

# Research on Idioms Variation of Modern Chinese and English in the Perspective of Construction Grammar Theory

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**Abstract:** Constructive grammar is essentially a category of cognitive linguistics. It considers vocabulary, grammar, semantics and pragmatics as a whole. It considers that the whole form and function of the construction does not add up to the simple components. Idioms are the essence of language. English is known for its rich idioms. It is very common to use idiom mutations in practice because of actual needs. Here, the principles of construction grammar theory are used to analyze the ways and classification of English idiom variation. The modern Chinese-English idiom variation is compared and analyzed from the aspects of phonetic features, semantic features, pragmatic features and syntactic features. The research results serve the expected practical value of English teaching, idiom dictionary compilation and corpus improvement.

## 1. Introduction

Constructive grammar theory is a cognitive linguistic theory that studies the nature of speaker knowledge. A construction itself is a whole. Its meaning is not a simple addition between components, nor is it a random arrangement of meaningless forms. That is to say, a certain part of a whole cannot exist independently from the whole, and the whole is larger than the sum of the parts. Linguists believe that language is a system of construction, and language acquisition is a construction acquisition. Construction is the basic unit of language, and chunks are an integral part of construction syntax. On the one hand, the construction grammar brings a new theoretical perspective for the study of second language acquisition and foreign language teaching. On the other hand, the application of construction grammar research will also contribute to the further improvement and improvement of the construction grammar theory.

Idiom language is the carrier of culture, and idiom is the essence of language. The idiom has a wide meaning and generally refers to phrases that are commonly used together and have a specific form. The meaning of the meaning cannot often be inferred from the meaning of a single word in the phrase. Idioms usually include idioms, proverbs, idioms, maxims, after-speakers, proverbs, proverbs, and jargon. The expressions have beautiful syllables, coordinated rhythms, or subtle humor, or serious and elegant, concise and concise, vivid and interesting, showing people a beautiful enjoyment. Idioms are the essence of language, with a strong national color and distinct cultural connotations.

In the process of communication, influenced by factors such as context and subjective consciousness of language users, the expressers will change the original form of the idiom according to the special context. By using idioms, the emotional color can be increased, the thoughts can be highlighted, and the center can be highlighted. To make the language rich and colorful, to achieve better communicative effects, this phenomenon is called idiom variation. English is famous for its rich idioms. The idioms are the most powerful, richest, and most widely used parts of English. It is very common for people to use the original idioms in practice because of actual needs. The research results of this subject serve the aspects of English teaching, idiom dictionary compilation and corpus improvement, and have strong practical use value.

## 2. Principle of Construction Grammar Theory

According to the research results of Langacker, Croft, Cruse, Fillmore, Goldberg and Jackendoff, the principles of construction grammar theory are summarized as follows:

(1) Construction is understood to include form and semantics, as well as the pairing of utterance functions. The construction includes all levels of language units in traditional grammar theory, such as morphemes, words, sentence patterns, idioms, and abstract phrase formats. The construction has symbolic features. Each configuration is a match between forms and meaning, that is, it has its own meaning and discourse function.

(2) The form and meaning of the construction are unpredictable. The concept of sentence meaning projection supported by formal syntax can be summarized as: "Sentences are meaningful, and sentence format has no meaning." Construction grammar is the reaction to this projection mode, which is ultimately a partial reaction to the generation of grammar. According to the theory of constructivism, the whole form and meaning of the construction are not simply the sum of the form and meaning of each constituent, so it is impossible to infer all the forms and meanings of the construction from the constituent components.

(3) Pay attention to specificity and edge phenomena. According to Langacker, "language is a mixture of regularity and specificity", which advocates the importance of language and opposes simplism. Goldberg also pointed out that the construction grammar emphasizes the implicit aspects of people's understanding of events and state of affairs. These "hidden aspects" actually refer to the specificity and marginal phenomena of language.

(4) In the syntactic study, the "what you see is what you get" approach is adopted. The construction grammar adopts a language-based model. The theory does not set the bottom of the syntax, does not set the phoneme vacancy component, and does not advocate the conversion between different sentence patterns, but advocates that the construction is dependent on separate input and general cognition which learned by the mechanism. Therefore, the construct is considered not to be derived, but to be "learned".

(5) It is argued that the construction has a habit. Croft and Cruse divide idioms into substantive idioms and formal idioms. The former's vocabulary is fixed; the latter is partially open. Fillmore proposes that a grammatical construct is a formal idiom, and Goldberg proposes that any expression with high frequency has a configuration. Langacker and Jackendoff also believe that any high-frequency construct or statement can be considered a construct.

(6) There is no clear boundary between grammar and vocabulary. Constructive grammar theory believes that there is a natural transition zone between syntax and vocabulary, forming a syntactic-lexical continuum.

(7) Advocating the investigation of syntax cannot be separated from semantics and pragmatics. Formal grammars such as generative grammar generally pay little attention to the factors of syntactic and semantic and pragmatic intersection. Generating semantics proposition includes grammar and pragmatic questions. Cognitive grammar and construction grammar further emphasize the semantic and pragmatic factors that have been neglected in the past. Goldberg believes that "subtle semantic and pragmatic factors are critical to understanding the constraints imposed by grammatical construction." Therefore, the construction grammar does not strictly distinguish between syntax and pragmatics.

(8) The construction is hierarchical, but each level forms a complete, highly unified system. The relationship between one construction and the other construction is generally closely related. The commonality between constructions constitutes the commonality between these constructions. These commonalities are themselves the basis of another construction. The characteristics are passed on to the more specific construction through the inheritance relationship.

## 3. Ways of Idioms Variation of English

On the basis of the original idioms, different means are used to imitate new idioms. There must be some connection between the new idioms and the original idioms. This connection is the basis

for idiom variation, which is the rationale. The rationale can be mined from the perspective of grammar and semantics. The grammatical rationale is based on the grammatical form of the original idiom, using grammatical changes to mimic new variants. Semantic reasoning refers to the basis of idiom variation is the semantic element. The basic way of semantic evidence is analogy. Most of the idiom variation is realized from the lexical and grammatical level. From the lexical level and the grammatical level, the variation phenomenon of pragmatic reasons is more clear and comprehensive in the process of using English idioms.

(1) Idiom variation at the lexical level. The performance at the vocabulary level is mainly to replace the words. Language users often have a tendency to innovate, break through the language of the box, create new and unique expressions, achieve better language effects, and the language will be rich and colorful. One is to replace. In the process of communication, in order to achieve the purpose of rhetoric and image, the new words in the original idioms are replaced with new words. Second, increase or decrease. Increase or decrease is to add new meaning to the idiom by adding or subtracting words from the original idiom. There are two main forms of the addition of words. One is to add the adverbs and adjectives to the original idioms to modify the original idioms to achieve the purpose of enhancing emotions. The word reduction is a pure take of the substantial part of the idiom, or some words are reduced according to the content, to achieve the simplicity of language expression. The third is abbreviations. Abbreviation refers to the compression of a few words in the original idiom into a new word for the convenience of speaking, so that the language expression is more refined. The shape of the compressed idiom has changed, but the meaning remains the same.

(2) Idiom variation at the grammatical level. The idiom variation is expressed in grammar, mainly to change the grammatical structure of the original idiom, including changing the word order, splitting parts, semantic extension and word reduction. First, change the word order. The order of exchange means that in order to achieve the rhetorical effect, the pragmatics exchanges the structural order of the idioms in the process of using the idioms. The second is to split the ingredients. The split component means that the pragmatic user uses the corresponding two components separately during the use of the idiom to form a new relationship for a clear contrast. The third is semantic extension. Semantic extension refers to the use of idioms in the use of idioms, and the addition of several components in the original idioms constitutes an extension, and the idioms after the extension are also changed.

#### **4. Classification of Idioms Variation of English**

**English idiom variation is divided into formal variation and semantic variation.**

(1) Formal variation. The idioms have changed in form, and the semantics have not changed. It mainly includes the following four categories: First, vocabulary replacement, including lexical replacement and tortuous replacement. Vocabulary replacement is the replacement of lexical components. It usually appears in literal idioms and semi-literal idioms, including verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions. The tortuous replacement is the morphological change of the word, which mainly includes quantity substitution, voice substitution, temporal replacement and qualifier replacement. Second, the composition increases and decreases. It is included the addition and subtraction of nouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions and pronouns, as well as the addition and subtraction of phrases and clauses in idioms. The third is that the ingredients are transferred to the class. It mainly includes two types of nominalization and adjectivization. The fourth is the compositional order. Usually the components of the order have multiple parts of speech or have the same semantic function. The understanding of formal variation depends on the context. Since language is the intermediary of contact, context is closely related to language understanding. Communicative activities are in a specific environment, and context has an irreplaceable role in explaining discourse.

(2) Semantic variation. The idioms have changed in semantics, and the form has not changed. It mainly includes the following four categories: First, vocabulary variation. The lexical variation in semantic variation is different from the lexical substitution in formal variation. The lexical

substitution is mostly synonym replacement, while the lexical variation is non-synonym replacement. The second is the component replacement. The component substitution in semantic variation is different from the component variation in formal variation. The variation of the component sequence has changed, but the semantics have not changed, and the component substitution has changed the semantics. The third is that the ingredients are inserted. Component insertion is not common in idiom variations. Generally, the components are inserted before the noun components in the idioms, and the meaning of the idioms changes. The fourth is that the word is polysemy. Although the idiom of polysemy has only one form of expression, it has many meanings. This situation is not common.

## **5. Comparative Analysis on Idioms Variation of Modern Chinese and English**

The idiom variation between English and Chinese idioms shows great differences in terms of phonetic features and word class selection in idiom alienation. It has great commonality in semantic and pragmatic features. For understand about these linguistic features, it is helpful to in-depth development of idiom teaching and other works. The comparative analysis of Chinese and English idiom variation mainly includes the following four aspects:

(1) Voice feature comparison. Voice refers to the sound that human beings emit through the vocal organs and has a certain meaning for social communication. Speech is a form of linguistic sign that has no meaning in itself, but has a function of conveying meaning. This kind of function is only possible when the voice is combined with a certain meaning to become a morpheme and a word in the language. In English idiom variation, the number of homophone variations is the least, the number of speech-like mutations is increased, and the number of different variations of speech is the most. In Chinese, the homonymous variation is the largest, the number of speech-like mutations is relatively reduced, and the number of different variations of speech is different is the least.

(2) Semantic feature comparison. The semantic features of English and Chinese idiom variation show convergence to a large extent, reflecting the semantic change process of English and Chinese idiom variation. The new meaning of idiom variation conflicts with the construction semantics of the original idiom, thus forming specific repression, such as vocabulary suppression or construction suppression, and thus new meanings. In this process, the original idiom meaning is resolved, and the idiom variation of the mutated part of the language is highlighted, and the characteristics of the idiomization are presented. Because the idiom has been alienated, the cognitive subject must combine the specific context, the encyclopedic knowledge and the original idiom meaning in order to perform the secondary cognitive processing about the variation form of the idiom.

(3) Pragmatic features comparison. Pragmatic refers to the practical use of language in a certain communicative environment. Since the use of language involves both parties, and it is subject to the contextual conditions, in order to use the language effectively, it is necessary not only to grasp the structural rules of the language, but also to understand the law of the use of language, which is pragmatic. The language application process must follow the social habits and expression rules of language use and act in accordance with social behavioral norms. The pragmatic features of English and Chinese idiom variation are very similar. However, English idiom variation can be transformed into normative language. Chinese idiom variation is often more temporary.

(4) Syntactic feature comparison. There are three aspects: First, the word class. In English, the lexical part of the idiom tends to be consistent with the original idiom; in Chinese, the part of the idiom variant is broader, and can be consistent with the original idiom and inconsistent. The second is the number of words or words. English idiom variation can be a single word variation or a multi-word variation. Chinese can be non-mutation, single-word variation, two-word variation, and multi-word variation. The third is the use of quotation marks. Chinese sometimes cites the mutated part to highlight the mutated part, thus expressing a special meaning different from the original idiom.

## 6. Conclusion

The important features of idioms are integrity, coagulability and irreplaceability. But the language is flexible and not static. In a specific context, people often break through the rules and regulations of the language and use it flexibly to create novel and unique expressions, enhance language expression and pragmatic effects. It is necessary to track the development and change trajectory of English and Chinese idioms, and exploring the creative means of comparing English and Chinese idioms, can make language learners understand the similarities and differences between Chinese and English, expand the knowledge horizon, cultivate the cognitive ability of language, and improve the level of intercultural communication.

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