

Logische Beziehungskonzepte und Inferenzprozeduren. Zu einer semantisch-kognitiven Theorie der verbalen Idiome im Deutschen. By Magnus Nordén. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International. 1994, Pp. 198.

This book presents an attempt to formulate a semantic-cognitive theory of idiomacity. Nordén combines the insights of current theories and constructs systematic inferential procedures for analyzing German idioms. In Ch. 1, he defines idioms as linguistic expressions that are characterized by three properties: First, their figurative meaning cannot be built up from the literal meanings of their constituents. Therefore, idioms are regarded as prominent counterexamples to the principle of compositionality. Second, idioms show a certain stability: they do not change their appearance through time and context. Third, their use is highly situation dependent. The author relates these properties to semantics, syntax and pragmatics, respectively.

In Ch. 2, an overview of recent work on idiomacity is given. The prominent Anglo-American approach (George Lakoff & Mark Johnson 1980, *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press) is contrasted with three approaches that are more common in Germanic studies. The Anglo-American theory of metaphors considers idioms as a special case of metaphors. Their figurative meaning can be derived from the literal meaning by metaphorical concepts. Thus, in this view idioms do not contradict the principle of compositionality. In contrast, the three other theories while assuming the impossibility of decomposing the meaning of idioms, focus on different aspects of the analysis of idioms, like inferences, metaphorical shift and interpretation. The inference-theory investigates the inferential rules according to which an idiom can be derived from encyclopedic knowledge. The theory of metaphorical shift assumes functions that create metaphors by shifting the literal meaning of the constituents to the figurative meaning of the whole. The last approach under consideration advances interpretation rules that relate the situation described by the literal meaning to the situation expressed by the figurative meaning.

The author constructs his theory out of the elements from these four theories.

In Ch. 3, he gives a general statement of the underlying theory of meaning: he locates his semantic-cognitive system in the framework of ideation theory, which assumes that the meaning of an expression is an idea or a concept, rather than the object the expression refers to. Such a theory seems to be very attractive for describing idiomacity since it links expressions directly with concepts. The objects are related indirectly to the expression by means of the concepts. Although he explicitly refers in his discussion to an article by John Lyons ('Bedeutungstheorien' In: A. von Stechow & D. Wunderlich (eds.). *Semantik. Ein internationales Handbuch der zeitgenössischen Forschung*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991, 1-24), he does not mention any of the problems of ideation theory discussed there.

In the central part of his work (Chs. 4-7) the author develops a cognitive semantic system for idioms, which is illustrated by the detailed description of 18 selected German idioms. The system is composed of structured complexes of interpretation rules. They form macro structures consisting of the literal meaning, the concrete meaning, the figurative meaning and further parts which he calls presuppositions. He illustrates the function of each of the named component by explicit descriptions of the relation between the literal and figurative meaning of the discussed idioms. He then undertakes a systematization of the logical concepts of relation ("logische Beziehungskonzepte") between the situation expressed by the figurative meaning and the situation expressed by the literal meaning. Finally, he categorizes these interpretation schemata according to very general cognitive patterns, like causal, conditional, temporal, final or comparative relations.

In the remaining chapter (8-12), the author relates these general relations to grammatical constructions and summarizes his cognitive system by stating 21 implicative principles that combine the different levels of the system. He then offers a comparative study of Swedish and English idioms and, finally gives a summary of the book and indicates desiderata. The book closes with a bibliography and an

appendix in which the cognitive-semantic structure of further idioms are given.

The work shows the familiarity of the author with the current theories. Its merits lies in the fact that Nordén undertakes the very ambitious attempt to unify different approaches to idiomacity, especially some not well-known approaches. However, he constructs his system by only adding prefabricated components without transforming them to one uniform theory. Thus, the resulting approach becomes eclectic and exhibit neither a systematic interaction between the different modules nor a clear system of underlying logical rules as the title of the book suggests. Nevertheless, the author has provided a skillful study of German idioms and he has demonstrated that idiomacity can only be accounted for by unifying different cognitive and semantic approaches. It is to be hoped that further research in this direction will be done in the future.

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