# REVIEW

## DECONSTRUCTING CONSTRUCTIONS
## (2007, EDITED BY C. BUTLER AND J. MARTÍN ARISTA)

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*Deconstructing constructions* is a collective volume edited after a workshop organized in May 2006 on the topic that has the same name as this book. The edition was carried out by the Functional Grammars Research Group at the University of La Rioja in Logroño, Spain. This work, focused on the Lexical Constructional Model (LCM), is a leading approach that adequately tackles key issues in argument realization. This model occupies a prominent place within its field since the comprehensive analyses presented in it and those that will also arise in the wake of it certainly concern most researchers in linguistics. The volume aims to examine the concept of constructions from different approaches and tries to achieve a better understanding of what a construction is, and what roles constructions have in the frameworks which constitute functional-cognitive space. The book begins with a brief overview which displays, in detail, a presentation of the contributors (pp. vii-xiv), a large group of leading figures in Functional Linguistics and Construction Grammar (CG), whose articles make up the whole work.In the Introduction (pp. xv-xx), Butler and Martín Arista present the main topics of the book establishing a clear distinction between two different ways of looking at the relationship between semantics and syntax, i.e. the projectionist model and the constructionist model. As an outline, the organization of this book is divided in three sections: the first (pp. 3-114) deals with papers on particular theoretical issues; the second (pp. 115-198) is dedicated to the LCM; finally, the third (pp. 199-294) presents a number of analyses of particular constructions. All these articles raise the question of how the concept of constructions can be applied to various theoretical issues, i.e. how this concept can help functionalist frameworks explain some linguistic phenomena more properly and, inversely, how functional frameworks can complement constructional approaches to overcome their limitations.

García Velasco studies the case of eponyms in verbal function, which entails a particular case of innovative lexical creation taking a proper noun as input, in "Innovative coinage: Its place in the grammar" (pp. 3-24). On the basis of Clark & Clark (1974), he supports the view that verbal eponyms are contextuals, i.e. expressions whose appropriate interpretation depends on the context and general knowledge. García Velasco shows that (i) out of context, verbal eponyms may receive multiple interpretations, and (ii) the meaning of a verbal eponym may change from one context to another; unlike authors who argue that the meaning of these units is predictable. In the second part of the article, he incorporates the facts in two functional theories of language: CG and Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG). First, he explores the possibility of treating verbal eponyms as examples of coercion, concluding that the meaning of verbal eponyms cannot be assumed to result from the interaction of a verbal construction and the meaning of the proper noun. On the contrary, he proposes that FDG offers an adequate architecture to implement the analysis proposed.

Besides, all his data represent an interesting challenge for theories of language based on usage.

In "The construction of macro-events: A typological perspective" (pp. 25-62), Pedersen considers Talmy's typological distinction between verb-framed and satellite-framed languages. Firstly, the typology is shown as a general theory of expressions of macro-events which goes beyond the simple study of motion events. Secondly, there are substantial deviations from the basic typological patterns, originally suggested in Talmy's work. Therein, a generalized version of his typology should include both the lexical level and more schematic constructional levels of analysis. Schematic and lexical constructions should be the basic constituents of the typology. From this perspective, Pedersen argues that Germanic languages tend to map the main information of expressions onto a lexical (verbal) construction; whereas Romance languages, e.g. Spanish, tend to do it onto the verb; while the secondary information may be mapped onto a complex schematic construction. In this revised version, unlike Talmy's work, the typology is about constructional patterns, the internal structure of constructions, and patterns of combined constructions in different languages types. Pedersen suggests that the generality of the typological pattern is due to the ontology of the typology. It is an information structure phenomenon with constructions of the main information (MIC) and the supportive information (SIC). Although there are typological differences between e.g. Germanic and Romance languages in expressions of macro-events, there is no simple clear distinction. It is shown that Talmy's descriptive typology is that some MIC/SIC are more consolidated in the grammar of some languages than in others, and a study of different types of MIC/SIC should require a large multilingual parallel corpus. Pedersen concludes by speculating whether the studied typological patterns may reflect a general clausal typology or not.

In "Constructions, co-composition and merge" (pp. 63-84), Martínez Fernández discusses some structures (*break* verbs with argument-adjuncts of motion) syntactically similar to Golberg's caused-motion construction, although they do not correspond to Goldberg's definition. Martínez Fernández rejects a purely constructional account of the so-called caused-motion construction in English (as discussed by Goldberg 1995) and offers an alternative account, based on Pustejosky's (1995) Generative Lexicon, that demonstrates the importance of a detailed semantic representation to predict the meaning of expressions seemingly instantiating the caused-motion construction. She labels these structures *merge* structures, since they acquire the semantics of motion without losing that of change of state. On the grounds of Pustejovsky's Generative Lexicon, she explains this type of structures and states that they deal with creative uses of language and polysemy. The General Lexicon has a lexical representation distinguishing four levels to capture lexical meaning – *Argument Structure, Qualia Structure, Event Structure*, and *Lexical Inheritance Structure* – all of them connected by means of *co-composition*. Martínez Fernández supports the idea that the Generative Lexicon has an advantage over CG since using the same system of lexical representation that is used for co-composition, it can also explain merge. The comparison between co-composition and merge indicates that the main differences can be explained by the semantic weight on the event and qualia structures. Nevertheless, this argument only works at the level of interpretation or comprehension, Goldberg (1995, 2006). Thus, the article aims to show how to account for the production of those structures, putting forward a question for future research: Can these structures be explained in terms of merge and co-composition?

"A typology of morphological constructions" (pp. 85-114) by Martín Arista contributes to the development of the theory of morphology of Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) on the grounds of the central role that constructions play in the current version of this linguistic theory. Therefore, Martín Arista applies the concept of constructions to the domain

of morphology in a RRG framework in order to develop a typology of morphological constructions illustrated by data from Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara. In the Layered Structure of the Word (LSW), the structural and functional similarities between morphology and syntax are highlighted by generalizing the descriptive and explanatory principles of syntax to morphology. Regarding morphological constructions, the defining criterion is the distribution of markedness which entails: projection of morphological features (marked nuclear element); percolation and projection of features (marked non-nuclear elements). As regards constructional schemas, there are different types: recursive/non-recursive, analytic/synthetic and continuous/discontinuous. Martín Arista argues that derivation (including compounding and affixation) can be endocentric or exocentric, whereas inflection is exocentric. Moreover, derivation and inflection can be synthetic or analytic, as well as continuous or discontinuous. Through the study of the Australian languages Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara (P/Y), Martín Arista shows that: although recursivity appears as a derivational phenomenon, the instances of double case in P/Y are likely to count as recursive inflection. On the theoretical side, Martín Arista argues that the discussion of P/Y shows that the interaction of Word and Phrase morphology, with inflectional ending in the last word, calls for a model allowing for interaction between Word and Phrase morphology. The complex Word layer of the LSW outlines the boundary between relational and non-relational Word morphology: delimiting the inheritance of relational morphological features and the percolation of non-relational morphological features. On the typological side, while P/Y is mostly dependent marking-suffixal, there are features of head-marking and prefixal morphology. Inflection appears in the Postfield in P/Y, while derivation can be either prefixal or suffixal. P/Y shows endocentric and exocentric morphological constructions realized through different constructional schemas: continuous/discontinuous, synthetic/analytic and non-recursive/recursive. The morphological nature of these constructions is not as dynamic as syntactic constructions are. The interaction with the context is limited and the semantic-syntactic motivation less direct. Furthermore, constructions and constructional schemas account for universal and language-specific properties of inflection and word-formation.

Butler discusses some recent functionalist, cognitivist and constructionist approaches to language in "The Lexical Constructional Model: Genesis, strengths and challenges" (pp. 117–152). The LCM is a complex and recent model with antecedents of functional, cognitivist and constructionist approaches. Butler pinpoints that three grammars, i.e. Dik´s Functional Grammar (FG), Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) and Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) could be seen as central to the set of structural-functional grammars. Butler gives the genesis of the model by showing what each parent theory contributes to the LCM and details the successive steps of its emergence. As Butler puts it, the LCM benefits from the similarities between functionalist and cognitivist approaches and accomplishes a synthesis of the two strands of what might be labelled functional-cognitive linguistics. After comparing a set of thirty-six features, it was found that almost half these features were shared and formed a common core for functionalism, cognitivism and constructionalism. Butler points out the central role to the lexicon, which contains all the basic predicates and terms of a language, within the FG. On the other hand, the Functional Lexematic Model (FLM) is a combination of Dik's proposals for the lexicon in FG and Lexematics. Mairal Usón and Van Valin (2001: 157-159) and Mairal Usón and Faber (2002: 41ff.) gave evidence to show that the FG predicate frame, with its meaning definitions based on the principle of lexical decomposition, is not an appropriate mechanism to respond to the challenge of constructing a lexically-based grammar. Mairal Usón (2002) chooses the fusion between lexical templates for a particular lexical class, and templates for various types of the construction into which verbs can enter (e.g. transitive, causative/inchoative, instrument subject, etc.). Thus, Mairal's work is influential since it situates, for the first time, lexical templates and their modelling

within an overall model, the Lexical Grammar Model. This model makes use of an adaptation of the RGG semantics-to syntax algorithm, including the use of intermediate semantic roles, or macroroles, the concept of the privileged syntactic argument, and syntactic templates. Finally, Butler presents the challenges of the relationship between semantics and morphosyntax and between grammar and the lexicon.

In "Levels of description and explanation in meaning construction" (pp. 153–198), Mairal Usón and Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez propose LCM as an adequate model for the investigation of the interaction between lexical and constructional representations. The LCM is aimed to be operational at all levels of linguistic description (including pragmatics and discourse). Therefore, it has a level 1 (core module) formed by elements of syntactically relevant semantic interpretation; a level 2 (pragmatic module) accounting for low-level inferential aspects of linguistic communication; a level 3 module based on high-level inferences (illocutionary force); and, finally, a level 4 module regarding the discourse aspects of the LCM (mainly cohesion and coherence phenomena). Each level is either included within a higher-level constructional configuration or performs as a cue for the activation of a significant conceptual structure providing an implicit meaning derivation. The building blocks of the LCM are the notions of lexical and constructional template. The interaction between them supplies the core meaning layer for other more peripheral operations. Meaning construction in the LCM focuses on two essential processes: cueing and subsumption. The latter is a fundamental meaning production mechanism consisting in the principled incorporation of lexical and/or constructional templates from one representational level into higher level constructional representations. Both authors distinguish two kinds of constraints on coercion: internal and external. The former originate from the semantic properties of the lexical and constructional templates and do not affect the *Aktionsart* (logical representation) ascription of the predicates concerned. The latter involve *Aktionsart* changes and result from the im/possibility of accomplishing high-level metaphoric and metonymic operations on the lexical items implicated in the subsumption process. Lastly, cueing or cued inferencing, as an alternative to subsumption, is a form of constraining non-explicit meaning on the grounds of lexical and constructional clues; accounting for inferences achieved by making contextual adjustments to the meaning of some predicates at the level of core grammar. However, at other levels it accounts for meaning involvement based on potential conceptual connections between propositions, or on metonymic activations or high-level, and low-level situational models or schemes. Summarising, this chapter presents the LCM in more technical details. It presents the overall architecture of the model, which consists of four levels corresponding to successive levels of meaning construction, from 'core' grammar to discourse integration, moving the focus to Level 1 of the model, i.e. the level of argument structure. The basic unit of argument structure in the LCM is called a template, containing argument realization information.

"Measuring out reflexivity in secondary predication in English and Spanish: Evidence from cognition verbs" (pp. 201–246) by Gonzálvez-García focuses on a usage-based, bottom-up analysis à la Goldberg (2006) of equivalent instances of secondary predication featuring *find/encontrar* and a reflexive pronoun, in English and Spanish, in the object slot. Both configurations can be considered as different, though closely connected, constructions, i.e. the *reflexive subjective-transitive* and the *self-descriptive subjective-transitive* construction. Although both constructions qualify as reflexive, there are some differences. Instances of the *reflexive subjective-transitive* construction levy an agentive, intentional construal on the event/state of affairs, and are also closer to a two-participant event elaboration where the entity encoded in the main clause and the reflexive is analysed as a 'divided self' between an experiencer subject and an affected object. Whereas the *self-descriptive subjective-transitive* construction imposes a non-volitional, non-agentive construal, and are equivalent to one-

participant events, and can often be rephrased on the grounds of intransitive and intensive clauses. When dealing with reflexives and middles, the significant determinant in this respect is the intrinsic meaning and form properties of the object-related predicative phrase (XPCOMP) and its transitivity properties (Hopper and Thompson 1980). Closely connected with the *subjective-transitive* construction is the *self-descriptive subjective-transitive* construction, which may encode two-participant or one-participant events. Besides, pseudo-reflexive configurations encode one-participant events/situations and are nearer middles than reflexives. Concluding, Gonzálvez-García points out that the *self-descriptive subjective-transitive* construction has a different semantics form that of the *reflexive subjective-transitive* construction. Therefore, they instantiate two different points in the reflexivity sequence. Gonzálvez-Garcia's study concludes by evidencing that each language displays its own distributional properties, providing further evidence that argument structure is both construction-specific and language-specific.

Cortés Rodríguez, in "The inchoative construction: Semantic representation and unification constraints" (pp. 247–270), analyses English inchoative structures within the framework of a conception based on functional assumptions of language and of the lexicon. The theoretical framework is the LCM and the conclusions drawn after the analysis are as follow: Firstly, the semantic interpretation of sentences accounts for the interrelation of the lexical and constructional template, both of them central to the LCM. Secondly, such interrelation is based on the unification process subject to internal and external constraints. The latter are based on cognitive mechanisms making use of metaphor and metonymy. Thirdly, external constraints achieve lower-level connections with internal constraints. The conceptual mechanisms related to external constraints have similarities in the conditions required by the semantic components of lexical templates. Finally, constructional and lexical templates are semantically mapped by a unitary system what makes the designing of internal constraints more attainable.

In "Semantic and pragmatic constraints on the English get-passive" (pp. 271–294), Guerrero Medina concentrates on the so-called *get*-passive, usually considered a problematic construction on linguistic grounds. Firstly, basing her discussion on examples from the British National Corpus (BNC), Guerrero Medina starts by stating that a verb-centered account is not able to account for the appropriateness of the construction: the *get*-passive should be regarded as a contentful unit. Secondly, she focuses on the main semantic and pragmatic features commonly associated with the *get*-passive in the linguistc literature. Thirdly, she treats the *get*-passive as forming a family of constructions in order to account for its semantic and pragmatic features, paying attention to two main subconstructions: the causative and the spontaneous *get*-passive. The constructional approach of the article presents the *get*-passive as a prototypically structured category. She argues that the *get*-passive is not semantically or pragmatically equivalent to the *be*-passive: the former is associated with its own semantic and pragmatic constraints, providing additional meanings of responsibility and involvement; on the other hand, the "causative" and "spontaneous" *get*-passive establish their own "profiled status" (Goldberg 1995: 53) on the semantic roles lexically profiled by the verbs connected to them.

Bearing in mind the epistemological background that underlies this volume, we must remember the large proliferation of linguistic models for grammatical representations over the last three decades, from the several functional grammars to the many variants of construction grammar and the like in cognitive linguistics. Discussing this question in the light of several theoretical issues and providing such a framework which integrates the most valuable contributions of each model into a single and coherent framework are the primary goals of *Deconstructing constructions*. Despite their minor differences, the functional and cognitive approaches seem compatible thanks to their shared assumptions. In the last decade,

research on the syntax-semantic interface in cognitive linguistics has shown that constructionist accounts appear to succeed where projectionist explanations fail, suggesting that constructional and lexical accounts are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary. Hence it is not only possible but also desirable to take the strengths of functional and cognitive models and build them into a unified framework. The LCM is precisely designed to achieve such a goal. Consequently, the work presented in this volume is central to the current debate about the concept of construction from functional and cognitive perspectives, thus constituting a core reading for all linguists these days.