

Methodology

Participants

A total of 390 native speakers of Dutch participated in the rating study (350 female participants and 40 males). The majority of them were university students (from Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands), but we also invited people from other age groups to participate. As a consequence, the age of the participants varied between 18 and 30 (mean age = 20.4, std. deviation = 1.5). About 98% of the people was highly educated (higher education = 35.1%, and pre-university education = 62.8%).

Materials

Idiomatic expressions. We selected 374 Dutch idiomatic expressions based on Dutch dictionaries (e.g. Boon & Hendrickx, 2017; Slot Webcommerce BV, 2017; Stoet, 1925), online idiom lists (Genootschap OnzeTaal, 2017), and our own knowledge and experience. For each idiomatic expression, we selected and checked the appropriate meaning by using dictionaries and online idiom lists. We adjusted these meanings in such a way that they did not contain other idiomatic expressions.

Questionnaire

The rating study was conducted online through the Qualtrics platform (Qualtrics, 2005). The participants started by filling in a background questionnaire with general questions about gender, year of birth, place of residence, mother tongue, level of education, and language background. In the main part of the rating study, the participants had to answer five questions about the idiomatic expressions on 5-point Likert scales (1,2,3, 4, and 6), and one multiple choice item (5).

1. Frequency: How often have you heard or read this expression? (1. very rarely – 5. very often)
2. Usage: How often have you used this expression yourself? (1. very rarely – 5. very often)
3. Familiarity: How familiar are you with the meaning of this expression? (1. completely unfamiliar – 5. completely familiar)
4. Imageability: How easily can you form an image of this expression? (1. very hard – 5. very easily)
5. Objective idiom knowledge (recognition): Which definition is the correct one? (multiple choice question: 4 alternatives)
6. Transparency: How clear is the meaning of this expression based on the individual words in the expression? (1. very unclear – 5. very clear)

An objective measure of idiom knowledge was obtained from an objective test of meaning recognition (5). In order to design multiple choice items for the knowledge test we created three incorrect alternative meanings that would have been plausible if one were not familiar with the idiom.

The idiomatic expressions were divided over 15 experimental lists, resulting in lists consisting of 25 idiomatic expressions. The idioms were randomly assigned to the lists, and every idiomatic expression occurred in only one list. Each participant rated one list of 25 idiomatic expressions. Before rating the 25 idiomatic expressions, the participants rated 2 idiomatic expressions as part of a practice session. In this practice session, the questions and the labels of the extreme points of the Likert scales were explained. As a form of calibration, examples were provided of idiomatic

expressions representing the extreme values. Subsequently, participants continued to the experimental lists. On average, the participants completed the rating study in about 30 minutes.

References

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