

***The question remains is* whether constructions are in the making: Constructionalization at work**

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This study examines one recent innovative construction in Present-day American English, i.e. *the question remains/arises/becomes is*, based on a variety of corpora, and argues that constructions are in the making all through the ages, resulting in the formation of anacoluthonic constructions. The process of creating innovative constructions is called 'bridging' (Iwasaki and Ono 2001): some constituents of one construction can be used as part of another construction in the course of the speaker's sentence production, as in (1). Elements in focus are underlined.

(1) *The question remains is* how is the quality? (mywowbb.com; Web; accessed on Nov 10, 2018)

In (1), *the question is* plus a direct or indirect interrogative clause and *the question remains* plus a direct or indirect interrogative clause seem to go through the speaker's mind, concurrently or sequentially, and in another moment, they merge into the complex-clause construction as in (1). The former *the question is* construction is first attested in 1815, while the latter *the question remains* in 1850, according to the results of the COHA survey. In addition, one related construction *the remaining question is* appears in 1822 onward. Those nouns that serve to anticipate what comes next are called 'shell nouns' (Schmid 2000); however, the recent innovative shell noun construction as in (1) has not yet come under close scrutiny.

Croft (2001) states that constructions are considered to make up a network whose elements are taxonomically related. In this particular case, a cluster of related constructions renders an anacoluthonic construction as in (1), which means that a change in the constituency of a syntactic structure during its production results in the formation of another structural pattern, i.e. apo-koinou constructions in the last decade of the twentieth century, albeit in extremely small numbers: constructions are formed and progress in a network not in isolation (see Shibasaki 2018 for a historical survey).

The whole process of change can be accounted for in the framework of constructionalization (Traugott and Trousdale 2014), because these constructions exhibit those apparently not well captured through traditional phrase structures. Furthermore, while *the question remains is* has a strong tendency to introduce direct interrogatives, none of the interrogatives is enclosed in direct quotation marks, either single or double, in the corpora surveyed for this study (cf. *The Chicago Manual of Style* 2017: ¶6.42): the emergent nature of grammar that blurs the lexico-grammatical boundary and punctuation is characteristic of constructions in the making, i.e. constructionalization.

References

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