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Englische Redewendungen und Sprichwörter in der Praxis

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Irrespective of the approach adopted, fixed expressions are interesting from a linguo-cultural point of view. Various kinds of phraseological units, such as idioms, proverbs, winged words and slogans, are used in different contexts, being attractive for language users for a number of reasons. Many of them have special stylistic value, such items tend to be rich in connotations and they often belong to culture-bound items. Moreover, fossilized word combinations can be modified by language users to meet their needs, which is reflected, for instance, in their use in advertisements and commercials. It is worth adding that phraseological units can be used with elements of another code, for example, with images. As the phrases at issue offer so much in terms of potential, one can expect them to appear in press, advertisements, commercials, songs, to name but a few areas of their occurrence.

In a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspective word combinations of idiomatic character tend to pose problems for language learners. Some of them result from differences between the two phraseological systems, i.e. the mother tongue system and that of the foreign language. However, in many cases difficulties in using the units in question – even at the advanced level – result from lack of detailed information on a given expression, its characteristics and use. The lexicographic presentation limited to providing the cross-linguistic equivalent leaves the learner with many question on how the fixed phrase really functions in a given language. Such units should be presented in a broad linguo-cultural context, so that the learner could acquire adequate knowledge about given phrases. That is the aim of Sabine Fiedler who in her book *Englische Redewendungen und*

Sprichwörter in der Praxis presents fifty English phraseological units with commentaries in German, covering all the aspects mentioned above.

The expressions selected by the author belong to various kinds of fossilised word combinations. The collection comprises mostly idioms (e.g. *once in a blue moon*, p. 7, *double Dutch*, p. 53), proverbs (e.g. *Birds of a feather flock together*, p. 41, *The early bird catches the worm*, p. 48) and winged words (e.g. *one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind*, p. 46, *Blood, sweat, tears*, p. 77). The book contains both units traditionally included in dictionaries of English idioms, for example, *forty winks* (p. 55), *over the moon* (62), *on cloud nine* (p. 84) as well as some phrases which have been in use for relatively short time and cannot be found in many lexicographic works, for instance, *Here's to you* and *I break for ...* (pp. 20, 91). The inclusion of the latter ones gives the book a special value, since thanks to it the reader will be able to identify them as idiomatic – which in the case of a foreign language learner is a conscious process – and will be able both to decode them in new contexts and to use them in various forms of communication.

The book is composed of a series of articles on particular phraseologisms, forming entries which comprise the information on the origins of a given unit and authentic examples taken from various sources, such as newspapers (e.g. *All that glitters/glisters is not gold*, pp. 22–23), public speeches (e.g. *make ends meet*, p. 45) films (*like looking for a needle in a haystack*, p. 42), literary works (e.g. *When in Rome do, as the Romans do*, p. 49), different booklets (e.g. *So far, so good*, pp. 51–52) and many others. It is worth stressing that the order in which given article is structured depends on the unit. In some cases the example is the starting point for the presentation of the source of the idiom (e.g. *throw in the towel*, p. 67), while in the others the discussion of the origins of the unit may be followed by examples (e.g. *a shell game*, p. 14). Such an approach is attractive for the reader, as the articles vary in their form. Moreover, it also allows for structuring the information in the way which is best for describing a given phrase.

The illustrative material is very important and the inclusion of various examples allows for showing different realisations of the potential of the units selected, which reflects how they can be used in real communication. In many cases the form of the unit is different from the expected form, i.e. the one given in dictionaries. For instance, creative adaptations can appear in discourse. Some units are especially prone to

modifications, which is commented on in some articles, for instance, the one about the saying *You can take/lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink*. It contains the following examples of modification (p. 57):

You can lead your boy to college, but you can't make him think,
 You can take a consumer to his salad, but you can't necessarily make him eat,
 You can lead a herring to water, but you have to walk really fast or they die.

Such a presentation of the unit draws the reader's attention to the fact that fixed phrases can be – and often are – modified in the process of communication (cf. p. 75).

Therefore, it is of such importance to provide well-chosen examples, such as the one quoted below (p. 16), in which the derivative form of the winged words appears. They help the reader to understand not only how a given unit can be used, but also – thanks to being able to observe its use in practice – to generalise on how such units tend to be exploited:

(...) But libraries seem to be losing out in the funding battles, due, in part, to the mistaken belief that they are somehow anachronistic in an age when so many Americans have instant computer access to information through the Internet. This is, frankly, a **let-them-eat-cake** attitude that threatens to destroy a network of public assets that remains critical in our country.

As mentioned before, many bilingual dictionaries of idioms have to reduce the amount of illustrative material to one example due to limitation of the volume of the lexicographic work.

This practice also is adopted for linguo-cultural information. Therefore, the book fills the gap, providing ample information both on how the unit is used and what is its cultural background and significance. The article, in which the unit *Diamonds are a girl's best friend* is a very good illustration of how fixed phrases are presented in the book: the song from a Broadway production, which is the source of the unit, is quoted with detailed information on its origins, which is followed by the authentic examples from advertisements (pp. 69–70).

Moreover, it is very important that entries in the book contain the examples of the use of phraseological units with visual elements. Being rich and varied, they constitute excellent illustrations of the use of fixed phrases in different contexts. Among them one can find advertisements (e.g. *once in a blue moon* – the advert of Toyota, p. 6), supermarket newsletters (*Treat or Treats?* – IKEA, p. 13), photographs of places like shops,

cafès etc., the names of which are idiomatic expressions (*WASTE NOT WANT NOT. Furniture & Household Goods*, p. 39). The examples collected comprise the authentic uses of English expressions, both canonic forms (e.g. *Many happy returns – advertisement of The Gleneagles® Hotel*, p. 11) and modifications (e.g. *Money doesn't grow on trees, but there's one branch where you'll find \$50 – the advertisement of the Australian bank Savings & Loans*, p. 25).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the great value of the book is the focus on showing how phraseological units function in language. Apart from the use of fixed phrases in combinations with visual elements, the process of borrowing phrases from English into German is commented on, for instance, in the article about the English proverb *The early bird catches the worm* contains the information of its being a phraseological loan and some examples of its use in the German language are provided (p. 48). Another interesting example is found in the article about *fair dinkum*, in which there is a quotation from the article from "The Welt" about the appointment of Kevin Rudds for the Prime Minister of Australia (p. 33). The text is in German with the idiom in its original form:

Ein Labor-Politker, der die Wahlen außerhalb der großen Metropolen gewinnt, kann kein gewöhnlicher Sozialdemokrat sein. Und tatsächlich: Nie sit Rudd Mitglied einer Gewerkschaft gewesen. Dass er weder den politischen Zirkeln in Sidney oder Melbourne entstammt, hat seinen Ruf als bodenständiger Politiker gestärkt. "Fair dinkum" nennt sich dieser Charakterzeug im Aussie-Slang: Einer, der hart arbeitet und Versprechen einhält. Das steht in Australien hoch im Kurs.

The quotation illustrated the culture-boundness of phraseological units and their textual potential as a borrowing. Moreover, it should be stressed that discussing such phenomena contributes to the development of the reader's linguistic awareness.

The book is highly recommended not only for those interested in the modern English language, phraseology understood in the broad sense of the term, the phenomenon of idiomacity, but also for all those who focus on communication, since it gives the reader a great opportunity to follow how idioms are used by language users in a variety of contexts. It gives an insight into the realisation of the potential of fixed phrases, not neglecting its cultural background.

Thanks to its original concept, combining linguistic and cultural information of phraseological units with visual elements, this book is also

of interest to lexicographers as a hybrid of dictionary and a collection of articles on phrases. Moreover, practical applications of the reviewed work should be mentioned, too. It is indeed an important contribution to materials for learners of English as a foreign language at advanced level, which aim at developing their linguo-cultural skills. Teachers of English as a foreign language can also benefit, as it can be used for preparation of very attractive teaching materials. To sum up, it should be emphasized that both from a theoretical and practical point of view the book is an important and valuable publication on English phraseological units.

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