1 Idioms and compositionality

The following are common English idioms with corresponding non-idiomatic meanings for them:

(1) a. kick the bucket (‘die’)
    b. kick the habit (‘quit’)
    c. touch a nerve (‘annoy’)
    d. leave no stone unturned (‘be thorough’)
    e. pull strings (‘use one’s connections to gain an advantage’)

This question asks you to explore the relevance of idioms to the principle of compositionality.

Task 1 Look again at the start of section 11.2 of Partee (1995), paying special attention to the principle of compositionality and its associated ideas. On that basis, articulate the challenge that idioms pose for compositionality. This can be done in a few sentences, but make sure you are thorough enough that a reader who didn't know about the principle of compositionality could understand your answer.

Task 2 Suppose we responded to the challenge by treating idioms as unanalyzed lexical items. On this analysis, kick the bucket would simply be an intransitive verb with presumably the same meaning as die. What challenge do the following examples, from Nunberg et al. 1994, pose for this response?

(2) a. kick the filthy habit
    b. touch a couple of nerves
    c. leave no legal stone unturned
    d. Pat got the job by pulling strings that weren’t available to anyone else.
    e. bucket list, a recent innovation derived from kick the bucket and referring to a set of things one wants to do before one dies.

Write a short paragraph (say, 7–10 sentences) explaining the nature of the challenge posed by these examples for the lexical analysis of idioms. You do not need to make reference to all of the examples in (2), and you are also free to introduce new data.

Task 3 In your view as a semanticist, how should we resolve this tension between the principle of compositionality and the existence of idioms? We’re open-minded about this and will be looking for a clear statement of your proposed response and a clear argument in favor of that response. (Expected length: 10–15 sentences, but this is not a hard restriction.)
2 What would shrimp kale be? [4 points]

One of the novel compounds in Levin et al.’s (2019) comprehension study is shrimp kale, which received the following distribution of responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metarelation</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>6 (37.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptual</td>
<td>9 (56.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>1 (6.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses are more evenly spread out across the categories than we might expect. Compare for, example, swamp squash, which received 16/16 (100%) Location responses.

Task 1 Classify the modifier and head in shrimp kale according to the artifact vs. natural kind distinction, as in the paper. You can look this up in the paper, so this should be straightforward, but it’s an important part of the reasoning. Say also whether the entire compound would refer to an artifact or natural kind, following the expected constraints on endocentric compounds.

Task 2 Relate this response distribution to the essence-related modifier hypothesis and the event-related modifier hypothesis. Is this the expected distribution given the classifications of the parts and the statement of these hypotheses? Why or why not? This is obviously not a completely transparent judgment (as it would be for swamp squash), so I advise taking at least 5–7 sentences to explain and justify your reasoning.

In case it is useful, here are the raw responses with their codes (from Table 2 in the paper) and the associated metarelation. (The codes for the ‘event’ examples seem informative to me.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Metarelation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A type of salad made with kale and shrimp.</td>
<td>made of</td>
<td>event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a kale with shrimp in it. A plant that has shrimp in it.</td>
<td>made of</td>
<td>event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A recipe involving the use of shrimp and kale</td>
<td>made of</td>
<td>event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a kale and seafood recipe.</td>
<td>made of</td>
<td>event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a kale and shrimp pasta dish</td>
<td>made of</td>
<td>event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kale made especially to garnish shrimp</td>
<td>purpose</td>
<td>event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bitter green grown in the ocean</td>
<td>habitat</td>
<td>location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a variety of kale that has characteristics of shrimp (color, etc.)</td>
<td>color</td>
<td>perceptual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abnormally small kale.</td>
<td>dimension</td>
<td>perceptual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A miniature, leafy vegetable.</td>
<td>dimension</td>
<td>perceptual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kale in the shape of a shrimp</td>
<td>shape</td>
<td>perceptual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kale that tastes like shrimp</td>
<td>taste/smell</td>
<td>perceptual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shrimp flavored kale</td>
<td>taste/smell</td>
<td>perceptual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kale that tastes like shrimp</td>
<td>taste/smell</td>
<td>perceptual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kale vegetable that is small and shaped liked shrimp</td>
<td>visual</td>
<td>perceptual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a shrimp that looks like a kale</td>
<td>visual</td>
<td>perceptual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3  **Break-verbs, hit-verbs, and other verbs**  

[3 points]

For each of the verbs *slap*, *pat*, and *shatter*, determine whether the verb is a *break*-type verb, a *hit*-type verb, or a different type of verb. Support your argumentation using the evidence from the conative alternation, the body-part possessor ascension alternation, and the causative alternation provided in (3)–(5) below. Remember that an asterisk (*) before a sentence indicates that the sentence is ungrammatical.

(3)  **Conative alternation**

a.  *slap*
   i.  Monica slapped his face.
   ii. Monica slapped at his face.

b.  *pat*
   i.  Monica patted the dog.
   ii. *Monica patted at the dog.

c.  *shatter*
   i.  Monica shattered the mirror.
   ii. *Monica shattered at the mirror.

(4)  **Body-part possessor ascension alternation**

a.  *slap*
   i.  Monica slapped the boy's back.
   ii. Monica slapped the boy on the back.

b.  *pat*
   i.  Monica patted the dog's head.
   ii. Monica patted the dog on the head.

c.  *shatter*
   i.  Monica shattered the man's wrist.
   ii. *Monica shattered the man on the wrist.

(5)  **Causative alternation**

a.  *slap*
   i.  Monica slapped his face.
   ii. *His face slapped.

b.  *pat*
   i.  Monica patted the dog.
   ii. *The dog patted.

c.  *shatter*
   i.  Monica shattered the mirror.
   ii. The mirror shattered.
References

