**Kerstin Fischer & Anatol Stefanowitsch (eds.). Konstruktionsgrammatik. Von der Anwendung zur Theorie. Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2006. Pp 210, € 29.80, ISBN 3860577883.**

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This collaborative volume, written in German, seeks to explore the applicability of Construction Grammar to various fields of linguistic inquiry. It brings together ten original contributions prepared by two researchers of international renown (Michael Tomasello, Thomas Stolz) and eight more junior scholars who cooperate in a "Construction Grammar network" sponsored by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* ('German Research Foundation', DFG). A secondary aim of the book is to familiarize German-speaking academics with the current state of the art in construction grammar.

Before embarking on a more detailed discussion, it may be useful to place the book in its historical context. Over the past twenty years or so, there has been a burgeoning descriptive and theoretical literature documenting the ubiquity of constructions in natural language, and a large number of North American and European scholars now subscribe to Construction Grammar as a workable theory of language. As yet, however, little work has been done on the application of this theory to more diverse lines of research, and there are few easily accessible introductions, especially in languages other than English.

The present volume fills this gap to some extent. It begins with a broad-range survey by the editors, who discuss similarities and differences between what may be considered the three main currents in Construction Grammar: Radical Construction Grammar as proposed by Croft, the frame-semantic approach developed in Berkeley by Fillmore and Kay, and the cognitive-linguistic current represented most prominently by Lakoff and Goldberg. Where these agree is in assuming that linguistic structure can be exhaustively described in terms of form-meaning pairs or "constructions"; Construction Grammar thus shifts the focus of linguistic attention from the generation of potential, "well-formed" sentences to that of semantically and pragmatically appropriate utterances actually made by speakers. There is some debate, however, as to whether constructions are compositional or non-compositional, and the authors of this volume do not seem to agree on this point. This makes one wonder whether some Construction Grammarians, although aiming to prove that language is fully idiomatic, have not yet realized that there is no such thing as "literal" or "primal" meaning for the native speaker and, hence, no compositionality at the level of basic constructions (cf.

Feilke 1996: 128); thus, the literal, compositional meaning of a collocation such as "sunny location" (i.e. *sunny* + *location*) has reality only in the abstraction of the linguist. Other areas of disagreement between Construction Grammarians concern the types of meaning inherent in constructions (i.e. semantic vs. pragmatic), the degree of polysemy attributed to constructions and the degree of abstraction permissible in Construction Grammar before it becomes indistinguishable from phrase structure grammars.

The articles by Tomasello and Diessel are both concerned with first language acquisition. Tomasello's article provides an overview of his own research into early grammatical development from the perspective of construction grammar. He explicitly takes issue with the traditional view that children go through a one-word phase followed by a two-word phase which in turn is followed by the acquisition of grammatical rules. Rather, he proposes that children's early multi-word productions can be viewed as consisting of constructions of different shapes and sizes. The child starts out with concrete nouns such as *cat*, holophrases such as *lemme-see* and pivot schemas such as *where is X?* and then uses these prefabricated formulaic units to derive more abstract categories and constructions. This is strongly reminiscent of theories of language rooted in British contextualism, such as Hoey (2005), which assume that speakers have local "makeshift" grammars characterized by constant flux and allowing only a limited amount of generalisation and abstraction.

Diessel's contribution naturally follows on from Tomasello's ground-breaking work on first language acquisition, extending the scope of construction-based approaches beyond the clause to include complex sentences. The focus of attention is on the acquisition of relative clauses, complement clauses, adverbial clauses and coordinate clauses. Using data from the CHILDES database, Diessel shows quite convincingly that children attain mastery of complex sentences either by expanding simple clauses or by integrating two clauses within one construction.

Haberzettl presents a penetrating reanalysis of some L2 production data from Wong-Fillmore's (1976) seminal study of 5 Mexican children acquiring English as their L2. Unlike most SLA specialists, who claim that universal grammar or general cognitive processing mechanisms mediate L2 acquisition, Wong-Fillmore arrived at the conclusion that reliance on formulaic utterances plays a key role here. Children first learn chunks that are later analysed; in the final stages of acquisition, Wong-Fillmore claims, children thus end up with a knowledge of abstract syntactic categories. Haberzettl argues that, firstly, it is more plausible to assume that formulaic chunks are only broken down to the extent that such segmentation is observed in input and that, secondly, constructions observed in output which fail to conform

to target language norms can be explained as construction blends or as input-based "creative" routines rather than rule-based productions. Although no mention is made of Wray's 2002 study, her conclusions thus coincide with Wray's views on the role of formulaic utterances in L1 and L2 acquisition. A second question that Haberzettl tackles is whether the close relationship between conceptual frames and grammatical structures posited in construction-based approaches to L1 acquisition also applies to L2 acquisition. Interestingly, this rather counterintuitive hypothesis must in some cases be abandoned in favour of a more atomistic view, whereby L2 learners put together individual words "productively". Haberzettl rightly concludes that L2 researchers need to uncover more evidence on the exact nature of the input to which L2 learners are exposed, and need to determine the relative proportions of atomistic units and constructions in their output. Haberzettl's otherwise excellent article is somewhat marred by the wholesale borrowing of English semi-technical terms such as "salient" and "prominent" (66), which, at least to my knowledge, have not yet gained currency in German and could be easily replaced with German formulations using the adjective "auffällig" or the verb "hervorheben".

Diewald discusses the applicability of Construction Grammar to language change and, more particularly, to grammaticalization. She argues convincingly that three types of constructions or "context types" may be distinguished which are associated with different stages of the grammaticalization process and shows that this model can be successfully applied to the grammaticalization of German modals.

Stolz challenges the thesis expounded by Croft that it is impossible to identify universal or cross-linguistic construction types. Put another way, he tries to show that constructions may be compared not merely in terms of their function, but also in terms of their form. As a likely candidate for such formal correspondence he singles out "word iteration" or "total reduplication", as in *es war einmal ein **alter alter** Mann*. Languages differ along several dimensions when it comes to word iteration, such as the word classes which can be iterated, the functions served by word iteration, the direction of iteration, etc. Thus, Italian allows the iteration of colour adjectives to create an intensifying effect (*gli occhi **neri neri***), something not permissible in German; it is equally true, however, that German and Italian share a number of iteration phenomena. Stolz argues that word iterations can be characterized as constructions even in the narrow, Fillmorian sense of the term because their function (e.g. pluralization in the case of *buku buku* [= books] in Indonesian) is distinct from that of its constituents. In other words, word iterations are schematic constructions whose form and content may be identical across languages.

Fischer's article is devoted to the relationship between Construction Grammar and interactional linguistics. She claims that there is great potential for cooperation between the two fields with regard to both theoretical premises and potential objects of study. Among other things, conversation analysis can reveal the types of contexts in which a construction is used, the functions it performs in interaction, the lexis commonly associated with it and its possible reformulations. A typical finding is that the vast majority of pseudo-clefts in English occur with the verbs *do*, *happen* or *say* and are used for purposes of turn-taking or floor-holding in argumentative contexts. Beyond this, Fischer shows that conversation analysis can help elucidate the interplay of linguistic levels, especially that between prosodic and semantic-pragmatic features of a construction. Research in this area could benefit from a look at the comprehensive lexicographic description of German discourse particles found in Courdier, Faucher & Métrich (1994-2002), a dictionary with which Fischer is apparently unfamiliar. Fischer's depiction of constructional meaning as being dependent on "the activation of particular tasks within the communicative frame" (142) is unduly complex; as the dictionary just mentioned demonstrates, it may be sufficient to describe particle-based constructions in terms of their intralinguistic and extralinguistic context and function. Fischer ends with a well-reasoned discussion of points of divergence between Construction Grammar and conversation analysis.

Stefanowitsch argues the rather obvious point that, like any other linguistic endeavour, Construction Grammar can benefit from corpus enquiries. His study is nevertheless remarkable in its skilful application of a range of statistical tools to the analysis of German constructions of the type NP + *haben* + *zu* + infinitive. Starting from a narrow definition of constructions as non-compositional, he uses Barkema's (1996) multi-dimensional statistical analysis to determine whether the construction in question is subject to more formal constraints than might be expected, but the results remain inconclusive. He also demonstrates how a particular brand of collocational analysis (termed "collostructional analysis"), developed by Stefanowitsch and Gries, can be used to explore the semantic properties of a construction. The idea is that, in view of their frequency of occurrence in the entire corpus, some lexemes will occur with higher than expected frequencies in a particular construction; a variant of this approach consists in comparing the frequency of occurrence of lexemes in two semantically related constructions, such as NP + *haben* + *zu* + infinitive and *müssen* + infinitive. Such an analysis yields a number of distinctive "colexemes" of the *haben* + *zu* + infinitive construction, showing it to be particularly common in administrative and political contexts. A third method employed by Stefanowitsch is dispersion analysis, which provides

striking confirmation for the text-type-specific nature of the construction under examination. The author concludes by stressing the superiority of inductive statistical methods in generating valid and reliable results. This, however, is a moot point; as Sinclair and others have shown numerous times, observations of the kind made by Stefanowitsch can also be arrived at through the close reading of concordance lines and their manual allocation to source files.

Müller maintains that Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar is better able to account for resultative constructions of the type *weil er den Teich leer fischt* than is Construction Grammar. In his view, two types of argument can be invoked in favour of such a position. Firstly, a construction-based approach has to posit a bewildering variety of resultative constructions; secondly, it cannot account for cross-linguistic similarities. This raises the more general question of whether the greater elegance, economy and universality of a particular theoretical approach should in itself give that theory higher status. Linguistic theories have to be psychologically and neurologically plausible rather than just elegant and economical, and there is no apparent neurobiological reason why speakers' internalised linguistic system should not consist of an abundance of constructions rather than lexemes and rules. It is worth remembering that, from a neurological perspective, there is no such thing as "rule-based" human behaviour.[1] And, as Lamb (1999: 341-343) has shown, Wernicke's area alone can accommodate more than a million phonological units.

The book concludes with a brief overview by Stefanowitsch and Fischer of general questions which emerge from the individual contributions. These concern the role of creativity vs. imitation in language acquisition, the tension between arbitrariness and motivation, the scope of "constructional" meaning and the methodological foundations of Construction Grammar.

In conclusion it can be said that the book is a fairly accessible introduction to Construction Grammar, with some articles such as Diessel's and Stefanowitsch's making for smoother reading than others, which use a highly specialised terminology or unnecessary borrowings such as *crosslinguistischer Vergleich* (107, read: Sprachvergleich, interlingualer Vergleich) or *balanciertes Korpus* (153, read: ausgewogenes / repräsentatives Korpus). A second edition might include an article on points of convergence between Construction Grammar and research on collocation and phraseology; another obvious area of application which will repay close study is translatology.

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1 For a particular output to occur, all that is required is an optimal adjustment of connection strengths between hundreds of neurons (Spitzer 2002: 75; cf. also Ellis 2003: 85). As native speakers of a language, we do not follow rules when we speak, any more than we follow rules when we run (although the process of running, like language, may be described in terms of rules).

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