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A cognitive-linguistic study of the causative, agent-deprofiling, and resultative constructions: system internal and external perspectives
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TESIS DOCTORAL

Programa de Doctorado en Filología Inglesa

A cognitive-linguistic study of the causative, agent-deprofiling, and resultative constructions: system internal and external perspectives

Un estudio cognitivista de las construcciones
causativa, de agente desperfilado y resultativas:
perspectivas internas y externas a los sistemas

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is framed within the field of Cognitive Linguistics, more specifically, within the framework of the Lexical Constructional Model (LCM), as initially formulated in Ruiz de Mendoza & Mairal (2008, 2011), Mairal & Ruiz de Mendoza (2008, 2009). This thesis develops central aspects of this model at the argument-structure level in a way that is consistent with the main assumptions of constructionist approaches to language, especially Goldberg's (1995, 2006) Construction Grammar thus emphasizing the role of constructions in the meaning-making process. To this end, the present dissertation conducts cross-linguistic research on the causative construction [X CAUSES Y], the various agent-deprofiling constructions [Y CHANGES STATE], and the resultative construction [X CAUSES Y TO BECOME Z]. This study provides a comparative analysis and description of these related constructions in two typologically distant languages, English and Urdu. In this regard, the study also aims for the conceptual explanation of the intra-linguistic (language internal) and inter-linguistic (cross-linguistic) features of these constructions, providing a benchmark for future typological studies. Our analysis evidences that the role of re-construal based on metaphor and metonymy is essential for the understanding of grammatical phenomena cross-linguistically. Behind the distinctive aspects of constructional organization in each language we have found consistent typological features, which are motivated by cognitive factors, among which, besides metaphor and metonymy, iconicity also plays an important role. The inherently fine-grained nature of cross-linguistic analysis has opened doors for future research into the intricacies of each construction, and by extension, of both languages.

RESUMEN

Esta tesis se enmarca en el terreno de la Lingüística Cognitiva, más específicamente, en el marco del Modelo Léxico Construccional (MLC), partiendo de su formulación original en Ruiz de Mendoza y Mairal (2008, 2011) y Mairal y Ruiz de Mendoza, (2008, 2009). Esta tesis desarrolla aspectos centrales de este modelo a nivel de la estructura de argumentos de una manera que es consistente con los principales supuestos de los enfoques construccionistas del lenguaje, especialmente la Gramática de Construcciones de Goldberg (1995, 2006), enfatizando así el papel de las construcciones en el proceso de construcción del significado. Con este fin, el presente trabajo lleva a cabo una investigación interlingüística sobre la construcción causativa [X CAUSA Y], las diversas construcciones de agente desperfilado [Y CAMBIA DE ESTADO] y la construcción resultativa [X CAUSA QUE Y SE CONVIERTA EN Z]. Este estudio proporciona un análisis comparativo y una descripción de estas construcciones relacionadas en dos idiomas tipológicamente distantes, el inglés y el urdu. En este sentido, también pretende la explicación conceptual de los rasgos intralingüísticos (internas a cada sistema) e interlingüísticos (externas a cada sistema) de estas construcciones, proporcionando un referente para futuros estudios tipológicos. Nuestro análisis evidencia que la reconstrucción del significado basada en la metáfora y la metonimia es esencial para la comprensión de los fenómenos gramaticales desde una perspectiva interlingüística. Las razones que subyacen a dichos procesos de reconstrucción del significado en cada lengua están motivadas, principalmente, por características tipológicas que se fundamentan, a su vez, en factores cognitivos entre los cuales, además de la metáfora y la metonimia, la iconicidad también desempeña un papel importante. La naturaleza inherentemente detallada del análisis interlingüístico abre la puerta a futuras investigaciones sobre las complejidades de cada construcción y, por extensión, de cada idioma.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter provides a brief summary of the study and offers suggestions for further research.

Chapter 1 describes the aims of this study, which are based on the description and explanation of three constructions, namely the causative, agent-deprofiling, and resultative constructions in two typologically separate languages: English and Urdu. This chapter explores the importance of cross-linguistic analysis as a way of contributing to typological studies. It also addresses the reasons for the selection of these constructions, which is based on their ability to express changes of state in contrastively significant ways achieving different meaning effects. In addition, this chapter argues in favor of the LCM as the most adequate constructionist model for the purposes of this kind of analysis. This framework brings together in a productive way relevant aspects of constructionist and lexicalist approaches, while supplying additional descriptive and explanatory tools for analysis.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of two standard constructionist approaches, Goldberg's and Boas's, with which the LCM has clear points of convergence. This chapter also justifies our choice of analytical categories from the LCM for the present study, which concerns lexical and constructional configurations at the argument-structure level. The exhaustive specification of the principles and constraints regulating lexical-constructional integration supplied by the LCM strikes a balance between the so-called "lumper" and "splitter" approaches to argument structure. In the constructionist literature, constructions have been argued to provide meaning that goes beyond that of the lexical item. This extra meaning is generally assumed to coerce lexical meaning. However, the notion of coercion is too generic and has not been clearly constrained in the various accounts. The LCM spells out a set of internal and external constraints on the incorporation of lexical structure into constructions.

The former constraints have to do with conceptual compatibility at all levels of description (e.g., concrete world-knowledge specifications and the event structure of lexical items). The latter constraints are a matter of reconstrual of lexical structure through the operation of high-level metaphor and/or metonymy. An example is the sentence *They laughed the actor off the stage*, in which the non-effectual action of laughing is seen as an effectual action thereby allowing the use of the verb *laugh* to take part in the caused-motion construction. In this situation the construction has greater strength than the lexical predicate, which has to be reinterpreted through high-level metaphor to be licensed into the construction. However, sometimes the lexical item has greater weight in terms of meaning as exemplified in *She sold me his car*, in which the ditransitive nature of the predicate requires the three expressed arguments. Understanding the balance between lexical items and constructions requires a detailed analysis of differences in constructional behavior as the properties of lexical items vary in terms of their internal meaning composition and class ascription. Ultimately, this kind of analysis has allowed us to study how integration takes place in the constructions examined in this dissertation.

Chapter 3 focuses on the description of some aspects of the Urdu language that are relevant for the present dissertation. The importance of this section lies in the lack of studies on Urdu from a constructionist perspective. Thus, this chapter analyses those elements of Urdu grammar that have proved important for the language internal and language external analysis carried out from chapter 5 to 8. A first consideration to take into account is that Urdu differs from English in the alignment of its arguments since Urdu is a split-ergative language and English is an accusative language. The split-ergative nature of Urdu is defined by the use of an ergative marker with transitive verbs in the perfective aspect. This kind of distinction is not relevant for an accusative language since all arguments follow the same pattern. This explanation is followed by an overview of the Urdu verbal system. Tense is mostly coded in grammatical units (e.g., auxiliaries, particles) that are external to the verb *per se*, while verbal aspect is denoted by three kinds of participle: habitual, progressive, and perfective. A particular feature of Urdu in comparison to English, is the use of light verbs. Light verbs have the generic meaning of marking the end point of an event, while adding other nuances

to the overall meaning of a construction, as is the case of accomplishments with *lena* ('to take'), benefaction with *dena* ('to give'), and change of state with *jana* ('to go'). After the discussion of the interaction between arguments and the verbal system, the chapter treats the distribution of the arguments in the sentence, which is indicated by case markers. Each case marker has a specific syntactic role within a sentence but it can be assigned different semantic roles (e.g., a nominative case can be an agent and a patient). At the end of this chapter, a section is devoted to summarizing the typological features of both languages from a cognitive perspective. Regarding the structures of their sentences, both languages are iconically motivated, although there is a difference in perspectivization: the SOV structure of Urdu is iconic in terms of the relations between the arguments, whereas the SVO structure of English is iconic with respect to the action scenario. Regarding verbal predicates, both languages differ in the manner of coding tense, aspect, and modality, but they follow a similar distribution pattern with regard to the main verb. This latter aspect of the grammatical behavior of the two languages is evidence of the activity of the principle of iconic proximity (i.e., the closer the formal distance the closer the conceptual distance) (Givón, 1995, p. 51) in both of them, despite their typological differences. Regarding motion events, English and Urdu differ considerably, since Urdu is a verb-framed language, whereas English is a satellite-framed language. This distinction affects motion-encoding expressions, as is the case of those based on the caused-motion construction and on those variants of the resultative construction where a figurative motion specification is used to express a change of state.

Chapter 4 establishes the research methodology of the study and describes the corpora used for each language. We base our analysis on qualitative research of specific examples gathered from corpora, in order to determine usage patterns that lead to high-level generalizations. To this end, the study uses a combination of inductive and deductive procedures. The corpora used for each language (i.e., iWeb for English and UrTenTen18 for Urdu) have proven useful in explaining, corroborating, and improving previously formulated hypotheses. The Web has been an important additional tool for corroborating equivalences in those situations in which the two corpora yielded no results.

Chapter 5 is concerned with the analysis of the causative construction in English and Urdu. To this end, this chapter has offered an overview of different aspects of the causative construction that are useful for its analysis in cross-linguistic terms. Both languages have important differences regarding the formation of the causative construction: English relies on lexical and periphrastic causatives, whereas Urdu uses morphological causatives. In Urdu, the predicate is manipulated from a grammatical point of view, which involves the recontextualization of the verb. Sometimes, the manipulation of the verb leads to lexical constructions. For instance, *saaf* ('clean') is one such construction and *karna* ('do') too; when they are combined, a lexical amalgam results. For certain communicative functions, as is the expression of causative meaning, lexical fusion between a base and an affix is used. Thus, Urdu resorts to amalgams of lexical constructions integrated into grammatical constructions. By contrast, English focuses on argument structures motivated by high-level cognitive reconstrual operations. Such operations can work at the lexical level (i.e., *cool* changes to *cool* as licensed by the metonymy RESULT FOR ACTION) or at the constructional level (i.e., *She walked the dog*, which is licensed by the metonymy ACTIVITY FOR CAUSED EVENT). Moreover, Urdu allows human instrumentals into the indirect causative construction licensed by the metonymy INSTRUMENTS ARE CAUSES (e.g., *Me ne us se (=INS) khana pakvaya* 'Lit. I made cook food with him'), whereas in English a periphrastic causative construction has to be used (e.g., *I made him cook food*). Iconicity also plays an important role in the configuration of the causative construction in both languages, which follow the principle of proximity, mentioned before, according to which conceptual and syntactic distance correlate. This activity of principle is evidenced by the distinction between lexical and periphrastic causative constructions in English, and by the addition of a shorter (i.e., *-a-*) or a longer (i.e., *-va-*) affix in Urdu.

Chapter 6 and 7 have explored two agent-deprofiling constructions, namely the inchoative and the middle construction. By deprofiling the agent of the action, these constructions promote the object to subject status, while endowing the object with agent-like qualities. This process is motivated by the high-level metonymic chain PROCESS FOR ACTION FOR RESULT. Both languages share this pretense nature

of the object. However, the intransitivization of the predicate follows a different process in each language. The lexical flexibility of Urdu allows the overt intransitivization of the verbal predicate, without any kind of reconceptualization of the verb, as is the case in English. Moreover, Urdu focuses on the process or the result of the action depending on the presence or absence, respectively, of the light verb *jana* ('to go'). Generally, light verbs have the role of telic markers but their use can turn to be specific depending on the construction in which they are embedded. Moreover, Urdu allows the addition of the actual agent of the action by means of an instrumental case. This process is licensed by the correlational metaphor INSTRUMENTS ARE CAUSES (as in the indirect causative construction), which provides meaning nuances that are lacking in English. Correlational metaphors of this kind are typologically motivated. Urdu expresses with case clitics what in English is expressed through a preposition. The number of cases is very limited in Urdu, which results in abundant meaning extensions of such cases. These extensions are mostly carried out through high-level cognitive operations. At the same time, the lexical item is the one that determines the semantic role of a given case. English does not allow the addition of the agent (e.g., **The glass broke with/by me*), since this role is assigned to the passive construction (e.g., *The glass was broken by me*). The inchoative construction in Urdu bears resemblance to the passive construction since the passive marker and the light verb used in the inchoative construction are homophonous. However, no confusion can arise since the passive construction is transitive and the inchoative construction is intransitive. These characteristics of the constructions in question are responsible for their differences in meaning. Thus, the passive construction expresses the ability of the agent of the action and it cannot be conceived as a pretense configuration.

Regarding the distinction between the inchoative and the prototypical middle constructions, the fine line between them lies in their use of grammatical aspect: the former is perfective, whereas the latter is habitual. Generally, the pretense nature of these two configurations profiles different roles in the syntactic subject; in the case of the inchoative construction, the action is presented as if it happened by itself, and in the case of the middle construction, the object is assigned enabling properties that allow the action to happen. From the analysis of examples, we draw the conclusion

that agent-deprofiling constructions are pretense configurations in both languages. However, the use of the light verb in Urdu and the possibility of adding the instrumental case as the causer of the action results in meaning nuances that are lacking in English. The use of the light verb in combination with a main verb is also evidence of lexical amalgamation. By contrast, English has a wider array of constructional possibilities at the argument-structure level, since instruments and locations can be promoted to subject status.

Chapter 8 deals with the resultative construction. To study this construction, it is important to distinguish between non-motion and motion resultatives. The former configurations are examples of the standard resultative construction (e.g., *He hammered the metal flat*), whereas the motion resultative construction makes reference to the caused-motion construction (e.g., *She broke the glass into pieces*). The standard resultative construction uses secondary predications in both languages. However, in Urdu, secondary predications are restricted to those verbs that demand a specific result; e.g., *Us ne apni kameez ko saaf [AP] doya* ('She washed her shirt *clean [AP]*'). This rule blocks secondary predications with verbs whose outcome can lead to several results. In these cases, the manner and the result are broken down into different syntactic categories in which the manner is expressed by the instrumental case and the result is captured in the main verb; e.g., *Us ne lohe ko hathori se [INS] seeda kya* ('He flattened the metal *with a hammer [INS]*'). The English equivalent examples hold on to the use of an AP since the instrument goes through subcategorical conversion licensed by the metonymy INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION (e.g., *He hammered the metal flat*), a process that is not possible in Urdu, since this language uses other verb formation processes (i.e., conjunct verbs).

When an instrument is not involved, the Urdu constructional solution of breaking down the manner and the result into two distinct categories is carried out by means of the combination of a main clause and a subordinate clause; the former encodes the result and the latter the manner of the action. To express manner a subordinate clause is used, while the main verb is in charge of the result. Consider *Bachey ne apni plate kha kar [SUBORDINATE CLAUSE] saaf ki* ('The kid cleaned his plate *by eating it [SUBORDINATE CLAUSE]*'). This example shows that the

result is encoded in the main verb, whereas the manner is expressed in a satellite (i.e., an instrumental case or a subordinate clause), a fact that is motivated by the verb-framed nature of Urdu.

In the same vein, the caused-motion construction tends to use constructional choices that are consistent with the verb-framed nature of Urdu. Consider the English example *She sneezed the napkin off the table*. In English this example is licensed by the high-level construct ACTIVITY FOR A CAUSED EVENT. This metonymy is not operational in Urdu since the value of prepositions like *off* is not encoded through any grammatical case in this language. For this reason, the standard way of expressing result in Urdu is used, which consists in a complex clause where the main clause expresses result and the subordinate clause expresses manner (e.g., *Us ne cheenk maar kar [SUBORDINATE CLAUSE] mez se kagaz gira dye* ‘He threw the pages from the table *by sneezing [SUBORDINATE CLAUSE]*’). However, the standard form is not always operational. A case in point is the use of the caused-motion construction to express result when licensed by the high-level metaphor A CHANGE OF STATE IS A CHANGE OF LOCATION; e.g., *Us ne glass ko tukroo me [LOC] tora* (‘She broke the glass *into pieces [PP]*’). This fact evidences that the meaning of these examples is provided by the construction, specifically by the use of the locative case in Urdu and the prepositional phrase denoting figurative motion in English.

In turn, the Urdu [V V] resultative construction is distant from the English resultative construction (e.g., *Ammi ne chuhe ko ghar se draa bhagaaya* (Lit. ‘Mama frightened made run the mouse from the house’), since in English we cannot find two consecutive content verbs without any mediating configuration. Instead, English would choose a caused-motion construction to express a similar meaning (e.g., *Mama frightened the mouse out of the house*). Lexical combinations of this type need to be explored in depth to establish patterns that may explain the possibility (or impossibility) of using certain verbal predicates with this kind of construction.

Taking into account our analysis of the different constructions, we have come to the conclusion that the use of analytic or synthetic formulations is not restricted to a specific type of construction. It depends on the type of construction. For instance, in Urdu, the causative construction is synthetic since it uses morphological affixes to

denote what in English is expressed through constructions based on auxiliary verbs, like *make* followed by an object and an infinitive. In contrast to Urdu resultatives, which show a tendency towards analytic solutions, English prefers synthetic specifications, which are motivated in most cases by iconicity and high-level cognitive modeling.

All in all, this dissertation has contributed to the cognitive-linguistic analysis of constructions from a cross-linguistic perspective by using the LCM as the framework for linguistic description and explanation. The originality of this study lies in the addition of Urdu to the vast literature of Construction Grammar(s). This study is also the first attempt to apply the LCM to a split-ergative language like Urdu in contrast to English. The analysis shows that the difference in the typological alignment of languages (accusative versus split-ergative) does not give rise to differences in terms of constructional meaning. However, other typological features such as the distinction between verb-framed and satellite-framed languages is important for the understanding of the constructions that we have studied. Our analysis also shows that the cross-linguistic study of constructions can pave the way for a better understanding of language-internal intricacies thus shedding light on issues that may have only been partially treated or completely overlooked by the excessive focus on languages in isolation.

This work also provides some bases for future research. First of all, the evidence provided in support of the analytical apparatus of the LCM, which has proven to be a powerful tool for cross-linguistic analysis, should encourage other researchers to use it for comparable analytical ventures. The LCM still awaits developments in the area of cross-linguistic analysis, which requires applying it to more languages. This is a gap that we could only fill partially with the present research. However, we are confident that we have managed to provide an analytical model that can be fully or partially replicated with the same or other constructional families across different languages.

Second, the study has revealed several areas of work on Urdu that need to be addressed, such as the study of light verbs from a cognitive-linguistic perspective.

This topic deserves a dissertation on its own that will clarify the different shades of meaning that a light verb can provide in a given construction.

Third, the existence of family resemblance relationships between constructions requires investing further effort in the formulation of high-level generalizations involving the properties of the constructions studied in the present work or any other constructions. For instance, within the generic domain of agent-deprofiling constructions, the cause-subject construction has not been studied in English or Urdu. Since instruments and causes are generally conflated in Urdu, we do not find a cause-subject construction, and the instrument-subject construction fulfils both roles. From a system-internal perspective, this initial observation demands further elaboration based on the careful examination of corpus data. It would be necessary to find comparable phenomena within other domains of Urdu and, if they exist, determine the real power of this kind of conflation. Then, from a system-external perspective, it would be worth exploring the role of the same conflation in other languages. This complex and laborious work should finally lead us to assess the strength of the initial thesis regarding Urdu.

Finally, the theoretical studies of this thesis can be applied to the field of language teaching. The extensive demand of English in countries where Urdu is spoken as a first or second language, makes pedagogical implementation of the analysis of families of constructions a necessary tool. In this regard, the creation of a comprehensive handbook for the study of the different patterns that constructions follow in each language could become a useful teaching tool based on the motivation of the phenomena to teach that might enhance the learning process (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza & Agustín, 2013, 2016; Wangmeng, 2019).

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