Igor Mel'cuk, *General Phraseology. Theory and Practice*, John Benjamins, coll. "Lingvisticae Investigationes Supplementa", 36, 2023, 281 p.

Igor Mel'cuk is a renowned linguist who stands out mainly for developing the meaning-to-text orientation theory. It should be noted that his training was achieved in Moscow and his languages of study are English and Russian. This is reflected in the work under review since in it we mostly find examples and references to phraseological expressions in English and equivalences or comparisons with phraseological expressions in Russian. Despite this, there are also examples of other languages, although to a lesser extent, such as Korean, German and French, among others.

General Phraseology can be considered a must-read for anyone interested in applied linguistics. Igor Mel'cuk, a great reference in the field of linguistics, presents in this book, in a very clear and precise manner, the knowledge and notions necessary to understand linguistics applied to phraseology from a comprehensive perspective, as the title of the work indicates. The volume is structured in eleven chapters, preceded by a broad introduction and finished by some illustrative conclusions with which the author exemplifies his typology proposal.

Firstly, in the *Introduction* section that runs from the first page to the eighth, the first phraseological concepts are introduced (what are phrases, how they should be used, how they work, etc.). From this introductory part we can already deduce that we are dealing with a manual of phraseology since basic notions are described in detail to understand everything that will be described throughout the book. In addition, in the appendix, presented at the end of the work, there is a glossary of specialized terms and lexicon of phraseology with their respective definitions.

In addition, it should be noted that at the beginning of the chapters we see a small box that serves as an index of the contents of the chapter in question, which greatly facilitates the consultation and search for specific topics or questions. We shall remind that this is a manual on phraseology, so, having this type of help to consult it, is always appreciated from the point of view of the user.

Phraseology as a linguistic discipline is discussed in chapter 1 which answers basic questions such as the definition of phraseology, the importance of this discipline or the context in which it is necessary to use it. The concept of phraseme mentioned in the introduction is also taken up and the three main reasons why the author considers that they

exist are indicated: dearth of elementary signifiers, human preference for ready-made items and the eternal quest of individuals for higher expressivity (p. 16). It is necessary to highlight how well are established the connections between the phrasemes and their role in the study of phraseology. This is achieved thanks to the examples extracted from the corpus that are presented in tables. Furthermore, Igor Mel'cuk clearly explains the main objectives pursued by phraseology: creating a theoretical-conceptual framework and describing and cataloging the phrases of each language (p. 18).

In chapters 2 and 3 phrasemes are studied in great detail. First, the author talks about the creation of phrasemes regarding their properties of compositionality, semi-compositionality and non-compositionality. For this, he provides examples that he analyzes and scrutinizes, making it easier for the reader to understand these concepts. Secondly, phrasemes are classified according to whether they are semantic-lexemic, that is, idioms and collocations, or conceptual-lexemic, that is, nominemes and clichés.

Among the examples provided to show the different types of phrases, the following should be highlighted because of how well they illustrate the theoretical explanations they support.

Type 1. Semantic-lexemic phraseme – Idioms (p. 42):

The Speaker wants to tell us that John is not feeling well. He constructs the meaning 'John is not feeling well' freely, and he can express it also freely, saying *John is not feeling well* or *John is (feeling) unwell*. But he can use a constrained expression ˹UNDER THE WEATHER˺ 'not feeling well', which is a non-compositional semantic-lexemic phraseme - namely, an idiom.

Type 2. Semantic-lexemic phraseme – Collocation (p. 42):

The Speaker wants to tell us that the rain falling now is intense. He constructs the meaning 'intense rain' freely, but he has to express it under a linguistic constraint: the meaning 'intense' must be expressed as a function of the noun RAIN$_{(N)}$, namely, as *heavy* – and not, for instance, as in Russian, where the meaning 'intense' with DOŽD´ 'rain$_{(N)}$' is expressed by the adjective SIL´NYJ 'strong' *(*tjažëlyj dožd´* lit. 'heavy rain'). *Heavy rain* is a semantic-lexemic phraseme, although of a different type than ˹UNDER THE WEATHER˺: it is compositional; more specifically, this is a collocation [...].

In these extracts we can see that the author has made a good selection of examples that illustrate his explanations according to the type of phrasemes he refers to. This greatly facilitates the reader's understanding of the information. From my personal point of view, the only criticism that can be leveled at the examples is the lack of inclusive

language, since the reference to "The Speaker" is later assigned a masculine pronoun "he" without being imperatively necessary. The use of the neutral pronoun "they", in this case, would have been the most appropriate.

In this part the author does not dwell much on describing the conceptual-lexemic phrasemes (nominemes and clichés) since he leaves them for later chapters.

Chapters 4 and 5 focus solely on Idioms. Igor Mel'cuk starts the topic by placing idioms in a theoretical framework that then he defines and classifies. For the author, idioms are characterized by:

> - an idiom can be non-compositional not only in its signified, but also in its signifier and/or in its syntactics;
> - an idiom can be more or less transparent semantically;
> - an idiom can be syntactically discontinuous;
> - an idiom has only a deep part of speech;
> - an idiom can contain degenerate lexemic components. (p. 51)

This leads him to classify idioms in four large groups: strong idioms, semantic pivot or semi-idioms, weak idioms and pseudo-lexemic idioms, also called idiomatic compounds. Next, he introduces the problem presented by this type of phrasemes. Finally, he describes and analyzes three cases of Russian idioms (*Užas kakoj*, *Čto za* and *Anjutiny glazki*) putting into practice the theoretical explanations about idioms before moving on to the collocations that are treated in the next chapter.

As we stated, chapter 6 deals with collocations in a similar way to idioms. A definition supported by numerous examples demonstrates that collocations are characterized by:

> - a collocation is compositional
> - the components of a collocation can be complex (=multilexemic)
> - the components of a collocation can be, and often are, "degenerate" lexemes
> - a collocation can be syntactically discontinuous. (p. 113)

Besides having these properties, collocations can be classified, as Igor Mel'cuk states, according to whether they are semantically motivated or syntactically motivated. The author also emphasizes the number of collocations that exist in a language since, as he indicates, it is a very large number, approximately 5,000,000, but in his words "I believe that that number should be tripled or quadrupled" (p. 126).

Chapter 7 is very short compared to the other chapters, and it does not contain a small table of contents (the aforementioned box) like the others. Nominemes are introduced here. First the concept is defined (a non-compositional and conceptual-lexemic phraseme) and

then it is indicated that most nominems are proper nouns since they lack meaning (even if their components do have meaning) and have a surface-syntactic form (p. 138). Among the examples provided by the author as nominemes, the following should be remarked:
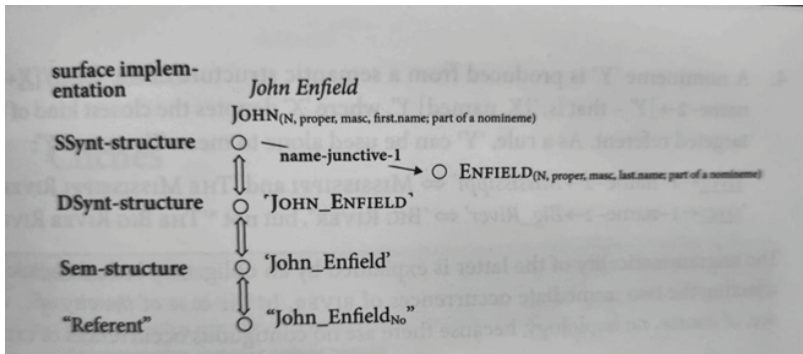

Figure 1: Excerpt from chapter 7, page 139

The presentation of the examples in many cases is in the form of an outline. This is something very useful as it helps to understand the text visually. On the one hand, the reader receives the written theoretical explanation and, on the other hand, s/he can observe that explanation in a more graphic way through the examples.

Something similar happens with the examples of chapter 8, but this time regarding clichés (compositional and conceptual-lexemic phrasemes). The author catalogs this type of phrasemes in four large groups (nickname, termeme, formuleme and sentenceme) since, as he tells us, they vary depending on their referent, which can be specific and concrete, generic and concrete, specific and abstract or generic and abstract. This demonstrates Igor Mel'cuk's attention to detail, as he analyzes the phrasemes in their entirety, without forgetting any component or factor that may affect them. Fragmenting the information into pieces that are more "digestible" for the reader is not an easy task because it requires a great skill that can only be achieved by having an extensive knowledge of the subject being discussed. The author of this work demonstrates a complete mastery of phraseology and therefore manages to present the data with pedagogy and clarity by administering them in small doses.

The final chapters, nine, ten and eleven, can be grouped together as a final section as they deal with phrasemes according to other approaches that complement the previous classification. Thus, each chapter focuses on a different class of phrasemes within which we can locate idioms, collocations, clichés and nouns. First, the author introduces the pragmatemes; secondly, the morphemic

phrasemes and finally, we have the syntactic phrasemes. Of course, this classification is accompanied by numerous examples that demonstrate the differences between each type of phrasemes.

Finally, we have a section of conclusions provided by the author of this work, among which we find the characterization of the 35 contentious phrases of J. Becker. To carry out this enterprise, Igor Mel'cuk makes use of the proposal he presented throughout the previous chapters.

As one would expect from a work by Igor Mel'cuk, the concepts are approached from three fundamental theories: meaning-to-text orientation; dependency syntax and heavy reliance on formally defined notions. The author does not disappoint and continues to provide detailed reflections on phraseology. As he himself describes on the back cover of the book, in this work he proposes "a novel approach to phraseology: a universal deductive calculus of all theoretically possible phraseological expressions (=phrasemes) implemented in 51 rigorously defined notions". This contribution is actually a detailed analysis of phraseology and the theories that make it up.

In short, *General Phraseology* by Igor Mel'cuk is a work that lives up to its title, offering a very complete overview of this discipline. Its well-ordered structure makes it easy to read and guarantees a good understanding of its content, both for a student and for any linguistics professional interested in phraseology.

Vanesa Freire Armada
Universidade de Vigo
vanesa.freire.armada@gmail.com