

Doris Schönefeld (ed.). *Converging evidence: Methodological and theoretical issues for linguistic research* (Human Cognitive Processing 33). Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2011. 352 pp. ISBN: 978-90-272-2387-6. Reviewed by **Gaëtanelle Gilquin**, FNRS – Université catholique de Louvain.

As the title suggests, *Converging evidence: Methodological and theoretical issues for linguistic research* deals with the different aspects that are involved in collecting, analysing and interpreting converging evidence, that is “evidence or findings that converge on one and the same conclusion” (p. 1), in the field of linguistics. Edited by Doris Schönefeld, the volume brings together thirteen papers which were presented at the *Third International Conference of the German Cognitive Linguistics Association* that took place at Leipzig University in September 2008. It is made up of two introductory chapters and three main parts (covering multi-methodological approaches to (i) constructional and idiomatic meaning, (ii) language acquisition, and (iii) the study of discourse), plus a preface and an author/subject index.

In the first introductory chapter (the main introduction to the volume), **Doris Schönefeld** provides a useful overview of the (empirical and non-empirical) methods available to study language, with a focus on intuition/introspection, corpora and experimental data. After commenting on the role of evidence and the type of evidence used in generative linguistics and cognitive linguistics, she makes a convincing case for the need to provide converging evidence. In particular, she argues for an ‘empirical cycle’, in which hypotheses formulated on the basis of observation help explain the phenomenon under investigation but at the same time lead to further hypotheses which can be tested, and she claims that such a cycle can only benefit from the exploitation of different types of evidence. The chapter ends with a brief presentation of the contributions to the volume. The second introductory chapter, **Gerard J. Steen**’s paper, while devoted to the topic of metaphor and the question of whether metaphor is always a matter of thought, also tackles more general issues having to do with converging evidence. An interesting distinction is made between phenomenological pluralism, which considers different types of evidence drawn from distinct areas of research and corresponding, in effect, to distinct (though related) phenomena of investigation, and methodological pluralism, which by contrast limits itself to different types of evidence drawn from one area of research and, therefore, pertaining to the same phenomenon. Steen illustrates the problematic character of phenomenological pluralism by highlighting the confusion that often exists between metaphor-as-thought in abstract conceptual structure (semiotic approach) and metaphor-as-thought in actual cognition (psychological approach). This leads him to conclude that “[p]henomenological pluralism is exciting but problematic” and “[m]ethodological pluralism is exciting and attractive” (p. 46) and to suggest that cognitive linguists should look for converging evidence within their own area of research.

The bulk of the papers belong to the first part of the volume, entitled “Multi-methodological approaches to constructional and idiomatic meaning” (pp. 55-246). Constructional meaning is discussed in five chapters, starting with **Thomas Egan**’s analysis of the ‘see x to be y’ construction. Using data from three large corpora, namely the British National Corpus, the Corpus of Contemporary American English and WebCorp, Egan seeks to test Bolinger’s (1974) intuition-based claim that perceptual verbs like *see* express a conceptual meaning when used with a *to*-infinitive complement (e.g. *I see this to be the next logical step*). As against Noël (2003), who challenges Bolinger’s view by showing that *to*-infinitives are also compatible with a

perceptual meaning, Egan provides converging evidence that *to*-infinitive complements cause a semantic shift from the perceptual to the conceptual. Out of over 500 (active) instances of the ‘*see x to be y*’ construction, only 43 involve perception, and of these, merely three express perception pure and simple; the others are all characterised by the presence of (explicit or implicit) alternatives, a feature that is related to the general schematic interpretation of the *to*-infinitive. The next chapter, by **Gunther Kaltenböck**, looks into clause-initial *I think* followed by a complement clause. In an attempt to determine the syntactic status of this complement-taking predicate (main clause or comment clause), Kaltenböck considers syntactic and prosodic evidence, and convergence (or lack thereof) between the two in naturally occurring data from the British component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-GB). While syntactically a distinction may arguably be drawn between *I think* followed by a *that*-complementiser (which suggests a main clause interpretation of *I think*) and *I think* with no complementiser (which suggests a comment clause interpretation), in terms of prosody both structural realisations of the complement-taking predicate (*I think* $\emptyset$ and *I think that*) favour reduced prominence, which is an indicator of a comment clause status. To account for this divergence, Kaltenböck puts forward a dynamic model of grammar which claims, among others, that the *that*-complementiser now functions more as a filler than as a marker of syntactic hierarchy. **Silke Höche** offers a comparison of two constructions that are often described as nearly synonymous, namely *be about to V* and *be going to V*. In an attempt to examine both the diachronic and synchronic dimensions of the constructions, Höche uses the quotation database of the *Oxford English dictionary* as well as some historical corpora (for the diachronic approach) and data from the British National Corpus (for the synchronic approach). Used in conjunction with the author’s and (past and present) grammarians’ intuitions, this corpus evidence reveals certain differences between the two constructions. The main difference, which is confirmed by a collocation analysis of the verb slot and an examination of the temporal adverbials occurring in the constructions, is that *be about to V* has developed towards an aspectualising construction, being closer to aspectualisers like *start to* or *begin to* than to futurate-forms like *will* or *be going to*. *Be going to V*, by contrast, exhibits a lower degree of immediacy and is more flexible with respect to the verbs and adverbs with which it associates. The chapter by **Stefan Th. Gries** deals with the English dative alternation, which is used as a case study to compare the efficiency of three statistical methods for the study of syntactic priming in corpora, i.e. “the tendency of speakers to re-use syntactic patterns they have recently comprehended or produced” (p. 143). Relying on a database of almost 3,000 prime-target pairs extracted from ICE-GB, Gries performs three types of analyses at different levels of granularity: at a coarse level of granularity, a simple cross-tabulation of the constructional frequencies in primes and targets; at an intermediate level of granularity, a binary logistic regression which takes into account fixed effects (like the construction of the prime or the distance between prime and target) and their interactions; and at the highest level of granularity, a generalised linear mixed-effects model (GLMEM) which in addition includes random effects (here, the verb lemma of each target and the name of the file in which prime and target occurred). The GLMEM turns out to be the most powerful technique, i.e. the one with the highest classification accuracy, but also the technique that is most in line with cognitive linguists’ theoretical assumptions. Furthermore, the study shows that corpora provide evidence for syntactic priming that is convergent with (and sometimes additional to) evidence gathered through experimental work. Like Höche and Gries, **Ad Backus** and

Maria Mos demonstrate the value of converging evidence through the comparison of two functionally similar constructions. The constructions under study are two constructions in Dutch expressing potentiality, namely *V-baar*, where *-baar* is a suffix added to verb stems to form adjectives (e.g. *breekbaar*, ‘breakable’), and *is te V*, a combination of a finite copular verb and an infinitive preceded by the *te* (‘to’) infinitive marker (e.g. ... *is moeilijk te vinden*, ‘... is hard to find’). Using data from a corpus of spoken Dutch (Corpus Gesproken Nederlands) and applying the techniques of collexeme analysis and distinctive collexeme analysis, the authors highlight some of the similarities and differences that exist between the two constructions, among which their (apparent) productivity, a shared preference for transitive verbs, but also a tendency to express assessed potentiality (for the *is te V* construction) vs. factual potentiality (for the *V-baar* construction). In an attempt to approach the mental representations of these constructions, Backus and Mos then conduct a magnitude estimation task in which participants are asked to assess the acceptability of constructed test sentences with *V-baar* and *is te V*. The results of the experiment largely confirm the findings from the corpus study, which pleads in favour of the “productivity and psychological reality of the constructions” (p. 165).

The next two chapters still belong to the first part of the volume, but instead of constructional meaning they tackle idiomatic meaning. **Alexander Ziem** and **Sven Staffeldt** investigate German somatisms, that is multi-word idiomatic expressions that include a body-part term, with a focus on somatisms that contain the word *Finger*. They propose a two-step procedure to determine the different meanings of somatisms which involves (i) the identification of the meaning aspects that are shared by all uses of the somatism (typically, the argument roles that inherently belong to the verb’s valency) and (ii) the identification of meaning variation (as reflected in the slots that do not belong to the verb’s valency). This procedure is illustrated by means of a corpus-based analysis of the expression *jm. auf die Finger schauen* (‘keep an eye on sb’). Through this analysis, the authors also address the issues of compositionality (is the meaning of somatisms motivated by the semantic potential of the body-part term?) and embodiment (is the meaning of somatisms grounded in human experience?). They demonstrate, among other things, that the term *Finger* in the expression *jm. auf die Finger schauen* refers to some sort of activity, thus exploiting the conceptual metonymy FINGER FOR ACTIVITY. In the following chapter, **Susanne R. Borgwaldt** and **Réka Benczes** set out to compare the word formation strategies that are used by German and Hungarian speakers to refer to novel hybrid objects composed of two identifiable parts (e.g. an animal that is half penguin, half cat) and novel objects with a salient shape (e.g. a lake with the shape of a heart). The results of a novel object naming task, in which participants are asked to name a number of digitally manipulated pictures, show that German speakers predominantly opt for noun-noun compounds (92 per cent, e.g. *Auberginenlatscher*, ‘eggplant slippers’), whereas Hungarian speakers’ choices display more variety, with 60 per cent of noun-noun compounds (e.g. *kaktusz béka*, ‘cactus frog’), 28 per cent of adjective-noun compounds (e.g. *repülő ananász*, ‘flying pineapple’ for a pineapple bird) and 5 per cent of blends (e.g. *krokogáj*, a blend of *krokodil*, ‘crocodile’, and *papagáj*, ‘parrot’). This distributional pattern does not seem to be influenced by the semantic domain of the two entities involved in the novel objects (which were any combinations of animals, plants and inanimate objects). The authors also emphasise the importance of metonymy in word formation, as well as the role played by creativity and humorous effects.

The papers in the second part of the volume look into language acquisition (pp. 247-316). **Rasmus Steinkrauss** is interested in the L1 acquisition of German *was ... für* ('what kind of...') questions and the factors that influence the order of acquisition and the frequency of production of such structures. Steinkrauss investigates a dataset representative of the production of a German-learning boy between the ages of two and three and of the ambient speech, and shows that, as predicted by a usage-based approach, input frequency plays a role in the child's formation of schemas (i.e. mental representations), and hence his production of *was ... für* questions. At the same time, however, the analysis reveals a number of discrepancies between the predictions based on input frequency and the observations made in the production data. These discrepancies are explained by additional factors such as the presence of supporting constructions (which the child has already acquired and which favour the use of the target structure) or functionally equivalent constructions that are more frequent in the input and thus more likely to be reproduced by the child. The paper ends with the author advocating for the simultaneous consideration of several factors. **Silke Brandt** and **Evan Kidd** deal with the L1 acquisition of relative clauses by English- and German-speaking children. Like Steinkrauss, they take into account input frequency to demonstrate the influence of linguistic experience on children's representations of complex constructions. Since corpus data reveal that object relative clauses are more likely to be attached to an inanimate head NP and to contain a pronominal subject (as in *the ball that he just threw*), children are expected to perform better on experimental tasks that include relative clauses formed according to these constraints. This is confirmed by a sentence-repetition task, in which children are asked to imitate several types of relative clauses, and a referential-choice task, in which they have to select the referent (as represented by a small toy) corresponding to the relative clause uttered by the experimenter. In these tasks, children appear to show better comprehension and production of object relative clauses with inanimate heads and/or pronominal subjects. Contrary to the findings of previous experimental studies that did not consider input frequency, no systematic difference was observed between children's processing of subject vs. object relative clauses. Unlike the preceding two chapters which are concerned with L1 acquisition, the chapter by **Nina Reshöft** is concerned with L2 acquisition. The paper relies on Talmy's (1985) typology of motion events, which distinguishes between satellite-framed and verb-framed languages. Whereas the former typically encode manner of motion through the verb and path of motion through satellites (e.g. *run into the house*), in the latter the main verb expresses the path of motion while other aspects of movement, including the manner of motion, are expressed by means of adjunct phrases (e.g. French *entrer dans la maison en courant*, 'enter the house running'). Reshöft aims to determine whether EFL learners' lexicalisation patterns for describing motion events are influenced by their mother tongue. With this aim in view, she analyses data from the International Corpus of Learner English produced by French, Italian and Spanish-speaking learners of English (i.e. with a verb-framed L1) and compares them to data from the British National Corpus produced by native speakers of English (i.e. with a satellite-framed L1). Her study shows that the learners tend to transfer the lexicalisation patterns of their L1 to the L2, which manifests itself, most notably, by the low frequency and weak diversity of manner verbs in their EFL production, or the small number of paths when they describe motion events.

In the last chapter, which also corresponds to the third and final part of the volume (pp. 317-348), **Anke Beger** investigates the metaphorical conceptualisations

of experts in psychology and laypersons to refer to anger, love and sadness in English. The study compares performance data from psychology guides from the Internet, where people can obtain expert advice about their emotional problems, and elicited data from interviews with randomly chosen people on the topic of emotions. The combination of the two methodologies makes it possible to confirm the initial hypothesis according to which experts and laypersons draw on (partly) different conceptual metaphors when describing emotions, with a tendency among experts to use metaphors as analytical tools that allow for therapeutic reframing (e.g. by claiming that ANGER IS A VEIL, which suggests that the cause of the problem is to be found in some unexposed emotions). At the same time, it leads to a refinement of the hypothesis, as it appears that laypersons may present different conceptualisations depending on their level of emotional involvement; thus, the metaphor LOVE IS A STRUCTURED OBJECT (as exemplified by *building and maintaining healthy relationships*) hardly ever occurs among the laypersons seeking advice on the Internet (who are presumably troubled by the emotion), but is more common among the interviewees who are invited to talk about love outside the discourse of counselling.

While all the chapters adopt a cognitively-oriented perspective, the book will be of interest to corpus linguists for several reasons. The first one has to do with the obvious link that exists between the cognitive usage-based approach and the framework of corpus linguistics (Schönefeld refers to corpus-linguistic methodology as “the most likely form of usage-based approaches” (p. 18); see also Gries and Stefanowitsch 2006, Stefanowitsch and Gries 2006 or Grondelaers *et al.* 2007, among others). In fact, this book and the studies it contains should encourage researchers to provide corpus linguistics with the theoretical foundation that it is often said to be lacking (see, e.g., Grabe and Kaplan 1996: 46), since indications are given as to how corpus analysis can be combined with theory. Another reason why this book should appeal to corpus linguists is that the focus is on converging evidence “in practice” (p. 24), with most of the papers relying on corpus data and dealing with topics that are dear to corpus linguists such as phraseology or language acquisition. As for the theoretical issues that do arise, they are always clearly defined and explained in a way that is also accessible to non-cognitivists. What adds to the reader-friendliness of the volume is its great internal coherence. It includes a number of cross-references, especially to the two introductory chapters, from which the authors borrow a number of key concepts, such as ‘converging evidence’ (p. 1ff.), ‘phenomenological pluralism’ (p. 40ff.) or ‘empirical cycle’ (p. 9ff.). Paradoxically, however, this feature may at times become a weakness. This is particularly true for the idea of converging evidence. While some papers are perfect illustrations of the multi-methodological approach (for instance, Backus and Mos’s combination of corpus analysis and magnitude estimation), others are less representative examples, limiting themselves, for example, to the comparison of empirical data from one corpus with intuition-based claims from the literature or hypotheses formulated by the authors introspectively, which one could see as no more than the application of a traditional corpus-based (top-down) method. As a result, the term ‘converging (or diverging) evidence’, which all the authors use at least once, tends to become some sort of empty shell (or umbrella term, to put it more positively), covering the testing of hypotheses or claims from previous research (Reshöft), the combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis (Steinkrauss), the use of several corpora (Höche) or the comparison of two languages (Borgwaldt and Benczes). In this respect, some authors’ efforts to apply the concept of converging evidence to their own study seem slightly artificial, as illustrated by Steinkrauss who refers to the challenge of having to provide converging

evidence “when just one corpus of one speaker is analyzed – a classical case study – and when neither other corpora nor another methodology may be used to gain further evidence” (pp. 253–254). More generally, one may regret that the volume does not exemplify a wider variety of (combinations of) methods, especially from the experimental side (in this regard, Borgwaldt and Benczes’s novel object naming task is probably the most experimental approach one can find in the book), and that some of the studies have a relatively thin empirical basis (e.g. the spoken production of one single child, 67 occurrences of a phraseological expression or 43 relevant tokens of a syntactic construction). This, however, is mainly a reflection of the nature of the event from which the book originated, namely a conference of linguists (not psycholinguists) working within the framework of cognitive linguistics, a theoretical paradigm that has only recently started to employ authentic empirical evidence. Furthermore, none of the above criticisms should detract from the quality of the book and the editor’s merit in having brought these papers together and invested time in this project (as is apparent from the authors’ acknowledgements, many of which explicitly refer to Doris Schönefeld). Not only does the resulting work show how data from different sources (and, sometimes, different domains) can be combined with each other in linguistic research, but it also demonstrates that the convergence (or divergence, for that matter) of evidence makes it possible to go one step further by confirming results obtained with a different methodology, refining a hypothesis which can then be tested again against the same or different data, correcting claims from the literature or theoretical models developed on the basis of intuition, providing new insights into certain linguistic phenomena that could not have been produced by a single source of evidence, or more simply expanding our understanding of the relations between different types of data and different methodologies (see also Gilquin and Gries 2009). Hopefully, this selection of studies will support a movement, increasingly noticeable in more recent linguistic research, away from methodological monism and towards triangulation of methods, an approach that should be facilitated by today’s easier access to data and tools to analyse them, as well as closer collaborations between linguists and researchers from other fields.

References

- Bolinger, Dwight L. 1974. Concept and percept: Two infinitive constructions and their vicissitudes. In N. O. Gakkai (ed.). *World papers in phonetics: Festschrift for Dr. Onishi’s Kiju*, 65–91. Tokyo: Phonetic Society of Japan.
- Gilquin, Gaëtanelle and Stefan Th. Gries. 2009. Corpora and experimental methods: A state-of-the-art review. *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory* 5(1): 1–26.
- Grabe, William and Robert B. Kaplan. 1996. *Theory and practice of writing. An applied linguistic perspective*. London & New York: Longman.
- Gries, Stefan Th. and Anatol Stefanowitsch (eds.). 2006. *Corpora in cognitive linguistics: Corpus-based approaches to syntax and lexis*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Grondelaers, Stefan, Dirk Geeraerts and Dirk Speelman. 2007. A case for a cognitive corpus linguistics. In M. Gonzalez-Marquez, I. Mittelberg, S. Coulson and M. J. Spivey (eds.). *Methods in cognitive linguistics*, 149–169. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Noël, Dirk. 2003. Is there semantics in all syntax? The case of accusative and infinitive constructions vs. *that*-clauses. In G. Rohdenburg and B. Mondorf

- (eds.). *Determinants of grammatical variation in English*, 347–377. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Stefanowitsch, Anatol and Stefan Th. Gries (eds.). 2006. *Corpus-based approaches to metaphor and metonymy*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Talmy, Leonard. 1985. Lexicalization patterns: Semantic structure in lexical forms. In T. Shopen (ed.). *Language typology and semantic description. Vol. 3: Grammatical categories and the lexicon*, 57–149. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.