

What do construction grammarians think about Construction Grammar?

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Construction Grammar (CxG) comes in different flavors and there are different ways of doing CxG. At the same time, many of the fundamental issues at the heart of the theory remain unresolved, and it is not obvious to what extent all the various approaches to and applications of CxG remain a coherent field of study. It is also an open question to what degree such coherence and compatibility is even desirable, and to what extent these unresolved issues and the differences between the flavors reflect actual differences in opinion.

To get a better idea of what practitioners of CxG think, we conducted an online questionnaire eliciting views and opinions about various aspects of CxG, such as: different tools and formalisms, the relation between CxG and usage-based linguistics, how to handle different kinds of meaning in CxG, and whether CxG provides (or should provide) a coherent overall model of language. After two rounds of pilots the questionnaire was distributed to all the participants of the last three instances of ICCG (i.e., ICCG 8–10) in the spring of 2021, all in all about 700 colleagues, and we received 189 replies. These matters were also discussed at a round-table session at ICCG-11 in Antwerp 2021, but in this paper we will focus on the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consists of three sections: 14 Likert scale questions, all of them including an option to add additional comments, 6 open-ended questions, and a section for metadata. The Likert scale questions yielded a high number of interesting comments, which warrant treatment as a result category of their own. All in all, the questionnaire generated more data than can be covered in a single talk, so this time we will mainly provide a brief overview of the results and highlight some of the main points.

Based on the numeric results, the Likert scale questions may be sorted into three groups: those on which there is mostly consensus, those where the field is divided, and those where the replies reveal uncertainty or indecision rather than disagreement. For example, there is almost consensus that CxG should be a model of language as a whole and not just grammar, as well as the view that constructions are cognitively real. Issues on where there is disagreement include whether CxG should distinguish between 'semantic' and 'pragmatic' types of meaning and whether CxG results should be represented by an exact formalism. A matter where the replies indicate uncertainty rather than disagreement is whether the meaning of constructions should be handled in terms of Frame Semantics.

What we are aiming for in this talk is not to resolve these various issues but rather point them out and shed light on the different opinions out there. Our intent is to stimulate further discussion about the future research directions in Construction Grammar.