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Zooming in on the *constructicon*: exploring the network of syntactic constructions

Francisco José Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, Alba Luzondo Oyón, Paula Pérez Sobrino (eds.).
2017. *Constructing families of constructions: analytical perspectives and theoretical challenges*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

The present book addresses the question of how syntactic constructions, which are defined as form-meaning pairings in Construction Grammar (Goldberg 2006, Hoffmann and Trousdale 2011; CxG, for short), are stored in the language user's mental repository. This repository is also referred to as the *constructicon*. Until now, the different strands of CxG research have mainly analysed these form-meaning pairings in isolation. The study of the relations between constructions, however, was often confined to the possibilities and limits of fusing (e.g. the fusion of an argument structure construction and a verb construction) and coercion phenomena. In the introduction, Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, Luzondo Oyón, and Pérez Sobrino mention some notable exceptions to this rule, but also conclude that a sound systematicity of constructional families is still a desideratum. *Constructing families of constructions: analytical perspectives and theoretical challenges* is thus the first book to offer a collection of a) different analytical ways of structuring a network of constructions (Part I – chapters one through five – *Analytical perspectives on grammatical constructions*), and b) case studies that address the explanatory force of current CxG approaches with regard to such a network (Part II – chapters six through ten – *From application to theory and back*). In doing so, it offers a major contribution to the ongoing debate as to the nature of the *constructicon*.

In the first chapter, *The role of verbs and verb classes in identifying German search-constructions*, Kristel Proost uses an elaborate corpus approach to identify instances of the under-explored German *search*-construction in the German general corpus DeReKo. Based on these data, she shows that the abstract conceptualization of the *search*-construction as the form-meaning pairing NPNom V PP – 'prospective possession' is too broad. Instead, she proposes that it be regarded as a family of constructions united by family resemblance (in the sense of Wittgenstein 1984). Proost suggests categorizing the twenty individual argument structure patterns that she identifies into four subfamilies. Within these four subfamilies, the patterns are related by formal or semantic attributes (i.e. preposition used, number of arguments, type of linguistic action performed by the verb), while between them, the subfamilies are related by either metaphorical extension from the prototypical pattern or by a precondition relation to the others.

In the second chapter, *Embodied motivations for abstract in and on constructions*, Marlene Johansson Falck reports on a corpus-based, bottom-up study analysing constructions involving the prepositions/particles *in* and *on* with abstract (i.e. non-spatial) meaning. She shows that these abstract *in* and *on* constructions can be reasonably grouped into families of constructions with similar meaning, and that these meanings bear resemblance to people's embodied experience with the prototypical meaning of *in* and *on*. Johansson Falck further relates her analyses to previous studies on *in* and *on*, which have made use of higher level knowledge constructs (such as image schemas, conceptual metonymies and conceptual metaphors). She convincingly argues that her results are not only highly compatible with the previous ones, but that they also add to a more holistic picture because the embodied perspective allows her to also identify lower level tendencies.

In the third chapter, *Doing Tsukahara and the Epley in a cross-linguistic perspective*, Rita Brdar-Szabó and Mario Szabó compare English eponymous verb constructions with their German, Croatian and Hungarian counterparts. At the heart of their analyses lies a family of micro-constructions whose members all contain a verb and an eponymous nominal expression. A difference is established on formal grounds between micro-constructions containing a light verb (e.g. *to do an Anna Karenina*) versus a heavy verb (e.g. *to pull an Anna Karenina*), and between those containing a complex noun phrase versus a bare or reduced noun phrase. This differentiation leads to four micro-construction possibilities. In their cross-linguistic comparisons, Brdar-Szabó and Szabó show that the choice of micro-construction within the family is language-specific and can be explained in terms of the language's structural properties and their readiness to accommodate complex metonymies. On the one hand, English mainly prefers using a light verb in combination with a bare or reduced noun phrase; on the other hand, the other languages mainly prefer the combination of a heavy verb with a complex noun phrase due to the structural peculiarities of these languages.

In the fourth chapter, *The role of inferencing in the interpretation of two expressive speech act constructions*, Klaus-Uwe Panther and Linda L. Thornburg analyse two constructions which belong to the larger family of expressive speech act constructions. They define speech act constructions as form-illocution pairings, and show that the forms *That NP should be VP* and *Wh-x do you think CL-x* are conventionally associated with expressive meanings. They further show that the basic expressive scenario is the same for all expressive speech act constructions on an abstract level, which constitutes the unifying feature of the otherwise morphosyntactically unrelated constructions.

In the fifth chapter, *exploring inter-constructive relations in the construction*, Francisco González-García compares three constructions in English and Spanish: (i) the reflexive-transitive construction (e.g. *I consider myself an artist*), (ii) the self-descriptive subjective-transitive construction (e.g. *I found myself in the middle of nowhere*) and (iii) the *What's X doing Y?* construction (e.g. *What's that fly doing in my soup?*). González-García plausibly argues that (i) and (ii) are related in form and meaning. Formally, both involve a subject NP, an object NP that is co-referential with the subject NP, and a complement XPCOMP. With regard to the meaning side of the construction, the subject NP needs to be human or construed as having human properties, and the complement needs to fulfill characterizing rather than identifying functions. In contrast, the constructions (ii) and (iii) are formally unrelated, but share functional properties only since the complement in (ii) and the Y element in (iii) encode an only temporarily valid and somewhat unexpected characterization of the object NP and the X element, respectively. González-García further highlights formal differences between these constructions in English and Spanish, but rightfully argues at the same time that these are merely minor differences. Their existence simply lends credence to the observation that argument structure is language-specific.

In the sixth chapter, *Revisiting the English resultative family of constructions*, which is the first contribution in Part II of the volume, María Sandra Peña Cervel proposes a thoroughly revised taxonomy of English resultative constructions. The classification she presents is inspired by previous proposals made by Goldberg and Jackendoff (2004) and Luzondo (2014). Peña Cervel's classification adopts one of Luzondo's criteria and makes a first, broad distinction between motion and non-motion resultatives. Further classification criteria include the transitivity of the construction, the syntactic realisation of the resultative phrase (as either AP or PP), and whether or not a process of transitivization takes place, all of which were drawn from Goldberg and Jackendoff (2004). The classification is complemented by a critical assessment of Luzondo's metaphoric and metonymic interpretations of some resultative constructions. These conceptual mechanisms neatly tie in with Peña Cervel's revised syntactic taxonomy, and thus provide a more comprehensive picture of the family of resultative constructions.

In the seventh chapter, Sabine de Knop and Fabio Mollica analyse *The family of German dative constructions*. They show that valency-dependent dative objects, free datives (i.e. datives that are not uncontroversially regarded as arguments) and – albeit only marginally considered in the contribution – phraseologisms including the dative form a family of constructions. Like Kristel Proost (chapter 1, same volume), they use Wittgenstein's (1984) notion of family

resemblance and convincingly show that, apart from including a dative, these constructions are mainly related by the semantic roles proper, or by common features between the semantic roles the dative noun phrase may instantiate. Other features, which establish a family resemblance among the German dative constructions, include their argument status and instance links. De Knop and Mollica's analyses further suggest that Construction Grammar and verb valency considerations establish a beneficial symbiosis, an observation that is fully in line with recent advances in CxG (see e.g. Boas 2003, Herbst 2014, Perek 2015).

The eighth chapter, *Motivation behind the extended senses of the Polish ditransitive construction*, is thematically closely related to the previous one, as it is concerned with the ditransitive construction in another Germanic language. Joanna Paszenda analyses the prototypical Polish ditransitive construction and its extended senses in a radial fashion. With impressive detail, she describes metonymic and metaphoric extensions, as well as extensions by perspectival switching from the prototypical use. Moreover, she highlights overlaps between these semantic shifts. In doing so, she argues for a multidimensional analysis of semantic networks such as these, as was proposed by Coleman and De Clerck (2008) and Geeraerts (2006) for Goldberg's (1992) radial network of the English ditransitive construction.

In the ninth chapter, *The English conative as a family of constructions*, Pilar Guerrero Medina challenges Goldberg's (1995) analysis of the English conative as a monosemic construction, instead proposing a family of constructions. In Guerrero's analysis, the contribution of the semantics of the verb is given prominence and leads to the family of conative constructions being comprised of an ablative (featuring resultative verbs of 'ingesting' or 'cutting'), allative (featuring non-resultative verbs implying 'contact'), and a directional conative construction (featuring intransitive verbs of 'attention'). This analysis accounts for the variation observed for the conative construction.

The tenth chapter, *Multimodal constructional resemblance*, constitutes a radical departure from the focus of the previous chapters in the volume. Elisabeth Zima argues that the *constructicon* is not only made up of verbal form-meaning pairings, but that it is essentially multimodal in nature. Using the NewsScape Library of Television News Broadcasts (Steen and Turner 2013) and an elaborate coding system, she shows that the members of the family of English circular motion constructions are each associated with an abstract form of circular gesturing, ranging from 37.3 to 75.3 percent of construction-gesture co-occurrence, which indicates their "joint entrenchment" (p. 323). The five different motion constructions under scrutiny here can be distinguished by their patterns of preferred co-occurrence with gestures, depending on the

genre in which the speech event happens and the extent of interactionality of that speech event.

Taken together, the present volume does an impressive job of showing how – according to CxG – the network of constructions our mind is composed of could be organized. Since constructions are defined as conventionalized pairings of form and meaning, it comes as no surprise that the members of constructional families can be formally and/or functionally related. What the present collection of papers shows, though, is the impressive interplay between the two levels. Most of the papers reviewed above show that constructions can share both formal and functional features at the same time, which lends more credibility to the entire idea of a *constructicon*. A radical exception is chapter 4, which establishes a family of constructions on purely functional grounds. Although highly appealing, it remains to be seen whether such an approach will gain acceptance among the scholars of CxG. Also controversial is the idea of a multimodal *constructicon* as proposed in chapter 10. If this idea gains ground in mainstream CxG, the network of constructions is even larger and more complex than was initially thought. In conclusion, it seems safe to state that the present volume gives an insight into the possible nature of the *constructicon* but also offers ample food for thought.

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Claudia Lehmann: Review on *Constructing families of constructions*. 2017. In
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Guided Tour to an Ancient Empire

Eleanor Dickey (ed.). 2016. *Learn Latin from the Romans. A Complete Introductory Course Using Textbooks from the Roman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Latin is a very difficult language for non-native speakers (and no others can be found on our planet today). It has a complex morphology: four declensions (slightly different for substantives, adjectives, and pronouns), four conjugations, active verbs that conjugate like passive ones, irregular verbs, complicated infinite verb forms, such as infinitives in the active and passive voice, gerundives and gerunds. Latin word order contains additional complexities: Compared to English it appears to be “free”, though it follows its own rules. In contrast to English, it is often hard in Latin to detect what the subject and object of a sentence is, and to what element an adjective refers.

How can such a language best be learned? The author, Eleanor Dickey, admits that her own way of acquiring Latin was anything but easy. It took her “years to reach the stage where [she] could read any original literature at all” (XVII). She adds that she was “the only of her (originally large) Latin class who made it to that stage” (ibid.). Her book was written to make the learning task of Latin for elementary students easier and more enjoyable. Throughout the book, the author shows great pedagogical interest and skills. Having taught in several English-speaking countries, she is aware of the pitfalls. For example, she presents the case paradigm in two different orders (p. 35): in “British case order” (nominative, accusative, dative, ablative) and in “ancient case order” (nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, ablative). This is a minor detail within her textbook, but it contributes to better usability in the respective countries, as these paradigms have to be learned by heart in the respective order.

Structure and progression

The introduction offers a short overview of the Indo-European language family, including Latin and its Romance descendants (Spanish, Italian, French...). In this survey, Dickey does not mention the large Slavic language family containing (among others) Russian, Polish, Serbian and Bulgarian. Students should be aware of these linguistic relatives of English, not only as important European neighbors, but also because their languages preserve many features of Latin: case system, rich conjugation system, vocabulary.

Throughout the book, the student receives clear, understandable grammatical explanations which take into account the specific audience of the book: anglophones and the translation possibilities for their language. The course is divided into five parts. Step by step, starting with

the basic concepts of declension and conjugation, the book lays out Latin grammar, ending with complicated morphological forms and syntactic structures. For each new grammar subchapter, the student finds abundant exercises for practice. These exercises are mostly in the form of translations going in both directions, from Latin to English and from English to Latin. After introducing a reasonable amount of new material, “Reading Practices” reward the students for their effort, offering them access to the culture of the ancient world. A list of vocabulary in order of appearance in the text helps, giving the meaning in English. Words of particular importance are often printed in bold. At the end of each lesson, one finds a list of “Vocabulary to learn” in alphabetical order.

One particularity of this book – one that distinguishes it from other approaches – is that it uses authentic texts. From the beginning, the reader/student is introduced to texts that cannot be found in other textbooks – texts that offer interesting glimpses into life in Rome. This in turn gives them insight into the Romans’ everyday culture. In contrast to other more traditional textbooks, which are mainly about “wars, gods and heroes”, this one guides us through pupils’ school life and the way they learned. Through these texts, the student comes to know that for the Romans themselves or other contemporaries, learning Latin was hard work; he gets an impression of slave society, shares the mourning of surviving family members, learns how the ancients cooked, sees the gladiators business (sober lists of losses), follows law suits, and reads personal letters. Beside these everyday texts, the student is also introduced into the art of poetry (e.g. Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Terence and Catullus). It is particularly remarkable that the book instructs students to read large parts of the *Aeneid* aloud – as early as in the introductory part, long before any understanding of the text. This helps the student become familiar with the varying lengths of Latin vowels, and with the rhythm of Virgil’s hexameters. The text will be encountered again later in the course.

Can this book be used for self-teaching? I can hardly recommend it for students who start from scratch without a teacher. In spite of the explanations given, it will be difficult for them to read aloud the poetry in the first chapter and later in the textbook. The exercises offered by this book are well selected and inspiring, but they are suited for work in class and for homework. They have an appropriate degree of difficulty, being on the one hand not too easy, but, on the other hand, too difficult to be solved without assistance. As students will feel doubts whether they have found the right answer, they will need corrections and confirmation. Without a teacher’s response, the learner risks producing incorrect forms and subsequently memorizing them. This means that independent learners would need a key with solutions. Teachers are also needed for the oral sections. Hexameters can hardly be learned only from books. Prose

texts should also be heard before pronounced. How are the long and short vowels pronounced and how does the rhythm of the text sound? To a certain degree, students can sidestep this lack of oral guidance, listening to poetry readings from the internet (links given in footnote 3, p. 7). The answer to the question whether the book requires a teacher may be slightly more positive for students who have some previous knowledge of Latin, but have forgotten much of it and want to brush it up. They might be more able to benefit from this book; a key to the exercises, however, would be more than welcome.

Normally, teaching Latin is unidirectional, with translations going from Latin to English. Some consider this direction a logical consequence of the fact that Latin is a language without contemporary native speakers (to avoid the term “dead language”), thus concluding that it is unnecessary to translate from English to Latin. Dickey deliberately includes many translation exercises English > Latin, as only the active use reveals whether the structure has really been understood, and in order to slow down the “inevitable process of forgetting”.

The author points out some important side-effects of Latin. Understanding Latin grammar will help students to understand much of the own English grammar. At the beginning of the Latin course, students might not have a good general knowledge of grammar. Working through this book, one will hopefully acquire insights into one’s own language which might help “to improve one’s ability to write good English” (XII). One point to be added is the enormous support that one can draw from Latin grammar (and vocabulary) for learning other foreign languages, especially those possessing highly developed declension and conjugation systems (like German and the Slavic languages).

This book – used with the help of a teacher – will certainly serve its purpose well: it conveys the necessary linguistic structures, helps the student acquire reliable proficiency, and provides a many-sided picture of Ancient Roman culture. A teacher, however, seems indispensable for giving corrections/confirmations for the exercises, and equally important, giving additional information about the ancient everyday texts, which in my opinion are the book’s main attraction. And the teacher should also give information on the classic authors (Caesar, Virgil, ...).

Can one recommend the publication of a supplement with exercise keys, descriptions of the origin of the texts and a sound guide for pronunciation and recitation? I doubt it. It would change the character of the work. A well-informed and inspiring teacher can hardly be replaced.

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Against Uniformitarianism: a book-length contribution to the heated (suspiciously male) ‘Exceptionalism’ debate

John McWhorter. 2018. *The Creole Debate*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

In this book, John McWhorter, one of the central figures in the ‘creole exceptionalism’ debate, presents a large collection of arguments and a wealth of data to support his theory that creole languages are typologically different from non-creole languages. In this sense, the overall argument of the book is not new; and yet, in the face of publications that are critical of his position, McWhorter is eager to substantiate his claims and to present his points in a book-length publication. It is basically devoted to rejecting the work of those who argue that creoles are not a structurally definable class. Overall, the book presents a clear idea of the foundations of McWhorter’s concepts, introduces an impressive data set from different creole languages, and at the same time gives insight into how polarized the discussion is, at least in McWhorter’s eyes, on whether or not creole languages form a structurally particular class.

The book is divided into six chapters and an introduction. In the introduction, the reader becomes acquainted with McWhorter’s position in the exceptionalism debate. He strongly rejects positions that argue that creoles are in essence not different from other types of languages, describing them as scientifically unfounded, not empirically valid, politically problematic and threatening the discipline of creole linguistics. His opponents are explicitly mentioned right in the beginning (and many times throughout the rest of the book); these are, in particular, Mufwene, Ansaldo, Aboh and DeGraff, the authors of what McWhorter calls the *Uniformitarian Hypothesis*. A central claim in McWhorter’s position is the concept of “break in transmission”, which he posits as the reason why creole languages show structural traits that are different from so-called ‘older’ languages. What exactly this break is and how it came about socio-historically, however, is not clearly explained. It seems to denote a situation in which adult speakers stop using the languages they have learned as children, start using a language to which they have limited access and then subsequently transmit this to a younger generation. This, according to McWhorter, results in the ‘disruption’ of the complex syntax of the languages involved. In other words, he posits that there must have been a pidgin stage from which the creoles were reconstituted.

When referring to the debate’s different positions, McWhorter’s discourse style tends to show parallels to current political discourse in which a ‘victim’ position is created in order to attack an opponent (see also Schneider & Heyd, to appear). Thus, the first sentence of the introduction maintains that “[t]here was a time when all linguists, even if only from a distance,

thought of creole languages as interesting” (p. 1). This suggests that everyone – and Mufwene, Ansaldo, Aboh, and DeGraff in particular – who does not align with the idea that creole languages result from a “break in transmission” and are a “type of language” are in effect saying that creole languages are “not interesting at all” (p. 2). The very personal identification of the authors who have different positions in the debate is a bit surprising, as is the impression that the book was written precisely in order to counter the writings of the above-mentioned authors.

The most important strategy to support his assumption is the discussion of data from a large number of different creole languages, which are mostly presented in single sentences. This approach is already present in the introduction with a sentence of Sranan Creole English, which I introduce here to show the line of argumentation that is central in McWhorter’s reasoning throughout the book. According to McWhorter, the following sentence shows features that are impossible to explain. He argues that only features that are difficult to acquire for adults have been eliminated (as DeGraff does, according to McWhorter – the exact reference of DeGraff is not given in the text).

- (1) A *hondiman* *no* *ben* *e* *bai* *wan* *oso* *gi* *mi*
 The hunter NEG PAST PROG buy a house give me
 “The hunter was not buying a house for me.” (p. 5)

McWhorter convincingly argues that *ben* for past and *e* for progressive, as well as *a* as definite article, *wan* as indefinite article and preverbal *no* for ‘not’ cannot be explained by loss through second language acquisition of adults, because the features that were not acquired (past tense, progressive, articles, negation) do not belong to those that are typical for deletion in second language acquisition. Therefore, the presence of these creole features can only be explained, if we follow McWhorter, by assuming that there has been a ‘break in transmission’. This form of discussing data as representing ‘a language’, in this case Sranan Creole English, is what McWhorter refers to as ‘based on empiricism’ (p. 6). Nevertheless, it still needs to be acknowledged that the existence of a prior pidgin state remains a hypothetical construct, which is not directly proven through the presence of these features. The epistemological foundations of the approach – the assumption that *languages* are systemic entities whose essence can be captured by studying isolated single sentences – is not discussed. Newer approaches on the discursive construction of *languages*, as currently debated in sociolinguistics (see e.g. García and Wei, 2014; Creese and Blackledge, 2010; Pennycook, 2004), are not taken into account. This is lamentable, as the critique that empirical data should generally feed into the debate (and is indeed not often treated in detail by the *Uniformitarians*) is quite accurate. And yet, the

discussion of empirical data is problematic where the epistemological *a priori* assumptions of what a *language* is are not scrutinized. Here, McWhorter runs the risk of giving the impression of an uncritical reproduction of traditional Western concepts of language, in which language is treated as a 'given' object that is guided by cognitive capacities of individuals and where potentially diverging language ideologies are not considered. In a study on language ideologies in creole-speaking contexts of Belize, it could be shown that non-standardness, fast language change and linguistic creativity may be considered a cultural value, and may thus also have an impact on language structure (see Schneider to appear). It is a hypothetical argument that such ideologies are the source of language structures such as the above – but it is similarly hypothetical to say that they stem from "a break in transmission" (after all, it is unlikely that speakers in multilingual contact situations forget their native languages and stop using them from one day to the other, in particular when raising young children).

Chapter 1 starts by mentioning that the idea of creating a book that is basically devoted to showing why others are wrong is problematic, but McWhorter assumes that this is mitigated in this chapter, which presents his own ideas on where creoles come from and why they are different. His primary claims are that creoles come from pidginization, which the author discusses with an array of empirical examples showing grammatical peculiarities (e.g. omission of copula, generalization of the infinitive, etc.), and he compares this with substrate influence and intertwined languages. Therefore, the current structure of creoles "reveals their origins in robust simplification of source language structures" (p. 21). The central hypothesis, then, is that there is a *creole prototype*, which is a "distinct synchronic class from older languages" (p. 21) that is characterized by three areas in which simplification happens: inflection, tone and semantics. McWhorter is careful to argue that this does not imply that there is no inflection, tone or lexicalization in creoles. With regards to inflection, paradigmatic inflection (conjugational paradigms, case declension) is absent; with regards to tone, he offers no clear statement on what uses of tone are absent in a prototypical creole, but he argues that creoles "lack a certain use of tone" (p. 23). He gives no further specification and allows that we do not find it in certain examples of creole languages. In the case of lexicalization, McWhorter says that creoles demonstrate "an absence of derivation of compositionally opaque denotation" (p. 24). As in all other chapters, these claims are backed up with empirical examples. And yet, the argument would clearly be more convincing if this was combined with quantitative, comparative data that is able to show that this is generally different in languages that are treated as 'old' or 'normal' languages (see e.g. Velupillai, 2015; who uses the Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures, see Michaelis et al., 2013, to make quantitative comparisons).

The subsequent two chapters are concerned with refuting the arguments that creolization is language mixture (chapter 2), and that creolization is second-language acquisition (chapter 3). Chapter two is thus presenting arguments to refute Mufwene's *Feature Pool* theory, which maintains that languages develop through the selection of features from a 'pool' that is available to speakers in multilingual contact situations (see e.g. Mufwene, 2008). Chapter 3, in turn, is mainly devoted to counter DeGraff's idea that creoles do not derive from pidgins, but are basically an effect of adult second-language acquisition. Mufwene's and DeGraff's positions are contrasted with an impressively long list of counter arguments and rich details in examples from many different languages. However, again McWhorter's examples are mostly single sentences, understood as representing *languages*, that are discussed; in addition, the reader who is not acquainted with a large number of creole languages cannot possibly know why McWhorter chooses these, and not other examples. The reader is therefore unable to decide whether a certain degree of cherry-picking of data influences the line (and clarity) of argument. However, it is very obvious that McWhorter knows his subject in great detail and is highly motivated to share his insights in very careful, precise and therefore also convincing discussions with the reader.

The fourth chapter brings up a new topic, namely the issue of complexity. McWhorter follows the traditional argument here that "creole languages are less grammatically complex than the world's other languages" (p. 90). Here, he shows examples of (non-creole) languages that are highly complex in their morphosyntax and show many forms of over-specification, which he in turn compares with creole language features, thus countering the idea that creoles' lack of grammatical complexity is based on the same lack in their lexifiers. In the conclusion to the chapter, he maintains, however, that even though he is convinced of creoles having less grammatical complexity, the complexity argument is less strong than the proposition of the Creole Prototype (p. 109).

Chapter 5, the last chapter before McWhorter's concluding discussion in Chapter 6, examines newer publications that counter the prototype approach, namely those by Aboh and Ansaldo. They argue that creoles are a type of language in a socio-historical, but not in a structural sense (Aboh, 2016; Ansaldo, 2017). McWhorter argues here that Ansaldo does not engage with data at all – "there is nothing in Ansaldo's work that suggests the familiarity with creolist data" (p. 128). He then argues that Aboh does not use data from enough different languages (p. 110). Thus, in McWhorter's eyes, their sociolinguistic approach is unable to refute the linguistic realities that are shown in his data sections.

The final chapter, *Envoi*, summarizes the arguments, addresses potential counterarguments to his positions, and gives some more arguments on why creoles are a structurally definable class (comparison to English, pp. 131-134, phylogenetic evidence, pp. 134-136). Finally, McWhorter discusses the sociopolitical aspects in this debate, accusing *Uniformitarians* of “sacrificing empiricism and precision on the altar of Political Correctness” (pp. 136-137), and hinting at the danger that the existence of creole studies as a linguistic sub-discipline might be threatened if we do away with the concept of creole languages as a structural class (pp. 141-143). One wonders whether it is a wise strategy to argue that a concept like ‘creole’ should be maintained for the sake of maintaining disciplinary boundaries. The final chapter frequently refers to the figures who McWhorter identifies as the main actors of the *Uniformitarian* side again – Mufwene, Aboh, Ansaldo and DeGraff – and it is here that the reader will understand that this book tells us as much about structures of creole languages as it does about the structures of the (masculine?) politics of science. Overall, there are many similarities in the interests of both *Exceptionalism* and *Uniformitarianism*, and despite some major opposing ideas, there are also similarities in argumentation (e.g. that language acquisition of adults impacts language structures, which one may or may not refer to with terms that clearly have problematic normative overtones, such as ‘break in transmission’ or ‘disruption’). Thus, the construction of entirely contrasting schools, as it is presented in this text, seems to have its sources not only in diverging interpretations of data, but also in the social structures and discursive rituals of science.

Overall, the reader can find fascinating details on many different creole languages and interesting data analyses in this volume, but the question of why the participants engage in *The Creole Debate* with such passion, and whether it is relevant for the speakers of creole languages, seems to be left unanswered.

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An instant standard

Ulrich Ammon. 2015. *Die Stellung der deutschen Sprache in der Welt*. Berlin/Munich/Boston: Walter de Gruyter.

With *Die Stellung der deutschen Sprache in der Welt*, Ulrich Ammon published an entirely rewritten follow-up to his 1991 standard volume *Die internationale Stellung der deutschen Sprache*. At 1,295 pages, the fairly reasonably priced book (79,95 € / \$112.00 / £72.50) is divided into 12 chapters, about half of them being book-length themselves. This already shows a major strength of Ammon's work, namely its breadth. Where other books cut short, simplify, and merge for (understandable) reasons of sheer extent and cost, Ammon goes into detail by trying to cover virtually every aspect of the diffusion of the German language in the world. He begins with a general introduction in the first chapter, "A. Die deutsche Sprache im Spannungsfeld nationaler Interessen und globaler Kommunikation: Begriffserklärungen und Theorieansätze". The following chapter, "B. 'Deutsche Sprache', 'deutsches Sprachgebiet': Was dazu gehört und was nicht, und die Frage einer deutschen Ethnie", deals with the necessary questions of what (and who) the object of study is thought to be, before describing the number of speakers and "economic strength" of the German language in chapter C.

The study of the German language in specific contexts follows, first as a national language ("D. Deutsch als staatliche Amtssprache"), then as a minority language ("E. Deutsch als Minderheitensprache, aber nicht staatliche Amtssprache"), and finally as a means of communication in the international economic and scientific world ("F. Deutsch in der internationalen Wirtschaftskommunikation", "Deutsch in der internationalen Wissenschaftskommunikation"). The latter two are Ammon's major concerns, and it should be noted that he does not plead for quick and simple solutions. He is, on the contrary, well aware that the "measures of promotion of German as an international scientific language could have unwanted side effects, which are to be examined respectively" (my translation, p. 694). Regarding German as a language of economic communication, he states:

The – albeit marginal – fight against English in the German speaking countries is a quixotry. Instead, it is important to find and maintain an optimal balance between German and English and other foreign languages – for long-term benefit, preferably not only for the German speaking community, but also for all those communities cooperating with it. (my translation, p. 518)

In the following chapters, the examination continues, covering "H. Deutsch in der Diplomatie und in der Europäischen Union (EU)", "I. Die deutsche Sprache im internationalen Tourismus", "J. Deutsch in Medien und Sprachkunst außerhalb des deutschen Sprachgebiets", and "K.

Deutsch als Fremdsprache (DaF) außerhalb des deutschen Amtssprachgebiets". The final chapter, "L. Politik der Förderung der deutschen Sprache in der Welt", gives an overview of German language policies abroad and compares them with those of other countries.

Finally, there is a very extensive bibliography (118 pages!) and glossary, which could have been a bit more detailed, as I will explain below. But one thing the book does not offer is a definitive conclusion or résumé. This doesn't necessarily represent a flaw, since it underlines the book's encyclopedic character, but it leads to very different forms of reception, as two reviews of Ammon's book have shown. Mark L. Louden's review for the *Monatshefte* ends with the following sentence:

Just as one stumbles onto interesting topics while browsing through an encyclopedia or the shelves of a library, readers will be intrigued to discover the manifold ways in which German is truly a global linguistic player in the twenty-first century. (Louden 2017: 675)

Elke Donalies' however, whose equally favorable review is published in *Linguistische Berichte*, provides a different reading:

The euphoria of the initially cited resume is beautiful, but not true, since the standing of the German language in the world is indeed at risk. Thus, Ammon's book is a fact-based call to all of us to take more, and – most of all – the right action for the German language. (Donalies 2016: 249)

This goes to show that Ammon's book not only allows, but in fact calls for divergent readings, interpretations and further work given the huge collection of information he provides.

Other reviewers (e.g. Marc Pierce) already noted that the extension of the book is both its greatest strength and its biggest flaw, since it "covers too many topics, and as such is sometimes simultaneously too detailed and not detailed enough" (Pierce 2015: 293). This is surely a valid objection, and Pierce offers some specific examples, to which I would add the following (minor) details: On page 75, Ammon mentions 'super diversity', describing the term as "probably coined by Jan Blommaert" (my translation). Blommaert's importance for this field of study is beyond question, but the term is usually associated with Steven Vertovec (e.g. 2007), who – according to the bibliography – isn't cited at all throughout the book. Furthermore, Ammon dedicates little attention to media, and only one subchapter to "Vokalmusik" – two large subfields of language dispersion, which would surely require chapters, if not volumes of their own. As for vocal music, especially a deeper look into rap and both its culture-merging and culture-strengthening effects (cf. Androutsopoulos 2003, Pennycook 2009) would have been an interesting read. Ammon mentions rap music at least once (p. 85), but doesn't list it

in the glossary. As mentioned before, a more extensive list would have been a great help in dealing with the book. And while the entry “rap” might be a bit too specific, a complete list of all countries and states dealt with in the book would have surely been useful. It is, after all, a book about German in the world.

Needless to say, the meticulous work and great detail provided in the book outweigh the relatively insignificant flaws mentioned here. Especially the initially mentioned breadth is impressive: In trying to cover every aspect of the role German plays globally, Ammon dedicates a whole chapter to the German language in tourism – a form of language contact often neglected within linguistic studies. Similarly, his chapter about “German as a minority language, but not official language” (chapter E., my translation) includes ‘expats’ alongside what Ammon calls “pensioner-colonies” on the Spanish island of Mallorca. This goes to show that this book is not only a standard work of reference for any student and researcher interested in the German language and its global standing, but it even offers new starting points for research one might not have previously considered or deemed worthy of study. Ammon’s book is therefore both an encyclopedic work of reference and – in the best sense of the word – a practical tool for researchers. It is up to us to make the best use of it.

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