

Do we need a specific grammar for non-canonical expressions? A description and analysis of definitions of some NC constituents

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Abstract: Needless to say that from a linguistic point of view a clear and cut distinction between canonical and non-canonical expressions is to be made for language explanations but especially for translation analyses, due to the fact that a good number of realizations belonging to the *Gray Areas (GA)* of language may arise from recurrent combinations of specific types of combined lexical items. The resultant lack of interaction between L1 propositions and L2 representations, identical or not, is often explainable and clarified by the *Error Analysis (EA)* method. Data collected and analysed here for this presentation have been chosen at hazard from different sources.

Key words: error analysis, canonical expressions, non-canonical expressions, collocations, idiomatic expressions, identity, equivalence, adequacy, diversity, linguistic, socio-cultural, world referents, linking, cohesion.

Introduction

As the title of this theoretical and analytical proposal indicates, it is our intention to clarify some controversial aspects of linguistic behaviour within the field of the gray areas of language, to give light both to understand theoretical proposals and to contribute and correct practical deviations in his type of language realisations.

This study is based upon a corpus of present day English. We have analysed the general and more specific behaviour of idiomatic expressions, considering either their semantic or formal different linguistic nature.

All data have been taken at random, from the Sunday Times and Internet sources. Some oral productions which I have heard at some time or other while in England, have been included but they are not representative, since not all data included in the corpus have not been recorded.

It is our intention to provide linguistic explanations of Non-canonical Phrases and illustrations of their formal, functional and semantic behaviour.

State of the art

For the purpose of this study we need to clarify what do we understand by canonical and non-canonical expressions.

In English, for example, **lame** is a simple word or a simple lexical unit of adjectival nature which begins with a different sound than **fame** or with a different second sound than **lane** but which rhymes with them and it means someone having a deformed leg and **duck** contains the same final consonantal sound as **pack** and as **park**, but they differ on their vowel phonemes and their initial consonantal segments, and means a type of swimming bird lamed in one leg, but when we say that *Bill Clinton behaved as a LAME DUCK in his affair with M. L.*, it seems a bit difficult for natives and especially for non-native to predict the meaning of the whole out of the meaning of the parts, as what it means is [ineffectual person, one who has no power to bring about change]. This kind of knowledge of the vocabulary belongs to the study of the mental lexicon, an area which has, over the years gradually emerged from obscurity to occupy a central stage in the study of language.

The expressions of all levels which show some kind of formal or semantic atypical deviation might be considered non-canonical. This items can be organized in groups forming new lexical items by extension and movement far from canonicity at least from a semantic point of view.

In English grammars, these expressions are often referred to, among other labels, as: idiomatic expressions and figures of speech. They are usually the very last result of linguistic involution with cognition and they represent the most advanced linguistic representations elaborated by mental processes, resulting in realisations of the type a), and resulting from processes such as those in b)

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a) Idioms, collocations, figures of speech (metaphors, etc.) Some are far from formal canonical representations and others, though formally canonical, are far from the basic meaning of the words composing the resulting lexical unit.

b) and also the misuse of the language, expansion, movement & enlargement of basic meanings, the tendency to economise, etc.

They include a great variety of linguistic realisations, showing both typical and atypical behavior as far as word order and meaning are concerned, such as: idioms, proverbs, sayings, collocations, inner terms, etc. Some scholars distinguish between canonical expressions or free combinations, and non-canonical expressions (including in the latter are collocations or in Chomsky's terminology loose associations between words and also those items characterised by showing some sort of either formal or/and semantic idiomaticity). Besides, terminology varies according to the different linguistic levels under which language was/ is and will be analysed.

Thus, canonical expressions refer to regularity of behaviour and non-canonical expressions to irregularity and in most situations to idiomaticity. Besides there is a formal view and a semantic view of language which is to intervene in their analysis.

It is a general idea that description of language and linguistics is a technical activity consisting in a system for choosing, realising and signalling meanings as result of linguistic behavior, through formal realisations, following either canonical patterns or belonging to the gray areas of language.

Due to several aspects that will be analysed all along this paper, a rule-based description of the facts is very difficult as cause-time effects change the language. The evolution and reactions of the individuals conforming the society itself have a lot to do with it as well.

As is well-known, the English language, as well as many other languages, varies in space (USA, Australian, African and other Englishes of the world). Besides, variation in situation has to be taken into account as different rolls change linguistic realisations in the home, office, police station, park, etc. given rise to hurried, unhurried and formal spoken realizations and also to written counterparts in certain situations.

Lexical variation [Morphological, Syntactical and Semantic variation], according to style or even location seems to be normal though sometimes unnatural. In this sense you can buy a *condom*, *French letter* - *prophylactic* - *rubber* - *sheath* - *condom* - *Durex* in Britain and other English spoken places but you might buy a *frenchie* using colloquial Australian English, a hypochoresic form from French which makes the word *condom* be considered of the nature of a pet name. This way of showing pejorative connotations denote an irregular behaviour, very often capricious of the community to express situations through language data and this type of actuation is what is provided by concrete manifestations of language as far as arbitrariness and unsystematic procedures are concerned. Besides, all this deserves a specific treatment that would make a theory of lexicon meeting levels of adequacy more and more complex.

Thus, we will be immersed within the concept of appropriateness rather than correctness considering that languages vary in time, space and situation, analysing inherent properties in English and specific difficulties which arise during the process of translation to other languages.

Research shows, on the one hand, that language expressions which follow canonical patterns, morphologic general patterns to form the items which composed them, cover a wide variety of meanings within the same pattern through common syntactic processes such as substitution, addition, deletion, elision, combination and transformation. Non-Canonical expressions, on the other hand, do usually show a much more restricted behaviour from a lexical point of view. In the tradition, NCs are conditioned by their idiomatic nature and they are treated as irregular items. In some cases they cannot be altered; in other cases their meaning cannot be deduced adding together the meaning of the items that compose that piece of language. Non-canonicity moves from word-level to phrase and clause level; some of the latter labels have to be treated as proper lexical items, at least from a semantic point of view. They often show formal irregularities of specific performances which block the general behaviour of similar canonical patterns. A great many of them do not usually affect the use of normal language (written and spoken); they are most often used for literary purposes and they are often included under the general term: figures of speech.

1 **Frenchie** (*plural Frenchies*)

1. *Alternative spelling of Frenchy.*

2. (Dated) (*Australian*) a condom, abbreviated form of French letter. Retrieved from "<http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Frenchie>"

3

And the question is, are these expressions so abundant and complex in the English language to deserve a specific treatment at least for advanced native and non-native students of English?

Do we really need specific grammar books, essays or a thorough research on opaque idiomatic expressions? Should grammars be categorised as canonical and non-canonical, assigning the former for elementary levels and the latter for advanced students? In the last decade some scholars have intended to grammaticalise differently the spoken medium from the written medium; others have suggested the need of specific grammars for different standard representations. In general, we can say that non-canonical expressions are structure dependent on fixed canonical patterns from a formal point of view and that the same canonical structure can be subject to various formal modifications and to semantic expansion. Canonical expressions, however, are used as units of form and meaning showing certain limitations at some or all lexical levels,

Method of the Study

The central core of research for this descriptive study is the morphological, syntactic and semantic blocking of general principles applied to canonical expressions in English, or as it might be called in traditional references focusing on grammar behaviour, especially in relation to 'the breaking off the rules' concerning a good number of realisations and the specific behavior of non-canonical lexical items. The fact that languages can be considered of unlimited linguistic production leads us to distinguish noncanonical expressions from regular expressions. A regular expression is a pattern that describes a set of strings. In concrete manifestations of language regular expressions are constructed in a similar way to arithmetic expressions, by using various operators to combine smaller expressions. For example, a sentence is said to be canonical if it follows the normal patterns that a language follows; thus, it might consist of a predicate (the essential constituent), and the sometimes optional ones, the subject and complement. At the level of phrase that constituent which contains or is not restricted to include the normal constituents the various types of phrases do accept. At the level of word, those realisations following the conventional rules of formation.

Lexical items at any of the levels above, which do not follow formal or semantic conventional parameters, are considered to belong to the gray areas of language and to be non-canonical from either a formal or a semantic point of view. Though they can be considered to be of irregular nature, they do not belong to the field of irregularities already incorporated into the language. From the point of view of teaching, this field in general, has not been exhaustively analysed since it has been maintained as something that has to be learnt by heart. This is probably true, due to the fact that attention has been paid to form, and to internal meaning deciphering, but not to internal grammatical understanding. It is our purpose to provide new ways of focusing the treatment of these structures in combination. To prepare this study the following steps have been followed:

- Searching for up-to-date data in Mass Media (written and oral data) and other sources, such as recording spontaneous oral data, lectures, and TV material.
- Discovering the linguistic behaviour of these examples through analytic procedures, on different linguistic levels and some of the main ways of focusing them.
- Discriminating their linguistic behaviour through hypothesis.
- Obtaining numerical results of their frequency, consulting English data banks in order to have information about the number of occurrences.
- Incorporating them into general or specific principles
- And concluding, whether or not they block or are blocked by general principles.

State of the art

Until now, formal canonical expressions, with the exception of a great number of atypical semantic deviations, would depend on grammar centrality as interpreted during the classical and Chomsky's earlier period. Ross (1967), for example, proposed several syntactic constraints on the operation of grammatical rules. Constraints 4 on canonical expressions have been stated either in purely syntactic terms, which reflect organising principles apparently unique to grammar that are assumed to be universal or applying in semantic concepts, especially those concerned with meaning interpretation. Within the GAs of language, constituents that form lexical modules proper in their own right, at least from a semantic scope, do often range from a transparent or semi-transparent interpretability to the totally opaque one. Especially the latter, are formed by units which very often present problems for internal interpretation, due to the fact that they are normally fixed expressions, which are not frequently used, that refer to very specific and concrete actuation of a community or of individuals in a community. Canonical expressions are regular expressions. A regular expression is a pattern that describes a set of strings. Regular expressions are constructed analogously to arithmetic expressions, by using various operators to combine smaller expressions. These expressions –from a lower to a higher rank- follow general formation, realisation and functional patterns, either alone or in combination. In general, they do not present problems neither for the native users at any linguistic level nor for foreigners understanding of most constructions during the learning process. They normally range from basic and transparent communicative messages to semi-transparent interpretable realisations. They constitute essential basic communicative constructions for all or most communities, as shown in

table 1

SUBJECT Verb Indirect Object Direct Object
ENGLISH I BROUGHT YOU [FOR YOU ---□]
 ----THIS MATERIAL
SPANISH
[OS TRAJE

ESTE MATERIAL
(YO) TRAJE [OS]PARA VOSOTROS---□
GALICIAN (EU)
TROUXENVOS
ESTE MATERIAL
RUMANIAN TI-AM
ADUS
TI-¿
ACEST MATERIAL
Table 1: Sentence pattern IV

The corpus of data

Put at its simplest, the data, object of this study, were the result of an exhaustive and contrastive reading as well as of the analysis of different textual sources. Examples for this study were culled from daily press mass media and oral sources chosen at hazard, at an initial stage,

- following the hypothesis that morphological and syntactic linguistic blocking should distinguish specific principles from general ones or rules,
- supporting this hypothesis but paying attention to the contradictory occurrences, which could reject this hypothesis.

The corpora in GA are being annotated at various levels and in two mediums to enhance their value in linguistic research. At the written level, reportage's from Internet: The Sunday Times and other Internet sources, prose and poetry literary texts and students' essays have been analysed. Annotations include the following types of non-canonical pieces of language inserted in canonical texts and they are tagged for word class: o Idioms (I); (Transparent (T); Opaque (O), Extended from or in relation to a Canonical referent (ECR)

- o Clichés (CL)
- o Non-canonical expressions proper or inner terms (NC)
- o Collocations (CO)

At the spoken level, casual conversations, Academic lectures and some TV programmes have been and will be taken into account for this purpose, of which only a few samples have been recorded for this purpose; Some instances have been recorded but the majority of them were transcribed directly.

The tagset is largely based on the way Quirk *et al* (1985) *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* has presented canonical realisations, and previous works on statistical data, as well as those of Cofer (1975), Oro (1987, 1988,1989) and Biber et al (1999) *The Longman Grammar of English.5*

The main intention is to propose a suitable method to study the gray areas of language and through this contribute to interpret some of the inherent features of this type of expressions. The unscripted data to be analysed thoroughly in order to select scripted data were selected at random in order to avoid subjectivity and conditioning. Put at its simplest it is our purpose to propose a clear idea in the sense Pierce² 1878: 286 has put it, of the behavior of some of these units of language which might behave as lexical items proper from a semantic point of view, from a formal point of view or both.

Table n° 1 labels the sources used for the selection of one of the types of items of our corpus of data and shows the number of occurrences of one of the four types of lexical items, idioms, compiled and studied for this purpose. Those showing an opaque semantic nature have been distinguished from those with a semi-transparent nature (see tables 3, 4 & 5). The connection between the frequency of the different types of non-canonical expressions presented in spoken and/or in the written medium reflects their difference in use as well as their complexity and their importance for instructional or informative purposes.

IDIOMS

Spoken

Texts

(70)

Dialogues (20) Private (10) face-to-face conversations 6

Public (10) classroom lessons

broadcast discussions

10

4

*1st International Conference on Foreign Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics
May 5-7 2011 Sarajevo*

Monologues (50)
Unscripted (20) spontaneous commentaries
demonstrations
15
5
Scripted (30) Broadcast film
broadcast talks
non-broadcast speeches
7
11
12
Written
Texts
(430)
Non-printed (45) Non-professional
writing (45)
student essays
student examination scripts
internet mail
15
10
20
Printed (100)
Non-Academic writing
Reportages
The Sunday Times & internet
sources
(239)
CRYING OF
A LOT
PRAIRIE SKETCHES
Idioms at clause level
(73)
(RP) Daily press
(RI) Internet
(INS) Daily press
(INS) Internet
26
47
0
0
Idioms at word level
(6)
(RP) Daily press
(RI) Internet
(INS) Daily press
(INS) Internet
3
3
0
0
Idioms at phrase level
(24)
(RP) Daily press
(RI) Internet
(INS) Daily press
(INS) Internet
24
0
0

0

Verbs and particles

(86)

(RP) Daily press

(RI) Internet

(INS) Daily press

(INS) Internet

66

14

0

16

Creative writing

--20--

Idioms at clause level

Idioms at word level

Idioms at phrase level

10

0

10

Table 2: sample of the corpuses studied for unit one

2 A clear idea is defined as one which is so apprehended that it will be recognized wherever it is met with, and so that no other will be mistaken for it. If it fails of this clearness, it is said to be obscure.

6

Sampling selected at hazard

The corpus contains samples of speech (SD) and writing (S.T. /CDI) by both males and females, and it includes a wide range of age groups. The following behave, belonging to our spoken corpus of data, very much in the same way, at least from a semantic point of view. Some of them, for example number 7 below, no doubt, do block the general morphological rules of language behavior, as far as the formation of verbs is concerned.

1. You put all your generative knowledge before the horses, etc. (SD)

2. Many kids who run away from unhappy homes discover they've jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire. (S. T.)

3.

a) You know, he is at it again but he really wants you know just to sit down (SD)

b) Like they just talk about how they both feel

a) Out of the frying pan into the deep freeze this time

4. Teaching at the local college is his bread and butter.

5. Unemployment and taxes are the bread and butter issues of this campaign. [CDI]

6. At the moment, she says, all Saints **are flavour of the week** (S.T. teen. 8-9:11)

7. You can **chomsky-adjoin** the sentence now.

In spite of being grammatically peripheral and somewhat or completely idiomatic, they form part of language and they make us believe that some of them will probably have their own place in grammars in a near future.

Table III, below, includes examples of non-canonical expressions or inner terms from a formal point of view. They include expressions which might be considered by some as atypical expressions or even errors from a grammatical point of view. In general, they are specific realizations which block realizations considered to be canonical. Thus, considering these realizations, a common question arises: is a new grammar needed for spoken and/or informal writing? The number of occurrences, as shown in table 1, and examples used in this paper will prove that there is a tendency to use utterances which do not follow the common patterns grammars of English tend to teach us: *I seen him, etc.

Spoken language

Sources Examples

(The Devil's own)

8 Sheila, **pass** the vegetables, please. -Yes. May I serve you?

9 Because **they say** the word peace, you know, **but end of the day all they want is surrender.**

10 **-D'you wanna know** what's the single biggest problem trying to raise money

in this country?

11 -How much time? -Six, eight weeks.

Written

language

Poetry

(Prarie Sketches: 64)

12My Sara is as rare as Indian Pearl!

Internet

&

Non academic

writing

13**Don't have** the cable **hook-up** yet?

<http://www.lfmm.com/t/sr.asp?u=100374762&v=4911&s=73&url=1&p=13&c=6>

033

14**A new ABCNEWS** poll finds patients' rights and Social Security outranking taxes and gun control.

15**What's going on at** the OTA <http://www.hcu.ox.ac.uk/ota/public/index.shtml>
(Saturday , 11th. September, 1999)

16**What's up?**

17**What's up** with 9/9/99?

18**What about my cup of tea?**

19 I seen him (student's essays, grammar sampling, etc.)

[Reportages,

Daily press]

20 the number of **five to seven-year-olds** in large classes, (...) (S.T. 26th December)

21 The Roslin researchers say that **overall their results** show that (...) (S.T. 26th Dec.)

22 (...) but it is a fraud on **a consumers**. (S.T. 26th December)

23 Villa continued to create **the better** opportunities, and (...) (Sport,p.1).(S.T.8Nov.1998)

Table3: examples & sources

The examples in table 3 show salient deviations from normal linguistic patterns and as Quirk and Startvik (1966), among others, would indicate, they do not form part of a 'linguistic core', as for they would block general linguistic patterns of structures and vocabulary applied to use.

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Findings and Discussion

In this part of the study, questions concerning whether the grammaticality, acceptability and potentiality in use of some of the expressions included can, of course, be formulated and discussed.

A good number of expressions of various ranks (word, phrase, sentence) of idiomatic nature or showing formal irregularities have been found and incorporated to our data corpus.. Among the former the following types will be briefly analysed here:

- Idiomatic and figurative expressions in general, that is expressions the meaning of which cannot be deduced adding together the separate items which make up that piece of language. Their formal behavior is fixed. Thus, some accept optional modifiers and others do not. They do not accept determiners variability, Plurals take O article. Numeratives are nominalized. The syntactic order cannot be altered. In sum, they cannot be modified by any of the syntactic processes which modify canonical expressions. They include: Proverbs, proverbial expressions, anti-poverbs or preverbs³, Phrasal verbs⁴ [Phrasal: look after; prepositional: look up; and phrasal-prepositional: look forward to]. Non-canonical expressions proper or inner terms which follow formal canonical patterns or not, such as: (minor sentences : just a minute,) (what about's types) (if only's) etc. (NC) expressions include expressions⁵ of *what about's type*, as in *What about the financial assistance?*; expressions like *if only (...)*, as in *If only we haven't lost our way*; here one needs a type of tense control, but one is free to fill the gaps very freely; For example, Spanish and Galician languages would follow different patterns to represent the identical lexical meaning, a canonical expression in the former and a subjunctive mode in the latter; or even expressions like *'The more (...) the more'*, whereas, certainly you expects a comparative form as the second constituent as in: *The more you ask the less you get* or *Better for women better for men* (S.T. Title of the article: Teen girls urged to admire Role Model Spice) - Collocations: [sequences of words or terms that co-occur more often than would be expected by chance: so as to, by accident, strong tea, heavy drinker, black shoes, etc] The collocational process is a general linguistic process in language behaviour that can be split into: The associational process which ranges from loose to tight lexical units and derives into proper collocations or idiomatic phrases, normally set phrases or compounding. In most occasions they constitute the first step for the compounding resultant state (well known -□well-known □□wellknown; hard

working □ □ hard-working □ □ hardworking; book case □ □ book-case □ □ bookcase, etc. mother in law □ □ mother-in-law; bull's eye), which is the result of combining two or more words to form a single unit. Clichés; expressions whose basic and conceptual meaning has been lost. They are used as connectors in conversation and their use should be avoided in the written medium, especially in formal language in favour of proper linguistic connectors. These are ready-made expressions but not necessarily idiomatic. From a formal point of view they are usually built up with canonical constituents; However, some are non-canonical expressions in the sense that they block the general principles of grammar, as in *A little knowledge is a dangerous thing* [kowllege for learning] or in *The Devil can quote Sripture for his purpose* [quote for cite] though it can be argued that *quote* is common in AE, where they don't say *cite*).

Due to semantic variation by extension and movement of meaning a normal canonical expression, or a minor sentence can very easily become clichés when they lose their conceptual meaning and they are applied for a different purpose as in 'Can I help you?' or 'Good morning!'. In general, a cliché is a metaphor characterised by its overuse.

3 According to Mieder 1985:119; also in Mieder 1993:24, proverbs, i.e. unchangeable sentences and proverbial expressions, i. e. sentences which permit alterations to fit their grammar [sentences of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorised forms, handed down from generation to generation]; antiproverbs or preverbs [the transformation of a stereotype word sequence – as e. g. a proverb, a quotation or an idiom for humorous effect. To have full effect, an anti-proverb must be based on a known proverb

4 According to Tom McArthur: (...) the term 'phrasal verb' was first used by Loagan Pearsall Smith in "Words and Idioms" (1925), in which he states that the OED Editor Henry Bradley suggested the term to him]

5 Here there can also be included expressions which block the general syntactic principles in relation to canonical expressions, as in: "Historians will look back on this project **as most important** thing we did (S.T. Chronicle Future, p.12), (...) but it is a fraud on **a consumers**. (S.T. 26TH DECEMBER)

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Table 4 shows a good number of items which can be categorised under any of the labels indicated above. Some are considered opaque⁶ as the meaning cannot be deduced out of their separate parts and others are considered as semitransparent⁷ as they can be deduced adding together the parts.

This is important for both native and non-native speakers. However, non-native speakers would have more problems for contextualisation. Native speakers, in general, do have some sort of probabilistic relationship which might help them to deduce the meaning of both types, opaque and semitransparent, after considering them in detail.

TYPE OF ENGLISH EXPRESSIONS TRANSLATION INTO TYPE EXPRESSION MEANING SPANISH GALICIAN

IDIOMS Kick the bucket To pass away

To die

Estirar la pata,

palmar

Estirar la pata,

palmar

To be sent to Coventry To be excluded from society

Take after To take care, to care Cuidar Coidar

COLLOCATIONS

Lame duck Inconclusive Patoso Patoso

CLISHES

Can I help you? High!,

Hello!

Good morning

¿Qué desea? ¿Qué quere?

INNER TERMS

What about you? And you?

what do you ---- of this, about it?

Y tú, que? E tí, qué?

Table4

Table 5, below, includes idiomatic units consisting of two or more lexical or grammatical units, which behave formally and/or semantically differently. For example, whereas prepositional verbs, consisting of a verb + a

preposition which cannot be separated in 'constructio', as in *he is looking after the dog* and they need to take a direct object, phrasal intransitive verbs can be separated as in *he turned it down*.

It also includes different types of idiomatic expressions which range from collocations to compounding and in spite of being formed by more than one lexical constituent. The translation into Spanish shows, as well as many other languages, that attending to the basic or conceptual meanings of their collocates might lead to funny realisations in the other language. In spite of this, some are integrated into other languages, especially those used for commercial purposes. There are many cases of calques from English into Spanish but also of loan translations as illustrated with the word for word translation of 'hotdog' into Spanish. Very specific cases which block all the general formal patterns of word-formation are the English resultant noun 'bull's eye' unique compound made up of 6 Opaque realisations:

- can't be deduced adding together the meaning of the parts, [put away/put something where it belongs]
- can't be deduced linguistically, as the meaning goes beyond its conceptual meaning.

Some can't be deduced through socio-cultural understanding [battling windmills]; They probably have to be learnt as separate lexical units, by heart and the meaning goes back to diachronic meaning, at least that of one of the parts that compose the whole.

7 Transparent realisations: the meaning can be deduced from the separate parts that constitute these pieces of language,

[take care/ care]

- from an already fixed idiomatic expression by extension [her children had flown the nest/ Flow from one place to another]

- from the expansion of a canonical term (...) towers above (One computer manufacturer towers above (=is bigger and more

successful than) all the rest). [I usually + adv/prep] from socio-cultural undefined interrelations (nest egg)

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from a Saxon genitive or the Spanish blended one *puenting* (bungee jumping), i.e. describing the action, adding the English -ing form to the Spanish noun *Puente*(bridge).

NON- CANONICAL EXPRESSIONS IN ENGLISH [OF (O) OR (ST) INFORMATION]

IDIOMS

PHRASAL

VERBS

LEXICAL ITEMS MEANING

O To put away

to give up

to account for

to look into

to pass away

to take after

To put something where it belongs

To stop

To explain

To examine

To die

To care

ST To take care **To care**

SAYINGS O [kick the bucket *kick the enormous bucket]

Teaching at the local college is his bread and butter.

Bright and breezy

Stand head and shoulders over

Straight from the horse's mouth

Flying by the seat of your pants

A blind alley (INL)

A close shave/call (INL)

A red letter day (INL)

Pull someone's leg

To die

Basic needs of life

To be happy and confident.

Clearly superior to someone or something.

Straight from the source, right from the origin.

(To do something without planning, (SD)/

Decide a course of action as you go along.

-A situation or method that you have tried and discovered to be of no use. (CDI),

-(A situation where something unpleasant or dangerous nearly happened. (CDI),

-(A day that is very important or very special. (CDI).

[informal: to tell someone something that is not true as a way of joking with them]

ST Run up a bill and run up a big bill.

With friends like these (who needs enemies),

To put people on a pedestal'

To put in prison

Still in the darck

Be in the blank

To be in the red

Accumulating a debt

friends behave like your worst enemy

To admire

Imprison

Still unsure about it

(be operating at a profit)

In debt

Table 5

(CO)8, a problematic linguistic term is interpreted as a lexicalization of two or more lexical and/or grammatical items put together producing one single unit of meaning. The concept of (CO), which plays an important role in British linguistics where it originated, seems to be vague and neutral in dealing with word classes and to which element acts as to modifier or head. This term, however, is one of the key concepts of functional 8 Even though the invention of the term collocation as applied in linguistics was attributed to Firth and extended by Halliday, the process itself has worried many scholars as mentioned above since classical times. Mellville, A. 1946. *Spoken English. An Idiomatic Grammar for foreign students*. Edimburg: Oliver and Boyd, (originally designed as a manual of English Grammar for Dutch students), includes a good number of examples with collocates:

1) I have never seen him so **out of temper** (angry); 2) The violinist is **out of the tune** (discordant, not in harmony) In fact he concentrates on collocates of various kinds, combined with prepositions, compound conjunctions and verb combinations. Neither must one forget the non-canonicity of certain verbs in English, commonly known as irregulars.

10 grammar proposed by Firth⁹ and developed by Halliday. Probably we could, even say that it has its origins in wordassociation of the syntactic type in spite of the word-class, due to the fact that they are paradigmatically linked by this process. According to Firth, it seems to be the case that we know a word by the company it keeps and he considers collocation to this 'relationship between words', to be part of its meaning (see also, Palmer 1976: 94ff, Carter 1987: 36 ff. And 48 ff.)

In sum, the idea of (CO) is extremely far reaching, and furthermore, the users must realise that some language is deliberately eccentric and creative in that kind of way. Not all languages (as can be seen in the Spanish translation, in the table below) would use the same formal correlates to represent these semantic lexical units.

NON- CANONICAL EXPRESSIONS IN ENGLISH [OF (O) OR (ST) INFORMATION]

COLLOCATIONS

COLLOCATIONS

LEXICAL ITEMS MEANING

O

Lame duck (patoso *pato cojo)

Clever bunny

A person or thing that is not able to function properly

What a clever boy!

ST

Fill in the gaps (cubrir los huecos)
Solve a problem (solucionar un problema)
Cure a disease (curar una enfermedad)
So as to (de manera que, para)
rough draft (borrador)
Fill in the blanks
Find a solution, resolve
Restore to health, make well.
In order to, in order that, so that
A plan or sketch

COMPOUNDS

O

Hotdog [perrito caliente]
Greenhouse [invernadero]
Bull's eye [ojo de buey]
Frankfurter sausage in a bun
A house where vegetables grow
Small circular window or opening

ST

Dog days (dias de perros)
A blind date (Una cita a ciegas)
A blind spot (Un punto ciego)
A red-letter day (un día especial,
memorable)
A blind alley (Un callejón sin salida)
Very hot days in summer
Date between two people who have
never met
Area in the retina of the eye which
cannot see.
A special day
A route that leads nowhere, a dead
end

Table 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

On the basis of this empirical research, we can conclude that only some of these expressions are to be considered lexical items proper. The majority of them follow normal formal canonical patterns and meaning may range from the transparent or semitransparent of the constituents to the totally opaque, or they keep on going with the conceptual meaning. Opaque expressions are more formally restricted than semitransparent ones. Whereas the former would not accept transformation on some way or other the latter can be transformed to widen or reduce the intended meaning.

Results show that the collocational process is a general Linguistic process in Language behaviour that can be split into: the associational process and the resultant new lexical units: proper collocations or idiomatic phrases, normally set phrases, but other processes of language are as well involved in. In general this process can be understood as the previous step for compounding, i.e., the movement from syntagmatic relations of language to a paradigmatic state or function.

Everyday non-canonical and idiomatic phrases are an integral part of the English language that are used and heard constantly. Some of them are very common phrases widely and frequently used, well understood and generally agreed upon meaning. However, very often, the widely understood meaning of the phrase seems to have nothing to do with the words that compose the phrase and they keep forming a big area of realisations in both oral and written mediums. Given that language is in constant development, they need to be revised constantly in order to incorporate new realisations, but care must be taken, as some only enjoy a certain period of time. Now and thanks to development of technology this task, in spite of its complexity is easy to hold.

In general one can assume that those expressions are to be treated independently both for theoretical analysis and for tuition purposes.

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May 5-7 2011 Sarajevo

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Statistics (all included)

Pages: 11

Words: 5656

Paragraphs: 441

Lines: 924