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FORMULAIC LANGUAGE SEQUENCES IN DISCOURSE AND NARRATIVE: CONSTRUCTIONIST APPROACH

The article provides a review of the language theories in the cognitive perspective maintaining that formulaic sequences are linguistic elements which are perceived as fixed and prefabricated wholes that can be retrieved from memory at the time of use. The theoretical consideration that most fixed expressions are defined relative to a certain conceptual framework also calls for special studies so emphasis is put on their functional and semantic characteristics in discourse and narrative.

New developments in constructive grammar are used to design an approach based on the idea of combining linguistic elements into complex expressions and to elaborate on the hypothesis that language is grounded in language independent cognitive processes. The author highlights the possibility to broaden research paradigm to study formulaic language units with the overall aim to deepen understanding of the role of proceduralized knowledge in discourse and narrative interpretation.

The article also demonstrates insights into what constitutes a formulaic sequence to determine distinctive characteristics of such meaningful sequences. The author claims that formulaic sequences have different pragmatic functions in discourse and narrative which are predetermined by their semantics and the context of the situation. The use of formulaic language units in context is governed by pragmatic principles which assign particular functions to these sequences. Pragmatic potential of the formulaic language units that is analyzed in the article gives evidence to the significant role ready-made chunks and preferred sequences of words play in language acquisition and production.

Key words: *formulaic sequence, prefabricated whole, situation-bound utterances, cognitive process, semantics, pragmatic function.*

Introduction. Last decades have seen a fast rise in the popularity of a constructionist approach to grammar theories based on the theoretical assumption that language is a wide network of constructions-pairings of form and meaning, formulaic sequences being considered the core category of meaningful fixed constructions. Recent linguistic studies that focus on the semantics of formulaic language units maintain their overall importance in language acquisition and production due to the particular role of such sequences in discourse.

The idea that certain language sequences have conventionalized meanings which predetermine their use in predictable situations is fundamental in constructive grammar. Extensive discussions of formulaic language constructions can be found in a number of studies done by Goldberg A. E., Kay P. & Fillmore Ch. J., Kecskes I., Wood D., Wray A. [1; 2; 3; 4; 5]. The term 'formulaic language' is an umbrella word for collocations, fixed expressions, lexical metaphors, idioms and other situation-bound utterances. Formulaic language units are usually defined as multi-word collocations which are stored and retrieved holistically.

In construction grammar it is argued extensively that different aspects of conceptual items and links, lexical items, phrases, and patterns of language can be activated by stimuli in the input or a certain context, thus, strings of language constructions can then be generated appropriate to the ideas linked to the stimuli, while more specific items and constructions can be placed with or within the formulae to generate fluent speech and facilitate effective language performance.

Objective. The article aims to discuss the prospects of the study of functions and semantics of formulaic language units in discourse and narrative within the cognitive framework and to outline tentative outcomes for linguistic studies and language teaching.

Discussion. Most cognitive linguists are completely in accord on the claim made by Langacker R. that linguistic structures are motivated by general cognitive processes [6]. This idea has proved fruitful and has been further developed in other grammars, in particular radical construction grammar that deals with cross-linguistic data, embodied construction grammar which emphasizes the relation of constructional semantic content to embodiment and sensor experiences, fluid construction grammar that proposes a universal mechanism for parsing and production as well a number of other grammatical theories that aim to study the process of grammaticalization, design of usage-based models. In general, cognition-focused grammatical studies extend the notion of formulaic and symbolic units to the grammar of languages.

Woods D. emphasizes a dramatic shift in the understanding of language from rule-governed, systematic behavior that has been dominant in linguistic theory for several decades to recognizing a significant role of formulaic language units viewed as ready-made chunks or preferred sequences of words in language acquisition

and production. The role of formulaic sequences in language production, particularly with regard to spontaneous spoken language, is a topic of investigation which has a rich potential for better understanding of how language is produced in real time. It is becoming more and more apparent, based on some thirty years of research that formulaic sequences are of critical importance in the production of fluent speech and that they play a key role in acquisition [4].

Kecskes I. provides a detailed overview of research of formulaic language units stating that 'by formulaic language we usually mean multi-word collocations which are stored and retrieved holistically rather than being generated *de novo* with each use. Collocations, fixed expressions, lexical metaphors, idioms and situation-bound utterances can all be considered as examples of formulaic language ... in which word strings occurring together tend to convey holistic meanings that are either more than the sum of the individual parts, or else diverge significantly from a literal, or word-for-word meaning and justifies the hypothesis of a *continuum* and maintains that formulaic language contains grammatical units (for instance: *be going to*), fixed semantic units (*as a matter of fact; suffice it to say*) and pragmatic expressions (such as situation-bound utterances: *welcome aboard; help yourself*). The findings of the research confirm that such functional continuum helps explain the difference between compositional meaning and actual situational meaning, so lexical items such as "going to" can become grammaticalized, or lexical phrases may lose their compositionality and develop an "institutionalized" function, such as *I'll talk to you later, How are you doing?, Welcome aboard* [3: 619–620]. Given the arguments formulaic sequences can be regarded as word sequences that recur again and again in the same form and they are believed to fit into a constructionist framework largely as lexically substantive constructions.

A well-grounded definition can be found in the pivotal work by Wray A. 'Formulaic language and the lexicon' that states that 'a formulaic sequence [as] a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar' was further developed to encompass the formulaic expressions within the framing procedure. Moreover, most fixed expressions are defined relative to a conceptual framework [5: 9].

Rationale. A deep insight into the nature and theoretical considerations of constructive grammar is presented in the works of Hoffman T. and Trousdale G. that provide evidence of the clear-cut connection between cognitive grammar that is traditionally understood to involve the description of how linguistic elements combine into complex expressions and the hypothesis that language is grounded in language-independent cognitive processes such as association (establishing psychological connections), automatization (using structures without much constructive effort), schematization (extracting a general structure or schema out of the commonality of specific experiences) and categorization (using stored structures to interpret new experience) [7].

The statement that form and content are symbolically linked is a cornerstone of current construction grammar and is impossible to overestimate as it implies that there are three basic structures that serve the semiological function of language – semantic structures, phonological structures and symbolic structures, as linguistic expressions consist of symbolic structures that are pairings of a semantic pole (the 'meaning' of an expression) with a phonological pole (the 'form' of an expression).

According to cognitive theories knowledge is organized by means of structures called either idealized cognitive models or domains. Currently these tend to be viewed as structured wholes, or *gestalts*, which have much in common with the possible worlds of truth-functional semantics and case frames [8]. The main difference between these well-defined concepts lies in the emphasis that is placed on either constituting components or different aspects, or levels of abstraction which are either the situation, or relations between the elements or the truth principle. As people usually categorize events and situations in terms of a scenario a typically structured idealized cognitive model is a sequence of events, with typical components like the source, the path and the goal, it being either logical or semantic by nature.

Analyzing the approach offered within the field of construction grammar Michaelis L. I. argues reasonably that the theory was devised in part to counteract the reductionist views of syntax and semantics, but at the same time it represented a return to a traditional, 'taxonomic' mode of grammatical analysis, as its proponents sought to show that there are constraints on form and interpretation that cannot be explained except as the products of grammatical constructions, form-meaning pairings of varying degrees of productivity and internal complexity [9].

The ideas worked out in cognitive grammar are basically similar to the fundamental theoretical assumptions construction grammar uses as 'although (it is) not based on a strictly objective 'mapping' of independently existing categories onto the language user's mind, (it) may, with its unified and humanized view of cognitive processes, provide a better framework for the study of at least certain elements of language (notably, elements expressing the speaker's epistemic commitment)' [5: 24].

Critical analysis of theoretical assumptions of construction grammar leads to a general conclusion that at present cognitive linguists and construction grammarians view formulaic sequences as a structured inventory of meaningful pairings. Importance of formulaic sequences in language performance, mainly unpredictable speech situations, has been studied quite extensively. Besides, there is convincing evidence of the fact that formulaic

constructions contribute to fluency, particularly modifiers and rhetorical organizers, certain frequent and prefabricated phrases, word combinations, grammatical structures associated with certain semantic concepts and fields that are used with ease.

It is our belief that a new prospective approach can be worked out within the approach with procedurized knowledge at its core. The perspective can help match semantics and pragmatics of the formulaic language units to broaden discourse and narrative interpretation scope in order to analyze the pragmatic value and loading of symbolic language. Moreover, a constructionist approach can provide a new perspective on categorization regarded as a basic aspect of both cognition and language use due to the very nature of the process that is inseparably connected with the basic human experience and abstract reasoning.

The peculiarities of the approach can be demonstrated while analyzing the excerpt that is part of the introduction to the novel 'Eat, pray, love: one woman's search for everything across Italy, India and Indonesia' by Elizabeth Gilbert.

The characteristic to be noted first is that many words in the excerpt are repeated and come in 'threes' –the idea behind this way of presenting the content surfaces only when the introduction is perceived properly as it is meant to offer a clear explanation of the perspective chosen by the author.

Special attention is also to be paid to the functional load and semantics of the lexeme 'or' which, being a universal marker of alternative choice, adds to the 'magic of threes' and eventually makes the introduction significantly meaningful. Moreover, it turns to serve a 'blueprint' or interpretation program that highlights the most essential aspects and offers a particular perspective.

Having analyzed the semantics and pragmatics of formulaic sequences in the first four paragraphs out of nine in the excerpt (*formulaic units are given in bold and repeatedly used elements are underlined*) the conclusion that the form and the content are paired in a special way in such constructions to make a cognitive pattern that is framed in a particular way to provide reasoning can be drawn quite rightly. The pattern is laid by the strings of formulaic constructions combined with recurring elements to emphasize an image, idea, experience or fact. It is important to mention that most of these elements are presented in clusters of threes, making a kind of matrix with meaningful elements intertwined elaborately to convey the message to the full:

or	...	or	...	<u>The 109th Bead</u>
<u>you see</u>	...	<u>wearing beads</u>	...	a lot of ...
<u>You also see</u>	...	a lot of	...	<u>wearing beads, too</u>
<u>strings of beads</u>	...	<u>japa malas</u>	...	<u>bead</u>
<u>japa malas</u>	...	<u>japa mala</u>	...	<u>108 beads</u>
<u>108</u>	...	<u>three-digit multiple of three</u>	...	<u>three threes</u>
And three	...	of course	...	<u>balance</u>
as ... or see	...	<u>balance</u>	...	<u>structure</u>
<u>japa mala</u>	...	<u>108 tales</u>	...	or
<u>beads</u>	...	<u>string</u>	...	<u>108 tales</u>
<u>three</u>	...	<u>Italy, India and Indonesia</u>	...	<u>three</u>
<u>this year</u>	...	<u>tales</u>	...	let me conclude by saying also
	...	<u>structure</u>	...	<u>japa mala</u>
because	...	<u>structured</u>	...	not spazzy free-for-all
not even	...	of the spazzy <u>free-for-all</u>	As both ... and
<u>beads</u>	...	as much as possible	...	In any case
<u>japa mala</u>	...	<u>extra</u>	...	<u>bead</u>
<u>the 109th bead</u>	...	<u>balanced</u>	...	<u>108</u>
<u>the 109th bead</u>	...	<u>extra</u>	...	or
But	...	apparently	...	<u>pause</u>
<u>thank</u>	...	<u>teachers</u>	...	So
<u>the 109th bead</u>	...	<u>offer thanks</u>	...	<u>teachers</u>
<u>this year</u>				

In addition to the vital role of the formulaic sequences in the excerpt the layout of the whole introduction that is organized in 9 paragraphs implies that the novel has a huge interpretation potential with numerous implications that can be decoded in different ways. The way 'Introduction' is presented is unusual as well as because it has a special name for all of the three parts connected with the alternative 'or' lexeme.

Introduction

or

How This Book Works

or

The 109th Bead

When you're traveling in India – especially through holy sites and Ashrams – you see a lot of people wearing beads around their necks. You also see a lot of old photographs of naked, skinny and intimidating Yogis (or sometimes even plump, kindly and radiant Yogis) wearing beads, too. These strings of beads are called japa malas. They have been used in India for centuries to assist devout Hindus and Buddhists in staying focused during prayerful meditation. The necklace is held in one hand and fingered in a circle – one bead touched for every repetition of mantra. When the medieval Crusaders drove East for the holy wars, they witnessed worshippers praying with these japa malas, admired the technique, and brought the idea home to Europe as rosary.

The traditional japa mala is strung with 108 beads. Amid the more esoteric circles of Eastern philosophers, the number 108 is held to be most auspicious, a perfect three-digit multiple of three, its components adding up to nine, which is three threes. And three, of course, is the number representing supreme balance, as anyone who has ever studied either the Holy Trinity or a simple barstool can plainly see. Being as this whole book is about my efforts to find balance, I have decided to structure it like a japa mala, dividing my story into 108 tales, or beads. This string of 108 tales is further divided into three sections about Italy, India and Indonesia – the three countries I visited during this year of self-inquiry. This division means that there are 36 tales in each section, which appeals to me on a personal level because I am writing all this during my thirty-sixth year.

*Now before I get too Louis Farrakhan here with this numerology business, **let me conclude by saying that I also like the idea of stringing these stories along the structure of a japa mala because it is so... structured.** Sincere spiritual investigation is, and always has been, an endeavor of methodical discipline. Looking for Truth is not some kind of spazzy free-for-all, not even during this, the great age of the spazzy free-for-all. As both a seeker and a writer, I find it helpful to hang on to the beads as much as possible, the better to keep my attention focused on what it is I'm trying to accomplish.*

***In any case**, every japa mala has a special, extra bead – the 109th bead – which dangles outside that balanced circle of 108 like a pendant. I used to think the 109th bead was an emergency spare, like the extra button on a fancy sweater, or the youngest son in a royal family. **But apparently** there is an even higher purpose. When your fingers reach this marker during prayer, you are meant to pause from your absorption in meditation and thank your teachers. **So here, at my own 109th bead, I pause before I even begin. I offer thanks to all my teachers, who have appeared before me this year in so many curious forms** [10: 1–3].*

Strings of repeatedly used elements as well as the abundance of 'or' structures, frequently used parallel constructions and all the cases of 'numerology' all serve the purpose of providing an interpretation pattern to decode in which the idea of personal search for balance is a leading one. Still, as if in contrast, the formal or surface aspect is deliberately de-framed as even the part that is stated to contain conclusion is restructured so that to re-introduce the thank-you or acknowledgement section.

All the peculiarities studied prove that the use of formulaic language units is governed by pragmatic principles, which also assign particular functions to these sequences in discourse and narrative. The meaning of a formulaic sequence is made up of conceptual structures of reasoning that is realized on the linguistic level through grammatical structures that have linguistic elements of alternative meaning. Consequentially, not only grammatical structures that are fixed, but the composition of discourse or narrative can be regarded as argument schemata characterized by the pairings of form and conventionalized meanings that are actualized in every concrete context in a special way. The constructionist approach based on a connection of form and function pairings makes it ideal for the study of semantics and pragmatics of discourse and narrative.

Conclusion and perspectives. Recent studies in cognitive linguistics provide proof of the essential role formulaic language units play in processing and storing information, their form and content being symbolically linked. Basic structures that serve the semiological function of language (semantic, phonological and symbolic structures) are represented linguistically in the pairings of a semantic aspect, i.e. the meaning of an expression, with a phonological aspect, e. i. its form. The term 'formulaic language' is used to encompass collocations, fixed expressions, lexical metaphors, idioms and situation-bound utterances.

Application of the constructionist approach leads to a conclusion that both the form and the content are paired in a special way to make a cognitive pattern that is framed in a particular way to provide proper reasoning. Besides, it helps match semantics and pragmatics of formulaic sequences to broaden discourse and narrative interpretation scope to analyze the pragmatic value and loading of symbolic linguistic elements. Such an approach might prove useful both for the further study of pragmatics of language units and for language teaching as formulaic language units are usually stored and retrieved holistically.

Despite the fact that numerous researchers have attempted to provide evidence that formulaic language is basic to language development and production, the awareness of its importance in language learning is still rising. Further studies will help broaden the study of formulaic expressions and draw theoretical considerations about their role and functions in narrative and discourse, in situation-bound utterances in particular. Moreover, theoretical foundations of constructivist approach can offer a new perspective for integrating interdisciplinary studies of cognitive and social factors in language variation to produce effective models of controlled language production.

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Чугу С. Д. Формалізовані мовні структури в дискурсі: конструктивістський підхід.

У статті узагальнено підходи, характерні для конструктивістської граматики, і обґрунтовано доцільність використання когнітивно-прагматичних засад інтерпретації дискурсу та художнього тексту.

Автор здійснює спробу розширити дослідницьку парадигму вивчення функційного навантаження формалізованих мовних структур у дискурсі з метою встановлення їх прагматичних та семантичних характеристик.

Стаття також окреслює перспективи використання результатів наукової розвідки у міждисциплінарних дослідженнях для поглиблення розуміння механізмів продукування мовлення.

Ключові слова: формалізоване словосполучення, шаблонне конструктивне ціле, ситуативно детерміноване висловлення, когнітивний процес, семантика, прагматична функція.

Чугу С. Д. Формализованные языковые структуры в дискурсе: конструктивистический подход.

В статье обобщаются подходы, характерные для конструктивистической грамматики, и обосновывается целесообразность использования когнитивно-прагматических основ интерпретации дискурса и художественного текста.

Автор предпринимает попытку расширить исследовательскую парадигму изучения функциональной нагрузки формализованных языковых структур с целью определить их прагматические и семантические характеристики.

В статье также очерчены перспективы использования результатов исследования в междисциплинарных исследовательских работах для углубления понимания механизмов продуцирования речи.

Ключевые слова: формализованные словосочетания, шаблонное конструктивное целое, ситуационно детерминированное высказывание, когнитивный процесс, семантика, прагматическая функция.