

Jelena Vujić, *Konstrukcione teme* [Topics in Construction Grammar]. Beograd: Filološki fakultet [Belgrade: Faculty of Philology], 2016, str. 188.

Reviewed by **ANDRIJANA BROČIĆ**<sup>1</sup>  
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology,  
English Department,  
Belgrade, Serbia

The monograph *Konstrukcione teme* (*Topics in Construction Grammar*) by Jelena Vujić is envisaged, according to the author, as providing a grounding in the basic concepts of Construction Grammar (henceforth CxG), which are deployed, in numerous ways, in later sections of the book. The fact that it was written in the Serbian language makes clear another objective the author had in mind while writing this book – to present ideas relating to many of the key constructs relevant to CxG to the research community in Serbia, thus filling a serious gap in the linguistics literature. The book has received three highly positive reviews by Professors Predrag Novakov, Vladimir Jovanović and Aleksandar Milanović, who have recommended it for publication. After the introductory chapter (pp. 9–10), in which Vujić briefly states her main aims, the monograph is organized into two major parts – Part One and Part Two, which are in turn divided into 9 chapters, 4 and 5 respectively.

The objective of Part I, entitled *Teorijski okviri konstrukcione gramatike* (*Theoretical Framework of Construction Grammar*), is to provide an introductory overview of the central tenets and key constructs of CxG, as well as the interrelationships between CxG and other areas of enquiry and movements in linguistics.

The first chapter of Part I (pp. 15–22) outlines, true to its title *Istorijat i osnovne teorijske pretpostavke konstrukcione gramatike* (*The History and Basic Theoretical Assumptions of CxG*), the basic guiding principles and worldview of a constructionist approach to language: various strands of CxG subscribe to the view that *constructions* constitute the fundamental building blocks of language, and that it is not possible to draw a clear-cut distinction between facts pertaining to the lexicon and those pertaining to syntax. Vujić traces the development of CxG in the works of Fillmore, Lakoff, Golberg, Key, Fried etc.

The second of the four chapters *Konstrukcije; pojam i vrste* (*Constructions: Concept and Types*, pp. 23–52) elucidates the central construct of CxG – *the notion of construction*. The author emphasizes that constructions are complex linguistic signs inasmuch as they contain and specify different levels of information – ranging from morpho-syntactic, semantic, pragmatic to prosodic and context-related and lays out a detailed description and classification of constructions.

In Chapter 3 *Konstrukciona gramatika i ostali lingvistički pravci* (*Construction Grammar and Other Trends in Linguistics*, pp. 53–58), Vujić briefly presents and discusses particular frameworks which are compatible with a constructionist approach to language, arguing that CxG has informed approaches in which the notion of construction plays a

1 Kontakt podaci (Email): brocic@EUnet.rs

central role, such as G. Lakoff's Neural Theory of Language, R. Jackendoff's Conceptual Semantics, W. Croft's Radical Construction Grammar, Sag's Head-Phrase Driven Structure Grammar. Sub-section 3.2 deals with contrastive studies in construction grammar, with special emphasis being placed on the concept of construction as a valuable tool for crosslinguistic comparison, while in 3.2. the author introduces the readers to G. Booij's *Construction Morphology*.

Chapter 4 *Konstruktiona gramatika i primenjena lingvistika* (*Construction Grammar and Applied Linguistics*, pp. 59–77) addresses constructional approaches to second language acquisition. Crosslinguistic transfer effects are also considered, and Vujić draws attention to the fact that the knowledge of constructions in L1 may have a bearing on the acquisition of L2 constructions. Drawing on a number of studies, the author shows the benefits of the constructionist approach to language teaching, as language learners are made cognizant of (and consequently process) target L2 constructions as pairings of form, meaning and function.

Part II, entitled *Mali konstrukcioni ogledi* (*Small-Scale Studies in Construction Grammar*), is designed to demonstrate the applicability of the constructs and notions expounded on in Part I. The obvious merit of this part lies in the fact that it contains a variety of studies which represent the author's personal contribution to the study of both English and Serbian within the framework of CxG. Another advantage is that the main ideas and arguments presented are clarified and corroborated with an abundance of specific language examples.

Chapter 5 *Dekonstruisanje i rekonstruisanje determinativne konstrukcije u engleskom u odnosu na srpski* (*The De/Reconstruction of the Determination Construction in English vs. Serbian*, 81–102), illustrates how the theoretical notions of CxG can find their practical implementation in foreign language teaching. Dealing with the issue of article acquisition in Serbian ESL/EFL learners, Vujić contends that helping students conceptualize, abstract and schematize articles via the meaning, form and function of the Determination Construction, as well as making them fully aware of the constructional semantic equivalents in their L1, can greatly facilitate the process of language learning and article acquisition.

In Chapter 6 *O formi, značenju i funkciji razdvojivih višičlanih glagola kao konstrukcionih idioma* (*On the Form, Meaning and Function of Separable Multi-Word Verbs as Construction Idioms* pp. 103–123), the author discusses the formal, structural, semantic and pragmatic properties of phrasal verb constructions. Special attention is devoted to the role and meaning of the particle, as well as its overall contribution to the external characteristics of constructions. Through the prism of Construction Morphology, Vujić offers a comprehensive account of the peculiarities of these complex verbs, which figure prominently in English.

Chapter 7 *Engleska genitivna konstrukcija sa partikulom of kao konstrukcioni idiom* (*The Of-genitive Construction in English as a Constructional Idiom* pp. 124–146) focuses on the formal and semantic properties of the idiomatic *Of-genitive construction* in English, more specifically, the a+N1+of+a+N2 structure. Its dual nature is emphasized, as this syntactic structure clearly exhibits lexical properties, which unequivocally points to the strong interdependence between syntax and the lexicon. It is shown that such interdependence can only be adequately and fully accounted for with the aid of the

theoretical apparatus of CxG. Also, by outlining the major properties of these genitive constructional idioms in English, the author once more highlights the role syntactic structures play in constructing and expanding the lexicon of a language.

Chapter 8 *Konstrukcionistički pristup dativu i dativnim konstrukcijama u srpskom iz perspektive pedagoške prakse* (A Constructionist Approach to the Dative Case and Dative Constructions in Serbian from a Language-Teaching Perspective, pp. 147–177) offers an extensive review of a range of meanings exhibited by dative constructions in Serbian, and creates a web of interconnected and closely related meanings of different dative constructions. The establishment of such a family of more or less prototypical meanings, as opposed to the insistence on one abstract meaning, can also have its practical application in the classroom, as it can enable students to form a semantic chain of dative constructions. It is shown that the meaning of the dative construction stems from a number of factors – apart from the connection between the relevant meanings of the verb and the dative referent, pragmatic and semantic aspects of the remaining elements of the construction are also shown to be paramount, as well as the pragmatic and discursive context in which the construction is embedded.

The final chapter (p. 178), entitled *Umesto zaključka* (By way of conclusion), presents a summary of the main objectives of the monograph, as well as a summary of the major findings that have emerged from the individual studies, while pointing to potential avenues for research, CxG's future perspectives and applications, especially to the Serbian language.

The monograph is written in a clear and concise style, providing an accessible source of information on the basic concepts of CxG, and will therefore prove to be an extremely useful resource for both novice researchers who wish to become acquainted with this theoretical paradigm and for those conversant with its basic principles who wish to gain further insight into CxG. More importantly, it performs an important service to the research community in Serbia in synthesizing and presenting ideas relating to many of the key constructs relevant to CxG in the Serbian language, and is certain to inspire further research into language phenomena characterizing this language within this theoretical framework.

Furthermore, as Jovanović states in his review, the findings presented in the book contribute significantly to the study of morphosyntactic and grammatical features of both English and Serbian.

Ultimately, even though CxG originally emerged from the necessity to explain some peripheral phenomena in language, such as idioms, the findings presented in this monograph convincingly demonstrate, as the author herself rightfully claims in the final chapter (p. 178), that CxG is a powerful theoretical and methodological tool for the analysis of the phenomena which can by no means be considered marginal (as shown through her research on the determination construction and phrasal verbs in English, and the dative construction in Serbian). The author therefore successfully points to the potential of this linguistic model to analyse and explicate a wide range of language phenomena.