

Series Editor's Foreword

With this book, *Language Learning* publishes the tenth volume in the Monograph Series. The monographs, published both as journal issues and as stand-alone books, available through the Wiley website, are intended to serve as benchmarks for interdisciplinary research in the language sciences in the years to come. *Usage-based Approaches to Language Acquisition and Processing: Cognitive and Corpus Investigations of Construction Grammar* is an exemplary realization of this goal, as it draws on theoretical and methodological perspectives from a wide range of approaches to the study of language learning and use and will inform scholars interested in first and second language learning, corpus linguistics, psycholinguistics, construction grammar, and many other foci of language research, as well as contribute methodologically to the ways these topics are explored by scholars.

Ellis, Römer, and O'Donnell present a view of language as a complex adaptive system that is learned, both in first and second language contexts, through usage. It argues that language is not something separate from its speakers or from cognition, as these have co-evolved both over time and in human development. It takes the point of view that dialogue and social interaction are key to meaningful language development and use, supported by shared attention, cooperative activity, and shared cognition. Both consciousness and language are co-constructed in social interaction.

These claims are supported and developed here through analysis of *constructions*: form-meaning pairings that blur the distinction between lexis and grammar and that do not separate form from meaning. The authors conceive of the language knowledge of an adult as a collection of constructions, and the particular set of constructions in focus in this volume is Verb-Argument Constructions (VACs). The authors set out to demonstrate how knowledge of VACs develops out of

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multiple experiences with the schematic meanings of such constructions, where verbs with particular semantic valence work together with various collocations in patterns that recur. Each of the patterns has certain very common realizations that are prior in learning and more frequent in use. The authors argue that much of our language use is formulaic, and that we learn constructions from experiencing them in social interaction. As we learn our mother tongues as well as second or additional languages, we build from the more common realizations of constructions to less frequent exemplars as we develop our repertoires of language use.

The monograph presents numerous studies conducted by the authors to argue for this way of thinking about language. These include analyses of large corpora of language use as well as corpora of first language development and development of English by second language learners, experimental studies of native speakers, parallel experimental studies of second language learners, psycholinguistic experiments on the ways speakers perceive and respond to VACs with different characteristics in terms of their frequency, contingency, prototypicality, etc., and computer simulations of VAC learning. All of these studies build an argument that converges in supporting the view of Language as a Complex Adaptive System that the authors argue for.

It is worth noting that the authors of this monograph weave throughout a poetic and philosophical voice that connects the abstraction and technicality of the work they present to larger themes in human life that study of language inevitably brings to the fore. With quotations from Whitman, Shakespeare, and Yeats, and reference to Wittgenstein and Quine, they connect with language usage, meaning, and cognition in deeper ways that underscore how language permeates and shapes our thinking, doing, and being.

The key contributions of the monograph are summarized in Chapter 10, where the authors distill the argument they have been developing, draw implications, and acknowledge the limitations of current methodologies, making recommendations for directions still to be explored. Finally, they

return to notions of *emergentism* and *language as a complex adaptive system*, connecting with findings from other fields, including biology, that integrate understandings from the biological, social, and semiotic to understand how complexity emerges from the interaction of many systems.

This volume breaks new ground in the *Language Learning* monograph series by including Supporting Information files that are available online. These files include tables and figures that further support the arguments developed in the book, providing additional examples and evidence. The online files are referred to and cross-referenced in the main prose of the corresponding book chapter and numbered with a prefaced “S” (e.g., Figure S3.1). Recent articles in *Language Learning* have included Supporting Information, and the journal is pleased to provide this additional support in the monograph series, too, beginning with this volume.

The *Language Learning* Monograph Series offers authoritative statements by scholars who have led in the development of particular areas of research in the language sciences. The volumes review recent findings and current theoretical positions, present new data and interpretations, and point to new directions of research. The series began in 1998 under the editorship of Richard Young of the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Lourdes Ortega of Georgetown University served as editor from 2008–2012. Now, after six years of editorship, I pass the role on to Marianne Gullberg of Lund University. I know we will continue to see groundbreaking interdisciplinary research emerge under her leadership.

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