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Jarosław Wiliński
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3136-6529
Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities

Conventional Knowledge, Pictorial Elucidation, Etymological Motivation, and Structural Elaboration in a Thematic Dictionary of Idioms

Abstract: The primary focus of this article is on the usefulness of conventional knowledge, pictorial illustrations, and etymological notes in the process of defining the meaning of idioms within the macrostructure of a thematic dictionary of idioms based on cognitive principles of linguistic organization, and on the use of phonological motivation and iconic and scalar ordering as principles for explaining the form of idiomatic expressions. This article makes a noteworthy contribution to the widely-held view in current language teaching and pedagogy that grouping figurative idioms under source domains and conceptual metaphors, using visuals for explaining the literal reading of idioms, providing background information about their literal meanings or origins, as well as drawing students' attention to the lexical make-up of idioms can be conducive to their learning and understanding and especially beneficial for students' retention of the meaning and form of such phrases (Kövecses and Szabó 1996; Kövecses 2001; 2002; Benor and Levy 2006; Boers and Lindstromberg 2008a; Kövecses and Csábi 2014).

Keywords: metaphor, metonymy, idioms, etymology, conventional knowledge, structural elaboration, onomasiological dictionary

1. Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a striking proliferation of publications dealing with potential applications of the theoretical background offered by cognitive linguistics in lexicographic work (see Ostermann 2012; 2015; Wojciechowska 2012; Kövecses and Csábi 2014; Wiliński 2015; 2016; 2017). Osterman's monograph (2015), for example, presented a cognitive approach to semasiological lexicography, an

approach that used semantic frames, conceptual metaphor, and cognitive views of polysemy to prepare new entries for agentive nouns, new definitions of emotion terms and new microstructural arrangements for particle entries in a monolingual dictionary. Wiliński's (2016) studies, by contrast, concerned the application of the conceptual theory of metaphor and metonymy and frame semantics in the design of an onomasiological learner's dictionary; especially, in the process of defining both the conceptual content and individual lexical items within the appropriate divisions and/or subdivisions of the classificatory scheme.

Some articles (Kövecses and Csábi 2014; Wiliński 2015; 2017) also discussed lexicographic applications of conceptual metaphors, metonymies and semantic frames for the arrangement of idioms and for the explanation of idiomatic meaning. Kövecses and Csábi's (2014) work, for example, focused on the possible advantages of employing cognitive linguistics as a theoretical underpinning for the organization of entries and for the explanation and arrangement of idioms related to fire in dictionaries. Wiliński's (2017) article, in turn, examined the concept of cognitive motivation and explored its lexicographical relevance and usefulness to the elucidation and presentation of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic differences in the use of British and American idioms.[1]

To date, however, the issue of the utility of conventional knowledge, pictorials, and etymological notes in the process of defining the meaning of idioms has only received cursory treatment in literature.[2] In addition, despite the implementation of frames, scripts, conceptual metonymies, and metaphors in an onomasiological dictionary, the inclusion of conventional knowledge, pictorials and etymological notes for the explanation of idiomatic meaning and the application of the notion of phonological and iconic motivation to the explanation of the form or lexical composition of idiomatic expressions have been hitherto neglected, thus deserving more systematic treatment in thematic lexicography. The aim of this article is therefore twofold. First, it aims to demonstrate the practical usefulness of conventional knowledge, visuals, and etymological information in the process of defining the meaning of idioms within the macrostructure of a thematic dictionary of idioms based on cognitive principles of linguistic organization. Second, it attempts to show how the concept of phonological and iconic motivation can be employed in a dictionary entry to help users comprehend and remember the form or lexical composition of idiomatic expressions. In this respect, the article is a further refinement of the cognitive approach to onomasiological lexicography proposed by Wiliński (2016; 2017) in a series of recent publications.[3]

A further improvement of the approach concentrates on proposing potential alternatives to the explanation of idioms in a thematic dictionary, in particular on employing conventional knowledge, metonymy boxes, etymological notes, and pictorials in the process of defining idiomatic meaning within the macrostructure based on target domains, source concepts, and metaphors. The primary focus is on applying background knowledge and encyclopedic information, provided in boxes under

main dictionary entries, to the elucidation of three types of idioms: non-metaphoric idioms, metonymic idioms, and idioms motivated by conceptual metaphors. Another refinement concerns the use of metonymy boxes, placed under target concepts, as an alternative to the arrangement of metonymic idioms under the headings of specific conceptual metonymies. Finally, the article seeks to consider practical applications of phonological and iconic motivation for explaining the lexical make-up of idioms.

The article is structured in the following way. Section 2 concentrates on the applicability of conventional knowledge in the form of explanatory notes and descriptive definitions to the elucidation of idioms motivated by metaphors, metonymies and domains of knowledge. Section 3 addresses the issue of the potential inclusion of pictorial illustrations of idioms in dictionaries. Section 4 considers the usefulness of etymological notes in dictionaries of idioms. Section 5 discusses lexicographic applications of the notion of phonological and iconic motivation to the explanation of the form or lexical composition of idiomatic expressions. Section 6 offers concluding remarks.

2. Conventional knowledge

Conventional knowledge relates to all the facts that are commonly known and shared between members of a speech community in a given culture (our cultural and embodied experience, traditions, stereotypes, and folk etymologies), thereby being more fundamental to the mental representation of a particular word (cf. Evans and Green 2006, 217).[4] For instance, conventional knowledge concerning the lexical concept *foot* might include the knowledge that some people in our culture use feet to run and kick a ball or that a foot forms a part of the human body. In addition, some facets of the knowledge about the foot can be used to understand a particular target domain (e.g. the bottom of a mountain can be conceptualized in terms of the part of the body at the end of the leg), while other aspects or parts of this knowledge can stand for a whole or another part within the same domain (e.g. since a foot is a part of a person's body, it can be used to refer to this person). The meaning of many idioms appears to be more predictable and transparent because conventional knowledge allows us to provide a motivational link between an idiomatic expression and non-idiomatic meaning of its constituents.

Conventional knowledge might be of practical usefulness for the explanation of idiomatic meaning under a particular domain or conceptual metaphor indicated by small capital letters (Wiliński 2015; 2017). The meaning of an idiom cannot be comprehended without access to the background knowledge that relates to its constituent words. For example, one would not be able to comprehend the idiom *bury the hatchet* without knowing anything about the situation in the past when it was traditional for each Native American tribe to bury a tomahawk or small axe as a sign of peace after fighting. Thus, the inclusion of the conventional knowledge

associated with this idiom to the elucidation of its meaning could be conducive to learning and facilitative for understanding.

2.1 Background knowledge and non-metaphoric idioms

Background information can be employed in a dictionary entry to elucidate three types of idioms: non-metaphoric idioms, metonymic idioms, and idioms motivated by conceptual metaphors. Non-metaphoric idioms constitute a considerable portion of idiomatic vocabulary. Their meaning is motivated by conventional knowledge of conceptual domains. Such idioms can be grouped under target domains, or concepts, referring to the idiomatic meaning of these expressions. Conventional knowledge, in turn, could be clarified in the box, as proposed in the current article, or incorporated into an explanatory definition (Wiliński 2015). For example, the idiom *off the beaten track* should be elucidated under the target concept of remote place, since the idiom means 'in a place which is not widely known, far from any main roads and towns', while the knowledge necessary to understand the meaning of the idiom could be presented in the box under the illustrative examples:

REMOTE PLACE

off the beaten track [British] or **off the beaten path** [American] A place that is *off the beaten track* is in an area where people usually do not live or go: ● *The location might be a bit off the beaten track and served mainly farmers and ranchers who made their living off the land.* ● *We're going to take a road trip now, far off the beaten path.*

CONVENTIONAL KNOWLEDGE
A beaten track here is a footpath or a narrow road in a place which is frequently visited and widely known. If a place is off the beaten track, it is far away from places where most people go and live.

As the above dictionary entry shows, the idiom *off the beaten track* is used mainly in Britain, whereas its variant *off the beaten path* occurs more frequently in the USA. This geographical variant is given as the second headword following the main one. The usage examples introduced by the symbol (●) were derived from the 560-million-word *Corpus of Contemporary American English* and the *British National Corpus* containing 100 million words, while the definitions of idioms, implemented in this entry and the subsequent ones, were created by the author himself on the basis of the explanations found in *Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Idioms* (2002) and *The Free Dictionary by Farlex*. The origin of the first expression is from a beaten track. The box, labeled CONVENTIONAL KNOWLEDGE, provides the explanation of the phrase *beaten track* and contains the information about the knowledge motivating the meaning of the idiom.

2.2 Background knowledge and metonymic idioms

Idioms motivated by metonymies can be grouped under target concepts, stated in small capitals, pertaining to their idiomatic meanings. These target concepts are conceptual elements, key concepts or domains to which an idiom provides mental access. Metonymic motivation and conventional knowledge, then, can be directly implemented into a descriptive definition or be explained in metonymy boxes placed at main dictionary entries for idioms, as proposed below. The idiom *pass the hat*, for example, can be listed under the target concept of collect money, while its metonymic motivation and conventional knowledge should be clarified in the metonymy box found at the entry for this idiom, as demonstrated below:

COLLECT MONEY

pass the hat or **pass the hat around** if people pass the hat or pass the hat around, they collect money for someone or something: ●*He passed the hat at concerts, and raised more than $8,000 for a new community center in Buenos Aires.* ●*They were passing the hat around with all the names, and I saw nobody was looking.*

METONYMY AND CONVENTIONAL KNOWLEDGE

People, such as musicians or street performers, sometimes use a hat to collect money in. Thus, the activity of passing the hat around can be used to stand for collecting money.

This metonymy box provides the explanation of the conventional knowledge and the metonymic relationship motivating the meaning of this idiom. This "stand-for relation" allows dictionary users to understand the motivation behind the origin of the idioms. The defining pattern (*a/an/-/the X is used to stand for a/an/-/the Y*) is introduced into the explication of this kind. In addition, the idiomatic meaning is explained by the full sentence definition consisting of two components: the left-hand side (a contextualizing part) and the right-hand side (an explanatory part). The first part includes the repetition of the idioms *pass the hat* and *pass the hat around* in the context, while the second part provides a general term (genus proximum) and at least one characteristic feature (differentia specifica) in as similar way as an analytical definition (see Svensén 2009, 236 for a discussion of this definition).

2.3 Background information and metaphorical idioms

Metaphorical idioms can be arranged under conceptual metaphors if their meanings are motivated by metaphorical correspondences. Conventional knowledge, then, is explained in the box. This knowledge usually comes from a source domain, i.e. a more concrete domain from which we draw the words to understand a target

domain. Consider, for example, the use of the idioms *under the counter* and *under the table* illustrated by means of the following sentences:

(1) It did not bother me to learn that Stefan was selling astral-quality cocaine under the counter at Chez Police.
(2) Jim can take his salary and use it to hire three immigrants and pay them under the table.

The examples in (1) and (2) show the usage of two geographical variants. The idiom *under the counter* is commonly used in British English, while *under the table* is more regularly encountered in American English. The corpus data indicate that both idioms are variable and frequently function as adjectives. For instance, people often use the adjectives *under-the-counter* and *under-the-table* to denote 'a payment or deal that is secret, dishonest or illegal'. Since both variants instantiate the metaphor illegal is hidden under something, they should be grouped under the heading of this analogy as follows:

SECRET OR ILLEGAL IS HIDDEN UNDER SOMETHING

To keep something secret or illegal is like hiding it under something, so that other people cannot see it. Being dishonest is like being low down (→ DISHONEST IS LOW DOWN)

Under the counter [British] or **under the table** [usually American] if you buy, pay or accept money under the counter or under the table, you do it secretly because it is dishonest or illegal: ●*Militants had threatened to kill him for selling liquor under the counter at a family business.* ●*Hank worked for meager wages paid under the table.* ►you can also talk about an *under-the-counter* or *under-the-table* payment or deal, meaning one that is secret, dishonest or illegal: ●*Parents and kids have been warned about alcohol and cocaine, but do they know about the danger of under-the-counter drugs?* ●*Bane says he and Rose did an under-the-table cash deal. No paperwork, no sales receipt.*

ETYMOLOGY and CONVENTIONAL KNOWLEDGE

The idiom *under the counter* originated in Britain during the Second World War. Shopkeepers kept some things that were in great demand under the counter. They only sold them to customers who were able to pay much money for them. The expression *under the table* alludes to money being passed under a table in some shady transaction, such as a bribe, or it refers to a situation in which salaries are paid secretly and often illegally.

In addition to the metaphor mentioned above, both idioms seem to be motivated by the metaphor DISHONEST IS LOW DOWN. Hence, the right-pointing arrow inside round brackets provides a cross-reference to the description of this closely related metaphor. Idiom variants are mentioned in the follow-up paragraph at the end of the

definition and examples. This paragraph is introduced by the symbol (►). Finally, the background information motivating the meanings of both idioms is provided in the box.

2.4 Alternative ways of explaining conventional knowledge

A possible alternative to the explanation of conventional knowledge in boxes under a particular conceptual metaphor and to the use of conceptual metaphors as a principle for arranging figurative idioms would be the incorporation of background information directly into a descriptive or explanatory definition and/or a grouped presentation of closely related idioms according to the source domains they can be traced back to. In such an arrangement, conventional knowledge can constitute an integral part of an explanatory definition, i.e. a definition that encompasses encyclopedic information. Such a grouping and explanation proves to be an optimal solution for dealing with the idioms used to understand many target domains or concepts. For instance, it seems to be easier to group idioms originated from boxing directly under the source domain of boxing than to determine the exact number of conceptual metaphors or target domains to which the idioms relate. Hence, the expressions such as *throw in the towel, on the ropes, lower your guard, be down for the count,* and *flex your muscles* should be arranged under the source domain of boxing, either in a random fashion or in an order that corresponds to the expected sequence of events in this domain. The conventional knowledge associated with the idioms, in turn, can be explained within the entries placed under the source concept of boxing. Consider, for example, the elaboration of the idiom *throw in the towel* under the source concept of boxing:

BOXING

throw in the towel or **throw in the sponge** [mainly British] if someone throws in the towel or the sponge, they stop attempting to do something because they realize that they cannot succeed. In boxing, a boxer's trainer sometimes throws a towel or sponge into the ring in order to signal that a fighter can no longer continue a fight: ●*If you've lost weight and gained it back, don't throw in the towel on exercise.* ●*At 28, he threw in the sponge for the security of a job repairing telephone transmission equipment.* ►you can also use verbs such as **toss** and **chuck** instead of **throw**: ●*The Taliban, some pieces of it, are melting into the countryside because they have decided to toss in the towel.* ●*I mean I was a little boy in the '50s and that was when a lot of people were chucking in the towel and selling the house.*

As the description above shows, corpus data indicate that the idioms can be varied by replacing the verb *throw* with *toss* and *chuck.* Both variants are motivated by the background knowledge relating to a boxing bout in which towels and sponges

are sometimes thrown into the ring as a signal of defeat in order to stop the fight before there are any more injuries. It is important to provide the motivation behind the origin of these idioms in a dictionary entry and to inform users of the literal sense of figuratively used expressions. Much experimental evidence supports that knowledge of the literal sense of idioms and their origin helps to make idiomatic uses more transparent and memorable (e.g. Boers 2001; Guo 2007), whereas the arrangement of figurative idioms under the source domain can have a significant positive effect on retention (e.g. Verspoor and Lowie 2003) and be especially useful for students' understanding of the meaning of the idioms (e.g. Boers and Lindstromberg 2008b).

3. Pictorial elucidation

Pictorial elucidation is a process of stimulating an association between a figurative expression and an image through the application of pictorials illustrating a literal reading of this figurative phrase (Boers et al. 2008). These pictorials could be line drawings, schematic and concrete drawings, or photographic visuals. Pictorial elucidation of source domain expressions adds concreteness to the figurative phrases and thus is believed to provide an extra stimulus for dual coding (Paivio 1986; Clark and Paivio 1991) and retention of meaning (e.g. Boers et al. 2008; Boers 2013).

3.1 Previous studies on the effectiveness of visuals in teaching idioms

Cognitive semantic studies (e.g. Tyler and Evans 2004; Boers et al. 2008; Boers et al. 2009; Lindstromberg 2010) have revealed that the dual coding of input (both verbal and visual) encourages the creation of memory traces and the retention of information. These findings have promoted the use of mental imagery in language teaching, where pictorial elucidation has been believed to foster comprehension. Experimental research that has investigated the effects of pictorial elucidation on idiom learning proves that visuals are likely to enhance understanding, but may interfere with the retention of form of idiomatic units if their component words are less familiar to students. Boers et al. (2008), for example, report the results of three experiments where pictures were employed to clarify the literal senses of the target lexical units with the purpose of helping the learners interpret and remember their figurative meanings. The findings of these three case studies indicate that the use of visuals could be an effective mnemonic technique for the purpose of retention of lexical meaning, particularly for students who are high imagers (i.e. learners whose cognitive style predisposed them to think in mental pictures). Boers et al. (2009), in turn, report that pictures enhance recall only in the case of familiar words, while the recollection of unfamiliar words may be hampered by the presentation of pictorials.

The results of experimental research are a sufficient incentive for applying pictorial elucidation to the explanation of idiomatic meaning in a pedagogical dictionary of idioms. The findings of the experiment conducted by Szczepaniak and Lew (2011) have shown that the presence of visuals in dictionary entries for idioms have a significant effect on the immediate and delayed recall of idiomatic form and meaning. For this reason, the inclusion of pictorial illustrations in idiom entries can be an effective method for enhancing understanding of idioms on the condition that such pictorials are well-chosen and congruent with the literal meaning of the phrases they are intended to elucidate (Szczepaniak and Lew 2011). MacArthur and Boers's (in press) research has revealed that many text books and self-study vocabulary books include pictorials that do not at all elucidate the meaning of those idioms. Instead, they are multimodal puns illustrating the clever or humorous use of an idiom. It is doubtful whether such visuals help students understand idiomatic meanings.

3.2 The use of visuals in dictionaries

The application of pictorial illustrations to the explanation of idiomatic expressions in pedagogical lexicography is not a common practice. Of the current editions of English idioms dictionaries, only *Oxford Idioms Dictionary for Learners of English* (OID2) (Parkinson and Francis eds. 2006) and *Cambridge Idioms Dictionary* (CID2) (Walter ed. 2006) include pictorials. The former applies simpler pictures that depict the most important aspects of the scene. The latter, in turn, uses drawings showing many contextual details and those that are not explicable and interpretable, which makes them difficult to decode (Svensén 1993, 169). Furthermore, as Szczepaniak and Lew (2011, 327) note, the dictionaries differ from each other in that OID2 refers explicitly to imagery through humorous drawings, whereas CID2 focuses on the illustration of figurative meaning. Finally, visuals in OID2 include captions or depict illustrative sentences underneath a picture; in CID2, pictures not only contain captions but also show a specific story (Stein 1991, 107).

Pictorials may accompany each type of the presentation of idioms proposed in this article. They can be used to illustrate the humorous use of the literal meaning of an idiom, to depict different aspects of both the literal and figurative meaning, to illustrate the idiomatic meaning, or to represent only the literal meaning. The most effective method, however, seems to be the inclusion of pictorials in idiom entries to the explication of source-domain scenes and the idioms whose component words are familiar to dictionary users (cf. Szczepaniak and Lew 2011). A main advantage of this technique is that the explanation of the literal sense of an idiom helps to make its figurative use more transparent and memorable. The pictures add concreteness to the figurative expressions and thus stimulate dual coding (e.g. Boers et al. 2008).

A facilitative role of visuals in the explanation of idiomatic meaning is also noticed by *Kövecses and* Csábi (2014, 130), who argue that picture dictionaries, such as Kövecses, Tóth, and Babarci's (1998) *A Picture Dictionary of English*

Idioms, are especially useful when applying conceptual metaphors and metonymies in a dictionary:

> Pictures are able to quickly and clearly express the motivation of word and idiom meanings, thus facilitating vocabulary learning with the help of visual images. Using visual images can provide connections to meanings to be stored in memory and provide meaningful links between expressions and their meanings, thus promoting the storage and recovery of items that belong together (i.e., a form and the corresponding meaning) and producing better retention than simple repetition.

3.3 The application of pictorials to the explanation of idioms denoting happiness

Consider, for example, the use of visuals for the explanation of the following idioms related to happiness: *be on cloud nine, be on top of the world, be over the moon, be in seventh heaven,* and *be floating/walking on air.* Since these idioms instantiate the metaphor HAPPY IS UP, they should be grouped and elucidated under the heading of this analogy:

HAPPY IS UP

Feeling happy is like being high up or like moving upwards. Feeling sad or unhappy is seen as being low down or moving downwards.

be on cloud nine if someone is on cloud nine, they are very happy because something good has happened to them: ● *Tammy was on cloud nine when she found out she had been selected from a pool of 7,000 applicants.* ▶you can also use the expressions **come off cloud nine** or **come down from cloud nine** to say that someone stops being happy and has to deal with the reality of everyday life after a period of happiness and excitement. ● *Trigger comes off cloud nine as Devils get set for play-offs push at Ipswich.* ● *This afternoon I came down from cloud nine long enough to shoot the best game I've ever had.*

ETYMOLOGY

The most likely explanation for this expression comes from the classification of clouds used by the US Weather Bureau in the 1950s, in which the ninth cloud denotes cumulonimbus, i.e. the highest type of cloud occurring at about 30,000ft.

be on top of the world if you feel on top of the world, you feel very happy: ●*You're feeling on top of the world, holding your newborn baby.*

be over the moon [British, informal] if someone is over the moon about something that has happened, they are extremely happy about it: ●*I mean, we were cheering and smiling and so happy and everyone was just over the moon.*

be in seventh heaven if you are in seventh heaven, you are very happy: ●*Actually, Dr. Benson, Amelia was so thrilled I was pregnant, she was in seventh heaven.*
be floating/walking on air if you are walking or floating on air, you feel very happy or excited: ●*I feel really lucky right now. I'm really grateful. I'm floating on air.* ●*Logically, Norman should have been miserable. Instead, he was walking on air and smiling at small children.*

ETYMOLOGY
In Islam and Judaism, the seventh heaven is the highest sphere in heaven, where God and the most exalted angels dwell.

Consequently, applying this conceptual metaphor as a heading under which the metaphorical expressions are arranged will be facilitative for learning and understanding. Of course, this type of presentation is meant to be accompanied by the application of pictorial illustrations depicting the literal reading of the idiomatic expressions or one of their component words. "Visual representations can only be effective in instructional contexts if they are perceived as bearers of significant, serious information, which is clearly relevant to the task at hand" (Skorge 2008, 266). Hence, such pictures should be as simple as possible, present the idioms whose component words are familiar to learners, and show the most important information about the literal meaning of an idiom. For instance, the picture of *be on cloud nine* may depict a joyful boy lying or sitting on the cloud in the shape of a number nine, ─ a scene of a boy standing on a globe, *be over the moon* ─ a person flying on the rocket over the moon or a rocket flying over the moon, *in seventh heaven* ─ a boy dressed up as an angel standing on a large cloud among many smaller clouds in the shape of a number seven, and *be floating/walking on air* ─ a boy walking or floating on air over the land. Perfect examples of illustrations designed to help English learners are those launched by Kaplan International Colleges (see Appendix). An advantage of such simple pictorials is that they do not provide too many contextual details and thus are easy to decode and comprehend; furthermore, they are not potentially misleading since they do not give users wrong ideas about the meaning.

4. Etymological notes

The use of pictorials for the explanation of the literal sense of idioms may be supplemented and supported by the implementation of etymological notes elucidating the origin of idioms. Such etymological notes can be inserted at the end of selected entries and introduced by a box, as shown in section 3 and below, when this allows dictionary users to understand the meaning of the idiom. The decision about which idiom should be supplied with an etymological note needs

to be taken individually by each lexicographer. Etymologies incorporated into idiom entries should be short, reduced to the minimum and comprehensible to readers (cf. Svensén 1993, 190; Landau 2001, 102). They should raise awareness of language change and show that idioms have their origins in a particular subject area, customs, or traditions (Szczepaniak and Lew 2011).

For example, the entry for the idiom *lead with your chin* may contain additional information about its origin. This note can be introduced by a box after the explanation of this idiom to inform a potential dictionary user about its history and etymology:

lead with your chin do or say something aggressively, causing a fight or argument: ● *He is a tough cop who leads with his chin when he talks.*

ETYMOLOGY
The origin of this expression is in boxing. It is used to refer to a boxer leaving his chin unprotected, thus making it easy for an opponent to hit it.

An advantage of such a short description is that it only provides basic information concerning the origin of this idiom and hence this note does not distract users' attention from idiomatic meaning.

Some short explanatory notes can also appear in boxes at the beginning of an entry. These can provide more information about the specific meaning of the primary entry word being a constituent of some idioms. Thus, under the headword *blow,* for example, it is possible to include the following information that helps explain the meaning of idioms derived from boxing:

blow

ETYMOLOGY
In the following expressions, *blow* comes from boxing and means a hard hit from someone's hand.

blow-by-blow account a description of an event that gives all its details in the order in which they happened: ● *They gave investigators a blow-by-blow account of what they say happened that night in that bedroom.*
body blow an action that causes someone great disappointment: ● *China is preparing to deliver its own body blow to the U.S. economy.*

Such a brief note provides the motivation for the idioms containing the component *blow,* thus facilitating their learning and understanding.

It is important to note, however, that the inclusion of etymology in idiom entries may divert users' attention from the current meaning and result in some confusion as to what the actual meaning is. Szczepaniak and Lew's (2011, 342) experimental research, for example, revealed that the use of etymological notes in dictionary entries cannot "guarantee deep processing of their content" and that etymologies do not have any positive effect on short-and long-term retention of both form and meaning of idioms. These findings seem not to be in line with the results of the research into the influence of etymological elaboration on idiom learning conducted by Boers (2001) and Boers, Demecheleer, and Eyckmans (2004). These studies point to the effectiveness of etymological elaboration as a technique facilitating the comprehension and retention of idioms and suggest that reading a brief etymological explanation is especially beneficial to the retention of unknown opaque idioms. The differences between the findings, however, are likely to arise from the nature of the activities the subjects were involved in (cf. Boers, Demecheleer, and Eyckmans 2004; Szczepaniak and Lew 2011). Szczepaniak and Lew (2011, 341) argue that their results do not contradict the findings by Boers and his colleagues and conclude that "etymological elaboration encourages learners to invest considerable cognitive effort in intensive processing of imagery before feedback on the actual origins and meaning of the expression is provided".

5. Structural elaboration

The semantic elaboration techniques employed above for the explanation of idiomatic meaning can be usefully supplemented and complemented by structural elaboration techniques intended to help dictionary users remember formal properties of given idioms. The term *structural elaboration* pertains to any mental operation with regard to formal features of a phrase or expression (Barcroft 2002). For instance, as noted by Boers and Lindstromberg (2008a), structural elaboration can be stimulated by recognition or perceiving properties such as affixes, peculiarities of spelling, and salient sound patterns (e.g. repetitions in rhyme).

5.1 Phonological motivation

With a view to fostering retention of form, some researches have sought to explore the scope of phonological motivation, evident in the conventionalization of alliterative and assonant expressions (e.g. *publish or perish*, *curiosity killed that cat*, *first and foremost*, or *the more the merrier*) (Boers and Lindstromberg 2009), and its usefulness for comprehending and remembering the precise lexical makeup of phrases in addition to remembering their meaning (Lindstromberg and Boers 2008a; 2008b). These studies indicated that phonological motivation is highly beneficial for stimulating retention of form (i.e. for learners' recollection of the precise lexical composition

of word combinations). Other studies (Boers and Lindstromberg 2005; Boers and Stengers 2008) concerned the phonological motivation behind the lexical selection in idioms. The results of these studies suggest that during the process whereby a particular multiword expression becomes conventionalized, the phonological features of one lexical item may influence the selection of another. For example, manual counts in the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms* (Speake ed.1999) and the *Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Idioms* (Sinclair and Moon eds. 2002) indicate that the lexical choice of approximately 20% of idiomatic phrases in English may be determined by alliteration (e.g. *off the cuff*) and/or rhyme (e.g. *be left high and dry*).

Given that the use of structural elaboration is likely to have a positive influence on learners' recollection of idioms and their exact lexical composition, the notion of phonological motivation can be especially useful for explaining, or drawing users' attention to, the precise lexical make-up of alliterative idiomatic phrases (e.g. *spick and span, neck and neck*, *first past the post*, or *black and blue*) in idiom dictionaries. For example, the entry for the idiom *black and blue* may include additional information about its structural motivation. This kind of information can be implemented in the form of notes explaining the lexical composition of idioms. Such notes can be inserted at the end of selected entries and introduced by a box directly after the elucidation of idiomatic meaning:

black and blue if a part of your body is black and blue, it is covered in bruises (= dark marks on your skin caused by being hit or having an accident): ● *I realized she was black and blue on both sides of her face.* METONYMY: The phrase refers to the colour of the skin changing because of an injury. This colour metonymically stands for a bruise. ► You can also say that someone **beats someone black and blue**, meaning that they hit them many times until they are covered in bruises: ● *You can't beat a person black and blue.*

STRUCTURE
Note that the words **bl**ack and **bl**ue begin with the same consonants or sounds.

As can be seen above, the note titled STRUCTURE contains a brief explanation of the form of the idiom. Bold fonts are used here for emphasis to indicate alliteration, i.e. the repetition of the first or second letter in a series of words. An advantage of such a simple and straightforward description is that it directly draws users' attention to the precise composition of this idiom, hence allowing dictionary users to understand the phonological motivation behind the form. As with etymological notes, the decision about which idiom should be equipped with a structural note needs to be taken individually by each lexicographer.

5.2 Iconic motivation and scalar ordering

Similar explanatory notes can also appear in boxes at the end of an entry in order to provide motivation for the word order in binomials. Some research (Benor and Levy 2006; Boers and Lindstromberg 2008a) has shown that iconic ordering (i.e. first things first, as in *kiss and tell* or *bow and scrape*) and scalar ordering (i.e. crescendo effects, as in *nickel and dime* or *alive and kicking*) are the most significant factors determining the word order in binomial idioms, and that a certain amount of awareness-rising regarding the motivation behind the word order of binomials may help students understand and remember the form of many binomial expressions. For example, Boers and Lindstromberg's study (2008a) found that these types of motivation are highly reliable predictors of the word order in 35.85% of the idioms in their sample of 106 binomial idioms. In addition, they extended the notion of iconic ordering to include cases where the word order reflects the probability of one entity being perceived before another, as in *cloak and dagger*, and cases where the first word serves as frame or ground for the second, as in *milk and honey* (see Boers and Lindstromberg 2008a).

These iconic principles can be applied to the explanation of binomial idioms such as *bread and butter*, *apples and oranges, ups and downs, safe and sound, now or never*, *sooner or later, wear and tear* or *bow and scrape.* For example, the binomials *now or never* and *sooner or later,* reflecting temporal succession, can be explained in the following way:

now or never the phrase is used to say that something must be done immediately, especially because there will not be another chance to do it in the future: ● *You're the only one who can do it. It's now or never.* ● *We've only got 10 minutes. It's now or never.*

WORD ORDER
The word order in this phrase reflects a temporal sequence of events: a particular action must be done now or it will not be able to be done in the future.

sooner or later the phrase is used to say that something will certainly happen at some time in the future, although you do not know exactly when: ● *The people of planet earth sooner or later will have to wake up from the present state of ignorance.*

WORD ORDER
The word order in this phrase reflects a temporal sequence of events: something will happen at an earlier or later point in time.

As can be seen above, the boxes provide the motivation behind the form of both expressions by referring to the iconic principle determining the sequential order of the components in the binomials.

A parallel description can be provided to clarify the lexical composition of *wear and tear* or *bow and scrape:*

wear and tear noun [U] the damage, change, or loss that usually happens to something in normal use, making it less valuable or useful: ● *We're going to test them to see how much wear and tear they can take.*

WORD ORDER
This word order reflects the order of events in the literal scenario: a piece of clothing that we wear tends to be torn in its ordinary use during a longer period of time.

bow and scrape (disapproving) to show too much respect for someone powerful or wealthy especially in order to get approval: ● *Where I grew up you had to bow and scrape to the nearest man and keep your mouth shut.*

WORD ORDER
This word order reflects the order of events in the literal scenario: in the past, there was the traditional custom of bowing that involved drawing back one leg and bending the other so that one foot was scraping the ground.

This description indicates that the linear arrangement of elements in both expressions is motivated by the iconic principle of sequential order. In other words, the binomials describe events which routinely occur in the order in which they are expressed.

A different semantic account can be proposed for the elucidation of the word order of the idiom *bread and butter*:

bread and butter noun [U] (informal) 1. The most basic element or the most important aspect of something. Note: bread spread with butter is a basic food: ●*Education is the bread and butter of success.* 2. a job, activity or task that provides you with a steady income: ● *His bread and butter is his club team.* ● *The oil markets are their bread and butter.*

WORD ORDER
The first word is the frame or context for the second one: *bread* in this phrase is used before *butter,* since butter is put on bread, not the other way around.

In this expression the first word serves as the frame or ground for the second one. Thus, *bread* is the context with reference to which the word *butter* is interpreted.

5.3 Frequency as a motivational principle

Apart from iconic ordering, Benor and Levy's (2006) study provided evidence that frequency can be a reliable predicator of word order in binomials: in other words, more common words tend to be used before less common ones, as in *salt and pepper*. The tendency for using the most common word first and the less common word second may be motivated by the ease of retrieval: frequent words tend to be retrieved from memory more easily than less frequent ones (see Boers and Lindstromberg 2008a). This kind of motivation can be applicable to the explanation of the word order of the expression (*risk*) *life and limb*:

risk life and limb if you risk your life and limb, you risk being killed or seriously injured: ● *Men must risk life and limb to protect women and children.*

WORD ORDER
In this idiom the most frequent word *life* comes first because it is probably easiest to retrieve from memory, and the first word has a broader meaning than the second one. Life is more important than limb loss, since if you lose a leg or a member you can still live.

This semantic description explains the word order of the idiom by indicating that the more frequent word tends to precede the less frequent one, and that the word with the broadest meaning tends to precede the word with a narrower meaning. In addition, it highlights that life is far more important than limb loss, which also may motivate the word order of these words.

6. Conclusions

This article has demonstrated that cognitive linguistics is able to provide a useful theoretical background for lexicographers and essential background information about idiomatic meaning and usage, which in turn may assist in the design and compilation of thematic dictionaries, with extensive knowledge about idioms, their meanings and geographical and structural variants. In particular, it has been shown that the use of conventional knowledge, pictorial elucidation and etymological elaboration constitutes an effective method for explaining idiomatic meaning in a thematic dictionary of idioms based on cognitive principles of linguistic organization.

The examples of dictionary entries presented in this article and some experimental evidence reviewed suggest that using conceptual metaphors, metonymies and domains as principles for organizing idiomatic expressions, grouping idioms under the source domain, providing background information about

the literal meanings or origins of such expressions, as well as applying pictorial illustrations depicting the literal reading of idioms or one of their component words can be conducive to their learning and understanding and especially beneficial for students' retention of the meaning of the phrases.

Further experimental research, however, could evaluate the advantages of the proposed techniques, their effectiveness and efficiency in the explanation of idiomatic meaning. The rationale for their implementation is supported when the proposed explanatory techniques are found to result in fuller and deeper understanding of figurative phrases than traditional ways of their presentation and elucidation in current dictionaries. Future work, therefore, might concentrate on the substantiation of the usefulness of the methods for explaining idioms employed in this article. Furthermore, more studies are needed to assess whether the inclusion of etymological notes in dictionary entries can guarantee better understanding of their meaning and thus ensure better retention of idioms, and whether visuals depicting exclusively the actual meaning instead of the literal reading would make a substantial contribution to the recollection of idiomatic meaning. Finally, it would also be interesting to put forward some proposals concerning the presentation and explanation of idioms motivated by multiple cognitive mechanisms (metaphors, metonymies and domains) and to prove the effectiveness of phonological and iconic motivation as an explanatory tool to help users comprehend and remember the form or lexical composition of idiomatic expressions in a dictionary entry.

Notes

1 The results of these studies point to the three inevitable conclusions. First, the cognitive motivation of idioms is beneficial for insightful learning that is more effective than rote learning. Second, the use of conceptual metaphors as a motivational principle aids lexicographers and teachers in organizing figurative phrases in groups. Such a systematic arrangement seems to be superior to a semantically random organization of vocabulary. Finally, the cognitive motivation of the meaning of idioms stimulates mental imagery that helps to make idiomatic meanings more transparent and memorable.

2 Wiliński's (2017) article about the implementation of conventional knowledge to the explanation of idiom variants and Szczepaniak and Lew's (2011) study into the usefulness of imagery in the form of pictorial illustrations and etymological notes in dictionaries of idioms were two notable exceptions. In his study (2017), Wiliński demonstrated the effectiveness of conventional knowledge in elucidating cross-cultural and cross-linguistic differences in usage between British and American idioms, whereas Szczepaniak and Lew (2011) pointed to a facilitative role of visuals on short-and long-term retention of both form and meaning of idioms.

3 This method of presenting idioms assumes that the meanings of lexical units, idioms, phrasal verbs, proverbs, and other expressions might be elucidated in thematic dictionaries with reference to cognitive mechanisms, such as metaphors, metonymies, frames/domains and scripts (Wiliński 2016), and/or by means of pictorials (photographic visuals or drawings).The macrostructure of onomasiological dictionaries may be comprised of three types of arrangement (Wiliński 2016; 2017): (a) metaphostructure − a grouped presentation of figurative expressions under the heading of the conceptual metaphors, (b) metostructure − a grouping of metonymic expressions under specific metonymic relationships within a frame, and (c) framestructure − the arrangement of words and phrases within the frame they evoke and the context in which they are found.

4 This constitutes background knowledge involving any level of complexity or structure, e.g. a concept (Evans 2007), a domain (Langacker 1987), a semantic frame (Fillmore 1982) or some other representational space or conceptual complex.

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Appendix


English Idioms: Happiness
'Having a whale of a time.'
'On cloud nine.'
'Tickled pink.'
'On top of the world.'
'Happy as a clam.'
'Buzzing.'
'Over the moon.'
'In seventh heaven.'
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