A Conceptual Framework to Explain the Interface of Syntax-Semantics in Idiomatic Expressions

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Abstract

This research proposes a conceptual framework for accounts of the syntax-semantics interface within idiomatic expressions, whose often non-compositional nature poses a substantial challenge to classical linguistic theory that is predicated on a meaning composition postulate based on word meaning and syntactic structure. But a significant challenge remains for linguistic theory: no single framework provides an explanation for how syntactic composition interacts with non-literal meaning in idiomatic phrasing, particularly since idioms vary in their compositionality. This gap in theory makes idioms hard to analyze and interpret across languages, in which syntactic stiffness tends to coexist with semantic obscurity or metaphorical richness. In probing the intricate relationship between syntax and meaning, the present research seeks to present a broad theoretical framework that brings together insights from both generative grammar, construction grammar, and cognitive linguistics. The framework is proposed as being able to cover the various gradations of compositionality among the different idioms, from fully opaque through to partially transparent ones. The research sheds light on the processing and interpretation of the idiomatic expressions across languages, pointing to the necessity of both syntactic structure and metaphorical meaning for idiom understanding.

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إطار مفاهيمي لشرح التفاعل بين النحو والدلالة في التعبيرات الاصطلاحية

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الـمـستـخـلـص

تقترح هذه الدراسة إطارًا مفهوميًا لفهم العلاقة بين النحو والدلالة ضمن التعبيرات الاصطلاحية، والتي تتميز غالبًا بطبيعتها غير التركيبية مما يشكل تحديًا كبيرًا للنظرية اللغوية الكلاسيكية التي تقوم على افتراض تكوين المعنى بناءً على معنى الكلمات والتركيب النحوي. لكن تظل هناك مشكلة رئيسية في النظرية اللغوية: لا يوجد إطار موحد يفسر بشكل كافٍ كيفية تفاعل البُنى النحوية مع المعاني غير الحرفية في التعبيرات الاصطلاحية، خاصة في ظل تباين درجات التركيبية فيها. هذا الفراغ النظري يعقّد تحليل وتفسير هذه التعبيرات عبر اللغات، حيث تتعايش الصرامة النحوية غالبًا مع الغموض الدلالي أو العمق المجازي. من خلال استكشاف العلاقة المعقدة بين النحو والمعنى، تسعى هذه الدراسة لتقديم إطار نظري شامل يجمع بين رؤى من النحو التوليدي، ونحو البناء، وعلم اللغة المعرفي. يُقترح أن يكون هذا الإطار قادرًا على تغطية التدرجات المختلفة للتراكبية بين التعبيرات الاصطلاحية المختلفة، من التعبيرات الغامضة تمامًا إلى تلك الشفافة جزئيًا. يسلط المقال الضوء على معالجة وتفسير التعبيرات الاصطلاحية عبر اللغات، مشيرًا إلى ضرورة وجود كل من الهيكل النحوي والمعنى المجازي لفهم التعبيرات الاصطلاحية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: علاقة النحو والدلالة، التعبيرات الاصطلاحية، التركيبية، غير التراكبية، النحو التوليد.

1. INTRODUCTION

Idioms, or idiomatic expressions, are ubiquitous across most languages and are necessary to fluent use of language. Idioms tend to evade classical compositionality assumptions—the notion that a given word string's meaning can be calculated from its atomic parts (Nunberg, Sag, & Wasow, 1994). For instance, the English idiom "kick the bucket," which means "to die," resists interpretation simply by understanding the meaning of each word separately, namely, words "kick" and "bucket." This is a substantial challenge for models of syntax and meaning, since they historically rely on a direct correspondence between word order, syntactic structure, and meaning. The classical view of meaning, as set out by Frege (1892), highlighted meaning as

compositional. Idiom expressions, however, make this a contentious issue by proposing that meaning originates from intricate interactions that go beyond individual word meaning.

There has been a variety of theoretical approaches to studying idiomatic expressions. One of them is the generative grammar perspective, which focuses on syntactic rules as central to meaning (Chomsky, 1981). In this view, idioms were either dealt with as exceptions to compositional rules or syntactically governed but semantically impermeable units (2002: Jackendoff). In contrast, construction grammar (Goldberg, 1995) assumes a more flexible perspective, with idioms as being stored constructions of both syntactic and semantic content. In all these approaches, however, there has not yet been a consensus regarding how best to describe how syntax and semantics relate to each other within idiomatic expressions.

A pertinent concern within the research area of syntax-semantics is how there is not a singular conceptual framework that can explain the extensive variety of idiomatic expressions across languages. While some idioms are fairly transparent within their meanings, there are some that are highly opaque, where syntax as well as semantics fail to adequately explain their meaning. For instance, whereas some languages make use of their idiomatic expressions mostly based on metaphorical meanings, other languages utilize their idiomatic expressions based on syntactic structures not interpretable by default. What it demonstrates is the necessity for a more sophisticated theoretical approach that unifies syntactic as well as semantic considerations together.

This research addresses this gap by introducing a conceptual framework for the explanation of the interface between syntax and semantics of idiomatic expressions. The aim is to gain greater insight into the role of syntactic structures on the interpretation of the meaning of idiomatic expressions, as well as how the semantic content that comes into contact with these structures is accounted for. In emphasizing the relationship between syntax and semantics, this work hopes to make a contribution to the wider theoretical issue regarding the structure, meaning, and processing of idiomatic expressions.

The issue targeted by this research stems from the desire to connect syntax with semantics in the processing of idiomatic expressions. Although research has targeted these fields separately, a need exists for a unifying framework explaining their interface systematically. Drawing on understanding from generative grammar, construction grammar, and cognitive linguistics, this research introduces a new conceptual framework that seeks to more fully explain the interface of syntax and semantics for idiomatic expressions.

The key aims of this research are as follows:

1. To construct a unifying conceptual framework that brings together syntactic views on idiomatic expressions with their semantic views.

2. To investigate how syntactic structures influence the interpretation of idiom meanings.
3. To examine the contribution of features of meaning, including metaphor and culture, to the processing of idiomatic expressions.
4. To establish a theoretical framework that can be applied across a broad variety of idiomatic expressions across languages.

Based on the stated goals, the research questions for the present study are:

1. How do syntactic structures influence the interpretation of idiomatic expressions?
2. How do semantic features contribute to the creation and interpretation of idioms?
3. How do we construct a unified framework for explaining the interface between syntax and semantics for idiomatic expressions?

The strength of this research is that it has the potential to offer a clearer and more integrated theoretical conception of idiomatic expressions. Through the creation of a conceptual scheme that unites both syntactic and semantic aspects, this research aims to make a contribution to the wider field of linguistics and provide novel insights into how language users process and interpret idiomatic constructions. The results of this research might further influence areas of research that remain heavily reliant on accurate processing of idiomatic expressions, including language acquisition, translation research, and computational linguistics.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Nature of Idiomatic Expressions

Idiomatic expressions are ubiquitous across natural language, indeed often a vivid and culturally evocative way of communicating. Idioms are normally assumed to be fixed locutions whose meaning is not calculable directly from the meaning of their constituent parts (Nunberg, Sag, & Wasow, 1994). Idioms appear across all languages, from proverbial expressions such as " Bite the bullet" to the more elaborate constructions of the type " Spill the beans." Idioms pose special challenges both for syntactic and for semantic theory because they commonly resist the assumptions of compositionality, one of the most fundamental assumptions of classical linguistic theory. In short, compositionality predicts that the meaning of a phrase is equal to the sum of the meaning of its parts (Frege, 1892), but idioms pose counter-examples where the meaning of the whole is not directly observable from the words that make up the expression.

2.2 Features of Idiomatic Phrases

Non-compositionality is one of the most prominent features of idiomatization, a term applied to define the impossibility of inferring the meaning of the overall sentence from the meaning of its parts (Gehrke, 2018). For example, in the idiom " Jump the gun," the meaning of "jump" and that of "gun" do not contribute to the intended idiomatic

meaning of starting prematurely. This aspect poses some special difficulty for meaning theories and requires a special approach within syntactic as well as semantical theories.

Aside from non-compositionality, idioms are also typically marked by fixedness. This is the fact that word order within the idiomatic expression is usually fixed and resists variation. For instance, the idiom " jump the gun" cannot readily be changed to " gun jump the" without it becoming un-idiomatic. The fixedness of idioms is even applied to their syntactic structure, being typically constrained or restricted in contrast to other semantically loose syntactic structures of the language (Searle, 1979). This fixedness is the antithesis of non-idiomatic expressions, whose word order or word replacement might not alter meaning at all.

Idioms may even carry a certain amount of opacity with respect to meaning. In certain idioms, meaning is fully opaque and is not able to be inferred unless there is a grasp of the idiom's cultural or historical context. For instance, the idiom "to barking up the wrong tree" is culturally embedded, and meaning, "to make a bad judgment," is not able to be interpreted absent a certain amount of knowledge concerning culture (Cacciari & Tabossi, 1993).

2.3 Classifications of Idiomatic Expressions

Idioms can be categorized on the basis of their syntactic and semantic characteristics, which make them even more problematic for theoretical analysis. A popular categorization is that depending on the syntactic categories to which the idiomatic expressions belong:
1. Verb-idioms: These are idiom units where a verb is the focal word. A good example is to "give up," which means to cease trying. The syntactic pattern here is usually a verb-predicate pattern (e.g., "give up," "break down").

2. Noun-phrase idioms: Noun-phrase idioms revolve around noun expressions and typically appear as phrases such as "a red herring," referring to a distraction, or "a piece of cake," referring to something simple to do. These kinds of expressions typically exhibit their own special syntactic organization, as different from their non-idiomatic equivalents (Nunberg et al., 1994).

3. Prepositional idioms: Prepositional idioms are focused on prepositions or prepositional phrases. Some prepositional idioms are, for example, "in the dark," being uninformed about something, or "on the spot," being present at the place or at the point when one is needed. The syntactic characteristics of prepositional idioms usually entail fixed prepositions which do not allow substitutions without changing the meaning of the idiom (Cacciari & Tabossi, 1993).

Semantically, idioms are either metaphorical or non-metaphorical. Metaphorical ones, e.g., " Hit the nail on the head" (To describe something accurately), draw on metaphorical mappings of the expression onto its figurative meaning. Non-metaphorical ones, for example "By the book" (To do something strictly according to rules or

procedures), might establish a stronger relationship between their meaning and their forms, yet remain under the restrictions of fixed syntactic forms (Schäfer, 2008).

2.4 The Syntax-Semantics Interface

The syntax-semantics interface is a key area of research within the wide context of linguistic theory since it deals with how the syntactic structure is connected with the interpretation of meaning. A diversity of theoretical frameworks has been put forth to describe how the two areas interact in the interpretation of idiom expressions. These theoretical frameworks are meant to show how the structural aspects of syntax determine the non-literal meaning of idiom expressions as well as how meaning construction is achieved through the interactions within them.

2.4.1 Theoretical Frameworks Addressing the Syntax-Semantics Interface

Montague (1970) developed this idea further using formal logical tools such as predicate logic and lambda calculus when applying them to natural languages, thereby creating Formal Semantics. His system insisted on strict compositionality, suggesting that an expression's meaning could be worked out from its syntax in an explicit manner. Idiomatic expressions, because their meanings were fixed and largely opaque, broke this mold, and later theorists were forced to develop exception-handling mechanisms (Krennmayr, 2011).

Subsequently, the analysis of idiomatic expressions in terms of the syntax-semantics interface has its genesis in Frege's (1892) principle of compositionality that stipulated that meanings in complex expressions are determined from meanings in parts and their syntax pattern. This early conception informed the foundations for formal models of meaning. Searle (1979) furthered idiomatic understanding by focusing on idioms' fixed nature in a broader speech act theory, pointing out that idioms tend not to undergo syntactic modification without semantic loss. A significant change came about with Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who developed Conceptual Metaphor Theory within the framework for Cognitive Linguistics. Lakoff and Johnson proposed that numerous idioms are based upon metaphorical mappings from bodily experience and advocated that meaning is conceptually and culturally shaped, rather than derived from syntax alone. Based on previous generative models, Chomsky (1981) developed Government and Binding Theory with a focus on universal principles of syntax. In this generative framework, idioms were considered largely as lexical exceptions—fixed phrases retained in the mental lexicon and immune to syntactic movement (Dąbrowska, 2018). Subsequently, Pollard and Sag (1994) proposed Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG), unifying syntactic and semantic constraints in one coherent framework. Their framework underpinned the contention that fixed idiomatic patterns could be explained by lexical and phrasal constraints.

At about the same time, Nunberg, Sag, and Wasow (1994) developed a balanced lexicalist view of idioms, dividing them into decomposable idioms, which do enter into compositional meaning, and non-decomposable idioms, which behave as holistic units.

This view reconciled formal and cognitive explanations in that it accepted internal syntactic structure but retained idiomatic meaning. Goldberg (1995) proposed a revolutionary perspective using Construction Grammar, which considers idioms as conventional pairings between meaning and form. Unlike idioms being regarded as anomalies, such a framework positions them along a scale of constructions, where there exists a gradation of compositional transparency.

More recently, Kaal (2011) and Krennmayr (2011) have pushed cognitive linguistic accounts further in investigating how mental representation, cultural schemas, and metaphorical thought influence idiomatic structure and interpretation cross linguistically. Their work highlights idiomatic meaning's dynamic and context-dependent nature.

2.4.2 Compositionality and Non-Compositionality in Idioms

Compositionality, traditionally, presumes that meaning is composed by a combination of the meanings of the parts and how they are syntactically combined (Frege, 1892). Non-compositionality is characteristic, nonetheless, of idiomatic expressions. Idioms defiy the compositionality principle because the meaning of these expressions is not predictable from their parts. For instance, in " Pull someone's leg," one might expect from the words themselves a meaning concerning something related to physically pulling someone's leg, but the idiomatic meaning refers to humor or playful deceit, making it non-compositional.

There remains some argument over the extent to which idiomatic expressions are non-compositional. It has been suggested by some researchers that a large number of idioms are partially compositional (Cacciari & Tabossi, 1993), with the meaning of the overall expression being affected by its constituents, but not literally so. This is a theme which is usually couched within the framework of semantic shifts, as words within an idiom do play a part in the meaning but do so indirectly or metaphorically (Nunberg et al., 1994).

3. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Proposed Conceptual Framework

The suggested conceptual framework seeks to allow for a general understanding of the relationship between syntax and semantics within idiomatic expressions. Drawing on the contributions of both Generative Grammar, Construction Grammar, and Cognitive Linguistics, this framework tries to capture how, as fixed but non-compositional structures, idioms engage both syntactic and semantic aspects simultaneously. In pooling these theoretical traditions, the framework attempts to address how syntactic structures inform how the meaning of idiosyncratic expressions is interpreted, at the same time emphasizing the contribution of meaning, by way of metaphors and conceptual mappings (Goldberg, 1995; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

This approach regards idiomatic expressions as not fitting the conventional compositionality constraint but rather as having characteristic syntactic and semantic features that show both linguistic universals and language-dependent idiosyncrasies (Nunberg, Sag, & Wasow, 1994). It further highlights the requirement to approach meaning dynamically, context-dependently, aligning with Construction Grammar's interest in linguistic structures and Cognitive Linguistics' metaphorical mapping theory (Krennmayr, 2011).

3.2 Syntactic Component of the Framework

Syntactically, idiomatic expressions exhibit fixed order and restrictions on movement, which are aimed at maintaining the idiomatic meaning intact. They are in addition immune from transformations like wh-movement or passivation, which operate freely in non-idiomatic sentences (Chomsky, 1981). Non-compositionality is conveyed in idioms by their syntax, in which meaning cannot be derived from normal meanings of words, nor from standard syntax.

Idioms typically exhibit fixed word orders which cannot be altered without altering meaning, making them insensitive to syntactic operations such as movement or scrambling (Baker, 1988). For example, rearranging words in the idiomatic expression "Catch someone red-handed" will alter meaning, making clear the fixed nature of idiomatic utterances.

Therefore, the syntactic fixedness of the idiom is important for maintaining their non-literal meaning, as well as for preventing their total incorporation within normal syntactic operations (Nunberg et al., 1994).

3.3 Semantic Component of the Framework

The semantic aspect of the paradigm deals with the non-literal meanings that define idiomatic expressions. Idioms typically rely on metaphoric or figurative meaning, under which the literal meaning of the words is not a representative example of the meaning of the expression (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). For instance, " Hit the sack" employs the imagery of hitting a sack (usually conceived as a pillow or bed) to describe going to bed. The literal connotation of "hit" and "sack" implies forceful behavior, but their idiomatic meaning is purely about the act of resting or sleeping, which is not literal but figurative usage of the terms.

The contribution of conceptual metaphor theory is especially important to the comprehension of meaning in idiomatology. Conceptual metaphors can facilitate the mapping of one area of experience onto a different area, giving a cognitive foundation for the interpretation of figurative expressions. In expressions such as "bark up the wrong tree," the act of barking is metaphorically associated with error, illustrating how abstract cognitive structures underlie the figurative meaning of idioms (Krennmayr, 2011).

3.4 The Interface Between Syntax and Semantics

The syntax-semantics interface for idioms is defined in terms of a relation between fixed syntactic forms and figurative non-literal interpretation of meaning. Another framework introduced to such an interface is Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG), which holds that syntax and meaning are highly interdependent, where syntactic structure is responsible for regulating the shape an expression takes and semantic content is acquired through lexical entries and restrictions (Pollard & Sag, 1994). In the case of idioms, fixed nature of idiomatic forms is expected to be a consequence of both syntactic structure and semantic convention, whose syntactic component affects meaning interpretation.

The syntactic organization is the frame in which meaning for idiom is understood, but meaning interpretation tends to extend beyond words' meaning at their most superficial, literal level. Concepts like Conceptual Blend Theory outline how mental spaces get combined for producing novel, non-literal meaning in phrases that are idiomatic (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002). An example from an idiomatic phrase "break the ice" is that the literal act of breaking gets conceptually combined with socializing for the figurative implication of easing awkwardness.

3.5 Theoretical Models of Idiomatic Expression Analysis

3.5.1 Compositionality and Non-Compositionality

The theory of compositionality states that meaning from a given phrase arises through the combination of meaning of its parts, as well as how it is being syntactically put together (Frege, 1892). Idioms, however, go against this trend because meaning is not necessarily derived from meaning of the words themselves but from how they are put together. For instance, the idiom " Throw in the towel" giving up or surrendering—does not follow directly from the literal meanings of the words "throw" and "towel".

Most theoretical models explain this by postulating a gradient of partial compositionality. The "Idiomaticity Scale", originally proposed by Cacciari and Tabossi (1993), states that idioms can differ from one another on a dimension of compositionality. For example, some idioms, such as " Hit the books" (to study hard), can remain partially transparent, whereas some, such as " Burn the candle at both ends" (To overwork), will be entirely opaque. The Idiomaticity Scale accounts for the fact that some of these idiomatic expressions are partially compositional, but not all of them are.

3.5.2 Structural Pattern of Argumentation in Idiomatic

The argument structure of idiomatic expressions is the pattern on how syntactic functions, including subject, object, and complement, are realized within the expression. In most idioms, syntactic structure plays a central role in determining how they are interpreted. For instance, in the idiom "break the ice," "ice" occupies the object position, yet metaphorically it is about transcending social awkwardness as opposed to literally

breaking ice. Such a switch of argument functions from the literal to the metaphorical one highlights how syntactic structures within idiomatics can differ from their non-idiomatic equivalents.

The syntactic structure plays a role as well with metaphorical extensions of idioms. For example, in the idiom a slip of the tongue, the noun "slip" normally denotes a physical movement, but with the addition of being a slip of the tongue, it triggers a metaphorical interpretation of saying something wrong. This illustrates that syntactic structure can facilitate shifts of interpretation that go beyond the literal function of the arguments (Nunberg, Sag, & Wasow, 1994).

3.5.3 Cognitive and Conceptual Approaches to Idioms

Cognitive linguistics provides a theory for explaining idiomatic expressions using mental representations and conceptual metaphors. For Lakoff and Johnson (1980), idioms are rooted in metaphorical thought whereby abstract entities are mapped onto more concrete experiences. For example, within the idiom "grasp the concept," the metaphorical use of the action of "grasping" is employed to project meaning for understanding or comprehension.

Image schemas, recurrent structures of human knowledge, are involved here as well in the meaning of idioms. The image schemas are fundamentals of knowledge structures such as container, path, or force, which predetermine how one interprets idioms. In the idiom "run into trouble," for instance, the path schema (movement on a path) is applied metaphorically to express running into difficulty (Johnson, 1987).

In this context, conceptual blend theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002) continues to explicate how several mental spaces are blended to formulate new meanings. For instance, for the idiom "to burn the midnight oil," a conceptual blend is made between the physical act of burning oil and the metaphorical idea of late work, resulting in a new, idiomatic meaning that unifies both physical and abstract aspects.

3.6 Theoretical Implications for Syntax-Semantics Theory

3.6.1 Revisiting the Syntax-Semantics Divide

The syntactic versus semantic primacy issue about the nature of idiomatic expressions has been a core concern within linguistic theory for many years. Traditional views, including those within Generative Grammar, stress syntax as being the most important factor determining meaning (Chomsky, 1981). Conversely, more contemporary views, including Construction Grammar (Goldberg, 1995), advance that meaning is as important as form, if not equally important, as they are interdependent. The suggested framework, by resolving both syntactic and semantic aspects, refutes a sharp separation between syntax and semantics by arguing that idiomatic expressions must rely on both dimensions for a full explanation. Acknowledging that idiomatic meaning follows from the convergence between fixed syntactic structures on one hand, and non-literal meaning

on the other hand, this framework comes to reconcile syntactic versus semantic primacy by underlining their dependency on each other within idiomatic expressions.

3.6.2 Implications for Linguistic Theory

The syntax-semantics interface of idiomatic expressions has far-reaching implications for general linguistic theory, especially for Generative Grammar, Construction Grammar, and Formal Semantics. In Generative Grammar, the contribution of the lexicon to encoding fixed units of idiomatic expressions defies the model's inherent assumptions on syntax-driven meaning composition (Chomsky, 1981). The suggested framework, in drawing on the notion of lexicalized constructions, implies that meaning is derivable both through syntax as well as from pre-stored constructions, lending credence to the argument that idiomatic expressions are instances of a larger, more dynamic system of language consisting of both compositional and non-compositional forms.

In Construction Grammar, the suggested framework is compatible with the idea that idioms are acquired as holistic constructions that merge both syntax and semantics (Goldberg, 1995). The framework facilitates the view that idioms must be treated within a constructional system, whereby meaning is not only derived from words individually but from the relationship between the forms and the meaning. Likewise, Formal Semantics can complement the suggested framework through the inclusion of metaphorical meaning and non-compositional forms so that a richer perspective on how idioms play a role within formal systems for representing meaning is achievable (Nunberg, Sag, & Wasow, 1994). Impact on Idiomaticity Research

This proposed structure has significant implications for research on idiomaticity, particularly for why idioms disrupt classical linguistic categories. Idioms were traditionally regarded as exceptions to the composition rules, resulting in their labeling as "lexical exceptions" or "anomalies" within most linguistic models (Cacciari & Tabossi, 1993). The new structure, by unifying syntax and semantics, proposes that idioms need not be viewed as anomalies but rather as being part of the overall system of linguistic constructions, presenting a more comprehensive view on how their role within language is to be perceived.

This framework also changes the emphasis of research on idiomaticity by placing emphasis on the continuum of idiomaticity, with idioms being on a continuum between fully compositional to completely non-compositional expressions (Cacciari & Tabossi, 1993). In recognizing the flexibility of the idiomatic construction, the framework creates some promising paths for conducting research on the gradient nature of the idiomatic expressions as well as how these become operational across different languages and contexts.

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4. METHODOLOGY

The researcher applied an integrative methodology that combines insights from a number of major theoretical models of linguistics, namely Generative Grammar, Construction Grammar, and Cognitive Linguistics, for the purpose of developing a unifying conceptual framework of the interface between syntax and semantics for understanding the meaning of idiomatic expressions. The integrative approach merges theories on syntactic structure, meaning interpretation, and their interface, presenting a single, unified model for examining idioms.

4.1 Methodology of Literature Review

The research methodology for this study was mainly based on a detailed literature review. The literature review was intended to establish major theories and frameworks on the syntax-semantics interface as well as on idiomatic expressions. I read seminal publications on syntax, semantics, and idiomatic expressions, with emphasis on the contributions of researchers like Chomsky, Goldberg, Lakoff & Johnson, and Krennmayr. The review was further on theoretical models like Generative Grammar, Construction Grammar, and Cognitive Linguistics to determine how each theory handles idiomatic expressions as well as their syntax-semantics interface.

4.2 Data Sources and Selection Criteria

The data included published scholarly articles, books, as well as linguistic examinations of idiomatic expressions. The literature was screened on the basis of its relevance to the subject matter and their contribution to theoretical knowledge about idioms. The selection of the sources depended on their emphasis on idiomatic expressions, their theoretical implication for syntax and semantics, as well as their credibility in linguistics. All the sources were peer-reviewed articles, scholarly books, as well as well-regarded linguistic journals to maintain the research findings' reliability and validity.

4.3 Research Procedures

The research process involved a step-by-step approach to reviewing and synthesizing the available literature. The beginning was marked by a meticulous search for seminal work on idiomatic expressions, syntax, semantics, and how these interact with one another. The search was concentrated on established models and theories by scholars like Chomsky, Goldberg, and Lakoff & Johnson.

Then, the researcher compared and integrated the theoretical models offered by the literature, determining the most important insights, discrepancies, and areas in need of further research. The researcher constructed a conceptual framework, based on the analysis, that combines syntactic and semantic approaches to understand the syntax-semantics interface for idiomatic expressions. Lastly, the researcher applied the framework to analyze the construction of idiomatic expressions, demonstrating how

syntactically formed structures direct meaning interpretation and how semantic features, including metaphorical forms and image schemas, play a role in idiomatic interpretation.

5. DISCUSSION

Analysis of the idiomatic expressions within the conceptual framework shows a number of important findings. Second, we can now see that idioms show different levels of compositionality. Some idiomatic expressions, for example, "spill the beans," are partially transparent, whereas others, for example, "kick the bucket," are completely opaque (Cacciari & Tabossi, 1993). This makes clear the gradient character of idiomaticity, where some idioms are semantically more transparent than others but both depend on fixed syntactic frames which limit their reshaping.

Second, the relationship between syntax and semantics within idiom interpretation is more dynamic than long assumed. Idioms are fixed constructions with certain syntactic rules applied to them, yet their meaning is more than a contribution from the literal meaning of their constituents. Consider, for example, the phrases "bark up the wrong tree." Syntax is important here (verb + prepositional) for directing the interpretation, yet meaning is a metaphorical mapping (Krennmayr, 2011). This highlights the need to factor both syntactic and semantic dimensions within idiom analysis.

The suggested conceptual framework makes important contributions to the understanding of the interface between syntax and semantics by illustrating the fact that idiomatic expressions are not explicable exclusively by either syntax or semantics. The framework proposes a consolidated framework by recognizing the mutual dependence between the syntactic structures and the meaning of the idiom. The framework proposes that syntactic structures define the limits within which idiomatic expressions can be articulated as well as interpreted, but meaning usually arises from a mix of lexicalized forms as well as metaphorical mappings (Goldberg, 1995; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The integrated view refutes the classical models by seeing syntax and semantics as purely independent areas as well as demanding a more holistic approach to the issue of idiomaticity.

In addition, by being able to represent partial compositionality, the framework is able to reconcile the interface between compositional and non-compositional idioms. Idioms such as "bring to the table" are more compositional than idioms such as " Take the bull by the horns," which are more semantically opaque. The range of idiomaticity on this continuum permits a more sophisticated appreciation of how idiomatic expressions behave within language (Cacciari & Tabossi, 1993).

In spite of the contribution of the framework, there are hindrances and constraints for applying it to the entire scope of idiomatic expressions. A key limitation is the extent to which idioms remain opaque. Although the framework addresses different levels of transparency, idioms depending on extensive situational knowledge or contextual interpretation might not align well with the assumed model. For example, idiomatic expressions embedded deep within culture or historical contexts might need some layers

of interpretation that are not straightforwardly addressed by the syntax-semantics interface (Krennmayr, 2011).

The second challenge is applying the framework across languages. Idioms are typically based on language-dependent structures, metaphors, or culture-dependent references that are not necessarily directly translatable from one language to another. Further research is needed on applying the framework to idioms across different languages, as cross-lingua differences between syntactic structures and metaphorical mappings might interfere with its use across languages (Nunberg, Sag, & Wasow, 1994).

6. CONCLUSION

Finally, this research has investigated the intricate relationship between syntax and meaning within idiomatic expressions, presenting a theoretical framework that unifies knowledge from a range of linguistics approaches. The research highlights how the dynamic properties between syntactic structure and meaning are mutually dependent on each other to construct the overall meaning of the idiom. In highlighting the relationship between these two elements, the theoretical framework put forth helps to advance the understanding of how idiomatic expressions work, defying the conventional syntax-semantics divide within linguistic theory.

The research sheds light on the gradient character of idiomaticity, illustrating that for idioms, there is a continuum between partial compositionality and full non-compositionality. It is a more refined view of idiomaticity compared to the classical models that view idioms as exceptions or aberrances to syntactic theory. The emphasis on partial compositionality within the framework enables a versatile yet thorough analysis of the use of idioms, as it caters to the different amounts of transparency and non-compositionality among individual expressions.

Nonetheless, there are some weaknesses to the study. One key difficulty is the context-dependent character of idiomatic expressions, which depend on shared knowledge of culture or history that is not always representable by syntactic and semantic analysis. The applicability of the framework to cross-linguistic idiom expressions is yet to be examined further, since idioms can differ widely across languages regarding their syntactic forms and metaphorical senses.

Future work might further improve the framework by redressing these weaknesses. In particular, a more extensive analysis of how contextual factors and culture determine the meaning of idioms would deepen understanding of the idiom's multifaceted nature. Cross-linguistic analysis might then explore how the framework is applied to idiomatic expressions across languages besides English, facilitating its universality assessment. In addition, research might investigate cognitive processing involved in idiom interpretation, notably in language learning and computational models for processing idioms.

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