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Introduction

Reconnecting form and meaning: Lexis and grammar from cognitive-functional and usage-based perspectives

Caroline Gentens,¹ Lobke Ghesquière,² William B. McGregor³ and An Van linden⁴

¹ University of Zurich, ² University of Mons, ³ Aarhus University, ⁴ University of Liège

1. Introduction

We are honoured and delighted to contribute this introduction to a Festschrift in honour of Kristin Davidse. The editorial team of this volume includes three former students and subsequently colleagues of Kristin's as well as a contemporary who has had a longstanding working relation with her. Anyone who has worked with her will know how Kristin will always shy away from the limelight and try to present her work as modestly as possible, as accidental findings almost, while at the same time emphasizing the importance of the work done by her colleagues. This introduction and the selected papers in the volume, however, reflect and highlight the range of her contributions, and develop

themes that she has made contributions to. It is a testimony to how she has enriched and nourished our professional lives and work. With this volume we hope to acknowledge the influence Kristin has had and continues to have not just on her students and former colleagues, but also on other linguists working within the broad traditions of cognitive, functional and usage-based grammars.

Although her original interest lay with religious and philosophical issues and with literature, Kristin quickly also developed a keen passion for linguistics which led her to enroll for an MA in Applied Linguistics at the University of Sydney, where she met Michael Halliday. He later supervised, together with Emma Vorlat, Kristin's doctoral thesis at the University of Leuven, entitled *Categories of Experiential Grammar* (Davidse 1991). Subsequently published in 1999 in the series *Monographs in Systemic Linguistics*, it was hailed by the editors of the series as "one of the most important works in Systemic Functional Linguistics to be produced during the last ten years. It is a well-reasoned, in-depth study of **transitivity**, following on from Michael Halliday's own perceptive and original work in this area" (Davidse 1999a, *Foreword*).

After completing her PhD in Linguistics, she obtained a tenured position in the Linguistics Department, University of Leuven, where she became full professor of English Linguistics in the research group Functional and Cognitive Linguistics: Grammar and Typology. It is on the occasion of her retirement in September 2022 and to celebrate her long and fruitful career that we would now like to offer her this volume.

As for much of Michael Halliday's work, Kristin's work is also characterized by the strong interconnectedness of linguistic theory and description. Her linguistic thinking has

always been rooted in detailed data analysis combined with theorizing, drawing on insights from several neighbouring disciplines. Kristin's work falls largely within the Neo-Firthian tradition, and is solidly founded in Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). It has, however, always been enriched with other functional, cognitive and usage-based approaches such as Sinclair's corpus work and Langacker's Cognitive Grammar, as well as Milsark's more formal analyses and Hjelmslev's Glossematics. Kristin has closely read and built on ideas and insights from these other approaches to feed into her own linguistic analyses and theorizing. She has instilled the same linguistic curiosity and openness of thinking in her doctoral students who have now gone on to become independent researchers themselves, all working within a broadly Neo-Firthian perspective, sometimes perhaps without fully realising how much their work has been shaped by both Kristin's thinking as well as that of the linguists who inspired her.

In a similar way, the volume draws on insights from and synergies with a range of cognitive-functional and usage-based approaches. The contributions develop ideas central to Neo-Firthian theories of grammar (in particular, Semiotic Grammar and SFL), the Prague School, Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG), and broader cognitive-functional (e.g. Construction Grammar) and usage-based approaches (e.g. Entrenchment-and-Conventionalization theory, corpus-based sociolinguistics). A similar range of perspectives was represented in an earlier special issue of the journal *English Text Construction*, presented to Kristin on the occasion of her 60th birthday (Vandelanotte, Van Praet & Brems 2017). The integration of multiple functionalist approaches, however, remains relatively rare, and it is one of the features that make this volume an interesting and stimulating read.

Kristin has inspired students and researchers alike to become critical thinkers while all the time being respectful and striving to see the merit in other people's work. She has influenced and helped peers in their linguistic thinking, but she would never believe us if we told her to what extent she has also influenced those who know her as a friend, colleague, mentor, animal lover and Italophile. Three of the editors of this volume have been so lucky as to have been taught by Kristin. We remember being completely overwhelmed by her first-year English grammar classes, in which she explained in detail the many layers of the English noun phrase as well as the very fine-grained and intricate system of modality. Gradually, though, her contagious enthusiasm for lexico-grammatical description spread and infected us all. By our third year we were eager researchers-to-be who were analysing their own little data sets hoping our term papers could contribute a little line to the description of the 'semantics of grammar' of English. As MA and PhD students, we were looking forward to working together with this professor who was always smiling, ever encouraging and tirelessly enthusiastic.

On many occasions, we have heard her speak with the utmost respect and appreciation for her own PhD supervisors, Michael Halliday and Emma Vorlat. In the obituary she wrote for Halliday in *Functions of Language*, for instance, she praised him for his "unstinted support, giving advice and writing references, always interacting with people with great courtesy and warmth, irrespective of their rung in academia" (Davidse 2018: 224). This, in a nutshell, is also what makes Kristin the person she is. She is a brilliant mind, a passionate teacher and the most supportive and encouraging supervisor one could imagine.

In the following sections we want to further highlight how this volume reflects and contributes to Kristin's work. Section 2 elaborates on the perspective taken in this volume, bringing together contributions dealing with some of the fundamental tenets of cognitive-functional and usage-based approaches to lexicon and grammar. Section 3, finally, presents an overview of the contents of each of the ten papers, highlighting links with Kristin's oeuvre.

2. Form and meaning in lexicon and grammar

Together with Anne-Marie Simon-Vandenberg and Dirk Noël, who also both contribute to this volume, Kristin founded the Benjamins journal *Functions of Language*. As Michael Halliday wrote in his preface to the first issue of Volume 1 in 1994, the linking of form and meaning was considered crucial by the editors of the new journal. This clearly went against the trend at the time to consider form and meaning (or function) separately, but rather drew on insights from Sapir, Whorf, Malinowski, the London School with Firth, and the Prague School, which all advocated for the centrality of both meaning and form to language. The starting point of all functional research is that language form is shaped by and constituted through meaning and usage. Some functional approaches, including Hallidayan SFL, take this notion a step further, and consider form and meaning to be mutually defining.

In many functional grammars and in all contributions to this volume, language then is seen as made up of signs, conceived of as functional structures in which form and meaning, grammar and lexis are integrated with each other (Croft 2001; Fried 2010). Accordingly, grammatical investigations are investigations into the sign system of a

language, in which constructions – form-meaning pairings (e.g. Goldberg 1995) of variable sizes (ranging from morphemes to multi-word units) and levels of schematicity – emerge as significant units. Ultimately, Kristin agrees with Langacker (1991: 275) on the symbolic nature of grammatical units: “Grammatical structures do not constitute an autonomous formal system: instead they are inherently symbolic, providing for the structuring and conventional symbolization of conceptual content. Lexicon, morphology, and syntax form a continuum of symbolic units divided only arbitrarily into separate components of grammar”.

Most of the contributions to this volume, however, go beyond the construction as a mere atomic sign, and take the construction to be also made up compositionally of component signs. This view is shared by Kristin, who is also concerned about the internal structure of constructions – not just their function or meaning. Much of her work reveals a desire to know how structures should be parsed. She believes linguistic analysis of specific items or constructions must always take into account differences – distributional, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic – relative to their function in the discourse. Syntagmatic and paradigmatic alternation patterns and collocational patterns, for example, have been used as a descriptive heuristic to identify structure types in much of Kristin’s work. Kristin refuses to reduce structure to mere linear ordering of elements, or – put differently – to reduce syntagmatic relations to sequential relations, or constructions to slots and fillers.

The inextricable link between form and meaning in the linguistic sign, recognized since de Saussure, is a given in all of the papers in this volume as well as in Kristin’s work. Whilst de Saussure referred to the connection between form and meaning as

“arbitrary”, it is clear that he did not mean that this connection is necessarily unmotivated. Unfortunately, the significance of motivation has been underestimated in subsequent research. A number of papers in this volume argue, to the contrary, that often there are principled and motivated relations between form and meaning in grammar and the lexicon. Bartlett’s contribution, for example, demonstrates motivation in the grammatical sign. In keeping with a number of recent articles that have shown phonological motivation in the lexicon (e.g. Brown, Holman & Wichmann 2013 among many others), Breunese & Diessel’s paper, in turn, shows motivation in the forms of demonstratives.

In addition to carefully studying the link between form and meaning in grammar and the lexicon, there is yet another characteristic that Kristin’s work and the publications in this volume have in common and that is the attention to detail and argumentation. Kristin’s long list of high-quality publications all testify to the importance she accords to teasing apart small pragmatic, collocational and semantic differences between constructions and to distinguishing distinct syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships. Over the years she has painstakingly carried out highly detailed qualitative analyses on both synchronic and diachronic corpus data to uncover the semantics of diverse grammatical structures, including existentials, clefts, and noun phrase elements. In her research, as in her teaching, she has always stressed the need for representative and rich data sets, a need recognized by all papers in this volume. None of the contributors content themselves with small sets of intuited data. Instead they strive to overcome the challenges of problematic data, and consider the potential interest of the unusual and unexpected, and their relevance to linguistic theory and its development.

3. Summary of the contributions

This section presents summaries of the ten contributions making up this volume, linking them to themes in Kristin's work. They entertain a variety of theoretical perspectives, reflecting Kristin's broad functionalist take on linguistic phenomena, which is not restricted exclusively to SFL. In addition, we believe they contribute to new descriptive and theoretical insights, with a focus on (i) patterns related to information structure, (ii) usage-based approaches to grammar and the lexicon, and (iii) broader theoretical issues in functional linguistics.

Section 1 contains three papers that deal with issues in information structure in one way or another. **Kaltenböck**'s paper opens the book, focusing on *there*-clefts without a subject relativizer in the Spoken BNC2014 corpus. The data set is analysed into a taxonomy of three functional subtypes of *there*-clefts on the basis of their constructional form-meaning characteristics and typical information-structural patterns. For the two specificational subtypes of *there*-clefts, enumerative and quantificational *there*-clefts, Kaltenböck draws on the seminal descriptions elaborated by Kristin and colleagues (Davidse 1999b, 2000, 2014; Davidse & Kimps 2016; Davidse & Njende 2019). The third type is the relatively understudied presentational-eventive *there*-cleft, athetic structure which does not specify a value for a pragmatically presupposed variable but instead forms "a single canonical clause whose proposition is pragmatically asserted" (Lambrecht 2001: 507). Kaltenböck describes the gradience of the three types of *there*-clefts from prototypical specificational to prototypical non-specificational (thetic) *there*-clefts, and finds that the latter make up the majority in the data without a subject relativizer. The

absence of the cleft relativizer is argued to erode the bi-clausal nature of specificational *there*-clefts, thereby also weakening the pragmatic presupposition associated with the cleft relative clause. This erosion effect is clearest in the case of presentational-eventive *there*-clefts, which are described as truly mono-clausal: they involve all-new propositions introduced with a low-informational grammaticalized prefix *there*'s.

Using English and Norwegian parallel and comparable corpus data, **Hasselgård** studies impersonal passive constructions with an expletive, semantically empty and non-agentive pronominal subject, i.e. English *it* and Norwegian *det*. Hasselgård's is the only contribution to use translation data, allowing her to study not only the English and Norwegian constructions, but also to uncover crosslinguistic similarities and differences. The translation study shows that even the constructions that are shared by both languages often receive non-congruent, i.e. structurally different, translations, especially in translations from Norwegian to English. The contrastive study shows that impersonal passive constructions are not only more frequent in the Norwegian data, they are also more diverse. Unlike English, which only has parenthetical and extraposition realisations, Norwegian also uses constructions with intransitive verbs and transitive verbs which keep their object in the passive. In her description of the extraposed and parenthetical constructions, Hasselgård references Davidse's (1994) work on speech and thought representation, and Davidse & Van linden's (2020) and Kaltenböck's (2005) work on *it*-extraposition. In linking the functional description of the different impersonal passive constructions to the ideational, textual, and interpersonal metafunctions of language, Hasselgård's study firmly places itself in line with Halliday's, Davidse's and McGregor's theorizing on the functions of language.

Bartlett's contribution concludes the section on information structure with an examination of the grammatical features of the canonical clause in Scottish Gaelic. Building on earlier arguments that the Scottish Gaelic clause is in the unmarked case process-oriented (Bartlett 2016; Bartlett & O'Grady 2019), it is proposed that the canonical clause lacks the topic-comment structure of an unmarked categorical statement. Rather, events are prototypically construed in terms of processes taking place with or without the involvement of participants. In this regard Scottish Gaelic contrasts with the Standard Average European (SAE) language, which is participant orientated, and shows clauses that are prototypically construed as categorical statements concerning participants doing or being things. Bartlett proposes that the different orientations between Scottish Gaelic and SAE languages emerge in terms of both the textual choices speakers habitually make in discourse, and grammatically in terms of the prototypical arrangement of component elements. Specifically, the prototypical VS(O) clause structure iconically depicts the P(x,y) pattern of predicate logic in which neither argument is favoured over the other. This is not to claim that Scottish Gaelic lacks means of encoding topic-comment structure; these are however marked constructions, employed in marked situations. In motivating his proposals, Bartlett sets the canonical clause type in Scottish Gaelic in paradigmatic opposition with a range of non-canonical constructions. Thus the discussion touches on a range of phenomena that have been of particular significance in Kristin's research, including in particular information structure (e.g. Davidse, Van Praet & Njende 2019), cleft constructions (e.g. Davidse 2000; Davidse & Njende 2019; Bourgoin, O'Grady & Davidse 2021) and existential (or presentational) constructions (e.g. Davidse 1999b).

Section 2 includes contributions that present usage-based approaches to grammar and the lexicon. **Traugott** adopts the framework of Diachronic Construction Grammar, distinguishing between constructionalization and constructional changes. Specifically, she discusses how two separate discourse markers, *Oh* and *by the way*, came to be combined to signal “digressive” discourse management and topic-shift in the 1840s, and conventionalized as a hedge on a potentially face-threatening utterance. Interestingly, from the 1920s the discourse marker combination is found in contexts where it serves to signal the speaker’s strong disalignment with and mockery of something said by a third person – typically individuals in authority or institutional collectives – and hence also mockery of the represented speaker themselves. The paper ties in with Kristin’s work on speech and thought representation, typically from a constructionist perspective (Vandelanotte & Davidse 2009; Davidse & Vandelanotte 2011) and her interest in the expression of speaker attitude, interpersonal phenomena and discourse markers (e.g. Davidse et al. 2015; Davidse et al. 2022; Gentens & Davidse 2017).

Similarly adopting the perspective of Diachronic Construction Grammar, **Noël** tackles the question of how the gradual disappearance of a construction in a language can be accounted for. He addresses the problem from the standpoint of a radically usage-based grammar, namely Schmid’s (2020) Entrenchment-and-Conventionalization theory. This theory has hitherto focused attention primarily on the accumulative dynamics of the addition of constructions to a language. Noël suggests, however, that it can also provide insights into constructional obsolescence. Two interacting processes, collective de-conventionalisation (“reversed conventionalization”) and individual de-entrenchment (“reversed entrenchment”) are proposed, which are effectively the reverses of the

corresponding collective and individual processes in Schmid's model. The paper focuses attention on the decline in use of the so-called Deontic NCI ('nominativus cum infinitivo') construction, which takes the schematic shape [BE Ven to INF] – as in e.g. *be obliged to* INF, *be forbidden to* INF – in Late Modern English. Two diachronic corpus studies are undertaken that investigate the respective contributions of de-conventionalisation and de-entrenchment to the obsolescence of the target construction. This approach is noteworthy in that it recognises the significance of diversity amongst speakers' ideolects and in patterns of de-entrenchment at the level of individual speakers, and how these interact with language change at the broader collective level. The paper links with the usage- and construction-based approach to grammar that characterises Kristin's research, and her interest in the diachronic development of English constructions, including constructions expressing interpersonal or modal meanings, in which she employs methods of diachronic corpus linguistics (e.g. Van linden & Davidse 2009; Davidse 2010; Brems & Davidse 2010; Ghesquière & Davidse 2011; Van Rompaey, Davidse & Petré 2015).

Another paper highlighting the importance of the social context in which language is used is **Butler & Simon-Vandenberg**'s study of the English compound indefinite pronouns *somebody/everybody* and *someone/everyone*. Using data from the Spoken BNC2014 corpus, they investigate register and sociolinguistic variation between the different *-body* and *-one* forms, in an attempt to uncover underlying form-meaning correlations and differences. In much of the literature the *-body* and *-one* sets are described as "semantically equivalent and in free variation". Their data, however, have allowed Butler & Simon-Vandenberg to both refute some of the hypotheses found in the literature, and confirm others. Whereas older studies such as D'Arcy et al. (2013)

observed social and stylistic differences between the sets of forms, the synchronic spoken data studied here did not substantiate this, which is taken by the authors to be evidence of change-in-progress. Also, the study has shown speaker age to influence the choice between *-body* and *-one* forms, with younger generations favouring the latter and older generations preferring the former, whereas the hypothesis that women would prefer *-one* forms was disproved.

Section 3 comprises four papers dealing with theoretical issues in functional linguistics. **Breunese & Diessel**'s contribution turns to iconicity in the domain of spatial deixis. Based on a cross-linguistic sample of 180 languages, the authors analyse how formal contrasts in demonstrative pronoun paradigms mirror meanings of closeness/distance of the intended referent with respect to the speaker and/or hearer. In line with earlier findings, the study confirms the tendency for proximal demonstratives to contain vowels with higher F2 frequencies than the vowels in corresponding distal terms. Besides formant frequencies, the authors highlight a number of additional formal correlates that can be iconic of increased spatial distance, including tonal characteristics, vowel lengthening, reduplication, and greater word length. The topic of iconicity in spatial deixis is central to Kristin's broad interest in deictic meanings and the place of these in cognitive and functional linguistic theorizing (Davidse 2001, 2004; Davidse et al. 2008; Willemsse et al. 2009; Davidse & Simon-Vandenberghe 2008).

Chrispin & Fontaine investigate the English verb *watch*, which shows some atypical features for a verb of visual perception that render its classification somewhat problematic. Set within the parameters of SFL their paper addresses an issue that has

attracted little attention within the theory, the classification of lexical verbs. Instead, SFL has focused attention on the classification of “processes”, understood as those phenomena that are construed by full clauses. As the authors indicate, this focus of attention on clause grammar at the expense of lexical classification – also reflected in the lack of attention to parts of speech classification (McGregor 2021: 173-174) – may be a consequence of the view that lexicon is “most delicate grammar” (Halliday 1961; Hasan 1987), and that lexemes emerge as the realisations of the final choices in system networks. Chrispin & Fontaine’s paper reveals that the properties and classification of particular lexemes need not be derivable from grammar, and are every bit as significant, theoretically and descriptively, as properties and classification of clauses. Ultimately, the paper raises the issue of the (covert) classification of verbs in languages such as English, and how this might best be achieved, an issue that has attracted some attention from Kristin (e.g. Davidse 1994; Davidse 1998).

To address the issue of the distinctive properties of the verb *watch*, Chrispin & Fontaine undertake a comparative corpus investigation of this verb and the verb *see*, presumably the prototypical verb of visual perception in English. This corpus investigation, which employs the COCA corpus, reveals a number of clear behavioural differences between the two verbs in terms of Aktionsart and other characteristics of complement types. Intriguingly, the atypical features of *watch* may result from its origins in an intransitive non-perceptual verb, and the manner of its subsequent diachronic development into a transitive verb of perception. Chrispin & Fontaine’s openness to other functional approaches than SFL for theoretical insights reflects Kristin’s *modus operandi*. And like Kristin, they incorporate Aktionsart as an explanatory feature in understanding

the behaviour of verbs (e.g. Davidse & Rymen 2008).

McGregor's paper on the absence of absolutive case in Gooniyandi (Bunuban, Kimberley, north-west Australia) touches the foundations of language description and linguistic theorizing, assessing what evidence we need to posit a grammatical category for a specific language, especially in the absence of substance. While Gooniyandi has an ergative case-marker (as well as other case-markers), McGregor presents evidence for the absence of absolutive case – whether realized by a zero-morpheme or by a case form that is formally identical with the root or stem form of the nominal concerned – and also argues for absence of evidence for that grammatical category. That is, rather than positing a zero-marker of the absolutive case (or a formally marked bare case form), as many analysts have done for similar data, he concludes that there is no absolutive case to mark in the language – the potential candidates are merely bare nominals. His line of argument has serious implications for the description of other Australian Aboriginal languages, the theory of ergativity and the typology of case-marking more generally, since unary case systems (i.e. systems consisting of just one case category, rather two or more in paradigmatic opposition) as well as clear constraints on zeros (or formally marked bare case forms) in the presence of ergative case are truly new to the linguistic scene. McGregor's paper resonates with Kristin's work on the zero-article (or, rather 'zero-quantifier') and bare nominals in English (Davidse 2004), and her keenness to build original and tight lines of argument that critically address unwarranted presumptions in linguistics.

The section on theoretical issues – and with it, the entire volume – concludes with

Keizer's paper on Gleason's lexico-grammatical distinction between enation and agnation, which the author reinterprets within Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG). Specifically, the author proposes to replace Gleason's distinction between lexemes and structures – in terms of which he defined enation vs. agnation – by that between representational and interpersonal frames (for Gleason's structures) and the elements that are inserted into these frames (for Gleason's lexemes) in FDG. Her approach crucially differs from Gleason's in the treatment of operators, such as determiners and auxiliaries. Keizer argues that operators are similar to lexemes in that they are inserted into frames but never change the type of frame, whereas Gleason held that such function words invariably change the structure of an expression. That is, while Gleason claimed that adding or changing function words (analysed as operators in FDG) yields agnate sentence pairs, Keizer contends that this results in enate ones; in her view, agnate relations only obtain between sentences showing different frames. The distinction between enation and agnation has played a prominent role – either explicitly or implicitly – in Kristin's own work as well as in the work of various scholars she has mentored and influenced (e.g. Davidse 1998; Heyvaert 2003; Laffut 2006; Verstraete 2007). Structurally different paraphrases are also central in joint work on locative constructions (e.g. Laffut & Davidse 2002) and on complement constructions with semiotic nouns (e.g. Davidse & Van linden 2020) or factive presuppositions (e.g. Gentens & Davidse 2017; Vandelanotte & Davidse 2009).

4. Envoi

This festschrift celebrates both Kristin's important contribution to linguistic scholarship

and her unstinting support of the work of her students and colleagues. We, the editors of this volume, as well as the authors of the papers, have benefited in various ways from Kristin's generosity of spirit. We have also learnt from her as a role model of a researcher who has – more than anyone else inspired by Hallidayan thought – established bridges with, not barriers against, other functional approaches. Her work makes it clear how one can combine research within a theory with insights from other theoretical perspectives. For all of this, and for what is still to come, thank you very much, Kristin!

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