(Diachronic) Construction Grammar

DCxG

Inter-framework colloquium Utrecht

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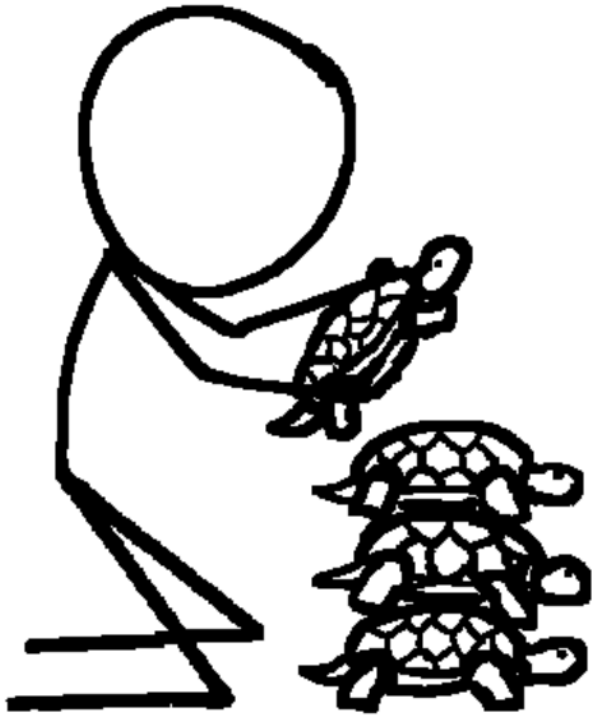
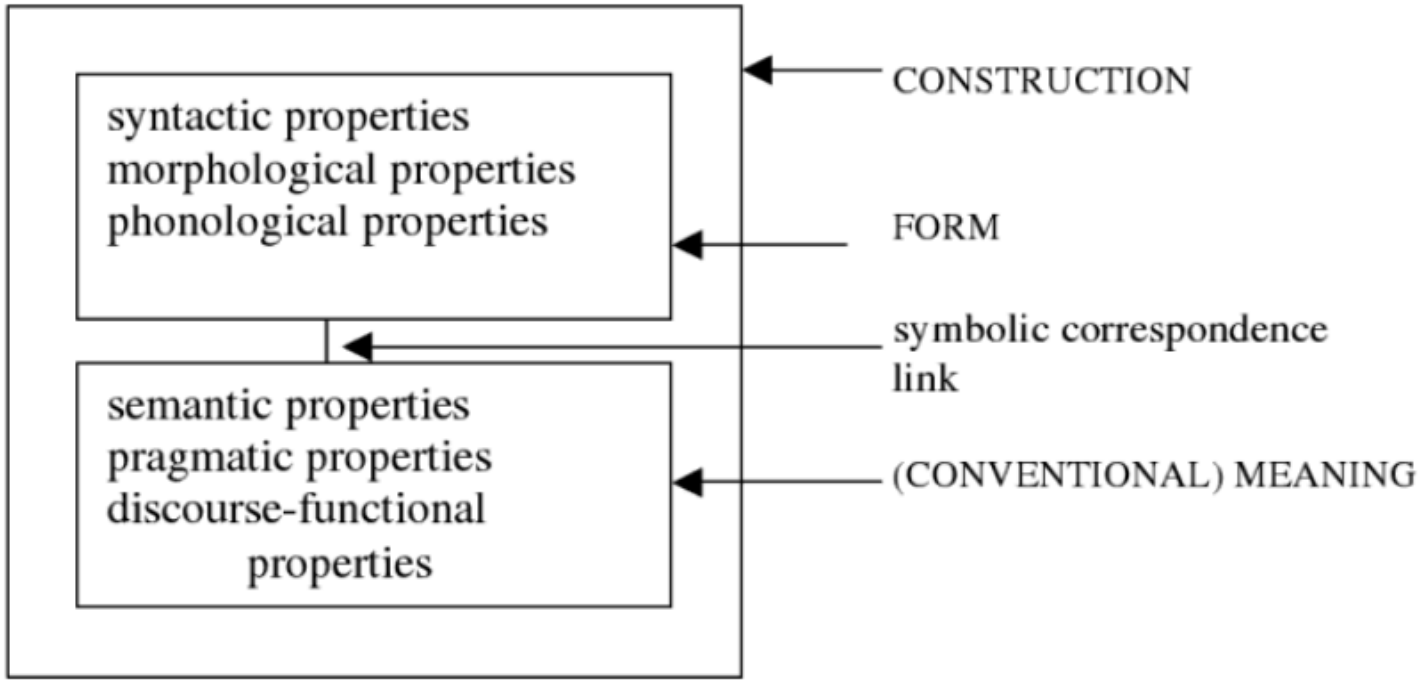
It’s constructions all the way down



”Construction grammar has generalized the notion of a construction to apply to any grammatical structure, including both its form and meaning.” (Croft 2001: 17)

Complex + specific	**idioms:** [*be*-TNS *all ears*] [*pull* NP*’s leg*]
Complex + schematic	**syntax:** [SUBJ *be*-TNS V-*en by* OBL]
Complex (bound)	**morphology**: [N-*s*], [V-TNS] [V-*ment*]$_{N}$
Atomic + specific	**word/lexicon:** [*this*], [*colourless*], [*idea*]
Atomic + schematic	**lexical/grammatical/syntactic catgory**: [DEM], [ADJ], [N]

Constructions are form-meaning pairings



"Cognitive linguistic approaches … have revived notional definitions, as a consequence of the rise of a conceptual approach to semantics."

"The semantic contrast in the linguistic expressions, including the lexical category that is used, reflects … **conceptualization**, not the "objective" properties of the entities being described."

(Baker & Croft 2017)

Constructions are form-meaning pairings

NOUN - FORM
determiners, pluralization, …

↓

NOUN - MEANING
'thing' conceptualization

VERB - FORM
tense, person/number, …

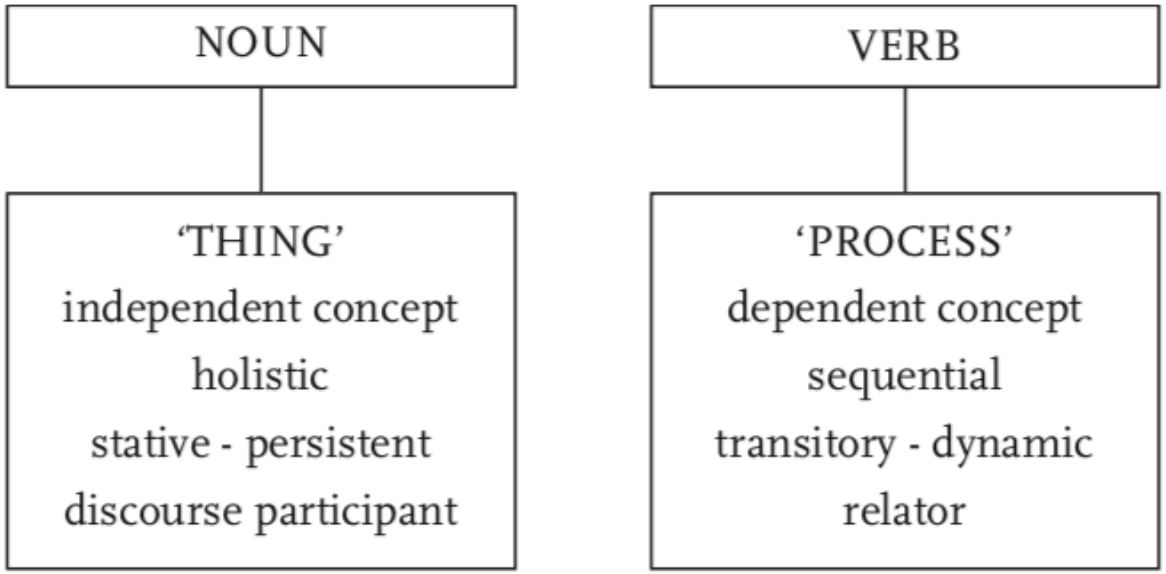
↓

VERB - MEANING
'process' conceptualization

(e.g. Gleason 1965; Schachter 1985)

(e.g. Hopper & Thompson 1985; Langacker 1987; Croft 2001)

Constructions are form-meaning pairings



(Figure from Fonteyn 2019; based on Croft 1991, Croft 2001, Langacker 2008, Baker & Croft 2017)

FIGURE 2.2. Schematic representation of the abstract functional-semantic values that characterize nouns vs. verbs.

Continuum Grammar

- Grammar-Lexicon continuum
- Continuous or ‘gradient’ structure of categories
  - “grammatical categories are very much like everyday categories” (Thompson & Hopper 2001: 47)
    - Subsective gradience
    - Intersective gradience

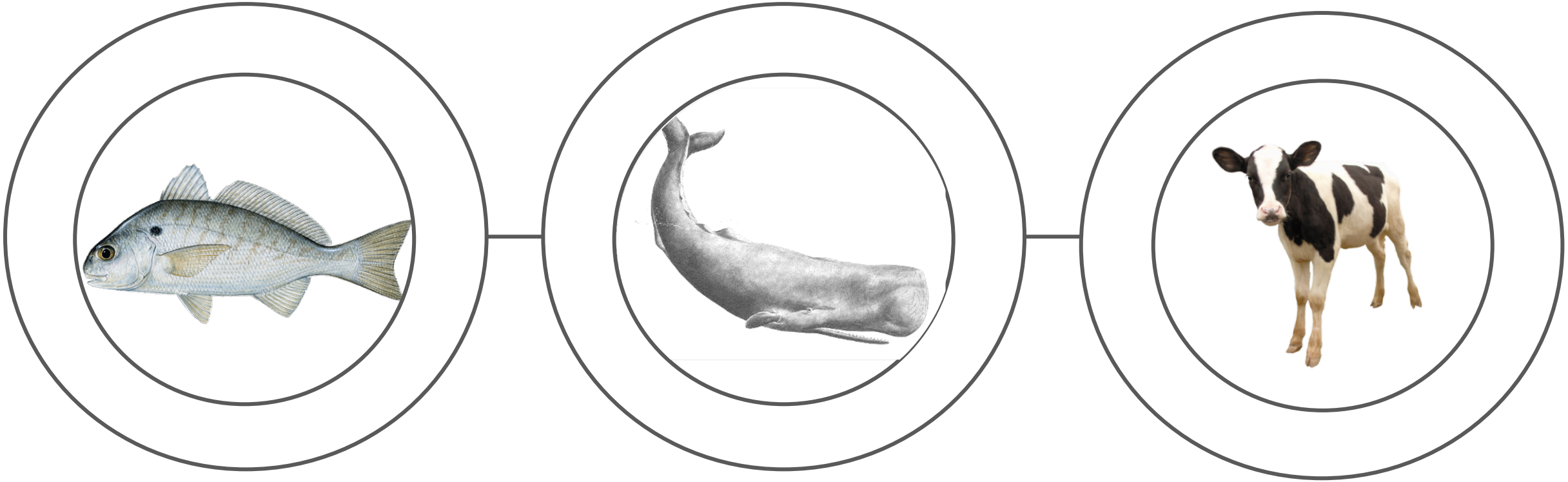
periphery

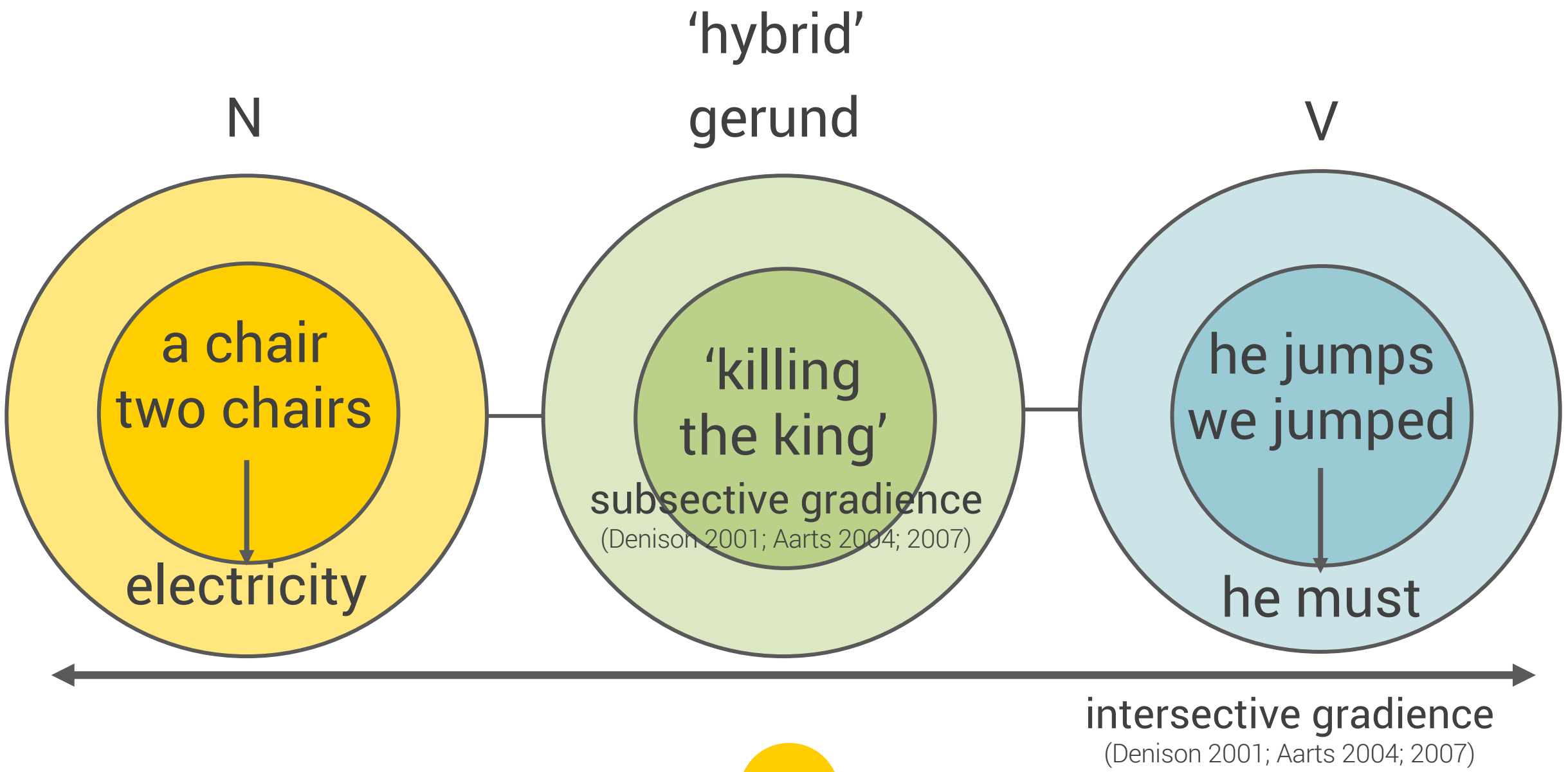
prototype

fish

‘hybrid’

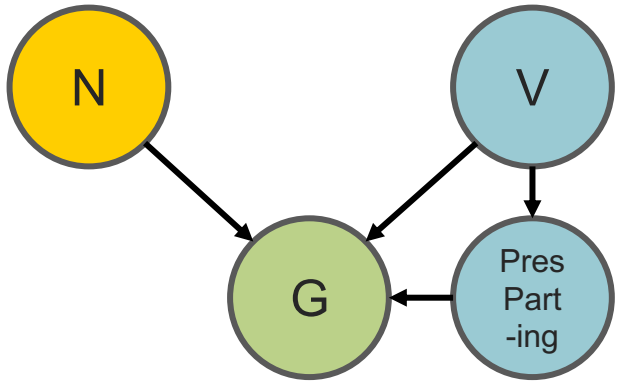
mammal




‘hybrid’
gerund
N
V
a chair
two chairs
electricity
‘killing
the king’
subsective gradience
(Denison 2001; Aarts 2004; 2007)
he jumps
we jumped
he must
intersective gradience
(Denison 2001; Aarts 2004; 2007)

Multiple inheritance

- In some strands of CxG, such hybrid structures are explained as *new* constructions that inherit features from two (or, in principle, n) higher-order constructions, i.e. ‘multiple inheritance’ (Trousdale 2015: 39).
- “The category GERUND inherits properties from both NOUN and VERB” (Trousdale 2015: 19)
- Diachronically, category mixing is perhaps explained better through ‘feature transfer’ from peers that either functionally or formally resemble one another.



DCxG

DCxG: summing up

- Lexical categories are schematic and atomic constructions (i.e. form-meaning pairings).
- What we conceive of as nouns and verbs should be understood in terms of associative (statistical) connections between lexemes and particular functionally/semantically/pragmatically specified slots of other, complex constructional schemas.
- The analysis of hybrid structures as products of multiple inheritance from NOUN-VERB is not so different from formal accounts (such as HPSG);
- The approach difficult to align with approaches where there is no room for intermediate or underspecified category membership (e.g. LFG).

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Categories are emergent

e.g. John plays the piano.

e.g. John plays the piano to pieces.

> It is not ‘play’ but the construction in which it occurs that caries the meaning

> Similarly, it is not the case that words such as ‘game’ or ‘stone’ are specified as N or V; these lexical items are rather probabilistically linked to referential or relational slots in particular constructions (also called N/V schemas).

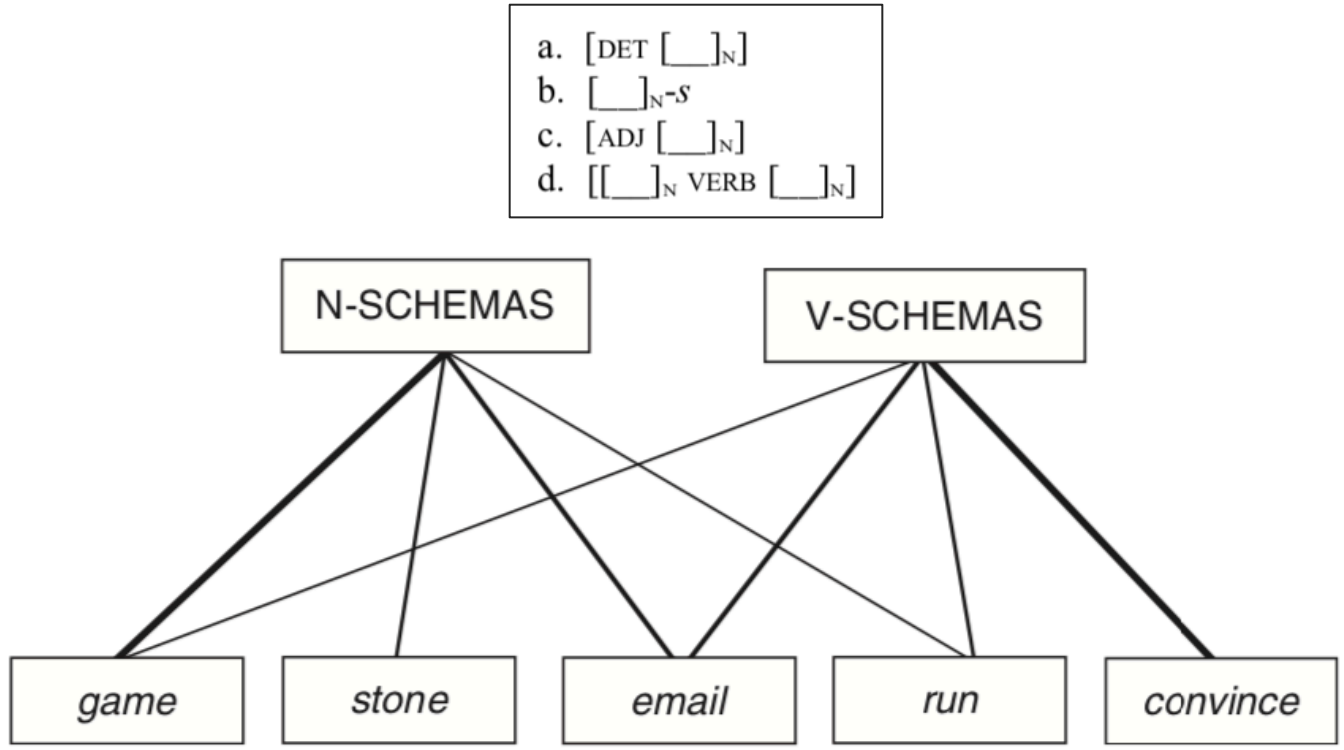

Figure 8.2 Word class network of lexemes and N/V-schemas (in English)

Diessel (2019)

Diachronic feature transfer

- Gerund as the product of reanalysis (cf. Fanego 2004):

  e.g. *by killing sore* > 'bitter killing' or 'killing bitterly'

  PREP* [__ing]$_{N}$ > PREP* [___ing]$_{N/V?}$ **by, in, for, of*

  - actualization: *by killing (of) them > by killing dragons > by having killed*

  - diffusion: *killing dragons > my killing dragons > the killing dragons*

- What happens in actualization of reanalysis is "at least in part a function of the resemblance a given innovation bears to existing patterns already licensed by the grammar" (De Smet 2012: 629).