
Situating constructional non-inflectedness

Jenny Audring

¹Leiden University

j.audring@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Spencer (2020) offers a helpful distinction between lexical and constructional non-inflectedness. Inspired by his outline of constructional non-inflectedness, which unites various phenomena not usually considered instances of the same phenomenon, I discuss the place of constructional non-inflectedness among other types of constructional constraints on inflectional behaviour. In particular, I suggest that constructional non-inflectedness is a subclass of the patterns shown in (1), in which a syntactic or morphological construction requires an inflecting word to be in a specific form, e.g. an infinitive, a participle or a stem.

- (1)
- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| [Mod VINF] | Ich will helfen ‘I want to help’ (German) |
| [Aux VPTCP] | Er hat es vergessen ‘He forgot it’ (German) |
| [Prt VINF/PTCP]! | Aufpassen/Aufgepasst! ‘Watch out!’ (German) |
| [Prt komen VINF/PTCP] | hij komt aanlopen/aangelopen ‘he comes walking’ (Dutch) |
| [A ASTEM [VPTCP[NSTEM]]] | breedgeschouderd ‘broad-shouldered’ (Dutch) |
| [aan de VSTEM] | Laten we aan de schrijf gaan. ‘Let’s start writing’ (Dutch) |

Restrictions can be even tighter in constructional idioms, where an inflected form is specified for its phonological shape. Such cases are rarely discussed, an example is (2) (Booij 2005). The plural allomorph in this construction is always *-en*, even in numerals that normally form the plural in *-s*, such as *zeven* ‘seven’.

- (2) [*met z ’n Num-en*] *met z ’n zevenen* ‘the seven of us’ (Dutch)

At the extreme, we see idiomatic constructions with fully fixed forms, as in (3). Forms such as *kith* nor *gebauchpinselt* do not occur outside this construction and hence do not appear in any other inflected form.

- (3) *kith*_{SG} and *kin* (English)
*sich gebauchpinselt*_{PTCP} *fühlen* ‘to feel flattered’ (German)

By showing that constructional non-inflectedness can be situated among other types of construction-specific morphology I hope to contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon.

References: • Booij, G. (2005). Construction-dependent morphology. *Lingue e Linguaggio* 4, 31–46. • Spencer, A. (2020). Uninflectedness: Uninflecting, uninflectable and uninflected words, or the complexity of the simplex. In L. Körtvélyessy & P. Štekauer (eds.), *Complex words: Advances in morphology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 142–158.