



Constructions at Work: The Nature of Generalization in Language

Adele Goldberg

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This book investigates the nature of generalization in language and examines how language is known by adults and acquired by children. It looks at how and why constructions are learned, the relation between their forms and functions, and how cross-linguistic and language-internal generalizations about them can be explained.

Constructions at Work is divided into three parts: in the first Professor Goldberg provides an overview of constructionist approaches, including the constructionist approach to argument structure, and argues for a usage-based model of grammar. In Part II she addresses issues concerning how generalizations are constrained and constructional generalizations are learned. In Part III the author shows that a combination of function and processing accounts for a wide range of language-internal and cross-linguistic generalizations. She then considers the degree to which the function of constructions explains their distribution and examines cross-linguistic tendencies in argument realization. She demonstrates that pragmatic and cognitive processes account for the data without appeal to stipulations that are language-specific.

This book is an important contribution to the study of how language operates in the mind and in the world and how these operations relate. It is of central interest for scholars and graduate-level students in all branches of theoretical linguistics and psycholinguistics. It will also appeal to cognitive scientists and philosophers concerned with language and its acquisition.

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