

序

人对任何事物和现象的认识无一例外地遵循由表及里、由个体到整体、由现象到理论的规律,对我们自身使用的语言也是如此。

习语是人类语言的普遍现象,它存在于任何一种语言之中。习语生动活泼、言简意赅的表达能力,再加之它和特定文化的紧密关联,使它很早就引起了不少学者的注意,并对这一特殊的语言表达方式开展了研究。但初期的研究大多数停留在表层,其成果大多是把一种语言中的习语汇编成册的习语词典之类,或是追溯习语历史及文化渊源的习语故事之类,或是比较两种语言中的习语试图寻找对等的表达方式的习语翻译研究之类。

上个世纪后半叶,语言学的深入和发展为习语的研究提供了坚实的理论支撑和多元化的视角,使得我们对习语的研究有可能从表面向深层发展。上世纪60年代以后,现代语言学研究出现了几个主要的流派,进而形成了几个语言学研究的分支,即形式语言学、功能语言学和认知语言学。不同的视角和不同的侧重使不同的语言学家提出了各自对习语的理解模式。可以说,至此,语言学界对习语的研究已经得到了理论的升华。对这一阶段中出现的各种主要的习语研究的理论模式,本专著做了颇为全面的归纳。但是,只有对前人成果进行归纳是成不了专著的,单纯的归纳也不会达到很高的学术水平。本专著的价值就在于它的作者在前人的研究基础上提出了一个新的解读英语习语的理论模式,她把这一模式称之为“习语的整合处理法”。

顾名思义,整合处理法把习语看作一个整体,在对习语进行解读时不是从某个单一的视角出发,也不是采用某种单一的方法,而是把句法、语义、语用、认知及社会文化等要素一并综合考虑。这样的“综合”法无疑要比先前的“单一”法能更全面、更深入地揭示习语的意义。用这种方法发现的习语的意义势必不会是停留在语言表层的单纯语言意义,而是在特定的文化背景、特定的交际场合

下习语所具有的体现使用者意图、感情和态度的意义,也就是我们通常说的语用意义。“整合处理法”纳入了语用、文化和认知等所谓的“语言外”因素,体现了当今语言学研究的主流和宽广的视角。这样的研究方法显然要比以前单一途径的研究向前大大迈了一步。这正是本专著的学术价值所在。“整合处理法”的提出对今后习语的进一步研究必将具有重要的借鉴意义。

除了它的理论意义外,本专著还具有重大的应用价值。“整合处理法”对于在外语,尤其是英语的教学过程中如何使学生真正理解习语的意义,并且能确切地运用习语,具有很大的指导意义。由于对习语的意义缺乏正确的认识而导致误用,乃至在交际过程中闹出笑话的情况屡见不鲜。“整合处理法”对教师、对学生以及其他使用外语作为工具的人都会带来裨益。本专著的作者是一位有着多年英语教学经验的教师,我想她撰写本专著的灵感(如果写学术专著也可以和艺术家的创作一样是受到灵感的驱动的话)极可能是来源于她本人在教学过程中的亲身体会,在讲授习语时她遭遇到了问题,便开始积极地寻求解决问题的途径和方法,其探索的结果便是她的“整合处理法”,而这一方法的有效性和可行性也很可能已经在她本人的教学过程中得到了验证。

最后值得一提的是,本专著引用的英语习语十分丰富,作者所使用的英语十分规范、地道。这显然也是和作者的教育背景和工作阅历分不开的。我本人感到阅读这本专著并不像阅读某些行文晦涩、对读者不那么友好的学术专著那样艰辛、令人困惑;这次的阅读感受与以前完全不同,流畅的行文、丰富生动的例子使得阅读本专著成为了一种愉悦,一种令人感到满足的学术收获。希望诸位读者能和我分享这一感受。

何兆熊

上海外国语大学

2007年3月

摘 要^①

习语作为一种相对固定的表达用语,渗透于人们的日常语言活动,具有形象生动、简洁明快的特点,并且蕴涵着丰富的社会文化信息。然而,习语有何形态特征和意义特征,有何词汇变异和句法转换规律,如何理解和使用等,尚无明确的定论。正是由于习语的多元化特性,习语在语言教学中往往处于边缘化的境遇。一些语言学生对习语的认识停留在囫囵记忆,知其然而不知其所以然的层面上,很少体会到习语的语用价值、认知效应及独特生命力。因此,对习语作全方位的描述和处理是一项艰巨的任务。在第二语言或外语习得领域,习语问题尤为值得关注和探究。

本书首先对习语的形成及其特性作了共时和历时的描述,进而对处理习语的不同方法和模式展开评述,最后从总体整合的视角集中探讨了以概念结构为依据的习语处理方法即整合处理法。

相对个体论而言的整体论注重整体而不偏重于将总体分解或分割成部分,并强调整体的重要性以及部分之间的相互依赖性,这是习语整合处理法的理论依据。现对这一方法作如下概括:

整合处理法的特征之一是:对相关背景知识和信息、形成习语构建成分意义的基本概念以及由此引申出的假设和蕴涵作总体整合。

其次,整合处理法旨在将部分或个体组合成有机的统一体。具体而言,在处理习语时,将句法、语义、语用、认知和社会文化五

^① 本书作者王颖,复旦大学文学博士、英语语言文学副教授。曾担任复旦大学外文系副系主任,现为复旦大学教务处副处长,上海市教育评估协会会员,兼任教育部《中国大学教学》审稿专家,香港时代生活丛书出版社及 Reader's Digest Association Far East Limited 特约翻译。主要研究兴趣包括:词汇学、语用学、高等教育教学管理。近年来发表学术论文十余篇,出版《福克纳文集—掠夺者》(上海译文出版社,2004年4月)等译著,编纂《新英汉英语同义词词典》(上海译文出版社,2004年2月),主持上海市高等教育学会研究课题“创新人才培养与通识教育课程优化管理”,并先后荣获上海市优秀教学成果二等奖和一等奖。

大要素整合成有机的统一体。

再者,整合处理法作为一种动态的研究方法将习语看作是实际运用中生成的概念结构。本书主要探讨习语如何以一种在线、实时结构出现在真实的语境中或特定的语篇中,语言学习者如何获得对习语的准确理解或解释。现举例说明。

true to form 的词典释义为“一如往常”。

True to form, John turned up late.

True to form, when it came to his turn to buy the drinks, he said he'd left his wallet at home.

True to form, Hurricane Wilma is projected to come ashore near Naples, Florida in just a few hours.

True to form, Britain has promoted the interests of corporations, not of Africa at the G8 (the Group of the Eight Countries).

(*Melbourne Indymedia, July 2005*)

从结构上分析,这一习语大体上总是位于句首,且用逗号与句子主体分开。如采用整合处理法就会发现“一如往常”这一词典释义并不确切。以最后一句为例。该句中的 *true to form* 间接地表达了不赞成甚至谴责的态度,暗示了八国集团一再要求非洲发展中国家采取自由贸易政策,为西方发达国家创造有利的贸易环境这一恃强凌弱的行为以及由此造成的使非洲国家丧失贸易调控杠杆、加剧贫穷走势的后果。在这一特定的上下文中, *true to form* 作为一个出现在真实语境中的概念结构具有特定的蕴涵,即“故态复萌”、“故伎重演”。这一意义由该习语的句法、语义、语用及社会文化等要素整合而成。

本书旨在向读者展示在生成和解释习语时,如何通过整合处理法将思想映射到语言中使形式与内涵匹配,并试图扩展这一研究用于语言学习,以最有效的方法来处理语言中的习语现象。

英语习语整合处理法的提出具有一定的原创性。自上世纪60年代以来,随着习语研究的逐渐展开,由形式语言学、功能语言学、认知语言学等不同的理论构架衍生出一系列的习语理解模式,如 Lexical Processing Model (Bobrow & Bell, 1973), Simultaneous Processing Model (Swinney & Cutler, 1979), Configuration Model (Cacciari & Tabossi, 1988) 及 Decomposition Processing Model (Gibbs *et al.*, 1989) 等。这些模式的构建无一例外是以母语人群

为适用对象的。就目前而言,针对非母语人群的习语研究尚未形成气候,现有少量文献(Lathey, 1986; Lennon, 1998; Cooper, 1999)局限于提供一些操作层面的教学细节提示。正是在这样的研究背景下,作者尝试探索出一个针对非母语者的英语习语整合处理法,旨在抛砖引玉,一方面对英语习语的教学提供些许启示或参考,另一方面激发对这一领域更深入的兴趣和探究。

全书由六章组成。第一章简要介绍了习语研究的历史背景,展示了理解和掌握习语与语言习得间的必然关联,并对本书的写作意图、总体构架以及语料收集作了概述。

第二章首先探讨了习语形成的一般过程,习语与单词、习语与其他固定表达用语的区别,以及习语内在的多重特性。在此前提下,通过对已有习语定义的比较分析,本章提出了更能如实反映习语多样性的描述性定义,强调了习语在形象生动、简约明快的表达形式下传递出的丰富内涵。

第三章回顾了自上世纪60年代后期以来的习语研究历程。近四十年来,形式语言学、功能语言学以及认知语言学分别从各自的视角出发关注着习语的分类、习语的变异、习语的喻义和本义间的关系等共同问题,并相继确立了各自的习语理解模式。本章对采用这三种研究方法开展的习语研究作了较为详尽的探讨,着重分析比较了各自代表性的成果如 Bruce Fraser (1970)的习语固化分级, Fernando (1996), Cacciari 和 Glucksberg (1991, 1993)的习语功能化分类, Vega-Moreno (2001)的关联论判释法, Cacciari 和 Tabossi (1988)的完形模式, Gibbs 和 Nayak (1989)的习语分解模式以及 Gibbs (1994)的隐喻模式。这三种研究方法的启示和整合,奠定了本书后续章节的理论基础。

第四章将视线转向了习语在实际语境中表现出来的词汇特征和句法特征。前一章中所讨论的理论构架在本章中得到了整合并用于分析、归纳采自 Riehemann (2001)、Moon (1998)的语料库研究和 Cowie 等人(1993)的习语词典的原始例证,同时也包括了作者本人在日常阅读中积累的第一手语料。这些语料所展示的习语变异和句型转换带有一定的规律,对语言教学尤其是习语教学的有效开展具有针对性的指导意义。

第五章提出了适用于非母语者的英语习语整合处理法。这一方法的理论构思,在肯定了形式语言学对习语形态和结构描述的

同时,更强调习语的交际功能、语用价值和认知效应,因而明确了语用能力、形象表达能力和社会文化能力的均衡开发应该贯穿习语教学乃至英语教学的全过程。根据这一原则,结合作者的实际教学积累,习语整合处理法进一步推出了具体的习语处理策略,旨在引导学习者对习语的相关背景信息、内在语义结构以及外部语境等进行分析、推理、联想、类比并加以整合,达到预期的、准确的理解。

第六章对本课题做出总结,认为习语内在的多元特性决定了对习语的研究必须整合形式、功能、认知三个不同的视角加以审视。习语整合处理法体现了这三种研究方法相辅相成的内在联系,是针对非母语者开展英语习语教学的有效途径。本章对如何完善这一方法提出了建议,如进一步探讨习语变异的其他类型以及针对性的教学策略;进一步比较习语的形式化分类与功能化分类间的优势互补关系及对教学的意义;尝试探寻习语的喻义与另一种形象思维倾向——潜在借喻结构之间的关系。

关键词: 整合处理法; 习语理解; 习语可分解性; 习语可变通性

Abstract

Idioms belong to the vast family of fixed expressions including collocations, proverbs, clichés, speech formulas, and so forth that shares some degree of conventionalization of meaning yet at the same time differs in semantic as well as syntactic properties. A large part of our everyday linguistic repertoire is formed by these conventionalized ways of saying things. Nonetheless, the task of describing what an idiom is, and how it is processed and understood, is still a rather challenging and controversial one, particularly in second or foreign language acquisition. Idioms remain to be viewed by a good many language teachers as mere quirks of the language, used randomly or without much motivation. They have been relegated to the sidelines of language teaching. Students are usually left with memorizing idioms as chunks and using them in some gap-filling exercises without much context. With only a superficial knowledge of idioms, they find themselves at a distinct disadvantage in their readings, discussions, debates and communication with native speakers. How idioms are processed by non-native speakers is definitely a non-negligible area deserving keen observation and detailed investigation.

This book starts with a synchronic and diachronic delineation of distinctive properties of idioms, then proceeds on to a critical review of different approaches (formal, functional, and psycholinguistic) and models for processing idioms (the Lexical Processing Model, the Simultaneous Processing Model, the Configuration Model, The Decomposition Processing Model) and finally focuses on a conceptual structure-based approach from the perspective of holistic integration — a holistic approach to English idioms for non-native speakers.

As opposed to atomism, holism is concerned with wholes rather than analysis or separation into parts and emphasizes the importance of

the whole and the interdependence of its components. The holistic approach to English idioms motivated by this theory can be epitomized as follows.

One of the hallmarks of this approach is the holistic integration of information from background knowledge, the concepts underlying constituent word meanings and the assumptions and implications arising from them.

Secondly, this approach aims at organizing parts into an organic, unified whole. To be more specific, holism-based idiom access involves integrating syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, cognitive and sociocultural factors into an organic, unified whole when an idiom is processed.

Thirdly, as a dynamic approach, the holistic approach treats an idiom as a conceptual structure occurring as an on-line, real-time construction in an actual environment or in a particular text or context.

By way of illustration, evidence is provided to fortify the arguments as presented in this book.

true to form: being or behaving as expected; in the usual, typical or characteristic way (dictionary explanation)

True to form, John turned up late.

True to form, when it came to his turn to buy the drinks, he said he'd left his wallet at home.

True to form, Hurricane Wilma is projected to come ashore near Naples, Florida in just a few hours.

True to form, Britain has promoted the interests of corporations, not of Africa, at the G8 (the Group of the Eight Countries).

(*Melbourne Indymedia*, July 2005)

A structural analysis of the idiom shows that it is invariably positioned at the beginning and separated by a comma from the main framework of the sentence. A holistic examination of the idiom as it occurs in the particular context will reveal the inadequacy of the sole reliance on the syntactic analysis and make it necessary to improve the dictionary explanation. In the last case for instance, the idiom *true to form* in that particular context conveys an indirect reproach of the G8

agreement made for the benefit of rich countries. It hints at the G8's undesirable practice of requiring African countries to pursue the free trade policy and create more favorable business environment for western companies. This goal of free trade for poor countries is a recipe for deepening poverty as it deprives them of levers to regulate trade for development.

The foregoing anatomy of the idiom is a typical example of the holistic approach processing an idiom as an on-line, real-time construction in a natural linguistic habitat.

This book is intended to show the reader how to map thought to language and match form to meaning in the generation and interpretation of an idiom. It seeks to extend the holistic research to language learning so that a non-native speaker can process a language in the most effective possible way.

This book consists of six chapters. A preview of each chapter is provided as follows.

Chapter One highlights the important relationship between idiom comprehension and language acquisition by providing the background knowledge of idiom studies. It also outlines the objective of the book, the process of data collection as well as the configuration of the project.

Chapter Two is devoted to presenting a true-to-life picture of the idiom by examining the general way it is formed, its relationships with the word or other prefabricated chunks, and its peculiar characteristics including decomposability, institutionalization, restrained flexibility, figuration and affect.

Chapter Three turns to review the theoretical studies on idioms over the past few decades since the 1960s covering a variety of topics: idiom classification, idiom variation, idiom use and comprehension, and idiom teaching. The three approaches (formal, functional and psycholinguistic) and the diversified findings are very consequential in laying a solid foundation for the present study. The discussions in this chapter pave the way for an integrated analysis of idiom flexibility and productivity made in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four integrates and applies the theoretical frameworks developed so far to examining the lexical and syntactic features of idioms. By using authentic examples and including naturally occurring variants, this chapter demonstrates that idioms do not always occur in their canonical forms and creative or unpredictable uses arise in authentic discourse. It shows further how idiom compositionality combines with context as well as general world knowledge to constrain or motivate idiom variation and productivity.

Chapter Five brings forth a holistic approach to English idioms for non-native speakers and recommends developing different types of competence and different strategies for holistic access to English idioms. This approach is intended to provide learners with constructive guidelines to make idiom comprehension and language learning more enjoyable and fruitful.

Chapter Six is mainly concerned with pedagogical implications of the present study and suggestions for further exploration.

Key words: a holistic approach; idiom comprehension; idiom decomposability; idiom flexibility

Contents

Chapter One Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the Present Study	1
1.2 Objective of the Present Study	5
1.3 Data Collection of the Present Study	9
1.4 Organization of the Present Study	11
Chapter Two Description and Characterization of Idioms ...	15
2.1 Describing Idioms	15
2.1.1 Formation of Idioms	16
2.1.2 Types of Idiom Collections	17
2.1.3 Relationship: Idioms & Words	18
2.1.4 Relationships: Idioms & Other Fixed Expressions	20
2.2 Characterizing Idioms	23
2.2.1 Distinct Properties	24
2.2.2 General Delineation	50
Chapter Three Idiom Studies: Different Approaches	53
3.1 Formal Approaches	53
3.1.1 Bruce Fraser (1970)	54
3.1.2 Adam Makkai (1972)	56
3.1.3 Rosamund Moon (1998)	58
3.2 Functional Approaches	62
3.2.1 Jury Strassler (1982)	62
3.2.2 Cristina Cacciari & Sam Glucksberg (1991, 1993)	63
3.2.3 Chitra Fernando (1996)	66
3.2.4 Rachel Giora (1997)	69
3.2.5 Rosa Elena Vega-Moreno (2001)	70

3.3	Psycholinguistic Approaches	74
3.3.1	S. Bobrow & S. Bell (1973)	75
3.3.2	D. A. Swinney & A. Cutler (1979)	75
3.3.3	Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. (1980)	76
3.3.4	C. Cacciari & P. Tabossi (1988)	78
3.3.5	R. W. Gibbs, Jr. & N. P. Nayak (1989)	80
3.3.6	R. W. Gibbs, Jr. <i>et al.</i> (1990-1995)	86
Chapter Four Flexibility & Productivity of Idioms		92
4.1	Lexical Flexibility	93
4.1.1	Structural Variety	94
4.1.2	Variation Generation	119
4.1.3	Variation Patterns	120
4.1.3.1	Verb Variation	120
4.1.3.2	Noun Variation	126
4.1.3.3	Modifier Variation	134
4.1.3.4	Miscellaneous Variation	138
4.1.3.5	Variation between American and British English	140
4.1.3.6	False Variation	142
4.1.4	Regularity of Variation	148
4.1.5	Variation Constraint & Comprehension	151
4.1.6	Case Study: Relevance-Driven Variation Comprehension	154
4.2	Syntactic Versatility	156
4.2.1	Nominalization	157
4.2.2	Pronominalization	160
4.2.3	Passivization	161
4.2.4	Topicalization	164
4.2.5	Modification by Relative Clauses	166
4.2.6	There Construction	168
4.2.7	Comparative Construction	170
4.2.8	Other Transformations	172
4.2.9	Nonce Uses of Idioms	174

Chapter Five A Holistic Approach to English Idioms	183
5.1 Developing Pragmatic Competence	186
5.2 Developing Figurative Competence	199
5.3 Developing Sociocultural Competence	205
5.4 Integrating Processing Strategies	218
Chapter Six Conclusions	223
6.1 Representation of Idioms	223
6.2 Enlightenment from Previous Studies	226
6.3 Compositionality and Flexibility	233
6.4 Pedagogical Implications	235
6.5 Suggestions for Further Exploration	238
References	241
Appendix I List of Dictionaries Consulted	255
Appendix II Tentative Classification of Fixed Expressions in English Lexicon	257
Appendix III Figurative Patterns Underlying Current English Idioms	260
Appendix IV English Idioms with Respect to Fraser's Frozen Hierarchy	265
Appendix V Makkai's Categorization of Idioms	267
Appendix VI Fernando's Categorization of English Idioms	270
Appendix VII Representative Examples of Conceptual Metaphors	272

Introduction

Idioms are pervasive. A large part of our everyday linguistic repertoire is formed by idioms. They arise in the natural use of natural language. The creation of idioms reflects new ways in which individuals construct concepts of the world and convey them vividly. People enjoy idioms for their incisiveness, their frequent wit, their polish, and their savor. Familiarity with a wide range of idioms and the ability to use them appropriately in context are among the distinguishing marks of a native-like command of language.

1.1 Background of the Present Study

Discourse will normally require a successful blend of conventionalized and original language. Fillmore (1979) maintains that formulaic language is far more pervasive than is often realized and that mastery of idioms and other formulae contributes to fluent performance characteristic of the able native speaker:

“[...] the strategy of acquiring formulaic language is central to the learning of language; indeed, it is the step that puts the learner in a position to perform the analysis which is prerequisite to acquisition. Formulaic language constitutes the linguistic material on which a large part of their (learner's) analytical activities could be carried out.” (640)

British linguist John Sinclair (1991) goes so far as to suggest that “the idiom principle” may well be the basic underlying principle

of language production under normal circumstances. Drawing on his decades of investigating vast quantities of naturally occurring language as part of the University of Birmingham/Collins Publishers Cobuild project, he puts forward his theory of “the idiom principle” forcefully:

“[...] a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analyzable into segments. To some extent, this may reflect the recurrence of similar situations in human affairs; it may illustrate a natural tendency to economy of effort; or it may be motivated in part by the exigencies of real-time conversation.” (110)

According to Sinclair, there is no doubt of the role of idioms in facilitating interaction by, for instance, indicating the speaker’s/writer’s attitude, evaluating people or events, directing the discourse, or alluding to shared knowledge or experience.

The last few decades have witnessed, alongside a general move towards sociolinguistics and pragmatics, an important number of studies (Fraser, 1970; Makkai, 1972; Bobrow & Bell, 1973; Swinney & Cutler, 1979; Strassler, 1982; Cacciari & Tabossi, 1988; Gibbs & Nayak, 1989; Cacciari & Glucksberg, 1991, 1993; Gibbs, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1995; Fernando, 1996; Giora, 1997; Moon, 1998; Vega-Moreno, 2001) turning their attention to idiom representation and processing that cover semantic, structural, functional and cognitive descriptions of idioms. Various classes of idioms have been proposed. While Fraser and Makkai study mainly the formal aspects of idioms, Fernando’s work classifies idioms according to the function they have in human discourse. According to Fernando and others with the same perspective, idioms in general reflect social norms and beliefs by tapping deeply into the world that accompanies language. Attitudes and norms are often inextricably bound up with idiomatic expressions. People resort to idioms not only to communicate propositional content but also to reflect upon and express attitudes and emotions. In some cases, idioms function as a kind of euphemism, the use of which

makes it more socially acceptable to make comments on events or people than the use of a non-idiomatic expression would be. To learn a culture's idioms, therefore, learners need to be made aware of the context in which the idioms occur. It is very often impossible to infer the meaning of an idiom until it is seen in its immediate context. The people, the settings and the themes involved in any text are indispensable cues for the grasping of idioms' functional force. Through an understanding of the function of idioms it becomes easier to understand the nuances between idioms that appear synonymous. For example, *to lure someone into a trap* and *to walk into someone's trap*, the first describes a negative effect on the person being lured and the second on the actor (Lattey, 1986: 225).

The multitude of types of classification reflects the inherent difficulty in drawing clear dividing lines among idioms. There is no sharp boundary separating categories. There are always differences within categories and similarities between categories that fuzz up any form of classification.

In addition, different models for processing idioms based on carefully conducted experiments and investigations have been recommended by the researchers from semantic, structural, functional, and cognitive perspectives: the Literal Processing Model (Bobrow & Bell, 1973), the Simultaneous Processing Model (Swinney & Cutler, 1979), the Idiomatic Processing Model (Gibbs, 1980), the Configuration Model (Cacciari & Tabossi, 1988), the Idiom Decomposition Model (Gibbs & Nayak, 1989), the Conceptual Metaphor Model (Gibbs, 1994), the Graded Salience Hypothesis (Giora, 1997) and the Relevance-Driven Comprehension Procedure (Vega-Moreno, 2001). These models have provided, in one way or another, a semantically adequate, pragmatically feasible or cognitively plausible clarification for the use and comprehension of idioms.

Among various models, the Conceptual Metaphor Model is very influential. To ascertain the way in which abstract terms are conceptualized in the human mind is a challenge which has been undertaken by many philosophers, psychologists, anthropologists, and linguists. The

leading figures of cognitive linguistics, and in particular its experiential branch, George Lakoff and Raymond Gibbs, have developed a substantial theoretical framework based on how people perceive, conceptualize and categorize the world around them. In his famous publication *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* (1987), Lakoff argues that metaphors play an important role in the way in which people conceptualize the world around them. Metaphors permeate language to the extent that much of our thinking is metaphorical and our everyday experience is reflected in the language we use. This is especially important in the case of idioms, many of which are motivated by metaphorical thinking though people are usually unable to interpret the underlying metaphors. Through the instrumentality of metaphors, the more abstract areas of experience can be conceptualized in terms of more concrete images. We can see this in *hand in glove* which describes two or more people in the close juxtaposition exhibited by a hand and a glove when the hand is wearing the glove (Lakoff, 1987: 271). Based on this assertion, Gibbs brings up a new alternative analysis to the study of idioms and shows that cognitive strategies may be at work when people interpret idioms. Although there may have been different cultural connotations for different speech communities, there are also general social, moral and political values which may prevail in different cultures. Therefore, idioms of different languages may have much in common in terms of the underlying conceptual metaphors. For instance, idioms which make use of parts of the human body are very popular across different speech communities because people share much the same perception of the shape and function of the individual parts of the human body.

There is an indication that interdisciplinarity has become part of idiom research. The multiplicity and intricacy of idioms determine that no single theory or model can fully justify all kinds of idioms used in the panorama of discourse situation. Therefore it is sensible for us to handle idioms of great diversity in a holistic way by incorporating the marrow of theories that have been put forward to account for divergent aspects of idioms.