

## Can frames describe the meanings of grammatical constructions?

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This paper discusses a hypothesis that Frame Semantics and Construction Grammar have put forth, namely, “meanings of grammatical constructions can be described by frames” (Fillmore et al. 2012). From the beginning of the development of the theories their proponents have regarded them as “sister theories” (Östman 2021) and assumed that frames could describe constructional meaning. Until recently, however, few studies have addressed the mechanism of how frames pertain to the meanings of constructions (cf. Ohara and Petrucci 2021, Czulo et al. 2020, Perek and Patten 2019, Torrent et al. 2018). Although Frame Semantics distinguishes between the semantic frame and the interactional frame (Fillmore 1982, Fillmore and Baker 2015), the interplay between the two types of frames has not received much attention. The current work builds on Croft’s idea of comparative concepts, which hypothesizes that constructional meaning involves both semantic content and its packaging (Croft 2022: 12). It employs data from Japanese FrameNet (JFN) and the JFN Constructicon (Ohara 2018) to argue that describing the meaning side of constructions requires both kinds of frames.

Semantic frames are script-like conceptual structures that describe types of situations, objects, or events along with their participants and props (Ruppenhofer et al. 2016:5), while interactional frames involve “... how we conceptualize what is going on between the speaker and the hearer, or between the author and the reader” (Fillmore 1982: 117). Although Fillmore proposed both types of frames at a relatively early stage of the development of Frame Semantics, only recently has FrameNet (FN) had the chance to begin to address the phenomena of interactional frames. So far FN has defined the *Attention\_getting* frame, an interactional frame “[that] covers terms used to get someone’s attention, including INTERJECTIONS (e.g., *hey*, *yo*) and certain terms of address (ADDRESS\_TERM), the latter of which may serve the function of attention getting” (<https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu>).

This paper argues that both semantic frames and interactional frames are needed to describe meanings of constructions. This is so, because all constructions encode both semantic content, i.e., information, and the packaging of that information (Croft 2022: 15): Semantic frames have to do with the semantic content of constructions; and interactional frames involve the packaging of that information in constructions, how speakers conventionally use constructions in interactions, i.e., functions of constructions such as declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamative, to name a few.

- (1) *Shinu ka ikiru ka to yû jōkyō* <sup>Event</sup> *datta*  
Die or live or QUOT say situation COP-PST  
Lit. “(It was) a situation that says die or live”  
= “It was a question of life or death for me.”

Sentence (1), above, constitutes an instantiation of the Predicate Nominal Construction in Japanese. The nominal predicate *jōkyō* ‘situation’ evokes the *Event* frame (“An *EVENT* takes places at *TIME* and *PLACE*”), a semantic frame that FN has defined. At the same time, the Predicate Nominal Construction has a discourse function of event reporting, in which an event is presented as important new information. This function may be defined as an interactional frame, the *\*Event-Central* frame, in which “the Speaker conveys New information about an event.” In other words, to describe the meaning side of the construction, which consists of a semantic content and a packaging of the semantic content, we need both the *Event* frame and the *\*Event-Central* frame.

To summarize, this paper claims that by employing semantic frames that involve the semantic content, and interactional frames that pertain to packaging of the semantic content, describing meanings of constructions becomes possible. By proposing the different roles of semantic and interactional frames in describing constructional meanings, this paper highlights the importance of interactional frames in Frame-Semantic analysis. This paper also urges lexicon-building projects such as FN and JFN, as well as constructicon-building projects (Lyngfelt et al. 2018), to take interactional frames into account when analyzing constructions. Furthermore, this paper suggests that aligning constructions in typologically distinct languages will require analyzing both types of frames.

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