

Syntactically Flexible VP-Idioms and the N-after-N Construction

Already discussed in the linguistic literature:

- syntactically flexible VP-idioms, like *pull strings* ('use connections')
- the N-after-N construction, as in *car after car*

Not yet discussed:

- syntactically flexible VP-idioms in combination with N-after-N, as in:
Kim pulled strings after strings to get Alex into a good college.

Challenge:

- Existing analyses of *pull strings* usually require the morphosyntactic plural form *strings* to be present for the idiom to be licensed.

My Analysis:

- *pull strings* = two separate word-level lexical entries, each with regular morphosyntax but idiomatic semantics, that find each other via semantic collocation constraints and syntactically and semantically combine in a regular fashion. NB: *pull* requires an unspecific plurality of idiomatic strings.
- N-after-N = one phrase-level lexical entry with irregular morphosyntax and idiosyncratic semantics that shows a syntax-semantics mismatch: syntactically singular, but semantically an unspecific plurality.
- Framework: Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG)