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Formulaic Language in Spoken English: An Analysis of Idioms in The TV Series Pretty Little Liars

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Introduction

Language is an essential medium with which people socialize and interact with each other. When using language, speakers sometimes resort to some prepatterned expressions that accelerate or facilitate the conversation; these prepatterned expressions may be called "situational formulas", it is to say fixed formed expressions uttered in particular contexts. In linguistics, these sequences are called generally formulaic language. Formulaic language is fundamental for the production of a fluent language and it includes a wide range of multi-word sequences with a variety of communicative functions and knowledge of how the language is used. For example, the use of formulaic language may be useful in social interaction since it helps maintaining, starting and ending a conversation, i.e. it is widely used in conversation to organise the discourse; it may help speakers to express their feelings of happiness, sadness or anger since they may resort to fixed word sequences; it can be useful to be polite with other interlocutors when greeting, thanking or apologising; speakers might use formulaic sequences to clarify, commenting or adding information or they can even resort to impolite word sequences in order to threat, insult or to be rude with someone else.

It has been estimated that between one-third to one-half of language is composed by formulaic elements, hence, it can be said that a significant portion of natural language is formulaic and that the percentage of formulaic expressions in spoken interaction has been established to be high.

The study of formulaic language became relevant in linguistics starting from the 1970s and was broadened and strengthened in the 1980s and 1990s, hence, publications of formulaic language have increased significantly only in the last decades. Since the 70s, therefore, scholars began to publish books and essays concerning formulaic language, classifying some different types of formulaic expressions, e.g. lexical bundles, collocations, proverbs, phrasal verbs and idioms.

English is particularly rich in idioms, however, only in recent years there has been an increasing attention to idiomacity. Idioms are groups of two or more words quickly processed and semantically opaque, in the sense that they are generally supposed to be recognised more quickly than non-idiomatic formulaic expressions and are stored in mind and then retrieved like long words and that the meaning of the entire idiom is independent

of the meanings of its component words. Idioms are a significant part of the English vocabulary and it has been estimated that they are frequently used in spoken interaction: they might be used in daily conversation to express feelings, criticising, covering sensitive topics, thanking, apologising and managing the conversation.

Formulaic language and idioms have been widely studied only in recent years and, in order to carry out deeper studies, many scholars, in addition to analysing real daily conversation, have focused on formulaic expressions and idioms in films and TV series. Despite being scripted, film dialogues are claimed to reflect real spoken language; films are, in fact, considered sources of linguistic input, where speakers are exposed to instances of spoken language.

The organisation of this thesis moves from theory to practice since it offers concrete examples, in fact, the focus will be on idiomatic expressions in the TV series *Pretty Little Liars*, a mystery teen drama reflecting teenagers spoken language.

The first chapter of this thesis will focus on formulaic language with a deep focus on idioms. The first section will give a brief overview of the history of its study, covering the 1920s through a pivotal period in the 1970s. It will then continue defining what formulaic language is, its characteristics and all the functions it performs in spoken interaction and then a classification of the most known types of formulaic expressions will be provided. The second part of this first chapter will deal with idioms, a type of formulaic sequences, and how speakers process these expressions in the mind their minds and, find them easier to recall since they are fixed word sequences. Idioms are considered fixed sequences of words and, for this reason, according to some scholars, they cannot be modified. However, it will possible to see how idioms can undergo variations without losing their idiomatic meaning. Finally, the main functions they perform and how they are classified by different scholars will be presented.

How formulaic language and idioms are used and how frequent formulaic language and idioms are used by speakers in face-to-face conversation will be the subject of the second chapter of this thesis. It is assumed that interlocutors usually use fixed expressions, i.e. more or less fixed sequences of words, which allow them to be more fluent. In this regard, the first part of this second chapter, will highlight the frequency of formulaic language and idioms in spoken interaction. Subsequently, it will go into depth on the frequent use

of formulaic expressions and idioms in greetings, thanks, apologies, criticisms, requests, insults etc. When interlocutors find themselves in difficulty in expressing their feelings, in apologizing to someone or in making a request, they may resort to the use of formulaic language and idioms as well as when they want to greet somebody, criticise or insult someone in order to express a concept in a more incisive but imaginative way. Finally, the second chapter will explore the way in which formulaic language and idioms may be used by speakers to open, continue a conversation or how they change topic while speaking.

The third chapter will focus on the characteristics of spoken language in films and TV series providing a deep explanation of the use of formulaic language, in particular idioms. The first brief section will deal with the features of spoken language in films and TV series, such as the frequent use of repairs, self-corrections, backchannels, fillers, discourse markers, etc. The second part is dedicated to formulaic language in which some studies of formulaic expressions will be presented. Subsequently, more importance will be given to the use of idioms in films and TV series with a comparison of different analyses of idiomatic expressions in some films.

The fourth chapter, the core of this thesis, will focus on the analysis of some idiomatic expressions in the first season of the TV series *Pretty Little Liars*, a teenage mystery drama. This chapter will be divided in two main parts. The first part is a general presentation of the TV series with the description of some important events that occur in the first season which will be useful to understand the analysis of the idioms that will be presented in the second part. The analysis will be divided into (1) types of idioms, i.e. phrasal verbs, institutionalised understatements, irreversible binomials, proverbs and familiar quotations; (2) idiomatic expressions used to greet, apologise and thank, (3) idiomatic sequences used to be rude to other interlocutors and, finally, (4) idiomatic discourse markers *you know* and *I mean*.

CHAPTER ONE
FORMULAIC LANGUAGE

"Words. Words. I play with words, hoping that some combination, even a chance combination, will say what I want"

(Doris Lessing)

The first chapter of this thesis will focus on formulaic language with a deep focus on idioms. The first part will briefly explore the history of its study starting from the 1920s up to a turning point in the 1970s, then it will continue defining what formulaic language is, its characteristics and all the functions it performs in spoken interaction and then a classification of the most known types of formulaic expressions will be provided. The second part of this first chapter will focus on idioms, a type of formulaic sequences, and how these expressions are processed in the mind of speakers and, being fixed sequences of words, they are more easily remembered. Idioms are considered fixed sequences of words and, for this reason, according to some scholars, they cannot be modified. In this thesis, however, it will possible to see how idioms can undergo minimal variations without losing their idiomatic meaning. Finally, the main functions they perform and how they are classified by different scholars will be presented.

1. FORMULAIC LANGUAGE

Human beings are unable to live their lives without socializing and interacting to each other, and language is essential to communicate. Language is the medium that people use for various purposes, e.g. to entertain themselves, to give information, to give orders etc. When using language, speakers sometimes resort to some prepatterned expressions that accelerate or facilitate the conversation.

Prepatterns are instances called situational formulas (Zimmer, 1958, cited in Tannen, 1987), i.e., fixed formed expressions uttered in particular settings whose absence in these situations is interpreted as an inappropriate behaviour. Many languages, for example, Arabic, Turkish, Greek, Italian etc., including English, contain numerous formulas of this type and most of them come in pairs (Tannen, 1987).

Examples of situational formulas might be *have a good trip* said when one is departing for a trip or the expression *welcome home*. However, these formulas in British English or

American English are less rigid than situational formulas in other languages, such as Greek (Tannen, 1987: 220). For instance, the situational formula *have a good trip* might be substituted by *have a nice trip* or *have a great trip*.

All discourse is more or less prepatterned, in this regard Leech (1969, cited in Tannen, 1987) states that almost all conversation is formulaic, i.e., structured around prefabricated words, phrases and other units. Moreover, Tannen (1987) notes, quoting Heidegger (1962; 191), that the meaning of utterances derives from words by association.

1.1 RESEARCH ON FORMULAIC LANGUAGE

A number of structural linguists started to pay particular attention to formulaic language in the 1970s, and by that time scholars from different disciplines, including literary studies, social anthropology, neurology etc., began to conduct extensive research on various aspects of formulaic sequences. The research agenda that linguists created starting from the 1970s, Wray (2000), Perkins (2000), Van-Lancker Sidtis (1987) and Pawley (1983) was broadened and strengthened in the 1980s and 1990s, hence, publications of formulaic language have increased significantly only in the last decades.

However, even before the 1970s, numerous researchers had already focused on some aspects of formulaic language. Pawley (2007) differentiates eight distinct research traditions of formulaic language developed from 1920s to 1970s:

1. Literary scholars working on epic sung poetry. According to Pawley (2007), the use and purpose of formulas started to be used in the 1920s and 1930s while scholars were trying to identify the function of formulaic language in Homer's poems. Pawley (2007) states that even in the 1920s and 1930s formulas were considered as a collection of words that could be employed under the same metrical conditions to express certain ideas and that formulaic language was flexible and easy to memorise and served the purpose of ensuring that the speaking performance will be fluent with a specific word order, not excluding possible variations.
2. Anthropologists with a focus on ritual speech and song. The magical spells of the Trobriand Islanders, an archipelago in New Guinea, were the subject of Malinowski (1935)'s study mentioned in Pawley's (2007). He observed that inhabitants used fixed words, distinctive intonation and specific rhythm when

uttering spoken incantations. A few years later, other studies analysed the language of folk tales, nursery rhymes, game chants and sayings and finding that they were full of formulaic units, similar to Trobriand magical incantations.

3. Language used in daily life has been the focus of philosophers and sociologists as a form of strategic interaction. The role of language routines started to be systematically studied in the 1960s. Philosophers and sociologists who studied the use of everyday language, were concerned with the strategic use of specific utterances; Pawley (2007) mentioned Goffman (1959), Sacks and Schegloff (1968) who drew attention to the social norms that govern people's behaviour in public space, that establish the discourse structures and that influence choices of conversational moves. Furthermore, it was noted by several scholars that the language used in greetings, farewells, compliments, insults, complaints, refusals, curses, blames, laments etc. is all conversational fixed or semi-fixed or, as Pawley (2007) calls them, all these are "situation-bound expressions".
4. Neurologists and neuropsychologists interested in the localisation of language functions in the brain. With the contribution of linguists, research on how language functions in the brain have grown considerably since 1960s.
5. Psychologists interested in learning and speech processing. Thanks to the study on the problem of the order in behaviour read by Pawley (2007), elements of behaviour were found to be connected to each other. In this regard, it was seen that in some studies conducted in the 1950s and 1960s, repeated and familiar word strings can generate more fluency in spoken language by creating chunking of familiar strings.
6. Educational psychology research. Pawley (2007) had the chance to study Bernstein's (1958) research which can be placed within a broad tradition of works on language, culture, cognition and personality by educational psychologists, anthropologists and linguists.
7. Early grammarians have acknowledged the importance of conventional expressions in spoken language. It was not until the 1960s that grammarians began to contemplate all the difficulties that pre-patterned expressions create for language. Only at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s some works

on the grammar and semantics of idioms were published, e.g Fraser (1970) and Makkai (1972).

8. English phrasal dictionaries. Although these kinds of dictionaries have been around for many years, they did not previously handle with formulaic language. According to Pawley (2007), the most well-known work for focusing on formulaic expressions is Partidge's dictionary (1937). However, a better grammatical treatment of multiword expressions appears in a small English phrasal dictionary in 1942 which had an impact on how formulaic language is handled in following general dictionaries; however, until 1970s the majority of dictionaries were primitive and contained only fixed expressions followed by their definition.

By citing Weinreich (1969) and Cowie (1981), Pawley (2007) claims that phraseology has been an important field in linguistics and lexicography since the late 1940s. However, due to two main factors, the 1970s are considered to be a turning point in formulaic language research: first, a sizable number of linguists started to study formulaic language, and second, previous research programs on formulaic language started to take shape (Pawley, 2007). Before the 1970s, formulaic language was seen as marginal in linguistic and constituted only a small portion of native speakers' spoken production; indeed, the focus of linguists' research has always been on grammar and on syntax which both have the ability to produce an unlimited number of sentences.

Starting from the 1970s, linguists stopped to look at formulaic language as odd and marginal. Thus, Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor (1988: 501, cited in Pawley, 2007) claim that formulaic sequences in a language are productive sequences with a grammatical structure. In the last decades of the 20th century, the work of philosophers on ordinary language inspired grammarians to write about speech acts showing the conversational use of specific formulas and their construction (Pawley, 2007). As a result, several studies begin to investigate the characteristics of spontaneous speech, especially on familiar expressions that improve fluency. Within a few years, formulaic language quickly gets recognition as a field of study in linguistics. By the late 1970s, linguists, working on formulaic language, started to ask themselves a range of questions about these sequences, e.g. how is it possible to identify conversational expressions? How can these expressions be classified and what are their functions? How do speakers know what to say in particular social contexts? These questions will be answered throughout this dissertation giving

ample space to the classification of these formulaic expressions, with a focus on idioms, and to the social context in which they are mostly used, for instance to greet somebody, to thank, to apologize, to start and close a conversation etc.

In the 1980s, the linguistic panorama was rich in studies on formulaic language, these allowed Pawley (2007) to identify some features that distinguish formulaic expressions from other discourse genres, e.g. speech formulas are highly frequent in conversation, usually 90%, they are linked to a particular discourse context and formulaic language permits to gain fluency due to specific prosodic or musical patterns.

There may be more research about formulaic language to keep in mind, such as those of Hickey (1991, cited by Pawley, 2007) and Pawley (1991). The New Zealand Meteorological Office's weather forecasts were examined by Hickey (1991), who has found that both in discourse structure and in choice of expressions are high formulaic. Pawley (1991) observed the structure of various types of radio sports commentaries, e.g., cricket, rugby and children's playground rhymes. He found that these conform to the basic oral-formulaic pattern (Pawley, 1991).

However, the study of formulaic language became relevant in linguistics only thanks to some corpora explored by Wood (2002), e.g. the Bank of English corpus and the London-Lund Corpus of spoken. These corpora provide new methods to study a language since they gather authentic language material from a variety of sources with the goal of analysing word repetition patterns. This permitted scholars to understand how words collocate and occur together with others (Wood, 2002).

1.2 WHAT FORMULAIC LANGUAGE IS

In linguistics, formulaic language has been defined as fundamental for the production of a fluent language (Wood, 2002); it includes a wide range of multi-word sequences with a variety of communicative functions (Wray, 2002) and knowledge of how the language is used. Formulaic language units include fixed phrases and idiomatic chunks such as *on the other hand*, *all in all* or longer phrases, clauses and sentence-building frameworks of words, e.g., *the bigger the better*. Similarly, Perkins and Wray (2000) describe formulaic language as multiword linguistic units and word sequences that are retained in long-term memory as if they were single lexical units. Formulaic language is referred to as lexicalised "sentence stems" by Pawley (1983). Furthermore, formulaic language is basic

to language development, processing and production of language (Wood, 2002), and Wray (2000: 466) adds that even if formulaic language might be seen as fixed, it is actually generated by syntactic rules (e.g. *It was lovely to see you*).

In English it is customary to ask the binomial *salt and pepper* and not for *pepper and* salt, for this reason considered an irreversible binomial, i.e. a pair of words used together in a fixed order, or the coffee might be defined as *strong* and not as *powerful* creating a collocation (Carrol and Conklin, 2020: 96), i.e. pairs of words that appear together and whose relationships depends on specific syntactic and semantic criteria (Syder and Sinclair, 2000, cited in Wood, 2019). The frequency and the faster processing of current sequences may be two characteristics of formulaic language. Hence, according to Bybee (2006, cited in Carrol and Conklin, 2020), sequences of words, i.e. formulaic language, occur very frequently in natural language and, as Wray states (2012: 234), all recurring sequences are stored in the lexicon and may be retrieved directly.

However, formulaic sequences can differ in different dimensions (Titone, 1999), for example, in their degree of fixedness, in their schematicity, in their functions and in their degree of compositionality. As a result, it may be difficult to compare some types of phrases, usually included in the category of formulaic language, with the fixed expression *salt and pepper*. For instance, idioms are semantically opaque and self-contained figurative phrases (Carrol and Conklin, 2020). Some studies describe idioms as sequences that can be processed faster than simple collocations (Cacciari, 1994). Collocations, on the other hand, are considered as words pairing that occur together more frequently, such as *strong coffee*. They are transparent and have a literal meaning that is the result of the combination of two words. Moreover, collocations are processed slower than idioms (Bonk and Healy, 2005, cited in Carrol and Conklin, 2020). In addition to the formulaic sequences mentioned above, Carrol and Conklin (2020) state that others formulaic expressions can be binomials, phrasal verbs, lexical bundles etc.

The study by Carrol and Conklin (2020) demonstrated that faster processing of formulaic language is influenced by the frequency of occurrence. Frequency, including transparency, is an important factor in how speakers judge word combinations, with shorter reaction times for more transparent combination (Gyllstad and Wolter, 2016, cited in Carrol and Conklin, 2020).

Formulaic language appears to be beneficial for facilitating quicker and more fluid communication by reducing the processing burden of sentence construction (Wood, 2002). Peters (1983, cited in Wood, 2002) describes these formulas as a "shortcut in communication" and adds that some expressions or variations on them might be so useful for memory that it is convenient to retrieve them in the most prefabricated form. Formulas might be remembered because of the linear surface order of their parts or by their phonological units and, depending on their pragmatic aspect and form, formulas can be stored in memory as cognitive bundles recovered in different ways.

Wood (2002) quoting Weinert (1995), claims that a combination of words can acquire a formulaic status when some formulas are merged or combined together, or as a result of the lexicalization of syntactic strings through frequent production.

1.2.1 Functions of formulaic language

Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992, cited in Perkins and Wray, 2000), Conklin and Schmitt (2004) and Perkins and Wray (2000) identify some functions of formulaic sequences in spoken English.

For example, Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992, cited in Perkins and Wray, 2000) believe that the use of formulaic language may be useful in social interaction. In face-to-face conversation, it might be possible to maintain the conversation by using summoning expressions (e.g. *how are you?*, *I didn't catch your name*), clarifying utterances (e.g. *what do you mean?*) or shifting turns utterances (e.g. *can I say something?*). Moreover, formulaic sequences can be employed with conversational purpose by asking for questions (e.g. *do you X?*), refusing something (e.g. *I'm sorry*) or expressing sympathy (e.g. *I'm sorry for your loss*).

Formulas can be used when speakers are asked questions on familiar and specific subjects, i.e., necessary topics including autobiography (e.g. *my name is X*), time (e.g. *what time is it?*), location (e.g. *where is X?*) and weather (e.g. *today it's X*) (Nattinger and DeCarrico, 1992, cited in Perkins and Wray, 2000).

Some formulaic sequences can be referred to as discourse devices because they are crucial and widely used in conversation to organise the discourse (Nattinger and DeCarrico, 1992, cited in Perkins and Wray, 2000); examples might include expressions such as

temporal connectors (e.g. *the day/week/Month/year before*), linkers (e.g. *on the other hand*, *even though*, *a matter of fact*), exemplifiers (e.g. *in other words*, *it's like X*), summarizers (e.g. *to make a long story short*, *my point is that*) and discourse markers (e.g., *you know*, *I mean*).

According to Conklin and Schmitt (2004), formulaic language can be useful in expressing specific meanings, ideas or messages, for example the idiom *the early bird gets the worm* is said to express the message that if somebody does something immediately, or before others do, he/she will have an advantage. In addition, formulaic expressions may be used to show social solidarity, e.g. to express solidarity by using the expression *yeah it is* or *don't worry*.

And finally, formulas might be used to demonstrate speakers' willingness to identify themselves with a specific speech community (Perkins and Wray, 2000).

1.2.2 Classification of formulaic sequences

Since the initial discussion of Pawley (1983) and other scholars, the area of formulaic language has been explored only recently. Nearly 20 years ago, Perkins and Wray (2000: 3) identified almost 40 terms to refer to formulaic language creating different categories: idioms, lexical phrases, collocations, binomials, lexical bundles, phrasal verbs, proverbs etc. Whatever the terminology, they are all multi-word sequences which show a bit of overlap and are subject to different interpretation (Wood, 2019: 30). This is the reason why, according to Wood (2019: 31), scholars find the categorization of formulaic language particularly challenging; he also notes that formulaic sequences may be identified in corpora by their frequency and the way they are produced, i.e., how words combine together. Moreover, according to Syder and Sinclair (2000, cited in Wood, 2019), some formulaic sequences can be classified by their frequency in corpora, mainly by their structural, semantic or syntactic properties and some by their pragmatic utility.

Based on the distribution and high frequency in corpora, scholars describe lexical bundles (Biber et al., 2002) as sequences of three or more words that can help the audience to predict what will be stated next and show the typical repetitiveness of speakers in dialogues or when they are talking about specific topics. According to Biber et al. (2002), a bundle can be a syntactically incomplete sequence of words but a meaningful string

such as *to be able to*, *a lot of*, *I don't know why* or semantically and pragmatically integrated expressions, e.g. *as a result of*.

In addition, collocations, proverbs, phrasal verbs, idioms and other types of formulaic sequences are distinguished by structural, semantic or syntactic properties (Syder and Sinclair, 2000, cited in Wood, 2019). Collocations are described by Firth (1935) as pairs of words that appear together whose relationships conforms to certain syntactic and semantic criteria, e.g., *plastic surgery*, *senior management* etc. For example, they can be in a syntactic relationship with Verb + Noun such as in *make a decision* or Adjective + Noun, e.g., *fatal mistake*, or they can have pragmatic functions such as in *how are you?*. Proverbs are sentence length sequences (Wood, 2019) which provide advice, warning (e.g., *a stitch in time saves nine*), explanations (e.g., *early to bed and early to rise*), common experience and good messages (e.g. *like death and takes*). Phrasal verbs are combinations of a verb and an adverbial particle that have a single meaning and behave both lexically and syntactically like a single verb (Biber et al., 2002). Examples of phrasal verbs can be *to pick up*, *to show off*, *to look up* etc. Finally, idioms are fixed semantically opaque or metaphorical word combinations (Moon, 1998: 4, cited in Wood, 2019) such as *kick the bucket* or *spill the beans*. Idioms are further examined in section 1.3 as they are the core of this thesis; in fact, a broad explanation will be provided regarding the way they are proceeded, their features, their functions and the types of idioms that different scholars managed to classify.

Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992, cited in Wood, 2002) categorise formulaic language in a different way, they list four classes: (1) Polywords are words that function as single words, such as *so far so good*, *in a nutshell*, *by the way* etc. with no possible variation or lexical insertion; (2) institutionalized are usually continuous expressions with invariable length, e.g. *nice meeting you*, *how do you do*, *long time no see* etc.; (3) phrasal constraints which permit variations of lexical and phrase categories, e.g., *a day ago*, *a very long time ago*, *in summary* etc. and finally, (4) sentence builders that might help to construct a full sentence with fillable slots, for example, *I think that X* or *not only X but Y*.

1.3 A FOCUS ON IDIOMS

In recent years there has been an increasing attention to idiomacity, both in the narrow and the broad sense. In their studies about idioms, Cacciari and Corradini (2015), Cacciari

and Tabossi (1988), Carrol and Conklin (2020), De Caro and Edith (2009), Fraser (1970), Kövecses (1996), Leah (2014), Makkai (1972), Newman (2017), Nunberg et al. (1994), Pawley (1983), Wood (2002, 2019) collected a few expressions used by scholars to refer to idiomatic expressions such as "formulaic expressions", "phraseological units" and "idiomatic expressions", "conversational routine", "linguistic routines", or "pre-patterned speech", "prefabs", "formulas", "set expressions", "collocations", "lexicalized sentence stems" and "semi-transparent expressions" and "opaque metaphorical expressions". Siyanova-Chanturia and Martinez (2014, cited in Carrol and Conklin, 2020) identify idioms as "prototypically formulaic expressions" highlighting their variability along all dimensions, including frequency, familiarity, transparency and literalness. Some researchers, such as Makkai (1972), claim that idiomacity is a broad and pervasive phenomenon and that it is difficult to separate from freedom of syntax. Similarly, Cutting and Bock (1997, cited in Carrol and Conklin, 2020)) state that idioms have an internal syntax, and are not merely "long words" as Cacciari and Tabossi (1988) argue.

English language is particularly rich in idioms and without them, English language would lose much of its spoken variety and humour. The background and the etymological roots are unknown, but according to De Caro and Edith (2009), some English idioms were first used in the writings of writers like Shakespeare, Walter Scott, Lewis Carrol to mention just a few. For example, an idiomatic expression can be found in a Shakespearian quotation: "as a social worker, you certainly see the seamy side of life" referring to the most unpleasant aspect of life that people normally do not see. In United Kingdom or United States, popular sports such as baseball or football are the source of more recent idioms. *To cover all of one's bases*, an idiomatic expression coming from the American game of baseball, means to prepare for or deal with a situation (De Caro and Edith, 2009). In addition, according to Niergarth (2007, cited in De Caro and Edith, 2009), the origins of some idioms, e.g. *to hold one's horses,* that means to stop and wait patiently for someone or something, can also be found in ancient era. It originates from a time when individuals rode horses and had to hold their horses while waiting for something or someone. Even the idiomatic expression *to kick the bucket* has historical roots because it refers to the slaughtering of pigs, for this reason it means to die (Wood, 2020: 33).

Some scholars, including Wood (2015), provide five basic criteria to define an idiom: (1) it is a group of two or more words processed more quickly than other formulaic sequences; (2) an idiom is semantically opaque, which means that the meaning of the entire idiom is independent of the meanings of its component words; (3) idioms are non-compositional, in the sense that the words that create the idiom cannot be analysed for their single meaning or function; (4) the mutual expectancy criterion, or lexicality, refers to the fact that the component words co-occur in a fixed way, giving idioms a unitary form and, (5) idioms, from a lexicon-grammatical point of view, are frozen and fixed: the component words cannot be replaced by synonyms. For instance, the idiomatic expression *beat around the bush* cannot be passivized or modified.

1.3.1 Processing idioms

Idioms are generally supposed to be recognised more quickly than matched "novel phrases" (Carrol and Conklin, 2020: 98), and similarly, Swinney and Cutler (1979, cited in Cacciari and Corradini, 2015; Cacciari and Tabossi, 1988; Carrol and Conklin, 2020; Conklin and Schmitt, 2012; Newman, 2017; Titone and Connine, 1999; Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2015), define idioms (e.g. *break the ice*) as meaningful phrases recognised more quickly than non-idiomatic phrases (e.g. *break the cup*). Hence, it seems likely that idioms are recognised and processed faster than other phrases mainly because they are well-known (Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2004, 2015) and familiar phrases (Titone and Connine, 1999). Unlike Titone and Connine (1999) who claims that familiar phrases are processed more quickly than decomposable idioms, i.e. idioms whose constituents contribute to the meaning of the whole, some other scholars assume that only decomposable idioms can be processed rapidly (Gibbs, 1989, 2001, cited in Cacciari and Corradini, 2015; Cacciari and Tabossi, 1988; Carrol and Conklin, 2020; Conklin and Schmitt, 2012; Newman, 2017; Titone and Connine, 1999; Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2015). The role of decomposability, i.e., how much the figurative meaning of idioms can be mapped onto the literal meanings of the component words, is an important issue in the analysis and study of idioms. The issue of decomposability is also covered by Wood (1981), who distinguishes composable idioms from non-compositional idioms, the latter are idioms whose meaning is not the sum of the meaning of its component parts. For example, the meaning of *by and large* cannot be understood by the meaning of its single constituent parts. To make this clearer, Titone and Connine (1999) underline that the literal meaning of the idiomatic expression

kick the bucket is not *to strike a bucket with a foot* rather *to die suddenly*. This is to say that the literal meaning has no semantic overlap with the idiomatic meaning. Similarly, Fowler (1996, cited in De Caro and Edith, 2009) states that an idiom is a phrase where words together have a meaning that is different from the dictionary definition of the single words. Based on the non-compositionality of idioms, it can be said that idioms are group of words whose meaning is different from the meaning of each single word analysed independently. Although idiomatic meaning is non-compositional, this does not mean that the literal meaning of component words plays no role in the processing of idioms (Cacciari and Corradini, 2015). In fact, according to Molinaro, Carreiras and Duñabeitia (2012, cited in Cacciari and Corradini, 2015) component words maintain their own lexico-semantic properties when creating together larger units.

Different models of idioms processing have been proposed. The literal processing model, mentioned by Titone and Connine (1999), is based on the fact that in the mind of speakers there is a "list" of idiomatic expressions accessible through a specific idiomatic mode of processing. It is to say that speakers firstly attempt to construct a literal interpretation, if this process fails, an idiomatic mode of processing starts and the idiomatic meaning is retrieved from the list. Moreover, reading Swinney and Cutler (1979, cited in Titone and Connine, 1999; Cacciari and Tabossi, 1988), Titone and Connine (1999) mention the lexical representation model with which it is possible to affirm that idioms were stored in mind and then retrieved like long words. The literal and figurative meaning starts after the first word of the idiomatic expression is presented; however, the idiomatic meaning should precede the literal meaning (Swinney and Cutler, 1979, cited in Titone and Connine, 1999; Cacciari and Tabossi, 1988). Finally, Titone and Connine (1999) describe Gibb's (1980) direct access model. According to this model, the idiomatic meanings have priority over literal meanings. Furthermore, thanks to this model, it is possible to claim that the component words of idioms will not be combined to form a literal interpretation of the expression, i.e. the literal meaning of idioms cannot exist.

Meanwhile, Cacciari and Tabossi (1988) claim that the recognition of idioms starts at the beginning of the formulaic sequence and goes parallel with the computational meaning. However, it takes time to identify the idiomatic meaning while taking into account the literal meaning of all words; for this reason, the meaning of the idiom becomes available before the literal meaning. In other words, idioms are initially processed word by word

until sufficient information is gathered to signal the presence of an idiom. The *Configuration Hypothesis* may allow to observe that the penultimate word of the formulaic expression is typically where idiom recognition occurs (Cacciari and Tabossi, 1988). For example, the idiomatic expression *kick the bucket* can be recognised by speakers as an idiomatic expression in the penultimate word, i.e. the article *the*. When interlocutors hear the incomplete idiomatic sequence *kick the* they may imagine that the sequence will be completed with the final word *bucket*; therefore, it can be said that, as Cacciari and Tabossi (1988) state, this idiom is recognised even if the complete idiomatic sequence is not uttered. The *Configuration Hypothesis* is the first model concerning the comprehension of idioms that gives an important role to idiom predictability. Their predictability depends also on the ability of the speaker to identify the sequence as belonging to a known idiom and complete this fragment idiomatically.

1.3.2 Idioms fixedness

Idioms are strings of more than one word whose syntactic form is usually fixed and highly pervasive in spoken interaction (McCarthy, 1992). Idiomatic expressions are accepted and used by native speakers with fixed structure and meaning (Bell, 1974, cited in Newman, 2017) even if sometimes they are not grammatically correct, for example the expression *it's ages*, referring to a very long time, contains a singular pronoun with a plural noun.

Speakers usually cannot change or substitute words of idioms otherwise the meaning would change (Baker, 1992: 63 cited in Leah, 2014); their fixedness may be determined according to some operations, all of the following are described by Baker (1992 cited in Leah, 2014):

(a) Addition: the formulaic sequence cannot have any additional elements. For instance, the idiom *to hit below the belt*, meaning to attack or criticize somebody cruelly and unfairly, would sound odd if a word not part of the fixed sequence is added or adding the adverb *very* to *red herring* would affect the idiomacity of the expression.

(b) Deletion: all elements must be present in the idiomatic expression. For example, the previous idiom, i.e. *to hit below the belt*, should present all its elements otherwise the idiomatic meaning of attacking or criticizing someone cruelly would

be lost or erasing the adjective *sweet* from the sequence have a *sweet tooth* would change completely its meaning.

(c) Transposition: elements may not normally be transposed, but limited transposition to certain types sometimes may occur. *Hit below the belt* allows limited nominalisation with which the idiom is turned into *that was a case of hitting below the belt*.

(d) Substitution: idioms do not accept lexical and grammatical substitutes, even if synonyms, e.g. it is not possible to substitute *belt* with *sash* or in the expression the *long and short of it*, *long* cannot be replaced with *tall* despite their meaning is nearly the same.

(e) Modification: changes in the grammatical structure may cause the destruction of the meaning of the idiom. For instance, *stock and barrel lock* is no more idiomatic because the order of the component words has been changed; the proper idiomatic form should be *lock, stock and barrel*.

(f) Comparative: adding the comparative suffix *-er* to the adjectives part of an idiom would alter its usual meaning, e.g., *to be in hot water*, i.e., be in trouble, cannot be changed into *to be in hotter water*.

(g) Passive: if idioms are passivized, they would lose their idiomaticity, for example, the meaning of *some beans were spilled* is different from *to spell the beans* which means to tell someone a secret or tell information before you were supposed to.

All of these restrictions have an impact on the degree of idiomacity of lexical items and they may remove the idiom's characteristics of figurativeness. Due to these features, idioms might be considered rigid structures, indeed, the majority of research on idiomatic expressions have focused on the canonical form of idioms (Cacciari and Tabossi; 1988 and Titone and Connine, 1999). Some studies (Fraser, 1970; Tannen, 1987) have shown that idioms can occur with some variation. Tannen (1987: 221) claims that even if it is common for English speakers to use fixed expressions, in spoken conversation it occasionally happens that they alter some items in their canonical form without losing communicative effectiveness. These studies have demonstrated that idiomatic expressions are not completely fixed or rigid in form as previously assumed. For instance, Tannen (1987: 222) heard a politician saying that the investigation he was conducting would not stop *until every stone is unturned,* instead of using the right expression which

is *leave no stone unturned*. The audience understood exactly what he meant, and there is no reason to think that listeners noticed that this idiomatic expression was grammatically incorrect.

Several ways to modify idioms exist, Fraser (1970) distinguishes five types of procedures that may be carried on a particular idiomatic expression:

(1) The adjunction of some non-idiomatic word to the standard form of the idiom. For example, relating the basic form of the idiom in the sentence *they hit the ball out of the park* and *they are hitting the ball out of the park*, the *-ing* must be adjoined to the main verb creating a gerundive nominalization transformation;

(2) The insertion of some constituent, such as the insertion of an indirect object or other constituents within the idiomatic expression. E.g., the insertion of *the class* in *John read the class the riot act*, while the basic idiomatic form is *to read the riot act*;

(3) The permutation of two successive constituents of the idiom such as in *to lay down the law* or *to lay the law down act*;

(4) The extraction of some words to place them into a different position; this process entails the extraction of a component of the idiom that will be placed outside the idiom. For example, in *the law was laid down by her father*, *the law* is outside the idiom, in the subject noun phrase position, while in the original idiomatic expression, i.e., *her father laid down the law*, *the law* is part of the direct object noun phrase.

(5) The reconstruction of the idiom into another structure organisation involves the alteration of its original structure. For example, in *his laying down of the law to his daughter* the syntactic function of the original idiom, i.e., *to lay down the law*, has been altered.

From these five operations, Fraser (1970) establishes a hierarchy of seven degrees of idiom, ranging from entirely free to completely frozen. The idioms at the highest level allows almost all traditional transformation while idioms at the lowest level do not; this model is:

Level 6 Unrestricted
Level 5 Reconstruction
Level 4 Extraction

Level 3 Permutation
Level 2 Insertion
Level 1 Adjunction
Level 0 Completely frozen

In addition to Fraser's (1970) five operations of idioms variation, Tannen (1987) adds a sixth one which is the blending. He asserts that people frequently combine and blend idiomatic expressions, e.g. by uttering a phrase that contains two parts of two different idioms (Tannen, 1987). Numerous merged formulas have been documented by Tannen (1987), for example, the expression *up against the wire* is the fusion of two different formulas: *up against the wall* and *down the wire*. It is essential to emphasise that speakers who fuse several formulas together do not commit grammatical, lexical or syntactic mistakes; even if they modify forms of fixed expressions, their communication and the listeners' understanding of these formulas are not affected (Tannen, 1987: 222).

Hence, it could be seen that some idioms may undergo some variation. Newman (2017) by referring to some recent research by different scholars, e.g. Moon, (1998), Barlow (2000), Langlotz (2006) and Schröder (2013), noticed that Fraser's (1970) operational model of idioms variation has been expanded. Similar to Fraser's (1970) insertion operation, they observe syntactic variations in idioms, for example, the idiomatic expression *to bite the bullet* (Moon, 1998; Barlow, 2000; Langlotz, 2006 and Schröder, 2013, cited in Newman, 2017), i.e., to force yourself to do something difficult, can undergo some syntactic transformation, as in the sentence *they have really bitten the bullet this time* (Newman, 2017). Furthermore, according to Newman (2017), idioms can vary lexically, e.g., in the canonical expression *throw in the towel*, meaning to stop doing something because impossible to succeed, *throw* can be substituted with *toss* without losing its idiomaticity. In addition, idioms might be truncated as in the example *he who plays the piper calls the tune* and finally, idiomatic expressions can be changed by adding adverbs or adjectives, e.g. *to spill the royal beans*, *to pull political strings* or *to make rapid headway* (Newman, 2017) where *royal*, *political* and *rapid* are no part of the original idioms.

Some studies have measured the time with which speakers process variants (McGlone et al., 1994, cited in Newman, 2017), and they showed that participants are faster at reading the canonical form of idioms, but that variants are read as fast as literal language and

therefore processed slower. For example, the expression *to break the ice* is processed more quickly than its variant *to shatter the ice*, both meaning to break an uncomfortable social situation and make people more relaxed.

1.3.3 Functions and properties of idioms

McCarthy (1998) lists different formal and functional types of idiomatic expressions and this categorization serves to show that a wide range of idiomatic expressions occur in everyday conversation. He states that idiomatic expressions have a high degree of informality and are more colloquial than their nearest synonyms in the literal free form (McCarthy, 1992: 57). According to McCarthy (1992), one of the most important analysts to describe the use of idioms in spoken language is Strässler (1982). He claims that idioms have an evaluative function, i.e., they are used by a speaker when referring to a third person, to an object or other non-human entity, rather than to the speaker him/herself or to the listener (Strässler, 1982: 103, cited in McCarthy, 1992). Furthermore, McCarthy (1992: 60) underlines that idioms in spoken language often occur in segments in which the speaker is evaluating the events, which is to say that they appear to occur at significant junctures and not randomly.

Along with functions, idioms possess orthogonal properties, and some of them are listed by Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994: 492).

(a) Conventionality: idioms are conventional word combinations, i.e., their meaning cannot be entirely predicted on the basis of the knowledge of the independent conversation;
(b) Inflexibility: idioms typically appear in only a limited number of syntactic constructions. On the other hand, Tannen (1987) and McCarthy (1992) hold the opposite opinion stating that idioms' degree of fixedness can vary;
(c) Figuration: idioms usually involve metaphors (e.g. *take the bull by the horns*), metonymies (e.g. *lend a hand*), hyperboles (e.g. *not worth the paper it's printed on*) and others figurations.
(d) Proverbiality: idioms might be used to describe or explain a recurring situation of particular social interest in relation to a specific scenario involving concrete things and relations;

(e) Informality: idioms are associated with informality or colloquiality (Nunberg, Sag and Wasow, 1994; McCarthy, 1992);
(f) Affect: idioms are frequently used to imply an evaluation or an affective stance towards the things to which they are referred (Nunberg, Sag and Wasow, 1994).

Except from the conventionality property, none of these applies obligatorily to idiomatic expressions (Nunberg, Sag and Wasow, 1994: 493); some idioms may not have the figuration property, and therefore could not have a figurative interpretation. For example, *by dint of*, containing an item occurring in no other contexts, cannot have figurative interpretation.

1.3.4 Classification of idioms

Idioms are a fundamental part of everyday conversation because they may help to produce more effective and powerful language than literal and non-idiomatic language. Classifying idioms is an important issue in their study; however, some linguists assert that idioms are difficult to classify, for this reason, Kövecses (1996) talks about "mixed bag" when referring to these formulaic sequences.

The difficulties related to the classification of idioms are pointed out mainly by Makkai (1972), who proposes a classification of idioms based on two categories, i.e., lexemic and sememic idioms. According to Makkai (1972: 135) there are two major categories to classify idioms: lexemic idioms based on the lexemic structure of idioms and sememic idioms based of their sememic. This distinction is made according to the stratum of the grammar, i.e., lexis and sememic, so that idioms depend on the stratificational model of the grammar. The lexemic idiom is a sequence of morphemes that includes more than one minimal free form and can occur in other environments as the realization of a mono lexicon lexeme, treated as single syntactic units (Makkai, 1975: 76). They deal with the familiar part of the speech, it is to say verbs, nouns, adjectives and prepositions. Sememic idioms, on the other hand, are strings of syntactic units which behave like a single semantic unit.

Makkai (1972) can be considered the pioneer of the study on the classification of idioms, but he is not the only one who managed to propose a detailed classification of idioms. Even if Makkai (1972) was the forerunner on these studies, the definition of different types of idioms of McCarthy and O'Dell (2002) should also be remembered. In addition

to their classifications, which are the main used in the studies of different scholars, there are many others who tried to classify them, e.g. Fernando (1996) and Kövecses (1996).

1.3.4.1 Lexemic idioms

According to Makkai (1972), lexemic idioms are the most numerous since they are composed by familiar part of speech, i.e. verbs, nouns, adjective and preposition, and can be part of a sentence. This category enabled Makkai (1976) to distinguish sub groups of idioms. Lexemic idioms embrace phrasal verbs, tournures, irreversible binomials, phrasal compounds and pseudo-idioms.

Phrasal verbs, when taken in their non-literal sense, can be idioms consisting of a verb and a particle which can be an adverb or a preposition (Makkai, 1976). Examples of idiomatic phrasal verb may be *to rake off* which can also be a nominal idiom or *come down with*.

Tournures are polylexonic lexemes of a larger size than a phrasal verb, i.e., combinations of three or more lexons occurring in a phrasal constriction. They are considered to be the largest lexemic idioms which often contain three or more words usually combination of verb + direct object + adjunct (e.g. *pull somebody's leg* or *go off one's head*) or, based on their structure, tournures usually have an initial relator that can be a verb (e.g., *to fly off the handle*), occasionally a preposition (e.g., *over the mark*, *beside the point*) and very rarely something else such as in the case of *as a matter of fact* (Makkai, 1976).

Moreover, irreversible binomials, mainly theorised by Makkai (1972) and later deeper explored by McCarthy and O'Dell (2010), are irreversible combinations of two words with a conjunction in between such as in the expression *to rain cats and dogs* meaning to rain profusely, *to be sixes and sevens* that means that someone is in a state of confusion and also *cash and carry*, *null and void* etc. Indeed, even McCarthy and O'Dell (2002) identified and defined the idiomatic irreversible binomials. Similarly to Makkai (1972) they describe them as combination of two words in fixed order joined with a conjunction words, usually *and*, e.g., *black and white* referred to someone or something in the sense that a subject or a situation is one in which it is easy to understand what is right and what is wrong or *black and blue* referred to someone who has dark marks on his/her skin due to an accident.

Following, phrasal compound idioms contain nominal composed by an adjective plus a noun, a noun plus a noun or an adverb plus a preposition (Makkai, 1976). For example, *blackmail* (adjective + noun) refers to forced payments, *bookworm* (noun + noun) is a parson committed in reading or studying, *hot dog* (adjective + noun) is a kind of sandwich and the *white house* (adjective + noun) is the official residence of the president of the US.

Finally, Makkai (1976) defines pseudo idioms as compound words or phrases in which one constituent is a "cranberry morp" with no meaning by itself (Makkai, 1972) or in which one or more lexons are "banned". A pseudo idiom can be *chit-chat*, *hanky-panky* and *helter-skelter* in which *chit*, *hanky* and *helter* are the "cranberry morp".

Taking into consideration Makkai's (1972) definition of lexemic idioms, even euphemisms, similes (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2002), idioms with *it*, metaphors (Kövecses, 1996), pure idioms, semi-idioms and literal idioms (Fernando, 1996, cited in Leah) might fall into the category of lexemic idioms.

According to McCarthy and O'Dell (2010), euphemisms are types of idioms used to be polite avoiding the use of words which might be offensive and to soften uncomfortable, provocative or sensitive topics (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010: 28). An example can be *passed away* which means to die or *powder my nose* is a polite way to say someone needs to go to the toilet.

Simile may include idioms that compare two things, for example, *as sly as a fox* meaning that a person is very crafty or dishonest, *as cold as ice* that means that something is extremely cold or someone is insensitive (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010: 28), *as light as a feather* meaning that something is very light, cool as a cucumber used to describe a calm person etc.

Kövecses (1996) adds two other types of idioms that can be considered as lexemic idioms which are idioms with *it*, e.g. *live it up*, and metaphors. Metaphors are expressions used to describe one thing but that describe something different, especially abstract, such as *to spit fire* referred to a quick-tempered or highly emotional person with a fierce temper.

Furthermore, Fernando (1996, cited in Leah, 2014) identifies three sub-classes of idiomatic expressions that can adhere to Makkai's (1972) definition of lexemic idioms: pure idioms, semi-idioms and literal idioms.

Pure idioms are non-literal and conventionalised multi-word expressions. They are always non-literal, they might be both invariable or with little variation and Fernando (1996 cited in Leah, 2014) considers them opaque, for instance, the idiomatic expression *to spill the beans* has nothing to do with beans.

Semi-idioms usually have one or more literal constituents and one non-literal. Therefore, Fernando (1996, cited in Leah, 2014) considers them as partially opaque, e.g., *food the bill* which means to pay.

Moreover, according to Fernando (1996, cited in Leah, 2014) literal idioms might be seen both as frozen or variable expressions. They are considered to be transparent because their interpretation can be based on the meaning of its parts, for example, *of course* or *for certain*; for this reason, it is easier to understand their meaning.

1.3.4.2 Sememic idioms

On the other hand, Makkai (1972) describes sememic idioms as syntactic units behaving like a single semantic unit and those idioms that create whole sentences on their own. He divides sememic idioms into proverbs, familiar quotations, institutionalised understatements and hyperbole. However, other idioms, identified by McCarthy and O'Dell (2002), can be part of this category, i.e. cliches and fixed statements.

Proverbial idioms are moral and well-recognised proverbs in a language whose meaning is not literal (Makkai, 1976), for example *too many cooks spoil the broth* said when there are too many people involved in doing the same thing, but the final result will not be so good, *don't count your chickens before they are hatched* meaning that one should not assume that something will happen definitively before it really does or *birds of feather flock together* that means that people of familiar interest, ideas or values tend to stay together. Similarly, McCarthy and O'Dell (2010: 26) state that proverbs can be idiomatic short sentences which refer to something that people have experience whose aim is to give advice or warning (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010: 26). For example, *where there is a will there is a way* is a popular old idiomatic expression used to encourage someone.

Familiar quotations as idioms are quotations from famous figures or sources (Makkai, 1976) such as *brevity is the soul of wit* from *Hamlet* by Shakespeare or *ask what you can do for your country* from the presidential inaugural address by Kennedy.

Following, institutionalised understatements are conversational expressions whose goal is to lessen the impact of a blunt and direct statement (Makkai, 1976) or statements that describe something in a way that makes it seem less important, serious or bad than it really is, such as the idiomatic sequences *it wasn't the smartest move* or *I wasn't too crazy about it*.

Makkai (1972) describes hyperboles as exaggerated statements which should not be taken literally (Makkai, 1976), e.g., *he won't even lift a finger* meaning that someone do not want anything or *I could eat a horse* which is an expression said by someone who is really hungry.

According to the *Cambridge Dictionary* clichés are not original and not interesting phrases and, McCarthy and O'Dell (2010: 30) claim that they often appear in advertising slogans or newspaper headlines, for instance, *there are plenty more fish in the sea* used to tell someone whose relationship has ended that there are other many people available to start a new relationship.

Finally, fixed statements are expressions usually used in everyday conversation mainly to order something (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010: 30), e.g., *get your shoes on!* that means to hurry up and be ready to go.

To conclude, this chapter mainly aimed to explore the features of formulaic language, i.e. fixed or semi-fixed sequences of two or more words, and idioms. Thanks to the study conducted so far, it has been possible to understand that formulaic language is processed quickly in the minds of the interlocutors, this is because they are perceived as single lexical units and therefore retained in long-term memory. Speakers, while having a conversation, might benefit from formulaic language as it allows to make the speech more fluid and better organised thanks to various devices. Formulaic language includes different types of formulaic expressions, among which idioms. Idioms are considered to be opaque expressions as the most of the times they do not have a literal meaning; although they are described as fixed sequences of words, idioms can undergo some variations by adding or changing a word within them. Finally, it could be possible to notice that idiomatic expressions are not all the same: various types of idioms exist.

Chapter two will be dedicated to the exploration of formulaic language and idioms in daily conversation. It will be shown that the percentage of formulaic expressions and idiomatic expressions is highly frequent in spoken interaction; speakers may recur to fixed or semi-fixed expressions mainly while greeting, apologising, thanking, making a request, complaining, expressing their feelings etc.

CHAPTER 2
FORMULAIC LANGUAGE AND IDIOMS IN SPOKEN INTERACTION

"Words, so innocent and powerless as they are, as standing in a dictionary, how potent for good and evil they become in the hands of one who knows how to combine them"

(Nathaniel Hawthorne)

The second chapter of this thesis will focus on how and how frequent formulaic language and idioms are used by speakers in face-to-face conversation. It is assumed that interlocutors usually use fixed expressions, i.e. more or less fixed sequences of words, which allow them to be more fluent. In this respect, the first part of this second chapter, will underline the frequency of formulaic language and idioms in spoken interaction. Subsequently, it will explore in detail the frequent use of formulaic expressions and idioms in greetings, thanks, apologies, criticisms, requests, insults etc. When interlocutors find themselves in difficulty in expressing their feelings, in apologizing to someone or in making a request, they may resort to the use of formulaic language and idioms as well as when they want to greet somebody, criticise or insult someone in order to express a concept in a more incisive but imaginative way. Finally, it will be explored the way in which formulaic language and idioms may be used by speakers to open, continue a conversation or how they change topic while speaking.

2. FORMULAIC LANGUAGE AND IDIOMS IN SPOKEN INTERACTION

According to the *Longman Dictionary* "communication" is "the process by which people exchange information or express their thoughts and feelings". Human language is characterised to be creative since speakers formulate new sentences or new word combinations never spoken or heard before (Chomsky, 1965, cited in Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2004, 2021). Spoken language tends to be informal, unplanned and directed to a limited number of listeners who generally know each other and interact with speakers often providing immediate, verbal feedback. In a typical conversational situation, speakers and listeners tend to be highly involved and fluent in their communication; this fluency is mainly dictated by the use of expressions which may control the flow of dialogues. These are formulaic expressions.

Human language is formulaic rather than freely generated; formulaic language, as discussed in the previous chapter, can be defined as prefabricated multi-words sequences stored and retrieved in people's memory at the time of use and, as Wray (2002) states, speakers usually tend to resort to fixed or semi-fixed ways of saying things depending on the context and on the situation.

2.1 FREQUENCY OF FORMULAIC LANGUAGE AND IDIOMS IN SPOKEN INTERACTION

For native speakers, formulaic language is considered to be an essential part of spoken interaction and its importance in communication has recently been recognised.

Numerous studies have tried to estimate the percentage of formulaic language in English conversations. For example, Vilkaitė-Lozdienė (2016) identified some research projects focusing on the frequency of formulaic language in spoken interaction. Moreover, Erman and Warren (2000, cited in Vilkaitė-Lozdienė, 2016) examined 19 extracts ranging in length from 100 to 800 words and estimated that formulaic language appears in 58.6%. More recently, Wei and Li (2013, cited in Vilkaitė-Lozdienė, 2016) used corpora to analyse the frequency of formulaic sequences in spoken language; they discovered that sequences of 2 to 6 words cover the 58.75% of their corpus. The latter percentage is similar to that of Erman and Warren (2000, cited in Vilkaitė-Lozdienė, 2016), although Wei and Li (2013, cited in Vilkaitė-Lozdienė, 2016) extracted the sequences automatically using their corpus. Other studies show that between one-third to one-half of language is composed by formulaic elements (Conklin and Schmitt, 2012: 72). Vilkaitė-Lozdienė (2016) mentioned also the use of the corpus of spontaneous English Canadian speech in which it is shown that speakers use an item of formulaic language once every five words and Biber et al. (2002) calculated a 30% of formulaic expressions in everyday speech. Even more so, Kecskes (2007) mentions that about 80% of speakers' production can be categorised as formulaic and that English includes about 25,000 formulaic sequences. Hence, it can be said that a significant portion of natural language is formulaic and that the percentage of formulaic expressions in spoken interaction has been established to be high.

2.1.1 Frequency of idioms in spoken interaction

English language is rich in number of idiomatic expressions and corpus linguistics can help researchers to identify the frequency of idioms. Indeed, corpus linguistics may be helpful in determining how often idioms are used (Liu, 2003). However, searching for idiomatic expressions in corpora does not seem to be very simple for researchers since idioms are composed of numerous components and they can even compose an entire sentence (Busta, 2008, cited in Ahmadi, 2020).

Moon (1998, cited in Ahmadi, 2020) attempted to use a corpus to search for the most frequent idioms in spoken language, namely the Oxford Hector Pilot Corpus (OHPC); he identified 6776 fixed expressions, including idioms. The findings revealed the overall frequencies and distributions of idiomatic expressions and their grammatical form, their variation, functions and ambiguity. Similarly, Liu (2003) carried out a study analysing the frequency of idioms in three contemporary spoken English corpora, i.e. the Corpus of Spoken, Professional American English, the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English and the Spoken American English corpus. The results of Liu's (2003) study showed that idioms related to sports are the most frequent, e.g. *ballpark estimate* meaning to be close to the right amount of money, *the ball is in your court* which means that people have to do something before any progress can be made in a situation, *right off the bat* meaning immediately etc.

However, these corpus studies on the use of idioms in spoken language were limited to a small number of idioms searched in large corpora, such as in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). In this regard, a more recent research based on the frequency of idioms in conversation using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) is Ahmadi's (2020). His aim was to identify the most frequently used idiomatic expressions in spoken language analysing the data coming from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), i.e. a large corpus of American spoken English. The frequency data showed that idioms occupy approximately 33% of a million words of spoken conversation; *every last*/*single*, meaning *each*, is the most frequent idiom in spoken language with a frequency of 33.61%. Another common idiomatic expression is *all of a sudden*, i.e. very quickly, *be on/off the air* meaning that someone is or is not broadcasting on radio or TV, *behind closed doors* meaning that something is hidden or

kept secret from the public, *no big deal* which means that there is not a serious problem etc.

Despite Ahmadi's (2020) work, further studies are needed to identify the frequency with which idioms are used in everyday spoken language.

2.2 HOW FORMULAIC LANGUAGE IS USED IN SPOKEN INTERACTION

According to Bardovi-Harling (2012), in spoken interaction, formulaic language performs a variety of functions that include maintaining the conversation's flow and form, enhancing theme, prompting social bonding, infusing humour, or, as Wood (2002) and Tannen (1987) claim it helps to express affirmation.

The *Dictionary of American Slang* offers a wide range of fixed formulas used in everyday conversation, including colloquialisms, dialecticism, slang etc. (Chapman, 1986, cited in Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2021). Formulaic language is prevalent in daily speech and speakers, according to Van-Lancker Sidtis (2004), often stick to fixed sequences for three main reasons: (1) formulaic language reduces the processing load, it is to say that, since formulaic sequences are "ready-made" expressions, speakers tend to make the least processing effort when communicating; (2) due to their high predictability, these sequences have a powerful influence on communication and guide the perception of the reality. They are not consciously created, but unconsciously adopted in spoken conversation; finally, (3) they coordinate communicative acts and create shared bases for common ground, i.e., the use of formulaic language requires shared experience.

It is crucial to consider the context in which specific formulaic expressions are uttered (Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2021). For instance, speech formulas frequently appear in idiolectal repertories, i.e., the way that a particular person speaks; all individuals can be heard to use different formulaic expressions frequently based on their idiolect, e.g., *you know*, *it's true*, *I mean*, *old man*, *for sure* etc (Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2021).

2.2.1 Expressing feelings and attitudes

Since formulaic language naturally transmits affective content, when speaking interactively, speakers express their sentiments, attitudes, evaluations, and probabilities using formulaic expressions (Biber et al., 2002). People communicate with one another

through language to show closeness, humour, and solidarity. Friends, family members, and neighbours all have a repertoire of fixed expressions they use to exchange meanings or generate laughter.

Since formulaic expressions can express feelings and attitudes, they might be used to manipulate the viewpoint, the responses and the behaviour of others, creating social bonding and relations between speakers (Bell and Healey, 1992, cited in Van Lancker Sidtis, 2021). For example, it has been discovered that couples use many formulaic expressions to express their feelings of love such as *you are my one and only* that is a promise to be in love forever with the partner or *I love you with all my heart and soul* meaning to hold a deep love for a person. Furthermore, speakers may use formulaic sequences to described couples, such as *puppy love* (i.e. an infatuation for another person) or *lovebirds* (i.e. couples who act affectionately towards each other), it is to say that positive relationships between interlocutors are correlated with a high number of formulaic sequences. In fact, Van Lancker Sidtis (2021) mentions research in which it was discovered that couples employ more than 200 formulaic expressions, including teasing, expressions of confrontation and affection, nicknames etc.

Van-Lancker Sidtis (2014), mentioning some other scholars such as Pawley (1991), adds that fixed expressions can also be used to identify groups of people with an emotional bound, such as families, work environments, sports and others social domains as well as personal identification within the group. When used repetitively, formulaic sequences might signal empathy and common objectives.

In order to convey their feelings and attitudes, speakers may use fixed exclamations, for example, *how wonderful, good for you, what a rip off* to refer to something that is not worth what it was paid for and *good boy* (Biber et al., 2002) or expletives, ~~i.e.~~ which are words or phrases used to communicate strong emotions such as anger, surprise, astonishment, disapproval or excitement, like *what good fortune*, *gosh golly* which is used to express surprise, wonder or even anger or *damn it*, an expression of anger.

Finding ways to express feelings is not always easy, however English provides speakers formulaic sequences to help them express their emotions and make the conversation easier and more fluent. Interlocutors may use fixed expressions such as *I feel a little sad*,

to be honest, *it's been a difficult day*, *I am mad at him*, *I'm happy*, *I'm glad* to mention but a few.

In addition, speakers might use specific linguistic devices called "personal stance markers" in order to convey their personal attitudes, judgements and opinions about their position of specific messages (Biber et al., 2002). "Personal stance markers" can be fixed expressions such as *in my opinion*, *without a doubt*, *I think*, *I guess that*, *I am sure that*, *I'm certain that*, *my impression is that* or *from my point of view*.

2.2.2 Polite and impolite formulaic expressions in everyday conversation

The language of social interaction has only recently been the subject of research. Fixed expressions are closely linked with social and linguistic contexts, for this reason utterances should be appropriate to social settings. For this reason, speakers must understand in which context a specific formulaic sequence can be uttered. Different studies focused on polite and impolite formulaic sequences (Abbas, 2021; Bardovi-Harling, 2012; Biber, 2002; Culpeper, 2003; Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2021) underlining that these fixed expressions are mainly linked with several speech acts such as complaints, requests, thanks, compliments, apologies etc.

Greetings, complaints, refusals, denials, requests etc. follow combos in conversational construction, known as adjacency pairs, i.e. two-move sequences where the first and the second part of the sequence are linked together and are raised by two sequential interlocutors (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973, cited in Goodwin, 1990). The first part of the pair makes a certain continuation relevant, and tShe second part completes and conclude the whole sequence. For example, when a speaker greets or asks how another interlocutor is, the latter is expected to answer using certain fixed expressions, e.g. *I'm fine, thank you*. Moreover, speakers may accept or refuse an invitation using formulaic expressions such as *thanks for the invitation*, *how wonderful* or *no, thank you, I'm sorry* etc.

2.2.2.1 Speech Acts

Speaking involves the performance of acts of language governed by some rules. Searle (1969) defines any linguistic performance as a speech act. A speech act occurs in specific conditions with the use of particular semantic rules. Speech Act Theory, was first introduced by Austin (1962) who claims that speech acts are expressions with specific functions in communication uttered when offering something, apologising, greeting,

ordering, complaining, refusing etc. This theory was later expanded by Searle (1969) who identify different types of speech acts. Austin (1962) calls locutionary acts any act meant to make a statement or to say something understandable to the hearer, e.g. *he has a deep mind*; while, he calls illocutionary acts those acts that are uttered with a purpose such as to inform, e.g. when asking some questions or giving a warning; and, perlocutionary acts are defined as acts that are uttered in order to achieve some effects by saying something, such as cause somebody to act, make a speaker to change his/her mind, convince, persuade or mislead, intimidate him/her.

For the research that will be carried out in this thesis, illocutionary acts will be taken into consideration. Austin (1962) divides the illocutionary acts into five classes: (1) verdicatives which are used to acquit, convict, classify or evaluate; (2) exercitives, i.e. commanding or advising, which exercise powers; (3) commissives, for example, promises or declaration of intentions, which commit someone doing something; (4) behabitives, e.g. when apologising and commending that have to do with social behaviour and attitudes and (5) expositives such as stating or conceding which are used in clarifying and arguing something. Austin's (1962) classification of illocutionary acts is later expanded by Searle (1969) who adds five speech acts: (1) representative speech acts, which commit a speaker to tell the truth about the previous proposition, e.g. *we watched a movie yesterday*; (2) directives speech acts which cause the other interlocutor to take a particular action, such as a request a command or an advice, e.g. *bring me some water*; (3) the expressive which express the speakers feelings and attitudes such as apologies or thanks, e.g. *I am sorry for my behaviour*; (4) the commissives which commit speakers to some actions as in promises, e.g. *I promise I will complete my homework* and, (5) the declarative speech acts that change the reality based on the preposition of the declaration, e,g, *I pronounce you husband and wife*.

According to Searle (1969) speakers should indicate the kind of illocutionary act they are performing by beginning the statement with *I apologize*, *I state*, *I warn* etc., however the context plays an important role since it will make it clear what illocutionary act is uttered.

2.2.2.1.1 Polite speech acts to thank, greet, apologize and make a request

In conversation interlocutors usually have to be respectful towards other speakers and therefore, use polite speech acts when making requests, offers or apologies (Biber et al.,

2002). In recent years, scholars have made great efforts to explore the language of social interactions. It is only now that some linguists and philosophers of language, such as Culpeper (2009) and Ferguson (1976), are interested in the use of formulaic expressions linked with politeness in modern conversation. Politeness is linked by Culpeper (2009) to social correct behaviours which show care for other people's feelings. Terkourafi (2002: 196, cited in Culpeper, 2009) describes formulaic polite expressions as "ready-made solutions" and Ferguson (1976) talks about "politeness formulas". All speech communities use polite formulaic expressions in daily interactions with the goal of improving the signal and the communication, minimising the interaction damage and strengthening the social bonding and reducing anxiety (Ferguson, 1976); polite formulaic greetings such as *good morning*, *thank you*, *bye-bye* etc.

Thanks usually occur in special discourse situations and constitute conventionalised responses to these situations. In this regard, many studies have identified a wide range of social linguistic context. Expressing gratitude is an essential part of spoken language and interaction, it is a way to show appreciation and the contribution of other interlocutors. In this respect, Bardovi-Harlig (2009) claims that *thank you*, *thank you so much* or *thank you for* might be the most frequent formulaic expressions to express gratitude in conversation depending on the context. For instance, in thanking a teacher students may prefer *thank you for your help*, while in more informal context speakers prefer the use of *thank you*. However, there are many ways to convey gratitude using formulaic expressions, e.g. *I appreciate it*, *I can't thank you enough*, *I'm so grateful for*, *you are the best* etc.

Furthermore, Van-Lancker Sidtis (2021) claims that formulaic expressions function for politeness and display the role and the status of speakers in society and their social identities. The use of polite formulas is typical of English spoken language (Biber et al., 2002) while greeting someone; *good morning* is a polite formulaic sequence along with *good afternoon*, *good evening* and *good night* (Biber et al., 2002). In addition, in a more informal context, speakers may use expressions such as *hi guys*, *hey man* and *hi there.* Among young people, *how are you doing?* or *alright mate?* are casual ways of saying hello. Usually, these questions are followed by a brief and mainly positive answer, creating an adjacency pair sequence (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973, cited in Goodwin, 1990). Below some examples can be found.

Example 1

A: Hey man! How are you doing?

B: I'm fine.

Example 2

A: Good morning, Grace.

B: Good morning, how are you doing?

Sometimes a formulaic sequence might be employed metaphorically for different purposes in communication and for humorous effects (Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2021). For example, *good morning* can be used sarcastically to someone who oversleeps and wakes up in the middle of the day or to somebody who is napping while a conversation is in progress and asks a question which has just been answered.

For speakers apologising is sometimes demanding; sometimes speakers do not have the courage to apologize and other times they cannot find the right words to do so, for this reason, English, like all languages, provides some prefabricated formulas which help speakers. There are several different ways to say sorry, depending on the context and situation, for instance, if someone did something wrong may say *I'm sorry* or *I'm deeply sorry*, *I'm so sorry about that*, *I feel terrible*, *that was my fault*, *I wanted to say sorry*, *I'm sorry for the mistake I made* etc. When people hurt someone, they might resort to some strategic formulaic sequences in order to take the blame and be forgiven more quickly and move on, e.g. *I'm sorry for the way I reacted*, *I'm sorry that I offended you*, *I was wrong about that* etc.

Finally, in English there are different ways of making polite requests or offers, usually questions, which involve the creation of adjacency pairs (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973, cited in Goodwin, 1990). Speakers may use *would you like*, *would you mind, could you please/kindly*, *can you please* or more specifically *would you be willing to help me*, *when you get a chance could you*, *would you be able to*, *would it be possible to* as polite ways of asking somebody to do something. For example:

A: Would you mind helping me water the flowers?

B: Yes, sure.

The conversation above is an example of adjacency pair where the first part of the sequence, since a request, requires a continuation which will be performed by the second speaker who will complete the whole sequence (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973, cited in Goodwin, 1990).

Moreover, interlocutors might use *can I help*, *shall I help* to make offers or sometimes *I can*, *I could* in utterances like *I can do that for you* or *I could give you a lift*.

2.2.2.1.2 Impolite formulaic speech acts

Culpeper (2010) discusses the role of formulaic language linked with impoliteness. He defines impoliteness as "negative attitudes towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts" (Culpeper, 2010: 3233). He continues by saying that some behaviours are viewed in negative ways if they are in conflict with what someone expects them to be, leading to negative consequences and offence to participants. Therefore, impoliteness is linked to threats or rude expressions (Abbas, 2022) with the aim of causing social conflict (Culpeper et al., 2003). Similarly, Bousfield (2008: 72, cited in Abbas, 2022) asserts that impolite conversation involves verbal face-threatening acts purposefully delivered. Linguists started to study impoliteness and found that impolite expressions are highly formulaic (Abbas, 2016),

Culpeper (2010) conducted a study in which he examined the role of impoliteness formulaic sequences in specific contexts. He based his research on some television reality shows; he selected 51 spontaneous dialogues and found that the most frequent impolite formulaic expression was *shut up* and its variants including swearwords (Culpeper, 2010: 3242). Thanks to his study, Culpeper (2010) proposed a series of impoliteness formulas including impolite refusals or answers, insults, criticisms, unpalatable questions, dismissals, silencers, negative expressions, curses etc.

Formulaic expressions identified as insults can be *you f**king moron*, *you rotten loser*, *you such a hypocrite* (Culpeper, 2010) or *f**king idiot*, *piece of s**t* which are all said to a detestable person when arguing with; impolite refusals or answers like *I wouldn't even think about it* which is a rude answer given to someone who is asking for a favour; critics such as *this is total crap* (Culpeper, 2010) said to someone who is believed to talking nonsense or *you don't understand a thing*, *I told you* which is a rude way to say you were right and *what a drag* said when bored about what the other speakers is saying;

unpalatable questions, e.g. *why do you make my life impossible?*, *which lie are you telling me?* (Culpeper, 2010) or *who cares?* which is an impolite way to say that somebody does not care a bit about what others are saying; dismissals or curses, for instance *f**k off*, *f**k you*, *go away*, *get lost* (Culpeper, 2010) or *go screw yourself* used when angry about something the other interlocutor said or negative expressions or threats such as *I'm going to bust your head off if you touch my car* and *I strangle you* (Culpeper, 2010).

2.2.3 Topic management formulaic language: starting, continuing and ending a conversation

Speakers often find themselves in a social situation where they have to speak, either on a first meeting or with acquaintances. Managing a conversation in real life sometimes presents some unexpected challenges such as finding or launching a topic and beginning or concluding a conversation (Kim, 2007) which requires mutual cooperation. For this reason, interlocutors resort o some devices that permit them to manage a conversation. These are called by Alexander (1978, cited in Van-Lancker Sidtis and Rallon, 2004; Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2015) "discourse structuring devices" and "conversational speech formulas" or "situation bound routines" by Coulmas (1981, cited in Van-Lancker Sidtis and Rallon, 2004; Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2015) which are all conversational speech expressions occurring in natural conversational contexts and discourse.

Coulmas (1994, cited in Van-Lancker Sidtis and Rallon, 2004; Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2015) lists four types of "discourse structuring devices" including fixed phrases for daily use, ritualistic formulas, routine formulas and poetic formulas, usually found in epics. These formulas have specific requirements for appropriate matching in social situations (Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2021: 41), for example, when encountering a friend or a colleague it is customary to say *good morning* or during a telephone conversation, speakers can use to fixed expressions such as *it is great to talk with you*, or, when showing astonishment, they might say *you have got to be kidding!*

According to Kim (2017: 74) initiating a conversation is closely linked with shared knowledge among participants; she states that, when interlocutors develop their relationship, they increase their shared knowledge and this allows to expand the variety of methods for topic initiation which are mainly formulaic. Topic devices initiators characterize daily conversation and help to start it; Kim (2017) defines them "topic initial

elicitor sequences" e.g., *my name is*, *I'm from*, *I'm X years old* or questions as *what's new?, any stories?, how are things?, life's good?, how's school going?* etc. Levinson (1983) adds that speakers might use some formulaic expressions to address the other interlocutor in order to start a conversation such as *hey you* or *hey man.*

In English there are fixed expressions that can be used to maintain the topic of the conversation indicating the relationship between a sentence and the prior discourse, expressions called "social interaction markers" by Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992, cited in Wood, 2002). Social interaction markers are used by speakers to maintain the conversation and they can be discourse devices that connect the meaning and the structure of the discourse, for example, *as a result of, after all, for example, as well, in other words, that is, in contrast, to the contrary* etc.; fluency devices including *it seems*, *so to speak* etc.

Moreover, (Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2015) claims that in a conversation participants might need to change the topic by bringing up a new subject or by steering the conversation in a different direction using expressions called "topic shifting devices" such as *that reminds me of*, *to get back to what I was saying*, *changing the subject* and *before I forget.*

The course of the conversation can be changed if a formulaic sequence is well placed since they may convey nuances of behaviour (Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2021: 71) or affective and attitudinal content (Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2018). In this respect, in addition to being useful for starting a conversation, formulaic expressions might be used to close it. To signal that the discussion has come to an end, interlocutors might say *it was nice talking to you*, *I gotta go*, *I have to leave*, *I need to run* to name but a few.

2.3 HOW IDIOMS ARE USED IN SPOKEN INTERACTION

Idioms are a significant part of the English vocabulary and they have a higher impact on the conversation and speakers' understanding than non-idiomatic expressions due to their close association with a specific culture and language. According to Moon (1998, cited in Ahmadi, 2020) language is a crucial part of culture and reflects it; culture could not exist without language. In this sense, idioms are a fixed form of language with numerous cultural connotations (Wang, 2017: 156). They can reflect distinctive cultural elements, e.g. religion, customs, habits, linguistic behaviours etc. and therefore be used in daily and natural conversation.

It has been estimated that English has approximately 25,000 idioms. It is almost impossible to have a conversation in English without using them; they provide a shortcut to meaning, they allow speakers to transmit meaning, ideas or feelings and this makes them highly frequent in conversation (Bernardi, 2023). For instance, when having a coffee with a friend or a relative, people might use the idiomatic expression *chew the fat* or *put the world to right* to express the desire to talk about something important. These examples serve to emphasize that idioms may be used every day at any time.

2.3.1 English idioms in daily conversation: expressing feelings, criticising, covering sensitive topics, thanking and apologising

As mention previously, English is rich in idioms and they are used all the time in spoken conversation. They are used in natural conversation without much thought since they are prefabricated expressions that facilitate the fluency of the conversation and help interlocutors to maintain it. Moreover, idiomatic expressions might be used to add variety and fun to the daily speech or to emphasize a concept or make a statement more memorable.

In their book, *English Idioms in Use,* McCarthy and O'Dell (2010) present over 1000 of the most useful and frequent idioms found in spoken interaction in specific contexts, e.g. when angry, when dealing with problems, when talking about specific arguments, conversational responses, when praising or criticising, when giving opinions on people actions, when speaking about behaviours, attitudes and feelings etc. All useful idiomatic expressions that speakers might use when interacting with others or when they want to be less direct and mitigate the interaction or when interlocutors want to make the conversation compelling or funnier thanks to their non literal meaning. For example, when asking someone how he/she is, he/she may answer *I'm feeling under the weather* or *I'm feeling off-colour*; the expressions *under the weather* and *off-colour* have nothing to do with the weather or colours, they are both idiomatic expressions meaning that somebody is not feeling well or is ill (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010). Idioms may be used even when welcoming and greeting somebody using expressions such as *long time no see* said when you meet someone you have not seen for a long period or *what's up?* which is used to ask someone how he/she is doing.

Furthermore, to answer the other interlocutor's questions or to keep the conversation going, speakers resort to natural responses which may be used to express agreement, disagreement, thankfulness, surprise, indifference, doubt etc (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010).

Example 1

A: You can borrow my car tonight.
B: Thanks a million!

(McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010)

Example 2

A: Come on the roller coaster with me!
B: No way!

(McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010)

Example 3

A: We bumped into John's teacher in Venice!
B: It's a small world.

(McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010)

Example 4

A: What do you think caused the problem?
B: It's neither here nor there what I think.

(McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010)

Example 5

A: How are you going to live on such a small salary?
B: I don't know – one way or another.

(McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010)

Thanks a million, in Example 1, is widely used by speakers to express gratitude; it is an idiomatic expression meaning thank you very much. In Example 2, speaker B expresses

disagreement by using the idiom *no way* whose frequency in spoken interaction is quite high; it is used to tell someone that something is impossible. While, in Example 3, the expression *it's a small world* is an idiomatic expression said to show surprise when an unexpected person is found in a different place from the usual one. The expression *it's neither here nor there*, in Example 4, shows indifference toward something that is not very important. Finally, in Example 5, speaker B shows doubt using the idiomatic expression *one way or another*, meaning in some way that is not sure and stated.

Another occasion to use idioms is when interlocutors want to avoid doing something by answering with an idiomatic expression to the question *are you busy?* This happens especially when having telephone conversations. Some ways to avoid a curt answer, i.e. *yes*, might be *I've got my hands full*, *I'm on the go all the time*, *I'm up to my eyes in work* or *I'm snowed under* (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010) all meaning to be busy with not having time to do anything else.

In English there are several words that can describe people's feelings but sometimes trying to express emotions may become overwhelming, for this reason, interlocutors can resort to idioms that can act as a filter between themselves and the feelings. McCarthy and O'Dell (2010) list many informal idioms which describe happiness, anger, disappointment or to criticize someone. Feelings of joy, contentment and other positive emotions are among the easiest feelings to express when talking to other speakers. One can say *I'm on cloud nine*, *I'm over the moon*, *I'm in seventh heaven*, *I feel on top of the world* etc. Interlocutors can also show excitement in doing something by using expressions such as *get a kick out of something*, *do something for kicks* or *jump for joy*. Expressing sadness or anger may be tricky at times, but having the right vocabulary can help speakers overcome the sadness or anger and also let others know how someone feels. Some of the common English idioms that express sadness can be *out of sorts*, *down in the dumps*, *misery guts* or *sour grapes* all linked with unhappiness (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010). In addition, to express anger one might use the idiomatic expression *fed up to the back teeth*, *at your wits' end*, *someone's blood is up* etc.

Interlocutors always find it difficult to talk about their own problems; for this reason, interlocutors often avoid expressing their feelings or even avoid conversation. Idiomatic expressions may help speakers to be sincere. McCarthy and O'Dell (2010) provide some

examples of what people may say when having some problems: *I'm in dire straits* meaning to be in a difficult or dangerous situation; *I've spread myself too thin* in order to express that someone is trying to do too many things at the same time but cannot give them the right attention they need; *I've come up against a brick wall* meaning that something is blocking a person from doing what he/she wants to do; *I've come up a stumbling block* to express that a problem is stopping from achieving something etc.

Even criticising someone might be challenging, for this reason idioms may help speakers to express themselves without being rude offending the other interlocutor. Again, McCarthy and O'Dell (2010) offer a series of idiomatic expression one can use to make a critique in a more mildly way.

Example 6

A: You are getting on my nerves.

(McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010)

Example 7

A: At first, you were all sweetness and light.

(McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010)

The idiomatic expression *get on someone's nerves*, in Example 6, means to annoy someone a lot while *to be all sweetness and light*, in Example 7, is usually used to describe a person who is friendly and pleasant, but in a false way.

Moreover, idioms are useful expressions that might be used to soften uncomfortable and sensitive topics such as death or poverty (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010: 28). For example, when someone wants to communicate to the other interlocutor that a person is dead, different idiomatic expressions might be used to be more delicate, e.g. *he/she's popped her clogs*, *he/she's given up the ghost*, *he/she's kicked the bucked*, *he/she's bitten the dust* etc. Meanwhile, a way to express people's negative financial circumstances might be *be on the breadline.*

As mentioned in section 2.2.2.1.1, *Polite speech acts to thank, greet, apologize and make a request*, thanks and apologies are an important part in daily interaction. Their aim is to

show appreciation and say sorry to someone. In this respect, speakers may use idioms to thank or make apologies which may help interlocutors to soften and to mitigate the conversation.

Speakers might thank someone by using idiomatic expressions such as *thankful for small mercies* used when grateful for something when it is not as bad as it could have been, *thank your luck stars* which means to be very grateful for something, *I owe you* used to thank someone for helping you, *pay it forward* used to say you will do something kind for someone because he/she has done something useful for you, *owe a debt of gratitude* to have a reason to thank or feel grateful to another person for something good that they have done, *you shouldn't have* said when thanking someone who has unexpectedly done something, to mention but a few.

Finally, apologies are an important part of spoken interaction and are a polite way to refer to somebody. As mention previously, there are different way to say sorry in English depending on the circumstances, including some idiomatic expressions speakers can utter to in order to defuse or sympathize with the interlocutor. For example, *sorry for your loss* is used when one is feeling sympathy because somebody has recently died, *pardon* or *I beg your pardon* is a more formal way to say that you are sorry for doing something wrong, *my bad* is an informal way to say that you accept that you are wrong or that something is your fault, *crawl back* meaning that you are sorry and admit that you were wrong.

2.3.2 Discourse markers

Discourse markers, expressions such as *and*, *so*, *but*, *oh*, *well*, *because*, *you know* and *I mean* are a set of linguistic items that function in cognitive, expressive, social and textual domains. Definitions given to this group of expressions vary widely as many scholars have studied them.

Discourse markers are used to signal relationships between discourse units (Schourup, 1999: 230), i.e. a relation between the discourse segment which hosts them and the previous discourse segment (Fraser, 1996). They are also used to create coherence within a speaker's turn or signal the relationship between one speaker's utterance and another's response (Shiffrin, 1987). Moreover, according to Redeker (1991, cited in Fraser, 2009), discourse markers are expressions used in spoken discourse, with an organizational and

structuring function. She defines discourse markers as "discourse operators", i.e. conjunctions, adverbs or interjections uttered with the function of bringing to the hearer's attention a particular type of connection of the subsequent utterance with discourse context (Redeker, 1991, cited in Fraser, 2009).

Shiffrin (1987) argues that each single marker in the communal lexicon has various functions, depending on the situation of the speaker and the context. She considers the term to embrace a large group of expressions, including lexicalised phrases (*You know*, *I mean*) which are markers of information and participation, conjunctions (*and*, *but*, *or*) which are discourse connectives, adverbs (*now*, *then*), interjections (*oh*) that create markers of information management (Shiffrin, 1987: 31). She adds markers of response (*well*) and markers of cause and result (*so*, *because*). Schiffrin's approach (1987) focuses on what a particular discourse marker is doing in the context in which it is produced and, Maschler (1994, 2015) adds that it is also crucial to consider the interpersonal relations between participants. A marker has several different functions, which can be discovered through an analysis considering the actions leading up to its use in various contexts.

Junker and Smith's study (1998, cited in Maschler and Shiffrin, 2015) examines differential use of discourse markers based on the context in which they are produced and the relationship between interlocutors. They divide discourse markers into reception markers (*oh*, *yeah* and *okay*) and presentation markers (*like*, *you know* and *well*). They found that presentation markers are used more in spontaneous interactions between friends or acquaintances and reception markers are used more between strangers because more feedback is needed from interlocutors about how they are integrating information into their knowledge stated.

2.3.2.1 Idiomatic *you know* and *I mean*

You know and *I mean* are described as pragmatic expressions (Östman 1981), pragmatic particles (Östman 1981), discourse markers (Schiffrin 1987; Fraser 1999), discourse signalling devices, pragmatic connectives, pragmatic operators (Schourup 1999) which are highly formulaic. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, they are both idiomatic expressions. *You know* is an informal idiomatic expression with little meaning; it is used by speakers when thinking what to say next such as in *Well I just thought, you know, I'd*

better agree to it. Meanwhile, *I mean*, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, is used by speakers to correct what they have just said, e.g. *I really do love him, as a friend, I mean*.

Both *you know* and *I mean* are important expressions in everyday conversation; they may signal relationships between discourse units (Schourup, 1999: 230) or discourse segments (Fraser, 1996), they can create coherence within a speaker's turn or signal the relationship between one speaker's utterance and another's response (Shiffrin, 1987). Shourup (1999: 232) claims that they are grammatically speaking "optional" and they do not change the conditions of the prepositions in the utterances they frame.

Shiffrin (1987: 31) describes *you know* and *I mean* as lexicalised phrases, i.e. phrases that function as single word, and, according to Redeker (1991), they are essential expressions for spoken discourse, with an organizational and structuring function. However, the majority of scholars claim that their function in spoken conversation is a bit problematic (Östman 1981; Schiffrin, 1987; Fox Tree and Schrock, 2002), but they were able to identify some main functions, for example:

1) Telling or commenting function: *you know* is a useful expression for the talk and may be used in narrative parts of the conversation (Östman 1981: 16), to shift the topic and to add more information or comments (Shiffrin, 1987); *I mean* might be used to inform or to evaluate something or someone (Fox Tree and Schrock, 2002).
2) Turn-taking function: *you know* and *I mean* are described by Östman (1981) as turn-taking devices or as markers used to signal the end of a syntactic unit; furthermore, *I mean* may be used to seek confirmation (Fox Tree and Schrock, 2002).
3) Clarifying function: *you know* may be used to introduce a clarification, to narrow the scope, to complete a topic, to repair the previous utterance or to underline a modification of the meaning of the previous talk (Shiffrin, 1987); *I mean* is used to increase the precision of a talk, to explain and/or to correct and reformulate something (Fox Tree and Schrock, 2002).
4) Emphasizing function: *you know* and *I mean* can be considered as boosters or as emphasizers (Fox Tree and Schrock, 2000).

5) Shared knowledge function: both *you know* and *I mean* may be used by speakers to take time to find the right words to say next. *You know* functions as a verbal filler, as a pause filler, as a mitigator (Östman, 1981) or as a clause internal restart (Schourup, 1985); *I mean* as a mitigator to make speakers less committed (Fox Tree and Schrock, 2002).

2.3.3 Topic management idioms: starting, continuing, ending and making a conversation fluent

As mentioned in section 2.2.3, *Topic management formulaic language: starting, continuing and ending a conversation*, managing a conversation might be challenging for speakers, in particular beginning or concluding it and shifting the topic (Kim, 2017). For this reason, there are some useful devices which can help speakers to find the right words to say in order to start, continue or end a discussion. These may be called by Alexander (1978, cited in Van-Lancker Sidtis and Rallon, 2004; Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2015) "discourse structuring devices" and "conversational speech formulas" or "situation bound routines" by Coulmas (1981, cited in Van-Lancker Sidtis and Rallon, 2004; Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2015) and sometimes might have an idiomatic connotation. Idioms have an important role in everyday conversation, they are fixed parts in human interactions with a specific function in communication such as managing a conversation or making it more fluent.

To start a conversation speakers may use "topic initial elicitor sequences" (Kim, 2017) such as *what's up?* or *how's life?* both informal idiomatic greetings or they can use the idiom *how are you keeping*? to ask if someone is well. Or even, to introduce a new topic they might use some English linkers such as *first of all* meaning before anything else, *to begin with* which means at the start of a process, event or situation etc.

But when the conversation starts to be boring or the current topic has reached its natural conclusion, interlocutors may need to change the subject of the conversation and, to do so, they can use "topic shifting devices" (Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2015) that can be even idioms which are mainly uttered to sound less rude, e.g. *by the way* which is used to introduce a new subject in a conversation*, in all seriousness* said to make a transition in conversation and express an honest opinion, *go off on a tangent* that is usually used in a sarcastic way to start talking about a completely new subject. In addition, the idiomatic

expression *on an unrelated note* does not completely change the topic of the conversation but may be used as a transition to shift from the previous sentence with the next one because with related topics or ideas as well as *speaking of* which is used to add something related to the subject being discussed.

To conclude a conversation using some idioms, speakers might use the idiomatic expression *cut someone short* which means to stop someone from talking, as in the following sentence *I should cut you short* or even the idiom *head out* meaning to leave as in the sentence *I should head out*. Moreover, interlocutors may utter the idiomatic English connectors *in conclusion* which is used to begin a final statement or *in short* when speakers want to describe something in a few words and end the conversation soon.

Moreover, since social interaction is the primordial means through which speakers share meaning and mutual understanding, they should be able to create a fluent communication (Goodwin and Heritage, 1990). For this reason, there are some grammatical elements in English, e.g. connectors, adverbs etc., that permit to develop a coherent social and spoken interaction. Connectors are used to link groups of words such as phrases and sentences and they mainly occur at the beginning of a sentence. They may be used by speakers to facilitate the communication by connecting sentences more logically and to express some thoughts in a better way.

Some of them have idiomatic features, for example to express contrast in an idiomatic way speaker may use *on the one hand* or *on the other hand* that are used to present two opposite facts or two different ways of looking at the same issue (McCartyh and O'Dell, 2010) or *on the contrary* meaning that the opposite of what has been said is true or even *in spite of* that is used to describe something unpleasant or bad that is happening.

Another idiomatic linker might be *as a matter of fact* which is used to add something more to what was just said in order to show emphasis as well as the idiomatic adverb *as a matter of fact* that adds something more to what is just said. Furthermore, to show concession speakers might resort to the linker *even though* which means despite the fact, *regardless of something* meaning that something is not influenced by other events or conditions or, to show condition, interlocutors may use *as long as*. While, *for instance* or *in other words* might be used to introduce examples and explain something more clearly

and *as far as someone is concerned* are idiomatic English connectors used to express personal opinion.

Finally, to express themselves better, to be more creative, to lengthen the conversation and to add emotional motives speakers might be helped by adverbs, some of which can be idiomatic. For instance, *above all* is highly frequent in spoken interaction and it means most importantly, as well as *after all* that means despite earlier problems or doubts, *all the same* meaning despite what has just been said, *all of a sudden*, i.e. quickly, *by and by* which means after short period, *into the bargain* used to add something to other facts previously mentioned, *now and then* meaning occasionally etc.

To conclude, this chapter mainly aimed to explore the role of formulaic language and idiomatic expressions in spoken interaction. The majority of words we utter are part of fixed or semi-fixed formulaic expressions. In addition, when expressing feelings or when thanking, apologising, insulting or criticising someone, speakers can use - and prefer to use - formulaic language and idioms in order to sound more polite or to soften some conversation topics and add emphasis or fun to the conversation. Finally, formulaic expressions and idiomatic ones are useful and help interlocutors to start, to continue or to close a conversation and to change the topic.

Chapter three will be dedicated to the features of spoken language in films and TV series with a focus on the frequency and the use of formulaic language and idiomatic expressions. Some research based on idioms in films or TV series will be compared in order to see how frequent they are and which are the most frequent types of idioms used by different screenwriters.

CHAPTER 3

FORMULAIC LANGUAGE AND IDIOMS IN FILMS

"Dialogue in fiction is always written to be read in silence. The page is the limit. Dialogue on stage and on the screen is meant to be spoken"

(Guillermo Cabrera Infante)

The third chapter will focus on the features of spoken language in films and TV series with a deep explanation of the use of formulaic language, in particular idioms. The first brief part will deal with the features of spoken language in films and TV series, such as the frequent use of repairs, self-corrections, backchannels, fillers, discourse markers, etc. The second part is dedicated to formulaic language in which some studies of formulaic expressions will be presented. Subsequently, more importance will be given to the use of idioms in films and TV series with a comparison of different analyses of idiomatic expressions in some films.

3. FORMULAIC LANGUAGE AND IDIOMS IN FILMS

3.1 SPOKEN LANGUAGE IN FILMS

In recent years, it has been discussed how important it is to expose speakers to linguistic materials, such as films (Bednarek, Piazza, Rossi, 2011; Berliner, 2009; Forchini, 2010; Giampieri, 2018).

Despite being scripted, film dialogues are claimed to reflect real spoken language. Films are, in fact, considered sources of linguistic input, where speakers are exposed to instances of spoken language (Sherman, 2003; Donaghy, 2014; Whitcher, 2015, cited in Giampieri, 2018) since films are designed to represent everyday spoken interactions. Indeed, the language of films is close to real life experience. Moreover, Giampieri (2018) claims that the visuality of films allows people to be more aware of the language they speak on a daily basis.

Improvisations, actors' spontaneous language and interpretation of the film script make film language very close to everyday language. Gilmore (2010: 117, cited in Giampieri, 2018) claims that spoken language in films, although itself contrived, is close to the language of everyday life and Bednarek (2018: 19) adds that the film dialogues are similar to unscripted spoken language. This is thanks to the talent of screenwriters, or thanks to

the transformation process that occurs when a script is interpreted by actors during filming. Some directors rely on improvisation, rather than scripting in their work and this can also enhance the sense of realism. Similarly, Giampieri (2018), who cites other scholars, believe that many film producers prefer unscripted and spontaneous dialogues.

Film language adheres to specific conventions and aims to satisfy the audience who mainly expects to be in contact with dialogues between characters that reflect everyday life. Film dialogues are governed by a double plane of communication that characterises all dialogue on the screen between the subjects in the story and the external viewers.

Spoken dialogues in films, firstly ignored for decades and only considered as an accompaniment to images, are now subjects of recent research in linguistics (Quaglio, 2009, cited in Bednarek, 2018 and Janney, 2012; Bednarek, 2010; Rossi, 2006; Piazza, 2006; Janney, 2012). Spoken language in films is referred to as "cinematic discourse" or "the language of films" (Piazza, Bednarek and Rossi, 2011), "film dialogue", "film discourse", "TV-series-speak" (Rossi, 2011) or more in general "the language of fictional television" (Bednarek, 2010), "television discourse", or "television dialogue" (Quaglio, 2009, cited in Janney, 2012). According to Bednarek (2018), the spoken language in films might be seen as the main expressive vehicle and primary form of communication of screenwriters.

The theory of what now we call cinematic discourse as a form of communication has been the subject of academic studies since the 1970s (Bednarek, Piazza, Rossi, 2011); however, relevant linguistic studies focusing on the language of films have just recently emerged. Before, as Thompson (2003: 3, cited in Bednarek, 2018) argues, the language used in films has never been a source of study used by scholars. However, over time, the analysis of film language has increased (Bednarek, 2018). Janney (2012) underlines that cinematic dialogue should not be described only as the language used in films, i.e. film dialogues, scripted conversation and fictional interaction, but also the language including the discourse of mise-en-scène, the sound editing used in narrating the stories to viewers and the montage. The discourse of films might be seen as a tool for characterisation, i.e. as a way to describe characters' way of thinking (Fowler, 1977, cited in Bednarek, Piazza, Rossi, 2011) and/or screenwriters' writing style. Moreover, it is essential to note that discourse in films describes the narrative genres and engages viewers (Bednarek, Piazza,

Rossi, 2011). From this point on, we deal with cinematic dialogues referring only to the language used in films without considering the audiovisual discourse.

As mentioned above, film discourse is fictional since scripted, however it has a relationship with real life conversation and is interpreted as an example of a representation. Bednarek, Piazza and Rossi (2011) state that film dialogues cannot be considered a faithful representation of real-life exchanges and, from this perspective, cinematic discourses provide only a recreation of the real world and the real time (Bednarek, Piazza, Rossi, 2011). This recreation is always in line with the sociocultural conventions (Bednarek, Piazza, Rossi, 2011) and in line with the "media logic", i.e. the way in which information is communicated (Bednarek, Piazza, Rossi, 2011).

Recent research has also shown that spoken language in films can be helpful for linguistics and language research purposes and, the main reason lies in the fact that films provide useful instances of spoken language features (Pavesi, 2015, cited in Giampieri, 2018). These studies focus on investigating how naturalistic or realistic is the cinematic discourses and in doing so, such studies also explore linguistic features of film dialogues (Bednarek, 2018).

3.1.1 Features of spoken language in films

Spoken language is argued to follow specific patterns, both grammatical and non-grammatical, which should be clearly distinguished from those of written language (McCarthy, 2001). Some scholars argue that spoken language tends to be ungrammatical (Ur, 1996: 106, cited in Giampieri, 2018), while McCarthy (2015: 7) states that defining spoken language as ungrammatical is a "hangover from grammar of writing". There are characteristics of spoken language that are the results of social situations taking place in real contexts with real participants. Ur (1996, cited in Giampieri, 2018) claims that in spoken discourse unfinished clauses are common and McCarthy (2001) adds that this is because structures in spoken language can be interrupted, aborted or not completed. However, conversational language has its own "socially-embedded grammar" (McCarthy, 2001: 54).

The peculiarities of spoken discourse include repetitions of the same word or utterance, repairs and self-corrections, use of backchannels, fillers and discourse markers that are used to organize and manage speech etc. Other important elements are ellipsis (Biber et

al., 2002; Leech, 2000), prefaces and utterance launchers (Biber et al., 2002). Spoken language is also characterized by false starts which occur when sentences are interrupted in order to insert other speech material. In spoken language there are also approximators or vague category markers used to avoid pedantic statements and/or questions. As Biber et al. (2002) and Leech (2000) state, there is no need to specification in conversation as speakers' context is shared. As a result, some pieces of information might be omitted (Biber et al., 2002; Leech, 2000).

Film language mirrors natural language and consequently, some of the "anomalies" of spoken language are likely to be found in films, e.g. double negatives (Biber et al., 2002; Leech, 2000). Conversation in films usually sounds perfectly natural that films dialogues, however, he recognises that whereas real people tend to adjust what they are saying (e.g. using overlap, false starts, discourse markers, repetitions etc.), film characters tend to speak flawlessly (Berliner, 2009) performing a "stylized" language that is planned and sometimes exaggerated (Bednarek, 2018). This does not mean that film dialogues are completely non naturalistic; for this reason, film dialogues should present some features of natural conversation. For example, Bednarek (2018), by quoting Richardson (2010: 19), states that to make every word and dialogue intelligible, accessible, comprehensible and "clean" to audience and to compensate for incomprehensible dialogues, screenwriters might resort to some strategies, e.g. repetitions or repairs. However, compared to natural and everyday interaction, cinematic language contains less overlap, fewer interruptions, repairs, false starts, hesitations etc. Berliner (2009) adds that dialogues in scripts, also called "stock movie lines", i.e. lines that may indicate a turn in a scene, have familiar and well-defined meanings and screenwriters should be able to reproduce the language of real life even if "adjusted". For instance, films or TV series, such as *Friends*, share many language characteristics with natural conversation even if there is less variation (Quaglio, 2008: 197, cited in Bednarek, 2018 and Janney, 2012).

In addition to representing everyday language features, cinematic dialogues are important because they inform the audience about the theme, the plot, the characters, the events of the story and, according to Bednarek (2018) they describe characters relations such as friendship in ways that are linguistically realistic. Furthermore, Janney (2012) claims that film dialogues guide and support the viewer in the interpretation of the narration and in understanding the attitude, the mood and the personality of characters.

3.2 FORMULAIC LANGUAGE IN FILMS

Films have long held the public attention but also academic interests and the language has gained the interest of linguists. As discussed in the first chapter and, as Vignozzi (2016) states, the spoken language of phone calls, conversations and other face-to-face interactions involving greetings and farewells is predictable in most cinematic dialogues (Taylor, 2004). Similarly, in describing the characteristics of scripted dialogues, Chaume (2004: 168, cited in Vignozzi, 2016) refers to the dialogues of scripts as "prefabricated orality", i.e. the spoken language of films is carefully planned, both from a prosodic and syntactic and lexical-semantic point of view. Although it is a planned language, it has many features and elements that can be found in real-life interactions, for example, the use of prepatterned formulas, i.e. formulaic language. Several linguists cited by Bednarek (2018) noticed that specific word sequences may be found in film dialogues such as discourse markers *you know* and *I mean*, the address term *you guys* and routine formulae, e.g. *nice to meet you*, *thank you* etc. Bednarek (2018) adds that film dialogues include high frequency of greetings and leave-takings formulaic sequences.

3.2.1 Formulaic expressions to greet, thank and apologise in films

The language of a film has an important role and function in people's spoken language, but only recently have scholars started to analyse the language found in films and TV series, including formulaic greetings, thanks and apologies, for example Widyawati Triasningrum (2021), Xu (2022) and Koesoemo (2023) to mention but a few.

Widyawati Triasningrum (2021) analysed some formulaic expressions in *Ally McBeal,* an American comedy drama written by David E. Kelley, aired from 1997 to 2002, with the aim of finding formulaic expressions and understanding their functions. Widyawati Triasningrum (2021) found eleven types of formulaic expressions including greetings, apologizing, thanking. Furthermore, Xu (2022) used the transcript of the film *Love Actually* (2003), a British famous romantic comedy, to identify formulaic greetings while Koesoemo (2023) aimed at identifying the formulaic thanking in the animated film *Luca* (2021).

Widyawati Triasningrum (2021) and Xu (2022) observed that speech act greetings might be realised in different ways and observed that they are very frequent in spoken language (Widyawati Triasningrum, 2021 and Xu, 2022), in particular some formulas occur more

frequently such as *how are you?*, *how are you feeling?*, *are you busy today?*, *really pleased to meet you, beautiful weather, good morning* etc. These are generally used when speakers are acquaintances. Within the greeting there is a gesture of friendliness, concern and interest. Furthermore, she notices that in English, *thank you* is perhaps the most frequent formulaic expression used in conversation. Koesoemo (2023) also identified *thanks guys*, *thanks for that* and *thanks to you* other formulaic expressions used to show thankfulness. While, according to Widyawati Triasningrum (2021), *no worries*, *that's nothing*, *you are welcome* and *my pleasure* are all formulas that might be used as responses to thanks. Widyawati Triasningrum (2021) further claims that apologies in conversation are high formulaic expressions, for instance *I apologize* and *I'm sorry* are the most uttered (Widyawati Triasningrum, 2021).

A few examples from the TV series *Ally McBeal* analysed by Widyawati Triasningrum (2021), from the film *Love Actually* analysed by Xu (2022) and from the film *Luca* analysed by Koesoemo (2023) can be found below.

Example 1

> Nelle Porter: How are you?
> Dennis: Fine.
>
> (*Ally McBeal*, 1997-2002)

Example 2

> Annie: Welcome, Prime Minister.
> Prime Minister: I must work on my wave.
> Annie: How are you feeling?
> Prime Minister: Cool. Powerful.
>
> (*Love Actually*, 2003)

Example 3

> Colin: Yahoo! Now, this is Harriet.
> Harriet: Hi. Really pleased to meet you.
> Tony: Hello, Harriet.

(*Love Actually*, 2003)

Example 4

> Elaine: I filed the appeal and brough up all our first amendment. I also clipped the pages on prior restraint.
> Ally: Thank you.

(*Ally McBeal*, 1997-2002)

Example 5

> Luca: Giulia! Are you all right?
> Giulia: Yeah…I'm, uh…okay…Thanks guys…

(*Luca*, 2021)

Example 6

> Lorenzo: Oh, way harder than that.
> Uncle Ugo: Thanks for that. Too much oxygen up here. Not like in the deep. As you'll learn.

(*Luca*, 2021)

Example 7

> Ally: Hey! Don't ever do that again.
> Jack: I apologise. I have Epstein's Bar

(*Ally McBeal*, 1997-2002)

Taking into consideration the studies conducted by Widyawati Triasningrum (2021), Xu (2022) and Koesoemo (2023), it can be said that English colloquial and informal conversation have many kinds of formulas, greetings, apologies and thanks included, and speakers automatically need and use them. Although respectively a TV series and a film, *Ally McBeal* and *Love Actually* represent real spoken language and real formulaic expressions used by speakers.

3.3 IDIOMS IN FILMS

Formulaic language plays an important role in everyday communication, including idioms. The use of idioms is common in everyday conversation that it seems very difficult to speak without using them. Nowadays, idioms are not only used in spoken interaction but may be also found in other areas such as in films. Films provide ideas and information about language (Thomson, 1997: 3, cited in Bednarek, 2018) with which the audience can directly engage with all the expressions uttered by characters (Giampieri, 2018); in fact, they are valuable resources presenting the everyday English in real life contexts.

In films, idiomatic expressions are high frequent since they are used mainly to convey sweetness to the story, to catch the audience's attention and to make the language of the film more captivate adding meaning and imaginary. The use of idioms in films might be also useful to improve the vocabulary and the communicative skills of the audience, who, by watching films, can assimilate some linguistic elements such as idioms. For this reason, idioms have attracted the attention of many scholars and researchers who started to analyse their frequency and role in films.

3.3.1 Research on different types of idioms in films

Some studies, such as Anggraeni et al. (2018), Aziza et al. (2015), Erviana et al. (2013), Erwina et al. (2022), Festian (2022), Rahayu (2022), to mention but a few, proposed an analysis of idiomatic expressions encountered in some films, respectively *Guardian of the Galaxy Vol. 2* (2017)*, The Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials* (2015), *Frozen* (2013), *Encanto* (2021), *Suicide Squad* (2016) and *Toy Story 3* (2010). A comparison between the six studies is proposed below with the aim of identifying the frequency of the different types of idioms, i.e. phrasal verbs, tournures, irreversible binomials, phrasal compounds, similes, fixed statements, proverbs, euphemisms and cliches, and in which context they are used.

3.3.1.1 Phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs as idioms are defined by Makkai (1976) as combinations of a verb and a preposition. Examples of idiomatic phrasal verbs can be *lock down*, *watch out*, *go out*, *hold on*, *work out* etc. Table 1. shows how many phrasal verbs Rahayu (2022), Aziza et al. (2015) and Erviana et al. (2013) found in *Toy Story 3, The Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials* and *Frozen*.

Table 1. Phrasal verbs

Films	Frequency of phrasal verbs
Frozen (2013)	57
Toy Story 3 (2010)	10
The Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials (2015)	1

Example 1

Mr. Janson: I want this place locked down. Call everyone in.

(*The Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials*, 2015)

Example 2

Jessie: It's a magnet! Watch out!

(*Toy Story 3*, 2010)

Example 3

Buzz Lightyear: Wait a minute. Wait, hold on. This is no time to be hysterical.

(*Toy Story 3*, 2010)

Example 4

Anna: Well, we haven't worked out all the detail ourselves. We'll need a few days to plan the ceremony. Of course we'll have soup, roast and ice cream.

(*Frozen*, 2013)

Example 1 comes from Aziza et al.'s (2015) research on the film *The Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials*. The idiomatic meaning of this phrasal verb is *to lock*. The dialogue occurs when the protagonists of the film are escaping from a building, for this reason Mr. Janson orders his employees to lock the building. In Example 2, the phrasal verb *watch out* means to be careful and can be found in Rahayu's (2022) study of idioms in *Toy Story 3* film script as well as *hold on* in Example 3 meaning respectively to wait. In Example 2, Jessie warns his mother to be careful and no to get hit by the laser, while in Example 3, the idiomatic phrasal verb is used by Buzz Lightyear who tries to convince his friends that

they will be taken to daycare, but they don't trust him. Finally, Example 4, taken from *Frozen* (2013) includes the idiomatic phrasal verb work out meaning to do a program (Erviana et al., 2013). Here, the protagonist Anna, is talking to Elsa about her sister's coronation ceremony.

3.3.1.2 Tournures

Rahayu (2022) and Erviana et al. (2013) discovered some tournure idioms in *Toy Story 3* and *Frozen*, e.g., *end of the line*, *reach for the sky, run for your life* and *put on a show*, which are combinations of three or more lexons, usually verb + direct object + adjunct (Makkai,1976).

Table 2. Tournures

Films	Frequency of tournures
Toy Story 3 (2010)	11
Frozen (2013)	4

Example 5

Woody: Give it up, Bart. You've reached the end of the line!

(*Toy Story 3*, 2010)

In the example above, the tournure *end of the line* means that it is no longer possible to continue with an activity or a process. In this sentence, the protagonist, Woody, asks Bart to give up because there is nothing left to do.

Example 6

Woody: Reach for the sky!

(*Toy Story 3*, 2010)

The meaning of the tournure *reach for the sky,* in Example 6, means trying to get something difficult or impossible to achieve. Here Woody is claiming that it is a difficult thing to catch criminals.

Example 7

Andy: No, it's okay, Mom. It's a fifty-foot baby from outer space! And she's on a rampage! Run for your lives!

(*Toy Story 3*, 2010)

Run for your life means to save yourself or avoid doing something. In *Toy Story 3* Andy uses this idiomatic tournure to asks to stay away from the fifty-foot baby.

Example 8

Elsa: Conceal. Don't feel. Put on a show. Make one wrong move and everyone will know.

(*Frozen*, 2013)

Put on a show is considered by Erviana et al. (2013) a tournure idiom because it consists of more than three lexons, here with an indefinite article meaning to pretend. In Example 8, taken from *Frozen* (2013), Elsa pretends to be kind and behave well.

3.3.1.3 Irreversible binomials

In their studies Rahayu (2022), Aziza et al. (2015), Erviana et al. (2013), Erwina et al. (2022), Festian (2022) and Anggraeni et al. (2018) identified some irreversible binomials, i.e., irreversible combinations of two words linked with a conjunction (Makkai 1976; McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010).

Table 3. Irreversible binomials

Films	Frequency of irreversible binomials
Guardian of the Galaxy Vol. 2 (2017)	6
Toy Story 3 (2010)	4
Frozen (2013)	3
The Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials (2015)	1
Encanto (2021)	1
Suicide Squad (2016)	1

In *Toy Story 3*, Rahayu (2022) identified four irreversible binomials such as *infinity and beyond*, *plush and huggable*, *cold and dark* etc.; while Aziza et al. (2015), in *The Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials*, found *supply and demand*; in *Frozen*, Erviana et al. (2013)

identified three irreversible binomials, for example *do or die*; Erwina (2022), analysing *Encanto*, identified *a thunder and a drizzle and a sprinkle* which is part of the category of irreversible binomials, but composed by three words linked with the conjunction *and*; Festian (2022) described *cut and run* as an irreversible binomial which was found in *Suicide Squad* and, finally, Anggraeni (2018) identified six irreversible binomials in *Guardian of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, e.g. *piece by piece*.

Example 9

> Buttercup: The guy may seem plush and huggable on the outside, but inside, he's a monster.
>
> (*Toy Story 3*, 2010)

Example 10

> Marcus: I'm talking about supply and demand.
>
> (*The Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials*, 2015)

Plush and huggable is an irreversible binomial idiom which describes a friendly person; here, in Example 9, Buttercup explains that the guy he is referring to may seem friendly and a kind person, but in reality, he is not. In Example 10, the irreversible idiomatic binomial *supply and demand* is linked to the idea that the price of some goods or services depends on how much something is sold and how many people want to buy it. Marcus explains that there was an agreement between two secret associations.

Example 11

> Anna: Elsa is surrounded. It's do or die.
>
> (*Frozen*, 2013)

Example 11 shows an irreversible binomial, i.e. *do or die*, meaning to take a risk in order to achieve a goal or fail making the effort.

Example 12

> Pepa: Great, now. I'm thundering and thunder will lead to a drizzle and a drizzle will lead to a sprinkle, (to herself, a mantra) Clear skies, clear skies, clear skies.

(*Encanto*, 2021)

Example 13

> Floyd: That's show I cut and run.

(*Suicide Squad*, 2016)

Example 14

> Nebula: I will hunt my father like a dog and I will tear him apart slowly, piece by piece, until he knows some semblance of the profound and unceasing pain, I know every single day.

(*Guardian of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, 2017)

Example 12 contains a binomial which combines three different things into noun + noun + noun, it is to say *a thunder and a drizzle and a sprinkle*. This idiomatic expression may represent Pepa's anxiety which is getting worse and if not controlled can cause a disaster Erwina et al. (2022). Example 13 comes from *Suicide Squad*; it is a binomial composed by two verbs including a conjunction in between. In this context, *cut and run* means to solve problems, indeed Floyd is trying to face some troubles. Finally, Example 14, from *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, shows the idiomatic binomial *piece by piece* uttered by Nebula when angry to her father. In this case, it means that she will destroy him in stages, gradually.

3.3.1.4 Phrasal compounds

Moreover, Aziza et al. (2015), Erviana et al. (2013) and Rahaju (2022) identified some phrasal compound idioms, respectively one, seven and seven, which are, according to Makkai (1976), compositions of adjective + noun, noun + noun and adverb + preposition.

Table 4. Phrasal compounds

Films	Frequency of phrasal compounds
Frozen (2013)	7
Toy Story 3 (2010)	7
The Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials (2015)	1

Example 15

Thomas: They had them strung up.

(*The Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials*, 2015)

Example 16

Anna: For the first time in forever, we can fix this hand in hand.

(*Frozen*, 2013)

Example 17

Lotso: Bring in the bookworm.

(*Toy Story 3*, 2010)

Example 15 comes from Aziza's (2015) analysis of idioms in *The Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials* film, Example 16 from Erviana et al.'s (2013) analysis of *Frozen* (2013), while Example 17 from the analysis of *Toy Story 3* by Rahayu (2022). The idiomatic expressions *strung up*, even if separated, is classified by Aziza at al. (2015) as a phrasal compound idiom because combining an adjective and an adverb. It means to be hanged, and the protagonist Thomas is explaining his friend that the place they are in is dangerous since many bodies are hanged. In Example 16, *hand in hand* is classified by Erviana et al. (2013) as a phrasal compound idiom consisting of noun + noun (with an adverbial particle in it). Its meaning is together, holding each other's hand; here Anna is trying to convince Elsa to go home and start over. Furthermore, *bookworm* (noun + noun), in Example 17, refers to someone who reads a lot.

3.3.1.5 Similes

McCarthy and O'Dell (2010) describe similes as idioms used to compare two things using the conjunctions *as* or *like*, e.g. *I'm like a pet*, *like the cat ate the canary, as special as you* etc. In *Guardian of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, Anggraeni et al. (2018) identified four similes, Festian (2022) eight in *Suicide Squad* while Erwina et al. (2022) seven in *Encanto*.

Table 5. Similes

Films	Frequency of similes
Suicide Squad (2016)	8

Encanto (2021)	7
Guardian of the Galaxy Vol. 2 (2017)	4

Example 18

> Mantis: I'm learning many things, like I'm a pet and ugly.
>
> (*Guardian of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, 2017)

Example 19

> Mr. Chairman: Hello, Amanda. We lose a national hero. But you sit there looking like the cat ate the canary.
>
> (*Suicide Squad*, 2016)

Example 20

> Mirabel: What do you think my gift will be?
> Abuela Alma: You are a wonder, Mirabel Madrigal. Whatever gift awaits will be just as special as you.
>
> (*Encanto*, 2021)

Example 18 is a sentence taken from *Guardians on the Galaxy Vol. 2* film whose idioms have been analysed by Anggraeni et al. (2018). *To be like a pet* is an idiomatic simile meaning that someone, in this case the protagonist Mantis, is a submissive person, willing to take orders and who is expected to perform specific tasks. Mantis, is talking to another character about her past and her the person who raised her. Example 19 comes from Festian's (2022) analysis of idioms on the film *Suicide Squad*. *Like the cat that ate the canary* is an idiomatic simile that describes a person who is happy or satisfied, in this case Amanda. Finally, the expression *as special as you* can be found in the Walt Disney's animated film *Encanto*. It has been classified by Erwina et al. (2022) as an idiomatic simile since it compares two different things, the gift and the young girl; it is usually uttered to make people feel not insecure about themselves anymore as in this case, Mirabel's grandmother is trying to calm her so that she can believe she is special even if with no special powers.

3.3.1.6 Fixed statements

McCarthy and O'Dell (2010) describe fixed statements as those sentences used mainly to give orders in everyday situation. *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2* is the film with the highest number of fixed statements, i.e. nine (Anggraeni et al., 2018), followed by *Encanto* with seven (Erwina et al., 2022) and lastly *Suicide Squad* with only two (Festian, 2022).

Table 6. Fixed statements

Films	Frequency of fixed statements
Guardian of the Galaxy Vol. 2 (2017)	9
Encanto (2021)	7
Suicide Squad (2016)	2

Example 21

> Julieta: Eat. Mi Amor, if you ever want to talk…
> Mirabel: I gotta put out the stuff, the house isn't gonna decorate itself – sorry, you could. You look great.

(*Encanto*, 2021)

Example 22

> Flag: Light it up!

(*Suicide Squad*, 2016)

Example 23

> Gamora: Who are you people? What is this place?
> Drax: What is she doing here?
> Nebula: Just watching the fireworks.
> Drax: Gamora, let her go!

(*Guardian of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, 2017)

Example 21 shows a conversation between two protagonists of the film *Encanto*. It is possible to identify the idiomatic fixed statement in the expression *I gotta put out the stuff*

meaning to put something in another place. Erwina et al. (2022) identify it as a fixed statement since it may be used in everyday spoken interaction, here, Mirabel is trying to convince herself and her mother that she can help her family by moving useless things from the house. Moreover, *light it up!*, in Example 22, is identified as a fixed statement by Festian (2022) since it is an order to take action; in *Suicide Squad*, Flag is ordering his friends to shoot the enemy. Meanwhile, in film *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, the idiom fixed statement is *let her go* (Anggraeni et al., 2018). In Example 23, Drax is ordering Gomora to let Nebula alone.

3.3.1.7 Proverbs

Proverbs are defined by Makkai (1976), McCarthy and O'Dell (2010) as short sentences whose meaning is not literal and which refer to something that people have experience whose aim is to give advice or warning. Erwina et al. (2022) and Festian (2022) identified in *Encanto* and *Suicide Squad* respectively two and only one idiomatic proverb, e.g., *hug it out* and *fire with fire*.

Table 7. Proverbs

Films	Frequency of proverbs
Encanto (2021)	2
Suicide Squad (2016)	1

Example 24

> Mirabel: I know we've… had our issues… but I'm…ready to be a better sister… to you… So, we should just… hug… Let's hug it out, huh?

(*Encanto*, 2021)

Example 25

> Mr. Chairman: You're playing fire with fire Amanda.

(*Suicide Squad*, 2016)

According to Erwina et al. (2022), *hug it out*, found in *Encanto*, is an idiomatic proverb, i.e., a short sentence whose aim is to give advice. Its meaning is to persuade somebody to end an argument and conciliate. In Example 24, Mirabel wants to end the argument with

her sister and make up. While, Example 25, from the film *Suicide Squad*, shows the idiomatic proverb *play fire with fire* classified as such because giving a warning or advice. In this context, it is a warning to Amanda because she is fighting with the same brutal methods of her enemy (Festian, 2022).

3.3.1.8 Euphemisms

Both *Encanto* and *Suicide Squad* present one idiomatic euphemism (Erwina et al., 2022 and Festian, 2022). Euphemism may be described as sequences of words used to state the truth without being offensive and to soften taboo or sensitive topics (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010).

Table 8. Euphemisms

Films	Frequency of euphemisms
Encanto (2021)	1
Suicide Squad (2016)	1

Example 26

> Mirabel: Grows a flower, and the town goes wild. She's perfect golden child.

(*Encanto*, 2021)

Example 27

> Floyd: I know you can't hear me, cause you're trapped in your temple of soldierly self-righteousness.

(*Suicide Squad*, 2016)

Both Example 26 and Example 27 are identified as euphemisms (Erwina et al., 2022 and Festian, 2022). The idiomatic expression *golden child* is a euphemism used to praise or satire on children who are loved more than the other children in a group. In *Encanto*, Mirabel uses this expression to show admiration toward Isabel's ability. While, the expression *trapped in your temple*, found in *Suicide Squad*, is considered to be a euphemism by Festian (2022) because this expression avoids harsh things. In this case, Floyd uses this idiomatic euphemism because another character doesn't care about his perspective and point of view.

3.3.1.9 Clichés

Erwina et al (2022) and Festian (2022) found in *Encanto* and *Suicide Squad* respectively two and sixteen clichés. They are not original and interesting phrases since they are very common and used in everyday life (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2010).

Table 9. Clichés

Films	Frequency of clichés
Suicide Squad (2016)	16
Encanto (2021)	2

Example 28

> Luisa: Hey move, you're gonna make me drop a donkey.
> Mirabel: Luisa? Will you just – just tell me what it is!

(*Encanto*, 2021)

Example 29

> Jocker: The fire in my loins. The itch in my crotch. The one, and only. The infamous Harley Quin!

(*Suicide Squad*, 2016)

The phrase *drop a donkey* means to defecate a large amount. Erwina et al. (2022) describe it as a cliché since it is a common expression used frequently. In *Encanto*, Luisa is mad at Mirabel who is disturbing her while working, and, through this expression Luisa is telling she may expel the dirt inside her, it is to say she will scold Mirabel. Finally, *the fire in my loins* is one of the idiomatic cliches identified by Festian (2022) in film *Suicide Squad*. It means to be excited and attracted by someone; in this context Jocker is talking about the feelings for Harley Quin who is his lover.

By comparing these six studies, it has been possible to notice some differences in the use of the different type of idiomatic expressions. Idiomatic phrasal verbs are the types of idioms whose frequency is the highest appearing fifty-seven times in the analysis of *Frozen* (2013) by Erviana et al. (2022). Considering the frequency of occurrence of idioms, phrasal verbs are followed by clichés occurring sixteen times in the analysis of

Suicide Squad (2016) by Festian (2022) and tournures which occur eleven times in *Toy story 3* (2010) which was analysed by Rahayu (2022). *Toy story 3* (2010) is also rich in phrasal verbs which occur ten times. The type of idiomatic expressions that appear the most in *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2* (2017), analysed by Anggraeni et al. (2018), is the fixed statement that occurs nine times. Thanks to the analysis carried out by Anggraeni et al. (2018), also six irreversible binomials and four similes were identified. A special mention goes to irreversible binomials which appear in all six films, as just mentioned, six times in *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2* (2017), four times in *Toy story 3* (2010), three times in *Frozen* (2013) and only once in *The Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials* (2015), analysed by Aziza et al. (2015), *Encanto* (2021) by Erwina et al. (2022) and *Suicide Squad (2016). Frozen* (2013) and *Toy Story 3* (2010) are also rich in phrasal compounds which occur seven times in both films; while *Suicide Squad* (2016) and *Encanto* (2021) are rich in similes appearing respectively eight and seven times. Erwina et al. (2022), analysing *Encanto* (2021), also found seven fixed statements. Proverbs and euphemisms may be found only in *Encanto* (2021) and *Suicide Squad* (2016) occurring twice or only once. In analysing *The Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials* (2015), Aziza et al. (2015) identified only one phrasal verb and one phrasal compound; similarly happened with the analysis of *Suicide Squad* (2016) by Festian (2022) and *Encanto* (2021) by Erwina et al. (2022) in which, respectively, two fixed statements and two clichés were found.

3.3.2 Study of idiomatic discourse markers *you know* and *I mean* in films

One analysis of idioms in film was conducted by Indra et al. (2021) focusing on discourse markers *you know* and *I mean* in film *Avengers: Endgame* published in 2019. It is an American superhero film written by Christopher Marcus and Stephen McFeely.

In their study, the researchers analysed the transcript with the aim of identifying how many times idiomatic discourse markers *you know* and *I mean* appear in cinematic dialogues (Indra et al., 2021). Discourse marker *you know* appears 39 times during the whole movie marking mainly information and participation, while *I mean* only 8 times.

Example 1

> Bruce Banner: you know, we'd be going short-handed.
> Rhodey: Because he killed all our friends.

(*Avengers: Endgame*, 2019)

Example 2

> Rhodey: Hang on, I've got to ask, if we can do this, why don't we just go find baby Thanos and, you know...

(*Avengers: Endgame*, 2019)

Example 3

> Loki: "I'm on my way down to coordinate search and rescue". I mean, really, how do you keep your food down?

(*Avengers: Endgame*, 2019)

Similarly, Forchini (2010) carried out research on idiomatic discourse markers *you know* and *I mean* using her corpus, *The American Movie Corpus*. The main aim of her study was to look at their frequency and use in conversations in film *Shallow Hal* released in 2001 which can count 11,490 words in its transcript. She could notice that *you know* and *I mean* are not so frequent; *you know* occurs 89 times and *I mean* only 37 times (Forchini, 2010).

Example 1

> Mr Shanahan: I need a man around that can give it to me straight, you know, whether I've been thinking a lot about it and I've made my decision.
> Link: Yeah. And then – check this out – he does this thing to me where he makes it so I can score better with the ladies. I mean at that time I thought it was a sort of a joke.

(Shallow Hal, 2001)

Example 2

> Rosemary: Uh well. I mean, sure.

(Shallow Hal, 2001)

In Example 1, *you know* is used to clarify or explain something while *I mean* to reformulate and modify the previous utterance. Meanwhile, in Example 2, *you know* is used to allow speaker time to fill the gap while seeking the right words.

3.3.3 Functions of idioms in films: prompting humour, showing enthusiasm and kindness and arousing antipathy

Masri et al. (2022) and Vignozzi's (2016) studies aimed at identifying the functions of idiomatic expressions used by screenwriters in films and the context in which they occur. Their main goal was not to differentiate and identify which type of idioms appears the most, but generally how many idiomatic expressions occur in films, in which context and with what function they are used.

Vignozzi's study takes into consideration a selection of different Disney animated films which are considered to be the most successful and linguistically elaborated ones (Vignozzi, 2016: 237), including *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *101 Dalmatians* (1961), *Robin Hood* (1973), *Aladdin* (1992) and *Hercules* (1997). Vignozzi (2016) analysed the transcript of these animated films and found that *Hercules* (1997) is the Disney film containing the highest number of idiomatic expressions, i.e. fourty, followed by *Aladdin* (1991) with twenty-eight, *Robin Hood* (1973) with fifteen, *101 Dalmatians* (1961) with twelve and finally *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) with eleven. It appears that all films present idioms in their transcript and it seems that over time the use of idiomatic expressions has increased significantly (Vignozzi, 2016); this means that the language in more recent movies tend to be more colloquial and informal, closer to everyday and natural conversation. While Masri et al.'s (2022) analysis of idioms is based on the film *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* (2019). Thanks to the research carried out, Masri et al. (2022) could find sixteen idiomatic expressions. All these idiomatic expressions can be found in different contexts and with different functions; according to Vignozzi, some idiomatic expressions may prompt laughter and create humorous scenes, other idioms might be used to show enthusiasm and kindness and others might be used to arouse antipathy towards some characters who behave rudely.

Example 1

> Snow White: Well, aren't you going to wash? What's the matter? Cat got your tongue?

(*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, 1937)

Example 2

Philoctetes: Concentrate, use your head!

(*Hercules*, 1997)

Example 3

Sheriff: You heard him, Nutsy! Het goin'! Move it. You birdbrain.

(*Robin Hood*, 1973)

According to Vignozzi, the three idiomatic expressions found in Example 1, Example 2 and Example 3 are meant to prompt laughter. Example 1 is taken from animated film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and depicts a scene where Snow White, the protagonist, asks one dwarf, Grumpy, if a *cat got his tongue*. This idiomatic expression is used when someone is annoyed because the other interlocutor will not speak. In this case, Grumpy takes this expression literally and reacts by showing Snow White that he still has his tongue (Vignozzi, 2016). A similar example can be found in *Hercules* (1997) (Example 2), since the protagonist, Hercules, takes literally his mentor's advice and uses his head to defeat his enemy. However, the idiomatic expression *use your head* simply means to think carefully and avoid making mistakes and not hitting someone using the head (Vignozzi, 2016). While, in Example 3, *you birdbrain* is an informal idiom describing a stupid person or somebody who behaves badly. In this scene, the sheriff gives an order to Nutsy who is a clumsy guard at his command (Vignozzi, 2016).

Example 4

Knotgrass: It's time, guys. Come on. Let's get everyone.
Thistlewit: It's the big day!

(*Maleficent: Mistress of Evil*, 2019)

Example 5

Queen Ingrith: Please, make yourself at home.
Maleficent: Bird, delicious.

(*Maleficent: Mistress of Evil*, 2019)

Example 6

Prince Philip: I'm glad you finally approve.

Queen Ingrith: I am ready to welcome your fiancée with open arms.

(*Maleficent: Mistress of Evil*, 2019)

In Example 4, taken from *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* (2019), *big day* is an idiomatic expression used to show excitement. It is used to describe a very important or significant day, indeed, here, the fairies are organising the welcoming of their new queen Aurora. Thistlewit, the fairy godmother orders the other fairies to prepare a good plan for Aurora's arrival claiming that the following day will be the most important day for them. Idioms in Example 5 and Example 6, both taken from *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* (2019), are used by characters to demonstrate kindness towards their guests. In Example 5, *make yourself at home* is described by Masri et al. (2022) as an idiom meaning to relax and make yourself comfortable in someone else's home. In this scene, Maleficent is sitting at the dining table in order to enjoy the meal and queen Ingrith urges her to start eating and behave like she is at home. Also in Example 6, queen Ingrith uses an idiomatic expression to show kindness. *With open arm* means to welcome someone in a very friendly way. In *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* (2019), it is used by the queen Ingrith who accepts her son's future marriage with Aurora.

Example 7

Sergeant: You'd better get out of here if you want to save your skins.

(*101 Dalmatians*, 1961)

Example 8

Jafar: Ah, ah, ah princess. Your time is up!

(*Aladdin*, 1992)

Example 9

King John: Ingrith… you see where I've had you placed. Right behind me.

Queen Ingrith: And that's where I'll always be.

(*Maleficent: Mistress of Evil*, 2019)

Idiomatic expressions in Example 7, Example 8 and Example 9 are all used as threats intended to arouse antipathy towards some characters who behave rudely. In Example 7, from *101 Dalmatians* (1961), the cat Sergeant is trying to rescue the kidnapped Dalmatian puppies telling them that if they want to save their skin, they have to follow him (Vignozzi, 2016). The idiom *save your skin* means to protect yourself from danger or difficulty. Example 8, taken from the animated film *Aladdin* (1992), includes idiomatic expression *your time is up*. It means that the period of time allowed for something is ended. Here, the wicked Jafar is putting a spell on the protagonist of the film, Jasmine. Vignozzi (2016) noticed that both in Example 7 and Example 8, idioms are taken literally by the interlocutors; while in Example 7 Dalmatians puppies think that Cruell wants to kill them to get their precious fur for new coats, in Example 8 Jafar puts Jasmine in an hourglass to show her the flow of time. Finally, the idiom *behind me*, meaning to support someone in what they are doing, can be found in *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* (2019) when king John reminds his wife that she should always support him in any decision he will make.

To conclude, the main purpose of this chapter was to explore the frequency of different types of idiomatic expressions in films. Thanks to the comparison of different research based on idioms in films, i.e. *Guardian of the Galaxy Vol. 2, The Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials*, *Frozen*, *Encanto*, *Suicide Squad* and *Toy Story 3*, it could be seen that films are rich in idiomatic expressions, mainly in idiomatic phrasal verbs, tournures, fixed statements, similes and clichés. Furthermore, films are also rich in idiomatic discourse markers *you know* and *I mean*. In this respect, chapter four, the core of the thesis, will focus on the analysis of idiomatic phrasal verbs, institutionalised understatements, irreversible binomials, proverbs, familiar quotations, idiomatic greetings and apologies and idiomatic discourse markers *you know* and *I mean* in the first season of TV series *Pretty Little Liars*, a mystery teen drama. The chapter will be divided in two parts; the first part is a general presentation of the TV series, including the plot, the description of the main characters and some important events happening in the first season; while the second part will focus on the explanation of the meaning of the idiomatic expressions mentioned above by presenting numerous examples taken from the TV series.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF IDIOMS IN THE FIRST SEASON OF THE TV SERIES *PRETTY LITTLE LIARS*

The fourth chapter, the core of this thesis, will focus on the analysis of some idiomatic expressions in the first season of the TV series *Pretty Little Liars*, a teenage mystery drama. This chapter will be divided in two main parts; the first part is a general presentation of the TV series with the description of some important events that occur in the first season, these will be useful to understand the analysis of the idioms that will be presented in the second part. The analysis will be divided into (1) types of idioms, i.e. phrasal verbs, institutionalised understatements, irreversible binomials, proverbs and familiar quotations; (2) idiomatic expressions used to greet, apologise and thank, (3) idiomatic sequences used to be rude to other interlocutors and, finally, (4) idiomatic discourse markers *you know* and *I mean*.

4.1 TV SERIES PRETTY LITTLE LIARS

Pretty Little Liars is an American TV series based on Sara Shepard's novel series of the same title. It is a mystery teen drama developed by Marlene Ling which was broadcast from 8th June 2010 to 27th June 2017 for a total of 160 episodes over seven seasons.

4.1.1 Plot

The story of the TV series *Pretty Little Liars* takes place in the fictional town of Rosewood, in Pennsylvania and follows the lives of five best friends, Aria Montgomery, Emily Fields, Hanna Marin, Spencer Hastings and Alison DeLaurentis whose friendship is destroyed after Alison disappearance. Aria, Emily, Hanna and Spencer reunite one year after their friend's disappearance because they start receiving threatening messages from a mysterious person who hides behind the name "A" and knows all lies, secrets and mistakes these four young girls have collected before and after Alison's disappearance. Throughout the seven seasons many clues from the night Alison disappearance are revealed and, all of these elements will help Aria, Emily, Hanna and Spencer to discover what happened to their friend. At first, they think it is Alison herself, but after her dead body is found the girls realise that somebody else wants to ruin their lives.

4.1.2 First season

Table 1. Episodes of first season of *Pretty Little Liars*

No. in season	Episode title	Written by
1	*Pilot*	I. Marlene King
2	*The Jenna Thing*	I. Marlene King
3	*To Kill a Mocking Girl*	Oliver Goldstick
4	*Can You Hear Me Now?*	Joseph Dougherty
5	*Reality Bites Me*	Bryan M. Holdman
6	*There Is No Place Like Homecoming*	Maya Goldsmith
7	*The Homecoming Hangover*	Tamar Laddy
8	*Please, Do Talk About Me When I'm Gone*	Joseph Dougherty
9	*The Perfect Storm*	Oliver Goldstick
10	*Keep Your Friends Close*	I. Marlene King
11	*Moments Later*	Joseph Dougherty
12	*Salts Meets Wound*	Oliver Goldstick
13	*Know Your Frenemies*	I. Marlene King
14	*Careful What U Wish 4*	Tamar Laddy
15	*If At First You Don't Succeed, Lie, Lie Again*	Maya Goldsmith
16	*Je Suis Une Amie*	Bryan M. Holdman
17	*The New Normal*	Joseph Dougherty
18	*The Bad Seed*	Oliver Goldstick & Francesca Rollins
19	*A Person Of Interest*	I. Marlene King & Jonell Lennon
20	*Someone To Watch Over Me*	Joseph Dougherty
21	*Monsters In The End*	Oliver Goldstick
22	*For Whom The Bell Tolls*	I. Marlene King

Table 1 shows the titles of all twenty-two episodes of first season of Pretty Little Liars and the screenwriters of each episode.

4.1.3 Characters

Alison DiLaurentis, played by actress Shasha Pieterse, is the leader of the group and the most popular girl at school before she went missing. She was the mean girl at school and, even now she finds pleasure in using people's secrets and lies against them to obtain what she wants. She is charming and manipulative, for this reason she manipulates her four friends and knows how to blackmail others. Later on, it is revealed that Alison is alive, and is trying to avoid being caught by "A".

Aria Montgomery, interpreted by Lucy Hale, is the artist of the group, she is intelligent, caring and loves literature and style. After Alison's disappearance, with her family she moved to Iceland for a year before returning to Rosewood. From the first episode she starts a romantic relationship with her English teacher, Ezra Fitz, but they decide to keep it secret.

Hanna Marin, interpreted by Ashley Benson, before Alison's disappearance, was named with the nickname of "Hefty Hanna" because she was overweight due to an eating disorder. Then she loses her weight and changes her style resembling Alison. Now she is one of the most popular girls at school; she loves fashion and usually wears high brand clothes. However, she is highly insecure about her appearance, she is impulsive, and a bit airhead. Over the course of the series, she cares more about people and has a serious relationship with Caleb.

Spenser Hastings, interpreted by actress Troian Bellisario, is a perfectionist living in a wealthy family. She is very competitive, overachieved striving to be the best at everything she does and she is determined to be a lawyer in the future. She is smart, stubborn and kind with everyone, but she is not afraid to take down people who threat her and her friends. At the beginning, she has relationships with different boys but only later she falls in love with Toby. She enjoys for a brief period the "A" team after she thinks that Toby was killed by "A" believing that the body found in the wood was Toby's. However, after learning from Mona that Toby is still alive, she abandons the "A" team.

Emily Fields, played by Shay Mitchell, is the sporty and shy girl of the group, she is the best swimmer of the school, she is sweet, loyal, empathetic, compassionate and very forgiving. She was in love with Alison DeLaurentis. Over the series she has several relationships with different girls, but the love for Alison grows steadily.

Mona Vanderwaal is the first “A”. She stalked Alison before she disappeared and wants to take revenge because Alison used to call her “the biggest loser”. After Alison’s disappearance, she becomes Hanna’s best friend and she starts to be the most popular girl at school, taking Alison’s place. Over the series, she continues working as “A” threatening and betraying Aria, Emily, Hanna and Spencer. Moreover, she deceives her friends by pretending to be insane and for this reason she is sent in a psychiatric hospital, she pretends to be dead and also, she kidnaps her four friends.

4.1.4 Important events in the first season

In this section, some important events that happen in the first season of *Pretty Little Liars* will be described. These will be useful to understand some parts of the analysis carried out on the idioms.

Aria, Emily, Hanna and Spencer have not been in contact anymore in a year. Aria and her family lived abroad for more or less a year since Alison’s disappearance and after Aria discovered that her father had a relationship with a younger woman. Spencer continually strives to be the perfect daughter for her parents, Peter and Veronica Hastings, both excellent lawyers who aspire only to the best. She has always been in competition with her older sister, Melissa, who, in episode one, engaged to Wren, a medical student with whom Spencer creates an unusual bond. Hanna, from being a fat girl, has transformed in one of the most beautiful and popular girls at school, despite going through a difficult situation, since her father Tom left her and her mother Ashley. This situation led her to carry out small thefts in shopping centres and emporium. She has a caring boyfriend, Sean who supports her. Finally, Emily, a tenacious but sensitive girl, is the only one who cannot forget Alison and what happened the summer before. She begins to have doubts about her own sexual orientation after meeting Maya in episode one.

In the first episode, the four girls are forced to get back in touch and try to discover who “A” is, a mysterious person who constantly sends them unsettling messages and threatens them to divulge their deepest secrets. In episode number one, in a pub, Aria meets an older boy, Ezra Fitz, and immediately she falls in love with him. However, he turns to be her new literature teacher and this forces them to maintain their relationship secret, while Aria is dating Noel Khan, a classmate.

In episode two, Jenna Marchall, who is Toby's stepsister, returns to Rosewood after being in a clinic for blind people and the four girls start believing her and Toby are involved in Alison's death. Spencer, teased by Wren, kisses her sister's fiancée and, for this reason Melissa will delate the wedding with him. After a flirt with her sister's ex-boyfriend, in episode five, Spencer begins to date Alex Santiago who is her golf instructor. Detective Darren Wilden starts to investigate Alison's death by persistently questioning Aria, Emily, Hanna and Spencer.

Because of school, Emily is forced, against her will, to meet Toby several times, but she will discover that the boy is not as bad as one might think. For this reason, in episode six, Emily invites Toby to the homecoming, thus arousing the curiosity and anger of her three friends.

In episode eight, Ian, Melissa's ex-boyfriend with whom she broke up the previous summer, returns to Rosewood and immediately attracts the suspicious of Aria, Emily, Hanna and Spencer. In the following episodes, it will be explained that Melissa and Ian boke up because of Spencer and because he had a secret relationship with Alison. In the present time, Ian tries to get closer to Melissa who, initially, hesitates. However, she is convinced by Spencer to give him a second chance.

In the tenth episode, the four girls are at Monay's birthday in the wood where Hanna is hit by a car driven by "A" who, afterwards, escapes leaving the terrified and frightened girls near Hanna's unconscious body.

Emily, after coming out in episode eleven, is separated from Maya. Emily's parents are destabilized by Emily's homosexuality and, for this reason, they sent Maya to study in a college far away from Rosewood. In episode fourteen, Emily, desperate, seeks help from Caleb, a new boy at school specialized in technology and computer science.

The secret relationship between Arian and Ezra proceeds full steam ahead, so that in episode fifteen, Spencer guarantees her friend a real first date with Ezra outside Rosewood at the opening of an art museum in Philadelphia. However, "A" delivers anonymously to Ella, Aria's mother, a ticket for the same art museum, so that her mom can discover on her own her daughter's top-secret relationship.

An important fact occurs in episode eighteen. At school, Spencer, opening a box, finds a trophy from a golf tournament won by Ian with blood on its side. Worried and convinced that it is the weapon used to kill Alison, the four girls take it to the police for further investigations. The following day the girls are waiting for the results of the blood found in the trophy, however, it is nothing more than the blood of a mouse.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF IDIOMS

The second part of chapter four is the core of the whole thesis. It will focus on the analysis of some types of idiomatic expressions that are idiomatic phrasal verbs, institutionalised understatements, proverbs and familiar quotations. Moreover, English idioms used by speakers to greet, apologise, thank and to be rude and idiomatic discourse markers *you know* and *I mean* will be investigated.

4.2.1 Research methodology

This research uses a descriptive qualitative and quantitative method. From the perspective of objectives Kumar (1999) defines as descriptive studies those studies that aim to describe a situation, a problem a phenomenon, a service, or provide information about the conditions of a community or describe the attitudes toward an issue. In other words, the purpose of these studies is to describe what is prevalent in respect to the issue analysed. Furthermore, from the perspective of the enquiry mode employed, Kumar distinguishes the qualitative and quantitative research. The goal of qualitative research is to describe a situation, a phenomenon, a problem or an event (Kumar, 1999). While the main aim of the quantitative research is to quantify the variation of a situation, issue, problem or phenomenon and to collect and analyse numerical data. It can be used to make predictions or find averages.

This study may be defined as qualitative since it aims to describe the phenomenon of idioms in the first season of TV series *Pretty Little Liars* and quantitative because its goal it is also to identify how many types of idioms there are.

In collecting data, the transcripts of the twenty-two episodes have been downloaded from the website *8FLiX, Film & Television Scripts Database*[1], which has thousands of screenplays, TV scripts and transcripts, including the transcripts of the first season of TV

[1] https://8flix.com/transcripts/pretty-little-liars-season-1-part-1-dialogue/

series that will be analysed, *Pretty Little Liars*. The transcripts of all twenty-two episodes will be downloaded in PDF format and then read.

Firstly, a detailed reading of all twenty-two transcripts of the first season will be carried out, underlining all the types of idioms listed by Makkai (1972), i.e. phrasal verbs, tournures, irreversible binomials, phrasal compounds and pseudo-idioms, proverbs, familiar quotations, institutionalised understatements and hyperboles, and by McCarthy and O'Dell (2002), i.e. euphemism, cliché, fixed statements and similes. There will be also a focus on idiomatic expressions of politeness used to greet, apologise and thank, on idiomatic sequences used to be rude with other interlocutors and on the idiomatic discourse markers *you know* and *I mean*.

After having counted all idiomatic expressions manually, only some types of idioms will be selected for the subsequent analysis, including phrasal verbs, institutionalised social understatements, irreversible binomials, proverbs and familiar quotations and idiomatic expressions to greet, apologise, thank, be rude and idiomatic discourse markers *you know* and *I mean.*

To make everything more schematic and easier to read, four sections will be organised based on (1) the types of idioms, (2) the idiomatic expressions to greet, apologise and thank, (3) the impolite idiomatic expressions and, finally, (4) the idiomatic discourse markers *you know* and *I mean*. The "Types of idioms" section will be divided into sub-sections, i.e. phrasal verbs, institutionalised understatements, irreversible binomials, proverbs and familiar quotations. A further selection will be made on phrasal verbs and, only the most frequent idiomatic phrasal verbs, the phrasal verbs linked to human relationships and lies, crimes and mysteries will be analysed.

At the beginning of each section and sub-section a table with the idiomatic expressions that will be analysed will underline the frequency with which they occur in the first series. Even for irreversible binomials, proverbs and familiar quotations, the episode in which they are uttered will also be shown. An explanation of the meaning of idioms, taken from the Cambridge dictionary, and examples taken from the scenes from the first season of the TV series will then be offered.

4.2.2 Results and discussion

4.2.2.1 Types of idioms

As mentioned in chapter one, there are two major categories to classify idioms: lexemic idioms and sememic idioms (Makkai, 1972: 135). Makkai (1972) distinguishes subgroups of idioms; lexemic idioms embrace phrasal verbs, tournures, irreversible binomials, phrasal compounds and pseudo-idioms. However, other types of idioms can be added in this list: euphemisms, similes (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2002), idioms with *it*, metaphors (Kövecses, 1996), pure idioms, semi-idioms and literal idioms (Fernando, 1996, cited in Leah). While sememic idioms, according to Makkai (1972) can be proverbs, familiar quotations, institutionalised understatements and hyperbole. Even here, withing the group of sememic idioms other idiomatic expressions can be added, for example, cliches and fixed statements (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2002).

In this thesis, idiomatic phrasal verbs, irreversible binomials, familiar quotations, proverbs and institutionalised understatements (Makkai, 1972) will be analysed.

4.2.2.1.1 Phrasal verbs

According to Makkai (1976), phrasal verbs, when taken in their non-literal sense, can be idioms consisting of a verb and a particle which can be an adverb or a preposition. They are phrasal verbs whose meaning cannot be interfered from the meanings of the words that make it up.

All idiomatic phrasal verbs that are in the twenty-two episodes of the first season of TV series *Pretty Little Liars* from the most frequent to the least frequent will be presented in the following table (Table 2). Subsequently there will be a focus on those that occur more than 10 times, on those related to human relationships and those linked to mysteries, lies and crimes with an explanation of their meaning and examples taken from the dialogues of the TV series. I decided to analyse the idiomatic phrasal verbs regarding human relationships and mysteries, lies and crimes as the TV series is mainly based on love relationships and friendships between the characters and on the crimes, the scams, the kidnappings and the lies that are constantly told by protagonists to defend themselves.

Table 2. Idiomatic Phrasal Verbs on *Pretty Little Liars* Season One

1.	COME ON	62

2.	FIND OUT	46
3.	FIGURE OUT	41
4.	PICK UP	23
5.	BREAK UP	19
6.	HANG OUT	12
7.	GET OVER SOMETHING	11
8.	GO AHEAD	11
9.	GIVE UP	10
10.	CHECK OUT	8
11.	TURN OUT	8
12.	MAKE SOMETHING UP	7
13.	MOVE ON	7
14.	MOVE OUT	7
15.	COME BY	6
16.	COME OVER	6
17.	HOOK UP	6
18.	COME OUT	5
19.	FREAK OUT	5
20.	GET OUT	4
21.	GO OUT	4
22.	BLOW UP	3
23.	COME ALONG	3
24.	COME UP WITH SOMETHING	3
25.	COUNT ON SOMETHING/SOMEONE	3
26.	DROP OFF	3
27.	FIX SOMEONE UP	3
28.	GET OFF	3
29.	GO ALONG	3
30.	GO AWAY	3
31.	GO ON	3
32.	HOLD ON	3
33.	KICK IN	3
34.	PISS OFF	3
35.	REACH OUT TO SOMEONE	3
36.	SCREW SOMEONE/SOMETHING UP	3
37.	SET SOMEONE UP	3
38.	SHAKE SOMEONE UP	3
39.	TAKE OFF	3
40.	BACK OFF	2
41.	BLOW SOMEONE AWAY	2
42.	BREAK IT OFF	2
43.	BRING SOMETHING UP	2
44.	CATCH UP	2
45.	CUT SOMEONE OFF	2
46.	FALL OUT	2

47.	FILL OUT	2
48.	GET ALONG	2
49.	GET AWAY	2
50.	GET THROUGH	2
51.	GO OVER	2
52.	HANG AROUND	2
53.	JUMP ON SOMEONE	2
54.	LET DOWN	2
55.	MESS SOMONE UP	2
56.	MESS WITH SOMEONE	2
57.	PLAY ALONG	2
58.	PONY UP	2
59.	RUN INTO SOMEONE	2
60.	STAND UP TO SOMEONE	2
61.	STEP ASIDE	2
62.	STOP BY	2
63.	TAKE SOMEONE BACK	2
64.	WATCH OUT	2
65.	WIPE OUT	2
66.	WIPE SOMETHING OFF	2
67.	WORK OUT	2
68.	BACK SOMEONE UP	1
69.	BAIL OUT	1
70.	BEAT UP ON SOMEONE	1
71.	BLOW OFF	1
72.	BRING SOMEONE BACK	1
73.	BRING SOMETHING ON	1
74.	BUMP INTO SOMEONE	1
75.	BURST OUT	1
76.	CHECK IN	1
77.	CHEER SOMEONE ON	1
78.	COME AROUND	1
79.	CORDON OFF	1
80.	COUGH SOMETHING UP	1
81.	COUNT SOMEONE IN	1
82.	DEAL WITH SOMETHING	1
83.	DRAG SOMEONE DOWN	1
84.	DRAG SOMETHING OUT OF SOMEONE	1
85.	EASE UP	1
86.	FACE SOMEONE DOWN	1
87.	FALL APART	1
88.	FALL FOR SOMEONE	1
89.	FEEL FOR SOMEONE	1
90.	FIRE AWAY	1
91.	FLESH OUT	1

92.	FREEZE SOMEONE OUT	1
93.	GAIN ON SOMEONE/SOMETHING	1
94.	GET PAST SOMETHING	1
95.	GET UP TO SOMETHING	1
96.	GIVE IN TO SOMETHING	1
97.	GO THROUGH	1
98.	GO THROUGH WITH SOMETHING	1
99.	GREW APART	1
100.	GUN FOR SOMETHING	1
101.	HAND OUT	1
102.	HANG UP	1
103.	HIT ON SOMEONE	1
104.	HOLD OFF	1
105.	HOLD OUT	1
106.	HOLD THAT AGAINST SOMEONE	1
107.	HOLD UP	1
108.	HOLE UP	1
109.	JERK SOMEONE AROUND	1
110.	JOT DOWN	1
111.	JUMP IN	1
112.	KEEP ON DOING SOMETHING	1
113.	KEEP SOMETHING FROM SOMEONE	1
114.	KEEP UP	1
115.	KICK UP	1
116.	KNOCK DOWN	1
117.	KNOCK IT OFF	1
118.	KNOCK SOMEONE DOWN	1
119.	LIGHT UP	1
120.	LOOK FORWARD IT	1
121.	MAKE OFF	1
122.	MAN UP	1
123.	MESS AROUD	1
124.	MOVE IN	1
125.	PASS OUT	1
126.	PASS SOMETHING AROUND	1
127.	PICK OUT	1
128.	PIN SOMETHING ON SOMEONE	1
129.	PITCH IN	1
130.	PLAY OUT	1
131.	POP UP	1
132.	PULL UP	1
133.	PUT SOMEONE THROUGH SOMETHING	1
134.	RELY ON	1
135.	ROLL AROUND	1
136.	RUN OFF	1

137.	RUN OUT	1
138.	SAIL THROUGH SOMETHING	1
139.	SETTLE DOWN	1
140.	SHOW UP	1
141.	SHUT SOMEONE OUT	1
142.	SHUT SOMETHING DOWN	1
143.	SLACK OFF	1
144.	SLIP AWAY	1
145.	SLIP UP	1
146.	SNEAK UP	1
147.	SNIFF SOMETHING OUT	1
148.	SOCK SOMETHING AWAY	1
149.	SORT SOMETHING OUT	1
150.	SPIT OUT	1
151.	SPLIT UP	1
152.	STEP BACK	1
153.	STICK UP FOR SOMEONE	1
154.	STOCK UP	1
155.	SUIT UP	1
156.	TAKE ON	1
157.	TAKE OVER	1
158.	TAKE SOMETHING OUT	1
159.	TAKE SOMETHING UP	1
160.	TEAR APART	1
161.	THROW UP	1
162.	TOSS SOMETHING OUT	1
163.	TRY ON	1
164.	TUNE IN	1
165.	WIND UP	1
166.	WORK THROUGH	1

4.2.2.1.1.1 The most frequent idiomatic phrasal verbs

Table 3 shows the phrasal verbs occurring more than 10 times. An analysis with examples from the first season of Pretty Little Liars will follow.

Table 3. The Most Frequent Idiomatic Phrasal Verbs

	IDIOMATIC PHRASAL VERBS	FREQUENCY
1	COME ON	62
2	FIND OUT	46
3	FIGURE OUT	41
4	PICK UP	23
5	BREAK UP	19
6	HANG OUT	12

7	GET OVER SOMETHING	11
8	GO AHEAD	11
9	GIVE UP	10

As shown in Table 3, *come on* is the most frequent phrasal verb occurring 62 times in all episodes. In the TV series it is used to encourage someone to do something in order to hurry or it is used to tell someone that you do not believe them or that you disagree with them or to show that you are angry with them. A few examples can be found below.

> Peter Hastings: Your mother's already taken out a full-page Ad in the club newsletter. I'm kidding. Come on. Have a butter cream.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 5, scene 251)

> Coach Fulton: It's out last practice before this afternoon's big meet, so let's make it a good one.
> […]
> Coach Fulton: Okay, ladies, in the water. In the water! Come on!
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 19, scene 519)

In episode 5, scene 251, Spencer and her father, Peter, are discussing Spencer's great essay. Peter is proud of her and jokes that her mother dedicated Spencer a space of her essay in the newsletter of her club. Then, he offers her daughter some biscuits encouraging he to take one using the expression *come on*. As well as in episode 19, scene 519, when the swimming coach is encouraging her athletes to do their best and do it as quick as they can in view of the official meet that will take place in the afternoon.

> Paige: They love you already.
> Emily: I don't do karaoke.
> Paige: Come on, Emily. Take a walk on the wild side.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 19, scene 464)

> Hanna: It was a coincidence.
> Aria: Is it? Han, come on, you don't think it's weird that my mom had a ticket the same night?
> Hanna: Yes, a weird coincidence.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 16, scene 103)

While, in episode 19, scene 464, *come on* is used by Paige as a way to underline that she does not believe that Emily does not do karaoke. They are in a club where everybody is singing and Paige asks Emily to join her, however, Emily refuses her offer to sing together. Furthermore, in episode 16, scene 103, *come on* is used by Aria because she does not believe what Hanna has just said. Aria and Ezra went to the cinema the night before, outside Rosewood, in order to keep their relationship secret. However, Aria's mother also went to see the same movie at the same time; Aria does not think that was a coincidence, but believes that "A" gave Ella, Aria's mother, the movie ticket in order to make her discover the secret relationship between her daughter and her teacher.

The second most frequent idiomatic phrasal verb is *find out* occurring 46 times in all twenty-two episodes. It means to get information about something because you want to know more about it, or to learn a fact or piece of information for the first time.

> Agent Cooper: Alison liked secrets, huh?
> Emily: She thought sharing secrets kept us close.
> Agent Cooper: They do, but secrets are made to be found out with time.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 10, scene 242)

In this case, *find out* refers to secrets. Emily and her friends are at the police station to be questioned by agent Cooper. Emily reveals that the relationship they had with Alison was centred around the secrets with the aim of keeping them close. However, agent Cooper believes that secrets should be known and discovered with time.

Occurring 41 times, *figure out* is the third most frequent idiomatic phrasal verb in the first season of *Pretty Little Liars*. It means to finally understand something or someone, or find the solution to a problem after a lot of thought.

> Spencer: Hey, hi. How was the club?
> Veronica Hastings: Chilly. Nobody who works there can figure out a thermostat.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 3, scene 586)

In episode 3, scene 586, Spencer's mom has just arrived home from the golf club. Veronica Hastings laments the fact that at the club it was cold because nobody knows how to fix the thermostat.

The fourth most frequent idiomatic phrasal verb is *pick up* used 23 times. It is mainly used with the meaning of to start a new relationship again, to answer the phone or to stop someone and take them to a police station in order to be arrested or questioned.

> Toby: I don't get many invitations. Just death threats.
> Emily: Do you believe me?
> Toby: That's what I asked you, before the cops picked me up. I never got an answer either.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 12, scene 511)

In episode 12, scene 511, *pick up* is used by Toby to explain to Emily that he was arrested and questioned by the police as he had been accused of killing Alison.

Idiomatic phrasal verb *break up* follows with 19 occurrences. It is used to explain that a marriage or a relationship ends.

> Aria: Does Melissa know he's back?
> Hanna: I don't know why she ever broke up with him.
> Spencer: He broke up with her.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 10, scenes 33, 34)

In episode 10, scenes 33 and 34, Arian, Hanna and Spencer are at school talking in the corridor, but all of a sudden see Ian, the ex-boyfriend of Melissa, Spencer's sister. Here, Hanna and Spencer are discussing about the fact that Melissa and Ian's relationship is now over.

Subsequently, *hang out* is uttered 12 times and means to spend a lot of time with someone.

> Spencer: Hey… Is there any chance you'd want to hang out sometimes? Like, not here?
> Alex: Yeah.
> Spencer: Okay. Bye.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 5, scene 661)

In episode 5, scene 661, there is a scene in which Spencer asks Alex, her tennis coach, to have a date using the idiomatic phrasal verb *hang out*.

Get over something, occurring 11 times, has different idiomatic meanings. It can be used to describe that someone feels better after something or other people have made him/her unhappy or to accept an unpleasant fact or situation after dealing with it for a while.

> Paige: I'm kind of done with swimming.
> Emily: Yeah, I used to feel that way.
> Paige: Obviously you got over it. How did you get over?
> Emily: I started swimming for myself.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 16, scenes 660, 661)

Here, in episode 16, scenes 660 and 661, Paige and Emily are talking about swimming. Paige had an accident with her bike and will not be able to swim for a while; for this reason, she feels frustrated and wants to stop swimming. Emily confesses that in the past she also wanted to stop swimming because she was not happy anymore, but she managed to overcome this moment and started to swim for herself.

The idiomatic phrasal verb *go ahead* also appears 11 times in the first season. It has nothing to do with the verb *to do*, indeed it is said to someone in order to give the permission to start to do something or it allows people to continue with a plan or activity without waiting.

> Emily: This has nothing to do with Toby!
> […]
> Darren Wilden: You want me to share this with them, or would you like to? Go ahead and tell them about the angry letter that you wrote to Alison.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 9, scene 650)

Emily, Aria, Hanna and Spencer are at the police station where the detective Darren Wilden is questioning them. He found in Emily's bag the trophy stained with blood and the detective believes that Toby asked the girl to hide it. Emily is trying to defend Toby from the detective and her friends' accusations. At this point Darren Wilden, by using the

phrasal verb *go ahead*, encourages Emily to continue talking and to reveal other secrets, such as the letters she wrote to Alison.

Finally, *give up* occurs 10 times but with different meanings. Idiomatic phrasal verb *give up* may mean to stop have a friendship with someone, to stop having a habit, such as smoking or drinking alcohol or to stop doing something because it is too difficult.

> Aria: Hey, why are you so down? It's about you and Sean breaking up? that doesn't mean you give up on him. Believe me, with all the stuff that Ezra and I have had to deal with, we should have been history by now.
> Hanna: Well, maybe it's a sign from the universe.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 15, scene 276)

> Veronica Hastings: Spencer…our family doesn't handle imperfection very well.
> Spencer: Mom, being sick is not an imperfection.
> Veronica Hastings: Just so you know, I gave up sidecars for spritzers.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 9, scene 758)

In the first example coming from episode 15, scene 276, the idiomatic phrasal verb *give up* means to stop having a friendship with someone; Hanna is upset because her relationship with Sean has come to an end. Aria is trying to cheer her up by telling her that even though their relationship is over, they will still remain friends. The second example, from episode 9, scene 758, shows a different use of *give up*. Spencer's family is one of the most high-ranking families in Rosewood and therefore must try to maintain a good reputation. However, this creates pressure on Spencer's mother who sometimes indulges in alcohol. Here, she admits that she has stopped drinking alcohol preferring non-alcoholic drinks.

4.2.2.1.1.2 Phrasal verbs of human relationship

In this section all idiomatic phrasal verbs relating to human relationships will be analysed in addition to those already analysed previously, e.g. *break up* and *hang out*. The idiomatic phrasal verbs related to the human relationships are listed in Table 4 and can be *grow apart*, *hook up*, *split up, go out*, *fix someone up*, *hit on someone*, *fall for someone*, *hold that against someone, come out, get along*, *fall out*, and *break it off*.

Table 4. Idiomatic Phrasal Verbs of Human Relationship

	IDIOMATIC PHRASAL VERBS	FREQUENCY
1	HOOK UP	6
2	COME OUT	5
3	GO OUT	4
4	FIX SOMEONE UP	3
5	GET ALONG	2
6	FALL OUT	2
7	BREAK IT OFF	2
8	GROW APART	1
9	SPLIT UP	1
10	HIT ON SOMEONE	1
11	FALL FOR SOMEONE	1
12	HOLD THAT AGAINST SOMEONE	1

Idiomatic phrasal verb *grow apart* might be used to describe that a relationship between two people is less close than in the past. It can be found in episode 1, scene 536 when Hanna and her mother, Ashley Marin, are discussing the fact that her father left them to go to live with another woman and Ashley and Hanna's father grow apart.

> Hanna: You grew up. You grew apart. It was mutual, and, honestly, we are much happier without him.
> Ashley Marin: Hanna. I have to admit, it does sound a lot better than the truth.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 1, scene 536)

Hook up can be considered an idiomatic phrasal verb which means to start a sentimental relationship with someone. In the scene below, from episode 5, scene 22, Aria, Emily and Spencer are discussing about the fact that Aria's dad started a secret relationship with a colleague of him without his wife's knowledge.

> Emily: It's your dad's mistake, totally.
> Aria: No, it is my fault.
> Spencer: You did not hook up with her and then ask your kid to cover for you.
> Aria: Ali said I should've told my mom right after it happened.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 5, scene 22)

Another idiomatic phrasal verb related to human relationships that will be analysed is *split up*. In episode 8, scene 708, *split up* is used to describe the end of a relationship between two people. Noel and Aria are talking about Aria's parents' separation.

> Noel: I heard about your folks splitting up.
> Aria: They're not split, they're separated.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 8, scene 708)

One of the meanings of the idiomatic phrasal verb *go out* is to have a romantic relationship with someone. Indeed, in the example below, coming from episode 11, scene 123, go out is used by Melissa, Spencer's sister, to claim that the relationship she had with Ian lasted two years.

> Spencer: He stayed the night?
> Melissa: It's not like we're strangers. We went out for two years, and we had a lot to talk about.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 11, scene 123)

The next idiomatic phrasal verb found in the first season related to the world of human relationship is *fix someone up* which means to find a romantic partner for someone. An example of the use of this phrasal verb comes from episode 11, scene 211. Aria confessed to her friends that she has a secret relationship with her teacher, Ezra. Hanna asks Aria if she was with him when she organised for her a date with Noel too.

> Hanna: You were seeing a teacher when I fixed you up with Noel?
> Aria: Yeah
> Hanna: Oh my God, I fixed you up with Noel.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 11, scene 211)

Subsequently, *hit on someone* means to show someone in a direct way that you are attracted to him/her. This can be seen in episode 11, scene 638, when Aria is telling Spencer about how she met Ezra and how they immediately liked each other.

> Spencer: A bar? You met him in a bar?

Aria: It's not a bar, it's a pub.

Spencer: And he hit on you?

Aria: Yeah, we were talking about writing.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 11, scene 638)

Speakers may use idiomatic phrasal verb *fall for someone* when they want to say that suddenly they have strong romantic feelings about someone. This idiomatic phrasal verb is uttered by Ian in episode 16, scene 254. Spencer offered to tutor Toby in order to help him at school, however, her sister Melissa and Ian are warning her because Toby is still suspected of Alison's murder. Moreover, they believe that Spencer is starting to have feelings for him.

Melissa: That kid murdered one of your best friends.

Ian: Wait don't tell me you're falling for that silent martyr carp.

Spencer: Well, Toby Cavanaugh hasn't cornered the market on lying.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 16, scene 254)

Hold it/that against someone means to like someone less because they have done something wrong or behaved bad in the past. It can be found in episode 16, scene 701, when Melissa, Spencer's sister, is admitting she knows everything about the flirt Spencer had with Ian. However, Melissa is not angry with Spencer and, for this reason, she tells her that she loves her anyway even if she betrayed her trust.

Melissa: He told me everything—the thing you two had when we were broken up. I can't hold that against you.

Spencer: Did he tell you anything else about that summer?

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 16, scene 701)

To *come out* is used in the first season of *Pretty Little Liars* with the meaning of to tell people that someone is gay. Emily realized she has always been gay and confessed it to her parents who were strongly destabilized by their daughter's homosexuality so they decided to make Maya, Emily's current girlfriend, go away. In episode 17, scene 705, Emily is venting to Paige.

Paige: God, why is everything so easy for you?

Emily: Easy? […] I come out, and they ship my first girlfriend off to God-knows-where, and now maybe she's done with me.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 17, scene 705)

One of the meanings of idiomatic phrasal verb *get along* may describe two people who like each other and are friendly to each other. It can be found in episode 20, scene 577; Mike, Aria's brother, arrived home and found his parents having a fight because of Aria. By mistake Aria sent her mom a message which was supposed to be sent to Ezra. That's the reason why their parents, Byron and Ella, who were getting closer again, are now arguing.

Mike: What did you do to mom and dad?
Aria: I don't know what you're talking about.
Mike: They were getting along, and I came home and find them fighting in your room.
Aria: About what?
Mike: About some boy they don't like.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 20, scene 577)

Furthermore, *break it off*, which can be used to describe the end of a relationship, can be found in episode 21, scene 618 when Ezra confesses to Aria that he was in a serious relationship with a woman who almost became his wife, although she ended their relationship shortly before their wedding.

Aria: So… you were married?
Ezra: No. no, it never happened.
Aria: Oh. Why did you break it off?
Ezra: I didn't. She did.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 21, scene 618)

The last idiomatic phrasal verb whose meaning is related to human relationships is *fall out*. It means to have an argument or disagreement that ends a romantic relationship or a friendship. In episode 1, scene 618, Emily uses this phrasal verb when speaking with Aria

to say that, after Alison's death, she no longer spoke to Hanna or Spencer, thus marking the end of their friendship.

> Aria: What's up with her? You two fighting?
> Emily: We didn't, just fall out of touch with you, Aria. We all fell out of touch with each other.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 21, scene 618)

4.2.2.1.1.3 Phrasal verbs connected to mysteries, crimes and lies

As mentioned above, *Pretty Little Liars* is a mystery teen drama whose plot focuses on the disappearance or death of Alison. Hence, lies, crimes and mysteries are the main points of the entire first season and, all the idiomatic phrasal verbs related to these topics are listed in the following table (Table 5).

Table 5. Idiomatic Phrasal Verbs About Mysteries, Crimes and Lies

	IDIOMATIC PHRASAL VERBS	FREQUENCY
1	MAKE UP SOMETHING	7
2	KEEP SOMETHING FROM SOMEONE	1
3	CORDON OFF	1
4	KNOCK SOMEONE DOWN	1
5	HOLE UP	1

Idiomatic phrasal verb *keep something from someone*, whose meaning is to lie and not to tell someone about something, is used in episode 2, scene 59, by Emily when she is talking with the other girls about Alison's secrets. Alison was used to lie to her friends and, in this case too; she was secretly having a relationship with an older boy.

> Spencer: Ali was seeing someone that summer.
> Emily: I knew she was keeping something from me… from us.
> Aria: Well, why didn't she want us to know?
> Spencer: He was an older boy, and he had a girlfriend.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 2, scene 59)

The second idiomatic phrasal verbs analysed, related to lies, may be *make something up*. It means to lie and invent something, such as an excuse or a story in order to deceive someone. It is used, for example, in episode 6, scene 582, when the four girls are at their

school homecoming. Al of a sudden, Hanna decides to go to her psychologist's office to steal Jenna's file. She knows she cannot tell Sean, her partner, a lie otherwise he would follow her, hence, she leaves him alone at the dance.

> Hanna: Keep an eye on Sean.
> Aria: What?
> Hanna: I can't exactly tell him where I'm going. If I make something up, he'll want to come with me.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 6, scene 582)

Another idiomatic phrasal verb may be *cordon off*; if the police cordon off an area, they put something around it in order to stop people from entering it. In episode 9, scene 132, an example of its use can be found. Detective Wilden Darren tells Spencer that the memorial built for Alison was destroyed the night before by someone unknown. The memorial has become an investigation area and, for this reason, the police prohibit anyone from visiting it.

> Darren Wilden: York street's been closed since last night. Somebody decided to pay a visit to Alison Di Laurentis' memorial and destroyed it. Shattered the tiles, broke the bench.
> Spencer: W-when did this happen?
> Darren Wilden: We had to cordon off the area, given its ongoing murder investigation.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 9, scene 132)

Furthermore, in episode 11, scene 111, *knock someone down* can be found. It is used to say that someone hit a person with a vehicle and injured or killed this person. In this case, Spencer is telling her sister Melissa that Hanna was hit by a car driven by an unknown person, probably A.

> Spencer: A car hit Hanna.
> Melissa: A car? Who was driving?
> Spencer: We don't know.
> Melissa: They didn't stop?
> Spencer: No, they just—they just knocked her down and drove away.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 11, scene 111)

Finally, idiomatic phrasal verb *hole up* means to stay in a safe place, often as a way of avoiding or hiding from someone. In first season of *Pretty Little Liars*, it is used in episode 15, scene 151 by Spencer who is talking with Aria. Spencer is willing to be Aria's alibi to guarantee her a real first date with Ezra. To be her alibi, Spenser will have to lie to everybody and stay at home the whole evening and night.

> Aria: Well, hey, how can I get you back?
> Spencer: Pay for extra toppings on my pizza delivery.
> Aria: All right, you got it.
> Spencer: Oh, and a DVD rental, because if I have to hole up in my room all night as your alibi, I would like to do it with Jake Gyllenhaal.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 15, scene 151)

It can be noted that idiomatic phrasal verbs are particularly frequent in the first series of *Pretty Little Liars.* The most frequent are *come on*, *find out* and *figure out* occurring respectively 62, 46 and 41 times; other idiomatic phrasal verbs worth mentioning, for example, *pick up* and *break up*. Since *Pretty little Liars* is a mystery teen grama, lies, mysteries and human relationships are the main points of the entire series; for this reason, idiomatic phrasal verbs related to human relationships and mysteries, crimes and lies have been taken into consideration. It has emerged that *hook up*, meaning to start a sentimental relationship with someone, occurs 6 times and *make up something*, to lie and invent something, such as an excuse or a story in order to deceive someone, 7 times.

4.2.2.1.2 Institutionalised understatements

Following, institutionalised understatements are conversational expressions whose goal is to lessen the impact of a blunt and direct statement by avoiding saying how really things are (Makkai, 1976) or expressions that describe something in a way that makes it seem less important, serious or bad than it really is or avoid saying how things really are in a direct way. Table 6 shows all the idiomatic institutionalised understatements found in the first season of the TV series.

Table 6. Idiomatic Institutionalised Understatements

EPISODE	IDIOMATIC INSTITUTIONALISED UNDERSTATEMENTS
Episode 2: *The Jenna Thing*	*Dead man walking*
Episode 3: *To Kill a Mocking Girl*	*Have sticky fingers*
Episode 6: *There Is No Place Like Homecoming*	*Lose your mind*
Episode 7: *The Homecoming Hangover*	*Give someone a heads up*
Episode 16: *Je Suis Une Amie*	*Have money to burn*

Dead man walking may be defined as an institutionalised understatement used to describe someone who will lose his/her job, position, title, status etc. very soon. It is a way to say that someone will be unemployed or due to his/her behaviours will no longer be considered as a good person anymore. In season one of *Pretty Little Liars,* it occurs in episode 2, scene 261 with a change: the word *girls* is used instead of the word *man,* but without altering its meaning. The four protagonists, believed to be involved in Alison's disappearance, are called to the principal's office to be questioned. However, before entering the office, Aria receives a message from "A" who is threatening the girls to lose their status as good and naïve girls due to their actions. "A" uses the expression *dead girls walking* rather than saying that the four girls will no longer be considered good and reliable person and that their reputations at school are ruined.

> Man on P.A.: Will the following students please come to the office. Emily Fields, Aria Montgomery, Spencer Hastings, Hanna Marin.
> Aria: Wait. It's from "A"
> Hanna: "Dead girls walking"

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 2, scene 261)

Have sticky fingers may be used to describe in an indirect way someone who is likely to steal, but without saying that this person is a thief. In first season of *Pretty Little Liars,* it is used in episode 3, scene 556, by Ashley Marin, Hanna's mom. Detective Widen is at Ashley's house and has found a precious bracelet in a drawer. Considering the fact that

Hanna stole a pair of glasses in a shopping mall, he believes that Hanna stole even the bracelet.

> Ashley Marin: And if you're thinking she knows more that she's letting on, you're out of line. Sticky fingers is a long way off from what you're talking about.
> Darren Wilden: Easy, mama bear. It's just a routine investigation.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 3, scene 556)

Speakers may use the idiomatic expression *lose your mind* when they want to say someone that he/she is behaving in a silly or strange way. It is used in episode 6, scene 524 by Aria when talking to Emily. The four girls are at the homecoming and Emily chose Toby as her partner. The guy is now suspected of Alison's murder and, for this reason Aria, Spencer and Hanna are worried about Emily.

> Spencer: You're here with Toby?
> Aria: either you've got some genius plan of sleeping with the enemy, or you've lost your mind!
> Emily: you don't even know him.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 6, scene 524)

Another institutionalised understatement that can be found on season one is *give someone a heads up*. It means to tell someone that something, usually bad and unpleasant, is going to happen. It is uttered in episode 7, scene 660 by Emily who is talking with Maya about the photo depicting them while kissing.

> Emily: I wanted to give you a heads-up. That picture of you and me kissing, it's probably gonna be seen by a lot of people.
> Maya: I won't lose sleep. That's you, not me.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 7, scene 660)

Speaker when want to talk about someone who spends a lot of money in a way that wastes it but in a more indirect way, may recur to the idiomatic institutionalised understatement *have money to burn*. It is used only once, in episode 16, scene 529. Caleb, who lent Hanna some money, wants them back, however, Hanna does not have them yet, so the boy

suggests Hanna to provide him the names of some rich guys so he can make them some favours and get his money back.

> Caleb: Do you wanna pay off your debt? I'm cashing in on that favour. Point out the kids who have money to burn.
> Hanna: Fine, I'll trade you—one name for one answer.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 16, scene 529)

It can be noted that in the first season of the TV series *Pretty Little Liars,* institutionalised understatements occur only five times and are mainly used to say things in a more indirect way avoiding telling how things really are. The five episodes in which they appear, i.e. episode 2 (*The Jenna Thing*), episode 3 (*To Kill a Mocking Girl*), episode 6 (*The Is No Place Like Homecoming*), episode 7 (The Homecoming Hangover) and episode 16 (*Je Suis Une Amie*), are all written by different screenwriters, respectively I. Marlene King, Oliver Goldstick, Maya Goldsmith, Tamar Laddy and Bryan M. Holdman.

4.2.2.1.3 Idiomatic irreversible binomials

Makkai (1972) and McCarthy and O'Dell (2002) define irreversible binomials as combinations of two words in fixed order joined with a conjunction words, usually *and*. In *Pretty Little Liars*, season one, six idiomatic irreversible binomials have been identified, one occurring two times. The table below (Table 7) will show the irreversible binomials found in the series and the episodes in which they are uttered by the characters.

Table 7. Irreversible Binomials

EPISODE	IRREVERSIBLE BINOMIALS
Episode 2: *The Jenna Thing*	*Round and around*
Episode 2: *The Jenna Thing*	*Kiss and tell*
Episode 7: *The Homecoming Hangover* Episode 19: *A Person Of Interest*	*Over and over again*
Episode 14: *Careful What U Wish 4*	*Back and forth*
Episode 14: *Careful What U Wish 4*	*Supply and demand*
Episode 18: *The Badass Seed*	*Toss and turn*

The idiomatic irreversible binomial *round and around* occurs in episode 2, scene 413 and is part of a song Hanna and her boyfriend Sean sing while studying at Hanna's place. It is used do describe a circular movement and, in this case, it refers to the fact that someone is not directly answering the question posed, but is beating around the bush.

> Hanna and Sean: Round and around, dancing round the question posed.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 2, scene 413)

Kiss and tell is the following irreversible binomial identified. It is uttered by Maya in episode 2, scene 533. In this part, Emily, Maya and Ben, Emily's current boyfriend, are in the car going to school. The previous night Emily and Maya had a sleepover and Ben is curious about it so asks the two girls how it went and how they slept. Maya claims she does not want to tell him how they spent the night and uses an irreversible binomial which means to talk, usually in TV or in a newspaper, about a relationship with a person. In this case, Maya would not talk about her relationship with Emily.

> Ben: So, Maya, now that you two have slept together, you've gotten further with Emily than I have. What should I know?
> Maya: Good girls, don't kiss and tell.
> Ben: You don't strike me as a good girl.
> Emily: Shut up, Ben.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 2, scene 533)

Over and over again occurs twice: in episode 7, scene 460 and episode 19, scene 550. It refers to something happened or done many times.

> Hanna: Look, I have already gotten busted for stealing sunglasses and my boyfriend's car.
> […]
> Spencer: Okay, Hanny, this is not about petty theft. Toby could be the killer. We can't keep making these same mistakes over and over again.
> Hanna: We?
> Spencer: Yes, we!
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 7, scene 460)

In episode 7, Hanna, Spencer and Aria are in the wood because they want to burn some folders Hanna took from the shrink's office. The three girls are arguing because Hanna always does things that het her and her friends into troubles, such as stealing some Gucci's glasses from a store, her boyfriend's car and some important documents from the office of her psychologist. Spencer scolds her, telling her that she cannot keep acting like this because her behaviours harm the entire group.

> Aria: Ezra's… helping Jenna with this thing, and he keeps asking questions about her. "Was it really Toby's fault? Can you imagine how her life must be?". I mean… Oh, my God!
> Emily: So, what do you say?
> Aria: I lie. Over and over again.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 19, scene 550)

While, in episode 19, Aria and Emily are studying in Emily's bedroom. Ezra keeps calling Aria, but she is upset that Ezra and Jenna are spending a lot of time together because of a script written by Jenna. To know the blind girl better, Ezra asks Aria many questions about Jenna's life, forcing the girl to lie to him continuously.

Back and forth can be described as an idiomatic irreversible binomial meaning side to side, to and fro. It occurs in episode 14, scene 271. Here, Hanna wants to find a job in a dress shop. She is passionate about clothes and fashion and with this excuse she tries to convince the shop assistant to hire her by saying that she knows everything about that shop.

> Hanna: Susan, I know your inventory back and forth. If you could just give me one shot.
> Susan: Look, I think you're terrific Hanna. If it were to me, I'd love to hire you, but my boss would kill me.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 14, scene 271)

Another idiomatic irreversible binomial that can be found in episode 14, scene 437, is *supply and demand.* It gives the idea that the price of goods and services depends on how much of something is being sold and how many people want to buy it. Here Caleb and Hanna are talking about the fact that Caleb, a computer expert, made Emily pay him three

times the normal amount for helping her to call Maya. “Supply and demand” is the economic theory Caleb uses; if the demand for a service or good increases, the price of these will also increase.

> Hanna: Well, you should, considering you charged her three times the normal amount.
> […]
> Caleb: You have a problem? Call customer service.
> Hanna: You knew she was desperate, and you took advantage of her.
> Caleb: Ever heard about supply and demand?
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 14, scene 437)

Toss and turn is the last idiomatic irreversible binomial identified in first season of *Pretty Little Liars*. It can be found in episode 18, scene 750 and it means to move around restlessly while sleeping or trying to sleep. In this case, Hanna, Emily, Spencer and Aria are at school having a break. They are waiting for the results of the tests carried out on the trophy. A few days earlier a trophy with some blood had been found which appeared to have been the Alison’s murder weapon. The four girls are nervous and could not sleep the previous night.

> Hanna: Did you guys sleep at all?
> Emily: No. Just tossed and turned.
> Spencer: She tossed, I turned.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 18, scene 750)

Idiomatic irreversible binomials occur 7 times in the first season of Pretty Little Liars, one of which appears twice, i.e. *over and over again*. It can be seen that the episodes presenting the idiomatic irreversible binomials are mainly episode 2, *The Jenna Thing*, written by I. Marlene King, and episode 14, *Careful What You Wish 4*, written by Tamar Laddy. Episode 7, *The Homecoming Hangover*, which presents an irreversible binomial, was also written by Tamar Laddy and, similarly, episode 19, *A Person of Interest*, was cowritten by I. Marlene King. It is to say that screenwriters I. Marlene King and Tamar Laddy are the ones who mainly inserted idiomatic irreversible binomials in the script which was then played by the actors.

4.2.2.1.4 Proverbs

According to Makkai (1976) and McCarthy and O'Dell (2010: 26) idiomatic proverbs are well-recognised sentences whose meaning is not literal and refer to something that people have experience whose aim is to give advice or warning. In the first season of *Pretty Little Liars* five proverbs have been identified. Table 8 shows the four proverbs uttered in the first season of the TV series *Pretty Little Liars* and the episodes in which they can be found.

Table 8. Proverbs

EPISODE	PROVERBS
Episode 1: *Pilot*	*Hope breeds eternal misery*
Episode 4: *Can You Hear Me Now?*	*Out of sight, out of mind*
Episode 6: *There Is No Place Like Homecoming*	*If it looks like a duck, walk like a duck then it probably is a duck*
Episode 15: *If At First You Don't Succeed, Lie, Lie Again*	*Eyes are the window of the soul*
Episode 17: *The New Normal*	*You can't judge a book by its cover*

Hope breeds eternal misery may be defined as an idiomatic proverb used when you hope you can help someone change, but you end up hurting because you honestly tried and at the end it did not happen. It is used in episode 1, scene 368 when Wren, Melissa's fiancée, goes out of the barn and approaches girls. Melissa and Spencer are having an argument about who will get to live in the barn. Spencer received the permission from her parents to live there, but Melissa, having returned home after a long time, decides to settle there with her boyfriend Wren, sparking Spencer's anger.

> Wren: Is everything okay? I'm Wren
> Melissa: I was hoping you'd be happy for me.
> Spencer: Well, you know what they say about hope. Breeds eternal misery.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 1, scene 368)

Secondly, *out of sight, out of mind* is a popular idiomatic proverb that is used to express that if something or someone is not visible or present, it is easy to forget it. This proverb is uttered by Hanna in episode 4, scene 95. In this case, the four girls, Spencer, Aria, Emily and Hanna, are trying to block all the threatening messages they receive from A. After having succeeded, a satisfied Hanna believes that these messages will be just a distant memory.

> Spencer: All of those little messages zipping through the air all around us.
> Aria: None of them from "A"
> Emily: This feels like a good thing.
> Hanna: Of course, it's a good thing. Out of mind, out of sight.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 4, scene 95)

The next proverb identified is *if it looks like a duck, walk like a duck then it probably is a duck* which means that a subject can be identified by observing its habitual characteristics. It can be found in episode 6, scene 529. Here, the four friends are at their school's homecoming. They each chose a partner and Emily's is Toby who, at that time, was suspected of having killed Alison. This is the reason why Aria, Spencer and Hanna are stunned and mad at Emily who is trying to defend the boy. However, Hanna does not believe in Toby's goodness and, by using this proverb, claims that simply by observing the boy's behaviours and characteristics it is possible to identify him.

> Spencer: He has every reason to hate us.
> Emily: He doesn't.
> Hanna: Emily, if it looks like a duck, walk like a duck then it's a fricking duck.
> Emily: Wow, I thought at least you'd understand.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 6, scene 529)

Eyes are the window of the soul is a proverb whose origin is not completely clear; it has been attributed to William Shakespeare, Leonardo Da Vinci, the Bible, but whatever its origin it means that eyes may reflect the emotions, the fears and the thoughts of a person. This proverb is uttered by an old woman at the end of episode 15, scene 749. This lady is

the owner of an emporium in Rosewood, the emporium in which Alison bought the bracelets she gave to her four friends. In the scene, "A" visits the woman after purchasing a bracelet similar to that of the four girls with the aim of deceiving them. "A" usually wears a black hood and a mask leaving only his/her eyes uncovered; the old lady claims that "A"'s eyes reflect his/her wishes and emotions.

> Female voice: beading is hard on the eyes, you know? […] You have interesting eyes my dear. The eyes are the window to the soul. Not to worry dear. I did exactly what you told me to do.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 15, scene 749)

Finally, *you can't judge a book by its cover* is a proverb said to show that you cannot know what something or someone is like by looking only at that person or thing's appearance. This proverb can be found in episode 17, scene 572. Aria and her father, Byron Montgomery, are talking about Erza Fitz, Aria's English teacher. She has a secret relationship with him but her father believes that Ezra has embarked on a secret relationship with his wife as she was fascinated by his smile and his attitude. Aria is disappointed by her father's thoughts and thinks that a person should not be judged simply by his/her appearance.

> Byron Montgomery: He is a nice-looking guy, he's easy-going. He does that boyish smile thing a little too much, but I figure that must work for him.
> Aria: What's that thing about judging a book by its cover?
> Byron Montgomery: Well, sometimes you can get a pretty good idea what's inside based on the cover.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 17, scene 572)

Idiomatic proverbs in the first season of TV series *Pretty Little Liars* occur five times in five different episodes, i.e. episode 1, *Pilot*, episode 4, *Can You Hear Me Now?*, episode 6, *There Is No Place Like Homecoming*, episode 15, *If At First You Don't Succeed, Lie, Lie Again* and episode 17, *The New Normal*. Episode 4 and 17 are both written by screenwriter Joseph Dougherty, while episode 1 by I. Marlene King and both episode 6 and 15 by Maya Goldsmith.

4.2.2.1.5 Familiar quotations

Makkai (1976) describes familiar quotations as quotations from famous figures or sources. In the first season of the Tv series, three familiar quotations have been identified. The table below (Table 9) shows in which episodes of the first season of *Pretty Little Liars* the familiar quotations can be found.

Table 9. Familiar Quotations

EPISODE	FAMILIAR QUATATIONS
Episode 14: *Careful What U Wish 4*	*Friends don't let friends dial drunk*
Episode 19: *A Person Of Interest*	*The truth will set you free*
Episode 21: *Monsters In The End*	*The more you struggle, the faster you sink*

Friends don't let friends dial drunk can be defined as a familiar quotation which comes from Plain White T's song with the same title. It means that friends should help their friends in any moment even when drunk and not them make them do anything silly. The frontman of Plain White T's explained that there was a time where there were some girls who would call him and the day after they acted like they did not know what happened the night before. Therefore, the singer states that friends must help other friends when in difficulty especially when drunk and not aware of what they are doing. In the TV series it appears in episode 14, scene 747. Emily and Hanna are in Hanna's bedroom; Emily is worried about Maya's distance, gets drunk and wants to call her. Hanna prevents her calling Maya and uses a familiar quotation coming from Plain White T's song.

> Hanna: Who are you calling?
> Emily: Maya. Give it back.
> Hanna: Friends don't let friends dial drunk. You'll thank me tomorrow.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 14, scene 747)

The following familiar quotation comes from the Bible (John 8:32) and it is *the truth will set you free*. It refers to the spiritual freedom from the bondage of sin. It can be found in episode 19, scene 62 ant it is uttered by Aria when the four girls are at the police station of Rosewood. However, during the interrogation with the police, the girls are forced to

lie about some questions the police asked them: they do not have to tell the truth because they were threatened by "A" and therefore can never be free.

> Aria: Whoever said "the truth will set you free" never met "A".
> Emily: Jesus. It's from the Bible. Jesus said it.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 19, scene 62)

The last familiar quotation found in the first season is *the more you struggle, the faster you sink*. It is a quotation originally uttered by Japanese writer George Ohsawa that can be found in his book *Macrobiotic Guidebook for Living and Other Essays* published in 1947. The familiar quotation reported in *Pretty Little Liars* is part of a longer quote: "Life can be so easy. Refuse to let go and you are a person drowning; the more you struggle, the faster you sink." It refers to the fact that the more someone tries to succeed at something, the more this person will fail. This quote was later used by American writer Sam Keen whose interview was published in 1999 in *The Sun Magazine* under the title *On the Flying Trapeze: Sam Keen Ponders How to Be Free*. He used Ohsawa's quotation by saying that the more a person tries to get out of quicksand, the more he/she will fail. In the TV series, it is uttered by Ian in episode 21, scene 571. Spencer and Ian are at the city fair and are having an argument. Spencer and the other girls, after obtaining some evidence, believe that Ian killed their friend Alison and therefore they do everything they can to get him arrested by the police. However, Ian knows how to defend himself and states that the more they try to undermine him, the more they will fail.

> Spence: Get away from me.
> Ian: You know, every time you try to bring me down, you end up in trouble. And you know what they say about quicksand, Spence. The more you struggle, the faster you sink. And you're sinking fast.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 21, scene 571)

Familiar quotations occur three times in three different episodes. They are *friends don't let friends dial drunk, the truth will set you free* and *the more you struggle, the faster you sink* which can be found respectively in episode 14 written by Tamar Laddy, *Careful What U Wish 4*, episode 19 cowritten by I. Marlene King, *A Person of Interest* and episode 21 by Oliver Goldstick, *Monsters In The End*.

4.2.2.2 English idioms to greet, apologise and thank in the first season of TV series *Pretty Little Liars*

As discussed in chapter two, section 2.2.2.1.1, *Polite speech acts to thank, greet, apologize and make a request*, in spoken interaction, interlocutors usually have to be respectful towards other speakers and therefore, use polite speech acts when making requests, offers or apologies or when greeting and thanking (Biber et al., 2002). Here, the idiomatic expressions used by characters to greet, to apologise and to thank will be discussed. Table 10 presents the idiomatic greetings, apologies and thanks found in the first season of the TV series.

Table 10. English Idioms to greet, apologise and thank

POLITE ENGLISH IDIOMS: GREETINGS, APOLOGIES AND THANKS	FREQUENCY
Excuse me	19
What's up?	16
See you later	12
I owe you	11
Take care	3
Catch you later	1
How are things?	1
See you soon	1

For what concerns apologies, *excuse me* is the only idiomatic expression uttered in the first season occurring 19 times with the meaning of *I'm sorry*. It is used when someone is sorry to interrupt something. In the example below, from episode 9, scene 100, Spencer's mom, Veronica, interrupts the school administrator by saying *excuse me* because she wants to know whether the test is cancelled or not due to a terrible storm coming to Rosewood.

> Spencer: You don't have to come inside, mom. If it were cancelled, nobody would be here.
> Veronica Hastings: Oh, excuse me. Hi are they actually gonna give this test today?

School administrator: Decision hasn't been made yet.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 9, scene 100)

In addition, the expression *I owe you* is the only idiomatic sequence used in the first season to thank someone. It occurs eleven times and it is said to thank someone for helping others and as a way of saying that in the future something will be done for this person. An example can be found in episode 15, scene 142 when Spencer is giving Aria the tickets for the opening of an art museum in Philadelphia so that she will have a real first date with Ezra. Aria, to thank Spencer and to tell her she will do her a favour in the future, uses the idiomatic expression *I owe you*.

Spencer: Oh! Here. I forgot to give these to you last night.
Aria: Thank you. Oh, I owe you.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 15, scene 142)

From the analysis carried out, it could be possible to notice that the majority of idiomatic expressions that can be used in daily conversation are greetings such as *what's up*, *see you later*, *see you soon*, *catch you later*, *take care* and *how are things*.

What's up? is the idiomatic greeting whose frequency is the highest one occurring 16 times in the whole season. It is a friendly greeting used to ask someone how this person is or to ask what is happening. An example comes from episode 5, scene 675, when Ashley Marin, Hanna's mom, asks her if something bad between her and Sean, her current boyfriend, is happening.

Hanna: Mom, I don't know if I'm going to homecoming.
Ashley Marin: Of course you're going. If you're breathing, you're going. What's up? You still haven't heard from Sean?
Hanna: He said we'd talk, but it hasn't happened.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 5, scene 675)

While, in episode 18, scene 178, *what's up?* is used by Ezra as a way to ask Aria how she is when she arrives home.

Aria: Hey.

Ezra: What's up?

Aria: Mhh.

Ezra: What are you doing here?

Aria: Nothing. I just wanted to talk to you before school.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 18, scene 178)

Similar to *what's up*, *how are things* is another way to say hello and ask someone how he/she is. It is uttered by Ezra in episode 4, scene 374, when asks Aria how she is. Aria is going through a difficult time at home because, after an initial separation, her parents are dating again.

Ezra: How are things?

Aria: Fine. Um… My mom and dad are having a date night.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 4, scene 374)

Furthermore, idiomatic *see you later*, *catch you later* and *see you soon* are all used as a way to say goodbye to someone. While both *catch you later* and *see you soon* occur only once in the first season, *see you later* occurs 12 times. For example, *catch you later* occurs in episode 4, scene 113, when Maya gives Emily a red scarf as a present. Maya is late for school and for this reason greets Emily by saying *catch you later*.

Maya: I got something for you. I saw this and thought it was the greatest colour on the planet. I was right. It's spectacular.

Emily: It's—it's great. Thanks.

Maya: Catch you later.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 4, scene 113)

Finally, *take care* is used three times in season one as a way to say goodbye. For example, it is uttered by Ashley Marin in episode 10, scene 278. Hanna's mom is in her office with Mrs. Potter, a client of hers, who is leaving. She uses the idiomatic expression *take care* to greet her client.

Mrs. Potter: Have a nice day, then.

Ashley Marin: Take care.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 10, scene 278)

It can be said that *excuse me*, occurring 19 times, is the idiomatic expression mostly used to apologise, *what's up?*, occurring 16 times, is the one used the most to greet and *I owe you* is used 11 times to thank someone.

4.2.2.3 Impolite English idioms in first season of TV series *Pretty Little Liars*

Impoliteness is defined by Culpeper (2010: 3233) as the set of "negative attitudes towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts". Speakers to be rude or impolite with other interlocutors can even use some idiomatic expressions; some of which, listed in Table 11, occur in the first season of TV series *Pretty Little Liars*.

Table 11. Impolite English Idioms

IMPOLITE ENGLISH IDIOMS	FREQUENCY
Screw you	4
Go to hell	2
Mind your own business	1
Drop dead	1
Who cares	1

The idiomatic expression *screw you* is used when someone wants to express extreme anger toward the person he/she is talking to. In first season of *Pretty Little Liars,* it occurs four times and, an example comes from episode 7, scene 579. Here, Sean, Hanna's current boyfriend, has given Aria a bunch of flowers as a present, however, according to Aria this was a way to show anger towards Hanna.

> Aria: I'm one of Hanna's best friends, Sean… the person you should be sending flowers to.
> Sean: I was just saying thanks for—
> Aria: No, you were saying "screw you, Hanna".

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 7, scene 579)

Another idiomatic expression to express anger is *go to hell*. It is used to angrily tell someone to stop talking or to go away. It is used twice in the first season of the TV series

such as in episode 7, scene 596. Mike, Aria's brother, is having a fight with a classmate as a way to vent after his parent's separation; Sean and Aria are trying to stop him, but Mike is furious with them and, therefore orders his sister and friend to go away and leave him alone.

> Sean: Hey, what are you doing, man? That's your sister.
> Aria: Let him go, Sean. Mike?
> Mike: Just go to hell.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 7, scene 596)

Another rude idiomatic expression occurring in the first season is *mind of your own business* which is mainly used to tell someone in a rude way that you do not want this person to interfere with something private. It is uttered by Aria in episode 4, scene 409, when she is talking with Ezra about her parent's separation. Ezra suggests letting Aria's parents to deal with their problems on their own and that she should not meddle.

> Aria: Like I'm not mature enough to deal with this?
> Ezra: I – I didn't say that.
> Aria: Yeah, I think that's exactly what you said. You said "you are a child and you should mind your own business".

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 4, scene 409)

In episode 13, another idiomatic rude expression can be found. *Drop dead* is a rude way of telling someone that you are annoyed with him/her and want this person to go away or be quiet. In scene 313 of episode 13, Toby is walking on the street and a man tell him to go away. Toby has just been released on bail and is now under house arrest awaiting to be judge in a trial.

> Man on the street: Why don't you save us the cost of a trial and drop dead!

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 13, scene 313)

Finally, *who cares* is used for showing that the speaker is not interested in something or someone. It occurs once, in episode 15, in scene 299, when Spencer, Aria and Emily are having lunch at school. Hanna is not with them, for this reason, Spencer is wondering

where their friend is. Aria and Hanna had an argument a few hours earlier, so she does not care where she is at the moment.

Spencer: Where's Hanna?
Aria: Who cares.
Spencer: What?
Aria: I don't know.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 15, scene 299)

From the analysis carried out, it can be said that *screw you*, used when someone wants to express extreme anger toward the person, he/she is talking to, occurring 4 times and, *go to hell*, used to angrily tell someone to stop talking or to go away, occurring twice, are the most used impolite idiomatic expressions in the first season of the TV series *Pretty Little Liars.*

4.2.2.4 Idiomatic discourse markers *you know* and *I mean* in first season of TV series *Pretty Little Liars*

As discussed in chapter 2, *Formulaic language and idioms in spoken interaction*, discourse markers are useful expressions in daily spoken interaction since they signal relationships between discourse units.

You know and *I mean* are two highly formulaic discourse markers which are described as idiomatic expressions by the Cambridge Dictionary. Some scholars, such as Östman (1981), Shiffrin (1987), Fox Tree and Schrock (2002), to mention but a few, claim that *you know* and *I mean* perform five main functions such as the telling or commenting function, the turn-taking function, the clarifying function, the emphasizing function and the shared knowledge function. The table below shows the frequency of both, *you know* and *I mean*, found in the first season of TV series *Pretty Little Liars*.

Table 12. Idiomatic *you know* and *I mean*

IDIOMATIC DISCOURSE MARKERS	FREQUENCY
You know	106
I mean	105

It can be seen that they are both particularly frequent in the first season, *you know* occurs 106 times and, similarly, *I mean* 105 times (Table 12) and they appear in all episodes. As mentioned in chapter 2, section 2.3.2.1, *Idiomatic you know and I mean*, both discourse markers perform five functions: (1) telling and commenting function; (2) turn-taking function; (3) clarifying function; (4) emphasizing function and (5) shared knowledge function. In the first season of Pretty Little Liars all 106 *you know* and 105 *I mean* perform these five functions, however the most frequent function of *you know* is the commenting function and the most frequent of *I mean* is the clarifying function.

In episode 17, scene 128, *you know* has a commenting function since it is used to add more comments (Östman 1981: 16). Emily comments that Aria might be right about Toby, that he is a dangerous boy and all of them believe so, except Spencer who is starting to have feelings for him.

> Emily: You know, Aria might be right about this. Toby does have every reason to give us a hard time.
> Spencer: I suppose, but that's just not the feeling that I got from talking to him.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 17, scene 128)

While, in episode 22, scene 144, *you know* is used with a clarifying function (Shiffrin, 1987) since Spencer wants to complete the topic regarding the christening of Melissa and Ian's future son. Spencer is annoyed about the future birth of this baby and, according to her, jokingly, it is premature to organize the baptism of a child who may no be human.

> Spencer: Church?
> Melissa: We're planning the christening.
> Spencer: Isn't that a little premature, you know, it it's not born a human.
> Melissa: That's not funny.
>
> (*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 22, scene 144)

I mean appears 105 times in the firs season, for example, it can be found in episode 9, scene 317, when Noel asks Aria to go out. The discourse marker has here a clarifying function (Fox Tree and Schrock, 2002) since Noel wants to correct and make clear that this will not be a real date.

Aria: Noel, that's really sweet—

Noel: It's not a date. I mean, it's a date, but it's not a date-date.

Noel: I think I already have plans.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 9, scene 317)

In episode 16, scene 52, *I mean* is used with a shared knowledge function as a mitigator to make the speaker less committed (Fox Tree and Schrock, 2002). In this scene, Aria finds the ticket to the opening of an art museum in Philadelphia that A sent to Ella, Aria's mom. At this point, fearing that her secret relationship with Ezra is in danger, she asks her father where her mom was on Thursday night. Her father, Byron, to be less committed, uses the discourse marker *I mean*.

Aria: So, she was at the museum on Thursday night?

Byron Montgomery: Yeah. I—I mean, I—I think so.

(*Pretty Little Liars*, episode 16, scene 52)

In conclusion, from the analysis carried out, it was possible to note that phrasal verbs are the most frequent type of idioms found in the TV series *Pretty Little Liars,* of which nine occur ten or more than ten times including *come on* uttered 62 times. Idiomatic phrasal verbs related to human relationships and friendships are quite frequent, while those linked to crimes, lies and mysteries are a little less frequent. Furthermore, five types of institutionalised understatements have been identified. It was also possible to find six types of irreversible binomials, one of which, *over and over again*, occurs twice. However, there was not abundant use of proverbs and familiar quotations as they were uttered five and three times respectively. Other types of idiomatic expressions were used to greet, apologise and thank in polite ways, such as *excuse me* occurring 19 times, *what's up?* which is used 16 times or *I owe you* used 11 times to thank the other interlocutors. Finally, idiomatic discourse markers *you know* and *I mean* are the most frequent idiomatic expressions used in the first season of the TV series occurring 106 and 105 times respectively.

Conclusion

This study aims to examine the use of language in spoken English, specifically the frequency and role of idioms in daily interaction through the analysis of a TV series, i.e. *Pretty Little Liars*, which is assumed to reflect everyday interaction and dialogues.

The research I conducted may be defined as qualitative since it aims to describe the phenomenon of idioms in the first season of TV series *Pretty Little Liars* and quantitative because its goal was also to identify how many types of idioms there were in the TV series. Considering the quantitative method of analysis, the results of the research highlighted a high use of idioms in the fictional spoken English of the TV series.

Before proceeding with my analysis on idioms in the Tv series *Pretty Little Liars*, however, I wanted to compare some studies on idioms in films that had already been carried out and then discover whether my personal analysis gave a high frequency of idiomatic expressions like the analyses carried out by other scholars. What I noticed was the high presence of studies in this field, i.e. the analysis of idiomatic expressions in films. This pushed me even more to conduct a personal analysis with the aim of noticing whether the TV series *Pretty Little Liars* was rich in idioms like the films and the TV series analysed by other scholars.

With my study I wanted to understand with what frequency some idioms, i.e. idiomatic phrasal verbs, irreversible binomials, familiar quotations, proverbs and institutionalised understatements, were used and in which context, it is to say in a conversations between friends and/or relatives or in more formal contexts such as at school or at work? Furthermore, other goal of my research was to identify in which context and with which frequency certain idiomatic expressions were used, including when greeting, apologising and thanking. Finally, other linguistic elements that I wanted to analyse were the idiomatic discourse markers *you know* and *I mean* both mainly used to organise the discourse, commenting, clarifying, emphasizing some points in the discourse or highlight some shared knowledge. The aim was to understand how often speakers use these two discourse markers and with what function *you know* and *I mean* were used most.

From the analysis carried out, it was possible to note that phrasal verbs were the most frequent type of idioms used in the TV series *Pretty Little Liars*; other types of idiomatic expressions, i.e. institutionalised understatements, irreversible binomials, proverbs,

familiar quotations, did not appear very frequently with a range between three and six times. Even the idiomatic expressions used to greet, apologise and thank in polite ways, such as *what's up?*, *excuse me*, *I owe you* etc. had a high frequency but, particularly frequent were the discourse markers *you know* and *I mean*, occurring 106 and 105 times respectively. As for the context in which they are used, it can be noted that the most frequent phrasal verb, *come one*, may be used to encourage someone to do something in order to hurry or to tell someone that you do not believe them or that you disagree with them or to show that you are angry with them. Here, in the series TV it is used mainly to encourage someone to do something as shown in a few examples in chapter four. *Pretty Little Liars* is a mystery teen drama in which mysteries, lies, murders, disappearances are the main themes, in addition to human and sentimental relationships. For this reason, the most frequent phrasal verbs are related to these topics, to mention *find out* meaning to get information about something, *pick up*, in the series mainly used with the meaning of to start a new relationship again or to stop someone and take them to a police station in order to be arrested or questioned, *break up* used in the series to explain that a marriage or a relationship ended, *hang out* highly used in Pretty Little Liars with the meaning of to spend a lot of time with someone, *give up* mainly used here with the meaning to stop have a friendship with someone and many others. Other idiomatic expressions may also be connected to the main themes of the series, it is the case of the institutionalised understatement *dead man walking* (in the series adapted into *dead girls walking*) which describe the bad status of the protagonists, the irreversible binomial *kiss and tell* related to the secretness of a relationship and the familiar quotation *the truth will set you free* linked again with secrets. Finally, as for the English idioms to greet, apologise and thank, the impolite idioms and the idiomatic discourse markers you know and I mean, they are all used in an informal context appearing in the majority of the cases in conversations between friends.

The study and the results I obtained from the analysis appear to demonstrate that idioms are frequent in the spoken language of films and are mainly a feature of informal interaction. In the TV series *Pretty Little Liars*, they are used with a high frequency to cover the main topics of the series, i.e. mysteries, lies, murders and human relationships. The research confirmed that idioms are used very often in spoken English, in particular in informal contexts.

I hope this research may help English speakers who can enhance their communications skills since idioms are often used to convey nuanced meanings and emotions. Moreover, understanding the use of idioms contributes to contextually appropriate communication. The analysis may also help language learners to enhance their communication skills since idiomatic expressions are essential for everyday communication. They might also improve their ability to understand idioms through this research in order to become more proficient in using the language and sound more fluent. The research might help them better understand the films or the TV series they watch in English, especially when they encounter some idiomatic expressions. I hope my analysis will be helpful also for English teachers who may improve their teaching material or can use this study to create assessment tools for student's comprehension and use of idioms. Teachers might teach idioms in context providing examples of how idiomatic expressions are used in real-life situations and conversations and this may help learners grasp the meaning and usage more effectively. In my research, many examples of how idioms are used in conversations are provided. Moreover, sharing real-life examples of how these expressions are used in different context, including films and TV series, demonstrate the application of idioms. Students, if exposed to clips of films or TV series, will find it easier to learn new expressions or linguistic items and the learning process will be more enjoyable and memorable. For this reason, for each example provided in my analysis, I reported the number of the episode and the number of the scene in which the idiom is uttered so that it will be easy for teachers to show the clip to students and then discuss and analyse the context in which the idiom is pronounced.

In general, my wish is that all individuals may enhance their language proficiency and communication skills. However, further research on idioms in films or TV series is without doubt needed, especially it could be useful to analyse the idioms present in films published many decades ago to understand how the language has evolved over the years and how idiomatic expressions evolve over time, reflecting changes in the society and the culture. For this reason, in my opinion, further research is necessary to capture and document these changes.

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Riassunto

Il linguaggio è il mezzo attraverso il quale gli esseri umani possono comunicare gli uni con gli altri con lo scopo di intrattenersi, fornire informazioni, dare ordini ecc. Per fare ciò, gli oratori utilizzano espressioni prefabbricate che accelerano e facilitano la conversazione.

Queste espressioni prefabbricate vengono chiamate dai linguisti e dagli studiosi, tra i quali Pawley (2007), Tannen (1987), Wood (2002), Wray (2002), per citarne alcuni, *situational formulas* o *formulaic language*. Un numero considerevole di linguisti ha iniziato a prestare attenzione al linguaggio formulaico negli anni '70, e da questo momento, diversi studiosi di letteratura, antropologia sociale, neurologia ecc. hanno iniziato a condurre ricerche approfondite sui vari aspetti delle sequenze linguistiche. Per esempio, Pawley (2007) ha condotto numerose ricerche circa le espressioni formulaiche che lo hanno portato a distinguere otto tradizioni sviluppatesi tra il 1920 e il 1970 riguardanti il linguaggio formulaico. A partire dagli anni '20, alcuni studiosi hanno lavorato sulla poesia epica cantata, sui rituali e gli incantesimi sottolineando l'esistenza di espressioni fisse, prefabbricate. Più recentemente, anche alcuni filosofi, sociologi, neurologi e psicologi hanno approfondito il tema della *formulaic language* nella lingua parlata. Infine, negli anni '70, i dizionari e le grammatiche hanno avuto grande importanza nello studio della lingua formulaica.

Nella branca della linguistica, la lingua formulaica è stata definita da Wood (2002) un elemento fondamentale per la produzione di una conversazione fluente. Studiosi come Perkins e Wray (2000) la definiscono come un insieme di unità linguistiche composte da più parole che solitamente vengono conservate nella memoria a lungo termine come se fossero singole unità lessicali. La frequenza d'uso e la sua rapida elaborazione possono essere definite due caratteristiche della *formulaic language.*

Nattinger e DeCarrico (1992) hanno identificato alcune funzioni della lingua formulaica, tra le quali la capacità di mantenere la conversazione fluente, la possibilità di organizzare il discorso ed effettuare domande o fare commenti e Conklin e Schmitt (2004) hanno aggiunto che la *formulaic language* può essere utile per esprimere alcuni significati, idee o messaggi o per mostrare solidarietà nei confronti di altri oratori.

L'area del linguaggio formulaico in linguistica è stata esplorata solo negli ultimi decenni del ventesimo secolo; Perkins e Wray (2000) hanno identificato una quarantina di termini che si riferiscono alle sequenze formulaiche creando numerose categorie, tra le quali gli *idioms*, *lexical phrases*, *collocations*, *binomials*, *lexical bundles*, *phrasal verbs*, *proverbs* e altre ancora. Le espressioni idiomatiche sono l'oggetto dell'intera tesi e, per questo motivo, verrà fornita una spiegazione più ampia riguardo il modo in cui vengono prodotte, le loro caratteristiche, le loro funzioni e le tipologie.

Negli ultimi anni c'è stata una crescente attenzione e maggior studio circa gli *idioms*; vengono ricordati soprattutto gli studi di Cacciari and Corradini (2015), Cacciari and Tabossi (1988), Carrol and Conklin (2020), De Caro and Edith (2009), Fraser (1970), Kövecses (1996), Leah (2014), Makkai (1972), Newman (2017), Nunberg et al. (1994), Pawley (1983) e Wood (2002, 2019) che hanno collezionato alcune definizioni e espressioni con le quali descrivere gli idiomi, e.g. *idiomatic expressions*, *semi-trasparent expressions*, *opaque metaphorical expressions* ecc. Wood (2015) offre alcuni criteri per definire gli *idioms*, tra i quali il fatto che sono semanticamente opachi, nel senso che il significato delle espressioni idiomatiche è indipendente dal significato delle singole parole che le compongono; sono un gruppo di due o più parole che vengono elaborate e ricordate velocemente e il fatto che siano fissi, o semi-fissi.

Come già menzionato, gli *idioms* sono velocemente riconosciuti ed elaborati degli oratori, questo perché sono frasi ben note (Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2004, 2015). Gli studiosi hanno presentato diversi modelli di elaborazione idiomatica.

Il ruolo della *decomposability*, ossia quanto il significato figurativo degli idiomi può essere considerato maggiormente rispetto al significato letterale delle singole parole componenti, è un tema importante nello studio degli idiomi. Per questo motivo, Wood (1981) distingue tra *composable idioms* e *non-compositional idioms*; questi ultimi sono idiomi il cui significato non è la somma dei significati delle parole che li compongono. Tuttavia, le singole parole mantengono le loro proprietà e caratteristiche lessico-semantiche.

Per quanto riguarda l'elaborazione delle espressioni idiomatiche, Titone e Connine (1999) propongono ulteriori modelli tra i quali il *literal processing model*. Secondo loro, nella mente degli oratori è presente una sorta di lista di espressioni idiomatiche accessibili in

qualsiasi momento. In primo luogo, solitamente, l'oratore cerca di dare un'interpretazione letterale all'espressione che ha ricevuto, se questo processo fallisce, può attingere alla lista idiomatica che possiede. Titone e Connine (1999) aggiungono un ulteriore modello di elaborazione idiomatica: il *lexical representation model*. Attraverso questo modello è possibile affermare che gli idiomi vengono conservati nella mente degli oratori come se fossero lunghe parole e che il significato figurativo inizia subito dopo la presentazione della prima parole di tale espressione idiomatica. Ultimo modello di elaborazione è quello di Gibbs (1980), il *direct access model*. Secondo questo modello, il significato figurativo ha priorità sul significato letterale delle parole e dunque, il significato delle singole parole non viene combinato per creare il significato complessivo dell'espressione idiomatica.

Infine, Cacciari e Tabossi (1988) presentano invece la *Configuration Hypothesis*. Con questa ipotesi, è possibile affermare che la sequenza formulaica solitamente viene riconosciuta quando viene presentata la penultima parola.

Gli idioms sono quindi sequenze di più parole solitamente fisse, di fatto gli oratori, di solito, non possono cambiare o sostituire delle parole nell'espressione idiomatica altrimenti il significato di questa cambierebbe. Tuttavia, la loro fissità può essere determinata attraverso alcune operazioni descritte da Baker (1992 citato in Leah, 2014). Tra le quali l'aggiunta o l'eliminazione di alcune parole all'interno dell'espressione idiomatica, la sostituzione, la modificazione, la passivizzazione, l'aggiunta agli aggettivi di suffissi di comparazione e la trasposizione, ossia la nominalizzazione di alcuni elementi dell'idioma. Da ciò si può dedurre che gli idiomi possono subire alcune variazioni nonostante siano definiti espressioni fisse. Fraser (1970), per esempio, fornisce alcuni modi con i quali un'espressione idiomatica può essere resa più o meno fissa; l'aggiunta di parole, di costituenti, ad esempio un complemento oggetto, il cambio dell'ordine delle parole e il cambio della struttura dell'idioma. Negli anni seguenti, altri studiosi hanno espanso il modello di variazione degli idiomi di Fraser (1970), notando che gli idiomi possono subire anche una trasformazione sintattica e lessicale.

Nel corso dello studio sugli idiomi, lo studioso McCarthy (1998) ha elencato alcune proprietà che le espressioni idiomatiche possiedono. Queste hanno un alto grado di informalità e vengono di solito utilizzate in contesti colloquiali informali. Gli idiomi possono avere anche una funzione valutativa, solitamente vengono utilizzati quando ci si

riferisce a una terza persona e ad un oggetto non animato piuttosto che a sé stessi o alla persona con la quale si sta interloquendo. Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994: 492) aggiungono che le espressioni idiomatiche sono combinazioni di parole il cui significato non può essere predetto se si considerano i significati delle singole parole; sono espressioni fisse anche se Tannen (1987) e McCarthy (1992) affermano che hanno diversi gradi di fissità; sono espressioni che coinvolgono metafore, metonimia, iperboli e altre figure retoriche e hanno un certo grado di proverbialità.

Le espressioni idiomatiche possono essere classificate in diversi modi. Alcuni studiosi, tra i quali Makkai (1972), McCarthy and O'Dell (2002), Fernando (1996) e Kövecses (1996) hanno proposto una loro classificazione.

Makkai (1972) afferma che esistono due macro categorie di idiomi: *lexemic idioms* e *sememic idioms*. I *lexemic idioms* si basano sulla struttura lessematica degli idiomi; sono una sequenza di morfemi che includono più di una forma libera e vengono trattati come singole unità sintattiche. Invece i *sememic idioms* si basano sulla loro sememica e sono sequenze di unità sintattiche che si comportano come un'unica unità semantica. Questa distinzione viene fatta considerando lo strato della grammatica.

Secondo Makkai (1972) i lexemic idioms sono i più numerosi in quanto sono composti da verbi, nomi, aggettivi e preposizioni. Considera *lexemic idioms* i *phrasal verbs*, i *tournures*, gli *irreversible binomials*, i *phrasal compounds* e gli *pseudo idioms* Considerando la definizione di *lexemic idioms* di Makkai (1972) anche altri tipi di idiomi possono essere aggiunti, per esempio gli *euphemisms* e le *similes* (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2002), gli *idioms with it*, le *metaphors* (Kövecses, 1996), i *pure idioms*, *semi-idioms* e i *literal idioms* (Fernando, 1996, cited in Leah).

I *sememic idioms* invece possono essere i *proverbs*, le *familiar quotations*, le *institutionalized social attitudes*, le *hyperboles* (Makkai, 1972), i *cliches* e le *fixed statements* (McCarthy and O'Dell, 2002).

Come menzionato in precedenza, il linguaggio parlato tende ad essere informale e gli oratori sono altamente coinvolti e fluenti; questa fluenza nel parlato è resa possibile dall'uso delle espressioni formulaiche. *Formulaic language* è considerata essere una parte essenziale dell'interazione tra gli oratori, per questo motivo numerosi studi hanno cercato

di stimare la percentuale delle espressioni formulaiche nelle conversazioni. Vengono ricordati soprattutto gli studi di Vilkaitė-Lozdienė (2016), Wei and Li (2013, citato in Vilkaitė-Lozdienė, 2016), Erman e Warren (2000, citato in Vilkaitė-Lozdienė, 2016), (Conklin and Schmitt, 2012: 72), Biber et al. (2002) e Kecskes (2007) i quali hanno affermato che circa la metà delle conversazioni odierne è composta da espressioni formulaiche.

Alcuni studiosi hanno anche cercato di identificare la frequenza delle espressioni idiomatiche all'interno di una conversazione. Per fare ciò si sono serviti di alcuni corpus linguistici tra i quali l'Oxford Hector Pilot Corpus (OHPC), il Corpus of Spoken, Professional American English, il Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English e lo Spoken American English corpus. I risultati ottenuti hanno sottolineato l'alta presenza di idiomi nell'inglese parlato. Grazie allo studio di Ahmadi (2020) si è potuto notare che le espressioni idiomatiche più frequenti sono *every last*/*single*, *all of a sudden*, *be on/off the air* e *behind closed doors*.

Il linguaggio formulaico nel parlato viene utilizzato molto spesso per esprimere i sentimenti ed alcuni atteggiamenti con lo scopo di manipolare i punti di vista, i comportamenti degli altri o anche creare relazioni solide tra gli oratori. Per esempio le coppie utilizzano spesso espressioni come *you are my one and only* o *puppy love.* Per esprimere sentimenti negativi di tristezza, di felicità o rabbia, gli oratori utilizzano espressioni formulaiche quali *I feel a little sad*, *I am mad at him* o *I'm happy.* Inoltre, gli oratori con il fine di descrivere i propri atteggiamenti personali, giudizi e opinioni possono utilizzare degli indicatori chiamati *personal stance markers* che sono espressioni fisse come *in my opinion*, *I think that*, *my impression is that* o *from my point of view* ecc.

Le espressioni formulaiche sono legate ai contesti sociali e linguistici, per questo motivo dovrebbero essere appropriate ai contesti sociali. Gli oratori dunque devono capire in quale contesto può essere pronunciata una specifica sequenza formulaica. Diversi studi si sono concentrati su sequenze usate per essere educati e altre in cui si risulta essere scortesi (Abbas, 2021; Bardovi-Harling, 2012; Biber, 2002; Culpeper, 2003; Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2021). Tali studi sottolineano che queste espressioni fisse sono principalmente collegate a diversi atti linguistici, chiamati da Searle (1969) e Austin (1962) *speech acts*, come le lamentele, le richieste, i ringraziamenti, i complimenti, le scuse ecc.

Espressioni formulaiche di cortesia possono essere collegate con i ringraziamenti (e.g. *thank you* o *thank you for your help, I appreciate it*, *I can't thank you enough* ecc.; con i saluti *good afternoon*, *hi guys*, *hey man*, *hi there* e *how are you doing*; con le scuse, ad esempio, *I'm so sorry about that*, *I feel terrible*, *that was my fault*, *I wanted to say sorry* e richieste o offerte tra cui *would you like*, *would you mind* o *could you please*.

D'altra parte, Culpeper (2010) discute l'uso del linguaggio formulaico in relazione all'essere scortesi. Grazie allo studio che ha condotto, Culpeper (2010) ha identificato espressioni come *shut up, you rotten loser*, *you such a hypocrite, this is total crap, go screw yourself* come le espressioni rudi e scortesi più frequenti nel parlato.

Gestire una conversazione nella vita reale a volte presenta alcune sfide inaspettate come trovare un argomento e iniziare o concludere una conversazione (Kim, 2007). Per questa ragione, gli oratori utilizzano alcune espressioni, chiamate da Alexander (1978, citato in Van-Lancker Sidtis and Rallon, 2004; Van-Lancker Sidtis, 2015) *discourse structuring devices*.

Iniziare una conversazione, secondo Kim (2017: 74), è strettamente collegato ad una conoscenza condivisa tra i partecipanti che utilizzano delle espressioni chiamate *topic initial elicitor sequences* ad esempio *my name is*, *I'm from*, *I'm X years old*. Invece, per mantenere viva una conversazione, gli oratori spesso ricorrono ad espressioni definite *social interaction markers* da Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992, cited in Wood, 2002). Queste possono essere *as a result of, after all, for example, in other words, that is, in contrast, to the contrary*. Quando invece i partecipanti hanno il desiderio di cambiare argomento, introducendone uno nuovo, possono utilizzare espressioni chiamate da Van-Lancker Sidtis (2015) *topic shifting devices*, come *that reminds me of*, *to get back to what I was saying* ecc. Infine, esistono anche alcune espressioni formulaiche utili per concludere una conversazione, è il caso di espressioni come *it was nice talking to you*, *I gotta go*, *I have to leave* e molte altre.

Anche gli idiomi sono espressioni formulaiche utilizzate spesso nell' inglese parlato quotidianamente. Nel loro libro, *English Idioms in Use,* McCarthy e O'Dell (2010) hanno racchiuso più di mille *idioms* che vengono usati frequentemente nella conversazione. Vengono utilizzati con lo scopo di mitigare l'interazione ed essere meno diretti con gli altri interlocutori. Per esempio, quando si chiede a qualcuno come sta, la risposta potrebbe

essere *I'm feeling under the weather* o *I'm feeling off-colour*. Gli idiomi possono essere utilizzati anche quando si accoglie un ospite o si saluta qualcuno, per ringraziare, per esprimere sorpresa, indifferenza, dubbio oppure accordo e disaccordo; vengono dunque usate espressioni come *long time no see* o *what's up, thanks a million* o *it's a small world* ecc. Anche descrivere i sentimenti alcune volte può essere complesso, per questo motivo gli interlocutori ricorrono ad idiomi. Ad esempio, per esprimere gioia possono usare le espressioni *I'm on cloud nine*, *I'm over the moon* o *I'm in seventh heaven*; per descrivere la tristezza *out of sorts*, *down in the dumps*, *misery guts* or *sour grapes* oppure rabbia, *fed up to the back teeth* o *at your wits' end*. Molto spesso gli oratori, per evitare di essere troppo rudi nel criticare qualcuno o qualcosa, utilizzano idiomi come *get on someone's nerves* o *to be all sweetness and light*. Anche per alleggerire argomenti sensibili come la morte o la povertà, gli interlocutori preferiscono utilizzare espressioni idiomatiche, ad esempio, *he's given up the ghost*, *he's kicked the bucked*, *be on the breadline* ecc.

Come menzionato precedentemente, i ringraziamenti e le scuse sono espressioni fortemente formulaiche e gli oratori possono anche utilizzare degli idiomi per ringraziare e scusarsi. Ad esempio, attraverso espressioni idiomatiche come *thankful for small mercies, I owe you, pardon*, *I beg your pardon* o *crawl back.*

I *discourse markers* sono espressioni come *and*, *so*, *but*, *oh*, *well*, *because*, *you know* e *I mean* che vengono usati per connettere e relazionare le varie unità del discorso e per organizzare il discorso (Schourup, 1999: 230). *You know* e *I mean* vengono definiti dal Cambridge Dictionary delle espressioni idiomatiche con lo scopo di cambiare l'argomento e aggiungere ulteriori informazioni o commenti (Shiffrin, 1987); informare o valutare qualcosa o qualcuno (Fox Tree and Schrock, 2002); segnalare la fine di un'unità sintattica (Östman, 1981); introdurre chiarimenti, completare un argomento o aggiustare l'enunciato precedente (Shiffrin, 1987) ecc.

Per gestire una conversazione, dunque iniziarla, concluderla o cambiare argomento, oltre alle classiche espressioni formulaiche menzionate in precedenza, gli interlocutori possono utilizzare anche espressioni idiomatiche. Per esempio, per iniziare una conversazione si possono usare *how's life, how are you keeping* oppure connettori come *to begin with* o *first of all*; per cambiare argomento possono essere utili idiomi come *by the way*, *in all*

seriousness, *go off on a tangent* cc. Invece per terminare un discorso si possono utilizzare gli idiomi *cut someone short, head out* o *in short*.

I film rappresentano al meglio la lingua parlata e, nonostante esista un copione, si sostiene che i dialoghi dei film riflettano il vero linguaggio parlato. Il linguaggio cinematografico aderisce a elementi specifiche e mira a soddisfare il pubblico che si aspetta principalmente di essere in contatto con dialoghi tra personaggi che riflettono la vita di tutti i giorni. Solo negli ultimi decenni, i dialoghi parlati nei film sono oggetto di ricerche linguistiche. Questi studi si concentrano sull'individuare quanto realistici siano i discorsi cinematografici e, così facendo, esplorano anche le caratteristiche linguistiche di tali dialoghi (Bednarek, 2018). Il linguaggio cinematografico rispecchia il linguaggio naturale e di conseguenza è probabile che alcune delle "anomalie" del linguaggio parlato si trovino nei film, ad esempio, doppie negazioni, ripetizioni, correzioni, interruzioni, l'uso di *disocurse markers*, *backchannels* ed espressioni formulaiche.

Tra le espressioni formulaiche vanno ricordati sicuramente i saluti, i ringraziamenti e le scuse la cui frequenza nei film è particolarmente alta. Per provare la loro alta frequenza, sono stati infatti presi in considerazione alcuni studi che hanno analizzato l'uso delle espressioni formulaiche in film e serie TV come *Ally McBeal, Love Actually* e *Luca*. Grazie ai rispettivi studi di Widyawati Triasningrum (2021), Xu (2022) e Koesoemo (2023) è stato possibile notare che le sequenze più usate per salutare, ringraziare e scusarsi sono *how are you feeling, good morning, thank you, thanks guys*, *no worries* ecc.

Anche gli idiomi sono particolarmente frequenti nei film e nelle serie TV. Per affermare ciò sono stati presi in considerazione alcuni film, *Guardian of the Galaxy Vol. 2* (2017)*, The Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials* (2015), *Frozen* (2013), *Encanto* (2021), *Suicide Squad* (2016) e *Toy Story 3* (2010) in cui sono stati analizzati i *phrasal verbs* idiomatici, i *tournures*, *irreversible binomials*, *phrasal compounds*, *similes*, *fixed statements*, *proverbs*, *euphemisms* e *clichés*. Confrontando questi sei studi è stato possibile notare che i *phrasal verbs* idiomatici sono il tipo di espressioni idiomatiche più frequenti nei film seguiti dai *chlicés*.

Un'analisi degli idiomi nei film è stata realizzata analizzando il film *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) e *Shallow Hal* (2001). In questi studi gli studiosi si sono focalizzati sulla frequenza dei *discourse markers you know* e *I mean* con funzione idiomatica. In *Avengers:*

Endgame, you know appare 39 volte, mente *I mean* solamente 8 volte, mentre in *Shallow Hal you know* appare 89 volte, mente *I mean* 37 volte. Si può notare che i due idiomi sono particolarmente frequenti in entrambi i film.

Le espressioni idiomatiche nei film svolgono anche delle funzioni, tra le quali suscitare umorismo, mostrare entusiasmo e gentilezza e far suscitare antipatia al pubblico nei confronti di alcuni personaggi. Per collezionare alcune funzioni degli idiomi sono stati considerati due studi. Uno studio si è occupato di analizzare gli idiomi nei film Disney *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *101 Dalmatians* (1961), *Robin Hood* (1973), *Aladdin* (1992) e *Hercules* (1997); il secondo studio si è basato sull'analisi del film *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* (2019). Espressioni usate per far ridere possono essere cat got your tongue, use your head, *birdbrain*; per mostrare eccitazione sono state usate espressioni idiomatiche come *big day*; per dimostrare gentilezza e cordialità nei confronti degli ospiti vengono usate le sequenze *make yourself at home* e *with open arm* infine, alcune minacce far suscitare antipatia al pubblico nei confronti di alcuni personaggi possono essere *save your skin* e *your time is up*.

Per dimostrare l'alta frequenza di espressioni idiomatiche nei film e nelle serie TV, è stato condotta personalmente un'analisi sulla serie TV *Pretty Little Liars*. Sono state prese in considerazione espressioni idiomatiche come gli *idiomatic phrasal verbs*, le *institutionalised social attitudes*, gli *irreversible bino*mials, i *proverbs*, le *familiar quotations*, gli *idiomatic greetings* and *apologies* e gli *idiomatic discourse markers you know* and *I mean*.

Pretty Little Liars è una serie TV americana basata sull'omonima serie di romanzi di Sara Shepard. È un dramma e thriller adolescenziale sviluppato da Marlene Ling la cui storia racconta di un gruppo di cinque ragazze Aria Montgomery, Emily Fields, Hanna Marin, Spencer Hastings e Alison DeLaurentis. Dopo la scomparsa di Alison, le altre quattro amiche iniziano a ricevere messaggi minacciosi da un misterioso mittente "A". il loro scopo è quello di scoprire chi si cela dietro questo misterioso personaggio e ritrovare la loro amica.

Per analizzare gli idiomi presenti nella serie TV, è stata effettuata una lettura dettagliata di tutte le ventidue trascrizioni degli episodi della prima stagione, trovate nel sito *8FLiX, Film & Television Scripts Database*, sottolineando tutte le tipologie di idiomi elencate da

Makkai (1972) e McCarthy e O'dell (2002). Inoltre, c'è stato un focus sulle espressioni idiomatiche di cortesia e scortesia e sui *discourse markers you know* e *I mean*. Solo dopo aver contato manualmente tutte le espressioni idiomatiche, sono stati selezionati solo alcuni tipi di idiomi tra cui *phrasal verbs*, *institutionalised understatements*, *irreversible binomials*, *proverbs* e *familiar quotations* ed espressioni idiomatiche per salutare, scusarsi, ringraziare, essere scortesi e *discourse markers you know* e *I mean*. È stata effettuata un'ulteriore selezione sui *phrasal verbs* e sono stati analizzati solo i *phrasal verbs* idiomatici più frequenti e i *phrasal verbs* legati alle relazioni umane, alle bugie e ai crimini. Tutti gli idiomi presi in considerazione per l'analisi sono stati raccolti in delle tabelle distinte in base alla tipologia di espressione idiomatica. È stato poi spiegato il loro significato accompagnato da esempi provenienti dalla serie TV.

L'analisi effettuata in questa tesi può essere definita qualitativa poiché mira a descrivere il fenomeno degli idiomi nella prima stagione della serie TV *Pretty Little Liars* e quantitativa perché il suo obiettivo è anche quello di identificare quanti tipi di idiomi si trovano nella prima stagioni.

Grazie all'analisi effettuata è stato possibile notare che i *phrasal verbs* sono il tipo di *idioms* più frequenti nella serie TV *Pretty Little Liars*, di cui nove ricorrono dieci o più di dieci volte compreso *come on* che appare 62 volte. I *phrasal verbs* collegati alle relazioni umane e alle amicizie sono abbastanza frequenti, mentre quelli legati a crimini, bugie e misteri sono un po' meno frequenti. Inoltre, sono stati identificati cinque tipi di *institutionalised understatements*. È stato anche possibile trovare sei tipi di *irreversible binomials*, uno dei quali, *over and over again*, appare due volte. Tuttavia, non c'è stato un uso abbondante di *proverbs* e *familiar quotations* che appaiono rispettivamente cinque e tre volte. Altri tipi di espressioni idiomatiche vengono usate per salutare, scusarsi e ringraziare in modo educato, come *excuse me* presente 19 volte, *what's up?* che viene utilizzato 16 volte oppure *I owe you* utilizzato 11 volte per ringraziare gli altri interlocutori. Infine, gli *idiomatic discourse markers you know* e *I mean* sono le espressioni idiomatiche più frequenti utilizzate nella prima stagione della serie TV che si verificano rispettivamente 106 e 105 volte.

Concludendo, si è potuto notare attraverso lo studio effettuato che le espressioni idiomatiche sono utilizzate principalmente in contesti informali, tra giovani amici e

familiari e che molti idiomi sono legati alle tematiche principali della serie TV cioè le relazioni umane, i misteri, le bugie, le scomparte e gli omicidi di personaggi primari e secondari.