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ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ЯЗЫКОВОЙ ВАРИАТИВНОСТИ В АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ НА ОСНОВЕ КОРПУСНЫХ ДАННЫХ

***Аннотация:** В статье рассматривается грамматика конструкций, корпусная лингвистика, виды частотности, место фразеологии в теории грамматики конструкций. Грамматика конструкций на сегодня является перспективным современным направлением исследования проблемы вариативности единиц на различных языковых уровнях, одним из базовых принципов грамматики конструкций является отрицание четких границ между грамматикой и словарем.*

***Ключевые слова:** грамматика конструкций, фразеологизм, идиомы, корпусная лингвистика, частотность.*

THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE VARIATION IN ENGLISH BASED ON CORPUS DATA

***Annotation:** The article discusses the construction grammar, corpus linguistics, types of frequency, the place of phraseology in the theory construction grammar. The construction grammar today is a promising modern direction in the study of the problem of the variability of units at different language levels, one of*

the basic principles of the construction grammar is the denial of clear boundaries between grammar and vocabulary.

Keywords: *construction grammar, phraseology, idioms, corpus linguistics, frequency.*

Introduction

This paper is devoted to the research of lexico-semantic variation in phraseology relying on the theory of Construction Grammar. The first and the second chapters of the paper deal with the theoretical part of the research: construction grammar, corpus linguistics, types of frequency, the role that construction grammar approach plays in phraseology.

The relevance of the topic is that construction grammar is the modern theory which can account for the phenomenon of linguistic variation in set expressions. One of the core principles of Construction grammar is that it denies the borders between grammar and semantics.

The object of the study are the set expressions with varying components in English.

The subject of the study is the reasons for variability of the components in set expressions.

The aim of the study is to identify the how construction grammar approach can enrich phraseological studies.

During the research the following methods were implied: descriptive, the method of interpretation and corpus analysis.

Various information sources were analysed during the research, among them the works of the founder of the Construction Grammar Charles Fillmore, the works by A.Goldberg, G.Lakoff, also the works of Russian scholars were used, among them there are works by D.Dobrovolskiy. Using the Corpus of Corporate American English the frequency of the set expressions with varying components was established.

1. Construction grammar

The term construction grammar (the abbreviation C x G) covers a “family” of theories, or models, of grammar that are based on the idea that the primary unit of grammar is the grammatical construction rather than the atomic syntactic unit and the rule that combines atomic units, and the grammar of a language taxonomies of families of constructions.

Construction grammar is the theory of linguistic knowledge, or saying it in other words it is what speakers know when they know a language. So it turns out that speakers have to know quite a few things, they have to know words and their meanings (basic words as *dog*, *day* etc.), how they are pronounced, they also have to know that there are different kinds of words, for example, *green*, *balloon* (meaning that there are adjectives, nouns etc.). One of the important parts of knowing the words, distinguishing them is knowing how to put those words together to form phrases and sentences, so speakers know that the word “green” can be combined with the word “balloon”, they also know which words do not work together (“many” cannot go along with “water”). Speakers also have to be able to put the right endings to the words while making phrases and sentences (two balloon-s, Mike walk-s) and they also know where to put which ending. Language learners also should be able to understand newly coined creative words, as for example, speakers have never heard the word “festive-ness” before, but thanks to their knowledge of word formation they might get the meaning of the new word.

Speakers should also understand that sometimes more is meant than said, for example in the sentence “I do not know if it is a good idea” speaker should get the message that actually one does not really support his or her idea about something, this is the actual meaning that is hidden in that sentence. The last but not the least, and often underestimated point by language learners in learning a target language is the knowledge of idiomatic expressions, for example, *I am all ears*, *let's take a break* etc. So this shows us that the language basically consists of constructions, and proves that the language is a well-structured organized unity.

There are different variations of Construction Grammar. One common idea unites those different variations of Construction Grammar, and the idea is the following - the language is comprised of various constructions. And here saying “a construction” the Construction Grammarians mean anything that can be a word or some sort of grammatical aspect, as for example, Subject-Predicate structure, and those concepts can be of any size at the same time.

Construction Grammar highlights the existence of a 'lexicon-syntax continuum'. This statement is a contradiction to the traditional views where the lexicon and the syntactic rules are considered to be completely separate components according to traditional grammar views.

The central motive of Construction Grammar theorists is to account for the extraordinary productivity of human languages, while at the same time recognizing the huge amount of idiosyncratic grammatical data that humans acquire and store. 'The constructionist approach to grammar offers a way out of the lumpers/splitters dilemma' [1, p. 45]. “The key point is that storage of idiosyncratic facts is compatible with deploying these facts productively to generate novel expressions.”[2].

Construction Grammarians believe that the speaker should know the constructions that are common for their target language to speak and use the language appropriately, as one of the leading scholars in the Construction Grammar field states “the totality of our knowledge of language is captured by a network of constructions: a ‘construct-i-con’ [3],’ ...the network of constructions captured by our grammatical knowledge of language in to, i.e. it is the constructions all the way down’[4]. So the construction grammarians are very explicit on it, and they mainly say that all the speakers know – are the constructions.

1.1 Construction Grammars: theories, followers and similar ideas

Construction Grammar can be referred to as a part of Cognitive Linguistics. Construction Grammar having a cognitive orientation is not just hollow words, but in fact it really does concern the essence of the grammatical theory.

The goal of Construction Grammar is to develop a language theory that includes all linguistic knowledge regardless of its regularity and simultaneously depicts linguistic behaviour as creative and repetitive [4, p. 26]. Furthermore, the description not only aims at the language system itself, but also at its acquisition, storage and processing. All these helps Construction Grammar to stand out among other grammatical theories that only deal with simply linguistic, and even purely “syntactic” questions.

The studies that were conducted at the times when Construction Grammar just started standing out only basic features of CxG developed mainly for so-called peripheral linguistic structures, for which generative analyses offered no solution (Fillmore 1988, p. 36), for example in George Lakoff's work on English constructions with *here and there* [5], Knud Lambrechts analysis of colloquial French constructions [6] or in the article by Charles Fillmore, Paul Kay and Catherine O'Connor on *let alone*-construction [7]. A very similar work was done at the same time by Ronald Langacker [8], even though he did not (yet) refer to his analyses to construction grammatical.

Construction Grammar is not a single theory, but a ‘family’ of approaches that share the same presuppositions about the nature of language. The different theories differ from one another in theoretical details and approaches. However, there are ideas that unite all constructional theories. Fischer and Stefanowitsch [9, pp. 4–5] and Goldberg [5, pp. 15–16] identify the following four principles:

1. All linguistic knowledge (whether explicit or implicit) consists of learned pairings of form and meaning (constructions). The lexicon and grammar are based on constructions, so there is no separation between the two.

2. The meaning of constructions is directly connected with the perceptible form. Meaning and form are not stored in different modules, but inseparably linked with each other.

3. Constructions form a network of reciprocal interdependencies with hierarchical and inheritance relationships.

4. There is no set of universal, innate constructions, neither intra linguistically nor cross-linguistically. Generalizations that can be analysed across languages are the result of common cognitive strategies.

There are also a number of assumptions that differ between the theories, this puts the beginning to the so-called theoretical premises. Some construction grammars attempt to be psycholinguistically realistic as in Goldberg's Cognitive CxG, Croft's Radical CxG, Langacker's Cognitive Grammar; while other scholars pay less attention to this [10]. At the same time, there are differences in the conception of the task of a grammatical model as such. Some assume that a grammar should be able to generate grammatical utterances (or sentences) or make general predictions about the form and meaning of utterances, while others take the view that it is not grammar but speakers who generate sentences, while the language system can only motivate and license possible structures [10, p. 17].

The relationships between individual constructions are also discussed diversely. While some assume that abstract and schematic constructions inherit their properties from less schematic ones [5, p. 16], others prefer an approach without inheritance [11]. Among the authors who accept inheritance, it is controversial whether it should be full or partial. In addition, there are dividing lines between the individual construction grammars concerning the universality of constructions, the formalisation of the model, the issue of compositionality and the semantics of constructions. Overviews and comparisons of the different construction grammars can be found in Goldberg [5], Langacker [10] and Fischer and Stefanowitsch [9].

In the last 15 years or so, Construction Grammar has established itself firmly in linguistics. It particularly deals well with usage-based approaches, especially in the fields of variational linguistics, diachronic linguistics and language acquisition. And therefore, the perception and understanding of Construction Grammar have widened, so today scholars propose to use the term Construction Grammar in plural form rather than singular.

Some versions of Construction Grammar have added epithets to the name, as for example, Radical Construction Grammar, Fluid Construction Grammar, Embodied Construction Grammar or Sign-Based Construction Grammar.

Not all of all of them share the same views with the actual Construction Grammar. Yet, there is the thesis that all of them subscribe under. Language is basically a fund of “**constructions**”, pairings of form and meaning, of varying degrees of complexity, and these constructions form taxonomic networks. The vertical dimension of these networks revolves around the idea of schematicity: the higher positions in the network are occupied by schematic constructions, which hierarchically subsume the lower positions with (partially) specific instantiations of the abstract constructions.

Whereas more traditional linguistic approaches have a division between syntax and the lexicon, constructional approaches to language generally reject such a division [9, pp. 255-256]. In the words of Goldberg [5, p.18]: “It’s constructions all the way down”.

1.2 The Constructicon: complexity, schematicity and network of construction.

In Construction Grammar there are “constructions” and these constructions are known as form-meaning pairs, and they are believed to be able to cover all linguistic knowledge. It is assumed that all linguistic information is conventionalized in constructions. Therefore, the concept of construction covers every linguistic level of description from morphology to syntax and description of texts. Since constructions themselves are closed-class items, they are said to be stored in the constructicon which, like the lexicon for words, contains the sum of all constructions. Constructions may differ from one another, but the differences are not conveyed in their architecture, but in their complexity, i.e. in whether they include smaller symbolic components, and in their schematicity, i.e. in the proportion of phonologically or otherwise formally specified elements.

Constructions differ in whether they are complex or not. As simplex constructions morphemes or words can be regarded and are often referred to as

lexical constructions. Complex constructions include in themselves other elements, either semantic, phonological or symbolic. Complex constructions, for example, are idiomatic coincidences. The possible complexity of constructions is independent of their schematicity. For example:

1. Lexical construction: *city or Good morning*
2. Idiom: *keep silent*

The phrase '*keep quiet*' differs from the lexical construction '*city*' in its complexity in that it comprises several lexical constructions.

Various types of constructions can be classified according to the dimension atomic-complex and the dimension schematic-specific, which are orthogonal to each other. As becomes clear in Table 1, the latter dimension is gradual in nature: partially schematic atomic constructions are bound morphemes and partially schematic complex constructions are several word constructions with a mixture of lexically fixed parts and lexically underspecified slots.

Morpheme	e.g. <i>pre-</i> , <i>-ing</i>
Word	e.g. <i>avocado, anaconda, and</i>
Complex word	e.g. <i>daredevil, shoo-in</i>
Complex word (partially filled)	e.g. [N-s] (for regular plurals)
Idiom (filled)	e.g. <i>going great guns, give the Devil his due</i>
Idiom (partially filled)	e.g. <i>jog <someone's> memory, send <someone> to the cleaners</i>
Covariational Conditional	The Xer the Yer (e.g. <i>the more you think about it, the less you understand</i>)
Ditransitive (double object)	Subj V Obj ₁ Obj ₂ (e.g. <i>he gave her a fish taco; he baked her a muffin</i>)
Passive	Subj aux VP _{PP} (PP _{by}) (e.g. <i>the armadillo was hit by a car</i>)

Table 1: Different types of constructions

Constructions of different sizes, from fully lexically instantiated multi-word expressions (e.g. *kick the bucket*) over partially lexically instantiated constructions like the way-construction [6], over bound morphemes (e.g. the third person verbal ending -s) to fully lexically underspecified constructions (e.g. the ditransitive construction), form a giant network, and each node in this network has its own features that specify the meaning import of that particular construction. The whole

network of constructions in a particular language is called the *Constructicon* [12, p. 42].

2. Phraseological Studies

Phraseologisms are known as complex lexical constructions of more than one word, which designate conceptual units, have been studied in the literature under various names - among which idioms and phrasemes.

At the beginning of the last century Bally, editor of Saussure's *Cours*, had introduced such notion as locutions phraséologiques, which contained the category of the *unités phraséologiques* to indicate fixed word unites of words characterized by a high internal cohesion, both structural and semantic.

Mostly the concept of phraseologism was studied in detail in the Soviet linguistics. Soviet scholars studied the phraseological units from a structural point of view, in opposition to the fixed word combinations, and had the generic name to this term *усложненные словосочетания* 'fixed word-combinations'.

The founding father of this field of studies- the phraseological studies - is believed to be Vinogradov. The definition *фразеологические единицы* was borrowed by Vinogradov from Bally's classification, and in 1947 in one of his works the term *фразеологические единицы* (phraseological units) was presented.

One more classification of the fixed word combinations is presented by Mel'čuk [1998], who introduced the concept of phrasemes or set phrases, in opposition to that of free phrases (in English terminology). Intermediate between these two types are the semi-phrasemes or collocations; that are the cases when one of the components maintains its literal meaning while the other is used metaphorically (for example, *strong coffee*).

Almost at the same time independently from the Soviet phraselological school, London linguistics school also started showing interest in word combinations. Firth introduced the notion of collocation to refer to the environment in which words occur. More recently, Sinclair introduced, through the innovative lexicographical project COBUILD, an approach to the study of recurrent word-combinations based

essentially on their frequency of use, thereby opening the way for the use of the corpus linguistics in phraseological studies.

The corpus-driven approach has extended the focus from phraseologisms to similar constructions such as collocations and high-frequency combinations of words, leading to the introduction of new concepts and the proliferation of new terminology: for example, the notion of lexical bundles, sequences of words occurring together with high frequency within the same register, known in literature also by the name of clusters, chunks, or n-grams.

2.1 Construction Grammar and Phraseology

CxG studies the so-called constructions; that is, pairings of form and meaning which, according to Goldberg [6, pp. 5-6], can be of varying complexity (morphemes, words, syntactic patterns, etc.) and present differing degrees of abstraction/concreteness (for example, nonlexically specified syntactic patterns vs. fixed idiomatic expressions).

As far as the aspect of creativity is concerned, Traugott and Trousdale introduced the concept of constructionalization, which is understood as the creation of a pairing with a new form and a new meaning, “in other words [...] the development of a new sign” [11, p. 22].

2.2. The Role of Construction Grammar in the Study of Phraseological Units

Construction Grammar started developing as a branch of Cognitive Linguistics to find a theoretical model that was also adequate to describe phraseological-type units [12, p. 225] whose form is difficult to predict (such as collocations) as well as its content (such as idiomatic expressions) and which present many descriptive difficulties for different grammatical models.

In CxG, phraseologisms, thanks in part to the frequency with which they are recognized within the linguistic system, acquire importance and interest: “Newer research has emphasized the extent to which speech consists of formulaic or prefabricated phrases (‘prefabs’)” [5, p. 26]. Nevertheless, studies in this area within

a CxG framework have been relatively recent [13, p. 152], except for the first works of the founding fathers.

Fillmore et al. discussed the salient feature of this new theory in “Regularity and Idiomaticity in Grammatical Constructions: The Case of Let Alone”, an article that can be considered the manifesto of the constructionist approach. In 1995, with Adele Goldberg’s monograph, interest instead turned from phraseologisms to abstract argument structures, also considered as units of form and meaning.

Nevertheless, according to Ziem and Lasch it was only after Goldberg’s wider definition of construction that the concepts and principles of CxG spread among European phraseologists as well because of the fact that Goldberg considers construction as “a form-meaning pair” characterized by the criterion of non-compositionality. This definition does not include, however, the various types of phraseologisms, whose defining characteristic is not necessarily the non-predictability of the structure but rather the fact they have “at least one lexically specified element” [10, p. 10]; Goldberg on the other hand, considers constructions also as compositional structures if they occur with a certain frequency in a language, a necessary characteristic for the construction to be considered entrenched.

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