

Phraseological Units in Discourse: Towards Applied Stylistics. By Anita Naciscione. Riga: Latvian Academy of Culture, 2001. Pp. 283.

The serious scholarship on phraseology has experienced an incredible boom during the past two decades especially in Europe, to wit the foundation of the European Society of Phraseology in 1999 with its headquarters in Zurich, Switzerland. A large number of books, dissertations, and articles has been published in many languages on various aspects of this fascinating field. In fact, it is difficult to keep up with the vast phraseological research carried out primarily by linguists, folklorists, cultural historians, philologists, and social scientists, especially psychologists and psycholinguists. Numerous book-length studies exist for such major languages as English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish, etc., and there are also detailed investigations in such languages as Bulgarian, Finnish, Hungarian, Lithuanian, etc. Quite understandably, the majority of investigations use the lingua franca of English in order to get at the multifaceted nature of phraseological units.

This is also the case with Anita Naciscione's intriguing book on *Phraseological Units in Discourse: Towards Applied Stylistics*. Professor Naciscione is the Head of the Department of Foreign Languages at the Latvian Academy of Culture at Riga, Latvia, where she teaches English stylistics, translation, and phraseology. Her book, written in clear, comprehensible, and exquisite English style is not only an erudite and invaluable contribution to phraseology, it is also a masterfully crafted work that is a pleasure to read and descant upon. Let it be said at the beginning of this review that this is one of the best written and presented books on phraseology. There is no unnecessary jargon, there is no theoretical or incomprehensible complexity, and there is no linguistic obscurity that readers with a general interest in phraseology could not understand. It is thus a book that can be recommended most highly to readers who want to inform themselves on the rich field of phraseology. It belongs not only into libraries and institutes but it should also be used as a textbook with students eager to learn about the world of phraseology. Having been written in English, it

should find many readers around the world, native speakers of English as well as those readers for whom English is a second language.

The book is divided into two major parts on "Phraseological Units in Discourse" (pp. 3-168) and "Towards Applied Stylistics" (pp. 173-230). Anita Naciscione also includes a most welcome "Glossary" (pp. 232-239) of major terms with clear explanations, eleven "Appendices" (pp. 241-259) with textual and illustrative materials from literature and the mass media, an impressive "Bibliography" (pp. 260-278), and a most welcome "Index" (pp. 279-283). Regarding the phraseological use by Anglo-American authors, from whose works Prof. Naciscione cites very convincing contextualized examples, it might be stated that there are quite a few studies available that are not mentioned by her (see Wolfgang Mieder and George B. Bryan, *Proverbs in World Literature: A Bibliography* [New York: Peter Lang, 1996]). There would also have been some additional and important secondary sources on English phraseology and its stylistic aspects as well as translation matters, which can easily be found in Wolfgang Mieder's *International Proverb Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography*, 4 vols. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1982, 1990, and 1993; New York: Peter Lang, 2001). But these additional resources do not lessen the value of this truly remarkable and readable book that can indeed be recommended to scholars and students alike.

Anita Naciscione begins her volume with an introductory chapter on "Phraseology and Discourse Stylistics" (pp. 3-17), where she states clearly that "actual texts show that phraseology is not a store of old fossils. Phraseology becomes alive in actual use" (p. 8). Thus, phraseological units must be studied in their "base form, core use, and instantial stylistic use" (p. ix) in order to be properly understood and appreciated as contextualized stylistic devices. Regarding students of foreign languages, it is of particular importance to teach them these three aspects of phraseologisms, and it behooves translators in particular to be aware of them as well.

As the author points out in chapter two on the "Identification of Phraseological Units in Discourse" (pp. 19-46), it is important to recognize and establish the "base form" of a phraseological unit in order to be able to understand and interpret its actual use in discourse. When the phraseological text is used in its standard form and meaning, one might speak of the "core use". However, as is often the case, the phraseological units in discourse are used in a much more complex fashion, and this the author refers to with the term "instantial stylistic use". The latter is appropriately defined as "a particular instance of a

unique stylistic application of a phraseological unit in discourse which results in significant changes in its form and meaning determined by the context" (32). Anybody who has taught a foreign language very much appreciates this point, especially also the way Anita Naciscione characterizes the four steps of dealing with a phraseological unit in a text: recognition verification comprehension interpretation (pp. 35-45). It should be mentioned that this and every other chapter is organized in a clear and logical fashion, the style and language are accessible, and each chapter and at times sections of chapters have concise summary statements that are of special use to students. In addition, of course, there are very interesting examples cited primarily from literary contexts or taken from the mass media. Detailed and enlightening comments are added so that readers are never lost or unclear about the significant points that the author wishes to advance.

Chapter three on "Key Concepts of Instantial Use in Discourse" (pp. 47-67) discusses in solid detail aspects of phraseological cohesion, continuity versus change, and sustainability. As the author states so convincingly, "instantial use [of phraseological units] is dynamic, it expands the semantic and/or syntactic limits of the base form, going beyond the requirements of core use" (p. 63). She also speaks of "discoursal flexibility" (p. 64) of phraseological units that might be cited only partially, that might be interrupted, and that might be alluded to so vaguely that one wonders whether they are in fact still sustainable or recognizable as fixed texts. That is quite a challenge for the native speaker, and it becomes a very special hurdle for a translator or a person who has learned the language as a foreign language. All of this takes practice and an increased linguistic awareness. My own students of German here in the United States often have difficulties recognizing phraseological units in their native English language as well as in German. They simply don't know the phrases! This presents a serious problem to communication as such, since cultural literacy regarding proverbs, proverbial expressions, and phraseological units in general is at times simply lacking.

The fourth chapter on "The Most Common Patterns of Instantial Stylistic Use of Phraseological Units in Discourse" (pp. 69-110) is a most comprehensive and certainly welcome treatise on how phraseological units are most commonly instantiated, namely by way of extended metaphor, phraseological puns, cleft use (creating a discontinuity or paradox), and phraseological allusion. As the author explains these four major categories, she presents telling contextualized examples from such varied authors as Geoffrey Chaucer, William

Shakespeare, D.H. Lawrence, John Robert Fowles, George Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy, J.R.R. Tolkien, James Thurber, Lewis Carroll, and Graham Greene. The author is, of course, completely correct in stating that phraseological allusions present a special problem: "The understanding of phraseological allusion relies on building a mental model of the phraseological unit which is hinted at on the basis of the meanings of the explicit image bearing components which are semantically and stylistically loaded. The identification and interpretation of associative links largely depend on the stylistic skills of the reader, listener or translator who has to deal with the interrelationships of figurative and direct meanings, single out the explicit and implicit components of a phraseological unit and mentally embrace the spread of the phraseological image" (p. 100). This is quite a task for students of foreign languages, and it behooves us as teachers to train them in this necessary challenge, as Anita Naciscione explains in the second part of her invaluable book.

Chapter five on "Phraseological Units in the Web of Discourse" (pp. 111-168) takes all what has been said and treated in the first four chapters on a higher and more involved stylistic level. By means of fascinating texts in contexts the author discusses further instantial aspects of phraseological reiteration, where a phraseological unit might be repeated as a *leitmotif* within a paragraph, a chapter, or even an entire literary work. And, of course, the *leitmotif* in itself will also vary, being cited in its base form, as a pun, as an allusion, etc. Anita Naciscione has done considerable previous work on the stylistic use of the diminutive, and it is not surprising that she includes a section on "the diminutive in phraseology" (pp. 122-136) in this chapter, namely ways of expressing the diminutive in English phraseology (morphological, lexical), the diminutive in the semantic structure of phraseological units, and the cumulative use of the diminutive by Lewis Carroll (see pp. 131-135).

Yet another part of this long chapter covers the concurrent instantial use, pointing out that "several instantial changes may occur concurrently within the framework of one phraseological unit in contrast to reiteration and cumulative use which are linear in character" (p. 136). There is also the complex "instantial phraseological saturation of discourse" (pp. 142-153), where a paragraph might contain an amassment of several phraseological units, presenting an incredible linguistic and semantic challenge to the non-native reader or the translator. Textual examples from William Somerset Maugham, D.H. Lawrence, John Galsworthy, William Shakespeare, and James Thurber are ample proof that "phraseological saturation implies a dense phraseological presence in the web

of discourse" (p. 152). Finally, the last section of the fifth chapter deals with comprehensive instantial use (pp. 153-167) which "encompasses a text, either appearing in titles and headlines or in codas" (p. 153). The author speaks of "umbrella use" (p. 154) when phraseological units appear in titles or headlines. She also points out that James Thurber very much enjoyed using twisted proverbs (anti-proverbs) as codas at the end of his modern fables. For this I might refer to Pack Carnes, "The American Face of Aesop: Thurber's Fables and Tradition," in P. Carnes (ed.), *Proverbia in Fabula: Essays on the Relationship of the Fable and the Proverb* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1988), pp. 311-331; and P. Carnes, "The Fable and the Proverb: Intertexts and Reception," *Proverbium*, 8 (1991), 55-76. In any case, this is a superb chapter where Anita Naciscione exemplifies her most convincing approach to the identification and interpretation of phraseological units in "the web of discourse" - a most befitting metaphor for this complex matter!

In the second part of the book with but one major sixth chapter on "Applied Stylistics and Instantial Stylistic Use of Phraseological Units in Discourse" (pp. 173-230), Anita Naciscione discusses the emergence of contextualized stylistics, applied stylistics, and stylistic literacy (pp. 173-176), arguing that especially learners of a second language need to be made aware of the importance of phraseological units in all modes of writing and oral communication. She argues for a discourse-based approach to phraseology in teaching that "enables the teacher to shift the emphasis from the preoccupation of teaching separate phraseological units to the natural flow of language" (p. 179). Clearly "learners need knowledge and skills to identify phraseological units and handle both core use and instantial use of phraseology in discourse" (p. 181). Using especially literary texts and also segments from the mass media, the teaching of phraseological units in discourse will without doubt lead to a broader stylistic awareness and competence in using preformulated texts in communication. Quite obviously then, "for phraseology stylistic awareness is a conscious heightened perception and understanding of the stylistic nature of phraseological units and their role in discourse" (p. 197).

All of this has also significant implications for the translation of phraseological units in discourse. There is no doubt that "a metaphoric network presents a major hurdle in comprehension and translation" (p. 201), especially when there are no equivalent expressions in the target language. Anita Naciscione presents a number of complex phraseological paragraphs from D.H. Lawrence's novel *The Lost Girl* to show how difficult it is to translate them into Latvian. She continues this

discussion with additional paragraphs from John Galsworthy's novel *The Silver Spoon* as well as William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, ending these remarks with a section from Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. All of this shows convincingly that phraseological units should be part and parcel of translation instruction to students. They definitely need to be made aware of the important stylistic aspects of phraseological units. This having been said, the author goes on to call for better compilations of phraseological dictionaries and glossaries that include etymological, cultural, and semantic explanations. This is especially necessary for archaic expressions as for example "to have a colt's tooth" that appears in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. There are many notes and articles that have dealt with such individual expressions. For this particular phrase there is, for example, the valuable essay by the renowned American paremiologist Bartlett Jere Whiting (1904-1995), "'A Colt's Tooth,'" *Mediaeval Studies in Honor of Jeremiah Denis Matthias Ford*, ed. by Urban T. Holmes and Alex J. Denomy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1948), pp. 321-331.

This long chapter, which perhaps could have been divided into three separate chapters, also includes a cursory section on "socio-cultural studies" (pp. 219-225) that touches upon the importance of cultural, historical, and social implications in the use of phraseological units. The few pages on the use and function of phraseological units in "advertising and marketing" (pp. 225-230) basically scratch the surface of this important modern stomping ground of preformulated language. A few examples are cited, and there are also four colorful illustrations in the appendix. In any case, these two parts of the sixth chapter would have deserved to be treated in individual chapters. Much secondary literature exists for both areas, and perhaps Anita Naciscione could expand her book by about thirty or forty pages in a new edition which her book will doubtlessly experience in due time. This is meant as a positive suggestion so that instructors and students using her book will benefit even more from her knowledge and expertise.

As can be seen from these remarks, Professor Anita Naciscione has published an extremely valuable book that discusses the stylistic implications of *Phraseological Units in Discourse*. While the book is based on solid theoretical considerations and explanations, it also provides a plethora of contextualized examples to illustrate various theoretical and stylistic points. Since the author clearly has students in mind, she took care to write her study in a most accessible and clear style, and she deserves the highest praise for this effort. While the reading of some scholarly books on phraseology can be quite tedious

and frustrating, her book is a joy and pleasure to read and to comprehend. Anita Naciscione has thus achieved her goal with distinction, presenting her readers with detailed comments on the stylistic use of phraseological units that are well grounded in theoretical and applied scholarship. The book has made a major contribution to phraseology, and both scholars and students will benefit greatly from Anita Naciscione's knowledge and insights. The book should definitely be widely distributed to libraries, institutes, and individuals throughout the world.

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