CHAPTER 13

Brutal Brits and persuasive Americans

Variety-specific meaning construction in the *into*-causative

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"England and America are two nations divided by a common language."
(George Bernard Shaw)

Adopting a construction-based view of language (Goldberg 1995), we demonstrate that it is possible to uncover differences between British and American English at the lexico-syntactic level, showing that the collexemes, i.e. the words significantly associated with a construction, are variety-dependent. To this end, we compare more than 5,000 verb pair types as they occur in the two varieties in the so-called *into*-causative construction (as in *He tricked me into employing him*) and submit them to the scrutiny of a statistical test called distinctive collexeme analysis, which identifies those verbs that distinguish best between the two varieties. Interesting contrasts emerge, such as the predominance of verbal persuasion verbs in the cause predicate slot of the American English data as opposed to the predominance of physical force verbs in the cause predicate slot of the British English data. We discuss how these and other results create a picture of subtle, yet systematic, differences in meaning construction, and we offer an explanation of these differences as reflecting differently entrenched semantic frames.

Keywords: British/American English, Construction Grammar, syntax–lexis interface, collostructional analysis, corpus linguistics, culture, dialectal variation, *into*-causative construction, meaning potential, semantic frame

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, the growing availability of variety-specific corpora has generated an increasing number of studies of regional varieties. With respect to the two major national varieties of English, British English and American, these studies already cover an impressive range of topics as diverse as vocabulary use (Leech and Fallon 1992), differences in conversational style (Tottie 1991), or the distinctive use of modal verbs (Nakamura 1993; Oakes 1992). Moreover, several studies have also documented grammatical differences between the two varieties (compare, among others, Biber 1987; Tottie 2002; Crystal 2004). However, the general

view still is that, as opposed to the obvious and well-documented phonological and lexical differences, "grammatical differences may be more subtle than the lexical ones" (Tottie 2002: 146), with "very few being general points of syntactic construction" (Crystal 2004: 311), so ultimately "non-trivial syntactic differences between British and American English have been notably harder to find in corpus-based studies" (Kennedy 1998: 193) than phonological, lexical, or discursive differences.

In the present chapter, we intend to show how new insights can be gained by adopting a construction-based perspective. Dialectal variation has hardly, if at all, been investigated in Construction Grammar, so we hope to show that this framework can provide new opportunities for this field of research, since it allows us to focus primarily on the syntax–lexis interface rather than phonology, morpho-syntax or lexis. Specifically, our approach, which is based on *distinctive collexeme analysis* (Gries and Stefanowitsch 2004a), is geared towards pinpointing subtle, yet systematic differences in the way that grammatical patterns found in both varieties are lexically filled. Taking the example of the so-called *into*-causative construction, we show that, although two such highly similar varieties as British and American English will, of course, share the same inventory of grammatical patterns to a large extent, they may nevertheless differ substantially in meaning construction, i.e., the uses to which they put these patterns.

2. A construction-based approach

The theoretical approach we adopt here is Construction Grammar as developed by, among others, Goldberg (1995, 1996) and Lakoff (1987). The central notion of Construction Grammar is the construction, which is defined as follows:

> A construction is […] a pairing of form and meaning/use such that some aspect of the form or some aspect of the meaning is not strictly predictable from the component parts or from other constructions already established to exist in the language. (Goldberg 1996: 68)

Note that this definition does not distinguish between different kinds of 'pairings of form and meaning.' Like some other current theories of language, Construction Grammar no longer assumes a strict division between grammar and lexicon: the linguistic system is viewed as a continuum which covers the whole range from fully lexically specified constructions (e.g., morphemes or words) to partially specified constructions (such as the *What's* X *doing* Y-construction; cf. Kay and Fillmore 1999) to abstract constructions (for example, argument structure constructions or tense and aspect).

In order to capture the relationship between constructions of different degrees of abstraction, Construction Grammar makes two fundamental assumptions. First,

since morphemes, words, and the larger, more abstract constructions they occur in are attributed an independent and meaningful status, the words that may occur in a construction must be semantically compatible with the meaning of the construction (or, more precisely, the meaning of the constructional slot into which the word is inserted; cf. Goldberg 1995: 59–66.). Secondly, the so-called *Principle of No Synonymy* states that "if two constructions are syntactically distinct, they must be semantically or pragmatically distinct" (cf. Goldberg 1995: 67).

One major strategy to detect these semantic or pragmatic differences is to investigate those elements of a construction that are variable, i.e. the lexical elements that occupy the 'free' slots in a construction. Evidence in favor of the necessity of semantic compatibility and the *Principle of No Synonymy* originally came from the investigation of classic 'alternation' phenomena, such as dative movement, the *load*/*spray* alternation, the active/passive alternation, particle movement, and others. Each of these cases has been shown to consist of two distinct constructions, each with its own semantics and/or pragmatics (cf. Goldberg 1995, 2002; Gries and Stefanowitsch 2004a). Moreover, even constructions which were formerly attributed the status of mere surface structure variants can be distinguished on the basis of the words that they typically attract (cf., e.g., Wulff 2006 on *go*–V vs. *go-and*-V in English).

In the present analysis, we give this approach a slightly new twist: we do not ask to what extent two highly synonymous or syntactically indifferent constructions can be distinguished by looking at their lexical inserts, but rather to what extent we can distinguish British English and American English on the basis of the verbal predicates that British and American speakers insert when they make use of a construction that is part of the inventory of both varieties. In a more technical parlance, we show that the predicates that are attracted to (or repelled by) the construction in question are variety-dependent. While the present study can only begin to outline the potential of a collostructional approach to meaning construction in different cultures, it appears reasonable to start out with a construction that denotes a concept that is fundamental to all cultures. One such concept that lies at the heart of any culture and accordingly continues to inspire (particularly cognitively oriented) linguistic analyses is causation. Therefore, the particular construction that we focus on in the present study to illustrate our line of reasoning is the so-called *into*-causative construction.

3. Previous studies of the *into*-causative

The *into*-causative is a construction which is used to denote a causative event by explicitly stating the causer and causee of this event as well as both the action that the

causer performed to cause the event (the cause predicate, e.g. *trick* in (1a)) and the resulting action that the causee performs in response to the causer's action (the result predicate, e.g. *employ* in (1a)). It is formally restricted in that the result predicate obligatorily follows the preposition *into* and only occurs in its gerundial form.

(1) a. He tricked me into employing him.
b. They were forced into formulating an opinion.
c. We conned a grown-up into buying the tickets.

In her analysis of the *into*-causative, Wierzbicka (1998) notes that the cause predicates occurring in it typically imply, or are at least compatible with, the idea of manipulation. She also points out that the number of potential cause predicates is limited, claiming that while one can *trick*, *manoeuvre*, and also *talk* a person into doing something, one cannot *encourage* or *induce* a person into doing something.

Similarly, Hunston and Francis's (2000) corpus-based analysis of the *into*-causative leads them to conclude that the construction ("pattern", in their terminology) is associated with "some kind of forcefulness or even coercion" (Hunston and Francis 2000: 16). This is also reflected in the fact that the cause predicates often denote negative emotions (their examples include verbs such as *frighten*, *intimidate*, *panic*, *scare*, *terrify*, *shock*, and *shame*), or ways of speaking cleverly or deviously (*talk*, *coax*, *cajole*, *charm*, and *browbeat*).

Gries and Stefanowitsch (2004b) elaborated on earlier studies in several respects: they opted for a maximally objective data selection by including all attestations of the *into*-causative in their corpus, and they considered both the cause and the result predicates. Most importantly, they provided a quantitative assessment of the association strength between the construction and the verbs that occur in it, as well as of possible interaction between the cause and the result predicates, by employing a technique from the family of methods called *collostructional analysis*. Since we also employ a technique from this family of methods, we will explain collostructional analysis and the results in more detail in what follows.

Collostructional analysis is a family of three methods for determining the direction and the strength of the association between a given construction and the words that occur in one or more of its slots (hence its name, a blend of *collocation* and *construction*) (cf. Stefanowitsch and Gries 2003; Gries and Stefanowitsch 2004a, b; Stefanowitsch and Gries 2005). Gries and Stefanowitsch (2004b) apply one of these methods, *co-varying collexeme analysis*, to identify those pairs of cause and result predicates that are strongly attracted to each other in the *into*-causative in British English (on the basis of the 1990–2000 volumes of *The Guardian*). For a brief illustration of this method, consider the association between the verbs *bounce* and *accept* in the cause and the result slots of the *into*-causative, respectively. In order to determine whether these are strongly attracted to each other in the *into*-causative,

Table 1. 2-by-2 matrix for ***bounce into accepting*** in the 1990–2000 volumes of *The Guardian*

	accepting	**other verbs**	**Row totals**
bounce	*29*	82	111
	(5.2)	(105.8)	
other verbs	267	5,910	6,177
	(290.8)	(5886.2)	
Column totals	296	5,992	*6,288*

the following frequencies are required and entered into a two-by-two table as in Table 1 (the italicized values are determined through corpus analysis, the remaining ones can be determined via subtraction):

- the frequency of *bounce* in the cause slot of the *into*-causative (111);
- the frequency of *accepting* in the result slot of the *into*-causative (296);
- the frequency of *bounce into accepting* in the *into*-causative (29);
- the frequency of the *into*-causative (6,288).

In a first step, the frequencies expected on the basis of chance are computed; they are given in parentheses in Table 1. It is immediately obvious that *bounce into accepting* occurs much more frequently than expected by chance: it is attracted to the *into*-causative. To test this result for significance, the table is then subjected to the Fisher-Yates exact test (cf. Stefanowitsch and Gries 2003 for justification), which outputs a *p*-value providing the probability to obtain the observed table or all more extreme ones. In our example, the *p*-value is 1.095273E–14. This value means that the probability of getting the result in Table 1 is statistically highly significant ($p<0.001$). In Gries and Stefanowitsch's terminology, *bounce into accepting* is a (significant) co-varying collexeme of the *into*-causative. Once this method is applied to all of the 3,908 pairs of cause and result predicates in the data set, all significant pairs can be ranked on the basis of their *p*-values (note that for expository reasons, the *p*-values are transformed into a negative base-ten logarithm (cf. Stefanowitsch and Gries 2005), but obviously this does not affect the ranking). Table 2 lists the 25 most strongly associated cause-result predicate pairs identified by the co-varying collexeme analysis.

In their interpretation of the results, Gries and Stefanowitsch (2004b: 229) conclude that "[m]ost striking of these pairs is that many of them seem to be based on frame-semantic knowledge of varying degrees of culture-specificity about […] what frames stand in an entrenched cause-effect relationship in a particular culture." A prominent example is the linkage of commercial transaction verbs with what Gries and Stefanowitsch refer to as the TRICKERY frame: *con into paying* and *mislead into buying* are examples of this association in Table 2, further examples in their data include *lure into purchasing* and *dupe into paying*. From such cases, "a cul-

Table 2. Most significant V_{cause}-V_{result} co-varying collexemes in the *into*-causative in the 1990–2000 volumes of *The Guardian* (cf. Gries and Stefanowitsch 2004: 230)

V_{cause}	V_{result}	N	-log ($p_{Fisher\text{-}Yates}$)
bounce	*accepting*	29	14.074
torture	*confessing*	8	13.155
draw	*commenting*	6	10.581
shock	*understanding*	7	10.483
stimulate	*producing*	6	9.330
dupe	*carrying*	8	7.244
con	*paying*	16	7.019
hoodwink	*leaving*	8	6.982
mislead	*buying*	14	6.980
delude	*supposing*	3	6.792
terrorise	*fleeing*	4	6.762
talk	*letting*	12	6.743
dupe	*leaving*	13	6.609
force	*making*	51	6.546
pressure	*having*	14	6.505
bounce	*announcing*	6	6.100
shame	*cleaning*	4	5.953
dragoon	*voting*	7	5.899
swing	*planning*	2	5.518
fool	*queuing*	3	5.435
lock	*using*	5	5.406
guide	*lending*	2	5.372
rush	*making*	11	5.305
educate	*understanding*	3	5.296
fool	*seeing*	6	5.180

tural model emerges of the buyer as a passive participant in the commercial transaction, exploited (and relatively easily so) by others for their own gain" (Gries and Stefanowitsch 2004b: 232). Another example is a strong association between verbs denoting coercion and what Gries and Stefanowitsch (2004b) refer to as a CONFESSION frame: people are preferably *tortured*, *beaten*, *intimidated*, *trapped*, and *coerced* into confessing. In addition, Gries and Stefanowitsch (2004b: 231–2) observe a more general semantic factor at work in British English, namely a weak but significant preference to conceptualize causation in the physical domain (as opposed to mental or communicative causation). This tendency is reflected by physical cause predicates being twice as frequent as mental cause predicates, and action result verbs being even 37 times more frequent than cognition result verbs. Given these culture-specific explanations, the present study sets out to answer the question to what extent we can expect to find the same patterns in another variety of English, or if the way the *into*-causative is put to use is actually variety-specific.

4. The *into*-causative in British vs. American English

4.1 Methods

More technically speaking, the question is how to identify, out of the set of all predicates that occur in the *into*-causative in the cause or the result slot in either variety, those predicates that actually distinguish between British and American English such that they are more typical of one variety as opposed to the other. In other words, we are now identifying those collexemes that actually distinguish best between the two varieties, using another extension of collostructional analysis, the so-called *distinctive collexeme analysis*, which is specifically geared towards this kind of question.

Distinctive collexeme analysis was originally designed to measure the dissimilarity of semantically similar constructions; we adapt it here to measure the dissimilarity of the same construction in two varieties. To illustrate this adaptation, consider Table 3, which displays the frequency values required for a distinctive collexeme analysis of *talk*: the frequency of *talk* in the cause slot of the *into*-causative in American English[1] and British English (i.e., 487 and 192, respectively) as well as the frequencies of the *into*-causative in the two varieties (i.e., 3,467 and 6,287, respectively).

As the expected frequencies show, *talk* occurs much more frequently than expected in the cause slot of the AmE construction and much less frequently in the cause slot of the BrE construction. This association is highly significant (Fisher-Yates exact test, p=3.416513E–85; $p_{log\text{-}transformed}$=84.47). Thus, *talk* distinguishes very well between American and British English; it qualifies as a distinctive collexeme for American English. In the following section, we will discuss the results of two distinctive collexeme analyses, one for the cause slot and one for the result slot.

Table 3. Two-by-two matrix for *talk* in the cause slot of the *into*-causative in American English vs. British English

	American English	**British English**	**Row totals**
talk	*478*	*192*	670
	(238.1)	(431.9)	
other verbs	2,989	6,095	9,084
	(3,228.9)	(5,855.1)	
Column totals	3,467	*6,287*	9,754

Note: the overall frequency of the *into*-causative construction is 6,287, while Table 1 reports it to be 6,288. This is due to a misclassified token which was removed from the data sample only after the publication of Gries and Stefanowitsch (2004b).

1. The American data were taken from the 1992 volumes of the *L. A. Times*.

4.2 Results concerning the cause slots

Let us first turn to the cause predicates that the distinctive collexeme analysis identified. Table 4 provides an overview of all distinctive collexemes for British and American English ranked according to their negative log-transformed *p*-values.

Table 4. Distinctive collexemes of the *into*-causative in British and American English

British English		**American English**	
V_{cause}	-log ($p_{Fisher\text{-}Yates}$)	V_{cause}	-log ($p_{Fisher\text{-}Yates}$)
pressurize	25.004	*talk*	84.466
bounce	18.211	*pressure*	39.928
panic	14.899	*prod*	20.239
bully	14.455	*coax*	11.790
dragoon	5.743	*coerce*	8.782
tempt	5.710	*scare*	4.697
sting	5.541	*snooker*	4.046
provoke	5.380	*parlay*	3.146
push	4.781	*entice*	2.774
lead	4.734	*guide*	2.202
con	4.342	*draft*	2.009
throw	4.215	*rope*	1.869
pressgang	4.202	*turn*	1.797
force	4.063	*plunge*	1.621
prompt	3.390	*bait*	1.547
hustle	3.055	*badger*	1.440
persuade	2.963	*threaten*	1.410
inveigle	2.907	*strongarm*	1.284
fool	2.880	*frustrate*	1.244
terroris|ze	2.480		
bludgeon	2.464		
brainwash	2.456		
draw	2.350		
hoodwink	2.166		
galvanise	2.165		
chivvy	1.908		
sidetrack	1.908		
frighten	1.787		
seduce	1.738		
encourage	1.731		
guilttrip	1.718		
kickstart	1.718		
beguile	1.676		
educate	1.569		
bamboozle	1.550		
bomb	1.527		
delude	1.527		
stir	1.527		

British English		American English	
V_{cause}	-log ($p_{Fisher\text{-}Yates}$)	V_{cause}	-log ($p_{Fisher\text{-}Yates}$)
browbeat	1.509		
terrify	1.504		
nag	1.408		
blackmail	1.393		
stimulate	1.387		
torture	1.349		
trigger	1.336		

While this mere list of distinctive collexemes may not be very revealing, systematic differences in the usage of the *into*-causative become apparent once these distinctive collexemes are grouped into larger semantic classes. The semantic classes were arrived at as follows. First, the three authors of this chapter classified the distinctive collexemes separately. The resulting three classifications and semantic classes were then checked for consistency. Verbs and classes which had not been used by all three authors were finally re-classified on the condition that finally a maximum number of distinctive collexemes be captured by a minimum number of semantic classes. The resulting classes are verbs denoting communication (e.g. *talk*), negative emotion (e.g. *terrify*), physical force (e.g. *push*), stimulation (e.g. *prompt*), threatening (e.g. *blackmail*), and trickery (e.g. *bamboozle*).[2]

The distinctiveness of each collexeme (or class of collexemes) for either variety is reflected in two pieces of information: first, the ranks of the collexemes in the list, and second, their *p*-values. Accordingly, Table 5 shows the distribution of all distinctive collexemes according to semantic class and variety, and Table 6 provides the corresponding summed log-transformed *p*-values per class and variety. In British English, for instance, we see in Table 5 that there are 17 distinctive collexemes that denote physical force; in the corresponding cell in Table 6, we find the sum of the *p*-values of these 17 verbs, which amounts to 88.16. In American English, there are only 9 verbs denoting physical force, so on the basis of Table 5 alone, one might conclude that this semantic class is much more strongly associated with the British variety. However, as can be seen in Table 6, the sum of the *p*-values of these 9 American English collexemes amounts to 81.77. That is, the number of verbs denoting physical force is smaller in American English, but then the individual association

2. As can be seen in Table 5, we agreed on one exception to this principle: the class of communication verbs comprises only two verbs. However, one of these two verbs, *talk*, is the by far most distinctive collexeme for American English (its log-transformed *p*-value of 84.466 is twice as high as the one yielded by the one following in the American English ranking, *pressure* (39.928), and even four times as high as the highest one for British English, *pressurize* (25.004)). It was felt that this should be reflected in the semantic classification as well.

Table 5. Distribution of distinctive collexemes according to semantic classes

Semantic class	British English	American English	Row totals
Communication	–	2	2
Negative emotion	7	3	10
Physical force	17	9	26
Stimulation	8	–	8
Threatening	4	1	5
Trickery	9	3	12
Column totals	45	18	63

Table 6. Distribution of summed log-transformed Fisher Yates Exact *p*-values of distinctive collexemes according to semantic classes

	British English	American English	Row totals
Communication	–	86.48	86.48
Negative emotion	28.86	7.38	36.24
Physical force	88.16	81.77	169.93
Stimulation	20.00	–	20.00
Threatening	24.07	1.41	25.48
Trickery	21.24	16.11	37.35
Column totals	182.33	193.15	375.47

strengths of these verbs are, on average, higher in American English than in British English.

Looking at Tables 5 and 6, we find that communication verbs are highly distinctive for the American variety – this class comprises only two verbs, yet the summed *p*-values in Table 6 strongly suggest that the *into*-causative is very strongly associated with communication in American English (as opposed to British English).

A second striking difference between British and American English can be observed with respect to the class of stimulation verbs. While a variety of British English verbs can be grouped into this class (such as *tempt*, *prompt*, or *trigger*), not a single verb among the distinctive collexemes of American English licenses such a (primary) classification. This contrast between British and American English turns out to be even stronger if we treat the class of threatening verbs as a subclass of stimulation verbs – one can conceive of threatening acts as an act of negative stimulation. A closer look at the British English stimulation verb examples lends further credence to the view that the two classes are semantically highly similar (and besides, it nicely illustrates the interplay between constructional and lexical semantics, thus strengthening the case for a construction-based perspective). While verbs like *encourage* and *stimulate* generally have a neutral or even positive connotation, we find that in the *into*-causative, these verbs are not to be interpreted in their default senses; rather, senses have been selected which allow for a negative interpret-

ation, mostly involving effort (cf. (2a) and (2b)). Moreover, in some cases, the actually intended reading is even provided by an additional, less polysemous verb to draw attention to the discrepancy between the way in which the causer describes his/her action and the evaluation of the causer's action by the causee or some bystander/observer, as in (2c).

(2) a. It seems astonishing that millennia of evolution have not educated our bodies into accepting their mature phase, but clearly the female body feels threatened by redundancy.
b. So dull is it that dinners have been held so that old retainers can be stimulated into recalling jolly anecdotes which can be injected into Robin Harris and John O'Sullivan's ghostmanship.
c. At the moment the victims of the Barings' debacle are being encouraged – some would say manipulated – into focussing their attention on Malaysia . . .

Verbs denoting negative emotion also occur more frequently in the British variety, and their summed *p*-values of 28.86 as opposed to 7.38 for American English indicate that this semantic class is more typical of British than American English. In a way, this ties in well with the above results such that the creation of bad feelings to make the causee comply with the causer's intentions seems to be a semantic aspect that is particularly emphasized in British English.

With respect to the class of physical force, the distribution of verbs seems to point towards a stronger distinctiveness for British English, but a look at the summed *p*-values reveals that this skewed distribution is not reflected in the association strengths, which are of comparable magnitude for both varieties (88.16 and 81.77, respectively). These *p*-values are the highest next to the ones yielded for communication verbs in American English, so we can conclude that physical force is indeed highly associated with the *into*-causative regardless of the variety.

Last but not least, let us point towards a yet more subtle difference between the two varieties which goes beyond the semantic classes. While in British English the cause predicates typically denote an action by which the causee is set into motion, be it literal or metaphorical motion (consider *sting*, *provoke*, *chivvy*, *stir*, *stimulate*, *trigger*, etc.), a number of the American English cause predicates denote exactly the opposite concept: verbs such as *snooker* or *rope* denote actions by which the causee is not set into motion, but rather fixed to a certain position, restricted in his/her mobility, and thereby forced to undergo some treatment (note that this tendency persists if one considers not only the significant distinctive collexemes, but rather the complete set of verbs that occur in the *into*-causative). This tendency may hint at a difference between British and American English with regard to what is conceived of as negative manipulation.

4.3 Results concerning the result slots

Let us now turn to the result predicates that are distinctive for either variety. Table 7 shows those distinctive for the British variety, Table 8 those for American English.

Looking at Table 7 and Table 8, we first of all see that while verbs denoting communication are rare among the cause predicates in British English, they are substantially more prominent among the result predicates (e.g. *concede*, *answer*, *suppose*, *back*, *announce*, or *say*). In American English, the opposite holds: there is only one verb, *plead*, which denotes communication (although it has to be admitted here that *plead* is the most significant of all distinctive collexemes). On the other hand, the majority of American English result predicates are light verbs (*let*, *come*, *have*, and *get*), or verbs denoting very general, unspecified actions (*be*), while we find only one light verb, namely *make*, among the distinctive collexemes of the British variety.

Table 7. Result predicates distinctive for British English

V_{result}	-log ($p_{Fisher\text{-}Yates}$)	V_{result}	-log ($p_{Fisher\text{-}Yates}$)
handing	5.660	*taking*	1.762
conceding	4.719	*presenting*	1.718
accepting	4.415	*sacking*	1.718
parting	3.414	*backing*	1.637
following	3.133	*setting*	1.593
producing	2.870	*booking*	1.527
creating	2.808	*collaborating*	1.527
understanding	2.738	*announcing*	1.427
opting	2.290	*standing*	1.340
offering	2.106	*working*	1.375
making	2.057	*abandoning*	1.374
answering	1.908	*saying*	1.359
supposing	1.908	*cutting*	1.347
feeling	1.845	*embracing*	1.336

5. Summary

By means of the distinctive collexeme analysis, we could detect a variety of differences in the way British and American speakers make use of the same construction.[3] These findings call for a modification of the opening quotation by Shaw: the

3. At this point, the attentive reader may ask why we did not also present a comparison of the co-varying collexemes of each variety—as a matter of fact, we did a distinctive collexeme analysis for all verb pairs in the two varieties; however, the results thereby obtained did not reveal anything substantial that was not already captured by considering the cause and result predicates separately. Moreover, it is worth pointing out here that Stefanowitsch and Gries (2005) even identified significant trigrams which comprise a co-varying collexeme pair and the *into-*

Table 8. Result predicates distinctive for American English

V_{result}	-log ($p_{Fisher\text{-}Yates}$)	V_{result}	-log ($p_{Fisher\text{-}Yates}$)
pleading	5.753	*going*[a]	2.016
purchasing	5.753	*smoking*	2.009
letting	4.314	*closing*	1.869
surrendering	3.881	*running*	1.821
donating	3.340	*counseling*	1.797
throwing	3.324	*lending*	1.655
enrolling	3.146	*shooting*	1.570
starting	3.099	*adding*	1.547
being	3.060	*preparing*	1.547
coming	2.891	*slowing*	1.547
trying	2.871	*helping*	1.389
coaching	2.697	*cashing*	1.348
deeding	2.697	*hurrying*	1.348
having	2.545	*mourning*	1.348
staying	2.483	*seducing*	1.348
returning	2.371	*soaring*	1.348
applying	2.271	*getting*	1.341
entering	2.159	*cleaning*	1.334
approving	2.101		

[a] *Going*, just as *running* in this table, seem to point towards a weak tendency for motion verbs in the American result predicates. However, a closer look at the data reveals that *going* hardly ever denotes motion in the literal sense, but is rather used to mean 'visit' (*going to the museum/ballet*) or in combinations like *going public*. With *running*, the picture is similar: in about 50% of the instances, *running* is used in the sense 'run for office' (*running for the Friedman seat* or *running for City Council*).

cultural differences he hinted at indeed find their reflection in the language, too (as they do in folk ideologies *about* language; cf. Milroy 2000). In what follows, we make some suggestions as to how these differences may be accounted for in terms of different preferences in meaning construction.

The term *meaning construction* is used here to mean "the 'selection' of an appropriate interpretation against the context of the utterance" (Evans, Bergen and Zinken To appear: 12). We would like to argue that there is a striking parallel between the pragmatic notions of *interpretation* and *context* and the lexico-syntactic notions of *verb* and *construction* as employed in Construction Grammar: we can conceive of constructions as the contexts that carry a particular meaning potential, that is, a specific range of meaning nuances that may be expressed using the construction. In constructions that are only partially lexically specified, such as the *into*-causative, the range of meanings that can be expressed, that is, the range of interpret-

causative construction (as opposed to trigrams in which either the cause or the result predicate is another verb), but this analysis did not produce any results which are relevant for the present study, either.

ations that we can attribute to the construction, is an interplay of the construction's semantics and the words that are inserted into the construction. Provided that the word's semantics is principally compatible with the construction's semantics, the lexical items inserted into the construction will highlight (or downplay) certain aspects of the construction's meaning potential by contributing their own semantics to the overall pattern.

Bearing the basic assumption in mind that meaning construction is conceptualization (Evans and Green 2006: 162–3), which is, among other things, fundamentally shaped by a speaker's cultural input, an interesting question that has hitherto not been investigated in much detail in Construction Grammar is: to what extent is the meaning potential of a construction variety-specific? That is, to what extent can we observe a shift of the range of lexical items that are preferably inserted into the construction if we compare the usage of the same construction in two varieties?

The collostructional approach as adopted here allows us to investigate this question systematically: collostructional analysis identifies and quantifies the variety-specific meaning potential of a construction. The significantly attracted collexemes are those that constitute the spectrum of compatible meanings, with those ranking higher being closer to the core of the construction's semantics than those ranking lower in association strength. Likewise, the significantly repelled collexemes give us a clue as to the limits of this spectrum. Moreover, by means of distinctive collexeme analysis, we can also identify variety-specific preferences in meaning construction. So how can one explain the differences in preferred meaning construction in British and American English as they show up in the *into*-causative?

Beforehand, two caveats are in order. Firstly, while collostructional analysis itself is a maximally objective method, it goes without saying that the interpretation of the results obtained thereby are, by necessity, subjective. This subjective component is even more profound if only a single construction is investigated, so we cannot derive any far-reaching generalizations regarding the cultural motivations for the observed differences here. Still, we can attempt to point toward *plausible* interpretations of the semantic differences observed in terms of differently entrenched semantic frames.

Secondly, it is beyond the scope of the present analysis to discuss the question if and to what extent semantic frames correlate with mental differences or only general cultural tendencies. For the semantic analysis undertaken here, we simply go with the definition of a semantic frame as constituting conventionalized, culture-specific semantic knowledge.

To begin with, the predominance of verbs denoting threatening acts or acts causing negative emotions in British English indicates that this semantic frame is much

more strongly entrenched in British than in American English. Since even verbs which generally denote stimulation in a more neutral sense are overridden by constructional semantics, this can be taken as further evidence for a deep entrenchment of this frame.

Moreover, the contrast between movement-initializing cause predicates in British English as opposed to movement-restricting cause predicates in American English may confirm the commonplace perception that British culture lacks the strong and explicit emphasis on mobility as an essential condition for a happy and free life as we find it in American culture. Indeed, the importance of freedom of movement for Americans also manifests itself elsewhere in language, for instance in the great variety of transportation metaphors in American as compared to British English (cf. Tottie 2002: 138–41).

The second most striking difference we observed was the overwhelming usage of *talk* in the American data, while no real communication verb was among the set of British English distinctive collexemes. Moreover, most of the stimulation, threatening and negative emotion verbs that are so highly distinctive for British English lend themselves much better to an interpretation which involves physical force rather than verbal persuasion or communication. Adding to this the observation that verbs denoting physical force constitute a considerable part of the distinctive collexemes in both varieties, we find that British speakers have a much stronger preference to conceptualize causation as physical action in the sense of physical force. American speakers, on the other hand, also conceptualize causation via communication or verbal persuasion. As already noted above, these conclusions have to be taken with a grain of salt since they are based on the investigation of a single construction only; as a matter of fact, it would be interesting to see to what extent these differences also show up in other causative constructions.

Finally, the high predominance of communication verbs in the result slot in the British variety as opposed to that of light verbs in the American variety suggests that, while the CONFESSION frame is not only typical of, but also distinctive for, British English, American speakers mostly leave the resulting action unspecified when employing the *into*-causative.

To conclude, the present analysis has demonstrated how sophisticated methods such as distinctive collexeme analysis are very useful tools for the investigation of dialectal variation at the lexico-syntactic level. By filtering out those collexemes which are significantly distinctive for either British or American English, distinctive collexeme analysis can identify the (mostly subtle) dialectal differences that might otherwise easily escape the naked eye. It thereby constitutes a major step towards an empirical underpinning of such fundamental cognitive-linguistic concepts as meaning potential or (preferred) meaning constructions.

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