

## **Making the Case for Construction Grammar: Foundations, Functionality, Facts and Fighting Back**

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The good news for advocates of Construction Grammar (CxG) is that language scholars from a wide array of backgrounds have adopted its fundamental insight: that knowledge of language includes grammatical generalizations of varied grains. CxG informs models of acquisition (Tomasello 2006, Diessel & Tomasello 2002), aphasia (Gahl et al. 2000), sentence processing (Hare & Goldberg 2000, Glenberg & Kaschak 2002, Bencini & Goldberg 2005), concept learning by autonomous agents (Steels & De Beule 2006) and neural computation (Feldman 2006). In addition, much recent work in corpus linguistics has constructionist foundations, including exemplar-based syntax and phonology (Bybee 2001, 2006) and statistical genre studies (Gries et al. 2005). Finally, constructions, and their adaptive and exaptive properties, have become the focus of recent work on language evolution (Jackendoff 2003). The bad news is that CxG has affected neither the theory nor the practice of mainstream syntax. In this talk, I will ask why this is the case and propose a remedy: a toolkit of CxG talking points based on the four F's: foundations, functionality, facts and fighting back. Describing the **foundations** of CxG involves explaining the difference between a licensing-based view of syntax and one based on suppression of unattested structures (Zwicky 1994, Malouf 2003). Demonstrating **functionality** requires us to acknowledge that working syntacticians need a robust and elegant formalism. I argue that Sign-Based Construction Grammar (Sag 2007, forthcoming) is such a formalism, and describe three of its major assets: localism, variable-grain description and an integrated treatment of inheritance. The **facts** include three major lines of evidence for construction-based syntax: the constructional basis of compositionality, the role of constructions in the licensing of complements and the interleaving of core and periphery during production. Finally, I will discuss ways to **fight back** against three entrenched myths about CxG: that it does not offer generalizations, that it is opposed to compositional semantics and that it does not provide a universal framework for syntax.