

## **Observing Idiom-Variation through Dynamic Ecological Lenses: Linguistic Phenomena as Shaped by the Organism-Environment Interaction**

Mainstream positions in linguistics and cognitive science see language and cognition as purely intracranial affairs (e.g. Fodor, 1975). Nevertheless, more recent approaches focus on them as flexible products of the constant interaction between organism and environment (e.g. Kelso, 1995; Gibbs, 2005). In the present paper, I will introduce the patterns of variation displayed by a selected sample of Italian idioms in comparison to a base-form, empirically detected with the aid of a cognitive-linguistic background (e.g. Croft, 2001; Fauconnier and Turner, 2002; Langlotz, 2006).

On the basis of what observed, I am going to argue that idiomatic constructions can be conceived as dynamic systems governed by a principle of causal circularity (both in ontogenesis and phylogenesis). Indeed, any idiom shows a bundle of formal, semantic/pragmatic, affective, and socio-cultural features working as an attractor (cfr. Cameron and Deignan's 2006 *metaphoreme*) and a motivation pattern functioning as a basin of attraction, which constrain the use of the idiom. Nevertheless, it also shows a trajectory which is constantly shaped by the bulk of interactions between formal, semantic/pragmatic, cognitive, socio-cultural, and contextual factors, in a self-organizing fashion.

I will thus propose that language can be seen as a huge soft-assembling network of interactive dynamic systems standing in a synergic relation of mutual influence with each other and with other facets of cognition, which displays a fractal structure.

### References

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