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Introduction: Formulaic Language and New Data

1 Preliminary Remarks: What Do We Know?

The existence of formulaic patterns in the widest sense (including phrasemes, constructions, non-literal units and/or other prefabs) has been hypothetically attested to all the languages in the world. Probably the most extensive attempt to grasp the complex nature of such utterances was undertaken within the framework of phraseology. The complexity was reflected already in the defining criteria of phrasemes. According to Burger (2015: 14–15), phrasemes are polylexical items that must consist of at least two constituents, have a more or less stable form in which they are frequently reproduced by speakers and can (but don't have to) be idiomatic in meaning. Research was traditionally focused mainly on one type of polylexical word combination, namely idioms such as *to spill the beans* or *to break the ice*, because they met all the criteria mentioned above and were therefore considered to be at the centre of the phraseological system.

But as newer linguistic theories such as usage-based approaches to Construction Grammar (Fillmore 1988; Goldberg 1995), corpus linguistics (Steyer 2013) or text and discourse studies (cf. most recently Stumpf and Filatkina 2018) show, the formulaic character of human communication reaches far beyond the items that can meet the criteria of phrasemes (Stein and Stumpf 2019). It encompasses single word conventionalised structures such as routine formulae like *and?*, *congratulations!*, *frankly (speaking)*, adverbial/prepositional constructions (*notwithstanding*), word formation, syntax on the one hand and formulaic text genres such as contracts, business correspondence, newsletters, recipes, announcements etc. on the other. Language acquisition (Tomasello 2003) and language loss (Wray 2008, 2012) are strongly interwoven with formulaic patterns. In second language teaching, too, formulaic items are now considered a key aspect of language competence (Lewis 1993). This new understanding of the constitutive role of formulaic patterns is the first central starting point of the current volume.

The second point concerns the notion of "new data". At first sight, the appeal for inclusion of "new empirical data" might seem to be not so new for modern linguistic research. It has been in demand since the development of corpus and

computer linguistics in the 1960s. However, the appeal was restricted to the analysis of large text corpora that until now continue to consist (not exclusively but predominantly) of written data from standard languages. Even within the framework of the above-mentioned newer paradigms, systematic research has been focused on only a few European standard languages with a rich literary tradition and a predominantly written norm. It was on the basis of these data that the theoretical framework, classification criteria and methodological approaches of various research directions dealing with formulaic language were developed. The most recent proof of this statement can be found in Häcki Buhofer's introduction to volume 9 of the "Yearbook of Phraseology":

> Linguistic research has dealt with the semantics of lexics in general and of phraseology in specific time and again, and rightly so. The present volume offers the desired spectrum as far as the languages examined are concerned, by presenting articles on Russian, English and others. At the same time, studies on rare and small languages and languages in the process of getting extinct remain a continuing desideratum. While quite a number of studies have investigated such languages from a general point of view, only few have taken on a phraseological perspective.
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> (Häcki Buhofer 2018: 1)

The current volume does not neglect the necessity and importance of corpus based approaches but it goes far beyond that and suggests a shift of focus by placing other new data at the center of scholarly research. Within the framework of this volume, the "new data" are understood as data from 1) areally limited and lesser-used languages, 2) languages spoken outside Europe, 3) linguistic varieties used in spoken domains and/or regarded as 'conceptually oral' and 4) data from the earlier/historical stages of language development. As first studies show, the systematic inclusion of these data challenges the existing postulates of research on formulaic patterns at both theoretical and methodological levels in a different way from the challenges that corpus-driven and corpus-based approaches brought decades ago. What we already know now is that, at the theoretical level, the challenges affect primarily the role of linguistic genetic affiliation, intertextuality, variation/modification, normatisation/codification, regularity/analogy and frequency in the process of formulaic language formation. In what follows, we give a short outline of available scholarly knowledge for each of these phenomena.

1.1 Genetic Affiliation and Intertextuality

The most extensive attempt to include "new data" into the research on formulaic language was Elisabeth Piirainen's project "Widespread Idioms in Europe and Beyond (WI)" (Piirainen 2012, 2016). It was dedicated to the classification of cultural phenomena in idioms of modern language varieties and had access to 78 modern standard and lesser-used languages from all language families as well as dialects. The project identified 470 idioms as similar and widely known. Currently, a similarly large-scale project devoted to dialects, spoken data and/or historical languages of the mediaeval and early modern periods does not exist.

Two results of the WI-project are of particular importance. Firstly, earlier ideas that the same genetic affiliation of two or more languages could explain a similarity on the level of idioms have been disproven. These ideas disregard the fact that the origin of the majority of idioms does not go back to a common "proto-language" of an early past. As becomes obvious, distribution crosses genetic boundaries. Secondly, the concept of a "common (European) cultural heritage", which was also often used for explanation of similarities in earlier works, requires a more detailed investigation. Until now, cultural traditions from Classical Antiquity, Christianity (the Bible), the Renaissance, Humanism, and the Enlightenment have been included in this term. Though the role of these domains remains central, other cultural domains such as folk narratives, jokes and legends appear to be significant as well, particularly for formulaic patterns in dialects, areally restricted, lesser-used and/or predominantly orally used languages. These domains have produced numerous widespread idioms (*to fight like cat and dog*, *to shed crocodile tears*) and have not yet been listed under the concept of "common (European) cultural heritage". Today's convergence of idioms is the product of an intense exchange of thoughts and ideas among educated language users that could only have been based on writing and reading books in historical times. This shared knowledge of widely disseminated written and oral texts led to and supported the establishment of cultural memory and many formulaic patterns such as idioms and proverbs. The WI-project described this phenomenon using the term *intertextuality* and called for its precise validation in individual languages, particularly those outside of Europe, as well as dialects and lesser-used languages (Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen 2005; Piirainen 2012: 520).

1.2 Variation and Modification

One of the major achievements of phraseological research in recent years is the understanding that even highly idiomatic units, such as *to cast pearls before*

swine, are not as fixed as has previously been thought. As the first results of diachronic studies show, at the historical stages of a language, fixedness or stability can only be attributed to a basic structure underlying a formulaic pattern. The patterns that might be considered formulaic in a certain language at the current point in time are always products of a complex process of change, which is inherently enabled by variation. However, at the current state of international research, for the majority of languages, systematic studies into the diachronic processes of the emergence of what is considered formulaic in modern languages face methodological difficulties, a theoretical vacuum and most importantly a lack of empirical data (Filatkina 2012, 2013, 2018a, b, c). Since its establishment in the 19th century, historical linguistics was strongly focused on the description of various but single and isolated linguistic domains such as phonetics, grammar or the lexicon. The variation and change of formulaic patterns as one basic condition of human communication remain a fundamental research question for all languages without exception and are often completely neglected, even in publications claiming the status of reference works on language change (for a detailed overview cf. Filatkina 2018c: 57–96).

As shown in Filatkina (2013) and Piirainen (2000), formulaic patterns undergo diachronic changes at absolutely all levels: structure, semantics, pragmatics, ways of syntactic contextualization, distribution in texts, stylistic connotations, frequency of use, degree of familiarity, cultural image component and so on. However, the assumption that formulaic patterns emerge due to a decline in variation should be reconsidered. Though the pivotal role of the decline in variation has been most clearly demonstrated for orthographical (Kohrt 1998), phonetic (Kohrt 1998) and morphological (Werner 1998) norms, it does not appear to be relevant to formulaic patterns. On the contrary, variation can be an indication of the completion of a conventionalisation process and the establishment of a new utterance: Only after a pattern has reached a high degree of fixedness and conventionalisation, can it become subject to variation and/or modification by language speakers and still remain recognisable and understandable for them (cf. Burger 2012 for collocations in German).

Similar research results come from the first works on varieties, dialects and colloquial languages handed down orally, including that of Luxembourg, which is distinguished by its dialectal origin and the domain of orality. Piirainen (in this volume) sums up the findings very precisely:

> [They] showed deviations from the hitherto established theories, e.g. regarding the stability or variability of idioms, the so-called anthropocentrism, usage restrictions of idioms

(among them gender restrictions which are due to certain images), as well as specific pragmatic functions of conventional word plays, all of which up to that time had not been known to this extent.

Synchronic mechanisms of variation and/or modification have been studied in detail within the framework of phraseology, particularly using data from standard English(es), German, Russian, French, Italian and Spanish.[1] Despite the numerous studies, no theoretically viable distinction between variation and modification has been reached so far (Pfeiffer 2016, 2017, 2018, Pfeiffer and Schiegg, in this volume). The former is generally understood as a conventional and regular phenomenon that is independent of particular contexts and compatible with the norms of usage of a given language. The different variants are usually not only expected to occur with a certain frequency, but also to be stored in the mental lexicon and should thus be codified in dictionaries. By contrast, modification is defined as an intentional and conscious intervention by a speaker into a common form and/or meaning of a formula. Modifications represent an occasional phenomenon that occurs in a specific context. Thus, they allow for unexpected semantic-pragmatic effects on the part of the hearer and are used creatively as a favourable tool of wordplay, e.g. in mass media headlines, fiction or commercials. The functions and mechanisms of modifications have been described in detail for a relatively small number of written standard languages. Once again, however, lesser-used languages, oral communication and dialects (Piirainen 1995, 2007, 2008) continue to be underrepresented in this research area. The same holds for historical stages of modern languages (cf. however Pfeiffer and Schiegg, in this volume, for 19th century German lower class letter writing).

1.3 Normatisation and Codification

The decline of variation in the process of emerging phonetic, morphological and orthographic conventions in language use has often been attributed to the normative influence of dictionaries and grammar books. This is where the decline predominantly took place as the lack of variation was treated as a necessary characteristic of language norms in historical times. With regard to formulaic patterns, this does not hold true as dictionaries, historical collections of proverbs and idioms as well as chapters dedicated to formulaic patterns in early grammar

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1 For reasons of space, only a small selection of scholarly work can be given here: Burger (2015); Dobrovol'skij (2013); Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2009); Langlotz (2006); Pfeiffer (2018); Sabban (1998).

treatises have been compiled with rather different goals from that of a prescriptive establishment of norms (Filatkina 2016; Hundt 2000; Moulin 2016). Therefore, older texts and collections differ substantially with regard to the formulaic patterns they include (cf. Filatkina 2018c: 97–127 and 128–141 for Old High German). The same holds true for dialectal, areally restricted data and phrasemes in lesser-used languages where dictionaries and grammar books might not exist at all (Piirainen 2007, 2008).

1.4 Regularity and Analogy

In the same way, the explanation of the development of formulaic patterns and their variation just as a case of regularity and analogy would be a simplification of the actual state of affairs. Norm conflicts and preservation of lexical and/or grammatical constituents that have to be regarded as obsolete or irregular from the point of view of free language use are widespread phenomena in the formation of formulaic patterns. A corpus based attempt to prove the high degree of "regular irregularity" (in terms of norm conflicts and/or preservation of obsolete lexical/grammatical constituents) in the emergence of formulaic patterns is undertaken in Stumpf (2015, 2018, 2019) and based on data from standard modern German.

Within the framework of Construction Grammar, variation, regularity and analogy are considered intrinsic features of constructions (Goldberg 2003: 221–222). Variation is governed by the principles of inheritance, analogy and family resemblance, meaning semantic or phonological similarity between new and existing forms, relational knowledge and structural alignment. The conflict between these principles should allow for creativity, especially in predominantly oral communication, but this point has not yet been made clear. Bybee (2010: 58) uses the above mentioned principles for a fine-grained analysis of the variation potential of the construction *it drives me* X$_{adj.}$, but does not discuss a novel utterance like *it drives me happy* as a possible creative modification (a construct?) in certain contexts. In her eyes, it is just unlikely because – due to analogy and family resemblance principle – the *drives*-construction goes with adjectives and phrases indicating madness or insanity. Research into the micro-steps of variation and particularly the role of regularity, analogy and creative modifications[2] in new sources as defined in the current volume still requires a lot of attention in

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2 From the constructionist point of view, the role of creative modifications is studied in Stumpf (2016) using data from modern German.

order to satisfy the far-reaching claim of Construction Grammar "to account for the full range of facts about language, without assuming that a particular subset of the data is part of a privileged 'core'" (Goldberg 2003: 219).

1.5 Frequency

Theories of language variation and change (morphological, typological, lexical and semantic) stress the pivotal role of frequency in any process of emergence of new items. It is a well known fact that in the process of lexicon expansion, for example, a sporadic innovation only has a chance of entering the lexicon if it is supported by a sufficient number of speakers, i.e. if they frequently use the item in a new form and/or meaning and function. It goes without saying that the emergence of formulaic patterns involves frequency. But another fact has to be taken into account as well: Formulaic patterns are constitutive elements of human communication only with regard to their type frequency; by contrast, their token frequency is generally low. In other words: A certain degree of formulaicity can be attested to absolutely any written text or oral communicative act because any of these sources contain different types of formulaic patterns (*type frequency*). The problem is that each type might occur only once (*token frequency*).

What seems to be a crucial factor for the emergence of formulaic patterns is not so much just the frequent use of a pattern but its frequent use in a specific situation of communication – oral or written! – as well as in a specific (cultural) text/discourse tradition (Stumpf and Kreuz 2016; Stumpf and Filatkina 2018). The link between a formulaic pattern and a context ensures that speakers resort to appropriate (even the most irregular!) units in respective situations. Evidence for such links has been already provided from different research perspectives and various modern languages (cf. Feilke 1994: 226 for German; Koch 1997 for French; Wray 2009: 36 and Wray and Perkins 2000: 7 for English), recently also within the fine-grained concept of construction discourse and the notion of discourse patterns in Östman (2005, 2015). The "new sources", particularly in the sense of spoken data, areally restricted or lesser-used languages, seem to support this evidence even more strongly. Therefore, more research needs to be forthcoming here.

2 Where Do We Go from Here? – This Volume

Departing from these briefly sketched already available research findings, the current volume tackles the following questions:

– What is formulaic in the "new types" of languages, varieties and dialects?
– Are the criteria developed within the framework of traditional phraseological research (e.g. fixedness, idiomaticity) applicable to "new data"?
– Can any specific types of formulaic patterns and/or any specific features (semantic, structural, pragmatic etc.) of regular (already known) types of formulaic patterns be observed and how do they emerge?
– What methodological difficulties need to be overcome when dealing with "new data"?

2.1 Lesser-Used and Areally Limited Languages

The first part of the volume brings together studies based on the data from areally limited and lesser-used languages. *Elisabeth Piirainen's* contribution provides the framework for this section and aims to bring together phraseological research and studies on formulaic and figurative language of lesser-used, mainly unwritten languages, from anthropology and ethnology. The term *lesser-used languages* is applied generically "for smaller and minority languages, which show a downward trend of influence" (Piirainen, in this volume) and which do not fulfill the criteria for their intergenerational transmission. In the context of the article, the term covers non-Western minority languages of the Austronesian language groups (Kilivila and Kewa), Basque as an isolate spoken in several varieties on both sides of the Western Pyrenees, Flathead Salish, a critically endangered American Indian variety in Montana, USA, and Inari Saami, a declining minority language on the edge of Northern Europe; some examples are taken from ethnic African languages. The study investigates body-part semiotizations, conceptual metaphors and pragmatic functions of figurative units in such languages. The results are threefold: Firstly, the inclusion of new, previously unresearched languages clearly shows that the symbolic value of semiotized body parts and inner organs is significantly different from that known in Western written languages. Secondly, the postulate of universality of such conceptual metaphors as TIME IS MONEY or UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING cannot be sustained. Thirdly, the entire complex of figurative secret languages, "veiled languages" and "tabooed languages" in Papua New Guinea appears to have no equivalent in the Western world.

Areal variation and change in oral modern German is studied by *Stephan Elspaß*. The novelty of this topic is remarkable as, at least to our knowledge, there is a complete lack of studies on phraseological change both in contemporary German and in any other modern language. Elspaß refers to data that has been obtained in three recent research projects on German areal linguistics: *Atlas zur deutschen Alltagssprache* (AdA) 'Atlas of colloquial German vernacular' (with internet survey data from mostly spoken regional vernaculars), *Variantenwörterbuch des Deutschen* (VWB) 'Dictionary of lexical variation in German' and the *Variantengrammatik des Standarddeutschen* (VG) 'Regional variation in the grammar of Standard German' (with data from large regionally-balanced corpora of the written Standard German in Germany, Austria and Switzerland). These new data are compared with data from the *Wortatlas der deutschen Umgangssprachen* (WDU) 'Word Atlas of colloquial German', collected in the 1970s and 1980s, and with the findings in Piirainen (2009). The study reveals a number of developments in the areal distribution of phrasemes both on the level of colloquial speech and in standard written German which have occurred in recent decades. In addition to his findings on phraseological change, Elspaß also shows a) that there are significant differences between awareness and actual usage of phraseological units and b) that the representation of areal phraseological variation in dictionaries is often misleading or even incorrect. This applies particularly to the phraseological dictionary edited by Duden (Duden 11), while the situation is considerably better for the VWB.

Basque collocations formed by onomatopoeia and verbs in a corpus of translated literary texts are the subject of investigation in *Zuriñe Sanz-Villar's* contribution. The Basque language has only a weak tradition of written literature and its standard variety only a short history. As Sanz-Villar notes, there has been no systematic research in the field of Basque phraseology and even less attention has been paid to the study of the translation of phraseological units from/into Basque. The benefit of the inclusion of Basque into research on formulaic language already becomes apparent at the typological level: Even though Basque phraseology still remains underinvestigated, previous research has already identified collocations formed by a partially or totally reduplicated onomatopoeia and a verb as a special type of formulaic pattern in Basque. Sanz-Villar selected 66 types and 162 tokens semi-automatically from her corpus and queried them in the TraceAligner program for the subsequent translation analysis. The translation analysis in its turn has shown that, despite the predominance of the translation option when the counterpart of the Basque collocation is a single verb in the German source text, the nuances hidden behind it are of great significance from a

translation point of view; indirect translations are not an exception but rather a widespread reality in German-into-Basque translations.

2.2 Languages Spoken outside Europe

Three contributions in Part II of the current volume offer insights on formulaic language from the perspective of three languages spoken outside Europe: Korean (Buerki), Classical Arabic (Eisa) and spoken Jordanian Arabic (Badarneh).

Andreas Buerki tackles the questions how formulaicity may be understood across typologically different languages and whether indeed there is a concept of formulaic language that applies across languages. Using a new data set consisting of topically matched corpora in three typologically different languages (Korean, German and English) and a constructionist view of linguistic signs, this study proposes a quantitatively founded statement that formulaic language has to be regarded as a language-specific phenomenon. The conclusion results from the observation that though formulaic patterns are in evidence in a very large number of languages, their density of occurrence varies greatly between languages of different types. A cross-linguistically viable concept of formulaic language cannot be centred at any particular structural level (such as sequences of words, phrases or polylexicality) and has to incorporate more abstract elements specified at varying levels of schematicity. Buerki's broader view on formulaic language coincides with the perspective of the current volume regarding the place of formulaic patterns in overall theories of language: Such utterances cannot be ignored as insignificant grammatical exceptions or treated marginally as only random stylistic/aesthetic phenomena; rather, they should be recognised as equally prominent linguistic means of communication in an integrative model of language.

The contribution of *Abdullah Eisa* is based on similar ideas and demonstrates the difficulties that emerge when typological criteria of formulaic patterns established on the data of standard languages (English) are to be applied to Arabic phraseology. The criteria in question are the notion of word, polylexicality, flexibility, frequency, adjacency and idiomaticity/semantic unity. Even though these criteria have been described as problematic also in the framework of traditional research on the phraseology of standard written languages, Eisa's study makes it clear that "new data" shed light on more general issues and can illuminate what is required for a complete account of linguistic variety and complexity.

The third study in this part of the book explores the use of politeness formulaic expressions in everyday social interaction in colloquial Jordanian Arabic.

What makes the contribution of *Muhammad A. Bardaneh* interesting for the current volume is not only the novelty of the data set but also the results of the analysis. On the one hand, the studied formulaic expressions pose no theoretical problems for their description within the well-known concept of positive and negative politeness. Positive formulae in Jordanian Arabic are used in interactional and transactional contexts and emphasize solidarity and communal belonging in the same way as in other languages studied with regard to this; negative politeness formulae are concerned with showing deference and non-imposition. Furthermore, the study supports the notion that formulaic expressions are central elements of polite communication in colloquial Arabic in Jordan in a similar way to those in any other language. On the other hand, they are different with regard to the cultural and social traditions in which they are strongly embedded: According to Bardaneh, many of these formulae involve reference to God and emphasize the religious and fatalistic nature of the community they are used in. As the majority of formulaic patterns are oriented toward positive rather than negative face, Bardaneh concludes by emphasizing the positive politeness leanings of Jordanians and their concern with solidarity and acquaintance, collectivist satisfaction, and communal belonging, as opposed to individualism and personal space.

2.3 Linguistic Varieties Used in Spoken Domains and/or Regarded as 'Conceptually Oral'

Spoken data are at the center of the contributions in the third part of the current volume and demonstrate that formulaic patterns are dynamic linguistic utterances that emerge not only in language history but also in most recent times as a reaction to social, political, historical and cultural changes.

Joanna Szerszunowicz draws upon the notion of the so called new pragmatic idioms or pragmatemes in Polish and suggests an integrated approach to their study. The integrated approach means that the analysis is not restricted to linguistic aspects of pragmatic formulaic patterns, but also takes into consideration other factors, for instance, their cultural background and the cultural-historical context in which they emerge. Szerszunowicz's specific interest focuses on patterns that came into existence after 1989, the year of Poland's political and economic transformation. The analyzed idioms confirm the increasing influence of the English-speaking world on the Polish communicative style and changing language behaviors in the new reality, in which the quality of being friendly and nice gains a new dimension. Other examples can be traced back to the problems of

budding Polish democracy or illustrate recent changes in social perception of the weekend.

In contrast, *Mareike Keller* uses recordings of German-English informal conversation not to study the emergence of new expressions but rather to address the issue of the storage and processing of phrasemes. Though this issue has been discussed extensively in the previous research, a consensus with regard to the degree to which phrasemes are stored and processed holistically or compositionally has not been reached so far. Spoken bilingual data appear to be particularly fruitful for the continuation of this dialogue on account of the large number of code-switching utterances that shed new light on both syntactic and semantic levels of patterns. As Keller states, they provide empirical evidence for the unitary storage of phrasemes at the conceptual level as well as for their compositional assembly in accordance with structural code-switching constraints during language production.

2.4 Earlier/Historical Stages of Language Development

The last part of the volume draws attention to data from historical stages of language development. *Marie-Luis Merten's* paper examines Middle Low German legal writing in the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period (1227 until 1567) from a diachronic perspective. Despite a vast amount of research, Middle Low German can be still considered an underinvestigated historical language, especially from the point of view of its formulaicity. What is particularly remarkable about Merten's paper is her attempt to investigate historical data within the framework of construction grammar, a theory which has traditionally been dominated by synchronic approaches. Merten interprets evolving and changing constructions of legal writing in connection with the changing communal constructi-con, i.e. a socio-cognitive network, a repertoire of constructions shared by legal writers of that time. For the analysis of diachronic formulaic patterns it is crucial to develop a theoretical framework that is capable of coping with phenomena of language in transition and both formulaic (lexical) expressions and more complex form-meaning pairs between fixedness and variability. This point was already made strongly at the beginning of the introduction to this volume and is emphasized by Merten. Approaches as shown by Merten can in their turn contribute significantly to the development of Construction Grammar as they include the cultural and historical context in the analysis of formulaic patterns, a perspective which is just starting to find its way into Construction Grammar.

Christian Pfeiffer and *Markus Schiegg* conclude the volume with a fine-grained study of sources that can be regarded as formulaic in a different sense from

legal writings. They examine the use and functions of religious formulae in historical lower-class letters – a data set taken from the Corpus of Patient Documents (CoPaDocs), a new corpus of 19th- and early 20th-century texts written by patients in German psychiatric hospitals which has not yet been systematically investigated from the perspective of formulaic language. A factor that is of great importance for the current volume (and historical linguistics in general) is the fact that most of the letters were written by lower-class people with only a poor education. Hence, the letters permit an insight into the use of formulaic language by ordinary people in the 19th century opening up a wonderful perspective such as presents itself only rarely to scholars dealing with earlier periods in the history. The authors choose a functional approach and present an extensive analysis of the pragmatic functions of religious formulae in these texts. However, they also contribute to the above-mentioned challenge of differentiating between instances of variation and modification. A valuable contribution to the volume is the authors' conclusion that the tendency to use formulaic items creatively has a long tradition and is not a development of recent decades. The modifications they found do not seem to have the aim of wordplay but are most obviously produced to achieve particular communicative goals. Based on an exemplary intertextual analysis, the authors finally raise the question whether there exists something like a European tradition of letter writing and a common stock of formulaic items and call for further contrastive research on historical letter writing.

The contributions to this volume take, each in their different way, upon the scientific ideas of our colleague Elisabeth Piirainen. In the hope that Elisabeth's work will be continued we dedicate this volume to her.

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