GRAMÁTICA DE CONSTRUCCIONES. CONTRASTES ENTRE EL INGLÉS Y EL ESPAÑOL

Montserrat Martínez Vázquez. (ed.).
Universidad de Huelva. Grupo de Investigación Gramática Contrastiva, 2003.
(by Asunción Villamil Touriño, Universidad Complutense de Madrid)

Construction Grammar is one of the latest approaches to linguistic analysis, headed by authors like Goldberg (1995, 1996) and with contributors such as Langacker (1987, 1991, 2003) or Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor (1988). According to this approach, language is seen as composed of meaning and form pairings or "constructions". Nevertheless, different authors provide different definitions of the notion "construction" and vary according to the degree to which they consider semantic content to be evident in constructions.

This volume is a compilation of articles devoted to the study of different constructions in the light of Construction Grammar in English and Spanish. Edited by Monserrat Martínez Vázquez, it is published as part of the findings of a research group in contrastive analysis (Grupo de investigación de gramática contrastiva) in the University of Huelva, that has already devoted a volume to transitivity (Martínez Vazquez 1998).This volume represents the contribution of several scholars with articles that present examples of analysis of different verbal constructions and verbal complements in English and Spanish, grouped by semantic fields.

The book opens with an introduction by Martínez Vázquez (2003:7-16) that starts by providing insight into the concept of "construction" in different theoretical lines, as well as reviewing the different approaches existing towards Construction Grammar. Thus, the introduction explores the theoretical framework and

perspective for the practical corpus-oriented analysis of the rest of the articles, that focus on four specific constructions in English and Spanish. The main aim of the papers is therefore contrastive, though the starting point is the English language, due to the contributors' background in English studies. To delimit the semantic verb classes that will be analysed, the researchers contributing to this volume take Levin's semantic classes of English verbs (1993) as a point of reference. In order to select the corresponding Spanish class they used the semantic fields of the *Diccionario Ideológico de la Lengua Española* by Casares. All possible constructions of an event type were previously selected from two novels and their corresponding translations. Apart from this manual search they used the following prestigious electronic corpora: *Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual* by the RAE, *International Corpus of English* (ICE-GB), *Cobuild* and *British National Corpus.*

The first article (F. Gonzálvez-García: "Reconstructing Object Complements in English and Spanish", 2003:17-58) is devoted to the so-called subjective transitive construction. Its object is to analyse constructions of the type "Personally I consider *it distasteful*", "Están cometiendo un delito del que yo *me* considero *víctima*" (2003:18) and how they fit in a constructional view of argument structure as assumed by Construction Grammar. The author starts by arguing for the need of abstracting several general semantic features of the construction in question in English and Spanish: factual-like involvement, direct experience by the subject and subjective assessment. He discusses how these semantico-pragmatic features can be applied to verbs of cognition, physical perception, causation/volition, preference, and calling and/or official communication. Through these examples he attempts to show that the distribution of verbless clause encoding is semantically motivated. In order to contrast his arguments, he examines some shortcomings of the thesis that there is a perfect match between syntax and semantics (Hudson *et al* 1996). These counterarguments are played down by arguing that Construction Grammar does not assume that grammar is wholly semantically-motivated, but that grammar explanations must include pragmatic and discourse oriented factors. Finally, he exemplifies some of the advantages of a construction-grammar approach by showing its effectiveness in handling lexical shifts or cases of merging of different senses of a given construction.

The second article (P. Ron Vaz: "Los verbos de posesión en inglés y en español", pp. 50-90) examines how verbs of possession differ in English and Spanish. The paper aims at finding out whether verbal expressions of possession show significant differences in the two languages as it occurs in nominal possession. As in the previous article, the assumption is that the syntactic pattern of a verb is conditioned by meaning. Some examples are given to demonstrate how verbs of the same class do not need to appear in similar constructions (*run, walk, embezzle, steal*), it therefore being necessary to distinguish two meaning levels: the lexical meaning

of the verb and that of the construction. Following these theoretical guidelines the empirical analysis is carried out, selecting a list of verbs of possession from the corpora. An attempt is made at providing a definition of the complex notion of possession and some lexical subfields are proposed (*tener, contener, sostener, mantener, obtener, dar*), which imply in all cases the final possession of an entity on the part of the possessor. After this characterization, the author focusses on the parallelism between the concepts of location and possession. The expression of possession as a state is characterized in both languages as location in a possessive space, while the transfer of possession is argued to be conceptualised as movement. The latter can appear in the following syntactic structures: caused-motion construction, ditransitive construction, benefactive construction and fulfilling construction. As some differences appear in the grammaticalization of movement and possession, the author claims that they are due to the fact that while physical movement establishes a tridimensional scene with a figure, a space, direction, and manner of movement, in the possessive field there are no such dimensions.

B. Rodríguez Arrizabalaga's aim ("Sobre verbos de cambio ingleses y españoles: las clases de 'breaking', y 'cutting' frente a las de 'romper' y 'cortar'", pp. 91-140) is to compare two of the classes of verbs proposed by Levin (1993), Break Verbs and Verbs of Cutting, both verbs of change, from a syntactic and semantic point of view. Before dealing with the corpus analysis the author reviews the literature on verbs of change, focussing on the features that can help to delimit this class of verbs, as their ergative character and their behaviour in the middle alternation. Two questions are posed: do the group of verbs of 'cutting' and 'breaking' belong to the same class? If such is the case, what are their distinguishing features? The analysis of the corpora shows that they share almost identical behaviour in both languages in the different aspects or alternations analysed: inchoative/causative alternation, middle alternation, instrumental subject alternation, construction with a possessive complementation, conative alternation, resultative construction, construction without a patient argument, the construction *X' way*, and movement construction. These results lead to their classification under the same verbal heading, that of verbs of change that involve a change in the material integrity of a given entity. However, the constructions in the two languages do not show the same degree of productivity: the English counterparts and the verbs of 'cutting' seem to be able to appear in a wider range of syntactic patterns according the data.

L. González Romero ("Los verbos psicológicos en inglés y español", pp. 141-187) presents a study of psychological verbs in English and Spanish, that is, those verbs such as *frighten, admire* or *fear*, whose main differences are to be located in their stative/dynamic nature and in their codification of the experiencer and stimulus as subject or direct object. These differences prove out to be valid for English after the corpus analysis. In Spanish, however, the classification of these verbs according

to the afore-mentioned features does not seem appropriate: the verbs can be divided in two groups according to the syntactic expression of their arguments, but there is not a shared homogeneous syntactic behaviour in each group, as they react differently in the alternations and constructions analysed (passive, causative alternation, alternation of the possessor or its attribute as subject, alternation of the possessor as direct object, pronominalization, passive with *estar* + participle and constructions with *quedarse* + adjective and *sentirse* + adjective).

After summarizing the main points of the papers in this volume, let us now turn to some concluding evaluative remarks. On the one hand, one of the most positive features of these articles is the inclusion of corpus research against which contrast theoretical claims, which gives a higher reliability to the claims proposed. Moreover, the book covers a diverse range of verbal constructions that display the versatility of a contrastive Construction Grammar analysis. On the other hand, from a contrastive point of view it may seem a drawback that the starting point should always be English and Levin's classification of English verbs, since Spanish verbal classes are not made *ex novo* but rather are made to adjust to those classes proposed for English. The papers therefore imply the need for a more thorough analysis of constructions in Spanish, opening a rich path in contrastive research for the comparison between Spanish and English constructions. Furthermore, some of the verb classes and constructions analysed may seem classical ones in the linguistic tradition, such as verbs of possession, but in spite of this the reader will be agreeably surprised to find new perspectives on them.

On the whole, the volume presents up-to-date research in an attractive field of syntactic analysis, as the last AELCO Conference showed (Zaragoza, May 13-15, 2003), where numerous papers were presented combining cognitive grammar with a construction approach to syntactic processes. The blending of these two trends seems to be enriching and promising. The research data presented here may offer a first step in this line of analysis and a thought-provoking invitation to an ideal springboard for future studies.