

Parameters of variation in the cross linguistic analysis of phraseology

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Introduction

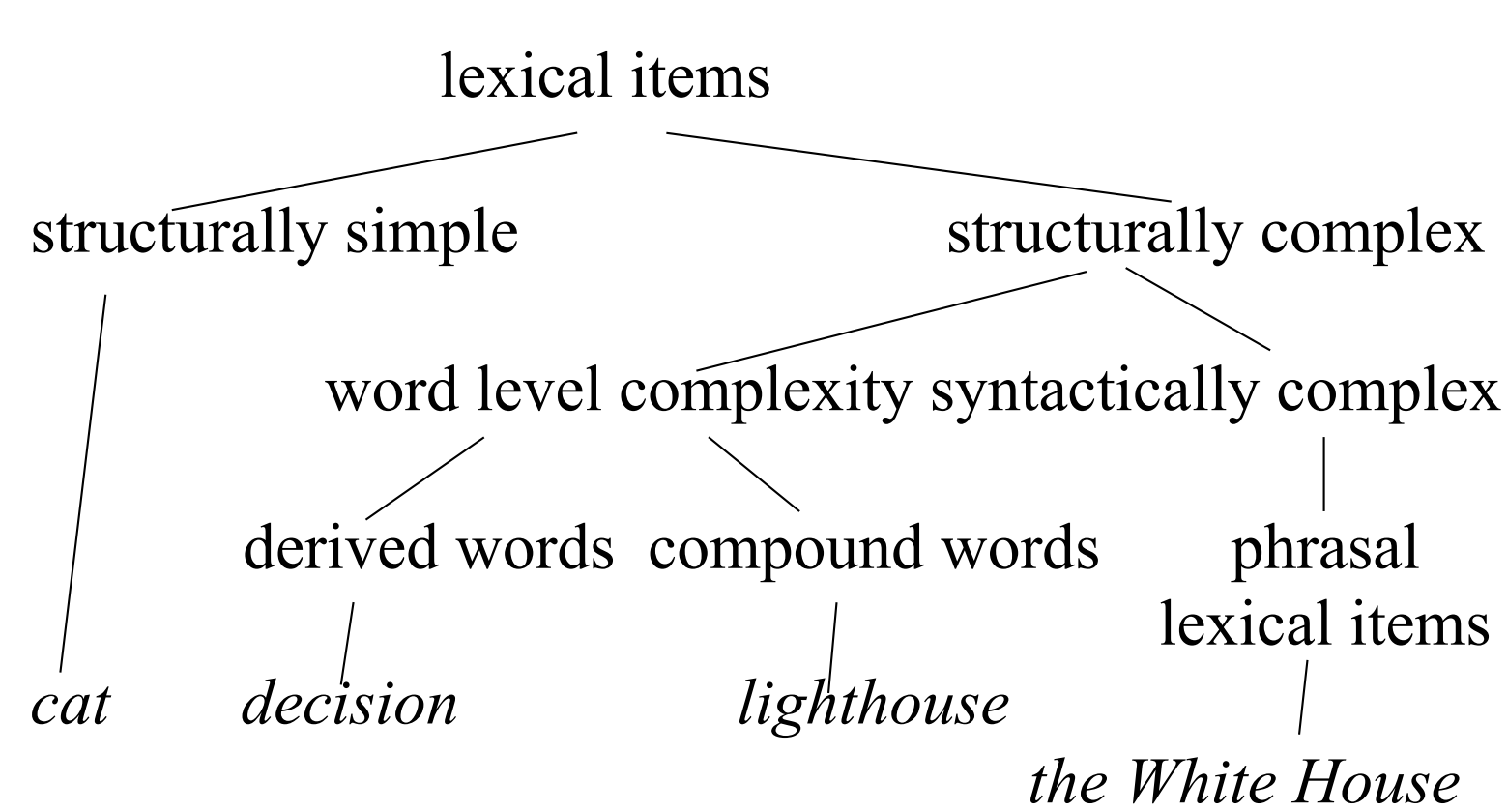
What are the central questions that need to be faced by a project on cross linguistic analysis of the phraseology of different languages?

1. What is in the phrasal lexicon of a mature native speaker of a language?
An inventory of phrasal lexical items (PLIs).
These have properties which make it necessary for them to be learned.
That is why they are stored and retrieved rather than computed. (Bresnan 1981)
2. What kinds of properties do PLIs have?
digital, e.g. obligatory plural,
and analogue, e.g. compositionality
3. What constraints does the grammar impose?
e.g. passives vs ergatives
4. Where do the idiosyncratic properties of PLIs come from?
Properties they have by virtue of being lexical items.
Properties they have by virtue of being structurally complex.
Properties they have by virtue of being phrases.

Preliminary determinations

PLIs are structural units with properties which cross classify.

1. Some properties of PLIs can also be properties of other structural types of lexical items.
Idiomatcity is not just a property of PLIs but of complex words as well, e.g. *infidelity*.
Having associated conditions of use, i.e. being a formula, is also a property of mono-morphemic words, e.g. *Hello*.
2. The properties of PLIs cross classify so that a PLI can be a restricted collocation, and semantically non compositional, and have associated conditions of use, e.g. *I declare the meeting open*.
3. Therefore the definition of a PLI must be made on structural grounds alone.



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Parameters of variation

- A. Properties of PLIs by virtue of being lexical items. These properties are also available for single words.
 1. Phonological idiosyncrasy (digital)
e.g. obligatory truncation, *I'm afraid ...*
idiosyncratic intonation contours, auction formulae (Kuiper 1996)
 2. Lexicalized conditions of use (digital),
e.g. *If it please Your Honour*.
- B. Properties by virtue of PLIs being structurally complex. These properties are shared with structurally complex words.
 1. Morphosyntactic idiosyncrasy (digital), e.g. *hands up (if ...)*
 2. Syntactic idiosyncrasy (digital)
e.g. *by and large*
 3. Semantic idiosyncrasy (analogue)
selective compositionality occurs where not all the cross product senses of words are part of the sense of the whole expression, e.g. *drive a hard bargain*
non compositionality, where the sense of a word in an expression does not occur when the word is used independently, e.g. *sit an exam*
analysability, e.g. *grasp the nettle*
- C. Properties by virtue of being phrases.
 1. Has a specific phrase structural configuration, e.g. *check DET (bank) balance* has the configuration [VP[V] [NP[DET]([N])[N]]]. (digital)
 2. Syntactic constraints
PLIs may have constrained syntax in that not all the possible phrase structural configurations the grammar allows are to be found in PLIs. (O'Grady 1998)
 3. Minimum of two lexicalized constituents, e.g. *run scared*. (digital)
This property is shared with compounds. (digital)
This property can be satisfied by the PLI having a selection set, i.e. more than one lexicalized constituent in a particular position but not a free selection, e.g. *cross NP's hand/palm with silver*.
 4. Bound words
Some words may be bound, i.e. not able to function on their own in syntax, e.g. *take umbrage at*.
 5. Restricted collocation
In what would otherwise be a position in the syntax of a phrase in which a number of semantically congruent lexical items might fit, only one (or two) are in conventional use, e.g. *set fire to NP*.

6. Slot (digital)
The syntax of a language may require certain constituents, e.g. complements of transitive verbs, possessive NPs. In a PLI these may not be filled with lexicalized material, e.g. *get NP's goat*.
Such slots may be semantically restricted in idiosyncratic ways, e.g. *give +human NP a piece of POSS mind*.
7. Optional constituent (probably digital)
Some PLIs have an optional lexicalized constituent, e.g. *(keep your) fingers crossed*
8. Modifiability (probably analogue)
In some PLIs modification by means of optional constituents is not permitted, e.g. *#cut no melting ice*.
The semantics of modifier constituents within PLIs is complex. (Nicholas 1995)
9. Flexibility (also termed transformational defectiveness) (probably analogue)
Where the syntax of a language allows a variety of related constructions for a similar argument structure, a PLI may only permit one or a less than full set of variations, e.g. double object constructions, *give NP the sack*, *give the sack to NP*. *#John's nose was cut off to spite his face*.
10. Specified antecedence (digital)
The antecedent of a pronominal or reflexive can be more restricted than the syntax requires, e.g. In *dig PRON's heels in* the antecedent of the possessive must be the subject of *dig*.
11. Idiosyncratic argument structure (digital)
A PLI has argument structure which is different from that of its head verb, e.g. *raining cats and dogs*.
12. Constructions (digital)
Lexically motivated constructions, e.g. the *let alone* construction (Fillmore et al. 1988).
Syntactically motivated constructions, e.g. irreversible binomials (Malkiel 1959).

Linguistic constraints

- A. Syntactic
The grammar of a language permits forms of idiosyncrasy not permitted by other grammars, e.g. obligatory passives vs obligatory ergatives.
e.g. free phrase order languages like Warlpiri.
- B. Lexical
The lexicon of existing words imposes constraints, e.g. VP restricted collocations in languages with very few verbs. (Pawley 2006).

Stochastic facts

Different languages make different selective use of the parameters of variation, e.g. some languages might have more bound words than others (Dobrovolskij 1988).

