

Construction Grammar, Frame Semantics, and Spoken Interaction

In this paper, I investigate possible contributions of two central notions developed by C.J. Fillmore (1975, 1982; Fillmore et al. 1988, Fillmore & Atkins 1992, Kay & Fillmore 1999), frames and constructions, to the study of spoken interaction. Using the example of pragmatic markers, I demonstrate a) how a construction grammar account can significantly further our understanding of the multifunctionality and apparent variability of pragmatic markers and thus contribute to accounting for the interpretability and learnability of these items; and b) that the notion of semantic frame can be used to address key pragmatic issues, such as situational appropriateness and linguistic choice.

I do so by demonstrating that the structural positions in which pragmatic markers may occur contribute to their interpretation and thus are best understood as grammatical constructions with mostly pragmatic, dialogical, meanings. For instance, *but* may function as a conjunction as well as a turn-taking signal, depending on its structural position. Crucially, other particles, like *and* and *or*, can fulfil very similar functions if they occur in the same constructions. Approaches that focus on the pragmatics of single markers are thus bound to overlook the contribution grammar makes to the interpretations pragmatic markers may receive in discourse. Using turn-initial markers as an example, I show how items typical of spoken interaction can be accounted for in a construction grammatical representation, disentangling the contribution of each marker and the constructions they may occur in and systematically extending the meanings accounted for towards the interactional realm of meaning (cf. Langacker 1999).

Moreover, I demonstrate how a frame semantic perspective accounts for situation-specific interpretations, again using pragmatic markers as an example. Different interpretations of the same marker can be understood against the background of different communicative frames. As much as encyclopedic knowledge may provide the background against which lexical items are understood (Fillmore & Atkins 1992), frames encoding situation-specific tasks attended to by the participants themselves serve as the background against which pragmatic markers are interpreted. Using genuinely pragmatic methods, these frames can be established as emic, participant categories.

Taking a construction grammatical and frame semantic perspective on spoken interaction thus provides opportunities to understanding pragmatic markers that go far beyond simply restating pragmatic analyses in construction grammatical terms (cf. Fried & Östman 2005). Instead, it opens up a fruitful perspective on items and mechanisms peculiar of spoken interaction in general, thus bridging the gap between interactional, for instance, conversation analytic, and grammatical work.

References:

- Fillmore, C.J. (1975), An alternative to checklist theories of meaning. In: *Papers from the First Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, 123-132.
- Fillmore, C.J. (1982), Frame semantics. In: Linguistic Society of Korea (ed.), *Linguistics in the Morning Calm*. Seoul: Hanshin, 111-138.
- Fillmore, C.J. / P. Kay / M. O'Connor (1988), Regularity and idiomatity in grammatical constructions: the case of let alone. *Language*, 64, 3, 501-538.
- Fillmore, C.J. / Atkins, B. T. (1992): Towards a frame-based lexicon: the case of RISK. In: A. Lehrer and E. Kittay (Hgg.): *Frames, Fields, and Contrasts*. Erlbaum, 75-102.
- Kay, P. / Fillmore, C.J. (1999), Construction Grammar and Linguistic Generalizations: The What's X Doing Y? Construction. *Language* 75: 1-33.
- Langacker, R. (1999), The Contextual Basis of Conceptualization. In: Nuyts, Jan / Pedersen, Eric (eds.): *Language and Conceptualization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 229-252.
- Fried, M. / Östman, J.-O. (2005), Construction Grammar and spoken language: The case of pragmatic particles. *Journal of Pragmatics* 37, 11: 1752-1778.