

Sören Stumpf

Free usage of German unique components

Corpus linguistics, psycholinguistics and lexicographical approaches

Abstract: In phraseological research, unique components are words that only occur within phrasemes (e.g. in *jmdn. an den Pranger stellen* TO PUT SOMEBODY IN THE UC [= unique component] (*Pranger* PILLORY) ‘to pillory somebody’ and *im Handumdrehen* IN A UC (*Handumdrehen* HAND’S TURNING) ‘immediately, in the twinkling of an eye’. Still, observations of actual language use show that seemingly unique components can also be (re-)used outside of phraseological contexts and that they can contribute to the expansion of the lexicon. This paper deals with this free usage of unique components and focuses on corpus analytical, psycholinguistic and lexicographical approaches. It addresses questions about how the free usage of unique components can be ascertained with the help of corpus linguistics, how this usage can be explained from a psycholinguistic perspective and to what extent freely used unique components are recorded in German dictionaries. *

1 Introduction

Within phraseological research it seems to be a well-investigated fact that phrasemes can be the origin of lexical-semantic innovations by functioning as source units for secondary words and meanings as well as for the respective formation processes / products (e.g. *Haare spalten* → *Haarspalterei*) (cf. Stein 2012: 231–233). This paper deals with a phenomenon which at first sight seems paradoxical and has not received much attention up to now: Lexical expansion through unique components.¹ This seems to be especially paradoxical in view of the fact that unique components are words which (nowadays) only occur in formulaic expressions and can therefore, by definition, not be used as autonomous lexical units (as in: *klipp und klar* UC AND CLEAR ‘very clearly’; *Fersengeld geben* TO GIVE UC (*Ferse* HEEL + *Geld* MONEY) ‘to escape, to take to one’s heels’; *etw.*

* I would like to thank Viola Kämmer for translating this article into English.

¹ These elements are also called “unique elements” (Jaki 2014), “bound words” (Soehn 2004, 2006; Trawiński, Sailer, and Soehn 2005) or “cranberry words” (Richter and Sailer 2003).

auf dem Kerbholz haben TO HAVE SOMETHING ON THE UC (*Kerbe* TALLY + *Holz* STICK) ‘somebody has committed a crime, to not have a clean record’) (cf. Häcki Buhofer 1998: 162).² This is why they are often referred to as lexical irregularities in phraseological research (see Stumpf 2015; in print a; in print b).

Looking at this from the point of view of corpus linguistics, it becomes apparent that many of the words research has previously classified as unique components can be found not only in phraseological contexts but also increasingly in free contexts (see Stumpf 2014; accepted) such as:

- (1) Ein **Fettnäpfchen** war den Mächtigen des Verbandes offenbar genug. Vor Wochenfrist hatte sich Assistentztrainer Hansi Flick (Foto) verbal vergaloppiert, als er das Rezept gegen Freistöße von Portugals Cristiano Ronaldo benannte: “Stahlhelme aufsetzen und groß machen.” (Hamburger Morgenpost, 15 June 2012)
 [One single blunder was apparently enough for those who have the say in the association. Before the week was out, assistant coach Hansi Flick (photo) had taken the wrong verbal track when he called the recipe for dealing with Portugal’s Cristiano Ronaldo’s free kicks: “putting on steel helmets and making ourselves great.”]

Here, the unique component *Fettnäpfchen* is used as an autonomous unit and is separated from its phraseological context of *ins Fettnäpfchen treten / tappen* TO STEP INTO THE UC (*Fett* FAT + *Näpfchen* LITTLE POT) ‘to displease somebody because of an inconsiderate comment / behavior, to blunder’.

This paper deals with this specific usage of unique components and focuses on the question in what way and to what extent freely used unique components can contribute to lexical expansion. Among others, the following questions can be considered relevant:

1. What methods could be applied in order to empirically prove the usage of components outside of phraseology? (section 3)
2. How can it be explained that seemingly unique components defy their phraseological fixedness? (section 4)

² Throughout this article, the German phrasemes and their meaning will be translated into English wherever possible. If the morphemes of a unique component are opaque and occur only within the scope of phraseological boundedness, no English equivalents can be given. If the unique component is a compound, the individual constituents of this compound will be translated. Translated constituents are written in small capital letters; the phraseological meaning is written in single quotation marks.

3. How can this usage outside of phraseology and the process of debonding³ unique components be explained from a psycholinguistic point of view? (section 5)
4. What are the criteria for categorizing a unique component used outside of phraseology as an autonomous lexical unit? (as opposed to unique components that are occasionally freely used in the sense of phraseological modifications) (section 6)
5. How and to what extent are unique components which have become free lexemes dealt with in German dictionaries? (section 7)

These questions will be answered empirically with the help of extensive corpus-based analysis (drawing on the Deutsche Referenzkorpus / DeReKo and the analysis tool COSMAS-II).⁴ From a theoretical point of view, the concept of semantic decomposability will be used to explain the usage of unique components outside of phraseology.

2 The current state of research

In previous research unique components have been defined as words that can only be found in the constituent inventory of phrasemes (e.g. *im Brustton der Überzeugung* WITH THE UC (*Brust* CHEST + *Ton* TONE) OF CONVICTION ‘with complete and utter conviction’ and *seit Menschengedenken* SINCE UC (*Mensch* HUMAN + *Gedenken* MEMORY) ‘as long as anyone can remember’) (cf. Dobrovolskij 1989: 57; Fleischer 1997a: 37; Häcki Buhofer 2002a: 429; Čermák 2007: 21 and Crudu 2016: 113). Unique components are mainly considered phenomena that prototypically reveal the fixedness of phrasemes (cf. Korhonen 1992: 49 and Häcki Buhofer 2002b: 129). In many cases they are lexical units which have

³ By using the term “(phraseological) bonding” I refer to the phenomenon that certain words only occur in formulaic expressions and that they more or less disappear from free language use. Furthermore, the “process of bonding” (German: *Unikalisierung(sprozess)*) refers to the process of a free lexeme becoming phraseologically bound. “(Phraseological) debonding” indicates the reverse process: Phraseologically bound components are separated from their formulaic expression and are used as autonomous lexemes of the lexicon again. I have taken the term from research on (de-)grammaticalization. Here, “debonding” means “a composite change whereby a bound morpheme in a specific linguistic context becomes a free morpheme” (Norde 2009: 186). Thus, I adopted the term which is usually used with morphemes and applied it to lexemes.

⁴ <https://cosmas2.ids-mannheim.de/cosmas2-web/> (accessed 27 March 2017).

become rare or even obsolete and which can no longer be found in free use but only in formulaic language. The fossilization of these elements in phrasemes shows their phraseological boundedness and can be regarded as a sign of the stabilizing effect of phrasemes (cf. Palm 1997: 30). This is the reason why phrasemes – due to their fixedness – can be considered repositories for archaic parts of a language.⁵ Previous attempts at categorization were based on theory and included various levels of description (structural, semantic, etymological etc.). Nevertheless, their weak spot lies both in conveying the idea of an easy distinction between “phraseologically bound” and “non-phraseologically bound” elements and in compiling an exhaustive and representative list of phraseologically bound components (see Dobrovól’skij 1978; Feyaerts 1994 and Dobrovól’skij and Piirainen 1994a, 1994b). Previous classification models proceed on the assumption that categorization must be dichotomous: Either a component is phraseologically bound or it is not. However, an attentive observer might see that words which have been classified as unique by research can, in fact, occur outside of phraseological contexts, as is the case with the following three examples taken from the DeReKo:

- (2) Der Nationalismus der korsischen Separatisten mit seinem Bombenterror gegen “Überfremdung” und für die Abtrennung vom französischen Mutterland ist oft nur der **Deckmantel** für Korruption und Verbrechen. (Salzburger Nachrichten, 31 October 1992)
[The Corsican separatists’ nationalism with its terror bombing against “foreign infiltration” and for separation from the French mother country often serves as a pretext for corruption and crime.]
- (3) Man kann ja über alles nachdenken und planen, bloß sollten **Luftschlösser** ausgeschlossen bleiben. (Niederösterreichische Nachrichten, 15 March 2012)
[Of course it is legitimate to think about everything and anything and make plans, but castles in the air should be excluded.]
- (4) Der “glücklichste Formulierer” [...] ist der bayerische Ministerpräsident Edmund Stoiber noch nie gewesen. [...] Nun schien wieder so ein Tag eines Stoiber’schen **Bärendienstes** zu sein. (Rhein-Zeitung, 11 August 2005)
[Bavaria’s premier Edmund Stoiber has never had the “most fortunate turn of phrase”. [...] And today seemed to be another day of Stoiberian disservice.]

⁵ However, it should be emphasized that even with unique-components-expressions there can sometimes be considerable structural variation (as in *aussehen / geschmückt / herausgeputzt / vorgeführt werden wie ein Pfingstochse* TO LOOK LIKE / TO BE DECORATED / TO BE PRIMPED UP / TO BE PRESENTED LIKE A UC (*Pfingsten* PENTECOST + *Ochse* OX) ‘to look like / to be decorated / to be primped up / to be presented in a grossly overstated way’).

With such examples, the crucial point is that they contradict the rigid and dichotomous definition of unique components by exhibiting the free usage of exactly those components that had previously been classified as unique. The observation that some unique components may occur in free usage is not a new one in unique component research. Häcki Buhofer (2002b: 154) finds that every lexeme in phrasemes (with unique components) whose meaning can more or less be derived from its form can also be used as an individual lexeme. Thus, she concludes that in most cases it is very difficult to draw a clear and reasonable line between uniqueness and non-uniqueness in a synchronous language system (cf. Häcki Buhofer 2002b: 155).

The problematic initial situation is as follows: On the one hand, there are the prevailing dichotomous definitions of previous phraseological research and the ensuing attempts at classification. On the other hand, there are examples and researchers' affirmative opinions about a usage outside of phrasemes that contradict this approach. Thus, the question arises as to how this situation should be dealt with and in how far this contradiction can be resolved. In my opinion, this should be done with the help of empirical analysis, as this approach is the only way to react to the previous, mainly intuitive and theoretical research into unique components.

3 Corpus analysis of unique components: unique components as a prototypical category

In order to empirically examine or even disprove a dichotomous distinction between unique components and free lexemes, corpus analysis would appear to be a suitable approach. It is only through a systematic and corpus analytical method that the actual usage of (seemingly) unique components can be ascertained and the essence of this uniqueness be described on an empirical level. It is this corpus-based method of examination that Steyer (2000: annotation 16) draws attention to when she writes that even supposedly unique components and thus, an element's boundedness to the respective phrase as well as a 'no-longer-existence' outside of the phrase, can be assessed through corpus analysis.⁶

The empirical section centers around the question as to what extent the elements can be considered phraseologically bound (also see Barz 2007a). The

⁶ However, this method has rarely been used in previous research on unique components.

underlying basis for the analysis is the DeReKo, with which it is possible to search for words in millions of texts and to ascertain and describe their usage with the help of mass data (cf. Steyer 2004: 94). Using the results from the corpus analysis, the concept of uniqueness can then be drafted.

The evaluation is based on a corpus of 1,909 components presumed to be unique components. The corpus was compiled with examples taken from previous unique component research and from the phraseological dictionaries of Röhrich (2006), Duden (2008), Quasthoff (2010) and Schemann (2011). The result is a list of phrasemes containing words that one might suppose to be unique. Within the scope of this corpus analysis, 1,318 components were assessed.

The quantitative analysis consists of the following three steps:

1. Determination of the **absolute quantity** of unique components: The first task is to determine the absolute quantity of the single lexemes (e.g. searching for *Gängelband*). The result reveals the absolute occurrence of the constituent: At the time of retrieval, *Gängelband* can be found 848 times in the DeReKo. Self-evidently, this set of results contains phraseologically bound lexemes as well as free realizations.
2. Determination of the unique components' **extra-phraseological usage**: This second step of the procedure centers on how many cases there are where the unique component is used in a non-phraseological context. In order to make this free usage more apparent, differentiated queries are used to exclude cases where the lexeme is used in a phraseological unit. To determine the basic form of a „unique component“-idiom, co-occurrence analysis are conducted in which those words are rendered visible that are frequently used in combination with the search word and that can therefore be seen as variants of the same phraseme (e.g. *jmdn. am Gängelband führen / haben / halten* ‘to keep somebody on a leash, to keep somebody tied to one’s apron strings’ // *jmdn. vom Gängelband befreien / lösen* ‘to let somebody off the leash, cut somebody loose from one’s apron strings’). The results show that there are 91 instances where *Gängelband* is not used in the word combinations *jmdn. am Gängelband führen / haben / halten* // *jmdn. vom Gängelband befreien / lösen*. The full text display shows these free realizations; for example:
 - (5) Dabei wären viele Firmen in Mittelfranken bereit, Behinderte ihren Fähigkeiten entsprechend einzusetzen, “wenn das **Gängelband** der Politik nicht wäre”. Es sei schließlich “gesellschaftliche Pflicht, etwas für die Menschen zu tun, die nicht auf der Sonnenseite des Lebens stehen.” (Nürnberger Nachrichten, 01 May 2003)

[Yet many companies in Middle Franconia would be prepared to employ disabled people according to their abilities, if politics didn't have them (the companies) on a leash. After all, it was a social obligation to do something for those who don't live on the sunny side of life.]

3. **Calculation of phraseological boundedness:** In a third and final step the percentage proportions of instances of free usage are compared with those of phraseological usage. The word *Gängelband* can be found 848 times (= 100%). 91 of these 848 instances occur within an extra-phraseological context (= approx. 11%). Thus, the component *Gängelband* (only) occurs in phraseological word combinations in about 89% of all instances.

The analysis reveals that these instances are rather heterogeneous with regard to their phraseological boundedness, which is why the components can be ranked by the degree of their phraseological boundedness (cf. Stumpf 2015: 479–525). Apart from words that are only used in formulaic contexts (e.g. *Schnippchen* in *jmdm. ein **Schnippchen** schlagen* ‘to trick / outwit somebody’), corpus analysis also brings to light those lexemes that are (phraseologically) bound only to a lesser extent (e.g. *Gardinenpredigt* in *jmdm. eine **Gardinenpredigt** halten* TO GIVE SOMEBODY A UC (*Gardine* CURTAIN + *Predigt* SERMON) ‘to give somebody a lecture’). However, the most interesting aspect is that there are many words located in the “intermediate zone” between these two points (e.g. *Schokoladenseite* CHOCOLATE + SIDE and *Armutszeugnis* POVERTY + CERTIFICATE). From a corpus analytical point of view, there is a gradual distribution ranging from strongly phraseological to almost non-phraseological constituents. The empirical approach disproves the prevailing dichotomy of previous research: A component is not “either – or” but “more or less” phraseologically bound. Therefore the dichotomous division of unique components and free lexemes has to be relativized and replaced by a more dynamic concept.

Unique components embody a prototypical category, which can be visualized by a center-periphery model (see Figure 1).⁷ Lexemes which possess a strong phraseological boundedness (e.g. *Kieker*) can be regarded as prototypical representatives of the whole category and are thus located in the center as opposed to lexemes that possess a weaker phraseological boundedness (e.g. *Zwickmühle* DOUBLE + MILL ‘quandary’, *Denkzettel* THINK + NOTE / REMINDER ‘a lesson taught’ and *Irrweg* ERRING + PATH ‘wrong track’). Outside of the peripheral

7 Cf. also Holzinger (2013: 64), who refers to this as a continuum.

bounds there are those lexemes that are not bound to a formulaic context (e.g. *Garage* ‘garage’).

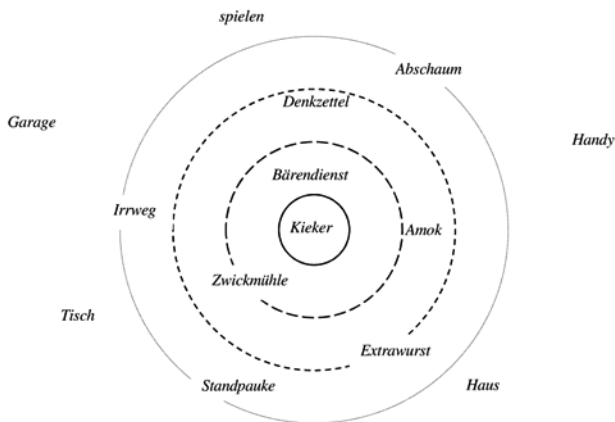


Fig. 1: The center-periphery model of unique components

4 Semantic decomposability as a determining factor of free usage

Given the relative boundedness of unique components, the question arises as to what kind of factors lead to the free usage of unique components. In fact, the semantic decomposability / analyzability⁸ of the idioms which contain unique components plays a decisive role. It is the principle of compositionality that can be considered the basis of the theory of semantic decomposability (see Frege 1923) as it claims that the meaning of a complex expression is determined by the meanings and the composition of its parts (cf. Rabanus et al. 2008: 28):

Contrary to the traditional view that idioms are non-compositional, many idiomatic phrases appear to be decomposable or analyzable with the meaning of their parts contributing independently to their overall figurative meanings [...]. (Gibbs 1990: 422)

⁸ See Gibbs and Nayak (1989); Gibbs, Nayak, and Cutting (1989); Gibbs et al. (1989) and Gibbs (1990). In German “semantically decomposable / analyzable phrasemes” are known as *semantisch teilbare Idiome* (cf. Dobrovol’skij 1997: 23–27).

In the case of phraseological word combinations, semantic decomposability is closely connected to a parallelism in the segmentation of the lexical and semantic structure of an idiom and, thus, also to the semantic status of the single components (cf. Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen 2009: 46). Semantic decomposability applies to those idioms whose constituents or constituent groups can act as relatively autonomous units that carry meaning, as is the case with the idiom (*leeres*) *Stroh dreschen*, in which the phraseological component *Stroh* could stand for 'dummes, inhaltsloses Zeug' (Engl.: 'stupid, meaningless stuff') (cf. Dobrovol'skij 1988: 131–132):

Tab. 1: Semantic decomposability of (*leeres*) *Stroh dreschen*

<i>(leeres) Stroh</i>	<i>dreschen</i>
'dummes, inhaltsloses Zeug'	reden'
(EMPTY) STRAW	TO THRESH
'stupid, meaningless stuff'	to talk'

The dissolution of uniqueness caused by semantic decomposability is also emphasized in the research:

Da die Konstituenten der sekundär motivierten, semantisch teilbaren Phraseologismen eine selbstständige Bedeutung haben, tendieren sie besonders zur Autonomisierung [...]. Die semantische Teilbarkeit der Phraseologismen ist demzufolge [...] eine Voraussetzung für das Auftreten neuer Sememe bei einem Wort, die einem Phraseologismus entsprungen sind. (Földes and Györke 1988: 105; see also Földes 1988: 71 and Ptashnyk 2005: 92–93)
 [As the constituents of the secondarily motivated, semantically decomposable phrasemes possess an independent meaning, they are prone to autonomization [...]. Thus, the semantic decomposability of the phrasemes is [...] a premise for the occurrence of new sememes which stem from a phraseme.]

I then subjected this assumption, which has previously only been illustrated with the help of a few examples, to empirical analysis. 153 expressions, taken from the list of "living" unique-components-idioms compiled by Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (1994a, 1994b), were examined with regard to their semantic decomposability. Here, the central question is how the semantic decomposability of a unique component is linked to its phraseological boundedness.

In order to determine decomposability, I included not only the comparison between the structure of an idiom and the structure of its semantic equivalent

but also an analysis of syntactic transformations⁹ such as 1) “relative clause” transformation, 2) “interrogative sentence” transformation and 3) the possibility of replacing the unique component with a demonstrative pronoun (Dobrovolskij 2004: 67):

- (6) Die gestern an den Tag gelegte Geschlossenheit lässt daher an die disziplinarische **Gardinenpredigt** denken, die Parteipräsident Fulvio Pelli seinen Delegierten vor zwei Monaten in Rapperswil hielt. (Die Südostschweiz, 14 March 2008)
[The unity that was displayed yesterday reminds us of the disciplinary lecture the party’s president Fulvio Pelli gave his delegates two months ago in Rapperswil.]
- (7) Ach Valentin, hättest Du je gedacht, welch große **Werbetrommel** in Deinem Namen einst gerührt werden würde? (Braunschweiger Zeitung, 14 February 2008)
[Oh, Valentine, would you ever have thought that so much would be drummed up in your name one day?]
- (8) Der nationale Verband verhehlt nicht, dass er an die Unschuld seiner prominentesten Athletin glaubt und ihr durchaus dieses **Hintertürchen** offen halten wird. (Nürnberger Nachrichten, 14 December 2009)
[The national association makes no secret of the fact that it believes its most prominent female athlete to be innocent and that it will keep this loophole open for her.]

Overall, 59 (39%) out of 153 unique-component-idioms are semantically decomposable (e.g. *jmdm. eine **Standpauke** halten* TO GIVE SOMEBODY A UC (*Stand* STANDING + *Pauke* KETTLEDRUM) ‘to give somebody a (real) dressing-down’). Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between semantic decomposability and the degree of phraseological boundedness of the respective unique-component-idioms.

As can be seen from the overview, there seems to be a connection between semantic decomposability and phraseological boundedness. The empirical analysis shows that the number of semantically decomposable unique-component-idioms decreases with the increase of phraseological boundedness. Semantically decomposable unique components are usually less phraseologically bound because they possess a certain meaning of their own, which allows them to be used outside of the phraseme. For example, 90% of the unique components which have a phraseological boundedness of 0–29% are semantically decomposable. Conversely, about 6% of the unique components that occur almost only in phrasemes (those that are phraseologically bound in 96% of all cases) possess semantic decomposability. Thus, semantic decomposability decreases with increasing phraseological boundedness.

⁹ Transformation tests provide proof of decomposability by giving the component a referential status and, thus, an autonomous meaning (cf. Dobrovolskij 2000: 118).

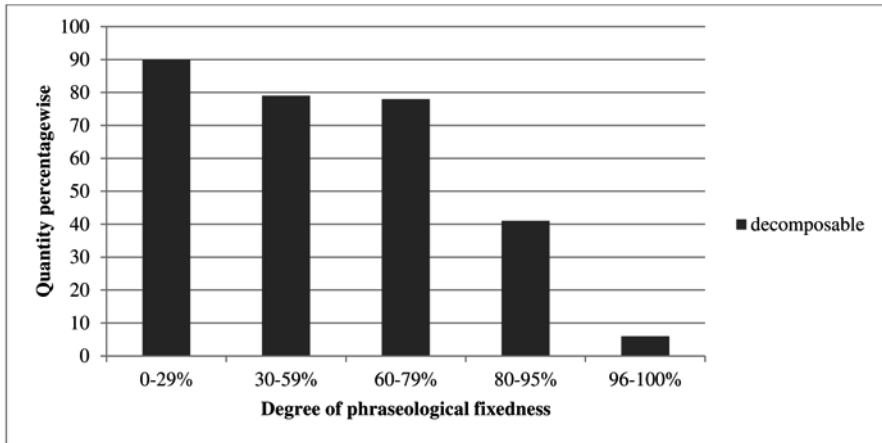


Fig. 2: Quantitative distribution of semantic decomposability of unique components

It can therefore be concluded that the most important feature for the process of autonomization is semantic decomposability, through which phraseological meaning can be allocated to the single constituents (cf. Barz 2007a: 16). In this way, the unique components gain morphosyntactic autonomy and develop semantic-associative potency (cf. Fleischer 1997a: 240).¹⁰ Semantic decomposability leads to a free usage of the unique components with a phraseologically motivated meaning (cf. Barz 2007b: 33).

¹⁰ This morphosyntactic autonomy also becomes apparent in forms of use usually reserved for free words. In the following text, for example, the (unique) substantival component of the phraseme *Luftschlösser bauen* TO BUILD UC (*Luft* AIR + *Schlösser* CASTLES) ‘to make unrealistic plans’ is used in the singular form and with the function of a genitive attribute: Auch der Einsturz des **Luftschlosses** “Einkaufszentrum” wird in Lampertheim kein großes Bedauern auslösen. (Mannheimer Morgen, 20 December 2000).

5 Psycholinguistic reflections on the free usage of unique components

The free usage of unique components can also be explained using psycholinguistic evidence. Here, it is especially research in the field of language processing that draws attention to the important relationship between phrasemes and lexemes and between phrasemes and free syntagmata: Although phrasemes – like words – are represented mentally as units, they are not necessarily treated as connected units by the speaker or hearer (cf. Burger, Häcki Buhofer, and Sialm 1982: 187), but are subject to the mechanisms governing the usage of free syntagmata (cf. Barz 2007a: 9). From a psycholinguistic point of view, phraseological variants are clues which suggest that phrasemes are not necessarily stored as complete and solid units but that they might be cognitive units, brought into being through certain production processes (cf. Häcki Buhofer 1999: 71). Through this variability, the syntactical-semantic unit of the phraseme is broken down, which – at least to some extent – makes it seem like a structured unit that is composed of autonomous parts (cf. Sabban 1998: 108). Unique-components-idioms, too, are processed as semantically (relatively) autonomous entities in the mental lexicon (cf. Dobrovolskij 1995: 24). Although the speaker stores them as a whole, he is also capable of understanding their single constituents as autonomous words with a specific meaning. According to this assumption, the relevant unique-components-idioms are perceived as lexical units produced in line with the rules of semantic composition (cf. Dobrovolskij 1995: 25), which benefits their autonomization and, thus, also their usage outside of phraseology.

Often speakers are not aware of the phraseological boundedness of the single constituents. Burger (2015: 92) points out that test subjects are able to visualize certain unique components (e.g. *Hungertuch* HUNGER + CLOTH, *Kerbholz* TALLY + STICK and *Maulaffen* MOUTH + MONKEYS) and are even capable of indicating features associated with these words.¹¹ From a cognitivist perspective, the “necrotic” character of unique components, which also calls into question whether these elements, because of their lack of meaning, can still be called words, has to be strongly relativized. Cognitive tests show that – despite their phraseological isolation – meaning can be attributed to the unique components (cf. Dobrovolskij and Piirainen 1994b: 449). It can therefore be noted – as Hallsteinsdóttir (2001: 278) puts it:

¹¹ Cf. also Burger (1973: 27).

Eine unikale Komponente wird isoliert nicht als bedeutungslos angesehen, sondern ihr wird eine Bedeutung zugeordnet, die als die wörtliche Bedeutung aufgefasst wird. Auch wenn die etymologisch korrekte Bedeutung nicht bekannt ist, können Sprecher bei unikalenen Komponenten – durch eine Quasimotivierung [...] – eine wörtliche Bedeutung konstruieren.

[Taken by itself, a unique component is not regarded as meaningless, but is attributed a meaning that is considered literal. Even if the etymologically correct meaning is unknown, speakers can construct unique components' literal meanings through a quasimotivation.]

Regarding the free use of unique components, the process of phraseological bonding as well as the reverse process have to be brought into focus. The bonding can be seen as a kind of terminal point through which phraseologically bound components lose their status of autonomous elements in the lexicon (cf. Fleischer 1997b: 12). However, corpus analysis also proves the reverse case to be true: Through both an elliptic formation of meaning (see section 6) and through “cognitive processes of re-motivation” (Häcki Buhofer 2002a: 432) phraseologically bound constituents can regain their status as autonomous semantic elements in the lexicon. Thus, the terminal point of the bonding process can be overcome and unique components can once more gain a meaning (even if it is probably a slightly different one) (cf. Häcki Buhofer 2002a: 432f).

According to Häcki Buhofer (2002a: 432), the benefit of a cognitivist perspective lies in the fact that it enables us to describe and explain why unique components can be taken out of their phraseological boundedness and why they can be used freely with a (re-)motivated meaning. Speakers possess a strong cognitive tendency to attribute meaning to constituents which could stem from correct as well as incorrect knowledge (from the point of view of historical linguistics) or from synchronic and contemporary processes of motivation (cf. Häcki Buhofer 2002b: 156). According to Häcki Buhofer's (2002b: 135) understanding of the psycholinguistic perspective and psycholinguistic findings, the concept of uniqueness is a contradiction per se and would therefore lose its legitimization almost completely.

6 Freely used unique components as a contribution to the expansion of the lexicon

The question arises as to what kind of (lexical) status can be ascribed to unique components: Primarily, this is about the connection between phraseology and word formation, which is especially characterized by the fact that the formation potential in both word formation and phraseology are a source of lexical-

semantic innovations (cf. Stein 2012: 230). Phrasemes can function as source units for secondary / derivative words and meanings as well as for the respective formation processes and products (cf. Barz 2007a: 8). In the case of unique components, so-called “de-phraseological derivation” plays the essential role in their autonomization. Földes (1988: 69) describes de-phraseological derivation as the development of word formations on the basis of a phraseme. This process, which takes place when unique components autonomize, can be defined as “elliptical meaning formation” (cf. Stein 2012: 235).

Tab. 2: *Sitzfleisch* (phraseological boundedness 35%)

<i>kein</i>	<i>Sitzfleisch</i>	<i>haben</i>
‘keine	Ausdauer	haben’
NO	SITTING + MEAT	TO HAVE
‘no	stamina	to have’

As Barz (2007a: 13) points out, this phraseological meaning formation is based on the principle of elliptical language use. According to this principle, parts of a complex expression can be left out if the communication partners share a sufficient amount of foreknowledge (cf. Fritz 2006: 51). Thus, the left-out expressions are a form of content which is not included in the verbal expression but which has to be mentally added (cf. von Polenz 2008: 302). Unique components that are freely used can therefore contribute to the expansion of the lexicon while they take on the meaning of the phraseme they are taken from (cf. Barz 2007a: 7). Földes (1988: 71) already draws attention to this special variety of lexical expansion by emphasizing that the extracted element gains formal-syntactical autonomy and absorbs the semantics of the whole construction. This “absorption” of the phraseme’s meaning is seen clearly in the following examples:¹²

- (9) Strapazierfähiges **Sitzfleisch** ist neben guter Kondition wichtig, wenn 35 Mitglieder des RV Wanderlust Beddingen am Montag, 17. Juli, sich auf den Weg zum Bundestreffen in Kiel machen. Vor den Radsportlern liegen 375 Kilometer, die an sechs Tagen auf den Zweirädern bewältigt werden müssen. (Braunschweiger Zeitung, 13 July 2006)

¹² The individual meaning specifications are taken from Duden (2013).

[Besides being in good shape, iron stamina / a resilient butt will be important for the 35 members of the RV Wanderlust Beddingen who will start out for their national meeting in Kiel on Monday, 17th July. The cyclists will have to tackle 375 kilometres in six days.]

Tab. 3: *Kohldampf* (phraseological boundedness 57%)

<i>Kohldampf</i>	<i>schieben</i>
‘(großen) Hunger	haben’
CABBAGE + STEAM	TO SHOVE
‘(ravenous) hunger	to have’

- (10) Mächtiger **Kohldampf** muß einen jungen Mann in Berlin verleitet haben, den Ausdruck Schnellimbiß zu wörtlich zu nehmen. (Rhein-Zeitung, 28 January 1998)
 [Ravenous hunger must have driven the young man in Berlin to take the expression fast food restaurant literally.]

Tab. 4: *Daumenschraube(n)* (phraseological boundedness 72%)

<i>die</i>	<i>Daumenschrauben</i>	<i>anziehen</i>
‘den	Druck ‘(mehr) Zwang	erhöhen’ ausüben’
THE	THUMB + SCREWS	TO TIGHTEN
‘the	pressure ‘(more) coercion	to increase’ to exercise’

- (11) Auch Großbritannien und Frankreich, die im UN-Sicherheitsrat wie die USA, Russland und China ein Vetorecht haben, forderten weitere **Daumenschrauben** für die Führung in Teheran. (Hannoversche Allgemeine, 05 December 2007)
 [Great Britain and France, who – like the US, Russia and China – have the right of veto in the UN Security Council, demanded that further pressure be put on the leadership in Teheran.]

In the examples quoted, *Sitzfleisch* has the meaning of ‘Ausdauer / Durchhaltevermögen’ (Engl.: ‘stamina / perseverance / endurance’), *Kohldampf* means ‘(großer) Hunger’ (Engl.: ‘(ravenous) hunger’) and *Daumenschrauben* means ‘Druck / Zwang / Sanktionen’ (Engl.: ‘pressure / coercion / sanctions’). As a result of the constituents’ separation from their phraseological context, there

exists a free usage which is motivated by the phraseological meaning (cf. Häcki Buhofer 2002b: 135). In the case of unique components, a new – since the item was no longer part of current usage outside of the phraseme – lexeme can develop in this way (cf. Barz 2007a: 14 and Häcki Buhofer 2002b: 155).

In the case of elliptical meaning formation on a phraseological basis, Barz (2007b: 33) comes to the conclusion that, compared to meaning formation on the basis of word formation, it does not lead to the expansion of the lexicon that frequently, as most instances of a free use of unique components are occasional in nature. My own corpus analysis, however, illustrates that freely used unique components can by no means be reduced to occasional modifications. Some unique components contribute to lexical expansion because they have undergone the process of lexicalization completely and are thus available to the speaker as free lexemes with a distinct meaning. The crucial question is when a unique component that is used outside of phraseological contexts gains the status of an autonomous lexeme. For this purpose, the quantitative analysis of the degree of phraseological boundedness conducted in the present paper can be extremely helpful. In my opinion, unique components which are semantically decomposable and also freely used in more than 50% of all cases cannot be denied a certain meaning of their own and, thus, they can also not be denied the status of a lexeme (e.g. *Denkzettel* THINKING + NOTE / REMINDER and *Krokodilsträne(n)* CROCODILE + TEAR(S)).

7 Inclusion of debonded words in the online Duden

Needless to say, for lexicography the previously illustrated process of debonding involves the inclusion of the relevant elements in the dictionary. As part of the present paper, the inclusion of 81 unique components, which range from a low to a high degree of phraseological boundedness, will be further examined. As can be seen from the online Duden,¹³ although more and more of the freely used unique components have their own entries in the dictionary, the lemmatization does not seem to take place systematically. Table 5 shows a summarized segment of this analysis:

¹³ <http://www.duden.de/> (accessed 27 March 2017).

Tab. 5: Inclusion of the debonded words in Duden online

Boundedness	Component	Meaning specification in Duden online
10%	<i>Gardinenpredigt</i> (CURTAIN + SERMON)	‘Vorhaltungen in strafendem Ton, durch die jemand seine Verärgerung zu erkennen gibt’ ‘Remonstrances in a punitive tone, that display somebody’s annoyance’
11%	<i>Armutszeugnis</i> (POVERTY + CERTIFICATE)	---
23%	<i>Extrawurst</i> (EXTRA + SAUSAGE)	---
26%	<i>Luftschloss</i> (AIR + PALACE)	‘etwas Erwünschtes, was sich jemand in seiner Fantasie ausmalt, was aber nicht zu realisieren ist’ ‘something wished for that somebody pictures in his / her imagination but that cannot be realized’
35%	<i>Sitzfleisch</i> (SITTING + MEAT)	(umgangssprachlich scherzhaft) ‘[mit geistiger Trägheit verbundene] Ausdauer bei einer sitzenden Tätigkeit’ (colloquially jocular) ‘stamina in a sedentary occupation [often associated with mental sluggishness]’
46%	<i>Denkzettel</i> (THINKING + NOTE / REMINDER)	‘exemplarische Strafe oder als Warnung angesehene unangenehme Erfahrung’ ‘Exemplary punishment or unpleasant experience that is seen as a warning’
57%	<i>Kohldampf</i> (CABBAGE + STEAM)	‘starkes Hungergefühl; großer Hunger, von dem jemand befallen ist’ ‘Ravenous hunger; somebody is ravenously hungry’
66%	<i>Fettnäpfchen</i> (FAT + LITTLE POT)	---
72%	<i>Daumenschraube</i> (THUMB + SCREW)	---
78%	<i>Zwickmühle</i> (DOUBLE + MILL)	(umgangssprachlich) ‘schwierige, verzwickte Lage, aus der es keinen Ausweg zu geben scheint’ (colloquial) ‘difficult, precarious situation / dilemma in which there seems to be no way out’
82%	<i>Bärendienst</i> (BEAR + SERVICE)	---

Boundedness	Component	Meaning specification in Duden online
83%	<i>Schattendasein</i> (SHADOW + EXISTENCE)	'Zustand geringer Bedeutung, weitgehender Vergessenheit' 'status of little (social) importance, obscurity'

The table demonstrates that debonded lemmata can be found in the online Duden, for example *Schattendasein* with a phraseological boundedness of 83% and the meaning of 'Zustand geringer Bedeutung, weitgehender Vergessenheit' (Engl.: 'status of little (social) importance, obscurity')¹⁴ or *Luftschloss* which means 'etwas Erwünschtes, was sich jemand in seiner Fantasie ausmalt, was aber nicht zu realisieren ist' (Engl.: 'something wished for that somebody pictures in his / her imagination but cannot be realized')¹⁵ and possesses a phraseological boundedness of 26%. By way of contrast, there are no entries for the words *Bärendienst* (82%) and *Extrawurst* (23%), which could be attributed a certain autonomy due to their gradual phraseological boundedness (similar to *Schattendasein* and *Luftschloss*) and their semantic decomposability. Thus, it seems to be rather inconsistent to have a separate dictionary entry for a strongly (phraseologically) bound word like *Schattendasein* while at the same time leaving out a word with a very weak phraseological boundedness like *Armutszeugnis* (11%). There is reason to assume that the lemmatization of freely used unique components is not based on empirical research.

Yet, the unique components which possess no further specification in Table 5 could very easily be given a meaning specification on the basis of their phraseologically motivated semantics. *Armutszeugnis* could be paraphrased with 'Beweis für jmds. Unfähigkeit / Unvermögen' (Engl.: 'proof of sb.'s incompetence / inability'), *Extrawurst* with 'ein Extrawunsch, eine bevorzugte Behandlung' (Engl.: 'a (granted) additional wish, preferential treatment'), *Fettnäpfchen* with 'ungeschicktes / unbedachtes / unkluges Verhalten / Fauxpas' (Engl.: 'clumsy / inconsiderate / ill-advised behavior / faux pas'), *Dauerschraube(n)* with 'starker Druck / Zwang (der auf eine Regierung o.ä. ausgeübt wird) / Sanktionen' (Engl.: 'strong pressure (put on sb. (e.g. the government)) / sanctions') and *Bärendienst* could be paraphrased with 'eine gute Absicht, die jedoch jemand anderem schadet' (Engl.: 'a good intention that nevertheless harms somebody').

14 <http://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Schattendasein> (accessed 27 March 2017).

15 <http://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Luftschloss> (accessed 27 March 2017).

8 Summary and perspectives

As corpus analysis shows, the category of unique components is a prototypical one. A word is not “either – or” but “more or less” phraseologically bound. This is why unique components can occur as or develop into autonomous and free lexemes, despite their apparent phraseological boundedness. In doing so, they acquire an independent, phraseme-motivated meaning, which is derived from their semantic decomposability.

The free usage of unique components can also be explained from a psycholinguistic perspective. Unique-components-phrasemes are processed as (more or less) semantically autonomous entities in the mental lexicon. Although speakers store these fixed expressions as a whole, they are capable of understanding their single constituents as autonomous words with specific meanings.

Thus, the process of phraseological bonding is not a unidirectional one. In actual language use, several debonding processes can be ascertained. Unique components can therefore contribute to the expansion of the lexicon as words that were seemingly restricted to a phraseological context can now again be used independently. From a lexicographical point of view, debonded words should find their way into the dictionaries.

For future research, it might be interesting to trace the debonding processes of single unique components diachronically and to determine further influential factors that promote the separation from the respective phrasemes. The motivation of the unique components undoubtedly plays a decisive role here. Within the scope of this corpus analysis, the words that occurred frequently in free usage were almost always compound words whose structure could be described as being relatively transparent (e.g. *Deckmantel* PROTECTING + COAT, *Lebensnerv* LIFE + NERVE or *Schokoladenseite* CHOCOLATE + SIDE):

Die grosse Zahl der zusammengesetzten Wörter mit unikalenen Elementen bietet von der Zusammensetzung her oft Anhaltspunkte für eine Motivation (die keine Remotivation im sprachgeschichtlichen Sinn ist), aber eine Aufteilung der phraseologischen Bedeutung auf die verschiedenen Komponenten einschliesslich der ‚unikalen‘ erlaubt. (Häcki Buhofer 2002b: 155)

[From the point of view of their composition, the huge number of compound words with unique elements can often be an indication of a motivation (which is not a remotivation in the historical linguistics sense), but which permits an allocation of the phraseological meaning to the different components, including the ‘unique’ ones.]

The free usage of phraseologically bound word formations is therefore facilitated by the fact that they are composed of commonly used elements and according to regular word formation rules (e.g. *Lauf-feuer* RUNNING + FIRE, *Hinter-hand*

BEHIND + HAND, *Tanz-bein* DANCING + LEG) (cf. Häcki Buhofer 1998: 168, 2002b: 134). Thus, they can be motivated more easily than (for example) unique components whose morphemes only occur within the scope of phraseological boundedness such as in *klipp*, *Tapet* or *Kieker*.

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