

Tanulmány

Attila Cserép & Tamari Narimanishvili **Challenges of Metaphor Identification in L2 Essays**

Abstract

This paper presents a small-scale study of figurative language production in essays written by Georgian learners of English. The method of metaphor identification implemented in the study is a slightly modified version of MIPVU (Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit), Instead of MIPVU's approach to the identification of lexical units and metaphors, which distinguishes phrasal verbs and idioms, our approach differs depending on the decomposability of multiword units, whether phrasal verbs or idioms. The study explores the major challenges that may arise in trying to assign figurative meanings to the constituents of multiword units, and it also illustrates the major steps of MIPVU: 1) identification of lexical units in the text, 2) determining the contextual sense, 3) selecting the basic sense based on a dictionary, 4) deciding whether the relationship between the basic and contextual sense is metaphorical or not. This study is part of a project to identify different kinds of errors made during figurative language production, with a special emphasis on the errors influenced by L1.

Keywords: figurative language, metaphor production, idioms, L2

1 Introduction

At the beginning of the 2000s, metaphor researchers expressed their concern that metaphor studies of naturally occurring language lacked a consistent and reliable methodology of metaphor identification (Nacey 2013: 65). The first attempt to create an explicit and systematic identification procedure was published by the Pragglejaz Group in 2007, and later its extended version MIPVU (Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit) was released (Steen et al. 2010b: 4, Nacey 2013: 67). This study examines metaphor use in the written production of L2 learners focusing on how multiword units are treated by MIPVU and employs a modified protocol to identify metaphor in phrasal verbs and idioms in order to see what difficulties are encountered.

The essays used in this study were written by 16 Georgian learners of English who had B1 and B2 levels in English based on *The Oxford Placement Test* results. Both male (7) and female (9) participants were 18 years old and were in their final year of high school. The argumentative essays that covered different topics had an average length of 120–150 words, and the total number of lexical units in the corpus added up to 2975.

Steen et al. (2010b: 5–6, 26–42) illustrate the four basic steps of MIPVU, which start with reading the entire text to have an overall picture of the discourse. The second step is to determine the lexical units in the text, which can be carried out with the help of an automatic

annotation procedure for POS tagging. The next and the most crucial step is establishing the basic and the contextual sense for each word using a dictionary and determining if the relation between the two senses is metaphorical. Meaning relation can only be assessed between distinct senses, and senses are viewed as sufficiently distinct if they are found in separately numbered sense descriptions (Steen et al. 2010b: 37). As decisions concerning sense conflation and separation in dictionaries can be based on various lexicographic principles rather than metaphoricity, MIPVU recommends the use of a backup dictionary *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (LD) in addition to the first choice, the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (Steen et al. 2010b: 16, Nacey 2013: 108). In our analysis, we used the online *Macmillan Dictionary* (MD) instead of the printed version.

2 Determining the linguistic units

As the Pragglejaz Group (2007: 15) state, the default linguistic unit is a single headword in the dictionary. However, exceptions are phrasal verbs, polywords and compounds, which are counted as single units because their meanings are nondecomposable (Pragglejaz Group 2007: 26, Steen et al. 2010b: 27–31). Here we confine our attention to phrasal verbs and idioms.

Decomposability refers to whether a multiword unit has meaningful constituent parts when interpreted figuratively (Pragglejaz Group 2007: 26). Pragglejaz (2007: 26) take the view that decomposing phrasal verbs usually results in the loss of their meanings but also point out some less evident examples in which the meaning of the whole is obviously related to the components: *eat up*, *drink up*, and *grow up* (Pragglejaz Group 2007: 26). MIPVU follows Pragglejaz’s practice (Steen et al. 2010b: 28); however, Littlemore et al. (2014: 121) believe that phrasal verbs should be broken down into lexical units if their meanings are to some extent motivated (“deemed to be partially motivated”) by the basic senses of their constituents.

Interestingly, idioms are handled differently from phrasal verbs. According to the Pragglejaz Group (2007: 27), the majority of idioms are decomposable, so their individual components should be analysed as separate lexical items. The MIPVU protocol shares the same view. Steen et al. (2010c: 172) decompose *treading water* into *treading* as a life-saving activity and *water* as an environment.

One of the disadvantages of the uniform treatment of phrasal verbs or idioms is that the same semantic structure is attributed to all the members of the category. Analysts are aware that this is an overgeneralization of what is essentially a heterogeneous field. The Pragglejaz Group (2007: 26, 27) state that “[phrasal verbs] typically have nondecomposable meanings” [emphasis ours], and claim that “most, if not all, idioms are decomposable for [sic] some extent for speakers” [emphases ours]. Nevertheless, the same methodology is adopted within a given category, probably because this significantly simplifies the analysis and increases consistency and commensurability among the analysts. At the same time, it can give us intuitively less appealing results.

Since the prerequisite to judging a unit metaphorical is the presence in the dictionary of two different senses, one of which has to be (more) literal, phrasal verbs without literal senses in the dictionary cannot always be viewed as metaphorical. Thus, *make up for* has two meanings in *Macmillan*: MD1 ‘to take the place of something that has been lost or damaged’ and MD2 ‘to provide something good, so that something bad seems less important’. Neither sense seems to be less basic, more abstract than (i.e. a metaphorical extension of) the other; therefore, *make*

up for is not metaphorical. This is exactly what we find in the VU Amsterdam Metaphor Corpus (VUAMC), a sample of the BNC annotated for metaphor with MIPVU. Figure 1 shows a concordance line including the phrasal verb. The colour black signifies the absence of metaphoricity, while brown marks metaphors. The full context is as follows: *OLDHAM Athletic, who had never beaten a First Division side since they dropped into the Second Division in 1923, made up for 66 years of not altogether patient waiting with a pulsating victory over the League champions Arsenal at Boundary Park last night.*

e they dropped into the Second Division in 1923 made up for 66 years of not altogether patient waiting

Figure 1. Make up for in VUAMC

Consider another example: *keep up*. Sense MD2 ‘to move at the same speed as someone or something’ is more basic than either MD3 ‘to continue to learn about something or find out about something, so that you know the latest things that are happening’ or MD4 ‘to continue to understand what someone is saying’, so that the latter two can be regarded as extensions of MD2. However, MD2 cannot be seen as metaphorical, even though this sense is different from a compositional interpretation of the constituents. The dictionary provides two more senses, both of which are transitive and therefore differ from the above-mentioned intransitive meanings, preventing any comparison and consequently coding as metaphor.

In contrast with phrasal verbs, idiom components are separately assessed. Steen et al. (2010b: 83) analyse, among others, *put your foot down* in the sense ‘refuse to accept something’. Refusing to move your feet metonymically stands for refusal to accept something, but where the source domain action is absent, the expression is purely metaphorical. Therefore, each significant component (*put*, *foot*, *down*) is coded as a metaphor separately. However, *put*, *foot* and *down* do not have independent senses at the figurative level. We prefer to judge nondecomposable idioms by considering the whole unit, based on the compositional and figurative interpretations of the entire word string. Yet, MIPVU does not allow this. It is true that many idioms are decomposable, but dividing all idioms into their parts seems to force different types of idioms in the same semantic structure. This may ensure uniformity among the researchers, but it leads to a mismatch between semantic structure and methodology for nondecomposable idioms. It is proposed that multiword units should be handled in accordance with their decomposability.

3 The semantics of phrasal verbs

As mentioned above, Littlemore et al. (2014) focus on motivation but do not illustrate their sense assignment with specific examples. The relation between motivation and decomposability is complex. Cserép (2001: 103) observes that decomposability (i.e. analysability) and motivation are distinct notions due to the following reasons. First, less motivated words can have separate senses (*a pill* ‘a fact/situation’ in *swallow a bitter pill*, *cat* ‘secret’ in *let the cat out of the bag*). Secondly, motivation sometimes does not lead to decomposability (*hit the roof/ceiling*). Moreover, phrases with a similar degree of decomposability may have diverse degrees of motivation (*happy as a pig in muck* has a higher degree of motivation than *happy as*

a sandboy, while both of them are partially decomposable). Based on Geeraerts (1995), Cieślicka (2013: 498) also distinguishes the two notions. Motivatedness, i.e. paradigmatic transparency¹, means how figurative meaning can be derived from the literal analysis of the idiom's individual components, and decomposability, i.e. syntagmatic transparency², refers to the extent to which idiom components express identifiable parts of the figurative sense. Cieślicka (2015: 213) argues that on the one hand, there are particular idioms that are motivated and nondecomposable such as *jump the gun* 'do something too soon'.³ On the other hand, some idioms such as *pop the question* (*pop* 'utter' and *question* 'marriage proposal') can be unmotivated and decomposable. Nevertheless, motivatedness and decomposability are closely related notions because motivatedness increases the likelihood of meaning decomposition.

Cognitive linguistic studies argue that many phrasal verbs are motivated, with the verb and the particle contributing to the overall meaning. Dirven (2001: 10) shows that the particle in *She brushed the crumbs off* is not fully integrated with the verb but keeps its adverbial function. At the same time, he states that metaphorical mapping often depends on the metaphorization of the whole expression (Dirven 2001: 5, 11–13). For example, the senses 'acquire' and 'by chance' of *pick up* are attached to the whole construction. The sense 'acquire' derives from the inference that what you pick up becomes your possession, and 'by chance' is based on the inference that negative possessions are not normally acquired intentionally (Dirven (2001: 5). Similarly, *brush* and *off* form a holistic unit in the sense 'clean' (*brush off a coat*) or 'reject' (*brush off the accusations*) (Dirven 2001: 12). In her study of *out*, Morgan (1997) demonstrates that the particle and the verb are independently meaningful. Thus, *figure* means 'reach a solution by thinking' and the meaning of *out* is related to the sense 'accessibility' in the phrasal verb *figure out* (Morgan 1997: 343). Her definition of the sense of *figure out*, 'causing something to be known by thinking about it', implies that *out* can be paraphrased as 'to be known' (Morgan 1997: 345). She claims that the particle expresses a cognitive image schema such as containment or verticality (Morgan 1997: 329). Mahpeykar and Tyler (2015: 32) suggest that the meanings of phrasal verbs are created by the interconnection between multiple independent senses of the verb and the independent senses of the particle. They break down *take up* in the 'occupy space or time' sense as *take* meaning 'occupy, extended use' and *up* meaning 'more, completion' (Mahpeykar and Tyler 2015: 24).

Mahpeykar and Tyler's (2015: 9–10) methodology differs from MIPVU in that they attach more importance to historically older meanings when selecting the basic sense, identify distinct senses not on the basis of sense numbering in the dictionary and use dictionaries other than *Macmillan*. Nevertheless, their fundamental idea is the same: find a basic sense, establish other distinct senses and decide whether the latter are extended meanings. For the verb *get*, they propose the 'obtain' sense as basic, while the extended meanings include 'move' (*I got there on time*) and 'change of state' (*I got hungry, I got cold, I got sick*) (Mahpeykar and Tyler's 2015: 11–12). The standard MIPVU protocol would judge the 'move' sense as basic rather than extended because it is a concrete, specific, human-oriented sense (Steen et al. 2010b: 35). The

¹ "Paradigmatic transparency" is a term that Cieślicka (2013: 498) borrows from Geeraerts (1995).

² "Syntagmatic transparency" is a term that Cieślicka (2013: 498) borrows from Geeraerts (1995).

³ *Jump the gun* is not a good example of nondecomposability. The gun metonymically stands for the shooting of the starting pistol signalling the start of a race, while jumping refers to the competitors starting their run too soon. The gun, therefore, could be mapped onto a time point or period that is considered appropriate to start an activity. The idiom can be decomposed as *jump* 'start doing sth earlier than' and the *gun* 'the appropriate time (for starting sth)'. A better member of the nondecomposable category is *kick the bucket* (Cserép 2001: 43).

‘change of state’ sense would not be metaphorical either. This sense is conveyed by *get* as a linking verb, which has no other more basic, central meanings, and since senses pertaining to different grammatical patterns cannot be compared (Steen et al. 2010b: 36), the ‘change of state’ sense cannot be considered extended.⁴ Although Mahpeykar and Tyler (2015) support their decomposition view with several examples, some of their analyses are less convincing. They assume that *take* in the sense ‘get hold of and remove’ and *out* meaning ‘not in situ’ combine when *take out* denotes the action of dating (Mahpeykar and Tyler 2015: 31). However, it could be argued that dating is an inference accompanying the original sense of taking someone out of their home, and this inference has developed into a new sense that is now attached to the whole phrasal verb.

Luo (2019: 133) distinguishes six extension types.

- (1) a. We fished out the ring. (semantic extension of the verb)
- b. The wind blew the candle out. (semantic extension of the particle)
- c. The statesman brought back peace. (metaphorical extension of the object)
- d. He wanted to cheer up the girl. (semantic extension of both the verb and the particle)
- e. He used up all the coins he had. (semantic extension of the particle verb schema)
- f. He picked up that disease in South Africa. (semantic extension at the level of the full particle verb)

In (1a), *fished* is a metonymic extension from the noun *fish*, while the particle *out* is not extended but keeps its literal, directional meaning.⁵ In (1b), only the particle *out* is extended. It is resultative, indicating the state change of the object, and it means ‘invisible’ (Luo 2019: 129). Luo (2019: 130) claims that neither the verb nor the particle in (1c) is extended. She argues that in order to understand (1c), *peace* “must be metaphorically perceived as a concrete object. Through such metaphorical mapping, the meaning of the particle verb *bring back* becomes figurative” (Luo 2019: 130). From Luo’s (2019: 130) discussion, it is not immediately evident what sense can be assigned to the verb or the particle, if any. However, in discussing the question of analysability, she claims that examples such as (1c), where the subject or object is extended, are decomposable (Luo 2019: 134). In our view, *bring back* can be analysed as *bring* ‘establish, cause something to be present’ and *back* ‘again’. As can be seen in (1d), both the verb and the particle are extended. Luo (2019: 129) explains that the noun *cheer*, which refers to a shout of happiness, is metonymically extended to refer to the act of causing a state of happiness.⁶ As regards the example (1e) *used up*, we can perceive semantic extension of the particle verb schema because the original movement sense of *up* is extended to the target domain sense of aspectual completion. Notice that (1b) and (1e) are very similar in that the verb retains its literal sense, while the particle is metaphorical. Yet, Luo (2019: 79–80) argues that the figurative sense of the particle in (1e) results from metaphorization of the whole particle-

⁴ More precisely, the secondary-choice *Longman* dictionary does offer another distinct linking verb sense: LD 19 ‘BE HURT/BROKEN ETC [linking verb, transitive] used to say that something, especially something bad, happens to someone or something’, but the relation between this sense and state of change is not metaphorical.

⁵ MIPVU does not allow meaning extension between different part of speech categories, and *fished* would be classified as literal, basic sense (Steen et al. 2010b: 35-36).

⁶ As stated in footnote 5, a noun and verb cannot be contrasted. Instead, the verbal sense ‘to give a loud shout of happiness or approval’ (*cheer* MD1) is metonymically extended to ‘make somebody happier or less worried’. An analysis of *cheer up* is offered in Section 4.2.

verb schema: the particle denotes the resultant state, and result implies completion. No matter how the metaphorization process works, the particle can be assigned an independent sense.

As opposed to the examples discussed so far, the sixth type of particle verb (1f) shows extension at the level of the full particle verb. Luo (2019: 131) takes this example from Dirven (2001: 5) and reiterates Dirven’s claim that when a contextual inference such as ‘by chance’ becomes part of the new figurative meaning ‘to acquire by chance’, metaphorization takes place on the whole phrasal verb, and this leads to the loss of decomposability (Luo 2019: 131–132). Luo (2019: 134) views the analysability of idiomatic particle verbs as related to the levels of semantic extension illustrated above. A particle verb is analysable when it is of the type (1a-e), but not when it is of the type (1f).

4 Analysis: phrasal verbs

We decided to check phrasal verbs for decomposability and treat only non-decomposable phrasal verbs as single units. We relied on the online *Macmillan Dictionary*, as well as Rudzka-Ostyn (2003) and Lindstromberg (2010) to attach senses to the components. The latter two books are intended for language learners and offer detailed information about the literal and figurative senses of many prepositions and particles. The following is an attempt to subject all the phrasal verbs in our essay corpus to semantic scrutiny. There are 14 instances of phrasal verbs, with one verb occurring twice. The sentences taken from the essays are reproduced here with the original spelling and punctuation.

4.1 *Go on, move on*

The verb and particle do not have independent figurative meanings in (2), since *go on* means ‘happen’ (*go on* MD2), and this figurative sense corresponds to the whole movement-on-a-path scenario: events are conceptualised as moving entities.

- (2) No one is making sure nothing skeptical is going on there, like lights in the middle of the night.

Compare (2) with (3), where the same phrasal verb is used, but the sense element of continuation is also salient. *Go*, therefore, has the same meaning as in (2), but *on* is also meaningful, denoting ‘continuing’ (MD11). These examples illustrate the significant role of context. While meaning decomposition relies primarily on the underlying conceptual mechanisms, this is simply a potential that can be realised in different ways in different contexts.

- (3) For me, personally, the pandemic feels like it is going on my whole life.

Another decomposable example is (4). *Move on* means ‘to leave one place and travel to another’ (*move on* MD1), and the same sense is conveyed by *move* alone: ‘to go to a different place’ (MD1a). The context implies that people move to a different location to live and work there. In fact, this meaning is also proposed for *move* in the dictionary: ‘to begin to live in a different house or area’ (MD3). While both meanings are likely, the syntactic pattern, the particle *on* without a place adverbial, favours the first interpretation (MD1a) over the second (MD3).

- (4) People come and go a lot here. They change jobs frequently and move on.

Move is therefore not figurative, but the particle is less straightforward. One sense of *on* in *Macmillan* is ‘continuing’ (MD11), subdivided into two subsenses: ‘used for saying that someone is continuing to do something’ (MD11a) and ‘continuing to move forwards’ (MD11b). The motion and action senses are viewed by the dictionary as not sufficiently distinct because they appear under the same sense number. By contrast, *Longman* distinguishes them, and the action sense can be regarded as metaphorical based on the ACTION IS MOTION metaphor (Lakoff 1993: 220). However, the context in (4) strongly favours a movement scenario.

Lindstromberg (2010: 51–54) identifies two spatial senses for *on*: one denoting contact and support, and another expressing direction. He further specifies the latter as ‘in the direction being faced’ and/or ‘in the same direction as before’ (Lindstromberg 2010: 53). These meanings do not fully fit the context in (4) because people continue their mobile lifestyle without any implication that they move in the same direction as before. It is true that when they are in the process of moving they face in the direction of movement, but body orientation plays an insignificant role in (4). What is highlighted is not forward movement but the continuation of their mobility. Therefore, *on* is viewed here as metaphorical.

4.2 *Cheer up, keep up with, make up for, sum up*

Cheer up in (5) can be divided into two meaningful units. *Cheer* has two dictionary senses: ‘to give a loud shout of happiness or approval’ (MD1) and ‘if you are cheered by something such as a piece of news, it makes you happier or less worried’ (MD2). The basic sense is the first one (MD1), referring to a scenario where human agents cheer other humans. Since the second sense (MD2) involves a non-human participant, it is an instance of personification. However, the context in (5) includes human participants, and thus the relation between the contextual and basic senses is metonymic, the expression of happiness and approval as a cause standing for the emotional effect of happiness.

- (5) I wasn’t able to see my classmates and spend some time together. This was stressful and everyone was struggling to cheer themselves up.

Cheer

Contextual sense: MD2 ‘make you happier or less worried’.

Basic sense: MD1 ‘to give a loud shout of happiness or approval’.

Decision: not metaphor.

Up

Contextual sense: ‘happy’ (not in MD), MD6 ‘increased in amount/level’.

Basic sense: MD1 ‘in or towards a higher position’.

Decision: metaphor.

Luo (2019: 129) views the particle as an instance of the GOOD IS UP metaphor, a general version of HAPPY IS UP, paraphrasable here as ‘happy’ (cf. Lindstromberg 2010: 192, 194). An alternative analysis would assign the sense ‘more’ to the particle, based on the metaphor MORE IS UP (*up* MD6 ‘increased in amount/level’) (cf. Lindstromberg 2010: 192, Rudzka-

Ostyn 2003: 80). Each analysis posits reiteration of a sense element: ‘happy’ or ‘more’ seems to be expressed by both the verb and the particle. Both of the posited senses are supported by conceptual metaphors, and it may be difficult to choose. The sense ‘happy’ cannot be found in either *Macmillan* or *Longman*, but the contextual sense does not need to satisfy this requirement (Steen et al. 2010b: 33). Naturally, this does not mean that both options are equally likely for every speaker. Whichever analysis is adopted, the phrasal verb is decomposable, and *up* is metaphorical.

(6) ...it means we must be familiar with other languages in order to keep up with new developments.

Keep up (MD3 ‘to continue to learn about something or find out about something, so that you know the latest things that are happening’) in (6) evokes the image of a racing scenario, where people are competing. This is shown by the second sense description in *Macmillan*: ‘to move at the same speed as someone or something’ (*keep up* MD2). The figurative scenario of our trying to keep up with new developments is compared to this race. Lack of change in the relative position of the racers is mapped onto lack of difference between our knowledge or awareness of events and the actual events. Our opponents in the race correspond to new events (developments). Moving at the same speed as your opponents in a race is mapped onto increasing your knowledge at the same pace as events happen. In other words, you learn about happenings soon after they take place. *Keep*, therefore, conveys the notion of keeping (yourself) in a state of up-to-date knowledge.

Keep

Contextual sense: MD1 ‘to stay in a state, position, or place without changing or moving’.

Basic sense: MD1 ‘to stay in a state, position, or place without changing or moving’.

Decision: not metaphor.

Up

Contextual sense: ‘(having) up-to-date (knowledge)’, ‘(being) informed’ (not in MD).

Basic sense: MD1 ‘in or towards a higher position’.

Decision: metaphor.

With

Contextual sense: ‘about, concerning’ (not in MD, the closest sense is MD14 ‘used for saying what a particular action or problem is related to’).

Basic sense: MD1 ‘if one person or thing is with another or does something with them, they are together or they do it together’, MD6 ‘used for showing who you compete, fight, or argue against’.

Decision: metaphor.

MIPVU limits sense contrast, i.e. metaphorical extension, not only to the same word class but also to the same grammatical subcategory (transitivity, countability) (Steen et al. 2010b: 36). The dictionary entry provides four more intransitive senses for *keep* in addition to MD1 above:

MD2c ‘used when giving directions, for telling someone to continue in a particular direction’
 MD5a ‘to stay within a limit’

MD9 ‘if food or other substances keep for a particular period of time, they stay in good condition for that period of time’

MD10 ‘used for asking if someone is well’

The example sentence in the dictionary (*I am trying to keep within budget*) makes it clear that MD5a is metaphorical because it refers to an abstract limit. The candidates for the basic sense include MD1 above, MD2c, which involves maintaining your motion, MD9, which refers to the physical state of a substance, and MD10, which refers to your health. All of these seem to satisfy the criteria for a more basic sense established by MIPVU: a more concrete, specific and human-oriented sense (Steen et al. 2010b: 35).

The particle *up* is assigned a sense (‘up-to-date’, ‘informed’) that is normally expressed by adjectives or participle verb forms rather than adverbs. A similar mismatch occurs in *cheer up* above, if *up* is paraphrased as ‘happy’. As stated in footnotes 5 and 6, MIPVU restricts sense comparison to the same word class. It implements a usage-based, discourse approach to metaphor identification, whereby metaphoricity is determined at the level of language use (Steen et al. 2010b: 16–17). This prevents identification of metaphorization processes taking place during word-formation, as a result of which the verb *dog*, for example, cannot be treated as a metaphorical extension of the noun *dog* (Steen et al. 2010b: 17). Furthermore, different word classes correspond to different types of concepts and referents, and sense comparison is supposed to mirror metaphorical mappings: you compare processes with processes, attributes with attributes, things with things. (Steen et al. 2010b: 16).

At the same time, the within-word-class restriction might make it impossible to assign a sense to an otherwise meaningful component. It is clear that the above examples do not involve word-formation. One argument in favour of loosening the restriction is that the assigned sense is supported by a well-established conceptual metaphor. We are aware that the HAPPY IS UP format names the source and target domains in general, not specific entities or processes within these domains, and it seems to link an attribute to a location. The sense of the particle in *keep up* could alternatively be described as ‘in a state of being informed’. Similarly, the particle in *cheer up* can be assigned the sense ‘in(to) a state of happiness’. This posits an adverbial meaning that matches the part of speech category of the adverbial particle. Particles are especially elusive, with depleted semantic content and general senses that defy a simple description.

Insistence on the part of speech rule would also lead to a discrepancy in idioms whose syntactic function diverges from the function associated with the word classes of their constituents. The expression *hook, line and sinker* consists of nouns, but the whole string functions as an adverb, as is clear from *I told her we’d bought a yacht and she fell for it hook line and sinker* (MD1 *hook, line, and sinker*). The basic senses of the constituents are nominal, but the contextual sense (of the phrase) is not. Similar examples with functional discrepancy are *good and proper*; *lock, stock, and barrel*; *bag and baggage*. The number of these odd idioms may not be high, but their analysis necessitates a flexible application of the part of speech rule. It is therefore suggested that this principle should be less rigorously adhered to in certain cases.

(7) Napoleon knew that all the hard work and talent in the world can’t make up for bad luck.

Make up for has two senses: MD1 ‘to take the place of something that has been lost or damaged’ and MD2 ‘to provide something good, so that something bad seems less important’. Example (7) illustrates the latter. These meanings are closely related, and both are basic, as was made clear in Section 2. Each component word tends to have general meanings in the language, and thus the expression does not evoke a very specific image. Based on the sense description of MD2, the particle *up* appears to have the meaning ‘good’, and *make* corresponds to ‘provide sth, do sth’. The former is supported by the GOOD IS UP metaphor (Rudzka-Ostyn 2003: 80, Lindstromberg 2010: 194).

The dictionary shows that *make* usually functions as a transitive verb, sometimes as a linking verb (in the senses MD8 ‘to give a particular total when added together’ and MD10 ‘to have the right qualities for a particular job, purpose etc.’), but it does not have intransitive senses, while in the phrasal verb it is used intransitively. As a result, the meaning of *make* cannot be defined simply as ‘provide’, and the intransitive contextual sense has to be contrasted with a transitive basic sense. One solution is to ignore this word for metaphor identification, based on MIPVU’s rule of grammatical identity. Another approach is to bypass this rule, which is possible, especially if the intransitive use of *make* occurs elsewhere. *Macmillan* does list some phrases with an intransitive *make*: *make as if to do something* ‘to make a movement so that you seem to be going to do something’, *make believe* ‘to pretend that something is real, especially in a game’, *make do (with/without something)* ‘to succeed in dealing with a situation by using what is available/despite not having something’, *make like* ‘to pretend to be something you are not’. Our solution is therefore to ignore the grammatical subcategory. Note that the original MIPVU protocol is also faced with the same problem. Even if these expressions are considered idioms, metaphoricity is determined on a word-by-word basis. Dividing multiword units reveals that certain constituents may have untypical meanings or grammatical patterns.

Make

Contextual sense: ‘provide sth, do sth’ (not in MD).

Basic sense: (transitive) MD1 ‘to create or produce something by working’.

Decision: metaphor

Up

Contextual sense: ‘good’ (not in MD).

Basic sense: MD1 ‘in or towards a higher position’.

Decision: metaphor.

For

Contextual sense: ‘in replacement, in compensation’.

Basic sense: ?

Decision: not metaphor.

For receives special treatment in MIPVU. It is always regarded as literal, since it has many abstract, delexicalized senses, as a result of which it is difficult to select a basic sense and contrast it with a contextual sense (Pragglejaz Group 2007: 29, Steen et al. 2010a: 776, Nacey 2013: 137).

Sum up (MD1 ‘to give a summary of something’) in (8) is decomposable because *sum* means ‘summarise’ and *up* means ‘collected, added, or brought together in one place’ (MD12). If the

phrasal verb is divided, then the proposed contextual meaning (‘summarise’) cannot be compared to a basic sense. In fact, *Macmillan* does not offer any verbal senses of *sum*, only nominal senses. The same applies to *Longman*. Consequently, the sense comparison and metaphor judgement cannot be carried out. In this case, MIPVU offers the code DFMA (Discarded For Metaphor Analysis). DFMA is also employed when lack of contextual knowledge results from unfinished units, such as *Yeah I had somebody come round and stuck their bloody ...*, where it is impossible to determine the status of *stuck* (Steen et al. 2010b: 33). The use of a larger dictionary can change the picture. For example, *sum* as a verb occurs in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. The dictionary shows that *sum* without *up* can mean ‘to give a summary of; summarise’.⁷ We argue that *sum* is different from the above cases of word class mismatch. The categories involved are verb and noun, and based on *Macmillan*, the metaphorical extension crosses this part of speech boundary. It is exactly cases such as *sum* that MIPVU excludes from a discourse approach to metaphor.

(8) To sum up, pandemic was a big challenge for the society...

Sum

Contextual sense: ‘summarise’.

Basic sense:?

Decision: DFMA.

Up

Contextual sense: MD12 ‘collected, added, or brought together in one place’.

Basic sense: MD4 ‘moving near to someone or something and then stopping’.

Decision: metaphor

4.3 *Cut down, put down roots*

Cut down (MD1 ‘to reduce an amount of something’) in (9) can be treated as decomposable, although the source domain elements of a tree cutting scenario, cutting and (falling) down, do not seem to have separate correspondents in the target domain of reducing a quantity.

(9) When smokers cut down the number of cigarettes, they’ll get fewer smoking-related illness.

However, *cut* without the particle can have the same metaphorical sense as with the particle (*cut* MD4 ‘to reduce something such as the amount or level of something’), and one of the meanings of *down* is ‘at or to a smaller amount, lower level etc than before’ (*down* MD7a). The latter is an example of the conceptual metaphor LESS IS DOWN (Lindstromberg 2010: 197). Therefore, *cut down* is arguably analysable into *cut* ‘reduce’ and *down* ‘to a small number/to a low level’. Both components are metaphorical:

⁷ *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*.
<https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=sum>

Cut

Contextual sense: MD4 ‘to reduce something such as the amount or level of something’.

Basic sense: MD1 ‘to use a knife, pair of scissors, or other sharp tool to divide something into two or more pieces’.

Decision: metaphor.

Down

Contextual sense: MD7a ‘at or to a smaller amount, lower level etc than before’.

Basic sense: MD1 ‘to or towards a lower place’.

Decision: metaphor.

(10) This means that they don’t put down roots in the community.

The phrasal verb *put down* is part of the idiom *put down roots* (MD1 ‘to become a part of the community where you live by making friends and taking part in local activities’). The idiom is based on a plant metaphor. The image of a plant developing roots that connect it firmly to the ground is mapped onto people integrating into a community. *Roots* refers to the relations that you build with others. This is an instance of the metaphor RELATIONSHIPS ARE PHYSICAL CONNECTIONS.⁸ *Put down* in this expression is the result of two metaphorization processes. When it refers to the formation of roots by a plant, *put down* has some degree of literalness: *down* has its directional sense, but *put* in the sense ‘grow’ maps plants onto humans (personification). This phrasal verb is metaphorically extended further to denote the forming of relations with the members of the community. *Put down* has the sense ‘establish, develop’.

Put down

Contextual sense: ‘develop, establish’ (not in MD)

Basic sense: MD1 ‘put someone/something on a surface’

Decision: metaphor.

Roots

Contextual sense: ‘relations’ (not in MD, the closest sense is MD3a ‘the place, culture, or family that someone comes from originally’).

Basic sense: MD1 ‘the part of a plant that grows under the ground, through which the plant gets water and food’.

Decision: metaphor.

4.4 *Look out for, hammer out, find out*

Look out for means ‘to take care of someone and make sure that they are treated well’ (MD2) in (11). The sense of caring seems to be indivisible, and the component words of *look out* only together carry this sense. In the figurative interpretation, *for* shows the beneficiary of the care (*for* MD1 ‘intended to help or benefit someone/something’).

⁸ For illustration see the metaphor examples at the end of the entry for *relationship* in the online dictionary: https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/relationship#relationship__10

- (11) People don't feel connected, they don't look out for each other, and they don't get to know their neighbours.

Is *look out* metaphorical or metonymic? In discussing the idiom *keep an eye on*, Steen et al. (2010b: 82) claim that the contextual meaning of looking after someone does not necessarily imply watching, but the sense of watching is basic to the metaphorical meaning. As a result, the metaphorical and metonymic interpretations are both possible, and MIPVU uses the label WIDLII (When In Doubt, Leave It In) to capture ambiguous words or word sequences. Ambiguity can arise because there is not enough contextual knowledge to determine their exact intended meaning, such as *driven up the bumpy Forest Drive to East Kielder Farm*, where *up* could literally refer to a higher location or metaphorically denote 'further along a path', or *gasp for breath* and *turn your shoulder*, where the designated action may or may not have taken place (Steen et al. 2010b: 34, 49). Metaphor and metonymy are not mutually exclusive options (Steen et al. 2010b: 38). Similarly, *look out* can be considered metaphorical or metonymic.

Look out

Contextual sense: 'provide care' (cf. *look out for* MD2).

Basic sense: MD1 'used for warning someone to be careful, especially because they are likely to have an accident'.

Decision: WIDLII.

For

Contextual sense: MD1 'intended to help or benefit someone/something'.

Basic sense: ?

Decision: not metaphor (see the discussion of *make up for* above).

Two more phrasal verbs include the particle *out*: *hammer out* and *find out*. The former is used with an unusual collocate in (12), where what you hammer out is luck, while the sense definition MD1 'to reach a decision or agreement after discussing it or arguing about it for a long time' implies that typical noun collocates are semantically related to *agreement* or *decision*. The example in *Macmillan* includes *deal*.

- (12) So we can hammer out luck with the help of lot of working on ourselves.

Hammer can be perceived as 'do something with great effort, work intensively' while *out* means 'created out of non-existence'. The sense description MD1 'to reach a decision or agreement after discussing it or arguing about it for a long time' implies that *hammer* could be assigned the meaning 'discuss or argue about sth for a long time', but in the context of (12) this does not work. Abstract *luck* is compared to a concrete object that can be created by hammering, as a result of which the object is created, i.e. changes from the state of nonexistence into existence. STATES ARE CONTAINERS is a common metaphor. Rudzka-Ostyn (2003: 25) notes that states of non-existence can be conceptualised as containers, and *out* expresses the idea that the object moves out of this state.⁹

⁹ Interestingly, *out* can also refer to the change from the state of existence to the state of non-existence (Rudzka-Ostyn 2003: 22, Lindstromberg 2010: 41, Luo 2019: 73).

Hammer

Contextual sense: ‘do sth with great effort’

Basic sense: MD1a to hit something hard or many times’.

Decision: metaphor.

Out

Contextual sense: ‘created’ (not in MD, the closest sense is MD6 ‘used for saying that a new product, book, record etc. is available for people to buy’).

Basic sense: MD1 ‘when you leave a place’, MD2 ‘when something is removed from where it was’, MD3 ‘outside’.

Decision: metaphor.

Out in (13) is also based on the metaphor STATES ARE CONTAINERS. Since *find* has its basic meaning, it could be argued that *out* is semantically empty or that it forms a lexical unit with *find*. Cognitive approaches, nevertheless, claim that *out* denotes the change from ‘unknown’ to ‘known’ (Rudzka-Ostyn 2003: 19, Lindstromberg 2010: 42). *Out* here is also motivated by the KNOWING IS SEEING metaphor (Luo 2019: 54, Mahpeykar and Tyler 2015: 28). The same event of a hitherto hidden piece of information being revealed is expressed from the doer’s point of view in *find* and from the affected abstract entity’s point of view in *out*.

(13) ... to find out who was the guilty it is useful to check cameras.

Macmillan conflates concrete and abstract senses of *find*. As can be seen below, the basic and contextual senses have the same number. Therefore, the relation between them cannot be metaphorical.

Find

Contextual sense: MD1c ‘to discover a fact or piece of information’.

Basic sense: MD1 ‘to discover something, or to see where it is by searching for it’.

Decision: not metaphor.

Out

Contextual sense: ‘discovered, revealed’.

Basic sense: MD1 ‘when you leave a place’, MD2 ‘when something is removed from where it was’, MD3 ‘outside’.

Decision: metaphor.

4.5 Take away

Just as *put down* in (10), *take away* in (14) is also a phrasal verb embedded in an idiom. It is a calque from the writer’s L1 (Georgian) and denotes the unpredictability of fate and the notion that fortune easily changes.

(14) Success that comes from pure luck and no hard work can be taken away with wind.

Georgian idiomatic expressions can be found in two major sources: *The Database of Georgian Idioms and Proverbs*, where equivalents are provided in English and the *Online Dictionary of Idioms*, which only gives definitions in the Georgian language. There are two entries relevant to *taken away with wind* in *The Database of Georgian Idioms and Proverbs*. The first one is given in (15).

- (15) *k'ar-is motanil-s, k'ari caiḡeb-s.*
 wind-GEN brought, wind-NOM take-it-will
 ‘The wind will take away what is brought by the wind.’

The English equivalents are *Easy come, easy go*, *Lightly won, lightly gone*, *A thing easy to get is easy to lose*. The second expression is illustrated below.

- (16) *k'ar-is arc' motanili mind-a, arc' gatanili.*
 wind-GEN neither brought want-I neither taken out
 ‘I do not want anything brought by the wind, nor something taken out by the wind.’

The equivalents of the second entry are very similar: ‘Light come, light go’, ‘Lightly won, lightly gone’, ‘A thing easy to get is easy to lose’.

There is one entry (showing alternative verbs) in the *Online Dictionary of Idioms*:

- (17) *k'ar-it' moberili (k'ar-is motanili)*
 wind-INSTR blown (wind-GEN brought)
 ‘wind-blown (wind-brought)’

The meaning of the expression is defined as ‘easily obtained’, ‘easily achieved’. The action of taking away corresponds to the event of causing to disappear, whereby *take* and *away* are considered to form a single unit. *With wind* denotes the ease with which your luck can disappear.

Take away

Contextual sense: ‘cause sth to disappear’.

Basic sense: MD9 ‘to remove something’.

Decision: metaphor.

With wind

Contextual sense: ‘easily’, ‘unpredictably’.

Basic sense: ‘with wind’.

Decision: metaphor.

4.6 Tell apart

Tell apart (MD1 ‘to recognize the difference between two people or things that are very similar’) in (18) is decomposable because *tell* has the sense ‘recognize’, while *apart* corresponds to ‘different’. The relation between the basic sense of communication and the contextual sense of mental recognition is metonymic, since the latter is a prerequisite to the former (RESULT FOR REASON). *Tell* has two similar sense definitions in *Macmillan*: MD3a ‘to

recognize the difference between one person or thing and another’ and MD3 ‘to recognize something as a result of knowledge, experience, or evidence’. The numbering shows that these are treated as subtypes of what is essentially one sense. MIPVU considers subtypes to be the same sense, and it does not affect decisions of metaphorical status whether we choose one or the other meaning for the contextual sense. From the point of view of meaning distribution, however, selecting one or the other may have consequences in terms of the specific sense of the other component, the particle *apart*.

(18) The game producers offer the product that are hard to tell apart from real environment.

If *tell* is interpreted as ‘recognize the difference’ (MD3a), the particle *apart* might be argued to add nothing to the meaning of the verb. Cognitive frameworks do not support this solution. An alternative would be to attach to the particle the meaning ‘difference’ or ‘different’, which would result in repetition of the same meaning element in the verb and the particle. This is not problematic in itself because reiterative phrasal verbs such as *rise up* or *sit down* do occur (Rodríguez-Puente 2012: 74). In addition, one of the examples in *Macmillan* also shows repetition in language use outside phrasal verbs: *These days it’s hard to tell the difference between political parties.*¹⁰ A third analysis assigns *tell* the sense ‘recognize sth as a result of knowledge, experience, or evidence’ (MD3), a more schematic version of MD3a. The syntactic structure seen in (18) is listed under MD3a in *Macmillan*.

The assignment of ‘difference’ to *apart* could raise some objections, since a nominal sense usually expressed by nouns is attached to a prepositional/adverbial component. Instead of this nominal sense, an adjectival sense could be posited: MD6 ‘if two people, opinions, or ways of living are far apart, they are very different’. This perhaps reduces the discrepancy, though does not resolve it, between the category of the particle and the type of meaning because ‘different’ is felt closer to an adverbial sense than ‘difference’. As particles often highlight the resulting states, the stative adjectival meaning seems to be more appropriate.

Tell

Contextual sense: MD3 ‘recognize sth as a result of knowledge, experience, or evidence’, MD3a ‘recognize the difference’.

Basic sense: MD1 ‘to give information to someone’.

Decision: not metaphor metonymy.

Apart

Contextual sense: MD6 ‘if two people, opinions, or ways of living are far apart, they are very different’.

Basic sense: MD1 ‘if two people or things are apart, there is a space between them’, MD5 ‘if you pull two things or people apart, you separate them’

Decision: metaphor.

¹⁰ https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/tell_1

4.7 Summary of phrasal verb findings

The analysis of 13 phrasal verbs has shown that most of the time their meaning is motivated; therefore, they can be broken down into lexical units. Of the 14 instances, ten occurrences of phrasal verbs are decomposable, while four are treated as units. The decomposition of phrasal verbs illustrated that the particle and the verb are frequently independently meaningful. However, some challenges emerged, such as the precise identification of the contextual sense and the mismatch between the type of sense and the part of speech category. The metaphorical sense expressed by a particle may be particularly difficult to determine. Some difficulties such as the identification of the contextual sense and basic sense and categorising their relation are shared between the original and modified MIPVU.

5 Analysis: idioms

The following idiomatic expressions were found in the essays:

- (19) Success that comes from pure luck and no hard work can be taken away with wind.
- (20) They are waiting for a wolf to eat them, otherwise they don't believe and study from others examples.
- (21) We should all do our part to make sure the world is safe for our children.
- (22) As an alternative, graffiti painter can be hired by government to paint old, bad-looking wall and give them new breathing.
- (23) This means that that they don't put down roots in the community.
- (24) So when neighbours go on vocation no one is keeping an eye on their house.
- (25) They don't keep a friendly eye on their children.
- (26) I take the view that, hard work and luck go hand in hand.

The idioms *be taken away with wind* and *put down roots* contain phrasal verbs, which have been analysed above. Two idioms were influenced by L1: *be taken away with wind* in (19), discussed above, and *wait for the wolf to eat them* in (20). There is one entry with similar lexical constituents in the *Online Dictionary of Idioms*.

- (27) *Mgel-ma šečam-os*
 Wolf-ERG eat-it-will
 'Let her/him be eaten by the wolf'

The expression is paraphrased as 'to die', 'to perish' and is used as a curse in connection with people or animals. The wolf in Georgian and European culture symbolises something bad. The *wolf* in (20) corresponds to death or something that can harm your health. When you are waiting for a wolf to eat you, you are doing nothing to avoid a disaster.

Wait (for)

Contextual sense: 'fail to prevent'.

Basic sense: MD1 'to stay in one place because you expect or hope that something will happen'.

Decision: metaphor.

Wolf

Contextual sense: ‘death, sth harmful to health’.

Basic sense: MD1 ‘a wild animal similar to a large dog that lives in groups’.

Decision: metaphor.

Eat

Contextual sense: ‘affect negatively’

Basic sense: MD1 ‘to put food into your mouth and swallow it’

Decision: metaphor.

In the example (21) *do our part* carries the meaning ‘to do what you can to help, or to do your part of what has to be done’ (MD1 *do your bit*).¹¹ *Do* retains its literal meaning, *our* also has its basic sense, and *part* denotes your individual contribution to some activity. For the noun *part* *Macmillan* offers the sense ‘the way in which someone is involved in an activity or event and the effect they have on what happens’ (MD6), which is not exactly the same as the contextual sense. The contextual sense highlights your ability or obligation, while MD6 emphasises your role in an activity.

Do

Contextual sense: MD3 ‘perform an action, activity, or job’.

Basic sense: same as contextual.

Decision: not metaphor.

Our

Contextual sense: MD1 ‘belonging to or connected with you and the group that you are a part of, when you are the person speaking or writing’.

Basic sense: same as contextual.

Decision: not metaphor.

Part

Contextual sense: what you can (do) to help, or (to do) your part of what has to be done (not in MD).

Basic sense: MD1 ‘one of the pieces, sections, aspects etc that something consists of’.

Decision: metaphor.

In (22), *give them new breathing* is probably used as the writer’s version of the phrase *breathe new life into something* and carries the meaning ‘to provide something with new ideas, new energy etc, so that it improves and is more likely to be successful again’ (MD1 *breathe (new) life into something*). The reason why the writer used this form might be that she was influenced by another idiom that has the morphologically related word *breathing*: *give somebody breathing space*. There is an obvious correspondence between providing a wall with a new appearance and providing something with new ideas or new energy, as a result of which the wall/something improves.

¹¹ *Do your part* can be found in the form *do your bit* in *Macmillan*.

Give (sb)

Contextual sense: MD4 ‘to cause a general result or effect’.

Basic sense: MD1 ‘to put something in someone’s hand, or to pass something to someone’.

Decision: metaphor.

New

Contextual sense: MD2 ‘replacing something that you no longer have or something that is no longer useful’.

Basic sense: same as contextual.

Decision: not metaphor.

Breathing

Contextual sense: ‘a (new) look/appearance or use’ (not in MD).

Basic sense: MD1 ‘the process of taking air into the body and letting it out again, or the sound of this’.

Decision: metaphor.

Keep an eye on in (24) is coded WIDLII by Steen et al. (2010b: 82) because it can be interpreted metaphorically or metonymically. This expression can have a literal meaning in the sense that it is certainly intended to refer to the physical act of watching. On the other hand, it might be obvious from some contexts that the phrase does not denote physical seeing because taking care is less directly connected to vision. As Steen et al. (2010b: 82) explain, although the sense ‘to look after someone or something’ does not necessarily presuppose literal watching, this literal meaning is basic to the metaphorical meaning. When coding idioms for metaphoricity, Steen et al. (2010b: 82) analyse “all the significant words”, which means that only lexical words are examined for metaphoricity, but function words (*an* in *keep an eye on* or *your* in *put your foot down*) are considered literal (Steen et al. 2010b: 82–83).

Keep an eye on could have two alternative analyses, shown below. One regards it as a holistic unit, while the other considers *keep* and *on* metaphors and *eye* metonymy. The original MIPVU chooses the second option, while we prefer the first analysis and view the idiom as nondecomposable. Despite the metonymic relation between eye and looking, it is argued that the words *keep an eye* together convey the notion of looking and therefore taking care.¹²

Analysis I:

Keep an eye on

Contextual sense: MD1 ‘to look after someone or something’.

Basic sense: MD1 ‘to look after someone or something’.

Decision: WIDLII.

¹² Note that the decomposition analysis posits for *eye* a contextual sense that can be viewed as fundamentally nominal, not verbal, i.e. *eye* means ‘the action of looking’ rather than ‘to look’.

Analysis II:

Keep

Contextual sense: ‘maintain’ (not in MD).

Basic sense: MD1a ‘to make someone or something stay in a state, position, or place’.

Decision: metaphor.

An

Contextual sense: MD1 used instead of ‘a’ when the next word begins with a vowel sound.

Basic sense: MD1 used instead of ‘a’ when the next word begins with a vowel sound.

Decision: not metaphor.

Eye

Contextual sense: MD4 ‘used for saying that someone is looking at a person or thing’.

Basic sense: MD1 ‘one of the two body parts in your face that you use for seeing’.

Decision: metonymy.

On

Contextual sense: MD8 ‘if your eyes are on someone or something, you are looking at them’.

Basic sense: MD1 ‘touching a surface or an object’.

Decision: metaphor.

The same idiom occurs in a modified form in (25). What is interesting about this use is that the adjective *friendly* modifies the idiom noun *eye* syntactically, but it tells us something about the action, so that it modifies the whole idiom semantically. This type of modification has been noted in the literature before (Ernst 1980, Sathi 2007, Cserép 2010). The contextual sense of *friendly* can be paraphrased as ‘in a friendly way, as a friend’, which is an adverbial sense that is attached to an adjective, a mismatch between lexical categories. Nevertheless, we argue that such mismatches should sometimes be tolerated. Since *friendly* is not an integral part of the idiom, it has to be judged as an independent lexical unit regardless of the decomposability of the idiom. It is classified as not metaphorical, with the basic sense paraphrased as ‘someone who is friendly is always pleasant and helpful towards other people’ (*friendly* MD1).

Go hand in hand (MD1 ‘to happen or exist together’) in (26) is partially decomposable.

Go

Contextual sense: MD4 ‘to happen in a particular way’.

Basic sense: MD1 ‘to move or travel to a place that is away from where you are now’.

Decision: metaphor.

Hand in hand

Contextual sense: ‘together’ (not in MD)

Basic sense: ‘hand in hand, holding each other’s hand’

Decision: metaphor

Hand in hand without *go* is not listed in *Macmillan*, but it can be found in *Longman* with the verb in brackets: (*go*) *hand in hand* ‘if two things go hand in hand, they are closely connected’

(*hand in hand* LDa). The dictionary also offers a literal sense: ‘if two people walk, stand etc hand in hand, they walk, stand etc while they are holding each other’s hand’ (*hand in hand* LDb). Since *hand* has no figurative sense independent of the whole unit, the phrase is nondecomposable. The unmodified MIPVU protocol would encounter the problem of having to determine basic and contextual senses for each component.

5.1 Summary of idiom findings

The analysis of 8 idiomatic occurrences has shown that idioms are not always decomposable; therefore, they should be treated as divisible or not according to their decomposability. Some expressions were not fully decomposable (*put down roots*, *be taken away with wind*) lending support to the continuum view of decomposability. Some idioms showed L1 influence, and L2 learners produced mostly correct idioms, sometimes creative forms and occasionally errors (*give them new breathing*).

6 Conclusion

The present study has provided comprehensive analyses of phrasal verbs and idioms in essays containing about 3000 lexical units written by Georgian B1-B2 learners of English. The major observation of our study is that the MIPVU protocol should be modified in order to handle multiword units in accordance with their decomposability. In particular, only non-decomposable phrasal verbs should be treated as single units. In addition, nondecomposable idioms should be judged by considering the whole unit, based on the compositional and figurative interpretations of the entire expression. This slight deviation from the MIPVU protocol allowed us to make better-established claims about the semantic structure of lexical units. The decomposition of phrasal verbs frequently results in an independently meaningful particle and a verb. For instance, *on* can denote continuation of an activity (*move on*, *go on*), or *out* refers to the change from a state of being unknown or non-existent to being discovered or existing (*find out*, *hammer out*). One of our findings is that the particle is sometimes best paraphrased with a meaning that does not match its word class, such as *apart* ‘different’ in *tell apart*, or *out* ‘discovered, revealed’ in *find out*. The same mismatch is occasionally found in idioms with external modification (*keep a friendly eye*). Furthermore, the verb in phrasal verbs can have an unusual grammatical subcategory, as the intransitive *make* in *make up for*. All this requires the cautious application of the word-class and grammatical restrictions stipulated by MIPVU. As for idioms, some of them turned out to be nondecomposable or not fully decomposable (*keep an eye on*, *put down roots*, *go hand in hand*). The findings of this study suggest that special attention needs to be paid to multiword units produced by learners of English because they tend to have unconventional meanings or grammatical patterns, sometimes influenced by L1.

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Attila Cserép
 Department of English Linguistics
 Institute of English and American Studies
 University of Debrecen
 4032 Debrecen, Egyetem tér 1.
 Email: cserep.attila@arts.unideb.hu

Tamari Narimanishvili
 University of Debrecen, Doctoral School of Linguistics
 4032 Debrecen, Egyetem tér 1.
 Email: tamari.narimanishvili@arts.unideb.hu