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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complex + specific</td>
<td><strong>idioms:</strong> [be-TNS all ears] [pull NP’s leg]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex + schematic</td>
<td><strong>syntax:</strong> [SUB] be-TNS V-en by OBL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex (bound)</td>
<td><strong>morphology:</strong> [N-s], [V-TNS] [V-ment]__N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atomic + specific</td>
<td><strong>word/lexicon:</strong> [this], [colourless], [idea]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atomic + schematic</td>
<td><strong>lexical/grammatical/syntactic category:</strong> [DEM], [ADJ], [N]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“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
a chair
two chairs
electricity

'hybrid'
gerund

'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: 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).
References


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 carries 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’
  
  \[
  \text{PREP}^* \ [\text{___ing}]_N > \text{PREP}^* \ [\text{___ing}]_{N/V}^? \quad *\text{by, in, for, of}
  \]
  
  - 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).