

constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure

****Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure****

constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure opens a fascinating window into how language operates beyond traditional grammatical rules. Instead of viewing syntax and semantics as separate, construction grammar treats them as intertwined within constructions—form-meaning pairings that shape how arguments (subjects, objects, complements) interact within sentences. This perspective offers a refreshing, more flexible understanding of argument structure, crucial for linguists, language learners, and anyone curious about how meaning and form come together in natural language.

Understanding Constructions and Argument Structure

At its core, construction grammar challenges the idea that sentences are merely built from fixed syntactic templates or abstract rules. Instead, it posits that constructions themselves carry meaning and dictate how arguments are structured. A construction is a conventionalized pairing of form and meaning that can range from simple words to complex syntactic patterns.

Argument structure refers to how verbs and other predicates determine the number and type of participants (arguments) in a sentence. For example, the verb “give” typically involves three arguments: the giver, the recipient, and the item given. Traditional grammar often treats argument structure as part of verb subcategorization, but construction grammar suggests that constructions themselves—beyond the verb—shape and sometimes override these expectations.

Why Construction Grammar Matters for Argument Structure

Traditional generative grammar often treats argument structure as a property of verbs, relying on lexical entries that specify which arguments a verb takes and their syntactic positions. However, this approach struggles with idiomatic expressions, semi-productive patterns, and irregular argument structures that don’t fit neatly into rule-based systems.

Construction grammar approaches this challenge by emphasizing the role of constructions in shaping argument realization. For example, the English ditransitive construction (“Subject + Verb + Indirect Object + Direct

Object”) is a construction that allows certain verbs to take two objects, but this pattern can also extend to verbs that don’t inherently have a ditransitive argument structure. Similarly, causative constructions (“Subject + Cause + Object + Verb”) can impose argument structures on verbs that don’t encode causation lexically.

This perspective highlights that argument structure is not just a lexical property but also a constructional phenomenon, arising from the interaction between verb meaning and constructional patterns.

Key Concepts in Construction Grammar Related to Argument Structure

To appreciate constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure, it’s important to understand some foundational concepts:

Form-Meaning Pairings

Constructions are essentially pairings of form (syntactic pattern) and meaning (semantic or pragmatic content). For example, the passive construction (“The ball was kicked by John”) pairs a particular syntactic form with a meaning that shifts focus from the agent to the patient.

Productivity and Creativity

Constructions can be highly productive, allowing speakers to generate new sentences using familiar patterns, but they can also be idiomatic or semi-productive. This dual nature helps explain why argument structures sometimes defy strict lexical rules but still feel natural to native speakers.

Constructional Inheritance

Constructions can inherit properties from more general constructions. For example, a particular ditransitive construction might inherit argument structure properties from a general transitive construction but add its own semantic nuances.

Examples of Constructions Influencing Argument

Structure

Let's explore some classic constructions that illustrate how argument structure is shaped by construction grammar principles:

The Ditransitive Construction

In English, the ditransitive construction allows a verb to take two objects, such as in "She gave him a book." Here, the construction itself licenses two arguments (recipient and theme), even if the verb "give" is the prototypical ditransitive verb. Interestingly, other verbs can appear in this construction with nuanced meanings, e.g., "She baked him a cake," where "bake" is not inherently ditransitive but gains this argument structure through the construction.

Caused-Motion Constructions

Consider sentences like "She sneezed the napkin off the table." The verb "sneeze" typically does not have a causative argument structure; however, the caused-motion construction licenses a causative reading with an additional argument (the napkin). This illustrates how constructions can extend or alter argument structures beyond what verbs lexically encode.

Locative Constructions

In sentences like "She put the book on the table," the locative construction pairs a verb with arguments specifying location. Even verbs not inherently indicating location can participate, showing how the construction influences argument structure by introducing locative participants.

Implications for Linguistic Theory and Language Learning

The construction grammar approach to argument structure offers several valuable insights:

Flexibility in Language Use

By recognizing constructions as key to argument structure, linguists acknowledge the flexibility and creativity inherent in language. Speakers can

manipulate constructions to convey nuanced meanings, combine arguments in novel ways, and adapt meaning in context.

Better Modeling of Idioms and Fixed Expressions

Many idiomatic phrases have argument structures that defy traditional verb-centric rules. Construction grammar accounts for these by treating the idiom as a construction with its own argument structure, enhancing our understanding of fixed expressions.

Practical Applications in Language Acquisition

For language learners, understanding constructions helps decode how arguments are structured beyond memorizing verb valencies. Recognizing common constructions enables learners to form new sentences naturally and grasp subtle shifts in meaning.

Challenges and Ongoing Research

While construction grammar provides powerful tools for analyzing argument structure, it also presents challenges. One is the sheer complexity and variety of constructions across languages, which requires extensive empirical research and detailed description. Additionally, computational modeling of constructions and argument structures is an ongoing area of development, aiming to enhance natural language processing systems.

Researchers continue to explore how constructions interact with lexical semantics, pragmatics, and discourse context to shape argument realization. Cross-linguistic studies are particularly valuable, as different languages employ constructions differently to encode argument relations.

Integration with Other Linguistic Models

There is growing interest in integrating construction grammar with cognitive linguistics and usage-based models. Such integration highlights how frequency, entrenchment, and cognitive processes influence the acquisition and use of argument structure constructions.

Tips for Applying Construction Grammar Insights

to Language Study

If you're fascinated by constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure and want to apply this knowledge practically, consider the following tips:

- **Learn Constructions as Units:** Instead of focusing solely on individual words or verbs, study common constructions and their argument patterns.
- **Pay Attention to Context:** Constructions often carry pragmatic meanings that shift depending on discourse context. Observe how argument roles change in different situations.
- **Explore Cross-Linguistic Examples:** Comparing how different languages use constructions can deepen your understanding of argument structure flexibility.
- **Practice Producing New Sentences:** Use known constructions creatively to experiment with argument structures and meanings.

Exploring constructions through this lens enriches your grasp of language as a dynamic, meaning-driven system rather than a fixed set of rules.

Delving into constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure reveals how language functions as a network of meaningful patterns that govern how participants in events are expressed. This approach underscores the inseparability of form and meaning, offering nuanced insights into syntax, semantics, and language use that continue to inspire linguistic research and language learning alike.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main focus of 'Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure'?

'Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure' primarily focuses on analyzing how constructions—form-meaning pairings—contribute to the understanding and representation of argument structure in language, emphasizing the role of constructions beyond lexical items.

How does the construction grammar approach differ from traditional syntactic theories in explaining argument structure?

Unlike traditional syntactic theories that often rely on fixed argument frames tied to verbs, the construction grammar approach views argument structure as emerging from constructions themselves, which are learned pairings of form and meaning that can flexibly encode various argument patterns.

What role do constructions play in shaping argument structure according to construction grammar?

In construction grammar, constructions are the primary units that determine argument structure; they specify the number and type of arguments, their semantic roles, and their syntactic realization, thereby shaping how meaning is mapped onto syntactic patterns.

Can you give an example of how a specific construction influences argument structure in this approach?

An example is the ditransitive construction (e.g., 'She gave him a book'), which inherently encodes a three-argument structure—agent, recipient, and theme—regardless of the lexical verb used, illustrating how the construction itself contributes to argument realization.

Why is the construction grammar approach important for understanding language processing and acquisition?

Because it treats constructions as learned pairings of form and meaning that encode argument structure, this approach aligns well with cognitive models of language acquisition and processing, explaining how speakers generalize patterns and understand novel utterances based on familiar constructions.

Additional Resources

Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure

constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure represents a pivotal shift in linguistic theory, emphasizing the integral role of constructions in shaping meaning and syntactic relationships. Unlike traditional generative grammar frameworks that often treat syntax and semantics as separate modules, construction grammar (CxG) posits that knowledge of language consists of a collection of form-meaning

pairings—constructions—that inherently encode argument structure. This article delves into the nuances of this approach, exploring how constructions redefine our understanding of argument structure, the implications for linguistic theory, and the broader impact on language acquisition and computational linguistics.

The Foundations of Construction Grammar

Construction grammar emerged as a response to limitations in earlier syntactic theories, particularly those grounded in Chomskyan generative grammar. While generative grammar typically assumes an abstract, rule-based system for combining words into phrases and sentences, construction grammar argues that many linguistic patterns are better understood as learned pairings of form and meaning stored as holistic units. These "constructions" range from simple morphemes to complex syntactic patterns, each carrying semantic or pragmatic content.

The approach highlights that argument structure—the way verbs and predicates select and organize their participants—is not solely determined by lexical entries but is also shaped by constructions themselves. For example, the ditransitive construction ("She gave him a book") carries a specific meaning and argument configuration that cannot be entirely reduced to the verb "give" alone.

Argument Structure in the Construction Grammar Paradigm

Traditional views in syntax often anchor argument structure in the lexical properties of verbs. Verbs like "give," "eat," or "sleep" are associated with fixed argument structures: "give" typically requires a subject, direct object, and indirect object. However, construction grammar challenges this lexicalist bias by suggesting that constructions contribute crucially to argument realization.

In this framework, a construction such as the caused-motion construction ("She sneezed the napkin off the table") can assign semantic roles and influence argument structure independently of the verb's lexical meaning. This illustrates that constructions provide schematic templates that specify how many arguments a predicate requires and what roles those arguments play.

Key Features of Constructions Affecting Argument Structure

- **Form-Meaning Pairing:** Each construction encodes both syntactic patterns and associated semantic roles, inherently linking form to function.
- **Flexibility:** Constructions can accommodate a wide range of verbs and predicates, sometimes overriding or modifying expected argument structures.
- **Hierarchy and Inheritance:** Construction grammar allows for hierarchical organization, where more general constructions inherit properties to more specific ones, facilitating efficient representation of argument patterns.
- **Idiomatic and Non-Compositional Meanings:** Some constructions carry meanings that cannot be predicted from their parts, impacting argument structure in ways that challenge compositional semantics.

Comparing Construction Grammar to Generative Approaches

Generative grammar and construction grammar both aim to explain how language users understand and produce sentences, but they diverge significantly in their treatment of argument structure.

Generative Grammar's Lexicalist Approach

In generative grammar, argument structure is primarily encoded in the lexicon. Verbs come with argument structure templates, and syntactic rules combine these with phrase structure rules. This approach has strengths in formal rigor and computational modeling but struggles with idiomatic expressions and flexible argument realizations.

Construction Grammar's Holistic Perspective

Construction grammar incorporates argument structure within constructions—units that encompass both syntax and semantics. This holistic approach accounts for phenomena such as idiomatic expressions, verb alternations, and non-canonical argument patterns more naturally.

For example, the causative-inchoative alternation ("The chef broke the vase" vs. "The vase broke") is explained not merely by verb properties but also by constructions that allow argument reorganization. Construction grammar models these alternations through distinct constructions with their own argument structures rather than derivational rules.

Applications and Implications of Construction Grammar in Argument Structure Analysis

Language Acquisition

Research in child language acquisition highlights that learners grasp constructions as meaningful units early on. Children often produce utterances reflecting construction-based argument patterns before fully mastering verb-specific argument structures. This suggests that constructions serve as cognitive scaffolds for learning argument structure, supporting the construction grammar hypothesis.

Cross-Linguistic Variation

Construction grammar offers tools to analyze argument structure variation across languages. Because constructions are language-specific, the diversity in argument realization—such as ergative constructions, applicatives, or serial verb constructions—can be modeled as unique constructions rather than exceptions to universal syntactic rules.

Computational Linguistics and NLP

In computational linguistics, leveraging construction grammar's insights can enhance natural language understanding and generation systems. By representing argument structures through constructions, systems can better handle idiomatic expressions, argument alternations, and non-standard syntactic patterns, leading to more accurate parsing and semantic interpretation.

Challenges and Critiques

While construction grammar provides a compelling framework, it is not without challenges. Critics argue that the breadth of constructions can lead to overgeneration and insufficiently constrained grammars. Moreover, the lack of a formalized, universally agreed-upon framework complicates computational implementation. Balancing the descriptive richness of constructions with formal precision remains an ongoing endeavor.

Pros of the Construction Grammar Approach

- Accounts for idiomatic and non-compositional argument structures naturally.
- Integrates syntax and semantics seamlessly, reflecting actual language use.
- Explains argument structure flexibility and alternations across languages.

Cons of the Construction Grammar Approach

- Potentially large and unwieldy inventory of constructions.
- Challenges in formalizing constructions for computational purposes.
- Less predictive power compared to rule-based syntactic theories in some contexts.

Future Directions in Construction Grammar Research

The study of constructions as fundamental units for argument structure continues to evolve. Integrating psycholinguistic data, expanding cross-linguistic databases, and developing computational models are current frontiers. Hybrid approaches that combine construction grammar insights with formal syntactic frameworks may offer balanced solutions, leveraging the strengths of both paradigms.

In an era where language technology and cognitive science intersect, the construction grammar approach to argument structure promises to deepen our understanding of how humans encode and process complex relational meanings within language. As research progresses, the interplay between constructions and argument structure will likely remain a fertile ground for linguistic innovation and practical application.

Constructions A Construction Grammar Approach To Argument Structure

constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure: Constructions

Adele E. Goldberg, 1995-03-15 Drawing on work in linguistics, language acquisition, and computer science, Adele E. Goldberg proposes that grammatical constructions play a central role in the relation between the form and meaning of simple sentences. She demonstrates that the syntactic patterns associated with simple sentences are imbued with meaning—that the constructions themselves carry meaning independently of the words in a sentence. Goldberg provides a comprehensive account of the relation between verbs and constructions, offering ways to relate verb and constructional meaning, and to capture relations among constructions and generalizations over constructions. Prototypes, frame semantics, and metaphor are shown to play crucial roles. In addition, Goldberg presents specific analyses of several constructions, including the ditransitive and the resultative constructions, revealing systematic semantic generalizations. Through a comparison with other current approaches to argument structure phenomena, this book narrows the gap between generative and cognitive theories of language.

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constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure: Constructions

at Work Adele Goldberg, 2005-12-23 This book investigates the nature of generalization in language and examines how language is known by adults and acquired by children. It looks at how and why constructions are learned, the relation between their forms and functions, and how cross-linguistic and language-internal generalizations about them can be explained. *Constructions at Work* is divided into three parts: in the first Professor Goldberg provides an overview of constructionist approaches, including the constructionist approach to argument structure, and argues for a usage-based model of grammar. In Part II she addresses issues concerning how generalizations are constrained and constructional generalizations are learned. In Part III the author shows that a combination of function and processing accounts for a wide range of language-internal and cross-linguistic generalizations. She then considers the degree to which the function of constructions explains their distribution and examines cross-linguistic tendencies in argument realization. She demonstrates that pragmatic and cognitive processes account for the data without appeal to stipulations that are language-specific. This book is an important contribution to the study of how language operates in the mind and in the world and how these operations relate. It is of central interest for scholars and graduate-level students in all branches of theoretical linguistics and psycholinguistics. It will also appeal to cognitive scientists and philosophers concerned with language and its acquisition.

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Structure in Usage-Based Construction Grammar Florent Perek, 2015-04-15 The argument structure of verbs, defined as the part of grammar that deals with how participants in verbal events are

expressed in clauses, is a classical topic in linguistics that has received considerable attention in the literature. This book investigates argument structure in English from a usage-based perspective, taking the view that the cognitive representation of grammar is shaped by language use, and that crucial aspects of grammatical organization are tied to the frequency with which words and syntactic constructions are used. On the basis of several case studies combining quantitative corpus studies and psycholinguistic experiments, it is shown how a usage-based approach sheds new light on a number of issues in argument realization and offers frequency-based explanations for its organizing principles at three levels of generality: verbs, constructions, and argument structure alternations.

constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure: *Construction Grammars* Jan-Ola Östman, Mirjam Fried, 2005-01-01 Addressing a number of issues (such as coercion, discourse patterning, language change), the contributions show how CxG must be part and parcel of cognitively oriented studies of language, including language universals.--Jacket.

constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure: Construction Grammar in Second Language Teaching Sebastian Flock, 2016-12-12 Studienarbeit aus dem Jahr 2016 im Fachbereich Anglistik - Linguistik, Note: 1,3, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena (Institut für Anglistik/Amerikanistik), Veranstaltung: Cognitive Linguistics: Construction Grammar, Sprache: Deutsch, Abstract: For more than 20 years now, the concept of constructions has been playing a more and more important role in theories of language acquisition and language use. In the 1980s Fillmore, Kay and O'Conner were the first linguists interested in constructionist approaches; and with her two books *Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure* and *Construction at Work: The Nature of Generalization in Language* Goldberg eventually paved the way for this alternative view on grammar. By now, Construction Grammar has become a wellaccepted descriptive and processing model that is based on a substantial body of scientific publications. However, the big interest of Construction Grammar research in first language acquisition and native speakers' language use contrasts the little interest in the branch of second language acquisition. It is only recently that linguists have approached the question whether second language learners' linguistic competence relies on constructions as well. Hence, it is no surprise that there has been only little interest in application of Construction Grammar in second language teaching as well. In my opinion, this is a wasted opportunity. If Construction Grammar is widely accepted in the field of first language acquisition, it is also necessary to transfer this concept to second language acquisition and teaching in order to create suitable teaching materials and methods. Thus, this paper is supposed to advocate an applied Construction Grammar in second language teaching.

constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure: Grammatical Constructions Masayoshi Shibatani, Sandra A. Thompson, 1999 In this collection a cast of distinguished contributors responds to and elaborates Charles Fillmore's and Paul Kay's *Construction Grammar*. In contrast to the modular Chomskyan approach which treats grammatical constructions as epiphenomena, Construction Grammar works on the premise that constructions function as units of grammar in a way similar to words, and that their properties derive from complex interplays between lexicon, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

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constructions, which are defined as symbolic

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constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure: Applied Construction Grammar Sabine De Knop, Gaëtanelle Gilquin, 2016-04-25 Current research within the framework of Construction Grammar (CxG) has mainly adopted a theoretical or descriptive approach, neglecting the more applied perspective and especially the question of how language acquisition and pedagogy can benefit from a CxG-based approach. The present volume explores various aspects of "Applied Construction Grammar" through a collection of studies that apply CxG and CxG-inspired approaches to relevant issues in L2 acquisition and teaching. Relying on empirical data and covering a wide range of constructions and languages, the chapters show how the cross-fertilization of CxG and L2 acquisition/teaching can improve the description of learners' use of constructions, provide theoretical insights into the processes underlying their acquisition (e.g. with reference to inheritance links or transfer from the L1), or lead to novel teaching practices and resources aimed to help learners make the generalizations that native speakers make naturally from the input they receive.

constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure: Moral Infringement and Repair in Antiquity Rikard Roitto, 2022-06-29 Moral Infringement and Repair in Antiquity, is a series of publications related to a project on Dynamics of Moral Repair in Antiquity, run by Thomas Kazen and Rikard Roitto between 2017 and 2021, and funded by the Swedish Research Council. The volumes contain stand-alone articles and serve as supplements to the main outcome of the project, the volume Interpersonal Infringement and Moral Repair: Revenge, Compensation and Forgiveness in the Ancient World, forthcoming on Mohr Siebeck in 2023. Supplement 3: Forgiveness, contains four articles and chapters by Rikard Roitto, republished in accordance with the publishers' general conditions for author reuse, or by special permission. 1. The Polyvalence of *aphiemi* and the Two Cognitive Frames of Forgiveness in the Synoptic Gospels 2. Forgiveness, Ritual and Social Identity in Matthew: Obliging Forgiveness 3. Practices of Confession, Intercession and Forgiveness in 1 John 1.9; 5.16 4. Forgiveness of the Sinless: A Classic Contradiction in 1 John in the Light of Contemporary Forgiveness Research

constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure: Handbook of Japanese Syntax Masayoshi Shibatani, Shigeru Miyagawa, Hisashi Noda, 2017-10-23 Studies of Japanese syntax have played a central role in the long history of Japanese linguistics spanning more than 250 years in Japan and abroad. More recently, Japanese has been among the languages most intensely studied within modern linguistic theories such as Generative Grammar and Cognitive/Functional Linguistics over the past fifty years. This volume presents a comprehensive survey of Japanese syntax from these three research strands, namely studies based on the traditional research methods developed in Japan, those from broader functional perspectives, and those couched in the generative linguistics framework. The twenty-four studies contained in this volume

are characterized by a detailed analysis of a grammatical phenomenon with broader implications to general linguistics, making the volume attractive to both specialists of Japanese and those interested in learning about the impact of Japanese syntax to the general study of language. Each chapter is authored by a leading authority on the topic. Broad issues covered include sentence types (declarative, imperative, etc.) and their interactions with grammatical verbal categories (modality, polarity, politeness, etc.), grammatical relations (topic, subject, etc.), transitivity, nominalizations, grammaticalization, word order (subject, scrambling, numeral quantifier, configurationality), case marking (ga/no conversion, morphology and syntax), modification (adjectives, relative clause), and structure and interpretation (modality, negation, prosody, ellipsis). Chapter titles Introduction Chapter 1. Basic structures of sentences and grammatical categories, Yoshio Nitta, Kansai University of Foreign Studies Chapter 2: Transitivity, Wesley Jacobsen, Harvard University Chapter 3: Topic and subject, Takashi Masuoka, Kobe City University of Foreign Studies Chapter 4: Toritate: Focusing and defocusing of words, phrases, and clauses, Hisashi Noda, National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics Chapter 5: The layered structure of the sentence, Isao Iori, Hitotsubashi University Chapter 6. Functional syntax, Ken-Ichi Takami, Gakushuin University; and Susumu Kuno, Harvard University Chapter 7: Locative alternation, Seizi Iwata, Osaka City University Chapter 8: Nominalizations, Masayoshi Shibatani, Rice University Chapter 9: The morphosyntax of grammaticalization, Heiko Narrog, Tohoku University Chapter 10: Modality, Nobuko Hasegawa, Kanda University of International Studies Chapter 11: The passive voice, Tomoko Ishizuka, Tama University Chapter 12: Case marking, Hideki Kishimoto, Kobe University Chapter 13: Interfacing syntax with sounds and meanings, Yoshihisa Kitagawa, Indiana University Chapter 14: Subject, Masatoshi Koizumi, Tohoku University Chapter 15: Numeral quantifiers, Shigeru Miyagawa, MIT Chapter 16: Relative clauses, Yoichi Miyamoto, Osaka University Chapter 17: Expressions that contain negation, Nobuaki Nishioka, Kyushu University Chapter 18: Ga/No conversion, Masao Ochi, Osaka University Chapter 19: Ellipsis, Mamoru Saito, Nanzan University Chapter 20: Syntax and argument structure, Natsuko Tsujimura, Indiana University Chapter 21: Attributive modification, Akira Watanabe, University of Tokyo Chapter 22: Scrambling, Noriko Yoshimura, Shizuoka Prefectural University

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contact, and then turn to questions related to reported speech, modality, indirect requests and prosody. Chapters investigate lexical pragmatics and (cognitive) lexical semantics and other interactions involving experimental pragmatics, construction grammar, clinical linguistics, and the distinction between mental and linguistic content. The authors bridge the gap between different disciplines, subdisciplines and methodologies, supporting cross-fertilization of ideas and indicating the empirical studies that are needed to test current theoretical concepts and push the theory further. Readers will find overviews of the ways in which concepts are defined, empirical data with which they are illustrated and explorations of the theoretical frameworks in which concepts are couched. This exciting exchange of ideas has its origins in the editors' workshop series on the theme 'The semantics/pragmatics interface: linguistic, logical and philosophical perspectives', held at the University of Lille 3 in 2012-13. Scholars of linguistics, logic and philosophy and those interested in the research benefits of crossing disciplines will find this work both accessible and thought-provoking, especially those with an interest in pragmatic theory or semantics.

constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure: Models of Modals Ilse Depraetere, Bert Cappelle, Martin Hilpert, Ludovic De Cuypere, Mathieu Dehouck, Pascal Denis, Susanne Flach, Natalia Grabar, Cyril Grandin, Thierry Hamon, Clemens Hufeld, Benoît Leclercq, Hans-Jörg Schmid, 2023-04-27 Modal verbs in English communicate delicate shades of meaning, there being a large range of verbs both on the necessity side (must, have to, should, ought to, need, need to) and the possibility side (can, may, could, might, be able to). They therefore constitute excellent test ground to apply and compare different methodologies that can lay bare the factors that drive the speaker's choice of modal verb. This book is not merely concerned with a purely grammatical description of the use of modal verbs, but aims at advancing our understanding of lexical and grammatical units in general and of linguistic methodologies to explore these. It thus involves a genuine effort to compare, assess and combine a variety of approaches. It complements the leading descriptive qualitative work on modal verbs by testing a diverse range of quantitative methods, while not ignoring qualitative issues pertaining to the semantics-pragmatics interface. Starting from a critical assessment of what constitutes the meaning of modal verbs, different types of empirical studies (usage-based, data-driven and experimental), drawing considerably on the same data sets, shows how method triangulation can contribute to an enhanced understanding. Due attention is also given to individual variation as well as the degree to which modals can predict L2 proficiency level.

constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure: A Constructional Account of Verb-Forming Suffixation Jacqueline Laws, 2023-09-15 The range of meanings expressed by derivatives formed by the attachment of the four principal verb-forming suffixes - ate, - en, - ify and - ize has been the subject of extensive analysis for over two decades. From a descriptive perspective, the research reported in this volume constitutes the most comprehensive usage-based analysis of verbal derivatives available to date and provides register-based and diachronic comparisons of usage and distribution patterns across corpora of spoken English. The semantic analysis adopts the seven well-established semantic categories of verbal derivatives and extends the set to twenty by including further meaning classes documented in the morphological literature and additional senses that emerged from the contextualized analysis of complex verbs in the datasets. From a theoretical standpoint, the novel approach involves the explicit linking of affix schemas to argument structure constructions, and proposes a unified model of verb-forming suffixation that accounts for the multi-functional characteristics of verbal derivatives, from a constructional perspective.

constructions a construction grammar approach to argument structure: Valency Thomas Herbst, Katrin Götz-Votteler, 2008-09-25 In recent years, research on valency has led to important insights into the nature of language. Some of these findings are published in this volume for the first time with up-to-date accounts of language description and new reflections on language, above all for English and German. The volume also presents examples of contrastive analysis, which are of use for all those who deal professionally with these two languages. Furthermore, the articles in the

psycholinguistic and computational linguistics section demonstrate the applicability and value of valency theory for these approaches and shed light on a fruitful cooperation between theoretical and descriptive linguistics and applied disciplines. The papers cover the following aspects of valency analysis: (i) theoretical aspects of the valency approach in relation to related theories of complementation (dependency syntax, FrameNet, case roles), (ii) descriptive aspects of valency and complementation, (iii) valency as a concept for the description of cognitive processes in syntactic processing, (iv) contrastive aspects of valency, above all for English and German, and (v) possible computational applications of the valency concept in fields such as automatic syntactic recognition or language processing. The volume combines papers of representatives from different linguistic schools on the topic of complementation. One of the aims is to show how concepts developed for the analysis of one language, in the case of valency often German, can be applied to other languages such as English.

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