

Newly Established Idioms through the Blending of Semantically Similar Idioms — *take care for*, *take care about* and *care of*

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1. Introduction

The information age has generated new words and new phraseological units (defined as repeatedly-used phrases consisting of at least two words, hence PUs) being developed through from a combination of existing words, making it easy to understand the meanings and the features. However, as many PUs behave uniquely in certain contexts in ways that are often beyond common grammatical rules or linguistic theories, it is often difficult to understand their actual behaviour. While dictionaries have attempted to describe the contextual usages for PUs, quantitative and qualitative research has proven insufficient in identifying the actual behaviour of the PUs. Previous research has attempted to deal with newly-observed PUs, but has tended to be restricted by rudimentary theoretical phraseology as to the types of processes involved in how word-combinations become unique PUs. To overcome previous rudimentary analyses, Inoue (2016) examines the inner features of PUs in terms of types, processes and criteria for word-combinations.

The focal point of this study is idioms, which have been classified as a PU subcategory (Please see Inoue (2007) on the PU subcategories and associated explanations)¹⁾ and have generally been defined as fixed, semantic, non-transparent word-combinations; however, newly-formed idioms have not yet been fully examined because of the traditional notion that idioms cannot change semantically or syntactically.

For example, *take care for*, *take care about* and *care of*, all of which

are thought to be the variants of the idiom *take care of*, have been observed in present-day English, as exemplified in (1) (italicised by the author as in the following.).

- (1) a. “You’re supposed to select someone who will be good for the baby,” Amy said. “Someone to look out for and *take care for* the baby. Not the other way around.” (COCA, 2014, Fiction)
- b. During instruction, such values and related attitudes can be obtained if several conditions are established: building a community with members who *take care about* each other, using democratic rules when decisions have to be made,
(COCA, 2005, ACAD)
- c. Tebow said. “And it would just be me and my mom at the house. So it was my responsibility until I was old enough to go (at age 15) to *care of* the cows, take care of the horses, take care of the chickens, take care of our garden, cut the grass.”
(COCA, 2012, News)

It has been widely acknowledged in previous research that idioms such as *take care of* have high idiomaticity (explained in detail in Section 4.2) and do not have variants. However, as example (1) shows, variants of *take care of* have been observed in both spoken and written English.

This study introduces variants for *take care of* from data obtained from corpora, and attempts to reveal the synchronic and diachronic elements. It was found that idioms can change, and that further research was necessary to precisely understand the current changes in idioms (PUs) and their uses in contemporary English.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. The first section gives a brief overview of the study, the second section deals with current problems in phraseology, and the third section summarises the explanations for *take care of*, *look after* and *care for*. The methodology adopted in this study is described in the fourth section, and in the fifth section, the corpora used in the study are introduced. The sixth section gives the quantitative results for the *take care of* variants, a

qualitative investigation of the *take care of* variants is given in the seventh section, and the eighth section discusses the *take care of* variants based on the results from the sixth and seventh sections. Study implications are given in the ninth section, and concluding remarks are given in the tenth section.

2. Phraseology – terms and subcategories

This section gives the definition for and the subcategories for phraseology in reference to previous research (Cowie 1998, 1999, Inoue 2007.).

Phraseology refers to the study of phrases, which are generally defined as repeatedly used word-combinations consisting of at least two words. The phrase category includes idioms, collocations, phrasal verbs, lexical bundles (=formulae), sayings/proverbs, and fixed phrases, each of which are described in the following, based on fluency, semantic associations, polysemy and semantic transparency.

Idioms are general considered to have a fixed used; that is, there is a strong semantic association between the components; from which the meaning cannot be easily predicted from the separate meanings of each component. It has been observed that collocations have strong semantic associations between the components, with some being more frequently used than others. Generally, the meanings of the collocations can be determined from the components and there is no polysemy. Phrasal verbs are high frequency word-combinations made up of a verb and an adverb on one hand or a verb, (an adverb), and a preposition on the other hand, and have semantic transparency, with some phrasal verbs being the sum of each component, and other not. Generally, phrasal verbs have strong semantic associations, but are not polysemous. Lexical bundles (also referred to as formulae) have strong semantic associations and are frequently used in a fixed way in daily conversations and are not polysemous; however, it is often difficult to predict the meanings of lexical bundles as they are semantically unique. Similar with idioms, sayings/ proverbs have a monosemous fixed use with their low frequencies. Unlike idioms, sayings/ proverbs

have sentence length. In contrast with the phrases explained so far, fixed phrases can be polysemous, are frequently used, and have strong semantic associations; therefore, it is difficult to determine the various meanings.

Table 1 summarises the properties of each PU from the four standards, with the ‘+’, ‘-’, ‘±’ indicating the properties of each.

Table 1 Properties of each PU

	frequency	semantic association	polysemy	semantic transparent
idioms	-	+	-	-
collocations	±	+	-	+
phrasal verbs	+	+	-	±
lexical bundles	±	+	-	+
sayings/proverbs	-	+	-	-
fixed phrases	+	+	+	±

I have investigated the actual manners of fixed phrases so far, not only because their uses are often beyond English grammatical rules and theoretical explanations, but also because these have often been regarded as irregularities and disregarded. In particular, this paper focuses on idioms because it is widely believed that idioms do not change; therefore, while there has been extensive research on idioms, the associated dictionary descriptions have been relatively stable. While dictionary descriptions of English language PUs have been updated through trial and error, with many PU meanings beside idioms having changed over time, most idiom definitions in dictionaries have not. Similar to other PUs, idioms have been changing because of the variants that have appeared in both speech and writing. Consequently, this study investigates the changes that have occurred in idioms, how new variants are being used and seeks to make clear how these idiom variants are becoming established as PUs using the criteria for the formation of PUs in Inoue (2016)

3. Previous research on *take care of*, *care for* and *look after*

The section summarises previous research on *take care of*, *care for*

and *look after*. It has been generally believed that *take care of*, *care for* and *look after* are synonymously and fixedly used. Therefore, in previous idiom research, there has been no focus on the idiomatic variants; *take care for*, *take care about* and *care of*.

3.1 Dictionaries

(2), (3), and (4) give a description of *take care of*, *care for* and *look after* as given in dictionaries (*LDCE*⁶, *MED*², *OALD*⁹). (2) was quoted from *LDCE*⁶, (3) was from *MED*² and (4) was from *OALD*⁹. (A) in each quotation gives specific ones regarding *take care of*, (b) *care for* and (c) *look after*.

- (2) a. **take care of sb/sth a)** to look after someone or something: *Who's taking care of the dog while you're away?* | **take care of yourself** *The children are old enough to take care of themselves.* **b)** to deal with all the necessary work, arrangements etc: *Her secretary always took care of the details.* | *Don't worry about your accommodations – it's all taken care of.* **c)** to pay for something – used when you want to avoid saying this directly: *We'll take care of the fees.*
- b. **care for sb/sth phr v 1** to look after someone who is not able to look after themselves SYN **take care of:** *He thanked the nurses who had cared for him.* | *The children are well cared for.* **2** to do things that keep something in good condition: *Instructions on caring for your new sofa are included.* **3 would you care for sth?** *spoken formal* used to ask someone politely if they would like something: *Would you care for another drink?* **4 not care for sb/sth formal** to not like someone or something: *I don't much care for his parents.*
- c. **look after sb/ sth phr v especially BrE 1** to take care of someone by helping them, giving them what they need, or keeping them safe SYN **take care of:** *Don't worry, I'll look after the kids tomorrow.* | *Susan looked after us very well. She's an excellent cook.* | *You could tell that the horse had been well*

looked after. 2 to be responsible for dealing with something
 [SYN] **take care of:** *I'm leaving you here to look after the business until I get back.* 3 **look after yourself** especially BrE spoken used when you are saying goodbye to someone in a friendly way 4 **can look after yourself** to not need anyone else to take care of you: *Don't worry about Maisie – she can look after herself.* (LDCE⁶)

- (3) a. **take care of 1** to do the necessary things for someone who needs help or protection: *Who will take care of the children?* 2 to treat something carefully so that it stays in good condition: *All the neighbours take very good care of their gardens.* 3 to do what is necessary to deal with a person or situation: *I'll leave you to take care of the refreshments.* ♦ *Can you take care of this customer, please?* 4 *informal* to pay for something: used especially when you are offering to pay for someone else: *She picked up the bill, saying, 'Let me take care of that.'*
- b. **PHRASAL VERB** |care for [T] 1 [**care for sb**] to love someone, especially in a way that is based on friendship rather than sex: *He really cared for her.* ♦ *She made him feel special and cared for.* 2 [**care for sb**] to do the necessary things for someone who needs help or protection = LOOK AFTER: *The inspectors make sure that the elderly residents are well cared for.* ♦ *Teach your children how to care for their pets.* 3 [**care for sth**] to treat something carefully so that it stays in good condition = LOOK AFTER: *Your clothes won't last if you don't care for them properly.*
- c. **PHRASAL VERB** |look |after [T] 1 [**look after sb/sth**] to take care of someone or something and make certain that they have everything they need = TAKE CARE OF: *It's hard work looking after three children all day.* ♦ **be well looked after** *You could tell that the car had been well looked after.* 1a. **be able to look after yourself** to not need anyone else to take care of you 2 [**look after sth**] to be responsible for something: *an organization that looks after the interests of art-*

- ists ◆ *Who's looking after the department while you're away?* **3** [**look after sth (for sb)**] to take care of something that belongs to someone else and make certain it is not damaged or stolen **4** **look after yourself** *British spoken* used for saying goodbye to someone you know well = TAKE CARE (*MED*²)
- (4) a. **take care of sb/ sth/ yourself 1** to care for sb/ sth/ yourself; to be careful about sth: *Who's taking care of the children while you're away?* ◆ *She takes great care of her clothes.* ◆ *He's old enough to take care of himself.* **2** to be responsible for or to deal with a situation or task: *Don't worry about the travel arrangements. They're all being taken care of.* ◆ *Celia takes care of the marketing side of things.*
- b. **[PHR V] ¹care for sb 1** to look after sb who is sick, very old, very young, etc. **[SYN] take care of** *She moved back home to care for her elderly parents.* **2** to love or like sb very much: *He cared for her more than she realized.* → SYNONYMS AT LOVE **not care for sb/ sth** (formal) to not like sb/sth: *He didn't much care for her friends.*
- c. **[PHR V] ¹look ¹after yourself/ sb/ sth** (*especially BrE*) **1** to be responsible for or to take care of sb/sth: *Who's going to look after the children while you're away?* ◆ *I'm looking after his affairs while he's in hospital.* ◆ *Don't worry about me – I can look after myself* (= I don't need any help). **2** to make sure that things happen to sb's advantage: *He's good at looking after his own interests.*
- d. **WHICH WORD? take care of/ look after/ care for**
- ◆ You can **take care of** or, especially in BrE, **look after** someone who is very young, very old, or sick, or something that needs keeping in good condition: *We've asked my mother to take care of/ look after the kids while we're away.* ◆ *You can borrow my camera if you promise to take care of/ look after it.*
- ◆ In more formal language you can also **care for** someone: *She does some voluntary work, caring for the elderly,* but

care for is more commonly used to mean 'like': *I don't really care for spicy food.* (OALD⁹)

It is clear from (2) to (4) that *take care of*, *care for* and *look after* have been recognised as synonyms and that *care for* and *look after* have been often dealt with as phrasal verbs. In addition, the syntactic patterns [take care of + sb/ sth], [care for + sth], and [look after + sth] are often used with the meaning 'take care of'. The syntactic pattern [take care of/ care for/ look after + sth] is used when expressing 'take responsibility for' or 'deal with'. The elements that co-occur in each idiom change depending on the meaning of the syntactic patterns.

(5) is a more archaic description of *take care for* as quoted in OED², which was used with the meaning *take care of*, as in the following example.

- (5) e.I.1.e fig. Rubbish, trash. (But cf. 1 Cor. ix. 9.)
 1643 Milton Divorce iv. (1851) 28 Certainly not the meere motion of carnall lust, not the meer goad of a sensitive desire; God does not principally *take care for* such cattell. (OED²)

3.2 Grammar texts

Grammar texts explain *take care of*, *care about/for* and *look after* as exemplified in (6) and (7).

- (6) a. take care of
Take care of normally means 'look after' or 'take responsibility for'.
*Nurses **take care of** sick people.*
*It's not good giving Daniel a rabbit: he's too young to **take care of** it.*
*Ms Savage **takes care of** marketing, and I'm responsible for production.*
Take care (without a preposition) means 'be careful'. Some people use it as a formula when saying goodbye.

Take care when you're crossing the road, children.

'Bye, Ruth.' 'Bye, Mike. **Take care.**'

b. care (about)

Care (about) is used to say whether you feel something is important to you.

This is very common in negative sentences. *About* is used before an object, but is usually left out before a conjunction.

*Most people **care about** other people's opinions.*

(NOT . . . ~~*take care of/ care for other people's opinions*~~)

*I don't **care whether** it rains – I'm happy.*

'I'll never speak to you again.' 'I **don't care.**'

'Your mother's upset with you.' 'I **couldn't care less.**' (= *I don't care at all.*)

c. care for

Care for can be used to mean 'look after'.

*He spent years **caring for** his sick mother.*

Another meaning is 'like' or 'be fond of', but this is not very common in modern English.

*I don't much **care for** strawberries.* (Swan 2016)

- (7) *I managed to **look after** everybody for a day and a half.* (look after = take care of) (Carter and McCarthy 2006: 435)

Grammar texts other than (6) and (7) and previous research have generally regarded *take care of*, *care about/for* and *look after* as being the same, but have paid no attention to *take care for*, *take care about* and *care of*, which are discussed later in this study. Similar to the explanations in the dictionaries, the syntactic pattern [take care of/ care for/ look after + sth] is used to mean 'take care of' and the syntactic pattern [take care of/ care for/ look after + sth] is used to indicate to 'take responsibility for' or 'deal with'.

4. Research methods

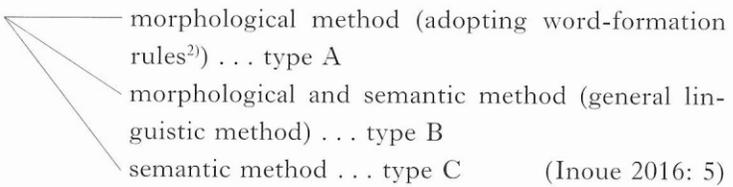
This section explains the methods employed in the study to examine (i) the inner features of how a word-combination becomes a PU and (ii)

idiomaticity, to investigate whether *take care for*, *take care about* and *care of* can be established as newly-observed idioms.

4.1 Inner features of how word combinations become PUs

Inoue (2016) examines how PUs are formed, what processes word-combinations have to undergo to become an established PU, what conditions are necessary to become a PU, and what stress pattern rules PUs have based on the PUs that I have investigated so far.

The methods for forming PUs are shown in (8).

- (8) PUs  morphological method (adopting word-formation rules²) . . . type A
 morphological and semantic method (general linguistic method) . . . type B
 semantic method . . . type C (Inoue 2016: 5)

At this point, care must be taken as type B is an intermediary for type A and type C.

(9) summarises the word-combination process for the development of a PU.

- (9) (i) two existing words are put together by adopting either (i) a morphological method, (ii) a morphological and semantic method, or (iii) a semantic method, which then become a repeatedly used unit
 ↓
 (ii) a PU has its own meaning and function through repeated use
 ↓ ← with the assistance of the lexicalization of phrases
 (iii) the PU is established as an independent lexical item
 (Inoue 2016: 6)

As described in (9), the PUs are first formed from a combination of two existing words, as in the Kenning used in Old English (OE), and then shaped using a specific method. The PUs then develop individual

features from frequent use, and, with the assistance of phrasal lexicalisation (one of word-formation rules), the PU finally becomes an independent unit. These processes have been found to hold true for all PUs, regardless of whether they are continuous or discontinuous.

The criteria for determining whether a word-combination is a PU are outlined in (10).

- (10) a. frequency
 b. dispersion
 c. fixedness (i.e., no variants)
 d. consistency of existing words (e.g., Kenning in Old English)
(ibid.)

Frequency and dispersion shown in (10a, b) are the norms that indicate that PUs do not appear by accident. If a word-combination is not frequently or widely used, they are not considered to be PUs. Fixedness in (10c) is a necessary condition, which indicates that the PU fixed form has semantically and syntactically stable uses in any context or situation, and is polysemic and multifunctional. In (10d), newly-observed PUs are formed by combining existing words.

(11) shows the PU stress pattern rules, all of which appear to be applicable to any PU.

- (11) a. it is impossible to predict the stress patterns of phrases simply by means of whether a word is a function word or a content word
 b. the stress is placed on the word by which a speaker would like to convey the most important meaning of phrases
 c. set phrases have stable stress patterns as words do
 d. set phrase doesn't necessarily consist of one tone group and each word consisting of set phrases has each tone group
(Inoue 2009: 133)

4.2 Idiomaticity

As mentioned, idioms have been widely defined as syntactically fixed word combinations formed by some words, and that semantically, the idiom meanings are not the sum of each component. A scale of idiomaticity can be used to measure the level an idiom belongs to.

According to Moon (1998), idioms can be classified into high or low idiomaticity based on three features³): institutionalisation, lexicogrammatical fixedness, and (semantic) non-compositionality. For example, idioms such as *kick the bucket*, *call the shots* and *kith and kin* have high idiomaticity as they are conventionally and fixedly used and it is difficult to infer the meanings from each component. On the other hand, idioms such as *enough is enough* and *because of* are regarded as having low idiomaticity because the meanings are easy to understand even though they are also conventionally and fixedly used. Idioms can be classified into four types in terms of idiomaticity: free combinations (e.g., *open a window*), restricted collocations (e.g., *meet the demand*), figurative idioms (e.g., *call the shots*), and pure idioms (e.g., *spill the beans*) (Cowie 1999: 71). For more detail, please see Cowie (*ibid.*).

Moon (1998: 8) also mentions three other criteria: (i) idioms have single-word (often hyphenated) cognates as an orthographic criterion, such as *break the ice*, *ice-breaker*, and *ice-breaking*; (ii) idioms typically stem from syntactic or grammatical units in their own right (e.g., *through thick and thin*, which works as an adjunct, *long in the tooth* as a complement, *a flash in the pan* as a nominal group, and *by and large* as a sentence adverbial, etc.); and (iii) idioms have a phonological criterion in which the interword pauses and word durations are shorter than in word combinations⁴.

This study uses the above six criteria to judge whether *take care for*, *take care about* and *care of* behaved like idioms and investigates whether the inner features of the PUs shown in (8) to (11) are applicable to *take care for*, *take care about* and *care of*.

5. Data used in the study

The internet allows for data to be easily acquired. For this study,

the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the British National Corpus (BNC), *WordBanksOnline* (WB), the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) and the Database of Analysed Texts of English (DANTE) were consulted. I accessed COCA, COHA, BNC, WB, and DANTE on June 8th, 2017.

6. Quantitative results

The data analysis found that *take care for*, *take care about* and *care of* were observed as variants of *take care of* and *care for*. *Care after* appeared in the corpora, but had the structure [care] [after + a word or phrase] such as *He didn't seem to [care] [after killing those four people]* (COCA). The *care* in *care about* was also used to express whether something was important, so was not in line with the focal point of the study and was not studied further. DANTE did not include any single examples of *take care for*, *take care about* or *care of*. Table 2 gives information about how many times each variant (*take care for*, *take care about* and *care of*) was used in each corpora. Please note that the numbers shown in Table 2 show the overall frequencies for each variant regardless of the tenses (present or past) or aspects (continuous or perfect).

Table 2 Frequencies for *take care for*, *take care about* and *care of* in present-day English corpora

	COCA	BNC	WB	sum
take care for	7	2	2	11
take care about	5	3	3	11
care of	7	0	6	13

From Table 2, it is clear that although not used often, all three variants are not minor errors as they were observed in written registers. They were observed to be mainly used in present tenses, and were sometimes used with a *to*-infinitive. The examples shown in the next section reveal the distinguishing tenses or aspects of the variants other than present tenses.

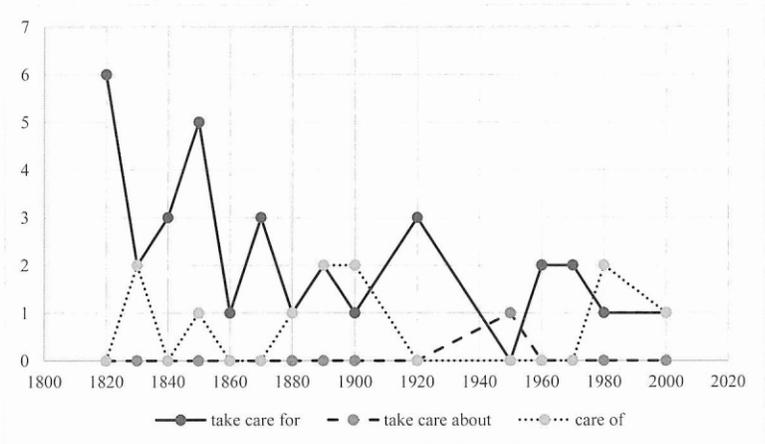
Table 3 shows the frequencies of the variants in each decade from a

diachronic viewpoint. The frequencies shown in Table 3 include all the tenses and aspects used by each variant. The time periods (1810, 1910, 1930, 1940, and 1990) when the three variants were not observed are not shown in Table 3. Figure 1 shows the frequencies for each

Table 3 Frequencies for *take care of*, *take care about* and *care of* in COHA

	take care for	take care about	care of
1820	6	0	0
1830	2	0	2
1840	3	0	0
1850	5	0	1
1860	1	0	0
1870	3	0	0
1880	1	0	1
1890	2	0	2
1900	1	0	2
1920	3	0	0
1950	0	1	0
1960	2	0	0
1970	2	0	0
1980	1	0	2
2000	1	0	1
sum	33	1	11

Figure 1 Frequencies for each variant in each decade



variant every ten years.

It can be seen from Table 3 and Figure 1 that *take care for* was used more frequently from the 1820s to the 1850s than in the other periods, that *take care about* was an interesting variant that was only observed once in contemporary English (i.e., 1950s), and that *care of* was not constantly used as it did not appear in all time periods. Consequently, Table 3 and Figure 1 indicate that *take care for*, *take care about* and *care of* have not been actively used.

7. Qualitative results

Take care for, *take care about* and *care of* are exemplified in (12), (13), and (14), respectively. (1b) is recorded again as (13a).

- (12) a. “Where is he now? I will come see him. Bring me to him.”
Ling Li shook his head. “Can no do, Miss Eden. He go (sic) to Rat Alley to be with Great-uncle Woo. Woo good doctor. Great-uncle *take* (sic.) *care for* number seven son. He have (sic.) ancient medicine from Shanghai.” (COCA, 2010, fiction)
- b. Did twenty-one-year-old communists have spare time in which to ruminate over rattlesnakes and vampires? “It is my job to *take care for* you,” Bogdan said.
(COCA, 2002, fiction)
- c. The Catholic News proclaimed that “even the atheistic civil authorities are thanking their lucky stars that the nuns, they once expelled, have come back to *take care for* the wounded soldiers.” (COCA, 1996, ACAD)
- d. All of the stewards were Englishmen who did not try to *take care for* anyone but their countrymen and a few Germans who gave them rum, which could be bought for one crown a bottle on the ship. (COCA, 1993, ACAD)
- e. Mr. CAPIUS: There are many people coming from Macedonia, and all of them are deported, and will be deported, and nobody does care for those people, so it’s a matter of equal right for all those applicants. And, what is interesting,

is that supporters of Mrs. Pamparova only *take care for* this specific case, without any reason why this case is different from others. (COCA, 1993, spoken)

In (12), it can be seen that *take care for* has the following two syntactic patterns: [take care for + sb] (type A) and [take care for + sth] (type B). Type A [take care for + sb], which is used more often, is synonymous to look after somebody, as exemplified in (12a, b, c, d), and type B is synonymous to take responsibility for something, as exemplified in (12e). The constituents in type A and type B qualitatively differ, with type A being established from a blending of *take care of* and *care for*, and type B being formed by a blending of *take care of* and *take responsibility for*, and sometimes has the same meaning as *take care of*.

- (13) a. During instruction, such values and related attitudes can be obtained if several conditions are established: building a community with members who *take care about* each other, using democratic rules when decisions have to be made, (COCA, 2005, ACAD)
- b. Mr-ESBJORN-SVENSSO: I don't agree about what Bugge said. I think there's a lot of fantastic jazz coming from here. But there's a lot of interesting things actually going on in Europe, and we don't have the tradition like you have here. I mean, it's your own folk music. We don't have to *take care about* it in that sense. (COCA, 2002, spoken)
- c. Toxicology tests on blood and tissue won't be finished for at least a month, Gagnon said, but police say they are sure that drugs were a major factor in Kordic's death. "If we *take care about* what the witnesses just told about the way he was acting and if we consider what the police officers think, Kordic was on the drugs," Gagnon said. (COCA, 1992, news)
- d. Reginaldo: 'He likes the races so much that it's very difficult when he becomes a human being again. I want to talk, go

out to dinner, smile, he - no. He doesn't need this.' Paulo: 'He does need that but from Friday onwards he just *takes care about* his sleeping time, his food. He's talking a little bit with people but he's always concentrating on the race. That's the reason I think he performs so well.'

(WB, 1990, written)

- e. So Iowa is his chance to make his stand, and he'll have a great problem if he can't succeed here in Iowa, but he's got to make sure to focus more on this notion of opportunity for all rather than *taking care about* a small, though important, segment of the country.

(WB, 2007, spoken)

Take care about in (13) can be classified into the two types; type C, as exemplified in (13a), which has a syntactic pattern [take care about + sb] implying the taking care of somebody; and the higher frequency type D, which has the syntactic pattern [take care about + sth] and is used to express 'care about something', as exemplified in (13b, c, d, e). Type D is made up of a blending of the PU [take care] (used to mean 'be careful') and [care about + sth], and then the verb *care* in *care about* comes to function as a noun due to the merging of *care* in the PU [take care]. Also, type C was possibly established after type D as type D is used more frequently; that is, type D [take care about + sth] tends to co-occur with somebody because of its repeated use and has a different syntactic pattern to type C [take care about + sb].

- (14) a. "Did you hear me?" She tried to keep her voice calm. She'd been doing that since she'd come back from England to *care of* her dying cousin.
(COCA, 2008, fiction)
- b. We learned that, although Native Hawaiian' ohana strive to provide the best level of care for their ill member, deficits in knowledge, information seeking, and negotiation capabilities presented obstacles to *care of* the ill member.
(COCA, 2008, ACAD)
- c. Secondly, it's not exhibiting the sense of outrage that most

parents would feel about the idea that you send off your children to Washington to be pages or interns, or some young position in the care of members of Congress and members of an administration; and those are the people who are supposed to *care of* these kids, not supposed to be harassing them, exploiting them. (COCA, 2006, spoken)

- d. SIEGEL: Yeah. Dropping out after the seventh grade, you couldn't have been up to anything good at that point.

Mr. WILSON: Well, I didn't really have a choice. My mother passed, and my father - he wasn't no father, so it was just me and my three - well, the ones that were up under me, the brothers and sister that I had to *care of* them, you know, so I dropped out of school. I dropped right out.

(WB, 1993, spoken)

- e. But I have to push back here because that's suggesting that journalists are unpatriotic, they don't care about their country, they don't *care of* people getting killed because they want good programming. (COCA, 2014, spoken)
- f. If she has to send for it, then tell her she can always write to you *care of* me - and here is the address.

(COCA, 2000, fiction)

Similar with *take care for* and *take care about*, *care of* in (14) also has two types: type E has a syntactic pattern [*care of* + somebody] used in (14a, b, c, d), which is used to take care of somebody and type F (i.e., (14e, f)) has the same syntactic pattern as type E, but implying to care for or to like. For type E (= (14a, b, c, d)), the words or phrases that follow *care of* are related to illnesses or social environments. In the case of type F, (14e) shows that *care about*, which is semantically similar with type F, is observed around *care of*, hence *care of* used in (14e) is used to mean 'care for'.

Generally, type F is used more frequently than type E. Type E and F are established syntactically: the *take* from *take care of* is omitted, resulting in the *care* in *care of* functioning as a verb similar to *care for*.

Semantically, *care of* arises from a combination of *take care of* and *care for*.

8. Discussion

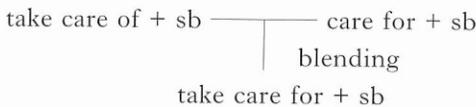
This section examines whether the three variants (*take care for*, *take care about* and *care of*) can be classified as idioms based on the quantitative and qualitative findings in the previous sections, and illustrates the differences between these three variants and the better known idioms (i.e., *take care of* and *care for*). Table 4 summarises the actual behaviour of these three variants.

Table 4 Syntactic and semantic features of the new variants

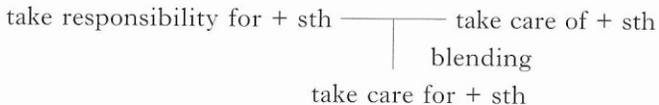
variants	syntactic pattern	meaning	type
take care for	take care for + sb	take care of	type A
	take care for + sth	take responsibility for	type B
take care about	take care about + sb	take care of	type C
	take care about + sth	care about	type D
care of	care of + sb	take care of	type E
	care of + sb	care for, like	type F

(15), (16), and (17) show how each variant is formed; (15) deals with *take care for*, (16) *take care about* and (17) *care of*.

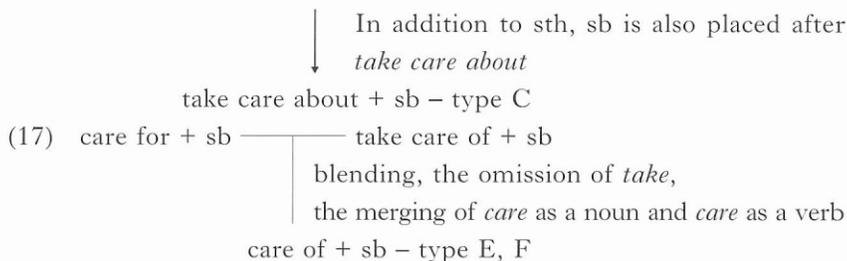
(15) a. type A



b. type B



(16) a PU take care --- care about + sth
 |
 blending, the merging of *care* as a noun
 and *care* as a verb
 take care about + sth – type D



It can be assumed from (15), (16), and (17) that the three variants are formed from a blending of semantically similar common idioms and the merging of the verb and noun functions (i.e., *care*). These three variants also use both a word-formation rule (i.e., blending) and a semantic method (i.e., merging), as shown in (8). While they fulfil process (i) in (9), but they are not used often as is shown in (10a), so it could be surmised that they are at the formative stage of becoming an idiom.

To examine which stress patterns in (11) are applicable to the three variants, native speakers of English (two Americans, a Canadian, a British, an Australian) were asked to read the following passages.

- (18) a. The Catholic News proclaimed that “even the atheistic civil authorities are thanking their lucky stars that the nuns, they once expelled, have come back to take care for the wounded soldiers.”
- b. Did twenty-one-year-old communists have spare time in which to ruminate over rattlesnakes and vampires? “It is my job to take care for you,” Bogdan said.
- c. During instruction, such values and related attitudes can be obtained if several conditions are established: building a community with members who take care about each other, using democratic rules when decisions have to be made,
- d. “Did you hear me?” She tried to keep her voice calm. She’d been doing that since she’d come back from England to care of her dying cousin.

- e. We learned that, although Native Hawaiian' ohana strive to provide the best level of care for their ill member, deficits in knowledge, information seeking, and negotiation capabilities presented obstacles to care of the ill member.

It was found that for (18), four of the seven informants pronounced *take c are for*, *take c are about* and *c are of*, with one informant replaced these three variants with *take care of* and *care about*. Interestingly, some informants paused for a beat between *take care* and *for*, *take care* and *about* or *care* and *of* as they were unfamiliar with the variants. An informant also said that after reading (18) the three variants should be changed to *take care of* or *care about* as they were semantically the same as *take care of* and *care about*. Generally, however, the three variants were found to have stable stress patterns and were regarded as variants of *take care of* and *care about*.

The differences between the more common idioms, *take care of* and *care for*, and the three variants were examined. Even though there were fewer examples of the three variants in the corpora, it was generally concluded that the three variants were semantically similar to the more common idioms. In (12b, c) for example, the use of *for* (intended to help or benefit sb/ sth) in *take care for* appears to emphasise the taking into *it*-construction in (12b) and the meaning in (12c). In other words, the newly-observed idioms have lower idiomaticity than the more common idioms in terms of semantic non-compositionality. It is expected that the differences between these three variants and the more common idioms will become clearer if and when they are used more often in contemporary English.

Based on the observations of the three variants, to judge whether these word-combinations work as idioms, it is concluded that they fulfill the criteria outlined in Section 4.2: (i) institutionalisation, (ii) lexicogrammatical fixedness, (iii) (semantic) non-compositionality, (iv) idioms with single-word (often hyphenated) cognates as an orthographic criterion, (v) idioms that were typical syntactic or grammatical units in their own right (in the case of the three variants, they work as a verb),

and (vi) as a phonological criterion, in which the interword pauses and word durations are shorter, as is more typical in idioms than in word combinations. Therefore, the three variants have become established as idioms, and therefore are PU subcategories.

9. Study Implications

The findings in this study indicate that idioms can change, which is in contrast to the long held belief that idioms are unchanging; therefore, the findings could be useful for further research on lexicography or idioms (i.e, phraseology).

Semantically similar idioms result in new idioms through mutual influence, with such changes being recorded as idioms in dictionaries, which explain in detail any newly-observed phenomena in present-day English. These newly-observed idioms enable researchers to reconsider idiomaticity and further contribute to the research development on idioms.

10. Concluding remarks

This study quantitatively and qualitatively proved that idioms can change by scrutinising the three variants of *take care of* and *care for*. The results could assist in developing appropriate dictionary descriptions for idioms and contributes to studies on idiomaticity. However, the three variants discussed in this paper all had low corpus frequencies and there was no further examination as to whether other idioms were experiencing similar changes. Therefore, future studies could delve further into the changes in idioms to broaden the findings in this research, provide further evidence as to the changes occurring in idiom structure and use, understand how these changes influence other types of PUs, and the types of changes occurring in phraseology.

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NOTES

1) Inoue (2007) admits idioms, collocations, lexical phrases, discourse particles and the relationship between PUs and grammatical categories are the subcategories of PUs. Please refer to Inoue (2007: 104ff.) about the definitions of each subcategory.

2) Word formation rules are as follows: compounding, derivation, borrowing, conversion, acronym, backformation, shortening, blending, lexicalization of phrases, metaanalysis and root creation.

3) Bolinger (1977: 168), Fernando (1996), Fernando and Flavell (1981: 19), and Barkema (1996) discuss the importance of idiomaticity.

4) Please see Makkai (1972), Bloomfield (1935), Van Lancker and Canter (1981), and Van Lancker *et al.* (1981) about the phonetic characteristics of idioms.

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