

Call for Papers

Workshop proposal for the 51st annual meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea (SLE) 2019, Leipzig, Germany, August 21st-24th

**Gestures, facial expressions and body posture in CxG accounts of language:
core or periphery?**

Organized by Dr. des. Claudia Lehmann (c llehmann@uos.de) and Dr. phil. Meike Pentrel (mpentrel@uos.de), Universität Osnabrück

Call Deadline: 15 Nov 2018

Keywords: Construction Grammar, Multimodal Construction Grammar, gestures, body language, constructions

This workshop aims at investigating the relationship between verbal expressions and gestures, facial expressions and body posture using Construction Grammar (e.g. Goldberg 2006, Hoffmann & Trousdale 2013), or CxG, as the theoretical background. As Langacker (2008: 250) points out: “Manual gestures [...], facial expressions, actions performed more globally (e.g. a shrug), and even factors like body language [...] may all be closely bound up with linguistic expressions, in which case they can hardly be excluded from ‘language’ on an a priori basis.” CxG provides a powerful framework for accounting for this very relationship. Its units of analysis, constructions, are defined as form-meaning pairings (e.g. Croft 2001: 18) and besides verbal expressions, gestures and the like can be such forms.

Recently, research on multimodal CxG has started to address these issues (e.g. Steen & Turner 2013, Zima & Bergs 2017). Quite a few publications report on notable co-occurrences of constructions and gestures (Schoonjans, Brône & Feyaerts 2015, Zima 2014a, Hsu, Brône & Feyaerts 2018). In the light of these findings, some researchers suggest that certain “constructions may not only have verbal but also gestural structure” (Zima 2014b: 27) and that gestures are thus integral parts of specific constructions. In these, gestural and verbal parts combine to arrive at a holistic meaning that is more than the sum of its parts (Schoonjans 2018). While multimodal CxG so far mainly focuses on gestures, the present workshop likes to include facial expressions and other bodily expressions, e.g. posture, in the discussion. Like gestures, body language and facial expressions also recurrently co-occur with certain expressions/constructions. An informal observation suggests, for example, that the construction *Tell me about it*, which is associated with an ironic meaning by convention, is often accompanied by a facial expression known as “blank face” whereas its nonconstructional counterpart (the sincere request) is not. However, the ironic construction is likewise accompanied by a flat intonation contour and so the question remains, if and to what extent “the body” can be seen as part of a construction since probably not all facets of a construction will be stored in the constructicon, i.e. the mental repository of constructs (cf. Goldberg 2013, Hoffmann 2017).

Yet, the notion of multimodal constructions is controversial. Since such constructions seem to also work in non-face-to-face situations, there are voices which analyse gestures not as integral but “as constructions in their own right that enter into crossmodal collocations with linguistic items” (Uhrig 2018) while others argue that truly multimodal constructions (as described by Schoonjans (2018) above), which are stored in the long-term memory, are rare phenomena (Hoffmann 2017). Given the

variability of gestures and their potential infrequent co-occurrence with verbal expressions, the entire idea of multimodal constructions can easily be challenged (cf. Cienki 2018).

Although opinions remain divergent as to whether multimodal constructions truly exist (Ningelgen & Auer 2017; Schoonjans 2017), the fact that embedded depictions serve as constituents of canonical verbal utterances argues for multimodal semiotic signals being integral parts of constructions.

Following from these different approaches this workshop addresses among others the following questions and issues:

- Are constructions multimodal or is each bodily expression a construction in its own right?
- Are gestures/facial expressions part of the constructions stored in the construction or are they idiosyncratic occurrences that cannot be generalized?
- Are there constructions that are always accompanied by gestures, facial expressions etc., even in non-face-to-face conversations? Does the lack thereof lead to miscomprehension?
- Are facial expressions universal or cultural specific? Even if they differ, are there certain constructions that are more prone to be accompanied by facial expressions than others?
- How can we incorporate bodily actions in a CxG model?
- The entrenchment of gestures
- The acquisition of gestures and facial expressions (as part of constructions)
- Is there a special type of gesture that is especially prone to become part of a construction (e.g. metaphoric gestures, iconic, etc.)?

The workshop invites general papers addressing the relationship between bodily expressions and construction grammar as well as papers featuring case studies on that relationship.

Provisional titles and abstracts (up to 300 words) may be sent until November 15th to Claudia Lehmann (cllehmann@uos.de).

References

Cienki, A. (2018). The multimodality issue: taking ‘utterance’ as a starting point. Paper presented at the International Conference on Construction Grammar 10, Paris, July 18th 2018.

Croft, W. (2001). *Radical construction grammar: Syntactic theory in typological perspective*. Oxford University Press on Demand.

Goldberg, A. E. (2013). Constructionist approaches. In Hoffmann & Trousdale (eds), 15-31.

Goldberg, A. E. (2006). *Constructions at work: The nature of generalization in language*. Oxford University Press on Demand.

Hoffmann, T. (2017). Multimodal constructs–multimodal constructions? The role of constructions in the working memory. *Linguistics Vanguard*, 3(s1).

Hoffmann, T., & Trousdale, G. (Eds.). (2013). *The Oxford handbook of construction grammar*. Oxford University Press.

Hsu, H., Brône, G. & Feyaerts, K. (2018). Embedded depictions as multimodal constructions. Paper presented at the International Conference on Construction Grammar 10, Paris, July 18th 2018.

Langacker, R. W. (2008). *Cognitive grammar: A basic introduction*. OUP USA.

Ningelgen, J. & Auer, P. (2017). Is there a multimodal construction based on non-deictic so in German? *Linguistics Vanguard*, 3(s1).

Schoonjans, S. (2018). *Modalpartikeln als multimodale Konstruktionen*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Schoonjans, S. (2017). Multimodal Construction Grammar issues are Construction Grammar issues. *Linguistics Vanguard*, 3(s1).

Schoonjans, S., Brône, G., & Feyaerts, K. (2015). Multimodalität in der Konstruktionsgrammatik: Eine kritische Betrachtung illustriert anhand einer Gestikanalyse der Partikel einfach. In Bücker, J., Imo, W. & Günthner, S. (eds.), *Konstruktionsgrammatik V*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 291–308.

Steen, F. & Turner, M. (2013). *Multimodal Construction Grammar*. In Borkent, M., Dancygier, B. & Hinnell, J. (eds.), *Language and the Creative Mind*. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, 255-274.

Uhrig, P. (2018). *Multimodal Constructions or Crossmodal Collostructions?* Paper presented at the International Conference on Construction Grammar 10, Paris, July 18th 2018.

Zima, E. (2014a). Gibt es multimodale Konstruktionen? Eine Studie zu [V(motion) in circles] und [all the way from X PREP Y]. *Gesprächsforschung - Online-Zeitschrift zur verbalen Interaktion* (15), 1-48

Zima, E. (2014b). English multimodal motion constructions. A construction grammar perspective. *Linguistic Society of Belgium*, 8, 14-29.

Zima, E., & Bergs, A. (2017). Multimodality and construction grammar. *Linguistics Vanguard*, 3(s1).