

# A constructional perspective on **language change**

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**DESCRIPTION** Recently there has been great interest in constructional approaches to change, e.g. Bergs and Diewald (2008), Traugott and Trousdale (2013) and Barðdal et al. (2015). In this course, I discuss and update the perspective called “constructionalization” developed in Traugott and Trousdale, using examples from the history of English. Constructionalization is an approach to morphosyntactic change such as the development of grammatical expressions (e.g. be going to), clausal structures (e.g. ditransitive She gave me a book) and idioms (e.g. Weird is the new cool). I revisit definitions of “constructionalization” and “constructional changes”, and discuss the complementarity of constructionalization and grammaticalization approaches to language change (see Coussé et al. 2018). Two case studies illustrate the differences. One is an account of the development of the semi-modals I’d better/rather/sooner, the other an account of the history of “dative” and “benefactive” alternations as in I gave her a book/I gave a book to her and I built her a house/I built a house for her. I end with discussion of the roles of subjectification and intersubjectification in constructionalization, using the example of the development of discourse markers like by the way.

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**LECTURE 1**  
04/03/2021  
6PM (UTC)

**Introduction. Some basic principles of construction grammar and of work on language change**

Suggested reading:

Goldberg, Adele E. 2003. Constructions: A new theoretical approach to language. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 7: 219-224. (available at <http://psych.colorado.edu/~kimlab/goldberg.TICS2003.pdf>)

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**LECTURE 2**  
11/03/2021  
6PM (UTC)

**Constructionalization and constructional changes revisited**

Suggested readings:

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs. 2014. Toward a constructional framework for research on language change. *Cognitive Linguistic Studies* 1: 3-21. Slightly modified reprint In Sylvie Hancil and Ekkehard König, eds., *Grammaticalization—Theory and Data*, 87-105. Amsterdam: Benjamins. (both available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275171235\\_Toward\\_a\\_constructional\\_framework\\_for\\_research\\_on\\_language\\_change](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275171235_Toward_a_constructional_framework_for_research_on_language_change))

Hilpert, Martin. 2018. Three open questions in diachronic construction grammar. In Evie Coussé, Joel Olofsson, and Peter Andersson (eds.) *Grammaticalization meets Construction Grammar*, 22-39. Amsterdam: Benjamins. (Youtube version available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXF8A1ShH1I>)

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**LECTURE 3**  
18/03/2021  
6PM (UTC)

**The complementarity of constructionalization and grammaticalization approaches**

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**LECTURE 4**  
25/03/2021  
6PM (UTC)

**Case study 1: the development of 3 semi-modals in English from the perspectives of constructionalization and grammaticalization**

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**LECTURE 5**  
01/04/2021  
6PM (UTC)

**“Vertical” and “horizontal” models of constructions;  
schemas and networks**

Case study 2: the development of dative and benefactive alternations in English

Suggested reading (mainly pp. 141-150):

Van de Velde, Freek. 2014. Degeneracy: The maintenance of constructional networks. In Ronny Boogaart, Timothy Coleman and Gijbert Rutten, eds., *Extending the Scope of Construction Grammar*, 141-180. Berlin: De Gruyter. (available at [https://limo.libis.be/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=LIRIAS219737&context=L&vid=Lirias&search\\_scope=Lirias&tab=default\\_tab&lang=en\\_US&fromSitemap=1](https://limo.libis.be/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=LIRIAS219737&context=L&vid=Lirias&search_scope=Lirias&tab=default_tab&lang=en_US&fromSitemap=1))

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**LECTURE 6**  
01/04/2021  
6PM (UTC)

**Subjectification and intersubjectification in  
grammaticalization and constructionalization**

Suggested reading

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs. 2010. (Inter)subjectivity and (inter)subjectification: A reassessment. In Kristin Davidse, Lieven Vandelanotte and Hubert Cuyckens, eds., *Subjectification, Intersubjectification and Grammaticalization*, 29-71. Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton. (.pdf version available from Elizabeth Traugott)

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**REFERENCES**

Barðdal, Jóhanna, Elena Smirnova, Lotte Sommerer and Spike Gildea, eds. 2015. *Diachronic Construction Grammar*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Bergs, Alexander and Gabriele Diewald, eds. 2008. *Constructions and Language Change*. Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton.

Coussé, Evie, Peter Andersson and Joel Olofsson, eds. 2018. *Grammaticalization Meets Construction Grammar*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs and Graeme Trousdale. 2013.  
Constructionalization and Constructional Changes. Oxford:  
Oxford University Press.

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