CONSTRUCTION GRAMMAR
AND "NON-NATIVE DISCOURSE"

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MY point of departure is the assumption that for a long time, theoretical linguistics has been based mostly on inquiries of idealized "native speaker discourse," more specifically, of *grammatical sentences* of idealized "native speakers." Basing my discussion on existing studies and my own observations of current language phenomena, I want to call into question the central position of the "native speaker" in linguistics. For "language in general" as the object of general linguistics should include various kinds of discourse, i.e. "native," "non-native," monolingual, bilingual, multilingual and any other mixed variety of language. But since the onset of theoretical general linguistics as a formal, rigorous science (in simplified terms this means since Ferdinand de Saussure), research is concentrated on a well-defined, regular object of inquiry, excluding dynamic and unstable phenomena. The abstraction and idealization is, of course, necessary if one wants to come up with (more or less) strict, well-defined regularities, a well-defined, clear system with clear characteristics. But this limited definition is often questionable because language in its actual performance is in constant change and variation.

THE "NATIVE SPEAKER" AND THE "NON-NATIVE SPEAKER"

My main goal is to stress that the idealization of the "native speaker" is closely related to the assumption of innateness of language (primarily advocated by mainstream linguistics of the last decades, i.e. mostly by Chomskyan generative grammar) and to the project of identifying and describing the universal rules of language, i.e. "Universal Grammar." Hence, my approach to "non-native discourse" is closely connected with the notion of rules, going hand in hand with the notion of grammaticality and therefore with the notion of "native speaker,"

who is traditionally assumed as being the arbiter—by means of his intuition—of grammaticality and appropriateness. Needless to say, the concept of *rule* is itself a matter of constant debate in linguistics as well as in other sciences and philosophy.

The limits of the "science of language," which inevitably arise with the restriction of the investigation to "native speakers," have during the last decades been indicated by extensive studies in the fields of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. Second language acquisition, bilingualism, multilingualism, languages in contact, "interlanguage," pidgins, creoles, etc. are major points of interest in these disciplines, and there are also other dynamic concepts that are increasingly being investigated. Particularly the growing body of diverse electronic corpora (of written as well as spoken texts) facilitates the recent rapid development of this kind of research. The concept of "native speaker" itself has been called into question by scholars such as Thomas Paikeday, Alan Davies, Roy Harris, Rajendra Singh, Alastair Pennycook, and Henry Widdowson. Although the concept plays a central role in general theoretical linguistics and grammar theories, Davies points out that it can be defined only from a sociolinguistic perspective. Moreover, the basic criterion is autobiography, more precisely, self-identification. In any case, the concept is "fugitive and subtle" (Davies 2003, 47–49), and not a clear-cut entity. Davies repeatedly stresses the social influence on any kind of speaker identity, arguing that "the fundamental opposition is one of power and that in the event membership is determined by the non-native speaker's assumption of confidence and of identity" (Davies 2003, 215).

Whether we should reject the concept of "native speaker" altogether or assign it a different role is nevertheless still debated. In this paper, my basic concern is what this means for general, formal theoretical linguistics. Accordingly, I ask the following question: Is the shifting focus of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics to investigate "non-native discourse" reflected in formal linguistics as well and, if yes, where and how? As rules and regularities constitute (d) the core of formal linguistic models, I want to examine what alternatives to the concept of "grammatical rule" can be developed by a (formal) theory in order to be able to grasp the characteristics of "non-native discourse" as well. Moving away from idealization and

limitation to manageable regularities, such a theory must, however, face certain difficulties in defining and systematizing linguistic facts, which requires a somewhat flexible, and therefore precarious, model.

CONSTRUCTION GRAMMAR

In this respect, Construction Grammar (CxG) occupies a special place among other formal grammar theories. This usage-based model[1] proposes a dynamic concept of "construction," which is based on usage frequency and is supposed to replace the traditional notion of stable grammatical rule. From this perspective, grammar is not innate but "distilled" out of language experience (cf. Kaltenböck 2011, 96). This means that the emergence of new constructions and their grammaticalization are common phenomena and, moreover, that the "native speaker' should no longer be the only reference of language analysis. Since the first constructionist papers from the late 1980s (Fillmore et al. 1988; Kay and Fillmore 1999; Langacker 1987; Langacker 1988, Lakoff 1987), several sub-schools, which differ in more or less important degrees, have emerged, forming a whole family of grammar theories (Cognitive Grammar, Berkeley Construction Grammar, Radical Construction Grammar, Embodied Construction Grammar, Fluid Construction Grammar). In this paper, I will nevertheless, under the name of Construction Grammar, assume one model of grammatical description, drawing special attention to the usage-based approaches developed primarily by Adele Goldberg and William Croft. As the essential question of my paper is related to the investigation of "non-native discourse," I will briefly address, in the next section, only those principles of CxG that are relevant for this topic and, on my view, enable an analysis of second and foreign language data:

- First, CxG attempts to reach a holistic and integrated theory of language "with universal impact" (Fried and Östman 2005, 1), a theory capable of integrating into the representation also semantic, prosodic and pragmatic characteristics;

1. The term is coined by Langacker 1987; see also Bybee 2010; Tomasello 2003; Hopper 1987; and Goldberg 2006.

- Furthermore, according to the usage-based approach constructions are based only on general cognitive processes and usage frequency (see Bybee 2010);
- Within the usage-based approaches language is considered not to be innate, which means that grammar is not hard-wired in the human brain but learned inductively, in a bottom-up manner from the input (see Goldberg 2006);
- The object of inquiry are surface constructions themselves, and not some deep, underlying structures. The theory adopts a "what you see is what you get" approach to syntactic form (Goldberg 2006), which means that it does not posit any hidden transformations;
- As the division between competence and performance is rejected (Goldberg 2006, Langacker 2008), CxG can (in principle) account for interaction and not just grammatical sentences out of context (see Deppermann et al. 2006; Hopper 2008; Östman 2005);
- The context is supposed to influence meanings and their modifications; what actually changes are the connections within the "structured inventory" (see Langacker 1987; Croft 2005), where grammatical markers and constructions are organized in a (semantic) network (Langacker 1987; Goldberg 1995). This network therefore is not stable but restructured in the course of the speakers' linguistic experience (see Diessel 2011, 838).
- Finally, but also most importantly, on the background of these assumptions about the object of inquiry and the characteristics of language, the concept of *construction* itself is the key notion of the theory.

Constructions are symbolic form-meaning pairings – the form is linked to a specific semantic or discourse function – which are learned.[2] In a broad sense, the formal side of the construction ranges from morphemes and words to (partially) lexically filled patterns, idioms but also fully generalized phrasal patterns (see Goldberg 2006; Fried and Östman 2005; Traugott 2008; Ellis forthc.). The "meaning" associated to the forms should, at least principally, include also pragmatic and discourse-functional properties. A schematic and frequently quoted representation of this form-function mapping is given in the Figure.

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2. Cf. Ellis (forthc.); Langacker (1987); Goldberg (1995, 2006); Croft (2001); Croft and Cruse (2004); Tomasello (2003); Robinson and Ellis (2008).

As opposed to grammatical rules, constructions can be, and often are, emergent structures, not necessarily stable and defined patterns. They can emerge from discourse (see Traugott 2008; Hopper 1987; Hopper 1998), and if we take the stated principles seriously, constructions should be able to emerge from any kind of discourse. As mentioned above, these form-meaning connections are achieved by general cognitive principles and on common discourse and pragmatic background. This means that the speech events with their context and discourse environment influence the form of the constructions.

Consequently, all the principles listed above are not bound to an idealized "native speaker" who has an intuition for "correct" grammar and is as such the only one suitable to provide researchers with data, but allow for "non-native discourse" as well (see Goldberg 2006; Östman 2005; Croft 2001; Croft 2005; Ellis forthc.). However, the question about how easily the specific speech situation influences the emergence or change of the constructions still remains unresolved.

So even though most publications in this field discuss grammatical sentences (which, however, may be "peripheral" idioms, phrasal patterns, etc.) of "native speakers," in recent years the extension to dynamic language use can be observed especially in the following research topics:

- CxG and interaction (Deppermann et al. 2006; Hopper 2008; Fischer and Stefanowitsch 2006; Günthner and Imo 2006; Günthner 2008);
- CxG and first language acquisition (Tomasello 2003; Behrens 2011);
- CxG and second language acquisition (Haberzettl 2006; Robinson and Ellis 2008; Holme 2010; Ellis forthc.);
- CxG and grammaticalization (Traugott 2008);
- CxG and "discourse" (Östman 2005);
- CxG and "non-native discourse" *per se*, i.e. discourse not considered from the perspective of language learners (Hoffmann 2011; Urban 2007).

In general, CxG as a formal linguistic model seems particularly connectable with sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, as several scholars from various linguistic fields have already pointed out (Blommaert 2010; Deppermann et al. 2006; Hopper

1998; Tomasello 2003; Fischer and Stefanowitsch 2006; Ziem 2011). Interestingly enough, this shift is by now designated also by the very notion of *Social Construction Grammar*, which is being increasingly used especially by German Construction grammarians. According to a conference report by Alexander Ziem "the notion [of Social Construction Grammar] should grasp even stronger the cultural practice of speech and view constructions as non-compositional, conventional, and cognitively entrenched" (2011). The idea is thus to bring closer together sociological, cultural insights into language and formal linguistic methods. This consideration of the social dimensions of discourse is crucial to my paper. But it certainly also raises the question of the role of linguistics as a science, i.e. of the latter's scientific rigour. For upon closer consideration of the topics discussed at that same conference (ad-hoc construction, apposition, constructions as socio-emotional means of coordination, etc.), the term "construction" itself becomes extremely vague.

It is true, however, that this wide range of linguistic phenomena—from standard grammatical sentences in natural languages to ad-hoc constructions in speech—reflects the above-mentioned "universal impact" that CxG aims to achieve. Taken in this broad sense and taking its principles radically, the most varied forms of "non-native discourse" can, at least at first glance, figure among the topics of CxG as well. To illustrate this direction of inquiry, I will now discuss the possible connections between Construction Grammar and English as a Lingua Franca.

ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA

I have chosen to discuss English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) because this kind of "discourse" or simply "communication" touches very fundamental questions that most researchers do not ask any more but rather take for granted. Moreover, it seems to me that there is a lack of critical conceptualization concerning linguistics as such as well as the different areas of linguistics.

As ELF-researchers have repeatedly stressed in recent years, ELF is neither a learners' (second) language, nor a (stable) variety of English. In her last book, *Understanding English as a Lingua Franca*, dedicated to the conceptualization of the phenomenon itself, Barbara Seidlhofer says that "we have to question the notions of variety and community. ELF is not a variety, not a speech community, not even a community of practice" (Seidlhofer 2011, 87–88). In short, ELF is "any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option" (Seidlhofer 2011, 7). It is therefore neither a "native" nor "non-native," "indigenized," second-language, "nativized" or any other kind of language variety (see Singh 1998; Hoffmann 2011; Kortmann et al. 2004), but a simple "means of communication" and is supposed to be studied in its own right rather than against the yardstick of English as a native language (see also Jenkins et al. 2011; Cogo and Dewey 2012).

With this assumption about English as a Lingua Franca as a linguistic phenomenon with no uniform speech community, the analysis will necessarily differ in certain aspects from the analyses that have been done so far (e.g. the investigation of second language acquisition or "non-native discourse" by Ellis, Gries and Wulff, Haberzettl, Hoffmann, Holme). Particularly the fact that ELF is constantly being accommodated to the needs and communicative goals of the speakers will make it difficult to address it as a linguistic phenomenon on its own. Nevertheless, since ELF is of course a kind of natural language, general theories of language should be able to account for it as well.[3] Hence, if we take the general principles of Construction Grammar seriously—i.e. that it should be a grammar with universal impact, that grammar is usage-based and not innate, that constructions can be emerging—ELF constructions could be analyzed with the representation models used in this theory as well. The common procedure would be to chose a construction from ELF (e.g. from VOICE Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English),[4] to identify its characteristics, i.e. the formal and func-

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3. Cf. also the opinion of Anna Mauranen that ELF could function as some kind of testbed for general linguitic models (Mauranen 2009, 231).
4. VOICE is a corpus of ELF talk, comprising around one million words of spoken transcribed ELF from various domains. It has been compiled at the Department of English at the University of Vienna.

tional features, and to represent it in a formal way, possibly with a scheme. But this proves very difficult in ELF because, as noted above, it is not a stable variety and the constructions often emerge from occasional speech events. But unfortunately the claim by Brown and Levinson that "this emergent character is not something for which our current empirical models are well equipped" (Brown and Levinson 1987, 48) still holds today to an important extent. In fact, even before identifying or choosing an ELF-construction, there arises the question, what can be counted as a construction (in the sense of Construction Grammar). The characteristics and the very ontological status of constructions are debated already when addressing data in "natural (first) languages," and become even more problematic when taking into consideration data from second/foreign language speech. It is also still debated whether second languages are represented in the mind in a different or the same way as first languages (see MacSwan 2000). This question is an important issue for further research in the field, but cannot be addressed in detail here.

Following the argumentation from papers devoted to learner language or second language acquisition from a constructionist perspective (primarily Ellis forthc.), I will now indicate some possible ways of analyzing ELF data.

CONSTRUCTIONS IN ELF

Basically, I will limit the discussion to certain "preliminary lexicogrammatical characteristics" (Seidlhofer 2004, 220)[5] that have proven quite durable in further research as well. Some of them seem especially adequate for further investigation, as very similar cases are discussed by Nick Ellis in his forthcoming arti-

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5. The characteristics are: "'Dropping' the third person present tense -s; 'Confusing' the relative pronouns *who* and *which*; 'Omitting' definite and indefinite articles where they are obligatory in ENL [English as a native language], and inserting them where they do not occur in ENL; 'Failing' to use correct forms in tag questions (e.g., *isn't it?* or *no*? instead of *shouldn't they?*); Inserting 'redundant' prepositions, as in *We have to study about ...*); 'Overusing' certain verbs of high semantic generality, such as *do, have, make, put, take*; 'Replacing' infinitive-constructions with *that*-clauses, as in *I want that*; 'Overdoing' explicitness (e.g. *black color* rather than just *black*)" (Seidlhofer 2004, 220).

cle that enables us to draw a direct parallel between the theoretical, constructionist approach and the ELF data.

First I want to take up those (numerous) constructions from ELF in which the third person present tense -s has been dropped. The analysis proposed by Ellis of this general phenomenon of learner language goes as follows: "For example, some forms are more salient: '*today*' is a stronger psychophysical form in the input than is the morpheme '-*s*' marking 3rd person singular present tense, thus while both provide cues to present time, *today* is much more likely to be perceived, and *-s* can thus become overshadowed and blocked, making it difficult for second language learners of English to acquire." (Ellis forthc.).

Examples from VOICE[6] can exemplify this statement in the following way (emphasis added):

(1)
S5 [Spanish]: no in this case i will concentrate on somebody for the operations i mean which er knows already traffics if **he start now to be** er only booking reservation afterwards then i still he already told me one step i mean we can be a xxx

S1 [German]: yeah but if if you need somebody who knows the commercial market who has market knowledge who knows to do his carriers
(from a sales team meeting: VOICE PBmtg27, 1161–1163, 1180)

(2)
S1 [Korean]: so in most cases **he make** his own decision
(from a business meeting in a food company: VOICE PBmtg3, 497)

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6. In oder to keep the extracts short and easy to read, the 'plain' output style has been chosen for these examples. This is however a reduced version of the transcription, where the only mark-up features are @-symbols (laughter) and square brackets (anonymized items). The only changes introduced in the ELF examples in this paper are the indication of speakers' first languages in square brackets. For further detail on VOICE, its output styles and transcription conventions see http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/help.

(3)
S4 [French]: **this visitor** in fact er s- er **call** us because is when **he have seen** the the the the advertisement in the newspaper **he say** can i come in a session and **he say** i will come at the first session then **he come he came** but it's the only one
(from a meeting of a project group discussing two past project events: VOICE POmtg439, 311)

Ellis apparently considers constructions with zero marking in the third person singular as constructions in their own right. Apart from the fact that the third person present tense –*s* does not directly indicate present tense but rather 'third person" and is basically a (communicatively) redundant morphological marker in modern standard English,[7] his explanation is quite convincing: more salient features (such as adverbs) are easier to acquire or perceive from the input and are consequently sufficient for efficient communication. In a similar manner, morphological markers of other tenses are also very often not realized in ELF-speech, as numerous examples reveal. In the following extract tense is actually morphologically marked only in the beginning of the report (followed afterwards by adverbs such as *then*, *second*) and through some occurrences of conjugated verbs:

(4)
(The beginning of event report: VOICE POmtg439, 207)
S4 [French]: /…/ then the organizer was saying everything was done but not the papers not yet this written fact hh then it was the eight of july the idea it is to do erm er a session during a braderie you know braderie it is sort of sale can you say sale

(Further narration about the event: VOICE POmtg439, 251, 304, 315–318)
S4: this is why **we decide to do this session there at this moment not in a- another time** in the supermarket
/…/
S4: and this event **it has** two part inside and outside hopefully **july was sunny then** plenty of people outside but **we thought** that **we need** to be inside

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[7] See also Breiteneder 2005.

/…/
S4: **then** we because all **people are** outside **we even need** first to be outside second er **we need** to be outside but not in a in a area without passage you know **we need** to be in a in their way
SX: mhm
S1[Dutch]: yeah
S4: then **we find** a tree er where the com- the the people from the the comp- er the supermarket **put** all of sangria tortilla et cetera **we went** under the tree er in in t- their way you know @@@@
(meeting of project group discussing two past project events: VOICE POmtg439)

Thus, in accordance with Ellis, we can conclude that these — although scarce — tense markings are "more salient" and that therefore the *-s*, *-ed*, or other suffixes become "overshadowed and blocked" (Ellis forthc.). How this heterogeneity of features (salience, cues, blockings) could be formally represented is nevertheless not mentioned in Ellis' article. This is probably due to the fact that influence of this kind is very difficult to formalize because it goes beyond the scope of grammaticality, especially sentence grammaticality, and thus beyond the form-meaning mappings, i.e. the constructions, which could be determined exclusively within the sentence borders. The notion of 'construction' would therefore have to be modified in order to account for elements beyond the scope of the individual sentence, a modification which is indeed a matter of debate among those linguists who try to integrate CxG and conversation analysis (see Günthner 2008; Deppermann et al. 2006).

As a second case, I will provide some examples of another above-mentioned feature, the overuse of "certain verbs of high semantic generality (such as do, have, make, put, take)" (Seidlhofer 2004: 220). This phenomenon is also one of the characteristics of learner language on which Ellis is commenting: he calls them "generic" or "light verbs" (like *go*, *do*, *make*, *come*, *put*, *give*) and observes that "learners start transitive word combinations with these generic verbs. Thereafter, as Clark describes, "many uses of these verbs are replaced, as children get older, by more specific terms" (Ellis forthc.). With this observation the temporary character of this kind of constructions is becoming apparent, since the forms are supposed to change in the course of the

improvement of language proficiency. But Ellis does not specify in any way the characteristic situation of second language learners, which differs in a number of ways from first language acquisition to which the quotation initially refers. For speakers of a second language do not necessarily reach a very high level of language proficiency, which means that the general expressions are much more entrenched and used more constantly. As such, these constructions are not necessarily available only as prototypical background schemas in the mind of a "non-native speaker," but serve as generic and at the same time concrete constructions for actual use. Some examples with the verbs *make* and *do* from VOICE can illustrate this point:

(5)
S2 [Danish]: it's the publication of report probably solves yes but in the danish case we in our accreditation we are going to **make the full process** and it ends with a report which will be public and which recommends a yes or no but we do not **make the yes and the no** that's for the government to me
S3 [Catalan]: hm
S2: we would never take that upon us to be those who actually **make the decision** that must be a- because we know that such decisions are always or often heavily politically influenced anyhow so we rather wish to steer er away from it th- the norwegians have done it the other way the **the [org7] makes the final decision yes or no**
(from a meeting on quality assurance issues in higher education: VOICE POmtg541, 1096–1098)

(6)
S1 [Dutch]: going to **make a password** or something
S5 [English]: yeah cos you don't want what you don't want is once you've got your final version is other people
S1: mhm
S5: doing things
S2 [Romanian]: yeah yeah yeah yeah
S7 [Lithuanian]: no no
S5: it's all right for you **to do things** with it
(from a meeting of a project group discussing a booklet: VOICE POmtg444, 978–984)

(7)
S14 [Finnish]: no and the thing is that they **make the questions**
but they don't say how to **go** about **doing** it
S1 [Norwegian]: er
S1: exactly
S14: answering the questions and this is what we need
(from a working group discussion on joint degree programs in
Europe: VOICE POwgd325, 324–327)

The examples thus reveal how it is possible that colloca-
tions, which are usually (or can be) formed with very specific
verbs (such as *chose*, *create*, *ask*, *put*, *take*, etc.), are formed, by
ELF speakers, with very general verbs. But this does not seem
to have any impact on the communicative effectiveness of the
interactions, which is also the case in the extracts above, where
the speakers use the most general, probably more entrenched
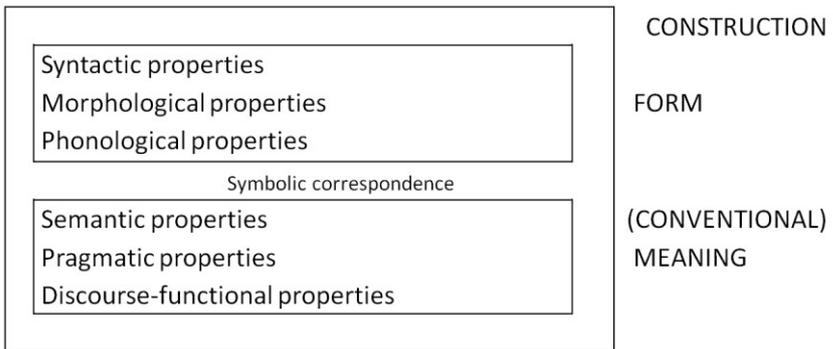constructions to express several tenses.

Conclusion

These examples are doubtless sufficient to demonstrate
that a constructionist approach is very promising in the case of
"non-native discourse"; but what also becomes evident is the
fact that the methodology and representation format are not
(yet) sufficiently adapted to such heterogeneous features. I
would also like to emphasize that analyses of this kind would
probably be valid only for each individual speech event because
the constructions (in ELF) differ between speakers and emerge,
or can emerge, constantly. This is why I think it is important to
stress the "shift from identification of linguistic features to
communicative functions" (Jenkins et al. 2011, 9), the shift that
has been unfolding in recent ELF studies and that I link to the
special attention grammatical processes are receiving in Con-
struction Grammar. Regarding English as a Lingua Franca, Jen-
kins, Cogo, and Dewey share Seidlhofer's position when they
say that "it is not so much the features themselves that are now
the focus of attention in ELF empirical research, but rather a
consideration of the FUNCTIONAL USE of these items; that is,
what is each form illustrative of?" (Jenkins et al. 2011, 9). In this
regard, the interest in "process understanding" can be con-

nected to the focus in CxG to explain the acquisition of language from the input and the context-specific emergence and creation of new constructions in discourse. Accordingly, constructions that are based solely on usage frequency and general cognitive, pragmatic and semantic functions could be connected with the "idiom principle" (Sinclair 1991, 110), the "cooperative imperative" (Widdowson 1983, 48), or the "online idiomatizing with pro-tem idiomatic expressions" (Seidlhofer 2009, 205). In this respect, the notion of "co-constructing language" (see Jenkins et al. 2011, 12) will, on my view, turn out to be one of the key concepts for grammatical and general linguistic analysis.

With this shift, this kind of investigation touches very fundamental questions about the theoretical impacts and limits of grammar theories on the one hand and, on the other, the conceptualization and operationalization of "non-native discourse" itself (including ELF). These considerations thus open up a broad research field that is not yet sufficiently investigated. This paper can be but an indication of such a field.

Figure: The Structure of a Construction According to Croft 2001

| CONSTRUCTION |
| Syntactic properties |
| Morphological properties |
| Phonological properties |
| FORM |
| Symbolic correspondence |
| Semantic properties |
| Pragmatic properties |
| Discourse-functional properties |
| (CONVENTIONAL) MEANING |

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ABSTRACT

The creative and heterogeneous language use, a traditional object of sociolinguistics, is increasingly becoming the focus of scientific research in more formal linguistics as well. In this respect, *Construction Grammar* occupies a special place among other formal grammar theories. This usage-based model proposes a dynamic concept of "construction," which is based on usage frequency and is supposed to replace the traditional notion of stable grammatical rule. From this perspective, grammar is not innate, which means that the emergence of new constructions and their grammaticalization are common phenomena and that the "native speaker" should no longer be the only reference of language analysis. My paper addresses linguistic forms and meanings, focusing on the specifics of "non-native discourse." It discusses the possibilities of connections between empirical approaches to "non-native discourse" in *English as a Lingua Franca* and the theoretical accounts proposed by recent Construction Grammar models.

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