

Italian Phrasemes as Constructions: How to Understand and Use Them

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Abstract: The present article describes the objectives and methods for a learner-centered description of Italian idioms based on the theoretical principles of Construction Grammar (CxG). The aim of the underlying research project is to develop a new way of looking at idioms, taking into account all linguistic aspects that could help to fully understand and use them in a formally and functionally adequate manner, including situational and discursive features. By *phrasemes* we understand different kinds of word combinations characterized by idiomaticity and/or entrenchment. I will focus here on (a) “predicative phrasemes” (typically figurative and containing an inflected verb as a predicate, also called *expressions idiomatiques verbales*), (b) “phraseotemplates” (lexically open or formal idioms, in German phraseology *Phraseoschablonen*) and (c) “pragmatemes” (according to the French term *pragmatème*, i.e. pragmatically highly conventionalized phrases, also called *expressions-énoncés*). Idiomaticity is characterized by non compositionality of its components and unpredictability of the whole structure. Italian examples for each of the three types are: (a) *Tenere il piede in due staffe* (‘to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds’), (b) *Cosa me lo chiedi a fare?* (‘Why are you asking me at all?’) and (c) *In bocca al lupo!* (‘Break a leg’). In chapter 2 I will first discuss basic concepts of Construction Grammar and Cognitive Grammar. In the following part (chapter 3) I will present my ideas about CxG and its ability to create a greater awareness of how many word combinations (in this context called *constructions*) in a language are idiosyncratic and unpredictable and about how to use fundamental theoretical issues of usage-based CxG (mainly Goldberg, Croft) and unification-based approaches in order to describe idioms in a new holistic way. Chapter 4 will deal with some important classifications of phrasemes and their practical aptitude for phraseodidactics. Chapter 5 will finally present my idea of applying methods of Construction Grammar and Fillmore’s semantics of understanding to build a new digital lexicographical format for phrasemes which is going to be called *phraseoframe*. This will be illustrated for the three types of phrasemes mentioned above. Each phraseme will be described by means of a simple meta language which is easy to understand and has links to prosodic, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic and discourse functional properties. As my approach is corpus based empirical evidence will be given for each of the three types of idioms by using several corpora of Italian spoken and written language (e.g., BADIP, PAISÀ and WEBBIT).

Keywords: Construction Grammar, Corpus, Idiom, Phraseology, Idiomaticity, Entrenchment, Phraseodidactics, Phraseoframe

Introduction

The main purpose of the present paper is to sketch out an approach to the learner-centred treatment of phrasemes within the framework of Construction Grammar. I will first sum up similarities and differences between the concepts ‘symbolic unit’, ‘construction’ and ‘phraseme’ and define the latter (chapter 2). In the third part, I will develop my phraseoframe model, mainly based on U-semantics and Construction Grammar, whose primary objective is to describe phrasemes in a comprehensive and learner-appropriate way by transposing the modified attribute-value method of Frame semantics and unification-based Construction Grammars to my purposes. Chapter 4 will deal with various classifications of phrasemes and will propose my own typology. I will finally (chapter 5) apply the theoretical issues discussed in the preceding part to three types of phrasemes: Predicative phrasemes (*attaccare un bottone*), phraseotemplates (the *si (che)* construction) and pragmatemes (*a buon rendere, e poi colpo di scena*), using the phraseoframe schema.

Symbolic Units, Constructions and Phrasemes

The similarities between central theoretical issues in Cognitive Grammar (CG), Construction Grammar (CxG) and phraseology have recently been pointed out by Gries (2008). They can be summarized by the author’s claim that phrasemes (or, in his terminology, phraseologisms) as well as constructions are symbolic units (which is the basic term in CG). A symbolic unit is, according to Langacker (1990, 16), “‘bipolar’, consisting of a semantic unit defining one pole and a phonological unit defining the other”. A construction follows the same theoretical principles:

Each construction will be a form-meaning pair (F, M), where F is a set of conditions on syntactic and phonological form and M is a set of conditions on meaning and use (Lakoff, 1987, 467).

The concepts ‘symbolic unit’ and ‘construction’ are indeed very similar¹, if we part from Lakoff’s definition of *construction*, which does not include non-compositionality as one of its integral features. This is different in Goldberg’s early definition of *construction* (1995), quoted here from one of her later articles, according to which:

¹The difference between symbolic unit (CG) and construction (CxG) is, according to Ziem (2008, 181), that the former may consist of several symbolic units ([dog]/[DOG] and [-s]/[PLURAL]), whereas a construction is not further reducible ([dogs]/[DOGS])

[a]ny linguistic pattern is recognized as a construction as long as some aspect of its form or function is not strictly predictable from its component parts or from other constructions recognized to exist (Goldberg, 2003, 219).

In comparison to her previous opinion Goldberg then made a somewhat surprising alteration to her definition, bringing into play the criterion of frequency and combining it with the feature of non-idiosyncrasy, thus abandoning the original defining criterion of non-compositionality:

In addition, many constructionalist approaches argue that patterns are stored even if they are fully predictable as long as they occur with sufficient frequency (Goldberg, 2003, 219f.).

In her second book about constructions this amendment is formulated even more clearly: “[...] Patterns are stored as constructions even if they are fully predictable as long as they occur with sufficient frequency” (Goldberg, 2006, 5). Thus Gries (2008) is right to postulate that a construction, which, all in all, he considers a synonym for *symbolic unit*, “must have occurred frequently enough for it to be entrenched in a speaker/hearer’s linguistic system” (Gries, 2008, 13). This means that frequency has been added subsequently as one of the prerequisites for the existence of a construction, which is certainly due to the fact that idiosyncrasy (or non-predictability) is not only caused by non-compositionality² (idiomaticity) but also by entrenchment (which, in Gries’ opinion, is the result of high frequency).

Here, I would like to add two observations: First, a symbolic unit does not necessarily have to be frequent. Defining a morpheme, lexeme (simple or complex) or a combination of lexemes as a symbolic unit only means that the *signifiant* and the *signifié* of this unit (that we might also call *linguistic sign*) are, by convention, inextricably linked to one another, as Saussure’s sheet-of-paper metaphor so aptly described it (CGL, 246). Second, entrenchment does not only have to do with frequency, it may also be due to a fixed or even strange word order (recalling Fillmore, Kay and O’Connor’s ‘familiar and unfamiliar pieces unfamiliarly arranged’) or to a situational restriction (e.g., formulae that refer to one specific situation).

What we ought to bear in mind, however, is that all three concepts, ‘symbolic unit’, ‘construction’ and ‘phraseme’, do not exclude one another but are, on the contrary, related by irreversible inclusion: Symbolic units include constructions which include phrasemes (cf. Gries, 2008). The main difference lies in the treatment of

²Non-compositionality is discussed in Svensson (2008).

lexically unspecified patterns such as abstract grammatical patterns (e.g., argument structures or word order like SVO), which are definitely part of the first concept (symbolic unit), not necessarily part of the second (construction), depending on the particular constructionalist approach and in no case part of the third concept (phraseme). As far as non-compositionality is concerned, it is irrelevant for CG and its symbolic units, it may be relevant for CxG and its constructions (see the difference between Lakoff (1987; Goldberg, 1995, *pass.*) and it may also be characteristic of a phraseme (see my definition below). With regard to frequency, there is no unanimity about its being relevant for the definition of *phraseme*. Gries claims that frequency is crucial, not only for phrasemes, but also, as we discussed above, for constructions and symbolic units. But do constructions really have to be frequent in order to be considered constructions? Is *let alone* a frequent pattern? What about the construction “*afraid/worried /concerned/anxious + lest + subject + subjunctive verb form*” (e.g., *She worried lest he should tell someone what had happened*, LDOCE5), or the idiom *to take the gilt off the gingerbread*? I think frequency is optional³. It is rather entrenchment (in a broader sense) that counts, on the one hand: Entrenchment due to strange or fixed word order, or to pragmatic restrictions. On the other hand, it may be non-compositionality that makes a linguistic pattern something opaque. Both of them mean non-predictability and thus idiosyncrasy. In the end, Gries’ definition of *phraseme* (*phraseologism*) as:

co-occurrence of a form or a lemma of a lexical item and one or more additional linguistic elements of various kinds which functions as one semantic unit in a clause or sentence and whose frequency of co-occurrence is larger than expected on the basis of chance (Gries, 2008, 6)

Is very similar to mine, but more narrow on the one hand and broader on the other. I therefore suggest the following:

Any combination of at least two separate elements, i.e., at least one lexical morpheme (word-form or lexeme⁴) or one grammatical morpheme plus at least one

³I do in fact very much appreciate usage-based approaches, but I doubt whether “anything that has been encountered often enough to be accessed as a whole [ought to be] considered a construction, even if it exhibits no idiosyncrasy of form and meaning” (Hoffmann and Trousdale, 2013a; 2013b, 5).

⁴The term *lexeme* is understood here, to mean ‘fundamental unit of the lexicon’ (cf. Matthews, 1991; 22, or Schafroth, 2014a, 3f.) and not ‘free morpheme’ in general, used as a generic term for lexical and grammatical morpheme (as in

more lexical morpheme or one more grammatical morpheme, can be defined *phraseme* when the whole construction is either entrenched (in some way)⁵ or idiomatic (non-compositional) or both of them⁶. Every phraseme is a construction and every construction is a symbolic unit, but not the other way round⁷.

Reversely, any linguistic pattern consisting of two free morphemes that is neither entrenched nor idiomatic (non-compositional) cannot be called *phraseme*. Thus compositional (transparent) compounds like *motor vehicle* are no phrasemes, although they are symbolic units and may be, depending on the theoretical approach, constructions. *Red herring* is non-compositional (it is no ‘red’ ‘herring’), thus a phraseme (as well as a construction and a symbolic unit). *Far and wide, back and forth* are phrasemes (and constructions) because they are entrenched, as well as collocations like *to lay the table* and *to clear the table* (in Italian you say *apparecchiare, sparcchiarela tavola*). The fact that collocations consist of two separate linguistic units (*clear, table*) is entirely compatible with my definition of *phraseme*. Derivations like *driver* or *uncomfortable* are symbolic units and maybe constructions, too, still depending on the theoretical framework, but they are no phrasemes. A derivation like *womanizer* may be qualified as a construction, because it is non-compositional, but it is no phraseme, because it is one (complex) lexeme. The situation is more difficult, however, with lexically open phrasemes, i.e., when the entrenchment is due to a fixed syntactic structure, for instance *the (more/better/bigger, etc.) the (better/more/worse,*

Kortmann, 2014, 88). Complex lexemes are usually derivations and compounds.

⁵In some way excludes however mere frequency. As already noted, I do not consider co-occurrences as police and fire brigade or piano and violin constructions (or even phrasemes) only because they have a frequency of occurrence that is greater than expected (cf. Gries, 2011). For a critical comment on frequency as a defining characteristic of a construction see Traugott and Trousdale (2013, 5).

⁶Using the term *combination* (instead of co-occurrence, deriving from corpus linguistics) I want to emphasize that is not the *parole* level that is decisive but the *langue level*. This clarification is consistent with the concept of symbolic unit and it is consistent, too, with the basic premise of usage-based Constructions Grammars and also of my approach: That linguistic knowledge is understood as an emergent product of linguistic use (cf. Ziem, 2008, 55).

⁷Verbs like It. *ricordarsi di qualcosa/qualcuno* or Fr. *se souvenir de quelqu’un/quelque chose* (‘to remember something/someone’) are indisputably polymorphous constructions, but as the reflexive pronoun *se* (or *mi* in the finite form *mi ricordo*) and the preposition *de/di* belong to the lexeme they are a matter of argument structure and valency, not of phraseology.

etc.), or the famous incredulity-response construction *Him be a doctor?* (which is *X be a Y?*). These phraseotemplates, as I call them, are certainly borderline cases—they are more constructions than phrasemes (cf. Stathi, 2011)—but they are included in the definition of *phrase* given above⁸.

Having given the necessary definitions of *construction* and *phrase*, I will now suggest a usage-based approach to an adequate linguistic description of phrasemes.

Construction Grammar and the Necessity of a Holistic Description of Phrasemes

As far as the form-meaning paradigm of constructions is concerned Croft specifies his interpretation of *meaning*:

[t]he term meaning is intended to represent all of the CONVENTIONALIZED aspects of a construction's function, which may include not only properties of the situation described by the utterance but also properties of the discourse in which the utterance is found (Croft, 2001, 19).

The complexity of the levels involved, both on the form and the meaning side—here again I would like to recall Saussure⁹—is illustrated in Fig. 1 and will play a vital role in my understanding of phrasemes as constructions to be described as comprehensively as possible. An idiom like *fare il terzo grado a qualcuno* ('to question, cross-examine someone') is such a form-meaning pair characterized by particular morphological and syntactic properties: The verb *fare* has to be inflected, *qualcuno* as well as the grammatical subject are represented by a noun and we are dealing with a ditransitive argument structure (Subj V Obj Obj₂) with an agent and recipient (or patient) bearing the feature [+ human] and being grammatically expressed by a

subject and an indirect object. But there are also properties on the meaning side of the pair, referring to semantic and pragmatic contents, if one is inclined to separate them at all¹⁰, but also to discourse-functional properties specifying the situation in which something is uttered.

At this point it seems appropriate to go back some decades in time in order to remember Fillmore's semantics of understanding (or U-semantics). According to Fillmore:

a sentence can only be fully interpreted if we know something about the situation in which it has been used; in many cases, then, understanding a sentence involves knowing the class of situations in which it could be appropriately uttered and knowing what effect it could be expected to have in that situation (Fillmore 1975, 16).

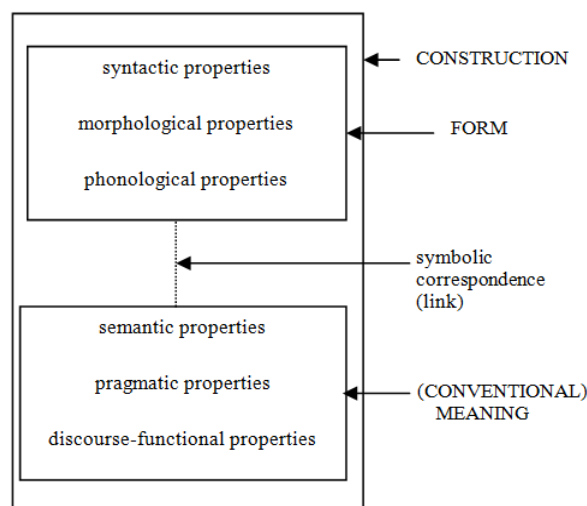


Fig. 1. The symbolic structure of a construction (Croft, 2001, 18)

⁸According to Gries' definition, phraseotemplates could also be considered phrasemes, as they represent a linguistic unit in terms of a semantic unit (cf. the author's example of the into-causative, which he himself regards a phraseologism; Gries, 2008, 5). Collocations, however, would not be covered by his definition of *phrase*.

⁹“La langue est encore comparable à une feuille de papier: La pensée est le recto et le son le verso; on ne peut découper le recto sans découper en même temps le verso” (CGL, 246). Quoting Saussure here does not mean that I adhere to the central structuralist assumption that there is something like “a strictly semantic structure that exists independently of the general cognitive organisation of the human mind” (Peeters, 2000, 4). Moreover, the linguistic sign in Sign-Based CxG “embodies ‘at least phonological structure, (morphological) form, syntactic category, semantics and contextual factors, including structure’ (Sag, 2012, 71)” (Traugott and Trousdale, 2013, 4).

¹⁰In Construction Grammar semantics and pragmatics are not clearly separated (Ziem, 2008, 134ff.). Gazdar (1979, 2) even claims that pragmatics is nothing else than meaning minus truth conditions and this is, as Busse (2009, 72) points out, almost everything semantics is generally interested in: Namely aspects depending on the context, the use and the users of linguistic signs for communicative purposes, things that cannot be explained by logical semantics. Thus semantics could, according to this point of view, be equated with pragmatics. We can recognize the shortcomings of “pure” semantics in the functions of discourse markers like *but*, *well* or *actually*, because these elements do not deal with truth conditions at all but with pragmatic aspects as contrast, insecurity, coherence, politeness or involvement (cf. also Fried and Östman, 2005). As phrasemes have at least as much pragmatic as semantic relevance □ if we think of phraseotemplates and pragmatemes they have primarily pragmatic potential—there will be no categorical distinction between semantic and pragmatic features in the phraseoframe (chapter 5).

The consequence of this view is to claim a holistic encyclopaedic approach which reflects the “necessity to study lexical concepts as integral part of human cognition in general” (Peeters, 2000, 4). This perspective has already been adopted by Langacker (1987), one of the founding fathers of Cognitive Linguistics, who insisted that the distinction between linguistic and extra linguistic (encyclopaedic) knowledge is as false and impossible as the distinction between semantics and pragmatics (cf. Stathi, 2011). Although the non-separation of semantics and pragmatics is one of the theoretical principles of usage-based CxG (cf. Ziem and Lasch, 2013, 51) the construction list practice of describing constructions does not always fulfil it. Up to now (Schafroth, 2013a; 2013b; 2014b) I have not made this distinction in my phrase frames. Although even authors postulating the holistic paradigm (e.g., Croft, 2001; Fried and Östman, 2004) do not always distinguish between semantics and pragmatics I have recently come to the decision not to separate the semantic from the pragmatic features. I thus fully agree that:

- a. “semantics is based on speakers’ ‘construals’ of situations, not on objective truth conditions” (Goldberg, 2013, 16) and
- b. “Semantics, information structure and pragmatics are interrelated” (ib.),

And that linguistic knowledge therefore is

- c. “not merely semantic in the traditional [...] sense of that term”, but that it also “represents conventional pragmatic or discourse-functional or information-structural or even stylistic or social dimensions of the use of a grammatical form or construction” (Croft, 2001, 93).

The basic assumptions of the holistic paradigm, already outlined in Fillmore, have been substantially developed by the German linguist Dietrich Busse (2012, pass.) in his theoretical framework of interpretative semantics and linguistic epistemology. Busse’s theory of an explicative semantics is linked to a communication-theory in which the expressive and the appellative function of linguistic signs are on the same level as the referential function (cf. Ziem, 2008, 151). Busse’s postulate of epistemic relevance goes hand in hand with the holistic paradigm: Linguistic understanding always takes place in a conceptual space (cf. Busse, 1988; Ziem, 2008; Croft, 2011) in which a distinction of linguistic and extra linguistic knowledge is not possible. Individuals being part of this space construe their reality by language, drawing on knowledge by inferences during the interpretation

of linguistic signs: Knowledge they acquired by previous experiences. As a result, what should be considered in a holistic description of constructions is not only linguistic knowledge but also “how speakers implicitly anchor what they say to extralinguistic factors and how these factors, in turn, constrain the usability of a specific linguistic expression” (Fried and Östman 2005, 1760)¹¹. To sum up these theoretical observations, we can say that:

[u]nderstanding [a] word requires knowing the whole scenario; understanding a sentence containing this word requires knowing the scenario and using the lexical contents and grammatical structure of the rest of the sentence to fill in some of the details; understanding a large text containing such a sentence may require situating a scene described by this text as a well-defined part of a larger story or state of affairs (Fillmore, 1976, 28).

Why I call my description of phrasemes (phraseo) *frame* will be explained in the following part:

In Frame semantics, a linguistic unit, here, a word (in just one of its senses) *evokes* a frame. The frame is the structure of knowledge required for the understanding and appropriate use of lexical items or phrases (Fillmore, 2004, 406).

The phraseoframe is a frame of knowledge representation that tries to register the relevant aspects to be considered in order to describe a phraseme in a holistic manner. “[E]ach frame is associated with descriptions of roles of the entities that participate in them (individuals, props, setting features” (Fillmore, 2012, 284). These frame elements reflect linguistic properties as well as the conceptual links to the frame evoked by a phraseme, summarized as “thesaurus”. The format of representation is a frame, literally (typographically) speaking, elaborated for digital lexicographical purposes, as it is currently realized in the *learners’ platform* project (cf. Schafroth, 2014a). In this lexicographical description, I of course concentrate on the representation of epistemically relevant *linguistic* knowledge about phrasemes (rules of linguistic usage in the broadest sense, including communicative parameters) – I have so far indeed restricted my constructionist

¹¹Speakers’ interpretations refer to contexts like (a) culture, tradition, history, (b) interactional and conversational constraints and (c) feelings and opinions (Fried and Östman, 2005; Fried and Östman, 2005, 1760). Other levels and types of knowledge are discussed in Busse (1991; summarized in Ziem, 2008, 154ff.).

activities on these-not ignoring, however, extralinguistic knowledge such as cultural or psychological items (expressed by remarks on the particular use of a construction in a particular situation).

The form of representation of a construction's features roughly follows the attribute-value structure as it is used in Construction Grammar, simplifying, however, the notational conventions: Attributes and values are neither formalized in boxes-within-boxes diagrams nor in the form of bracketed pairs organized into sets (attribute-value matrices) (cf. Fried and Östman, 2004) but as a sort of phraseme sketch containing the relevant types of information in prose, distributed on the domains *prosody*, *morphology*, *syntax*, *semantics and pragmatics*, *discourse functions*¹². The attributes indicate the types of knowledge that are or may be relevant for the frame evoked by the phraseme: e.g., within the domain semantics and pragmatics: 'Speech act', 'situational setting', 'motivation'. As the unification of linguistic properties is focussed in this approach, I will follow here the methods of unification-based Constructions Grammars, making a clear difference between internal and external characteristics (internal/external syntax of a construction). On the other hand, the phraseoframe is also usage-based, following the premise that "experience with language creates and impacts the cognitive representations of languages" (Bybee, 2013, 49). As a consequence, if corpus data reveal "idiomatic variation" (Wulff, 2013, 285) the formal and semantic variants will be recorded as well¹³.

In order to give a quick overview of the structure and the elements of the eclectic **phraseoframe** model we can bear in mind the following items:

- Theoretical fundamentals: Fillmore's semantics of understanding, Busse's epistemically relevant semantics, Frame semantics, Construction Grammar (Cognitive Construction Grammar, Radical

¹²A similar way of treating phrasemes, here pragmatemes, in terms of morphosyntactic, semantic and pragmatic description is suggested by Kauffer (2011). According to the author, there are pragmatemes expressing a particular communicative function, such as threat, doubt, resignation, incredulity or, even more specifically, the speaker's refusal to continue his communication. My phraseoframe thus tries to put into practice a phraseological desideratum: "Mais il est nécessaire que toutes les dimensions du figement soient prises en compte: Les critères morpho-syntaxiques, ceux de nature sémantique et également la dimension pragmatique, plus intéressante, encore plus analysée, mais particulièrement pertinente pour les phraséologismes pragmatiques" (Kauffer, 2011, 46).

¹³In fact, when examining phrasemes as they occur in texts we should not speak of constructions but of constructs instead, because the former represent the general abstract structure and the latter are their instantiations licensed by constructions.

Construction Grammar and, as far as the attribute-value structure is concerned, as well unification-based Construction Grammars) (cf. Ziem and Lasch, 2013)

- Theoretical premises: Holistic paradigm (trying to capture all facets of linguistic knowledge relevant for understanding and adequately using linguistic signs); non-separation of semantics and pragmatics; usage-based analyses
- Methodological essentials: Learner-appropriate metalanguage; breakdown by linguistic domains; attribute-value structure in prose (without CxG formalism of boxes and brackets) reflecting linguistic knowledge types (attributes) and their descriptive elements (values); inclusion of formal and semantic variants; broad documentation of corpus data
- Technical features: digital representation; hyperlinks to other phrasemes of the same semantic fields and frame; hyperlinks to audio- and video files to illustrate prosody and gesture

Classification of Phrasemes

What does this mean for phraseology? And what about the criteria usually taken into account when we speak about phrasemes? Before giving an answer to these questions I will briefly treat some phraseological classifications before presenting my own typology¹⁴.

Let us start with Makkai (1972; 2011) who has made some important distinctions. Firstly, he classifies "idioms" (phrasemes) in *subgrammatical idioms* (phonetic, phonemic, morphological idioms), *lexemic idioms* (nominal combinations, phrasal verb idioms, tournure idioms, phraseological idioms of encoding and sememic idioms), proposing then even *hypersememic* or *pragmemic idioms* (referring to conversational implicatures, one of several techniques of pervasive idiomaticity). It is remarkable that among all imaginable types of phrasemes Makkai does not mention *syntactic idioms*, which would correspond to our *phraseotemplates*. Makkai's tournure idioms are *predicative phrasemes* in my terminology (e.g., *to spill the beans*), whereas phrasemes like *not written in stone*, *to make a long story short* or *to cut to the chase* are called *phraseological idioms of encoding*, because they display their idiomatic character, according to Makkai, only in speech production (encoding). Without having learned them, speakers would not be able to produce them. On the other hand, "their meaning is clear the first time they are heard" (Makkai, 2011, 222).

¹⁴Literature on phraseology is abundant. Summaries of different states of research, theoretical approaches, terminology and concepts can be found in Moon (1998; Burger, 2007; Ellis, 2008; Granger and Meunier, 2008; Ettinger, 2009; Benigni *et al.*, 2015). Meunier and Granger (2008) focus on phraseology in foreign language learning and teaching.

(Besides, this may be true for native speakers but not for foreign learners). By using this example I have already mentioned the second important type of phrasemes, *the idioms of encoding* and *idioms of decoding*, picked up by Fillmore *et al.* (1988) who call them *encoding* and *decoding idioms* and whose definitions seem to me clearer than the one given in Makkai (1972):

A decoding idiom is an expression which the language users couldn't interpret with complete confidence if they hadn't learned it separately. With an encoding idiom, by contrast, we have an expression which language users might or might not understand without prior experience, but concerning which they would not know that it is a conventional way of saying what it says (Fillmore *et al.*, 1988, 504f.).

I will illustrate this with Italian examples. Idioms of decoding are *darsi la zappa sui piedi* ('to shoot oneself in the foot'), *alzare il gomito* ('to have one too many'), *arrampicarsi sugli specchi* ('to grasp at straws'), idioms of encoding *rosso acceso* (*bright red*), *fin qui tutto bene* (*so far so good*), *più che altro* (*above all*), *per così dire* (*so to speak*), *in linea di massima* (*basically*). All of them are idiosyncratic constructions which a L2 learner of Italian would either not understand at all or not be able to produce in exactly the same way. Even if one encoding idiom or the other might be transparent to a foreigner learner, let us say *fin qui tutto bene*, it is doubtful that any of them could be produced on the basis of the open-choice principle-learners would probably say *fino a qui, tutto bene*. So, in the end, the distinction between encoding and decoding idioms is not really helpful for learner-centred phraseology and confirmation has come once again: In a foreign language everything is different (cf. Hausmann, 1997).

Another typology was proposed by Fillmore *et al.* (1988), who distinguish firstly lexically open (or formal, schematic) and lexically filled (or substantive, specific) phrasemes-the term *idioms* used by the authors comprises all kinds of phrasemes-and secondly three types of usual or unusual combinations to be qualified as idiomatic: (a) Unfamiliar pieces unfamiliarly arranged (*kith and kin, with might and main*), (b) familiar pieces unfamiliarly arranged (*all of a sudden, in point of fact*), (c) familiar pieces familiarly arranged (*to pull someone's leg, to tickle the ivories*). I have always wondered why they did not add the fourth type: Unfamiliar pieces familiarly arranged. One might think of phrasemes like *uscire dai gangheri* ('to fly off the handle'), *mettersi in ghingheri* ('to put on one's finery'). The two poles, lexically open and lexically filled phrasemes, are represented in Fig. 2.

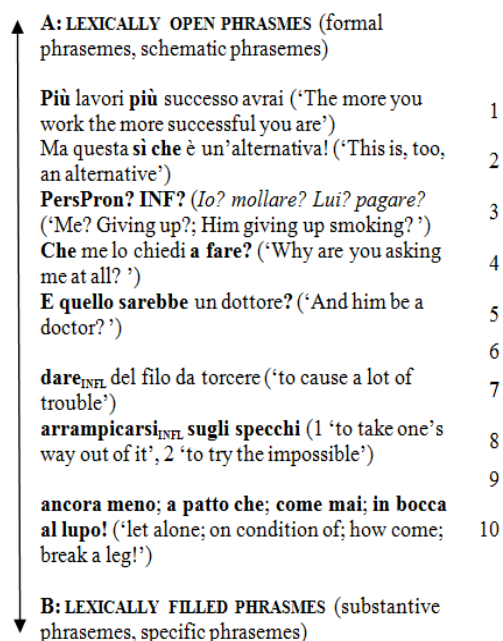


Fig. 2. Lexically open and lexically filled phrasemes arranged on a continuum (based on Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor, modified according to Schafroth, 2014a)

Is it reasonable, following Nunberg *et al.* (1994), to claim the existence of two types of idioms, (a) idiomatically combining expressions and (b) idiomatic phrases? The first type permits an interpretation according to the argument structure, inherited by the hierarchically superior general structure of transitive verbs (Ziem and Lasch, 2013, 58), as in the bivalent monotransitive construction *alzare il gomito* ('to have one too many'). The relationship between the verb and its direct object is determined in terms of semantics, however, not in terms of syntax: "Collocational dependencies are in fact the overt manifestation of semantic relations, not syntactic relations" (Croft, 2011, 176). In the predicative phraseme (idiom) we are looking at, *alzare* allows only the lexeme *gomito*. "This collocational dependency is called an idiom chunk and it is evidence for a relation between" (ib.) *alzare* and *gomito*:

alzare	il gomito
BERE	TROPPO ALCOOL
[VERB]	[OBJECT]

According to one of the principles of Construction Grammar, what we have to look at are not the single components of a construction, but the construction on the whole and consider them non-derivational and monostratal (Fried and Östman, 2004, 25). Only the categories and roles (i.e., argument structure here) are derivative, constructions themselves, however, must be taken as basic (Croft, 2001, 175). In the idiomatically

combining expression *alzare il gomito*, following Croft (2001, 181), “the syntactic parts of the idiom” (*alzare* and *gomito*) “can be identified with parts of the idiom’s semantic interpretation” (‘bere’ and ‘troppo alcool’), according to which *alzare* corresponds to *bere* (‘drink’) and *il gomito* to *troppo alcool* (‘too much alcohol’).

As far as idiom typology is concerned only a few linguistic proposals turn out to be applicable from a foreign language teaching point of view¹⁵. I thus do not consider it necessary to distinguish between *idiomatically combining expressions* and *idiomatic phrases* (Nunberg *et al.*, 1994), because neither *dare del filo da torcere* (‘to cause a lot of trouble’), representing the first category, nor *tirare le cuoia* (‘to die’, similar to *kick the bucket*), standing for the second one, are semantically transparent for a foreign learner of Italian. Both of them have to be described more or less in the same way in a dictionary. The typology set up in Fillmore *et al.* (1988) seems to be suitable for linguistics, because they make us understand how phrasemes are structured, but it is nonetheless of little help for L2 learners, who have different needs.

My own classification of phrasemes is simple. Based on the definition of the term *phraseme* given above and taking into consideration the fundamental definition of a construction (as a form-meaning pair) I will distinguish the following types, moving down, according to Fig. 2, from lexically open phrasemes at the top to lexically filled phrasemes at the bottom, passing over, however, phenomena which are between the main types as well as cases with more or less idiomaticity or entrenchment:

- Phraseotemplates (*più/meno X più/meno Y, Che (OBJ₁) (OBJ₂) VERB_{inf} fare?, ... sì (che)...*)
- Predicative phrasemes (*darsi la zappa sui piedi, fare mente locale, alzare il gomito, menare il can per l’aia*)¹⁶
- Collocations¹⁷ (*apparecchiare/sparecchiare la tavola, capelli radi, scapolo impenitente, digrignare*

¹⁵Notable among them is however the onomasiological approach in Bárdosi *et al.* (2003).

¹⁶Predicative phrasemes are characterized by an inflectional verb and a nominal part, often reflecting the structure “(direct, indirect or prepositional) object (+ adverbial)”: *Alzare il gomito, uscire dai gangheri, darsi la zappa sui piedi*. Furthermore they are typically figurative. Some authors call them *idioms* (e.g., Moon, 1998), but this term is too ambiguous because it is also used in a broad way in the sense of *set phrases* or *phrasemes/phraselogisms* (Makkai, 1972; 2011; Fillmore *et al.*, 1988). Others authors refer to terms like *expressions idiomatiques verbales* (González Rey, 2001), which is very precise, by the way, while yet others split the concept into two entities they call *idiomatically combining expressions* and *idiomatic phrases* (Nunberg *et al.*, 1994, see above). The terminological confusion is considerable (Burger *et al.*, 2007).

¹⁷Collocations are understood here as semi-fixed lexeme combinations consisting of a cognitively primary and

i denti, dare il seno (a un lattante), aspettare un bambino, macchina di seconda mano)¹⁸

- Non-compositional compounds (partially: *lettera aperta, chiave inglese*; entirely: *colletto bianco, pesce d’aprile*)¹⁹
- Grammatical and adverbial phrasemes (*tanto meno, salvo che, a prescindere da, a maggior ragione, nell’insieme, in linea di massima*)
- Discourse markers (*mi raccomando, hai voglia!*)
- Full sentence phrasemes and proverbs (*Sogno o son desto?, Paese che vai, usanza che trovi*)
- Pragmatemes (*in bocca al lupo!, a buon rendere*)

Predicative phrasemes are known to be especially difficult to understand (let alone use), particularly when they are fully non-compositional, as *essere alla frutta* (‘to be broke’ or ‘to be on one’s last legs’). Even in the case of idioms whose meaning might be motivated by metaphoric interpretation, such as *darsi la zappa sui piedi* (‘to shoot oneself in the foot’) or, using one’s imagination, even *alzare il gomito* (‘to have one too many’). On the other hand, we have to deal with expressions like *gettare olio sul fuoco*, being rather transparent and having its equivalent in *to add fuel to the fire*, but showing also pitfalls because

semantically autonomous *base*, e.g., *ipoteca* (‘mortgage’) and a semantically dependent *collocator*, e.g., the verb *accendere*, whose meaning ‘to take out’ depends on its base *mortgage*, but which in other contexts (e.g., *accendere una sigaretta* ‘to light a cigarette’) may be completely different.

¹⁸It is not relevant here whether or not the collocator is idiosyncratic, e.g., *verde* in *numero verde* (‘toll-free telephone number’) or *un mondo* in *divertirsi un mondo* (‘to have a lot of fun’), or *di seconda mano* in *una macchina di seconda mano* (‘a second-hand car’). Cf. Konecny and Autelli (2012-). Complex attributive adjectives (adjectival phrases) as *di seconda mano* (synonymous with *usato*) are treated here as adjectival collocators.

¹⁹As far as word formation is concerned, we have a theoretical problem. Adhering to the above definition of phraseme, derivations may be constructions, but they are not to be regarded as phrasemes. The problem with compounds is that they may be fused in one form (e.g., *cacciavite* ‘screwdriver’, *tergicristallo* ‘windshield wiper’) and thus not be considered phrasemes. Beyond that, due to pure orthographical conventions, compounds might be written together as *cassaforte* (‘safe’) and thus be outside the phraseme category, or they might be inside (*carro armato* ‘tank’) and outside (*carrarmato*) at the same time. I however stick to my decision to call compounds phrasemes only if separate lexical units are taken into account, whether they are partially non-compositional (*lettera aperta* ‘open letter’, *mercato nero* ‘black market’) or entirely non-compositional (*colletto bianco* ‘white-collar’, *pesce d’aprile* ‘April fool’). Compositional compounds (e.g., *motore a benzina* ‘gasoline engine’, *cavallo di razza* ‘thoroughbred’) may be constructions (based on the criterion of entrenchment), but they are no phrasemes.

fuel would rather be translated by *carburante* in Italian and *to add s.th. to s.th.* would generally not be rendered by the verb *gettare*. So the obvious solution, departing from an English-to-Italian perspective would be **aggiungere (del) carburante al fuoco*.

Lexicographical Treatment of Phrasemes within the Framework of Construction Grammar

As a permanent (and eternal) learner of several foreign languages, I have always regretted being rather limited in my ability to understand let alone produce phrasemes. Even university teachers advised us against trying to master the field of phraseology because of its being too difficult for L2 learners, as they argued. I have never been convinced, however, of this explanation. Later, as a linguist and university professor, I tried to figure out new ways to enhance the methodological situation for learners in the field of phraseology (cf. Ettinger, 2009; 2011). Construction Grammar helped me to understand what I would have to do. This is how the phraseoframe came into being.

In the following section, some innovative ideas on L2 phraseology will be described (cf. also Bolly, 2009). As indicated above, as it is impossible to treat all phraseological types, three kinds of phrasemes, predicative phrasemes, phrasemotemplates and pragmatemes, will be illustrated by the phraseoframe. The objective is to elucidate the importance of a comprehensive description of phrasemes for learners of Italian as a foreign language. The entirely corpus-based description will be realized according to the types of features on the form and meaning side of these constructions: Prosodic, morphological and syntactic properties will be followed by semantic-pragmatic and discourse-functional properties. The mode of representation will be an attribute-value structure in prose.

Predicative Phrasemes

The first phraseme is a somewhat particular case. *Attaccare un bottone a qualcuno* (literally ‘to sew on a button to somebody’) would be in English something like *to talk somebody’s ear off*. If we want to know how it is used we do not learn much when we consult traditional Italian dictionaries like Zingarelli, Treccani and Garzanti.

- (1) *attaccare un bottone*, (fig., fam.) molestare con discorsi e chiacchiere interminabili (Zingarelli)
- (2) *attaccare un b. a qualcuno*, o *attaccare bottone con qualcuno*, trattenerlo con una conversazione lunga e noiosa (Treccani.it, Vocabolario).
- (3) (a) *attaccare bottone*, iniziare un discorso; tentare un approccio: *Ha attaccato bottone con tutte*

- (b) *attaccare un bottone*, (fig.) iniziare un discorso lungo e noioso: *Mi (= a me) ha attaccato un bottone che non finiva più!*

What we can conclude from these three lexicographical explanations are two things: First, there seem to exist two different constructions with *attaccare* and *bottone*, which are syntactically different and, second, Italian dictionaries obviously do not agree on the meaning of the two phrasemes. This remarkable result allows the conclusion that the two constructions are mixed together in everyday language.

Let us first describe the two syntactic patterns and try to grasp the difference in meaning:

(A)

qualcuno attacca un bottone a qualcuno

QUALCUNO	(agent)	INIZIA	UN
DISCORSO	LUNGO	E	NOIOSO
QUALCUNO	(addressee)	CON	

(B)

qualcuno attacca bottone con qualcuno

QUALCUNO	(agent)	INIZIA	UN
DISCORSO	CON	QUALCUNO	(addressee)
(PER TENTARE UN APPROCCIO (goal))			

These are indeed two different constructions, each of them having different syntactic, semantic and pragmatic properties (bearing in mind the indefinite article in A and the zero article in B). Here once again we can see that the semantic content cannot be separated from the pragmatic one. A and B imply different goals and motivations and are associated with different prototypical semantic features, which can be verified on the basis of corpus documents:

- (i) Mauro ha poi trovato subito un ottimo argomento per attaccare bottone con Sarah: La Spagna, meta di viaggio di entrambi; la bella napoletana infatti ha vissuto per cinque anni a Madrid e lì ha conosciuto un modello spagnolo con il quale ha avuto una storia durata sei anni, ma ora, è di nuovo single. (PAISÀ)
- (ii) Fermarsi a guardare superficialmente questo evento si vedono solo dei gran bevitori di birra e gente che va lì solo per **attaccar bottone** con gente del sesso opposto (anche dello stesso come s’è visto prima...), [...]. (WEBBIT)
- (iii) Neanche Berlusconi sa bene cosa sia meglio fare, in questa giornata che segna il trionfo di un ex comunista. Entra, esce a farsi fotografare con una comitiva di turisti, rientra, si siede accanto a Fini e gli **attacca un bottone** su chissà cosa (il presidente

di An a un certo punto non riesce a trattenere uno sbadiglio) (CORIS)
 (iv) Mi scusi se le ho **attaccato un bottone**, vedo che lei sta partendo. Beh, spero che vada in un bel posto e che passi una bella vacanza. (WEBBIT)

A should indeed not be confused with B. Whereas B may express (a) coming into contact or starting a conversation with someone or (b) trying to flirt with someone, A unambiguously means a negative judgment from the speaker's point of view who sees himself engaged in a conversation against his will²⁰. Thus A is often accompanied by the features [+disturbing] and [+boring], which can be reflected on the linguistic surface (by adjectives, adverbs and other modifiers): *Attaccare un bottone infinito*, for instance. Linguistic context is particularly important for understanding the semantic-pragmatic core of the respective constructions. It is not always easy to grasp the meaning without paying careful attention to the context. When the direct object is used in the plural (*bottoni*), to mention another difficult case, A and B could be possible.

In the following phraseoframe only one of the two similar phrasemes, namely A (*attaccare un bottone a qualcuno*), will be illustrated²¹:

phraseme	<i>attaccare un bottone (a qualcuno)</i>
type of phraseme	predicative phraseme
PROSODY	
intonation	falling
focus stress	on <i>bottóne</i>
MORPHOLOGY	
finite verb	[attaccare]
variable elements	[attaccare] [un] [bottone] [un] [bottone] – sometimes in the plural: <i>attaccare bottoni (a qualcuno)</i> , s. corpus examplev (below)
SYNTAX	
syntactic function	sentence or dependent clause
sentence types	
– declarative sentence	usual
– interrogative sentence	possible
– imperative sentence	improbable

²⁰A and B are in fact converging to an even greater extent: B may approach A in meaning when used with the indirect object *a qualcuno* instead of *con qualcuno*. These linguistic subtleties are all documented in the two detailed phraseoframes about A and B, easily accessible through the website of the Italian learners' platform (*Piattaforma per chi impara l'italiano*, cf. Schafroth (dir.), 2014b)

²¹For the other phraseme, *attaccare bottone (con qualcuno)*, see <http://li.phil.hhu.de/suche>

<u>internal syntax</u>	
basic structure	<i>qualcuno attacca un bottone (a qualcuno)</i> Subj V Obj ₁ Obj ₂ ²²
obligatory actants	[qualcuno] [bottone]
optional actants	[a qualcuno] note that the absolute use (without <i>a qualcuno</i>) is not frequent (see corpus example vi)
modifiers	frequent use of adjuncts (mostly adjectives) that express intensification or irony: <i>un bottone tremendo</i> , <i>un boccone mica da ridere</i> , <i>un bottone allucinante</i> ²³
collocations	<i>attaccare un bottone [infinito]</i>
<u>external syntax</u>	
syntactic function	may be used as an apposition by means of the preposition <i>su</i> introducing the topic of the conversation: <i>La tintora disse che no, non c'era niente, estava per attaccarle un bottone su tutta la faccenda</i>
prepositional object	
SEM_PRAGM	
meaning	to engage someone in a conversation considered excessively long by the interlocution
semantic field(s)	irritation
semantic roles	subject is agent, indirect object (Obj ₂) is addressee (and patient)
reference to hearer	yes, but less frequent than reference to third person
reference to speaker	no
reference to third person	very often
speech act(s)	informative

²² What ought to be done, if we want to consistently follow Construction Grammar's theory, is to distinguish between several degrees of abstraction: (1) macro-constructions (abstract meaning-form pairings, such as Subj V Obj₁ Obj₂ / X CAUSES Y to RECEIVE Z), (2) meso-constructions ("similarly-behaving specific constructions"), (3) micro-constructions ("individual construction-types"), and (4) constructs ("the empirically attested tokens, which are the locus of change") (cf. Traugott, 2008, 136). This will be done in future studies.

²³ As far as adjuncts like *mica da ridere* ('[which is] not funny') is concerned, it could be argued that this syntactic enlargement is a matter of external syntactic, but we subsume this phenomenon under *internal syntax*, because it still modifies the noun (Obj₁) syntactically as an adjective does.

status of speech act(s)	indirect
motivation	expression of displeasure
illocutive function	complaint
situational setting	(dialogues) in spoken language or in computer mediated communication rather not face-to-face
variety	spoken language; also largely documented in written language, especially in newspapers and fiction and in computer mediated communication
register	colloquial
frequency	no corpus-based frequency results, but familiar in everyday language
DISCOURSE (introducing) new topic	no
(causing) topic change	no
discourse function	usually anaphoric when talking about someone
metalinguistic function ²⁴	possible
USAGE NOTES	Do not confuse <i>attaccare un bottone (a qualcuno)</i> with the similar phraseme <i>attaccare bottone (con qualcuno)</i> which is <u>not</u> associated with the features [+disturbing] and [+boring]. See there.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR L2	It is recommended to use only the standard variant <i>attaccare un bottone a qualcuno</i> . Do not use the plural form and do not leave out the indirect object.
CORPUS EXAMPLES	see above; and (v): (v) La saluto perché spesso nel percorso tra la fermata del bus e casa mia, a Baltimora, incontro delle

²⁴ By *metalinguistic function* I understand the playful usage of a phraseme with the effect of interpreting it as compositional. Another possibility is univerbation based on a phraseme, both cases representing plays on words. Phrasemes are hence constructions to be placed between compositional phrases and morphology (cf. Stathi 2011, 151). This is exactly what often happens in texts. The metalinguistic function is activated when a phraseme is “dephraseologized” or used in another syntactic structure or in a word cluster, e.g. *to burn the midnight oil* (to be understood literally) *spiller of the beans* (as a nonce formation). Aspects of idiomatic creativity, including idiom variation and variability, are treated by Langlotz (2006).

persone sconosciute che per educazione americana, mi **attacca un bottone** infiniti su chi fossi e chi fossero loro, [...]. (WEBBIT)
 (vi) Se chiamate un amico al cellulare, e questi **attacca un bottone** che non finisce più, una spiegazione c'è. L'amico ha un telefonino Tim autoricaricabile: più la conversazione si prolunga, più chi ha risposto ricarica la carta, mentre chi chiama paga (La Repubblica Corpus).

Fig. 3. Phraseframe for the construction *attaccare un bottone (a qualcuno)*

Phraseotemplates

The next type of construction, which is about half way between a lexically open and a lexically filled idiom, might be called “phraseotemplates” in English-in-German there are several terms like *Phrasem-Konstruktionen* (Dobrovol'skij, 2011) or *Phraseoschablonen* (Fleischer, 1997), in French, for instance, *expressions-énoncés* (González Rey, 2001). They are syntactically fixed prefabs with a lexically open slot to be filled by an inflected transitive or intransitive verb. A famous English example is the incredulity-response construction *Him be a doctor?* (which is *X be a Y?*). In Schafroth (2013a) I dealt with the *wh*-construction *Che me lo chiedi a fare?* (other examples would be *Che studi a fare?*, *Che mi fai questo regalo a fare?*, *Cosa ti hanno preso a fare?*):

[(Che)Cosa / Che[(OBJ₁)(OBJ₂)[V[a fare]]COMPL]]

What is astonishing about this construction is that there is not a single Italian dictionary in which you can find it. Monolingual dictionaries as well as specialized phraseme dictionaries do in general ignore this type of phrasemes, probably because before Construction Grammar they had not been identified as such, neither in English books (cf. Götz and Lorenz, 2002) nor in other languages' phraseological dictionaries (cf. Bárdosi *et al.*, 2003 for French phrasemes, or Lurati, 2011; 2002 for Italian phraseology)²⁵.

²⁵This is however not entirely true for other languages. In Mel'čuk (1987) there are indeed phenomena (of Russian) that might be compared to phraseotemplates.

Beyond that, how should all these constructions be described in a dictionary in order to provide a maximum of knowledge about its meaning and its use?

If we part form the construction *Che me lo chiedi a fare?* as a whole we can recognize on the formal side of the pairing an interrogative clause composed by a *wh*-pronoun (*che, che cosa* or *cosa*) and a verb phrase consisting of an inflected verb and an obligatory and invariable infinitive complement (*a fare*). The argument structure of the verb (here *chiedere*) is fully reflected in the sentence where subject, direct object and indirect object are represented, the latter two by pronouns.

The phraseotemplate I want to describe here is the *si (che)* construction used for expressing concession, reinforcement (or insistence) or rectification. The construction is briefly mentioned in some Italian grammar books (e.g., Serianni, 1997, 252, or Patota, 2006, 255), but L2 learners do not find sufficient descriptions in any grammar or textbook. Analysing some linguistic corpora (here PAISÀ, CORIS, BADIP, WEBBIT, La Repubblica Corpus) I could make out the following form-meaning-pairs:

(1) V sì (Object)

RECTIFICATION

(1a) A: *Oggi non piove, meno male* – B: *Prima pioveva sì*

(1b) *Secondo punto... è una questione di abitudine. Ti posso assicurare che non mi perdo tantissimo adesso (mi distraigo di più quando quando seguo la serie in tv), e se capita la rivedo, altro vantaggio. Per quanto riguarda la letteratura, conoscessi le lingue leggerei sì, i libri in lingua originale.*

(1c) A: *Non ci ha mai invitati a casa sua* – B: *Ci ha invitati sì una volta!*

(2) ma sì che V

CONTRADICTION

(2a) A: *Qualcosa da dover fare incidere qualcosa* – B: *ma dai davvero per domani mattina per domani sera non credo* – A: *ma sì che te la incidono*

(3) (ma) sì che V

REINFORCEMENT

(3a) *Queste sì che sono rivelazioni.*

(3b) *Ecco, questo sì che sarebbe un miracolo.*

(3c) A: *Ricorda qualcos'altro?*-B: *Oltre la rete la ragazza dai capelli biondi, ma sì che l'ho vista, eccome.*

(3d) *Stavolta, nell'incendio dei giorni scorsi, avrete visto di sicuro nei TG i Rom incazzati che*

parlavano con i poliziotti. E sì che si sono incazzati! Non facevano altro che ripetere: "Ma perchè? Siamo pagando puntuali ogni mese!

(3e) *Però c'è l'albero. Quello sicuramente viene dalle nostre sacre montagne. No! Neppure quello l'abbiamo inventato noi. Ci rimarrebbe il presepe. Quello sì che è roba nostra.*

(4) V sì Predicative/Direct Object/Infinitive ma/però

CONCESSION

(4a) *Quello che fumava di più era TopCat (risate) Sean invece non fumava, beveva sì, però non fumava.*

(4b) *Devo confessare che quando l'Ulivo vinse le elezioni, benché contrariato, mi consolai al pensiero che, tutto sommato, avremmo avuto sì un detestabile governo di sinistra, ma composto di gente provveduta, capace di fare il suo mestiere.*

(4c) *Infatti, se i pannelli solari funzionanti rimanevano esposti verso il Sole, si poteva sì guadagnare energia sufficiente per far funzionare la stazione ma contemporaneamente la temperatura all'interno della stazione sarebbe aumentata notevolmente.*

(4d) *Così, in una Polonia dove l'opposizione è praticamente ufficializzata, dove il visitatore si muove come in un paese democratico con vari partiti - sentendo cioè due e più campane -, sta anche diventando palese che mettersi contro il regime può sì costare la prigione, ma per brevi periodi subito seguiti da un indulto.*

(4e) *C'è sì Roma, ma c'è soprattutto Parigi, da tempo l'alleato strategico.*

What we can deduce from these examples is that obviously the *si (che)* construction is above all a discursive or even rhetoric strategy to rectify, contradict, strengthen, fine-tune or modify an argument. When used without *che* the morpheme *sì*, introducing a sort of concession, is often placed directly behind an inflected verb, which frequently is the copula *essere*, the verb *avere* or a modal verb like *potere, dovere, volere*. If there is a clause containing a concession indicated by *sì*, then we generally find a coordinate clause joined by *ma* or, very occasionally, by *però*.

Isn't this too complicated for a foreign learner of Italian? My answer is: From the European reference level C1 onwards (or even earlier) it is possible to learn a construction like this. Besides, why should such a construction, argumentatively strong and usable in many situations, be restricted only to native speakers? There are only a few linguistic elements involved, the main difficulty consisting in the right position of *sì (che)* and in combing two clauses.

An epistemically satisfying description could contain the following items (space prevents me from displaying a complete phraseoframe):

phraseme	a) (<i>ma</i>) <i>si che</i> VERB b) VERB <i>si</i> ... <i>ma</i>
type of phraseme	phraseotemplate
PROSODY	
intonation	a) rising (falling) b) rising
pitch	on <i>si</i> (in a and b)
focus stress	on <i>si</i> (in a and b)
MORPHOLOGY	
finite verb	none
variable elements	none
SYNTAX	
syntactic function	a) in the form of <i>si che</i> or <i>masi che</i> (preceding the verb): modifier of the following verb phrase b) in the form of <i>si</i> (after the verb), with or without <i>ma</i> (or <i>però</i>): modifier of the verb
<u>internal syntax</u> basic structure ²⁶	a) (<i>ma</i>) <i>si che</i> VERB (+ complement or object or infinitive) – have a look at examples 2 and 3 b) VERB <i>si</i> (+ subject/ infinitive complement or object), often followed by <i>ma</i> (sometimes by <i>però</i>) – compare examples 1 and 4
collocations	none
<u>external syntax</u>	
typical verbs involved	a) any verb b) <i>essere, avere, potere, volere, dovere,</i> but also other verbs
optional elements	in the structure a): <i>ma</i> (in <i>ma si che</i>) in the structure b): <i>ma</i> (or <i>però</i>) in the coordinate clause
SEM_PRAGM meaning	with a) you may contradict or reinforce an argument or what has been said before; with b) you may rectify what has been said before or you may give the impression to

²⁶ As Hoffmann (2013) points out, complex sentences are constructions, too. In the case of the *si che*-meso-constructions (Traugott, 2008, 236) it is however difficult to identify a superordinate abstract macro-construction.

	your interlocutor that you want to admit or concede to something which, however, in the following clause introduced by <i>ma</i> is fine-tuned or modified
semantic field(s)	underline one's opinion; contradict; rectify; concede
reference to hearer	possible
reference to speaker	possible
reference to third person	possible
speech act(s)	assertive, directive
status of speech act(s)	direct
motivation	you want to be right (a) or to correct someone or something (b) or to convince someone (also b)
situational setting	unspecific; often used in controversial discussions
variety	in spoken or written language
register	neutral
frequency	no corpus-based frequency results, but very familiar in everyday language
DISCOURSE	
(introducing) new topic	no
(causing) topic change	no
discourse function	(a) and (b); anaphoric (referring to something known or already mentioned) (b), when conceding something: furthermore cataphoric (indicating that the argument being treated will be carried on)
rhetoric value	(a) and (b): showing determination and self-confidence (b), when conceding something: rhetoric strategy used in order to avoid expressing one's opinion directly or too openly
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR L2	Both types, <i>Prima pioveva si</i> and <i>Queste si che sono rivelazioni</i> , are easy to learn: use just <i>si</i> and place it directly after the verb or use <i>si che</i> before the verb!
CORPUS EXAMPLES	see above

Fig. 4. Phraseoframe for the constructions (*ma*) *si che* VERB and VERB *si* ... *ma*

Pragmatemes

The last type of phraseme to be treated here are formulae which I shall call *pragmatemes*, following Mel'čuk (1995), according to which a pragmateme is a phraseme fixed by the situation to which it is related (Mel'čuk, 2008, 4). Form and meaning of pragmatemes represent and evoke the conceptual content of a specific situation to which they are closely linked²⁷. Examples of this classical type of construction are *Bless you!*, *Never mind!*, *Hold the line!*, but also formulae like *You'll catch your death!*, *What do you say?*, *Pardon my French*, *Whose turn is it to deal?* or *Wet paint!* (cf. Fléchon *et al.*, 2012 with French examples). Pragmatemes, also called *expressions-énoncés* in French phraseology (González Rey, 2001)²⁸, are encoding idioms (according to Makkai, 1972; 2011), familiar pieces familiarly arranged (citing Fillmore *et al.*, 1988) and thus compositional, i.e., the way their elements are combined is regular and their meaning is transparent. However, they are characterized by a high degree of entrenchment so that L2 learners would probably understand them when uttered in a concrete situation, but they would not be able to produce them.

It is a challenging if not impossible task for traditional dictionaries to describe pragmatemes in a satisfactory way. What ought to be done by lexicographers is to provide all information about their meaning and their use. I will try this with respect to the Italian constructions *a buon rendere* and *e poi-colpo di scena*.

A Buon Rendere

First of all we would have to determine whether its frequency of occurrence is greater than expected (cf. Gries, 2011). This might be questionable in the case of our pragmateme in Italian. But as we are not able to provide data about this issue we exclude this item.

Let us then turn our attention to Italian dictionaries. In *Zingarelli 2015* we find, rather concise, the following paraphrase: 'detto di favore e sim., impegnarsi a restituirlo'. *Garzanti 2009* gives a similar explanation: 'Si dice a chi ci ha fatto un favore, promettendo di restituirlo' and in the *Nuovissimo Dardano* we can read: 'Locuz. per dire che si accetta ql.co con il proposito di ricambiare appena possibile'. None of them enables a

foreign user to understand let alone use the construction, although *Dardano* provides some crucial semantic indications. What is in deed relevant as far as the meaning of *a buon rendere* is concerned can be expressed in two of my students' lexicographical trials:

(a) *a buon rendere*, si dice a qualcuno che ci ha fatto un favore per sottolineare che siamo pronti a ricambiare il favore nel futuro: *Grazie per il tuo sostegno. A buon rendere!*

(b) *a buon rendere*, 1. se qualcuno dice *a buon rendere* vuol dire che vuole ringraziare qualcun altro e ricambiare appena possibile: *Grazie per la cena. A buon rendere!*

(a) and (b) convey the minimum semantic information one ought to have. Actually the description is not sufficient to fully understand how and when to use this formula. The crucial point is that whoever says *a buon rendere*, after having benefited from a favour (which may be big, but usually is a banal or every day one, like having been offered a coffee in a bar by a colleague) feels obliged to return the favour or at least considers it a formula of politeness to say these words, often combined with some sign of gratitude: *Grazie! A buon rendere!* Languages differ here considerably. The German (pseudo) equivalent *Danke, Du hast was gut bei mir!* would not be used if only a little favour is concerned. In Italian, however, the favour is usually small, but may be big, too. Let us have a look at some corpus examples (WEBBIT):

(i) «[...] e magari bermi pure io un caffè per bontà vostra ...» «Tutto qua? Ma vieni con me che te lo offro direttamente al bar un caffè!» invitò Paolo, sorridendo a quel tizio che aveva un "non so che" di Pacino e De Niro con l'accento napoletano. «*Grazie dottò, a buon rendere*. Andiamo!»

(ii) volevo chiedervi e se usassi la sendto e recvfrom? potrebbe funzionare? mmm ... AbsoluteBeginner: Scusate se insisto, ma che tipo di server è? Grazie Domy per la tua risposta ma è un po' vaga. Non vorrei rompere le scatole in mezzo a voi che siete tutti esperti, ma è una questione importante. Ho provato a capirci qualcosa leggendo nei motori di ricerca ma ... nun gliela fò! *Grazie*. E non posso nemmeno dire *a buon rendere*.

As quite often is the case with lexemes, expressions and phrasemes, speakers tend to invert their meaning by antithesis. This also applies to the pragmateme *a buon rendere*, which may refer to a situation in which the speaker expresses anger towards his interlocutor, making

²⁷ Kauffer (2011, 41f.) puts forward the main characteristics of pragmatemes (which he calls *actes de langage stéréotypés*): "Statut d'énoncé", "idiomaticité", "fonction essentiellement pragmatique". Pragmatemes "ne servent pas à désigner un objet, une personne, un procès etc. mais ils participent à la création d'un acte de langage qui a une composante illocutoire, voire perlocutoire" (42). See also Lüger (1999; 2007).

²⁸ Other works refer to the stereotypical character of pragmatemes (Coulmas, 1981; Schapira, 1999; González Rey, 2007; Kauffer, 2011).

him understand that sooner or later he will hit back. But this might also be used in an ironic or humorous way. Let me cite one more the student who already proposed (b):

(c) **a buon rendere** 2. se qualcuno dice *a buon rendere*, dopo avere ricevuto un torto, vuol dire che vuole vendicarsi appena possibile: *Ieri mi hai umiliato davanti a tutti. A buon rendere!*

To get some evidence for this usage from authentic usage let us look at the following corpus examples (CORIS):

(iii) Certo che sei davvero idiota. Comunque, **a buon rendere**. Speriamo di non rivederci più.

(iv) Vabbè, allora io vado, ti saluto vecchio mio, grazie del panino e buone vacanze – Anche a te, ah Martino aspetta un attimo... – Si Cesare dimmi – Hai letto come si chiama la ragazza? – Quale ragazza? – Bravo Martino, **a buon rendere**.

(v) Riforma Senato: Un regalo di Berlusconi a Renzi... a buon rendere (*Il Fatto Quotidiano* 6/8/2014)

To sum up, I propose the following phraseoframe:

phraseme	<i>a buon rendere</i>
type of phraseme	pragmateme
PROSODY	
intonation	falling
focus stress	on <i>rendere</i>
MORPHOLOGY	
finite verb	none
variable elements	none
SYNTAX	
syntactic function	usually: a sentence of its own (holophrastic) possible: <i>a buon rendere</i> as a modifier (adjective); s. corpus example further below (vi)
<u>internal syntax</u>	
basic structure	<i>a buon rendere</i> P ADJ V(nominalized)
optional elements	<i>grazie</i> , preceding <i>a buon rendere</i> sometimes introduced by <i>come si dice (in questi casi): a buon rendere</i>
collocations	none
<u>external syntax</u>	
syntactic function	may be used as an

modifiers	apposition sometimes used together with <i>dire</i> , <i>gridare</i> (see corpus example (ii) above)
SEM_PRAGM meaning	(a) you say <i>a buon rendere</i> when you want to thank your interlocutor for a personal, special or <i>often</i> little favour he did to you, such as having offered you a drink or something else, expressing simultaneously that you will return the favour. (b) you may also use <i>a buon rendere</i> in order to make your interlocutor understand that the words he/she said or the things he/she did annoyed or hurt you; you might say this, too, in an ironic or witty manner.
semantic field(s)	gratitude (a), irritation (b)
reference to hearer	yes
reference to speaker	no
reference to third person	possible
speech act(s)	(a) gratitude; (b) criticism, reproach
status of speech act(s)	rather direct
motivation	(a) you feel obliged to return a favour, (b) you express your irritation and let your interlocutor know that you will think of paying him back for he/she said or did to you; your anger may be real or ironic or humorous.
situational setting	face-to-face (or in computer mediated communication)
variety	usually in spoken language (or in computer mediated communication); also documented in written language, especially in newspapers, but rather in the second meaning (b)
register	neutral
style	slightly old-fashioned
frequency	decreasing

DISCOURSE	
(introducing) new topic	no
(causing) topic change	no
discourse function	usually at the end of a conversation expressing (once more) gratitude (a) or annoyance (b)
metalinguistic function	possible, e.g. when saying <i>come si dice (in questi casi): a buon rendere</i>
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR L2	Do only use it if you know someone really well. If so you may say it also referring to small favours, but do not use it when you receive a gift.
CORPUS EXAMPLES	see above; and (vi): (vi) E in ogni caso fidatevi che il costo che improntate per un qualsiasi prodotto della Apple è un investimento a buon rendere !

Fig. 5. Phraseoframe for the construction *a buon rendere*

e poi – colpo di scena

The last case study is to illustrate again the shortcomings not only of learners' lexicography but of monolingual and bilingual (Italian) lexicography in general. Pragmatemes may not be part of the basic learning material of a L2 programme, but they are, as I said, as far as communicative effects are concerned, nonetheless important and should therefore not be limited to native speakers. Such as in the case of *epoi-colpo di scena* (literally *plot twist*, referring to a "radical change in the expected direction or outcome of the plot" of a story, a novel or a film; OED), which is a rhetoric strategy used in a story or a tale someone tells (or in a newspaper article or novel) in order to increase suspense or to capture the listeners' attention²⁹, similar to Italian *ta-ta-ta-ta*♪, a sort of fanfare mimicry, another construction not mentioned in a dictionary even once.

Uttered with a pause after *e poi* ('and then') and *colpo di scena* ('surprising twist') it announces the climax of a story or something unexpected – in English something like *surprise!* or *and this is the surprising part!*, woven into an utterance or a written text³⁰.

²⁹This construction is similar to Italian *ta-ta-ta-ta*♪, a sort of fanfare mimicry, not mentioned in any dictionary even once.

³⁰I admit that there are similar constructions, such as *e poi, un altro problema*, so that one might argue that we are rather dealing with a phraseotemplate (*e poi X*), which is indeed worth being examined, but *e poi... colpo di scena* is (besides

Linguistic corpora (paisà, WEBBIT, La Repubblica Corpus) give good evidence of this pragmatic pattern:

(i) Avevamo visto nascere l'amore tra lei e Lucas e **poi ... colpo di scena**, le cose non si erano rivelate per niente come avevamo creduto che fossero!

(ii) Dekker, proseguendo le indagini, trova che durante la rapina il gruppo di criminali invece di rubare direttamente il denaro, nel computer della banca avevano inserito un virus che trasferisse elettronicamente i soldi (un miliardo di dollari) sul loro proprio conto corrente; trova **poi, colpo di scena**, che l'assassino dell'ostaggio all'inizio delle vicende era in realtà stato York, non Conners.

(iii) Nel pomeriggio **poi ilcolpo di scena**, perchè Cesare Zaccone, il legale della Juventus, ha preso la parola tentando la via del patteggiamento ed ammettendo così, di fatto, la colpa. Su precisa domanda del presidente della Caf Ruperto infatti, l'avvocato difensore del club bianconero ha dichiarato: [...].

(iv) Le sanzioni previste per chi contravveniva al divieto d'abbattimento furono notevolmente inasprite nel 1985, grazie al settempedano Gigetto Cristini, fondatore nel '70 di "Quercia Amica". Poi, nel 1998 ilcolpo di scena: Mentre nel resto d'Italia cresceva l'attenzione verso gli alberi monumentali, la Regione Marche, per mezzo della tristemente nota legge 33, riduceva drasticamente le sanzioni fino a renderle praticamente ridicole.

(v) Ma niente "mondiali", se mancano i documenti necessari. Così tutti, fino all'altro ieri, avevano pensato che queste gare iridate si sarebbero svolte orfane di Girardelli: Insomma, una chance in più negli slalom, discipline in cui il ragazzo appare pressoché imbattibile. **Poi, il colpo di scena**: Il Lussemburgo chiedeva ufficialmente l'iscrizione, il comitato organizzatore della Valtellina l'accettava.

Dictionaries are made for providing linguistic information about lexical units, i.e. lexemes and lexeme combinations, such as collocations, compounds, phrasemes. But they usually stop here. Constructions that go beyond this boundary, especially phraseotemplates and pragmatemes, are often not registered let alone treated in an epistemically relevant way. This is not surprising as far as traditional print lexicography is concerned, but in digital lexicography almost everything is possible³¹. The reasons for not

perhaps *e poi, colpo di genio*) entrenched in a double sense: Formally and with respect to the situation in which it is used.

³¹New insights into digital and electronic lexicography are offered by Granger (2012), Granger and Paquot (2012) and L'Homme and Cormier (2014).

considering or not holistically describing phrasemes in general are based on the lack of awareness of innovation and new lexicographical techniques. Besides, it involves a lot of hard work to renew a dictionary which goes deeply into the microstructures... The reality looks somewhat different, as we can see when:

colpo di scena is, in fact, described in Zingarelli 2015 and Garzanti 2009, but only as a compound, not mentioning the whole pragmateme and not telling us in a satisfactory way when and how it used and what for.

Zingarelli 2015: (s.v. *colpo*:) *colpo di scena*, colpo di teatro, improvviso e sorprendente mutamento di situazione; (s.v. *scena*:) *colpo di scena*, (fig.) avvenimento improvviso che produce notevoli cambiamenti.

Garzanti 2009: (s.v. *colpo*:) *colpo di scena* n. 1 (teat., cine.) avvenimento imprevisto che coglie di sorpresa e cambia il corso dell'azione 2 mutamento improvviso e sorprendente di situazione: *colpo di scena: arriva il marito*.

Without appropriate situational context the example given in Garzanti's meaning no. 2 is not comprehensible. I therefore feel it is of utmost importance to describe phrasemes in a comprehensive manner, the way it could be realized in a digital learners' dictionary of Italian illustrated here by another phraseoframe:

phraseme	<i>e poi – colpo di scena</i>
type of phraseme	pragmateme
PROSODY	
intonation	first rising (<i>e poi</i>), then falling or falling-rising (<i>colpo di scena</i>)
focus stress	on <i>pó</i> i and on <i>scé</i> na (secondary stress on <i>cól</i> po)
pitch	on <i>poi</i>
MORPHOLOGY	
finite verb	none
variable elements	[<i>e poi</i>] or [<i>poi</i>] [<i>colpo</i>] or [<i>il colpo</i>] [<i>colpo</i>] or [<i>colpone</i>] (augmentative): non frequently, but recorded in texts (e.g. WEBBIT)
	[<i>scena</i>] or [<i>scenona</i>] (augmentative): non frequently, but recorded in texts (s. corpus example vi)
SYNTAX	
syntactic function	simple sentence (without verb), generally used as an

	aposition
<u>internal syntax</u>	
basic structure	<i>e poi – colpo di scena</i>
optional elements	[<i>e poi</i>] (can be omitted)
collocations	none
<u>external syntax</u>	
syntactic function	often used as an insertion (parenthesis)
modifiers	none
SEM_PRAGM	
meaning	something important is about to be said or written
semantic field(s)	unspecific
reference to hearer	no
reference to speaker	possible
reference to third person	possible
speech act(s)	expressive
status of speech act(s)	indirect
motivation	someone wants to be original while speaking or writing
situational setting	face-to-face or author-reader
variety	in spoken language, when someone is telling something; in written language, too.
register	neutral
style	neutral, slightly artificial
frequency	no corpus-based frequency results, but familiar in everyday language, especially in the situation of telling something (interesting or exciting)
DISCOURSE	
(introducing) new topic	yes
(causing) topic change	possible
discourse function	strategy to increase attention and suspense
metalinguistic function	not documented
rhetoric function	speaker/writer wants to entertain
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR L2	Try it when you tell a story. Make a pause after <i>e poi</i> and raise your voice twice (during <i>e poi</i> and <i>colpo di scena</i>), in order to succeed in creating suspense (and a smile)
CORPUS EXAMPLES	see above, and (vi) (vi) Tutti attendono con ansia quel giorno, perché è l'unico giorno dell'anno in cui ci si

possono levare i mutandoni di lana che pizzica e in gabinetto si può usare la carta igienica invece delle ortiche. Fai che ti rifai, ecco che la piccola salta fuori. Ma, oh, **colpone di scenona**: era tutto un truccone! La vittima sacrificale non era la subdola mocciosetta, ma Edward medesimo! (*Il prescelto: Nicolas Cage sfida l'ApeMaia. E le prende di brutto*; <http://cinescherno.com/2012/05/17/il-prescelto-nicolas-cage-sfida-lape-maia-e-le-prende-di-brutto/>) (Accessed on February 13, 2015).

Fig. 6. Phraseframe for the construction *e poi – scena di colpo*

Conclusion

What are the main results of this article? I have tried to explain why conventional lexicography is not and cannot be able to treat phrasemes in a way that helps foreign languages users to really understand and use them. Whereas there is a long and rich tradition in lexicology as far as research on phrasemes is concerned, lexicography seems to have established a tradition of treating all idiomatic expressions as poor relations: Superficially and without any attempt to elucidate specific linguistic properties and pragmatic conditions, information that is indispensable for the full understanding of phrasemes in order to enable learners to use them like native speakers do. Phrasemes are, as I pointed out, constructions, hence symbolic units. This means that they are first of all conventional, but furthermore entrenched and/or non-compositional (idiosyncratic). If linguistic units are not (fully) predictable, they have to be learned separately. Native speakers usually have no problems decoding or encoding phrasemes (under the condition they have so far come across or learned them), but foreigners have.

As phrasemes, due to their rhetorical or emotional effect, play an important role in language production, in everyday use as well as in formal speech, my concern is to make available this comprehensive knowledge to foreign learners, too. Construction Grammars helps me to do this. Based on the holistic approach of the CxG framework, constructions (i.e., phrasemes, too) can be described by means of attribute-value representations. This is what I wanted to propose here, introducing the phrase frame model that is well suited to applying the attribute-value concept, doing, however, without

Construction Grammar's formalism but providing instead explicit information about linguistic properties of all levels. The final objective is a digital phraseme dictionary in which, phrase templates, predicative phrasemes (idioms), collocations, non-compositional compounds, grammatical and adverbial phrasemes, discourse markers, full sentence phrasemes and proverbs as well as pragmatemes can be described in a comprehensive manner, taking systematically into account authentic language (as documented in language corpora). Digital lexicography should at last embark on new ideas. Digital platforms provide enough space to implement all (phrase logical) desiderata of bilingual and bilingual lexicography, including learners' lexicography.

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Ethics

The author hereby declares that there is not any ethical issue or conflict of interest arising from the present article or the research on which it is based.

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