

Sabine Fiedler 2007. *English Phraseology. A coursebook*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 198 pages, DKK 198.

Idiomatic expressions play a very important part in language and constitute a major obstacle for foreign learners. Most of the work on phraseology is found in books and research articles which are not readily accessible for students, and those who have tried to teach the subject have found a coursebook sorely missing. Sabine Fiedler's book fills this gap with a book that opens its readers' eyes to the pervasiveness of idiomatic expressions and makes them acquainted with standard as well as creative uses.

The introduction by Rosemarie Gläser firmly places Fiedler's book in the strong tradition of phraseology research at the University of Leipzig, which is influenced by Russian phraseology as well as by English corpus-based studies and lexicographic work, particularly by A.P. Cowie and his associates (Cowie *et al.* 1975; 1983). More generally, this tradition can be placed in the framework of the 'phraseology approach' to phraseological research as opposed to the 'frequency-based approach' (Nesselhauf 2005: 11 ff.) associated with corpus linguistics (e.g. Sinclair 1991). The phraseology approach can also be contrasted with Cognitive Linguistics, in which idiomaticity is defined more widely as a main principle in language (e.g. Taylor 2002: 537 ff.).

The intended readership, according to Fiedler's preface, is not only university students, but also learners at other (presumably lower) levels. Furthermore, in addition to serving as a coursebook, as the title proclaims, it is also meant as a reference book for "all learners interested in both curiosities in language (as found in idioms and phrases) and eventually in how the English language actually works." The focus is on idioms, "because they are the main source for creative use and stylistic effect."

The preliminaries are followed by four chapters each covering a major aspect. In Chapter 1, What is Phraseology?, Fiedler gives a characterization of 'phraseology' as a field of study and a set of expressions, for which 'Phraseological Unit', abbreviated as 'PU' is used as an umbrella term. In Chapter 2, Classification, she goes on to categorize PUs under the two main sub-headings of 'conventional types' and 'special types', while Chapter 3, Phraseology in Use, accounts for the functions PUs have in different kinds of texts, including a range of 'marked' uses exploiting the conventional expressions. Finally, Chapter 4, Phraseology and Translation, outlines the special problems of finding equivalents for PUs in different languages, exemplified by English and German, and suggests how they may be addressed. After the four chapters supplements are provided by Gläser on PUs in the language for special purposes and in the national standard varieties of English.

Each of the main chapters is clearly subdivided into numbered sections and subsections, which allows the reader to locate a specific topic by means of the list of contents. At the end of each chapter, there are several pages of exercises to which readers are referred at relevant places in the chapter. A comprehensive answer key is found at the end of the book, where we also find an index as well as a glossary of linguistic terms with brief explanations of the main terms. A list of figures and abbreviations is supplied, and, in addition to the bibliography of the theoretical literature, a list of the sources of examples is provided.

The discussion of the terms and categories used is a typical feature of this coursebook, so that in addition to learning something about phraseology, students are also made aware of the problems of categorizing natural language and the trade-offs that often have to be made.

In Chapter 1: What is Phraseology?, readers are introduced to the problem of terminological variety, and a motivation is given for using ‘Phraseological Unit’ (PU) as a general term to avoid the highly polysemous term ‘idiom’. The meaning of idiom that is relevant for phraseology is defined as “a peculiarity of language approved by the usage of language, and often having a significance other than its grammatical or logical one” (Fiedler 2007: 16). It follows that PU relates to ‘phraseology broadly defined’, as including collocations and proverbs (Farøe 2005: 14), but in her discussion of the main characteristics of PUs Fiedler shows that PUs do not capture everything that is ‘idiomatic’ and that what counts as phraseological is somewhat arbitrary. Thus ‘polylexemic structure’ is taken to be one of the defining criteria of a PU, which means that compounds will be excluded if they are written as one word, as in German: *Krokodilstränen*, but included as a noun phrase if they are written as two words, as in English: *crocodile tears* (Fiedler 2007: 18).

The discussion of other characteristics is also relativized. While ‘stability’ is given as a key feature (Fiedler 2007: 19), it is clearly demonstrated that, “within definite constraints”, PUs are variable in a number of ways. ‘Lexicalization’ as a feature refers to the fact that PUs are memorized as wholes by language users, much like lexical items; however, new ones are created all the time, many of which will never make it into a dictionary.

‘Idiomaticity’, a fourth characteristic, is seen as graded, ranging from ‘real idioms’, which are fully opaque, to transparent ones. Fiedler explains idiomaticity as “the common phenomenon that the meaning of an expression is difficult or even impossible to derive from the meanings of the constituents it is composed of” (Fiedler 2007: 22). This definition of idiomaticity as a decoding problem is normally assumed in Phraseology and can be contrasted with the view advocated by Cognitive Linguistics (e.g. Taylor 2002: 546 ff.) which includes the encoding perspective. Fiedler emphasizes that “idiomaticity [as defined above] is a

typical, but only optional characteristic of a PU” (Fiedler 2007: 23). Adopting the broader definition would have the advantage of bringing all PUs within the realm of the idiomatic in a principled way, while it would still be possible to focus on the PUs that are least predictable from their components. – The fact that many types of PUs have stylistic and expressive connotations is mentioned as a further characteristic, to which Fiedler devotes the third chapter of her book.

PHRASEOLOGICAL NOMINATIONS	
• noun phrases	<i>a lame duck</i>
• adjectival phrases	<i>shipshape and Bristol fashion</i>
• adverbial phrases	<i>at a snail's pace</i>
• clauses	<i>find one's feet</i>
(IRREVERSIBLE) BINOMINALS	<i>here and there</i>
STEREOTYPED COMPARISONS	<i>sleep like a log</i>
PROVERBS	<i>Let sleeping dogs lie</i>
WINGED WORDS	
• Catchphrases*	
• Slogans*	
• Sententious remarks*	
• Quotations	<i>Something is rotten in the state of Denmark</i>
ROUTINE FORMULAE	<i>Many happy returns last but not least</i>

* No examples given that specifically relate to this subcategory

Table 1. Conventional types of PUs in the majority of systemic descriptions

Chapter 2, Classification starts with an overview of the typologies of Makkai (1972), Gläser (1986) and Roos (2001), before Fiedler presents the typology used in this book as consisting of ‘conventional’ and ‘special’ types of PUs, respectively. ‘Conventional’ is defined as “types of PUs in the majority of systemic descriptions” (Fiedler 2007: 39). The two types are presented in Table 1 above and in Table 2 below.

The first type mentioned is ‘phraseological nominations’, which correspond to what Farøe (2005: 14) refers to as ‘idioms narrowly defined’. The term ‘nomination’ is taken from Gläser and includes phrase idioms (nominal, adjectival, adverbial) and clause idioms. Unlike Gläser’s nominations, it does not include collocations, nor does it include sentence-length idioms like *the coast is clear* and *his heart is in the right place*, which differ from proverbs in that they refer to a specific situation and are discourse dependent (Dobrovolskij/Piirainen 2005:

50 f.). This type might have been included here under nominations.

‘(Irreversible) binominals’ are pairs of words characterized by their fixed order, which is shown to follow a number of general principles. They are fully transparent and thus easy to decode. In ‘stereotyped comparisons’ one constituent is used in its normal sense, and it would therefore have been a possibility to categorize them as a special type of collocation (see below). ‘Proverbs’ are sentence-length PUs characterized by their general meaning; they express a general truth, a cultural norm, or a piece of general advice. ‘Winged words’ include a range of typically sentence-length idioms, (‘catchphrases’, ‘slogans’, ‘sententious remarks’, and ‘quotations’) whose stability as part of the lexicon may vary considerably. A final ‘conventional’ type of PU included by Fiedler is ‘routine formulae’, a very heterogeneous category of expressions in terms of function. They are specialized according to discourse context and are characterized by Fiedler as phatic communication.

PARAPHRASAL VERBS	<i>to make use of</i>
(RESTRICTED) COLLOCATIONS	<i>to have patience</i>
RHYMING SLANG	<i>trouble and strife</i> (for ‘wife’)
WELLERISMS	<i>“Everyone to his taste,” said the farmer and kissed the cow.</i>

Table 2. Special types of PUs

Under ‘special types of PUs’ we find ‘paraphrasal verbs’ and ‘restricted collocations’ as well as ‘rhyming slang’ and ‘Wellerisms’. While the two last types can be said to be ‘special’ because they are not generally used, the two former are probably the most generally used types of PU. If they are seen as ‘special’, it may be because they have one element that is not figurative. On the other hand, so do stereotyped comparisons, and in irreversible binominals both elements are transparent.

Fiedler defines ‘Paraphrasal verbs’ as consisting of “a transitive verb with a relatively wide range of meaning (e.g. *have, pay, give*) and a noun phrase (e.g. *a look, attention, smile*) which carries the semantic weight”. The category gets its name from ‘Paraphrasal verbs in a narrow sense’ (otherwise called ‘light verb constructions’ or ‘support verb constructions’ in English), which ‘paraphrase’ a synonymous simple verb (e.g. *to make use of* vs *to use*), with the extra potential of expressing durative, inchoative and causative meanings (*to be in/to come into/to bring into focus*). ‘Paraphrasal verbs in a broad sense’ are not explicitly defined by Fiedler, but while *give a smile* is used to exemplify the narrow type, combinations like *receive* or *get a smile* [my examples] could exemplify the broader type showing the continuity between ‘paraphrasal verbs’ and ‘restricted

collocations’, which Fiedler defines as having “one constituent that is used in a specialised or figurative sense” (Fiedler 2007: 52).

Fiedler argues convincingly that also ‘open’ or ‘free’ collocations should be considered PUs. Although both constituents are used in their literal meanings, and the expressions are thus fully transparent from a decoding point of view, they may cause problems from an encoding point of view (*gain/gather/acquire experience*; but not **make experience*). The question remains: what is *not* a PU? How, for instance can we include *pay/meet/settle/pick up the bill* while excluding *tear up/lose/drop the bill*? I have argued elsewhere that based on Fillmore’s theory of frame semantics (e.g. Fillmore 1985), a distinction may be made between collocations (PUs) in which the dominant frame is evoked by the noun and combinations in which it is evoked by the verb, which are not phraseological (Poulsen 2005: 250 ff.).

While the focus on use is characteristic of the entire book in which arguments are consistently supported by examples, **Chapter 3** is specifically devoted to **Phraseology in use**. It is shown how the complex structure and structural variability of PUs combined with their stability as knowledge structures, create a rich potential for variability and creative extension. Fiedler demonstrates how PUs are used for a range of functions especially in journalistic and literary texts, e.g. to attract attention in headlines and titles as well as in photo captions, to introduce topics, characterize people and events, create cohesion throughout a text, and to sum up or make concluding points. In her account of ‘marked uses of PUs’, Fiedler shows how such creative activities are in fact also subject to a number of routines (‘substitution’, ‘expansion’, ‘reduction’ and ‘permutation’) while sometimes mere ‘allusion’ may suffice. In this chapter, the main focus is on PUs with stylistic and expressive connotations (mainly nominations, proverbs and winged words), while routine formulae are mentioned because of their structuring function. The unmarked use of collocations is not mentioned here, while an example of marked use was given in Chapter 2 (Fiedler 2007: 52):

Customer: *Waiter! What’s wrong with these eggs?*

Waiter: *Don’t ask me, sir. I only laid the table.*

This is in line with the openly declared bias of the book in favour of idioms as “the main source for creative use and stylistic effect”, which has already been mentioned, and which is also reflected in the focus on journalistic and literary texts. Gläser’s supplement on PUs in the language for special purposes, which shows a different usage pattern, helps balance the picture.

Chapter 4. Phraseology and translation is based on examples of translations from English into German, which may detract from its appeal to native speakers of other languages than German. However, translations into other languages

give rise to the same types of problems, and Fiedler's advice for how to cope with them will be equally useful. Thus, section 2, which is about the translation process, gives readers an overview of aspects of equivalence that need to be taken into account and outlines a four-step strategy for translators to follow.

On closing this book, I have the overall impression that it lives up to its ambition of being a useful resource for teaching as well as for self-study. The terminology may take some getting used to for those who do not have the same background, but since it is carefully explained and related to terms that may be more familiar, this should not be a problem. It is not the ambition of the book to develop the theoretical notions, but rather to show how phraseology is actually used, especially in journalism and literature. This is achieved by fleshing out the description of categories with a wealth of examples and by providing a wide range of relevant exercises (with answers) throughout. – A final note of complaint should go to the publisher: the quality of the photos is quite poor, and the accompanying texts are often barely legible. The book deserves better.

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