



THE ROLE OF CONSTRUCTION GRAMMAR THEORY IN UNDERSTANDING SECOND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Xo'janov Islom Navro'z o'g'li

*(Physics teacher of the Presidential school in Nurafshon in Uzbekistan,
khujanovislom2001@gmail.com)*

Maksumov Oybek Paxlavanovich

*(English teacher of the Presidential school in Nurafshon in Uzbekistan,
oybekmaksumov1981@gmail.com)*

Abstract. The fundamental building blocks of language acquisition, known as constructions, span from basic morphemes to complete sentences. While construction grammar offers advantages over traditional and generative approaches, its application to second language acquisition studies remains fragmented and unsystematic. This paper explores the developments in construction grammar theory and identifies key strategies for its effective integration into language teaching and learning. Furthermore, it addresses the methodological and practical limitations of existing research in this field.

Keywords: construction grammar; generative grammar; second language acquisition

Construction grammar offers a novel perspective on understanding language's essential nature, structure, and functions. In contrast to Generative grammar, this cognitive linguistics-based theoretical framework presents several opposing principles. Construction grammarians challenge transformation theory by asserting that linguistic structures are transparent and independent, rather than derived from other structures. They maintain that form and meaning in sentences are conventionally linked, with distinct grammatical structures carrying unique semantic content and functions.

While traditional grammar focuses primarily on common and regular patterns, construction grammar broadens its scope to examine both standard and non-standard grammatical forms with equal importance. This approach recognizes that all structures carry meaning and contain implicit constraints that learners must discover. These innovative perspectives have enriched second language acquisition theory with new theoretical foundations.

Goldberg's (1995:4) definition states that a construction exists when a form-meaning pair $\langle Fi, Si \rangle$ contains aspects that cannot be predicted solely from its components or established constructions. This definition emphasizes construction grammar's focus on unpredictable form-meaning relationships that defy conventional generative rules, particularly marked or idiomatic expressions. Unlike traditional grammar, which treats these expressions as peripheral, Tang (2009) suggests that this emphasis on idiomatic expressions makes construction grammar particularly relevant to second language acquisition.

Construction grammar's superiority over theories like Chomsky's Government and Binding Theory lies in its more nuanced approach to verb usage. Tang argues that a verb's usage is determined by its associated constructions rather than inherent properties. For example, typically intransitive verbs like "sneeze" and "bake" can acquire transitive properties in specific constructions, as in "John sneezed the napkin off the table" and "Mary baked John a cake."

The limitations of Chomsky's Government and Binding Theory become apparent in its circular

reasoning regarding verb arguments. Consider the verb "kick" in various contexts:

1. "The horse kicks" (intransitive)
2. "Pat kicked the wall" (transitive)
3. "Pat kicked the football into the stadium" (complex transitive)
4. "Pat kicked Bob the football" (ditransitive)
5. "Pat kicked his way out of the operating room" (idiomatic)

Goldberg's research (1995, 2001) demonstrates that verbs may not determine sentence meaning as traditionally assumed. Evidence shows that a verb's part of speech and meaning can vary based on sentence structure. For instance, "kick," typically intransitive, can function transitively with various object patterns. The verb can even acquire transfer semantics similar to "give" in certain constructions. This flexibility and the potential mismatch between verbs and their constructions led Goldberg to develop construction grammar's form-meaning pair approach, offering a more comprehensive explanation of the complex relationships between sentence forms and meanings.

While construction grammar offers semantic economy in verb interpretation, it presents significant challenges for learners. Students must not only memorize multiple verb meanings but also grapple with numerous ambiguous and unsystematic constructions. The inherent instability of construction meanings, compared to verb meanings, poses a particular challenge for second language learners, suggesting that construction grammar's practical application in second language acquisition may be limited.

Nevertheless, idioms, with their relatively stable meanings that transcend their component parts, remain crucial for English learners to master. Proficiency in idiomatic expressions enhances fluency and naturalness in both written and spoken English. Dong Yanping and Liang Junying (2004) propose that understanding a construction's idiomatic nature requires first recognizing its distinctive characteristics within the broader context of language use.

Consider two illustrative examples:

The phrase "red tape" demonstrates this learning process. Learners progress through several stages:

1. Understanding literal component meanings ("red" as a color, "tape" as a strip of cloth)
2. Grasping the construction's holistic meaning
3. Synthesizing literal and metaphorical interpretations

The phrase's evolution is noteworthy: originating in 17th-century English, it became a common metaphor for bureaucratic delays by the early 19th century. This metaphorical transformation stems from the historical practice of binding British official documents with red tape. Through metonymy, the physical binding came to represent the documents themselves, and ultimately, the time-consuming administrative procedures they embodied.

Similarly, "white elephant" illustrates how cultural knowledge enriches idiomatic understanding. The phrase originates from Thai royal tradition, where kings would gift white elephants to disfavored courtiers. These sacred animals, protected from harm and expensive to maintain, often led their recipients to financial ruin. The literal meaning ("milk-colored large animal with a long nose") combines with this cultural context to create the modern meaning: "a costly possession that becomes a burden to maintain." These examples demonstrate that comprehending construction meanings requires analyzing literal components while incorporating knowledge of metonymy, metaphor, and cultural context. This approach offers advantages over rote memorization of idioms. The historical and cultural narratives behind these expressions make them more memorable and engaging for learners, potentially enhancing retention and understanding. This method suggests a more nuanced approach to teaching idiomatic expressions in second language acquisition, one that balances linguistic analysis with cultural and historical context. Rather than viewing constructions as mere obstacles, they can be approached as windows into the cultural and historical dimensions of language, enriching the learning experience while facilitating more effective acquisition of idiomatic expressions.

Here's a paraphrased version of the text:

The passage explores different grammatical perspectives on language structure and meaning, highlighting the evolution of linguistic understanding from generative grammar to usage-based and construction grammar approaches. Generative grammar initially proposed that sentences can be transformed

between different structures while maintaining the same core meaning. This view suggested that sentences have a deep structure and a surface structure, with meaning primarily residing in the deep structure. In contrast, usage-based grammar argues that language structure emerges from how people actually use language. According to this perspective, linguistic structures are shaped by human cognitive experiences and gradually stabilize through repeated use. Each linguistic structure carries nuanced semantic intentions and functions. Construction grammar takes a more detailed approach, emphasizing that seemingly similar sentences are not identical but contain subtle semantic differences. This perspective aligns with the natural tendency of language to simplify and differentiate itself. If two expressions appear too similar, they will typically compete, with one eventually disappearing or developing distinct meanings. The text illustrates this concept through passive construction examples, demonstrating how seemingly similar sentences can have significant semantic restrictions. For instance, the phrases "The corner was turned" and "The page was turned" are not interchangeable. The acceptability depends on whether the subject is genuinely affected by the verb's action.

References:

1. Anatol S. & Stefan Th. G. Collostructions: Investigating the interaction of words and constructions [J]. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*
2. Chomsky, N. 1981. *Lectures on Government and Binding* [M]. Dordrecht: Foris. Croft, W. 2009. *Constructions and generalizations* [J]. *Cognitive Linguistics*
3. Dong & Liang. 2004. The roles constructions plays in the comprehension of English sentences for Chinese students [J]. *Foreign Language Teaching and Study*
4. Ellis, N. C. & F. Ferreira-Junior. 2009a. Construction learning as a function of frequency, frequency distribution and function [J]. *The Modern Language Journal*
5. Goldberg, A. E. 1995. *Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure* [M]. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
6. Goldberg, A. E. 2001. Patient arguments of causative verbs can be omitted: the role of information structure in argument distribution [J]. *Language Science*
7. Goldberg, A. E. 2003. *Constructions: a new theoretical approach to language* [J]. *Trends in Cognitive Science*
8. Goldberg, A. E. 2009b. *Construction work* [J]. *Cognitive Linguistics*
9. Gries, S. T. & Wulff. 2009. Psycholinguistic and corpus-linguistic evidence for L2 constructions [J]. *Annual Review of Cognitive Linguistics*