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Chapter 4

The place of constructions

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This study focuses on the question of the internal organization of the lexicon. In recent years, some cognitive linguists have considered the hypothesis that language forms are essentially independent of each other, thus questioning the widely accepted assumption of mental links between cognates or between constructions and their typical usage instances. The present study approaches this question on the basis of a grammatical construction (so-called *Characteristic-As-Place* construction) which can be considered a classic case in point: apart from a general schematic pattern, the construction is also associated with a number of concrete expressions built around the construction's pattern. It will be argued that it makes sense to postulate some kind of mental relations between the construction's fixed manifestations and its schematic formula. Without such relations it would be, among other things, difficult to account for innovative usage of the construction.

Key words: grammatical constructions, constructicon, mental representations, derivational relations, chunking

4.1 Language conceptualized as a place

In their attempts to describe its nature, various theoretical models cannot help but portray language as a place or an object that takes up physical space. This view is evident in the title of Jackendoff's (1997) *Architecture of the Language Faculty*. The LANGUAGE IS A PLACE metaphor is also exploited in Wittgenstein's (1922/1974: 20) statement "the boundaries of language (the only language I understand) indicate the boundaries of my world". Similarly in Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, concepts in one domain are *mapped* onto concepts in another domain, as if the two domains—and by extension, language which operates on them—represented physical areas. To take one more example, in the context of evolutionary psychology, scholars talk about the "language faculty, like other biological systems showing signs of complex adap-

tive design” (Jackendoff & Pinker 2005: 204) and in general discuss “language design features”, a clear mental shortcut which involves looking at language as if it were a building or artifact designed by the blind watchmaker of natural selection (Dawkins 1986).

While there are obvious limits to metaphoric modeling, there is a sense that viewing language as a sort of concrete place is *not* too far from the truth. After all, language is subserved by actual brain areas, and various scholars work under Chomsky’s (1988: 60) assumption that “The language faculty is a component of the mind/brain, part of the human biological endowment”. It has become customary to refer to linguistic knowledge (and the neural circuits behind it) as “the language faculty” or as *The Language Organ*, the title of Anderson and Lightfoot’s (2002) book. Thus research in neurolinguistics and psycholinguistics examines questions like “language localization”, “lexical memory store”, or the linguistic “real estate of the brain” (Hoff 2004: 50). Exactly how language is imagined spatially is another matter, and, rather predictably, a source of fundamental disagreements. Authors working in the nativist tradition claim that language is separate from other cognitive functions and it is itself subdivided into modules, a view most forcefully advocated by Fodor (1983) in his book *The Modularity of Mind*. For a long time, linguists assumed at least the binary partitioning of the language territory into the lexicon and syntax. But in recent years, the division has been questioned, as in Culicover & Jackendoff (2005: 26), who claim that “the traditional distinction between lexicon and grammar is mistaken”. In Cognitive Linguistics, the view of separate grammar and lexicon has been replaced by a continuum, where the lexicon is seen as transitioning seamlessly into syntax. In Construction Grammar, the continuum area has come to be referred to as the “phrasicon” (Fillmore, Kay, & O’Connor 1988: 511), “expanded lexicon”, or “constructicon” (Goldberg 2006: 64), “a super lexicon encompassing not only single lexical items, but also multi-word expressions and partially filled phrases as well as completely schematic syntactic patterns” (Szcześniak 2016: 121). All forms that are found to populate the constructicon are referred to as constructions, defined as “learned pairings of form with semantic or discourse function, including morphemes or words, idioms, partially lexically filled and fully general phrasal patterns” (Goldberg 2006: 5).

4.2 Relations between constructions

However, even though most cognitive linguists converge on the conclusion that knowledge consists in “the mental lexicon, idiom list, and grammar ... represented as a uniform collection of grammatical constructions” (Jurafsky 1996: 140) spread throughout the continuum, disagreements persist about the exact internal organization of the proposed continuum area. The main question

I wish to address here is whether constructions residing in the constructicon are interconnected or primarily independent. The interconnected network scenario is advocated by authors like Goldberg (2006), Trousdale (2015), or Perek (2016). Under this view, “Constructions are linked in a network and may capture grammatical patterns at any level of complexity and abstraction” (Perek 2016: 1).

The opposing view, under which constructions are believed to be largely autonomous is promoted by Bybee (2010) or Taylor (2012). Although Bybee (2010: 25) herself uses the term “network of relations”, presupposing that constructions are linked together within the user’s cognitive representation of language, she qualifies this proposal and stresses that links between constructions “can be of varying strengths. Certain factors ... are influential in the maintenance or loss of these lexical connections” (p. 25). Because the question of links between constructions is part of her exemplar model, a brief excursus on the model’s main assumptions is necessary here. Exemplars are defined as “rich memory representations; they contain, at least potentially, all the information a language user can perceive in a linguistic experience” (Bybee 2010: 14). Exemplars are memory units corresponding directly to constructions, and indeed the two terms can be used largely interchangeably. However, apart from specifying constructions as pairings of form and function/meaning, exemplars are conceived of more directly as entries in the speaker’s mental representations, and the exemplar model strives to capture the psychological nature of such entries in the mind. Thus exemplars are hypothesized to accommodate information about contextual specifications, where

This information consists of phonetic detail, including redundant and variable features, the lexical items and constructions used, the meaning, inferences made from this meaning and from the context, and properties of the social, physical and linguistic context (Bybee 2010: 14).

Bybee further claims that exemplars are subject to constant updates: “exemplars are considered to register details about linguistic experience” (p.14), a view echoed in Taylor’s (2012: 3) mental corpus thesis, where “each linguistic encounter lays down a trace in memory. The trace pertains not only to the linguistic signal as such, but also to the context in which it is encountered”. In the same vein, both Taylor and Bybee stress “rich memory representations” (Bybee 2010: 31), where “the detail-rich and multi-dimensional representation applies to the structural, semantic, and discourse-related aspects of speech” (Taylor 2012: 286). The rationale here is that all that detail is directly relevant to usage; what the speaker knows about a given construction affects how she will use it.

The emphasis on detail-rich knowledge also explains why these authors downplay relations between constructions. Quite simply, from the user’s point of view, what matters is how a given construction is used, what communicative

function it fulfills, how appropriate or apt it is in a given context, and any information in the service of efficient use, but crucially *not* what other constructions it may be related to. Even in the case of constructions that are closely linked, i.e. where one construction can be shown to originate from another, or to be its specific instantiation, any links between them are, according to Bybee, subject to gradual weakening and eventual dissolution. This can be illustrated on the example of expressions like *take a break* or *pull strings*. They form as independent exemplars through the process of chunking: “If two or more smaller chunks occur together with some degree of frequency, a larger chunk containing the smaller ones is formed” (Bybee 2010: 34). These expressions can be said to be specific instances of schematic transitive constructions V-NP, and in the speaker’s mental representations, links can be hypothesized to hold between the chunked expression *break a habit* and its component words *break* and *habit*, as represented by means of lines in Figure 4.1.

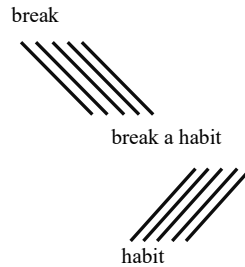


Figure 4.1 Relations between a chunk and its component words

According to Bybee (2010: 48), complex chunks “maintain their internal structure and their relations with the other uses of their component parts” but these “complex units may become autonomous from their sources, losing both internal structure and transparent meaning”.

If true, attrition of interconnections between constructions may have profound implications in terms of the range of phenomena that can be affected. It is not only chunks like *break a habit* that lose their association with the verb *break*; the same applies to special cases of schematic constructions involving concrete lexical insertions. For instance, the *way* construction can be assumed to reside in the speaker’s construction as a schematic form [v one’s way PP], and it can also be stored in lower-level formulaic chunks like [*make your way* PP] or even more substantively as [*talk your way out of trouble*]. The same is true of complex words like *available* which cease to be related to their etymological components *avail* and *-able*. Such weakening interconnections can be thought of as fading traces of a language form’s derivational history. If this fading mechanism is as pervasive as Bybee claims, the consequences for the overall picture may be rather dramatic, as a speaker may lose awareness of not only relations between

cognates (*dear* and *dearth*, *warm* and *warmth*) but also polysemous uses of the same word. This issue will be addressed in Section 4.4.

In what follows, I will focus on a fairly schematic pattern with a number of relatively autonomous lower-level instantiations that have developed based on the formula provided by the construction (coincidentally, the pattern in question has to do with the notion of place too, as it serves to express a salient property of a location being described in a sentence). After I have reviewed the form and use of this construction, I will return to the question of how best to imagine the arrangement of the contents of the construction. That is, the construction will serve as an opportunity to explore the issue of interconnections between related patterns, and I will argue that even assuming autonomy of emerging chunks, downplaying their links with the host pattern is not entirely justified.

4.3 The Characteristic-As-Place Construction

4.3.1 A form highlighting a salient characteristic

This section focuses on what can be termed the Characteristic-As-Place Construction (CAP), analysed in more detail in Szcześniak (2019), exemplified by the sentences in (1).

- (1) a. Helen watched her nieces from the *safety* of her recliner. (Gin Jones, *A Dose of Death*)
 b. Lyn's work continues in the *comfort* of the Arbor House Bed and Breakfast. (Ray Madaghiele, *Ray of Hope*)
 c. Down below, we sit in the *comfort* of the gazebo. (Marquis Heyer, *Whispers of the Poet*)
 d. What you do in the *privacy* of your home is your business. (Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing in America*)
 e. That evening, in Amsterdam, I sat in the *peace* of the lounge of a private hotel. (W. G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*)

The above uses should be considered instantiations of a special construction. Phrases like *from the safety of her recliner* or *in the privacy of your home* are built around a clear pattern represented in (2), where NP_{char} stands for a noun naming a characteristic of a location NP_{loc}, all normally preceded by a preposition NP_{loc}.

- (2) P NP_{char} of NP_{loc}

The main purpose of the construction is to reify an abstract property of the location in question and make it look *as if* that property is an actual location.

As a consequence, the subject of the sentence is construed as being in or moving through that materialized characteristic. This reframing of the characteristic as a location is a kind of mental transubstantiation that gives the construction its name. It must further be pointed out that the element of physical motion or location of the subject through the characteristic is crucial because it is what sets the construction apart from other syntactic patterns that also allow noun phrases preceded by prepositions:

- (3) New York State continues to invest in the safety of the airport. (<https://www.governor.ny.gov>)

In (3) too, the *safety* can be construed metaphorically as a location (*in which* investment is made), but the key word here is “metaphorically”. By contrast, the properties in (1) are viewed as if they are actual locations, in which people (or other concrete figures) can sit, from which people can watch something or in which anything can be done. In other words, the pattern triggers a semantic operation through which a characteristic materializes into a space metonymic with the location named by the noun following it. It can be speculated that the metaphoric construal of a property as a location, like in (3), served as a precursor for reified uses like those in (1), where a property is treated as a *de facto* location. And it can be further hypothesized that, at some point in the history of English, the shift from the metaphoric to the reified occurred (perhaps) through transitional uses such as the example in (4), where the interpretation of the property is ambiguous between the two readings.

- (4) Sleep, O sleep in the calm of all calm,
 Sleep, O sleep in the guidance of guidance,
 Sleep, O sleep in the love of all loves
 (Lines from *The Death Dirge*; a Gaelic prayer, author and date unknown)

And like a typical location noun, the characteristic NP_{char} can be preceded by a diverse range of prepositions found in descriptions of locations. A cursory glance at a number of examples of use is enough to conclude that probably any preposition is possible. The examples in (5) are a brief sample of both locative and motive prepositions.

- (5) a. A person finds going **out of** the comfort of his or her own home agonizing.
 (Joc Anderson, *The Author of Love*)
 b. He moved most of the guards back **into** the comfort of the buildings.
 (Michael Connelly, *The Mortarmen*)
 c. ...many of us have been discussing the Prophecy **around** the privacy of our camp fires for weeks now. (Sara Douglass, *Enchanter*)

- d. ... he led a group of sailors and Basque fishermen *inside* the safety of Louisbourg. (Guy Wendell Hogue, *Louisbourg*)
- e. Women living in refuges have to be constantly vigilant when *outside* the safety of the refuge. (Lyn Shipway, *Domestic Violence*)
- f. A few metres *above* the safety of the new pathway, the sled hit a small outcrop of ice. (Lee F Herrick, *The Foundation Vault*)

Another hint that the pattern is a separate construction is that it is not available in some languages. For example, if translated verbatim from example (1e), the sentences in Czech¹ (6) or Polish (7) are decidedly anomalous:

- (6) * Toho večera v Amsterdamu jsem seděl v klidu pohovky soukromého hotelu.
- (7) * Tego wieczora w Amsterdamie siedziałem w spokoju salonu prywatnego hotelu.

The CAP construction is highly productive. Although it can most typically be attested with only a handful of nominal insertions, of which by far the most common are *privacy*, *comfort*, *safety*, the construction can also feature other nouns, as in (8). Other nouns attested as insertions in the NP_{char} slot include *tranquility*, *intimacy*, *familiarity*, *shelter*, *invulnerability* and *security*.

- (8) a. Nobody relaxes until we chug past the breakwater, and even slipping into the *calm* of the marina. (Charlotte Gill, *Eating Dirt*)
- b. All too quickly we were transported from the *serenity* of the woods. (Michelle Pugh, *Love at First Hike*)
- c. Mallous peered around in the *quiet* of the museum. (Philip M. LaVoie, *Legacy of the Vampire*)

4.3.2 Central exemplar meaning

Of prime importance for the present study is the question of the semantics of the construction, because it is directly relevant to how various instances of the

¹ For the sake of accuracy, it should be pointed out that the question is more complex. Czech seems to allow at least some uses of the construction, and so for example, it is perfectly natural to say *Helen pozorovala své neteře z bezpečí svého křesla* or *To, co děláš v soukromí svého domova, je tvoje věc* (literal translations of 1a and 1d, respectively; Petra Novotná, p.c.), which suggests that the construction may be partially productive or that some of the nouns denoting characteristics have lexicalized additional locative senses. However, any discussion of the intricacies of such sentences in Czech would go far beyond the scope of this study, whose main focus is on the behaviour of the construction in English.

construction are mutually related. In the cognitive linguistic literature it is assumed that new uses of a given construction are created based on semantic similarity to the main (central) instances of an established exemplar. What then is the meaning of the CAP's typical exemplars which can be assumed to be shared by most speakers? If uses like [p *the safety of* NP_{loc}] or [p *the comfort of* NP_{loc}] can be treated as likely candidates for exemplars in the speaker's mental representation of the construction, then most noun insertions found in the first segment of the [p NP_{char} *of* NP_{loc}] frame convey readings synonymous with either 'comfort' or 'safety'.

What could justify the characterization of the construction as an instrument for expressing 'safety', 'privacy' or 'comfort' is quite simply the evidently high frequency of its uses with the nouns *safety*, *privacy* and *comfort*, which constitute a great majority of all attestations. The remaining uses like those in (8) feature close synonyms most likely motivated by the correspondence with the two nouns, which function as benchmark representatives. At this point, it is tempting to conclude that the construction is strongly associated with the readings of 'safety', 'privacy' or 'comfort' or even that these readings *are* the meaning of the construction.

4.3.3 Less frequent interpretations

However, the semantics of the construction is not confined to a simple cluster of synonyms. The meanings conveyed in (9) and (10) go beyond the readings of 'comfort' and 'safety'. Among other less typical insertions are *quietude*, *excitement*, *coolness*, *charm*, and *splendor*.

- (9) a. They had slept each night, bent and knotted in the **discomfort** of the car seats, without undressing. (Newton G. Thomas, *The Long Winter Ends*)
 b. In the summer months they ordinarily retreated to the **cool** of the Khan Khokhii Mountains. (Tim Cope, *On the Trail of Genghis Khan*)
- (10) a. Hawke was able to lead them through the lower mountains and caverns and allow them to rest in the **obscurity** of the caverns. (Marleen Johnsen, *Beaumont Treasure*)
 b. In the silences between thoughts, emotions or sensations, we rest in the **enormity** of the ocean. (Ayala Gill, *Yoga as a Mindfulness Practice*)
 c. ...the witch was a victim and died in the **horror** of the flames. (Roland Barthes, *Michelet*)
 d. A huge gust hits the trees and Mara thinks of Rowan and all the others, starved, sick and dying in the **misery** of the boat camp ... (Julie Bertagna, *Exodus*)

- e. Inland a new generation of pioneers struggled in the *austerity* of the wilderness... (James David Hart, *The Popular Book*)
- f. ...to step into another world: from the *hustle and bustle* of an Alexandrian cult to the *stillness* of the Eastern deserts... (Phil Booth, *Crisis of Empire*)

While some of the less typical insertions can still be shown to allude to the semantics of ‘comfort’, as is the case with *charm* or *discomfort*, many other insertions (*obscurity*, *hustle and bustle*, *austerity*, *horror*) in (10) are hardly straightforward extensions of such a narrowly defined exemplar. What they share is a much more general sense of ‘defining characteristic or essence of the location described’.

Thus, exemplars, however frequent they may be, do not reveal the full meaning of a construction. Instead, their detailed meanings are specific instances of the general and abstract meaning of the construction. It is the comprehensive scope of the general meaning ‘defining characteristic’ that makes room for uses of nouns like *horror* or *enormity*, which would not be possible if the construction’s meaning were confined to meanings of ‘comfort’ or ‘safety’.

4.4 The psychological reality of relatedness

Based on the above observations of the CAP construction, I will now attempt to draw broader conclusions about the question of relatedness of forms within the construction. Bybee claims that when a construction gives rise to a substantive chunk, that chunk may acquire an increased degree of autonomy and gradually cease being associated with its mother pattern. This dissociationist view is in line with the more general cognitive linguistic rejection of derivations, under which constructions are not viewed as derivatives of other constructions (for example, the passive voice is argued to be independent from the active voice, despite Chomsky’s quite irresistible transformational analyses of the former as originating from the latter). Perhaps the most extreme version of the non-derivational view is found in Taylor (2012), who extends it to word senses:

Although the relatedness of two meanings might be apparent to the analysing linguist, it by no means follows that speakers of a language also perceive the different uses to be related. For the linguist, there might be compelling grounds to regard meaning B as an extension of meaning A; there might even be historical evidence for such a process. ... The notion of one meaning being derived from, based on, or an extension of another meaning might not feature at all in the speaker’s mental representation of the word and how it is used (Taylor 2012: 229).

Taylor's argument is that the cognitive linguist's prime ambition should be to account for the psychological reality of sense relatedness, and not to dwell on its historical record; what matters for language proficiency is how two given senses are used and not whether they are related.

However, the conception of words in the mental lexicon being mutually disassociated does not sit well with the insights flowing from earlier traditional descriptions of the language system, even those that strive to capture the mental functioning of language. To take one obvious example, recall that Saussure argued that words determine their meanings through correspondences with their neighboring words, including antonyms, synonyms and cognates, just like the value of a five-franc coin is not fixed by "the metal in a piece of money" (Saussure 1916: 118), but by its relation to other coins and their values:

...all words used to express related ideas limit each other reciprocally; synonyms like French *redouter* 'dread,' *craindre* 'fear,' and *avoir peur* 'be afraid' have value only through their opposition: if *redouter* did not exist, all its content would go to its competitors (Saussure 1916: 116).

In what follows I will argue that although the connections between language forms may be backgrounded and treated as secondary to the connections that these forms establish with their usage, it is nevertheless important to appreciate the possibility that in the mind of the speaker, correspondences between words—as well as between chunks and their dominant patterns—do matter and it is impossible to rule out their existence. What prompts Taylor and others to question the significance of relations is considerations of use, but ironically it is precisely for reasons of use that it makes sense to hypothesize that speakers do consult them, at least subconsciously, if only to determine the meaning of a lexical item they are about to use.

4.4.1 Relations opaque to awareness

First, before any other arguments are considered, it is perhaps necessary to point out that any discussions of the question are inevitably speculative. There is simply no way of knowing for sure whether two forms are related or completely independent in the speaker's mind. However, any strong statements against relatedness should be hedged against obvious facts like the unconscious nature of what happens in the mind: "the lexicon and the rules of grammar are not accessible to awareness. Only their consequences, namely linguistic expressions, are consciously available" (Jackendoff 1997: 181). Ruling out any connections is surely more extreme and implausible than allowing the possibility that two

language forms may be linked mentally in one way or another, at least at a very unconscious level. This scenario is justified by the well-known observation that memory (especially long-term memory) is highly associative (Goldberg 1995: 133). If anything, the mind is known to forge associative links rather than avoid them. In the case of linguistic associations, speakers often conjecture links between words, even if they need to double-check them for etymological accuracy. In fact, Taylor himself gives the example of people's false beliefs about relatedness of senses not justified by historical data:

Take, as an example, the word *ball*, in the meanings 'spherical object' and 'social event involving dancing'. Some people might see in the circular movement of the dancers or the circular shape of a dance floor a relation to the shape of a sphere; for these speakers, the word might count as polysemous (Taylor 2012: 229).

That speakers entertain such connections is a symptom of a deeper tendency to link word senses (and by extension, words with their cognates, and larger constructions with their specific instances) into networks. Some evidence in favour of this associative tendency is available from psycholinguistic studies of parallel activation of multiple memory contents, to which I turn now.

4.4.2 Cross modal priming

Some support for the idea that multiple senses of a word are accessed in parallel comes from a lexical decision experiment by Swinney (1979), which showed that when faced with a polysemous word, speakers nevertheless consult even those senses that context should help eliminate.

Swinney's study investigated the activation of the senses of the polysemous word *bug*, whose meanings include 'insect', 'error' and 'espionage device'. The design involved a lexical decision task where subjects were timed for their recognition of the words ANT and SPY. Some of the subjects were first asked to read the following sentences:

- (11) Rumor had it that, for years, the government building had been plagued with problems. The man was not surprised when he found several spiders, roaches, and other bugs in the corner of his room.

The objective was to investigate whether the words ANT and SPY would be recognized faster during the lexical decision task as a result of the subject's prior exposure to the word *bug*. Perhaps predictably, priming effects were observed for ANT, because the word *bug* in the priming sentence was used with the 'insect'

meaning, which is closely related to the word *ant*. But surprisingly, the reaction times for the word SPY also decreased, even though the context presented in the sentence did not justify the ‘espionage’ sense of *bug*:

not only are both (all) meanings for an ambiguity momentarily accessed, even in the presence of a strong biasing context, when the ambiguities are approximately balanced for most likely a priori interpretation ..., but that all meanings are also immediately and momentarily accessed even when materials have a priori biases largely toward just one of the ‘senses’ of the word tested (Swinney 1979: 657).

4.4.3 Generalizations

Many recent studies treat productivity and creativity as a product of analogy. Specifically, new uses are argued to be motivated by analogy with existing expressions, and these new uses form “by replacing a constituent verb, adjective or preposition by a synonym or antonym” (Langlotz 2006: 274). To take a well-known example, the *drive* ADJ construction can yield variants like *drive someone nuts*, *insane*, *berserk* etc. on analogy with the central chunk *drive someone crazy* (Bybee 2010: 81). In the case of the CAP construction too, most new uses can be explained by showing that new insertions are analogous to chunks like *the comfort of your home*. This chunk can serve as a model for *the luxury of your home* or *the bliss of their sphere*:

- (12) The Brahma gods are always affirming their identity and lingering in the bliss of their sphere. (Venerable Sucitto Bhikkhu, *The Dawn of the Dhamma*)

However, as was demonstrated in Section 4.3.3, many uses are hard to justify by analogy. Insertions like *hustle and bustle*, *obscurity*, or *enormity* are not synonymous or antonymous with *comfort* or any of the typical insertions, and they share little, semantically speaking, with these model insertions.

A better alternative is to account for them as following a higher-level (more general) pattern (2), repeated here for convenience in (13). The significance of a more general formula is that the first NP does not accommodate a synonym cluster centred around the meaning ‘comfort’, but allows nouns naming *any* characteristic of a location.

- (13) P NP_{char} of NP_{loc}

That, however, requires the speaker exploiting a relation between known chunks (that serve as models) and the schematic pattern. This is another way of saying

that speakers can generalize from specific examples to more schematic categories. This possibility is contested in Bybee: “productivity (the ability to apply existing structure to new utterances) can be accomplished through local analogies to existing exemplars, without reference to higher-level or more abstract generalizations” (Bybee 2010: 102). The problem is that the CAP (and many other constructions) can be shown to feature insertions that are *not* accomplished by straightforward local analogies to existing exemplars. They clearly rely on long-range analogies with schematic patterns of the type shown in (13), which suggests that speakers are aware of underlying relations involved.

Now before the non-relational organization view is dismissed, it is fair to consider an alternative idea in its favour. One way of preserving the local-analogies-only view would be to assume that in some cases exemplars serve as models for creative extensions, which can by definition be rather liberal. Such extensions go far beyond simple synonymy, as can be seen in numerous examples of metaphoric extensions identified in the cognitive linguistic literature. When a given lexical item is used with a metaphoric meaning, such as *breeze* in *breeze through the task*, the extension involves much more than simple synonymy. Here, the verb is interpreted as meaning something more elaborately removed from the literal ‘blow like a wind’. Advocates of non-relational accounts could argue that non-typical uses of the CAP are also extensions, and thus obviate the need for generalization relations with high-level schematic patterns.

However, this argument only works if extensions are clearly motivated and share important points highlighted by the analogy applied. There is a lot of shared semantic content highlighted in the use of *breeze* with the meaning ‘proceed (in a task)’: the fact that the progress is as effortless as a breeze is light, or that in both cases considerable distance is covered. By contrast, the extensions found in the CAP construction share little with frequent exemplars. If anything, they represent dilutions of the semantics of low-level chunks, which is a signature feature of generalization, not of extension.

4.4.4 Inflation of disconnected chunks

One final argument against overplaying the autonomy of language forms in the constructicon should become apparent when we follow the autonomy-above-relatedness view to its logical conclusion. Chunking is a theoretically unlimited process. A given sequence can solidify into increasingly specific chunks by fusing with other lexical material as illustrated in Figure 4.2 below.

It would be absurd to claim that a speaker who has incorporated a chunk (in stage 4) into his or her knowledge no longer sees any relation between this chunk and its preceding dominant (in stage 3). Similarly, it is quite beyond belief to assume that speakers are not aware of links between clearly and saliently

related words like *whiten* and *white* or *speaker* and *speak*. Admittedly, it makes perfect sense to assume that a chunk may be allotted its own separate entry in the lexicon and, through frequent repetition, be consolidated to be instantly accessible for the purposes of fluent and efficient use, but it is unclear why these steps of psychological entrenchment should somehow erase its relations to even the closest constructions.

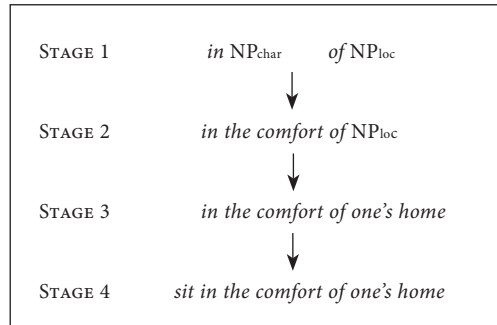


Figure 4.2 The chunking process yielding the low-level instantiation *sit in the comfort of one's home*

4.5 Conclusions

This study has been concerned with the issue of internal relations within the construction. Specifically, the question has been whether language forms are interconnected in the speaker's cognitive representations or, conversely, whether they should be treated as autonomous islands, mutually irrelevant and indifferent. More broadly, the question concerns all items of linguistic knowledge, which include not only very general patterns, fixed expressions, or complex words, but also multiple senses of polysemous words. Does it make sense to hypothesize connections between the meanings of *cut* in *cut the grass*, *cut the cloth* and *cut the salaries*? Searle (1980: 221) and Taylor (2012: 226) answer in the negative. They claim that the speaker benefits from associating these senses with specific occasions of use, but not from linking them with one another. Similarly, are there mental connections between *blockbuster* and the component elements *block* and *buster*? Gentner and Bowdle (2008: 118) suggest that “most people are unaware of the original sense of *blockbuster*, namely, a *bomb that can demolish an entire city block*”. The emerging picture is one where the speaker's knowledge may have little to do with the linguistic accounts of word formation which trace the mechanisms responsible for deriving new forms out of existing material. If it is true that the mental representations leave no place for interconnections between items of linguistic knowledge, we are faced with a paradoxical conclusion

that the enormous body of research amassed in fields like morphology, syntax, or historical linguistics may be little more than academic speculation, interesting, well-intentioned and even impressively compelling, but ultimately divorced from concrete reality.

But this conclusion is obviously extreme, if not harshly unfair. True, many insights about the psychological status of derivational correspondences between words may be inevitably speculative, as no brain imaging technology available makes it possible to demonstrate the existence of polysemous links or connections between constructions and their concrete instantiations. However, denying internal relations in the lexicon is pure speculation too. And the problem is that doubts about interrelations are based primarily on personal introspection. When authors like Taylor express their skepticism, they invoke the speaker's perspective, that is, their *own* private perspective, inspired by the irresistible impression of not paying attention to links between a given word being used and its cognates. Of course, it is hard to argue with that; after all, in the act of language use, the speaker's focus is on the communicative situation, and not on what might happen under the surface. But appeals to conscious monitoring is a dubious argument. By the same token, nobody is aware of the mental operations at work necessary to keep the balance while riding a bicycle, but that does not mean those operations do not take place. Explaining the mental reality of language knowledge and use by restricting one's observations to what is readily visible has a suspiciously behaviourist ring to it, and although cognitive linguistics has developed a distrust of anything that resembles hidden derivations or invisible relations, its insistence on the surface form has limited explanatory potential. As Dixon (2010: 40) observed, one cannot understand language fully by only analysing "surface structure; this is rather like trying to assess the physical fitness of an athlete from the clothes they wear".

Fortunately, our intuitions and hypotheses about the internal relations between language forms are not merely speculative. Even if we are far from being able to substantiate our claims by direct neurolinguistic evidence, we have enough clues gleaned from psycholinguistic studies (like the one summarized in Section 4.4.2) or from speakers' creativity in using constructions with new vocabulary items. Using words in novel combinations would be impossible without long-distance analogies (requiring relations between diverse items in the constructicon) because not all experimental uses of a construction can be accounted for by reference to existing instances. In their semantics they go well beyond the familiar patterns dictated by memorized chunks. These facts justify the conjecture that constructional "network is made up of instances of use (constructs), and constructions of varying levels of generality and productivity" (Trousdale 2015: 21).

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