SLE Workshop: Construction Grammar meets Sociolinguistics

Conveyors: Lotte Sommerer & Axel Bohmann (University of Freiburg)

Keywords: Construction Grammar, Sociolinguistics, Variation and Change, register, indexicality

Description of the WS:

This workshop tries to bring together Usage-based Construction Grammar and (variationist) sociolinguistic research and its methodology. In general, CxG stresses that language is an emergent complex adaptive system (Diessel 2019) with a socio-cognitive basis and "must be understood in its interaction between social and cognitive exigencies" (Schmid 2020: 10; Harder 2010). Moreover, it is argued that linguistic knowledge is best conceptualized in the form of constructions. These are symbolic form-meaning pairings which directly map form (phonetic and syntactic code) onto function (conventionalized semantic and discourse-pragmatic knowledge) (e.g. Croft 2001; Goldberg 2006). More recent definitions of what a construction is explicitly state that the meaning side also includes social information; e.g. knowledge about genre and style conventions, dialectal/sociolectal/generational information (e.g. Hoffmann 2022; Ungerer & Hartmann 2023).

We argue that this sociolinguistic component has not yet been integrated sufficiently into current CxG research. Although the connection between Sociolinguistics and Cognitive Linguistics has already been established in the form of 'Cognitive Sociolinguistics' (e.g. Geeraerts, Kristiansen & Peirsman 2010; Kristiansen et al 2022) and although papers have already been published on more constructional issues (e.g. Hollmann 2013; Kerz & Wiechmann 2015; Vieira & Wiedemer 2019; Morin, Desagulier & Grieve 2020; Soukup 2022; Szmrecsanyi & Engel 2022; Röthlisberger & Tagliamonte 2021), we see room for a more thorough investigation of how to integrate sociolinguistic aspects when a) modeling constructional variation, spread and change b) sketching network relations in the constructicon and c) postulating generational, group or individual constructional templates.

We situate sociolinguistic variation at various scales of social organization. The traditional Labovian study of variation and change is concerned with relationships among the linguistic systems of different strata of a given speaker population, finding "orderly heterogeneity" (Weinreich et al. 1968) along demographic lines such as age, gender, and socio-economic status. More recent approaches in sociocultural linguistics (Bucholtz & Hall 2008) or "third-wave" (Eckert 2012) variation studies have placed greater emphasis on identity and social meaning of individual forms in context. A central theoretical concept in this regard is indexicality, i.e. the anchoring of linguistic forms to the situation of utterance, which can have a presupposing (utterance form is predictable from context) and an entailing dimension (utterance form influences context). In this view, the social meaning of linguistic forms is understood as a range of potentials, organized in an "indexical field" (Eckert 2008). Finally, our understanding of sociolinguistic variation also encompasses register, both as conceptualized by Agha (2007) and Biber (e.g. 1988).

This leads to the following research questions:

- How, how much and what kind of sociolinguistic knowledge should be integrated into constructional templates and network sketches?
- How does one cater for the fact that there are different levels of conventionalization (regional, social, generational etc.)? How does this map onto a network sketch of the constructicon of a particular language?
- How should CxG model sociophonetic knowledge/variation?
- How are indexical presupposition and entailment to be integrated into constructional representations?
- How can the notion of an indexical field be incorporated into constructional accounts, i.e. the idea that many linguistic forms come with a range of meaning potentials, none of which is necessarily actualized in any given instance of use?
- How can register-sensitive language use be incorporated theoretically in variationist and constructional terms?
- In what ways do the data (sociolinguistic interviews and qualitative-ethnographic contextualization versus large corpora and controlled experiments) and methods of statistical analysis (mixed-effects regressions versus association measures) influence the results to be gained in the two fields and is there potential for mutual cross-fertilization at the methodological level? Where do methodologies clash?

We welcome papers which explicitly relate their presented empirical data and line of argumentation to the RQs above.

The workshop (approx. 12 papers) will start with an introduction by the organizers and will be concluded with a final discussion. We are soliciting abstracts of 500 words (including references and examples). Abstracts should be submitted to EasyChair before the **15 January 2024**. Please feel free to contact us, if you have any further questions.

Kind regards, Lotte Sommerer & Axel Bohmann

References:

Agha, Asif. (2007). *Language and social relations*. Cambridge: CUP.
Biber, Douglas. (1988). *Variation across speech and writing*. Cambridge: CUP.
Bucholtz, Mary & Kira Hall (2008). All of the above: New coalitions in sociocultural linguistics. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 12(4), 410–431.
Diessel, Holger. (2019). *The grammar network. How linguistic structure is shaped by language use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Croft, William. (2001). *Radical Construction Grammar. Syntactic theory in typological perspective*. Oxford: OUP.
Eckert, Penelope. (2008). Variation and the indexical field. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 12(4), 453–476.
Eckert, Penelope. (2012). Three waves of variation study: The emergence of meaning in the study of sociolinguistic variation. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41(1), 87–100.
Geeraerts, Dirk, Gitte Kristiansen, & Yves Peirsman (2010). *Advances in Cognitive Sociolinguistics*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
Goldberg, Adele E. (2006). *Constructions at work*. Oxford: OUP.

Harder, Peter (2010). *Meaning in mind and society. A functional contribution to the social turn in cognitive linguistics*. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter Mouton.

Hollmann Willem B. (2013). Constructions in Cognitive Sociolinguistics. In Thomas Hoffmann & Graeme Trousdale (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of construction grammar*. Oxford: OUP, 491-510.

Kerz, Elma & Daniel Wiechmann. (2015). Register-contingent entrenchment of constructional patterns: causal and concessive adverbial clauses in academic and newspaper writing. *Journal of English Linguistics* 43(1), 61–85.

Kristiansen, Gitte, Karlien Franco, Stefano De Pascale, Laura Rosseel & Weiwei Zhang. (2022). *Cognitive Sociolinguistics revisited*, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

Morin, Cameron, Guillaume Desagulier & Jack Grieve. (2020). Dialect syntax in Construction Grammar: theoretical benefits of a constructionist approach to double modals in English. In Timothy Colleman et al (eds.), The wealth and breadth of construction-based research, *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 34, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 248–58.

Röthlisberger, Melanie & Sally Tagliamonte. (2020). The social embedding of a syntactic alternation: Variable particle placement in Ontario English. *Language Variation and Change, 32*(3), 317–348.

Schmid, Hans-Jörg. (2020). *The dynamics of the linguistic system. Usage, conventionalization, and entrenchment*. Oxford: OUP.

Soukup, Barbara. (2022). Speaker design goes Construction Grammar. In Gitte Kristiansen, Karlien Franco, Stefano De Pascale, Laura Rosseel and Weiwei Zhang (eds.), *Cognitive sociolinguistics revisited*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 621-632.

Szmrecsanyi, Benedikt & Alexandra Engel (2022). Register variation in a cognitive (Socio)linguistics perspective. In Gitte Kristiansen, et al (eds.), *Cognitive sociolinguistics Revisited*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 398-409.

Ungerer, Tobias & Stefan Hartmann. (2023). *Constructionist approaches: past, present, future*. Cambridge: CUP.

Vieira, Marcia & Marcos Luiz Wiedemer (2019). Variationist Sociolinguistics and Construction Grammar: the challenges and the prospects of compatibilization. In *Dimensões e experiências em sociolinguística*. São Paulo: Blucher, 121–128.

Weinreich, Uriel, William Labov & Marvin Herzog. (1968). Empirical foundations for a theory of language change. In Winfred P. Lehmann & Yakov Malkiel (eds.), *Directions for historical linguistics: A symposium in Austin, TX*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 95–188.