Phraseology in children's literature: a contrastive analysis

Verkade, S.A.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, the theoretical framework at the base of this dissertation will be outlined. After an overview of contrastive linguistics (§2.1.), we will go into the field of phraseology (§2.2.). In §2.2.3. the criteria generally accepted for phraseological units and their problems will be discussed, and in §2.2.4. we will elaborate on the great inter- and intralingual terminological confusion in the field of phraseology. Next (§2.3.), the field of Translation Studies will be considered, where the concept of equivalence will be highlighted. Lastly, in §2.4. we will seek to place this dissertation on the crossroads of contrastive linguistics, (contrastive) phraseology and Translation Studies, discussing the utility and need of studying phraseology in its co-text and (children's) literature.

2.1. Contrastive linguistics

In his 1941 article *Languages and Logic*, Whorf (1941/2012: 307–308) coins the term "contrastive linguistics", distinguishing the discipline from comparative linguistics:

> Much progress has been made in classifying the languages of earth into genetic families, each having descent from a single precursor, and in tracing such developments through time. The result is called "comparative linguistics." Of even greater importance for the future technology of thought is what might be called "contrastive

> linguistics." This plots the outstanding differences among tongues – in grammar, logic, and general analysis of experience.

Comparative linguistics looks mostly at similarities between languages and seeks to understand how they developed and how they are related to other languages through time. Contrastive linguistics, on the other hand, is mostly interested in differences and does not usually contrast entire language systems but rather small parts of them.

While Whorf might have been the first to adopt the term "contrastive linguistics", the concept of "contrasting" languages goes back considerably longer (Pickbourn 1789/1968: xviii) and is explicitly present in an essay by Wilhelm von Humboldt (1820: 10):

> […] und beide, die Sprache und der Sprachcharakter der Nationen, treten in ein helleres Licht, wenn man die Idee jener in so mannichfaltigen individuellen Formen ausgeführt, diesen zugleich der Allgemeinheit und seinen Nebengattungen gegenüber gestellt erblickt.[4]

Von Humboldt (1820: 1) refers to this future branch of study as "das vergleichende Sprachstudium" ('the comparative study of languages') and divides it into two parts: the study of the organism of languages ("die Untersuchung des Organismus der Sprachen", von Humboldt 1820: 8) and the study of languages in their state of 'formation', i.e. development ("die Untersuchung der Sprachen im Zustande ihrer Ausbildung" *ibid.*)[5].

---

[4] "[…] and both the language and the linguistic character of a nation appear in a clearer light when one sees the idea of language realized in so many individual ways and when one can compare and contrast the linguistic character of one nation with that of others, both in general and individually." English translation in von von Humboldt (1997: 8), ed. by Harden & Farrelly.

[5] Von Humboldt (1820: 8) divides these two research areas "mit Uebersehung der kleinen Unrichtigkeit" that the development of a language influences the already established organism, and may have influenced it before the organism reached that state.

Wenguo & Mun (2007: 24ff) have identified three phases of the development of contrastive linguistics, limited to the West[6] and from scientifically and practically based studies in the nineteenth century onward[7]:

1) 1820s – 1940s: "emergent philosophy on contrast";
2) 1940s – 70s: "riding the waves of transition in theoretical linguistics";
3) since 1980: "towards theory construction in macro perspective".

The first phase is initiated by Wilhelm von Humboldt (1820, 1836) and concludes with the works of Otto Jespersen (1924, 1925) and the above-mentioned Benjamin Lee Whorf (1941)[8]. While von Humboldt approached the discipline from a more theoretical point of view, Jespersen (1924: 346) proposed a "new kind of Comparative Syntax" and applied that contrastive methodology to his own work. In this phase, contrastive linguistics is used as a framework for describing languages and is seen as theoretical or general linguistics (Wenguo & Mun 2007: 36).

In the second phase, the scope of the discipline shifts: as part of applied linguistics, the focus lies on second language education. In fact, in the 1950s the field of contrastive linguistics is dominated by ideas from behaviourism and structuralism. Wenguo & Mun (2007: 34–44) identify this second phase with Charles Fries and Robert Lado. Lado's *Linguistics across cultures* (1957) is often seen to mark the start of modern contrastive linguistics (e.g. James 1980: 8; Rusiecki 1976: 23); even though Wenguo & Mun disagree with this view, they agree it

[6] The authors dedicate separate chapters to the development of the discipline in China, see Wenguo & Mun (2007: 69–163).
[7] Thus excluding earlier examples of contrastive analyses, that, as the authors note, are described in Krzeszowski (1990: 1–3); one of those dating to as early as ca. 1000 AD.
[8] Whorf's contribution to contrastive linguistics goes well beyond his coinage of the name of the discipline. Together with his professor, Edward Sapir, he presumed linguistic relativity (every language has a structure that governs its users, leading to different worldviews) and linguistic determinism (language shapes and hence limits the ideas of its users). The former is considered the weak form (it influences) and the latter the strong form (it determines) of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. See Wenguo & Mun (2007: 29–33) for a more detailed discussion of Whorf's work.

"opens up a new era in the contrastive analysis of languages, setting new goals on new grounds and new rules of games in terms of methodology" (2007: 35; see 2007: 38–39 for contributions Lado made in the field of language teaching). Fries (1945: 9) states that: "[t]he most effective teaching materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner." It was the assumption that comparing a target language with a learner's native language (source language) would favour the learning of that target language, as the differences between the two would pose obstacles. This became known as the "Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis". Scholars assumed that they could predict which parts of the target language would not create difficulties (those similar to the source language), and which parts would lead to errors (those diverging). On the basis of analyses of that kind, teaching materials could be developed.

This assumption proved to be wrong. The claim that language learning errors could be predicted:

> obviously had to be adjusted as the relationship between language structure and learning difficulty became clearer. Not only is there no correlation between degrees of linguistic dissimilarity and mental effort required, but also proficiency can often be affected by mistakes concerning minor differences rather than major ones." (Verspoor & Dirven 2004: 250)

Both Fries and Lado were supporters of what would later be called the "strong version" of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (cf. Wardhaugh 1970). The weak version of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis has linguistic evidence of interference as a starting point and contrasts two language systems only to account for the observed difficulties. It uses contrastive analyses to explain observed phenomena, not to predict them (Wardhaugh 1970: 126–127).

With contrastive linguistics considered a part of applied linguistics, Lado and Fries found a governing theory in structuralism. In the United States, contrastive linguistics lost status while Chomsky's generative transformation grammar (1965) became more and more prominent. Di Pietro (1971) thus took generative linguistics as a guiding principle for his views on contrastive analysis (see Wenguo & Mun 2007: 39–42 for a discussion of Di Pietro 1971).

Albeit second language learning and teaching was the main focus during the second phase of contrastive linguistics, it is necessary to mention a key work on a different topic. *Languages in contact* by Weinreich (1953) is a thorough discussion of bilingualism as the author observed it, stating that "two or more languages will be said to be IN CONTACT [emphasis already present] if they are used alternately by the same persons." (Weinreich 1953/2010: 1; cf. Rusiecki 1976: 20–22).

According to Wenguo & Mun (2007: 44–45) the start of modern contrastive studies is marked by contributions from James (1980); Fisiak (1980, 1981, and later); Hartmann (1980); Snell-Hornby (1983); Krzeszowski (1990); Wierzbicka (1991, for contrastive pragmatics), Connor (1996) and Chesterman (1998). James (1980: 27) made a distinction between microlinguistics and macrolinguistics, and advocated for the latter. The former (*ivi*: 61-97) was typical of the second phase of development in contrastive linguistics, as the goal was to describe languages to serve language teaching and learning. The latter (*ivi*: 98-140), on the other hand, did not only set out to describe linguistic code but also took into consideration the context. The attention thus did no longer lie on the formal system (*langue*, de Saussure 1916; Competence, Chomsky 1965), but rather on the process of communication (communicative competence, Hymes 1972). Macro-analysis for James meant broadening the discipline both vertically (by analysing larger linguistic units, above sentence level, specifically concerning text and discourse analysis) and horizontally (by taking into consideration the extra-linguistic, sociocultural settings).

While the attention is almost exclusively devoted to applied linguistics in the second phase of the development of contrastive linguistics, in the third phase there is a shift to theoretical research (Wenguo & Mun 2007: 45–47). Fisiak (1980: 3–4) stressed the importance of neatly distinguishing between applied and theoretical contrastive linguistics, for progress to be made in the field. Only by releasing contrastive linguistics from the need to serve applied linguistics, and more specifically pedagogic purposes, contrastive linguistics could develop its own theoretical principles (Jackson 1976: 7, cited in Fisiak 1980: 4). While many more efforts are worth mentioning, these two explain the name Wenguo & Mun (2007) have given to the third phase of development of contrastive linguistics: "towards theory construction in macro perspective"[9].

2.2. Phraseology

The term "phraseology" (from Greek φράσις, – εως, 'phrase, expression' and λόγος 'discourse, reason') in linguistics refers to

1) the discipline occupied with the study of non-free word combinations;
2) the object of that discipline, the whole of non-free word combinations in a (specific sub-)language.

Various accounts of (the history of) phraseology exist, both general (e.g. Burger et al. 2007; Granger & Paquot 2008) and within language-specific traditions (e.g. Feyaerts 2007 for Dutch, Nuccorini 2007 for Italian). In the following, we will not try to emulate those overviews but limit ourselves to briefly addressing some key works, concepts and approaches that will help to clarify the position of this research in the branch of phraseology. Subsequently, the criteria

[9] It goes beyond the scope of this dissertation to digress on the developmental phases of contrastive linguistics. Wenguo & Mun (2007: 24–67) give an excellent, in-depth overview – especially of the third phase (*ivi*: 44–67); we kindly refer the reader to their work for more details.

for defining phraseological units and the terminological dispersion that characterises the field will be discussed.

2.2.1. Phraseology as a discipline in linguistic research

Phraseology (in a broad sense) can be split up into two parts:

1) paremiology (from Greek παροιμία 'proverb'), the study of autonomous, fixed expressions, like proverbs;
2) phraseology in a narrow sense, the study of 'smaller' combinations that usually are not autonomous.

Naturally, it is not always easy to make a neat distinction between the two and some overlap will occur[10].

Proverbs have been collected and studied for many centuries (Hrisztova-Gotthardt & Varga 2015: 1), as the publication dates of many collections can show (e.g. Erasmus' *Adagia* first published in 1500). The study of phraseological units is conventionally marked to originate in much more recent times, with the start of modern linguistics (de Saussure 1916: 178; discussion in Koesters Gensini 2020b: 22–24), Charles Bally's (1909) *Traité de stylistique française* functioning as a landmark study. Bally (1909/1921: 66–87) did not only discuss French word combinations but also saw them as a continuum (from occasional to fixed combinations), and distinguished between *unités phraséologiques*, that have a completely fixed form, and *séries phraséologiques*, that maintain some of their autonomy. However, as Autelli (2021) points out, there have been many phraseologist before Bally – "albeit the works were mostly of a practical nature as opposed to theoretical essays" (Autelli 2021: 22–23).

Inspired by Bally, phraseology is developed in the ex-Soviet Union (Vinogradov 1946) and from the 1980s onward extensively in Germany (e.g. Eckert 1979; Fleischer 1982/1997). The interest in phraseological studies has

[10] As Koesters Gensini (2020b: 22) points out, formulas (e.g. "good morning") are autonomous, but are usually studied in narrow phraseology.

increased a lot at the end of the twentieth century; this is also thanks to the existence of many research groups, associations and specific journals, of which Messina Fajardo (2023: 25–26) gives a brief overview. Corpas Pastor (1996) distinguishes three main parts in phraseological research: 1) Eastern European structuralism; 2) Linguistics in the ex-Soviet Union and its contribution to other states from the former eastern block; 3) North American linguistics with Transformational-generative Grammar as a starting point.

Only recently, however, phraseology is widely considered an autonomous discipline and no longer a sub-branch (Messina Fajardo 2023: 36). Not so long ago, Granger & Paquot (2008: 27) stated that:

> […] phraseology has only recently begun to establish itself as a field in its own right. This process is being hindered by two main factors however: the highly variable and wide-ranging scope of the field on the one hand and on the other, the vast and confusing terminology associated with it.

The first problem, that of the object of the field, leads to the second (which we will get back to in §2.2.4.). Granger & Paquot (2008: 28–29), who have both done research on language learners and phraseology in language learning and teaching, discuss two major approaches to phraseology that have different objects of study. The first, the 'phraseological approach' (Nesselhauf 2004), originating from the ex-Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries, has "a view of phraseology that restricts the scope of the field to a specific subset of linguistically defined multiword units and sees phraseology as a continuum along which word combinations are situated, with the most opaque and fixed ones at one end and the most transparent and variable ones at the other." (Granger & Paquot 2008: 28). The second approach originated with Sinclair and uses "a

bottom-up corpus-driven approach to identify lexical co-occurrences" (*ivi*: 29)[11], instead of the traditional top-down approach (identification on the basis of linguistic criteria). This approach is referred to as the 'frequency-based approach' (Nesselhauf 2004) and encompasses many word combinations that previously were considered to lie outside of the field of phraseology. One is thus a narrow conception, while the other is very broad.

The phraseological and frequency-based approaches mentioned above are far from the only approaches to phraseology. There is enormous variation in the field. While some scholars have been occupied with the boundaries of the discipline, others investigate pragmatic-textual aspects, variation of PUs, phraseology in special languages, or semantic-semiotic aspects – for instance by focusing on certain themes, semantic-cognitive aspects, psycholinguistic aspects, or translational aspects and equivalence. Since this dissertation is positioned in the field of contrastive phraseology, we will discuss that approach in a more detailed manner.

2.2.2. Contrastive phraseology

In contrastive phraseology, phraseological units are compared between two or more languages. However, scholars have different views on what "contrastive" should entail exactly. In a broad sense, contrastive and cross-linguistic have the same meaning, and any comparison of phraseology between two or more languages is seen as contrastive phraseology. In a narrow sense, all differences and similarities need to be taken into account. In an even more strict sense, the comparison is to be based on differences only (Colson 2008: 194).

[11] Automatic identification of phraseological units is a trending topic in Natural Language Processing, but, despite rapid developments, still very challenging. Savary et al. (2019) discuss why this is still a difficult task and give an overview of the state of the art in multiword expression (MWE) identification. The authors encourage the research community to prepare syntactic MWE lexicons, in order to enhance the automatic identification of MWEs.

As phraseology developed mostly in Russia and Germany, those languages were among the first to be well described. Later on, English and French were considerably studied, and soon most European languages followed. It became clear that a cross-linguistic comparison between PUs could benefit the theoretical issues of phraseology in general. However, as Čermák (2001) and Dobrovol′skij & Piirainen (2005) have pointed out, many contrastive studies describe and compare phraseology based on examples without considering what it implicates on a theoretical level (Colson 2008: 192–194). In this light, a major contribution to cross-linguistic phraseology has been that of Dobrovol′skij & Piirainen (2005). The authors have analysed conventional figurative units (e.g. idioms and lexicalised metaphors) in eleven languages[12], with the aim of developing a theoretical framework that "makes it possible to analyse different types of conventional figurative expressions from different languages on the basis of consistent parameters and criteria, so that the potential findings will be fundamentally comparable." (2005/2022: V–VI).

Many works sought to find descriptors whereby the phraseological similarities and differences could be described. In other words, the scope was to identify an adequate *tertium comparationis*, that later seems to have been found in the equivalence concept. As Korhonen (2007: 577) states: "Die Ermittlung von Äquivalenztypen stellt einen der am meisten untersuchten Aspekte der kontrastiven Phraseologieforschung der letzten Jahrzehnte dar […]."[13] See §2.3. for a discussion of the equivalence concept in Translation Studies, and Korhonen

[12] Most of these are Germanic language varieties (the standard languages Dutch, English, German, Swedish, and a Low German dialect, *Westmünsterländisch*). Four other Indo-European languages are included (French, Russian, Lithuanian, and Modern Greek), as well as two non-Indo-European languages (Finnish and Japanese). Cf. Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen (2005/2022: 3–5).

[13] "The identification of equivalence types represents one of the most studied aspects of contrastive phraseology of the last decades […]." All translations, unless explicitly mentioned otherwise, are ours.

(2007: 577–584) for a discussion on different equivalence types with regard to phraseology.

2.2.3. Criteria for phraseological units

Back to the first problem according to Granger & Paquot (2008: 27), that of "the highly variable and wide-ranging scope of the field". As discussed above, the two major approaches to phraseology – phraseological and frequency-based – have different views on what the object of the discipline should be and thus propose different criteria that lead to the narrow and the broad perspective. Colson (2008: 193) summarises this in the following way: "Phraseology in the broad sense meets the criteria of 'polylexicality' and 'fixedness', whereas phraseology in the narrow sense requires the additional criterion of 'idiomaticity'." The narrow perspective seems to cut out important, frequent units that should not be overlooked (Granger & Paquot 2008: 45):

> Overemphasis on fixedness and semantic non-compositionality has tended to obscure the role played by a wide range of recurrent and co-occurrent units which are fully regular, both syntactically and semantically, and yet clearly belong to the field of phraseology.

The three central criteria in the debate are:

1) **Polylexicality**, i.e. PUs consist of at least two components. For some scholars, at least one of those elements needs to be autosemantic (e.g. Fleischer 1997: 29), while others (e.g. Gréciano 1997: 169) also allow two synsemantic components, and open the door to compounds (see Bauer 2019; Schulte im Walde & Smolka 2020 on compounds and phraseology; see Mollay 1992 on idiomatic compounds and phraseology in Dutch).
2) **Fixedness**, often referred to as stability, is comprised of various aspects. First, and maybe foremost, it is a syntactic criterion: structural stability

means that PUs often do not allow "modifications", i.e. substitution of components, grammatical manipulations, and syntactic operations, and can present syntactic anomalies (cf. Jaki 2014: 7–9). Other aspects of fixedness are commonness, psycho-linguistic fixedness, and pragmatic fixedness (cf. Burger 1998/2010: 15–29).

3) **Idiomaticity**, which is a semantic criterion and presumes the non-compositionality of PUs, i.e. the sum of the single literal meanings of the components does not equal the overall meaning of the unit. Fully idiomatic PUs are mostly referred to as idioms and are considered by some to be the core of phraseology (e.g. Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen 2005/2022: 31[14]).

Burger (1998/2010), for example, sees idiomaticity as an optional characteristic of PUs, using it to distinguish between phraseology in a broad and a narrow sense, whereas polylexicality and fixedness are obligatory. For Fleischer (1997), on the other hand, only the criterion of polylexicality needs to apply for every PU. However, he indicates three properties that he considers prototypical, but that may be absent: fixedness, idiomaticity, and lexicalisation (cf. Sailer & Markantonatou 2018: v–vi). It should be clear that there are many different views on what exactly constitutes a phraseological unit (see Vrbinc 2019: 12–16 for a discussion of views of various authors).

"All of these criteria are recognised as problematic if applied rigidly" (Buerki 2016: 17). To start from the last criterion discussed: idiomaticity is a gradual concept, and cannot be thought of in binary terms of presence/absence.

[14] Colson (2008: 197) argues that if we were to take the claim that idioms are the core of phraseology as true, only the cognitive or semantic aspect of language would be taken into account. In comparison to other types of PUs, idioms have a very low frequency; from a statistical point of view, idioms should rather be considered a marginal category. So if idioms were to be "the central and most important class of phrasemes" (Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen 2005/2022: 51), phraseology in general should be considered as marginal. According to Colson (*ibid.*), contrastive studies show that phraseology is a major aspect of all languages.

Jaki (2014: 10) gives the example of *to rain cats and dogs*, where the element *cats and dogs* has an idiomatic meaning, but *rain* is meant literally. But also compositional, non-idiomatic word combinations, like *to make/take a decision*, *to run away*, *on board* (of a ship), and *salt and pepper* (in the acceptation of seasoning and spice), should be – and in this dissertation will be – considered phraseological units. A rigid application of the criterion of fixedness also poses problems, since many PUs do allow some type of variation (e.g. *to make an important decision*). Some of those variations eventually become conventionalised, while other remain creative expressions to achieve a particular effect (Jaki 2014: 9; Vrbinc 2019: 12–13). Maybe the most problematic of all criteria is that of polylexicality if intended in its more rigid conception (autosemantic elements). Basing the inclusion in a phraseological inventory on the fact if something is written as one or two words, has profound theoretical limits. In fact, orthographic rules change with time[15] and some words have spelling variants consisting in one or two words, for instance *half uur* vs. *halfuur*, *rode kool* vs. *rodekool*, *volle maan* vs. *vollemaan* (*Rode Kool / Rodekool* 2011/2021). In these cases only the first option would be considered a PU, whereas the second variant would be ignored. Likewise, some languages tend to create compounds, while others do not, which would lead to the inclusion of an 'equivalent' PU in one phraseological inventory, but not in the other (e.g. English *telecommunications network* vs. Dutch *telecommunicatienetwerk* vs. Italian *rete di telecomunicazioni*). For this reason, some scholars have suggested the category of *Einwortphraseologismen*, "one-word phraseological units" (cf. Duhme 1995). Koesters Gensini (2020b: 19) points out another reason why the polylexicality criterion, especially when implemented in an orthographic way, is unnatural:

[15] According to Dutch law, the government and government-funded educational institutions are obliged to follow the spelling as decided upon by a committee of the *Nederlandse Taalunie*. A similar law exists in the Flanders, where the same orthographic rules apply. Two appendices to these laws contain the rules and a list of words. De *Woordenlijst Nederlandse Taal* is updated periodically and freely available to users on Woordenlijst.org, but can also be bought in a printed version, conventionally referred to as '*het Groene Boekje*'.

> Si tratta infatti di una nozione che non ha un corrispondente naturale nelle lingue storico-naturali, che com'è ovvio sono primariamente parlate (cfr. De Mauro 2002). Anche mettendo da parte il fatto, teoricamente rilevante, che solo circa un terzo delle lingue attualmente parlate dispone di una forma scritta, è ben noto che un insieme di parole grafiche dalla stessa struttura lessicale in una lingua o in un determinato stato di lingua può corrispondere a un'unica parola grafica in un'altra lingua o in un altro stato diacronico della stessa lingua.[16]

KEY POINTS FOR THIS RESEARCH

We have discussed numerous points of view in this paragraph. In this dissertation the conviction is followed that phraseological units have a far from discrete, but rather gradual and heterogeneous character and that, rigidly applied, the conventional criteria are very much problematic. Phraseological units are non-free combinations of two (or more) constituents.

The criteria applied in this dissertation and our classification of phraseological units are discussed in §4.2.2.

[16] "It is, in fact, a notion that does not have a natural correspondent in the natural languages, which are obviously primarily spoken (cf. De Mauro 2002). Even putting aside the theoretically relevant fact that only about a third of the currently spoken languages has a written form, it is well known that a group of graphic words of the same lexical structure in one language or in a determinate state of a language can correspond to a single graphic word in another language or in another diachronic state of the same language."

2.2.4. Terminology and classification

A vast terminology for phraseological units and subtypes is in use, which reflect different views on phraseology in general – but often scholars do not specify on which criteria their identification and classification is based, contributing to confusion and terminological dispersion, and hindering advances outside of the specific phraseological framework implemented (cf. Gries 2008).

> The unwieldy terminology used to refer to the different types of multi-word units is a direct reflection of the wide range of theoretical frameworks and fields in which phraseological studies are conducted and can be seen as a sign of the vitality of the field. (Granger & Paquot 2008: 45)

The terminology used to describe the general concept of PUs, often contains a reference to a criterion that identifies them. According to Messina Fajardo (2023: 37–38) in Italian a range of terms is in use (also cf. Quiroga 2006: 41–42): *fraseologismo*, *frasema*, *(espressione) polirematica* (cf. e.g. De Mauro 1999: VIII, 2002; Koesters Gensini 2020a, 2020b), *unità polirematica*, *lessema polirematico* or *lessema complesso* (cf. De Mauro & Voghera 1996), *lessicalizzazione complessa*, *unità lessicale superiore*, *sintagma lessicalizzato*, *solidarietà lessicale*, *espressione idiomatica*[17], *multi parole*, *locuzione* (cf. Della Valle 2005: 91), *locuzione plurilessicale*. Some terms mostly focus on the semantic aspect (e.g. *espressione idiomatica*), while others highlight polylexicality – either in a rigid or a more loose conception – (e.g. *polirematica*, *espressione polirematica*, *unità polirematica*, *lessema polirematico*) or on the process and not on the final product (e.g. *lessicalizzazione complessa*). The fixedness of PUs is also brought to attention, with terms like the Spanish *expresión fija* (cf. Zuluaga

[17] Interestingly, in his Italian handbook on linguistics, Simone (1990: 514–515) uses "idioms" (in English) to refer to a variety of non fully compositional expressions, including occasional and momentaneous expressions.

1980) or the French *expression figée* (cf. Gross 1996). In Dutch literature on phraseology the terms *vaste (woord)verbinding* (focus on conventionality; cf. e.g. van Sterkenburg 1987; Kowalska-Szubert 1996; Verstraten 1992), *fraseologisme* (cf. e.g. van Sterkenburg 1987; Verstraten 1992; Pręd ota 1997; Földešiová 2017) and *fraseologische eenheid* (cf. e.g. Földešiová 2017) are in use. Very common terms used in English literature on the subject, are *multiword expression* (MWE) and *multiword unit* (MWU) (cf. e.g. N. H. W. Grégoire 2009, 2010; Baldwin & Kim 2010; Yuldashev et al. 2013; Hüning & Schlücker 2015; Sailer & Markantonatou 2018), thus focussing on the polylexicality criterion. The term *phraseme*, however, seems to have gained the preference in the last years (cf. Burger et al. 2007: 11-12).

In this dissertation, we have decided to use the term *phraseological unit*, as it does not privilege a specific aspect or criterion and can function as a hypernym or archlexeme, that includes all other terms that aim to classify or highlight different aspects of phraseology (e.g. idiom, collocation, etc.). It is also a term that works in different languages: *fraseologische eenheid* (nl.), *unità fraseologica* (it.), *unidad fraseológica* (es.), *phraseologische Einheit* (de.), et cetera.

Now that we have settled on a term to refer to our object of study, we are left with phraseological units that differ greatly between each other. It is necessary to create some structure by the means of a classification. Many taxonomies have been proposed, but different scopes may require a different point of view, hence not all are suitable for each research project. Jaki (2014: 12–16) gives an overview of different phraseological types, while Fleischer (1997: 111–123) and Granger & Paquot (2008) discuss different taxonomies.

The classification of phraseological units in this research is quite elaborate, in order to analyse all PUs as precisely as possible. In stead of having one classification that tries to embody various levels of analysis, these levels are separated. The most important distinction to be made is between semantic (see §4.2.2.1.) and (morpho)syntactic levels (see §4.2.2.3.). The semantic analysis level can be seen as a scale from fully non-compositional to compositional PUs (from

idioms to collocations to "other", compositional phraseological units). The (morpho)syntactic analysis focusses on the internal structure of phraseological units (for example irreversible binomials, light verb constructions, compounds, et cetera), without taking the various levels of non-compositionality into account. The classification implemented in this dissertation is thoroughly discussed in Chapter 4 (*Methodology*).

2.3. Translation Studies

Translation Studies (TS) is the field of study occupied with both translating and translations, application and theory. Even though the practice of translation is a very ancient one, the academic study of it is quite recent (see Gentzler 2014 for an overview the various stages of translation studies): only in the 1970s and 1980s the discipline began to emerge in multiple regions. Translation Studies is said to be founded in Belgium and the Netherlands in the early 1970s, having come forth out of comparative literature studies (Gentzler 2014: 14–17). The University of Leuven was an important centre, hosting the now historic 1976 colloquium "Literature and Translation". The proceedings gather the papers of many pioneers of the discipline, among whom James Holmes, José Lambert, Raymond van den Broeck, Susan Bassnett, Itamar Even-Zohar, André Lefevere and Gideon Toury (Holmes et al. 1978). James Holmes' 1972 paper *The Name and Nature of Translations Studies* is often seen as the foundational statement of Translation Studies (Bermann & Porter 2014: 2; Gentzler 2001: 93; Munday 2016: 16; Schippel & Zwischenberger 2017: 10; Snell-Hornby 2006: 3; cf. D'hulst 2022: 5). He described three impediments to the development of "the field of research focusing on the problems of translating and translations" (Holmes 1972/1988: 68), the first being the lack of appropriate channels of communication, as the research outputs were dispersed in publications on other, established disciplines. Holmes (1972/1988: 68) thus stressed "the need for other communication channels, cutting across the

traditional disciplines to reach all scholars working in the field, from whatever background."[18]

The second impediment is the confusion caused by the lack of a generally accepted name for the field of study as a whole. Discussing why other terms (e.g. "translatology", cf. Goffin 1971: 58–59; "translation theory"; "science of translating", cf. Nida 2003; Nida & Taber 2003) would not be appropriate or could lead to misunderstandings, the author proposes "translation studies" (Holmes 1972/1988: 68–70). Translation Studies seems to have taken over since, and is even starting to come up in Italian studies in stead of the term *traduttologia*. In Dutch studies, *vertaalwetenschap* still appears to be the most common term. In the United States there seems to be a preference for the term "translation and interpreting studies", hence distinguishing between simultaneous or consecutive interpretation, and (mostly) written translating and translation, whereas in other traditions those are both included under the hypernym "Translation Studies" (Figure 1).

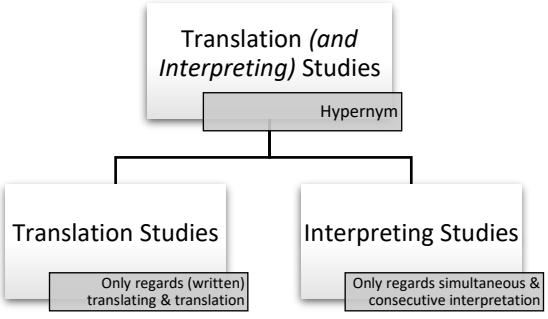

Figure 1 Translation and Interpreting Studies

In this dissertation we use "Translation Studies" in its hypernymic sense, thus hypothetically including interpretation. However, due to the nature of this research, in practice it will refer to translating and translation only.

According to Holmes (1972/1988: 71), the third impediment to the development of TS is "the lack of any general consensus as to the scope and

[18] This impediment has since been resolved, as results clearly from the many publications (papers, books, handbooks, journals), conferences and organisations regarding TS. See Munday (2016: 11–13) for an overview.

structure of the discipline." And that is precisely what Holmes aims to reach with his paper, by outlining the general framework and major objectives of TS. In the remainder of his paper (*ivi*: 71–78), the author describes what the discipline comprises, and divides it into different parts. The first distinction is made between applied and "pure" TS, the latter split up in two branches (descriptive TS and theoretical TS), with two main objectives (*ivi*: 71):

1) "to describe the phenomena of translating and translation(s) as they manifest themselves in the world of our experience"
2) "to establish general principles by means of which these phenomena can be explained and predicted."

Holmes proceeds to describe the areas of research within those two branches, descriptive and theoretical TS, and then briefly returns to the branch "of use" to identify four of its areas (translator training, translation aids, translation policy, and translation criticism). Holmes stresses, however, that these branches, while presented as fairly distinct, all influence each other: description is necessary to be able to build a theory based on data, both descriptive and theoretical TS are the base for applied TS, and, in general, all three branches provide and use findings to and of the other two.

Toury (1995: 10) presented Holmes' framework as a 'map'; while on the one hand this has a clarifying function, on the other hand the divisions between different areas may seem too neat – after all, Holmes stressed the mutual influence between branches (and areas). It should not come as a surprise that the framework and the map have been thoroughly discussed and criticized, and, as time has passed and the field of study has developed, adjustments, additions and modifications have been proposed (among many, Chesterman 2017; Lambert 1991; Pym 1998/2014; Snell-Hornby 1991; Toury 1991, 1995; van Doorslaer 2007).

Naturally, translation is not new, and neither are thoughts or comments on translation (e.g. Cicero, Horace, Jerome, Zhi Qian; see Venuti (2021: 13–23)

for an overview from antiquity to the late nineteenth century). For example, German writers in the eighteenth century (e.g. Schleiermacher 1813/2011; von Humboldt 1816/1909) viewed translating as a practice to improve the German language and literature and ideally to overcome the cultural and political dominance of France (Venuti 2021: 20–22). Grammar-translation (cf. Cook 2010: 9–15) – a language learning method that became dominant between the late eighteenth century and the 1960s, based upon the translation of mostly artificially constructed sentences to practice the grammar and structure of foreign languages – might have been one of the reasons as to why academia did not consider translation as a primary subject: translation was often perceived as just a means to acquire the ability to read the original (Munday 2016: 13–14). Contrastive linguistics, however, embraced translation as a part of research, as data was often provided through translations and translated examples (e.g. Vinay & Darbelnet 1958; Nida 2003; Di Pietro 1971; James 1980).

Since Holmes' map of the discipline, many areas of it have been explored and many theories and concepts have been formulated. It goes beyond the purpose of this dissertation to revisit them all, hence the reader is referred to overviews in Malmkjær 2013, 2018; Munday 2016: 113–140. See Reiß & Vermeer (1984) on Skopos Theory; the works of Even Zohar, and Toury, on polysystem theory; Bassnett & Lefevere (1990) on the concept of cultural turn. Gambier & Van Doorslaer try to reflect these developments by organising the discipline in a conceptual map that underlies their online "Translation Studies Bibliography" (Gambier & van Doorslaer 2004-2023) with keywords and their occurrence, frequency and interrelationship as a starting point (van Doorslaer 2007: 222). The basic map splits up in 'translation' (i.e. the act of translation) and 'translation studies' (the meta approach)[19], reflecting the special relationship between the two

[19] The term 'translation' includes interpreting, so the two branches are subsequently split up into 'translation' and 'interpreting' on the one hand, and 'translation studies' and 'interpreting studies' on the other.

with a dotted line, indicating "a sort of complementariness, possibly internecessity, but no hierarchy, no inclusion" (*ibid.*). 'Translation' is further distinguished into 'lingual mode', 'typology based on media', 'modes of translation' and 'fields of translation'. Those are then split up in a more detailed way, e.g. 'modes of translation' contains '(c)overt translation', '(in)direct translation', 'retranslation', etc. (*ivi*: 223–224). 'Translation studies' contains 'approaches', 'theories', 'research methods', 'applied translation studies' – all of them with several subdivisions, that could contain other divisions as well (*ivi*: 228–231). An interesting innovation is that besides the map that divides 'translation' and 'translation studies', a 'transfer map' is proposed, "where all aspects concerning the concrete transfer from source language/text/culture to target language/text/culture occur: strategies, procedures, norms or translation tools, but also contextual or situational aspects to be taken into account." (*ivi*: 226)[20].

It goes well beyond the scope of this dissertation to further discuss the many aspects of Translation Studies and the theories, concepts and turns that have emerged. One element, however, needs to be discussed more thoroughly: the concept of equivalence[21]. Equivalence "is a variable notion of how the translation is connected to the source text" (Venuti 2021: 5). In the second half of the twentieth century, the main theories of equivalence developed as a reaction to inadequate linguistic theories (Pym 2007: 274–275). Inspired by de Saussure (1916) who explained "how languages form systems that are meaningful only in terms of the differences between the terms", structuralists assumed that every language shapes its users views of the world[22]. Since languages divide the world

[20] Within the transfer map, a part concerns the institutional environment, that is also specified within the normal map, as a part of 'applied translation studies' (translation studies > applied translation studies > institutional environment). Van Doorslaer (2007: 228) uses this example to show that both terms and maps are not mutually exclusive.
[21] Also see Kenny (2009) for an overview of the concept of equivalence.
[22] Cf. §2.1 n. 8 on Sapir and Whorf.

differently[23], outside of their own system no words should be completely translatable and thus translation should not be possible. The concept of equivalence was developed to try to explain what those linguistic theories could not explain (Pym 2007: 275).

As conveying the meaning of a word in another language was deemed impossible, it was necessary to take a closer look at what "meaning" actually entails. Saussure made a distinction between *valeur* and *signification*, the former being in relation to the language system (*langue*), the latter depending on the actual use (*parole*)[24]. If translation cannot convey value, equivalence of signification might be in reach.

Koller (1979: 176–191) thus examines the concepts of *Äquivalenz* and *Korrespondenz*. The latter, correspondence, is closer to the field of contrastive linguistics and refers to the *langue*, describing differences and similarities in language systems[25]. The former, equivalence, operates within Saussure's *parole*, and therefore relates to equivalent elements in specific language pairs and contexts.

Jakobson (1959/2021: 157–159) retains that everything is translatable in any language[26], as "[l]anguages differ essentially in what they *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey" and distinguishes three kinds of translating: intralingual translation (into other signs of the same language), interlingual translation (into another language) and intersemiotic translation (into a different sign system). According to Jakobson (*ivi*: 157), in interlingual translation, "there is ordinarily

[23] See Saussure's (1916: 166) famous example of *sheep* – *mutton* in English and *mouton* in French; or *bosco* – *legna* – *legno* in Italian, opposed to *Wald* – *Holz* in German and *bois* in French.
[24] Like the distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, cf. Coseriu 1978/1988.
[25] For instance the identification of false friends: e.g. German *aktuel* means 'current' not the English 'actual' Munday (2016: 74–75).
[26] Except for poetry, that "by definition is untranslatable" – "[o]nly creative transposition is possible", either intralingual, interlingual, or intersemiotic (Jakobson 1959/2021: 160).

no full equivalence between code-units, while messages may serve as adequate interpretations of alien code-units or messages".

The views on translatability and equivalence vary from one end of the spectrum to the other, connected to two of the major schools of thought in Translation Studies. In the linguistically-oriented approach, equivalence is a crucial concept. As Catford (1965/1974: 21) puts it: "The central problem of translation practice is that of finding TL [target language] translation equivalents. A central task of translation theory is that of defining the nature and conditions of translation equivalence." One of the aspects linguistically-oriented researchers addressed, was that of the unit of equivalence[27]. While some looked at equivalence on word-level (e.g. Kade 1968), others (e.g. Reiß 1976) stressed relationships on text-level. Since texts have many linguistic layers, Catford (1965/1974: 24–26, 75–76) pointed out that equivalence might not always be achieved on all these layers at once, but may be established at lower ranks if sentence-sentence equivalence is not in reach. This clearly reflects in Skopos Theory and the difference between source text oriented and target text oriented translation.

Nida (1964; Nida & Taber 2003) also moved away from a strict word-for-word equivalence and stressed the importance of meaning in its context (1964: 33ff; cf. Munday 2016: 65–66). He focused on the aspect of the nature of equivalence types, proposing two orientations:

1) towards the source text structure, called "formal equivalence";
2) towards the receptor, called "dynamic equivalence".

In the former, the target text (TT) is very similar to the source text (ST) both in form and in content, while in the latter the focus is on conveying the message of the source text to the target text as naturally as possible ("naturalness of expression", Nida 1964/2003: 159). The 'foreignness' of the source text

[27] See Sorvali (2004) for a comprehensive discussion on the unit of translation.

should hence be minimized in the target text[28] and meaning must take precedence over style if the equivalent effect (or response) is to be achieved (Nida 1964/2003: 164–168).

Much like the concept of equivalence itself, Nida's principle of equivalent effect was heavily criticised (cf. Munday 2016: 69–71), some scholars claiming it to be impossible to achieve (e.g. van den Broeck 1978: 40; Larose 1989: 78)[29]. Even in the Nineties, *Meta* published a series of five papers by Qian Hu (1992a, 1992b, 1993a, 1993b, 1994) regarding "the implausibility of equivalent response". Much criticism was also directed at the subjectivity of the equivalence response: "The whole question of equivalence inevitably entails subjective judgement from the translator or analyst." (Munday 2016: 69). Despite the debate, Nida had a substantial impact on scholars, among whom Newmark[30], Koller and De Mauro.

In an attempt to describe what elements of a source text and a target text might be equivalent, Koller (1979, 1989, 1992, 1995, and more) gives a different perspective on the equivalence relationship, assuming that translations are characterised by a double linkage: on the one hand to the source text and on the other to the communicative conditions on the receiver's side (Koller 1995: 197). The equivalence relation, through the differentiation of this double linkage, is defined by distinguishing between equivalence frameworks. Koller (1979: 186–191, and in more detail 1992: 228–266) describes five of those frameworks:

a) Denotative equivalence (regarding the extralinguistic content of a text, also referred to as content invariance);

---

[28] Later on, this particular point was heavily criticised by culturally-oriented translation theorists like Venuti (1995/2017).

[29] The difficulty or impossibility to achieve equivalence, or a translation without some form of manipulation by the translator, is contained in the often quoted Italian adage *traduttore, traditore*.

[30] See Newmark (1981) for his take on Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence, or in his terms "semantic translation" and "communicative translation".

b) Connotative equivalence (regarding lexical choices, especially between near-synonyms, also referred to as stylistic equivalence);
c) Text-normative equivalence (regarding text types and their specific characteristics, also referred to as stylistic equivalence);
d) Pragmatic equivalence (oriented towards the receiver, also referred to as communicative equivalence, or Nida's dynamic equivalence);
e) Formal equivalence (regarding the form and aesthetics of a text and individual stylistic features, also referred to as expressive equivalence, but different from Nida's formal equivalence).

In the initial stage of the research project in which the CREAMY-platform (used for the empirical part of this dissertation) was developed, an attempt was made to measure equivalence using different types, including Koller's. This did not prove convincing, because of the cultural aspects that are intertwined with linguistic meanings[31] (see Koesters Gensini 2020b: 33–36 on the evolution of the concept of equivalence in CREAMY).

Koller (1995: 196–197) also discusses the conditions and factors that contribute to determine the equivalence relation between source text and target text:

> Equivalence is a relative concept in several respects: it is determined on the one hand by the historical-cultural conditions under which texts (original as much as secondary ones) are produced and received in the target culture, and on the other by a range of sometimes contradictory and scarcely reconcilable linguistic-textual and extra-linguistic factors and conditions:
>
> – the source and the target languages with their structural properties, possibilities and constraints,

[31] In fact, as Baker (2011: 5) states: equivalence "is influenced by a variety of linguistic and cultural factors and is therefore always relative".

- the "world", as it is variously classified in the individual languages,
- different realities as these are represented in ways peculiar to their respective languages,
- the source text with its linguistic, stylistic and aesthetic properties in the context of the linguistic, stylistic and aesthetic norms of the source language,
- linguistic, stylistic and aesthetic norms of the target language and of the translator,
- structural features and qualities of a text,
- preconditions for comprehension on the part of the target-language reader,
- the translator's creative inclinations and understanding of the work,
- the translator's explicit and/or implicit theory of translation,
- translation tradition,
- translation principles and the interpretation of the original text by its own author,
- the client's guidelines and the declared purpose of the translation,
- the practical conditions under which the translator chooses or is obliged to work.

However, as Koesters Gensini (2020b: 34) points out, it is surprising that Koller does not refer to the familiarity of the translator with both languages (and cultures) implicated in the translational process, to the (lexicographic) instruments available for those languages and, in the case of literary translations, to the figure and the work of the author of the source text.

Another scholar inspired by Nida is Tullio De Mauro. In a discussion on the general problem of linguistic comprehension, De Mauro (1994: 91–95) as

well distinguishes between "functional" or "formal" translations on the one hand, and "dynamic" translations on the other. De Mauro then goes on to distinguish seven levels of translational adequacy in which each level comprises the precedent level:

a) denotative adequacy;
b) syntactic-phrasal adequacy;
c) lexical adequacy;
d) expressive adequacy;
e) textual adequacy;
f) pragmatic adequacy;
g) semiotic adequacy.

The first three (a-c) subdivide the functional/formal type of translation, the last four (d-g) refer to the dynamic type. Koesters Gensini (2020b: 35–36) considers these parameters promising for the measurement of the type and grade of equivalence as implemented in the CREAMY-research.

Nevertheless, the linguistic approach on translation and equivalence received a great deal of criticism. Researchers with a historical-descriptive approach retain that the concept of equivalence does not work. Halverson (1997: 214) describes the criticism as follows:

> Snell-Hornby (1988: 22) rejects the concept as "imprecise and ill-defined", as well as a "distort[ion] of the basic problems of translation". The former argument addresses the nature of the concept and its status in research, while the latter, that the concept fails to account for the "basic problems of translation", is clearly the motivation behind the rejection of the concept by the scholars of the contending approach to translation studies, who maintain that the most important translational phenomena are those which cannot be accounted for within a strictly linguistic approach. They have chosen,

> instead, to focus on features of the target culture and the effects these features have on the translation process and/or product.

The focus of historical-descriptive scholars is on the target text, thus minimizing the role of the source text and its relationship with the translation. A second focus lies on the norms that govern the act of translating, and the situational or cultural features that could account for those regularities (Halverson 1997: 215–216). Some studies aim to describe which factors influenced the creation of existing translations using the framework of Polysystem Theory (see Even-Zohar 1979; Toury 1980, 1995). For Toury (1980) equivalence is by default present in all translations, even if they are of low quality. As Pym (1995: 159) notes, if equivalence is in fact present in all translations, it entails that the concept cannot be used prescriptively – hence making it useless for linguists of the time. Others looked into the *skopos*, the aim or goal of the translation (Skopos Theory, see e.g. Vermeer 1978, 1989, 1996, 1998; Reiß & Vermeer 1984). In this target-side functionalism, equivalence is not a central concept either as it is seen as one of the many scopes a translator could aim to achieve (Pym 1995: 159).

As the amount of criticism grew, the scientific status of equivalence shrank. However, a lot of the concept's fall out of grace might depend on an erroneous conception of it. Neubert (1994: 414) states that "[t]he narrow and hence mistaken interpretation of translational equivalence in terms of linguistic correspondence is in our opinion one of the main reasons that the very concept of equivalence has fallen into disrepute among many translation scholars." As Pym (1995: 163–164) points out, Snell-Hornby (1988) refers to equivalence as an "illusion of symmetry between languages" – but linguists working on the concept do not seem to have presupposed such symmetry. Even more so, Nida's dynamic equivalence presupposes linguistic asymmetry, and Koller focusses on the level of *parole*.

The problem, according to Pym (1995: 165–166), does not lie in seeing equivalence as an illusion. In fact, one should strive to "objectify the subjective importance of equivalence as a concept." For some scholars (Gutt 1991: 186; Neubert 1994: 413–414; Pym 1992, 1993 – all cited in Pym 1995: 166) equivalence is a social concept (and hence not associated to prescriptive linguistics), that works on a presumption of resemblance.

> Despite apparent regression to the 1970s paradigm, these recent positions are in fact exploiting the gap between translation as a social practice (equivalence as a necessary and functional illusion) and translation as actualization of prior correspondences (equivalence as something that linguists might hope to analyze on the basis of language alone). (Pym 1995: 166–167)

Pym (2010/2014: 37) himself follows the concept of assumed equivalence and labels it as "a belief structure", that can be established on any linguistic level from form to function (*ivi*: 6). He proposes a distinction between "natural equivalence" and "directional equivalence", where the former is presumed to exist prior to the act of translating and is not affected by directionality (cf. Pym 2010/2014: 6–23). The latter gives the translator the choice between various translation solutions, that are not necessarily determined by the source text. It is, however, an asymmetric relation: the creation of an equivalent by translating from one language to the other, does not imply that the same equivalent is created when the languages are swapped, i.e. the target language becomes the source language) (cf. Pym 2010/2014: 24–42). With this model, Pym tried to take into consideration the critiques both approaches received.

Equivalence is not a concept of the past, and continues to be implemented in research – also on phraseological units (e.g. Korhonen 2004, 2007; Koesters Gensini & Berardini 2020). Ďurčo (2016), for instance, proposes

a very complex, contrastive model of equivalence, specifically for the examination of phrasemes. Koesters Gensini (2020b: 35) considers equivalence to still be a necessary parameter – but most certainly not the only one – to analyse translations, even more so if literary translations. On the question of what element a translator needs to find an equivalent for, Koesters Gensini (*ibid.*) points out that it is necessary to:

> […] distinguere tra il punto di vista del lettore della traduzione e quello di chi si occupa della traduzione con finalità di analisi teorico-linguistiche. Per il primo certamente conta il testo nella sua interezza, indipendentemente dal fatto che si tratti della lingua originale o di una sua traduzione. Per il secondo, invece, la scomposizione del testo tradotto in categorie minori sembra un processo indispensabile e anche legittimo per quanto riguarda l'analisi. Va da sé che poi i dati provenienti dallo studio di unità minori di quelle del testo vadano a confluire nel processo interpretativo globale, senza trascurare il fatto che in ogni testo le unità più piccole non si combinano in modo aritmetico, ma piuttosto interagiscono influenzandosi e condizionandosi reciprocamente.[32]

Hence Koesters Gensini hypothesizes that phraseological units embedded in their co-text form a translational unit that can be analysed autonomously and that contributes to the type and grade of equivalence of the translation as a whole.

---

[32] "[…] distinguish between the reader's point of view of the translation and the point of view of who deals with the translation for the purpose of theoretical-linguistic analyses. For the former, certainly the text in its entirety counts, regardless of whether it is the original language or its translation. For the second, however, the breakdown of the translated text into smaller categories seems an indispensable and also legitimate process with regard to analysis. It goes without saying that the data from the study of smaller units than the text itself merge into the overall interpretative process, without neglecting the fact that in every text the smaller units do not combine in an arithmetic way, but rather interact by influencing and conditioning one another."

KEY POINTS FOR THIS RESEARCH

In this dissertation equivalence is considered to be a necessary and very helpful concept for the analysis of phraseological units – even more so in light of the difficult relationship between source and target text in Children's Literature (see §3.2. and §3.3.). Equivalence will hence be used as a parameter in the empirical part of this dissertation, and never as a judgement on the quality of the translation in analysis. The concept is one of many parameters; the analysis is not solely based on equivalence. Given the issues regarding the translation of Children's Literature (discussed later on, in §3.2. and §3.3.), it is even more important to be aware of extratextual influences, like the norms and values of the target culture.

In this dissertation (and all research carried out within the CREAMY framework) equivalence will be measured on two levels (formal and semantic, i.e. signifier and signified) and in four grades (absent, low, high, total). See §4.2.2.9. for a more detailed account of how we implement and measure translational equivalence in our research.

2.4. The crossroads of contrastive linguistics, phraseology, and Translation Studies

The topic of this dissertation is situated at the crossroads of contrastive linguistics, (contrastive) phraseology and Translation Studies (Figure 2). In the following, we will highlight the motivation of this research: why have we chosen this approach? What have we taken from contrastive linguistics, phraseology and

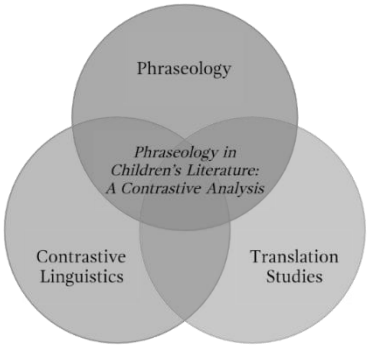

Figure 2 Crossroads of disciplines

Translation Studies? Why do we set out to compare the phraseology of Dutch and Italian in Children's Literature (CL)?

Studying phraseological units contrastively from a Translation Studies point of view, seems promising. By comparing a source text with a target text, it is not only possible to identify the similarities and differences in the single phraseological inventories of the languages involved, but also the semantic, syntactic, lexical and pragmatic connotations that often constrain professional translators – especially in the field of literary translation – to rewrite and manipulate the source text in order to convey the precise denotative and connotative characteristics to the target text. It proves a considerably complex task, which might be one of the reasons why research on the interaction of phraseology and Translation Studies is still relatively new.

To mention just a handful of valuable, and very diverse contributions: Gläser (1984, 1999) takes a more descriptive route. In her 1984 paper she analyses phraseological units in English and German by comparing their differences and similarities on semantic level within their respective linguistic systems, and their form and function in samples of an English and a German novel and their respective translations. In the 1999 paper – contained in a volume edited by Sabban (1999) that bundles multiple valuable contributions given at a 1997 conference on phraseology and translation – Gläser compares phraseological units contained in two German works by Christa Wolf with their English and French translations, dividing them into different types. Poirier (2003) focusses on the theoretical side of phraseological translation, discussing the both arbitrary and (in two ways) conventional translation of phraseological units, and the consequences that should have in language teaching and translation theory. The author retains that equivalence and correspondence should be seen as complementary rather than conflicting. Sabban (2010) discusses the discrepancies between translations of idioms in dictionaries and in text, and highlights the importance of context for the meaning variation of idioms.

Naciscione (2011) retains that most phraseological units are metaphorical, and that wherever possible the metaphor should be preserved in the target language. The author vouches for a cognitive approach not only as a tool to recognise and understand the construction of figurative meanings in different languages, but also to translate metaphorical PUs.

A contrastive approach to phraseological units is not only beneficial in an interlinguistic manner, but can also prove fruitful from an intralinguistic point of view, as accurate and adequate descriptions of the single languages are needed to make a comparison – and those descriptions might not always be at hand (Koesters Gensini 2020b: 29–30).

According to Koesters Gensini (2020b: 30–31) contrastive linguistics often referred (and refers) to the level of *langue*, thus neglecting what language users effectively do with (elements of) a language. Coseriu (1952) already stressed the importance of studying and teaching not only what is potentially possible to say in a language (the level of *langue*), but also what is actually said in specific contexts and co-text. This is not the level of *parole*, i.e. the concrete and individual use of language, but an intermediate level he refers to as "norm", i.e. what language users are willing to consider as "normal":

> Die Sprachsysteme werden nämlich nicht unmittelbar, sondern stets über die Ebene der Sprachnorm realisiert, wodurch allerlei Einschränkungen und Fixierungen eintreten. […] Es genügt also nicht zu wissen, was man in einer Sprache sagen könnte, man muss auch wissen, was normalerweise in bestimmten Situationen gesagt wird. Mit anderen Worten: um das in einer Sprache Mögliche zu schaffen und zu verstehen, muss man das entsprechende Sprachsystem kennen; um eine Sprache wirklich wie die Einheimischen zu sprechen, muss man auch die entsprechende

> Sprachnorm bzw. die entsprechenden Sprachnormen kennen.[33] (Coseriu 1970: 27–28)

The author insists on the importance of describing and analysing linguistic units embedded in their pragmatic context, and argues that approaches aiming to do so *in abstracto* encounter significant theoretical limits (cf. Koesters Gensini 2020b: 31). Although more and more studies take linguistic use into consideration, many maintain an abstract approach; some exceptions in the field of phraseology can be found in Finkbeiner (2011); Koesters Gensini (2014); Koesters Gensini & Berardini (2020); Koesters Gensini & Schafroth (2020); Richter-Vapaatalo (2008, 2010); Rovere (2003). Studying PUs in their pragmatic context, in our case specifically their co-text, assures the possibility to go beyond denotative meaning and consider what Gréciano (1994) has named *Phraseoaktivität*: all expressive force of a phraseological unit that exceeds the denotative dimension. Koesters Gensini (2020b: 26–27) clearly sums up what the semantic value of a PU consists in:

> In chiave linguistica, il preciso valore significazionale risulta quindi anche dalle connotazioni che la locuzione assume nella comunità linguistica, dalla sua collocazione nello spazio variazionale della lingua d'appartenenza, da eventuali associazioni sia semantiche con altri segni linguistici presenti nel testo o nella lingua, sia culturali, evocate tramite la locuzione nei parlanti della lingua in oggetto.[34]

---

[33] "The language systems are not realised directly, but always above the level of the language norm, whereby all kinds of restrictions and fixations occur. […] So it is not enough to know what you could say in a language, you also have to know what is normally said in certain situations. In other words: in order to express and understand what is possible in a language, you must know the corresponding language system; in order to really speak a language like natives, you must also know the corresponding language norm or rather, the corresponding language norms."

[34] "From a linguistic point of view, the precise significational value also results from the connotations that the expression assumes in the linguistic community, from its location in the variational space of the language to which it belongs, from any associations it might

Furthermore, lexical meaning in general is rather complex, which makes the comparison between two languages considerably difficult. This leads to cases where two phraseological units seem to be equivalent from a semantic point of view, but on closer look only share one or some acceptations. Hence, precise linguistic, pragmatic and contextual analysis and description are fundamental for any cross-linguistic comparison of phraseological units[35].

More often than not, phraseological units cannot be translated literally. Colson (2008: 199–200) explains the difficulty of affronting phraseology in translation:

> […] it is clear that translating from one language to another will mean being confronted twice with a very difficult task: establishing the meaning of the source text while taking figurative language and phraseology into account, and then trying to find an equivalent formulation in the target language. Phraseology will, in other words, be one of the major pitfalls of translation.

Furthermore, by translating phraseological units on a large scale, for example in a literary translation, there is a risk of deformation. If, to exemplify the issue through our corpus, the main characters of the source text, clearly situated in Dutch surroundings, start to express themselves in the target text not through Dutch images contained in expressions and idioms, but by the use of Italian images, through Italian figurative language or Italian proverbs, this distorts the text. While there might be a restitution of meaning, a part of the original text is lost. "The destruction of expressions and idioms" is one of Berman's deforming tendencies (Berman 1985/2021: 257–258). This leads us to the issue of norms – not to be confused with Berman's deforming tendencies – which

---

have either on semantic level with other linguistic signs present in the text or language, or on cultural level, evoked through the expression in the speakers of the language in question."

[35] See Koesters Gensini (2020b: 27) for a more detailed discussion of this argument.

condition acts of translation. Societal, literary and cultural expectations influence both the author and the translator, and can differ through time (Berman 1985/2021: 252). Especially in Children's Literature, the norms play an important role (see §3.2. and §3.3.). When a deviance from the norms of the target language and culture is induced by source language constraints, i.e. when parts of the translation do not read as authentic language because of influences from the source text, we refer to those instances of target language as "translationese" (Schmied & Schäffler 1996: 44.)[36].

Bearing in mind the difficulties of phraseology in translation and the need to analyse phraseological units in their co-text, and considering the parallelism, at least on text-level, between a literary source text and its translation, these kind of text pairs seem to provide an adequate corpus for the study of PUs. The study of phraseology in literary texts is not a new phenomenon. Eismann (2008) gives an overview of phraseology in literary texts, Mieder (1973, 1976, and many more) focusses on proverbs in literature, while some valid contributions on phraseology with a corpus of literature can be found in Ji (2010); Horvathova & Tabackova (2018).

A question we need to address at this moment, is why the choice of Children's Literature[37]. A contrastive analysis of the phraseology in Children's Literature seems a promising path to take[38], as CL has mostly been ignored by scholars but consists of highly culturally-conditioned texts (House 2004: 683) and there is a close link between culture and phraseology (Sabban 2007, 2008). It is expected that both the author and the translator base their linguistic choices in general and phraseological choices in specific on the young receivers and their

[36] Constraints limit us from extensively addressing in this dissertation Berman's deforming tendency regarding the destruction of expressions and idioms and the issues of norms and translationese. These subjects will be addressed separately in future publications.

[37] For the choice of *Wiplala* specifically, see §4.1..

[38] Some studies on phraseology in CL have been carried out, for instance Burger 1997, 2009; Finkbeiner 2011; Häußinger 2017; Richter-Vapaatalo 2010; Ślawski 2015.

still limited linguistic and cultural knowledge (Burger 1997: 233; Finkbeiner 2011: 47–48). This means CL could also be a fruitful field for the identification of the inner most part of phraseology: we have identified language-specific core vocabularies, but could there also be core phraseological inventories?

Although still a desideratum, the identification of such a core would reveal most useful for the possible applications it could have in second language teaching and learning. In fact, language teachers and learners are still often faced with long bilingual lists of supposedly 'equivalent' phraseological units (especially idioms), based on the misconception that a PU in one language needs to be translated with a PU in another language. In this research a first attempt will be made to evaluate how a corpus of Children's Literature could be implemented for the identification of a core phraseological inventory.

It is true that CL is intended for native receivers and not for language learners. Nevertheless, the attention authors, translators and other professional figures presumably pay to linguistic difficulty and variety[39], still seem to make it an adequate starting point. Furthermore, (adult) L2 learners do use children's books to advance and several scholars argue it is a good practice (e.g. Bland & Lütge 2013; Burwitz-Melzer & O'Sullivan 2016; English 2000; Ho 2000; Songören 2013; cf. Webb & Macalister 2013). Cheetham (2015) argues that Children's Literature for foreign language learners does not deserve the negative image it is sometimes attributed, and that it should be considered on the same level, if not superior, to 'normal' literature when used as extended reading material. While it is in no way a given that the identification of the core of phraseology by means of a contrastive analysis of Children's Literature could work, and without doubt other inputs[40] than the ones presently analysed will be necessary, this dissertation could provide for a promising start.

---

[39] In Chapter 3 *Children's Literature*, these issues will be further discussed.

[40] For example by using different corpora, including other authors and age groups. An interesting comparison could be made using the BasiLex corpus (Tellings et al. 2014). A frequency analysis would also need to be carried out. As of yet it has not been possible

Especially in recent years, quite some studies on phraseology in second language learning and/or teaching have been carried out. Among others: Arnon & Christiansen (2017); Cornell (1999); Ellis et al. (2008); Meunier & Granger (2008); Nita & Solano (2020); Paquot (2019); Paquot & Granger (2012); Stengers et al. (2011); Vetchinnikova (2019); Yuldashev et al. (2013). But what many studies on phraseology and language learning and teaching have in common, is that their focus lies on higher proficiency levels or specific registers (e.g. English for academic purposes, see Coxhead 2008; Ellis et al. 2008; Granger 2017; Howarth 1996; Vašků et al. 2019). This should not come as a surprise, since PUs are often very complex structures that deviate from what is perceived as 'normal'. While notoriously difficult to master for language learners, this does not mean that PUs are not present at all language levels[41]. The scope of this dissertation is to analyse phraseological units from various points of view in what could be referred to as less complex language.

KEY POINTS FOR THIS RESEARCH

In this dissertation we will analyse Dutch and (translated) Italian phraseological units in a corpus of Children's Literature (see Chapter 4).

"Phraseological unit" is used as a neutral, hypernymic term to refer to non-free combinations of two (or more) constituents that have a far from discrete, but rather gradual and heterogeneous character. The conventional criteria for phraseological units are seen as very problematic if rigidly applied.

to determine precise frequency levels for phraseology. Besides, different languages will presumably make use of different types of phraseological units in different proportions. As Colson (2008: 197–198) states: "Describing some kind of phraseological profile for various languages on the basis of large corpora can be very useful for both language learners and translators, because many errors are due to an insufficient or incorrect mastery of phraseology."

[41] Colson (2008: 194) states that phraseology in a broad sense is "present at all levels of linguistic production and comprehension, because native speakers will assemble lexical elements according to a wide variety of existing patterns that may have little to do with grammar."

The classification of phraseological units is separated into different levels (see §4.2.2.).

The approach taken to the analysis of Dutch and Italian phraseological units comes from contrastive linguistics: the Dutch PUs will be compared with their Italian counterparts, and vice versa. It is fundamental, however, to study these phraseological units embedded in their pragmatic context – hence the need for translations and Translation Studies. The choice for a corpus of a source text and a target text seems adequate because a literary ST and its translation as a whole can be considered parallel texts. Furthermore, the concept of equivalence is deemed an extremely useful parameter in the contrastive analysis of phraseological units. Equivalence will be used as an indicator on a formal and a semantic level, but will not be used to express judgment on the quality of the translation.

As both the author and the translator base their phraseological choices on the idea they have of the phraseological competence (and in general of the still limited linguistic and cultural knowledge) of their young receivers, a corpus of Children's Literature has been chosen in an attempt to evaluate how CL could prove fruitful for the identification of a core phraseological inventory – still a desideratum – that would have profound implications on L2 teaching and learning. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of the peculiarities of Children's Literature.

Although it might not be possible to fully evaluate how CL can prove fruitful for the identification of a core inventory of phraseology, this dissertation can contribute on a theoretical and on a practical level to all disciplines involved. The detailed contrastive analysis, and the mapping of similarities and differences between the Dutch and (translated) Italian phraseological inventories can offer both intra- and interlinguistic theoretical insights, as well as provide data for future studies in the field of linguistics and Translation Studies, or, in more practical manner, to translators.