PART 2

Interactional approaches
Grammatical constructions in dialogue

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1. Introduction

Construction grammars take many shapes, from more formalistic ones to more cognitive ones (Goldberg, 1995; Fried & Östman, 2005; Croft & Cruse, 2004). This paper takes its point of departure in the analysis of talk-in-interaction and in dialogical theory. Such a theoretical framework will still share many assumptions with Construction Grammar (CxG; Fried & Östman, op.cit.), including of course the insistence that a theory of grammar must be usage-based. Yet it is undeniable that many variants of CxG suffer from an interactional deficit. I will therefore argue for a dialogical – a more interactional and contextual – theory and interpretation of grammatical constructions and lexical resources (Linell, 2006a, 2009).

2. A dialogical conception of grammatical constructions

I take dialogical theory (or ‘dialogism’) (Linell, 1998, 2009, and references there) to be a general theoretical framework for the description and explanation of most kinds of human action, cognition, communication and semiotic practices. It stresses the dynamic use of linguistic resources in the construal of meaning in interaction and contexts, whether the medium is spoken, written or electronic. That is, the terms ‘dialogue’ and ‘dialogical’ are not used here exclusively with reference to direct interactions between two or more mutually co-present individuals or communicative systems, e.g. face-to-face interactions based on spoken language. On the other hand, this is not to deny the significance of the metaphor of conversation within many applications of dialogical theory. And indeed, I shall deal in this paper with linguistic resources as used in talk-in-interaction.

One of the credos of dialogical theory is that, as regards language and language use, we should always prefer explanations in terms of cognitive processing and/or social action and interaction (e.g. constraints on turn design conditioned by sequential contexts), and let purely structural (language-internal) accounts
only stand proxy for such explanations. As applied to grammatical constructions, this view is more in line with the interactional variant of cognitive grammar of Ono & Thompson (1995), following Langacker (1987), than with formal CxG.

Ono & Thompson (1995) introduce the notion of ‘constructional schema’. Below, I summarise their most important points:

1. Language users’ grammatical knowledge is organised in terms of ‘constructional schemas’ that are relatively stable and have emerged from language users’ cumulative experiences of utterances. They are ”schematizations over sets of expressions parallel in formation, which are their instantiations” (p. 220).

2. Having once emerged in some form, a schema constitutes a pattern, according to which speakers configure linguistic elements when they are faced with the task of having to solve a particular communicative problem in a new situation.

3. Schemas are abstract prototypes (p. 217) with fuzzy boundaries (p. 220); ”[they] do not form a finite set, but are best understood as a dynamic and constantly changing inventory” (p. 220).

4. From a formal point of view, constructional schemas can be phrases, clauses, or multi-clause structures (p. 220). Schemas can be combined, linked to and embedded within each other in different ways (p. 220).

5. The structure of each single schema is linked to principles such as “one clause at a time” (Pawley & Syder, 1977) and ”one new idea per intonation unit” (Chafe, 1994).

6. Instantiations of schemas are negotiated locally, and are strongly influenced by cognitive constraints, and by social constraints that emerge in and through the situated interaction (p. 217).

Another interactionist account of constructions is that of Anward (1999). Anward formulates nine theses, which I here collapse into five: Constructions are (i) utterance types, i.e. abstractions from concrete utterances, or aspects of networks of related such utterances, but (ii) they are also lexicalised items with variable parts, (iii) which are open and dynamic, both paradigmatically and syntagmatically. (iv) They (or their instantiations/PL) are context-dependent as well as context-inducing, but (v) at the same time, they have also been abstracted, ”torn from contexts”, i.e. largely decontextualised, although they still bring with them some residue of their former contextual embeddedness when they become employed in new usage events.

Anward’s and Ono & Thompson’s points are obviously very closely related. In principle, I would endorse all of them, but I will proceed beyond them in some
respects, in particular in developing aspects of the external (or outer) syntax of constructions, with three subaspects:

a. what conditions on prior sequences does (the occurrence of) a specific grammatical construction set up (these conditions being either specific requirements or merely preferences),

b. what conditions on subsequent sequences does it set up,

c. what are its preferred co-occurring resources?

This implies that we will be concerned with some aspects of sequential context(s) when we consider grammatical constructions (cf. Anward’s point (iv)). I will argue that some conditions of the kinds suggested by (a–c) can be part of the language user’s knowledge of each and every grammatical construction.

Language users also have pragma-semantic knowledge linked to specific grammatical constructions. At some level, they ‘know’ a great deal about what kinds of meanings and functions constructions have and what sorts of pragmatic effects one can achieve with them. Accordingly, this theory assumes that constructional schemas, alias grammatical constructions, have integral meaning potentials tied to themselves. Neither situated interpretations of utterances nor the meaning potentials of the resources of language can be fully compositionally derived from their constituent elements.

The central idea behind the notion of meaning potential is that no word or grammatical construction has a completely fixed meaning (or function) that is actualised in all its usage events, but instead, the meaning potential is a (structured) set of affordances for sense-making that combines with contextual factors to yield situated meanings in different ways in different situations (Norén & Linell, 2007). I shall use the term ‘functional potential’ for the meaning potential of a grammatical construction (as opposed to a lexical item).

3. X-och-x – a responsive construction in Swedish

Research in interactional linguistics has demonstrated that talk in real interaction is incrementally produced and in various senses co-constructed by several participants (e.g. Auer, 2007; Lindström, 2006). Utterances are often co-constructed, and they are always dependent on sequential links within connected discourse. These links are either backward-pointing (‘responsive’) or forward-pointing (‘projective’) (or both). If the concrete constructs, i.e. the situated utterances, have these properties, then it seems reasonable to assume that at least some of the more abstract constructions (schemas) used, i.e. the resources of language, have been designed to be used in interaction and that they too include responsive and
projective properties. The definition of such a ‘responsive construction’ is that its linguistic form encodes (local) responsivity. This means that one can tell from the morpho-syntactic (and prosodic) form of any instantiation that it cannot be the first contribution in the discursive sequence (episode) where it occurs; instead, it is responsive to some prior contribution, and sometimes, this prior contribution too must exhibit a particular form.

Many constructions, and some of their instantiations, are of course not responsive in this narrow sense. For example, an utterance like It’s raining can occur as the first (and even only) contribution to a conversational episode. On the other hand, there are also many other responsive constructions in various (and arguably all) languages. Some English examples are:

– various elliptical constructions,
– many question types (responsive questions), such as echo-questions: “am I sure?” “do I read?”, and wh-questions with declarative word order: “you live where?”,
– the “incredulity response construction” (Lambrecht, 1990): “(what?) him wear a tuxedo?”,
– more well-known constructions, such as the it-cleft,
– various contribution types (with a grammatical side), many of which have been explored in Conversation Analysis, for example, and-prefaced questions (Heritage & Sorjonen, 1994) and so-initiated formulations (Drew, 1998).

Yet, explicitly dialogical analyses of grammatical constructions have seldom been made, but Wide (2002) provides one devoted to the responsive construction vera búinn að in Icelandic.

For reasons of space, I shall focus on only one grammatical construction here, that of x-och-x (i.e. ‘x-and-x’) in Swedish. This construction belongs to a subcategory of responsive constructions that we may call ‘reactive’ constructions. In using x-och-x, the speaker reacts to (or against) the use of a word or expression x occurring in a prior utterance, and by repeating it (in this case: twice, with an interjacent och ‘and’) in the beginning of his/her response, he or she reaccentuates it, negotiating and re-specifying its situated meaning. Let us cite an example before going into further details.³

(1) FLYTTA Å FLYTTA (samat: V1: 989ff) there is ongoing talk in a dinner

1. G: sen så beslagtos huse å (0.5) dom flytta tilbaka
2. ti (0.7) ti Hamburg (å)
3. M: nå flytta å flytta men ja menar va (. ) fan kan du
4. göra
G: "then the house was confiscated and (0.5) they **moved** back to (0.7) to Hamburg (and)"

M: "well (nå), **moved and moved** but I mean what (.) the hell can you do"

The speaker uses the *x-och-x* construction to comment on the situated use of a particular expression *x*, suggesting that *x* is not quite situationally appropriate, although not completely misplaced either. In (1), *x* is *flytta* 'move (house)', and speaker M seems to cancel the sense aspect of 'moving voluntarily, whereas he might still endorse another aspect, such as the more neutral semantic aspect of 'changing one’s dwelling-place'.

In the terminology of Fillmore et al. (1988), *x-och-x* is a formal idiom. A better term might be ‘schematic idiom’ (Croft & Cruse, 2004: 234). The *x-och-x* segment itself appears as a syntactically non-integrated element in the ‘pre-front field’ (cf. Auer, 1996) of a turn or Turn Construction Unit (TCU). However, it is usually prosodically integrated, rather than marked off (separated) (in the terms of Selting, 2005: 21) with the following clausal segment. It contains two copies of an expression *x* (a morphological form of a lexeme) that has occurred in a prior utterance. These two *x*’s are conjoined by *och* 'and', in conversational language almost always in the phonological form /o/, usually rendered as å in spelling.

What the speaker does with *x-och-x* is to take an expression *x* from an immediately prior utterance, place a reduplicated copy of it (*x och x*) in the pre-front field of a new turn or turn-constructional unit, and follow this up with an utterance in which the situated appropriacy of *x* in relation to the current topic is negotiated. Thus, the construction has a semantic-pragmatic function, or rather functional potential that cannot be entirely derived from its constituents, i.e. ‘x’ and ‘and’; and their meanings. I shall go into more pragmatic-semantic details below.

*X-och-x* occurs mainly in conversational language, that is, in actual talk-in-interaction as well as in certain written and electronic genres (e.g. chat, weblogs) in Swedish, and similarly at least in Danish, Norwegian, and Finnish. There is no direct counterpart of *x-och-x* in English; in our example (1), we could render the meaning of “moved and moved” approximately as “moved?, it depends on what you mean by that”. In German, you may compare the formal idiom *Was heisst schon x?* (or *x oder nicht x*).

The source of *x* is usually in the interlocutor’s prior contribution, as in (1), but it can also occur in the speaker’s own utterance. There are many similarities between the other-responsive and self-responsive uses, but also some formal and pragma-semantic differences (for details, see Lindström & Linell, 2007). Here, I shall cite one more other-responsive example (2), and then provide a self-responsive example (3).
(2) MÅNGA Ä MÅNGA (TemaK:B9:4:6) (from the very start of a talk at a maternity clinic between a doctor (D) and a pregnant woman (W); D wonders if W is used to being tape-recorded in connection with her visits to the clinic)
1. D: jaha du e van vi de har å-eh (.) bli inspelleda
2. W: ja=
3. D: =du har (.) haft många inspelleda samtal eller
4. W: ja-eh (.) många å många men de e nåra stycken
5. så de-
   D: “okay (jaha), you are used to this ah (.) being tape-recorded?”
   W: “yeah”
   D: “you have (.) had many conversations recorded, or.?”
   W: “well (ja-eh) (.), many and many, but there are quite a few, so It’s —”

In (2), the speaker objects to the use of många ‘many’, without downright denying its relevance. X-och-x accomplishes some kind of devaluation or downgrading of x, that is, from, say, ‘a large number’ to ‘some’ or ‘quite a few’.

(3) NORMAL Ä NORMAL (Swedish Radio; a H(istorian) is being interviewed by an I(interviewer) on the topic of elite schools, so-called Napola schools, in Nazi Germany and their possible role in promoting Aryan elitism)
1. H: [...] eh (.) °ja° de va (.) delvis normal skolgång
2. men-eh (.) eller ja, normal å normal °men° (.)
3. man ägnade mycke tid åt fysisk fostran å gymnastik
4. å sedan så småningom också (.) militära övningar.
5. I: så man höll på å kasta handgranater å skjuta me
6. gevär?
H: “ah (.) well (ja) it was (.) a partly normal schooling but ah or well (ja), normal and normal (.) but one devoted much time to physical education and exercises and then gradually also (.) to military practices.”
I: “so one was busy throwing hand-grenades and shooting with rifles?”

What the speaker does in (3) is to question in retrospect his own use of the term ‘normal’ (in line 1). However, he does not take it back completely. Rather he seems to suggest that some military education was ‘normal’ in the specific historical context, but that military exercises would not be considered ‘normal’ in today’s comprehensive schools. One may perhaps see this as a downgrading on a scale of ‘normality’. When x-och-x is self-responsive, it is partly reminiscent of what Couper-Kuhlen & Thompson (2005) have described as ‘concessive repair’ in English
data. An example would be the following (op.cit.: 263): a school teacher has com-
plained about the unruliness of the children in class, saying that she needs to get it 
all off her mind, and then mentions that she will have an in-service training the 
day after: so I can switch off. well, not really switch off but you know, relax. This 
concessive repair involves a response to a prior description (here: “switch off”), 
treating it as “partially unjustified”, as an “overstatement” (she did not mean “re-
ally switch off”), and then following it up with a “revised statement”, which does 
not, however, imply a complete “backing down” (“you know: relax”). In contrast to 
\textit{x-och-x}, however, ‘concessive repair’ is always self-responsive, and is not as tightly 
grammaticalised. While concessive repair is a conversational practice, \textit{x-och-x} is 
clearly a grammatical construction. Furthermore, \textit{x-och-x} is probably less of a re-
pair; it treats the deployment of the expression \textit{x} as in fact partially justified in the 
context at hand.

4. Conditions on \textit{x-och-x} as a construction

Space restrictions exclude both further examples and a detailed analysis of, for in-
stance, conversational (impromptu) vs. written (and therefore sometimes edited) 
usages. (Lindström & Linell (2007) provide a comprehensive analysis.). Instead, I 
will consider here what properties of \textit{x-och-x} one might want to specify in a more 
precise dialogical analysis of the construction. I shall distinguish between formal-
grammatical and semantic-pragmatic aspects. Among the former, I shall talk about 
conditions of \textit{internal} structure, and conditions on ‘outer syntax’ (co-text) of three 
kinds: conditions on \textit{antecedent} segments (i.e. on prior contributions to the local 
sequence), \textit{subsequent} segments, and \textit{co-occurring} linguistic resources.

4.1 Formal-grammatical aspects

The primary condition on \textit{antecedent} strings is of course the following:

\begin{enumerate}
  \item If an expression \textit{x} (a morphological form of a lexical item \textit{x}) occurs in the 
   preceding turn constructional unit (TCU) or turn, \textit{x-och-x} may be used.
\end{enumerate}

This rule articulates a necessary condition in the sense that \textit{x-och-x} is an option if 
and only if \textit{x} does occur in the prior discourse. This is also what makes \textit{x-och-x} 
into a responsive (and reactive) construction. (In very exceptional cases, this rule 
can be flouted when a speaker begins a new communicative episode with an in-
stance of \textit{x-och-x}. But then, a prior occurrence of \textit{x} will be tacitly inferred and 
imagined by the hearer.) However, (i) is not a sufficient condition (nor are the
other conditions below sufficient conditions); if an expression \( x \) occurs in an utterance, it is of course not necessary to follow it up with \( x\text{-och-}x \).

Other, non-obligatory but enabling conditions are: \( X\text{-och-}x \) is more probable,

ii. if \( x \) is focally stressed in the prior (source) utterance,

iii. if \( x \) is rhematic in that utterance, and

iv. if the source utterance is interrogative (this applies only when \( x\text{-och-}x \) is other-responsive).

The interpretation of each such condition is that if the condition is satisfied, the probability that \( x\text{-och-}x \) will be used in the following utterance is increased (presupposing of course that condition (i) is satisfied in the first place). In our example (1), (ii) and (iii) are satisfied, but not (iv). In (2), (iv) too is partially satisfied. As we have seen (cf. also condition (x) below), the speaker of \( x\text{-och-}x \) questions the situational appropriacy of \( x \). If the source \( x \) is already placed in an interrogative utterance (condition (iv)), we can, in some instances, talk about a collaborative construction of uncertainty and its elimination (example (2)).

As regards the internal structure of the \( x\text{-och-}x \) segment itself, we might posit the following obligatory conditions:

v. \( x\text{-och-}x \) occurs in the ‘pre-front field’ of a new turn or TCU,

vi. \( x \) in \( x\text{-och-}x \) is repeated (twice) in the same morphological form as in the source utterance,

vii. both \( x \)’s (or at least the second one) are focally stressed,

viii. the \( x\text{-och-}x \) segment itself is prosodically (but not syntactically!) integrated with the subsequent utterance.

Co-occurring constructions are other linguistic devices and constructions that speakers tend to ‘co-select’. In traditional terms, \( x\text{-och-}x \) is preferably “constructed with” certain other resources. Thus, the following condition is optional:

ix. \( x\text{-och-}x \) often co-occurs with distancing responsive particles (in the examples here: \( nå, ja, ja-eh \)) and concessive markers, especially in self-responsive cases (eller ‘or’ (cf. example (3): line 2), \( i \text{ alla fall} \) ‘anyway’, etc.).

In coherent discourse, especially within the bounds of local contributions, speakers routinely make semantic specifications that involve the use of several (usually convergent) semiotic resources (Deppermann, 2005: ‘co-selection’). Co-selected resources “reciprocally constrain and specify each other’s local interpretation” (Deppermann, op.cit.: 306). Therefore, such resources often become associated with each other. In this case, the lexicalised grammatical construction \( x\text{-och-}x \) is (paradigmatically and syntagmatically) associated with distancing particles and concessive markers, as a sedimented result of speakers’ co-selection routines.
Finally, moving on to the subsequent contribution, we find:

x. after the x-och-x segment, it is obligatory to proceed with an utterance that – for current communicative purposes – confirms (or foregrounds) some aspects and simultaneously cancels (or backgrounds) other aspects of x’s meaning potential.

Note that unlike the antecedent condition, this subsequent part is necessarily present: x-och-x does not occur without this kind of continuation. This fact (together with condition (viii)) may be taken as an argument for regarding this subsequent segment as part of (the internal structure of) the grammatical construction itself.

4.2 Semantic-pragmatic aspects

The subsequent segment is closely related to the semantic-pragmatic functions of x-och-x. As we have seen, what the x-och-x construction does is usually to problematise one (central) sub-sense of the meaning of x, and to enhance another as situationally appropriate. One might say that the construction is a grammaticalised method of initiating a local meta-linguistic discussion and semantic analysis of the situated use of x, and this deliberation necessarily involves consideration of x’s lexical meaning. That is, in using the construction, the speaker exploits the meaning potential of x as a communicative resource. In fact, precisely this – negotiating which semantic aspects of x will apply – can be seen as the core of the construction’s own functional potential. This amounts to another argument for including (what I just called) the subsequent segment (cf. condition (x)) within the grammatical construction itself. In our example (1), as we noted, what is questioned is the appropriacy of using flytta ‘move (house)’ in a situation in which the people moving had no other choice; it seems that flytta is often taken to mean ‘move voluntarily’, and this is the aspect of the meaning potential that is being cancelled here. At the same time, other aspects of the meaning potential are possibly supported in (1), such as ‘changing one’s dwelling place’.

The analysis of x-och-x usage events involving different lexemes can be used as an illuminating case of probing the interaction between grammar and lexis in authentic language use. Accordingly, Norén & Linell (2007) analyse the interaction of x-och-x with different kinds of lexemes, and demonstrate that the construction has somewhat different semantic-pragmatic effects depending on the meaning potential of the lexical item (x) with which it interacts. X-och-x is often applied to items with a quantitative or scalar semantics, and it downgrades or contextualises the situated value of x. In this respect, a quantifier like många ‘many’ in (2) clearly belongs to another semantic category than flytta ‘move’ in (1). A word like normal ‘normal’ is not unambiguously scalar in its semantics, but Norén & Linell (op.cit.)
argue that the construction may sometimes foreground or actually construct a scale-dependent interpretation of x. In (3), the military exercises were 'normal' only in the particular socio-historical environment talked about, that is, the conversationalists construe it as a case placed somewhere towards the lower end of a scale of (general) 'normality'.

5. General conclusions: Constructions in dialogue

My topic in this paper is not x-och-x per se (see Lindström & Linell, 2007), nor dialogical linguistics in general (see Linell, 2006a, 2009). Rather, I am interested in what the study of responsive constructions can teach us, when it comes to remedy the interactional deficit in Construction Grammar. By way of summary, I shall draw attention to three or four points in a dialogical (contextual, interactional) conception of a grammatical construction.

Contexts, including linguistic co-texts, sanction specific linguistic resources, and at the same time, contexts are themselves evoked or made relevant by the latter (Anward; see above). The first point is therefore that the situated occurrences and interpretations of particular utterances involve sequential dependencies; utterances have backward-pointing ('responsive') and forward-pointing ('projective') properties. In other words, grammatical constructions are made to fit into sequences of real coherent sequences of sense-making in talk (or text). Some constructions have actually encoded such relations. X-och-x is such a responsive construction; language users’ knowledge about this linguistic resource includes knowledge about antecedent and subsequent strings, as well as about co-occurring resources. Accordingly, such constructions do not only have an internal structure; they also have an external syntax with (at most) three parts: antecedent segments, subsequent segments, and co-occurring resources.

Secondly, grammatical constructions are concerned with actions and doings; they should be thought of in terms of methods, procedures or operations. Communicatively, they make a change, a 'difference that makes a difference', to the micro-situations in which they occur. The use of x-och-x changes, however little, the understanding of the current situation and its discoursal topic. Linguistically, constructions are operations on form and meaning, operating on some linguistic material and returning something else. On the structural, product-oriented side, they are oriented to the (speaker's) design and production of utterances or utterance parts with a particular linguistic structure. In CxG jargon, the abstract 'construction' licenses or authorises the 'construct' instantiated.

Within an overall dialogical framework, we would like to capture methods, procedures and operations, and more generally: actions and processes. If, then, we
try to account formally for grammatical constructions, this is not exclusively a matter of dealing with constituent structure, as in most grammatical theories, including CxG (despite its basis in e.g. Fillmore’s semantics of understanding), but with methods used by the parties to the interaction. Furthermore, while syntacticians (and compositionalists in semantics) usually deal only with the internal structure, a dialogical linguistics must also take external syntax into consideration.

The third point, too, is related to the preceding considerations. A grammatical construction has pragma-semantic properties that cannot be exhaustively derived from its constituent parts. We must assume, of course, that some loose form of compositionality is needed for assigning interpretations to new complex expressions, but strict compositionality is impossible. First, we can of course not compute interpretations of situated utterance tokens without contextual information (and relevant contexts cannot be specified in advance). Secondly, as several scholars in cognitive linguistics and construction grammar (e.g. Goldberg, 1995: 13ff.) have argued, strict compositionality does not hold on an abstract 'structural' level either; specific constructions have semantic properties that cannot be compositionally derived. A grammatical construction involves a specific semantic operation that is tied to the construction as a whole. In the case of $x$-och-$x$, the construction is mainly reactive: it negotiates the meaning of an expression $x$ occurring in the prior discourse, and modifies or revises the interpretation to be accepted locally.

This in turn implies that the grammar as a whole will register similar information at many places. Such a ‘maximalistic’ assumption, which is opposed to the dominant minimalism of many models of theoretical linguistics (Cappelen & Lepore, 2005), is nowadays commonplace in both usage-based approaches, such as construction grammar (Fried & Östman, 2005), and in some more theoretical approaches to semantics (Recanati, 2004). Specific constructions may inherit properties from more abstract constructions. For example, $x$-och-$x$ undoubtedly belongs to a family of reactive constructions with several properties in common (Lindström & Linell, 2007). Certain linguistic resources are frequently co-selected (see above), and such resources are arguably associated with similar information at several places in the language user’s knowledge of his or her language.

Fourth, I have been reasonably specific about various conditions associated with $x$-och-$x$ in this paper. Such constraints on the use of $x$-och-$x$ could arguably be formalised in a suitable notation. However, we must be aware that a complete formalisation is not necessarily the ultimate goal. This is argued in Linell (2006b) with particular reference to $x$-och-$x$. Formalisation is not a neutral or "innocent" meta-linguistic description, but it transforms its own subject matter. If we think of the subject matter as the dynamic practices of sense-making, and the resources used in these practices, formal accounts tend to respecify these in terms of static semantic frames and syntactic structures that are assumed to exist somehow.
abstracted from language use. If we think of language dialogically, as involving actions in situations in the world, we can not simply equate situated meanings with tokens of abstract fixed types. While I would definitely insist that grammatical constructions and meaning potentials do exist as such, in addition to and in one sense partly independently on the situated usage events, as accumulated resources in the situation-transcending practices of language use; these resources are, after all, only made manifest, actualised, in these real usage events.

References


Pawley, Andrew & Frances Syder (1977). The one clause at a time hypothesis. Unpublished manuscript.


Notes

1. This paper builds upon joint work with Jan Lindström (Helsinki) and Kerstin Norén (Karlstad). The paper was first read in a workshop on "Context in Construction Grammar" organised by Jan-Ola Östman and Mirjam Fried at IPrA IX, Riva del Garda, Italy, July 14, 2005. I am grateful to all these colleagues, as well as to other participants in the workshop. My own
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2. The notion of affordance comes from Gibson’s (1979) theory of perception. For the application to language, see e.g. Thibault (2005).

3. The examples used here are drawn from a corpus of tape-recorded cases (Lindström & Linell, 2007). Here I have simplified transcripts. The particular x-och-x segment and its source in a prior utterance are given in bold-face. In this paper, each example is followed by an approximate rendition in English, in which the x-och-x phrase has been translated word-by-word despite the fact that it lacks an idiomatic English counterpart.

4. (.) marks a micro-pause. Underlining (of a syllable nucleus, i.e. a vowel sign) indicates focal stress.

5. There are some (non-random) exceptions to this. See Lindström & Linell (2007).

6. Just like in the case of the necessary condition (i), condition (x) can occasionally be flouted, with particular rhetorical effects.