

# COMPOSITIONALITY IN COGNITIVE CONSTRUCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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Historically, compositionality has played an important role in our understanding of the construction and organization of human language. Compositionality generally refers to the principle that the meaning of a complex expression is determined by the meanings of its individual parts and the rules used to combine them (Partee 2004). To understand the meaning of words and phrases, one must look at the meanings of each morpheme or word within them and the syntactic structure that combines them. Cognitive Constructional approaches largely reject the notion of complete compositionality, recognizing the prevalence of non-compositional idiomatic expressions within language grammars. However, partial-compositionality is recognized for the combination of semantic primitives and basic-level categories (Lakoff & Johnson 1999) (Pleyer, Lepic & Hartmann 2022).

The theme session tackles several questions about how best to account for the perception of such structural complexity from a cognitive perspective. We first ask, what does it mean to say a structure is “compositional? For example, is any structure with analyzable units an example of compositionality? Second, we ask whether modality (visual vs. auditory mode) shapes language structure in a way that might inform our understanding of “compositionality?” For instance, when we think about multi-channel constructions involving the hands, face, and body (but which are not necessarily multi-modal as in the case of signed languages), does this resemble compositionality seen in true multimodal spoken language constructions? Finally, do we need “compositionality” within cognitive frameworks? Perhaps cognitive linguists working in construction-based approaches have the explanatory tools to account for the combinatorial nature of language without invoking the notion of compositionality. The goal of this theme session is to provide scholars with a platform to discuss compositionality across modalities, fostering dialogue between researchers working on signed and spoken languages.

## References

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