

Filatkina, Natalia. 2018. *Historische formelhafte Sprache: Theoretische Grundlagen und methodische Herausforderungen*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.

Fleischer, Wolfgang. 1997. *Phraseologie der deutschen Gegenwartssprache*, 2nd edn. [1st edn. 1982]. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Fleißner, Fabian & Elena Smirnova. 2025. Funktionsverbgefüge unter Druck: Ein Vorschlag zur Typologisierung verbonominaler Konstruktionen des Deutschen. *Zeitschrift für germanistische Linguistik* 53(1). 126–165.

Generalova, Elena V. 2025. "Deneg net, no vy deržites'": novye ustoyčivye sočetanija, svjazannye s ponjatiem "den'gi", v russkom jazyke konca XX — pervoj četverti XXI vv. ["There is no money, but you hold on": new stable combinations associated with the concept of "money" in the Russian language of the late 20th – first quarter of the 21st centuries]. *Russkaja rech'* 1. 21–36.

Goldberg, Adele E. 2006. *Constructions at Work: The Nature of Generalization in Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grady, Joseph. 2008. Superschemas and the grammar of metaphorical mappings. In Andrea Tyler, Yiyoung Kim & Mari Takada (eds.), *Language in the Context of Use: Discourse and Cognitive Approaches to Language*, 339–360. Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton.

Häcki Buhofer, Annelies, Marcel Dräger, Stefanie Meier & Tobias Roth. 2014. *Feste Wortverbindungen des Deutschen. Kollokationenwörterbuch für den Alltag*. Tübingen: Francke.

Hausmann, Franz Josef. 1985. Kollokationen im deutschen Wörterbuch. Ein Beitrag zur Theorie des lexikographischen Beispiels. In Henning Bergenholtz & Joachim Mugdan (eds.), *Lexikographie und Grammatik. Akten des Essener Kolloquiums zur Grammatik im Wörterbuch*, 118–129. Tübingen.

Hausmann, Franz Josef. 2004. Was sind eigentlich Kollokationen? In Kathrin Steyer (ed.), *Wortverbindungen – mehr oder weniger fest*, 309–334. Berlin, New York: De Gruyter.

Hoffmann, Thomas. 2022. Constructionist approaches to creativity. *Yearbook of the German Cognitive Linguistics Association* 10(1). 259–284.

Jackendoff, Ray. 1995. *Patterns in the Mind: Language and Human Nature*. New York: Basic Books.

Jianghua, Han. 2019. The meaning construction of idiom based on blending model. *Macrolinguistics* 7(1). 105–115.

Konecny, Christine. 2010. *Kollokationen. Versuch einer semantisch-begrifflichen Annäherung und Klassifizierung anhand italienischer Beispiele*. München: m_press.

Kövecses, Zoltán. 2020. *Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lakoff, George. 1987a. Position paper on metaphor. In *Proceedings of the 1987 Workshop on Theoretical Issues in Natural Language Processing*, 194–197. Stroudsburg, PA: Association for Computational Linguistics.

Lakoff, George. 1987b. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, George. 1993. The contemporary theory of metaphor. In Andrew Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought*, 2nd edn., 202–251. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Langlotz, Andreas. 2004. Conceptual blending as a principle of idiom structure and idiom variation. In *Proceedings of EUROPHRAS 2000*, 263–272. Tübingen: Stauffenburg.
Leclercq, Benoît & Cameron Morin. 2025. *The Meaning of Constructions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Longman DEI – Longman dictionary of English idioms. 1979. Ed. Thomas Hill Long & Della Summers. Harlow & London: Longman Group Limited.
Mel'čuk, Igor. 1998. Collocations and lexical functions. In Anthony P. Cowie (ed.), *Phraseology. Theory, analysis, and applications*, 23–53. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Mel'čuk, Igor. 2015. Clichés, an understudied subclass of phrasemes. *Yearbook of Phraseology* 6. 55–85.
Mel'čuk, Igor. 2023. *General Phraseology: Theory and Practice*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
Mellado Blanco, Carmen (ed.). 2022. *Productive Patterns in Phraseology and Construction Grammar: A Multilingual Approach*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
Mellado Blanco, Carmen, Pedro Ivorra Ordines & Maricel Esteban Fonollosa (guest editors). 2024. New Approaches to Construction Grammar(s). *Quaderns de Filologia: Estudis Lingüístics* 29, Universitat de Valéncia.
Mellado Blanco, Carmen, Fabio Mollica & Elmar Schafroth (eds.). 2022. Phrasem-Konstruktionen in der heutigen Forschung: ein Überblick. In Carmen Mellado Blanco, Fabio Mollica & Elmar Schafroth (eds.), *Konstruktionen zwischen Lexikon und Grammatik. Monolingual, kontrastiv, multilingual*, 1–18. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.
Mellado Blanco, Carmen. 2019. Phrasem-Konstruktionen kontrastiv Deutsch-Spanisch: ein korpusbasiertes Beschreibungsmodell anhand ironischer Vergleiche. *Yearbook of Phraseology* 10. 65–88.
Mieder, Wolfgang. 2004. *Proverbs: a handbook*. Westport, Connecticut & London: Greenwood Press.
Moon, Rosamund. 1998. *Fixed Expressions and Idioms in English: A Corpus-Based Approach*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Nunberg, Geoffrey, Ivan A. Sag & Thomas Wasow. 1994. Idioms. *Language* 70(3). 491–538.
Omazić, Marija & Nihada Delibegović Džanić. 2009. Constraints to mechanisms of idiom modification. In Csaba Földes (ed.), *Phraseologie disziplinär und interdisziplinär*, 211–222. Tübingen: Gunter Narr.
Pavlova, Anna. 2024. „It is what it is": Phraseme Constructions Repository. In Federica Casadei & Sabine Elisabeth Koesters Gensini (eds.), *fraseologismi schematici. Questioni descrittive e teoriche*, 197–214. Roma: Aracne.
Pavlova, Anna & Katrin Schlund. 2024. Core and boundaries of the notion of phraseme construction. In *Quaderns de Filologia: Estudis Lingüístics*. Vol. 29: Nuevos enfoques en la(s) Gramática(s) de Construcciones, 23–46.
Piirainen, Elisabeth. 2012. *Widespread Idioms in Europe and Beyond. Toward a Lexicon of Common Figurative Units*. New York: Peter Lang.
Piirainen, Elisabeth. 2016. *Lexicon of Common Figurative Units: Widespread Idioms in Europe and Beyond*. New York: Peter Lang.
Sinclair, John. 1991. *Corpus, concordance, collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Steen, Gerard. 2008. The paradox of metaphor: Why we need a three-dimensional model of metaphor. *Metaphor and Symbol* 23(4). 213–241.
Steen, Gerard. 2011. The contemporary theory of metaphor – now new and improved? *Review of Cognitive Linguistics* 9(1). 26–64.
Steen, Gerard. 2024. A minimal method for multidimensional, multivalent metaphor analysis. In *Book of Abstracts*. *Imago Mundi. An Overview of Metaphor: Creativity, Phraseology & Discourse*. Università degli Studi di Cagliari. 9–11 May 2024.

Steyer, Kathrin. 2000. Usuelle Wortverbindungen des Deutschen. Linguistisches Konzept und lexikografische Möglichkeiten. *Deutsche Sprache* 2. 101–125.
Steyer, Kathrin. 2013. *Usuelle Wortverbindungen: Zentrale Muster des Sprachgebrauchs aus korpusanalytischer Sicht*. Tübingen: Narr.
Stojić, Aneta & Christine Konecny. 2024. Proposal of a catalogue of criteria for the identification and classification of metaphorical collocations. A qualitative study based on German, Croatian, English, and Italian examples. *Yearbook of Phraseology* 15. 67–100.
Vinogradov, Viktor Vladimirovič. 1977 [1947]. Ob osnovnyx tipax frazeologičeskix edinic [On the main types of phraseological units]. In Viktor V. Vinogradov, *Izbrannye trudy. Leksikologija i leksikografija* [Selected works. Lexicology and lexicography], 140–161. Moscow: Nauka.
Wray, Alison. 1999. Formulaic language in learners and native speakers. *Language Teaching* 32. 213–231.
Wray, Alison. 2002. *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.