

牛津应用语言学丛书



# Idioms and Idiomatcity

## 习语与习语特征

Chitra Fernando

上海外语教育出版社



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## 出版前言

去年5月本社出版了从牛津大学出版社引进的19种“牛津应用语言学丛书”,受到了外语教学界师生的一致好评和欢迎,在短短的一年中,重印了4次。为了向我国的外语教学和研究人員提供更多的学术参考专著,帮助读者了解近年来国外应用语言学和外语教学研究的理论,促进我国外语教学的研究和改革,本社又挑选了10本该系列中的精品,奉献给广大读者。希望本套丛书能够对于借鉴国外研究成果和总结我国自己的外语教学经验,形成具有中国特色的外语教学理论有所帮助。

《习语与习语特征》是一部探讨习语和习语特点的学术专著,作者C·费南多(Chitra Fernando)是澳大利亚麦夸里大学(Macquarie University)英语、语言学与传播学院的高级讲师,在此之前,她在斯里兰卡科伦坡国家教师培训学校任职。她的研究领域主要是习语研究、双语研究和语言政策。费南多长期从事习语研究,具有丰富的经验,在学术领域取得了丰硕成果,这使她在学术界享有很高的声誉。在本书中,作者根据现实生活中的语言和英语语料库中的大量资料,对习语的作用进行了分析,并提出了对习语的新见解。

全书6章可划分为三大部分。在第一章中,作者介绍了不同学者对习语所下的定义,并在此基础上阐述了自己的观点。在第二章中,作者主要介绍了习语组成的结构特点和基本分类。第三章到第六章主要介绍了习语的各种作用。

本书的一大特点就是角度新颖,以往的习语研究常常把重点放在习语本身的结构上,而本书的作者则把习语置于语言环境中,更注重习语作为一种约定俗成,简洁有效的语言形式在人们语言交流中所起的作用——从单纯的表达意义的功能,到反映对话者之间关系的交际功能,直至使文章通顺、流畅、连贯的联系功能。作者运用了许多生动翔实,而又有代表性的例子,使本书既有科学性,又简洁易懂。

本书是一本颇有启发性的习语研究专著。它适用于具有一定习语知识基础的英语专业高年级学生、硕士生和博士生,可以作为他们的教材或参考书,对于专门从事习语研究的专家和学者也具有相当高的参考价值。

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2000年5月

# Acknowledgements

Every scholarly topic has its own special set of problems. Few more so than idioms and idiomaticity. The following pages will show, I hope, that idioms and idiomaticity are pervasive features of a language. As such, they demand from the analyst who wishes to do justice to this pervasiveness a sense of the amplitude of language both in general and particular terms. What this means in practice is that in talking about idioms and idiomaticity the idiomatologist must also talk about the vocabulary, syntax, semantics, and sociolinguistics of a language, and adopt, preferably, a theoretical 'consensus' orientation for this purpose. This is another way of saying that general linguistics provides the best background and training for an idiomatologist.

For the opportunity to acquire such a background and training I am indebted to the linguistics discipline of Macquarie University, as established and developed by Arthur Delbridge and developed further by his successor, Christopher Candlin. The eclectic philosophy adopted by the linguistics discipline there, permitting as it does different linguistic persuasions as well as a range of courses in theoretical and applied linguistics to be taught, makes life congenial for the general linguist. In such an environment a linguist is free to teach in several areas, adopting different orientations, as I did, in syntax, semantics, contrastive linguistics, sociolinguistics, and language learning at various periods in the many years I spent at Macquarie University. Also helpful in enlarging and shaping my understanding of how language works, more specifically how English works, was the experience I gained in the English Unit of the Sri Lankan Education Department, where I was involved in the mid 1960s in preparing language learning materials for use in local schools. Periods spent overseas as a visiting scholar at the universities of Edinburgh, Exeter, London, Reading, Birmingham, and Pennsylvania have contributed to my understanding not only of language but also to my understanding of linguistic scholarship. All these experiences have in one way or another shaped this book.

The immediate inspiration for this work, however, was a thesis completed in 1981, though this book adopts a theme and a focus very different from its progenitor. These changes, which have considerably enlarged the scope of my earlier research on idioms and idiomaticity, I owe to John Sinclair and Ronald Carter, the editors of this series, who offered several valuable suggestions and comments. I found their comments on the importance of focussing on collocations—a focus which allowed the inclusion of many areas of investigation and their associated language forms

## Acknowledgements

which might otherwise have been ignored—especially valuable. Several others, known and unknown, have also helped shape this book, either by commenting on drafts of this book or on my earlier work on idioms. Among those known are Arthur Delbridge, Roger Flavell, Michael Halliday, Reinhard Hartmann, Marlena Norst, and Euan Reid. Needless to say, any shortcomings that may still exist are entirely my own.

Nic Witton (Modern Languages, Macquarie University) gave me much needed and generous help in understanding how adverb particles work in German, and Pearl Adisheshan (Institute of Languages, New South Wales) provided me with useful material on teaching multiword expressions of various sorts.

My bibliography is another testimony of the debt I owe to numerous scholars working in the same or related fields. I should, however, like to make special mention of three idiom dictionaries: *The Longman Dictionary of English Idioms* (1979) and *The Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English, Volume 1* (1975) and *Volume 2* (1983). I have drawn on all three in framing slightly modified definitions for particular idioms, but these make no significant difference to their meanings.

Last but by no means least, are my students. They have greatly enhanced my intellectual life by their interest, enthusiasm, and appreciation. Their contribution to this work is evident in several of the examples cited. Their questions, observations, and disagreements on a variety of topics, some of which have been dealt with here, have made me revise my thinking on specific points, and have contributed to greater precision in my analysis of data.

Many people have contributed to getting the nuts and bolts of this book into place. Christopher Candlin first drew my attention to this topic in the flyer announcing the Describing English Language series in 1987, one of those chance happenings with fruitful results.

Thanks are due to Ron Carter for permitting me to air various issues and anxieties in a six-year correspondence.

I would also like to thank David Wilson, formerly of Oxford University Press and now of the Université de Neuchâtel, who contributed to the clarification of the overall theme of the book over a pleasant lunch, and, with Antoinette Meehan of Oxford University Press, provided sympathetic support and editorial expertise. Their careful and microscopic scrutiny of the manuscript resulted in the elimination of many inconsistencies and in the development of several of my observations throughout the text.

Finally, I am very grateful to Corinne Cheung, Barbara Albertini, and Mary Feely for the dedication they brought to putting my typescript on disk, a service which has helped significantly in the materialisation of this book.

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The author and publishers would also like to thank the following for permission to reproduce material that falls within their copyright:

Collins Dictionaries, HarperCollins, London, for extracts from The Birmingham Collection of English Text.

New South Wales University Press, Australia, for an extract from *Engendered Fictions* by A. Cranny-Francis (1992).

# The author and series editors

**Chitra Fernando** lectured in the School of English, Linguistics, and Media at Macquarie University, Sydney from 1968 to 1994. Before that she worked in the English Language Unit of the Education Department in Colombo, Sri Lanka and in the English Department of the Government Teacher Training College, Colombo District. While at Macquarie University, she taught courses in syntax, semantics, language and culture contact, the language component in migration studies, and teaching English to migrants. Her research has been in the areas of idiomatology, bilingualism, and language policy.

**John Sinclair** has been Professor of Modern English Language at the University of Birmingham since 1965. His main areas of research are discourse (both spoken and written) and computational linguistics—with particular emphasis on the study of very long texts. He has been consultant/adviser to a number of groups, including, among others, the Bullock Committee, The British Council, and the National Congress for Languages in Education. He holds the title of Adjunct Professor in Jiao Tong University, Shanghai. Professor Sinclair has published extensively, and is currently Editor-in-Chief of the Cobuild project at Birmingham University.

**Ronald Carter** is Professor of Modern English Language in the Department of English Studies at the University of Nottingham, where he has taught since 1979. He has been Chairman of the Poetics and Linguistics Association of Great Britain, a member of CNAA panels for Humanities, and a member of the Literature Advisory Committee of The British Council. Professor Carter has published widely in the areas of language and education, applied linguistics, and literary linguistics. He has been Director of the Centre for English Language Education at the University of Nottingham, and from 1989 to 1992 was National Co-ordinator for Language in the National Curriculum.

# Foreword

## Describing English Language

The Describing English Language series provides much-needed descriptions of modern English. Analysis of extended naturally-occurring texts, spoken and written, and, in particular, computer processing of texts have revealed quite unsuspected patterns of language. Traditional descriptive frameworks are normally not able to account for or accommodate such phenomena, and new approaches are required. This series aims to meet the challenge of describing linguistic features as they are encountered in real contexts of use in extended stretches of discourse. Accordingly, and taking the revelations of recent research into account, each book in the series will make appropriate reference to corpora of naturally-occurring data.

The series will cover most areas of the continuum between theoretical and applied linguistics, converging around the mid-point suggested by the term 'descriptive'. In this way, we believe the series can be of maximum potential usefulness.

One principal aim of the series is to exploit the relevance to teaching of an increased emphasis on the description of naturally-occurring stretches of language. To this end, the books are illustrated with frequent references to examples of language use. Contributors to the series will consider both the substantial changes taking place in our understanding of the English language and the inevitable effect of such changes upon syllabus specifications, design of materials, and choice of method.

John Sinclair, *University of Birmingham*  
Ronald Carter, *University of Nottingham*

## **Idioms and Idiomaticity**

It has become something of a commonplace recently to read that vocabulary has become the neglected area of language study; however, even after ten years or so of sustained attempts to address this neglect, it is still not unusual to read such statements about vocabulary. One reason for the recurrence of such commonplaces is that they remain true.

In this series issues in the description and study of lexis have received explicit treatment in books by John Sinclair and by Michael Hoey. Chitra Fernando's book continues the line by focusing on idioms and idiomacity, an area which is, paradoxically, one in which a lot of knowledge is felt to have been accumulated but which Chitra Fernando demonstrates to be a continuingly complex and demanding topic.

One main reason for the fascination of Fernando's book is that she moves the study of idiom firmly out of the domain of the phrase and the sentence into a consideration of the function of idioms in contexts of communication. This enables an exploration of the role and function of idioms in texts and discourses, both spoken and written, and in this process Fernando makes valuable contributions to our understanding of the role of idiomatic expressions in the construction of interpersonal meanings, in the formation of coherent text, and in the creation of stylistic effects. By taking a more discursive view she also convincingly demonstrates the bipolar nature of idiomacity in the balance between routinized expression and linguistic creativity. She does this without sacrificing the rigorous and systematic analysis of idiom structure which has characterized many previous studies.

Chitra Fernando's book has had a long gestation and in her painstaking approach to evidence she has followed meticulously the series principle of seeking out corpora of naturally-occurring data in support of statements. In recent years she has suffered a long and painful illness and has undertaken this task with particular fortitude. She is committed to an innovative approach and to saying new things. In the view of both John Sinclair and myself she has achieved this goal with this book.

Ronald Carter

# Text data, its sources, and presentation

Data labelled [A] describes the author's data, which consists of conversations taken down verbatim after occurrence, and texts taken from real-life communication such as letters, advertisements, notices, etc. In some places it was necessary to invent examples, and these are labelled [I]. Data was also used from The Birmingham Collection of English Text, and this is labelled [BCET]. Elsewhere information about the source of the data is given in parentheses.

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