Idiomatic Creativity

Appendix B:
Idiom-variation principles
Illustration of idiom-variation principles

In this appendix, the five idiom-variation principles, as described in Chapter 6, are illustrated. The formulaic depictions follow Langacker’s categorisation formula for usage-events: \( [S] \rightarrow (T) \). Correspondingly, creative idiomatic usage events are formalised and graphically represented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[I]</td>
<td>categorisation standard: the idiomatic configuration stored as a type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[A], [B]</td>
<td>idiomatic constituents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[α], [β]</td>
<td>correspondents of A and B in the idiomatic meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[C]</td>
<td>literal scene/literal meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[γ]</td>
<td>idiomatic scene idiomatic meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Δ)</td>
<td>the context-specific target conceptualisation onto which the denotation of [I] is mapped - its (contextual) referent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(IVAR)</td>
<td>the newly computed ‘idiom variant’, (IVAR), which has the status of an occasional, transitory novel standard to categorize the context-specific usage event, (IU).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[VAR]</td>
<td>the linguistic unit(s) that are activated to interact with [I] to compute (IVAR). [VAR] usually consists of (a) specific lexical unit(s), but may also involve (a) lexically non-specific constructional schema(s), (e.g., [PLURAL/-s]). In other words [VAR] subsumes morphosyntactic, lexical and syntactic alterations of the idiomatic base-form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[E]</td>
<td>the predication of [VAR]. In the case of [VAR] being a constructional schema, [E] has the function of an alternative construal of [C].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ε)</td>
<td>the idiomatic interpretation that [E] receives on the level of the idiomatic meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(CVAR)</td>
<td>the adapted literal scene (literal meaning) that is associated with the idiom variant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(γVAR)</td>
<td>the idiomatic meaning of the newly computed idiomatic variant.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Constructional adaptations

For this idiom-variation principle the steps of manipulating [I] to compute \( I_{VAR} \) are illustrated in detail. The figures refer to the example discussed in Section 6.2. of the book: *that governments grasped nettles that others ...*

**Step 1: Retrieval**

```
TARGET CONCEPTUALIZATION = (Δ)
(GOVERNMENT TACKLES PROBLEMS THAT OTHERS...)
```

```
IDIOM (TYPE) = [I]
```

```
IDIOMATIC MEANING = [γ] = ‘idiomatic scene’
[TACKLE THE PROBLEM]
```

```
CONSTRUCTIONAL SCHEMA \([A] \cap [B]\)
```

```
CONSTITUENT [A] = grasp
```

```
CONSTITUENT [B] = the nettle
```

```
LITERAL MEANING = [C] = \([A] \cap [B]\) = ‘literal scene’
[GRASP THE NETTLE]
```
Step 2: Instantiation of analysable/isomorphic structure relative to conceptual metaphors

TARGET CONCEPTUALIZATION = (Δ)
(GOVERNMENT TACKLES PROBLEMS THAT OTHERS...)

IDIOM (TYPE) = [I]

IDIOMATIC MEANING = [γ] = ‘idiomatic scene’
[TACKLE THE PROBLEM]

CONSTRUCTIONAL SCHEMA [[A] ∩ [B]]

CONTROL IS PHYSICAL GRASP

LITERAL MEANING = [C] = [[A] ∩ [B]] = ‘literal scene’
[GRASP THE Nettle]

PROBLEMS ARE DANGEROUS OBJECTS
**Step 3:** Adaptation of formal structure (plural inflection) as mediated by literal scene and conceptual metaphors

TARGET CONCEPTUALIZATION = (Δ)
(GOVERNMENT TACKLES PROBLEMS THAT OTHERS...)

 instantiaton

IDIOM VARIANT = (IVAR)

TARGET CONCEPTUALIZATION = (γvar) = (γ) ∩ [6]
[TACKLE PROBLEM] ∩ [PLURAL] =
(TACKLE PROBLEMS)

adaptation

VARIED CONSTRUCTIONAL SCHEMA

[[A] ∩ [B] ∩ [VAR]]

CONTROL IS PHYSICAL GRASP

CONSTITUENT [A/a] = [GRASP/grasp]

CONSTITUENT [B] ∩ [PLUR/-s] = ([NETTLE]PLURAL/(nettles))

adaptation

ADAPTED LITERAL MEANING =
[C] = [[A] ∩ [B] ∩ [E] = ‘literal scene’
(GRASP THE NETTLES)

PROBLEMS ARE DANGEROUS OBJECTS
Literal-scene manipulation

I am using the subscript, c, in \([E_c]\) to mark the fact that \([E]\) is fully consistent with \([C]\).
### Topic indication

The subscript \( \Delta \), in \([\varepsilon_\Delta]\), indicates that \([\varepsilon]\) relates \([\gamma]\) to the usage context, \((\text{DOMAIN}_\Delta)\).

\[
\text{TARGET CONCEPTUALIZATION} = (\Delta)
\]

\[
\text{IDIOM VARIANT} = (I_{\gamma_\Delta})
\]

\[
\text{IDIOMATIC MEANING} = (\gamma_{\Delta}) = [\alpha] \cap [\beta] \cap [\varepsilon_\Delta]
\]

‘adapted target scene’

\[
\text{LITERAL MEANING} = [A] \cap [B] \cap [\varepsilon_\Delta] \neq (C_{\Delta})
\]

‘inconsistent literal scene’

\([A]\) \[B]\) \([\varepsilon_\Delta]\)

**Construction of topic-indication relative to the phrase-induced figurative meanings of the lexical constituents**

**Topic-indicating adaptation of idiomatic meaning relative to \((\Delta)\)**
**Topic-related literal-scene manipulation**

**a. Through lexical substitution**

The subscript \( \alpha \), in \([E_{\alpha \Delta}]\), indicates that the newly computed literal-scene \((C_{\text{VAR}})\) relates \([I]\) to the usage context, \((\text{DOMAIN}_{\Delta})\).
b. Conjunction

TARGET CONCEPTUALIZATION = (Δ) = (γ) ∩ conjunct

IDIOM VARIANT = (IVAR)

IDIOMATIC MEANING = (γ) ‘target scene’

CONJUNCT = ([E/Δ] ∩ [∈C])

LITERAL MEANING = [C] = [A] ∩ [B]

LITERAL MEANING = (CVAR) = [A] ∩ [B] ∩ [E/Δ] = ‘manipulated literal scene’

[A] [B] [E/Δ]

Context-induced adaptation of literal-scene to add context-dependent information. The conjunct refers directly to the usage-context.

Construction of conjunction variant
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**Ambiguation**

\[
\text{TARGET CONCEPTUALIZATION} = (\Delta_1)
\]

\[
\text{TARGET CONCEPTUALIZATION} = (\Delta_2)
\]

\[
\text{IDIOM VARIANT} = (\text{IVAR})
\]

**IDIOMATIC MEANING** = (\textit{?})

‘target scene’

\[
\text{LITERAL MEANING} = [C] = [A] \cap [B]
\]

\[
\text{LITERAL MEANING} = (\text{CVAR}) = [A] \cap [B] \cap [E_{\Delta}] = \text{‘manipulated literal scene’}
\]

[C] is recognised as immanent in (\text{CVAR}) and co-activated to trigger the idiomatic meaning.

Context-induced adaptation of literal-scene to trigger ambiguation. The newly computed literal scene makes direct reference to the usage-context.

Construction of pun variant

\[ [A] \]

\[ [B] \]

\[ [E_{\Delta}] \]
Overview of constraining and supporting factors for systematic idiom-variation

TARGET CONCEPTUALIZATION = (Δ)

IDIOM VARIANT = (I_var)

IDIOMATIC MEANING = (γ_var) = [α] ∩ [β] ∩ [ε]
‘adapted idiomatic meaning’

LITERAL MEANING = (C_var)
‘manipulated literal scene’

[A] ← [B] ← [E]

UNDERLYING, ENTRENCHED PATTERNS OF SEMANTIC EXTENSION THAT POTENTIALLY RENDER THE SEMANTIC STRUCTURE OF [I] TRANSPARENT