

## **Constructions in learner language: experimental and corpus-linguistic evidence**

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In Construction Grammar, frequent syntactic configurations are assumed to be stored as symbolic units in the mental lexicon alongside words. For L1 data, there is a growing body of research in favor of constructions; examples include Goldberg's (1995) study on systematic meaning differences between one verb in several syntactic frames, the priming of constructions (cf. Hare & Goldberg 1999), sorting experiments (cf. Bencini & Goldberg 2000), and language acquisition (cf. Tomasello 1998).

The many studies supporting the existence of constructions in L1 data raise the question if, and to what extent, constructions also characterize learner language. In this presentation, I review recent work done by my colleague Stefan Gries and me in which we focus on advanced German learners of English as an L2. In one study (Gries & Wulff 2005), we found syntactic priming and semantic sorting effects for two argument structure constructions that were highly compatible with a construction-based approach and even obtained verb-specific constructional preferences highly similar to those of native speakers. Earlier results from Liang (2002) on Chinese learners of English add to the evidence that increased learner proficiency comes with increased proximity to native speaker complementation patterns and preferences. In a more recent study (Wulff & Gries 2008), we added more comprehensive but compatible evidence for English complementation constructions. The presentation will be rounded off with a discussion of the pedagogical implications of these results.