

Arguments for a Construction-based Approach to the Analysis of Chinese

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This paper argues that long-standing problems in the analysis of Chinese, such as the question of word classes and grammatical relations, can be resolved, or actually done away with completely, if we take a constructionist approach in the analysis. This means the constructions are taken as basic, so we only need to look at the propositional functions of elements in the construction (referential, modifying, or predicative), and do not need to posit global categories such as word classes and grammatical relations.

Keywords: Mandarin Chinese, Construction Grammar, grammatical relations, word classes, clausal noun modifying structures

1. Constructions

The idea that language involves constructions rather than rules has been around a long time. Dwight Bolinger (1961, 1976) argued that much of language use involves recall of complete forms, including sentences, from memory rather than generation of totally new forms, as these remembered forms are what become fixed syntactic patterns (constructional schemata). Bolinger argued for something

like constructions, what he called ‘idioms’, and combinations of constructions, what he called ‘syntactic blends’ to form new syntactic structures, and pointed out ‘the permeation of the entire grammatical structure by threads of idiom’ (1961:366). (See also Pawley 1985, Grace 1987, Langacker 1987, Nunberg, Sag & Wasow 1994.) In Foley & Van Valin 1984 (see also Van Valin & LaPolla 1997: Ch. 6) we find the first treatment of grammatical relations as a construction-based phenomenon, that is, rather than seeing grammatical relations as a global phenomenon in a language, they saw it as a matter of individual constructions where one argument position in a construction is singled out for special prominence and treatment as the pivot of the construction, and there is a restricted neutralization of semantic roles in that pivot position. Different languages may grammaticalize different kinds of pivots, and in different constructions, if at all, and a single language may grammaticalize more than one type of pivot.¹ A key insight of that approach is that the meaning of the construction is more than just the sum of the parts. The construction as a whole forces a particular interpretation (i.e. the construction itself has a meaning). For example, consider the “Cross-clause co-reference constraint” in English. In this construction there are two conjoined clauses with one argument omitted from the second clause. This construction forces a particular interpretation of coreference between a particular argument of the first clause and the omitted argument of the second clause, as in (1), even when the interpretation doesn’t make sense from a real-world perspective,

¹ It is important to distinguish simple topic-comment constructions from the type of grammaticalized pivot constructions that we are talking about here (as in (1) and (2) below). These pivot constructions constrain the interpretation of the role of referents in discourse, that is, they are a kind of referent tracking mechanism. Only they (and not the topic-comment structure) can be associated with syntactic relations (see LaPolla 2006a, 2006b for discussion). I have argued elsewhere that Chinese has not grammaticalized any such pivot constructions (e.g. LaPolla 1993, 2009).

as in (2). For an argument that isn't the actor of a transitive clause or the single argument of an intransitive clause to participate in this construction, the passive construction must be used, as in (1b).

- (1) a. The man_i saw the dog and Ø_i went downhill.
b. The dog_i was seen by the man and Ø_i went downhill.
- (2) The man_i dropped the melon and Ø_i burst. (Comrie 1988:191)

The modern constructionalist approach differs from earlier work in seeing all aspects of linguistic structure as constructions. In the constructionist approach, all grammatical knowledge is represented as constructions: pairings of form and meaning. Constructions can be simple or complex, schematic or substantive (or anything in between). No syntactic structure is needed aside from the constructions. There is also no separation of components as in the componential view of grammar that separates syntax, semantics, phonology, and pragmatics into different components that are separate from each other and from the lexicon, and must be linked together with linkage rules. In the constructionist approach there is no discussion of interfaces, as there are none. There is only the constructions, so there is also no separation of lexicon from the constructions; words are also constructions. In the Radical Construction Grammar of Croft (2001), the approach adopted here, there are no syntactic relations (which would be relations between parts of a construction other than the part-whole relation), only syntactic roles (part-whole relations). There are no syntactic categories other than the roles (propositional functions) the elements have in the constructions, and so there are no global syntactic categories in a language. As there are no universal syntactic construction types, there are no universal syntactic categories.²

² See the application of this view to transitivity in LaPolla (2011) and LaPolla, Kratochvíl & Coupe (2011).

2. Language structure as conventionalized constraints on inference

In several papers (LaPolla 1997, 2003, 2010, LaPolla & Poa 2002) we argued that there is no coding or decoding in communication, just ostension (performing an action in an ostensive way to show a desire to communicate) and inference (abductive inference, essentially guessing why the communicator made the ostensive act).³ Language is not seen as a thing, but as behavior, governed and constituted by convention and habit. Our knowledge of language is our memory of the communicative behavior of ourselves and others. The role of language (as well as gestures and other ostensive acts) is to constrain the addressee's interpretation of the communicative intention of the communicator. Linguistic patterns emerge in discourse during the process of interaction (Bybee 2006, Hopper 2011, 2012, Thompson & Couper-Kuhlen 2005). Constructions then, as defined above, are conventionalized patterns of experience which constrain the interpretation in a particular way. This view entails that each language is unique, and each structure which conventionalizes in a language does so in a particular type of situation, so each construction is unique.

3. Chinese

3.1 Background

In discussions of Chinese grammar, two problems have loomed large: word classes and grammatical relations. In terms of the former, Y. R. Chao (1968) devoted 300+ pages of his *Grammar of Spoken Chinese* to defining word classes (pp.498-815), aside from another whole chapter trying to define "word" itself in

³ This abductive inferential ability is a general cognitive ability, and is a survival instinct, used in understanding the natural world and the intentions of other humans. See LaPolla (2010) for more discussion.

Chinese, yet could not come up with any hard and fast definitions for classes, as there is a major problem of “overlapping classes”:

In Chinese 怪 *guay* is an adjective in 可是這很怪 *Keesh jeh heen guay* ‘But this is odd’, an adverb in 怪難看的 *guay nankann de* ‘rather ugly’, and a transitive verb in 別怪我! *Bye guay woo!* ‘Don’t find me odd—don’t blame me!’ ... (1968:498)

His response was to try to define them anyway, with lots of exceptions and overlapping. He specifically mentioned not taking the line of Li Jinxi 黎錦熙 (1992[1924]:24), who had argued that “The class of a word depends on the sentence (it appears in), outside of a sentence it has no class” (凡詞, 依句辨品, 離句無品), and later, that “through (its) function (its) class becomes manifest” (由職顯類; 1953:10-11, my translations). Yet in the quote above it seems that Prof. Chao is in fact following Li Jinxi’s view by saying the word *guay* (*guai*) belongs to a different class in each of the constructions it is used in. Recently two issues (40 and 41) of 語言學論叢 *Yuyanxue Luncong* (published by Beijing University) were devoted to defining word classes in Chinese; the controversies rage on. Most of the approaches taken take the distributional method for defining categories for granted; that is, they select constructions, and try to define global word classes based on particular constructions seen as criterial for the definition of those categories.

In terms of grammatical relations and the structure of the clause in Chinese, there are basically three opinions in the field: Topic-Comment (Y. R. Chao 1968, Lü Shuxiang 1979, LaPolla 2009); Topic-prominent (Li & Thompson 1976, 1981); and Subject-Predicate (Zhu Dexi 1982⁴ and most formalist approaches).

⁴ Although Prof. Zhu Dexi is generally seen as an exponent of the subject-predicate view, my own reading of his work is that he was closer to Prof. Chao in understanding “subject” to be topic.

Part of the difference is due to whether one assumes all languages must have the category of “subject”, which usually also means one assumes this represents a global phenomenon in any one language. Similar to the case with lexical categories, constructions are often used for determining or defining grammatical relations. In the following we will look at several key constructions in Mandarin Chinese to see to what extent we find a consistent pattern of lexical class or grammatical relation when we look at the use of these constructions in natural language data.

3.2 The *ba* construction

The first construction we will look at is the *ba* construction. In the common view of this construction, for example as laid out by Thompson (1973), the construction is said to manifest the template in (3):⁵

(3) NP1 *ba* NP2 V1 (V2) (NP3)

In this view the particle *ba* is said to be preceded by the agent of the main verb (V1) and followed by a noun or noun phrase and is said to mark the “direct object” of V1 (e.g. Sun & Givón 1985). It isn’t hard to find examples that seem to instantiate this template, for example in (4):

⁵ I must emphasize that this is Thompson’s view (and the common view) of this construction, which I am arguing against here; I do not accept the designations of “NP” and “V” used here.

(4) 他們計畫明年把共祭活動推廣到陵園和社區。

[Tamen] jihua mingnian⁶

3PL plan next.year

NP1

ba [gongji huodong] tuiguang dao [lingyuan

BA public.obervance activity spread arrive cemetery

ba NP V1 V2 NP3

he shequ]

and community

<http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2011-04-04/100722235984.shtml>

Although this example seems to show what is uncontroversially a noun phrase that might be considered the direct object after the particle *ba*, as it is the theme or patient of *tuiguang* ‘spread’, there are many examples that show a different pattern, where the element that follows the particle *ba* is either not a theme or patient, or is not clearly a noun phrase. Consider the examples in (5):

⁶ Abbreviations used include:

ADV adverbial marker

AFF the word 給 *gěi* when it is used as an affective marker

BA the word 把 *bǎ* when it is used in the *bǎ* construction

CL classifier

CSM change of state marker

LOC locative marker

MC modifying clause

NEG negation

NOM nominalizer

PFV perfective aspect marker

- (5) a. 如果你把筆寫禿了，只要按一下藍色按鈕，筆芯就會馬上變尖。

Ruguo ni ba bi xie tu le
if 2SG BA pencil write blunt CSM
'If you make the pencil blunt from writing with it,'

<http://www.ycxljy.com/jyky/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=16494>

- b. 這題太難了，會把頭髮愁白。

Zhe ti tai nan le, hui ba toufa chou bai
this question too difficult CSM will BA hair worry white
'This question is too difficult, it will make (one's) hair turn white.'

http://web.wenxuecity.com/BBSView.php?SubID=netiq_best&MsgID=582

- c. 因為這套衣服把我變的太可愛了，身材整個又矮腿又短全身看來就不成比例無言啦！

Zhe tao yifu ba wo bian de tai ke'ai le
this set clothing BA 1SG change ADV too cute CSM
'These clothes made me (look) too cute!'

<http://www.wretch.cc/blog/gitbox/4658325>

- d. “我聽說，一般的女人不喝酒，女人不喝一般的酒，喝酒的女人不一般。” “我怕你了，那我就喝一小點兒，剩下的你全包了。” “好吧，千萬別強迫自己，真怕你喝醉了，做出什麼傻事兒來。” “才不會呢，我還怕這兩瓶酒把你給喝醉了。”

Wo hai pa zhe liang ping jiu ba ni gei he zui le
1SG still fear this two bottle liquor BA 2SG AFF drink drunk CSM
'I'm even afraid you'll get drunk from these two bottles.'

<http://bbs.big5.voc.com.cn/topic-1964540-2-1.html>

In (5a) the pencil is an instrument, not the patient, of ‘write’; in (5b) *toufa* ‘hair’ is not a semantic argument of *chou* ‘worry’ at all; for (5c) there is no equivalent expression with the 1SG pronoun as the patient; and in (5d) the wine referred to by the referring expression before the particle *ba* is the patient of *he* ‘drink’, not the agent, and the agent of *he* ‘drink’ appears after the particle *ba*. So there is no consistency in terms of which roles appear in the post-*ba* slot, and in fact the referent referred to by the post-*ba* referring expression does not even have to be an argument of the verb.

Now let’s turn to the type of phrase that can appear in the post-*ba* slot. Consider the examples in (6):

- (6) a. 不要把吃飯變成一場戰爭。

Bu yao ba [chi fan] bian cheng yi-chang zhanzheng
 NEG want BA eat rice change become one-CL war
 ‘Don’t make eating into a war.’

<http://renyifei.172baby.com/posts/137278.html>

- b. 爲什麼有些人把吃飯睡覺當成最重要的？

Weishenme you xie ren ba [chi fan shuijiao]
 why EXIST CL people BA eat rice sleep
 dang cheng zui zhongyao de
 take.as become most important NOM

‘Why do some people take eating and sleeping as the most important (things)?’

<http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/228560628.html>

- c. 爲什麼把吃飯各自付款稱爲AA？

Weishenme ba [chi fan gezi fukuan] cheng wei AA
 why BA eat rice each pay call be AA

‘Why is eating and each person paying for themselves called “AA”?’

<http://iask.sina.com.cn/b/17752493.html>

In (6a) a “verb phrase” appears in the post-*ba* slot; in (6b) two “verb phrases” appear in the post-*ba* slot; and in (6c) a whole clause appears in the post-*ba* slot. Trying to use the *ba* construction to define form classes or grammatical relations, then, will not work. What we can do is recognize that we have a construction that marks a secondary topic that is affected in some way by an action.

3.3 The *zhe ben shu de chuban* construction

A second construction that has been treated at length in discussions of form classes in Chinese is the 這本書的出版 “*Zhe ben shu de chuban*” construction (first discussed in Zhu, Lu & Ma 1961). This construction was considered problematic because we find what had been defined as a verb in other contexts acting as the head of a noun phrase. Natural examples highlighting the problem with this construction are given in (7):

- (7) a. CNN循環播出中國國家形象宣傳片。

CNN xunhuan bochu Zhongguo guojia xingxiang

CNN circulate broadcast China country image

xuanchuanpian.

propaganda.film

‘CNN repeatedly broadcast a propaganda film promoting China’s national image.’ <http://www.sina.com.cn/2011-01-19 07:49> 新浪播客

b. 有沒有看到那天的播出？

You mei you kan dao nei tian de bochu?
 EXIST NEG EXIST watch arrive that day NOM broadcast
 ‘Did (you) see the broadcast of that day?’

明日之星 (電視節目) 2011.06.11

Used in the construction in (7a), *bōchū* ‘broadcast’ has a predicative function, but used in the construction in (7b), *bōchū* ‘broadcast’ has a referring function. So the argument has been around whether such words are “really” nouns or verbs. Zhu et al.’s (1961) solution is to say that the word acting as a head is a verb, even though the phrase it is the head of is a noun phrase. This is problematic because it violates the sense of a phrase being a projection of the category of the head (see Shen 2007). This is completely driven by the assumed need for uniform global categories within a language. But no justification for the need for having uniform or global categories is ever given. In reality it is appearing in the particular position in the construction that gives the word its function; the word does not have (and does not need to have) any function outside of a particular construction.

3.4 The Topic-Comment construction

Another important construction is the Topic-Comment construction, the basic clause type in Chinese (Chao 1968, LaPolla & Poa 2005, 2006), and we can find the same phenomenon in this construction, that is, the same words and phrases can be used referentially or predicatively. For example, 吃 *chī* ‘eat’, when used in the comment of a Topic-Comment construction, as in (8a), has a predicative function, but when it appears in topic position, as in (8b), it has a referential function:

- (8) a. 但不要吃那些加重近視的食物
dan bu yao chi naxie jiazhong jinshi de shiwu
but NEG want eat those increase nearsightedness NOM food
'but don't eat foods that will increase nearsightedness'
<http://yk.bjybkf.com/news/ydbj/2007/9/079111727563384.html>
accessed 2012.09.02
- b. 在中國及世界的許多國家，吃是一種文化。
chi shi yi zhong wenhua
eat COPULA one kind culture
'In China and many countries of the world, eating is a kind of culture.'
<http://baike.baidu.com/view/13977.htm> accessed 2011.07.10

In (9a) *tóngzhuōchīfàn* 'eat at the same table' appears in comment position, and so has a predicative function, but in (9b) the same expression appears in topic position, and so it has a referring function.

- (9) a. 書記和我們同桌吃飯。
Shuji he women tong zhuo chifan
secretary and 1PL same table eat
'(The Party) secretary ate at the same table as us.'
http://d.wanfangdata.com.cn/periodical_ddkg201101023.aspx accessed 2011.07.10
- b. 同桌吃飯也就具有了表演的性質。
Tong zhuo chifan ye juyou le biao yan de xingzhi
same table eat also possess PFV perform NOM nature
'Eating at the same table also has the nature of a performance.'
<http://baike.baidu.com/view/13977.htm> accessed 2011.07.10

When used in the comment position of this construction, *shīrén* ‘poet’ and *dàxuéshēng* ‘student’ have a predicative function, as in (10a) and (10b) respectively:

- (10) a. 這些人都很詩人。

Zhexie ren dou hen shiren
 these person all very poet
 ‘These people are all like poets.’

<http://hi.baidu.com/xmfine/blog/item/8c8b804404b6cb84b2b7dccb.html>

- b. 都大學生了還這麼幼稚？

dou daxuesheng le hai zheme youzhi?
 all university.student CSM still this.much naïve
 ‘(You) are already a university student, (but) still so naïve?’

<http://video.baomihua.com/goodadv/12901470?P3P31>

Example (11) is from a written advertisement for Baihuayou. If one looks in the dictionary, one will not find a predicative use for the word *zhái* 宅 ‘house’, but here it is used predicatively, and is easily understood.

- (11) 除了整天宅在家營養也是很重要的。

Chule zhengtian zhai zai jia...
 aside.from all.day house LOC home
 ‘Aside from staying home all day...’

Ad for Baihuayou in MRT in Taipei, rec. 2012.03.12

3.5 Clausal referential phrase modifying construction with *de*

In Modern Mandarin, when a clause is used to modify a referring expression, it is nominalized by the particle *de* and then this nominalized clause precedes the

referring expression. This is actually the same structure as discussed in §3.3, but with a clause as the initial element. The clause with *de* is a complete referring expression and can be used alone (compare (12) and (13)).

(12) 坐在我後面的人

[[zuo zai wo houmian de]_{MC} ren]_{NP}
sit be.at 1SG back NOM person
'the person sitting behind me'

<http://tw.knowledge.yahoo.com/question/question?qid=1612031307463>

(13) 站在我後面的是台灣人民

[zhan zai wo houmian de]_{MC/NP} shi Taiwan renmin
stand be.at 1SG back NOM COPULA Taiwan people
'the (ones) who are standing behind me are the Taiwan people'

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iB2gZ5Zt4o0>

In these particular examples it might be argued that the referring expression following the clause is an argument of the clause (although it would be hard to argue for a “gap”, as there are no obligatory arguments), but the same structure in Chinese can be used when the head of the structure is clearly not an argument of the modifying clause, as in (14)-(18):

(14) 在每年地價稅開徵四十日前（即 9 月 22 日前），逾期申請者，
自申請的次年期開始適用。

zi [[shenqing de]_{MC} ci nianqi]_{NP} kaishi shiyong
from apply NOM next year start use
'(it will be) effective starting in the year after applying'

<http://www.kctax.gov.tw/tw/tax/LVT01.aspx>

- (15) 有人以前買菜的零錢，都會分給孩子，現在投竹筒，可以讓孩子
一起來付出。

[[mai cai de]_{MC} lingqian]_{NP}
buy vegetable NOM change
'change (left over after) buying groceries...'⁷
<http://www.newdaai.tv/?id=49496&view=print>

- (16) 很快，室內響起了炒飯的聲音。

chao fan de shengyin
stir.fry rice NOM sound
'the sound of rice frying'
<http://www.zwwx.com/book/10/10815/3146586.html>

- (17) 好吃又不會胖的甜點

haochi you bu hui pang de tiandian
tasty also NEG can fat NOM sweets
'sweets that (when you eat them they) won't make (you) fat'
http://yule.tv.tom.com/App_User_Video.php?video_id=21702

- (18) 不用洗手的自動馬桶

[[bu yong xi shou de]_{MC} zidong matong]_{NP}
NEG use wash hand NOM automatic toilet
'a toilet which (after having used it one) doesn't need to wash (one's)
hands'
<http://nimb.blogbus.com/logs/52825568.html>

⁷ In a different context this could mean 'the change to buy groceries with', but that is not what it was used to mean in the context in which it appeared. This is from a Buddhist web site where they are trying to get people to donate more money. The full translation is 'Some people, before they would take the money left over from buying groceries and give it to the children, now they put it into the collection box, this way they can have the children donate together'.

Compare the following examples, all with the expression 能寫的 *neng xie de* [able write NOM]:

(19) 後面能寫的紙都不浪費

houmian neng xie de zhi

back able write NOM paper

‘paper on which you can write on the back...’

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5DHRvuv_7M

(20) 想找枝能寫的筆

xiang zhao zhi neng xie de bi

think look.for CL able write NOM pen

‘(I) want to find a pen (which) can write’ (or ‘which one can write with’)

<http://www.managertoday.com.tw/?p=2483>

(21) 能寫的人，有福了！

neng xie de ren

able write NOM person

‘person who can write...’

<http://www.dk101.com/Discuz/viewthread.php?tid=93094>

(22) 不能寫的人

bu neng xie de ren

NEG able write NOM person

‘person that (one) cannot write about’

<http://tw.knowledge.yahoo.com/question/question?qid=1510092303862>

(23) 能說又能寫的能力

neng shuo you neng xie de nengli
 able speak also able write NOM ability

‘ability to speak and write (well)’

www.evis.com.tw/YOHAN_2012.pdf

(24) 學習英文，可以說是全民運動，可是真正學的好英文，能說又能寫的，實在少之又少。

neng shuo you neng xie de
 able speak also able write NOM

‘(those) who can speak and write (English well)’

http://save-coco.blogspot.com/2012/01/blog-post_05.html

(25) 將目前手中有的資料能寫的就寫吧

neng xie de jiu xie ba
 able write NOM then write SUGGESTION

‘... just write the (materials) that (you) can write’

http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Irwin

The same structure in different contexts can be interpreted differently, as can be seen in comparing (21) with (22) and (24) with (25). When there is a head sometimes the interpretation of the nature of the referent of the head is a clue as to its relationship to the modifying clause, so if we compare, for example (19) and (20), it is only our understanding of the nature of ‘paper’ vs. ‘pen’ that tells us whether the referent of the modifying clause is what is written on or what is used to write. But even this is not fully deterministic, as the head is also open to various interpretations, as we can see from comparing (21) and (22).

These modifying constructions (including (12)) are structurally compound constructions made up of two referring expressions, similar to 學校的校長 *xuexiao de xiaozhang* [school NOM president] ‘president of the school’, though with a nominalized clause as the modifying element. There is no understood co-referential argument in the modifying clause, and while the first element modifies the second element, the relationship between the two can vary (cf. the discussions of English noun compounds in Downing 1977, Kay & Zimmer 1978, Levi 1978, Finin 1980). Semantically they can have a function similar to that of restrictive relative clauses in English, in that they can restrict the inference of the referent of the head. Once we start looking at the uses of this construction, we find that there are many possibilities, and in some cases the head might be said to be an argument of the clause, but in many cases it clearly isn’t, and also whether there is a referring expression acting as head or not the interpretation of the referent of the modifying clause relies on inference from context, so the possibility of the head being omitted cannot be used as a criterion for distinguishing noun complements from relative clauses, and the construction cannot be used for determining grammatical relations. In the framework of LaPolla (2003), we would say that Chinese has not grammaticalized constraints on the identification of the relationship between the modifying clause and the head.

Given the many possible uses of this construction, rather than trying to artificially divide the possibilities into one or the other choice in the traditional dichotomy of relative clause and noun complement, and also trying to determine strict subcategorization frames or argument structures and relations, in Chinese we can simply follow a constructionist approach and recognize a single clausal modifying construction, which posits only a relationship between the modifying clause and the head. These two parts are both referring expressions, and so can be used alone or together. One of the core insights of the constructionist approach

is that the overall construction has meaning beyond the sum of the parts. It is the two elements (the modifying clause and the head) being together in the construction and in a particular context that allows the particular interpretation of the relation between the two and the interpretation of the referent.

4. Discussion

We have seen above that the constructions discussed are fully grammaticalized and have a consistent structural pattern, but the elements that enter into the constructions are not consistent in terms of type or semantic role. That is, these constructions do not constrain the interpretation of the identification of referents and their roles in discourse the way they do in some other languages (see also LaPolla 1993, LaPolla & Poa 2006). The most useful approach to Chinese grammar then is to take the constructions as basic, and not try to impose global categories on the language for which there is no empirical evidence, as taking the constructions as basic means there is no need for abstract global categories in individual languages or cross-linguistically. In the practice of the distributional method, one chooses constructions to define form classes, and then uses the form classes so defined to characterize the constructions. For example, a word is defined as a noun because it appears as the head of a certain type of construction, and then that construction is defined as a noun phrase because the head of the construction has been defined as a noun (on the basis of it appearing in that construction). As pointed out by Croft (2001), taking the constructionalist approach allows us to avoid this sort of circularity. Taking the constructions as basic also allows us to avoid the “methodological opportunism”⁸ inherent in

⁸ This term is from Croft (2001). It refers to the practice of picking and choosing which constructions one uses for defining form classes and grammatical relations to suit one’s

using the distributional method for defining form classes and grammatical relations, and allows us to appreciate the diversity of structures in language, making for a much more empirically grounded linguistics.

For those of us involved in language documentation and linguistic typology, taking the constructionalist approach means that when we write grammars we do not need to have chapters on supposed global grammatical categories; we just need to present the constructions used for the propositional acts of referring, predicating, and attributing, and when we do cross-linguistic comparison we do not assume any global or universal categories and instead work inductively, looking to see what constructions are manifested in the languages, and whether the interpretation of a particular functional domain is constrained, and if so, to what extent, and also what form the construction used to constrain the interpretation in that way takes (see LaPolla 2003, 2006a-b for more discussion of this approach to typology, and particularly grammatical relations).

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從構式語法角度分析現代漢語的結構

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本文用構式語法分析法來解決現代漢語長期無法解決的語法問題。從構式語法分析法的角度來說，構式是最基本的分析單位，所以我們在分析構式的時候，只要看構式和組成構式成分的命題功能，如指示、修飾、敘述等。因為以構式為主，所以不需要定全語言性的範疇，因此詞類和句法關係這一類的問題就不存在。

關鍵詞：現代漢語，構式語法，句法關係，詞類，子句性修飾結構