The "mini-constructicon"
– a first step towards designing a Reference Constructicon of English

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It is one of the central convictions of most usage-based grammarians that any sharp distinction between lexis and grammar is inappropriate (e.g. Langacker 2008), yet this insight has not yet been put into practice in terms of reference works, where the traditional distinction between grammars (in the sense of grammar books) and (various types of) dictionaries is still maintained.

The reference constructicon we have in mind has to be imagined as an all-comprehensive electronic reference tool containing all the information we imagine speakers of a language to have, i.e. a network of constructions ranging from very small constructions such as words or morphemes to very abstract ones like the passive construction or argument structure constructions, recognizing the central role of collocations or constructions such as the *the X-er the Y-er* construction (Fillmore, Kay & O'Connor 1988).

To the best of our knowledge, no such all-comprehensive reference tool exists – neither for English nor for any other language. All present constructica and constructicon projects seem to focus on particular spheres of language description (often the ones that have fallen between the stools of traditional grammars and dictionaries). For very obvious (financial) reasons, our project is no exception, but intended as a first step towards a more comprehensive reference tool.

Building on the *Valency Dictionary of English* (Herbst et al. 2004) and the *Valency Patternbank*, (Herbst & Uhrig 2009) one focus of the present project will lie on the description of argument structure constructions of verbs (Goldberg 1995, 2006), adjectives and nouns. One of the aims of the project is to determine what extent the items identified as occurring in particular valency patterns can be easily subsumed under generalized constructions (compare Herbst 2014).

In this paper, we wish to outline the basic principles of this "mini-constructicon". In particular, it will be shown how the description of more abstract constructions will entail a collo-profile, i.e. a frequency-ranked list of words occurring in the construction.

We will also outline how our approach differs from FrameNet (which in its present form probably comes closest to the ideal of a comprehensive reference constructicon) – namely that we put a stronger focus on the way that the meaning of an utterance (and its parts) is negotiated between the meanings of constructions. Thus we would consider the differences in meaning between (1) *Her pilot flew her to Paris*, (2) *We flew to Atlanta* and (3) *Lufthansa flies to Tokyo* as the result of different constellations of the semantic roles or frame and not to different senses of the verb *fly* as in FrameNet, where *fly* is attributed to five different frames with five different senses. For this purpose, a systematic comparison between FrameNet and the Valency Dictionary of English will be presented.

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