goals pursued is comparison of the degree of indirectness in different conversation genres, the ratios of turns (tone units or words) vs. frequency of indeterminacy phenomena could be a useful way of comparing the texts under examination (e.g. in Table 2, p. 47). On the other hand, the lack of precise quantitative results does not make the presented account of SI phenomena less valuable, because its main value consists in presenting a thorough description and methodology for the study of these phenomena. As is inevitable in semantico-pragmatic studies, the fuzziness between individual interpretative categories is an inherent problem, and the treatment of SI, too, can hardly avoid it, viz. the cline attenuation-accentuation, or the view of depersonalization as one of the markers of attenuation (p. 63), but also a category on its own (impersonality in Chapter 5).

In a second edition the text would benefit from being rid of small oversights and inconsistencies. For instance, on p. 11 it is claimed that indications of the character of the individual texts and some of the texts in the full version are included. Actually only one text, S.1.4, is presented there, characterized only as a face-to-face conversation and the characterization appears elsewhere (under the discussions of the separate indeterminacy phenomena). On p. 12 Diane Blakemore (1992) is quoted, but not in Works Cited (i.e. references); a similar omission occurs with Chafe (1982, p. 50), Hoffmanová (1994, p. 80) and Aarts (1991, pp. 88–89).

Nonetheless there is no doubt that Urbanová’s monograph provides a very good introduction to the subject of meaning in conversation and yields a number of new, fresh observations. It is closely structured and accessibly written. Although not a bulky publication, it is exceptionally rich in information. Apart from its research goals, it may be described as having a distinct didactic potential in that its survey of the positions of different authors relevant to the subject in one way or another is quite exhaustive. As a whole, the monograph is a useful contribution to the analysis of spoken language and significantly enriches our understanding of the workings of SI in English conversation, such as the differences between the SI means and the degree of their exploitation in various conversation genres.

_Pavlína Šaldová, Aleš Klégr (Prague)_

_Note_


STANISLAV J. KAVKA
_A BOOK ON IDIOMATOLOGY_

The importance of idioms in learning a foreign language is not put in doubt by any teacher. Idioms are recognized as a necessary part of the inventory of linguistic means and the knowledge and appropriate use of idioms is considered to be a manifestation of the student’s attaining a higher level of the foreign language acquisition.

Idioms are often treated as something lacking a system, something not following, or even going against the rules of the language, something that cannot be subjected to analysis, they are regarded as fossilized
expressions. Idioms are often referred to as expressions whose meaning cannot be derived from the meanings of their individual components.

Stanislav Kavka is aware of the problem of analysing idioms, but unlike many other authors, considers them a part of the language system and, as such, a domain which allows for some analysis which can bring a deeper insight into this area.

Not many authors have tried to examine idioms theoretically in spite of the fact that there are a great number of publications dealing with idioms and their use in practice. Obviously even authors who doubt the presence of any system in the area of idioms must choose a way of organizing their inventory and thus creating a certain systematic framework. The most common way of organizing manuals presenting idioms is to split them in groups according to the word class of the most important word in an idiom. Kavka tries to make a more subtle analysis and in fact his view of idioms is wider than that of many other authors. He says that even if we define idioms as linguistic units the meaning of which cannot be completely derived from the meanings of their components, even the units traditionally not viewed as idioms can be included. One such class of units is that of the compounds. Kavka emphasizes the fact that, e.g., the compound noun blackboard often refers to a board which is black, but not necessarily: a blackboard can be green, white, and it can be made of various materials, not all of which would normally be referred to as a "board of wood".

The title of the book contains the term idiomatology, which is Kavka's modern coinage, as well as the notion of idiomaticity, which refers to the linguistic means embracing "not only idioms proper but also other expressions which may violate the expected rules of grammar and/or logic" (page 3). Though the terms are not new they have been coined anew very cleverly, giving the impression that they are well-known terms which we readily understand.

The defining characteristics of idiomatic expressions are dealt with in Chapter II. Kavka distinguishes between free combinations, collocations and idioms proper. Free combinations allow substitution of each element by some other item of the same class. Collocations are word groups in which the substitution of an item by another item might produce a "foreign" impression, e.g., one starts a family rather then founds one (a Slovak might think the latter to be appropriate as it corresponds to the verb used in his/her language). I would like to point out that Kavka goes a little too far in some cases, e.g. in considering running a business idiomatic, since we can run any kind of organization, e.g. a school, a publishing house, etc., and we can simply consider the verb run as including among its meanings some which the verb bežať does not have in Slovak (run, like many other English verbs can, without any formal change, be used causatively, i.e. in the sense of "make something run"). Similarly, the meaning "pornographic" is one of the meanings of blue, not only in combination with film (blue story, blue joke), and is listed in dictionaries under the entry blue, giving such synonyms as indecent, obscene, etc. However, since Kavka says that there is a continuum between ordinary word combinations and idiomatic expressions, we can still view the mentioned cases as situated somewhere between the two extremes.

Idioms proper, or genuine idioms, are "non-compositional", in contrast to free combinations, which are compositional, and collocations, which are semi-compositional. In idioms proper Kavka sees such features
as "conventionality", "figuration", "proverbiality", "informality" and "effect", having been inspired by hints of other scholars in the field before him. Anyway, according to how these features are present in the particular linguistic units under investigation, Kavka sees there a continuum having free combinations at one end and idiomatic expressions at the other (depicted graphically on page 19).

Kavka's book is interesting not only because it deals with idioms but also because Kavka himself used many idiomatic expressions in his discussion (though occasionally this effort may have gone too far – e.g., the expression to zero in on st has a very high frequency in the book). Nevertheless, the presence of the idiomatic expression in the text helps the reader submerge in the topic and realize the omnipresence of idioms in the language, even at such levels as formal written English. (A useful by-product of studying Kavka's theory is that one learns a number of interesting idiomatic expressions).

A large portion of Kavka's book deals with testing the variability and other features of the components of idiomatic expressions. To readers for whom the book is intended (university students of English) such analysis may seem too subtle, too complicated, too theoretical, but in my opinion Kavka's purpose has been to show that idioms are far from non-analysable units and that their scientific study is possible. In discussing the variability of idiomatic expressions he applies to them various processes such as lexical variability, adjective subtraction and insertion, potential extension by various structural units, etc. Special attention is paid to the types of syntactic modification (e.g. clefting, wh-movement, pronominalisation, etc.).

Chapter V, forming a substantial part of the book under review, looks at the problems of idioms from a different point of view, viz. from the viewpoint of comprehending idiomatic expressions, that is their mental processing. The author tackles the differences in the ways of comprehending literal and non-literal or figurative meanings. He considers it plausible “to look upon idiomatic expressions as equivalents of single lexical items”, thus following, yet critically, one of the three commonly known psycholinguistic theories.

Kavka's study of idiomatology is undoubtedly a valuable contribution to the field so much ignored by linguists. It brings some order into the chaos and at the same time, within the line of the Czech and Slovak linguistic tradition which views language as a system, includes idiomatology into the system, even if treating it rather as a peripheral than a central phenomenon of the linguistic structure. Kavka can be considered as one of Czecho-Slovak pioneers in this area and we can hope that his theory will be further developed not only by him but also by his disciples.

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FRANTIŠEK ŠTÍCHA
ČESKO-NĚMECKÁ SROVNÁVACÍ GRAMATIKA. [= TSCHECHISCH-DEUTSCHE KONTRASTIVE GRAMMATIK.]
Praha: Argo, 2003, 842 S.

Die vergleichende Grammatik von F. Štícha ist die erste Grammatik dieser Art, die vor allem die syntaktischen Strukturen der beiden Sprachen – der tschechischen und der deutschen – ausführlich beschreibt und konsequent einander gegenüberstellt. Entsprechend ihrer Bestimmung, in erster Linie als praktisches Handbuch für Fortgeschritte-