

**NOM Prénom :** CAPPELLE Bert

**Nature de la mission** (séjour de recherche, participation à un colloque...): participation au colloque « International Construction Grammar Conference » (ICCG-08)

**Lieu et date :** Osnabrück (Allemagne), 3-6 septembre 2014

**Frais de mission attribués par le laboratoire :**

STL : 768€

**Description de la mission** (par ex. résumé de l'intervention proposée/activités de recherche réalisées au cours de la mission...):

Nous (= Bert Cappelle, Edwige Dugas, Vera Tobin de l'Université de Case Western Reserve et Maarten Lemmens) avons parlé d'un usage inconnu de la construction *let alone* :

In this paper we re-examine the *let alone* construction, which lies at the basis of the Construction Grammar paradigm (Fillmore et al. 1988; cf. also Janssen & Van der Leek 2010, Toosarvandani 2009a, 2009b, 2010, Kay 2004). In canonical cases such as (1), the second conjunct is a sentence fragment whose restored proposition ('the baby can't walk yet') is semantically entailed by the proposition expressed in the first conjunct (here via the familiar ranking of crawling and walking on a scale of ease of acquisition):

(1) The baby can't even crawl yet, let alone walk.

Pragmatically, the second part satisfies Grice's maxim of Relation, as it negatively responds to an 'at issue' context proposition – the suggestion that the baby might possibly walk already – while the first part satisfies Grice's maxim of Quantity by stating something more informative, namely that the baby lacks an even more basic motoric skill.

Our focus, though, is on a seemingly aberrant use of the *let alone* construction, illustrated by the web-attested utterance in (2):

(2) He's won five times this year (...) Very few golfers have won that many events in one year, let alone their careers.

Semantically, the restored proposition in the second conjunct in (2) is not entailed by the proposition in the first conjunct; pragmatically, it is the first part that links up with an explicitly evoked proposition in the context while the second part functions as an afterthought.

We first show that utterances like (2) are not exceedingly rare: in a sample of 200 *let alone* sentences from the BNC and COCA, we identified nine arguably similar examples and we have an additional set of over twenty clear self-collected attestations. Next, we argue that these are not to be considered as evidence that some people have internalized "the wrong meaning" of the construction, as could be conjectured (Pullum 2013). Rather, their existence can be explained as resulting from a generalization of the pragmatic information in the canonical use: the speaker presents the first conjunct as containing the proposition that is centrally asserted while the second conjunct is presented as secondary, which is mirrored by the lack of main clause syntax in the second conjunct only. A general schema then allows for a (still scalar) near-paraphrase with 'or, what's more, ...'. Gricean maxims should be kept outside the pragmatic information in the *let alone* construction, which instead has specific information-structural content.

## References

- Fillmore, Charles J., Paul Kay and Mary Catherine O'Connor. 1988. Regularity and idiomaticity in grammatical constructions: The case of *let alone*. *Language* 64, 501-538.
- Janssen, Theo A.J.M. and Frederike C. van der Leek. 2010. The 'let alone' puzzle: a question of orientation. In Bert Cappelle and Naoaki Wada (eds.) *Distinctions in English grammar. Offered to Renat Declerck*, 312-337. Tokyo: Kaitakusha.
- Kay, Paul. 2004. Pragmatic aspects of grammatical constructions. In Laurence R. Horn and Gregory Ward (eds.), *The Handbook of Pragmatics*, 675-700. London: Blackwell.
- Pullum, Geoffrey K. 2013. X, let alone Y. *Language Log*, 5 April 2013. <http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=4553>, accessed 2 February 2014.
- Toosarvandani, Maziar. 2009a. The relevance of focus: The case of *let alone* reopened. In María Biezma and Jesse Harris (eds.) *UMOP 39: Papers in pragmatics*, 105-123. Amherst, MA: GLSA.
- . 2009b. Letting negative polarity alone for *let alone*. In Tova Friedman and Satoshi Ito (eds.) *Proceedings from Semantics and Linguistic Theory XVIII*, 729-746. Ithaca, NY: CLC Publications.
- . 2010. Scalar reasoning and the semantics of *let alone*. In Max Bane, Juan José, Bueno Holle, Thomas Grano, April Lynn Grotberg and Yaron McNabb (eds.), *Papers from the Forty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*, 51-64. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.

**Bénéfice de la mission** (pour le chercheur/l'enseignant-chercheur, pour le laboratoire) :

Le chercheur et ses collègues du laboratoire ont eu l'occasion de présenter une partie de leur travail concernant cet opérateur scalaire. Beaucoup de linguistes ont assisté à notre communication et, parmi ceux qui ont posé des questions intéressantes, il y avait quelques « grands noms » de la communauté de la Grammaire des Constructions (Laura Michaelis, Bill Croft). Ma présence au colloque et cette communication en particulier a mené à de nouveaux contacts avec des linguistes d'autres pays (ou à des renforcements de contacts préexistants) et, entre autres, à une proposition de collaborer à un ouvrage.