

TOWARDS A CLASSIFICATION OF HEBREW MWEs

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Research Question

Does the semantic classification of idioms correlate with their flexibility/rigidity?

Metaphorical figurative idioms

- (1) yarad me-ha-ʕec
descended from-the-tree
'conceded'

Opaque figurative idioms

- (2) heʕela heres be-yado
brought.up shard in-his.hand
'was unsuccessful'

Cranberry idioms

- (3) yaʕav ʕal ha-meduxa
sat on the-MEDUXA
'deliberated'

Method: A corpus-based investigation

We used *heTenTen 2014*, a billion-token web-crawled Hebrew corpus (available on SketchEngine), to search for different types of variations that occur with representative MWEs from the three semantic classes. We focused on 11 specific verbal MWEs, and annotated 400 examples overall.

Syntactic variations: relativization, word order alternation, topicalization

- (4) hi crixā laredet me-ha-ʕec ha-cadqani
she needs to.descend from-the-tree the-righteous
ve-ha-baxyani ʕe-ʕalay hi ʕipsa
and-the-whiny that-on.it she climbed
'She needs to abandon the righteous and whiny
stance which she adopted.'

- (5) legabei danela heʕelu ha-maʕamacim heres
about danela brought.up the-efforts shard
'As for Danella, the efforts were unsuccessful.'

- (6) ʕal meduxa haʕuva zo yojvim horim
on MEDUXA important this sitting parents
rabim
many
'Many parents are deliberating on this important
issue.'

Argument structure variations

- (7) ʔein kmo ʕilot biʕhoniyyot lehorid ʔet
no like reasons security to.bring.down ACC
jnei ha-cdadim me-ha-ʕec
both.CS the-sides from-the-tree
'There is nothing like security reasons to cause the
two (opposing) sides to concede.'

- (8) hu yufta legalot ki yado
he will.be.surprised to.discover that his.hand
maʕala heres
brings.up shard
'He will be surprised to find himself unsuccessful.'
(written about someone rummaging through a pile
of books)

- (9) higiʕa ha-zman lehofiv ʕal ha-meduxa
arrived the-time to.cause.sit on the-MEDUXA
kalkelanim ve-aqtuʕarim
economists and-actuaries
'It's time to make economists and actuaries delib-
erate on the issue.'

Lexical variation: insertions and substitutions

- (10) hu maca derex mavriqa liqqoc me-ha-ʕec
he found way brilliant to.jump from-the-tree
'He found a brilliant way to concede.'
- (11) yef kaʕelu ʕe-menasim lehorid ʔoto
there.are those that-try to.bring.down him
qcat me-ha-ʕec ha-foqoladi
bit from-the-tree the-chocolaty
'There are those who try to make him slightly aban-
don his stance re. chocolate.' (written about a chef
who claims to have invented a popular chocolate
cake)

- (12) kʕe-tagifa kvar tivater ʕim
when-you.will.arrive already you.will.remain with
heres be-yadxa
shard in-your.hand
'When you finally arrive, you will have failed.'
- (13) nisyonotai legagel heʕelu heres
my.attempts to.google brought.up shard
radyoʕaqtivit
radioactive
'My googling attempts re. radioactivity were un-
successful.' (written by a person trying to find out
the number of nuclear bombs)

- (14) ʕal meduxa zo hitqabcu harbe melumadim
on MEDUXA this gathered many scholars
'Many scholars have deliberated on this issue.'
- (15) miʕala ha-meqanenet be-lev ha-yojvim ʕal
wish that-lies in-heart.CS that-sitting on
meduxa qafa ve-ʕragit zo...
MEDUXA difficult and-tragic this ...
'A wish that lies in the heart of those deliberating
on this difficult and tragic issue...'
- (16) zohi hahlaʕa ʕafer mecuya ʕal meduxat
this.is decision that is.present on MEDUXA.cs
beit ha-miʕpaʕ
house the-court
'This is a decision that the court is deliberating on.'

Conclusions

Everything goes! Verbal MWEs in Hebrew turn out to be consistently more flexible than we assumed, allowing creativity in their usage similarly to compositional phrases. Nevertheless, a word of caution: Idiom variations are not frequent, thus a huge corpus is essential.