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## List of Abbreviations

CxG	Construction Grammar
CCxG	Cognitive Construction Grammar
CL	Cognitive Linguistics
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FLT	Foreign Language Teaching
PCCxG	Pedagogical Cognitive Construction Grammar
SLA	Second Language Acquisition

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## 1. Introduction

Grammar teaching has always played a major but also controversial role in the foreign language classroom. How and what exactly foreign language teachers teach is highly influenced by the way they conceptualize the nature of language and the relevance they assign to the importance of grammatical knowledge. Teachers' beliefs about grammar and its role in the language classroom can have a substantial impact on students' learning and progression in terms of language proficiency. Ortega (2003: 1), echoed by Keck and Kim (2014: 1), states that teachers, as language practitioners and pedagogues, need to triangulate linguistic description with questions of language acquisition and language instruction to be able to arrive at a satisfactory practice. As a subfield of applied linguistics, the research domain of pedagogical grammar is involved in synthesizing these three areas in order to answer how grammar could be taught and learned most efficiently (Keck & Kim 2014: 1). Numerous applied linguists (e.g. Odlin 1994; Ellis 1998, 2006; Larsen-Freeman 1998, 2003; Norris & Ortega 2000; Keck & Kim 2014) have emphasized the necessity for more research in the field of pedagogical grammar to address the manifold concerns foreign language teachers are confronted with in their everyday practice. Out of dissatisfaction with recent research in pedagogical grammar, which seems to have rarely managed to effectively deal with all of these concerns, Keck and Kim (2014: 4) have proposed a framework for pedagogical grammar "which can be used by language teachers to organize both their existing knowledge (of grammar, of second language acquisition, of L2 instruction) and their future explorations of L2 grammar pedagogy."

In the course of this thesis, Keck and Kim's framework (2014: 4) will be combined with one of the most thriving and auspicious linguistic research fields of the last two decades, i.e. Construction Grammar (hereafter: CxG). Operating within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics (hereafter: CL) and discussed in a vast body of literature (e.g. Goldberg 2006; Hoffmann & Trousdale 2013; Hilpert 2014; Diessel 2015), the relatively young linguistic research field of CxG, has established new conceptualizations of first and second/foreign language acquisition. There is a wide variety of different theoretical CxG approaches (e.g. Cognitive CxG, Goldberg 1995, 2006; Radical CxG, Croft 2001; Embodied CxG, Bergen & Chang 2005, Usage-based CxG, Diessel 2015), however, all models share the assumption that language is based on constructions, i.e. conventionalized form-meaning pairings (Goldberg 2006: 3; Gilquin & De Knop 2016: 3). Generally, CxG does not believe in the existence of an innate universal grammar, rather it assumes that everything a speaker knows about language is stored in a large network of constructions, i.e. a construct-i-con (Goldberg 2003: 219; Hilpert 2014: 2). A construction does not only include words (e.g. *cat*) but all levels of grammatical

description as for example morphemes (e.g. *-licious*), idioms (e.g. *kick the bucket*) or abstract phrasal patterns (e.g. *X is more ADJ than Y*) (Hoffmann & Trousdale 2013: 9). A speaker stores all these constructions in a construct-i-con together with all the knowledge s/he associate with a particular construction, i.e. phonological, morphological, syntactical, semantical and pragmatic information (Hilpert 2014: 2). A construction can, thus, be conceptualized as a symbolic sign in the sense of Saussure that links formal, i.e. syntactic, morphological and phonological information to aspects of meaning, i.e. semantic, pragmatic and discourse-functional notion (Croft & Cruse 2004: 258).

This thesis will take on the model of usage-based cognitive CxG (hereafter: CCxG), which assumes that all grammatical knowledge is based on usage and derives from a speaker's experience with a language. In that sense, CCxG views grammatical competence to be strongly connected to frequency of occurrence. Depending on how often a speaker processes a specific linguistic item (e.g. a phrase, a word, a phoneme etc.), it will be easier for the speaker to uncover the underlying structure and store the schematic pattern of a construction (Sommerer 2018: 20). By assuming that speakers store schemas, i.e. grammatical templates (Diessel 2011: 838), CCxG rejects the idea of traditional rules that most formalist approaches include. These stored schemas can include both regular, concrete patterns as well as more abstract elements. CCxG, thereby, also takes on a non-reductionist, inventory-based approach, which believes that speakers have a great amount of cognitive storage at their disposal (Diessel 2011: 834).

While the theoretical perspectives of CxG have already been explored extensively, the more applied approach has got less attention (Gilquin & De Knop 2016: 3). Today, many foreign language teaching materials reflect the common conceptualization that a language basically consists of a grammar and a lexicon; a dichotomy which treats the majority of linguistic aspects as separable by these two levels, and thereby hinders the process of foreign language acquisition more than it helps it (Loenheim et al. 2016: 328). As CCxG views language as consisting of constructions that are entrenched in a speaker's mind and based on usage (Ellis, Römer & O'Donnell 2016: 26), it does not only reject the traditional rule-based view on language, but it also requires a new mode of how languages are taught and subsequently also represented (Loenheim et al. 2016: 328). Recognizing the potentials of CxG, many scholars in the field of applied linguistics (e.g. Liang 2000; Gries & Wulff 2005; Valenzuela Manzanares & Rojo López 2008, Gilquin & De Knop 2014) have demonstrated in their studies that constructions do exist in foreign language acquisition and that language learners seem to rely on them heavily. Building on this knowledge, Gilquin and De Knop (2016: 14) emphasize the importance of further research in the field of applied CxG to "help learners make the generalizations that



native speakers make naturally from the input they receive”. With a focus on the Austrian EFL-classroom, this thesis will investigate how foreign language teachers, and subsequently also learners, could benefit from a pedagogical CCxG model. More precisely, it will be discussed why the way traditional foreign language teaching (hereafter: FLT) programs teach English grammar is often inefficient and why a CCxG-informed approach to teaching grammatical constructions would be more valuable.<sup>1</sup>

Chapter 2 of this thesis will introduce the reader to the concept of pedagogical grammar and its perspectives for the second/foreign language classroom. More specifically, it will discuss how the areas of grammar description, L2 grammar acquisition and L2 grammar instruction (Keck & Kim 2014: 4) can be combined to offer a framework that will aid foreign language teachers in balancing linguistic theory and their professional practice. In addition, chapter 2 will provide a brief overview on how different research conceptions in applied linguistics have shaped the role of grammar in FLT-practice up to the present time. This discussion will also touch upon the ongoing linguistic debate of implicit versus explicit grammar teaching, which will help the reader to position the constructionist approach within the field of applied linguistics.

Chapter 3 will then go on to explain the theory behind CxG and specify the particular model that will be used in this thesis, namely usage-based cognitive CxG (CCxG). More precisely, chapter 3 will have a look at what the basic tenets of CCxG are and how constructions can be defined. Moreover, it will be discussed what types of constructions there are and how they could be stored and organized within the construct-i-con.

Turning to the more applied approach to CCxG, chapter 4 will explore how CCxG conceptualizes first and second/foreign language acquisition. Moreover, this chapter will also try to determine which factors affect construction learning and how they might influence second/foreign language acquisition.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the scholars and studies which this thesis refers to, all use the terms ‘L2’ and ‘foreign language’ interchangeably, meaning any additional language that is learned after a speaker has mastered his/her native language(s). If a distinction between second language learning and foreign language learning is being made, it is often the case that learning environments (e.g. English-speaking country or not) and learning purposes (e.g. in order to get by in everyday life or for very specific situations) are contrasted (e.g. Nars 1997: 51). For inclusive reasons, I will mostly use the designation ‘second/foreign language’ in order to include both learning contexts. However, for practical reasons (e.g. quotations), I will sometimes also use the term L2 to refer to both second and foreign language.

After a thorough review of pedagogical grammar and CCxG in general, these chapters will then have set the basis for the core interest of this thesis, i.e. pedagogical CCxG (hereafter PCCxG), which will be discussed extensively in chapter 5. Combining Keck and Kim's (2014: 4) framework with the basic tenets of CCxG, this chapter will explore some general principles a PCCxG might entail. By distilling the work of those scholars who have tried to bridge the gap between CxG theory and FLT practice (e.g. Holme 2010 a, 2010b; Herbst 2016, Gilquin & De Knop 2016), chapter 5 will suggest some principles that could help FLT professionals to improve their practice in terms of grammar description, grammar acquisition and grammar instruction.

Eventually, chapter 6 will then discuss possible implications and applications of a PCCxG. Offering a more applied view on PCCxG, chapter 6 will examine to which extent a CCxG-informed approach could be implemented in the Austrian EFL-classroom and thereby add to a potentially fruitful improvement of current FLT-practice. By taking two grammatical examples, namely the indefinite article and the way to express futurity in English, chapter 6.1. and 6.2. will try to show how these items are currently taught in the most frequently used EFL-school books in Austria (*More! 1-4* series, Gerngross et al. 2018), why these approaches might be problematic, and how these grammar items could be taught to meet PCCxG-principles. These subchapters will also try offer practice-related perspectives on the discussions by providing suggestions on how the *More! 1-4* series (Gerngross et al. 2018) could be adapted to meet PCCxG principles. Chapter 6 will also provide examples of self-designed PCCxG-material and give ideas on how foreign language teachers could help their students in learning and storing constructions in an efficient and authentic way. Ultimately, chapter 6.3 will also discuss the current limitations of a PCCxG and show why the suggested principles and implications are not always applicable.

In the end, chapter 7 will highlight the key findings of the discussions and give a final assessment of the potentials of a PCCxG for teaching grammatical constructions in the Austrian EFL-classroom.

## **2. Pedagogical Grammar**

Second or foreign language pedagogy, and with it pedagogical grammar, is

a truly multidisciplinary endeavor, because any activity proposed in the classroom (a matter of pedagogy) makes an implicit assumption about the way in which the target system is organized (a matter of linguistics), as well as how the target construction is learned (a matter of acquisition) (Achard 2004: 166).

Thus, pedagogy and linguistics are highly interconnected and dependent on each other. However, relating them to one another seems to be rather difficult as each discipline often stays more or less separate and has difficulties learning from each other (Achard 2004: 165-167).

As this thesis is concerned with a reconsideration of current conceptions of grammar instruction in second/foreign language teaching, section 2.2. will give a brief overview of how the pioneering work in linguistics has influenced FLT-practice, especially in terms of grammar teaching. But before, section 2.1. will explain the concept of pedagogical grammar and introduce the reader to a framework for pedagogical grammar (Keck & Kim 2014: 4) that will serve as a guiding grid for a characterization of PCCxG.

### **2.1. A framework for Pedagogical Grammar**

Teachers' beliefs about grammar, i.e. what it involves and what not, profoundly influence the way they act as language pedagogues. However, as Odlin (1994: 10) aptly states, no conception of grammar, i.e. a grammar description, alone will ever "satisfactorily cover the concerns of practitioners of pedagogical grammar". That is because teachers' beliefs about second/foreign language acquisition, the nature of learning and the effects of instruction are equally shaping their teaching practice. Numerous applied linguists (e.g. Odlin 1994; Ellis 1998, 2006; Larsen-Freeman 1998, 2003; Norris & Ortega 2000; Keck & Kim 2014) have therefore emphasized the necessity for more research in the field of pedagogical grammar to address the manifold concerns second/foreign language teachers are confronted with in their everyday practice.

In general, pedagogical grammar can be defined as "a research domain that is concerned with how grammar can most effectively be taught and learned in the second language (L2) classroom" (Keck & Kim 2014: 1). In an attempt to synthesize the numerous aspects pedagogical grammar deals with, many scholars feel the need to delineate pedagogical grammar from other conceptions of grammar. Odlin (1994: 1-10), for example, starts his account of pedagogical grammar by contrasting it to other grammar conceptions such as prescriptive grammar (standardized rule-based view on language) or descriptive grammar (often non-standard usage-based view on language). Eventually, Odlin (1994: 11) concludes that pedagogical grammar is "a practically oriented hybrid drawing on work in several fields". Over

a decade later, Davies (2007: 21) also introduces pedagogical grammar by differentiating it from analytical grammar, i.e. a formal description without reference to pedagogy. Davies (2007: 23) does, however, acknowledge that pedagogical grammar unites the questions of “how best to teach language” and “how the language deploys itself in order to permit meaning to be expressed”. Wang (2003) even goes further by adding the aspect of ‘learner language’, i.e. identifying and understanding learner errors and eventually identifies the following three key areas of pedagogical grammar, namely linguistic description, teaching grammar and learner grammar. Wang’s (2003) conceptualization of pedagogical grammar is rather similar to Ortega’s (2003) construal of this research field, who also says that pedagogical grammar requires a knowledge of ‘what’ to teach, ‘how’ to teach it and ‘when’ to teach what.

Drawing on this work, Keck and Kim (2014) provide a framework for pedagogical grammar that seems to offer a basis for further conceptualizations. Out of dissatisfaction with recent research in pedagogical grammar, which seems to have rarely managed to effectively deal with most of the concerns language teachers have, Keck and Kim (2014: 3-4) propose the following framework (Figure 1) for pedagogical grammar:

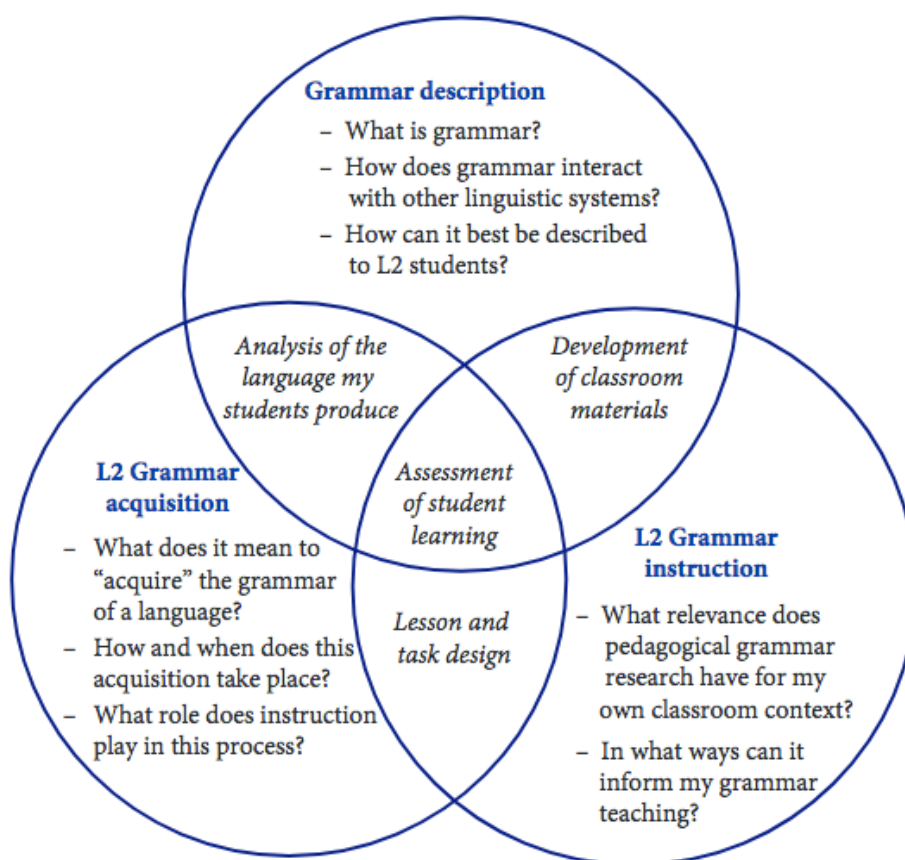


Figure 1: Framework for second language grammar pedagogy (Keck & Kim 2014:4)

Keck and Kim (2014: 2) claim that this framework “can be used by language teachers to organize both their existing knowledge (of grammar, of second language acquisition, of L2 instruction) and their future explorations of L2 grammar pedagogy”. Instead of giving L2 teachers a list of rules and guidelines, the scholars provide this framework, which enables language pedagogues to incorporate their own professional experience and assumptions. According to the scholars (Keck & Kim 2014: 4), the research domain of pedagogical grammar is involved in synthesizing the three areas of grammar description, L2 grammar acquisition and L2 grammar instruction in order to answer how grammar could be taught and learned most efficiently. Keck and Kim (2014: 1-2) have based their framework on the exploration of “data-based accounts of grammar in use” (L2 grammar description), “research which explores how and when particular grammar systems are acquired by L2 learners” (L2 grammar acquisition) and “research which explores the relative effectiveness of different instructional approaches” (L2 grammar instruction). Thus, the first area of ‘grammar description’ covers the question of ‘what’ by examining what grammar actually is and how it can be characterized and described. That means that basic questions such as ‘Do I believe that grammar is an individual module that can be separated from lexis?’ or ‘Do I think grammar is based on rules?’ need to be answered in this area. The second area ‘L2 grammar acquisition’ deals with the question of how and when learners actually learn a foreign language. A teacher’s beliefs about learner language and acquisition processes build a crucial basis for practical classroom measures and can determine aspects such as when to introduce a new grammar item. Finally, the third area of ‘grammar instruction’ deals with the aspect of how a teacher’s knowledge of grammar and language acquisition informs classroom practice. Questions such as ‘Do I teach a specific grammar item explicitly?’ or ‘How do I link theoretical research to my everyday practice?’ are answered within this area.

All three areas should be seen interacting fields that inform one another and determine how L2 language pedagogues analyze and assess student language and design lessons and material in the foreign language classroom. Thus, instead of proposing a list of principles that is motivated by a specific linguistic school and rather static, Keck and Kim’s framework (2014: 4) offers language pedagogues a flexible and adaptable approach for their professional decisions, as it allows to combine already existing linguistic beliefs with new scientific insights and is still adjustable according to different learners aims or environments (Keck & Kim 2014: 2-3).

Of course, what those involved in language pedagogy believe about grammar is highly influenced by linguistic research and scientific insights. Different approaches to FLT have different syllabi with often deviating foci employing different language learning paradigms

which all influence classroom practice. In order to understand where CCxG positions itself and how CCxG reasoning could be combined with Keck and Kim's framework (2014: 4) to arrive at a concept for a PCCxG, it might be useful to revisit some of the most essential debates and have a closer look at the major key developments in applied linguistics and pedagogical grammar.

## **2.2. Key developments in language and grammar teaching**

According to Bell (1981: 79) FLT can be traced back to Hellenistic times, which shows that linguistic inquiry and its implications for (second/foreign) language learning have a very ancient history. In this chapter, however, the timeframe for illustrating how linguistic theory influenced FLT practice will not go beyond the last century. The last decades have seen crucial changes in FLT theory and the scientific work of this time has fundamentally shaped current beliefs about grammar pedagogy (Keck & Kim 2014: 29). Some of the findings have contributed to important developments and opened lively debates that still continue today and might essentially influence the everyday practice of FLT professionals. As this paper is concerned with pedagogical grammar, the role of grammar within the language classroom will be centered in the following overview. This will eventually help the reader to understand why a possible paradigm shift towards CCxG in grammar teaching might be useful.

### **2.2.1. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century developments to new ways of L2 teaching**

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, grammar instruction played a significant role in FLT settings, as the majority of L2 classrooms employed a so-called Grammar Translation approach, which centered the explanation of grammar rules and the translation of foreign language texts into the first language with the help of vocabulary lists (Keck & Kim 2014: 8). Towards the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this approach to FLT has experienced heavy criticism. One reason for that was the Second World War and the subsequent greater necessity for oral proficiency in foreign languages (Bell 1981: 93). The demand for a new form of FLT came into existence when the linguistic discipline itself was in a phase of change and linguists were reassessing their approaches and notions to the study of language (Keck & Kim 2014: 8).

When structural linguistics emerged in the 1930ies (Keck & Kim 2014: 9), the view on the nature of language started to change from 'traditional' linguistics with a diachronic focus on written form towards a focus on the present forms of spoken language which derives from a system of forms (Bell 1981: 92). Structuralist views on language also influenced the way languages were taught in the following years. According to Trappes-Lomax (2000: 4) "[t]he methodology which developed from a structuralist approach with its insistence on the

paradigmatic dimension interacting with the syntagmatic dimension, naturally led to a slot and filler approach to the teaching of grammar”. This means that for approximately the next 20 years grammar was taught almost only directly with grammar textbooks mainly consisting of grammar drills (Trappes-Lomax 2000: 4). Since structuralists employed a behaviorist model of learning, i.e. language learning was reached through habit learning (Bell 1981: 96), it could be argued that the teaching of grammar drills derived from an interplay of structuralism and behaviorism. While grammar teaching played an important role prior to the 1950ies, new developments in structural linguistics and behaviorism “helped to shape the approach to pedagogy taken in the Audiolingual Method” (Keck & Kim 2014: 9), which challenged the role of grammar teaching immensely for the first time. Primarily based on the constant repetition of sentence patterns in the target language (Van Els et al. 1984: 153), the Audiolingual Method was clearly against the teaching and learning of grammar rules. Although it would soon come under attack, the method’s existence helped to stimulate new developments in FLT and promote innovative research.

In the course of the 1950ies, out of dissatisfaction with the rather descriptive structuralist view on language, Chomsky brought transformational generative linguistics to life. He claimed that a structuralist approach to language “could never fully account for the grammar of a language” (Keck & Kim, 2014: 10) and therefore argued for the existence of a Universal Grammar, which supposedly allows humans to master the language they are exposed to despite the relatively poor input they get (Keck & Kim 2014: 11). Although Chomsky (1969, echoed in Bell 1981: 100) claimed that “linguistics could not help the language teacher”, the transformational generative view on the nature of language seemed to bear some fundamental implications for language learning and therefore also for language teaching. After all, if language is conceptualized as an abstract system of underlying knowledge, and language learning depends on an innate Universal Grammar, it is also separated from the outside world and its context of use. This conception is also reflected in Chomsky’s distinction between language competence (grammatical knowledge) and language performance (actual language use) and his primary research focus on language competence (Keck & Kim 2014: 12). Nicholas and Starks (2014: 6) claim that those who employ this view on language in the classroom focus more on the structure of language itself rather than on how these structures are used. This eventually results in “a focus on the learner’s language system without the same level of attention to the learner and how s/he uses that system” (Nicholas & Starks 2014: 6). Moreover, the Chomskyan view on language acquisition significantly weakened the behaviorist learning model and put the systematic mental construction of language in the center of attention (Nicholas & Starks 2014:

78). According to Whong (2011: 49), such an argumentation for natural acquisition does not seem to be compatible with instructed language learning, which is why generative linguistics research ultimately distanced itself from applying their model to FLT-practice. Although the body of research in generative linguistics that allows for connections to second/foreign language learning is growing, generative linguistics has never considered the “application to the classroom as a natural objective of their research” (Whong 2011: 4).

Ironically, it was mainly Chomsky’s insistence on language competence over language performance that caused an uproar amongst linguists. By the 1970s, applied linguists and foreign/second language teachers started to realize that effective communication was more useful for second/foreign language learners than perfectly formed language bits or grammar rules learned by heart (Keck & Kim 2014: 14). This insight, together with sociopolitical factors and new research, eventually led to an acknowledgement of social factors in language and initiated the beginning of the communicative approach, later known as Communicative Language Teaching (hereafter: CLT). This approach foregrounds authentic language use and centers communicative competence as the ultimate goal of language learning. The next chapter will explain which factors exactly led to the development of CLT as well as what principles it implies for second/foreign language teaching.

### **2.2.2. The communicative turn**

Richards and Rodgers (2014: 83) generally argue that two different factors, one external and one internal, have always shaped the nature of language teaching. The external factor encompasses the role or status a language has worldwide as well as political developments, while the internal factor reflects changes and reevaluations of the linguistic enterprise itself, i.e. applied linguistics, (foreign) language teachers and other experts. Richards and Rogers (2014: 83) claim that

[t]he language teaching profession undergoes periodic waves of renewal and paradigm shifts as it continually reinvents itself through the impact of new ideas, new educational philosophies, advances in technology, and new research paradigms (...). The movement and approach known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a good example of how a paradigm shift in language teaching reflects these two sources of change.

The question that arises is what kind of developments exactly led to this paradigm shift and subsequently also to the emergence of CLT as well as what kind of role grammar instruction plays in this approach to FLT.

As far as the external factor is concerned, Richards and Rodgers (2014: 84) state that “changing educational realities in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s” contributed to a paradigmatic turn in



the teaching of languages. When more and more European countries became interdependent on each other, the Council of Europe, which was and is responsible for educational and cultural collaborations, recognized the increasing need to teach the most common and relevant languages of the European Common Market. As education was one of the Council's major concerns, it was highly involved in furthering the language teaching enterprise and promoting innovative research and developments (Richards & Rodgers 2014: 84). Hedge (2000: 46) too considers the growing need "of professional mobility between countries" in Europe to have contributed to the development of the so-called 'communicative classroom'. At that time, the global spread of English and its status as a world language connected to economic and political power was already incomparable (cf. Seidlhofer 2011). Moreover, Hedge (2006: 46) mentions that course designers in the field of ESP (English for Specific Purposes), who designed their lessons according to their students' specific communicative aims in English, have significantly contributed to the communicative turn by basing their syllabi "on functional and situational views of language".

Highly interconnected with the need to enable language learners to communicate effectively in the target language, the internal factor that made the paradigmatic change towards CLT possible is of course to be found within a reevaluation of the prevalent theoretical knowledge that essentially informed the instructional language teaching practice. Richards and Rodgers (1986: 64) argue that CLT, the language teaching approach mainly used nowadays in Austrian school contexts, partly developed in response to Chomsky's reconfigurations of the nature of language. While in the late 1950ies Chomsky claimed that structuralist language theory cannot account for the uniqueness of individual sentences (Richards & Rogers 1986: 64), applied linguists and language teachers slowly started to realize that mastering linguistic structures only will not suffice to help their students communicate effectively in the target language (Larsen-Freeman 2000: 121). Approximately ten years later, different works of applied linguists, among them Hymes (1971), Wilkins (1976) or Widdowson (1978), emphasized that FLT practice needs to focus more on communicative competence than on the structure of language. These observations eventually shifted the focus in FLT and resulted in CLT, a teaching model that centers communicative competence as the primary goal of language teaching (Larsen-Freeman 2000: 121).

Both Hedge (2000: 45) as well as Keck and Kim (2014: 12-14) emphasize the importance of Hymes' (1972) concept of 'communicative competence', which primarily constitutes the conceptual base of what it means to know and use a language within the communicative paradigm. By adding 'communicative' to Chomsky's conceptualization of 'competence' in his

distinction between *competence* and *performance*, Hymes proposed a framework that gave equal relevance to the knowledge of social conventions and to the knowledge of grammar rules (Hedge 2000: 45). By claiming that speakers of a language do not only have the ability to form grammatical sentences but are also able to situationally decide which linguistic choice is the most appropriate one, Hymes addressed some of the major concerns language teachers had at that time and thereby strongly shaped (foreign) language methodology (Keck & Kim 2014: 13). Keck and Kim (2014: 14) summarize this development as follows:

What was missing in the language teaching world was a method that could develop students' abilities to use grammar to carry out important communicative functions. In other words, second language learners did not simply need grammatical knowledge or a large repertoire of formulaic expressions, they needed communicative competence. This shift in conceptions of language acquisition and language competence gave birth to a new approach to language teaching. Aptly named the *communicative* approach, it drew directly from Hymes' work and established communicative competence as the most important goal of second language classroom instruction.

On behalf of the European Ministers of Education, Van Ek applied Hymes' notion of communicative competence in 1976 in order to develop an FLT methodology which promotes greater intercultural understanding and enables learners to communicate effectively in everyday settings (Keck & Kim 2014: 15). Stressing that speakers should develop a "foreign language ability as a *skill* rather than knowledge" (Van Ek 1976: 5), Van Ek contributed to the creation of syllabi that were organized around communicative functions rather than grammatical forms. Synthesizing the work of Hymes, Van Ek and others in an article, Canale and Swain (1980: 29-30) presented a more elaborate notion of communicative competence, arguing that grammatical competence was an important but only one out of more components of language competence.

Although the authors' work had a profound impact on FLT practice worldwide, they could not give a satisfying answer on how to reasonably combine or balance grammar instruction with communicative approaches (Keck & Kim 2014: 17). While Canale and Swain (1980: 1-47) were pondering on how to incorporate grammar instruction in CLT contexts, a so-called anti-grammar movement, which was primarily influenced by Krashen's work (1982), started to form during the 1980ies. Krashen (1982) argued that grammar can be completely acquired by implicit grammar teaching, while others (e.g. Ellis 1993) were concerned about students' language accuracy and argued for explicit grammar instruction in second/foreign language contexts. The way grammar is taught in CLT today has been highly influenced by the dispute between these two contrary sides. Thus, before moving on to the role of grammar instruction in CLT today, the next chapter will first touch upon this strongly debated topic of implicit versus explicit grammar instruction.

### **2.2.3. Implicit vs. explicit grammar teaching**

As has been discussed earlier, grammar instruction played a foundational role in structural FLT approaches (Ellis 2002: 17). However, with the progression of CLT and its focal interest in communicative and meaningful interaction, the role of explicit grammar instruction got challenged. Attitudes towards grammar instruction became a highly controversial aspect within the context of CLT, as some scholars argued for the inclusion of grammar instruction and others were strictly against it. While Canale and Swain (1980), for example, weakened the relevance of grammar in FLT settings but clearly dissuaded language teachers from abandoning grammar instruction completely, Krashen (1982) at that time outspokenly advised language teachers against the teaching of grammar (Keck & Kim 2014: 18). In his research, which consisted of a set of hypotheses, such as ‘The Monitor Hypothesis’ or ‘The Input Hypothesis’, Krashen (1982) argued that explicit grammar learning and the conscious reflection on rules would actually hinder language acquisition more than it would help it, as monitoring grammaticality in speech would interfere with fluency (Kim & Keck 2014: 19). Providing more reasons against the teaching of grammar, Krashen (1982: 24-25) claimed that the communicative input, which should be comprehensible but approximately one level above learners’ current competence and thereby aid the acquisition process, cannot be effectively integrated into a grammar-oriented syllabus as the order of acquisition and the stage students are at are not precisely definable. The underlying notion of Krashen’s concept of implicit grammar instruction was that grammatical competence can be acquired in “a fluency-oriented environment without conscious focus on language forms” (Hedge 2000: 145). This subsequently led to FLT approaches, e.g. The Natural Approach (Krashen & Terrell 1983), in which the role of grammar was demoted to a minimum and language should be acquired in a naturalistic way without any explicit instruction.

These developments triggered a fierce debate about the question if explicit grammar teaching should be abandoned or not. While many language educators tried to follow Krashen’s call for meaningful, purposeful and engaging interaction in the target language, the effects of the communicative movement on the learners’ grammatical competence had not been fully examined or understood (Keck & Kim 2014: 22). However, the arguments for incorporating a focus on form got stronger. In a series of ongoing studies, Swain and Lapkin (1989), for example, looked at the grammatical competence of students who learned French in immersion programs (L2 is the language of instruction in all subjects) where a CLT approach was employed. Summarized by Keck and Kim (2014: 23), the findings of these studies pointed against Krashen’s anti-grammar impetus:

The findings of these studies suggested that while immersion students, after several years of study, were quite fluent in their communication and were confident in their ability to use French in the school setting, analyses of the language produced by these students identified a number of grammatical forms that had not yet been fully acquired.

Swain and Lapkin (1989: 153) further found out that the students' writing and speaking performances "clearly identifie[d] them as non-native speakers of the language".

These findings led to a critical reconsideration of Krashen's work, as language educators started to worry that students could suffer from severe drawbacks in professional or academic contexts due to fossilized production, if major grammatical errors stayed unaddressed. Moreover, Swain (1985) argued that input alone was not enough for students to develop grammatical competence, but teachers needed to create a classroom environment where students were encouraged to analyze their output and convey appropriate and coherent messages, while also receiving meaningful feedback from the language educators (Keck & Kim 2014: 24-25). Drawing on his former work, Schmidt (1990) also emphasized the role of consciousness in foreign language learning and thereby gave the role of grammar in FLT novel relevance. Known as 'The Noticing Hypothesis' (1990), Schmidt (1990: 149) argued that learners need to consciously notice a specific form before they can acquire it or use it appropriately:

Paying attention to language form is hypothesized to be facilitative in all cases, and may be necessary for adult acquisition of redundant grammatical forms. In general, the relation between attention and awareness provides a link to the study of individual differences in language learning, as well as to consideration of the role of instruction in making formal features of the target language more salient.

This meant that a mere focus on exclusively function-driven classroom environments most likely would not suffice for learners to become competent in terms of grammar. In that context, Ellis (2001: 18) suggests that second/foreign language learners, who are exposed to a classroom environment that is primarily or exclusively focused implicit grammar teaching, might lack adequate linguistic input as well as opportunities for significant output that would create situations where specific grammatical forms are needed. Based on earlier work (Fotos & Ellis 1991), Ellis instead argues (2001: 18) that learning environments which are exclusively focused on communication and meaning often create situations where learners can get their messages across or negotiate meaning without using the target language according to grammatical norms. Eventually, Ellis (2001: 31) concludes that explicit grammar teaching, i.e. formal instruction, can contribute to a more efficient and accurate second/foreign language acquisition. However, while making a clear case for grammar, he also acknowledges that explicit grammar instruction may only succeed at certain stages of learning and is tied to specific constraints (Ellis 2001: 31). These constraints include, for example, that explicit grammar teaching should only start

after learners have achieved a certain lexical stage or that grammar instruction should not be embedded in communicative task-based activities but should be discussed separately and only deal with those areas of grammar that are typically causing problems for second/foreign language learners (Ellis 2001: 31).

Varying between these two different sides, i.e. implicit versus explicit grammar instruction, many language educators were not sure how they could promote a more balanced learning environment in terms of form and function teaching. Nevertheless, language professionals agreed in the course of the 1990ies that in order to develop communicative competence in the target language, learners would need both opportunities to engage in meaningful interaction and opportunities to pay attention to the form of a language (Keck & Kim 2014: 27). Hence, research in FLT-pedagogy did not focus anymore on the debate if grammar instruction in general was needed, but the subject of interest now was how and to which extent language educators should assure that learners pay attention to both form and function in order to attain communicative competence (Keck & Kim 2014: 28).

The question that arises now is how CLT, which is mainly taught to teacher trainees today and subsequently very dominant in second/foreign language classrooms, positions grammatical instruction within its program. In her account of the communicative language classroom, Hedge (2000: 46), for example, summarizes the key components of communicative competence as follows: pragmatic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, fluency, and finally, linguistic competence which entails “knowledge of spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, word formation, grammatical structure, sentence structure and linguistic semantics” (2000: 46-47). As will become apparent from chapter 3 onwards, such a subsumption of grammar and lexis under one superordinate category is a reasonable approach to conceptualize the nature of language. However, the principles that CLT follows when it comes to grammar instruction seem to be rather vague and sometimes even contradictory. For example, Hedge (2000: 47) clearly differentiates between activities that focus on linguistic accuracy and activities that aim at meaning and fluency, when she says that “the most difficult question to resolve has been how to achieve a balance between ‘focused’ or ‘form-focused’ classroom activities”. However, the author then goes on to discuss grammar from three different perspectives, including grammar as meaning, grammar in discourse and grammar in style, all of which are apparently highly interconnected with the negotiation of meaning and language in social contexts (Hedge 2000: 153-158). Additionally, Hedge (2000: 159) argues that each grammar item presented should be embedded in some kind of context that is somehow related to the learners’ lives as grammar would then become generative and transferable to other situations. As far as the use of linguistic

metalinguage or the sequence of the grammar items to teach are concerned, Hedge (2000: 160) remains rather vague too and states that a language teacher must make these decisions according to the type of learner s/he teaches. The same applies to the degree of explicitness that a teacher should provide. For example, adult learners who are used to formal instruction should be presented with explicit grammar they can later work with in meaningful contexts, while other learners should discover grammatical patterns inductively (Hedge 2000: 160-161). All of these suggestions seem rather intangible as well as difficult to apply to FLT practice and in fact, Hedge (2000: 179) confirms this view in saying that “looking at our current state of knowledge about how grammar is acquired, and at the possible roles of various classroom approaches, poses more questions than it resolves”. One might argue now that the current state of knowledge has advanced and that there are more concrete guidelines on how to teach grammar in CLT contexts, especially since CLT is still the most commonly used approach to teaching second/foreign languages. However, it seems as if it has not exactly become clearer for foreign language teachers what it is they should do. A reason for that might be that the number of aspects and factors that can or should inform a CLT-classroom measure seems to be too high to make a clear decision. Spada and de Santos Lima (2015: 188), for example, found in a recent study that although teachers and learners prefer grammar instruction tasks that are embedded in content-based contexts over isolated grammar tasks, they consider both to be useful but the decision as to which kind of task to choose is dependent on factors such as proficiency, learner goals, teacher objectives or particular features of the target language. It seems as if such a decision could be guided by more straightforward principles. Thus, CLT appears to have no practical framework as far as grammatical instruction in CLT is concerned.

#### **2.2.4. The Lexical Approach**

Of course, CLT was not the only approach that attempted to redefine the role of grammar in language teaching. The Lexical Approach, which was primarily developed by Willis (1990) and Lewis (1993) during the 1990s, is a FLT-concept that basically grounds on the production and the understanding of lexical chunks. It shares some crucial assumptions about language with CL and CCxG in that it rejects a grammar-vocabulary dichotomy as well as the Chomskyan competence/performance distinction and thereby takes on a non-nativist notion (Lewis 1993: 11-12). As the name suggests, the Lexical Approach foregrounds the importance of lexis in language teaching and centers the teaching of chunks, collocations and other lexical units that are viewed to produce continuous coherent texts when combined (Lewis 1997: 7). In his account of the Lexical Approach, Lewis (1993, 1997) differentiates between single items (words) and multi-word items (collocations, fixed expressions and semi-fixed expressions)

while he views “grammar as a receptive skill” (Lewis 1993: 9) which can help learners to deduce meaning which is conveyed through certain grammatical choices. Advances in corpus linguistics, such as new technological means to record and store a large amount of natural speech in corpora and different dictionaries, were highly useful for the development of The Lexical Approach. The main reason for that is that raw-data language, i.e. naturally occurring language, as well as the relative frequency of specific words or lexical units played an important role for teaching instructions in this model (Richards & Rodgers 2001: 132).

As far as the teaching of grammar is concerned, The Lexical Approach attempted to change the way grammar was described and thought of in traditional ways. Acknowledging that grammatical competence is important, though by far not as important as lexis, Lewis (1993: 133-135) challenged some basic conceptions of traditional grammar syllabi. He renders some items that are thought of as relevant grammatical items in structural syllabi as completely useless. For example, Lewis figures that learning grammatical concepts such as ‘the first/second and third conditional’ are misleading. He states that *would* does not deserve grammatical treatment but should rather be introduced as a one-word lexical item at the very beginning of a FLT-course and thereby get a linguistically generative position (Lewis 1993: 110). Further Lewis (1997: 15) states that

the essential idea is that fluency is based on the acquisition of a large store of fixed and semi-fixed prefabricated items, which are available as the foundation for any linguistic novelty or creativity. Grammatical knowledge permits the creative re-combination of lexis in novel and imaginative ways, but it cannot begin to be useful in that role until the learner has a sufficiently large mental lexicon to which grammar knowledge can be applied.

The notion of a large storage which holds both fixed and semi-fixed items, the recognition of meaning in grammar and the aim to ‘rewrite’ what is traditionally viewed as grammar, all show some basic parallels with CxG’s view on language and acquisition. As far as classroom activities are concerned, Lewis (1997: 15) suggests, amongst other things, a contrastive comparison of L1 and L2 and criticizes an L2-only policy; which too matches PCCxG principles.

There are, however, some aspects to this approach that are somewhat confusing. Although Lewis insists on the fact that the Lexical Approach rejects a vocabulary/grammar dichotomy, it could be argued that his notion of “a large mental lexicon to which grammar knowledge can be applied” (Lewis 1997: 15) actually reflects this distinction more than it rejects it as it only shifts the focus from grammar to vocabulary. Broccias (2008: 81) identifies this approach to be “located midway between what is traditionally assumed to be the lexicon and grammar” and

Richards and Rodgers (2001: 138) see this in-between state to be characteristic of the whole approach, stating that proponents of the Lexical Approach still need to demonstrate how their proposals could be implemented in authentic classroom contexts and language teaching syllabi. Moreover, Lewis (1991: 32) claims that the Lexical Approach offers everything the communicative approach does and only adds relevance to lexis; a statement which actually confirms that the Lexical Approach is far away from a fully-fledged FLT-approach.

As the Lexical Approach does not seem to offer a satisfying solution to form-function balancing, Schmidt (1995: 1-63) advocates for teaching communicative tasks and explicit grammar lessons. However, he argues that explicit grammar instruction is only needed for those grammatical forms that students have not yet noticed or fully mastered. The questions that arise in this context are (1) how language educators can promote the noticing of grammatical forms, (2) if lessons that are designed with the intention of making learners aware of grammar should still be embedded in a communicative context or (3) if such lessons should be organized according to the specific grammar item.



### **3. Usage-based cognitive Construction Grammar**

In order to eventually arrive at an elaborate concept for a PCCxG, where the underlying linguistic theory of CCxG meets FLT pedagogy principles, it is necessary to explain what exactly CCxG is. This chapter will, therefore, start by explaining some basic tenets of CxG and specify the particular model that will be used in this thesis, namely usage-based cognitive CxG (CCxG). More precisely, this chapter will have a look at what exactly constructions are, what types of constructions there are and how they could be stored and organized within a speaker's mind.

CCxG can be considered as one out of several theories that arose out of a need to deal with linguistic problems that generative accounts of linguistic knowledge could not solve. The specific challenge that CxG in its early days tried to tackle was the status of idioms in language and their integration into a model of syntax. Idiomatic expressions, with their conventionality and partly inflexible structures or non-transparent meanings, were highly problematic for a Chomskyan view on grammar that proposed a componential model which should be able to explain and subsequently also predict all grammatical aspects above word level with the help of some general rules (Croft & Cruse 2015: 225-230). Hilpert (2014: 3) claims that generative grammarians treat idiomatic language as a kind of "appendix to the dictionary" and that "the constructional view of linguistic knowledge originates with the observation that relegating idioms to an appendix is not satisfactory". Fillmore, Kay and O'Conner (1988), who are considered to be the founders of CxG, tried to analyze this 'appendix' from a new perspective. They identified that idiomatic expressions are so frequent in language that, for them, they could not be treated as just one problematic aspect anymore. The scholars figured that these expressions actually deserved much more attention (Hilpert 2014: 8). Fillmore, Kay and O'Conner (1988: 534) concluded that the analytical tools they had used in order to deal with idiomatic constructions, might be "powerful enough to be generalized to more familiar structures", i.e. all other aspects of language and not only idiomatic expression. Essentially, this concluding remark had set a ground for a new grammatical model which would eventually make the modular grammar-lexis distinction obsolete, as all linguistic knowledge could be captured with the notion of a construct-i-con (Hilpert 2014: 8).

However, CxG cannot be described as one coherent model which all construction grammarians adhere to. In fact, there are several more or less varying models of CxG, e.g. Radical CxG (Croft 2001) or Embodied CxG (Bergen and Chang 2005) to name but a few, that emerged from a constructionalist approach to language which has its roots in CL and thus shares many beliefs and principles with it. Originated in the late 1970ies and early 1980ies, CL cannot be considered

as a single uniform theory but rather a framework that encompasses many theoretical approaches (Geeraerts & Cuyckens 2007: 4). CL conceives grammar and lexicon as forming a continuum that reflects the relevance of both form and meaning in language (Langacker 2008: 8) and is thus “at large [...] the most outspoken current attempt to give meaning a central position in the architecture of the grammar” (Geeaerts & Cuyckens 2007: 14). Operating in a CL-framework, this thesis aims at displaying the usefulness and quality of a usage-based, cognitive constructional approach (CCxG) to second/foreign language learning and teaching. Before describing how CCxG conceptualizes language learning, the following sections will try to outline some of these mutually shared features with CL and give a detailed account of CCxG in general.

### **3.1. Recent developments in grammar teaching**

This rather brief recapitulation has shown that the role of grammar in FLT-contexts has gone through various stages over the past years; as Keck and Kim (2014: 146) quite aptly state: “[T]he pendulum has swung away from a structural syllabus, towards entirely meaning-focused Communicative Language Teaching, and back again to at least some focus on grammatical form”. In this context, Wee (2007: 22) amongst others, criticizes that especially in CLT-settings “there has been too much of a de-linking of form from function” as the communicative focus has led to a great reduction in explicit form teaching.

Long and Robinson (1998: 15-41) warn from a comeback to complete explicit instruction and argued for a ‘focus on form’ approach instead, i.e. teachers would only discuss grammar forms in situations where meaningful communication is not possible or endangered due to possible breakdowns caused by a misuse of grammatical items. The authors contrast this strategy against the “focus on formS’ methodology where the learners communicative aim does not define the form discussed but the form is pre-selected regardless of learner needs. While Long and Robinson (1999: 15-41) consider the link between form and function to be crucial, others (e.g. Ellis 1993; DeKeyser 1995 or Fotos 2002) argue that lessons which explicitly center grammatical forms from the beginning are more useful for the noticing process that is needed for acquisition than a ‘focus on form’ approach. Fotos (2002: 135-154), for example, has suggested that learners would benefit most in terms of their grammatical competence, if explicit grammar instruction precedes a communicative task which then entails the use of the particular form discussed. The usage of the form during communication should then be discussed and reflected on in a follow-up task.

On the one hand the communicative turn has led to a teaching practice which centers meaningfulness in communication; a development, which can be considered valuable. The course of this development, on the other hand, has also contributed to an even clearer delinking of grammatical and communicative competence. Especially in its early years but also today, CLT has mostly been explained and conceptualized by comparing and contrasting it to grammar-focused FLT (e.g. Savignon 1972; Richards 2006).

Drawing on more recent research (e.g. Nassaji & Fotos 2011; Norris & Ortega 2000), Keck and Kim (2014: 146) have identified “that both approaches [i.e. implicit and explicit instruction] have the potential to promote L2 acquisition”. Instead of taking one side of the implicit or explicit grammar instruction dichotomy, the scholars have suggested a continuum (see Figure 2) which allows for an in-between approach and more flexibility according to different classroom environments and learners’ needs.

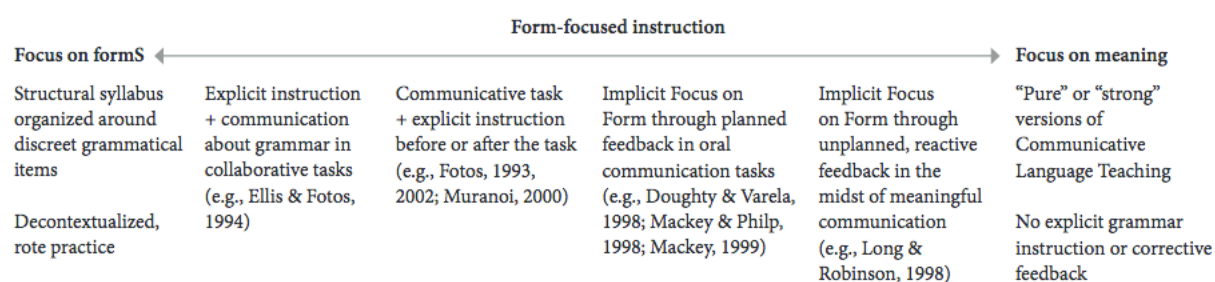


Figure 2: Form-Focused Instruction continuum by Keck & Kim (2014: 147)

This continuum, which Keck and Kim (2014: 147) call the Form-Focused Instruction Continuum, does not only outline the key developments in FLT practice with regard to grammar, it also reflects most language teachers’ everyday practice in which they often vary between different pedagogical options and approaches depending on the learners’ aims and intentions (Keck & Kim 2014: 149).

Although few scholars would position themselves on one of the extreme sides of this continuum, this chapter has already indicated that a total delinking of form and function, i.e. grammar and meaning, does not seem to be beneficial for second/foreign language learners. One linguistic model that offers a framework, which effectively combines form and meaning, and therefore sets the basis for an approach to FLT-instruction that currently seems the most efficient one for second/foreign language acquisition, is CCxG which will be discussed extensively in chapter 3.

Up to now, what chapter 2 should have done, is to demonstrate briefly how different linguistic branches have influenced views on grammar teaching and subsequently FLT-practice.

Although there is a widespread belief among language teachers that theory deviates extremely from their everyday practice (Widdowson 2003: 6), the descriptions above have shown that linguistic theory is indeed relevant for the classroom practice. In this context, Widdowson (2003: 6) argues that “[i]nstead of setting up a pointless polarity and dismissing the relevance of theory out of hand, what we need to do is explore how it can be made relevant and turned to practical advantage. And this is where applied linguistics comes in”. Thus, the next the chapter will attempt to explain the theory behind CCxG and thereby set the base for a discussion of its practical applications in FLT.

### **3.2. Basic tenets of usage-based CCxG**

Before discussing what a construction is and how constructions are learned, this chapter will look at some fundamental principles of CCxG and answer the questions of what it actually means to add the qualities ‘usage-based’ and ‘cognitive’ to a constructional approach. Finally, this chapter shall show that a speaker’s knowledge is based on constructions and grammar is symbolic and meaningful (Langacker 2008: 5).

#### **3.2.1. Usage-based aspects of CCxG**

The usage-based thesis in CL states that what a speaker knows about a language, i.e. the mental grammar, derives from actual language use meaning how and how often symbolic units are used in context (Evans & Green 2006: 478). CL and with it CCxG methodology, thus, initially deals with natural language, i.e. how it is understood and spoken. As opposed to Generative Grammar, CL disagrees that so-called modules of a language (e.g. morphology, syntax or phonology) can be treated separately or even exist. The ‘Generalization Commitment’ in CL rejects the modular view on language and shifts the focus towards an investigation of common principles that are valid across various aspects of language.

Thus, construction grammarians do not subscribe to the existence of a Universal Grammar but claim that the acquisition of grammar is based on usage, which means that all generalizations made by a speaker are viewed as deriving from the speaker’s experience with a particular language (Bybee & Hopper 2001: 18). Speakers use incoming language from their environment to categorize the input based on phonological, semantic or contextual features and already existing categories. It is during this ongoing sorting and matching process, when units “such as syllable, word, and construction emerge” (Bybee 2013: 49). Subsequently, grammatical competence is not separable from actual language use, which makes CCxG a non-modular grammar model. The symbolic nature of language and communication makes it possible for

speakers to string sequences together and identify patterns of use to form constructions (Tomasello 2003: 5).

As a usage-based approach, CCxG, moreover, views grammatical competence to be highly connected to frequency of occurrence, as input frequency is a fundamental aspect for grammatical constructions to become uncovered and entrenched (Sommerer 2018: 20). These constructions, i.e. form-meaning patterns, include both concrete and abstract elements. According to Tomasello (2003: 5-6) “competence with a natural language consists of the mastery of all its items and structures” in a usage-based approach. CCxG, thus, also denies the relevance of economy in language use and thereby takes on a non-reductionist, inventory-based approach. It assumes that language users have an immense amount of cognitive storage at their disposal (Diessel 2011: 834), and also store regular patterns next to more general schematic constructions if they occur frequently enough.<sup>2</sup>

### **3.2.2. Cognitive aspects of CCxG**

But what is most fundamentally ‘cognitive’ about CCxG is that it views language as an integral facet of cognition which cannot be detached from other cognitive abilities (Langacker 2008: 8). The ‘Cognitive Commitment’ in CL rejects the modular theory of mind and claims that language structure does not only reveal cognitive principles specific to language, but it also reflects general cognitive principles (Evans & Green 2006: 40-44). CCxG therefore views language as being based on

language-independent cognitive processes such as association (establishing psychological connections), automatization (using structures without much constructive effort), schematization (extracting a general structure or schema out of the commonality of specific experiences), and categorization (using stored structures to interpret new experience) (Broccias 2013: 192).

Language is, thus, an essential part of cognition and cognition, from a CL point of view, is “noninsular, being grounded in perception and bodily experience” (Langacker 2008: 28). This means that linguistic understanding and ability does not only involve knowledge of language, but it also includes knowledge of the world transmitted by language (Geearts & Cuyckens 2007: 5). Therefore, CL conceptualizes language as a tool used to organize, process and convey information (Geeraerts & Cuyckens 2007: 3). Focusing on meaning, it acknowledges that language reflects how we subjectively perceive reality (Geearts & Cuyckens 2007: 5), which subsequently means that language seems to offer a clearer view on how the processes of

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<sup>2</sup> In contrast, other constructionalist approaches, such as Berkley Construction Grammar (Fillmore, Kay & O’Conner 1995) or Sign-based Construction Grammar (Sag 2010), are barely concerned with aspects of frequency. These strands of CxG believe that if a regular pattern can be explained on the basis of an already existing construction, then there is no need to store this pattern – no matter how frequent it is (Boas 2013: 248).

perception and cognition might generally work in our minds (Evans & Green 2006: 48-53). We use language, i.e. symbolic assemblies consisting of form-meaning pairings, to externalize our conceptualization of the world. This means that when we try to convey meaning via language, what we actually do is to convey our perception of reality, i.e. a mental image, by using linguistic symbols that are encoded with mental representations (Evans & Green 2006: 21).

How we experience and construct reality is, according to cognitive approaches, not only a question of our minds but also highly determined by the nature of our bodies. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, philosopher Descartes established the assumption that body and mind are two completely separate entities which can be studied and examined individually. This philosophic approach has had an impact on other scientific branches until today, e.g. formal linguistic approaches like Generative Grammar still take on this rationalist view and argue that language can be studied formally without any reference to the nature of the human body or experience (Evans & Green 2006: 44). In CL, however, the idea of embodiment plays a central role in the study of language as CL “views language to be grounded in embodied human experience” (Broccias 2013: 1). CL, thus, takes on an empiristic view and thereby rejects the rationalist mind/body-dichotomy (Evans & Green 2006: 44). This means that “we have a species-specific view of the world due to the unique nature of our physical bodies” (Evans & Green 2006: 45) and our way of perceiving the world is highly determined and influenced by the way our bodies are constructed. For example, how we visually perceive color influences how we speak about it, Evans and Green (2006: 45) explain why:

One obvious way in which our embodiment affects the nature of experience is in the realm of colour. While the human visual system has three kinds of photoreceptors or colour channels, other organisms often have a different number. For instance, the visual system of squirrels, rabbits and possibly cats, makes use of two colour channels, while other organisms, like goldfish and pigeons, have four colour channels. Having a different range of colour channels affects our experience of colour in terms of the range of colours accessible to us along the colour spectrum. Some organisms can see in the infrared range, like rattlesnakes, which hunt prey at night and can visually detect the heat given off by other organisms. Humans are unable to see in this range. As this simple example demonstrates, the nature of our visual apparatus – one aspect of our physical embodiment – determines the nature and range of our visual experience.

From an empiristic perspective, this spectrum of visual experience also has to affect our cognition in some kind of way. One well known theory is that our embodied experience is reflected by image schemas which generally rest on our perception of the world as experienced through our senses, i.e. our pre-conceptual experience. Image schemas are very basic but highly meaningful concepts, such as CONTAINER, CONTACT, or BALANCE (Evans & Green 2006: 46). CL assumes that these basic, embodied concepts can be extended to more abstract concepts,

a process named conceptual projection. According to Evans and Green (2006: 46), this process allows us to “talk about being *in* states like love or trouble (...) because abstract concepts like LOVE are structured and therefore understood by virtue of the fundamental concept CONTAINER”.

Hence, CCxG, assumes that the existence and shape of any grammatical construction is dictated by our perception of reality, i.e. by human cognition and motivated by social interaction. The brief discussions of usage-based and cognitive aspects of CCxG have shown that grammar rests on the knowledge of constructions and is inherently meaningful. What is essentially missing now to make a more detailed discussion about all these aspects possible is a more comprehensive explanation of what exactly a construction is.

### **3.2. The construction**

In his introductory textbook on CxG, Hilpert (2014: 1) begins by posing the question what linguistic knowledge is, i.e. what is it that a speaker of a specific language has to know in order to be considered as, for example, a speaker of English? While most people, and in fact also many linguists, would presumably come up with a longer and probably also rather complex list containing several bullet points, Hilpert (2014: 2) concludes that all a speaker needs to know is “constructions”. More precisely, he points out that linguistic knowledge in the framework of CxG consists of “a large network of constructions, *and nothing else in addition*” (Hilpert 2014: 2). This statement, which, especially for language pedagogues, may seem rather surprising at the beginning, rests on the following claim of Goldberg (2003: 219) who is the founder and one of the key figures in CCxG: “The totality of our knowledge of language is captured by a network of constructions: a ‘construct-i-con’”.

#### **3.2.1. Defining constructions according to CCxG**

Language educators but also students might have come across the term ‘construction’ several times already, presumably connected to specific complex forms, e.g. the ‘present perfect construction’ or ‘the passive construction’. Although the term has gone through some notional variations (cf. Hilpert 2014; Sommerer 2018), a ‘construction’ is defined differently in CCxG. In an altered account of earlier definitions, Goldberg (2006: 5) has proposed the following infamous definition of constructions, which will be applied in this thesis:

Any linguistic pattern is recognized as a construction as long as some aspect of its form or function is not strictly predictable from its component parts or from other constructions recognized to exist. In addition, patterns are stored as constructions even if they are fully predictable as long as they occur with sufficient frequency.

Goldberg’s account of constructions captures various relevant notions. First of all, she notes that constructions are so-called conventionalized form-meaning pairings. For example, words like *cat*, idioms like *kick the bucket* or morphemes such as *-licious* are all examples of constructions; the idea is that we store these constructions together with all the knowledge we associate with them, i.e. phonological, morphological, syntactical, semantical and pragmatic aspects (Hilpert 2014: 2). In that sense a construction represents a symbolic sign in the sense of Saussure that links formal, i.e. syntactic, morphological and phonological aspects to facets of meaning, i.e. semantic, pragmatic and discourse-functional notion (Croft & Cruse 2004: 258). Figure 3 illustrates this structure:

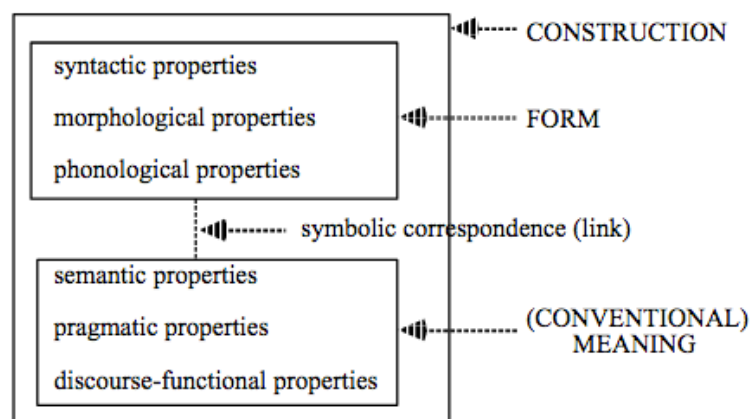


Figure 3: The symbolic structure of a construction (Croft & Cruse 2004: 255)

To better understand the nature of a construction, Figure 4 and Figure 5 show how form and conventional meaning are linked to result in the indefinite article construction (4) and the will-for-future construction (5). These constructions will be taken as a basis for a practical discussion of CCxG in chapters 5 and 6.

F	[[a <sub>c</sub> /an <sub>v</sub> ] + [N <sub>c/b</sub> ]]
M	{indefinite entity}

Figure 4: The indefinite article construction

F	[will + [V <sub>base</sub> ]]
M	{action with future reference}

Figure 5: The will-for-future construction

Figure 4 shows that the indefinite article construction consists of a fixed part, i.e. [a<sub>c</sub>/an<sub>v</sub>] and a substitutable entity, i.e. a countable, bound noun (Holme 2010a: 118). Depending on the phonological properties of the noun, i.e. if the noun acoustically starts with a consonant or a vowel, [a<sub>c</sub>] or [an<sub>v</sub>] is used. A possible example of an instantiation of this construction would be, for instance, *a uniform*. Figure 5 shows how the modal *will* combines with a non-finite verb to form the ‘will for future’-construction, which basically describes some action or activity in



the future. It is important to note that [a/an] and [will] alone are as well conventionalized form-meaning pairings and constitute independent constructions themselves,

Referring back again to Goldberg's definition of constructions, she incorporated a second criterion, namely that of non-predictability which captures some unpredictable aspect of meaning or form. Idioms such as *kick the bucket* or *break a leg* are typical examples for the non-predictability of meaning as the meaning of the overall construction cannot be inferred from its individual parts; these idioms are thus non-compositional and subsequently not predictable in meaning (Hilpert 2014: 10). However, constructions can also be non-predictable in terms of form. Hilpert (2014: 10-11) identifies, for example, *all of a sudden* to be non-predictable in form as all individual parts are identifiable but their composition (i.e. indefinite determiner *a* preceding the adjective *sudden* which is not followed by a head) does not adhere to a more general pattern that would allow for such a structure. One additional characteristic of constructions that is not an explicit part of Goldberg's definition should be mentioned, namely that of polysemy. Polysemy can be understood as the ability of a form to express more than one meaning (Smirnova & Sommerer forthc.). For example, a construction like [right] is polysemous as it can express a direction in the sense of the opposite of left but it can also refer to the sense of correct or morally justified.

Highly connected to the notion of non-predictability is Goldberg's claim that learned form-meaning pairings in the form of phrases or clauses carry some more or less abstract meaning that is independent of the words that instantiate the phrasal or clausal construction (Goldberg 1995: 1; 2013: 16). Boas (2013: 236) states that this postulation is based on "the wish to avoid the claim that the syntax and semantics of the clause is projected exclusively from the specifications of the main verb", which basically means that formal schematic patterns carry meaning. To exemplify this, it might be helpful to compare single word constructions such as *cucumber* with more abstract phrasal construction such as the passive construction [NP be V-ed [by NP]]. While *cucumber* is rather rich in meaning and describes a specific object, the passive construction entails a more abstract meaning, i.e. {X is affected [by Y]}, indicating a specific perspective (cf. Boas 2013: 235-239; Sommerer 2018: 132-133).

The third notion that Goldberg adds to her definition is that of frequency which is highly connected to the usage-based character of CCxG. By postulating that expressions which appear frequently enough in language are stored as constructions too, she renders the criterion of non-predictability non-mandatory. For example, it is extremely probable that an expression such as *I don't know*, which statistically occurs relatively often in language use, is stored as a

construction although it follows a regular schematic pattern (Hilpert 2014: 14). Frequency in CCxG is accounting for other important processes and will be discussed in chapter 3.2.4. in more detail. Before this can be done, however, it is first necessary to give examples of what types of constructions there are and how they can be classified.

### 3.2.2. Types and classifications of constructions

Constructions can vary in their degree of schematicity. As explained before, the passive construction is rather schematic, i.e. abstract, while the word *cucumber*, for example, is more substantive. The question that arises now is, what exactly do these descriptive attributions mean. Croft and Cruse (2004: 255) identified that all grammatical knowledge, i.e. all constructions in a speaker's mind, can be located and placed on a continuum of two dimensions and thereby categorized according to their degree of schematicity or substantivity and their degree of complexity or atomicity. Figure 6 presents this continuum, known as the 'syntax-lexicon continuum', and compares it to traditional accounts of grammatical entities:

Construction type	Traditional name	Examples
Complex and (mostly) schematic	<b>syntax</b>	[SBJ <i>be</i> -TNS VERB <i>-en</i> by OBL]
Complex, substantive verb	<b>subcategorization frame</b>	[SBJ <i>consume</i> OBJ]
Complex and (mostly) substantive	<b>idiom</b>	[ <i>kick</i> -TNS <i>the bucket</i> ]
Complex but bound	<b>morphology</b>	[NOUN- <i>s</i> ], [VERB-TNS]
Atomic and schematic	<b>syntactic category</b>	[DEM], [ADJ]
Atomic and substantive	<b>word/lexicon</b>	[ <i>this</i> ], [ <i>green</i> ]

Figure 6: The syntax-lexicon continuum (Croft & Cruse 2004: 255)

Starting at the bottom of Figure 6, we can see that constructions can be atomic and substantive as well as atomic and schematic. 'Atomic' refers to the fact that the construction cannot be broken down into more pieces, i.e. it has no identifiable internal structure or sequence. An atomic and substantive construction such as [*this*] is, thus, a construction that consists of one specific item that is lexically filled. An atomic and schematic construction such as [DEM], is, too, a construction that consists of a single item, however, this construction exists in the form of an abstract category that is not lexically filled.

On the top side of the continuum, we can find complex constructions, whereby 'complex' refers to constructions that have some kind of identifiable structure or sequence. Some parts of the sequence might be fixed and lexically determined, while other parts can be open, such as in [*kick*-TNS *the bucket*]. The sequence for this particular construction, i.e. the word order, is

conventionally fixed which quickly becomes evident when we look at variations like *the bucket was kicked by him*. Such a phrase is basically possible but would convey a very different meaning than the fixed idiom. Moreover, the major parts of the construction are lexically filled, i.e. the construction is mostly specified in the sense that most of its positions are substantive. Only the [-TNS]-position of this particular construction is open and thereby schematic, meaning not specified. However, constructions can also be completely specified (e.g. *How is it going?*) or completely underspecified, i.e. neither phonologically, nor semantically filled (e.g. [DEM+CN]<sub>NP</sub>) (Sommerer 2018: 133). Interestingly, semi-specified constructions are often associated with particular function words or lexemes which are so essential to these constructions that sometimes the construction is named after that particular word, e.g. ‘the existential *there*-construction’ or ‘the *let alone*-construction’ (Sommerer 2018: 134; Diessel 2015: 312).

### 3.2.3. Identification of constructional status

However, before one can name a construction in a particular way, it is first necessary to find and identify a generalization which fulfills the specific criteria that would allow to consider an expression a construction in the first place. In order to identify constructions, Hilpert (2014: 21) proposes several strategies that are basically tied to the criteria in Goldberg’s definition discussed in 3.2.1. and can be subsumed under the following headings:

- Idiosyncrasies in terms of form and meaning (Hilpert 2014: 14-18)

This heading is related to Goldberg’s notion of non-predictability. As far as a deviation in terms of form is concerned, any idiosyncrasies might indicate evidence for a construction. In other words, if a specific expression entails formal characteristics that somehow differ from canonical patterns, i.e. broader generalizations that might license such an expression, chances are relatively high that this expression might be a construction. The following sentence is one out of several examples Hilpert (2014: 15) uses to explain the logic behind this identification strategy:

(1) John is best friends with Eddie Murphy.

The peculiarity that can be observed in this sentence is that the subject *John* and the subject complement *best friends* do not agree in number. Conventionally, subject and subject complement do agree as in canonical predicative constructions such as *They are lawyers* or *She is a student*. Example (1) thus shows a formal idiosyncrasy and is called reciprocal-predicative-construction, as it describes a reciprocal relation between two people and, additionally, only works with a prepositional phrase such as *with Eddie Murphy*.

As far as idiosyncrasies in terms of meaning are concerned, it can be said that an expression which is non-compositional, i.e. it's meaning is not deducible from the meanings of its individual components, might be identified as a construction. In that sense, it is apparent that all idioms are constructions as the meanings of the component parts of an idiom, e.g. *you're barking up the wrong tree*, do not reveal anything about the meaning of the whole expression. However, not only idioms or idiomatic phrases carry non-compositional meaning. Again, Hilpert (2014: 16-17) uses various examples to illustrate his point, the following is one of it:

(2) John sauced the pizza.

The meaning expressed by this example is that John put sauce onto his pizza. This meaning is presumably easily understood by proficient speakers of English; learners of English might, however, have some trouble to deduce the meaning of the noun *sauce* used as a verb, as they might probably think that John dipped a slice of his pizza into a sauce or whatsoever (Hilpert 2014: 17). Proficient English speakers have no problems in grasping the meaning of that expression as “their linguistic knowledge includes a subpattern of the TRANSITIVE construction with denominal verbs that shows itself in expressions such as *pepper the steak* [or] *butter the toast* (...)” (Hilpert 2014: 17-18). This construction is based on the concept of coercion (Michaelis 2004: 25), which holds that the meaning of a lexeme can differ according to its constructional environment as this has the power to alter the meaning of an expression or to enforce particular semantic features on it. In example (2), the principle of coercion expands the meaning of the noun *sauce* by the notion of ‘application of something onto something’.

- Restrictive and collocational use (Hilpert 2014: 18-22)

This heading describes identification strategies that are related to both form and meaning and might be somewhat difficult to discover.

As far as restrictions are concerned, consider the following example, again taken from Hilpert (2014: 19):

- (3) I brought John a glass of water.  
\* I brought the table a glass of water.

The first sentence in (3) might seem absolutely unspectacular but a comparison with the second sentence reveals that the ditransitive-construction that can be found in the first sentence is restrictive in its use as the recipient in this argument structure needs to be animate if an actual transfer is involved (Hilpert 2014: 19). Such a constraint in language use is thus, too, indicating evidence for a construction because a speaker needs to know about such constraints and this information subsequently needs to be stored somewhere in the construct-i-con. As Hilpert rightly states (2014: 20), especially non-native English speakers might have difficulties in

determining idiosyncratic constraints. Using a corpus database might be helpful to check how a specific expression behaves in different environments and how it is or is not used.

Interconnected with the use of data from linguistic corpora are collocational preferences that indicate evidence for a construction. To illustrate his point, Hilpert (2014: 21) uses the following sentence which incorporates the will-future construction:

(4) I will call you tomorrow.

Reconsidering the strategies to identify constructions that were discussed previously, there is no particular reason to assume that the auxiliary verb *will* followed by the non-finite verb phrase *call you* constitutes an own construction. However, research suggests otherwise (Hilpert 2014: 21). Gries and Stefanowitsch (2004: 97-129) have used corpus data to show that some verbs combine significantly more often with *will* than others do. In particular, they have analyzed the collocational preferences of *be going to* and *will*, and have found that *will* occurs more frequently with verbs that are non-agentive, durative, and low in transitivity, while *going to* occurs more often with verbs that are agentive, punctual, and high in transitivity. Gries, Hampe and Schönefeld (2005: 635-676) have presented research data that suggests that speakers seem to pay close attention to such collocational preferences, which apparently helps them to acquire constructional meaning. This consequently means that collocational preferences must somehow be stored as constructional information in the construct-i-con. In that sense, it is absolutely legitimate to assume that the above example consisting of an auxiliary and an infinitive is a construction, as someone who utters a sentence such as (4) presumably has stored a specific constructional pattern that might render a basically possible expression such as *I am going to call you tomorrow* rather unusual or odd.

So far, this chapter has discussed what constructions are and how to describe and identify them. Before we go on to discuss how constructions are organized in a speaker's mind, the next section will discuss how structures are emerging and cognitively implemented, i.e. entrenched.

#### **3.2.4. Frequency and entrenchment**

Goldberg's 2006 definition of constructions has clearly indicated that frequency plays a crucial role in usage-based CCxG. In this context, frequency refers to the number of times a specific linguistic item (that might be a phrase, a single word or even a single phoneme) occurs in language use. Divjak and Caldwell-Harris (2015: 54) identify the work of Bybee and others (e.g. Bybee & Thompson 2000 or Bybee 2007) to be ground giving for the role of frequency in linguistic research. Generally, the term frequency in linguistics refers to how often a specific language stimulus (e.g. a phoneme or a word) is experienced and processed in the environment

(Divjak & Caldwell-Harris 2015: 54). Essentially, constructions can be seen as processed sequence of language that have been used often enough to be accessed as a unit (Bybee 2013: 51). Frequency is, thus, essential to learning constructions as “[b]oth infants and adults use statistical properties of linguistic input to discover structure, including sound patterns, words and the beginnings of grammar” (Divjak & Caldwell-Harris 2015: 53). In other words, frequency is highly determining for which patterns and schemas are extracted and stored out of the commonalities of language experience.

Especially, the distinction between type and token frequency (Bybee & Thompson 2000) is crucial in CCxG, as it determines the productivity of a specific schema (Boas 2013: 247). Token frequency basically describes the overall number of words in whatever form of language, while type frequency refers to the number of distinct words in this language input. For example, the sentence *Eminem’s earlier songs are much better than what he is producing now* has the same number of tokens and types, namely twelve. However, the sentence *Eminem’s earlier songs are much better than his current songs* has ten tokens but only nine types as *songs* occurs twice.

Type frequency can reveal information about a construction’s productivity since “increased type frequency has been shown to directly correlate with a construction’s ability to occur with novel items” (Boas 2013: 247). As far as argument structure constructions are concerned, it has been shown, for example, that the way-construction (e.g. *She sang her way to the talent show’s finale*) can occur with a large number of verbs and is therefore more productive than the resultative-construction (e.g. *The judges found the woman guilty*) which seems to occur only with a very limited number of verbs and is therefore less productive (cf. Goldberg 1995 as well as Goldberg & Jackendoff 2004, echoed by Boas 2013: 247). Moreover, type frequency can help speakers in creating general categories for different types and thereby prevent constructions from being associated with one specific lexical item. The more different lexical items are used in a particular construction, the more general the category formed for that position can be, which means that the category is also more prone to extend to novel items. As a high type frequency means that a construction occurs rather frequently in language use, the abstract representation, i.e. the schema of this construction, is strengthened with every use, which subsequently makes the construction more accessible for uses with other items (Bybee & Thompson 2000 echoed by Divjak & Caldwell-Harris 2015: 55). The process of schematization, i.e. the act of storing abstract grammatical patterns in the cognitive domain, is thus strongly influenced by a high number of types (Sommerer 2018: 138).

Token frequency is also determining a construction's productivity; first and foremost because it is influencing its degree of entrenchment, i.e. neuronal cognitive implementation (Boas 2013: 247). There are various different notions of the concept of entrenchment, which was first introduced by Langacker (1987: 59), who figured that "with repeated use, a novel structure becomes progressively entrenched, to the point of becoming a unit". That means that every time a speaker's uses a form, i.e. experiences a token, a node in the speaker's mind is activated, which in turn has an impact on the cognitive representation of this item (Barðal & Gildea 2015: 32). A frequent activation of a specific node, results in greater strength and better connection, thus, in a higher degree of entrenchment. Subsequently, if a particular unit is used less frequently, its degree of entrenchment will be rather weak (Sommerer 2018: 136). Moreover, Blumenthal-Drame (2012: 68) as well as Bybee (2013: 61) add that high token frequency also affects fluency and the ease of processing and retrieving, making entrenchment a multi-layered process. How often a particular token occurs in the input is, thus, highly relevant for language learning as it fosters memorization through repetition (Divjak & Caldwell-Harris 2015: 55). The more often a form is encountered in the input, the easier it will be to access and use this form. For example, "irregular forms survive because they are high in frequency, which means they are encountered and processed more often" (Divjak & Caldwell-Harris 2015: 55).

What all these notions have in common is the idea that "entrenchment refers to a process of strengthening memory representations" (Divjak & Caldwell-Harris 2015: 61). However, entrenchment does not only refer to representations high in schematicity as both tokens and types can be entrenched. More abstract schemas, for example, may be entrenched when a higher degree of type frequency is given. If a high number of types instantiates a construction, the schematicity of this construction will be strengthened as there are more chances that language users will generalize across these types (Barðal & Gildea 2015: 32). In contrast, more substantive, lexically-filled constructions are entrenched with a higher degree in token frequency (Barðal & Gildea 2015: 32-33). Strong or at least stable representations of units or chunks in the cognitive domain will also annex unwitnessed alternatives, meaning that repeated representations of a construction (e.g. *The flowers faded*) will pre-empt non-attested constructions (e.g. *\*The time faded the flowers*) (Divjak & Caldwell-Harris 2015: 61-62). Entrenchment, additionally, prevents speakers from overgeneralizations which implies that low frequency words will subjectively feel more acceptable in new constructions than high frequency words (Divjak & Caldwell-Harris 2015: 62).

This brief account on frequency and entrenchment has shown that the usage-based character of CCxG beholds the view that our experience with language is highly influencing the way it is

represented in our cognition. Especially in terms of teaching, the power of high frequency and its support of entrenchment should not be underestimated. Chapter 4 and 5 will discuss this aspect in more detail and show that input frequency plays a fundamental role in FLT. Hence, schematic structures emerge “through repetition and categorization rather than resulting from a pre-existent, innate matrix” (Sommerer 2018: 139) like nativist approaches postulate when subscribing to the existence of a Universal Grammar. Repetition and categorization are domain-general cognitive processes like association and automation, which help speakers to organize language. Investigating frequency of occurrence and processes of entrenchment, therefore, does not only give insights into the nature of our constantly changing grammatical system but it also reveals something about the nature language learning.

### **3.3. The Construct-i-con**

As has been explained in previous sections, CCxG views language as consisting of numerous constructions, i.e. form-meaning pairings that are entrenched in a speaker’s mind, based on usage and stored in the construct-i-con, i.e. a network-like inventory (Ellis, Römer & O’Donnell 2016: 26). In this structured inventory the grammatical signs, i.e. the constructions, are organized into networks, whereby each construction represents a node in this network and is connected to other nodes through different types of links. In their analysis of the construct-i-con most scholars use a distinction of inheritance links and relational or horizontal links (Sommerer 2018: 139). According to Hilpert (2014: 60) inheritance describes “a relation between more abstract and more specific constructions in which the more specific ones exhibit formal and functional features of the more abstract ones”. For example, a vertical instance link illustrates that a construction is a more specified version of another construction (Sommerer 2018: 141). Lower-level constructions, which are the more specific, i.e. substantive, ones are thus inheriting features of form and meaning from the more abstract schematic constructions at the top of a network. Relational or horizontal links, on the other hand, describe relations between constructions. To better understand these organizational relationships, Figure 7 (next page) illustrates a partial network structure of the indefinite article construction.



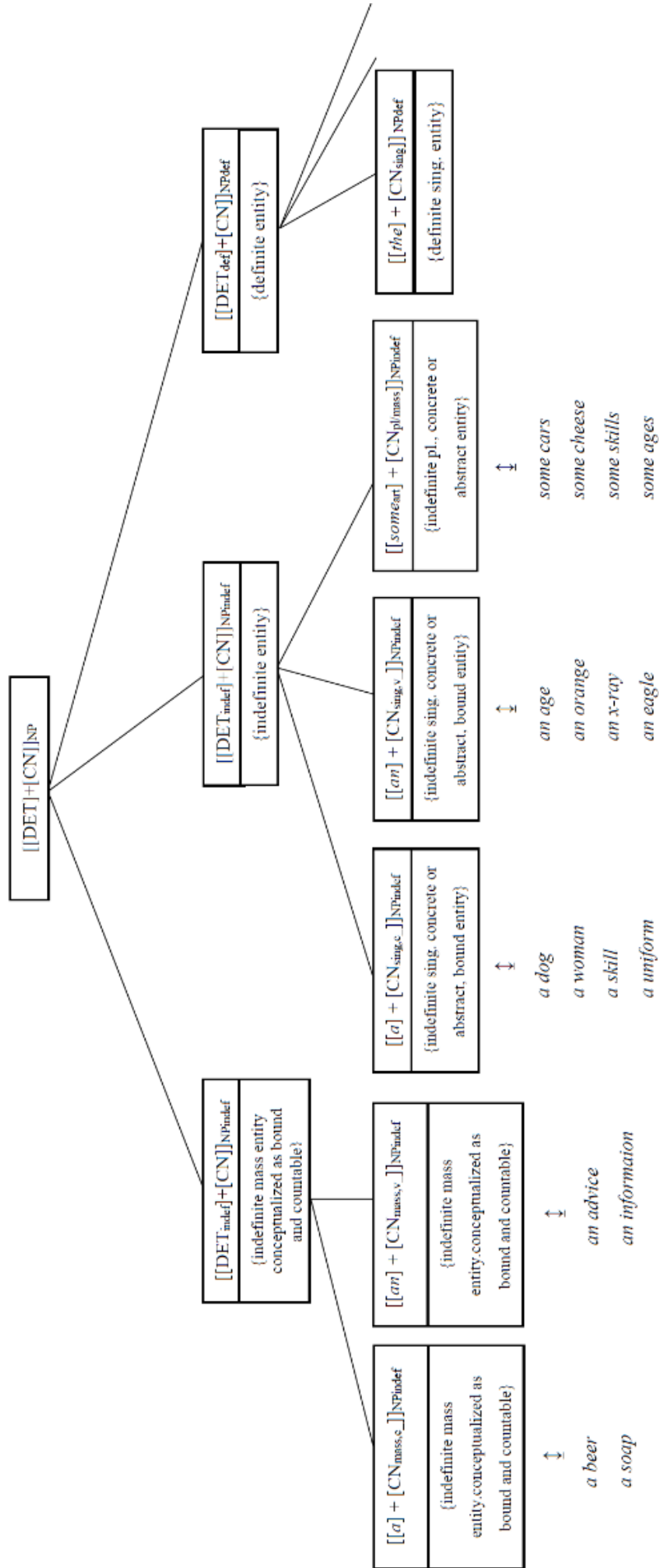


Figure 7: Partial network structure of the indefinite article construction

Figure 7 illustrates how a constructional structure for the indefinite article presumably emerges in a language user's network<sup>3</sup>. By hearing input such as *a software*, *an orange*, *a skill*, a speaker recognizes and stores the semi-specific patterns  $[[a] + [CN_{mass,c}]]_{NP_{indef}}$  and  $[[an] + [CN_{mass,v}]]_{NP_{indef}}$  which, in terms of meaning, correspond to an {indefinite, single concrete or abstract, bound entity}. Abstracting from the input, the speaker realizes that *a* combines with singular common nouns that phonetically have a consonant in the onset, while *an* combines with singular common nouns that phonetically have a vowel in the onset. A speaker will also realize that plural nouns such as *cars* or mass nouns such as *cheese* can combine with indefinite determiners such as *some* which is used in the sense of an article in this case. A speaker then realizes that *a*, *an* or *some* all determine indefinite entities, which presumably results in the entrenchment of a more abstract schema  $[[DET_{indef}] + [CN]]_{NP_{indef}}$ . The abstraction process, thus, happens in an upward manner and once the vertical nodes are established, information can be inherited in a downwards manner. A speaker who abstracts a schematic pattern for indefinite noun phrases with *any*, as in *any cheese*, will thereby automatically apply the information of the higher level schema to the new construction. Finally, a speaker will abstract a similar pattern for mass nouns that are conceptualized as bound countable nouns, like in *a beer* or *some advice*. This eventually leads to further links and vertical as well as horizontal relationships and finally results in a non-static network structure that is continuously modified through language use. What exactly vertical and horizontal links, i.e. relations between constructions, are, will be explained in the following two sections.

### 3.3.1. Vertical links (inheritance)

As already mentioned in chapter 3.2.2., a speaker's grammar is organized in terms of higher-level schematic constructions and more specific lower-level constructions. The concept of inheritance captures the relationship between such constructions. Inheritance describes the constructional hierarchy between more substantive lower-level constructions and more abstract schemas as CCxG assumes that lower-level constructions vertically inherit characteristics from higher-level constructions. This relational process allows more abstract, general patterns to pass on features of form and meaning to more concrete patterns, i.e. lower-level instantiations. This process, thus, happens in a down-ward manner. In contrast, the abstraction of schemas follows an upward path, meaning that abstract patterns are extracted from more substantive, specified patterns. A simplified taxonomic hierarchy of vertical relations is illustrated in Figure 8:

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<sup>3</sup> Note that this network structure is not complete.

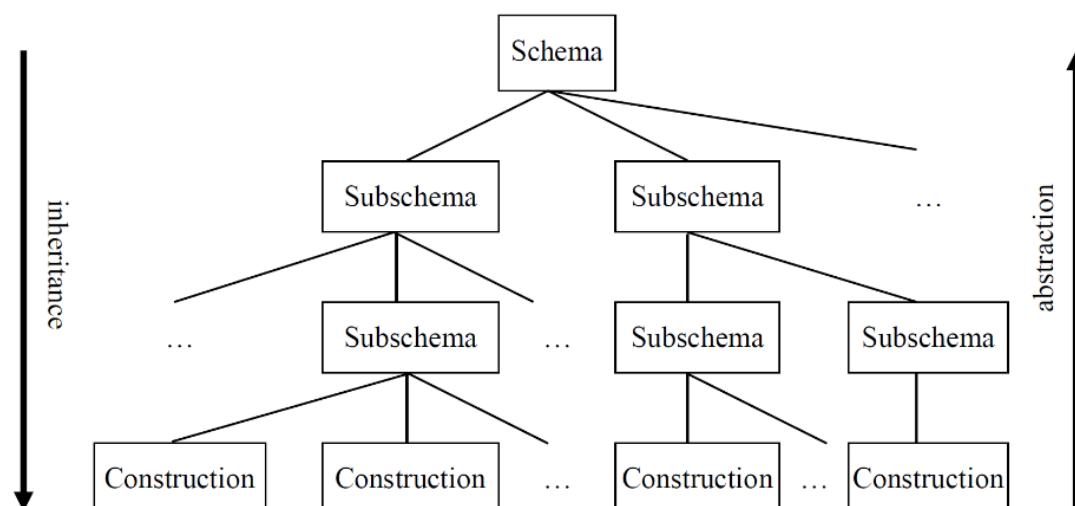


Figure 8: Simplified taxonomic hierarchy (Smirnova & Sommerer forthc.)

The right arrow in Figure 8 indicates that constructional networks are created in a bottom-up manner. By detecting similarities between already entrenched constructions, a speaker is able to abstract more schematic constructions (Smirnova & Sommerer forthc.). Although abstraction is a bottom-up process, inheritance happens in a top-down manner, as shown by the left arrow in Figure 8. Thus, features and characteristics of abstract schemas can be passed all the way down to lower-level constructions. Smirnova and Sommerer (forthc.) explain the benefits of such a taxonomic network as follows:

The advantage of such a taxonomic network model is that it allows general information to be entered on the higher levels which pass on this information to all lower-level constructions. At the same time, more specific, non-shared information pertaining to (idiomatic) sub-regularities may be captured directly on the level of constructions positioned on various midpoints of the hierarchical network.

A very basic example of inheritance would be the Subject-Predicate construction. As Hilpert (2014: 58) states, “[a]lmost all clausal constructions in English share the formal characteristic of the verb agreeing in number and person with its subject”, thus, some clausal constructions exhibit this formal feature of subject-verb-agreement from the more general Subject-Predicate construction. Linked to each other through so-called instance links, a more concrete clausal construction would be positioned towards the bottom of the network, while the more abstract schema is positioned at the top of such a taxonomic hierarchy. Any kind of irregularities can then be positioned on midpoints within that hierarchical organization (Sommerer 2018: 140).

Generally, scholars differentiate between three different network concepts: the complete inheritance model, the full-entry model, and the normal or default inheritance model (cf. Croft & Cruse 2004: 262-279; Hilpert 2004: 57- 67; Sommerer 2018: 140). The complete inheritance model postulates that any inherited information or feature is only stored once with the most

general abstraction of a construction; this information is then inherited by following constructions. Thus, in the complete inheritance model specific instantiations do not need to be stored separately because all relevant information is stored in the more general schema. On the contrary, the full-entry model endorses the view that the same information is stored at all levels in the network, i.e., speakers memorize a great amount of redundant information. There is not much relevance assigned to inheritance in this model (Sommerer 2018: 140). However, neither of the two models can give an answer to the question of how a speaker solves the problem if the inherited information or the anyhow stored information conflicts with the actual point of reference. The normal or default inheritance model can handle this problem by blocking inheritance where it is necessary. In order to exemplify this, Croft and Cruse (2004: 276) take the following, very comprehensible example:

[W]e know that most birds fly, to the point that if we hear reference to ‘a bird’, we will assume that it can fly. Of course, if we are further informed that the bird in question is an ostrich or a penguin, or that it has a broken wing or it is dead, we would cancel that assumption. One model for representing this information is to store the information FLIES with the category BIRD, instead of with the many instances of bird species and individual birds that can fly. The property FLIES is inherited in those cases, but inheritance can be blocked if it conflicts with information in the more specific case, such as penguins, ostriches, a bird with a broken wing, a dead bird and so on.

Thus, the normal or default inheritance model allows lower-level constructions to block any inherited information from higher-level constructions, if this information stands in conflict with the specific situation the lower-level instantiation is used in. In this context, the usage-based nature of the construct-i-con becomes apparent, as we can see that a speaker’s language use is highly influenced by his/her experience with language.

Another important aspect of inheritance is that there are different types of inheritance links (Hilpert 2014: 60-63). As briefly mentioned before, the link that connects a higher-level construction with its more specific instantiation is called instance link. Another inheritance link type is the so-called subpart link which relates two constructions that have some kind of similarity in terms of form or meaning, but one construction cannot be classified as being an instance of the other. For example, consider the similarity between a transitive construction, e.g. *You mailed a picture*, and a ditransitive construction, e.g. *You mailed me a picture*. As Hilpert (2014: 62) states, these constructions have a lot of features in common, such as “a subject with the role of an agent and a direct object that assumes the role of a patient or theme”. Neither of these examples can be considered to be an instance of the other, however, it is reasonable to assume some kind of interconnectedness between these types of constructions, represented as subpart links within the construct-i-con (Hilpert 2014: 62-63).

The third type of inheritance link that should be briefly mentioned here are polysemy links. These links capture the fact that the meaning of one construction can be conceptually extended to the sense of another construction. For example, Hilpert (2014: 61) mentions the English s-genitive construction to illustrate a polysemous relation. Consider the following examples:

- (5) a) Tina's pencil  
b) Tina's flight

The prototypical sense of the s-genitive construction implies some sort of possession, as in (5) a), where the possessor Tina possess a concrete object, i.e. the pencil. The second example (5) b), however, does not fulfill this prototypical example as the flight is not a concrete object that is owned by Tina. Rather, the s-genitive describes a relation between Tina and a specific flight, meaning 'the flight that Tina is taking'. This extended sense of the s-genitive construction is, thus, connected to the central sense of possession through a polysemy link (Hilpert 2014: 61). Similarly, the fourth type of inheritance links, i.e. metaphorical links, connects constructions in terms of basic and extended meaning. Metaphorical links, thus, associate two constructions whereby one construction represents the sense of the source domain and the other construction represents the sense of the target domain of a conceptual metaphor (Hilpert 2014: 61). The following sentences are examples of a metaphorical extension:

- (6) a) Tim drove you insane.  
b) Tim drove you home.

Both constructions are very similar in terms of form. However, in terms of meaning, the resultative construction in (6) a) conveys the sense of a change of mind or state and is an extension of the caused-motion construction in (6) b), which has the sense of a change in location.

The last aspect of inheritance links that needs to be addressed is multiple inheritance, i.e. "that a particular construct is often the result of the parallel activation of several constructions" (Sommerer 2018: 140). In other words, a single construction can be an instantiation of several different, more abstract constructions. Figure 9 illustrates an example of multiple inheritance.

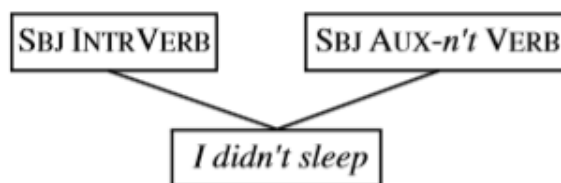


Figure 9: Multiple inheritance (Croft & Cruse 2004: 64)

On the one hand, the sentence *I didn't sleep* is an instantiation of the intransitive-verb-construction [SUBJECT + INTRANSITIVE VERB] but on the other hand, *I didn't sleep* is also

an instantiation of the negative-construction [SUBJECT + AUXILIARY-n't + VERB]. Thus, I didn't sleep activates both the intransitive-verb construction and the negative-construction. Multiple inheritance, therefore, makes obvious that the construct-i-con must be a highly interwoven network with, as Hilpert (2014: 63) states, "many-to-many links" and cannot be organized in a strict downward hierarchy. In fact, some accounts of this network add the so-called horizontal axis by saying that constructions at the same level of abstractness can be horizontally related to each other (e.g. Van de Velde 2014: 147). This type of link will be discussed in the following subsection.

### **3.3.2. Horizontal links**

According to Smirnova and Sommerer (forthc.), scholars usually distinguish between vertical links, i.e. related through inheritance, and horizontal links, i.e. related through some kind of similarity but not through inheritance. However, what exactly constitutes a horizontal link is still a matter of controversial debate among construction grammarians (e.g. Diessel & Tomasello 2005, Diessel 2015). One reason for that is that the complexity of the construct-i-con becomes even more apparent when horizontal links are added.

Following Van de Velde (2014) and Smirnova and Sommerer (forthc.), this thesis takes on the stance that horizontal links indicate that constructions on the same level of abstractness can be related to each other and influence their neighbor's form-function-mapping to a certain degree (Van de Velde 2014: 149). In this context, horizontal links are understood "in terms of paradigmatic relations between different choices, (...) which do share some general meaning but at the same time are opposed to each other in terms of their semantics/function" (Smirnova & Sommerer forthc.). In this sense, horizontal links stand for some kind of similarity but do not symbolize relatedness as inheritance links do (Sommerer 2018: 142). They seem to be important for language users as the presence or absence of a vertical link might trigger cues as to when and how to use a particular construction in a specific situation. In other words, the contrast between formal or semantic aspects of constructions on the horizontal axis is relevant for their use and meaning (Van de Velde 2014: 149-157).

To illustrate this, Figure 10 (next page) shows an extract from the earlier sketched network of the indefinite article construction.

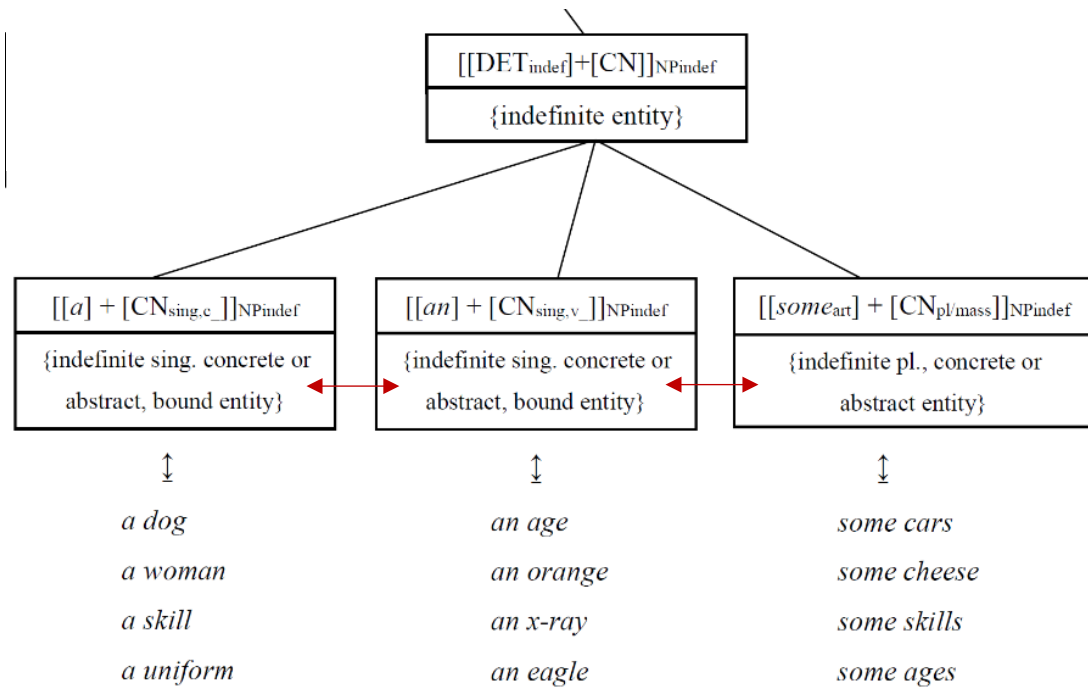


Figure 10: Extract of partial network structure of the indefinite article construction

The three semi-specified constructions in Figure 10 are horizontally connected, which is indicated by red arrows. The constructions  $[[a] + [CN_{mass,c}]]NP_{indef}$  and  $[[an] + [CN_{mass,v}]]NP_{indef}$  are semantically identical but differ slightly in terms of their formal features. The third construction in the row  $[[DET_{indef}] + [CN]]NP_{indef}$  differs in both form and semantics from the previous two constructions. Some formal and semantic features are, however, shared as all three constructions inherit from the same higher schema  $[[DET_{indef}] + [CN]]NP_{indef}$  (Smirnova & Sommerer forthc.).

Other scholars, as for example Cappelle (2006) or Perek (2015), take on a so-called ‘allostruction approach’ and center similarities rather than oppositions as in the paradigmatic approach. The focus within this account lies on ‘allostructions’, which are constructions that are synonymous but differ in certain aspects of form. Allostructions are vertically connected to higher level schemas which are called ‘superconstructions’ or ‘constructemes’ (Smirnova & Sommerer forthc.). Figure 11 showcases an abstract constructeme and its vertically connected lower level allostructions.

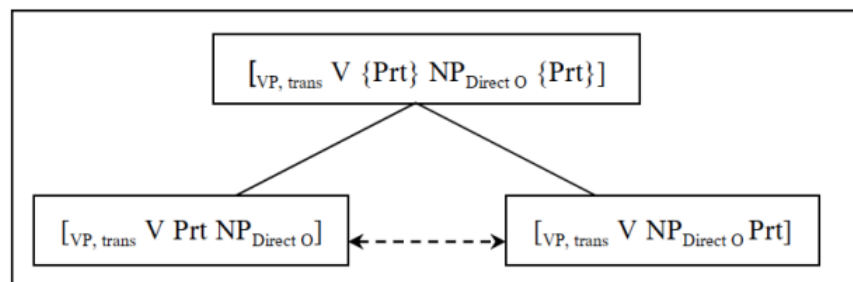


Figure 11: Capelle's superconstruction/ constructeme (2006: 18)

The allostructions in Figure 11 have the same meaning and share some formal features which are also part of the higher level constructeme. The features which make the two allostructions differ are only displayed within these constructions and are not part of the constructeme (Smirnova & Sommerer *forthc.*).

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the nature of horizontal links is still open to discussion among construction grammarians. On the one hand, there are paradigmatic accounts that are based on differences and opposition in terms of semantics and on the other hand, there are allostruction accounts that focus on semantic similarities. Both accounts are foregrounding the semantic facet, but whether or not such links may be based on formal aspects is a matter of future research (Smirnova & Sommerer *forthc.*). Another open question in connection to horizontal links is that of the economic and psychological plausibility of such links. Taking another look at Figure 11, it can be seen that the lower-level constructions are connected both through the vertical dimension and through a horizontal link. According to Smirnova and Sommerer (*forthc.*) the question arises “whether a more economic approach with only one (vertical?horizontal?) relation would suffice to capture the fact that these construction are related”. Importantly, Smirnova and Sommerer (*forthc.*) add that the aspect of capturing relatedness of constructions in a network is always tied to the linguistic perspective and representation of networks. Neural networks which are three-dimensional can never be captured with two-dimensional representations and thus render the discussion about horizontal and vertical links irrelevant as a speaker’s neural network can grow and extend in multiple direction (Smirnova & Sommerer *forthc.*).

To summarize, chapter 3.3. has shown that the construct-i-con is perceived as a network-like inventory in which numerous constructions are connected to each other by different types of links. While the network’s taxonomic hierarchy which is organized through vertical links seems to be on solid ground, the nature of horizontal links remains an open question. The next chapter will go back to having a closer look at constructions themselves. In particular, chapter 3.4. will explore to which extent abstract constructions carry meaning and can influence the overall semantic interpretation of a word (chapter 3.4.1.). Moreover, the following chapter will explain how certain linguistic items are drawn to others and how some constructions prefer specific linguistic items over others (chapter 3.4.2.).



### 3.4. Argument structure constructions

Given the fact that CxG in general arose out of the study of idioms, it might be surprising that the key figure in CCxG, Adele Goldberg, with her study of, as Hilpert (2014: 25) calls it, ‘simple sentences’ contributed one of the most important works for CxG. In her book on argument structures, Goldberg (1995) refers to sentences like the following ones as instances of argument structure constructions:

- (7) a) Robert gave Nina an apple.  
b) The wind blew the cap off her head.

If one would apply all the above discussed strategies for identifying constructions to the examples in (7), first results would presumably speak against calling the examples instances of a particular construction. Goldberg (1995), however, argues that sentences such as those in (5) a) and b) carry some meaning of their own and are therefore instances of argument structure constructions.

Related to verb transitivity, argument structure is also known as valency and describes how many and what kind of linguistic items can be tied to another specific linguistic item. Those linguistic elements that bond to a specific item are called arguments, while the item itself is called predicate. In (5) a) *gave* is the predicate, while *Robert*, *Nina* and *an apple* are the arguments; the verb *give* has thus three arguments. The verb *eat*, on the other hand, usually calls for only two arguments, such as in *Nina ate John's apple*. This explanation refers to the semantic argument structure, which is sometimes also called event structure and described with thematic roles (Hilpert 2014: 27). As far as the syntactic argument structure is concerned, it can be said that speakers know in what kind of syntactic environment a specific linguistic item usually occurs. For example, the verb *eat* is typically enclosed by a subject and a direct object (Hilpert 2014: 28). So far, the explanation of argument structure does not differ from assumptions about valency in compartmental grammar models. For Goldberg (1995), however, this explanation would not suffice as it does not account for unconventional verb uses. The following section will give some examples of such uses and explain the concept of non-compositional meaning.

#### 3.4.1. Meaning in argument structure constructions

Consider the following example of an unconventional verb use, taken from Hilpert (2014: 28):

- (8) John played the piano to pieces.

The meaning of this sentence, i.e. that John actually broke the piano while or because he played it, cannot really be explained or inferred from the conventional use of the verb *play*. The conventional meaning of the verb *play* might include playing with toys, playing an instrument

or even playing a ball in a specific direction during a sports game (Hilpert 2014: 28), but certainly not breaking something. Goldberg (1995) now argues that it is not the verb, but the structure of the whole sentence that allows speakers to understand the meaning of the sentence. She named this particular structure the ‘English resultative construction’ and identified that “speakers of English know that there is a syntactic pattern that conveys the meaning ‘X causes Y to become Z’, independently of the actual verb that is found in this pattern (Hilpert 2014: 29). The meaning of this construction thus allows speakers to understand expressions like *play something into pieces* as in (6), as it adds a resultative element to the conventional argument structure of the verb *play*.

By contributing additional arguments to the valency patterns of verbs that conventionally do not take these arguments, argument structure constructions carry non-compositional meaning on their own. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, these constructions are generalizations of rather ‘simple sentences’; interestingly, these generalizations reflect everyday human behavior and actions. Goldberg (1995: 39) postulates that “basic sentence types encode as their central senses event types that are basic to human experience”, describing this as ‘the scene-encoding hypothesis’. For example, (5) a) *Robert gave Nina an apple* is an instantiation of the ditransitive-construction which typically reflects actions of giving, showing, sending or offering (Hilpert 2014: 31). The second example sentence (5) b) *The wind blew the cap off her head* is an example of the caused-motion-construction, which is, as the name already suggests, associated with some kind of motion that could be semantically generalized as ‘X causes Y to move along or towards Z’ (Hilpert 2014: 35).

There are a number of other types of argument structure constructions, such as the ‘way-construction’ or the ‘causative-construction’ (cf. Goldberg 1995 or Hilpert 2014). In general, there are much more aspects to argument structure constructions, which are definitely worth looking at, e.g. the fact that not all verbs and argument structure constructions can be fused. However, the discussion of all these aspects would go beyond the scope of this thesis. Useful resources for much more detailed accounts of argument structure constructions are, amongst others, Goldberg (1995; 2006), Levin and Rappaport-Hovav (2005) or Herbst and Götz-Votteler (2007). Additionally, there is a lot of research on argument structure constructions in other languages, which might be especially interesting for language pedagogues; e.g. Barðal (2008) for Icelandic, Fujii (2004) for Japanese or Boas (2003) for German.

### 3.4.2. Lexical links

The last type of links describes the relationship between schematic constructions and concrete lexemes. While structuralist or Chomskyan accounts of grammar are essentially excluding lexical expressions from their analyses, usage-based CCxG and other constructionalist approaches acknowledge the importance of concrete lexemes for grammar (Diessel 2015: 312). As discussed in 3.4.1., some expressions are even name-giving for some constructions. For example, in the *way*-construction (17) or in the existential-*there*-construction (18), the words *way* and *there* are essential parts of the structural patterns of these constructions:

- (9) Gina fought her way to the finale of the championships.  
 (10) There are a lot of unused clothes in your closet.

Moreover, Diessel (2015: 313) identifies that lexical expressions and constructions are often connected through so-called probabilistic links. In this context, Gries and Stefanowitsch's (2004: 97-129) collostructional analysis, which has already been addressed in section 3.2.2., has shown that some schematic slots in specific constructions are filled significantly more often with particular lexemes than with others. The authors have found that the collocational preferences of *be going to* and *will* differ. *Will* occurs more frequently with verbs that are non-agentive, durative, and low in transitivity, while *be going to* occurs more often with verbs that are agentive, punctual, and high in transitivity (Gries & Stefanowitsch 2004: 114). Figure 12 illustrates some of these collocational preferences found by Gries and Stefanowitsch (2004: 114):

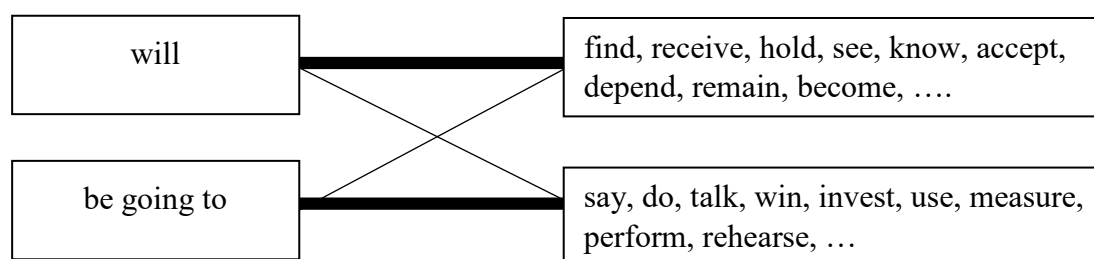


Figure 12: Lexeme preference of 'will' and 'be going to' based on distinctive-collexeme analysis (Gries & Stefanowitsch 2004: 114)

As can be seen in Figure 12, *will* preferably combines with more non-agentive, non-specific actions or states such as in *The situation will remain tense*. Contrary, *be going to* encodes actions that are rather agentive and specific as, for example, in *They are going to win the game* (Gries & Stefanowitsch 2004: 14). The reason for these specific preferences might be that *be going to* is typically used in more different contexts than *will*. In their standard English grammar, Carter and McCarthy (2006: 631) state that both forms can be used to predict something on the basis of present evidence. However, the *be going to* is usually taken when there is some actual evidence in the outside world (e.g. *They are going to win the game*. It can

already be anticipated based on the points the team is ahead.), while the ‘will’-form is preferably used when the evidence is not as obvious (e.g. *The situation will remain tense!* No actual evidence but based on experience.).

Another example would be the words *give* and *bring*. Gries and Stefanowitsch (2004, echoed by Diessel 2015: 313) have shown that *give* appears more frequently in the ditransitive-construction (11) than *bring* does, while *bring* appears more frequently in the *to*-dative-construction (12) than *give* does. The reason for this is that the *to*-dative is typically associated with a greater distance and higher degree of involved motion than the ditransitive-construction (Diessel 2015: 313). Note how examples (11) and (12) convey a different notion of transfer:

- (11) Julia is giving her neighbor potatoes.
- (12) Julia is bringing potatoes to her neighbors.

Diessel (2015: 313) illustrates this relationship between these lexemes and these constructions as marked by a stronger, direct horizontal link:

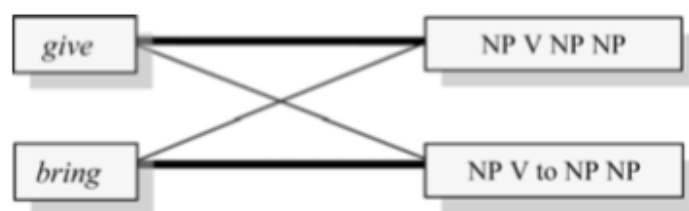


Figure 13: Relationship between verbs and constructions (Diessel 2015: 313)

Figure 13 (Diessel 2015: 313), thus, shows that the lexical expression *give* would basically fit the *to*-dative construction; the same applies to *bring* and the ditransitive construction. However, their frequency of occurrence and the associated notions of meaning that these lexemes imply, establish a strong link between the respective verbs and the constructions. Some words are, therefore, simply more semantically compatible with the overall meaning of a construction, which Goldberg (1995: 50) calls the ‘Semantic Coherence Principle’.

However, it is not only this principle that influences the probabilistic links between lexical expressions and constructions. In some cases, the lexical expression might fit perfectly the constructional meaning, but it is simply just not used in this particular construction. Diessel (2015: 313-314) illustrates this by referring to the verb *donate*, which would semantically fit both the ditransitive-construction, as well as the *to*-dative-construction. Nevertheless, *donate* is only found in the *to*-dative-construction, as in (21), and most speakers would not consider *donate* in the ditransitive-construction, as in (22), to be acceptable (Diessel 2015: 314).

- (13) Sarah donated food to the homeless shelter.
- (14) \* Sarah donated the homeless shelter food.

This example, too, shows how linguistic behavior, i.e. language production and perception, and the experience speakers make with language is highly determining probabilistic links between constructions and lexical expression (Diessel 2015: 314).

To summarize, chapter 3 has given a general account of CCxG, defined what a construction is and addressed various types of constructions. Moreover, this chapter has looked at how constructional knowledge is cognitively processed and organized and has specified the dynamic nature of the construct-i-con. What is essentially missing now in order to be able to provide insights for FLT, is a discussion of how CCxG actually conceptualizes language acquisition and what determines how speakers learn constructions. The following chapter will therefore give an account of how construction grammarians conceptualize the processes of language acquisition.

## 4. Language acquisition and construction learning in CCxG

As this thesis aims at providing pedagogical insights for the EFL-classroom, the major focus lies on second/foreign language acquisition. However, as first and second/foreign language acquisition are tightly interconnected, a discussion on how CCxG conceptualizes processes of first language acquisition will be provided in chapter 4.1. How CCxG describes processes of second/foreign language learning and what factors determine the learning of constructions in a second/foreign language, will be addressed in chapter 4.2. Understanding what these factors are will already lead to some first insights for FLT and will help to establish a base for discussing processes of construction and reconstruction in second/foreign language acquisition more extensively in chapter 5.

### 4.1. First language acquisition in CCxG

Cognitive usage-based approaches to language presume that the acquisition of language is based on a number of sociocognitive skills (Hilpert 2014: 177). Central to these approaches is that linguistic knowledge and the ability to perceive and produce language rest on abstractions and generalizations made through experience with a particular language. The more language in use is encountered, the more cues and clues about the language can be stored in the memory, i.e. the construct-i-con. Constructionalist approaches assume that children are gradually building up their construct-i-con based on their language input. This network inventory is never static as it is constantly getting restructured and adjusted in the course of language acquisition (Hilpert 2014: 157).

Before looking at how constructions are acquired, we first need to look at how constructions are distinguished from constructs, i.e. their realizations in speech. Constructs and constructions are different in terms of their level of abstractness. While a construction is the schematic representation of a specific linguistic structure, a construct constitutes the instantiation of this construction in the form of a specific utterance. The relationship between those two is illustrated in Figure 14 (next page). The example shows the schema of an imperative construction at the top, i.e.  $[V_{\text{base}} [NP_{\text{nonsubject}}]!]$  and a possible realization of this construction, i.e. *Open the door!* As can be seen in Figure 14 (next page), the relation between a construction and a construct is based on instantiation and schematization; a bottom-up process which is said to be based on implicit learning (Diessel 2015: 304).

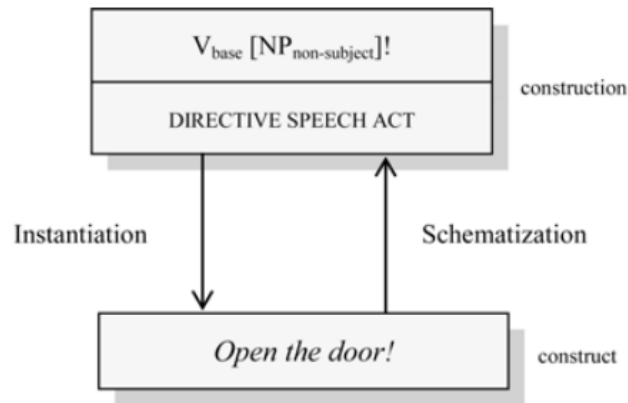


Figure 14: Construction and constructs (Diessel 2015: 313)

Drawing on different studies that looked at early child language (e.g. Dabrowska 2000 or Gómez & Gerken 1999), Diessel (2015: 304-305) claims that children acquire constructions, i.e. abstract syntactic patterns, by schematizing from concrete constructs. These schematic patterns are stabilized through constantly reoccurring constructs in the input and add to a speaker's grammatical knowledge. Subsequently, these schemas license new expressions that follow this pattern (two-way arrows in Figure 14). Thus, grammatical schemas emerge through a bottom-up process resulting in a hierarchically organized taxonomic network (Diessel 2015: 306). Although in a relatively simplified version, Figure 15 (Diessel 2015: 306) illustrates a possible taxonomy of the emergence of WH-constructions, i.e. WH-question schemas in child language.

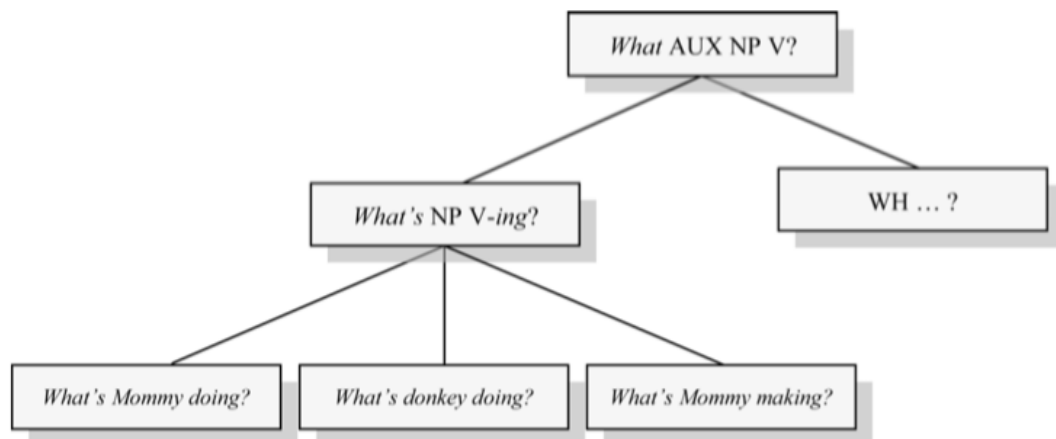


Figure 15: Emerging taxonomy of WH-constructions in child speech (Diessel 2015: 306)

Referring to Dabrowska (2000), who examined the emergence of WH-constructions in the speech of a two-year old child, Diessel (2015: 305-306) illustrates the development of the schema [What AUX NP V?]: First, it is explained that this abstract schema originates from the question *\*What's doing?*, which the child had used a lot before it added the noun *Mommy* to this patterns. After some time, the child started to insert other types of nouns and eventually also other types of verbs within this pattern, resulting in the schema [What's NP V-ing?].

Finally, the child realized that *what's* is a contracted form of *what* and the auxiliary *is*, which then licensed the pattern [What AUX NP V?]. This particular pattern might then have been ground giving for other varieties of WH-constructions such as [Where AUX NP V?]. Thus, this analysis suggests that before speakers are able to produce complex variations of particular construction, “the development involves a piecemeal, bottom-up process whereby children acquire increasingly more abstract syntactic patterns” (Diessel 2015: 306). In other words, the construct-i-con is created in a bottom-up manner during language acquisition and the dynamic nature of the network allows for new nodes to emerge after a speaker has realized similarities or schematic patterns in the input.

It is assumed that children begin with item-based learning by picking up concrete phrases that gradually evolve to abstract schemas as they identify functional resemblances and similar structures across various concrete phrases. Hence, a child's cognitive representation of linguistic knowledge is assumed to differ from an adult's mental representation, as a child's language is said to directly reflect its instantaneous linguistic knowledge (Hilpert 2014: 157). It is this gradual item-based learning process that allows L1 learners to form exemplars, i.e. representations of experiences which are mostly identical (Bybee 2010: 14) and to group these exemplars that frequently occur together and share an abstracted form of meaning. Later on, learners realize that these grouped exemplars consist of slots with more or less analogous items. Now, if a new item appears in one of these slots, the information about the already existing and known items can largely be applied to the new item as well (Skala 2013: 46-47).

Overall, it can be said that a child's grammatical knowledge evolves in piecemeal manner starting with lexically specific formulas that are gradually deconstructed and eventually elaborated to more complex schematic patterns or units (Diessel 2013: 364). Rather than acquiring syntactic rules and conceiving these rules as algebraic, meaningless forms (Tomasello 2003: 5), children are building patterns with high frequency words in order to come up with meaningful constructions. In this context, Skala (2014: 47-48) skillfully emphasized the interplay of lexis and syntax that allows speakers to use mental representations productively:

The meaning of these words [high frequency words] then often resembles the meaning of the construction as such, which makes it possible for the child to build up a mental representation of the construction from the lexical basis. Once the construction is entrenched on the basis of this skewed input it can be filled with new words that then add less prototypical meanings to the construction and are, in turn, colored by the meaning of the construction. This, once again, underlines the close relationship between individual lexical items and syntactical structures.

Constructions are, thus, acquired and learned through an interactive connection between language input and domain-general cognitive mechanisms (Torres-Martinez 2017: 8).



According to Tomasello (2003: 6), these mechanisms. i.e. sociocognitive abilities, involve several acquisitional processes and skills that Tomasello (2003: 3-6) summarizes under the terms of ‘pattern-finding’ and ‘intention-reading’ skills.

Pattern recognition could be said to prepare the already described ability to form schemas (Hilpert 2014: 163). It is an infant’s ability to detect regularities in sound sequences it perceives in its environment. This pattern recognition aptitude is active long before children are able to produce language and eventually helps them in later stages of word learning (Hilpert 2014: 162). In fact, pattern-finding involves several skills, which all seem to be indispensable for the ability to categorize and construct language. These skills include the ability to form categories based on input, the ability to form schemas from recurrent patterns, the ability to statistically analyze perceptual and behavioral sequences and the form complex analogies across complex wholes (Tomasello 2003: 4).

The second set of skills that constitute a child’s sociocognitive ability to acquire a language evolves around the term ‘intention-reading’. It involves a child’s “predisposition to interpret other people’s actions as purposeful and goal-directed” (Hilpert 2014: 160). This ability is especially important for understanding communicative intentions or being able to perceive linguistic expressions as communicative acts. Moreover, ‘intention-reading’ is associated with a child’s capability to engage in what is called ‘joint attention’, which describes an infant’s ability to consciously direct its attention to two or more entities, e.g. a caretaker and a toy. Infants are then aware that the caretaker experiences the same situation as they do and automatically associate the linguistic input the caretaker produces with this mutually shared experience (Hilpert 2014: 159). Important in order to maintain joint attention, another ability involves imitation and role reversal. For communication to be successful, it is not only important to imitate the linguistic sounds that others produce, but it is also important understand and to be able to reverse sender and receiver roles. As soon as children are capable of naming objects or directing someone’s attention towards specific objects, it is assumed that they have understood that language basically consists of symbols which meanings are mutually shared among speakers (Hilpert 2014: 162).

The constructionalist view on language acquisition differs very much from rule-based, generative accounts of language acquisition. Many language teacher trainees, myself included, were and are presented with rule-based theories on acquisition that make the assumption that children at a rather young age actually already have mastered a language on a structural level, but they are just not able to operationalize this knowledge, i.e. to produce language perfectly.

In other words, rule-based accounts believe that even though children are often not able to perfectly realize adult rules, they are still constantly aiming at them, which is why rules already have to be stored as such; they are just not produced perfectly because language production is not yet mastered (Hilpert 2014: 156). Every time a child utters a new phrase, it has supposedly mastered to combine a syntactic rule with lexical expressions that were retrieved from the mental lexicon (Hilpert 2014: 156-157).

Finally, this brief discussion on first language acquisition has shown that usage-based accounts on language acquisition, e.g. CCxG, offer a very different perspective on the process of first language acquisition. The chapter has tried to argue that the process of language acquisition does not ground on some preexisting capacities but basically rests on our human ability to abstract generalizations on the basis of our embodied experience with language (Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Del Pilar Agustín Llach 2016: 153). Grammatical development begins with the gradual decomposition and elaboration of basic lexical input to complex schemas (Diessel 2013: 364). CCxG, thus, defines language competence as the ability to master all kinds of structures and items, i.e. constructions, a language contains (Tomasello 2003: 6) and to store these constructions in a network which derives from a speaker's linguistic experience (Diessel 2013: 364).

## **4.2. Second/foreign language acquisition in CCxG**

Now, the question arises, if second/foreign language learning proceeds along the same lines. Much less attention has been paid to second/foreign language learning in CxG. Scholars who have tackled these research fields (e.g. Liang 2000; Gries and Wulff 2005; Valenzuela Manzanares and Rojo López 2008, Ellis 2013) have demonstrated that constructions do exist in second/foreign language acquisition and that language learners seem to rely on them heavily.

### **4.2.1. Constructions in foreign language learning**

Gries and Wulff (2005: 182-200) have shown in two studies with advanced EFL-learners whose L1 was German that the learners exhibited syntactic priming (i.e. the fact that speakers exhibit a general tendency to repeat syntactic structures they have just perceived) for different argument structure constructions (Gries & Wulff 2005: 184-191) and that their semantic knowledge of these constructions definitely influenced their categorizations (Gries & Wulff 2005: 191-194). The first study centered formal aspects of constructions and used sentence completion tasks to see, if the EFL-speakers would complete the sentences which would most naturally be continued with a ditransitive or prepositional dative construction by native speakers in the same way. The study subjects had to complete their sentences after receiving texts that included such

syntactic structures, i.e. primes. The possible filler items included various other kinds of structures, e.g. sentence parts ending with an intransitive verb (Gries & Wulff 2005: 186). The study results showed that the tested subjects behaved very much like native speakers of English, which for Gries and Wulff (2005: 186) indicates that “foreign language learners do have some representations of the syntactic structures instantiated (...) that are similar enough to that of the native speakers to allow for priming”, which subsequently builds the basis for constructional knowledge.

The second case study Gries and Wulff (2005: 191-194) have conducted to show that EFL-learners rely on constructions focused on the meaning of constructions and replicated a sentence-sorting study from Bencini and Goldberg (2000). German EFL-learners were asked to sort different English sentences into groups. These sentences could either be grouped according to verbs used in these sentences, which would be the more obvious approach, or according to the underlying argument structure constructions, which would be the less obvious approach. The study subjects were asked to sort the sentences according to semantic similarities and the outcome showed that the EFL-learners did not rely on superficial lexical similarity between the verbs but sorted the sentences according to identical argument structure constructions (Gries & Wulff 2015: 194). Overall, the study has shown that the categorization preferences of EFL-learners highly resembled those of English native speakers indicating that, despite having much less input, second/foreign language speakers are able to arrive at construction-based generalizations, whereby “frequency of exposure to, and use of, constructions play a vital role” (Gries & Wulff 2005: 196).

#### **4.2.2. Determinants of construction learning**

Frequency alone does not determine if and how EFL-learners acquire constructions in the target language. In their account of language learning from a constructionalist perspective, Ellis, Römer and O’Donell (2016: 45-68) have compiled a list of factors that typically determine and influence the learning of constructions in a second/foreign language. The scholars have grouped their findings into interacting groups, which will be presented in subsequent sections in the form of concise summaries of these factors. This should eventually offer helpful insights in terms of how these determinants might be used productively in an EFL-context.

##### **4.2.2.1. Form-related determinants**

First, Ellis, Römer and O’Donell (2016: 45-68) elaborate on factors that relate to the form such as frequency, chunking, sequencing and salience of form. Drawing on insights from a psychological exploration of usage-based learning, the researchers point out that the more often

something is experienced in the same context, the easier it will be to store and access this experience. This means that high frequency constructions are processed and anticipated more easily than constructions that are rather rare in the input (Ellis, Römer & O'Donnell 2016: 46). Moreover, the form-meaning assembly will be stronger in frequent constructions than in rarer ones. Ellis, Römer & O'Donnell (2016: 47) exemplify this by pointing out that the probability that the formal cue [wʌn] will activate nodes in the network that signal *one* or *won* is much higher than the probability that it will forewarn *wonderland*. Frequency of experience, thus, shapes and reflects the network underlying a speaker's knowledge.

However, not only single items but also frequent sequences of more items, i.e. chunks, can be stored as constructions (Ellis, Römer & O'Donnell 2016: 47). What we perceive as a chunk appears to be highly subjective and depends on a speaker's proficiency. While more proficient speakers will perceive a specific sequence as one chunk, beginners might perceive this particular sequence as consisting of more chunks. Speakers use sequence learning and chunking on many different levels, such as word chunking, grammar chunking or collocation chunking. What is important to understand in this context is that the more often sequences appear, the more connective associations with it will be stored in the long-term memory and this, according to Ellis, Römer and O'Donnell (2016: 47-48), "is the process that underlies the attainment of automaticity and fluency in language". Moreover, salience of form in the input experience and the communicative necessity to understand it correctly are regarded as influential factors in construction learning (e.g. the word *today* is more salient in indicating present tense than the morpheme *-s* marking the third person singular present form in verbs).

#### **4.2.2.2. Interpretation-related determinants**

Another group of determinants Ellis, Römer and O'Donnell (2016: 45-68) have explored are factors relating to the interpretation, such as significance in the comprehension of the overall utterance, prototypicality, generality and contingency of form and function. The ability to group exemplars and their features into larger categories is another important determinant of construction learning as the meaning of constructions is typically based on classification (Ellis, Römer & O'Donnell 2016: 60). Grouping items with certain semantic qualities as categories in a semantic network will allow the speaker to fill open slots within a schema with a variety of possibilities. Considering that human categorization is a highly subjective process, definitory questions of prototypicality or polysemy arise in this context. Discussing these questions would exceed the scope of this thesis, however, it might be important to note that factors such as deviance from the prototype or the order of exposure (typical items should precede atypical

items in learning) influence the learnability of categories ( Ellis, Römer & O'Donnell 2016: 60-61).

In the context of associative category learning Ellis, Römer and O'Donnell (2016: 61) state that although frequency is an important factor when it comes to construction learning, “contingency between cue and interpretation”, i.e. how reliable the mapping of form and function is, is even more important. The scholars exemplify this by indicating that an *-s* at the end of different words (the cue), can lead to numerous interpretations such as indicating possession, a plural form or marking the third person singular present form (Ellis, Römer & O'Donnell 2016: 63). The contingency between cue and interpretation in this example is thus not very reliable and will therefore be more difficult to learn.

#### **4.2.2.3. Learner-related determinants**

Lastly, factors that are related to the language learner complete the scholars account of determinants of construction learning. When learning a language, learners make use of both implicit and explicit learning strategies. Mostly, language is acquired and stored implicitly, i.e. unconsciously, as speakers are much more interested in successful communication than in counting frequency in the input. However, if communication fails due to understanding problems, speakers consciously draw on their resources available and try to process the new construction (Ellis, Römer & O'Donnell 2016: 63). “This one-off act of conscious processing too can seed the acquisition of novel explicit form-meaning associations” (Ellis, Römer & O'Donnell 2016: 65) and thereby build the base for implicit tuning for following encounters of this construction. Such insights into the “nature of the learner”, e.g. when special attention is paid to constructions or when construction learning might be blocked due to L1 interference, but also other factors mentioned above are highly important considerations that influence the design and concept of a CCxG-informed pedagogical grammar.

The next chapter will attempt to fuse the central aspects of the preceding chapters into a chapter on pedagogical CCxG by combining the presented framework for pedagogical grammar (Keck & Kim 2014: 4) with the theoretical accounts of CCxG. Eventually, chapter 5 will have set the basis to start having a look at some practical implications but also limitations of a PCCxG in the Austrian EFL-classroom in chapter 6.

## 5. Pedagogical Construction Grammar

While the theoretical perspectives of CCxG have already been explored extensively, the more applied approach has got much less attention (Gilquin & De Knop 2016:3). However, CCxG can offer highly instrumental insights in terms of language pedagogy. As a non-modular conceptualization of grammar, CCxG rejects the traditional rule-based view on language learning and therefore does not only conceptualize second/foreign language learning differently, but it also requires a new mode of how languages are taught and subsequently also represented (Loenheim et al. 2016: 328). Holme (2010a, 2010b), Herbst (2016) or Gilquin and De Knop (2016) are among those scholars, who have tried to bridge the gap between CxG theory and FLT practice by suggesting principles or general implications for a CxG-informed approach to FLT. Following their work, this chapter sets out to present CCxG-informed principles useful to EFL-contexts. Moreover, chapter 5 will finally combine the framework for pedagogical grammar from chapter 2.1. (Keck & Kim 2014: 4) with the basic tenets of CCxG (chapter 3 and chapter 4) in order to arrive at a framework for PCCxG. This chapter will attempt to offer a more applied view on PCCxG and start to examine to what extent a CCxG-informed approach could be implemented in the Austrian EFL-classroom. After setting up a PCCxG-framework, chapter 6 will offer a more practice-related perspective by providing suggestions on how parts of the most frequently used EFL-school book in Austria, the *More! 1-4* series<sup>4</sup> (Gerngross et al., 2018) could be used or adapted to meet PCCxG principles. Further, chapter 6 will analyze how specific grammar items are currently taught and why these approaches might be inefficient. Additionally, this chapter will offer some suggestions on how these grammatical constructions could be taught to meet PCCxG-principles and provide ideas on how foreign language teachers could help their students in learning and storing constructions in an efficient and authentic way.

### 5.1. Principles for PCCxG

Herbst (2016: 24) argues that the way traditional FLT presents present-day English is often inefficient and suggests that a CCxG-informed approach to EFL-teaching is be more valuable. For him many EFL teaching materials do not only use grammatical terminology unreflectedly, but also present levels of form, function and meaning in a rather complicated and confusing way (Herbst 2016: 25). These teaching materials often reflect the common conceptualization that a language consists of a grammar and a lexicon; a dichotomy which treats the majority of

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<sup>4</sup> The school book series involves one school book package consisting of a student's book and a work book for each of the four school years of lower secondary school. For the third and fourth year Austrian schools can choose between the 'general course student's book' and an 'enriched version' which, amongst other things, entails longer and more demanding reading or listening comprehensions.

linguistic aspects as separable by these two levels, and thereby hinders the process of foreign language acquisition more than it helps it (Loenheim et al. 2016: 328). Moreover, Herbst (2016: 32) concludes that “something is rotten with the state of language teaching”; a statement that might seem somewhat emotionally loaded but is certainly justified, if we think about how many foreign language teachers might unknowingly teach languages in unnecessarily complicated and confusing ways. According to Herbst (2016: 25) English grammar is often presented unnecessarily confusing and still strongly influenced by old grammatical traditions based on the teaching of Latin. In this context, Pullum (2009: 255) appropriately states that “English grammar as presented to schoolchildren (...) is in a state resembling what biology might be like if teachers had paid no attention at all to *On the Origin of Species* (1859)”. Pullum’s judgement seems staggering but ten years later the state of English grammar teaching in FLT contexts still seems to be at the same level. The questions that arise now are what are the obstacles that second/foreign language teachers and learners experience when trying “to establish a systematic connection between form and function” (Torres-Martínez 2017: 2) and which guidelines and principles could be applied to FLT-classrooms in order to make language learning more efficient and authentic. The rest of chapter 5.1. will, therefore, distill some basic principles on how to teach grammar in a CCxG-context from the works on PCCxG by various construction grammarians (e.g. Littlemore 2009, Holme 2010a, 2010b; Herbst 2016; Gilquin and De Knop 2016, Torres-Martínez 2017).

- Principle I: *Second/foreign language teachers need to teach constructions, i.e. form-meaning pairings.*

As has been shown, language learning rests on the learning of constructions. Thus, foreign language teachers also need to **teach constructions**, i.e. form-meaning pairings. This principle is important as it accounts for a usage-based approach to teaching a language and also helps teachers to distance their teaching from a strict grammar-lexis-dichotomy and employ an approach that positions language input on a lexico-grammatical continuum (Holme 2010a: 120). **Constructions should thus be directly presented as form-meaning pairings** (Herbst 2016: 42-43), which means that neither grammar nor lexis should be favored over another, but it should be clear that every construction allows for an exploration of both form and function. Herbst (2016: 41) does not view a strict distinction between grammar and vocabulary as necessary, rather, he advocates for raising awareness that vocabulary sections also contain grammatical information and vice versa. Thus, both schematic and substantive constructions can be analyzed and explored on the basis of form and meaning, which will eventually help

second/foreign language learners to understand how to use constructions productively (Holme 2010a: 120).

- Principle II: *Lexical items should never be presented in isolation.*

One thing that can often be encountered in EFL-textbooks are vocabulary sections, where new words are listed and accompanied with some sort of translation, e.g. *bat* = *Schläger, Fledermaus* (Herbst 2016: 42). Such a presentation of new lexical items seems to be problematic as new “**words and their meanings should be looked at inside the constructions** where they are found to occur” (Holme 2010a: 130). In order to help building up a network of constructions, students should not only be taught what a specific word means but also how it is used in several contexts. In his exploration of how textbooks could be improved in terms of a CCxG approach, Herbst (2016: 42) advocates for **explicitly indicating chunks and collocations in vocabulary sections of EFL school books**. For example, if a textbook presents the word *homework*, the collocation *do one’s homework* should also be introduced (Herbst 2016: 43). Moreover, Herbst (2016: 43-44) states that **important and frequent valency constructions should also be listed explicitly**. For instance, instead of presenting the word *avoid* only with its translation *vermeiden*, it would be more valuable to list patterns such as *avoid somebody/ something = jemanden/ etwas vermeiden* or *avoid doing something = vermeiden etwas zu tun* (Herbst 2016: 44).

Another way to show learners “how they could instantiate a construction in a way that would give them a greater grasp of its meaning and the type of lexical substitutions that it would or would not allow” (Holme 2010b: 368) is to **use substitution tables** (Holme 2010a: 129; Holme 2010b: 369). These can be helpful for students to schematize and learn constructions. Initially, students should notice forms and constructions that are relevant for their communicative purposes and their goals within a particular topic or text they are currently engaged in (Holme 2010a: 129). Holme (2010a: 129) used this construction teaching technique to teach the pattern [X drew (Y’s) attention to Z] to an experimental group of Hong Kong sixth formers. First, the class ‘noticed’ the construction in their textbook and then they rewrote “the construction with proforms to show places where different lexis could be used” (Holme 2010a: 129). Next, the class explored which items could be substituted or added to arrive at new forms of this construction. Finally, the class came up with the following substitution table (Figure 16, next page). The degree of guidance in the process of creating such a table is of course determined by the nature of the learners and the context students are learning in. Holme’s (2010a: 129) control group showed a significantly lower ability to produce unfamiliar and accurate versions



of this construction than the experimental group. This shows that producing such tables with learners and using them to produce new constructions seems to be highly efficient.

Somebody	<i>drew (someone's) attention to</i>			some/thing/one
Sally	<i>drew attention to</i>			her dress
The teacher	<i>drew the class's attention to</i>			the equation
Somebody	drew	(...) attention	<i>to</i>	something
We	turned	our interest	<i>to</i>	the matter in hand
The chair	moved	the meeting	<i>on to</i>	the next topic

Figure 16: Substitution table for constructions (Holme 2010a: 126)

The next principle will present other techniques that can help EFL-students to explore meaning within constructions.

- Principle III: *Second/foreign language teachers need to enable learners to explore and experience the meaning of a construction.*

In his account of a pedagogical model for CCxG, Holme (2010a: 130) argues that by **taking on an embodied approach**, teachers could offer their students opportunities to explore how the meaning of constructions is construed by letting the students experience or visualize “the imagery from which we derive the form’s meaning” (Holme 2010a: 130). One way of exploring different meanings of a construction is to **make use of the concept of image schema**, which refers to “how we build patterns of imagery from experience then use these to conceptualise meanings” (Holme 2010a: 120). For example, chapter 3.1.2 has briefly discussed the concept of embodiment and explained how our image schemas imply concepts such as CONTAINER and subsequently do not only make it possible for us to talk about things being inside of or contained in other things but also enable us to talk about being in emotional states such as being *in love* (Evans & Green 2006: 46). Holme (2010a: 121) proposes to group schematically related constructions and **use illustrations** to trigger the underlying imagery. For the example of *being in something* a teacher might show students pictures of *a person in a house*, *a cat in a box* and then slowly move from the prototypical meaning to less obvious examples such as *someone being in a city*, *potatoes in a soup* or *sugar in a cake*. Finally, the teacher could guide learners to arrive at more abstract construals, such as *being in a particular situation*, *being in an emotional state* such as love, *being in trouble* or *being in a dilemma* by showing the students illustrations of such emotional states or discussing personal examples. Thus, one way of helping students to grasp potentially abstract notions of a construction is to activate image schemas by using illustrations (Holme 2010a: 122). Holme (2010a: 128) states that “[v]isual devices [...]

can steer the development and selection of form-meaning correspondences that are appropriate for a given construction”.

- Principle IV: *Second/foreign language teachers need to balance their use of implicit and explicit teaching methods.*

Learning through embodied experience most often would be classified as implicit learning, i.e. learners are acquiring skills and knowledge without consciously investing in the process of learning. Although proponents of the CLT approach to FLT are increasingly acknowledging that second/foreign language learning is not successful when teachers employ an exclusively implicit approach to teaching form (Dörnyei 2013: 165), a highly dominant focus on the indirect practice of grammar teaching remains within CLT, which is the teaching approach predominately taught in current teacher training programs and used in FLT-practice in Austria. While CLT is struggling to reintegrate explicit form teaching in order to enable learners to arrive at target-like communicative competence (Dörnyei 2013: 164), CCxG-approaches to FLT (e.g. Littlemore 2009; Holme 2010; Herbst 2016) have recognized the importance of **a balanced use of both implicit and explicit teaching** of form-meaning assemblies. As a usage-based model, CCxG views language acquisition as emerging from an inductive, i.e. implicit learning process. While it is imperative to create the need to communicate in order to ensure usage, this view of inductive acquisition cannot be entirely applied to second/foreign language learning. One reason for that is that the input of the target language differs from the input L1 learners are exposed to, which is why foreign language learners need additional assistance, i.e. explicit instruction (Littlemore 2009: 181). This does not mean that teachers should employ teaching methods from traditional grammar teaching with rule drills or have students learn these rules by heart, instead CCxG-informed teachers should try to **explain why certain constructions behave like they do**. Littlemore (2009: 174-178) suggests that “it is much more useful to try and explain, perhaps through the use of examples (...) the exact construal implied by the constructions and use this explanation to show why certain words sit more comfortably within those constructions than others”.

- Principle V: *Second/foreign language teachers need to use grammatical terminology moderately and in a meaningful way.*

Explaining why certain constructions behave like they do during FLT-practice, might be easier, if teachers adhere to the following implication: Second/foreign language teachers and subsequently also school book designers need to **reduce the use of traditional grammatical terminology**. This terminology (e.g. subject, verb, object, adverbial) often leads to misinterpretations and seems to deter students from consciously dealing with language as

explanations in their school books use too many of these terms making the explanations much more complicated. For example, Herbst (2016: 44) states that making a distinction between a gerund and a participle “does not make sense in present-day English”, however it is still widely used in EFL-textbooks “simply because (some!) students might know it from Latin”. The terminology CCxG or Cognitive Linguistics uses (e.g. caused-motion-construction) is much more relatable to the meaning of a certain phrase than the terminology traditional grammar would use (Littlemore 2009: 167). Herbst (2016: 44) too, advocates for a highly limited use of grammatical terminology and argues that grammatical terms should only be used when they aid language learning and not just because of nostalgic affection to traditional grammar teaching that is based on Latin. On a positive note, it can be said that a review of the *More! 1-4* school book series (Gerngross et al. 2018) has shown that this school book series uses traditional grammar terminology in a rather limited manner.

- Principle VI: *Second/foreign language teachers need to make use of already existing constructions and resources.*

Finally, Littlemore (2009: 178) as well as Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez and Pliar Agustín Llach (2016: 180) argue that a **contrastive analysis of L1 and the target language** might help learners to conceptualize certain constructions when they are used similarly in both languages. On the other hand, it might also **help to make learners aware of crucial differences** between the two languages and thereby prevent interfering L1 transfer to the target language. One example where a contrastive analysis of German and English might be useful is when students learn about the use of the words *difficult* as in *a difficult task* and *heavy* as in *a heavy suitcase*. German speakers can use the same, or at least very similar words, i.e. *schwierig* and *schwer*, as in *eine schwierige Aufgabe* and *ein schwerer Koffer* to refer to both concepts. In this case an explicit contrastive analysis of the L1 and the target language might prevent German speaking EFL-learners from saying *\*a heavy task*. Thus, drawing students’ awareness to such differences might be beneficial for the learners as it would consciously prevent them from applying their linguistic knowledge from their L1 to the target language. Of course, such analyses and comparisons presuppose that the teacher does not only need to be an expert for the target language, but s/he also needs to have a good knowledge of the student’s first languages which, considering that most classrooms are not homogenous in terms of the student’s first languages, seems to be an impossible task.

After reviewing the basic principles for a CCxG-orientated EFL-classroom, the next chapter will now attempt to show how a PCCxG-framework for such an EFL-classroom could look like.

## **5.2. A framework for PCCxG**

Chapter 2.1 has presented a framework for pedagogical grammar (see Figure 1, page 5) by Keck & Kim (2014: 4), which featured three main areas: L2 grammar description, L2 grammar acquisition and L2 grammar instruction. As discussed in Chapter 2, pedagogical grammar is involved in synthesizing these three areas in order to answer the question of how grammar could be taught and learned most efficiently. As this thesis seeks to offer a CCxG-informed approach to teaching and learning grammar, this chapter will attempt to describe the aforementioned three areas from a CCxG perspective.

### **5.2.1. Grammar description**

In order to describe the area of grammar description in Keck and Kim's framework (2014: 4) the questions of (1) what grammar is, (2) how grammar interacts with other linguistic systems and (3) how it can be best described to L2 EFL-students need to be answered.

As has been discussed extensively in chapter 3, CCxG assumes that grammar, i.e. linguistic knowledge, is based on the knowledge of constructions. Constructions are conventionalized form-meaning pairings, i.e. symbolic signs, that combine formal aspects (syntactic, morphological and phonological properties) and facets of meaning (semantic, pragmatic and discourse-functional properties). They can also be viewed as linguistic patterns that are either not predictable in form or meaning or are very frequent in actual language use. CCxG holds the view that a speaker's experience with a language is highly influencing the way it is cognitively represented. Processes such as repetition and categorization constantly help speakers to organize language, which makes grammar a dynamically changing system. Based on usage, constructions are stored in the construct-i-con, i.e. a structured, network-like inventory that interconnects constructions through different types of links. Thus, the answer to the first question of Keck and Kim's framework (2014: 4) is that grammar can be described as the knowledge of constructions.

Operating within the framework of CL, CCxG believes that the acquisition of grammar is based on usage, which means that all generalizations a speaker makes derive from his/her experience with natural language. Subsequently, CCxG rejects the theory that so-called prefixed modules of a language exist or that these modules can be treated separately. Rather, CCxG has a focus on the investigation of common principles that are valid across several aspects of language. Grammatical competence in CCxG is not separable from actual language use, which makes CCxG a non-modular grammar model. Therefore, the answer to the question of how grammar

interacts with other linguistic systems is that it does not interact with other linguistic systems at all, as constructions, by nature, already include all relevant linguistic information.

The answer to the last question of grammar description in Keck and Kim's framework (2014: 1), i.e. how grammar can be best described to second/foreign language learners, is based on the discussion of the previous two questions. If linguistic knowledge rests on the knowledge of constructions and constructions are so-called form-meaning assemblies, then what students should be presented with in the second/foreign language classroom are constructions. Herbst (2016: 41), too, suggests that foreign language learning should be based on the learning of constructions which are presented as form-meaning pairings. Further, Martinez-Garcia and Wulff (2012: 240) suggest that in order to be able to offer learners the possibility to arrive at their own constructions the presented form-meaning pairings should better reflect actual language use. While a communicative approach to language teaching might neglect the exploration of form, traditional approaches to grammar might ignore the communicative function of a specific form. But what is actually necessary in FLT is, as Wee (2007: 24) states, "an approach to grammar and language teaching that is contextualized, where grammatical properties are consistently linked to communicative goals".

In an attempt to combine form and function in second/foreign language teaching, Larsen-Freeman (2003: 34-35) proposed a pedagogical grammar framework that consists of the so-called 'Three Dimensions': form, meaning and use. While form involves aspects of morphology, syntax but also graphology, the dimension of meaning refers to the semantics associated with a particular form. The third dimension involves pragmatic aspects in certain communicative contexts. Larsen-Freeman (2003: 60) claims that "an understanding of when or why to use a particular grammatical form should be part of a teacher's understanding of grammar", which is why she emphasizes the relevance of grammar analysis in discourse. Second/foreign language instruction that operates within this framework should involve materials and sessions that allow students to analyze why a particular form was chosen over another one (Larsen-Freeman 2003: 49). Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), as well as Celce-Murcia (2002), have developed materials and methods that provide language teachers with tools to conduct their own analyses of grammatical features in spoken or written texts (Keck & Kim 2014: 39). Although corpora can be helpful when language professionals try to analyze where, why and how a certain construction is used in order to transform their analyses into second/foreign language teaching material, the amount of time and training Larsen-Freeman's (2003) and Celce-Murcia's (2002) approach would require, probably exceeds an average second/foreign language teacher's time. However, the attempt to present grammar

acknowledging three different dimensions, while trying to combine aspects of form and meaning seems highly useful from a CCxG perspective.

Based on Ellis, Römer and O'Donnell's work (2016: 45-68) presented in chapter 4.2.2, I would also suggest an approach to grammar instruction which is based on three dimensions. These dimensions should involve aspects of form, aspects of interpretation and aspects related to the learner. As far as the aspects of form are concerned teachers would not only need to pay attention to the morphological, phonological or syntactical features of a construction, but they would also need to incorporate aspects of frequency, chunking or salience of form into their teaching of constructions.

As mentioned previously, frequency of experience shapes and reflects the network, i.e. the construct-i-con, underlying a speaker's knowledge. For example, consider the example of the indefinite article construction  $[[a_e/an_v] + [N_{c/b}]]$ . Now, a CCxG-informed second/foreign language teacher could teach this construction after learners have repeatedly heard and used this construction in various contexts. Of course, the teacher would incorporate aspects of interpretation too when teaching this construction and include activities that can help students to categorize this construction (e.g. What is  $N_{c/b}$ ? *A woman, a skill, an advice?*). Moreover, a second/foreign language teacher would need to address how reliable the mapping of form and function is; in this case, the indefinite article *a/an* referring to an indefinite entity makes the contingency between cue and interpretation very reliable and thereby most likely easier to learn.

In this context, the third dimension, i.e. aspects related to the learner, becomes relevant. If a group of students seems to implicitly understand the indefinite article construction, implicit teaching and learning strategies might suffice to store this construction. However, if some of these students seem to struggle understanding or using this construction, conscious explicit attention to this construction will be useful, especially when aspects of form and interpretation are blocking construction learning due to L1 interference (e.g. L1 without articles). When it comes to interferences between the L1 and the target language, the area of L2 grammar acquisition of Keck and Kim's framework (2014: 4) becomes relevant. The next chapter will, therefore, explore how second/foreign language grammar acquisition operates from a CCxG point of view.

### **5.2.2. Grammar acquisition**

As far as the acquisition of the target language is concerned, Keck and Kim's framework (2014: 4) again poses three questions, namely (1) what it means to "acquire" the grammar of a

second/foreign language, (2) how and when acquisition takes place and finally, (3) what role instruction plays in this process.

First of all, it is important to bear in mind that second/foreign language learners are already mastering an L1 system and are not only constructing, but also reconstructing linguistic knowledge when learning an additional language (e.g. Ellis 2013: 366; Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Del Pilar Agustín Llach 2016: 153). This means that we cannot expect the acquisition process to be exactly the same as with L1 users. After all, the meaning of language and the way we use it is fundamentally influenced by the way we perceive the world and what we already know about it (embodied experience). Hence everything new that we learn and perceive is affected and related to what we already know (Ellis 2013: 374). Therefore, scholars call for pedagogical strategies that comprise contrastive analyses of L1 and the target language, which should “help [learners] become immersed in the conceptual world of native speakers” (Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Del Pilar Agustín Llach 2016: 180).

As every language involves different attention-directing mechanisms, Ellis (2013: 375) points out that learning another language implies learning to think alternatively as well as attempting to construe the world in the same way a native speaker of the target language would do. Theoretical accounts of crosslinguistic transfer (e.g. Gass & Selinker 1983) hold that if the target language and the L1 use similar ways of ‘thinking for speaking’, learning the target language will be easier; but if the ways of ‘thinking for speaking’ deviate too much, language learning will be more difficult (Ellis 2013: 375). In that context, CCxG perspectives on second/foreign language learning assume that FLT can benefit from additional explicit focus on form as Ellis (2013: 376) aptly explains:

Since they [L2 learners] are using the same apparatus to survey their L2 too, their inductions are often affected by transfer, with L1-tuned expectations and selective attention blinding the computational system to aspects of L2 form, thus rendering biased estimates from naturalistic usage and the concomitant limited end state typical of L2A [second language acquisition]. In cases where the forms lack perceptual salience and so go unnoticed by learners, or where the semantic/pragmatic concepts available to be mapped onto the L2 forms are unfamiliar, additional ‘Focus on Form’ [...] is likely to be needed in order for the mapping process to be facilitated.

Moreover, Ellis (2013: 376) advocates for a type of second/foreign language instruction where a form-focused, explicit and conscious processing of a new construction should precede implicit processing phases. As has been discussed in chapter 2, including explicit instruction in FLT can be generally viewed as useful and is also consistent with CCxG views on second/foreign language learning. However, Ellis’ proposal of a rather fixed sequence of explicit instruction

following implicit processing, somehow seems to collide with the concept of usage-based generalizations that rest on language input and are gradually abstracted. Moreover, it would be interesting to see how such explicit introductions of novel form-function assemblies would look like, if they had the aspiration to account for a gradual emergence of construction networks in the learners' construct-i-con.

Overall, it can be said that a CCxG view on second/foreign language learning shows that the native language and any additional language cannot exist in isolation to each other during foreign language acquisition. Second/foreign language learners and teachers need to acknowledge that L1-systems and any other additional languages existing or emerging in a speaker's cognitive domain are tightly interconnected and will influence each other. Turning to the questions in the area of second/foreign language acquisition in Keck and Kim's framework (2014: 4), we can, thus, say that 'acquiring' an additional language involves processes of construction and reconstruction and implies attempts to construe reality from a native speaker's perspective.

Finding an answer as to when and how acquisition takes place seems to be more challenging. From a CCxG point of view it is questionable to assume that second/foreign language learners follow a fixed natural sequence or some kind of fixed built-in syllabus when learning a language. However, several studies (e.g. Pica 1983, Long 1983, Ellis 1989, Pienemann 1989), where second/foreign language acquisition was examined and compared to naturalistic learner contexts, have shown that the sequence of acquisition was relatively similar in both contexts. Although the studies have shown that instruction was no guarantee for competence, the results displayed that instructed learners had developed a greater grammatical competence than learners without instruction (Ellis 2005: 216). In essence, this means that explicit grammatical instruction can aid learners in achieving higher levels of linguistic competence, however, the order of instruction, i.e. when to teach what, needs to be compatible with natural processes of acquisition and the cognitive developmental stages of learners (Ellis 2005: 216–217). Again, Elli's considerations seem reasonable but also relatively vague for language teachers in practice. Questions as to how exactly such a natural process of acquisition looks like or how to determine the cognitive developmental stage of learners, would need to be answered before this rather theoretical account of an in-built syllabus can be applied in the second/foreign language classroom. A PCCxG-informed language classroom would not only take into account a learner's cognitive development, presumably initially determined by age, but it would also consider other language systems that are already mastered as well as already existing implicit and explicit linguistic knowledge. Moreover, it is important for PCCxG-informed



second/foreign language teachers to bear in mind that processes of (re)construction involve a gradual development of more or less abstract representations in the speaker's cognitive domains. Thus, paying attention to how the construct-i-con might be organized can fundamentally influence when and in which contexts a specific grammar item is or is not taught. Additionally, a CCxG-informed syllabus for second/foreign language learners would also need to consider when and how often learners have the chance to hear, use and explicitly study the target language. Therefore, it is rather difficult to find a generally valid answer to the question as to when and how acquisition takes place in second/foreign language classrooms. Rather, it seems to be important that a language teacher's knowledge of constructions and his/her learners is extensive enough to enable him/her to make individual, professional decisions that are informed by both linguistic theory of CCxG and FLT pedagogy principles.

As far as FLT-instruction is concerned, it is important that second/foreign language teachers who want to employ a CCxG-approach in their classrooms find methods on how to support gradually emerging (re)constructional processes. Language teachers would probably need to discover and determine areas that might be particularly demanding in the second/foreign language, but they would also need to identify those underlying generalizations in the L1 that might be used productively for the acquisition of the target language. Another aspect relevant to second/foreign language instruction implies that professionals in this context would need to know how and when to apply explicit, form-focused instruction or implicit processing phases. These aspects will be discussed in the following chapter.

### **5.2.3. Grammar instruction**

The area of grammar instruction of Keck and Kim's framework for pedagogical grammar (2014: 4) involves the questions of what relevance pedagogical grammar research has for a second/foreign language teacher's classroom context, and in what way it can inform grammar instruction, i.e. grammar teaching. This chapter will, thus, try to combine all relevant insights on PCCxG instruction that scholars agree on in order to arrive at one short and practice-oriented principle that can be guiding for CCxG-informed EFL-instruction.

As already mentioned, one of Herbst's (2016: 41) basic implications that can be applied in order to considerably improve grammar instruction from a CCxG point of view comprises that foreign language learning should be based on the learning of constructions which are presented as form-meaning pairings. Additionally, Martinez-Garcia and Wulff (2012: 240) claim that the presented constructions need to reflect actual language use, which would make processes of (re)construction more efficient. Similarly, Wee (2007: 48) calls for an approach where

“grammatical properties are consistently linked to communicative goals”. On the one hand communicative approaches often seem to neglect the conscious processing of form and explicit grammar teaching and on the other hand form-focused approaches often seem to disregard communicative needs. Eventually, second/foreign language teachers seem to vary between these options, which in essence might be beneficial for students but might still often lead to a continuous delineation of form and meaning resulting in ‘grammar lessons’ and ‘speaking lessons’. CCxG offers a solution for these problems as teaching constructions combines form and meaning and rests on actual language use and, thereby, allows for both, explicit and implicit grammar teaching. Thus, a first attempt towards a general principle for a CCxG-informed grammar instruction reads as follows:

- *Productive second/foreign language grammar instruction rests on usage-based construction learning.*

Holme (2010a: 127) stresses that language teachers need to expose learners to material and as much input as possible in order to compensate for the lack of input that native speakers usually receive during first language acquisition. Further, he emphasizes the need to ensure “sufficient usage to foster entrenchment” (2010b: 362). In addition, also Gilquin (2016: 144) identifies that the amount of input learners get in the foreign language significantly influences their ability to generalize and arrive at schemas for constructions. The principle above, therefore, needs the following reformulation:

- *Productive second/foreign language grammar instruction rests on sufficient exposure to usage-based constructions.*

Further, Gilquin (2016: 145) proposes that language teachers should present input in an authentic way but without avoiding explicit instruction and presentation of constructions. This is again supported by Herbst (2016: 42) who emphasizes the importance of explicit listing of constructional structures. In concordance with Herbst (2016:42), Holme (2010b: 373) suggests using explicit instruction procedures and conscious exploration of constructions, which will help learners to use the constructions that were already implicitly entrenched through usage correctly. Relatedly, Ellis, Römer and O’Donnell (2016: 67) explain why implicit FLT, as often used in approaches such as CLT, does not suffice:

Some aspects of language, particularly as an L2 [notion of L2 here fits an FLT context], are unlearnable - or at best are acquired very slowly - from implicit processes alone. In cases where linguistic form lacks perceptual salience and so goes unnoticed by learners, or where the L2 semantic/pragmatic concepts to be mapped onto the L2 forms are unfamiliar, additional attention is necessary in order for the relevant associations to be learned.

Counting in these observations, the general principle formulated above, requires an additional reformulation:

- *Productive second/foreign language grammar instruction rests on sufficient implicit and explicit exposure to usage-based constructions.*

With regards to the relationship between first and the second/foreign language, Ellis and Cardierno (2009: 12) argue that the foreign language stands in direct competition with the student's L1, which is why CCxG-informed grammar instruction needs to identify strategies that will support students in using this competition productively and prevent interference. Similarly, Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez and Del Pilar Agustín Llach (2016: 153) point out that foreign language learners have already mastered an L1 system, which means that we cannot expect the acquisition process to be the same as with L1 users. In this context, Holme (2010a: 127) as well as Wee (2007: 29) emphasize the importance of “scaffolding”, i.e. how constructions are related to other constructions. From a PCCxG point of view, this means that foreign language teachers need to enable students to “conceptualize the new through the known” (Holme 2010b: 362) and identify which already existing L1 constructions might be used productively and which L1 areas might interfere with the new language. This will subsequently aid learners to “store constructions more efficiently in their mental constructicon and retrieve the information more rapidly” (Gilquin & De Knop 2016: 7). However, not only a contrastive analysis of L1 and the target language might be helpful, as comparisons between similar constructions in the foreign language itself might foster language learning too. Littlemore (2009: 171-173) explains that constructions which are related to each other through polysemy, subpart links or instance links should be taught together or in reference to each other as this will help the learners to systematically store the constructions. The general principle for a CCxG-approach in the EFL-classroom, thus, needs a final reformulation:

- *Productive second/foreign language grammar instruction rests on sufficient implicit and explicit exposure to usage-based constructions which are contrasted against and compared to already existing constructions.*

Of course, a one-sentence principle does not do justice to the rather expansive sets of principles and considerations the scholars mentioned above have developed. The aim of this chapter and subsequently of the formulation of this principle simply was to filter what most of these suggestions had in common and to come up with one reduced principle that could serve as a starting point for second/foreign language teachers who would like to apply a CCxG-informed grammar instruction approach in their classrooms.

Finally, the most relevant aspects of CCxG theory have now been combined with Keck and Kim's framework for pedagogical grammar (2014: 4). Figure 17 displays the adapted PCCxG framework:

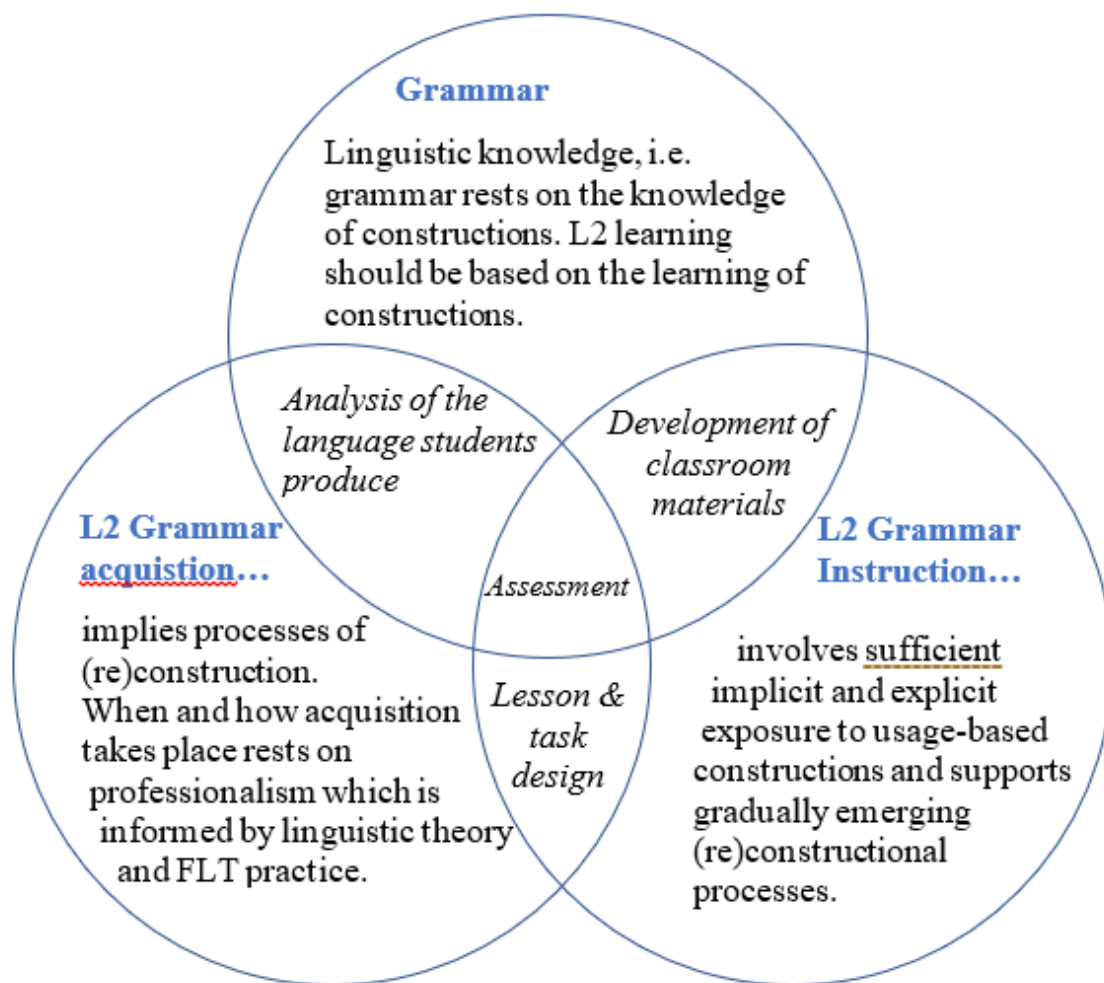


Figure 17: Framework for PCCxG based on Keck and Kim's framework for PG (2014:4)

Taking this framework as point of departure for a CCxG approach to FLT the question arises, how these PCCxG-informed principles can be put into practice and applied in the classroom. Chapter 6 will, therefore, try to give some more tangible insights into how classroom implications and applications of a PCCxG might look like and where the limits of these applications might be.

## 6. Implications and applications

This chapter will analyze how specific grammar items, i.e. expressing futurity (chapter 6.1) and using the indefinite article construction (chapter 6.2), are currently taught and presented in Austria's most popular EFL school book series for lower secondary level, *More!* 1-4 (Gerngross et al. 2018). Moreover, it will be discussed why the approaches these EFL school books use might be inefficient. Additionally, the subsequent chapters will offer some suggestions on how these grammar items could be taught to meet PCCxG-principles and provide ideas on how foreign language teachers could help their students in learning and storing constructions in an efficient and authentic way. Applying the discussed principles from the previous section, this chapter will not only examine to which extent a PCCxG approach could add to a potential improvement of current FLT-practice, but it will also address certain limitations (chapter 6.3.) a PCCxG-informed approach might entail in the Austrian EFL-classroom.

### 6.1. Example 1: teaching future reference

The first item that should be analyzed from a PCCxG perspective is what is often called the 'future tense' in EFL textbooks. However, according to standard grammars of English, e.g. *Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (Quirk et al. 1985), *Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (Huddleston & Pullum 2002) or *Cambridge Grammar of English* (Carter & McCarthy 2006) the English language has no 'future tense'. The reason for that is that there is no future ending, i.e. inflectional form for English verbs as there is for verbs in the past. English, unlike many other languages, uses different ways to refer to future time. These forms include structures such as (Carter & McCarthy 2006: 629):

- (15) We're **going to buy** a new camera. (be going to + infinitive)
- (16) She's **coming** next Thursday. (the present progressive form)
- (17) I'll be home about eight. (shall/will)
- (18) My flight **leaves** in two hours' time. (the present simple form)
- (19) The government **is to introduce** a new funding system for universities.  
(be to + infinitive)
- (20) We're **about to have** dinner. (be about to + infinitive)

As can be seen from the above examples (15) – (20), references to the future can be realized by using several different constructions, all of which can have slightly different notions of certainty. According to Carter and McCarthy (2006: 629-636), the 'be going to + infinitive'-form, as well as the 'present progressive'-form, are widely used to refer to future plans, arrangements or decisions. The 'be going to + infinitive' form is used more often in informal, spoken contexts and indicates that although a decision has been made and something will take place in the near future, the actual plans or arrangements have not yet been made (Carter & McCarthy 2006: 629-630). Using the 'present progressive'-form to refer to future plans then

suggests that such arrangements have already been made. As far as the ‘will’-form in comparison to the ‘be going to + infinitive’-form is concerned, Carter and McCarthy (2006: 631) state that both can be used to predict something on the basis of present evidence. However, the ‘be going to + infinitive’-form is usually taken when there is some actual evidence in the outside world (e.g. *You are going to burn the cake. It can already be seen.*), while the ‘will’-form is preferably used when the evidence is not as obvious (e.g. *Let me bake the cake, you’ll just burn it again!* Not actual evidence but based on experience.). But if something is absolutely certain (e.g. *Halloween will be on a Thursday in 2019.*) ‘will’ may be used again. In terms of formality Carter and McCarthy (2006: 631) state that using the ‘will’-form is basically more formal (not the contracted form) than using the ‘to be going to + infinitive’-form. The ‘present simple’-form is typically used for fixed, already scheduled events (e.g. *The bus arrives in half an hour.*) and the ‘be to + infinitive’-form is often used to refer to future contexts associated with obligation, formality or commands (e.g. *You are not to come back late.*). This brief explanation of some different possibilities to refer to the future and the various notions that come with all these forms illustrates that referring to the future in English seems to be a rather multifaceted undertaking.

However, the most popular EFL school books *More! 1-4* (Gerngross et al. 2018), which are used to teach lower secondary level students in Austria, only present a few limited ways to refer to future contexts in English. The *More!* school book series 1-4 (Gerngross et al. 2018) primarily differentiates between the use of *be going to* and *will* to express futurity. As can be seen from Material Extracts 1 and 2 (next page), the *More! 1 Student’s Book* (Gerngross et al. 2018: 93-94) starts by introducing the affirmative *be going to* form using a grammar chant and a memory game (Material Extract 1) which is then followed by an explicit grammar explanation section (Material Extract 2). Generally, it can be said that grammar chants and memory games, as presented in Material Extract 1, can be assessed as valuable from a CCxG point of view, as they cater for a higher degree of entrenchment of this particular construction. As has been discussed in chapter 3.2.4, activating a specific node iteratively, i.e. experiencing and using a specific construction repeatedly, will have an impact on how strong the cognitive representation of this item is (Barðal & Gildea 2015: 32). By using a song, which usually facilitates memorization, the school book authors add to a higher frequency which eventually has an impact on fluency and makes it easier for learners to access and use this construction (Blumenthal-Drame 2012: 68; Bybee 2013: 61). Thus, while Material Extract 1 seems to fit

PCCxG principles, the explicit grammar explanation part (Material Extract 2) seems to bear some problematic aspects.

## Grammar chant *be going to*

CD 4  
10



### 14 A chant. Listen and repeat.

What are we going to do for my birthday?  
What are we going to do?

Are we going to have lots of fun?  
Are we going to go to the zoo?  
Are we going to invite lots of kids?  
Are we going to do something new?

No, we're going to take our money.  
We're going to buy a balloon.  
We're going to see lots of stars.  
And we're going to fly to the moon.



Material Extract 1: More! 1 Student's Book (Gerngross et al. 2018: 92)

## SbX GRAMMAR

### *be going to*

Wenn du über Pläne für die Zukunft sprichst, verwendest du ***be going to***.

What ***are*** you ***going to do*** for your birthday?  
*I'm going to give John a birthday present.*  
*He's / She's going to have a party.*  
*We're going to play a game.*  
*They're going to listen to music.*

**Bildung:** Present simple von ***be*** + ***going to*** +

**Verb:** *They're going to visit their friends.*

**Beim Verb *go* kann man zwei Formen verwenden.**

**Entweder:** *We're going to go to London tomorrow.*

**Oder:** *We're going to London tomorrow.*

### Ordinal numbers

Für Aufzählungen (der erste, der zweite, usw.) verwendest du die folgenden Wörter:

<i>one</i> → <b><i>first</i></b>	<i>four</i> → <b><i>fourth</i></b>	<i>seven</i> → <b><i>seventh</i></b>	<i>ten</i> → <b><i>tenth</i></b>
<i>two</i> → <b><i>second</i></b>	<i>five</i> → <b><i>fifth</i></b>	<i>eight</i> → <b><i>eighth</i></b>	<i>eleven</i> → <b><i>eleventh</i></b>
<i>three</i> → <b><i>third</i></b>	<i>six</i> → <b><i>sixth</i></b>	<i>nine</i> → <b><i>ninth</i></b>	<i>twelve</i> → <b><i>twelfth</i></b>

Ordnungszahlen über 20 bildest du nach dem gleichen Prinzip:

21. → ***twenty-first*** 32. → ***thirty-second*** 43. → ***forty-third*** 54. → ***fifty-fourth*** (etc.)

### Time prepositions

Du verwendest unterschiedliche Präpositionen (Vorwörter), um über Tage, das Datum und die Uhrzeit zu sprechen.

My birthday is ***on*** February 12<sup>th</sup> / May 28<sup>th</sup> / September 5<sup>th</sup> (etc.).  
The concert's ***on*** Thursday, July 15<sup>th</sup>.  
My sister's birthday is ***in*** December / April / June (etc.).  
The film starts ***at*** 7 o'clock / half past eight / 6:45 (etc.).  
I have Maths ***in*** the morning / the afternoon.  
We go to bed late ***at*** night.



Material Extract 2: More! 1 Student's Book (Gerngross et al. 2018: 93)

First of all, students are presented with a rule when to use *be going to*, which says that they should use this form when talking about plans for the future. The problem here is that this explanation is incomplete or probably misleading, as sentences such as in (21) would not be accurate anymore because they do not express any future plans:

(21) Look at that car! It is going to crash into the tree!

Secondly, it is stated in the book that there are two different possibilities to use *be going to* with the verb *go*. It is either used ‘normally’ as in (22), following the pattern [be going to + V] or the verb *go* is omitted as in (23):

(22) We’re going to go to London tomorrow.

(23) We’re going to London tomorrow.

Assuming that a [be going to + V] construction implies references to the future, example (22) can definitely be considered an instance of this construction. However, from a CCxG perspective example (23) cannot be considered an instance of this construction. The reason for that is that (23) is an example of the present progressive form; what adds the notion of future to this construction is the adverb ‘tomorrow’. The same applies to example (16) *She is coming next Thursday* from above. It is not the [be + Ving] construction that is generally used to express futurity, rather it is the structure of this particular sentence with the adverbial addition *next Thursday* that sets everything in a future context. Thus, we could assume that a construction such as [be + Ving + ADV<sub>future time</sub>]<sup>5</sup> is related to the [be+Ving] construction through a horizontal link and that the presence or absence of the adverb serves as a cue as to when to use this particular construction (Van de Velde 2014: 149-157). In a CCxG-informed classroom this construction and subsequently this additional way to refer to future time would, therefore, probably be taught together with the present progressive form. Interestingly, the present progressive is introduced just one unit before the *be going to* form is presented (cf. More! 1 Student’s Book, Genrgross et. al 2018: 86).

Another problematic aspect of how the *be going to* form is presented in the school book is related to frequency of occurrence. Before the grammar chant and the grammar section, the school book uses the *be going to* form five times in a reading exercise which is directly preceding the grammar chant (More! 1 Student’s Book Genrgross et al. 2018: 90-91). The *be going to* form is neither used in the units preceding (More! 1 Student’s Book Genrgross et al. 2018: 8-87) or the units following (More! 1 Student’s Book Genrgross et al. 2018: 96-123).

As has been discussed in chapters 3.2.4. and 4.2.2.1 frequency of occurrence is a highly determining factor for construction learning. Especially, type frequency, i.e. that a construction

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<sup>5</sup> The adverb in this construction could also have initial position, such as in *Tomorrow, we are going to London*.



occurs rather frequently in a language use, is influencing the process of schematization and ensuring that the abstract representation of a construction is strengthened with every use (Bybee & Thompson 2000 echoed by Divjak & Caldwell-Harris 2015: 55). Not using a newly introduced form as often as possible, thus, contradicts the usage-based policy of CCxG and hinders the extraction process that learners need to store schemas (Divjak & Caldwell-Harris 2015: 53).

Moreover, the *More! 1 Workbook* (Gerngross et al 2018), i.e. the student's exercise book for respective units, presents another questionable feature. The exercises are strictly split up into vocabulary and grammar exercises, which perpetuates a grammar-lexis dichotomy and does not reflect that every lexical pattern entails some grammatical information and vice versa. The *More! 1 Workbook* (Gerngross et al 2018: 121-122) involves four 'grammar exercises', which, from a PCCxG point of view, seem to be useful as they intent to help learners to memorize the underlying schema of the *be going to* form by using activities that aim at sentence structure, e.g. Material Extract 3:

### More Grammar *be going to*

#### 17 Write the words in the correct order to make sentences.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 going / help / is / John / to / you.<br><i>John is going to help you.</i> ..... | 4 bike! / fall off / to / are / you / going / your<br>..... |
| 2 email. / write / are / to / we / going / an<br>.....                            | 5 going / is / angry. / be / Sara / to<br>.....             |
| 3 going / I / home / to / am / late. / come<br>.....                              | 6 at eight. / going / they / to / are / arrive<br>.....     |

Material Extract 3: *More! 1 Workbook* (Gerngross et al. 2018: 121)

In Material Extract 3 students are asked to form sentences by finding the correct order of the words. On the one hand, such an activity seems valuable as the construction is used several times and students consciously need to focus on the pattern of the construction, which might foster memorization. On the other hand, it seems somewhat problematic that the workbook only offers four of such 'grammar' activities *More! 1 Workbook* (Gerngross et al 2018: 121-122) to exercise the *be going to* construction. There are no activities in this particular unit that might create the actual necessity to utter or use this construction in a communicative context. The communicative need to understand and use a particular construction is, however, a highly

influential factor when it comes to construction learning (Ellis, Römer & O'Donnell (2016: 47-48).

Additionally, the students are only presented with the positive form of *be going to* in this year and all exercises from the workbook (More! 1, Workbook, Gerngross et al. 2018: 121-122) aim at affirmative *be going to*-sentences. The reason for that seems somewhat inexplicable as the school book actually deals with different forms of negations in English long before *be going to* is introduced (More! 1 Student's Book, Gerngross et al. 2018: Unit 5, 6, 7 or 8). The negative form of *be going to* is then introduced in the second year. Additionally, students are presented with *might* or *might not* to talk about possible events or actions occurring in the future (Material Extract 4).

SbX

GRAMMAR

**going to (negative)**

Du verwendest **going to**, wenn du etwas planst oder beabsichtigst, etwas zu tun. Beim Verb **go** verwendest du normalerweise kein **going to**. Also: **I'm going to a party.**

So bildest du die Verneinung mit **going to**:  
negative of **be + going to + base form of the verb.**

*I'm **not going to play** tennis tomorrow.*

*You **aren't going to like** the film.*

*He/She **isn't going to do** the shopping.*

*It **isn't going to rain** this afternoon.*

*We **aren't going to do** our homework.*

*They **aren't going to play** volleyball on Sunday.*

**might – might not**

Wenn du sagen willst, dass etwas möglicherweise (nicht) eintreten wird, verwendest du:  
**might (not) + base form of the verb.**

*I **might go** to the party. I'm not sure.*

*It **might rain**, so take a coat.*

*I **might not sleep** well.*

Material Extract 4: More! 2 Student's Book (Gerngross et al. 2018: 61)

The rules that are mentioned in Material Extract 2 are repeated here and *be going to + go* is again presented as a 'special case'. Moreover, the bottom of Material Extract 4 tells the learners to use [*might (not) + V<sub>base</sub>*], "if they want to express that something could (not) probably happen in the future" (More! 2 Student's Book, Gerngross et al. 2018: 61).

There are, however, contexts in which [might (not) + V<sub>base</sub>] can be used without implying futurity, e.g.:

(24) Steven **might be** right.

(25) He **might not be** the best driver, but he still got his driver's license

Example (24) does not really refer to the future, but it indicates vagueness and possibility, stating that there is a possibility that something a person said in the past, for example, could be true. Expressions such as in (25) are usually used to express acceptance of a certain fact or a situation in the present, while contrasting this fact with something that seems more relevant in this particular situation. Thus, the way learners are presented with the use of *might* in this school book seems somewhat limited. It is questionable, if EFL-learners using this book would be able to understand or produce sentences as in (24) or (25) correctly.

On a positive note, the workbook exercises seem to have a greater communicative aspect in the second year. Although there is a strict division between vocabulary and grammar again, both the affirmative and the negative *be going to* form are used throughout the whole workbook unit (More! 2 Workbook Gerngross et al. 2018: 60). For example, students are asked to complete dialogues that use the *be going to* form or to create dialogues using this particular form themselves. However, the quality of the competition task varies. For example, exercises such as in Material Extract 5 seem to be valuable as they aim at using the whole construction within a dialogue context:

**A Read the dialogues and complete with the phrases from the box.**

not going to look after  
I'm going to phone her then

I only know what I'm not going to do  
Is she not going to be

**DIALOGUE 1**

**Bob** What are your plans for the weekend?

**Sally** I don't know. <sup>1</sup>.....  
.....

**Bob** And what's that?

**Sally** I'm not going to do anything for school. And I'm <sup>2</sup>.....  
..... my  
little sister.

**DIALOGUE 2**

**Ruth** Is Sophie going to be at the party?

**Tim** I don't know.

**Ruth** What do you mean? <sup>3</sup>.....  
.....  
at YOUR birthday party?

**Tim** I really don't know.

**Ruth** <sup>4</sup>.....  
..... Is that OK?

**Tim** OK.


Material Extract 5: More! 2 Workbook (Gerngross et al. 2018: 58)

However, exercises such as in Material Extract 6 seem rather ineffective:

**3 Complete the dialogue with the words in the box.**

shopping  
tidy  
tired  
isn't  
going  
to

<b>Cathy</b>	Dad, can Olivia and I go to the party tonight?	<b>Dad</b>	So you can help me do the 3 .....
<b>Dad</b>	What does your mum think?	<b>Olivia</b>	Ha, ha.
<b>James</b>	She doesn't know.	<b>Dad</b>	And you have to take the rubbish out*.
<b>Olivia</b>	We're 1 ..... to ask her when she gets home.	<b>Olivia</b>	Dad!
<b>Dad</b>	Well. OK, but you have to tidy the house first.	<b>James</b>	It's going 4 ..... be a nice quiet afternoon for me.
<b>Cathy</b>	What? All of it?	<b>Dad</b>	No, it 5 ..... ! You're going to do the washing-up*.
<b>Dad</b>	Well, you can both start with the living room.	<b>Olivia</b>	Ha, ha.
<b>Olivia</b>	The living room!	<b>Dad</b>	So – come on, everyone. Let's get



Material Extract 6: *More! 2 Workbook* (Gerngross et al. 2018: 56), red arrow added

Due to spatial reasons, Material Extract 6 only includes parts of the whole activity but the whole activity is not necessary to understand the problematics of this exercise. Students are asked to complete the dialogue with the words in the blue box on the left side and the correct word for gap number four (red arrow) would be *to*. Now, it is highly questionable what the sense or reason for this activity is. The students are not asked to use the whole *be going to* construction but should only fill in one little item that taken out of the construction can have other functions or compositional meanings. The question that remains is how can EFL learners benefit from filling in the word *to* in this dialogue.

Now, if teachers follow the progression of this school book series, students are already learning English for almost two years, when they are introduced to what is called the ‘will-future’ (Material Extract 7, next page). From a usage-based perspective, this absolutely does not make sense as *will* is - by far - more frequently used than *going to* to express futurity. This can be shown by using the results of different corpora. For example, a search of the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) has shown that *will* has 1.118.515 entries while *going to* has 490.134 entries (COCA Davies 2008). A search of the *British National Corpus* displays similar results with 248.439 entries for *will* and only 32.557 entries for *going to* (BNC Davies 2004). Generally, learners use such statistical properties to determine which patterns and schemas are extracted and stored and how strong they are represented (Divjak & Caldwell-Harris 2015: 53). Thus, the progression and the emphasis that is put on the *going to*-form in the EFL school books *More! 1-4* (Gerngross et al. 2018) completely contradicts the usage-based approach and does not reflect the actual frequency of occurrence of these two forms.



Mithilfe der **will-future** drückst du Erwartungen, Vermutungen und Hoffnungen für die Zukunft aus:

We **will meet** again. (We'll **meet** again.)

I **will not go** away for a very long time. (I **won't go** away for a very long time.)

Du verwendest die **will-future** auch dann, wenn du etwas vorhersagen willst:

Some heavy rain **will come** in from Northern Scotland.

The south of England **will have** quite a lot of fog near the coast.

The sun **won't come** out for another few days.

Du verwendest die **will-future** auch dann, wenn du dich spontan entschließt oder spontan versprichst, etwas zu tun:

Maybe **I'll try** sailing, too.

**I'll help** you with your homework tonight.



**Complete with 'I / will / won't.**

Bildung: person + <sup>1</sup>.....(not) + base form of the verb

Kurzformen: I will = I <sup>2</sup>.....

I will not = I <sup>3</sup>.....



Material Extract 7: More! 2 Student's Book (Gerngross et al. 2018: 119)

Another problematic aspect of how the 'Will-for-Future'-construction is presented in Material Extract 7 is the term 'will-future'. Naming one of many ways to refer to future time the 'will-future' suggests that a new tense is introduced, which is actually misleading because, unlike in other languages, there is no 'future tense' in English. What is problematic here, is that some learners might be at risk of interfering crosslinguistic transfers between their L1 and the target language English. While German, for example, uses a rather similar way to refer to the future [*werden* + *V<sub>base</sub>*], French [*V<sub>base</sub>* + *-ai/ -as/ -a/ +ons ...*] or Turkish [*V<sub>base</sub>* + *-(y)ecek / -(y)acak*] have own inflectional forms for expressing futurity. Thus, learners with German as their L1 will probably have little difficulties with studying the 'future tense' as presented in the textbook. However, learners with French or Turkish as their L1 might be confused and struggle to use this construction as they are used to have an own inflectional ending for the future from their L1 and from other English tenses such as the past tense. In such cases PCCxG perspectives on second/foreign language learning (e.g. Ellis 2013: 376) suggest that FLT-professionals need to cater for an additional explicit focus on form to facilitate the abstraction process. In that context, Ellis, Römer and O'Donnell (2016:67), state that "some aspects of language, particularly as an L2 are unlearnable [...] from implicit processes alone" and need explicit exploration, especially in cases where the new form is unfamiliar.



Moreover, in Material Extract 7 the school book authors state that the ‘will-future’ is used to express “expectations, presumptions and hopes”, “predictions” as well as “spontaneous decisions and promises” (More! 2 Student’s Book, Gerngross et al. 2018: 119). If a student would now want to know or revise on possible different notions of *be going to* as a way to refer to future, s/he might consult the grammar overview section at the end of the school book where the ‘future tenses’ are explained (Material Extract 8). Here, *be going to* and *will* are subsumed under the heading “FUTURE TENSE”, which seems, as already mentioned, inappropriate, as there is no inflectional form in English that marks a future tense and there are multiple ways to refer to future time in English (Herbst 2016: 26). Moreover, the explanations seem rather confusing, as the explanation below the “*going to* – future” only states how to build this tense, while the explanation below the ‘*will*-future’ states when to use this tense, i.e. “if you want to predict or promise something”. Apart from the fact that this explanation is incomplete and deviates from what has been said in Material Extract 4, the confusion reaches its peak, when we realize that the school book authors differentiate between a ‘future tense’ (Material Extract 8) and the modal verb *will* (Material Extract 9, next page):

## FUTURE TENSE

### *going to*-future (Zukunft mit *going to*)

Die *going to*-future wird mit einer Form von **be** und **going to** und der Grundform des Vollverbs gebildet.

Positive Aussagen		Negative Aussagen		Fragen		Kurzantworten
I'm	going to play football.	I'm not	going to play football.	Am I / Aren't I	going to play football?	Yes, I am. / No, I'm not.
You're		You aren't (You're not)		Are/Aren't you		Yes, you are. / No, you aren't (you're not).
He's		He isn't (He's not)		Is/Isn't he		Yes, he is. / No, he isn't (he's not).
She's		She isn't (She's not)		Is/Isn't she		Yes, she is. / No, she isn't (she's not).
We're		We aren't (We're not)		Are/Aren't we		Yes, we are. / No, we aren't (we're not).
You're		You aren't (You're not)		Are/Aren't you		Yes, you are. / No, you aren't (you're not).
They're		They aren't (They're not)		Are/Aren't they		Yes, they are. / No, they aren't (they're not).

### *will*-future

Die *will*-future verwendest du, wenn du etwas vorhersagen möchtest oder versprichst.

Positive Aussagen	Negative Aussagen	Fragen	Kurzantworten	
I'll (I will) see you tomorrow.	I won't (will not) see you tomorrow.	Will I see you tomorrow?	Yes, I will.	No, I won't (will not).
You'll (You will) see me tomorrow.	You won't (will not) see me tomorrow.	Will you see me tomorrow?	Yes, you will.	No, you won't (will not).
He'll (He will) see her tomorrow.	He won't (will not) see her tomorrow.	Will he see her tomorrow?	Yes, he will.	No, he won't (will not).
She'll (She will) see him tomorrow.	She won't (will not) see him tomorrow.	Will she see him tomorrow?	Yes, she will.	No, she won't (will not).
It'll (It will) rain tomorrow.	It won't (will not) rain tomorrow.	Will it rain tomorrow?	Yes, it will.	No, it won't (will not).
We'll (We will) see you tomorrow.	We won't (will not) see you tomorrow.	Will we see you tomorrow?	Yes, we will.	No, we won't (will not).
You'll (You will) see me tomorrow.	You won't (will not) see me tomorrow.	Will you see me tomorrow?	Yes, you will.	No, you won't (will not).
They'll (They will) see you tomorrow.	They won't (will not) see you tomorrow.	Will they see you tomorrow?	Yes, they will.	No, they won't (will not).

Material Extract 8: More! 2 Student’s Book (Gerngross et al. 2018: 145)

## Modal verbs (Modalverben)

Die wichtigsten Modalverben sind **should / shouldn't, have to / don't have to, might / might not, must / mustn't, can / can't, could / couldn't, will / won't, would / wouldn't, shall / shall not**, and **may / may not**.

I	can/can't (cannot)	come today.	I	have to/don't have to	go to school.	
You			You			
He			He	has to/doesn't have to		
She			She			
It			should/shouldn't	It		have to/don't have to
We			might/might not (mightn't)	We		
You				You		
They	They					

Material Extract 9: More! 2 Student's Book (Gerngross et al. 2018: 146)

From a linguistic point of view, treating *will* in the 'will-future' and the modal verb *will* as grammatically different categories seems to be, as Herbst (2016: 26) states, "an unnecessary and unhelpful complication of the linguistic facts". Nevertheless, the More! school book series seems to treat [will + V<sub>base</sub>] and the modal *will* as two different phenomena. However, if we look at the sentences presented in the blue table in Material Extract 6 and insert *will* instead (e.g. *I will come today. / I will go to school.*) the future time reference is still obvious. Thus, treating the modal *will* as a distinct category from the construction that uses *will* to express futurity does not seem reasonable.

As far as the workbook activities are concerned, the unit for the will-for-future construction (More! 2 Workbook Gerngross et. al 2018: 114-121), again, displays a division between grammar and vocabulary as well as activities that are aiming at structure and the use of this construction in different contexts. However, there is one activity in the respective unit that can be seen rather often in traditional grammar exercises, i.e. a fill-exercise where only the infinitive form is used (Material Extract 10):

## Essential Grammar will-future

8

Complete the sentences with the missing verbs.

rain  
do  
drive  
meet  
finish  
help  
go  
tell

- Here. I'll ..... you with your homework.
- The weather's not good. I think it'll ..... later.
- One day, I'll ..... around in a Ferrari. One day!
- I'll ..... you outside the cinema at 8 p.m., OK?
- I'm feeling tired. I think I'll ..... to bed.
- I'm bored. I won't ..... any more work tonight.
- It's a secret. Promise you won't ..... anybody.
- It's a long job. We won't ..... before midnight.

Material Extract 10: More! 2 Workbook (Gerngross et al. 2018: 117)

As can be seen from Material Extract 10 above, the students are asked to fill in infinitive forms in sentences where parts of the will-for-future construction are already given. What the students have to do now is to determine the meaning of the infinitives and find out which sentence fits this meaning best. The activity does not tell anything about the will-for-future construction and does not even make the learners use the construction. However, it is titled with “Essential Grammar *will-future*”, which does indicate that the school book authors’ intention for this activity was to make students exercise the use of the will-for-future construction. Overall, it can be said that the beneficial aspect of this activity seems to be absent.

Following the course of the More! school book series (Gerngross et al. 2018), the learners revise on the *be going to* form at the end of their third year of learning English (Material Extract 11).


SbX

GRAMMAR

*be going to* (Revision)

Match the examples and the rules. Write 1, 2 or 3.

- 1 Du verwendest *be going to*, wenn du geplante zukünftige Handlungen ausdrücken willst.
- 2 Du verwendest *be going to*, um Fragen über geplante zukünftige Handlungen zu stellen.
- 3 Du verwendest *be going to*, um auszudrücken, dass etwas mit größter Wahrscheinlichkeit eintreten wird.



☐ *The car's out of control – it's **going to crash**.*  
*Look at all those clouds – it's **going to rain**.*

☐ *I'm **going to dig** for diamonds tomorrow.*  
*Dad's **going to take** me to the Okavango Delta for 6 days.*  
*I'm **not going to buy** anything that puts animals in danger.*

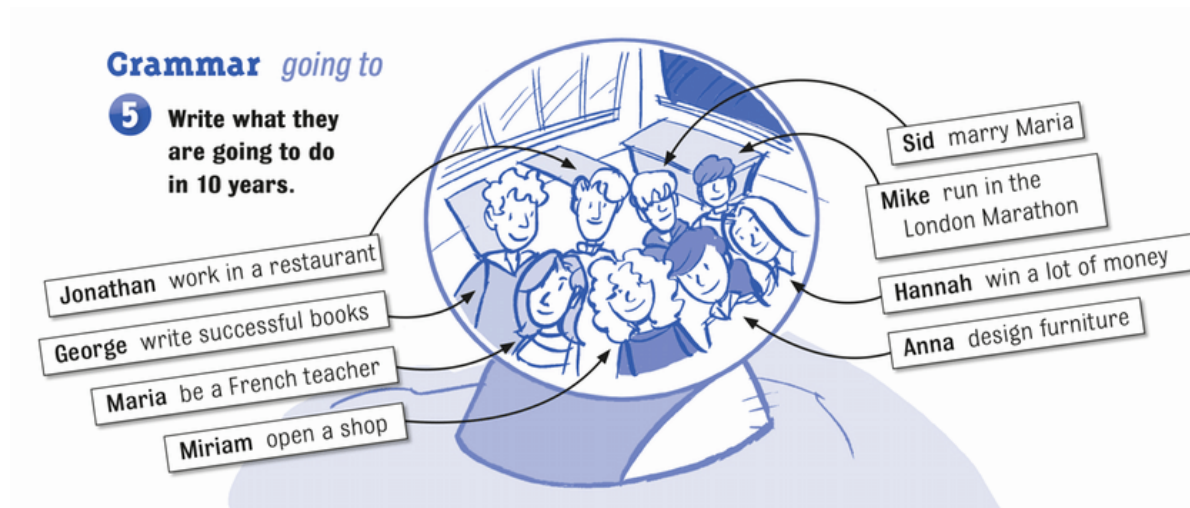
☐ *Are you **going to call** the police?*  
*Is he **going to shoot** the leopard?*

Material Extract 11: More! 3 Student's Book Enriched Course (Gerngross et al. 2018: 122)

In contrast to their first and second year, the students are presented with more detailed rules on when to use the *be going to* form for future references. Material Extract 11 states that this form is used to (1) express “planned future actions”, (2) to ask about “planned future actions” and (3) to express “that something will most probably happen”. Notice that Material Extract 7 which introduced the ‘will-future’ mentions similar situations in which *will* should be used to express “presumptions, predictions or decisions”.



In that context students might ask themselves why the following exercise (Material Extract 12) from their workbook (Gerngross et al. 2018: 109) only uses the *be going to* form and not the will-for-future construction:



Material Extract 12: More! 3 Workbook Enriched Course (Gerngross et al. 2018: 122)

The activity shows a fortune crystal ball, which is clearly activating contexts of fortune telling and predictions. Now, the question arises why this particular activity is connected to using the *be going to*-form, if the book says that *will* is used for making predictions. The school book authors could have indicated, if using *will* in the example sentences (e.g. *Miriam is going to open a shop* vs. *Miriam will open a shop*) from the activity might work too or if this would create a different meaning.

With the intent to clarify or revise the ‘future tenses’, a student might again refer to the grammar overview section in the third-year school book and s/he might be surprised to find yet another way to refer to the future tense, which has not been mentioned so far (Material Extract 12, page 84). The explanation says that the present continuous form is used “as a future tense for plans or arrangements”. This way of referring to the future has never been discussed in the school book units and it remains highly questionable, why it is only presented in the grammar overview section in the third year, when it would have been more suitable to introduce this way of referring to the future in the first year, after discussing, what was then called ‘the present progressive’. Moreover, as we have seen from various Material Extracts so far, plans and arrangements seem to be part of both the ‘*be going to* – future’ and the ‘*will* – future’. Thus, it does not seem too far-fetched to state that these apparently inadequate descriptions on how to refer to future time in English might be too confusing for approximately 13-year-old EFL-learners.

## FUTURE TENSE

### going to-future (Zukunft mit going to)

Die *going to-future* wird mit einer Form von **be** und **going to** und der Grundform des Vollverbs gebildet.

Positive Aussage		Negative Aussage		Fragen		Kurzantworten
I'm	going to play football.	I'm not	going to play football.	Am I / Am I not	going to play football?	Yes, I <b>am</b> . / No I'm <b>not</b> .
You're		You <b>aren't</b> (You're not)		Are / Aren't you		Yes, you <b>are</b> . / No, you <b>aren't</b> (you're not).
He's		He <b>isn't</b> (He's not)		Is / Isn't he		Yes, he <b>is</b> . / No, he <b>isn't</b> (he's not).
She's		She <b>isn't</b> (She's not)		Is / Isn't she		Yes, she <b>is</b> . / No, she <b>isn't</b> (she's not).
We're		We <b>aren't</b> (We're not)		Are / Aren't we		Yes, we <b>are</b> . / No, we <b>aren't</b> (we're not).
You're		You <b>aren't</b> (You're not)		Are / Aren't you		Yes, you <b>are</b> . / No, you <b>aren't</b> (you're not).
They're		They <b>aren't</b> (They're not)		Are / Aren't they		Yes, they <b>are</b> . / No, they <b>aren't</b> (they're not).

Die *going to-future* verwendest du, wenn du eine feste Absicht ausdrücken möchtest oder wenn etwas unmittelbar bevorsteht.

We're **going to** visit my uncle.

Look! It's **going to** rain.

### will-future

Die *will-future* verwendest du, wenn du etwas vorhersagen möchtest oder versprichst.

Positive Aussagen	Negative Aussagen	Fragen	Kurzantworten	
I'll (I <b>will</b> ) see you tomorrow.	I <b>won't</b> (will not) see you tomorrow.	Will I see you tomorrow?	Yes, I <b>will</b> .	No, I <b>won't</b> (will not).
You'll (You <b>will</b> ) see me tomorrow.	You <b>won't</b> (will not) see me tomorrow.	Will you see me tomorrow?	Yes, you <b>will</b> .	No, you <b>won't</b> (will not).
He'll (He <b>will</b> ) see her tomorrow.	He <b>won't</b> (will not) see her tomorrow.	Will he see her tomorrow?	Yes, he <b>will</b> .	No, he <b>won't</b> (will not).
She'll (She <b>will</b> ) see him tomorrow.	She <b>won't</b> (will not) see him tomorrow.	Will she see him tomorrow?	Yes, she <b>will</b> .	No, she <b>won't</b> (will not).
It'll (It <b>will</b> ) rain tomorrow.	It <b>won't</b> (will not) rain tomorrow.	Will it rain tomorrow?	Yes, it <b>will</b> .	No, it <b>won't</b> (will not).
We'll (We <b>will</b> ) see you tomorrow.	We <b>won't</b> (will not) see you tomorrow.	Will we see you tomorrow?	Yes, we <b>will</b> .	No, we <b>won't</b> (will not).
You'll (You <b>will</b> ) see us tomorrow.	You <b>won't</b> (will not) see us tomorrow.	Will you see us tomorrow?	Yes, you <b>will</b> .	No, you <b>won't</b> (will not).
They'll (They <b>will</b> ) see you tomorrow.	They <b>won't</b> (will not) see you tomorrow.	Will they see you tomorrow?	Yes, they <b>will</b> .	No, they <b>won't</b> (will not).

### Present continuous for future

Das *present continuous* verwendest du als Zukunftsform, wenn ein Plan oder eine Vereinbarung gemacht worden ist.

We're **leaving** for London tomorrow.

Material Extract 13: More! 3 Student's Book (Gerngross et al. 2018: 154)

Finally, in the middle of their fourth year of learning English, students are presented with a final form used to express futurity, i.e. ‘present simple for future’ (Material Extract 14):



## Grammar

### Present simple for future

Du verwendest oft das *present simple* für Handlungen, die in der Zukunft stattfinden, wenn etwas fest vereinbart ist (Fahrpläne, Flugpläne, usw.). Zum Beispiel:

We **leave** London at about 9 p.m. on Friday and **arrive** in Perth at 00.30 on Sunday.

Our plane to Alice Springs **leaves** at 8.30 tomorrow.

Today we **say** goodbye to Broome in the early afternoon and **fly** to Sydney.



The train leaves at eight.  
Bruce is worried he hasn't got  
time for a cup of tea.

Material Extract 14: *More! 4 Student's Book* (Gerngross et al. 2018:79)

In Material Extract 14 students are informed that the present simple form is often used for future actions that are already arranged for a certain time (e.g. flight plans etc.). However, as already mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Carter and McCarthy (2006: 631) state that *will* may be used if something is absolutely certain (e.g. *Halloween will be on a Thursday in 2019*). Similar to the [be + Ving + ADV<sub>future time</sub>]-construction discussed before, it is not the present simple tense that adds the notion of futurity, but it is rather the whole construction together with a specific time reference that makes the future time reference obvious. If a student using the *More! 4* school book series would now want to revise on the possible ways to refer to future time in English in a grammar overview section, s/he would probably be disappointed as there is none. This, too, seems somewhat inexplicable as the fourth and thereby last year of lower secondary school in Austria is usually the stage where students learn new grammar items. Upper secondary levels usually work on revising and strengthening the student's grammatical competences.

The questions that remain now are: Would students using this school book deem some of the perfectly fine sentences in (23) – (28) incorrect? Would they be able to produce such sentences? Would they understand what native speakers mean, when they say something like *The company is to introduce a new compliance policy* in professional contexts? Although it is not possible to answer these questions in this thesis, the mere fact that such questions need to be posed, makes Herbst's judgement (2016: 32) about the state of FLT as “rotten” more understandable. There are many other grammatical topics which support this view. For example, Herbst (2016: 22–32) provides more examples on the confusing state of grammar teaching addressing grammar topics such as the distinction between participles and gerunds, prepositions, conjunctions,

adverbs or the mix of form and function. A more detailed exploration of these topics would exceed the scope of this thesis. However, this brief account of how most Austrian EFL-learners at lower secondary level learn to refer to future time has already shown that English grammar is often presented unnecessarily confusing and that it is probably still strongly influenced by old grammatical traditions based on the teaching of Latin (Herbst 2016: 25). In this context, Pullum (2009: 255) appropriately states that “English grammar as presented to schoolchildren (...) is in a state resembling what biology might be like if teachers had paid no attention at all to *On the Origin of Species* (1859)”. Pullum’s judgement seems staggering but approximately ten years later the state of English grammar teaching in FLT contexts seems to be at a similar level. The question arises as to how this situation could be changed by applying a PCCxG-approach.

As far as teaching future reference in EFL-contexts is concerned, a first step towards a more authentic and efficient second/foreign language learning would be to stop using the terms ‘future tense’, ‘will-future’ or ‘going to-future’. As has been discussed, using such terms is misleading as the English language offers several more options to expressing futurity. Following Principle V from chapter 5.1., it would be much more valuable to refer to constructions, e.g. will-for-future construction. Teaching within the framework of constructions would not only make grammar terminology more relatable, it would also assure that “teaching grammar is about teaching the rules through which a meaning governs form” (Holme 2010a: 130). For example, when teaching the will-for-future construction (Figure 5), the form-meaning assembly could be pedagogically appropriated (Figure 18) to showcase that this construction is partially schematic and partially lexically specified and can be used to say, for example, that something is planned in the future:

### ‘Will-for-future’-Construction

Form	SUBJ + will + V + OBJ/details
Meaning	If you want to say that something will happen in the future and it is planned, you can use the will-for-future construction.
Example	Selina will be in Paris next Monday.

Figure 18: Pedagogically appropriated form-meaning assembly for the will-for-future construction

Figure 18 does not only display which parts of the construction are schematic and which parts are filled but it also indicates the communicative function of this construction by explaining the meaning and giving an example (Herbst 2016: 42). Moreover, it visually links the formal pattern

with actual examples through colors making it easier to understand the link between form and function, which accords to Principle III in chapter 5.1.

A next step towards a PCCxG-informed way of teaching how to express futurity, would be to adapt the school books progression to actual language usage. This means that if ‘will’ is much more frequent than ‘going-to’, then the will-for-future construction should also be presented first and not vice versa as it has been done in the *More! 1-4* school book series (Gerngross et al. 2018). Additionally, school book authors would need to take collocational preferences based on corpus linguistic analyses of specific constructions into account in order to cater for authentic and efficient second/foreign language learning. As has been discussed in chapter 3.4.2, *will* occurs more frequently with verbs that are non-agentive, durative, and low in transitivity (e.g. *find, receive, hold, see, know,...*), while *be going to* occurs more often with verbs that are agentive, punctual, and high in transitivity (e.g. *say, do, talk, win, use,...*) (Gries & Stefanowitsch 2004: 114). Moreover, chapter 4.1.1.1 has explained that frequency and collocation chunking are highly important determinants for construction learning (Ellis, Römer & O’Donnell 2016: 46-47). It would, thus, seem reasonable to present input that reflects these frequent collocational preferences in an EFL school book. However, the *More! 1-4* school book series (Gerngross et al. 2018) does not seem to include these preferences as a review of Material Extracts 1 to 13 shows. For example, the school book authors use the verbs *do* or *see* both with *be going to* and *will*. Sentences such as *We are going to see lots of stars* (Material Extract 1) or *I won’t do any more work tonight* (Material Extract 10) do not seem to foster construction learning. Therefore, it is imperative that school book authors writing texts or example sentences for the school book exercises take into account that some schematic slots in specific constructions are filled more often with particular lexemes than others (Gries & Stefanowitsch 2004: 97-129).

Another way to do the usage-based character of second/foreign language learning more justice would be to offer enough occasions to actually use and encounter the construction that is being taught. As has been discussed in chapters 5.1 and 5.2.3, learners need to be exposed and use constructions as often as possible in order to ensure entrenchment and foster the process of generalization. Thus, it seems highly problematic that the *More! 1* school book authors (Gerngross et al. 2018), for example, do not deem it necessary to actually make students use the *be going to* form in the following units after it has been introduced. As frequency is a key factor to construction learning, school book authors should present activities that create the communicative need to use specific constructions repeatedly. Moreover, if school book authors design activities that aim at using a particular construction, they need to ensure that the learners

actually use the whole construction within these activities. Fill-in exercises that only aim at infinitives or smaller parts of a construction go against the nature of construction learning and do not tell students anything about the form or the meaning of a particular construction.

Another important aspect when it comes to PCCxG-informed teaching of future reference is that school books need to actually discuss the various notions of meaning that come along the different possibilities to express futurity. For example, stating that *will* is used to make predictions is a highly general and simplified explanation (e.g. Material Extract 13), especially if the *be going to* form is then used in the form of a fortune telling activity (Material Extract 12). Such an example clearly shows that the composition of explanations and exercises related to future reference in the *More! 1-4* school book series (Gerengross et al. 2018) seems to be unnecessarily confusing. A more understandable way to explain when to use which form would be to base explanations on standard grammars of English (e.g. Carter & McCarthy 2006) and adapt these for pedagogical purposes. For instance, at the beginning of this chapter it has been explained that both *will* and the *be going to* form can be used to make predictions (Carter & McCarthy 2006: 631) based on different degrees of evidence. These explanations could be appropriated to learner's needs using a substitution table as Holme (2010a: 126) suggests. An example of such a table could look as follows:

### Making predictions...

Meaning	Form	Examples
There is some evidence that something is going to happen. <b>The evidence is obvious.</b>	SUBJ + be going to + Vbase	<i>You are going to burn the cake.</i> <b>It can already be seen</b> that the baking color is already quite dark.
There is some evidence that something is going to happen. <b>The evidence is NOT obvious.</b>	SUBJ + will + Vbase	<i>Let me bake the cake, you'll burn it again!</i> There is no actual evidence, but the prediction is <b>based on experience</b> . The person has already burnt a cake in the past.
There is <b>certain, scientific evidence</b> that something will happen.	SUBJ + will + Vbase	Halloween will be on a Thursday in 2019. A calendar is based on an <b>ordinal system</b> to organize dates.

Figure 19: Substitution table for expressing future predictions

Of course, this table is by far not complete and a lot of question remain open. For example, Material Extract 10 entails the sentences *The weather's not good. I think it'll rain later* while Material Extract 11 contains the sentence *Look at all the clouds – it's going to rain*. Now both examples seem to be based on visible evidence, which could make students question the explanation from the table above. However, the explanation above still seems less confusing than an oversimplified generalization such as 'will is used for predictions' which is preceded by an activity that makes prediction while using the *be going to* form.

Overall, it can be said that teaching and learning how to express futurity in an EFL-context is a rather multifaceted topic. As has been shown throughout this chapter, the way the *More! 1-4* school book series (Gerngross et al. 2018) approaches teaching future reference does not seem to be ideal. Using PCCxG-informed techniques to discuss the various forms and notions that come along the different possibilities that the English language offers to refer to future time might be one way to make EFL-teaching in this context more authentic.

## 6.2. Example 2: teaching the indefinite article

The second item that should be analyzed from a PCCxG perspective is what is the 'Indefinite Article'-construction  $[[a_c/an_v] + [N_{c/b}]]$ . The 'Indefinite Article'-construction consists of a fixed part, i.e.  $[a_c/an_v]$  and a substitutable entity, i.e. a countable, bound noun (Holme 2010a: 118). Depending on whether the noun acoustically starts with a consonant or a vowel  $[a_c]$  or  $[an_v]$  is used respectively. A possible example of an instantiation of this construction would be, for instance, *a uniform*. Taking the indefinite article construction *a basket* as an example, Holme (2010a: 118) explains in a rather simplified manner that this construction can be abstracted into a more general pattern by viewing the indefinite article as a fixed part of the construction and the noun as substitutable entity. Although exchangeable, the meaning of this noun is determined to a certain degree in that it "expresses a 'thing' or an abstract idea that is conceptualized in the same way as 'a thing' (Holme 2010a: 118). Moreover, this 'thing' can be described as bounded, i.e. something that is construed as separable from other things and therefore countable (Holme 2010a: 118). This particular construction  $[[a_c/an_v] + [N_{c/b}]]$  is, thus, "compositional but within a fixed band of meaning" (Holme 2010a: 118) as the interpretational features 'bounded' and 'countable' are inherited if we insert, for example, *orange*, *pencil* or *lake* in the substitutable position instead of *basket*.



Holme (2010a: 118) suggests that teachers should differentiate between compositional constructions, i.e. productive grammatical patterns with substitutable parts, and non-compositional constructions, i.e. fixed expression like idioms. Of course, the notion of the indefinite article construction explained above is rather simplified as we did not consider more detailed aspects of inheritance or schematicity. *Beer*, for example, is generally uncountable and unbound but we still can order *a beer*, as a speaker who utters this phrase construed a particular type of beer that fits the schematic meaning of the indefinite article construction. However, starting grammar instruction with a simplified notion of the compositional construction  $[[a_c/an_v] + [N_{c/b}]]$  when teaching articles might be a good starting point for EFL learners.

A review of the *More! 1 Student's Book* (Gerngross et al. 2018), which is used for students at the age of ten, has shown that the school book authors have chosen a rather implicit approach to present indefinite articles. First of all, the school book only presents the indefinite article *a* without explicitly mentioning its grammatical function but just by using it in short texts or chants (e.g. *a gorilla* *More! 1 Student's Book*, Gerngross et al. 2018: 11). Although *a* is used from Unit 1 onwards (*More! 1 Student's Book*, Gerngross et al. 2018: 8-13), there seems to be no explanation for the use of these articles throughout the first seven school book units. The question that arises here is why the school book authors chose to only use constructions containing the indefinite article *a* but never used an instance of the construction containing *an*. What might be problematic here is that EFL students might already have abstracted a pattern such as  $[a + [N_{c/b}]]$  for all common nouns until they are introduced to the indefinite article *an* much later in the book. However, the school book does use common nouns that are acoustically starting with a vowel much earlier in the book (e.g. *ear*, *idea* *More! 1 Student's Book*, Gerngross et al. 2018: 24-29). Only in Unit 8 (*More! 1 Student's Book*, Gerngross et al. 2018: 54) the school book introduces the indefinite article *an* and presents a 'rule' for when to use it (Material Extract 15, next page).

Material Extract 15 shows that students are presented with a 'grammar' box that is explaining three different grammar items, i.e. present simple negative, adverbs of frequency and indefinite articles. Taking a closer look at the box it does not seem as if these three topics are related because neither the area which presents the present simple negative nor the area which presents adverbs of frequency contains an indefinite article. Generally, it seems as if the indefinite article construction with a distinction between *a* or *an* is not really foregrounded throughout this whole unit 8 (*More! 1 Student's Book*, Gerngross et al. 2018: 50-54) as the construction only appears seven times in the unit's texts, however only one out of seven examples contains the indefinite article, i.e. *an egg* (*More! 1 Student's Book*, Gerngross et al. 2018: 52).



## SbX GRAMMAR

He always watches TV.



### Present simple negative

So bildest du die Verneinung im

Present simple:

I **don't (do not)** like vegetables.

He/She **doesn't (does not)** like rice.

We **don't (do not)** like carrots.

### Articles a/an

Du verwendest **an** dann, wenn das folgende Wort mit einem Vokal (Selbstlaut) am Anfang ausgesprochen wird.

Beispiel: **an** old skateboard

**a** banana      **an** egg

**a** hot dog      **an** apple

### Adverbs of frequency

I'm **always** hungry.

She **often** eats beef.

Simon and I are **usually** tired.

We **sometimes** have curry.

I **never** drink milk.



**Kreise die richtigen Wörter ein und bilde die Regel:**

Die Wörter **always, often, usually, sometimes, never** kommen <sup>1</sup> **vor / nach** dem Verb.

Beispiele: I **never** drink milk. / I **often** read books.

Beim Verb **to be (am/is/are)** kommen die Wörter **always, often, usually, sometimes, never** <sup>2</sup> **vor / nach** dem Verb.

Beispiele: I'm **always** hungry. / They're **often** late.

Material Extract 15: More! 1 Student's Book (Gerngross et al. 2018: 54)

It could be said that this approach to teaching EFL learners how to use the indefinite article construction is rather inefficient and unnecessarily complicated. Students might have already memorized an 'incorrect' construction, i.e.  $[a + [N_{c/b}]]$  for referring to indefinite entities because the school book did not use the complete structure or pattern. Now, when this addition is made, there is not enough 'material' for the students to entrench this new pattern or modify the old construction. From a constructionist perspective this approach of teaching and presenting the indefinite article construction does not really make sense as construction learning is very much based on factors such as frequency and salience of form (see chapter 4.2.2.1). The more often something is experienced in the same context, the easier it will be to store and access it and the stronger the form-meaning assembly will be. Moreover, an only phonologically noticeable vowel is not a very salient marker for using the article *an*, which is why the input experience and the frequency of occurrence are highly important factors for EFL-learners when encountering the indefinite article construction (Ellis, Römer & O'Donnell 2016: 45-68). With this in mind, it is rather inexplicable why the school book authors have decided to place a rather short explanation within this 'grammar' box from Material Extract 10. However, if a student would like to have a more detailed explanation s/he might refer to the grammar overview section at the end of the More! 1 Student's Book (Gerngross et al. 2018: 130-135) where s/he will find examples as to when and how the indefinite articles *a* and *an* should be used (Material Extract 16):

## Indefinite article (Unbestimmter Artikel)

Der unbestimmte Artikel **a** wird vor einem zählbaren Hauptwort verwendet, **an** wird vor Selbstlauten verwendet.

a bike	Vor den Vokalen (Selbstlauten): a, e, i, o, u
a teacher	an egg [ən 'eg]
a dog	an apple [ən 'æpl]

## Definite article (Bestimmter Artikel)

Der bestimmte Artikel, der wie **der/die/das** im Deutschen verwendet wird, ist im Englischen immer **the**.

the bike	the teacher	the dog
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Material Extract 16: *More! Student's Book* (Gerngross et al. 2018: 54)

Apart from the fact that separated grammar boxes and grammar overview sections perpetuate a grammar-lexis dichotomy, we can positively note that the explanation says that the article *a* is used in front of a countable noun.

As far as the exercises for the indefinite article constructions are concerned, it can be said that the *More! 1* workbook (Gerngross et al. 2018) offers some useful activities. Material Extract 17, for example, shows an activity that makes the students consciously reflect about the accurate use of the indefinite article construction and choose the correct form.

## Essential Grammar Articles *a / an*



### Circle the correct word.

- 1 I've got *a / an* sister and three brothers.
- 2 I don't want *a / an* apple, thanks.
- 3 We live in *a / an* big city.
- 4 Have you got *a / an* computer?
- 5 Take *a / an* umbrella with you.
- 6 Sue has got *a / an* orange bike.
- 7 Bob's in *a / an* band.
- 8 Let's watch *a / an* DVD.

Material Extract 17: *More! 1 Workbook* (Gerngross et al. 2018: 70)

However, in order to make the activity even more PCCxG-informed, it would be valuable to let students circle both the correct article as well as the correct noun. Marking or using the whole construction instead of only one part of it would not only be in accordance with Principle I from chapter 5.1. but it would definitely also facilitate construction learning and processes of entrenchment and generalization.

Overall, this rather implicit approach the school book authors applied here, does not seem to be reasonable from a PCCxG perspective. The main questions that arise are why the authors have

chosen to split the indefinite article construction and introduce *a* much earlier than *an* and why the authors have chosen to place an explicit explanation randomly into unit 8, if this unit does not even foreground the use of this construction. Generally, it seems questionable if not counterproductive to use such an approach as the way the *More! 1 Student's Book* (Gerngross et al. 2018) presents the indefinite article appears to foster inaccuracy and does not reflect authentic language use. Rather, it would be more beneficial for the EFL-learners to introduce both *a* and *an* at the same time and add some explicit grammar activities for the use of indefinite articles to support the students in arriving at a more generalized constructional pattern. In order to be in accordance with the usage-based character of CCxG, the school book's texts and other input forms would need to contain much more examples of the indefinite article construction. Taking the gradual development of construction processing and learning into account, it could be helpful for learners using this the *More! 1 school book* (Gerngross et al. 2018) in their first year of lower secondary school to add at least two, explicit grammar activities when learning about indefinite articles.

The example below illustrates how such an activity could look like. Of course, an EFL professional would need to assess, if his/her individual learner group would need an explicit explanation before or not.

1) Tick what applies to the underlined words.


a chair   a movie   an orange   a cat   a bottle   an activity   a shoe

☐ The underlined words can be counted.   ☐ The underlined words cannot be counted.

☐ The underlined words are things or living beings (=noun).

**a/an + .....**

2) Find two examples of your own. Write the examples down and draw a picture of them next to each construction, just as in the example below.



**a cat**

Figure 20: Activity for teaching the indefinite article construction

In this example exercise, the teacher can choose the level of explicitness and guidance, which means that s/he can either help the learners in ticking the correct answers or use a more inductive approach and let the students discover the features themselves. Finally, the students should arrive at a general pattern for the indefinite article construction. Depending on the learner's degree of explicit linguistic knowledge, the pattern might either be *a/an + countable noun* or *a/an + countable thing or living being*. This pattern, together with an explanation of the activity would need to be in the teacher's handbook. Students should then come up with their own constructions and illustrate them as using illustrations to teach constructions can help to activate the learner's image schemas (see chapter 3.21. or chapter 5.1.) and subsequently also aid them in grasping the more abstract notions of a specific construction (Holme 2010a: 122). Moreover, the teacher could then choose to work out a pattern with the learners in terms of when to use *a* and when to use *an*. The examples in the exercise above can be used as a starting point to compile a list with words that acoustically start with a vowel in the context of a speaking activity.

After the students have mastered the indefinite article construction with rather prototypical countable nouns such as those from the example above, it would be time to consider more abstract nouns that are conceptualized in the same way. Figure 21 (next page) constitutes an example for such a follow-up exercise.

Although this activity does not seem to explicitly explain the more abstract notion of the indefinite article construction, it can help learners to grasp that speakers of English often leave out words or use an abbreviated version to refer to something rather specific. Thus, when someone orders 'a hot chocolate', what s/he actually means is 'a cup of hot chocolate' or when someone refers to somebody else as 'a beauty', what s/he means is that a specific person or animal is a beautiful being. How and whether the notional extension of the indefinite article should be written down or explicitly described is again a case of professional individual judgement. Depending on the learners' level of competence, teachers using this activity could also decide to let students search for other instances of the indefinite article construction, which would eventually lead to the discussion of even more abstract examples such as '*a few....*'.

Overall it can be said that if the learners' L1 has a similar concept of using the indefinite article construction, this can of course be used productively and would probably facilitate storing and using this particular construction. If this is not the case, students will presumably need more activities and explanations demanding their conscious attention.

However, it is highly unrealistic to assume that every EFL teacher is familiar with the various L1s his/her students have. A second/foreign language teacher's linguistic knowledge is limited,

which on the one hand is only human and natural but on the other hand constitutes a problem from a constructionalist perspective. This and other limitations of PCCxG will, therefore, be discussed in more detail in the next section.

You know that after *a/an* what should follow is a word that is countable. Often this word is a thing or a living being as in *an orange* or *a cat*. But sometimes it is not that obvious...

**Read the dialogue. Then draw the underlined words from the dialogue in the boxes below.**

*Julia is visiting her uncle Fred in London. They are sitting in a café.*

Waitress: Hi, what can I get you?

Julia: Hello. I would like a hot chocolate, please.

Uncle Fred: I would like a cup of coffee, please.

Waitress: Alright, I'll be back with your orders in a few minutes.

Uncle Fred: Would you like to go for a walk afterwards, Julia?

Julia: Yes, please! Can we also go to the zoo? I would love to see the new elephant Kina.

She is such a beauty, I've seen pictures of her in the newspaper.

a hot chocolate

a walk

a beauty

Figure 21: Activity for teaching levels of abstractness in the indefinite article construction

### 6.3. Limitations of PCCxG

Although CCxG seems to reconfigure FLT towards a more authentic and efficient practice, there are still many questions that remain unanswered. One rather specific problematic aspect is that the suggested implications above are not always applicable. Actually, much research would need to be done for every language in FLT contexts in order to provide FLT-professionals with resources that can help them to understand and study the target language extensively from a CCxG-perspective.

Such research and detailed explorations would not only be very time consuming, but teachers would also need to have extensive linguistic knowledge of CL, and usage-based CCxG in

particular, which would call for teacher training curricula that imply CCxG as a fundamental part of teacher training programs at universities. Teaching a foreign language by using network structures does not seem to be fully applicable to the everyday practice of language pedagogues. Describing the network structure in terms of inheritance and other relational links is probably the most reasonable approach from a linguistic point of view. However, it seems that such a distinction could be rather intangible for language teachers in practice as it calls for a rather far-reaching linguistic expertise. A thorough understanding of the organizational structure of the construct-i-con, as explained by most scholars, appears to be rather time-consuming and making this knowledge productive for FLT-practice might be even more demanding. Nevertheless, a second/foreign language teacher will not be able to teach satisfactorily in a CCxG-informed classroom, if s/he does not have at least an idea of how our inventory of constructions might be organized.

Moreover, it remains questionable, whether non-native teachers will be proficient or, as Holme (2010b: 373) puts it “confident enough” to explore and teach constructions in the target language in such great detail. However, even if language teachers would become experts in CCxG and would have native-like competence, attempting to use a CCxG-approach consistently without readymade material or school books that use a CCxG-approach seems rather idealistic.

Another problematic aspect that concerning the language teacher’s knowledge, which has already been addressed briefly in the previous chapter, is related to the use of contrastive analysis of L1 and the target language. Considering that the homogenous classroom in terms of L1 backgrounds is a myth, comparing or contrasting constructions of two languages might thus only be useful for a limited number of students in the classroom. Using the standard language of education, which in Austria’s case would be German, as point of reference for cross-linguistic analyses might be useless too, as the levels of students’ proficiency can deviate quite dramatically. In the multicultural and subsequently multilingual classroom, teachers cannot assume that the language of education is mastered by every student on a native-speaker level, which is especially the case in classrooms with younger students.

Moreover, most FLT-research done by construction grammarians was conducted with intermediate or highly proficient and at least adolescent learners. It is debatable, whether the discussed methods of grammar teaching would work with beginners or lower age groups too (Holme 2010b: 373). Additionally, more research would need to be conducted to answer the questions of when to teach what and how a potential CCxG-informed EFL-syllabus might look

like. In the case of Austria, the national curriculum (Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, National Curriculum for Academic Secondary Schools 2019) for second/foreign languages for the lower secondary level of grammar schools (the More! 1 – 4 school book series, Gerngross et al. 2018 is used exactly in this period) can be described as rather vague. Although the general principles teachers need to adhere to when teaching involves positive aspects from a CCxG-perspective, it is still obvious how CLT approaches have fundamentally influenced the curriculum. As can be deduced from the following extract, while the interplay of grammar and vocabulary and the contextualization of grammar with meaning are emphasized, it is also said that grammar should be taught implicitly whenever possible (Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, National Curriculum for Academic Secondary Schools 2019: 56):

Kontextualisierung von Wortschatz und Grammatik

Der Vermittlung von Wortschatz und Grammatik in vielfältig kontextualisierter und vernetzter Form ist größtes Gewicht beizumessen, zB ist Vokabular, wo immer möglich, in Kollokationen, Redewendungen und Phrasen mit impliziter Grammatik einzubetten. Der funktionale Aspekt der Grammatik hat Vorrang gegenüber dem formalen Aspekt. Generell sind die situative Einführung und ein induktives Erschließen grammatischer Sachverhalte aus kommunikativen Zusammenhängen und Textbeispielen anzustreben. Grammatische Teilsysteme dürfen sich keineswegs verselbstständigen und wegen ihrer leichteren Überprüfbarkeit indirekt zum eigentlichen Lernziel des Fremdsprachenunterrichts werden. Wo es sinnvoll ist, sind grammatische Strukturen besser ohne Regelformulierung als lexikalische Einheiten zu vermitteln.

Moreover, this extract of the national curriculum advises second/foreign language teachers to teach grammatical aspects inductively, i.e. implicitly within communicative contexts. Although the curriculum takes the stance that the functional aspects of grammar are more relevant in FLT-contexts than merely formal aspects, a delineation of grammar and lexis is still reflected in the curriculum. This becomes evident when the extract above says that grammatical subsystems - an assumption that perpetuates a modular view on language - are not to be taught individually and grammatical structures should be taught as lexical units without rules. Additionally, the extract also shows that the Austrian national curriculum for second/foreign language learning on lower secondary level assumes a gradual development and emergence of the target language, it again reflects the underlying CLT dominance by saying that the superordinate goal of language learning is communicative competence (Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, National Curriculum for Academic Secondary Schools 2019: 57)

Annäherung an die Zielsprache unter Berücksichtigung der Lernaltersprache

Die Bereitschaft der Schülerinnen und Schüler, neue sprachliche Strukturen in den Bereichen Lexik und Grammatik anzuwenden und dabei Verstöße gegen zielsprachliche Normen zu riskieren, ist im Sinne des übergeordneten Zieles der kommunikativen Kompetenz von zentraler Bedeutung und bei der Evaluation der Schülerleistungen dementsprechend einzubeziehen.

A positive aspect from a CCxG-perspective can be found in the curriculum extract below which says that a contrastive analysis of learner's L1 and the target language can be highly beneficial for the second/foreign language competence (Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, National Curriculum for Academic Secondary Schools 2019: 57):

Reflektierender Sprachenvergleich

Ein bewusster und reflektierter Umgang mit Sprache (auch im Vergleich mit der Unterrichts- bzw. Muttersprache) ist zu fördern. Komparative und kontrastive Methoden sind vor allem dort angebracht, wo sie zu einem verbesserten sprachlichen Bewusstsein der Fremdsprache gegenüber führen und den Lernerfolg wesentlich verstärken.

This extract of the national curriculum states that a contrastive analysis and a conscious comparison of the target language and the “Unterrichts- bzw. Muttersprache”, i.e. in this case German, is appropriate and can lead to a better understanding and subsequently to a higher level of success when learning a second/foreign language.

The rest of the national curriculum for lower secondary level seems to be fairly vague and does not include any information on grammar items that should or should not be taught at a specific time. Rather, the topics students need to be able to talk about and the communicative competences learners need to have are listed according to the levels of the Common European Framework of References for Languages (Council of Europe, CEFR 2001). For example, students at CEFR level A2 (which they should reach approximately in their second year of learning English) should be able to talk about their family, their education and how they live (Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, National Curriculum for Academic Secondary Schools 2019: 59).

This consistent CLT-orientation of the Austrian national curriculum for lower secondary English language teaching shows that an appropriation towards PCCxG would imply a fundamental reconsideration and reformulation of the underlying FLT concepts reflected in this curriculum. If an English language teacher in Austria would want to apply a CCxG-informed approach to his/her teaching in Austrian EFL classrooms, s/he would probably have to disobey some essential implications of the national curriculum. Apparently, this is highly problematic, as the national curriculum constitutes the foundation for various legal aspects of teaching and assessment. Thus, an official incorporation of PCCxG perspectives in terms of an acknowledged approach for second/foreign language teaching in Austria would not only require more research but also more political awareness raising. Attempting to appropriate the national curriculum for English language teaching in terms of PCCxG is a highly valuable undertaking; however, it is questionable if such an educational endeavor is politically realizable in Austria.



## 7. Conclusion

This thesis is based on the idea that second/foreign language teachers and subsequently their students can fundamentally benefit from a pedagogical grammar approach to usage-based cognitive construction grammar (PCCxG). By challenging the grammar-lexis dichotomy and current views on FLT-practice, it has been shown that the methods traditional foreign language teaching programs employ to teach English grammar are often inefficient as the underpinnings that guide these programs often hinder the process of second/foreign language more than they help it.

Chapter 2 has demonstrated how key developments in linguistics and language teaching have influenced current FLT-practice and eventually contributed to the delinking of grammatical and communicative competence, as well as implicit and explicit grammar instruction. Moreover, Chapter 2 has also presented a framework for pedagogical grammar (Keck & Kim 2014: 4) that allowed to effectively reorganize the current views on grammar teaching through a triangulation of the three areas of grammar description, grammar acquisition and grammar instruction in FLT-contexts. In order to be able to combine this framework with the theoretical accounts of CCxG to arrive at a concept for PCCxG, chapter 3 has extensively discussed the underlying concepts of CL, CxG and especially CCxG. More precisely, this chapter has defined what constructions are and how constructional knowledge is cognitively processed and organized within the dynamic nature of the construct-i-con.

Turning to the more applied accounts of CCxG, chapter 4 has elaborated how CCxG conceptualizes processes of first and second/foreign language acquisition and what factors determine the learning of constructions in FLT-contexts. Before combining the theory of CCxG with the PG framework in order to arrive at a model for PCCxG, chapter 5 has also presented a list of practical principles that FLT professionals can use to guide their teaching. The most relevant aspects of CCxG have then been combined with Keck and Kim's (2014: 4) framework for pedagogical grammar, which has finally led to an adapted framework for PCCxG. This framework together with the presented principles for FLT can now serve as a point of departure for second/foreign language teachers who would like to employ a CCxG-informed approach to their teaching.

Finally, chapter 6 has showcased in an exemplary manner how grammar is currently taught and why there is a need to reconfigure current EFL-practice. By using examples from the most commonly used EFL school books for lower secondary levels in Austria (*More! 1-4* school book series, Gerngross et al. 2018, information on usage rights can be found in the appendix),

this thesis has shown that English grammar is often presented unnecessarily confusing and complicated to EFL-students. Moreover, chapters 6.1 and 6.2 have also elaborated on the practical implications and applications a second/foreign language teacher might need to consider when employing a PCCxG approach to his or her teaching. These chapters, thus, include explicit suggestions on how FLT-professionals could implement CCxG-informed teaching methods in their EFL-classrooms (e.g. through the use of illustrations and substitution tables, the reduction of traditional grammar terminology or a contrastive analysis of the learner's L1 and the target language). However, chapter 6.3. has also shown that the current state of PCCxG still bears some problematic aspects. Much more research would need to be done before second/foreign language teachers could consistently use CCxG-approaches in FLT-contexts. For example, the method of comparing and contrasting students' L1 with the target language seems rather difficult considering the fact that learners often do not share the same L1 in second/foreign language classrooms. In the context of the Austrian EFL classroom, it has been additionally shown that the national curriculum would need to be fundamentally appropriated to meet PCCxG needs in order to offer EFL-teachers in Austria a legal base for implementing PCCxG in their professional practice.

In conclusion, it can be said that a CCxG-informed approach to FLT shows much potential to fruitfully improve second/foreign language learning. Applying PCCxG in the EFL-classroom does not only mean to accept a new way of how language and language learning is conceptualized but it also means to actually teach constructions, i.e. form-meaning assemblies. This eventually involves a multilayered reconsideration of current FLT-practice, as teachers would need to find efficient ways to balance implicit and explicit teaching and thereby help their students to schematize and learn constructions. However, all considerations that have been made throughout this thesis are practically useless, if the language teacher is not operating on the premise that s/he is familiar with constructionist notions of the nature of language and language acquisition. In other words, before attempting to use CCxG to explain and teach a foreign language, a second/foreign language teacher first needs to understand how CCxG conceptualizes language. Future research on CCxG approaches to FLT could usefully address this topic to answer the question on how to implement CCxG in language teacher training programs.

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## 10. Appendix

### Usage Rights School Books (More! 1-4, Gerngross et al. 2018)

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**Von:** hp@herbertpuchta.com

**An:** jelena.blatancic@gmx.at

**Re:** [CONTACT] <http://www.herbertpuchta.com>

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Dear Jelena (if I may),

Many thanks for your message, and congratulations on this exciting theme for your diploma thesis.

This is to confirm that we are happy for you to use examples from More! for your thesis. I wish you all the very best with your work, and would love to eventually read your paper.

With best wishes,

Herbert

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On 19.03.18, 13:53, "jelena.blatancic@gmx.at" <jelena.blatancic@gmx.at> wrote:

Dear Dr. Puchta,

my name is Jelena Blatancic and I am studying English and German in the teacher trainee program at the University of Vienna. I am writing you to kindly ask for permission to use parts of your school book series More! in an exemplary manner for my diploma thesis. My thesis will deal with Pedagogical Construction Grammar and its potentials in the Austrian EFL classroom. One part of my research will try to answer how the most commonly used EFL school books in Austria could be integrated in a Construction Grammar informed language classroom. As a usage-based cognitive model Construction Grammar views language as consisting of numerous constructions, i.e. form-meaning pairings that are entrenched in a speakers' mind and based on usage. This non-modular conceptualization of how languages are learned and stored in our minds does not only reject the traditional rule-based view on language, it also requires a new mode of how languages are taught and subsequently represented. As research has shown that Construction Grammar can help learners to acquire a language in a more efficient and authentic way (e.g. Gries and Wulff 2005; Holme 2010; Herbst 2016; Ellis, Römer and O'Donnell 2016), I would like to investigate how this linguistic model can be made productive in the Austrian school context. I am looking forward to your answer and want to thank you for your considerations.

Kind regards,  
Jelena Blatancic

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## **Abstract**

The present thesis concerns itself with exploring the potentials of Construction Grammar and its application to the EFL-classroom. With a special emphasis on Austria, it investigates how foreign language teachers, and subsequently also learners, could benefit from a Pedagogical Construction Grammar model.

After introducing the reader to a framework for Pedagogical Grammar and its perspectives for the second/foreign language classroom, it is shown how different research conceptions in applied linguistics have fundamentally shaped the role of grammar in foreign language teaching and thereby influenced a still ongoing debate of implicit versus explicit grammar teaching. The thesis then goes on to explain the theory behind Construction Grammar and the specific model that is used throughout the thesis, namely Usage-Based Cognitive Construction Grammar. It explores how Construction Grammar conceptualizes language acquisition, which factors affect construction learning and how they might influence second/foreign language acquisition. Moreover, it is shown which practical principles second/foreign language professionals can apply to guide their teaching according to Construction Grammar beliefs. After adapting the framework for Pedagogical Grammar towards Usage-Based Cognitive Construction Grammar, it is discussed which possible implications and but also limitations such a model might entail. Additionally, this thesis offers practice-related perspectives on the discussions by showcasing why the way the most frequently used EFL-school books in Austria present grammatical constructions is often inefficient and how these constructions could be taught to meet Pedagogical Construction Grammar principles.

## **Abstract in German**

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Erforschung der Potenziale der Konstruktionsgrammatik für den englischen Fremdsprachenunterricht. Mit besonderem Schwerpunkt auf Österreich wird untersucht, wie Fremdsprachenlehrer und -lehrerinnen, und damit auch Lernende, von einem Modell der pädagogischen Konstruktionsgrammatik profitieren könnten.

Nach der Einführung eines Bezugskonzepts für Pädagogische Grammatik für den Zweit- bzw. Fremdsprachenunterricht wird gezeigt, wie unterschiedliche Forschungsrichtungen innerhalb der angewandten Sprachwissenschaft die Rolle von Grammatik im Fremdsprachenunterricht grundlegend geprägt haben und damit eine bis heute andauernde Debatte über den impliziten und expliziten Grammatikunterricht beeinflusst haben. Die Arbeit widmet sich im Anschluss der Theorie hinter der Konstruktionsgrammatik und dem spezifischen Modell, das in der

vorliegenden Arbeit angewandt wird, nämlich der nutzungsbasierten kognitiven Konstruktionsgrammatik. Es wird untersucht, wie die Konstruktionsgrammatik den Spracherwerb konzipiert, welche Faktoren den Spracherwerb beeinflussen und wie diese den Zweit- bzw. Fremdsprachenerwerb prägen können. Darüber hinaus wird gezeigt, welche praktischen Prinzipien Zweit-/Fremdsprachenexperten anwenden können, um ihren Unterricht nach konstruktionsgrammatischen Grundsätzen zu gestalten. Nach der Anpassung Bezugskonzepts für die pädagogische Grammatik an die nutzungsbasierte kognitive Konstruktionsgrammatik wird analysiert, welche möglichen Auswirkungen und Einschränkungen ein solches Modell mit sich bringen kann. Darüber hinaus bietet diese Arbeit praxisbezogene Perspektiven auf die Diskussionen, indem sie zeigt, warum die Art und Weise, wie grammatikalische Konstruktionen in den in Österreich am häufigsten verwendeten EFL-Schulbüchern präsentiert werden, oft ineffizient ist und wie diese Konstruktionen unterrichtet werden könnten, um den Prinzipien der pädagogischen Konstruktionsgrammatik zu entsprechen.