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The syntax-semantics interface of idiomatic multi-word expressions

Abstract: Idiomatic multi-word expressions (MWE) are commonly analyzed as phrasal units in syntax, in addition to their literal counterparts, and accordingly introduce syntactic rather than semantic ambiguity. However, an analysis of idiomaticity based on syntactic ambiguity is disadvantageous, because it neglects recent psycholinguistic findings about the processing of idiomatic MWEs, and it furthermore obscures the possible connection between their literal and idiomatic meaning. In this contribution, we sketch an alternative analysis, employing the framework of Lexicalized Tree-Adjoining Grammar (LTAG), where idiomaticity is not subject to syntactic ambiguity, but emerges in the semantics.

(work in collaboration with Laura Kallmeyer)