Complex **Idiom** Modification

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International Conference on Advance in
Education, Humanities and Language (ICEL)

October 25, 2023

Introduction

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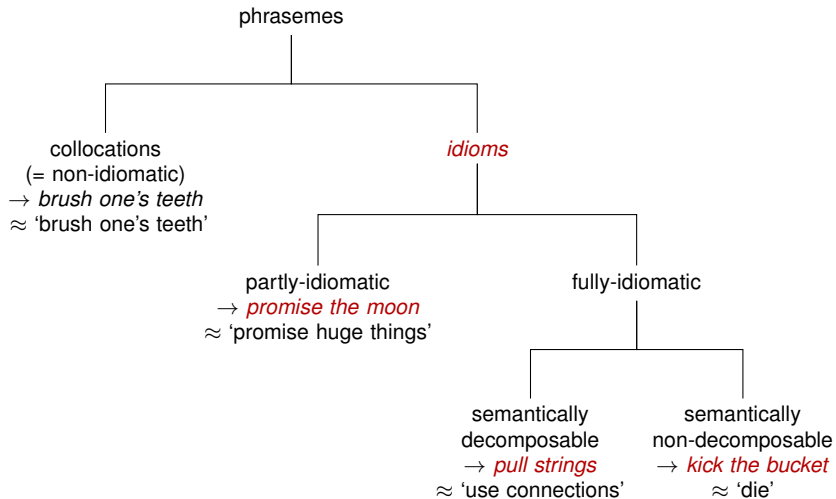 the meanings that the same words have outside of the expression.

  - ▶ **b)** distinguishes idioms from collocations, like *brush one's teeth*, but
    includes fully-idiomatic idioms, like *pull strings* ('use connections'), and
    partly-idiomatic idioms, like *promise the moon* ('promise huge things').

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⇒ **Neither type is without internal structure**.

Ernst (1981)

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For further discussion of modification in idioms, see also Stathi (2007), Cserép (2010), McClure (2011), Sailer (2017), and others.

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(2)   In spite of its conservatism, many people were eager to
       jump on the <u>horse-drawn</u> <u>Reagan</u> *bandwagon*.

       $\sim$ to join the outdated Reagan movement

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(3)   He *came apart at the* <u>political</u> *seams*.
       ∼ <u>Politically</u>, he *came apart at the seams*.

       come apart at the seams ≈ 'fail'

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(4)   In spite of the treatment the other refugees received from the rescue
       party in the desert, he *bit his* <u>thirst-swollen</u> *tongue* and kept to himself.

       bite one's tongue ≈ 'stop oneself from saying sth.'

Conjunction modification

pull x's leg + **cross-gartered**

(5)   Malvolio deserves almost everything he gets, but ... there is
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         p_1 & p_2: 'We playfully deceived Malvolio,
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NB:
Literal and idiomatic meanings can simply be retrieved from the lexicon $\rightarrow$ direct access
Figurative interpretations and inferences are based on literal meanings $\rightarrow$ indirect access

kick the bucket **+ <u>golden</u>**

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	p_1 & $p_{2'}$: 'Hugo Chávez died, and Hugo Chávez was rich.'

bite the dust + __blood-spattered__

(8)   It was the great Trinity of the French Revolution, and you can still
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       'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity'. But the greatest of these, it turns out,
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$\leadsto_{inf}$ $p_{2'}$:   'The ground/location was blood-spattered.'
$\leadsto_{inf}$ $p_{2''}$:   'People lost their lives.' (not far-fetched in the above context)

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　　　　　$p_{1'}$ & $p_{2''}$:　'Liberty was no longer pursued, and people lost their lives.'

Conclusion

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2. There is a secondary proposition p_2, which can take on two forms:

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3. Sometimes, further steps are necessary:
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▶ The interpretation of the idiom excluding the additional adjective (p_1), which potentially requires a figurative/metaphorical reinterpretation ($p_{1'}$), and the literal interpretation of the idiom's object noun phrase including the adjective (p_2) are both still fairly straightforward.

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▶ Overall, the conjunction modification data suggest that the distinction between decomposable and non-decomposable idioms might not be as categorical as Nunberg et al. (1994) initially thought – see Bargmann and Sailer (2018) for further discussion.

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