

**Idiomat�icity and regularity in grammatical constructions:
What can we learn from the clause-linking construct-i-con?
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I am honored by this opportunity to share a Construction Grammar perspective on the issue of “idiomaticity and regularity in grammatical constructions.” In doing so, we commemorate our academic forefathers Charles J. Fillmore and Ivan A. Sag and the legacies of their great works, such as Fillmore, Kay, and O’Connors (1988) and Nunberg, Sag, & Wasow (1994).

A fundamental goal of construction grammar is to account for every aspect of a language. Both more general and idiomatic patterns constitute data that must be accounted for by the grammar (Kay & Fillmore 1999). Realizing this goal requires examining semi-idiomatic, semi-productive expressions. This includes “formal idioms” (which are considered constructions), as well as both the most general/abstract and the most concrete ends of the productivity-idiomaticity cline. This relates to another asset of the constructional system, which calls for careful attention to semantically decomposable “encoding idioms.” As shown by Nunberg, Sag, & Wasow (1994), the meaning of an “idiomatically combining expression,” though conventional, is distributed among its parts.

With these tenets and issues in mind, this talk focuses on supra-clausal constructions, examining constructional phenomena that exceed the boundaries of the clause. The case studies I discuss are drawn from families of clause-linking constructions in Japanese as compared with English in the semantic domains of concessive conditionals, conditionals, causals and temporals. In this work, syntactic, lexical/morphological, semantic, and pragmatic variations in clause-linking constructions are taken as constructional polysemy and constructional networks in the CONSTRUCT-I-CON. The CONSTRUCT-I-CON (Fillmore 2006; Fillmore, Lee-Goldman & Rhodes 2012) stores all form-meaning pairs (constructions), regardless of where they fall on the abstract/concrete and lexical/syntactic continua. A primary goal of this work is to demonstrate **a unified account of both the productive and idiomatic aspects** of the constructions at hand.

To lay out the clause-linking CONSTRUCT-I-CON, I focus on two orthogonal parameters: **CONSTRUCTION TYPE** and **CONSTRUCTIONAL SCHEME**. First, each of the clause-linking families can appear in different CONSTRUCTION TYPES, according to **(in)subordination**. In this case, subordination refers mainly to typical full bi-clausal constructions like (1) below. Insubordination manifests in antecedent-only reduced conditional constructions such as (2). Of interest here is the intermediate construction type, in which main and subordinate clauses are integrated. This can result in semi- or highly idiomatic constructions in Japanese (and other languages). (3) illustrates an English counterpart of the Japanese intermediate type.

- (1) **Bi-clausal construction:** If Chuck and Ivan were here, they would smile and assist us.
- (2) **Reduced conditional (construction):** If Chuck and Ivan were here.
(If only Chuck and Ivan were here.)
- (3) **Integrated construction:** It would be nice if Chuck and Ivan were here.

Second, these different construction types all share a certain CONSTRUCTIONAL SCHEME associated with specific combinations of forms, meanings, and pragmatic functions such as prohibiting, permission or requesting. In each of the examples (1-3) above, the speaker’s wish is conveyed (whether pragmatically via implicatures, construction-wise, or semantically).

Families of these vertical and horizontal networks of constructions can feature a variety of clause-linking morphemes within Standard Japanese. While showing high degrees of productivity, they are lexically constrained and yield various (semi-)idiomatic constructions. Furthermore, the same networks of construction types and constructional schemes are widely found in other dialects, which use different (clause-linking) morphemes and lexical items. I take this as further evidence that although they form highly idiomatic constructions, the parameters CONSTRUCTION TYPE and CONSTRUCTIONAL SCHEME are general in nature.

I will further discuss the developmental path in child language acquisition. Children produce in subordinate and highly idiomatic integrated constructions before learning subordination (Fujii 2018, 2022). In a “pragmatic and constructional bootstrapping” account, Fujii (*ibid*) proposes that the subordinate and idiomatic constructions serve as a springboard for the more complex bi-clausal ones.

Time permitting, I will introduce another approach to account for regularity of idiomatic constructions based on **Frame Semantics and FrameNet**. This **frame-based constructional approach** has already proposed and established (in Fujii & Lee-Goldman 2010, 2019, 2020) that argument structure can be satisfied via unselected adjuncts. Here, I extend the analysis to show that ‘argument structure satisfaction via unselected adjuncts’ (*ibid*), used and entrenched in discourse, can in fact also yield semi-idiomatic constructions.

Having explored various cases in English and Japanese, based on Frame Semantics as implemented by FrameNet, Fujii & Lee-Goldman (*ibid*) propose an alternate mechanism for argument satisfaction. Unselected adjuncts (including adverbial clauses) whose content coheres well with the evoked semantic frame, its frame structure, and Frame Elements can satisfy argument requirements. Despite the variation in constructions that are used across frames and languages to express information in this manner, we demonstrate a semantic commonality among the cases.

This semantic regularity has implications not only for argument structure satisfaction but for the issue of ‘**idiomaticity and regularity**.’ The proposed frame-based mechanism for ‘argument satisfaction via unselected adjuncts’ can orchestrate entrenchment and constructionalization of idiomatically combining expressions that also involve language-specific lexical and syntactic idiosyncrasies.

Through this set of projects, I aim to illustrate generalizations and overarching principles governing relatively local, idiosyncratic, and idiomatic aspects of the networks of polysemous constructions within a theoretical framework that also accommodates their regular productive aspects. Based on these analyses, I conclude that both regular general and (semi-)idiomatic constructions are not only included but *linked* in our language systems and knowledge.

Selected References

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