IDIOMS IN COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS:
IS IT ALL ABOUT CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORY?

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Abstract: *The present paper is a study of idioms in cognitive linguistics in an attempt to account for the prevailing trends and prospective directions of research in the field. First, I look at idiomatic expressions from the standpoint of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, with a special emphasis on socio-cognitive and pragmatic aspects of idiom use and comprehension. For this purpose, idioms used in an American legal drama series –* Suits, *are analysed. I then proceed with the discussion of the motivational aspect of idioms. In the final analysis, the perspectives for future research of idioms within cognitive linguistic framework are outlined.*
Keywords: *cognitive linguistics, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, idiom comprehension, idiom motivation, idioms*

1. Introduction

At present, cognitive linguistics is a bustling area of research serving as a nexus between a variety of approaches, such as Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987), Frame Semantics (Fillmore 1982), on the one hand, and Conceptual Metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), Conceptual Blending Theory (Fauconnier and Turner 2003), and Usage-Based Linguistics (Bybee 2010), on the other hand, to name a few. In this paper, it is argued that cognitive linguistics will benefit from a multifaceted approach to the study of idioms. This should, in my view, include the meaning-making, the interpretation, the motivation and the comprehension of idioms. As regards the meaning-making and the interpretation of idioms, Conceptual Metaphor Theory pioneered by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) shall serve as a principal methodological framework. The motivational aspect of idioms shall be considered in the light of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2006; Gibbs 2017; Kovalyuk 2019; Strack 2019), Conventional Figurative Language Theory (Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen 2005) and Dynamical Systems Theory (Gibbs and Colston 2012), among others. The discussion concludes by looking at Priming Theory (Hoey 2005), Dual-Coding Theory (Paivio 2014), and Applied Linguistics Theory (Cieślicka 2011; Mcpherron and Randolph 2014; Wood 2015) in an attempt to outline the perspectives for future research of idioms within cognitive linguistic framework.

2. Idioms and Conceptual Metaphor Theory: exploring further avenues

As Boers (2014: 186) puts it, "it could be argued that much of the evidence for conceptual metaphors actually came from the study of idioms". First presented

in 1980 by Lakoff and Johnson, Conceptual Metaphor Theory has since been regarded as one of the most overarching in Cognitive Linguistics. The idea proposed by Lakoff and Johnson appeared to challenge the traditional view of metaphor in that linguistic metaphor was in an actual fact secondary to metaphoric thought. That being said, "if metaphor exists at a conceptual level, this explains why semantically related words often have similar metaphoric uses", as Sullivan (2017: 385) rightly observes. This assumption, apparently, holds for idioms as well. Consider the following boxing-derived English idioms: *beat (someone) to the punch, down for the count, hit below the belt, throw in the towel*, etc. Alluding to some run-of-the-mill scenarios of a boxing match where one boxer beats another to the punch, where one boxer is down for the count (of nine) as a result of a knock-out punch delivered by another boxer, where one boxer hits below the belt and the other gets hit below the belt (which is illegal according to the rules of boxing), and where one boxer throws in the towel because he or she is unable to continue the match, accordingly, they semantically pertain to arguments, conflicts, and competitive situations in real life. From a broader perspective, the uses of the above idioms fall under the umbrella of ARGUMENT IS WAR and SOCIAL EXCHANGES ARE BOXING MATCHES conceptual metaphors. Such line of thinking is very accurately summarized by Gibbs:

> Consider Chris Matthews's political commentary and his different boxing metaphors for the Obama vs. Romney debate. Did Matthews's choice of many conventional expressions necessarily indicate that he was thinking of the Presidential debate in a specific metaphorical manner? CMT scholars would argue that Matthews's speech, especially his systematic use of boxing metaphors, provides empirical evidence on the power of conceptual metaphors, such as POLITICAL DEBATES ARE BOXING MATCHES, in structuring people's thinking about abstract topics. But skeptics would likely respond that Matthews merely spit out a series of clichéd phrases which have littered the English language for some time. Politics just happens to be talked about in certain conventional ways, some of which originated in metaphorical thinking. Still, the fact that a contemporary speaker, such as Matthews, used particular words or phrases does not imply that he was cognitively drawing cross-domain comparisons between political debates and boxing matches. (Gibbs 2017: 8)

It can be inferred from Gibb's account that even though a political debate can be described in terms of boxing metaphors little evidence exists to attest to the fact that this very conceptual metaphor inheres in the mind of an average native English speaker. Gibbs, however, furnishes the reader with an important clue as to why this might be happening further in the monograph:

> The attempt to locate the cognitive and embodied, including neural, bases for metaphorical language, in many people's view, ignores the larger social and communicative goals that speakers and writers have when using metaphor, as well as the historical customs and ideological beliefs that may motivate some metaphoric discourses. Mathews's commentary, for instance, did not simply sprout from his private conceptual system, but emerged within a complex network of cultural understandings about Presidential campaigns and political debates. Efforts to ground linguistic metaphors in cognitive and, perhaps neural, structures miss the vital social nature of metaphorical speech acts. (ibid.)

What Gibbs further suggests is that linking the origin of conceptual metaphors to embodied experience does not suffice when it comes to the actual use

of metaphors, where cultural, social and communicative factors, among others, must be taken into consideration. In what follows, idiom-instantiated metaphors will be analysed from cognitive linguistic, pragmatic and sociological standpoints. For this purpose, let us examine the following extract taken from the script of Suits, an American legal drama television series (season 08, episode 10):

> IO: Two days ago, when you said this shady son of a bitch destroyed that painting intentionally.
> C: Is that how you talk about your former clients?
> SW: Alex, this thing is a loser for you. Get your client under control.
> AW: Don't talk to me about this case being a loser. You're lucky we're even - in here.
> AW: Bullshit. We go to court and I will clean your clock.
> HS: Samantha and Alex are about to go to war.
> RZ: I told her to settle.
> HS: Well, she didn't.
> RZ: And if Samantha did that, I'll deal with her.
> HS: How? Because you've let her do whatever she wants ever since she got here.
> DP: I don't suppose it would do any good to ask you to let Alex go up there first.
> SW: I'm not backing down because I think I'm better than Alex Williams, and I'm not gonna say that I'm not.
> RZ: If we keep doing nothing It's worse than letting them settle it themselves.
> HS: One case, head-to-head, winner gets name partner.
> RZ: As you both know, Harvey and I each made a promise to put your names on the door next.
> HS: And obviously it's not possible for us both to keep that promise.
> SW: This better not be you telling us we're going up at the same time, because as far as I'm concerned, that's as bullshit as telling me you're giving it to him.
> AW: And for once, you and I agree.
> HS: Good, because we have another idea.
> SW: Are those what I think they are?
> HS: Two conflict of interest waivers giving you the green light to take off the gloves and get in the ring.
> RZ: You wanted a fight. You got it. The winner gets their name up next. Any questions?
> AW: I got one. Is it gonna be "and Williams," or just "Zane Specter Litt Williams"?
> SW: I can answer that. It's not gonna be either one.
> AW: Then I guess we'll just have to find out.
> SW: I guess we will.
> LL: Well, before you start taking any swings, I wanna make one thing clear: This is a fair fight. No using inside information. No looking at the other person's shit. Are we clear?
> AW: Yes.
> SW: Clear.
> RZ: And if no one else is gonna say it, I will. Let's get ready to rumble [dramatic music].
> (Abbreviation explanations: IO – Insurance Officer; C – Client; SM – Samantha Wheeler, Partner; AW – Alex Williams, Partner; HS – Harvey Specter, Senior Partner; RZ – Robert Zane, Managing Partner; DP – Donna Poulsen, COO; LL – Loius Litt, Senior Partner).

To summarise briefly, the plot unfolds around a series of events leading up to a situation where Samantha Wheeler and Alex Williams, partners in a fictional top tier New York law firm, will be competing for a name partner position. To be nominated name partner, they are expected to handle the same case to the best of

their ability and on equal terms. Competition, from the perspective of sociology, along with exchange, conflict, cooperation, and accommodation, is one of the major types of social interaction. Social interaction, simply put, is the way in which individuals act toward and mutually influence one another (Bardis 1979: 148). Competition, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (online), is "the action of endeavouring to gain what another endeavours to gain at the same time; the striving of two or more for the same object; rivalry". Anecdotal evidence suggests that workplace competition most often involves recognition, bonuses, and promotion. When it comes to describing competition, people tend to employ certain phrases, clichés, and metaphors. As evidenced from the script extract above, both partners themselves and the senior partners refer to the competition in terms of boxing, such as in the *"We go to court and I will clean your clock"* sentence, for example. The complete list of metaphors and metaphoric idioms employed in the above extract is provided in the following table:

Metaphor/idiom in context	General meaning	Intended meaning
I will *clean your clock*	I will *deliver a decisive punch in your face*.	I will *defeat you in court*.
Samantha and Alex *are about to go to war*.	Samantha and Alex *are about to start fighting*.	Samantha and Alex *are about to take action against each other in court*.
One case, *head-to-head*	One case, *in direct opposition*	One case, *in direct opposition in court*
Two conflict of interest waivers *giving you the green light to take off the gloves and get in the ring*.	Two conflict of interest waivers *giving you the permission to start fighting hard in the ring*.	Two conflict of interest waivers *giving you the permission to start competing all out in the courtroom*.
You wanted *a fight*.	You wanted *a (boxing) fight*.	You wanted *a head-to-head case in court*.
Well, before you start *taking any swings*	Well, before you start *delivering any blows*	Well, before you start *presenting any arguments*
This is *a fair fight*.	This is *a fair boxing match*.	This is *a fair competition*.
Let's get ready *to rumble*.	Let's get ready *to fight*.	Let's get ready *to the competition in court*.

Table 1: Metaphors and idioms in "Suits" script extract, Season 8, episode 10

The general meaning column in the above table functions as a proxy between metaphors and idioms in context and their intended meanings. Thus, the partners in the law firm are conceived in terms of boxers or fighters. A head-to-

head competition between the partners is referred to as a boxing match. The courtroom where the competition is set to take place is perceived as a boxing ring. The arguments to be presented by the competing partners in court are represented as swings taken by boxers. The all-out competition in court guaranteed by conflict-of-interest waivers is described in the context of a gloves-off boxing match. The rest of the firm, i.e., the managing partner, senior partners, name partners, partners, and the staff are implicitly construed as spectators in a boxing match. This brings us to the point where we can assert that the metaphorical mappings of the given idioms do provide proof for the existence of a WORKPLACE COMPETITION IS A BOXING MATCH conceptual metaphor. It might not inhere in the mind of a specific native speaker of English and it may not be manifest explicitly in a given language context, yet the establishment of a well-structured set of mappings instantiated in a language context gives plenty of evidence in its support.

One other important point of discussion is that of common ground, which, according to Stalnaker (2002), is "presumed background information shared by participants in a conversation", in metaphor use and comprehension. As indicated in the script extract above, Samantha Wheeler, the aspiring name partner, is the first one to expressly describe the relationship between herself and Alex Williams, another aspiring name partner, in boxing terms: *"Bullshit. We go to court and I will clean your clock"*. Here her actions resemble those of a boxer bragging before the fight about defeating another boxer. This idea is later picked up by senior partner Harvey Specter in his conversation with managing partner Robert Zane, as in *"Samantha and Alex are about to go to war"* sentence. The common ground is established in the follow-up meeting between all firm partners, where the issue of competing for a name partner position is repeatedly characterized using boxing-derived figurative language, such as *"Two conflict of interest waivers giving you the green light to take off the gloves and get in the ring"*, *"Well, before you start taking any swings"*, *"This is a fair fight"*, etc. Michael Buffer's trademarked catchphrase *"Let's get ready to rumble!"* pronounced by the firm's senior partner Robert Zane comes as the icing on the cake. It usually signals the start of a boxing match, and in this context, it means that the competition between the aspiring name partners is officially on.

Otherwise said, the deliberate use of boxing-derived idioms and metaphors in the legal context is a socio-cognitive representation of common ground of some kind. The show, which originated in the USA, relies, first and foremost, on the US-based audience. Presumably, it is common knowledge that boxing fights are fierce, "life-or-death" affairs, where winners take it all and losers tend to be hurt badly, both physically and emotionally, and seldom get a second opportunity to restore the status quo. Similarly, any aspiring name partner is well aware that chances for getting a sought-after name partner position are few and far between. Therefore, he or she will ruthlessly invest all the resources and skills to win it, just like any boxer in the ring. The script relies heavily on the premise that WORKPLACE COMPETITION IS A BOXING MATCH, and the audience, both national and international, are expected to be cognizant of this principle.

3. Idioms: searching for motivation

When it comes to definitions, idioms have been conventionally described as "multi-word phrases having two principal characteristics: non-compositionality and syntactic frozenness" (Cruse 2006: 82). In other words, as far as non-

compositionality is regarded, the meaning of idioms cannot be easily predicted from the meanings of its constituent elements. To exemplify the point, consider the following idiom: *to spill the beans*. Provided one comes across this expression for the first time, chances are that one will not be able to arrive at its meaning. This is the reason why idioms are often characterized as semantically opaque or non-transparent.

In cognitive linguistics, however, in an attempt to prove the above point wrong, some theorists (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Langlotz 2006; Gibbs 2017) have convincingly argued that non-transparency and opacity are not regular characteristics across the entire idiomatic stock of a language. Rather, idioms are often treated as "symbolic units" (Evans 2009: 87) and as "products of our conceptual system" (Lundmark 2006: 73). For instance, the idiom *cover all the/your bases* 'to deal with every part of a situation or activity' becomes fairly analyzable provided one is aware that *base* stands metaphorically for a situation or an activity. Language users' competence, i.e., knowledge of the role *a base* plays in sports, namely in baseball, helps them understand the idiom as 'being attentive to details'. If decomposed lexically, individual words do play a role in the overall meaning of idioms. Furthermore, inclusion of the given idiom in English language dictionaries and its specific meaning are pre-conditioned by a metaphorical concept PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY IS COMPETITION, which is instantiated by a number of related idiomatic expressions, e.g., *to get to first base*. Similarly, the figurative idioms *get off on the right foot*, *get your feet under the table, have a foot in the door* and a dozen more alike expressions are motivated by our common knowledge that we typically use our feet to indicate progress. Simply put, the metonymical use of *foot* for "progress in an activity" derives, as mentioned, from our bodily experience.

Motivation of an idiom thus becomes what can be described as interplay between the literal meaning and the idiomatic (institutionalized) meaning (Boers 2014: 188, Burger 2007: 91). In the classical version of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, motivation of an idiom is a matter of the underlying (conventional) image and its link to a conceptual metaphor entrenched in our conceptual system (Lakoff 1987: 448). It follows that to belong in the realm of the Conceptual Metaphor an idiom must be "*imageable*" (in Lakoff's terms), i.e., hold a conventional image. To illustrate, the meaning of the idiom *have a foot in the door* is motivated by the conventional image of a person selling things from door-to-door and blocking the door with a foot so it cannot be closed on him or her. The image above and the metaphor PROGRESS IS A FORWARD MOVEMENT IN SPACE that, according to Lakoff (1987), is intrinsic to our conceptual system, contribute to the activation of the idiom's meaning. Thus, *having a foot in the door* is attempting to attract someone's attention by violating someone else's private space.

Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005) address the issue of idiomatic imagery in line with the Humboldtian and, consequently, Neo-Humboldtian concept of "inner form" to take a cognitive semiotic stance as to the differentiation between a literal form and a figurative form of a linguistic unit. A figurative unit, thus, so Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005: 17) claim, is a secondary sign given it "uses the content of another sign as a form filled with new content". Furthermore, what the above researchers highlight is that from a cognitive perspective "motivation of an idiom influences its cognitive processing" (idem: 80). Motivation in their case may be *index-based*, whereby a motivating link cannot be traced neither by similarity nor by convention, but rather through a symptom; *iconic motivation*, which can be

interpreted through conceptual metaphor tools and through what the researchers refer to as the "rich image"; *symbol-based motivation* involves one single constituent that ensures coherence with akin cultural codes in a language. Special cases of motivation also include *stereotypes, kinegrams, punning clichés,* and *textual dependence* as well *blended types of motivation.*

For Langlotz, idiom motivation is a matter of how concrete relevant concept is. Hence, people are thought to recognize idioms as transparent by understanding the idiomatic meaning in relation to the literal meaning through the process of re-interpretation (Langlotz 2006: 51). Conceptual metaphors do hereby underlie the interpretation of idiom. Mappings between corresponding domains, however, can only be established in terms of encyclopaedic knowledge associated with the literal meaning.

Burger (2007), too, emphasizes the importance of what is literal and what is figurative when looking at idiom motivation. Based on what is posited as "semantic autonomy", the researcher has arrived at the following semantically grounded classes of idioms: *idioms without semantically autonomous components*, *idioms with semantically autonomous components*, and *idioms with a single semantically autonomous component* (Burger 2007: 96). It follows that, as Burger himself acknowledges, the absence of semantically autonomous components leads to opacity or non-compositionality, like in *swallow the bitter pill*; several semantically autonomous components may render an idiom transparent, as in *carry coals to Newcastle*; one semantically autonomous component adds to the partial transparency of an idiom, as in *foot the bill*.

Naciscione's research (2010) revolves around the question of the phraseological image feasibility in the visual representation of meaning. Again, so Naciscione maintains, it is metaphor that brings up an image in mind. As a result, "understanding the functional load of both visual image and language helps to bridge the cognitive gap between the textual and the visual, as they cannot be viewed separately" (idem: 29). One important concept, among other things, that was introduced by Naciscione in her research paper, is that of a "figurative network". The figurative network can thus be loosely defined as an instantiation of metaphor combined with stylistic devices to facilitate phraseological image creativity in multimodal discourse.

Gibbs and Colston (2012) rest on an innovative "dynamical systems theory", in an attempt to advance a "theoretical umbrella" to account for the plethora of approaches to figurative language research. Albeit focused on figurative language in the broadest possible sense, idioms are thereby described as "the only type of language that expresses meanings requiring additional pragmatic or extra-linguistic information" (idem: 50-51). Moreover, as Gibbs and Colston argue, idioms appear as analysable language units, whereby their individual parts make independent contributions to the meaning of the whole phrase, e.g., in *spill the beans*, the verb *spill* has the conventional meaning of 'to suddenly reveal', as encoded by English language dictionaries.

As an interim summary, we would like to agree with Burger (2007) as to who should recognize motivation: language users or researchers? It follows that in order to figure out motivation both experiment-based studies as well as corpus-based inquiries should be performed. It is at this point that we turn to its experimental and applied facets of idiom motivation.

From the point of view of language use, native speakers are seldom concerned with the literal background of idioms. They simply acquire them as pre-

fabricated chunks and produce accordingly. Again, the etymology of idioms, like *far cry from*, *cost an arm and a leg*, and *sit on the fence* is of a minor concern here. Psycholinguistics, however, does not see eye to eye on this.

Thus, L1 speakers and L2 (proficient) users of the language do not have to first retrieve the literal meaning and then activate the idiomatic meaning of a sequence (Conklin and Schmitt 2008; Siyanova-Chanturia 2015). Although formulaic language and idioms in particular may be gradable in terms of idiomaticity (Howarth 1998), context clues and analogy have been found the only expedient tools in native and near-native English language users when dealing with completely unknown idiomatic expressions ad hoc (Wray et al. 2016). Furthermore, when it comes to the semantic transparency of idioms, native (ESL/EFL teachers) and non-native speakers (EFL teachers) tend to assign different transparency ratings to the same idioms, as argued by Boers and Webb (2015). The results of this study stand in stark contrast to those presented in Skoufaki (2008), where L2 learners performed similarly to L1 learners on idiom transparency and analyzability tasks. Contextual clues, again, were found a prevalent source of assessing idioms' transparency. Moreover, context can help L2 learners suppress irrelevant meanings in idioms when they are embedded in figuratively biased sentences (Cieślicka 2011). These views, however, are not shared. Li (2012), for example, argues for the pedagogical implications of the conceptual metaphors and image schemas in learning idioms as opposed to the traditional context-based channel of learning idioms. As regards idiom comprehension and mental imagery production, adults tend to outperform school-age children in terms of processing the opaque idioms, such as *have a soft spot in one's heart*, contrary to the transparent ones, such as *go by the book*, yet children were found to produce a more consistent image of an idiom provided they understood its meaning correctly (Nippold et al. 2005).

On the other hand, what was briefly outlined as the euphonic instruments in phraseological units by Kunin (1978: 409-411), has now been upgraded to the concept of the phonological motivation of idioms and multi-word expressions. Hence, Boers and Lindstromberg (2009) claim that assonance (repetition of vowels), as in *white lie*, alliteration (first letter repetition), as in *cut the cackle, too good to be true*, and rhyming, as in *even Stephen, thrills and spills,* account for as much as around 20% of all 5,667 multi-words expressions listed in the *Macmillan English Dictionary*. Gries (2011), employing a usage-based approach, has found that alliteration in English idioms and multi-word units is a matter of a much more frequent occurrence than baseline expected frequencies. From the standpoint of the cognitive language pedagogy (Cieślicka 2010), phonological priming is relevant for the production of idioms by L2 speakers, as in *Jack kicked the bucket/budget* to validate the idea that literal analysis of an idiomatic string cannot be ignored in language production.

4. Cognitive accounts of idioms: future perspectives

There are several important strands that have emerged in this regard.

First and foremost, Priming Theory (Hoey 2005) has profoundly impinged upon the cognitive accounts of idioms. As proposed by Hoey (2005: 11), priming is a faculty of the mind to contain "a mental concordance of every word it has

encountered, a concordance that has been richly glossed for social, physical, discoursal, generic and interpersonal context". On that account, according to a study done by Carrol and Conklin (2015), L1 English speakers tend to equally quickly read idioms in literal and figurative contexts, whereas L2 Chinese speakers will rather have an apparent difficulty to integrate figurative idioms into the general context. Priming Theory, in fact, is an important starting point to account for language construction and acquisition processes.

Dual-Coding Theory provides another crucial backdrop against cognitive studies of idiomatic expressions. Given the role mental imagery plays in the processing and production of idioms in L1 and L2 speakers, the dual coding theory of memory (Paivio 2014) postulates that items backed by dual representation are remembered with less effort, as opposed to those with a single representation in memory. In an effort to substantiate these underpinnings, Pritchett et al. (2016) have analysed the activation of two-word English and Russian idioms in bilingual individuals. Their findings are in agreement with the dual coding theory of memory and thus indicate that idioms with a dual mental representation are retrieved much faster than idioms with a single mental representation.

The applied linguistics dimension to teaching and remembering idioms is another area bedevilled by a growing number of approaches and models, yet lacking unified consistency. As shown in the previous subsection of the present paper, researchers are yet to find a common cognitive pedagogy venue to teaching idioms in accordance with the theoretical background, types of learners, L1 and L2 variables, the role of context, etc. Research has demonstrated that learners, especially adult learners, experience substantial difficulties in remembering and confident usage of English idioms (Wood 2015). Moreover, a lion's share of studies on idioms' acquisition have adopted a narrow, experimental, and outside-of-lesson approach, which tends to overlook actual classroom performance of students (Mcpherron and Randolph 2014).

Taking into account these caveats, it is worth projecting the coming research pathways in the area of idiomatic and, if viewed from a broader vantage point, multi-word expressions.

To begin with, professional communication and discourses is an area somewhat marginalized in the contemporary study of idioms and phraseology at large; however, studies by Fiedler (2010), Jaki (2014), etc. provide sufficient grounds to explore the cognitive underpinnings of courtroom interactions, doctor/nurse-patient communication, electronic media discourses, and financial reporting documents, to name a few.

Furthermore, as has been argued in the previous subsection, most studies on idiom acquisition focus on skills such as reading, speaking, and writing, leaving little space to the analysis of listening to language users.

Finally, conversation analysis and pragmatics allied with sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics, and linguistics proper, among other disciplines, can help phraseology provide evidence and answers on how we use the acquired idioms and multi-word expressions, to uncover the extent to which we succeed in using them in our social interactions across all levels of communication, and, last but not least, to contribute to the study of meaning in language by looking at how people say or do not say what they really mean evidenced from idioms in particular and formulaic language and phraseology in general.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, I would like to draw attention to the following points of discussion. In cognitive linguistics, idioms are still part of the far-reaching theories of Conceptual Metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987) and figurative language (Gibbs and Colston 2012; Dancygier and Sweetser 2014; Colston 2015). Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 52), for example, refer to them as "speech formulas", "fixed-form expressions", "phrasal lexical items", and it is only in his later monograph that Lakoff (1987: 448-453) himself makes reference to idioms proper, not providing a well-structured account of them. Nevertheless, when scrutinized against the Conceptual Metaphor theory, idioms, so Lakoff argues, can represent embodied experience, that is one can perceive a certain domain of experience through another domain.

Secondly, idiom's motivation in cognitive linguistics has always been linked to its imageability, which can activate its meaning. Motivation of idioms has been frequently described as a relationship between its literal and figurative meanings, which sparked substantial interest as to the re-interpretation, analysability and transparency of idioms. It follows that motivation should be recognized by both language users and researchers. When language users come across an unknown idiom, so cognitive linguists maintain, they can turn to their conceptual knowledge in an attempt to interpret its actual meaning. On top of that, idiom transparency and analysability, paired with context clues, tend to be equally significant tools for language users in analysing and interpreting meanings of familiar and unfamiliar idiomatic expressions.

Thirdly and finally, phraseology and cognitive linguists have now obtained powerful allies in Priming Theory, Dual Coding Theory and Applied Linguistics, to push ahead with their quest for idioms' meaning and interpretation, idioms' acquisition and idioms usage by language speakers.

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