

Call for papers BCGL 8: The grammar of idioms

CRISSP (KU Leuven) and UiL OTS (Universiteit Utrecht), as part of the joint NWO/FWO project 'The Syntax of Idioms', are proud to present the 8th Brussels Conference on Generative Linguistics: The grammar of idioms.

Workshop description

According to the Fregean principle of compositionality, the meaning of a complex expression is determined by the meanings of its parts and the rules used to combine them. This principle is flouted in the case of idioms (cf. Katz & Postal 1963; Fraser 1970; Katz 1973; Chomsky 1980; Machonis 1985; Schenk 1994; Grégoire 2009; among others). Every language contains idiomatic expressions which, by definition, denote a meaning that is not simply derivable from (the combination of) the meanings of the individual lexical items of that expression. A canonical example is *kick the bucket*, the meaning of which has nothing to do with either kicking or buckets; it simply means 'to die'. The existence of such expressions within natural language gives rise to many questions which have puzzled linguists for years, such as how these phrases are formed syntactically, whether they are restricted to certain structural domains, or how it is that we are able to deduce the idiomatic interpretation of such phrases despite there being no clues as to their meanings within any of the individual lexical items that comprise these expressions.

The purpose of this workshop is to discuss and explore the phenomenon of idioms with the aim of gaining better theoretical and empirical insights into how such expressions are able to occur within natural language, and what sorts of rules of language they are governed by. More specifically, issues that we would like to see addressed at this workshop include, but are not limited to, the following:

Syntax

- The "size" and building blocks of idioms: Is there a size limitation to idioms? That is, aside from verbs and their arguments, can idioms be comprised of any other syntactic material? Can they also be built from tense, modality, aspect, or passive voice, for instance, or material from the CP domain? Are there nominal, adjectival or prepositional idiomatic expressions besides the more familiar verbal/clausal ones? What implications might this have for the theory of idiomatic constructions (cf. Chomsky 1980, 1981; Marantz 1984; McGinnis 2002; Svenonius 2005; Hoeksema 2010; Harwood 2013, 2014)?
- The opacity and transparency of idioms: How do opacity and compositionality interact in idioms? Are they completely frozen structureless atoms or are they built up by the same (or similar) syntactic and morphological structure building mechanisms that are responsible for non-idiomatic expressions? What is the internal organization and makeup of idioms? What is their external syntax, i.e. how does material contained within the idiom interact with material that is not part of the idiom (cf. Makkai 1972; DiSciullo & Williams 1987; Marantz 1984; Fellbaum 1993; Nunberg et al. 1994; Van Gestel 1995; Ifill 2002)?
- Idioms and syntactic diversity: Can we attest micro- and macro-variation in the syntax of idiomatic expressions and if so, where? Do different languages allow different sizes of idioms and/or different syntactic behaviour of idioms? What implications does this have for the theory of idioms in particular, and what does this tell us about cross-

linguistic variation in general (cf. Everaert 1996; Hoeksema 1996, 2010; Hoekstra 2009; Fellbaum 2014; Fellbaum et al. 2003)?

- How should idioms be defined? Where does one draw the line between an idiom and simply a fixed expression such as a well-known metaphor? Does a discontinuous idiom constitute an idiomatic expression in the same way that a continuous idiom does? Should opaque/non-compositional idioms be considered apart from transparent/compositional idioms? Should idioms that exhibit syntactic or lexical flexibility be considered alike with inflexible idioms (cf. Chomsky 1981; Nunberg et al. 1994; O'Grady 1998; Ifill 2002; Svenonius 2005; Grégoire 2009; Hoeksema 2010)?

Semantics

- The meaning of idioms: Exactly how is the meaning of an idiomatic construction derived when it follows in no (obvious) way from the meanings of any of the individual lexical items that comprise it? Are idioms stored in our mental lexicon, and if so, how (cf. Chafe 1968; Bach 1974; Fellbaum 1993; Nunberg et al. 1994; Jackendoff 1997; Marantz 1997a,b; Ifill 2002; Svenonius 2005; Grégoire 2009)?

Processing

- How are idiomatic expressions processed? What is the role of literal processing during the interpretation of idiomatic expressions? Can idiomatic meaning be accessed directly, or is literal processing crucial in the access of idiomatic meaning? What is the role of structural, lexical, and contextual factors in the retrieval, interpretation of, and processing of idiomatic expressions? How do syntactic compatibility, lexical compatibility, and contextual expectations influence real-time processing of idioms and their non-idiomatic counterparts (cf. Swinney and Cutler 1979; Cacciari and Tabossi 1988; Gibbs & Nayak 1989; Cutting and Bock 1997; Sprenger, Levelt & Kempen 2006; Holsinger 2011, to appear)?

Diachrony and Acquisition

- Diachronically speaking, when and how does an expression become an idiom? How does an idiom form?
- How are idioms acquired by L1 learners of a language (cf. Elbers 1989)?

Invited speakers

Christiane D. Fellbaum (Princeton)

Louise McNally (Universitat Pompeu Fabra)

Manfred Sailer (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main)

Abstract guidelines

Abstracts should not exceed two pages, including data, references and diagrams. Abstracts should be typed in at least 11-point font, with one-inch margins (letter-size; 8½ inch by 11 inch or A4) and a maximum of 50 lines of text per page. Abstracts must be anonymous and submissions are limited to 2 per author, at least one of which is co-authored. Only electronic submissions will be accepted. Please submit your abstract using the EasyChair link for BCGL8: <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=bcgl8>

Important dates

- First call for papers: January 21, 2015
- Second call for papers: February 15, 2015
- Abstract submission deadline: March 15, 2015
- Notification of acceptance: April 15, 2015
- Conference: June 4-5, 2015

Conference location

CRISSP – KU Leuven Brussels Campus
Warmoesberg 26
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Organizing institutions

Center for Research in Syntax, Semantics & Phonology (CRISSP) – KU Leuven
Utrecht Institute of Linguistics OTS (UiL OTS) – Universiteit Utrecht

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