CASA – A Constructionist Approach to Syntactic Analysis

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Construction Grammar has proven itself to be a very fruitful model for the description of language and language learning, but it has not yet managed to establish itself as the model of linguistic description on which foreign language teaching is based, although first steps in this direction have been taken (De Knop & Gilquin 2016, Boas 2022). This may partly be due to the fact that, in some countries at least, in university teaching Construction Grammar is (at best) presented as a model of linguistics, but is not being used for actual language teaching or syntactic analysis.

It is absolutely essential that language students – and prospective foreign language teachers – should be introduced to the basic insights of cognitive linguistics and Construction Grammar and be shown in what ways this model is superior to previous approaches, especially traditional grammar. In this talk, we intend to outline the basic principles of a model of syntactic analysis which aims to do precisely that.

We will discuss

- the types of constructions we identify (declarative-'statement' cxn, past tense cxn, argument structure constructions, premodifier constructions, etc.),
- the format of presentation, in particular the formal, functional and semantic categories as well as collo-profiles that we are using, and outline
- how the various constructions that can be identified in an expression (the construct) can be represented in the form of a construction grid that shows the points of overlap between the constructions and indicates which elements of a construct belong to which construction.

Particular emphasis will be put on the question of how constructions combine, where we shall argue that the concept of blending (Fauconnier & Turner 2006) can be applied to syntactic theory.

Furthermore, we will show how the format of constructions that we propose for the syntactic analysis of sentences can be used (a) for an online CASA-ConstruCtiCon of English, and (b) in a textbook for students of English linguistics.

References

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De Knop, Sabine & Gaëtanelle Gilquin (eds). 2016. *Applied Construction Grammar*. Berlin & Boston: de Gruyter Mouton, 21-52.

Fauconnier, Gilles and Mark Turner. 2006. In Dirk Geeraerts (ed.), *Conceptual integration networks. Cognitive Linguistics: Basic Readings*, 303-371. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter. [revised version of 1998. Cognitive Science 22.2, 133-187].