

**“It’s constructions all the way down:”
Learning L2 Vocabulary and L2 Grammar in the German Frame-based Online Lexicon
(G-FOL)**

When acquiring vocabulary, L2 learners must understand a word’s form, meaning, and use, which involves more than memorizing one-to-one correlations between languages. Frame Semantics (Fillmore 1982), an approach to words as evoking a common theme or “frame,” provides language learners and teachers a way to organize vocabulary meaningfully and thus functionally. At the same time, L2 learners must also learn grammatical constructions at different levels of abstraction, or, in Goldberg’s (2006) words: “It’s constructions all the way down.” This paper shows how L2 learners of German can learn both (more) abstract grammatical patterns while at the same time also learning item-specific knowledge that instantiates these patterns at the lexical level.

Integrating insights from Pedagogical Construction Grammar (Herbst 2016, Boas 2022), section 1 of this paper first provides an overview of the structure and content of the German Frame-based Online Lexicon (G-FOL; Boas et al. 2016; www.coerll.utexas.edu/frames/), a beginning learner’s dictionary of German for speakers of English based on semantic frames (Fillmore & Baker 2010). At the center of discussion is the pedagogical implementation of the theoretical notion of grammatical construction as a pairing of form with meaning/function, which serves as the organizational backbone of G-FOL’s architecture.

Section 2 shows that grammar can be made more accessible to students by relating it in a way that highlights its purpose and function in the target language and embeds the grammatical structures in meaningful contexts. We take German’s dative case and ditransitive construction (both modeled in terms of constructions) as our examples, demonstrating strategies and techniques for first teaching their meaning and then practicing their use, all in the context of buying and selling (according to the four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing). First, we present the *Buying* and *Selling* frames (including related vocabulary and grammar). Then we demonstrate how to introduce *Buying* and *Selling* to students and use it to teach the meaning of the ditransitive construction (e.g. *Die Mutter kauft ihrem Sohn einen neuen Rucksack.* ‘The mother is buying her son a new backpack.’) with a focus on the dative case.

Section 3 discusses a number of sample activities provided by G-FOL that help students practice the four skills using the *Buying* and *Selling* frames to contextualize new vocabulary and grammar. These demonstrations will show how instructors can draw on existing knowledge structures (knowledge of a buying and selling scenario) to contextualize their teaching and learning activities both inside and outside the classroom. The paper closes with a proposal for integrating other types of grammatical patterns and constructions that exhibit certain patterns of regularities such as the reflexive construction with German verbs of grooming (e.g. *sich waschen*, *sich rasieren*, etc.), thereby leading to a better understanding of how Construction Grammar and Frame Semantics can be fruitfully integrated into a broader pedagogical model with concrete applications to support the teaching and learning of foreign languages (see Holme 2010, Holme 2015, Lorenz et al. 2020, Gemmill Hudson 2022).

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