Phraseological Units in Discourse: Towards Applied Linguistics
by Anita Naciscione, 2001. Riga: Latvian Academy of Culture,
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When dealing with the stylistic analysis of phraseological units in discourse, Naciscione undertakes a complex transdisciplinary search at the interface of at least three fields of linguistics: phraseology, stylistics and discourse studies. This major innovation undoubtedly calls for new ways of thinking about the correlation between phraseology and stylistics, as well as each of these linguistic disciplines. It also calls for the exploration of their links with associated disciplines: psycholinguistics and cognitive linguistics.

The book consists of two parts: a theoretical one, embracing five chapters, and an applied part, logically and didactically moving from the general to the particular. I find the organization of the book very helpful, as the material in the first chapters prefigures what follows, which broadens the usefulness of the starting points as a general introduction.

The book has a solid theoretical foundation. On the one hand, it is based on the European and American linguistic schools represented by the most distinguished scholars in phraseology and discourse studies – Carter, McCarthy, McRae, Makkai, Lakoff, Gläser, Moon, Widdowson, Cook and others. On the other hand, it relies, especially in its studies of phraseological units, upon the Eastern European school of linguistics and first of all upon 'classical' Russian theory of phraseology, which "with its later extensions and modifications, is probably the most pervasive influence at work in current phraseological studies and is unrivalled in its application to the design and compilation of dictionaries" (Cowie 1998: 2).

The main concern in the theory of phraseology is the elaboration of terminology, setting out the key concepts and developing major processes. Naciscione tackles every item with thorough understanding and precision and succeeds, in my opinion, in everything.

Chapter 1 *Phraseology and Discourse Stylistics* outlines the urgent issues of modern phraseology and its links with stylistics and discourse. This approach seems to be beneficial, as much of the research in the sixties and the seventies had a tendency to disregard the stylistic features of language. The author reasonably grounds the need to study the stylistic value of phraseological units in discourse, as it is fundamental for the establishment of the role of phraseological units in the creation of textual meanings.

One of the strong points of the book is a thorough choice of terminology among the abundance of different and contraversial terms. It especially concerns the terms of phraseology – a newly born self-contained linguistic discipline, which has become recognized as an academic area in its own right and has turned into an important field of pure and applied research in Western European and North American Linguistics over the last twenty years (Cowie 1998). I highly appreciate the author's choice of adequate terms, reasonable arguments in their favour and the supply of clear-cut definitions for the selected terms.

The Glossary of the key terminology is in itself a reliable source of knowledge for students, as all the entries are provided with accurate and sufficient definitions. I share the opinion of my students who believe that it is a unique book for L2 learners to gain information on the the essential terms in phraseology.

When arguing against the use of the term *idiom* in her book, because of its ambiguity and lack of distinctiveness, Naciscione follows Kunin (one of the founders of classical Russian phraseology) in believing that there are two large groups of fixed word combinations: phraseological units and stable word combinations of non-phraseological character. I fully agree to this reasonable subdivision that appears to be universal in the sense of its applicability to research of not only in English phraseology but also phraseological systems of the German, Swedish, Romance and Slavonic languages. Consequently, the author keeps to the term *a phraseological unit* which is defined by Kunin as 'a stable combination of words with a fully or partially figurative meaning' [Kunin 1970: 210]. Undoubtedly this definition is best suited for the purpose of the book as it includes two inherent properties of praseological units: a) stability and b) figurative meaning, which distinguishes these units from variable word combinations and also from set expressions with no figurative meaning.

In Chapter 2 *Identification of Phraseological Units in Discourse* the author shows the role of the base form in the identification process of the PU (phraseological unit), gives the most important features of core use of the PU, explains the essence of the concept of instantial stylistic use and singles out its main features and proposes an identification procedure of PUs.

This chapter includes the second major innovation of the book that consists in introducing the term *the base form* of the PU in the English language to indicate the form of the phraseological unit to which other forms of the PU can be related and with which they can be compared. The author adequately visualizes the base form of the PU as a 'decontextualized unit of language' which is 'generic to all manifestations of a particular PU in discourse or a totality of discourses' (p. 22). I consider this idea essential for the theory of phraseological stylistics because the identification process of the PU demands a profound understanding of the base form as an element of the system of language and its realization in discourse either in core use or in instantial use.

The third innovation is the term *core use* introduced by Naciscione to denote the basic, most common, essential form and meaning, which is the invariable of the PU, available to a language user, constituting the 'perfect example'. To draw a clear line of demarcation between *core use* and *base form* the author gives persuasive textual examples of how core use realizes the cohesive relations inherent in the base form.

The fourth innovation is the term, representing a broad linguistic category, *instantial stylistic use* introduced by the author to denote a particular instance of a unique stylistic application of a PU in discourse, which results in significant changes in its form and meaning determined by the context. Instantial stylistic use is described by the author as a mechanism, which secures stylistic use on each particular occasion and gives rise to a text form and meaning in a specific stylistic instance. This revolutionary idea is very welcome. The author writes: 'Actually form is also the structure of meaning and one of its aspects. With a new discoursal form the PU acquires a new meaning and stylistic effect… The cohesive properties inherent in the

base form secure instantial use' (p. 29). The statements of the author on the linguistic value of the terms *core use* and *instantial use* are fortified by a sensible discussion and deepened by singling out and summarizing their most important features.

One of the focuses of the research is extended phraseological metaphor in discourse, whose image may be sustained across sentence boundaries, creating a web of unique interrelationships of figurative meaning. This calls for associative thinking and a cognitive approach to identification and interpretation. This is another revolutionary proposal that I call the fifth innovation: the *identification procedure*, which the author ventures to devise in order to meet the challenges of instantial use in discourse, i.e. the author aims at establishing a set of techniques of identification which would not be based on intuitive understanding of a specific initial form, but would provide a tool to cope with the infinite variety of discoursal forms and meanings. This has been neatly devised, I must admit, as the author singles out a number of discrete steps to aid the process of identification: recognition > verification > comprehension > interpretation. Indeed, my teaching experience with L2 learners at the advanced level enables me to confirm that the sequence of directions set out by Naciscione to establish the identification procedure is very helpful in discovering instantial use in the flow of discourse and ,what is more, it serves to avoid a subjective judgement to a great extent.

Chapter 3 propounds the theory of key concepts of instantial stylistic use in discourse. Developing further the theory of cohesion as a semantic relation (Halliday and Hasan), Naciscione affirms that phraseological cohesion is not only a semantic means, it is also a *stylistic* category, for it reveals both semantic and stylistic ties. Thus the book explores cohesion as one of the basic theoretical concepts in phraseology alongside with stability and figurativeness. Cohesion of the base form derives from phraseological meaning and the organization of the unit. It is Naciscione who reveals to us that phraseological cohesion is an essential feature of the progressive development of text, as it secures continuity of phraseological ties in discourse. The author proves with linguistic elegance that sustained stylistic use of a phraseological unit enhances the perception of the text as a cohesive and coherent entity.

The author singles out the main features of another key concept. *An instantial pattern* is viewed as a set of stylistic resources which are drawn upon for the purpose of creating text, which I think may be regarded as another innovation in the book, and shows vividly that the pattern is the key to understanding the metamorphosis of a base form into instantial use.

In Chapter 4 the author presents the most common patterns of instantial stylistic use of phraseological units in discourse and Chapter 5 is aimed at having a closer look at the potential of phraseological resources in weaving a seamless web of discourse. I think the discussion of the diminutive seems a bit protracted, though new and helpful.

The author explores phraseological meaning in discourse from the cognitive point of view. She argues against the old approach, which treats all phraseological units as clichés and dead metaphors, and claims that phraseological metaphor is alive. A cognitive approach to phraseological units in discourse, which is another innovation in itself, reveals that stylistic use is not a deviation or a violation, but a deliberate choice that

reflects the cognitive processes of the mind in creative thinking, conveying a new perception and calling for a change in the standard form of a phraseological unit.

In the final chapter the author argues for the need of applied stylistics as a field of special interest: the use of the stylistic competence of the language user in the fields of teaching, translation, lexicography, visual representation, advertising and marketing.

The author's theoretical conclusions have practical applications. Among the reasons why the stylistic use of phraseological units is hard to master as a skill is not only the theoretical obscurity or discoursal complexity, but also insufficient support from dictionaries. Phraseological stylistic competence that may be derived from Naciscione's book in favour of lexicography will enhance the quality of dictionaries, which will be of great benefit to both native students and L2 learners. However, the greatest benefit is gained by teaching and learning.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the book makes a significant contribution to the interface of phraseology, stylistics and discourse studies. It is the first time that discoursal use of phraseological units is viewed from a cognitive perspective, which has proved to be a fruitful approach, as in language in use all these aspects are intertwined. The author shows the importance of learning and teaching the cognitive skills to understand and appreciate phraseological meaning in discourse.

The importance of Naciscione's book lies in its originality and applicability. An asset of the book is its clear-cut presentation. It is written in a lucid way and has much to offer to every phraseologist, stylistician and discourse analyst. I understand that the task of the reviewer is also to criticise, but even for a critical-minded reader it is difficult to find faults with this book, which I daresay is a very special book on modern European linguistics and, I hope, one of the best works on phraseological stylistics in discourse in the world. However, I have some suggestions. To gain a more complete picture of the stylistic use of phraseological units, the author could have dwelt more on the visual representation of phraseological meaning, which is very topical today. Actually this is the theme of a new book. For applied purposes it would also be most useful to develop teaching materials for training in stylistic awareness (based on Modern English texts) as a sequel to the book.

References

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