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The book *Romance Perspectives on Construction Grammar*¹ consists of eight chapters that have been presented as talks at the Fifth International Conference on Construction Grammar (ICCG-5), organised by Hans Boas at the University of Texas, in Austin in September 2008. This monograph is an essential contribution to the development of a Construction Grammar approach in Romance Languages, where this framework has not been fully developed yet, unlike in English studies. *Romance Perspectives on Construction Grammar* opens up, then, a path to follow.

The book starts with an introductory chapter by Hans C. Boas and Francisco González-García, “Applying constructional concepts to Romance Languages”. Here, the authors state the main aim of the book, that is, to provide the current state of the art with an overview of constructional research applied to Romance languages as a departing point for further contrastive studies in the field. The rest of chapters are organised in three sections. Namely, one section that focuses on the continuum between syntax and the lexicon; a second section devoted to the status of fragments, patterns and constructions, and, finally, a third section concerned with abstract grammatical constructions in Romance languages.

The first section opens with Jiyoun Yoon’s work “The role of constructional meanings in novel verb-noun compounds in Spanish”. He designs two experiments, whose results lead to the conclusion that compounds formation is neither random nor unsystematic, but regulated (i) by the meaning of the two existing types of Spanish [n + v] compound constructions, (ii) by the speakers’ Encyclopaedic knowledge, (iii) by their own dialect, (iv) by related expressions as well as by (v) the relationship between frequencies and analogies, (vi) by metonymies and metaphors, which play an important role in the interpretation and creation of novel [v + n] compounds.

Peter Lauwers’ contribution, “From lexicalization to constructional generalizations. On complex prepositions in French”, deals with the treatment of French complex prepositions as grammatical constructions, leaving the lexicalization issue aside. More specifically, he focuses on the study of French complex prepositions introduced by *sous* ‘under’ (*sous la surveillance de son père* ‘under his father surveillance’) considering that they are constructions, since they consist in pairings of form-meaning whose signification cannot be derived from the sum of their component parts. In Lauwers’ opinion *sous* constructions instantiate a pattern, which he calls *the Mediate Dependency Construction* (= MDC). Lauwers proposes to ascribe all MDC to a more abstract construction including *sous* constructions, and other prepositional constructions that share similar surface structures and constraints.

The second section of the monograph starts with a chapter entitled “A constructional corpus-based approach to ‘weak’ verbs in French”, by Dominique Willems and Claire Blanche-Benveniste. The authors study French weak verbs, which have three main contexts of use: before a *that*-clause (*Je trouve que c’est dommage* ‘I think that this is pitiful’), as parentheticals (*C’est dommage je trouve* ‘This is pitiful I think’), and as a conversational response (-C’est dommage ‘This is pitiful’/ -Oui, je trouve ‘Yes, I think

so (too)'). The authors argue that weak verbs are constructions. The weak verb construction links a cluster (or family) of three different syntactical structures to a concrete meaning, that of mitigation. Each structure has its own meaning and applies to different verb types.

Irina Nikolaeva takes a Sign-Based approach in “The Narrative Infinitive Construction in French and Latin”. She deals with an infinitive construction found both in Latin and in French in narrative passages. These constructions are syntactically independent, in spite of their lack of conjugated verbs, and are specializing in expressing assertions. The fact that narrative constructions act as finite clauses, and are, therefore, temporally specified, informationally structured and, having overt referentially independent subjects, allows the author to state that finiteness does not depend on the verbal morphology, but on the information given. Nikolaeva’s proposal is that narrative infinitives, which admit explicit subjects, are a subgroup of finite verbs. Then, they are connected with indicative and subjunctive forms. Regular infinitives, imperatives and participles, on the contrary, conform a non-finite verbal subtype.

Francisco González-García’s contribution to this monograph, “Bringing together fragments and constructions: Evidence from complementation in English and Spanish”, consists in a review of Thompson’s description of secondary predications: in Thompson’s opinion some (object) finite complements are stored together with their subjects as fragments conveying pragmatic meaning: epistemic / evidential / evaluative. Thompson considers them fragments. González-García rejects the description of structures such as Eng. *I find X difficult* or Sp. *Lo veo difícil* ‘I see it difficult’ as fragments with an evidential – epistemic – evaluative meaning. In his opinion they are strong verbs that maintain their subcategorization properties. Furthermore, the object of these structures appears to be semantically essential, “since it functions semantically as the STIMULUS of perception by the subject/speaker” (p. 28). Even if these structures transmit a pragmatic meaning, they are not fragments but subtypes of a more general type of construction. In other words, in González-García’s opinion the depictive secondary predication instances in English and Spanish form a family of subjective-transitive constructions. Similarly to Goldberg and Jackendoff’s (2004) proposal in relation to resultative constructions, González-García argues that, even if the subjective-transitive constructions analyzed do not form a single construction, they share the same similarities to be considered a sort of family constructions.

The third section starts with Anne Abeillé, Gabriela Bîlbîie and François Mouret’s proposal of a constructional approach of gapping, based on the analysis of coordinated structures in French and Romanian “A Romance perspective on gapping constructions”. They prove that even if some kind of syntactic parallelism is required, this is not as important as discourse parallelism. The authors do not consider that in gapping structures there would be more linguistic material than that which is pronounced or written, and they sketch a formal analysis of gapping, which follows a construction-based version of Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar. The construction-based approach “enables gapping sentences to inherit properties from related constructions” (p. 264).

The book ends with Johan Pedersen’s chapter, “Variable type framing in Spanish constructions of direct motion”. Pedersen describes Spanish constructions of telic motion, whose core is a manner verb such as *Juan bailó hasta la puerta* ‘Juan danced

(*all the way*) to the door'. Sentences like this represent a challenge to Talmian typology. According to Talmy's proposal, two different types of languages can be distinguished. Namely, verb-framed languages, such as Spanish, in which the path of motion depends on the verb, while the manner of movement is expressed by an additional phrase; and satellite-framed languages, in which the verb expresses the manner of motion, whereas the path depends on a satellite of the verb (*He ran into the house*). However, Spanish sentences that contain a manner motion verb in combination with telic path phrases *Michel corre al molino* 'Michel is running to the mill' demonstrate that such a binary distinction is not fully representative of the variety of languages in the world.

All things considered, *Romance Perspectives on Construction Grammar* is a valuable contribution to the study of Romance Languages Grammar from Construction Grammar framework.

References

Goldberg, Adele E.; Jackendoff, Ray. 2004. The English resultatives as a family of constructions. *Language* 80: 532-568.

¹ This review was first published in *Languages in Contrast* 15.2 (2005), pp. 294-296. We would like to thank John Benjamins Publishing Company for allowing us to reproduce this review on Infoling.