Review

Tobias Ungerer and Stefan Hartmann, *Constructionist approaches: Past, present, future* (Elements in Construction Grammar). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. x + 77. ISBN 9781009308731.

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In this Element in Construction Grammar, Tobias Ungerer and Stefan Hartmann cover the state-of-the-art of constructionist approaches to grammar, dealing not only with their history and present developments but also the future avenues they could take. It is especially the latter objective that makes this publication one of a kind and an inspiring read.

Chapter 1, 'Introduction' (pp. 1–3), sets the scene. Delineating constructionist approaches to grammar from traditional ones, the authors show what lies at the heart of all construction grammars, i.e. the assumption that language-related knowledge is made of idiomatic units called constructions. While acknowledging the fact that Construction Grammar is no unified theory, they continue the introductory chapter by highlighting the commonalities to all constructionist approaches: the assumption of a lexicon-syntax continuum, the network approach to language representation, the surface orientation and the rejection of a Universal Grammar. In doing so, the authors accomplish the formidable task of defining the common ground of all approaches to grammar that can be described as constructionist.

Chapter 2, 'Discovering idiomaticity: The case for constructions' (pp. 3–15), provides a historical sketch of constructional approaches and the notion of 'construction' itself. The authors begin their overview by summarizing Fillmore *et al.*'s (1988) seminal paper on the *let alone* construction, which, arguably, is the first to show the schematicity and productivity of this idiomatic pattern. They continue their overview by tracing the history of the term 'construction', using Adele Goldberg's changing definitions. In doing so, they discuss central possible criteria of constructionhood, i.e. nonpredictability, frequency and entrenchment. They also point to recent discussions regarding Goldberg's latest definition and future directions in conceptualizing linguistic knowledge. The chapter continues with a summary of the discussion on whether words and morphemes should be considered constructions, touching on notions such as simple and complex signs as well as wide and narrow definitions of the term 'construction'. Chapter 2 ends with a summary and a brief comment on the (according to the authors hardly existing) practical consequences of these different views on what a construction (really) is. In sum, chapter 2 gives a very brief overview of the history of

constructional approaches. The authors are well aware that the picture they paint is incomplete, arguing that they 'cannot provide a summary of all the phenomena that have been studied from a constructionist perspective over the last thirty-five years, as there are too many' (p. 4), but that concentrating on Goldberg's definition of construction instead 'reflects important developments in CxG' (p. 4). Chapter 2 leaves the reader wondering about its target audience. Given its focus on seminal works, its contents are largely known to construction grammarians. There are some noteworthy references to future directions, e.g. to the entrenchment-and-conventionalization model (Schmid 2020) and a gradualist notion of constructionhood, but in comparison to the historical perspective, their discussion is kept to a minimum.

Chapter 3, 'From Sign-Based to Radical: "Flavors" of Construction Grammar' (pp. 15–26), provides a comparison of the six major variants of constructional approaches: Berkeley CxG, Sign-Based CxG, Fluid CxG, Embodied CxG, Cognitive CxG and Radical CxG. Rather than introducing these approaches one by one, the authors compare them along three dimensions, which are their degree of formalism, their research foci and the methods they usually employ. They show that the first four approaches are more formalist in representing constructions in the form of attribute-value matrices and using the mechanism of unification. In comparison, the latter two approaches lack these kinds of formalism. The authors also present arguments for and against formalism in Construction Grammar and conclude that the answer to the question of the usefulness of being formalistic also hinges on the research focus. Regarding this, the authors identify three broader subgroups: approaches interested mainly in grammatical description (Berkeley and Sign-Based CxG), those interested mainly in the computational modeling of language comprehension and/or production (Fluid and Embodied CxG) and those interested in cognitive and typological dimensions of language use (Cognitive and Radical CxG). Finally, the authors identify subgroups of constructional approaches regarding their preferred methods but also stress that all approaches make use of introspection to some extent, while generally being open to a variety of empirical methods. According to them, some approaches prefer corpus-based methods (in particular Cognitive CxG, but also Berkeley and Sign-Based CxG to some extent), some lexicographic methods (Berkeley CxG), some qualitative analyses (Radical CxG), some computational methods (Fluid and Embodied CxG) and some experimental methods (mainly Cognitive CxG, but also Fluid and Embodied CxG). It is the latter method where the authors see further potential for constructionist enterprises and name experimental semantics and experimental semiotics as examples. By focusing on dimensions rather than on the approaches themselves, the authors bring a fresh perspective to the overview. In their summary, the authors also stress that there is considerable overlap between the frameworks. This observation is also emphasized at various other points in the Element and is intended to foster discussions and collaborations across the different 'flavors' of construction grammar. In doing so, the chapter takes a stimulating twist at the end.

Chapter 4, 'Connecting the dots: The construct-i-con' (pp. 26–43), summarizes the state-of-the-art of the network view of constructional knowledge. First, the authors present the network analogy in more detail: the nodes represent linguistic units (such as constructions), while the links between the nodes represent the relations between these units. The authors further show why the network representation of the construct-i-con became a cornerstone in constructionist approaches. They show that it explains previously observed psychological effects (i.e. frequency, recency, neighborhood and priming effects) and that it is a useful tool for explaining language change. Following this brief characterization of the network view, the authors discuss the types of links that have been proposed to hold between the linguistic units. The traditional relations such as paradigmatic, syntagmatic and symbolic relations are discussed regarding their representation within the network as horizontal and vertical links and nested networks, respectively. In addition, more innovative relations, i.e. polysemy links, metaphorical links, filler-slot and pragmatic relations are discussed. True to the subtitle of this Element, *Past, Present, Future*, the authors also identify four main areas for further research regarding the architecture of the construct-i-con: (i) the ontological status of nodes and links as well as the development of criteria to decide between the different model proposals; (ii) the development of strictly empirical and (automatized) bottom-up ways of generating constructional categories, including well-established, corpus-based and experimental methods; (iii) the exploration of formal and computational methods like artificial neural networks (ANNs) or tools from network science as additional methods; and (iv) the conceptualization of the network as multi- rather than two-dimensional and its optimal visualization. With its focus on recent trends and future outlooks on the network architecture of the construct-i-con, the chapter contributes significantly to the ongoing debates and, therefore, presents one of the strongest chapters in this Element.

Chapter 5, 'Creativity, multimodality, individual differences: Recent developments in Construction Grammar' (pp. 43–51), offers a review of current developments in the field, all of which can be seen as 'a reaction to the emphasis of "mainstream" CxG on more or less "regular" constructional patterns in spoken and written language as well as the tendency to abstract away from the individual language user' (p. 43). As for creativity, the authors first introduce the notions of F-creativity, which they see as being largely synonymous with productivity, and E-creativity, which produces innovative structures, and discuss these considering the maxims of extravagance and conformity. They continue by pinpointing the challenges surrounding creativity: social-pragmatic dimensions of constructional knowledge, the dynamicity of these socio-pragmatic features, and individual differences in the creative use of language. Regarding multimodality, the authors review and discuss constructionist approaches to sign languages and co-speech gestures. Regarding the latter, they note that the question of whether these and related phenomena such as prosody should be part of constructional analyses leads back to the problem of defining constructions in the first place (see chapter 2). The authors also review constructionist approaches to image-macro memes

and ponder on possible graphemic constructions. Regarding individual differences, the authors observe that, while constructionist approaches acknowledge that language users differ in their knowledge of language, the majority of works tacitly assume an idealized language user. At the same time, the authors emphasize the importance of modeling individual differences and point at recent progress in the development of analytical tools by offering Neels (2020) as a sample study. In the summary of chapter 5, the authors also point at directions they were unable to take and mention constructicography, multilingualism and language pedagogy as further areas of productive research. By reviewing the 'hot topics' in Construction Grammar, this chapter, like the chapter before, is a significant contribution to the field since it raises important questions on the fundamental beliefs of mainstream Construction Grammar, including the question of what constitutes constructional knowledge, the very definition of construction (and, likewise, linguistic knowledge) and the relation between entrenchment and conventionalization.

Chapter 6, 'Conclusion and outlook' (pp. 51–3), summarizes the Element and identifies two major desiderata. One concerns the limited number of languages Construction Grammar theory is based on, 'as it is still to some extent an open question how well constructionist concepts can account for typologically very different languages, including signed languages' (p. 52). The other desideratum concerns the cognitive plausibility of constructions and the relations between them. The authors observe that work in Construction Grammar often heavily relies on individual case studies and voice their concern that this practice may lead to fragmentation of the field. In this context, they see their own contribution as a call for discussions between and collaboration across subdisciplines by highlighting possible future areas of common interest outlined in this Element.

This Element lives up to what it promises in the title, i.e. it provides an overview of the history of constructionist approaches, summarizes the state-of-the-art and reflects on possible future directions of constructionist enterprises. The first perspective could be seen as slightly redundant as the Construction Grammar community has already seen the publication of introductory textbooks, quite a few handbook articles and a handbook concerned only with CxG, each targeting different audiences. But it is the second and especially the latter perspective that makes the reading interesting for the Construction Grammar community. In particular, chapters 4 and 5 make the reader crave more: more intellectual exchanges with fellow researchers, more stimulating discussions at workshops and conferences, and more collaboration with grammarians concerned with all kinds of languages and from all kinds of disciplines to find out more about our common interest: linguistic knowledge and how language users store the pieces of language-related information. The Element serves as an appetizer to broaden one's horizon, consider studies outside one's comfort zone, and seek input from researchers of other subdisciplines in Construction Grammar and from disciplines beyond. It excels at pointing at possible future areas of interest and analytical tools that concern all (construction)

grammarians. This Element is thus an important contribution to contemplate what is important in linguistics.

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