Abstract

Multimodal expressions are complex linguistic phenomena (Sag et al. 2002) as they have multidimensional properties and varying degree of non-compositional properties (Nunberg et al. 1994). This poster aims at presenting a preliminary work on the identification of the fixedness degree of multimodal expressions (MVE).

1. Introduction

We specifically focus on Modern Greek and French as lexical MVE database exist with a larger coverage of encoded semantic properties of verbal MVE that are organized in the form of a lexicographic grammar (M. Gross 1986). Our study is built on the work of M. Gross (1984) for French and the work of Fotopoulou (1993) and Mini (2009) for Modern Greek.

2. Linguistic data – Method- Criteria

For our study, we constructed a small set of 65 verbal multimodal expressions for both languages. The extracted expressions have different syntactic structures in order to test the fixedness degree with respect to a series of tests. These tests are those which, in principle, enable to define a fixed expression like more and more studies show that as in Vincze (2011), Sallurere and Wintner (2014), Stone (2015). These criteria enables to evaluate the exclusive co-occurrence of expression components.

Max a cassé (les pieds + le jet + le verre) à Marie (FR)
Max broke the feet + + + to Marie
Max gets on Marie’s nerves

• Morphosyntactic criteria: non-regular restrictions apply on the determiner distribution or on the morphological variants (e.g. number), as well as on some transformations like passivation or pronominalization.

Mou κόπηκε το ήπαρ [GR]
me.PRO-GEN cut.V-3-PL-PASS the.ART-DEF liver.N-PL-ACC

* Mou κόπηκε το μάτι [GR]
me.PRO-GEN cut.V-3-PL-PASS the.ART-DEF eye.N-PL-ACC

• Semantic criteria: the meaning of the expression is non-compositional, i.e. it is not predictable from the meaning of its components, as well as on some transformations like passivation or pronominalization.

Mouve a cassé (les pieds + le jet + le verre) à Marie (FR)
Max broke the feet + + + to Marie
Max gets on Marie’s nerves

• Lexical criteria: Fixedness can be identified by testing whether there exists a paradigmatic break. These criteria enables to evaluate the exclusive co-occurrence of expression components.

Max a cassé (les pieds + le jet + le verre) à Marie (FR)
Max broke the feet + + + to Marie
Max gets on Marie’s nerves

Let’s now examine our results with the perspective of Mini et al. (2011). Grammatical and semantic tests examine:

(i) exclusive cooccurrence between the verb and its complements (nominal elements):

(ii) the meaning of the verb and its complements (literal meaning, metaphorical meaning), and the global meaning of the expression.

The combinatorics of these criteria led to two groups: compositional and non-compositional expressions.

3. Discussion - Results

Compositional expressions can be divided in two classes: quasi-typical and conventional expressions. In quasi-typical expressions, the verb keeps its meaning combining with a metaphoric element or the verb has a metaphorical meaning by extension from its literal or concrete meaning such as in η καρδιά μου (“my heart cracked”), the verb ράγισε retains the core meaning of “cracking without being cut into pieces” that it has in the sentence η καρδιά μου ράγισε.[“the glass cracked”] by a semantic extension to a non-tangible/abstract level. On the other hand, the noun καρδιά (“heart”) is a semantically autonomous constituent of the phrase since it refers to the inner emotional world. η καρδιά μου [“my heart cracked”]. Conventionalized phrases are those whose verb maintains its fundamental meaning whereas the noun has a parallel to the basic-literal meaning which is a conventionalized meaning. A conventionalized meaning is a meaning widely accepted by a linguistic community and used with all possible connotations acquired in the course of time. For example, in the phrase τον τρώει το σάρκα της ζήλειας (literally “the woodworm of jealousy eats him”) meaning “jealousy wears him out”, the verb eat retains the core meaning of wear. What differentiates this phrase from the phrase το τρώει το σάρκα του ζήλου (literally “the woodworm eats the wooden table”) is that what the phrase τον τρώει το σάρκα της ζήλειας describes is realized on an abstract level, whereas its consequences are perceived on a tangible level. In other words, one can probably recognize somebody who is jealous, but one can hardly see him “eaten alive” by jealousy. This is a first coarse-grained classification with few elements yet. We need to extend the coverage by adding new entries for both languages.

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