

**Analogy in Construction Grammar:  
The Case of *Just Because of X Doesn't Mean Y*\***

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### 1. Introduction

This article examines certain nominal uses of a *because of* phrase, as exemplified in (1), and aims to present a preliminary discussion of a role of analogy in construction grammar theory.

- (1) I mean, what happened is Pete Wilson signed a bill. It was a bad bill... I mean, just because of Pete Wilson's dumb mistake doesn't mean you're going to have lights out in Manhattan.

(CNN transcripts)

The underlined sentence in (1), in essence, conveys the same meaning as sentence (2):

- (2) Just because Pete Wilson made a dumb mistake doesn't mean you're going to have lights out in Manhattan.

That is, these sentences have the meaning of inference denial (i.e., the conclusion that you are going to have lights out in Manhattan is not automatically drawn from the premise that Pete Wilson made a dumb mistake). They differ from each other, however, in their syntactic forms. That is, the subject of sentence (1) is a *because of* phrase, while that of sentence (2) is a *because*-clause.<sup>1</sup> I will call a form-meaning pairing like (1) the *just because of X doesn't mean Y* (JBo-X DM-Y) construction, and one like (2) the *just because X doesn't mean Y* (JB-X DM-Y) construction, respectively.

Before starting the analysis, it should be noted that the JBo-X DM-Y construction is considered not perfectly acceptable, while the JB-X DM-Y

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<sup>1</sup> Although it is controversial whether the *just because* in sentence (2) is a subject (Hirose (1991)) or an adjunct (Bender and Kathol (2001)), I am not concerned with this issue. For the sake of simplicity, I use the term "subject" to refer to the position preceding the negated verb phrase *doesn't mean*; but for neutrality, I use Bender and Kathol's terms, the JB-X DM-Y construction, rather than Hirose's subject *because*-clause construction.



In (3), all the uninterpretable features are deleted and the derivation converges.

Matsuyama also argues that the *because of* is a compound preposition. This category status is established by William's (1981) righthand head rule, which requires the righthand head of a compound to determine its syntactic category (cf. also Emonds (1985)). That is, the righthand head of *because of* is the preposition *of*, and therefore must itself become the syntactic category of *because of*, and hence *because of*, a preposition, does not have an [N-] feature. Following Rizzi (1986), Matsuyama (2001:343) formalizes the relation between *pro* and its binder as follows: The binder and bindee must agree in categorial feature values. Given that the *because of* phrase is a PP, it cannot bind the *pro* in [Spec, *v*], since *pro* is nominal and therefore has a different category feature from its binder.

Matsuyama thus claims that the JBo-X DM-Y construction is not grammatical based on his analysis of the licensing system of the subject *because*-clause. In contrast to his observation, however, as example (1), repeated here as (4), shows, JBo-X DM-Y constructions *do* exist.

- (4) I mean, what happened is Pete Wilson signed a bill. It was a bad bill... I mean, just because of Pete Wilson's dumb mistake doesn't mean you're going to have lights out in Manhattan. (= (1))

In order to solve the paradox, I will propose a construction grammar analysis in section 5. Before that, in the following section, I will observe Hirose's (1999) constructional analysis of the JB-X DM-Y construction on the basis of which my proposal will be made in the sections that follow.

### 3. Hirose (1999)

#### 3.1 Hirose (1999): Inheritance Relations

Hirose (1999) presents a construction grammar analysis of the JB-X DM-Y construction and describes inheritance relations (cf. Goldberg (1995)) between the relevant constructions. Hirose (1999), like Matsuyama (2001), considers the *because*-clause of the JB-X DM-Y construction as the subject of a sentence, and points out that the occurrence of a *because*-clause, an adverbial clause, in the subject position cannot be explained compositionally for the following reasons. First, unlike *that*-clauses, *because*-clauses can occur in the subject position only when the verb of inference (and a limited range of other verbs) that follows is negated.<sup>3</sup> Consider the following:

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<sup>3</sup> See Hirose (1999) and Bender and Kathol (2001) for details of the kind of verbs that may

- (5) a. {That/(Just) because} John is rich doesn't mean that he is happy.  
 b. {That/\*(Just) because} John is liked by all the students means that he is a good teacher.

(Hirose (1999:598))

In (5a), either the *that*-clause or the *because*-clause can be the subject of the negated verb of inference. By contrast, example (5b) shows that only *that*-clauses may be used as the subject if the verb is not negated. Based on the contrast, Hirose argues that the occurrence of the subject *because*-clause cannot be attributed to the semantics of the verb, i.e., we cannot say that verbs of inference can take a *because*-clause as its subject, since the polarity of a sentence is independent of the lexical semantics of the verb used in the sentence.

Another reason is that not only verbs of inference but also *make* (a causative verb) and *be* (a copula verb) may follow the subject *because*-clause as shown in (6):<sup>4</sup>

- (6) a. Just because you donate a sperm and an egg doesn't make you a parent.  
 b. Just because U.S. taxes are lower is no reason to increase them.

(Hirose (1999:598))

Once again, the occurrence of a *because*-clause in the subject position, Hirose argues, is not predictable from the lexical meanings of such verbs.

For these reasons, Hirose refuses a lexical semantic approach to the construction at issue and takes a constructional approach, claiming that the JB-X DM-Y construction and some of its variants with verbs of different kinds (e.g. (6a, b)) inherit their information from more general constructions. The notion of inheritance is proposed by Goldberg (1995). She puts it, "by postulating abstraction hierarchies in which lower levels inherit information from higher levels, information is stored efficiently and made easily modifiable (Goldberg (1995:72))." Several types of inheritance links are proposed according to how the inheritance is motivated, among which instance links (I<sub>1</sub>-links), metaphorical extension links

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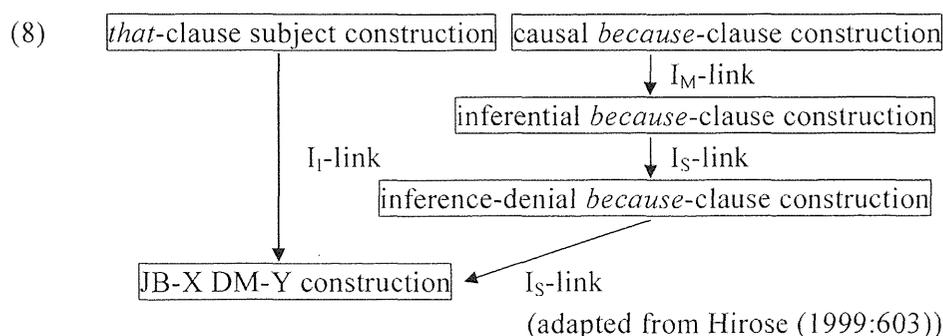
appear in this construction.

<sup>4</sup> Hirose (1999) refers to each construction as "the causative verb version of subject *because*-clause construction (e.g. (6a)),<sup>4</sup>" and "the *be* verb version of subject *because*-clause construction (e.g. (6b))." For a simplicity reason, as far as such a distinction is not necessary, I do not distinguish these types and I will treat all the types equally as the JB-X DM-Y construction regardless of types of the verbs used in the construction.

( $I_M$ -links), and subpart links ( $I_S$ -links) are relevant for the present discussion. Their definitions are given in (7a-c):

- (7) a. Instance links are posited when a particular construction is a special case of another construction. (Goldberg (1995:79))  
 b. Metaphorical extension links are posited when two constructions are found to be related by a metaphorical mapping. (adapted from Goldberg (1995:81))  
 c. A subpart link is posited when one construction is a proper subpart of another construction. (Goldberg (1995:78))

With these notions, Hirose (1999) describes relations between the relevant constructions as follows:



By describing inheritance relations between the constructions as in (8), Hirose claims that the *JB-X DM-Y* construction inherits its information multiply from the more general constructions, i.e. the inference-denial *because*-clause construction (e.g. (9b)), where the *because*-clause is used adverbially, and the *that*-clausal subject construction (e.g. (9c)), where the nominal *that*-clause occupies the subject position.

- (9) a. Just because John is rich doesn't mean that he is happy.  
 b. Just because John is rich, it doesn't mean that he is happy.  
 c. That John is rich doesn't mean that he is happy. (Hirose (1991:25))

The subject *that*-clause in (9c) describes the premise from which to draw a conclusion and its content is contextually presupposed. This is the same function as that of an inference-denial *because*-clause, and based on this functional similarity,





- b. NEG [John is happy, because he is rich]  
(Hirose (1991:25))

In (13a), according to Hirose, the negative *doesn't mean* negates the inferential process of drawing the conclusion that he is not happy from the premise described in the *because*-clause. In this respect, the inference-denial *because*-clause construction is similar to the causal *because*-clause construction and different from the inferential *because*-clause construction. Like inference-denial ones, causal *because*-clauses may be inside the matrix negation, while inferential ones may not (cf. Rutherford (1970)). Observe the following contrast:

- (14) a. He doesn't beat his wife because he likes her.  
(Rutherford (1970:100))  
b. He's not coming to class, because he just called from San Diego.  
(Rutherford (1970:97))

Rutherford points out that sentence (14a) can be understood as either "it's because he likes his wife that he doesn't beat his wife (p.100)" where *not* in the matrix clause merely negates the proposition expressed in the main clause (i.e. narrow scope interpretation), or "it's not because he likes her that he beats his wife (p.100), where it negates the causal relation between what is mentioned in the main clause and what is mentioned in the *because*-clause (i.e. wide scope interpretation). In the inferential *because*-clause construction (14b), by contrast, Rutherford observes that only narrow scope interpretation is possible, i.e., the only possible reading of sentence (14b) is "it is because he just called from San Diego that I think he is not coming to class." Thus, we may say that the inference-denial *because*-clause construction is similar to the causal *because*-clause construction rather than to the inferential *because*-clause construction.

Lastly, the inference-denial *because*-clauses may precede the main clause. This is also similar to causal *because*-clauses, and is different from inferential *because*-clauses. Observe the following contrast:

- (15) a. Because it has rained, the ground is wet.  
b. \* Because the ground is wet, it has rained.

The *because*-clause in (15a) is a reason for the ground being wet, while that in (15b) provides a premise from which to draw the conclusion that it must have rained. As the contrast shows, while causal *because*-clauses may precede the main clause,

inferential ones may not. This fact, again, suggests the similarity of the inference-denial *because*-clause construction to the causal *because*-clause construction and its difference from the inferential *because*-clause construction.

The three facts observed in this subsection, i.e. (i) the focalizability of the *because*-clause by an exclusive, (ii) the wide scope interpretation of the matrix negation, and (iii) the position of the *because*-clause, all suggest that the inference-denial *because*-clause construction should be related directly to the causal *because*-clause construction, not by way of the inferential *because*-clause construction.

#### 4. Revised Inheritance Model

In the previous section, I reviewed Hirose's (1999) analysis and pointed out that the inference-denial *because*-clause construction should be related directly to the causal *because*-clause construction. That is, the inferential *because*-clause construction is not relevant in discussing the inference-denial *because*-clause construction and constructions that are subsequently related to it. More precisely, the inference-denial *because*-clause construction inherits no information from the inferential *because*-clause construction.

I would like to start this section by considering what way the inference-denial *because*-clause construction is related to the causal *because*-clause construction. Since the inference-denial *because*-clause construction has both syntactic and semantic properties of the causal *because*-clause construction, it seems reasonable to see the former as an instance of the latter with its main clause substituted for a limited range of partially lexically filled expressions, e.g. *it doesn't mean Y*, *it doesn't make Y*, *it is not Y*. In other words, the inference-denial *because*-clause construction is a partially lexically filled instance of the causal *because*-clause construction. Hence, an instance link is posited between them, and this relation may be illustrated as follows:

$$\begin{array}{ll}
 (16) \quad \text{causal:} & \text{(Just) because } \underline{C_1}, \underline{C_2} \\
 & \qquad \qquad \qquad \downarrow \\
 \text{inference-denial:} & \text{Just because } \underline{C_1}, \underline{\textit{it doesn't mean Y}}
 \end{array}$$

In (16), the arrow represents a lexical substitution; the main clause of the causal *because*-clause construction  $C_2$  is substituted for the partially lexically filled expression *it doesn't mean Y*. In this way, the main clause of the inference-denial *because*-clause construction can be seen as a special case, or instance, of the main clause of the causal *because*-clause construction.

If the inference-denial *because*-clause construction is treated as an instance of the causal *because*-clause construction, a question may arise as to how the construction obtains the meaning of “inference” denial.<sup>5</sup> To give an answer to the question, let us consider a sentence like (17):

- (17) Because the ground is wet, I think it has rained.  
(Kanetani (2007b:112))

We have seen in section 3.2 that an inferential *because*-clause cannot be in sentence-initial position, as shown in (18a) below. However, with an expression of the speaker’s thought in the main clause such as *I think*, despite its sentence-initial *because*-clause, sentence (17) is accepted to some speakers as a sentence with virtually the same meaning as the meaning of sentence (18b), i.e. an inferential process. Hence, the form-meaning mismatch.

- (18) a. \* Because the ground is wet, it has rained. (= (15b))  
 b. It has rained, because the ground is wet.

In Kanetani (2007b), I explain this mismatch phenomenon in accordance with the Override Principle provided in (19):

- (19) The Override Principle: If a lexical item is semantically incompatible with its syntactic context, the meaning of the lexical item conforms to the meaning of the structure in which it is embedded.  
(Michaelis (2005:51))

Following the principle, the grammaticality of sentence (17) may be explained as follows. In (17), despite the inferential sense of *I think*, because of the syntactic context that it appears in, the whole sentence expresses a causal relation. That is, those who accept this sentence can recognize a causal relation between the ground being wet and the speaker concluding that it has rained. In other words, sentence (17) is accepted not as an irregular instance of the inferential *because*-clause construction, but as an instance of the causal *because*-clause construction. Therefore, even if the lexical expression *I think* in (17) seems to denote the

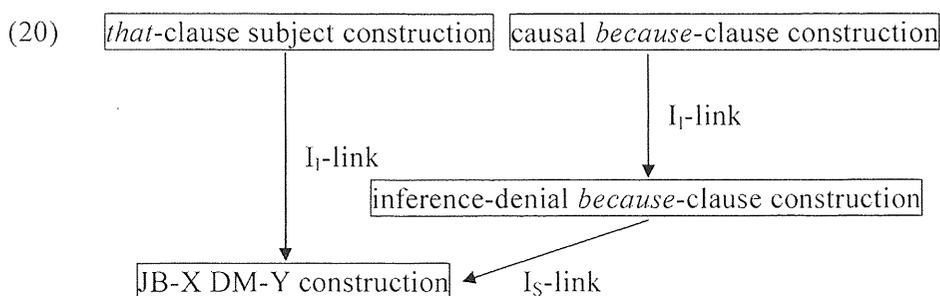
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<sup>5</sup> As seen in section 3.1, Hirose (1999) treats the inference-denial *because*-clause construction as a subpart of the inferential *because*-clause construction (see (8)), and argues that the former contains the meaning of inference. He thus attributes the meaning of inference (to be denied) that the inference-denial *because*-clause construction has to the meaning of the inferential *because*-clause construction.

speaker's thought, such a semantic feature is overridden by the sentence form; the interpretation of the sentence is coerced into the causal one.

Our view of the inference-denial *because*-clause construction as an instance of the causal *because*-clause construction is explained in the same way. The meaning of inference-denial can be conveyed by lexical expressions such as *doesn't mean*, while the whole sentence expresses a causal relation. Indeed, Bender and Kathol (2001) observe that the meaning of a sentence like *Just because X doesn't mean Y* is directly encoded by the lexical expression *doesn't mean*.

In sum, the inference-denial *because*-clause construction is a special case of the causal *because*-clause construction whose main clause is substituted for a limited range of expressions that denote inference-denial. In order to maintain this idea, inheritance relations should be revised as follows:



Unlike Hirose's inheritance model in (8), the model proposed here does not include the inferential *because*-clause construction, since it is not relevant. In (20), the inference-denial *because*-clause and causal *because*-clause construction are connected directly, and an instance link is posited between them.

## 5. The JBo-X DM-Y Construction as an Analogical Construction

We are now at a point to consider how the JBo-X DM-Y construction, a syntactically anomalous construction, come into use. My claim is that the construction at issue is not a static construction but emerges on-line via analogies from the inference-denial *because*-clause and JB-X DM-Y constructions. The notion of analogy employed in this section is a four-part analogy, which may be formulated as follows:

$$(21) \quad A : B = C : D$$

The formula provided in (21) reads, "A is to B as C is to D." Let us call the left-hand member of the formula the source, and the right-hand member the target.

Blevins and Blevins (2009:2) note, “[in an analogy like (21)], the relation R between a pair of items A:B provides a basis for identifying an unknown item, given an item that matches A or B. Knowing R and knowing that C is similar to A permits one to identify D as the counterpart of B.” In this section, I will show that inference-denial uses of a *because of* phrase may be accounted for by this notion.

Before examining the JBo-X DM-Y construction, let us consider a sentence like (22):

- (22) In my point of view the class sizes have been very large in many classes, but just because of that it doesn't mean the school can start kicking out students.

(www.student-voices.org/SpeakOutDiscussion.aspx?Id=846)

In this sentence, the main clause is introduced by *it*, which is bound by the *because of* phrase. Henceforth, I will call constructions of this kind the inference-denial *because of* construction. Constructions like (22), where a PP binds a pronoun, seems to violate Matsuyama's (2001) generalization that the binder and bindee must be identical in category features.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the construction is used.

In section 3.2, I compared causal *because*-clauses with inferential *because*-clauses in terms of (i) their focalizability by exclusives, (ii) their scope relations with matrix negation, and (iii) their positions. There is yet another diagnosis to distinguish causal *because*-clauses from inferential *because*-clauses. Causal ones may be replaced with a *because of* phrase, whereas inferential ones may not, as exemplified by the following contrast:

- (23) a. He's not coming to class because of his sickness.  
 b. \* He's not coming to class because of his having just called from San Diego. (Rutherford (1970:105))

If, as maintained in section 4, the inference-denial *because*-clause construction is an instance of the causal *because*-clause construction, one may expect it possible to replace an inference denial *because*-clause with a *because of* phrase. Here, an analogy like the following works: What holds in the causal *because*-clause construction should also hold in the inference-denial *because*-clause construction. This may be illustrated as follows:

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<sup>6</sup> Matsuyama (2001) provides the generalization only for *pro*, but since *it* used in (24), an explicit counterpart of *pro*, is also nominal, this generalization should apply to the inference-denial *because*-clause construction, as well, whose main clause is introduced by the bound pronoun *it*.

(24)

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Because</i> <sub>[Causal]</sub> C <sub>1</sub> , C <sub>2</sub> | : | <i>Because of</i> NP, C <sub>2</sub>                                |
| <i>Just because</i> X, <i>it</i><br><i>doesn't mean</i> Y          | : | <u><i>Just because of</i> X,</u><br><u><i>it doesn't mean</i> Y</u> |

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In (24), the upper line represents the source of the analogy, the lower line its target, and the underlined part a product via the analogy. Here, the analogical deduction works as follows: If a causal *because*-clause is replaceable with a *because of* phrase, then an inference-denial *because*-clause should also be replaceable with a *because of* phrase. Thus, the knowledge of the similarity of the causal *because*-clause construction to the inference-denial *because*-clause construction permits the speaker to fill the gap (i.e. the underlined part in (24)) with the inference-denial *because of* construction as the counterpart of the causal *because of* construction. It is this analogy that makes the inference-denial *because of* construction, as in (22), acceptable, even though such a sentence does not meet syntactic conditions.

Let us now turn to the JBo-X DM-Y construction, e.g. *just because of Pete Wilson's dumb mistake doesn't mean you're going to have lights out in Manhattan* (= (1)). Comparing the inference-denial *because*-clause construction with the JB-X DM-Y construction, we may find their difference either the presence or absence of the pronoun *it*. In this regard, Hirose (1991, 1999) points out that the two constructions are identical in their meanings, and Matsuyama (2001) considers the pronoun *it* used in the inference-denial *because*-clause construction an overt counterpart of the null subject *pro* (see section 2 for details of his *pro* analysis). From their observations, we may say that their difference is so subtle that another analogy as formulated in (25) is invoked:<sup>7</sup>

(25)

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Just because</i> X,<br><i>it doesn't mean</i> Y | : | <i>Just because of</i> X,<br><i>it doesn't mean</i> Y           |
| <i>Just because</i> X<br><i>doesn't mean</i> Y     | : | <u><i>Just because of</i> X</u><br><u><i>doesn't mean</i> Y</u> |

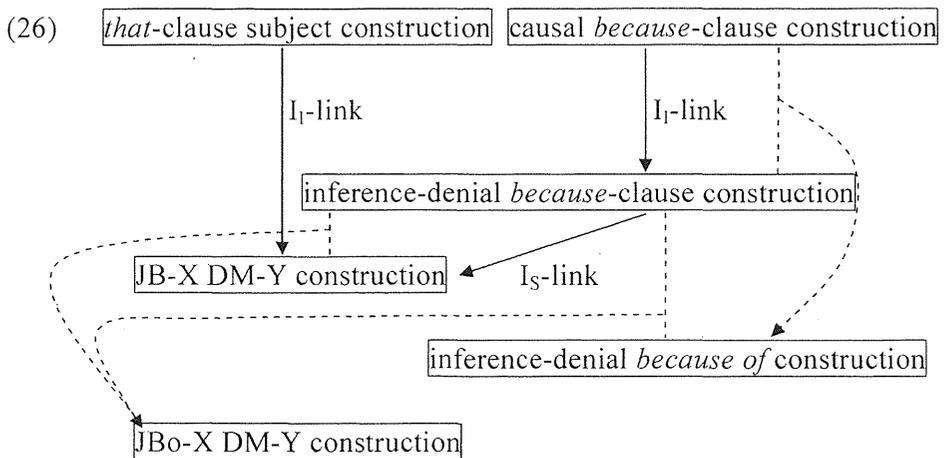
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<sup>7</sup> Although it may be indisputable that their similarity invokes analogies of this kind, closer investigations are necessary of exactly which aspect(s) in their similarity invoke(s) the analogy. Leaving it an open question for a future research, I do not discuss this issue farther in the present article, however.

This analogy makes one expect that what holds in the inference-denial *because*-clause construction should also hold in the JB-X DM-Y construction. As discussed above, an inference-denial *because*-clause could be replaced with a *because of* phrase, and so a subject *because*-clause is expected to be replaceable with a *because of* phrase as well. Notice that the source (i.e. the upper line) in (25) is identical with the target (i.e. the lower line) in (24). This means that once we obtain the inference-denial *because of* construction analogically, using the emergent construction as its source, the analogy as formulated in (25) works, and as a result, the JBo-X DM-Y construction emerges (as underlined in (25)).

By combining the arguments in this section with the inheritance model proposed in section 4, the relations between the relevant constructions may thus be illustrated as follows:



The dashed arrows represent analogies that work on the basis of the similarities between the constructions connected by the dashed lines. The similarity of the inference-denial *because*-clause construction to the causal *because*-clause construction invokes the analogy by which to produce the inference-denial *because of* construction. The analogically emergent construction, in turn, along with the analogy based on the similarity of the inference-denial *because*-clause construction to the JB-X DM-Y construction, produces the JBo-X DM-Y construction. Note that since inference-denial *because of* and JBo-X DM-Y constructions are not established as “grammatical constructions,” or not stored in our mind, inheritance links are not posited. Rather, such constructions should be considered to be produced on-line. This idea helps us account for the JBo-X DM-Y construction’s unstable nature that we will briefly discuss in the following section.

## 6. Instability of the JBo-X DM-Y Construction

As I noted in section 1, the JBo-X DM-Y construction is not perfectly admitted. In fact, some native speakers do not accept the sentences, and even after being shown attested examples, they would be doubtful about accepting the sentences. It is also true that as shown in this article, JBo-X DM-Y constructions *do* exist despite their anomalous syntactic nature.

In this relation, Lambrecht (1988:320) comments in his analysis of the *there* amalgam construction (e.g. *there was a farmer had a dog*) that such substandard sentences may be “uttered spontaneously” even if the speaker is “convinced that the constructions do not exist in his dialect or speech pattern.” Likewise, the speaker may spontaneously utter the JBo-X DM-Y construction, even though (s)he may be aware that the construction is syntactically anomalous if time is given to reflect on its grammaticality. This may in part account for the reason why the construction is found particularly in informal registers.

Presumably, facing a dilemma between syntactic rules or principles such as those reviewed in section 2 (cf. Matsuyama (2001)), on one hand, and analogies such as those proposed in section 5, on the other, the speaker may feel uncertain whether a given sentence is acceptable or not. As a result, the JBo-X DM-Y construction is not entrenched as well as the JB-X DM-Y construction, and therefore is not a stable construction.

## 7. Conclusion

In this article, I showed how the JBo-X DM-Y construction, which is predicted to be ungrammatical, is used. Slightly modifying Hirose’s (1999) inheritance model, I claimed that the construction at issue emerges on-line via analogies based primarily on the similarity of the causal *because*-clause construction to the inference-denial *because*-clause construction. By seeing the inference-denial *because*-clause construction as an instance of the causal *because*-clause construction, the analogy works that what holds in the latter should also hold in the former. Since a causal *because*-clause may be replaced by a *because of* phrase, one may expect that an inference-denial *because*-clause may be replaced with a *because of* phrase as well. This analogical deduction yields the inference-denial *because of* construction and the JBo-X DM construction.

This conclusion leads to another argument that while the JB-X DM-Y construction is well entrenched (cf. Hilpert (2005)), the JBo-X DM-Y construction is not. As I mentioned in section 5, the latter is a product of analogical deduction and therefore is not established as a “grammatical construction,” or not stored in our mind. This straightforwardly accounts for the latter’s substandard nature and

supports the usage-based model of grammar. Analogies do not only yield constructions that people may consider unacceptable but also account for the unstable nature of constructions that emerges in such ways. It is an advantage of construction grammar that we can take the notion of analogy naturally into the theory and account for a dilemma between the grammaticality and the actual use of a given expression.

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