

Pilar Guerrero Medina, ed. 2011: *Morphosyntactic Alternations in English. Functional and Cognitive Perspectives*. Sheffield: Equinox. 383 pp. ISBN: 978-1-84553-744-9.

BEATRIZ RODRÍGUEZ ARRIZABALAGA

Universidad de Huelva

arrizaba@uhu.es

Morphosyntactic alternations have always been at the core of both formal and functional linguistic analysis. Due to their complexity, however, there are still, even today, many morphosyntactic, semantic and pragmatic issues concerning alternations that remain unanswered in the literature, something the present collective work attempts to address. In the words of Guerrero Medina, its editor, one of the main objectives of this volume is, in fact, no less than to “contribute to a better understanding of the phenomena subsumed under the rubric of *morphosyntactic alternation*” (2).

To this end, this volume brings together fourteen chapters couched in the functional paradigm of linguistic analysis, though within different contemporary theoretical frameworks, which, as a whole, present a serious, original and updated examination of the phenomenon in general, and of various different English morphosyntactic alternations in particular.

The chapters are coherently organized in two parts. The first, entitled ‘Theoretically-oriented Approaches to the Issue of Morphosyntactic Alternations’, comprises four chapters of a clearly theoretical orientation which investigate the notion of alternation and/or verb classification, supported by descriptive evidence from the grammatical theories in which they are rooted. The second, in turn, consists of ten studies on specific English alternations, having, thus, a more descriptive orientation. Since the intrinsic behaviour of the different alternations tackled does not remain constant throughout, this second part of the volume assumes its own internal structure which groups together the first four contributions, dealing with three clear instances of “transitivity alternations” (Levin 1993: 25), on the one hand, and, on the other, the six remaining chapters, all focussing on alternations which imply a change in the morphosyntactic expression and/or placement of arguments and do not affect the transitivity of the verb.

Part I opens with a contribution by Davidse, ‘Alternations as a Heuristic to Verb Meaning and the Semantics of Constructions’, located within the structural-functional tradition of Gleason (1966) and Halliday (1967, 1968), in which the author, on the basis of two case studies, makes a strong defence of the usefulness of verb-specific alternations in verb classification and in the semantics of constructions. The former is examined in relation to English ditransitive verbs; specifically, their behaviour in alternations which, allowing the omission of the non-agentive participants known as “Dative” and “Patient”,

are clearly dependent on semantics. Two of the results obtained here should be regarded as extremely innovative since, as Davidse herself remarks, they “had tended to be neglected so far” (33): first, the existence of an important class of ditransitive verbs (*attribute, ascribe, impute*, etc.) which encode the “causation of a possessive relation” and for which Dative and Patient are always obligatory; and second, the existence of several subclasses of ditransitive verbs (*pay, feed*, etc.) which strongly profile Agent-Dative action chains. The specific area chosen to demonstrate the heuristic of alternations for the semantics of constructions is that of English intransitive ergatives, which Davidse classifies, according to the lexical restrictions imposed by their grammatical subjects, into two different types on the basis of their possible alternation with a reflexive pattern: *He stopped/He stopped himself* vs. *Eggs boil/*Eggs boil themselves*.

The second chapter, ‘The Study of Alternations in a Dialogic Functional Discourse Grammar’, is a contribution by Mackenzie which deals with the phenomenon of English morphosyntactic alternations within the dialogic model of Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG); a version of FDG which incorporates recent findings of contemporary sociolinguistics in relation to priming on formulation and decoding, and which basically differs from the “standard” model (Hengeveld and Mackenzie 2008) in that the contextual component is visualized as shared by the two participants in a dialogue. The analysis offered by Mackenzie may strike the reader as shocking and surprising, since it defends a completely new conception of alternations, radically different from the traditional one, in which the key factor is not the semantic and/or pragmatic connection between two or more clauses but, on the contrary, the clear morphosyntactic parallelism between lexically related (*The 747 was landing by the control tower/The 474 was alerted by the control tower*) or lexically unrelated clauses (*The moon has set in the west/A man should rely on his friends/These arguments were refuted by several scholars*). To support his hypothesis, Mackenzie provides psycholinguistic evidence that shows that morphosyntactic parallel clauses do group together cognitively, which he expands on with the examination of a short extract taken from the *Michigan Corpus of Spoken English (MICASE)* which reveals, through the analysis of the verb *take*, how this relatedness becomes visible in dialogue in the operation of priming.

The following chapter, ‘Constraints on Syntactic Alternation: Lexical-Constructional Subsumption in the Lexical Constructional Model’, is a contribution by Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal Usón which discusses syntactic alternations as epiphenomenal to constrained lexical-constructional integration within the framework of the Lexico-Constructional Model (LCM). The authors focus mainly on the external principles of high-level metaphor and metonymy to prove that these are crucial in the explanation of related alternations, such as, for instance, the causative/inchoative (*The child broke the window/The window broke*) and the middle (*These clothes don't wash well*), on the one hand, and the caused-motion construction (*She sneezed the napkin off the table*) and the resultative (*He beat me silent*), on the other. In this way they demonstrate that both high-level phenomena do, in fact, constrain the process of subsuming lexical characterizations into constructions and that their comprehension is essential to account for constructional coercion over lexical structure.

Part I closes with Neale's contribution 'Alternation and Participant Role: A Contribution from a Systemic Functional Grammar'. Framed in the approach to TRANSITIVITY developed within the output of Systemic Functional Linguistics known as the Cardiff Grammar (CG), this work provides an alternative analysis to Levin's (1993) lexicon-based approach to alternations, in which the study of paradigmatic relations between verb senses as alternations is abandoned in favour of one that considers them, instead, as cases of "near equivalences". Neale illustrates her analysis with the two different senses underlying the verb *break* in the traditionally named causative alternation ("a one role", "affected only" Process in *The glass broke* and a "two-role", "agent plus affected" Process in *Sebastian broke the glass*), which is extremely useful for the reader who, thanks to the detailed explanation offered, is able to understand how any other alternation would be handled using the system network in the CG approach. The initial part of the paper is also very helpful for the reader because, by presenting a complete overview of the treatment given to TRANSITIVITY in the CG, in which the notions of "process", "system network" and "delicacy" receive special attention, it provides the appropriate context for this theoretical approach to verbal alternation.

Part II starts with García Velasco's contribution 'The Causative/Inchoative Alternation in Functional Discourse Grammar', in which the author defends the position that FDG provides the natural locus to represent the causative/inchoative alternation in English, as well as in other languages, on the basis of the following two arguments: (i) the separation of lexemes from the frames in which they occur that takes place in this specific theoretical framework; and (ii) the inclusion of a conceptual component, absent from the classic version of FG (Dik 1997), which provides an appropriate interpretation of pairs, like *John broke the window/The window broke*, which, according to the author, require a conceptual explanation rather than a purely linguistic one, as commonly put forward in the literature.

In the following paper Marín Arrese revisits, from a cognitive linguistic perspective, two particular thematic-subject constructions in English and Spanish for which she proposes, basing her argument on the notions of construal and profiling, a non-derivational analysis: (i) the inchoative construction illustrated in *The vase broke/El jarrón se rompió*, which denotes spontaneous events; and (ii) the middle construction, exemplified in *Wholemeal bread cuts easily/El pan integral se corta con facilidad*, which encodes, in turn, facilitative events. Furthermore, Marín Arrese asserts that both constructions lie on a continuum defined by three of their most relevant distinguishing features (namely, (i) the degree of distinctness of participants in the events; (ii) the degree to which the external source of energy is implicit or schematically evoked; and (iii) the degree to which the thematic participant initiates or facilitates the event), and posits, thus, between them a middle ground which accommodates instances of "blends" and other non-prototypical phenomena, such as middles with instruments, means or locatives as thematic subjects (see examples in García de la Maza below) and middles of intransitive predicates (*This music dances better than the other one*). The paper ends with an interesting brief account of

the network which subsumes these two thematic subject constructions along with other constructions of reduced transitivity, such as passives and unaccusative intransitives.

Middle constructions are also the focus of the following contribution in the book: ‘The Semantics of English Middles and Pseudo-middles’, by García de la Maza. In the exhaustive research the author carries out on the semantico-pragmatic peculiarities underlying English middles there are three important issues that are worth highlighting: (i) the compositional interpretation of the constructional meaning of the English middle as a function of the meaning of the subject together with the verb and the adverb; (ii) the inclusion within the middle paradigm of three idiosyncratic and marginal English constructions which deviate from the prototypical middle: namely, (a) those having a Location or a Means as subject of an intransitive VP (*The top loch is fishing well; This music dances better than the other one*); and (b) those with a Means participant as subject of a transitive VP (*This wood carves beautiful toys*); finally, (iii) the lexicalization process which some middles are undergoing.

The contribution by Guerrero Medina, ‘An Antipassive Interpretation of the English “Conative Alternation”: Semantic and Discourse Pragmatic Dimensions’, deals with the English conative alternation, illustrated in *She kicked the mule/She kicked at the mule*. After briefly reviewing how it has been studied in Levin’s (1993) lexically-based approach and Goldberg’s (1995) construction-based approach, Guerrero Medina comes down in favour of the latter, though with some reservations. In order to overcome the greater of these (i.e., the representation of the meaning of the construction as invariable), Guerrero Medina presents a corpus-based analysis of the semantic and discourse-pragmatic dimensions of the English conative construction, placing special emphasis on its connection, based on the parameters below, with the construction traditionally called “antipassive” in the functional-typological literature (Cooreman 1994): (i) identifiability and affectedness of the object; (ii) the aspectual changes in the predicate; and (iii) the lack of volitionality of the agent. As regards pragmatics, this corpus analysis also shows a clear connection between both constructions in terms of topicality.

The section of the volume concerned with alternations that do not affect the transitivity of the verb opens with a work by Boas entitled ‘A Frame-Semantic Approach to Syntactic Alternation: The Case of *Build* Verbs’. Intended to be a contribution to the ongoing discussion in the literature on the inconsistencies detected in Levin’s (1993) classification of English verbs, this paper offers an alternative frame-semantic analysis of the so-called *build* verbs, which allows for a finer-grained account of semantic verb classes, avoiding, thus, the problems underlying Levin’s approach, as well as providing some interesting advantages for cross-linguistic applications. Basically, it asserts that the differences in the syntactic behaviour of *build* verbs proposed by Levin (1993) are best accounted for in terms of the different polysemy network of verb senses. Adopting ideas from Fillmore’s (1982) Frame Semantics and drawing on data from the corpus-based database of English known as FrameNet, Boas proposes, on the basis of his analysis of the verb *grind*, accounting for the alternating behaviour of verbs by determining, first, the different types of Lexical

Units associated with each verb and, consequently, with the semantic frames they evoke and, secondly, the valence patterns which represent their over realization.

The contribution by Gries, 'Acquiring Particle Placement in English: A Corpus-Based Perspective', stands out in this collective work for being the only contribution developed within the field of language acquisition. It focuses on the linguistic factors that determine, together with some psycholinguistic variables, children's early acquisition of the constituent order called "particle placement", illustrated in *He picked up the book/He picked the book up*, which is so characteristic of English transitive phrasal verbs. Specifically, Gries examines, on the one hand, the lexical preferences children manifest to use one construction (VPrtDirObj) over the other (VDirObjPrt), and on the other, the influence on the choice of construction exerted by some traditionally-studied syntactico-semantic variables (i.e. LENGTH AND TYPE OF OBJECT) as well as of some new phonological (i.e. SEGMENT AND CV ALTERNATION) and frequency variables, which, in contrast, have received almost no attention in the literature. For this purpose, Gries compiles a sample of 3673 verb-particle constructions taken from three children's corpora, extracted from the CHILDES databank, which he examines separately. His findings, that remain constant across the three corpora, establish that the VDirObjPrt order is the predominant one in children's production (95% of all VPCs analysed) due, according to the author, to two main reasons: (i) it is the order used to encode the movement of an object caused by an agent, a scenario that is cognitively salient and basic for children; and (ii) it constitutes a significant portion of the children's input, being more characteristic of oral discourse than the VPrtDirObj order.

The next contribution by González García, 'Looks, Appearances, and Judgements: Towards a Unified Constructionist Analysis of Predicative Complement Alternations in English and Spanish', is an extensive corpus-based analysis on two particular predicative constructions found in both English and Spanish: (i) those called by the author "subjective-attributive constructions", in which the predicative complement follows a verb of the *seem/parecer*-type (*He seems (to be) angry/Parece (estar) enfadado*); and (ii) those he calls "evaluative subjective-transitive constructions", in which the predicative relationship appears after verbs of sensory and/or cognitive perception (*The BBC considers this alternative inappropriate/ La RAE considera esta oración incorrecta*). Despite the two basic differences concerning the choice of the main clause subject and the feasibility of reflexive arguments, González García proposes a unitary Goldbergian constructionist account of both constructions, different from those proposed by Gisborne (2008) and Yoon (2004), due to the features the two constructions share: (i) their core constructional meaning; (ii) the common semantico-pragmatic profile of their components; and finally, (iii) the feasibility of coercion in relation to scalarity and their possible progressive modification and occurrence with an imperative form.

In the next chapter, entitled 'Metonymy-Motivated Morphosyntactic Alternations', Barcelona argues, from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, for the crucial role of conceptual metonymy in the motivation of some instances of the three main types of what, for him, constitute the phenomenon of morphosyntactic alternations: namely,

(i) the conventional pairing of a basic form with more than one basic meaning (class I), which Barcelona discusses in relation to the field of suffixal derivation and conversion; (ii) the conventional pairing of a basic constructional meaning with more than one uninflected form (class II), which the author explains with examples of ellipsis; and (iii) the model-variant relationship of two constructions within the same network (class III), which Barcelona describes through particular cases of syntactic constructions.

Located within the FDG framework, the contribution by Portero Muñoz, 'A Functional Discourse Grammar Approach to the *Swarm*-Alternation as a Case of Conversion', centres on the so-called "*swarm*-alternation", a specific case of the locative alternation illustrated in *Bees are swarming in the garden/The garden is swarming with bees*. The proposal presented here must be regarded as truly original because, in contrast to most traditional approaches which exclude verbal alternations from the word-formation domain, it studies the *swarm*-alternation, on semantic and syntactic grounds, as a case of conversion. Specifically, Portero Muñoz bases her analysis on a corpus of *-ing*/*-ed* forms of recurrent verbs in the *with*-construction of the alternation that shows that, due to the deverbalization process and subsequent adjectivization they undergo in this particular structure, these verbs display a similar behaviour to classical examples of the conversion of verbs into adjectives. Following a similar line to that of García Velasco in this same volume, Portero Muñoz devotes the second part of her work to explaining the suitability of FDG to account for the *swarm*-alternation by means of a non-derivational syntactic approach which overcomes most of the problems underlying the derivational approaches rooted in the field of lexical semantics such as, for instance, that of Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1998).

The final contribution by Martín Arista, 'Morphological Relatedness and Zero Alternation in Old English', distinguishes itself from the rest because it deals with morphological alternations in Old English (OE); specifically, with two cases of formal-functional mismatches in morphologically related words which Martín Arista subsumes under the phenomenon known as "zero-alternation" due to their relationship and to their strong implication for the organization of the OE lexicon. The first case concerns the morphological processes of zero derivation and conversion, which are not distinguished between here since they both establish a semantic relationship between two different morphological forms by means of a zero morph (*A:ngenga* "solitary goer, isolated one"/*A:ngenga* "solitary, isolated"). In the very complete overview of zero derivation presented, the typology of affixless derivation and the analysis of OE strong verbs deserve special attention due to the scientific care with which they are handled. The second case focuses on empty morphs; that is, explicit suffixes without any semantic effect that, like *-ig-* in the pair *Ðri:stlic/Ðri:stiglic* ("daring"), establish a relationship between two different morphological forms. Due to its meaning and recursiveness in OE, the phenomenon of redundant derivation through empty morphs is to be differentiated, according to the author, from lexicalization and convergent derivation.

Although the volume as a whole is intelligently organized, moving from the functionalist approaches to the study of morphosyntactic alternations of the first

section and then to the more descriptive corpus-based studies of the second part, there is a slight theoretical shortcoming which warrants some attention here. The expression “Functional and Cognitive Perspectives” that appears in the subtitle of the work may perhaps be understood in a narrower sense than it really has because, aside from the structural-functionalist models known as Functional Discourse Grammar (Dik 1997) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday 1967, 1968) and the more cognitively-oriented approaches of Goldberg’s (1995, 2006) Construction Grammar and Fillmore’s (1982) Frame Semantics, in which most of the contributions of the book are couched, there is a number of other functional and cognitive theoretical frameworks which are not mentioned in the book; the different versions of Construction Grammar (Fillmore and Kay’s Berkeley Construction Grammar (1996); Croft’s Construction Grammar (2001); Steels and de Beule’s Fluid Construction Grammar (2006), among others, or Fauconnier’s Mental Spaces (1997), to name a few. Notwithstanding, the presentation of theoretical constructs and mechanisms from different approaches in order to produce a more accurate account of morphosyntactic alternations is a very positive feature of the book, since it proves that different linguistic approaches are complementary, rather than exclusive.

Another weak structural point is the varying quantity of real data found in the different descriptive contributions of the second part: some chapters make use of a very limited amount of corpus data (Guerrero Medina, García de la Maza, among others), whereas others base their studies on a large amount of data and offer detailed frequency analysis (González García, Gries and Martín Arista, for instance).

Despite these two flaws, the book is, all in all, a successful work on the study of English morphosyntactic alternations, which provides new suggestive insights into this complex linguistic phenomenon. It contains, in fact, many reflections and findings that are enlightening, arousing the reader’s curiosity and opening interesting new lines of future research.

WORKS CITED

- COOREMAN, Ann 1994: ‘A Functional Typology of Antipassives’. Barbara Fox and Paul J. Hopper, eds. *Voice: Form and Function*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 49-88.
- CROFT, William 2001: *Radical Construction Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- DIK, Simon C. 1997: *The Theory of Functional Grammar, Part I: The Structure of the Clause*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- FAUCONNIER, Gilles 1997: *Mappings in Thought and Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- FILLMORE, Charles J. 1982: ‘Frame Semantics’. Linguistic Society of Korea, ed. *Linguistics in the Morning Calm*. Seoul: Hanshin. 111-38.
- FILLMORE, Charles J. and Paul Kay 1996: *Construction Grammar*. CSLI Lecture Notes. Stanford: CSLI.

- GISBORNE, Nikolas 2008: 'Dependencies are Constructions'. Graeme Trousdale and Nikolas Gisborne, eds. *Constructional Approaches to English Grammar*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 219-55.
- GLEASON, Henry Allan 1996: *Linguistics and English Grammar*. New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston.
- GOLDBERG, Adele E. 1995: *Constructions. A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure*. Chicago: Chicago UP.
- 2006: *Constructions at Work: The Nature of Generalization in Language*. New York: Oxford UP.
- HALLIDAY, Michael A. K. 1967: 'Notes on Transitivity and Theme in English 1'. *Journal of Linguistics* 3.1: 37-81.
- 1968: 'Notes on Transitivity and Theme in English 3'. *Journal of Linguistics* 4.2: 179-215.
- HENGEVELD, Kees and J. Lachlan Mackenzie 2008: *Functional Discourse Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- LEVIN, Beth 1993: *English Verb Classes and Alternations. A Preliminary Investigation*. Chicago: Chicago UP.
- LEVIN, Beth and Malka Rappaport Hovav 1998: 'Morphology and Lexical Semantics'. Andrew Spencer and Arnold M. Zwicky, eds. *Handbook of Morphology*. Oxford: Blackwell. 248-71.
- STEELS, Luc and Joachim de Beule 2006: 'A (very) Brief Introduction to Fluid Construction Grammar'. *Proceedings of the Third International Workshop on Scalable Natural Language Understanding (ScaNaLU 2006)* <<http://acl.ldc.upenn.edu/W/W06/W06-3510.pdf>> (Accessed 10 September, 2012).
- YOON, Jiyoun 2004: 'Infinitival Complement Constructions in Spanish: A Construction Grammar Approach'. Julie Auger, J. Clancy Clements and Barbara S. Vance, eds. *Contemporary Approaches to Romance Linguistics. Selected Papers from the Thirty-third Linguistic Symposium on Romance Languages (LSRL)*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 381-97.

Received 26 September 2012

Accepted 31 October 2012

Dr Beatriz Rodríguez Arrizabalaga is Senior Lecturer in English Linguistics at the University of Huelva. Her research focuses mainly on the syntax and semantics of English and on their contrastive analysis with those of Spanish. She has published several works on the following topics: the attributive systems of English and Spanish, English and Spanish change of state verbs, and English and Spanish resultative constructions. At the moment she is carrying out a corpus-based analysis of English cognate object constructions.

Address: Departamento de Filología Inglesa. Universidad de Huelva. Avda. Tres de Marzo s/n, 21071, Huelva, Spain. Tel.: +34 959 219133. Fax: +34 959 219143.