

Widening the scope: Recent trends in constructional contact linguistics

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1. Introduction

Over the past decades, Construction Grammar (CxG) has gained a reputation for being able to integrate linguistic aspects that have traditionally been treated as lying on the fringe of the language system, i.e. far beyond the synchronic syntax-lexicon continuum that was the original focus of CxG, including, for example, diachronic change (e.g. Hilpert 2013; Traugott & Trousdale 2013; Barðdal et al. 2015), interactional perspectives (e.g. Brône & Zima 2014), and language acquisition (Diessel 2013). In more recent years, this has included a slow, but steadily increasing interest in language contact, and it has been argued that particularly usage-based constructionist approaches are better fitted to model multilingual phenomena than, for instance, most formalist grammatical theories. In particular, Diasystematic Construction Grammar (e.g. Höder 2018) provides a framework that has proven to be a useful tool for analyzing contact phenomena in a way that fits in both with usage-based CxG and current thinking in contact linguistics.

The development of the field has resulted in a small, but growing literature, which in addition to earlier publications (e.g. Höder 2012, 2014ab, Wasserscheidt 2014, Ziegeler 2015) includes the special issue of *Constructions and Frames* edited by Hilpert & Östman (2016), based on a workshop on *Constructions across Grammars* (Freiburg 2012), as well as Boas & Höder's (2018b) well-received volume on *Constructions in Contact* in the *Constructional Approaches to Language* series, based on contributions from the 2014 workshop on *Construction Grammar and Language Contact* at the *8th International Conference on Construction Grammar* (ICCG-8, Osnabrück 2014). A follow-up workshop on multilingual constructions was organized at ICCG-10 (Paris 2018). The papers from that workshop form the basis of the majority of contributions in the present volume.

While the first *Constructions in Contact* volume (Boas & Höder 2018b) concentrated on typical language contact situations involving Germanic languages, the present one widens the scope in mainly three respects. First, it includes contributions on a wider range of languages, including French, Spanish, Welsh, Malayalam, and American Sign Language as well as contact scenarios that involve typologically different languages. Second, it also addresses other types of scenarios that do not fall into the classic language contact category, such as multilingual practices and language acquisition as emerging multilingualism. Third, it aims to integrate constructionist views on language contact and multilingualism with other usage-based and cognitive approaches.

Thus, this volume also builds a bridge to other fields of research within (and outside) CxG. The most obvious of these fields is, of course, contact linguistics in general and research on contact-induced change from a historical perspective, for which CxG

provides a very suitable framework, a point made explicitly by both Boas & Höder (2018a) and Traugott (2019). This is closely connected with the field of historical linguistics, in particular in its constructionist form, Diachronic Construction Grammar (e.g. Barðdal et al. 2015, Van Goethem et al. 2018, Coussé, Andersson & Olofsson 2018, Zenner, Heylen & Van de Velde 2018, Sommerer & Smirnova 2020). However, the contributions in this volume also relate to research on additional language acquisition, including both constructionist approaches (e.g. Ellis 2013 and De Knop & Gilquin 2016) and other approaches. Finally, this volume also ties in with an increasing interest in more general cognitive approaches to language contact. Recent publications include Zenner, Backus & Winter-Froemel's (2019) *Cognitive Contact Linguistics*, which brings together a broad range of cognitive linguists interested in language contact phenomena, as well as a special issue of *Applied Linguistics Review* on *Usage-Based Contact Linguistics* (Quick & Verschik, eds.; in press), which focuses on different aspects of multilingual situations from a usage-based perspective.

2. The diasystematic approach in a nutshell

Several of the contributions to this volume refer to or apply Diasystematic Construction Grammar (DCxG, Höder 2012, 2018, 2019; see also Höder, Prentice & Tingsell, in this volume). This approach applies basic ideas of usage-based Construction Grammar, as represented by Goldberg (1995, 2006, 2019) or Croft (2001), to language contact situations. The starting point here is (a) the fact that all manifestations of language contact can ultimately be traced back to different forms of individual and collective multilingualism, and (b) the contact-linguistic insight that multilingual speakers do not strictly separate their languages in cognitive processing, but on the contrary select linguistic elements from a cross-linguistic repertoire in communication according to the given communicative setting (cf. Matras 2009: 208–209). 'Language', from this perspective, is a metalinguistic label rather than reflecting a cognitively realistic entity.

This translates into Construction Grammar terms as the claim that multilinguals organize all of their linguistic knowledge into a single multilingual construction. This construction includes not only constructions from different languages, but also constructions that are language-unspecific. While such constructions can sometimes be described as generalizations across pre-existing language-specific ones, this is not always the case, in particular with schematic constructions. For example, bilingual members of the Danish minority in Germany who speak both Danish and German as their L1 do not acquire two Verb-Initial Polar Question constructions but rather a single, language-unspecific one that can be used in either language, since Danish and German share this way of marking polar questions by introducing interrogative main clauses with finite verbs (Höder 2018: 48–51).

In DCxG, language-specificity is not a feature of the ‘language system’ or ‘grammar’ as such, but rather an optional property of individual constructions. More precisely, it is a pragmatic property and, hence, part of a construction’s meaning along with other pragmatic properties (cf. Cappelle 2017). This reflects the fact that multilinguals usually associate different languages with different communicative settings and that this association is typically conventionalized within multilingual communities (cf. Grosjean 2008: 22–34). As a consequence, grammar is community-specific (Höder 2018: 45–47): the way a language is represented constructionally in multilingual speakers’ minds can be quite different from the way it is reflected in the constructions of monolingual speakers.

While DCxG differs from more traditional approaches to language contact phenomena in a number of ways, the most important difference is this: With its focus on the multilingual construction, DCxG offers the possibility to analyse multilingual phenomena in an inherently multilingual way, rather than conceptualizing them in terms of interactions and potential conflicts between different languages. In particular, synchronic contact phenomena as well as contact-related language change can be modelled as processes that are located *within* the construction rather than *between* separate language systems. For example, a contact-induced innovation would, in a ‘linguocentric’ perspective, have to be analysed as a loan, a calque, an interference (or, to use Clyne’s [2003] broader terminology, a type of *transference*) from language A to language B. In a diasystematic view, such innovations are often the result of ‘pro-diasystematic change’, i.e. a mechanism that turns a language-specific construction into a language-unspecific one within the construction shared by a multilingual community. Instead of complexifying the grammar of language B, as a traditional approach would imply, this change instead marks a simplification of the community-specific multilingual grammar of A/B speakers.

At the same time, DCxG does not require any theoretical or formal machinery in addition to the key concepts and assumptions that are shared by usage-based constructionist approaches in general (cf. Goldberg 2013), although some specific formalization routines have been established such as the notation of language-specificity as <C_{glottonym}>. In particular, the way DCxG analyses arrive at language-unspecific constructions and other (sometimes untraditional) cross-linguistic generalizations does not rely on anything else beyond the usual types of domain-general cognitive mechanisms that are assumed to be at work in the constructional organization of linguistic knowledge. As a result, DCxG ties in with other usage-based constructionist approaches to, among other things, constructional change, constructional pragmatics, socially meaningful linguistic variation, and so forth.

3. Structure and chapters of the volume

This volume consists of four thematic sections, each focusing on different aspects of constructions in a multilingual environment. The chapters in the first section of this volume are concerned with *Constructions in multilingual practices*. Aileen Urban's chapter *Idioconstructions in conflict: Ad hoc generalization in multilingual speech processing* investigates the role of potentially conflicting information in constructs that cannot be considered as stereotypical multilingual practices in classical approaches, such as Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame model or Muysken's Code-Mixing Model.

Using corpus data from Norwegian and Swedish as heritage languages in the United States, Urban proposes a Diasystematic Construction Grammar (DCxG) approach. More specifically, she focuses on the differentiation between diaconstructions, i.e. language-unspecific elements that the involved languages have in common, and idioconstructions, i.e. language-specific elements that distinguish them. From this perspective, typical multilingual practices can be analyzed as constructs reflecting a combination of idioconstructions that carry conflicting pragmatic information. This leads Urban to propose that this conflict reflects spontaneous generalization, i.e. pragmatic bleaching, of the involved idioconstructions.

The second chapter in this section, by Samuel Bourgeois, is entitled "*Ok, qui d'autre na, nobody on the line right now?*" *A Diasystematic Construction Grammar approach to Discourse Markers in Bilingual Cajun Speech*. It investigates the distribution of discourse markers in bilingual speech. Bourgeois first reviews a number of different language contact studies analyzing the semantic and syntactic detachability of discourse markers, which make them easy targets for code-switching or borrowing. Some of these studies highlight the progressive adaptation of one DM system to that of another language, while others emphasize that superstrate DMs are utilized to strengthen discourse cohesion and coherence.

Bourgeois points out that even though past studies on multilingual DM usage have provided rich insights, open questions remain with regard to non-salient examples and the emergence of mixed code DMs. The main part of his chapter is based on data from a bilingual radio program, looking at the DM system of Cajun French (CF) and English speakers in southern Louisiana using a Diasystematic Construction Grammar (DCxG) approach. This approach analyses contact phenomena from a multilingual standpoint rather than looking at them in terms of conflict between two distinct language systems. Bourgeois presents an analysis that demonstrates that the DM systems of Cajun bilinguals are simultaneously active. Besides observing these DMs outside of their native languages, evidence of the congruence of the two systems is further supported by the documentation of mixed code DMs such as *na, yeah mais* and *mais yeah*.

The third chapter in this section, by Alexander Onysko, is titled *Cognitive models of language contact: An integrated perspective of Diasystematic Construction Grammar and Cognitive Language Contact Phenotypes* and provides an in-depth overview of how cognitive models of language contact have taken shape since Weinreich's (1953)

groundbreaking publication of *Languages in Contact*. Onysko sets the stage by discussing Weinreich's work, which not only boosted research into observable manifestations of language contact in speech and texts, but also laid the foundations for another discipline: the study of bi- and multilingualism. The chapter then shows that even though both domains of research are closely related, they developed into separate branches in linguistics not at least due to their diverse foci on describing contact phenomena between languages on the one hand and on investigating multilingual speech on the other. Consequently, the latter has inspired substantial psycho- and neuro-linguistic research while theory-building in language contact has been characterized by descriptive models and typologies of contact phenomena.

Based on this discussion, Onysko focuses on more recent developments in research on language contact, specifically those strands concerned with language contact in Cognitive Linguistics in general (cf. Backus 2014 and contributions in Zenner, Backus & Winter-Froemel 2019) and in Construction Grammar in particular (Höder 2012, 2014a/b, 2018 and contributions in Boas & Höder 2018b). The author argues that these recent trends have given rise to new developments in language contact theory that aim for explaining language contact processes in cognitive terms. The remainder of Onysko's chapter focuses on enhancing cognitive linguistic approaches to language contact theory by synthesizing Diasystematic Construction Grammar (see Höder 2018) with the cognitive typology of language contact phenomena proposed in Onysko (2019). Finally, Onysko discusses other relevant models that address cognitive aspects of language contact (e.g. Muysken 2013, Filipović & Hawkins 2019) in order to further develop cognitive theories of language contact.

The volume's second section, *Constructional Change in Language Contact*, begins with Bertus Van Rooy's chapter *A Diasystematic Construction Grammar analysis of language change in the Afrikaans and English finite verb complement clause construction*. Van Rooy investigates a case of language contact between Afrikaans and English where Afrikaans first adopts a new formal variant of an existing construction, the verb complement clause without an overt complementizer. This development raises the question of the semantic functions associated with the two variants of the construction – with and without the complementizer. Thus, both formal and possible semantic change (Boas & Höder 2018a) are in evidence in the case of the complement clause without overt complementizer. This is in contrast to the case investigated by Coleman (2018), where the formal options had been inherited from the Dutch ancestor and established in Afrikaans prior to contact with English, and the change is in the range of uses of the construction.

Van Rooy argues that contact seems to function as one factor in this development, alongside the internal properties of the existing construction and their relationships with other constructions, such as indirect and direct speech in the case of Afrikaans. According to Van Rooy, this finding supports the emerging view in Diasystematic Construction

Grammar that contact should be seen as a normal part of constructional change, and not as some force of an entirely different kind. Due to interlingual identification of the forms and broad functions of verb complement constructions, made by speakers of Afrikaans, they gradually develop a diaconstruction which over time becomes more and more similar to English, a case of prodiasystematic change, as proposed by Höder (2018).

Evelyn Wiesinger's chapter *The Spanish verb-particle construction [V para atrás]: disentangling constructional contact and change* focuses on a specific construction in Spanish contact and non-contact varieties under a synchronic and qualitative corpus-based perspective. Framed within a cognitive, usage-based constructional framework, Wiesinger's chapter goes beyond the focus of many constructional analyses investigating primarily schematic argument structure constructions by offering an in-depth analysis of a specific type of "intermediate construction" at the crossroads of syntax and semantics. Wiesinger shows that [V *para atrás*] can be considered a partially lexically filled construction with an open slot for the verb, situated at an intermediate level of schematicity, in contact *and* non-contact varieties of Spanish.

More specifically, she provides a fine-grained analysis of form and meaning of [V *para atrás*] in (non-contact) European and Mexican Spanish, as well as in US Spanish as spoken in Spanish-English bilingual communities. This variational and comparative approach is in so far promising since a first pilot study on European and US Spanish has suggested an important extension of the semantic and combinatorial properties of [V *para atrás*] in the latter variety (see Wiesinger 2019). Comparing the differences between [V *para atrás*] in European, Mexican and US Spanish with the properties of the VPC [V *back*] in American English is an ideal test bed for discussing whether they can be accounted for by language-internal constructional change (cf. Traugott & Trousdale 2013) or by interlingual constructional contact that are not necessarily easy to distinguish (see Coleman 2016 for a recent discussion).

The third section of this volume, entitled *Language contact between typologically different languages*, begins with Savithry Namboodiripad's chapter *Non-Dravidian elements and (non)diasystematic change in Malayalam*. Namboodiripad deals with non-Dravidian sounds and words in Malayalam, a Dravidian language with considerable influence from Sanskrit and English, as spoken in Kerala, India. She shows that both Sanskrit- and English-origin words are highly frequent and appear across a variety of semantic domains in Malayalam. Analogous to Latinate and Germanic morpho-phonological sub-patterns in English, Sanskrit and English words in Malayalam have phonological patterns which are not found in Dravidian-origin words, such as hetero-organic clusters, certain codas, and voiced aspirated stops.

The core of Namboodiripad's analysis is couched in the framework of Diasystematic Construction Grammar, which captures the fact that the borders between languages are often blurred. This approach allows for a systematic distinction between diaconstructions, which are language non-specific, and idioconstructions, which are

language-specific. Namboodiripad bases her analysis on data collected online (via WhatsApp) in popular culture and from linguistic fieldwork. She shows how DCxG provides an ideal framework for analyzing high-contact languages while also capturing smaller-scale contact effects. Crucially for those studying language contact this does away with a need for a fundamental distinction between high- and low-contact languages (e.g., Faraclas & Klein 2009, Mufwene 2000).

In *Making one's way in Welsh: Language contact and constructional change*, Kevin J. Rottet investigates how the English *way*-construction has been borrowed into Welsh, resulting in the Welsh counterpart *ffordd*-construction. The first part of Rottet's chapter reviews the properties of the English *way*-construction (Goldberg 1995, Israel 1996). Then, Rottet reviews some cross-linguistic equivalents of the *way*-constructions, showing that it does not have an exact equivalent in other languages.

The main part of Rottet's chapter is concerned with showing how the *ffordd*-construction makes use of the Welsh word *ffordd* 'way' (it can also mean 'road' in other contexts), preceded by a possessive that is coreferential with the subject. Just like the English *way*-construction, it can coerce a non-motion verb into a verb of motion when it is used in this construction. Given the close match between the two constructions, the relative chronology of their appearance, and the known history of intense contact between the two languages, Rottet argues that the Welsh *ffordd*-construction arose due to contact with English. More specifically, he proposes that the sharing of this construction between the two languages is an extension from the interlingual identification of the English word *way* and its usual Welsh translation equivalent, *ffordd*. Rottet formulates his insights through the lens of Diasystematic Construction Grammar, which models the mental representations that bilingual speakers have and specifies that some constructions are shared by both languages, or stored mentally without a language label attached to them and thus usable in either language.

The third chapter in this section, *From letters to families: Initialized signs in American Sign Language*, by Ryan Lepic investigates contact between American Sign Language (ASL) and English, more specifically borrowing from English into ASL. Lepic first reviews previous work on ASL-English contact describing the workings of the ASL fingerspelling system, in which the letters of English words are represented as sequences of ASL handshapes. Lepic's study addresses a related outcome of ASL-English language contact, analyzing a database of initialized signs collected from an ASL dictionary. Initialized signs are formed with handshapes that correspond to English letters, and signs can be considered initialized when the handshape used to form the sign matches the initial letter of the sign's English translation. An example is the initialized sign LANGUAGE, which is formed with "L handshapes" from fingerspelling.

The central part of Lepic's chapter is concerned with the database study, looking at ASL handshapes that are classified into those which are primarily used for initialization, such as the R handshape, and those which are rarely used for initialization, such as the

X handshape. Lepic also analyzes initialized signs, which result from metonymic relations between English words and ASL signs, such that initialized signs forge kind-of and whole-part relationships with existing ASL signs. An example is the initialized sign BIOLOGY, which derives from ASL SCIENCE, reflecting that 'biology is a kind of science'.

These facts about the use of particular handshapes for initialization, and the semantic relationships at work in initialization, are analyzed in the theory of (Diasystematic) Construction Grammar. Lepic shows that under this approach, patterns of meaning and form that are shared among related ASL signs, as well as between ASL signs and English words, are represented as abstracted constructional schemas. These constructional schemas account for both the properties that are shared among existing ASL signs, as well as explain more productive instances of initialization (and de-initialization) in ASL.

The fourth section of this volume consists of chapters dealing with multilingual constructions in language acquisition. The first chapter in this section, *Additional language acquisition as emerging multilingualism. A Construction Grammar approach*, is by Steffen Höder, Julia Prentice and Sofia Tingsell. Based on earlier constructionist and non-constructionist work (e.g. Höder 2018, Schmid 2015/2017, Ellis 2013, Selinker 1972), the authors develop a usage-based constructionist model of additional language (AL) acquisition within the framework of Diasystematic Construction Grammar, based on a purely cognitive definition of constructions as learned form-function pairings, thus disregarding the conventional aspects that are essential in other contexts.

They argue that since multilingual speakers, from a diasystematic point of view, are supposed to store and process constructions from all their languages within one single constructicon that consists of both language-specific and language-unspecific constructions, language learners – as emerging multilinguals – also organize their constructions into the pre-existing constructicon. However, this not only entails the gradual entrenchment of new, AL-specific constructions, but also the modification of pre-existing ones as well as a way that constructions are linked in the constructional network. As a consequence, the authors propose a formalism that analyses the acquisition of constructions in terms of adding and removing properties at the level of constructions, interconstructional links, and constructional properties, resulting in different kinds of reorganizational sequences. While their approach is primarily constructionist in its theoretical focus, Höder, Prentice and Tingsell emphasize that it also fits well into other recent approaches to AL acquisition that as a result of the 'multilingual turn' of the field, stress the creative and dynamic nature of language learning as well as the necessity to avoid a 'monolingual bias'.

Daniel Jach's chapter, entitled *Something I was dealing with: Preposition placement in multilingual constructicons*, analyzes the well-known word order variation between fronting (e.g., *something with which I was dealing*) and stranding (e.g., *something which I was dealing with*) in English as a second language. Jach bases his

investigation on a sample of relative clauses from native and nonnative English corpora, which he subjects to a binary mixed-effects regression analysis. This analysis correlates preposition placement with a range of predictor variables, including proficiency, native language, the usage frequency of specific prepositions, and lexical strings (e.g., *about which*, *talk about*), and the meaning of the relative clause filler.

Adopting a usage-based CxG approach, Jach discusses the results and proposes that language learners acquire a network of form-meaning constructions which represent the distribution of fronting and stranding in their language use at multiple levels of schematicity, ranging from lexically specific prototypes to cross-linguistically shared representations. Moreover, effects of proficiency and lexical strings indicate that constructions remain adaptable to usage throughout learners' lifetime and involve sequential, predictive knowledge, suggesting a dynamic view of constructions.

Van Goethem and Hendriks's chapter, *Intensifying constructions in second language acquisition: A diasystematic-constructionist approach*, investigates the acquisition of Dutch intensifying constructions by French-speaking learners in Belgium. After discussing how multilingualism is modeled in Diasystematic Construction Grammar, the authors review different constellations of multilingualism in Belgium and discuss the learning of Dutch intensifying constructions by speakers of French. According to Van Goethem and Hendriks, intensification can be expressed cross-linguistically by several morphological and syntactic constructions. The authors focus on adjectival intensification and show that French and Dutch share a wide range of intensifying constructions, but at the same time display certain language-specific patterns.

Based on the (formal and semantic) cross-linguistic similarities and differences and on the expected beneficial effect of CLIL input on second language acquisition, Van Goethem and Hendriks formulate the hypothesis that the CLIL learners' L2 use of Dutch will integrate more (formal and semantic) features typical of L1 Dutch intensification. Their research takes a Diasystematic Constructionist approach (DCxG) (Höder 2012, 2014a, 2014b, 2018), which conceptualizes the linguistic competence of multilingual speakers as an "interlingual network of constructions with different degrees of schematicity" (Höder 2012: 255). Within this framework, Van Goethem and Hendriks analyze the acquisition of intensifying constructions at three different levels of schematicity.

The results of their study indicate that, despite cross-linguistic differences between particular native- and target-language intensifying constructions, additional input (through CLIL) favors the formation of diasystematic links, since the CLIL students use intensifying constructions overall in a more target-like manner, compared to their non-CLIL peers. Moreover, the results allow Van Goethem and Hendriks to unveil specific re-organizational processes that occur in the diasystem of French-speaking learners of Dutch, such as the (over)generalization of particular schematic patterns and the inaccurate tagging of specific intensifiers.

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