

Contents

Preface and Acknowledgments – *xiii*

PART ONE Determining boundaries – 1

- 1 **Introduction** – 3
 - Boundaries – 3
 - At the boundaries – 4
 - Five questions about formulaic language – 5
 - The structure of the book – 6
- 2 **Conceptualizing formulaic language** – 9
 - Introduction – 9
 - Orientation: what is formulaic language? – 9
 - Definition: the morpheme equivalent unit – 11
 - Three key conceptual claims about morpheme equivalent units – 12
 - The mental lexicon is heteromorphic – 12
 - The content of the lexicon is determined through Needs Only Analysis – 17
 - MEUs enable the speaker to manipulate the hearer – 20
- 3 **Working at the boundaries** – 23
 - Introduction – 23
 - Conflicts between formulaicity and novelty – 23
 - A clash of irregular and regular forms – 23
 - Humour – 25
 - When the impossible becomes possible – 25
 - When the morpheme equivalent unit constrains expression – 26
 - Speech errors – 27
 - How idioms are processed – 28
 - The question of novelty – 33
 - Exploring morpheme equivalent units – 34

- 4 **Formulaic language and the oral tradition – 37**
 - Introduction – 37
 - Autonomy – 37
 - Formulaic language and the oral tradition – 38
 - Oral texts – 38
 - The nature of formulas in oral texts – 40
 - Formulas as a mark of antiquity: solving an ancient mystery – 41
 - The transition to written record – 43
 - Formulas in written compositions – 45
 - Writing: a cause or symptom of change? – 46

- 5 **Formulaicity in speech and writing – 49**
 - Introduction – 49
 - Literacy and perceptions of language and the world – 49
 - How we engage with language – 49
 - Literacy and our world view – 50
 - Written text and information – 51
 - Formulaicity in language across domains – 51
 - Levels of autonomy in speech and writing – 52
 - Expressive autonomy in closed and open societies – 53
 - Conclusion: formulaicity as a measure of autonomy – 56

PART TWO Locating boundaries – 61

- 6 **Morpheme equivalent units in the bigger picture – 63**
 - Introduction – 63
 - The desiderata for a comprehensive model of language – 64
 - Three parameters: patterns, their causes, and the principles behind them – 64
 - Interactions across boundaries – 67
 - Locating formulaic language in a comprehensive model – 68
 - Points of reference: causes of formulaic language – 69
 - To the interface – 70

- 7 **Evaluating models at the interface – 73**
 - Introduction – 73
 - Generative theory – 74
 - Functional grammar – 77

- Corpus-driven models – 80
 - Pattern grammar – 81
 - Frame semantics – 83
- The cognitive approach – 84
- Conclusion – 87

- 8 Identifying formulaic material in real texts – 93**
 - Why is identification so difficult?* – 93
 - Identification and definition – 93
 - Types of definition, and their implications for identification – 94
 - How definitions apply to examples – 97
 - Example approaches to identification through definition – 99
 - Definition and identification in the case studies in this book – 99
 - Two purposes of identification – 100
 - Frequency – 101
 - Phonological indicators of formulaicity – 102
 - Form – 104
 - Idiosyncrasies – 105
 - Spelling – 106
 - Intuition – 107
 - Published lists and corpora – 109
 - Mixed criteria – 110
 - Bespoke designations – 110
 - Conclusion – 111

- 9 A diagnostic approach to identifying morpheme equivalent units – 113**
 - Introduction – 113
 - Intuition as a tool – 113
 - The criterion-based approach – 114
 - Validation – 115
 - Notes on applying the diagnostics effectively – 115
 - Eleven diagnostic criteria for assessing intuitive judgements about formulaicity – 116
 - Using the diagnostic criteria – 121
 - Examples of the diagnostic criteria in action – 122
 - Conclusion – 126

PART THREE Studies at the boundaries - 129

- 10 **TESSA: a case study in machine translation - 131**
Overview - 131
The design of the TESSA system - 131
TESSA and morpheme equivalent units - 135
- 11 **TALK: a formulaic approach to supporting communication in the speech-disabled - 137**
Overview - 137
Introduction - 137
TALK in action: some observations - 140
Conclusion - 141
- 12 **Formulaic language learning: the beginner - 143**
Overview - 143
Introduction - 143
The study - 144
The data - 145
Analysis - 147
- To what extent were memorized strings successfully recalled? - 147
- Where were errors and pauses located? - 148
- What errors were made? - 149
Conclusion - 151
- 13 **Formulaic language learning: advanced - 153**
Overview - 153
Introduction - 153
Design - 154
- Participants - 154
- Procedure - 155
Data - 156
- Quantification - 157
Analysis - 158
- Were all participants equally able to memorize and recall nativelike material? - 158
- What were the limitations on reproducing memorized material in a real conversation? - 158
- What sorts of conversations were most receptive to the anticipation and effective reproduction of useful material? - 159

- What sorts of changes were made when memorized material was not perfectly reproduced? – 160
- Can individual profiles of performance indicate linguistic strengths and weaknesses? – 162
- Conclusion – 164

14 Meanings of the parts and meaning of the whole – 165

- Overview – 165
- The case – 165
- What does ‘coonass’ *really* mean? – 167
- How we make meaning – 168
- Conclusion – 170

15 Formulaicity and naturalness in a French and Saunders sketch – 173

- Overview – 173
- Introduction – 173
- Naturalness as a goal in acting – 175
- The Extras* by French and Saunders – 176
- Naturalness in *The Extras* – 176
- Symptoms of ‘naturalness’ and ‘unnaturalness’ – 177
- Why did French and Saunders sound *more natural* than Briers and McEwen? – 180
- Modelling the routes to naturalness in *The Extras* – 182
- The risks of ‘naturalness’ – 183
- Conclusion – 184

PART FOUR Examining the boundaries – 187

16 Formulas as the default – 189

- Introduction – 189
- Evidence for the default – 189
- Unawareness and tolerance of irregular forms within morpheme equivalent units – 190
- The ‘Royal Highness’ paradigm – 190
- Harry Potter and the formulaic spells – 190
- Incomplete intuitions, relative to objective evidence – 191
- Accounting for poor intuitions – 192
- The acquisition of logical forms – 194

- The default position in *extremis* – 195
- Clinical evidence for formulaicity as the default – 196
- Idiom comprehension – 200
- Conclusion – 202

- 17 Origin and dynamics of formulaic language – 205**
- Introduction – 205
- How would the default have come about? – 205
- Formulaicity and language evolution – 205
- Formulaic language to the rescue – 206
- Formulaic language first – 207
- A modern example – 209
- Continuity – 210
- Shifting the default boundary – 210
- Idealized scenarios of language use and language change – 210
- Realizations of esoteric and exoteric communication – 213
- Different default boundaries and communication – 214
- Different formulaic knowledge – 214
- Choices about group membership – 216
- Conclusion – 217

- 18 Formulaic language learning in adults – 221**
- Introduction – 221
- Establishing the boundary between formulaic and analytic engagement – 221
- Units of language knowledge – 223
- The circumstances of learning – 223
- Learning in different situations – 225
- Making formulaic learning work – 227
- Limitations of formulaic learning in adulthood – 229
- Opportunities for learning in a new way – 232
- Conclusion – 233

- 19 Teaching language to computers – 235**
- Introduction – 235
- What units are most appropriate for natural language processing by computer? – 235
- The representation of meaning – 237
- Unit size – 239

- Could computers acquire a language like a child? – 241
- Applying NOA to computer language learning – 242
- Conclusion – 244
- 20 Formulaicity under pressure – 247**
 - Introduction – 247
 - Formulaicity for basic proficiency – 247
 - Formulaicity for fluency – 248
 - Formulaicity for fidelity – 249
 - Formulaicity for greater accuracy – 250
 - Risk-taking in memorization – 251
 - Verbatim memorization in acting – 252
 - Taking risks in memorization – 253
 - The calculation of risk by language learners – 254
 - Risk as an index of proficiency – 255
 - Memorization as a route to success – 256
 - Conclusion – 257
- 21 Formulaic language, formulaic thought – 259**
 - Introduction – 259
 - Formulaic sequences for social control – 259
 - Formulaic language as a straitjacket – 261
 - The inherent constraints on creativity of a holistic protolanguage – 261
 - Modern-day constrained signalling systems – 263
 - Motor racing flags – 264
 - Nautical flags – 266
 - Military trumpet and bugle calls – 267
 - Patterns of constraint in limited signalling systems – 272
 - Conclusion – 273
- 22 Across the boundaries – 277**
 - Introduction – 277
 - Taking stock at the boundaries – 277
 - Formulaic language and the challenges of communication – 279
 - How formulaic language assists communication – 279
 - Addressing the complex problem using formulaic language – 283

Opportunities for future research	– 284
– Adult language learning	– 284
– Computational linguistics	– 285
– Forensic linguistics	– 285
– Performance	– 285
– Communication disorders	– 285
Final word	– 286
References	– 287
Index	– 303