

Opponent Review for the Bachelor Thesis of Barbora Pěničková

Title: Comparative Analysis of Transparency of Selected Idioms

Author: Barbora Pěničková

The title of Barbora Pěničková's bachelor thesis is Comparative Analysis of Transparency of Selected Idioms. In her abstract she states that the thesis will deal with Czech and English idioms and transparency. She states that the aim of the thesis is to verify that the "knowledge of the meaning of the individual parts may decrease lack of understanding but is not always enough to make it transparent."

The theoretical part focuses on the particular definitions of an idiom and transparency, differences between idioms in Czech and English, and correspondence of the selected Czech and English idioms. The practical part of the thesis explains in detail the research and results of the research among the participants (Czech and English native speakers) regarding the hypothesis of the thesis.

For the convenience of the reader, she includes a list of tables such as English and Czech idioms used in the research to inform the reader about the various sources of information. This does provide an easier reference up front if the reader wishes to look at a specific table and immediately gives an indication of the detailed organization put into the work. In the introduction she focuses on the use of idioms, topicality and the widespread use of idioms in everyday speech. Here she formally states the purpose of the thesis and how it is organized. The research is briefly described as to the aims, the participants, methods, materials and the results as well as the interpretation of the results. As she states in the last sentence, she hopes the thesis will perhaps make a modest contribution to the investigation of idioms. Section 2 deals with the definition and characteristics of an idiom. Here she gives various definitions of the idiom from various documented sources from the dictionary to various academics. She gives various definitions because for the purpose of the thesis these definitions will prove relevant to the goals of the thesis. On P. 5 she states that from a semantic perspective idiomatic expressions are not transparent, however, as she also states this is not completely true and gives examples of contrasting idioms such as *break the ice* and *kick the bucket*. With her own views supported by citations, she demonstrates to the reader that she has in-depth knowledge of the issue and is prepared to discuss the issue throughout the thesis as shown through various examples. This establishes her academic professionalism from the beginning of the thesis which contributes to the goal of the thesis she presents. She introduces in the early stages of the work such terminology as transparency and its synonym decomposability. With frequent use of this terminology she establishes the central theme of her argument early on which provides orientation to the reader as to where the work is leading to in this area of linguistics. She also clearly defines the terminology to demonstrate her understanding of the language used for the purposes of her thesis.

In section 4 she discusses processing and interpretation. In this section she presents three different views to make up the whole, the decompositional hypothesis, the configuration hypothesis and the Phrase-induced Polysemy model. Here she discusses various academic views relating to these notions to further educate the reader on the various views in this field of study. In the next sub-

section she discusses various strategies of interpreting idioms, such as the mechanism of the metaphor and metaphorical organizational patterns. She suggests connecting both the literal and figurative meaning of the idioms to help to interpret the meaning of the particular idiom. Another mechanism discussed is metonymy. Here she gives an example of *heads will roll* to visualize the mechanism. In the next section she discusses processing and interpreting of L2 idioms. Here she uses the support of several academics to claim that L2 learners do not have enough competence in the second language to comprehend metaphorical meaning. As result of this deficiency, they may revert to literal or meaning in their L1. This is a good point in connection with her discussion of transparency of idioms. She also claims that the L2 learner may then rely on his L1 and cultural knowledge to find a similar expression in his own language. In section 5 she discusses language characteristics of Czech and English. Here she explains the difference between genetic and typological classification in relation to the parent languages. While Czech and English both stem from the Indo-European family, they are divided into different sub-groups, English from the West Germanic group, and Czech from the Slavic group. This, she claims would provide both similarities and difference in the case of transparency of idioms. In the next section she discusses correspondence of idioms. Here she states that language learners often depend on their knowledge of the individual words of the idiom as well as the knowledge of idioms in their own language. As she states the learner would use this device to find a similar idiom even partially in his own language.

The next two sections she discusses total and partial correspondence. Here she discusses idioms that correspond on all three levels(stylistic,semantic and formality)(total) idioms that display a lower level of similarity between the L1 and L2 . In the next section she discusses animal idioms and non-animal idiom correspondence. As she states in her summary of the section, the purpose of the theoretical section was to orientate the reader towards different classifications of idioms in preparation of the following practical part. Here she has shown through this educational section that the two sections are indeed connected and to complement each other and that the first section should be a base for the second section, the research that follows.

In the second section she explains the method and materials used in the research. The volunteers include sixty Czech native speakers ages 16-54 who study or have been studying English as a second language. The second group consists of twenty-five native speakers aged 18-50. As she states, they had no or little knowledge of Czech language. In the next section she discusses the materials and procedure. She used two sets of idioms for each group. Each group received thirteen idioms relating to animals. The participants were given the idioms in the other group's language. She chose animal idioms due to their frequency in use. She shows the Czech and English idioms as well as the meaning in table listed. She then goes on in the following pages to explain the details of the research conducted. In section 8 she discusses the results. She first explains the results of the Czech participants and then the native speakers. The Czech participants identified 52% of the idioms. She also lists a table in descending order of the rate of successful interpretation going from 83% to the lowest at 28%. She is very specific in her analysis of the results explaining the results for various areas of interpretation which shows her professionalism in the presentation of the research along with the enthusiasm and dedication to specificity. In the next section she discusses the native speakers of English and their rate of successful interpretation which was higher than average, 76%. She also provides a table of the Czech idioms and rate of successful interpretation ranging from 100% to 0%.

In the next section she offers a discussion and interpretation of the results. She relates this section directly to the aim of her thesis, the comments on the transparency of the English animal idioms and a comparison with the Czech idioms. She offers special attention in this section to the six idiomatic expressions that were interpreted correctly by the majority of the Czech participants. Here she offers some interpretation as well as speculation which is appropriate with this kind of detailed study. She also identifies certain idioms related to the study which shows that she has given a lot of consideration to the results of the research and how it applies to her thesis on idioms and transparency. She offers a comparison in her discussion of the Czech and English native speakers to show which of the idioms may be considered more transparent based on the study. The rest of the section goes on to discuss the details of the research conducted and the conclusion sums of the thesis as a whole.

She includes an extensive bibliography which is appropriate for a work of this type and it also shows her thoroughness in her discussion in the theoretical section as well as an appropriate number of citations verifying her own interpretations of the results. The various appendixes include the materials used along with carefully stated tabulated results of the research.

Overall Barbora Pěničkova's bachelor work is not only completely transparent in terms of the details of her research but nothing short of impressive. She has shown a great amount of enthusiasm and care in her work and although there were noticed two or three minor mistakes in use of language, this is negligible with respect to the content and did not distract the reader from the detail and sense of purpose of the work. The work does have a sense of vision in regards to the study of idioms and the implications of how they could be taught in the classroom as a result of this work. As she states, she has contributed to the study of idioms and transparency and therefore I enthusiastically recommend a mark of (vyborně) (1) for this bachelor work.

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