

BOOK REVIEW

Elizabeth Closs Traugott. (2022). *Ten Lectures on a Diachronic Constructionalist Approach to Discourse Structuring Markers*. Leiden: Brill. ISBN 978-90-50690-9

Reviewed by Shan Zuo and Fuyin Li (Beihang University)

We remember E.C. Traugott as co-editor (with Terttu Nevalainen) of *The Oxford Handbook of the History of English* (2012), and as co-author (with Graeme Trousdale) of *Constructionalization and Constructional Changes* (2013). And now we have *Ten Lectures on a Diachronic Constructionalist Approach to Discourse Structuring Markers* (2022) — her *pièce de résistance*.

In May of 2021, Elizabeth Closs Traugott served as distinguished forum speaker for the twentieth *China International Forum on Cognitive Linguistics*, where she delivered ten lectures. These have been transcribed to become the volume that we shall now review.

The ideas in this book evolved in a milieu of cognitive linguistic theories, where, however, findings on pragmatics and construction grammar were rarely combined. This tome is, then, the first to attempt bridging that gap, by analyzing pragmatic markers from a diachronic constructionalist perspective. This book is a qualitative, corpus-based analysis and focuses on the following core issues: (1) how certain conventionalized knowledge could be explained in constructional terms; (2) how pragmatics — especially conventionalized non-truth-conditional meaning — could be more infused into constructional thinking; and (3) how diachronic construction grammar could better account for language change with some new consideration of constructional change and constructionalization. She draws on illustrations from actual case studies of the historical development of pragmatic markers such as *also* and *furthermore* (for elaboration), *but*, *instead*, and *all the same* (for contrast), and *by the way* (for digression). This marriage of two subfields in linguistics injects new thinking that molds the quintessence of what Traugott has been doing with grammaticalization, constructionalization, and constructional changes. More specifically, theoretical issues on constructional network, position, subjectification (and intersubjectification), pragmatic inferencing, and analogy are all looked at from a fresh viewpoint.

Traugott's volume significantly recasts theoretical work in pragmatics and diachronic construction grammar; it consequently should guide us in new directions for pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, and historical linguistics. On the whole, her theoretical innovations, rigorously refined terms, case illustrations, and

reader-friendly language make this book an attractive read for the linguistics community.

Her *Ten Lectures* are tripartitioned into chapters on theoretical background, case studies, and a final summation. The epicenter of it all is the diachronic development of discourse structuring markers.

Lecture 1 introduces the overall intent of the volume, the basic principles of Cognitive Construction Grammar and various approaches to Pragmatics. Traugott seeks to infuse more pragmatics into the constructionalist view, an approach to language study that has been neglected for the most part by practitioners of construction grammar. She challenges previous views that regard discourse markers as “extra-grammatical”; she contends, however, that discourse markers must be part of our knowledge of language. By way of illustration, Traugott draws from a trio of corpora: COCA (The Corpus of Contemporary American English), COHA (The Corpus of Historical American English), and EEBO (Early English Books Online); these provide essential context for her mode of analysis. The author argues that – different from semantics, which deals with truth-functional and invariant meanings – pragmatics involves meanings derived from actual utterances through inference and is thus context-dependent. Pragmatic markers of expressions – such as *by the way* or *so* – can be conventional, the prior expression forming the focus of this volume.

Lecture 2 investigates how and why language changes, before focusing on constructionalization and constructional changes. The entire chapter is devoted to the language user at both individual and community level. Individual language users come from different socio-cultural groups, at different ages, producing distinctive usages; thus promoting language change or innovation that can be rather abrupt at the individual level. Only increased frequency and replication of such innovation at the community level can be called language change, which is rather gradual. Mechanisms behind change can be analogy with extant constructions, neoanalysis, and borrowing. Changes that are established with simultaneously new form and meaning patterns at the community level are constructionalizations. The stages before and after constructionalization are pre-constructionalization and post-constructionalization and are accompanied with such modulations of contextual uses as *fixing of strings* (Budts & Petré 2020: 331) and alignment to other constructions by analogy.

Lecture 3 focuses on the distinction between grammaticalization and constructionalization. In Traugott’s view, they complement one another by addressing different issues with different data. More specifically, for grammatical items, approaches of construction grammar and grammaticalization could go hand in hand. However, substantive and lexical constructions, like ditransitive alternations, are not in the domain of grammaticalization, and thus researchers should

turn to a constructional account. In other words, the scope of studies in diachronic construction grammar is larger than that of grammaticalization. For the same data and same facts, construction grammar highlights expansion in such domains as productivity, schematicity, and compositionality, while grammaticalization highlights reduction in semantics and structure. Where grammaticalization and constructionalization converge is when they both investigate the change of collocational patterns or the contexts in which a gram develops. In either approach, analogy is now regarded as a major factor for change.

In Lecture 4, Traugott focuses on one particular type of pragmatic marker, namely discourse structuring markers (DSMs), which form the main topic of this volume. Based on the degree of contentfulness, mobility, and multifunctionality, Traugott further distinguishes between markers that are relatively contentful and monofunctional, and those that are pragmatic and multifunctional. She terms the former DSMs and the latter DMs (discourse markers). The major role of DSMs is centered in their coherent modeling of ongoing interaction between discourse segment or unit 1 and discourse segment or unit 2 which can be subjective and intersubjective. DMs are a subset of DSMs and may evolve out of DSMs diachronically. Traugott illustrates the evolution of DSMs by discussing the development of *after all* from a temporal adverbial meaning “after everything” to a multifunctional DM. The essence of semantic change lies in the particular context where *after all* occurs, namely reasoning and contrastive contexts. When the form became a monomorphemic chunk and its function transformed into an inferential DSM meaning “in the end”, constructionalization happened. When *after all* further developed subjective uses for justification in clause-initial position, concession in clause-final, and epistemic emphasis in clause-middle position, constructional changes occurred. Traugott notes that, apart from context-dependent factors, external factors such as systemic change and language contact or borrowing may also lead to change.

Lecture 5 delves into the rise and evolution of DMs through the lens of grammaticalization, pragmaticalization, and thetical grammar. While the development of DMs exhibits grammaticalization properties such as bleaching and coalescence, the expansions in both syntactic scope and mobile syntactic positions contradict Lehmann’s grammaticalization parameters which entail a reduction of structural scope (Lehmann 2015: 153) and a decrease in syntagmatic variability (Lehmann 2015: 167). The pragmaticalization accounts it as a process from a full item that changes category and status into a pragmatic item with textual or interpersonal meaning, bypassing an intermediary grammaticalization stage. Scholars like Traugott argue that pragmaticalization exclusively yields PMs and serves a single function, thus not requiring independent consideration. Discourse Grammar suggests the rise of pragmatic markers involves an instantaneous cooptation

process, deploying chunks of sentence grammar (clauses, phrases) for thetical functions. This process, distinct from the gradual nature of grammaticalization, allows for spontaneous occurrences. Traugott contends that the dual-level (sentence and thetical grammar) model violates Goldberg's (2006: 18) statement that "it's constructions all the way down". Instead, Traugott advocates for encompassing of pragmatic expressions into grammar and building a particular model of Construction Grammar.

Lecture 6 discusses the historical development of elaboratives, such as *moreover*, *also*, *furthermore*, *besides*, *in addition*, and *plus*. The function of elaboratives is to combine Ns, Adjs, and Vs and mark the continuation and expansion of discourse unit 1 to discourse unit 2. The examination of instances from corpora indicates that, despite being elaborative connectors, each of them demonstrates a distinct pathway of gradual development from distinct original meanings. To be more specific, *also*, *furthermore*, *moreover*, *besides*, and *in addition* derived from manner, spatial, temporal adverbs, and anaphoric spatial preposition respectively and transformed to elaborative connectors with distinct frequencies and genre preferences. Furthermore, it is the original meaning of these markers and the context where they occur that constrain their present-day usage. As Traugott illustrates, the combination of *further* with another elaborative helps comprehension. The result is the expansion of the Elaborative.Subschema since the twentieth century.

Lecture 7 centers around the development of contrastive markers with illustrations of *but*, *instead*, *all the same*, and *anyway*. Contrastives signal a contrast relation between discourse unit 1 and discourse unit 2. Traugott points out that grammaticalization has paid less attention than construction grammar to the links in a network. The various meanings are related to different domains, or in a constructionist view, there are links between constructions in a construction that are not randomly linked but related in meanings and functions. For example, *but* intersects with many other domains such as spatial schema, scalar exclusion schema, contrastive connector schema, and elaborative connector schema. Where Traugott differs from existing claims on connecting functions of discourse markers is that she argues *but* and *instead* are pragmatically different markers. The former is quite flexible and context-dependent while the latter rather restricted to the meaning of substitution, hence *but* serves as a DM and *instead* as a DSM.

Lecture 8 is concerned with digressives, a small sub-schema of the Connector.Schema. Digressives like *by the way*, *incidentally*, and *parenthetically*, signal a relative incoherence between two segments and function as a topic-shift. Traugott illustrates this with examples of *by the way* and *oh, by the way*. *By the way* can be used as a subjective comment or intersubjectively as a hedge. Traugott checks the types of clauses and contexts that support its gradual development from a cir-

cumstance adverbial denoting a literal directional path to a metaphorical adverbial meaning a textual path (“in passing”), which is a DSM marker of digression before functioning as a hedge and a DM. Petré (2019) refers to such contexts as assemblies of contexts that cohere and enable the development. When used as a hedge to soften a face threat, *by the way* can be seen as a DM used in a multi-functional way. While *Oh, by the way* is a digressive marker expressing an aggressive, pseudo-representation of another’s speech or action, and false impoliteness, which develops out of a rather polite hedge. The context where it occurs, especially the discourse unit 2 context, matters most. Traugott also lists other examples, including negative uses of *the* and of the French T-V pronominals, to support of the pejorative pragmatic enrichment.

Lecture 9 discusses constraints on combinations of DMs and whether position is a type of construction. Discourse marker combinations are categorized as DM+DM, DSM+DSM, and DM+DSM, with identifying criteria including potential insertion between the DSMs and DMs, functional variations indicating different meanings, phonetic unity, and usage frequency. Guided by these criteria, Traugott posits that *Oh, by the way* qualifies as a combination, whereas *now then* is a unit. This aligns with existing hypotheses such as the semantic coherence of combinators (Lohmann & Koops 2016) and the sequencing hierarchy of order of DMs from a more general to a more restricted meaning (Koops & Lohmann 2015). Traugott goes on to examine the correspondence between meanings (consider for example, the Elaborative.Schema and Contrastive.Schema) and positions relative to the clause, asserting that, in English, no particular position is associated with a certain meaning. Consequently, position can hardly be taken as a construction. This therefore challenges Goldberg’s (2003:233) hypothesis that “It’s constructions all the way down.”

Lecture 10 is centered around the constructional network of DSMs and summarizes the whole set of lectures. The network proposal has its origin in the claim made by Goldberg (2006:18) that “the network of constructions captures our grammatical knowledge *in toto*”. In the network, constructions of varying abstractness and generalizations are linked to each other horizontally and vertically, forming a constructional space. Traugott extends her comparison between the proposed constructional space and Hilpert’s study (2013). In her definition, constructional space is linked to conceptual structure, with a focus on abstract schemata. This contrasts with Hilpert’s study, which primarily concentrates on syntactic distribution and micro-constructions. Additionally, Traugott suggests that the context of related conceptual categories might contribute to language change. Considering the closer similarity between ditransitives and transitives, Traugott hypothesizes that the constructional space between the Ditransitive.Schema and Transitive.Schema is closer compared to Spatial.Schema and Connector.Schema.

In her *Ten Lectures*, Elizabeth C. Traugott has proven herself a pathfinder in the search to meld historical linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and pragmatics, furthering the theoretical development of diachronic construction grammar.

First of all, her theoretical contribution to diachronic construction grammar lies in its incorporation of contexts and linguistic co-texts in the examination of language production and diachronic change. This has led to a revision of constructionalization and constructional changes, as proposed by Traugott & Trousdale (2013). Constructionalization highlights conventionalization and replication, while constructional changes emphasize a gradual modulation of contextual use (e.g. syntagmatic collocations, paradigmatic alternatives of a slot, or systematic changes) that precedes and follows constructionalization. It is therefore with these distinct characteristics that a uniform model depicts both the form and function of the discourse markers in their diachronic change. This is in line with the essence of construction grammar proposing that language is the outcome of what speakers do instead of individual expressions with a life of their own. This is what diachronic construction grammar could reveal what construction grammar has missed.











Second, the study employs data extracted from extensive electronic corpora, supplemented by consultation with authoritative dictionaries, guaranteeing a relatively objective and reliable interpretation of instances. The abundant data also allow for a finer-grained analysis of the diachronic trajectories of DSMs, such as increased frequency of co-textual shifts and the emergence of new constructions. While the analyses are overall qualitative, certain hypotheses proposed may require empirical validation, as seen in the intuition-based constructional space for Connectors (Traugott 2022: 188). Employing statistical techniques (Multiple Correspondence Analysis, for example) could provide a tool for measuring the connections among micro-constructions in constructional space and offering insights into diachronic changes. Furthermore, the constructional network models for DSMs developed in this book have been restricted to English. To assess its generalizability, further research may consider incorporating different languages and varieties, including Chinese and other non-European languages.

Third, this work presents an innovative analysis of DSMs within constructional networks, considering vertical inheritance from abstract schemata, links to other discourse structuring constructions as well as historical links to spatial, temporal, and other schemata. This approach is quite appealing since the modeling of language changes under the combined networks is in line with the multidimensional nature of language and speaker's knowledge (e.g. Sommerer & Smirnova 2020). It has also paved the way for further research. For example, the horizontal links are just briefly sketched in Chapter 10. Therefore, additional research could

complement the current findings by exploring how other members (e.g. alternative expressions), within the constructional family might influence the emergence and obsolescence of pragmatic connectors, while also investigating the underlying mechanisms involved.

Nevertheless, one flaw cannot obscure the splendor of the jade. Traugott's new book stands out as a vital contribution to the comprehensive theoretical and practical analysis of diachronic construction grammar and pragmatics, and sheds light on further cross-linguistic analysis and comparison. This volume is highly recommended for any linguist with an interest in language change and pragmatics.


References

-  Budts, Sara & Petré, Peter. 2020. Putting connections center stage in diachronic construction grammar. In Sommerer, Lotte & Smirnova, Elena (eds.), *Nodes and networks in diachronic construction grammar*, 317–352. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
-  Goldberg, Adele E. 2003. Constructions: A new theoretical approach to language. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 7(5). 219–224.
- Goldberg, Adele E. 2006. *Constructions at work: The nature of generalization in language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
-  Hilpert, Martin. 2013. *Constructional change in English: Developments in allomorphy, word-formation and syntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
-  Koops, Christian & Lohmann, Arne. 2015. A quantitative approach to the grammaticalization of discourse markers: Evidence from their sequencing behavior. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 20(2). 232–259.
-  Lehmann, Christian. 2015. *Thoughts on grammaticalization*. 3rd edn. Berlin: Language Science Press.
-  Lohmann, Arne & Koops, Christian. 2016. Aspects of discourse marker sequencing: Empirical challenges and theoretical implications. In Kaltenböck, Gunther & Keizer, Evelien & Lohmann, Arne (eds.), *Outside the clause: Form and function of extra-clausal constituents*, 417–446. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
-  Petré, Peter. 2019. How constructions are born. The role of patterns in the constructionalization of be going to INF. In Busse, Beatrix & Möhlig-Falke, Ruth (eds.), *Patterns in language and linguistics: New perspectives on a ubiquitous concept*, 157–192. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
-  Sommerer, Lotte & Smirnova, Elena (eds.). 2020. *Nodes and networks in diachronic construction grammar*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
-  Traugott, Elizabeth C. 2022. *Ten lectures on a diachronic constructionalist approach to discourse structuring markers*. Leiden: Brill.
-  Traugott, Elizabeth C. & Trousdale, Graeme. 2013. *Constructionalization and constructional changes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Address for correspondence

Shan Zuo
School of Foreign Languages
Beihang University
37 Xueyuan Road
Haidian District Beijing
China
zuoshan@buaa.edu.cn

Co-author information

Fuyin Li
School of Foreign Languages
Beihang University
thomasli@buaa.edu.cn
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0094-9174>

Publication history

Date received: 3 July 2023
Date accepted: 11 January 2024
Published online: 29 August 2024