"Towards a contrastive usage-based constructionist methodology for a cross-linguistic comparison of constructions"

This paper proposes a systematic approach to conducting contrastive linguistic research within Construction Grammar(s) (CxG(s)). In the first part, we provide a brief historical overview of the development of Contrastive Linguistics (CL) by first reviewing the goals and methodologies of some of the seminal works in CL, such as Lado (1957), James (1980), Krzeszowski (1990), and Gast (2013). Then, we discuss how insights from CxG(s) have informed a number of different analyses that touch on contrastive issues, including Boas (2003), Gonzálvez-García (2010), Hasegawa et al. (2010), Boas & Gonzálvez-García (2014), Boas & Ziem (2018), and Dux (2020), among others.

In the second part, we discuss a number of theoretical and applied problems in Contrastive Construction Grammar, including the following: (1) Defining constructions across languages. Since constructions are defined in cognitively-influenced, usage-based versions of CxG (Goldberg 2006, 2016, 2024; Croft 2001, 2022) as pairings of form with meaning/function, how do we empirically and reliably determine what constitutes a "construction" in different languages? Often, even finding translation equivalents is difficult, because constructions in two languages do not regularly cover the same meanings and functions and they may also be organized in different types of constructional networks. (2) Granularity and scope. Since constructions exist at different levels of abstraction and may in addition involve varying degrees of complexity (see Goldberg 2006, 2024), it is not always possible to establish a consistent level of granularity across languages for efficient comparison and contrast. (3) Methodological issues with contrastive data. Relying on comparable datasets (e.g. parallel corpora) is often challenging due to availability and representativeness. (4) Constructional polysemy across languages. A single construction may carry multiple meanings in one language but only (a) smaller subset(s) of meaning in another. This issue requires us to resolve polysemy and identify how meaning extensions occur across languages.

In the third part of our paper, we outline the cornerstones of a new methodology of contrastive analysis for CxG(s) that employs concepts from constructicography (Fillmore et al. 2012, Lyngfelt et al. 2018, Boas et al. 2019, Diessel 2023) to propose concrete steps towards finding solutions to the four problems outlined above. Focussing on contrastive data from a variety of languages including English, French, Slovak, Spanish, and German, we discuss a number of different options for solving the problems raised above. More specifically, we adapt Boas' (2010) proposal to use constructions as a *tertium comparationis* to show how different layers between forms, meanings and functions interact with each other across different types of constructions (e.g., word order constructions, argument structure constructions, voice constructions, etc.) in their respective ConstructionNets (Goldberg 2024). This discussion sets up the basis for a roadmap for future studies in Contrastive Construction Grammar that relies on Fillmore's (1982) Frame Semantics as well as Croft's (2022) comparative concepts.

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