

Book Review

Book Review: Traugott (2022). *Discourse Structuring Markers in English. A Historical Constructionalist Perspective on Pragmatics*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins. ISBN: 978-90-272-1091-3

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The cognitive-constructionist approach to language has significantly gained prominence, with recent developments expanding its exploration into language change. Diachronic Construction Grammar, as a vibrant branch of construction grammar, has gained significant popularity in recent times (Traugott and Trousdale 2013; Hilpert 2013; Barðdal et al. 2015). By converging the perspectives of historical linguistics and constructionalist frameworks, Diachronic Construction Grammar offers fresh insights into the emergence of new constructions and changes to existing ones throughout their historical evolution (Noël 2007). Traugott has consistently demonstrated her enthusiasm for constructionalist models and has presented systematic frameworks to elucidate diachronic changes across various constructions in her earlier research (Traugott and Trousdale 2013; Traugott 2015). Her latest monograph provides a profound contribution to the understanding of the diachronic development of discourse markers (henceforth, DMs). Through combining the cognitive-constructionalist framework with pragmatics, Traugott rethinks the relationships between meaning changes, preeminently subjectification, intersubjectification and textualization from a constructionalist perspective. Subjectification and intersubjectification pertain to meaning shifts primarily grounded in the perspective of addressers and the cognitive stances and social identities of addressees, respectively. Textualization, on the other hand, indicates an increased degree of textual function in discourse, influencing the interpretation of textual relationships by addressees (p. 197).

The current work has been inspired by construction grammar as explicated in Goldberg (1995) and Croft (2001), wherein a construction is defined as a form-meaning pairing. The meaning/function of a construction encompasses semantic properties, pragmatic properties and discourse functions (Croft 2001, p. 18). Traugott extends this conceptualization by incorporating communicative functions (such as subjectification, intersubjectification and textualization) in order to account for various types of constructions including DMs. This proposal is notable due to its argument that the function of a complex linguistic unit becomes conventionalized, stored within a construction, and is perceived as intersubjective in the interpretation of the addressee within the context of dyadic communication. The book embraces the pivotal principle that language knowledge is comprised by a network of constructions and the links therein (Langacker 1987). This network-based perspective offers thought-provoking insights into pragmatics, particularly historical constructionist pragmatics, in that it investigates the evolution of DMs with respect to their family relationships.

The first point under scrutiny concerns the taxonomy and clear definitions of the overlapping sub-categories under the umbrella term “pragmatic markers” (p. 5). Specifically, this book extensively employs the term “discourse structuring markers” (henceforth, DSMs) (p. 4) to denote connectors that not only signal the relationship between different discourse

segments but also shape it in alignment with the intentions of addressers. Within this framework, DMs (e.g., *by the way*) are confined to multifunctional and pragmatic connectors, subsumed under the category of DSMs, and are distinguished from monofunctional and contentful DSMs, which are referred to as 1DSMs (e.g., *further*). Traugott uses the concept of DSMs to incorporate a wide range of expressions situated along the semantic–pragmatic continuum, spanning from the monofunctional 1DSM end to the multifunctional DM end, in order to elucidate the origins and development of syntactic conjuncts.

The monograph is structured into fourteen chapters, grouped into three parts. Part I (Chapters 2–5), titled “Foundations”, is dedicated to presenting the fundamental theoretical concepts that underpin the arguments provided in the book. Part II (Chapters 6–10), titled “Case Studies”, delves into the emergence and development of four representative topic-orienting DSMs, namely elaborative markers (e.g., *moreover*), contrastive markers (e.g., *instead*), digressive markers (e.g., *by the way*), and markers indicating a return to a prior topic (e.g., *back to X point*). Part III (Chapters 11–13), titled “Three open issues for a historical constructionalist perspective on pragmatics”, echoing the subtitle of the book, shifts to a discussion of meaning change with regard to subjectification and intersubjectification in constructional terms. Two further questions are explored: whether the clause positions of DSMs can be assumed as meaningful constructions and how to sketch a constructional network model of a DSM that accounts for contextual changes in historical terms. The primary data were manually extracted from five large electronically searchable corpora in English, categorized based on periodization, providing substantial empirical evidence to support the validity of the up-to-date theoretical hypotheses presented in this book.

Chapter 2 gives a thorough introduction to the foundational tenets in cognitive linguistics and construction grammar, establishing a strong conceptual framework for the subsequent examination of DSMs. The author presents the influential constructional model proposed by Croft (2001), which posits that the distinction between semantics (truth-conditional and conventional content) and pragmatics (non-truth-conditional, (un)conventional content) is not absolute but rather exists along a gradient. In Chapter 3, a potential problem regarding the definitions of constructionalization and constructional change is addressed, as their precise delineation is somewhat ambiguous in the work of Traugott and Trousdale (2013). Notably, in this book, Traugott resolves the problem by regarding constructionalization as a “point” of construction creation, while specifying constructional change as a gradual “process” (p. 50). More crucially, the author emphasizes the essential role of interlocutors in driving usage change and updates the concepts of constructionalization and constructional changes by incorporating shifts in the contextual properties of expressions. This highlights that the replication and entrenched innovative usage of specific expressions within certain contextual assemblies enable the meaning changes. The remainder of this chapter elaborates on the basic mechanisms, viz., neoanalysis, analogy, borrowing, frequency and pragmatic inferencing, which potentially trigger constructional changes and constructionalization of procedurals from a historical perspective.

Chapter 4 takes as a point of departure the interpretation of DSMs as conventionalized constructions with the form-meaning pairing [[Conjunct] ↔ [Discourse Structuring Marker]]. Against this backdrop, the author proposes the Discourse Structuring Marker Trajectory Hypothesis to provide a comprehensive and fascinating interpretation of the development of DSMs (p. 73). This hypothesis encompasses both syntactic changes, involving the transition from circumstance adverbials to conjuncts, and meaning changes, wherein DSMs undergo a shift from contentful to predominantly pragmatic features in historical evolution. In Chapter 5, a concise overview of four frameworks, namely grammaticalization, pragmaticalization, Discourse Grammar and Diachronic Construction Grammar, is provided to explicate the rise of DSMs from diverse perspectives. Traugott conducts a comparative analysis of these interpretations, highlighting the potential issues associated with the first three. This analysis ultimately leads to the conclusion that Diachronic Construction Grammar offers a full and insightful account for understanding DSMs. This approach examines DSMs within a multi-level grammar model, considering their position in schema

networks and exploring vertical inheritance relationships as well as horizontal sisterhood associations with other schemas.

In terms of case studies, the author taps into a diverse range of corpora encompassing various text types and genres from different historical periods. This approach provides a broad-scale perspective on the usage patterns of DSMs. Chapters 6–10 are organized in a parallel structure, wherein each subcategory of DSMs is examined. These chapters delve into the historical development of several synonymous members within a specific conceptual domain, and finally, an interim conclusion is drawn. In terms of historical trends, each data-rich chapter offers a semasiological analysis of diverse uses of a specific DSM over time. Cumulatively, these chapters present an onomasiological account of alternative DSMs within a schema network or “constructional space” (p. 119) associated with a particular discourse contextual concept. These convincing case studies exemplify the dynamic nature of (sub)schemas and demonstrate that a constructional space can not only undergo internal expansion or contraction throughout its history, but also build connections with other (sub)schemas externally, thus forming a larger constructional network. In light of the rise of DMs like *all the same* and *however*, the author slightly revises the DSM Trajectory Hypothesis by incorporating the adjective phrase as a potential source of DSMs. Although the histories of different DSMs vary, with some undergoing the initial phase proposed in the DSM Trajectory Hypothesis, namely the shift from a circumstance adverbial or an adjective phrase to a construction $[[\text{Conjunct}] \leftrightarrow [\text{DSM}]]$, and others becoming further reshaped after constructionalization to achieve a DM status through constructional change, the modified DSM Trajectory Hypothesis is borne out by the development of all the DSMs discussed in this part.

Moving on to “three open issues” drawn from the data analysis in the preceding chapters, the author delves into the interaction between pragmatics and construction grammar. In Chapter 11, Traugott explores the roles of subjectification, intersubjectification and textualization in the development of DSMs, offering a novel interpretation of their relationships. The author posits that while subjectification and intersubjectification are conceptually closely related, they maintain an independent status, yet are further intertwined with textualization. Notably, these three meaning changes occur simultaneously in the constructionalization of DSMs, rather than unfolding sequentially along a unidirectional diachronic continuum. More crucially, Traugott advances the hypothesis that as a DSM becomes constructionalized, it inherently experiences textualization, weak subjectification and weak intersubjectification, thereby acquiring the constructional properties of textuality, subjectivity, and intersubjectivity. Illustrated through the case of *by the way*, when employed as a circumstantial adverbial, it pertains to spatial relationships within the real-world context. However, when used as a $[[\text{Conjunct}] \leftrightarrow [\text{DSM}]]$, it entails a subjective assessment of information importance, serving a more textual function compared to its lexical source. Nevertheless, it is advisable to seek further evidence to ascertain whether this hypothesis is robustly supported by pragmatic markers in general, whilst assessing its applicability across diverse languages.

In Chapter 12, relating to the second of the three open issues, a compelling discussion is presented regarding whether the conceptualization of clausal positions is meaningful from (inter)subjective perspectives. Taking examples such as *after all* and *by the way*, the author suggests that while the discourse functions of DSMs may change when positioned in pre-clausal, post-clausal and clause-medial slots during development, the positional functions of DSMs are highly specific to individual instances, contingent upon concrete construction items. Consequently, these positional functions cannot be analogized or generalized across all conjuncts that serve as adverbial linkers denoting addressers’ evaluation of the relationship between two linguistic units (Quirk et al. 1985, p. 440). This meticulous analysis leads to the conclusion that slot position does not constitute a construction, thereby providing a testing ground for the hypothesis that “it’s constructions all the way down” (Goldberg 2003, p. 223). Chapter 13 addresses the topic of node creation and loss within constructional networks in historical terms, which is highly relevant to the overall theme of

the book. This book reiterates the idea that context, as it relates to discourse function, is an indispensable factor in constructional change of DSMs. Traugott discusses the crucial role of contexts in meaning change and incorporates contextual change into network models of DSMs, presenting an outstanding pattern for schematically outlining the historical development of various DSMs. The architecture of the models is characterized by nodes that represent interconnected concrete micro-constructions and abstract schemas at a higher level, with links denoting associations with the context in which the node is activated.

This enlightening monograph is an impressive piece of high-quality work, based on extensive empirical evidence that complements intuition-based theoretical accounts. The author's primary contributions reside in two areas. Firstly, the proposal of new hypotheses regarding the historical development of DSMs, such as the DSM Trajectory Hypothesis and the constructional network models, from a diachronic constructionalist perspective. These provide valuable insights and establish a solid foundation for further research on meaning/function changes of pragmatic markers. Secondly, the author offers updated definitions and elaborations on the concepts of subjectification, intersubjectification and textualization, shedding new light on their relationships. Furthermore, the book's engaging nature is reflected in its lucid clarifications of constructional change, constructionalization and the finely-grained categorization of constructional components including pragmatic and contextual factors. This accessibility makes the book reader-friendly for scholars specializing in pragmatics, even those without extensive knowledge of the constructionalist framework. Notably, specialists of pragmatics stand to benefit greatly from adopting the constructional network thinking approach, as it allows for the exploration of not only the multi-level components of DSMs within a constructional model, but also the development of related subschema within the same constructional network. This contrasts with the traditional approach of treating expressions as isolated items. Additionally, the author effectively alternates between in-depth discussions of theoretical hypotheses and case studies of historical phenomena. Considering this book is clearly and logically structured with its usage-based and corpus-based approach to data analysis, the profiling method in this book is likely to be an important source of inspiration for researchers wishing to do further research in this domain.

The strengths of the book are evident, yet it also raises some questions. First, the empirical methodology employed in this study is purely qualitative, relying on diachronic observations and rich examples from a macro perspective to extrapolate the history of DSMs. However, further studies could benefit from a more precise analysis that identifies the specific temporal stages of a particular change and explores the exact factors that influence the change in DSMs as reflected in the network models. The inclusion of quantitative approaches including state-of-the-art techniques, such as multivariate cluster analysis (Gries and Hilpert 2008) and collocation analysis (Gries and Stefanowitsch 2004), is strongly recommended to complement the qualitative findings presented in this study. Second, the dataset used in this book focuses primarily on writing-based texts, some of which serve a speech-like purpose. However, since the primary function of DSMs lies in discourse organization that guides the argumentation process, and the change of communication functions in the development enables the pragmatic-semantic change, a greater emphasis needs to be placed upon the utterance data from turn taking, particularly the colloquial conversations between interlocutors. Such data from spoken interactions would reveal more discourse-structuring and interaction features in active and contextually relevant discourses, providing a broader scope for analysis.

That being said, this book provides an informative and updated theoretical foundation for the expanding field of research on construction grammar and pragmatics. It can undoubtedly serve as an invaluable resource for scholars and practitioners engaged in cognitive linguistics, pragmatics and historical linguistics.

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