

## What's pragmatics doing outside constructions?

Here is a simplistic view of constructions which cannot be attributed to any particular scholar but which is implicit in much work in linguistics and therefore deserves to be identified as such:

Constructions are units linking form with meaning. The meaning of a construction can be called its *semantics*. While one may more broadly speak of a construction's 'function' instead of its meaning, constructional semantics is to be distinguished from *pragmatics*. This latter notion necessarily falls outside of a construction, given that it deals with how the context in which the construction happens to be used may also contribute to its meaning, perhaps better called its 'interpretation'.

This view is problematic, because some constructions have pragmatic content built into them. In this paper, I will therefore attempt to provide a more satisfactory view of constructions. The approach taken here is qualitative and theoretical. The chapter does not focus on one particular empirical phenomenon but surveys a range of pragmatic areas (inferences based on Gricean maxims, information structure, etc.), with the aim of examining if, and how, different pragmatic tiers of information could be integrated into a description of constructions. In particular, I will examine how pragmatics can be handled by a theory of form-function linking known as Construction Grammar.

A major question to be resolved is how much pragmatic information speakers have to store in their long-term memory and how much they can just figure out. Interpretations which are in principle computable may nonetheless be 'short-circuited'. A familiar example is the request interpretation of *Can you X?* But how can we know whether language users, when hearing such a pattern, draw on a stored interpretation rather than compute that interpretation afresh on each encounter? We will see that as 'ordinary' linguists, we can often circumvent psycholinguistic or neurolinguistic experiments designed to probe speakers' memorized pragmatic knowledge, by applying some simple cross- and intralinguistic heuristics.