

A Constructional Account of the Close Apposition in English

Unlike the close apposition construction (Close-AC), English loose apposition (Loose-AC) displays quite diverse syntactic and semantic/pragmatic properties (Keizer 2005, Acuna-Farina 2009). In this paper we suggest that a Construction-Grammar (CxG) Perspective (see Goldberg 2006) can offer us a streamlined analysis for these properties.

According to Kaiser (2007), unlike the Loose-AC, the Close-AC can be classified into five different types, depending on the property of the anchor (NP1) and the appositive (NP2), as seen from the corpus data (COCA: Corpus of Contemporary American English):

- (1) a. Type 1: [Det + [N + **Prop-N**]] (modifier-head structure)
[The actor John Austin] plays Poe in the one-man show. (COCA 2002 SPOK)
- b. Type 2: [Det + [N + CN]] (head-complement structure)
[The word love] is so abused. (COCA 2006 MAG)
- c. Type 3: PosDet + N + Det + CN (head-modifier)
[My friend the president] was a good man that did a bad thing (COCA 1998 SPOK)
- d. Type 4: Prop-N + Det + CN (coordination)
[Chuck Norris the actor] came out here. (COCA 1993 NEWS).
- e. Type 5: Title-N + **Prop-N** (functor-head)
[Actor James Franco] is now in rare company. (COCA 2011 SPOK)

Each type is formed with different combinatorial rules. We suggest that Type 1 is N2-headed like a typical NP structure (cf. *the infamous Robert Dinnis*) in which the Det is a specifier. This explains why Type 1 excludes examples like **a poet James, a James who came here yesterday*. Meanwhile Type 2 is N1-headed with N2 as a complement. N1 can be complex as in *my good friend the lawyer*. Unlike Type 1, Type 2's N1 does not entail N2. Type 2's Det is also cannot be indefinite (**a word recession*). Type 3 has two full-fledged NPs – forming a Head-modifier construction as in *my good friend [[the poet Anna Akhmatav]]* Type 4, in which NP1 is a proper N and the NP2 cannot be an indefinite (**John a friend*) is like a coordination structure in which two 'definite' NPs are juxtaposed as in *Ted Danson the actor*. Type 5 is the combination of the functor and the N2 head, in which the title N is a functor.

As such, we can observe that the Close-AC makes use of all the possible X'-rules to reflect the roles of each NP in terms of syntax. Instead of assuming that these subtypes form one homogenous construction type, this paper suggests that each of these subtypes inherits appropriate combinatorial properties from the counterpart English phrasal constructions including head-modifier, head-complement, and head-functor constructions. This inheritance-based approach can account for the complexities of the construction in question. This way of describing the grammar can also offer us a way of accounting for the semantics/pragmatics properties of the construction, uniquely assigned to the construction. The semantic relation of the Close-AC is, we assume, taken to be a 'copula-relation' which have three different subtypes: identification, predication, and specification. The identification is the main use of the Close-AC as in as in *the letter S* and *the princess Diana*. Note that this 'copula' semantic (including pragmatic relation) is a 'construction-specific' and non-compositional, coming from no expression within the construction.

It is clear that the Close-AC has more diverse uses than the Loose-AC, while sharing certain properties with it. These regularities as well as idiosyncrasies can be expected once we look at this construction with the spirit of CxG where all levels of linguistic description (including morpheme, word, phrase, and clause) are understood to involve pairings of form with semantic or discourse functions and language-specific generalizations across constructions are captured via inheritance networks (Goldberg 2006).

References

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