

# Introduction

- **Issues of text semantics** (Fillmore 1974/1981)
  - Components of expressive and interpretive work
  - Status of context in grammatical descriptions
  - Semantics vs. pragmatics?
- **In this talk:**
  - Connection between frames, constructions, and contextual clues
  - Emergence of constructional meaning from usage

# Discourse connectives

- Polysemous patterns in grammatical morphemes
- Relationship between lexeme and construction (beyond issues of argument structure and verb semantics)
- Synchronic (and diachronic) relationships between constructions

# Case study

## JESTLI 'if' (jesli, esli, jesi, esi) in spoken Czech

### (1) in indirect Y/N questions:

*a vono se tě to eště zeptá, < **jesli** to chceš smazat včetně podadresářů, jo>*  
'and it'll also ask you < **if** you want to delete everything including the subfolders>' [PMK]

### (2) ... in free-standing clauses:

- a. < **Jesi** tam hned nějak nemohla popadnout dech nebo co >  
lit. 'If she got short of breath or something'  
'I think she probably got short of breath or something'
- b. < Ale **jesli** to vůbec měli přepojený do vrátnice.>  
lit. 'But **if** it was even forwarded to the receptionist.'  
'I don't think it was even forwarded to the receptionist.'

# Case study

## JESTLI 'if' (jesli, esli, jesi, esi) in spoken Czech

### (3) ... and in non-clausal contexts:

*a tak NJ nešel, že jo, no tak potom ho, potom ho volal, někdo mu volal,  
< jesi NP nebo kdo > že už, že už de rovnou*

‘and so NJ wasn’t coming, right, well and so then somebody called him,  
< **I-think-maybe** [lit. **if** ] NP or somebody>, that, that he’s going  
straight [there]’ [oral2006]

(2a) ... real example of a free-standing clause:

A: *povídám tak co ? chodíš ještě cvičit ? povídala že ne že už necvičí že jí  
potom bylo špatně, že se /*

B: */pane /*

A: */jí tam špatně dýchalo nebo co já říkám  
tak co to tak přeháníš tak když toto tak vynechám nějaký ty cviky že jo ?  
< **jesi tam hned něk nemohla popadnout dech nebo co taky** >*

B: *no nediv se prosim tě dyť není vůbec na to zvyklá*

-----

A: *so I say what's up? do you still go to the gym? She said no, she  
doesn't, she got sick afterwards, she /*

B: */oh man /*

A: */had a hard time breathing or  
something, I say well then why do you overdo it, if it's [too much]  
then you skip some exercises, right?*

*< **I guess she got short of breath there or something** >*

B: *well no kidding, she isn't used to it at all*



- **Questions:**

- How did we get from syntactic subordinator (1) to a discourse connective (2)?
- What does the relationship between (1) and (2) tell us about speakers' linguistic knowledge and understanding?
- How can we represent the knowledge?

- **Proposals:**

- Crystallization of certain preferences in 'transitional' contexts
- Maximizing quality of conversational contribution
- Metonymic transfer of constructional meaning and frame-based knowledge
- Constructions, lexical frames, discourse patterns

# Analytic steps

- With the help of CxG:
  - identify transitional patterns that provide evidence for the hypothesized relationship between (1) and (2)
  - isolate specific usage factors that account for the emergence of the polysemy
  - suggest explicit representations

## Embedded Y/N questions (ex. 1)

- Semantics of main predicate:  
‘lack of knowledge’ (Vs of not knowing, asking/  
finding out, deliberating/selecting, discussing);
- Substitutability: *jestli* ‘if’ / *zda* ‘whether’
- Relative order of clauses:  
[ main<sub>Theme</sub> – *jestli*-clause<sub>Rheme</sub> ]
- Compositional meaning
- No textual/stylistic restrictions

```
cat v+
phonol. [ intonation [] ]
```

**Indirect Y/N Question**

```
cat v
lex +
prg [ info-str. role theme ]
frame [ { ASKING, DOUBTING,
          DELIBERATING, ... }
        FE #1 [] ]
val { #1 [ Content ], #i []* }
```

#1

```
cat v+
sem 'multiple choice'
prg [ info-str. role rheme ]
```

**cat compl.**

**lxm** { *JESTLI, zda* }

inherit Y/N Question



in “transitional” contexts:

## Linear inversion

(4)

1. A: [PAUSE] *nepřijel, no tak nevím, jak je to, **jesli** je v krámě dneska* [PAUSE]
2. B: *Alice asi jela až ráno ne ?*
3. A: [PAUSE] *nebo **jesli** jela ráno až a von šel pak rovnou do krámu nebo jak,*
4. *nevím*
5. B: *hmm. no moc se mu tam nechtělo do práce* [oral2006]

1. A: [PAUSE] he didn't come so I don't know how it is, **if** he's in the store today  
[PAUSE]
2. B: Alice probably didn't go till the morning, no?
3. A: [PAUSE] or **maybe** [lit. 'if'] she didn't leave till the morning and he then went  
straight to the store or something,
4. I don't know
5. B: uhhh. well he wasn't eager to go to work

## Distance between clauses

(5) *řekla sem jim, že v tom městě provádím, nebo že provádíme, sociologické průzkum v oblasti knihkupectví. nó, < **jesi** by mi byly ochotný odpovědět na pár otázek,> že se vlastně jedná, že se to pak bude statisticky zpracovávat* [PMK]

'I told them **that** I'm doing, or **that** we're doing a sociological study in their town in the area of book-selling, right, < **would they** be willing to answer a few questions for me >, **that** it's in fact – **that** it'll be processes statistically'

# Emergence of constructional meaning

- Crucial role of ‘transitional’ contexts:
  - linear order of clauses
  - physical distance between clauses
  - (intonation of *jestli*-clause)
  - (resumptive pronouns in main clause)

## Backgrounding of main clause

- Conflicts in mapping between form and function
- Role of frequency patterns

(only reduced forms)

	Bohemian Czech	Prague Czech	Total:
Indirect Y/N questions – total:	696	442	1138
▪ <i>nevědět</i> ‘to not.know’	443	183	626
<i>nevím</i> ‘I don’t know’	413	166	579
▪ Vs of positive knowledge (total tokens):	2	6	8

cat v+

## Indirect Y/N question

cat v  
lex +

frame [ {ASK, DOUBT,  
NOT.KNOW,...}  
FE #1 [] ]

val {#1 [Content], []\*}

#1

cat v+  
sem 'multiple choice'

cat compl.

lxm {*jestli*, *zda*}  
'if, whether'

cat v+

,

# Transitional contexts

cat v+

prag discourse-frame [
   
     PRIVATE CONVERSATION
   
     register informal
   
     genre informational ] ]

Indirect Y/N question

#1

cat v+
   
 sem 'multiple choice; **uncertainty**'
   
 prag **speech-act [ ]**

cat compl.

lxm *jestli*  
'if'

cat v+

cat v

lex +

frame [ {NOT.KNOW}
   
     FE #1 [ ] ]

val {#1 [Content]}

lxm *nevím* 'I don't know'

# Free-standing *jestli*-clause ?

Indirect Y/N question

cat v+

prag [ discourse-frame [ PRIVATE CONVERSATION  
register informal  
genre informational ] ]

#1

cat v+  
sem 'multiple choice; **uncertainty**'  
prag **speech-act [ ]**

cat compl.

lxm *jestli*  
'if'

cat v+

→ emergence of constructional meaning: "lack of factual knowledge"

## (2a) Cxn 1: Potential Explanation

A: *jí tam špatně dýchalo nebo co já říkám tak co to tak přeháníš tak když toto tak vynechám nějaký ty cviky že jo ? < **jesi tam hned něk nemohla popadnout dech nebo co taky** >*

B: *no nediv se prosim tě dyť není vůbec na to zvyklá*

-----

A: had a hard time breathing or something, I say well then why do you overdo it, if it's [too much] then you skip some exercises, right?  
< **I guess she got short of breath there or something** >

B: well no kidding, she isn't used to it at all

- discourse context: working out common ground
- speaker's subjective evaluation of  $p$
- explicative meaning of *jestli*  
→ 'I think  $p$  is most plausible'

## (2b) Cxn 2: Counter-argument

*volal sem na tu Prahu čtyři že jó , tak tam to už na ten národní vejbor tam to nikdo nebral . myslel sem , že třeba aspoň vrátnice , ale **jestli to vůbec měli přepojený do vrátnice** . prostě nikdo .* [PMK]

‘I was calling Prague 4, right, and there, well, the city hall, and nobody was answering . I thought that maybe at least the reception . but **I guess it wasn't even forwarded to the receptionist** . simply no answer’

- discourse context: non-confrontational argument
- speaker's negative affective stance toward *p*
- adversative meaning of *jestli*  
→ ‘I don't think *p* is true/likely’

# 'Context'

## informational discourse

### Potential Explanation cxn.

- 'I think  $p$  is most plausible'
- explicative *jestli*
- form: trailing *nebo pro-form*  
'or pro-form'

anticipates YES

## argumentative discourse

### Counter-argument cxn.

- 'I don't think  $p$  is true/likely'
- adversative *jestli*
- form: augment. negative  
*vubec* 'not at all'  
initial *ale* 'but'

anticipates NO

Frame NOT.KNOW

# 'I know nothing' → 'I may know something'

(Y/N question)

(Subjective Assertion)

cat v+  
sem 'uncertainty'

**Subjective Assertion**

inherit Indirect Y/N Question

phonol. [ intonation **declarative** ]

prag	<b>discourse-frame</b>	PRIVATE CONVERSATION
		register informal genre informational
	<b>involvement</b>	'speaker's subjective evaluation of propositional content as likely true'
	<b>coherence</b>	speech-act assertion/explicative (of #1) hearer-response -- discourse-role 'response' disc.-sequence 'find an antecedent (#1)'

cat **contextualizor**  
sem 'explicative'  
lxm JESTLI

cat v+

nebo co

## Counter-argument

**inherit** Reported Y/N Question

cat v+

sem '*p* is likely false; uncertainty about the propositional content'

prag

d-frame

PRIVATE CONVERSATION

register informal

genre co-operative argument

involvement 'speaker's subjective evaluation'

coherence

s-act assertion

topic-shift [ ]

h-response [ ]

d-role "response"

d-sequence {#2 d-role "antecedent"}

cat pp

val {#1 [Content]}  
( lxm { *kdoví*; null } )

#1

cat contextualizor

sem 'adversative'

lxm (*ale*) *jestli* (*vũbec*)

cat v+

# Interpretive clues

- Frames (concern lexemes):
  - structured, schematized world knowledge
- Discourse frames/patterns (concern conventionally expected contextual information, Östman 2005):
  - genres
  - text types
  - socio-pragmatic information
  - speech-act functions
  - pragmatic force...
- Grammatical constructions
  - constructional meaning
  - internal structure

# Semantics vs. pragmatics?

- **Usual understanding:**

lexicon                      vs.                      usage  
(conventional)                      (on-line interpretation)

- **Proposal:**

**lexeme-meaning**                      vs.                      **interactional meaning**

both can be highly conventional *and* open to  
modulations in usage

→ 2 types of frames:

**'semantic' frames** and **'discourse' frames**



... 2 types of frames:

**'semantic' frames**

= schematization of world knowledge,  
representations of lexical meaning of words

**'discourse' frames**

= schematizations of communicative and discourse-  
structure conventions

# Conclusions

- Meaning/function of *jestli* cannot be determined outside of specific **constructions**.
- Constructions found in spoken discourse are distinct grammatical entities, *not* just ‘imperfect’ versions of constructions found in written discourse.
- Multidimensional nature of constructions naturally allows for incorporating textual constraints on grammatical patterning.

# Constructions, frames, context

- knowledge and understanding of recurring, conventionally expected *socio-pragmatic patterns* (e.g. dialogical vs. monological structures; politeness patterns; etc.), not *just* the meaning of words
- principles of *textual organization* (i.e., ‘rules’ of structuring sequences of propositions, not *just* syntactic structuring of sequences of clauses)
- **Directions for future work:**
  - ...develop constructions as knowledge structures representing **communicative competence** (not *just* narrowly defined grammatical competence)