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

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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-constructional 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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