

Late Transfer of Idioms

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Recent developments have made it challenging to reconcile phase theory (Chomsky 2000) and idioms. Marantz (2013) has noted that under current theoretical assumptions the domain of idiomatic interpretation is larger than the phase. We develop a theory of Late Transfer of Idioms (LToI) such that if a phase is a proper subpart of an idiom, Transfer to LF can be delayed to the next higher phase. This resembles the system delaying Transfer to PF in Bobaljik's (2012) allomorphy analysis.

Data: Icelandic 'participate', lit. 'take part' and Lithuanian 'give up', lit. 'raise hands', lose their special meaning in a Canonical Passive (CaP) (1;3) but retain it in a New Impersonal Passive (NIP) and the *-ma/-ta* impersonal (2;4). LToI disallows idiomatic interpretation via traces and unlike CaP, NIP and *-ma/-ta* crucially contain a covert subject (Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir 2002, Sigurðsson 2011, Šeirakeitė 2016), blocking the direct object from raising to subject. Polish *-no/-to* patterns with its *-ma/-ta* cognate against CaP.

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| <p>(1) #Þáttur var tekinn í hlaupinu.
part.NOM was taken in run.the
Intended: 'Sbdy participated in the run'</p> | <p>(2) Það var tekið þátt í hlaupinu.
there was taken part.ACC in run.the
'Somebody participated in the run.'</p> |
| <p>(3) #Rankos buvo nuleistos.
hands.NOM were lowered
Intended: 'Sbdy gave up.'</p> | <p>(4) Prislėgus skoloms, dažnai nuleidžiama rankas
press.down debts, often lowered hands.ACC
'Somebody gave up.'</p> |

Background: Nunberg et al. (1994) distinguish Idiomatic Phrases (IdP) like *kick the bucket* which are interpreted as one piece and Idiomatically Combining Expressions (ICE) like *spill the beans* whose verb and DP subparts appear to map separately to 'reveal' and 'secret', respectively. The former are known to lose their special meaning in the passive #*the bucket was kicked* whereas the latter retain it ✓ *the beans were spilled*. Chomsky (1981:194) suggests that IdP are flagged such that verb-object must be LF-adjacent without developing a full account. IdP are furthermore a problem for phase-cyclic transfer to LF because a chunk larger than a phase is interpreted in one piece.

Phase proliferation and LToI: The hypothesis that fixed agents do not form idioms with verbs with variable objects (Marantz 1984) and the view that *v* is a phase makes it attractive to link the domain of idioms with phases. However, the structure of idioms like *give the devil his due* (Bruening 2010:536) raises questions as ditransitive idioms of this type violate phase locality under any version of phase locality if Appl is phase (Sigurðsson 2012). Furthermore, if D is a phase (Svenonius 2004) as well as the category-defining heads (*v*, *n*, *a*) (Marantz 2001), phase-local idioms are unrealistic even in basic cases like *kick the bucket* because the roots $\sqrt{\text{KICK}}$ and $\sqrt{\text{BUCKET}}$ are clearly non-local. Thus, we suggest LToI, that **Transfer to LF can be delayed to the next higher phase if the structure already built is an exact subpart of an idiom**. Delayed transfer is disallowed if a part of the structure to be shipped to LF is different from the idiom, e.g., an object trace in CaP (1;3).

Evidence for LToI: First, in addition to overt movement in CaP (1;3), the *availability* of movement is (for most speakers) sufficient to revoke the special meaning as shown by indefinite nominative arguments which can stay low in passives.

- (5) #Það var tekinn þáttur í hlaupinu.
there was taken part.NOM in run.the
Intend.: 'Sbdy participated in the run.'

In the presentation, we discuss ways in which movement potential might tamper with the structure for the purpose of blocking LToI, including (i) Case valuation (NOM/ACC), (ii) the PF reflex of Case (morphological form), and (iii) covert LF movement. Regardless of analytical details, the generalization holds. Some speakers get the special meaning in (5) but for them overt movement

counts rather than movement potential. For NIP (2), we assume a ϕ -bundle in Spec,Voice which restricts the agent role without saturating it, explaining NIP's mixing of passive properties (passive participle morphology, *by*-phrases) and active properties (accusative low theme) (Legate 2014). Crucially, Spec,Voice is not empty so 'part' cannot A-move in NIP, hence LToI is permitted and idiomatic interpretation is preserved.

The analysis that loss of idiomatic interpretation depends on movement potential is further supported by passivized verb-PP idioms (6) because A-movement is unavailable out of a PP (here, 'take in the reins' \approx 'put an end to something') and NIP-like ability passives (7) in which the direct object stays a low accusative. These invariably preserve idiomatic interpretation as predicted by our analysis.

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| (6) Það var tekið [pp í taumana].
there was taken [pp in reins.the]
'Somebody put an end to something.' | (7) Það er ekki takandi þátt í því.
there is not takeable part.ACC in it
'It is not possible to participate in it.' |
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Second, consider Lebeaux's (1988) generalization that idioms like *kick the bucket* / #*the bucket was kicked* which lose their special meaning in the passive (IdP) have a fixed determiner (8) but those who preserve it (ICE) like *take advantage of* / ✓ *advantage was taken of John* have a variable determiner slot (9). IdP need LToI because the idiom is larger than a phase and changing the determiner blocks LToI. However, the subparts of ICE are interpreted separately so their special meaning does not depend on LToI; thus their determiner can vary. We show that the generalization carries over to Icelandic and we discuss apparent counterexamples in which a variable quantifier can be used in non-passivizable idioms. We suggest that the exceptionality of those cases involves the fact that the quantifier appears to quantify over events rather than individuals.

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| (8) a. <i>kick the bucket/all the bucket</i> | (9) a. <i>take advantage/some advantage of</i> |
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Third, consider the generalization that language generally lacks idioms where the agent and the verb are fixed but the direct object variable (Marantz 1984, Harley and Stone 2014). This generalization falls naturally out of the LToI analysis because a variable embedded position is not compatible with the requirement that Transfer can only be delayed at a phase which is an exact subpart of an idiom.

Zeroing in on 'exact subparts': The notion 'exact subpart' crucially involves all embedded complements. However, consider some nuances. First, we assume that head movement does not interact with interpretation. Second, variable adjuncts do not block LToI; they might be Late Merged. Finally, the status of specifiers remains to be worked out. Some speakers are reluctant to passivize possessor idioms like *pull someone's leg* which suggests that variable specifiers block LToI, but we will show that a clear generalization is elusive – a puzzle we will discuss in our presentation.

Implications: Our analysis of IdP is compatible with the view that the domain of idioms like *kick the bucket* is *v* (cf. Svenonius 2005), suggesting that *v* in passives is not a phase head (pace Legate 2003), whereas *v* in the active, the NIP and *-ma/-ta* is. Finally, Late Transfer of Idioms is in line with recent developments of phase theory, such as den Dikken 2006, which argue it is necessary in some cases to extend phases: LToI allows idioms larger than a phase and this is empirically motivated. Such size requires that each embedded phase is an exact subpart of an idiom.

Selected references: Bobaljik 2012. Universals in comparative morphology. • Chomsky 2000. Minimalist inquiries • den Dikken 2007. Phase extension • Embick 2010. Localism versus Globalism in M. and P. • Harley & Stone 2014. The 'no agent idioms' hyp. • Lebeaux 1988. Lang. acquisition and the form of the grammar. • Legate 2014. Voice and *v*. • Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir 2002. The 'new impersonal' construction in Icelandic • Marantz 2001. Words. • Marantz 2013. Locality domains for contextual allomorphy across the interfaces • Nunberg et al. 1994. Idioms. • Sigurðsson 2011. On the new passive. • Sigurðsson 2012. Minimalist C/case. • Šeirakeitė 2016. Lithuanian Passive-like Impersonals and Regular Passives. PLC 40 • Svenonius 2004. On the edge • Svenonius 2005. Extending the Extension Condition to Discontinuous Idioms