Construction Grammar II: accounting for generalisations in grammar

1 Constructions

Consider the following examples:

(1) champagne
(2) canapés
(3) under the bed
(4) Tommy tickled Monica.
(5) She blew him a kiss.

a. In each case, state whether the expression is a construction according to (i) Langacker and/or (ii) Goldberg.
b. Explain how you reached your conclusions.
c. Finally, summarise the differences between the two definitions of construction.

2 Mapping verbs onto constructions

Recall the discussion of the ditransitive (X CAUSES Y TO RECEIVE Z) construction in Chapter 26. As we saw, Goldberg claims that certain aspects of verb meaning are salient in licensing the linking of verbs to constructions. Consider the verbs listed below:

(1) type
(2) cook
(3) swim
(4) drive
(5) tickle
(6) donate
3 Identifying constructions

The following sentences are all examples of the sentence-level (verb argument) constructions studied by Goldberg:

(1) Susan’s best friend refused John an invitation.
(2) Susan beckoned John into the bedroom.
(3) John moved her to tears.
(4) The French windows lent Susan’s kitchen an air of sophistication.
(5) He gave her a headache.
(6) She drove him mad.
(7) She kissed him unconscious.

a. For each sentence, identify which type of construction it belongs to and explain how you reached your conclusions.
b. For each sentence, state whether it counts as an instance of the prototypical or central meaning associated with the construction in question and explain how you reached your conclusions.
c. If you think a given example is not an instance of the central sense, explain how it is motivated by, or related to, the central sense.

4 The conative construction

Consider the following examples, which illustrate the conative construction:

(1) Jimmy tore at the wrapping paper.
(2) Monica hacked at the loaf of bread.
(3) Monica’s husband kicked at the cat.
(4) Monica lashed out at him.

a. On the basis of these examples, work out the syntax and semantics associated with this construction.

Now consider the following example:

(5) She shouted at him.

b. Based on your analysis in 4a., how would you now account for the example in (5)?
c. Does this relate to the central sense, a peripheral sense or a completely different construction? Explain how you reached your conclusions.
Finally, consider the following example:

(6) She threw a glance at the other driver.

d. Is this example related to the example in (5), or does it relate to a different construction? Explain your reasoning.

5 The way construction

The following examples illustrate what Goldberg (1995) calls the *way* construction:

(1) Susan fought her way to the top.
(2) John flirted his way into Susan’s life.
(3) John whistled his way home.
(4) Susan drank her way through the party.
(5) Susan clattered her way down the stairs.

a. On the basis of these examples, work out the syntax and semantics of this construction.

b. Goldberg suggests that there are two main senses associated with this construction, connected by a polysemy inheritance link. How might these two senses be described?

6 Comparing construction grammars

In the form of an annotated table, present a comparison of the key similarities and differences between the following constructional approaches to grammar:

(1) Cognitive Grammar;
(2) Construction Grammar (as developed by Goldberg);
(3) Radical Construction Grammar.