“My constructions include viewpoint”: the genitive and constructional compositionality

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constructional meaning

- form-meaning mapping
- various levels of generalization
- question: can formal components of a construction contribute individual meanings?

Viewpoint

- visual artifacts
- narrative
- deictic expressions
- gesture and sign language
- metaphor
- stance (epistemic, emotional, ...)
- ... and constructions

One language’s creativity is another’s workaday grammar

(Nick Evans)
one person’s X is another person’s Y

- One person’s food is another person’s poison
- One person’s happy is another person’s sad

some X and Y pairs

- loss / gain
- zealot / visionary
- spending / job
- drug / poison
- blather / progress
- heretic / martyr
- propaganda / news

One person’s X is another person’s Y

- referent not identified in the sentence
- evocation of contrasting frames
- speaker’s expression of contrasted evaluative stances
- attributed to unidentified conceptualizers
- hence the generic/proverbial tone of the construction

One person’s X is another person’s Z

- One person’s trash is another’s lesson in recycling.
- One person’s trash is another person’s ...seahorse? (Washington artist recycles scrap metal in his sculptures)
- One person’s garbage is another’s power. (power provided by methane gas from landfills)
One person’s $X$ is another person’s $Z$

- there is a referent of $Z$
- it is not about contrasting stances
- rather, it profiles one stance and a shift away from that stance
- it is about unexpected productive use of things usually viewed through a negative stance
- the $Z$ expression is not a stance evoking noun, but a literal reference to an event or phenomenon

One person’s trash is another person’s treasure

subject of conceptualization 1

object of conceptualization

subject of conceptualization 2

frame 1
trash
negative stance

frame 2
treasure
positive stance

is the viewpoint associated with the construction as a whole or with one specific aspect of form?

constructional elements

- form-meaning mapping
- but also …
- genitive (viewpoint marker)
- $X$ and $Y$ (sources of evaluative frames)
- frame metonymy
- viewpoint outside the frames evoked
- intersubjective construal
constructional compositionality

- a form may contribute its meaning to many constructions and become a building block in the overall frame of the construction
- the same form may contribute a specific aspect of meaning to more than one construction
- there are several constructions relying in various ways on the genitive as a viewpoint marker and on frame-rich nouns
- because of the dual viewpoint, it is also a construction of intersubjectivity

the genitive

- is the ‘viewpoint’ meaning available elsewhere?
- *The street was littered with some person’s trash / my neighbour’s trash*
- other constructions?

XYZ constructions

- four elements
- three mentioned
- the relation between two is projected as the new relation between the other two

The Pope is the father of all Catholics.

- X is the Y of Z
- X (Pope), Y (father), Z (Catholics), W (unmentioned [child])
- X is a counterpart of Y; Z is a counterpart of W;
- Y-W relationship is projected into the blend; X-Z relationship thus emerges.
The Pope is the father of all Catholics

- Paul is Sally's father
- ??The Pope is all Catholics’ father

X is Z’s Y

- My Viper is my Sharon Stone. It’s the sexiest vehicle on the road.
- ??The Dodge Viper is the Sharon Stone of George (my brother, all drivers). It’s the sexiest vehicle on the road.

XYZ versus X is Z’s Y

- the Everest of Engineering
- Engineering’s Everest
Iraq is Bush’s Vietnam

- Iraq is Bush’s Vietnam
- (??Iraq is the Vietnam of Bush)

Y-W relationship (Johnson got into an unpopular war [Vietnam] that he couldn’t win or get out of) is projected into the blend; X-Z relationship thus emerges (Bush got into an unpopular war [Iraq] that he won’t be able to win or get out of).

Even though she has gained the prestigious Senate position, it is believed in certain quarters that this is one Hillary who has not yet reached the summit of her political Everest.
her political Everest

Clinton

senate

frame 1

career

Hillary

frame 2

mountain

up-down

ultimate achievement

Edmund Hillary

presidency

ultimate achievement

Hillary Clinton

blend

X’s Y includes Z

My Canada includes Quebec

Canadian English?

X’s Y includes Z

My CBC includes the CBC Radio Orchestra.

My Canada includes a racism-free workplace

My Ontario includes horse racing...does yours?

X’s Y includes Z?

... my country includes stupidity, and therefore must embrace Quebec.
emergence of a construction

- viewpoint genitive
- Canadian English?
- not like *I’m done my talk* (Hinnell 2012)
- proper names and other frame-rich nouns

proper names and frames

- these constructions manipulate the frames available in discourse
- proper names are carriers of rich frames
- they uniquely identify the referents

frame metonymy / manipulation

- multiple framings (*Canada, trash/treasure*)
- partial framing (*Iraq / Vietnam*)
- image schematic frame structure (*Everest*)

constructional meaning and compositionality

- form/meaning pairs at various levels
- independent constructions/recurring forms
- components:
  - frame metonymy
  - viewpoint
  - blending
Questions?