Introduction

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Anyone who has learned a foreign language remembers their encounter with idioms or collocations, which although they are interesting and fun, can also pose problems of understanding or production. It is far from obvious that the English expression *kick the bucket* means "to die," and that it can be rendered in French with the equivalent but equally opaque *casser sa pipe* (break one's pipe). Likewise, proficiency in a foreign language requires the ability to reproduce *verbatim* expressions which might seem to lack traditional "grammatical logic." One of the authors of this introduction recalls spontaneously, and unconsciously, producing a grammatically "correct" version of a French idiom, causing mirth among native French-speaker friends: "*il fait son petit chemin de bonhomme*" instead of "*il fait son petit bonhomme de chemin*" (which could be translated very roughly as "go one's way merrily" instead of "go one's merry way"). Such anecdotes reveal how learners appropriate the grammar of the target language, but can then overgeneralise the rules to idioms and thus find themselves... "barking up the wrong tree." These examples point to the importance of studies into such phenomena which present researchers in linguistics and language teaching with theoretical and practical challenges.

The papers presented here are the result of a research seminar entitled "Séquences pré-fabriquées et apprentissage des langues étrangères "*Formulaic Language and Foreign Language Learning,*" organised by the Centre for Research into National Identities and Interculturality (CRINI) held at the University of Nantes' Faculty of foreign languages and cultures on 15th April 2011. The aim of the seminar was to examine a subject which is relevant not only to linguistics and foreign language didactics, but also to intercultural studies, since formulas can be deeply rooted in specific cultures. We had the pleasure of welcoming Alison Wray, professor and director of research at Cardiff University, as our invited keynote speaker. An internationally renowned specialist in the field, she is the author of numerous publications including *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon* (2002) and *Formulaic Language: Pushing the Boundaries* (2008). In her inaugural talk she provided seminar participants with an extremely clear overview of the nature of formulaic language, the possibilities for research into the topic, and implications for foreign language teaching and learning. Having thus established the theoretical framework, speakers and audience participated in an interdisciplinary and intercultural discussion, in keeping with the ethos of the host laboratory. The presentations in English and in French all shared the same focus on the links between formulaic language and foreign language learning and teaching, but from different perspectives. The programme covered the translation of idioms in university classes in French as a foreign language, formulaic language in children's folklore and their use in language classes, foreign language awareness activites in primary school, and bilingual children's learning of formulas through storybook reading. Each speaker contributed their thoughts on the nature of formulas, different manifestations of formulas according to cultural domains and genres, and ways of learning and/or teaching formulas.

Presentation of articles

In her paper "Future Directions in Formulaic Language Research" **Alison Wray** offers reflections on the development of research into formulaic language, seeing research as a cyclical process which goes through phases of innovation, consolidation, confirmation, and finally reflection. She situates present research at the end of the consolidation and confirmation part of the cycle and encourages
researchers to now "examine existing claims, the evidence on which they were built, and the assumptions underlying them." The development of new insights, theories and models will also require "imagination and intense scholarship."

In Part Two, Wray identifies three main areas of observation and investigation in formulaic language research: native speaker language (including first language acquisition), clinical language, and second language learning, and outlines developments made so far in each area. The investigation of language patterns in native speakers has moved through stages influenced in turn by observation of repetitive or idiomatic 'ordinary' language, and theories based on Chomsky's atomic view of the lexicon. More recently, research has sought to resolve the tension between the capacity for novelty in comprehension and production, and the possible processing advantages to both speaker and hearer of being less novel. Modern computational methods for identifying frequent multiword strings have enabled more precise research into real language use, resulting in theories such as Sinclair's "open choice principle" and "idiom principle." Research into language disorders resulting from brain damage has contributed many valuable insights into language processing in general as well as to formulaic language research, since "across many types of language disability, both developmental and acquired, formulaic language seemed to remain and to play an important role in facilitating continued communication." Second language teaching and learning is directly concerned by the need to balance holistic and analytic approaches to language use. The status of multiword strings as useful phrases to be memorised or as forms of complicated words incorporated into vocabulary learning may reflect assumptions about what is useful for learners and the ways in which teachers can help them to achieve native-like fluency, or idiomaticity.

Wray then goes on to outline her own work in which she has tried to bring together evidence from these different fields in order to provide a coherent cross-disciplinary explanation of formulaic language and the new questions that have resulted from such an enterprise. She describes the Formulaic Language Research Network and some of the current work in this area before advising on the way forward and some questions that researchers now need to ask. Part Three presents six current claims and opportunities for development, in each case providing a claim, an expansion on the claim, and its implication for L2 research and teaching. The six claims concern variation in idiomaticity, social causes of idiomaticity, idiomaticity as a consequence of processing, whose processing is being reduced?, where do collocations fit in?, and variation according to genre.

Alison Wray provides researchers with a useful outline of past and current formulaic language research as well as valuable notions about the importance of the methods to be adopted when assessing claims. She also points to some practical ways forward, proposing interesting questions about the underlying theories and assumptions of each of the six claims under scrutiny. She ends her paper with the hope that formulaic language will play a central role of in future linguistic research.

In her article, "Translating idioms 'with your eyes closed'? Images as a tool to learning," **Marine Espinat** applies a multidisciplinary and intercultural approach drawing from the fields of phraseology, translation studies, German studies, and research into the teaching of French as a foreign language. She begins with a discussion and definition of phraseology which is enriched by her knowledge of research carried out in the German language. In so doing, she provides new perspectives for researchers who might only be familiar with English language research literature. Her reflections on the role of images within idioms is particularly interesting. The author emphasises the notion of images while arguing in favour of teaching idioms in the language classroom, and she asks important questions about the strategies employed when translating idioms.

Espinat describes lessons in the translation of French and German idioms which she gave at a German university, and then provides the results of these sessions. A typology of the difficulties faced by students is followed by an analysis of the errors students made when translating idioms linked to an image. Through such an analysis, the author proposes to provide students with a method for translation which consists in looking for metaphorical models in order to reformulate them by finding other images which share the same conceptual model.

In her discussion of the difficulties inherent in images, the author reflects that the comprehension of the true meaning of idioms can be susceptible to interference from images. The image within an idiom is often linked to notions that are deeply rooted in culture and whose meaning may remain opaque even for native speakers who are used to hearing and using what may be a common idiom. The third part of the article deals with phraseology and images in foreign language learning. Here, Espinat presents a recent development in phraseology and foreign language teaching research, "phraseo-didactics", as well as a contrastive approach which enables the learner to "see her second language as being linked to her first."

In his paper, "Trying to Make it Real: Harnassing Foreign Language Teaching to Children's Folklore, Formulaic Language and Rhythm" **Andy Arleo** hopes to encourage future cross-disciplinary studies which bring together research in children's folklore, formulaic language, and foreign language teaching. He proposes that researchers working in these three academic fields would mutually benefit from incorporating each approach into their own. He supports this conclusion with an analysis of children's folklore which takes into account formulaic language, with an emphasis on the role of rhythm and the "powerful mutually enforcing partnership between rhythm and formulaicity." He proposes that rhythm be added to the list of diagnostic criteria developed by Wray and Namba (Wray 2008). He then goes on to suggest ways in which formulaic children's folklore may contribute to the evolution of primary school teaching practice.

In the introduction, Arleo provides readers with a working definition of children's folklore before examining, in Part Two, a necessarily limited set of examples of formulaic children's folklore which include seeking games, clever comebacks, handclapping games, parodies, and counting-out rhymes. Each analysis emphasizes the role of rhythm and formulaic chunks, and indicates the potential for cross-cultural studies or applications to foreign language teaching. Part Three focusses on the role of rhythm in the formulaicity of children's folklore and suggests that rhythm aids fluency and the memorization of children's folklore, thereby enabling its recall and replication leading to further propagation. The author also discusses the

isochrony of speech and suggests that research discussed by Patel (2008), which concludes that speech is not isochronous, may be neglecting to take into account the frequency of formulaic language in speech. There is also a general reflexion on the categorization of speech and song (or chant) in different cultures and its implications for research.

In Part Four, Arleo argues for more authentic, peer-sourced and peer-targeted material to be used in primary level foreign language teaching, based on the assumption that "communication in the real world is the ultimate objective." He proposes that children's folklore not only fits into this category but is also a vehicle for holistic embodied learning based on real interactions between children. He suggests that teachers initially resist the temptation to analyse such language, preferring to favour fluency over immediate accuracy, and allowing for a more gradual development of accuracy thanks to regular rehearsal that enables children to progress at their own pace. He makes suggestions for more analytical learning strategies that can be "built onto this solid foundation through teacher and peer scaffolding."

Catrin Bellay's article, "Bilingual children's reuse of formulaic phrases encountered in storybook reading: the effect of rich definition, parental reuse, and parent-initiated reuse," concerns work carried out as part of an ongoing longitudinal study of the language development of her four French-English bilingual children, with an emphasis on the role of stories, songs, rhymes, and television for children. As she points out in the introduction of her paper, the precise role of Musical, Audio-visual, Poetic and Narrative Input (MAPNI) on the acquisition and development of bilingual child language has not yet been studied. Her article studies and compares the effects on the acquisition of formulaic phrases of different techniques used during and after storybook reading.

In Part One, she presents the aims of her paper, reviews relevant studies in vocabulary learning, discusses the links between formulaic language and language learning, and suggests that her children's bilingualism and their limited exposure to English allows the researcher to isolate to some degree the relationship between input and output. Part Two presents the methodology, including the participants, the materials used, eleven target phrases (e.g., "Time will tell"), the procedure, and information regarding recordings and transcripts. Part Three presents the results, first involving parental offer styles (e.g. "Do you know what <target phrase> means?"), reading techniques and reuse during reading sessions as well as in other contexts. This is followed by the analysis of child utterances during the reading sessions, child reuse during the reading sessions and in other contexts, reuse of formulaic frames and reuse of non-target phrases. The data is clearly summarized and exemplified in a series of tables.

Part Four discusses the role of parental reading techniques and re-use in acquisition; re-use as a measure of acquisition; the role of formulaicity in determining whether and how a phrase is reused; implications for second-language teaching; limitations and future directions. Bellay suggests that while rich definition "can heighten children's understanding and experience of phrases...it is not possible to conclude from this study that such reading techniques or reuse really lead to acquisition of the phrases in question." Rather, she stresses the value of "constructing or co-constructing new variations within frames which seems to have a positive impact on the acquisition of those frames." She notes that like riding a bike, a child must use a phrase to acquire it, a metaphor that one might link to the role of procedural memory in language acquisition. Bellay makes a number of concrete proposals that will be helpful for second language teaching. For instance, idiomatic fixed phrases might be memorized by the

learner and reused in role plays. In her conclusion, Bellay emphasises the importance of the attitude adopted by the adult during child-adult interactions in storybook reading, which can help the child take on the role of an active learner rather than a passive listener. Such supported learning involving the meaning of opaque idiomatic expressions or cultural references may enhance the appreciation of the story.

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