

**Review of Butler, C. and J. Martín Arista (eds.) *Deconstructing Constructions*  
(Amsterdam: John Benjamins 2009)**

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This book constitutes an original contribution to the ongoing debate on the relationship between different linguistic theories. More specifically, the authors take issue with the relationship between projections and constructions in the wider setting of the convergence between functional and constructional models. In this sense, the projectionist and constructivist representation of argument structure adopted, respectively, by functional and constructional models are not considered incompatible but, on the contrary, are combined into an ingenious and elegant approach whose stronghold is precisely its eclectic nature. Thus, the functionalist view, according to which the syntax of a given verbal predicate can be predicted from its semantic argument structure, and the constructivist perspective, based on the idea that constructions, and not only the lexical items that belong in them, convey meaning, are reconciled and applied to a number of empirical and theoretical problems.<sup>1</sup> The book, consequently, has deep-rooted foundations in previous linguistic research that has come to two conclusions: firstly, that verb semantics is not sufficient to account for all syntactic configurations of a certain verb (Goldberg 1995, 2006); and, secondly, that semantic-syntactic projections require an inventory of constructional templates in order to explain every possible aspect of syntactic constituency, including hierarchy, dependency and order (Van Valin and LaPolla 1997; Van Valin 2005). In general, the question is explored from several angles and different solutions are proposed, most of which can be inserted into the development of two linguistic frameworks: the Lexical Constructional Model (Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal Usón 2008) and the Layered Structure of the Word (Martín Arista 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011a, 2011b).

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<sup>1</sup> See Martín Arista (1999, 2003) and Butler (2003) on the relationship between formalism and functionalism and, above all, a review of structural-functional theories of language.

The volume is organised in three sections. The first is comprised of papers that deal with theoretical questions, the second is devoted to the Lexical Constructional Model and the third section consists of studies of particular constructions.

In the first section, Daniel García Velasco, in a book chapter entitled ‘Innovative coinage: its place in the grammar’, examines coinages such as instances of denominal verb conversion of the type *bottle<sub>N</sub> → to bottle<sub>V</sub>* and reaches the conclusion that such coinages should be considered an integral part of the grammar. The consequences of this position for both functional and constructional approaches to language are discussed in the remainder of the chapter. Johan Pedersen’s chapter, entitled ‘The construction of macro-events: a typological perspective’, carries out a constructionist analysis starting from Talmy’s distinction between satellite-framed languages (like the Romance languages) and verb-framed languages (such as the Germanic languages). Pedersen claims that Talmy’s generalisation of the pattern to combinations of a main and a subsidiary event (macro-events) owes much to lexicalisation patterns and should include a level of schematic constructional analysis. Pedersen illustrates his analysis by means of three Germanic and three Romance languages. Beatriz Martínez Fernández’s chapter, entitled ‘Constructions, co-composition and merge’ deals with occurrences of verbs of breaking in English which, according to the author, cannot be explained in terms of a construction as put forward by Goldberg (1995) because they combine motion and change of state. Martínez Fernández draws on work in Role and Reference Grammar and Pustoejovsky’s Generative Lexicon to provide an explanation for the phenomenon based on the operations of co-composition and merge. To close this section, Javier Martín Arista’s chapter entitled ‘A typology of morphological constructions’, generalises the semantic and syntactic mechanisms of Role and Reference Grammar at clause level and devises a framework of word functions, positions and feature percolation. Martín Arista applies the model of the layered structure of the word to two typological reversals, such as Old English and the Australian language Pitjantjatjara/Yakunitjatjara.

The second section, which focuses on the Lexical Constructional Model, begins with the book chapter by Christopher Butler, entitled ‘The Lexical Constructional Model: Genesis, strengths and challenges. Butler reviews the main aspects of the model and discusses them against the background of the numerous theoretical theories, frameworks

and proposals on which it draws, including Coseriu's structuralist lexicology, Mel'čuk's structuralist morphology and lexicology, Dik's Functional Grammar, Foley and Van Valin's Role and Reference Grammar, Wierzbicka's Natural Semantic Metalanguage, Construction Grammar and cognitive linguistics. Butler concludes by discussing a number of areas that require future research by the model. The chapter by Ricardo Mairal Usón and Francisco José Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, entitled 'Levels of semantic representation in meaning construction', deals with the concepts of lexical template and constructional template, which, as the authors put it, make allowance for a synthesis of functional and constructional approaches such that meaning construction is not restricted to the core grammar, while making reference to other areas like illocution, implicature and discourse coherence.

The third and section begins with Francisco González García's chapter, entitled 'Measuring out reflexivity in secondary predication in English and Spanish: evidence from cognition verbs'. González García analyses secondary predications with *find/encontrar* used as cognition verbs in both English and Spanish. The author draws the conclusion that two related constructions can be identified, namely the reflexive subjective-transitive construction and the self-descriptive subjective-transitive construction. Francisco Cortés Rodríguez's chapter, entitled 'The inchoative construction: semantic representation and unification constraints' explains the subsumption of lexical templates by constructional templates. Cortés Rodríguez demonstrates that two types of constraints operate on the process of lexical subsumption, external and internal. The external constraint is based on the high-level PROCESS FOR ACTION metonymy and the internal constraints fall into two types, one relating to the telicity and causativity of causative/inchoative verbs, the other to the arguments in the lexical templates. The closing chapter in the volume, Pilar Guerrero Medina's 'Semantic and pragmatic constraints on the English *get*-passive', claims that the properties of the *get*-passive cannot be explained in lexical terms only. To come up with a satisfactory account of the phenomenon, discursive and pragmatic questions are also required. Guerrero Medina demonstrates that the semantics of the *get*-passive includes five classes, in such a way that the structure is associated with a family of constructions that belong to two basic types, namely the causative and the spontaneous.

Overall, the book takes an interesting look at current work in the convergence of linguistic theories is based on a comprehensive review of earlier literature and contains fine-grained studies of theoretical questions or empirical aspects of individual languages. Moreover, it has a coherent structure and covers a wide range of topics by making use of extensive exemplification, citing numerous bibliographical references and bringing a significant number of languages into the discussion. The analysis presented is thought-provoking and shows remarkable standards of theoretical background and empirical expertise, although the solutions proposed might not always be entirely convincing for every framework discussed in the book, including Functional Discourse Grammar, Role and Reference Grammar, Construction Grammar and Cognitive Linguistics. Last but not least, the editorial work is impeccable. The structure of the book is transparent and well balanced and extensive use is made of glosses and figures, while the indexes are reader-friendly and give access to the key terms used in the book.

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