

## CHANGES IN ARGUMENT STRUCTURE: THE TRANSITIVIZING REACTION OBJECT CONSTRUCTION

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*Changes in Argument Structure* is a single-authored monograph consisting of eight chapters focusing on the description and diachronic evolution of the English reaction object construction (ROC; e.g. *He smiled warm thanks at the audience*). The ROC is an argument structure construction composed of an intransitive verb (*smile*) followed by an object that conveys an emotion or an attitude (*thanks*) so that the whole syntactic configuration is characterized by the extended meaning [ $X_i$  express  $Y_i$  by V-ing] as in *He expressed warm thanks by smiling at the audience*.

In the Introduction the author convincingly explains the motivation, significance, and originality of her research. As the English ROC has attracted considerable attention from a synchronic perspective, Bouso's research sets as its goal to contribute to the field of historical linguistics by offering a diachronic study of the ROC and by exploring key issues such as when and how this construction emerges, how it develops over time, and what mechanisms of change and factors have influenced its development.

The book is structured in two blocks: Part I, entitled *Transitivization, Reaction Objects and Construction Grammar*, contains three theoretical chapters (chapters 2-4), and Part II: *Hands-On with Data: A Usage-Based Approach to the History of the ROC* includes three empirical chapters (chapters 5-7) which address the research questions and test the initial hypotheses.

Within Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995; 2006; Hilpert 2014), the theoretical framework adopted in this monograph, the ROC qualifies as a valency-increasing construction, that is, a construction that adds an extra argument (*warm thanks* in the previous example) to the intransitive verb it combines with (*smile*). To discover how the ROC emerged as a transitivity-increasing construction, the first logical step is to understand the process of transitivity-increase that began in Old English (OE), which is clearly described in Chapter 2. This chapter finishes by commenting on Visser's (1963-1973) list of factors that contributed to the large-scale transitivity-increase process. The first part of Chapter 3 is devoted to the treatment of the object in historical and contemporary reference grammars whereas the second part discusses the features of reaction objects as compared to other nonprototypical objects such as cognate objects and *way*-objects. In Chapter 4 the author provides a solid justification for the choice of Construction Grammar as a framework by arguing that the suitability of this theory of linguistic knowledge relies precisely on its need to account for idiosyncratic structures, such as the ROC, that Generative Grammar had relegated to the lexicon. Construction Grammar is proposed here as the best heuristic tool to explain the nonprototypical features of reaction objects and to show how the ROC relates to other constructions within the large English network of constructions. Additionally, the monograph uses Diachronic Construction Grammar (Hilpert 2013; Traugott and Trousdale 2013) to investigate the historical development of the ROC.

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Chapter 5 starts by offering a thorough characterization of the modern ROC, which is categorized as a multiple inheritance construction sharing features with various constructions in the English language, such as the experiencer construction (*Tom likes Helen*), the resultative construction (*The gunman shot him dead*), and the ditransitive communicative construction (*Susan wired Joe a message*). For example, both the ROC and the experiencer construction share the surface structure of a transitive construction and involve two similar participants: a sentient agent and a cause/source, which is an emotion or mental state in the case of the ROC (*I sighed relief*). Likewise, the ROC shares a resultative meaning with the resultative construction (*He kissed her farewell*). Lastly, the similarities between the ROC and the communicative construction consist of an identical surface structure, i.e. the ditransitive construction, and the presence of an intended recipient (*He nodded assent [at Charles]*).

The second part of Chapter 5 deals with the historical dimension of the ROC, whose origins lie in Late Middle English (LME). The author also claims that the ROC followed a similar path of development as other transitivity-increasing constructions (e.g. the cognate object construction, the *way*-construction, and the dummy *it* object construction) in that it occurred first with more transitive-like verbs (e.g.

manner of speaking verbs like *roar*, *bray* and nonverbal expression verbs like *moan*) and later expanded to intransitive verbs denoting nonverbal expression like *smile* and modern verbs of sound emission like *purr*.

Drawing on data from the *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts, version 3.0* (CLMET3.0), Chapter 6 examines the constructional changes of the ROC in form, function, frequency, and distribution (across verb classes, time periods and text types) in British English. The focus is on Late Modern English (LModE, 1710-1920) as this is the period during which the ROC proliferates. Results confirm that the ROC is a low-frequency construction in LModE but increased in frequency from the mid-18th century onwards, perhaps because of the emergence and subsequent development of the British sentimental novel, which made extensive use of verbs of sounds and gestures to describe the emotions and affective relations of characters. Regarding the distribution of the ROC across verb types, collexeme analysis shows that five prototypical verbs —namely the manner of speaking verbs *mutter* and *murmur* and the verbs of nonverbal communication *smile*, *nod*, and *wave*— paved the way for the grammatical constructionalization of the ROC and its two main subschemas over the LModE period —namely the manner and the means subschemas (Sentient agent<sub>i</sub> cause Y<sub>i</sub> become expressed by<sub>manner/means</sub> doing V). After its consolidation in LModE, the ROC underwent several ‘post-constructionalization constructional changes’ throughout the 19th and 20th centuries: (i) increase in productivity; (ii) morphophonological reduction or the tendency to drop the indefinite article (e.g. LModE *nod an affirmative* > Present Day English *nod Ø yes/ nod Ø agreement*); and (iii) expansion of the range of collocates (e.g. inclusion of verbs of gestures such as *peck* or modern verbs of sound emission such as *coo*).

Based on data from the *Corpus of Historical American English* (COHA), Chapter 7 focuses on the development of the ROC in American English from the 1810s to the 2000s and describes further constructional changes regarding the frequency and distribution (diachronic and textual) of the ROC. The author also claims that the ROC is a British innovation that later spread to American English as most of the data from COHA belongs to the genre of fiction and the period of lowest frequency of the American ROC (1810-1849) overlaps with the heyday of the British ROC (1780-1849). Furthermore, this chapter confirms a striking parallel development between the ROC and the *way*-construction in that both increased their productivity during the 20th century and attracted new verb classes such as verbs of instrument of communication (e.g. *wire*, *phone*, etc.), verbs of activity (e.g. *dance*, *drink*, etc.), and verbs of light emission (e.g. *flare*, *glisten*, etc.). Lastly, Chapter 8 provides a summary of the book by assessing how each chapter answered the research questions and confirmed the initial hypotheses. This chapter ends by

discussing the limitations and theoretical implications of the study and by proposing further venues of research.

The monograph *Changes in Argument Structure* is a well-documented, rigorous study that will be enjoyed by both experts and novice researchers interested in the history of the English reaction object construction. The strengths of the book are the originality of an uncharted area in historical linguistics, the exploration and comparison of the development of the ROC in two varieties of English, namely British and American, the parallelism between the ROC and other constructions of the English language, such as the *way*-construction, and the use of a complex methodological perspective (e.g. collexeme analysis as well as several statistical tests). As the author herself mentions, one of the weaknesses of the volume is the fact that the corpus-based study using COHA only takes into account a small set of verbs combining with delocutive reaction objects. Thus, further research on the American ROC should consider expanding the list of reaction objects so that the results are more comparable to those for the British ROC.

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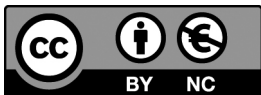
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