Frames and Constructions: Putting Them Together

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For a long time I've assumed that Frame Semantics and Construction Grammar somehow belong together, and apparently so have a number of other people, to judge from the titles of workshops, conferences and book series. FrameNet (FN) in a sense is a realization of frame semantic ideas centered on lexical units, and the existing English FN database is a catalogue of information about the basic distributional properties of English lexical units, especially their valence, where the semantic role information associated with each "valent" is based on descriptions of the frames that underlie the meanings of those lexical units. Following the tradition of valence dictionaries, the syntactic part of the distributional information in FN is pretty much limited to the relations of predication, complementation, modification, and determination (e.g., possessor-head relations), with the result that even if FN were "finished" there would be a great many aspects of English sentences that it could not account for.

In recent exploratory work (funded by a small NSF grant), I have joined members of the FrameNet team (especially Russell Lee Goldman and Russell Rhodes) to prepare a sample registry of "peripheral" grammatical constructions. This *Constructicon* contains informal descriptions of their grammatical and semantic properties of each construction and a collection of sentences (from the FN corpus) annotated to exhibit the properties of the constructions they instantiate.

In this talk I will show how the basic FN lexical database recognizes a variety of linguistic features of lexical units, and how information about grammatical constructions can be provided in ways that use very similar conceptual and annotational tools. A major goal is to show how the integration of constructional and lexical information can give a more complete picture of sentence meanings in English. Most constructions have meanings of their own, so putting them together amounts to articulating the elements of lexical meanings with those of the constructional meanings.

Although as linguists we are interested in the general project of writing a construction grammar of English, the annotations of construction instances must be seen as distinct from grammar-writing as such: the goal of the Constructicon is to display large samples of the kinds of observations which construction grammarians need to account for.