What's in the constructicon? Relating constructional forms and constructional meanings on the full range of the lexicon-grammar continuum

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Keywords: constructicography, frames, conceptual metaphors, grammatical constructions, lexical units, lexicon-grammar continuum

In the last decade several constructicon projects emerged, jointly motivated by the aim to build a digital resource for grammatical constructions, i.e., form-meaning pairings on various levels of abstraction and schematicity, specific for their respective target language (for an overview cf. Lyngfelt et al. 2018). By doing so, each project had to decide on a vast range of issues, including theoretical, methodological and technical ones. One issue relates to coverage: Which linguistic items should be addressed and integrated in the constructicon? How to relate these items? And what does it take to implement both the items and the relations among them in a user-friendly repository? Each constructicon project provides specific answers to these pressing questions, mostly also motivated by practical considerations, for instance regarding the expected workload in relation to affordability. While, for example, the Berkeley FrameNet Constructicon – the pilot project which is currently not being continued – includes a sample of about seventy constructions ranging from constructional idioms to abstract argument structure constructions, the Russian Constructicon focuses on a large-scale basis on semi-schematic constructions (cf. Janda et al. 2020). Neither covers lexical constructions, including valency constructions; however, such constructions located toward the lexicon pole of the lexicon-grammar continuum are included in the Brazilian Portuguese FrameNet (cf. Torrent et al. 2018) and in the German Constructicon (cf. www.german-constructicon.de).

This talk discusses advantages and challenges of including the full range of constructions of various schematicity, idiomaticity and syntagmatic complexity along with the semantic frames evoked by them in the German FrameNet Constructicon. The focus is on four constructicographic issues: (1) Following Goldberg's "constructions-all-the-way-down" maxim (Goldberg 2006: 18), to what extent do lexical and grammatical construction entries overlap and differ, and how can we account for this in constructicographic routines? (2) What is needed to include fixed multiword units as well as constructional idioms along with productive and highly schematic grammatic constructions in a constructicon? (3) How can conceptual metaphors – which themselves form complex meaning-bearing units– be captured both methodologically and empirically? (4) And is there a place for conceptual structures not encoded by linguistic forms, such as some image schemata, in the constructicon? The talk concludes by outlining the tripartite structure of the German FrameNet Constructicon that has been designed to address these challenges.

References

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