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## Construction Grammar and spoken language: The case of pragmatic particles

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### Abstract

There has been growing interest in studying the relation between how the notion of ‘construction’ is used in Construction Grammar (CxG) and other constructional approaches to grammar, and how it is used in Conversation Analysis and other interactional, dialogic approaches to language and communication. In this study we show that CxG is well equipped to address the complexities of spoken language, if one allows the notion of construction to be extended in a dialogical direction.

The study tests the feasibility of using CxG as a framework that can provide adequate analyses and explanations of grammatical patterns found in spoken language, by studying a number of pragmatic particles as form-function constellations in Czech and Solv. The analysis thus also leads to systematizing the pragmatics and discourse toolboxes of CxG and such systematization, in turn, provides a deeper and more rigorous basis for the understanding of the pragmatic particles under investigation.

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## 1. Preliminaries<sup>1</sup>

Systematic study of spoken language has not, until recently, been associated with frameworks that focus on describing ‘grammar’. Construction Grammar, as one such grammar-centered model of language and linguistic analysis, has been no exception, historically speaking: the bulk of constructional research has not been particularly concerned with analyzing spoken data beyond noting, occasionally, that a specific syntactic pattern may have different manifestations in spoken language from what it has in ‘standard’ grammar (Michaelis and Lambrecht, 1996; Lambrecht, 2004; Lambrecht and Lemoine, 2005). Even in those studies, however, emphasis has been on the domain of the sentence/utterance as the appropriate (and sufficient) context for a grammarian’s interest in the patterns studied.

This bias away from spoken language, however, reflects more the traditional understanding of what a grammarian ought to study than any built-in limitation of Construction Grammar with respect to its applicability to the study of spoken data and to larger stretches of discourse as the domain of analysis. The goal of this paper is to initiate a more focused discussion of what Construction Grammar has to offer in analyzing and representing regular patterning found in natural discourse.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, we will focus on some of the issues that are relevant in a communicatively *and* grammatically adequate treatment of pragmatic particles within a Construction Grammar framework. We have chosen pragmatic particles as an illustrative example since they constitute a linguistic category that is notoriously difficult to capture in a systematic account.

Construction Grammar (CxG) is now a well-established approach to language and linguistic analysis, with a representative body of literature that demonstrates the theory’s basic tenets as well as ways in which constructional analysis has been applied to a wide range of phenomena (e.g., Fillmore et al., 1988; Fillmore, 1989, 1999; Goldberg, 1995, 2002; Michaelis and Lambrecht, 1996; Kay and Fillmore, 1999; Kay, 2002; Croft, 2001; Fried and Östman, 2004). For the purposes of this paper, the fundamental features of CxG can be summarized as follows.

First, CxG aims to account for *all* linguistic constructs (tokens) of a language. This means that CxG sees itself as a grammar of language as a whole – both of its ‘core’ structures (what traditional grammars, including most generative grammars, have aimed for) and of its so-called ‘periphery’ (including what traditional grammars call sentence

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<sup>1</sup> The impetus for this paper came as early as in 1999 at a seminar in Helsinki, which in addition to ourselves included Peter Auer, Jan Anward, Auli Hakulinen, and Marja-Liisa Helasvuo. A further installment of the theoretical parts of the paper was presented at a workshop on Construction Grammar and spoken language organized by Jaakko Leino and Johanna Kuningas in 2002. A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the International Pragmatics Conference in Toronto in 2003 at a panel organized by Karin Aijmer and Anna-Brita Stenström. We are greatly indebted to comments from scholars at these venues.

<sup>2</sup> There is a growing interest especially within Interactional Linguistics (e.g., Steensig, 2000; Selting and Couper-Kuhlen, 2001) in applying constructional insight to Conversation Analytic research. A constructional approach has also been suggested as a promising way of thinking about discourse phenomena in other domains of pragmatics research (e.g., Auer, 2000; Couper-Kuhlen and Thompson, 2000; Fischer, 2000). We are very positively inclined towards such views, and see our own work as basically motivated by the same goal, but approached specifically from the Construction Grammatical perspective: as grammarians concerned with incorporating discourse phenomena into grammatical description and representation, rather than as discourse analysts inspired by the general conceptual potential of a sign-based approach to language analysis.

fragments, idioms, and various non-clausal phrases). Second, constructional analyses must be consistent with what we know about cognition and interaction; it is this requirement that gives CxG its basis for having a universal impact. And third, different traditional ‘levels’ of grammatical description (phonology, syntax, semantics, prosody, pragmatics, discourse, etc.) are integrated in a single complex sign – a *grammatical construction* – which represents a generalization about speakers’ grammatical knowledge. Put differently, linguistic structure – on all ‘levels’ – is not seen as the result of rules that apply to predefined units and categories; instead, the basic unit of analysis and representation in CxG is a conventional pattern of usage in which form and meaning/function are associated in particular ways.

Grammar is thus seen as a set of abstract constructions that license what is acceptable in a language. It is particularly this aspect that is relevant to the issues we will address in this paper. We hope to show both how the insights of CxG can enhance our understanding of pragmatics, discourse, and interaction, and how certain phenomena whose importance has been established within the fields of pragmatics, discourse, and interaction can be naturally accounted for in the CxG framework.

The premise that grammatical knowledge is organized through relatively complex conventional patterns and that grammar also includes knowledge of communicative patterning invites a comparison between the analytic methods used by a construction grammarian and the ways in which a systematic study of interaction is carried out in dialogical approaches. Within the latter, Conversation Analysis (CA) suggests itself as a particularly appropriate candidate for a meaningful comparison, since CA – and especially its further development of Interactional Linguistics – is the closest to CxG in its interactional objectives and interests. Our goal is to test CxG as a grammatical theory that can facilitate adequate analyses and provide explanations of grammatical patterns found in spoken language. By taking an outspoken CxG perspective on interaction, we also de facto want to argue that successful extensions of linguistic thought into sociology and ethnography are possible only if there is a systematic understanding of grammar as the basis for such extensions.

The paper is organized as follows. In the next section we will explicitly compare the proclaimed views of construction grammarians and conversation analysts, in order to stress the similarity between the two approaches. Sections 3 and 4 contain our empirical analyses of pragmatic particles – in the Finland–Swedish dialect Solv and in spoken Czech. Section 5 discusses the theoretical implications of the data analyses for the direction in which CxG needs to be elaborated in order to become a full-fledged model of language and linguistic interaction. The paper closes with some thoughts on how both CxG and CA can benefit from mutual cooperation.

## 2. Construction Grammar and Conversation Analysis<sup>3</sup>

The fundamental feature shared between CxG and CA is the fact that both approaches take *all* ‘chunks’ of language – large and small, verbal and non-verbal – as equally

<sup>3</sup> In this study, for the present audience, we largely take an understanding of CA and dialogical approaches to language for granted, and focus on the question of what insights a constructional analysis can contribute to the established CA ways of thinking. In many respects, we base our understanding of CA on the Linköping approach; cf. in particular, Linell (1998).

deserving of description and analysis, without assuming any a priori determined relative degree of theoretical significance that a particular type of structure might have for our understanding of grammatical knowledge. We take this commonality as a starting point in evaluating what the two approaches can offer each other. Let us first briefly enumerate some specific similarities and differences between the two approaches, most of which are fairly well-known.

The notion of grammatical construction in CxG is easily extendable beyond the domain of the sentence/utterance, especially if we allow a view of ‘grammar’ that is not prescriptive or pre-determined in the abstract. A construction thus comes close to CA’s notion of turn-type. Both constructions and conversational patterns are organized (cognitively and interactionally) in networks of relationships.

Constructions in CxG and turn-constructional/turn-type units in CA hold comparable theoretical status. Turn-type units in CA emerge from conversational patterns and social practices, which constitute the analytic core in CA. Constructions in CxG also emerge from language use (hence, it is fair to describe CxG as ‘usage-based’) and are cognitively grounded in that they reflect the speakers’ reliance on categorization strategies based on registering systematic similarities versus differences between patterns.

Both approaches are non-reductionist and ‘maximalist’, since they both insist that full understanding of linguistic expression as well as grammatical organization cannot be reduced to ‘form’ only, ‘meaning’ only, or ‘function’ only. Neither approach subscribes to a division between core versus marginal utterances, neither approach views either meaning or structure as strictly compositional (i.e., external and internal properties<sup>4</sup> need not match in a given linguistic pattern), and neither accepts concepts such as ‘ellipsis’ as an explanatory device.

However, the two approaches also differ in several respects. Although neither CA nor CxG take speakers’ intentions as a priori central to linguistic behavior, each emphasizes different factors in establishing what *is* relevant to adequate linguistic descriptions. For example, much work within discourse, pragmatics, and interaction has long been based on the assumption that (a crucial part of) the meaning of an utterance is provided by the effect that utterance has on the addressee/audience. In fact, the centrality of the addressee constitutes much of what CA defines as ‘context’, in addition to activity types, topical context, interactive context, and sequential structure.

Constructional research also acknowledges the importance of context but emphasizes different contextual clues as relevant to construing the meaning of a given linguistic expression; it focuses on that which is relevant for grammar. A significant portion of the utterance’s meaning, as well as the conditions on its use, are determined by the semantic information that is structured in interpretive frames (for the Frame Semantics view of meaning, assumed in CxG, cf. Fillmore, 1982; Fillmore and Atkins, 1992), including situational roles and other ‘frame elements’. In addition, there have been attempts to take the CxG enterprise to the discourse level, in the form of discourse patterns (cf. Östman, 2004). CxG thus does not assume that meaning is only negotiated in actual interaction. Instead, lexical and phrasal meanings can be specified, in a given construction, as part of the

<sup>4</sup> The distinction between external and internal properties of a construction constitutes one of the most crucial distinctions in CxG. It rests on the observation that the (internal) properties that a construction has in and of itself need not match the (external) properties, which specify in what contexts the construction can be felicitously used. For details, see Fried and Östman (2004).

interactant's knowledge of language – and thus as a way to incorporate the speakers' perspective as well. Even if everything can be negotiated in human interaction, CxG stresses the point that the potential for meaning negotiation does not imply that everything is, therefore, up for grabs and indeterminate, but that codified meaning also needs to be taken into account.

CA and CxG also differ in their view of variability and language change. CA is primarily concerned with the emergence of grammatical patterning in on-line production, dialogically, and as a cooperative achievement. In contrast, CxG has focused mostly on that which appears relatively stable; it accepts variability within the grammatical code (Leino and Östman, 2005), but sees it as a phenomenon that can be explicitly described.

Finally, the two approaches use different formalisms and have different reasons for formalizing; in fact, many conversation analysts would altogether reject the suggestion that CA is in the business of formalizing. CxG does not see any inherent problems with formalization, as long as formalisms remain tools for expressing generalizations about our understanding of how language is structured and how it works.

To summarize, both CxG and CA attempt to make generalizations, but each approach delimits its domain of analysis with a different goal and perspective in mind. CA has been more ethnographic and interaction-oriented, whereas CxG has focused on what is shared across speakers. Constructions in CxG are abstract grammatical patterns distinct from concrete linguistic expressions (the former are conventionalized abstractions over tokens of the latter), whereas constructions in CA are context-changing/construing entities, grounded in concrete instances of dynamically negotiated meaning from which discernable paradigms emerge. Inferencing, negotiation, cooperation, and recontextualization are crucial in CA, whereas CxG focuses on the outcome of such processes, although it accepts that the outcome need not be uniform across different contexts.

Whether one decides to highlight the differences or the similarities, it is fair to ask if there is an a priori value in expecting a single linguistic model to be imperialistic and attempt to account for every aspect of language (use). Instead of arguing over what CxG or CA can account for and what one or the other is not made to address, we propose that a fertile starting point is to accept that CxG and CA are compatible approaches that do different things and aspire to do different things, but they accomplish their goals in a complementary manner. What is important in this view is not whether either CxG or CA can do everything or which of the two can do it all better, but that the practitioners of the two approaches focus on what each can do best, while at the same time finding points of contact and opportunities to inform each other's research in a productive way. The result of such collaboration can only be a richer, deeper understanding of language, grammar, and communication.

One aspect of language that might appear somewhat problematic for CxG is the treatment of 'non-propositional' material in spoken discourse, such as hesitation, gaze, or 'false' starts, among others. It is true that these aspects of communication do not fit readily within the purview of grammar as understood in CxG, which puts emphasis on those aspects of language use that represent conventional practice shared across speakers in a relatively stable, predictable pattern. At the same time, it is not self-evident that hesitation, gaze, and similar phenomena can or ought to be treated as part of grammar ('grammar' in the traditional sense understood by grammarians), and we will not concern ourselves with this particular dilemma here.

Our focus is on a slightly different, more subtle, type of ‘non-propositional’ material found in spoken language, namely, on pragmatic particles. These items cannot be as easily dismissed as not belonging properly in the description of speakers’ grammatical knowledge, since they are known to appear in recurring, general patterns and clearly serve a particular conventionalized function. The question is how that function can be best captured and what is involved in formulating an adequate generalization about the function’s place in the grammar of a given language, while also acknowledging its communicative value in spoken discourse.

The analysis of pragmatic particles<sup>5</sup> presents a notorious challenge for the grammarian and we will take up the challenge in this paper by studying several particles in two languages, Czech and Solv. We will attempt to draw at least a rough functional map that should amount to useful generalizations about our understanding of what exactly the speakers of Solv or Czech must know about the particles in question and how that knowledge can be represented through the tools of a constructional analysis while taking into account the dialogical nature of our data.

### 3. Question particles in Solv

The Finland Swedish dialect Solv<sup>6</sup> is a very particle-rich language, in which it borders on unacceptability – and is definitely impolite – not to use several particles in a turn in interaction. To a certain extent, these particles clearly make up for the relative lack of distinctive prosody in Solv in comparison to, say, standard Swedish.<sup>7</sup> In this section, we will focus on several particles, drawing primarily on their detailed analysis in Östman (1986); our goal is to establish several general parameters that can (and need to) be incorporated into a full-fledged description of particles, using the CxG formalism.

Solv has at least four morphemes that can be used as question particles, *tå*, *då*, *elå*, and *na*.<sup>8</sup> They are all utterance-final; the utterance-final slot seems particularly apt to host interrogative cueing: an utterance-final repetition of personal pronouns and demonstrative

<sup>5</sup> Over the years, an abundance of terms have been used in reference to pragmatic particles. Perhaps the dominant term today is that of ‘discourse marker’. We have here retained the traditional label ‘pragmatic particle’, since we see ‘discourse marker’ as designating only one functional type of pragmatic particles; cf. also Östman (1995). The analyses in this study make it clear both that we need a general term for methodological reasons, and that the functions of particles may be so varied as to require a denomination that does not determine before the actual analyses what kind of function is involved.

The problem of polyfunctional discourse particles has also been addressed by Fischer (2000), who appeals to a constructional model of language in proposing polysemous structures.

<sup>6</sup> Solv is a dialect of Swedish spoken in the village Solf on the west coast of Finland, some 400 km’s north-west of Helsinki.

<sup>7</sup> The theoretical question of whether languages can be grouped together typologically as rich in particles or not, and how such a classification interacts with prosody, has been extensively discussed in previous research; cf. in particular Östman (1989, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> To these, at least *tåddå* could be added, although it is not completely clear whether it is better seen as a pragmatically codified particle in its own right, or whether it is more appropriately seen as a combination of *tå* and *då*. A list of further particles that can function as question particles in Solv is given in Östman (1986: 71–84); the utterance-initial particle *åm* is dealt with below.

pronouns and adverbs (cf. Östman, 1986: 75–83) can also, in certain contexts, be directive and indicate that the speaker is asking a question. Table 1, based on Östman (1986), gives an overview of the different functions that have been identified for the utterance-final question particles. The column under each particle lists the usage-based characteristic contexts and functions of that particle. These characteristics all emerged from analyses of natural conversations in Solv, further corroborated through the use of questionnaires, interviews, measurements of phonetic characteristics, and experiments, which have also been documented elsewhere.

Table 1 shows that, for instance, the particle *då* has been found to be acceptable in the Solv community as a question marker, but that men do not use it as a question particle in *wh*-questions. The particle also correlates with the introduction of a new topic, and the expected answer to a *då*-question is in the negative. This particle is furthermore used to express opposition to what somebody else has said and it is used in situations that are better characterized as formal, rather than as enhancing solidarity among the participants. In terms of politeness, it can be described as marking social distance, in contrast to *tå*. If a question is made without *då*, that question is interpreted as impolite; by using the particle, the present interactant offers the floor to his/her partner(s). In contrast to the other particles, the use of *då* is also restricted to marking the speaker's negative engagement. Finally, it is the only one among the question particles that can have a phrase in its scope, but it cannot itself be stressed; one of its uses thus has grammaticized into a pure question particle, which has been codified as such.

A speaker thus has to choose which particle is the most appropriate one in relation to the pragmatic context in which a question is uttered. All the utterances in (1) mean 'Has Sven kissed Selma?', but by changing the final particles, different attitudes are communicated.

- (1) a. A Sven possa Selma *då*?  
 b. A Sven possa Selma *tå*?  
 c. A Sven possa Selma *elå*?  
 d. A Sven possa Selam na?

In addition to the pragmatic functions introduced by the values in the columns under each particle in Table 1, it is also possible to place utterances (1a–d) on a scale of explicit – implicit requests as shown in Fig. 1 (cf. Östman, 1986: 34).

The characteristics shown in Table 1 represent pragmatically codified constraints on the usage of these particles. However, the functions, characteristics, and constraints on usage of each particle are not to be seen as independent of the functions of the other particles. Rather, these particles form a system in the structuralist sense: a particle is also defined in relation to all other particles (and other linguistic manifestations) that form the system of questions in Solv.

The way the information in Table 1 is organized anticipates the CxG manner of presenting the functions as particular values associated with a particular parameter (or 'attribute', to use the CxG technical term) – at different levels. Four such parameters have emerged as being relevant for the description of pragmatic function: Coherence, Politeness, Involvement, and Syntax/Semantics. The last one is a familiar one and covers issues belonging to codified grammar, including propositional meaning.

Table 1  
 An overview of the constraints on usage of the utterance-final question particles in Solv

	<i>tå</i>	<i>då</i>	<i>elå</i>	<i>na</i>
<b>Coherence</b>	Linguistic community: acceptable as question	Linguistic community: acceptable as question	Linguistic community: acceptable as question	Linguistic community: ambivalent acceptability as question
	Men do not use in <i>wh</i> -question Known topic Expected response: Yes	Men do not use in <i>wh</i> -question New topic Expected response: No	Expected response: Yes or No	Expected response: Yes or No
<b>Politeness</b>	Solidarity Camaraderie-Deference No particle = impolite; particle = turn-giving	Opposition Formality Distance/Deference No particle = impolite; particle = turn-giving	(Deference) No particle = impolite; particle = turn-giving	No particle = impolite; particle = turn-giving
<b>Involvement</b>	Not engaged (cf. <i>då</i> )	Negatively engaged	Positive	Negative?
<b>Syntax/Semantics</b>	Question  (Can take stress)	Question Possible scope of less than a whole utterance Not stressed	Question  Can take stress	Question Not <i>wh</i> -questions  Not stressed



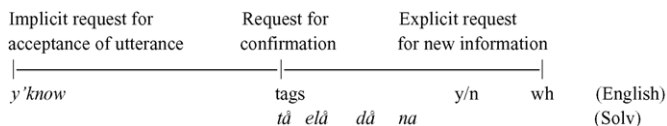


Fig. 1. The semantic relations between the utterance-final question particles in Solv.

The three parameters of Coherence, Politeness, and Involvement have been developed in the work on Implicit Anchoring.<sup>9</sup> According to this way of viewing language function, the primary object of study for pragmatics is precisely the implicit in language, the question of how speakers implicitly anchor what they say to extralinguistic factors, and how these factors, in turn, constrain the usability of a specific linguistic expression. The three parameters represent contexts within which speakers in general make interpretations:

- a. the culture, tradition, history, and general coherence that speakers live in, accommodate to, and are constrained by: society and all its institutions;
- b. the interactional and conversational constraints, and norms of politeness and tact that speakers have to take into account in order to (be able to) live with other speakers; and
- c. the speakers' feelings and opinions; the constraints on how affect and attitudes are expressed, and the prejudices that surround speakers.

In previous research, these three domains (or parameters, attributes) have been labeled Coherence, Politeness, and Involvement, respectively. It can be debated which constraints should be grouped under which domain, but that is only in the nature of things – that is how language works. In the last resort, the three domains are merely tools that have been found useful by linguists.

The three parameters can now be used to systematize and arrange the outcome of analyses of language function. This is what has been done in Table 1, where the constraints on the use of the different question particles are organized around these three parameters. The pragmatic particles, or any other contextual marker or cue, can now be seen as *pragmatic* crystallizations, where the word 'pragmatic' is to be understood in relation to these three parameters.

Each column in Table 1 thus represents the meaning/function of a given morpheme when used as a question particle. It is important to note that none of the particles in Table 1 necessarily function as question particles in *all* their occurrences. We thus must make a distinction between the potential meanings/functions that a particle has, and the aspect of this meaning or function that gets actualized in a given context, in a particular situation. Each of the four particles as captured in Table 1 must be seen as a crystallization of a cluster of potential meanings, of which the question-particle status is the result of full grammaticization (indicated through the Syntax/Semantics attribute), but which does not preclude a given particle from being interpreted differently in other contexts. The meanings

<sup>9</sup> For research on implicit cueing under the rubric of Pragmatics as Implicit Anchoring (PIA), see Östman (1981, 1986, and later studies).

Table 2  
The potential and actualized functions of *tå* as part of a particular utterance

	<i>E</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>fråån</i>	<i>flyyje</i>	<i>tå</i>
C					Known topic Expected response: Yes
P					Solidarity Camaraderie-Deference Particle = polite Particle = gives turn
I					Positive
S/S					<b>+ Question</b>

C stands for the Coherence parameter; P for Politeness; I for Involvement; and S/S for Syntax/Semantics. The *t* is the orthographic symbol for the flapped *l* in Solv.

of each particle range over the potential functions in their respective columns in Table 1. Put differently, other actualizations of the potential meanings manifest themselves through highlighting different aspects of the properties associated with the three pragmatic parameters but, crucially to the topic of this paper, they do not amount to a fully grammatical status of a question marker.

To analyze the actualized meaning/function of a linguistic crystallization, a system called Level Analysis has been employed (cf. Östman, 1981). As an example, consider the partial analysis of the Solv utterance *E i fråån flyyje tā* ('It is from the-plane *tå*?') in Table 2. In such an analysis, all the potential meanings/functions of – in this case, *tå* – need to be spelled out; the bold-faced 'Question' preceded by a plus-sign indicates that this is the meaning/function that is being actualized in the particular context in which this utterance was used. The fact that the plus-sign is not next to any of the pragmatic functions, but in the 'Syntax/Semantics' row, indicates unambiguously that the particle is being used as a grammaticized question particle, and here, as the only segmental<sup>10</sup> indicator of the question status of the utterance. (As noted above for the particles in general, *tå* does not have to have this function whenever it is used, and the other uses would be represented by appropriately different specifications of the potential characteristics.)

The standard manner of representing a construction or a construct<sup>11</sup> in CxG is to formalize them as nested boxes. We cannot go into the details of the CxG formalism here; suffice it to say that the parameters (as attributes) and constraints (as values) in Table 1, depicting the potential functions of the question particles in Solv, can easily be converted into a box notation. Fig. 2 gives a picture of the *elå* construction in Solv, for illustration.

<sup>10</sup> As shown in Östman (1991) there is also a specific question contour in the prosody of Solv, and a pronounced use of this contour can indeed by itself be the sole indicator of the interrogative status of an utterance. Typically, though, prosody is secondary to word order and to the use of question particles in Solv; this particular utterance was pronounced with a 'declarative', falling contour (+F SOL80-JO8-1).

<sup>11</sup> CxG makes a clear distinction between 'constructions' as abstract patterns (generalizations of speakers' linguistic knowledge) and 'constructs' as concrete instantiations or manifestations of those constructions (in technical terms, constructs are tokens 'licensed' by constructions). For details, see Fried and Östman (2004).

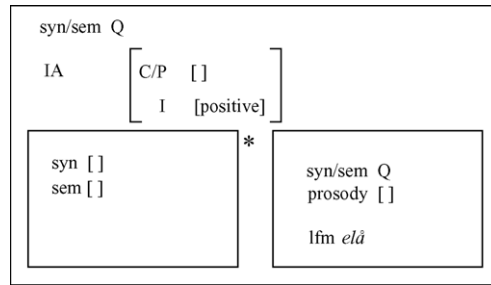


Fig. 2. A schematic representation of the *elâ* construction.

In this preliminary attempt at formalizing the essence of the particle *elâ*, Implicit Anchoring (IA) is taken as the main ‘pragmatics’ attribute with the C, P, and I parameters and their values as the composite value of IA. The empty square brackets given as values for some of the attributes in the *elâ* construction indicate that a specification of these values is not part of the representation of the abstract construction and thus not part of its codified properties – the values materialize in actual interaction and in conjunction with other constructions a particular *elâ* construct inherits.

In a preview of issues to be discussed in the following section, the problem of multiple potential functions of a single particle can be briefly illustrated on yet another Solv particle, the utterance-initial *âm*. In one of its uses, this morpheme functions as a subordinating conjunction<sup>12</sup> in two distinct grammatical contexts: it introduces embedded yes-no questions, equivalent to *whether*-clauses in English, and it marks real or potential conditions in conditional sentences, roughly comparable to English *if* + present tense conditionals. As such, *âm* represents a cross-linguistically common pattern of a codified grammatical meaning and we will not be concerned with this use any further. However, the same morpheme frequently appears also in free-standing questions, as we can see in example (2).<sup>13</sup>

- (2) a. *Âm* e no ska ga ti set yyt na neet idaa  
*âm* it *no* shall go to put out any nets today  
 ‘Might it be possible to throw out some (fishing) nets today?’  
 (+M SOL80-JO9-1)
- b. A: Jer e . . . langt ifråån ede  
 is it far away that ‘Is that far away?’  
 B: Va  
 what ‘What?’  
 A: *Âm* e i langt bårtifråån  
*âm* it is far away-from ‘Is it far away?’  
 (+F SOL80-JO8-1)

<sup>12</sup> In addition, the free morpheme *âm* can also be a preposition or a verbal particle; these uses are not dealt with here.

<sup>13</sup> The examples from Solv are discussed in more detail in Östman (1986) and the keys after the examples refer to material collected by J.-O. Östman. Example (2a) also has the modal particle *no*, which we leave without a gloss; its exact status is irrelevant to the issues addressed in this paper.

Table 3

Pragmatic constraints and potential meanings of the utterance-initial particle *ám* in Solv

	<i>ám</i>
<b>Coherence</b>	Linguistic community: acceptable as question Used more often by women; and by older speakers Used immediately after the introduction of a new topic, as an explication of the sudden topic shift; cf. English <i>I mean</i>
<b>Politeness</b>	Suggestion Polite repetition
<b>Involvement</b>	Rhetorical Exclamatory
<b>Syntax/Semantics</b>	y/n question <i>if/whether</i> question <i>if – then</i>

Since these *ám*-utterances are not necessarily accompanied by question intonation in Solv, the particle *ám* itself is the only indicator that the utterance is a question. In Östman (1986) it is, therefore, analyzed as a question particle, clearly distinct from its usage as a subordinating conjunction, although its utterance-initial position does suggest a relationship between the two. Since the particle *ám* differs in its position in an utterance from the utterance-final particles, it was not included in Table 1. Instead, Table 3 gives a separate overview of the corresponding pragmatic functions of *ám* (based largely on Östman, 1986), thus anticipating our discussion of the Czech data in Section 4.

Overall, the particles in Solv constitute a rich inventory of distinct morphemes, each of which is associated with a particular cluster of properties, amounting to a distinct pragmatic function. Collectively, they also bring up several general features that evidently figure in identifying the cross-linguistically attested strategies for marking questions, such as word order, specialized markers, or intonation. While the first two features play a prominent role in Solv, the last one will turn out relevant in the data discussed in the next section, in which we examine a set of data that show a single morpheme associated with a range of different meanings and functions, expanding significantly on the brief observations we made about *ám*. We will demonstrate the flexibility of the CxG approach on the example of Czech spoken data that have not been previously analyzed and that present a different set of analytic and representational challenges, as compared to the situation in Solv.

#### 4. Czech *jestli*

In both written and spoken Czech, there is a commonly used subordinating conjunction, *jestli*, which can be described as the Czech counterpart to the conjunction *ám* in Solv: this, too, introduces embedded yes-no questions, and marks real or potential conditions in conditional sentences. While each function of this syntactic *jestli* may show certain idiosyncratic behaviors depending on whether it is found in written or spoken text (e.g., differences in preferred word order or in the mood of the verb), they have one prominent feature in common across all types of texts: they both represent a codified grammatical

category, with a clearly identifiable grammatical function. Their usage is not subject to specific discourse types, contextual pressures, inference, or any other kind of Implicit Anchoring; they express a particular syntactic and functional relationship between two clauses. We will not be concerned with this use here.

The word *jestli* (often in its phonetically reduced forms *jesli*, *esli*, *jesi*, or *esi*) is also very commonly found in spontaneous discourse, but not even the most detailed description of the ‘standard’ interrogative and conditional uses, whether spoken or written, can account for the full range of the spoken data.<sup>14</sup>

We start by noting that in contrast to written texts, *jestli* in spoken discourse frequently introduces free-standing utterances, either after a pause or at the beginning of a turn, without any connection (formal or semantic) to the immediately surrounding grammatical context (reminiscent of the Solv particle *ám* in this respect, shown in (2) above). As is well known, spoken discourse resembles more a sequence of syntactically (semi)independent sentences, or sentence fragments, than a distinctly structured nexus of hypotactically connected clauses, and it is thus not surprising that examples of detached *jestli*-clauses, even those in which *jestli* maintains its grammatical status of a complementizer as described above, are easy to find; other subordinated clauses display this property in spoken Czech as well (cf. Grepl and Karlík, 1998: 396 for a partial survey).

However, there is an abundance of examples, such as (3–5) below, that do not contain any candidate for being the potential main clause, to form a complex conditional or interrogative sentence. This formal autonomy of *jestli*-utterances immediately begs the question of what the function of *jestli* might be in the free-standing utterances; more precisely, such usage suggests a non-complementizing use of *jestli*. In the excerpts in (3), the relevant form as well as its equivalent in English is underlined.

- (3) a. A: *Máš už to kolo umytý?*  
 have:2SG:PRES already that bicycle:ACC wash:PASS:SG:ACC  
 ‘Have you washed that bicycle yet?’
- ⇒ B: *Jesi ho mam umytý?– No eště sem se k tomu nedostal. . .*  
 3SG:ACC have:1SG:PRES wash:PASS:SG:ACC  
 ‘[Are you asking] whether it’s washed? – Well, I haven’t gotten around to it yet. . .’ (MF corpus)
- b. A: *Poslal už Lád’a ten dopis?*  
 send:PPL:SG already L.:NOM that letter:ACC  
 ‘Has Lád’a sent the letter?’
- ⇒ B: *Co jesi poslal?*  
 what send:PPL:SG  
 ‘What are you asking that he sent?’

<sup>14</sup> Unless explicitly stated otherwise, all the examples come from *Pražský mluvený korpus* (‘Prague Spoken-Language Corpus’, abbreviated PMK) within the Czech National Corpus. PMK contains about 700,000 words and represents a variety of spoken genres, speakers, and speech situations. Examples labeled MF come from conversations randomly collected by M. Fried.

- A: *Ten dopis co říkal že musí poslat–*  
 ‘The letter he’d said he had to mail.’
- B: *No asi jo, žádnéj tady nevidim.*  
 Well, I guess he did, I don’t see any around here.’ (MF corpus)

In terms of communicative function, the *jestli*-utterances in (3) are questions of sorts; they also have the rising intonation of normal, free-standing Czech questions. But it would be inaccurate to conclude that *jestli* simply functions as an interrogative particle here. For one thing, Czech (spoken or written) does not require any special marking in direct yes-no questions; in fact, the opening turns in (3a, b) represent the pragmatically most neutral form of yes-no questions, in spoken discourse signaled simply by intonation. Consequently, *jesi* in B’s reply in (3a) does not contribute any grammatically relevant information. Even more striking, *jesi* in (3b) appears in an information question that contains a question word, *co* ‘what’; this is evidence that even if *jestli* is a type of interrogative marker, its exact function can only be understood in association with the discourse environment in which it occurs. As a clue about the effect of the environment, it is important to note that if these two sequences of replies were examples of internal monologues (B simply questioning whether the bicycle is washed or a letter has been sent), no *jestli* would appear; its presence would be, in fact, incoherent in a monological context.

Based on these observations, the usage in (3) can be best described as being limited to a dialogical exchange in which the speaker is asking for a repetition or confirmation of an immediately preceding turn, which itself must be a yes-no question,<sup>15</sup> expressing his/her suspicion that a misunderstanding is possible otherwise. The word *jestli* thus serves as a type of quotative, with a distinct performative function. We might go as far as treating it as an explicit marker of the dialogical nature of the type of discourse in which it is used, along the lines of ‘I think I heard you ask X – please confirm’. Depending on the degree of the speaker’s (un)certainly, he/she may or may not wait for the confirmation before proceeding. We will label this usage a Quoting Question.<sup>16</sup>

At the grammatical level (i.e., when taken in isolation), the fragments with *jestli* in (4) display the same formal features that apply in (3): they are free-standing yes-no questions introduced by *jestli* and typically pronounced with a question intonation (the symbol == indicates a long pause).

- (4) a. A: *rozhodně dycky de na tom pracovat tak že ty lidi .. budou .. neustále do sebe zami .. zamilovaný. že se asi naučej mít rádi jiný stránky než ty který odumíraj*  
 ‘definitely, one can always work on it so that the couple .. will .. always be in love with each .. each other, that they’ll maybe learn to appreciate other sides than the ones that are disappearing’

<sup>15</sup> ‘Echoing’ turns other than yes-no questions are of course also possible (and common), but then the quoting is signaled by a different marker – one that is related to embedded content clauses, *že* ‘that’.

<sup>16</sup> The particle *ám* in Solv can also be used in this quotative manner, which suggests that the quotative usage is an intermediate phase through which the Solv particle evolved into its grammaticized status of a question particle.

- B: == *a co, co třeba třeba byty?*  
 ‘== and what, what about apartments, maybe?’
- A: *co s bytama ?*  
 ‘what about apartments?’
- ⇒ B: *no tak jestli by třeba nebylo . . .*  
 ‘well just if maybe there wouldn’t.’
- A: *příčina rozvodů že nemaj byt, nebo . . .*  
 ‘the reason for divorce that they don’t have an apartment, or . . .’
- B: *no třeba.*  
 ‘yeah, something like that’ (PMK282; 036)
- b. A: *sou tam na Sázavě klíšť’ata?*  
 ‘are there ticks on the Sázava?’
- B: *jo*  
 ‘yeah’
- A: *a infikovaný?*  
 ‘and infected?’
- B: *to já nevím, já sem je neinfikovala*  
 ‘I don’t know, I didn’t infect any’
- ⇒ A: *jestli jako je to v takovejch těch oblastech, protože já rozvažuju, jesti mám dát ovočkovat děti nebo ne?*  
 ‘is it, like, in those kinds of regions [I wonder] because I’m thinking if I should have the kids vaccinated or not’ (PMK131; 046-ZVAN)
- c. A: *já se podívám ještě na ty velikosti vono to tu není ale*  
 ‘I’ll check the sizes, but I can’t find it anywhere’
- ⇒ == *jesi vy vidíte? == toleto je ale vaše vono nikde není ta velikost*  
 ‘- - Can you see [I wonder]?’ - - this is yours, though – it isn’t here, the size’
- (Müllerová et al., 1992: 68, l. 19–21)

However, these three sequences do not involve repetition of the interlocutor’s question (or a portion thereof), as was the case in (3). Rather, the speaker is actually searching for help in formulating a question that is implicitly present in the surrounding context but not explicitly articulated. In this respect, these *jestli*-patterns are the closest to genuine questions that seek exchange of information. In all the examples in (4), the question is only indirectly motivated by the preceding context and its purpose is to extend a somewhat tentative invitation to pursue a new direction (or subtopic) within the conversation.

Put differently, *jestli* here signals the speaker’s awareness that an uncooperative mode on the interlocutor’s part is a possibility. Uncooperativeness may have been demonstrated directly, as in (4b), or it simply cannot be taken for granted in a given social or propositional context; (4c), for example, is an excerpt from a conversation between a store clerk (speaker A) and a customer who came to ask for the clerk’s assistance with a purchase, and at issue is finding the requested size, while (4a) comes from a discussion of a potentially controversial and emotionally charged topic (reasons for high divorce rates among young Czechs). Using the word *jestli* marks all such questions unambiguously as very indirect and signals

deference to the interlocutor, giving him/her an easy way to reject the proposed conversational path without appearing rude; all of this is firmly rooted in culturally established rules of interactional politeness. We will label this function a Polite Question.

A genuine question, both in its content and form, is also part of the pattern shown in (5), but with an additional twist: the *jestli*-question abruptly interrupts a single turn, is not prompted by the interlocutor, is not offered in direct response to another participant's turn, and, crucially, does not expect a reaction from the interlocutor.

- (5) A: *sem přesvědčený, že sou, že sou povolání, který by měli dělat jenom muži, kde vlastně by ženy neměly pracovat, a zároveň sou asi povolání, kde vlastně to ženy, zřejmě ženám de přirozeně líp než mužům, ale nevím jestli sou povolání, kde by naopak muži vůbec neměli žádný místo. jestli mám nějaké nějaké příklad? echh myslím si, myslím si fff ... nevím, no. [...]*  
 ==> 'I'm convinced that there are, there are professions which should only be done by men, where women actually shouldn't work, and at the same time there probably are professions where women, where it comes more naturally to women than men, but I don't know if there are, on the other hand, professions in which men wouldn't have any place at all. Do I have an example? Uhm, I think, I think ... well, I don't know. [...]'  
 (PMK193; 001-MBIF)

These resemble 'standard' rhetorical questions, except for the presence of *jestli*, which is definitely not a feature of rhetorical questions used in written narratives. This use of *jestli* seems to signal the speaker's wish to keep it evident that he/she has not lost sight of the fact that he/she is engaged in a dialogue, in spite of taking a relatively long turn that is, at the micro-level, monological in nature. We could gloss this 'anticipatory' use of *jestli* as 'I know you could easily interrupt me with a question at this point – so here it is, together with my answer'. For easier reference, we will call it a Rhetorical Question, but with the understanding that it is different from rhetorical questions in written Czech.

Related to the uses exemplified in (4) are also other patterns that are clearly motivated by general rules of politeness, but which are distinct both in form and in the details of their pragmatic function. Some examples are in (6).

- (6) a. A: == *ee* == *já sem zapomněl ten druhý konec votázky. jestli můžeš ještě jednou ...*  
 '== uh == I forgot the other part of the question .. if you, [please,] can one more time...'  
 (PMK 165; 011-ZIAN)
- b. A: *no tak ho přeneseme ke Kateřině, k tý posteli.*  
 'well, so we'll move it over to Kateřina's side, next to that bed'
- ==> B: *spíš právě jestli bysme nedali ten květinovej stolek vobráćeně, takle ke stěně a*  
 'actually, why don't we maybe turn the flower stand the other way around, like this next to the wall and...'  
 (PMK120; 124-ZIAN)



Intonationally, examples of this kind resemble requests (sometimes with a distinctly ‘pleading’ flavor) and they come in various subtypes. Some function as very polite, non-committal imperatives, along the lines of ‘it might be a good thing/I’d be so grateful if. . .’, as in (6a). In some contexts they have the force of polite suggestions for action, such as (6b), which approximates the English expression ‘why don’t you. . .’, and they differ from the imperatives in that they tend to require the verb to be in conditional mood (a codified morphological marker of politeness and indirectness in Czech), although it is not a rigid condition, as evidenced by (6a). In all cases, the speaker does not expect necessarily a verbal response, but whatever reaction might be expected, the speaker’s message is again one of deference within a positively (rather than antagonistically) framed negotiating context: ‘I’m asking you to do X – but I realize you might not wish to go along’. This function will be labeled Negotiation.

One interesting development within this pattern of usage is illustrated in (7), in which *jestli* does not introduce any clause whatsoever. Instead, this word alone stands for the implicit condition under which the requests might be carried out, and the request itself is expressed in the form of an imperative (unlike in 6).

- (7) A: *Járo, jesti, tak zavřete dveře, aby vám netáhlo na nohy*  
 ‘Jára, if [you want to], then [you can] close the door so you don’t  
 have your feet in the draught’ [PMK 421; 004-ZVBN]

In fact, the expression *jesti-tak*, very common in colloquial Czech, seems to be on its way to grammaticize as a marker of polite imperatives (8b), in contrast to the plain imperative (8a), and it is pragmatically roughly equivalent to the form in (8c), which is found in more formal texts. This usage does not involve any negotiation; it simply is a signal of politeness in issuing a request. Put differently, while *jestli* in (6) includes a performative function, in (7) it simply says ‘if you don’t mind’; we will refer to it as a Directive.

- (8) a. *zavřete dveře* ‘close the door’  
 close:IMP:2PL door
- b. *jesti tak zavřete dveře* ‘would you close the door’  
 if so close:IMP:2PL door (lit. ‘close the door, if you don’t mind’)
- c. *prosím Vás zavřete dveře* ‘would you close the door please’  
 please 2PL:ACC close:IMP:2PL door

Finally, there is a *jestli*-pattern that stands apart from both the questions (3–5) and the requests (6–7), although syntactically it resembles the former (a yes-no question).

- (9) a. A: *ale voni jezdějí k Náchodu já právě myslím. Českéj Těšín máš, to máš  
 za tym*  
 ‘but they drive toward Náchod, is what I think. *Český* Těšín –  
 that’s beyond the’

- B: *za Ostravou. tam sou ty trhy vyhlášený, to je pravda*  
 ‘beyond Ostrava. It does have famous markets, that’s true’
- ==> A: *a já mam takový tušení, že voni jezdějí tadyhle někde někde: jestli to dokonce nejní přes Harrachov ten .. přechod, co je tam. je tam taky ňáká Gora, myslim*  
 ‘and I have a feeling that they usually go somewhere here: it could even be through Harrachov, that .. border crossing that’s there. There’s also some[thing called] Gora there, I think’
- B: *no je to právě ta Jelení Gora*  
 ‘well that’s exactly that [place] Jelení Gora’ (PMK435; 297-MVBN)
- b. A: *to přijeli stěhováci a to eště zase akorát bylo mínus pětadvacet stupňů, já sem říkal něco vemu do auta, já sem přišel a vubec baterka s tím nehla, takže auto bylo naprosto nepojízdný, takže stěhováci našťestí teda přijeli, ta ávie zřejmě startuje i při mínus pětadvaceti nebo jestli jí měli v garáži, to přišli takový chlapíci tak velikosti Martina a poloviční, jo, [...]*  
 ==> ‘so the movers came and it was also twenty-five below zero, I’d said I’ll take some stuff in my car, I went there and the battery was hopeless so the car was totally out of commission, but so fortunately the movers came – looks like the Avia starts up even in twenty-five below zero, or maybe they had it in the garage [I don’t know], so some guys showed up kind of Martin’s size, and half that, y’know, ...’ (PMK219; 012-MVBN)

In (9a), we have a dialogue with several turns, in (9b) a monological narrative, but in both cases, *jestli* is used in the middle of a single turn and evidently does not constitute an attempt to elicit a response from an interlocutor. Instead, these two examples express the speaker’s uncertainty about something, representing a ‘thinking aloud’ mode, casting a specific propositional content only as potential, as the speaker’s best guess, but one that is evidently not offered as a new topic for discussion. It is usually no more than an aside, offering a possible explanation for something else in the speaker’s turn. Also prosodically, these uses are assertions (with a type of declarative contour), rather than questions; this function will be referred to as Uncertainty.

The usage as a general expression of uncertainty or guess also has a narrower variant, shown in (10), in which the clause introduced by *jestli* contains a quantifier expression.

- (10) A: *my sme měli kancelář maličkou, bylo nás tam vosum, a jestli to byly dva metry na vosum, nudlička taková, a tam nás sedělo vosum*  
 ‘our office was tiny, there were eight of us in it, it was maybe two meters by eight [at most], a kind of noodle of a room, and there were eight of us sitting in it’ (PMK327; 021-ZIBF)

In terms of its pragmatic force, this use of *jestli* can be described as an explicit disclaimer of giving precise information about the size of something; we will label it Estimation. But there is also a semantic idiosyncrasy built into this pattern, unpredictable from any of its other properties (semantic, pragmatic, or formal): it incorporates a scale on which the estimated size is presented as ‘too small’. The combination of *jestli* + quantifier phrase can be paraphrased as ‘possibly only/at most so-much’, never ‘possibly as much as...’. In fact, the usage shown in (10) is sometimes expanded explicitly by adding the fixed expression *tak je to moc* ‘it’s too much’, illustrated in (11).

- (11) *a jestli to byly dva metry na vosum, tak je to moc*  
 and if PART were two meters by eight then it is too-much  
 ‘if [I say] it had 2 meters by 8, I’m giving it too much’  
 (in more idiomatic English: ‘it couldn’t have been more than 2 by 8’)

Thus, by using this pattern (with or without the expansion *tak je to moc*), the speaker not only makes it clear that he/she is only giving an estimate, but that the estimate is also cast as erring on the generous side.

The range of functions and interpretations associated with *jestli*-patterns in the spoken language, beyond the purely grammatical complementizing functions, are summarized in Table 4. The left-most column labels the functions we identified and discussed in this section. The criteria listed across the top row are based on what the data seem to call for in order to provide a set of features that uniquely identify each usage, while at the same time suggesting generalizations across various subsets of *jestli* uses, much the same way the Solv data was presented in Table 1.

Once we lay out the relevant features, various questions about representation emerge. The most general issue has to do with defining the status of the word *jestli* as a specific linguistic category. In this case, we need to reconcile the apparent polyfunctional

Table 4  
 Summary of properties that characterize non-subordinating *jestli* in spoken Czech

	Prosody	Restricted V morphology	Y/N Q	Pragmatic function	Answer expected	New topic/ direction	Type of turn
<b>Polite Question</b>	Q	–	√	Deference to hearer	√	√	D
<b>Quoting Question</b>	Q	–	[ ]	Seek hearer’s confirmation	√	–	D
<b>Rhetorical Question</b>	Q	–	√	“Fake” interaction	–	√	M
<b>Uncertainty</b>	A	–	–	Indirectness	–	–	M
<b>Estimation</b>	A	Indicative	–	Hedging	–	–	M
<b>Negotiation</b>	Pleading	Conditional	–	Indirectness/deference	[ ]	[ ]	D
<b>Directive</b>	n/a	Imperative	n/a	Politeness marker	–	n/a	D

Under *Prosody*, Q stands for ‘question intonation’ and A for ‘assertion/declarative intonation’. Empty brackets indicate that a particular use is unspecified for a given property; M stands for ‘monological’; D for ‘dialogical’. The symbol ‘–’ indicates absence of a feature, while ‘n/a’ indicates that a given feature is irrelevant for a particular function.

distribution of *jestli* with the traditional assumption that a linguistic category can (or even, must) be fully identified and defined in isolation, independently of larger contexts. In addressing this issue, it actually matters very little whether one subscribes to the functionalist principle, in its extreme version, of one-form-one-meaning, or to a derivational approach in which one meaning/function of a single form is determined to be ‘basic’ and the remaining uses are derived from it by grammatical or lexical rules. Either way, something will be lost in our generalizations and the fundamental problem will remain: On what basis can we define the ‘meaning(s)’ of *jestli* in order to capture all the relevant information? This problem arises not only in accounting for the pragmatic functions found in the spoken data, but extends to the syntactic functions of *jestli* as well – both on its own (should there be two different *jestlis* – interrogative and conditional – or a single, polysemous one?) and in relation to the non-subordinating uses. We propose that this is not even the right way of formulating the question. Rather, we suggest that all the attested uses constitute a network of expressions with similar or overlapping functions and/or formal features, and that capturing the details of that network is the ultimate goal in making adequate generalizations about the speakers’ knowledge.

Evidently, each usage of *jestli* displays its own idiosyncratic properties that do not simply follow from the meaning of the word itself (whatever arbitrary definition we may give it) or the syntax of the utterance in which it occurs. Nor can the uses be derived directly as simple extensions or subtypes of the syntactic function as a conjunction. Instead, we can see subsets of properties shared across several uses of *jestli*, each of which also includes some idiosyncratic feature(s) of its own. For example, if we take the free-standing questions (the first three rows in Table 4) and their formal properties (the first three columns), we see that they all tend to show the same intonation contour and they make no special demands on the verb morphology, although one of them (the quotative) is generalized beyond the environment of yes-no questions (indicated by the brackets [ ]). Thus in terms of their prosody and syntax, all three patterns could be treated as roughly the same category. But they differ with respect to their discourse features (the last three columns). On the one hand, the real questions and the quoting questions expect the hearer’s reaction, while the rhetorical question does not; this distinction also relates to the type of turn each question type is associated with: interaction/dialogue for the former, narrative/monologue for the latter. At the same time, the rhetorical question patterns together with the polite question in that both shift the direction of the subsequent discourse, while the quoted question does not. And in terms of their pragmatic function, each is clearly distinct from the other two: one is a genuine question, albeit offered tentatively, one is a performative (indirect request), and one simply imposes the formal ‘trappings’ of a dialogue on what is really a narrative.

A preliminary picture of the relationships in the network might take the shape of Fig. 3, which abstracts away from the morphosyntactic details and focuses only on the distribution of *jestli* over major semantic and pragmatic notions. Prosodically, we have three intonation patterns (questioning, asserting, and requesting) corresponding to the three speech-act functions listed across the middle of the diagram and underlined. Since the word *jestli* is associated with each of them, we cannot reduce the function of *jestli* to marking a particular speech-act function, even though such a function

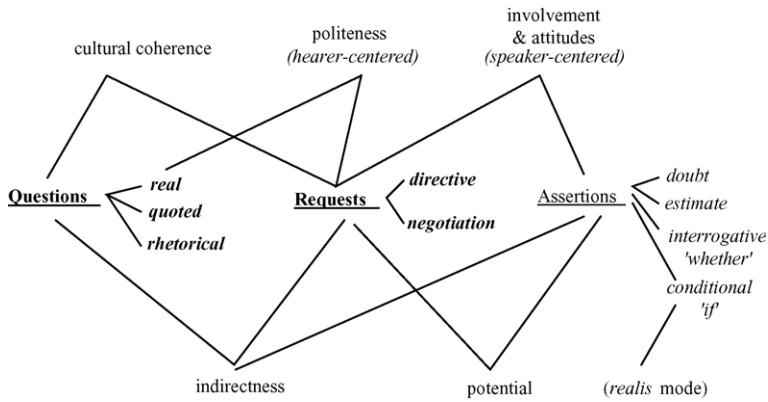


Fig. 3. A partial functional map of *jestli*-patterns.

is part of the picture.<sup>17</sup> Semantically (the bottom portion of the diagram), all the uses summarized in Table 4 have to do with expressing indirectness – whether in asking, in making statements, or in issuing requests. This is significant because it allows us to establish a semantic overlap with the syntactic functions of *jestli* as a marker of indirectness and real or potential condition; both the dialogical uses and the syntactic ones are thus motivated by the same semantic notions. There is one crucial difference, though. The need for expressing indirectness in the dialogical uses is motivated not by morphosyntax or by any inherent ‘meaning’ of *jestli*, but pragmatically: by culturally embedded rules of politeness that govern social interaction among Czech speakers. These constraints on usage can be understood as particular manifestations of the three pragmatic parameters (across the top portion of the diagram) that were discussed in Section 3.<sup>18</sup>

We thus must conclude that each distinct usage of *jestli* in the language (spoken or written) can only be understood as a particular combination of all these factors, together with the distinction of the basic text type (or turn type): interaction versus a narrative. While the questions and requests serve as a device for keeping the interlocutor’s presence in focus, the expressions of uncertainty tend to be primarily speaker-based.

In a constructional analysis, as already discussed, each specific combination of properties that recurs as a whole in actual linguistic expressions amounts to a ‘construction’ – a unique and further indivisible pairing of form and function/meaning. Thus each of the *jestli* uses summarized in Table 4 (and with the addition of the two

<sup>17</sup> By the same token, the use of *jestli* (or these particles in general) cannot be reduced to being purely an issue of prosody. This finding does not contradict the observations made in studies focused on the prosodic aspects of discourse (e.g. Couper-Kuhlen and Selting, 1996; Ford and Thompson, 1996). It merely brings attention to the fact that we need a more fine-grained view of the role prosody may play in speakers’ knowledge about the nature of these particles: prosody represents only one of several features that co-occur in particular conventionalized configurations, that is, in grammatical constructions.

<sup>18</sup> Boldface in Fig. 3 indicates interactional uses of *jestli*.

grammatical functions not addressed in this paper) can be represented as an abstract template, a ‘construction’, which specifies not just morphosyntactic or lexical-semantic information, but also conventionalized pragmatic and interactional features whenever such specifications are relevant to a complete and accurate analysis of a given linguistic pattern. And crucially, positing such complex co-occurrences of features (formal, pragmatic, semantic) is justified on the grounds that the whole pattern is not simply a sum of its parts, but has its own, otherwise unpredictable (non-compositional) meaning or function. As we have briefly sketched above, the putative *jestli*-constructions fulfill this condition.

But there is also other evidence that such autonomous form-meaning units exist and that speakers use them independently of the specific grammatical contexts that might license them in the first place. In each of the examples in (12), the word *jestli* appears in the middle of a turn and the syntactic structure is that of standard indirect questions: a main clause followed by a *jestli*-clause.

- (12) a. ==> A: *to by se muselo změřit, nó, jestli by to šlo dát místo toho takovou tu bílou hranatou a zas to celý na to postavit*  
 ‘one’d have to measure it, yeah, [to see] if maybe we could put in that white one instead and then put the whole thing on top of it’  
 B: *a myslíš, že by to šlo ?*  
 ‘and you think it’d work?’ (PMK 221; 107-MIAN)
- b. A: *Zuzana si přišla, jestli nemám, teda jestli mám tu mast. já sem jí slíbila Infadolan [...]*  
 ‘Susan came [to ask] if I don’t have, I mean, if I have the ointment – I’d promised her Infadolan [...] (PMK128; 140-ZIBN)
- c. A: *nemusim furt škudlit, jesi se pojedu podivat na rodiče nebo jim jenom zatelefonuju*  
 ‘I don’t have to pinch pennies all the time [to calculate] if I’ll drive to visit my parents, or just call them’ (PMK 270; 001-MIAF)

However, these *jestli*-clauses appear in semantic contexts in which an indirect question would not be expected; the verbs in the presumed main clause are not even remotely verbs of asking or knowing (cf. *změřit* ‘take measurements’ in 12a, *přijít* ‘come’ in 12b, *škudlit* ‘pinch pennies’ in 12c), and yet, the overall interpretation is that of indirect questions (12b) or a deliberation of possibilities (12a, 12c). The indirect-question reading is based solely on the understanding imposed by the *jestli*-clause itself: it alone invokes a certain set of semantic and pragmatic expectations, which then apply to the utterance as a whole. It is one of the strengths of CxG that it accounts naturally for extended usage of this kind, through the same mechanism that is used for utterances where everything falls into place directly, so to speak.

## 5. Implications for CxG

At a general level, this study seeks to evaluate the feasibility of applying Construction Grammar to spoken language. On the example of pragmatic particles, we have demonstrated how CxG can approach spoken-language phenomena and address various pragmatic issues, without compromising its status as a grammatical theory. We consider it futile to argue whether the CxG approach is ‘better’ or ‘worse’ than, say, CA or corpus studies in dealing with interaction-based linguistic phenomena; rather, we want to stress that CxG’s focus on the linguistic and grammatical point of view in analyzing spoken discourse contributes an understanding that is a necessary complement to the findings of other approaches to spoken language. Our point is that grammar must be an integral and necessary part of any linguistic analysis that aspires to provide a deeper understanding of language and communication. And, on the basis of our understanding of cognitive and interactional phenomena in language, we would argue that the kind of grammar best suited for this task is a constructionally based grammar. From the Construction Grammarian’s point of view, then, the question is what kind of dialogical approach it would be most compatible with, so that the result is a viable approach to (spoken) language as a whole. In this study we suggest that the tenets of CxG fit in with one particular major approach to spoken language, namely, CA, and we have also pointed out the importance of corpus studies for CxG.

We are convinced that general pragmatics issues have to be addressed systematically, just like anything else in language that is reflected in grammatical structure (understood constructionally, not derivationally). We have shown that the existing CxG framework can

Table 5  
Pragmatic attributes and values

Attributes within <b>Coherence, Politeness,</b> and <b>Involvement</b>	Examples of possible values
<b>Coherence</b>	
Type of speech act	Question Request Assertion (etc.)
Speaker information (sex, age...)	e.g., M/F
Shift of discourse topic	Yes (→ new topic) No (→ keep old topic, or topic specification not relevant)
Expectations vis-à-vis hearer	Yes (a response; specific response) No
<b>Politeness</b>	
Power ~ Solidarity	Formal/Informal
Tact	Distance/Deference/Camaraderie
<b>Involvement</b>	
Involved	+/-
Intonation	Different contours

be easily enriched by introducing the parameters that are necessary for incorporating discourse-level information, and in particular information concerning issues connected with the general view of pragmatics as Implicit Anchoring.

For illustration, in Table 5 we list some of the attributes and their potential values that have emerged from our work as necessary in any future work within the pragmatic domain. These attributes are to be understood as representations of grammatically relevant and conventionally encoded pragmatic information. All of them have been illustrated in the data sections of this study.<sup>19</sup>

## 6. A potential reconciliation

We would like to finish with a selected list of further points that are relevant in the relationship between CxG and CA. These issues have become obvious partly through our analyses, partly through other recent research.

First, studies within CA and Interactional Linguistics (and see also, e.g., Tiainen-Duvallon, 2002) have shown that a construct<sup>20</sup> can be jointly produced, i.e., by more than one speaker (cf., e.g., Lerner, 1991). This allows us to talk about the concrete co-constructing of understanding in discourse, while at the same time accepting that the result of co-constructing may correspond to codified abstract patterns (or, possibly, a concatenation of several such patterns).

Second, we have suggested that constructions can be potentialities; every construct does not have to be picked up (by one's interlocutors) as a manifestation of a construction the speaker may have had in mind. This tallies well with the idea that intention and uptake do not necessarily go hand in hand and that *both* need to be taken into account as part of an adequate analysis of linguistic behavior.

Third, constructional analyses of spoken language can show relationships, similarities, and differences across typologically different languages. This holds better promise for addressing issues of linguistic universals than has been the case in theoretical linguistics and syntax-based typological studies. In particular, taking a constructional view allows us to approach language universals not only from a cognitive point of view, but also from an interactional perspective.

Fourth, the data discussed in this study provide evidence that the inventory of constructions cannot be conceived of as a list of unrelated items that just happen to exist in a given language. Instead, they form networks of overlapping grammatical patterns such that each member of the network is defined not only as a distinct entity that has a discrete set of properties, but also in relation to, and overlapping with, certain other members of that network.

Finally, even potential 'mistakes' in language production have to be analyzable in terms of constructions, or, minimally, in terms of *how* (in what respects) such mistakes are not

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of further attributes and values at the discourse level related to shift of discourse topic, see Östman and Virtanen (1999).

<sup>20</sup> Because of the pronounced ethnomethodological stance of CA, conversation analysts do not always regard the distinction that CxG upholds between constructs and constructions as equally relevant. Typically, thus, within CA, 'constructions' can be talked about as being jointly produced.



part of a particular language. In fact, this is why the CxG formalism needs to be rigid and kept as an important part of the CxG model, despite the fact that scholars working in more dialogical approaches often wonder why Construction Grammarians cling to the formalism. The formalism forces precision in stating generalizations, which, in turn, also helps the analysts to see things more clearly and gain a better understanding of language structure.

In this study we have shown that CxG is well equipped to address the complexities of spoken language, if one allows the notion of construction to be extended in a dialogical direction. For instance, issues of inferencing and negotiation, which are crucial in analyses of spoken discourse, need to, and can, be fruitfully addressed within CxG's sister-theory Frame Semantics (we have not discussed this aspect in this study; but cf. Fried and Östman, 2003; Fried, 2004, *in press*). At the same time, it follows from our analyses that from the point of view of dialogical approaches, certain aspects of CxG would have to be re-evaluated if such extensions are embarked upon. For instance, the idea that constructions could be seen as turn-types, that the relation between constructions and constructs might need to be rethought for dialogical analyses (since CA strives to work with linguistic realizations only), or that the notion of 'context' might have to be extended from its current, narrower, status in CxG. Alternatively, and as we prefer it, CxG should be kept the way it is, only refined with the view to keeping the model attuned to what we know about cognition and interaction; not, however, with the view to first and foremost having it become a model for human interaction, a model that would attempt to compete with CA and other dialogical approaches.

All in all, the seemingly opposite monological and dialogical approaches to language do not have to be incompatible ways of viewing language – if we allow flexibility in both directions.

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