

English Comment Clauses – A Constructional View on Forms, Positions, and Functions

Over the past few decades, the study of comment clauses as in (1), (2), and (3) has attracted considerable scholarly interest, particularly concerning “comment clauses formed with common verbs of perception and cognition” (Brinton 2008: *i*).

- (1) **I reckon** they're made for each other. (BNC_KPG)
- (2) It's not just women's work, **you know**, all that. (BNC_J2F)
- (3) He interfered with her plan to rob the casino, too, **looks like**. (COCA_MAG: Nerdist)

Comment clauses are a “blurry notion”, since “structurally they represent clauses, but functionally they are like disjunct adverbials” (Kaltenböck 2013: 287–289), conveying secondary – i.e. meta-communicative – information (Dehé 2014: 65).

Following a Usage-based Construction Grammar approach (Hilpert 2013, 2014; Schmid 2020), I will study comment clauses from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives, aiming to uncover their historical development and contemporary usage trends – shedding some light on their syntactic, semantic and pragmatic development.

I will propose three sets of similar form-meaning/function constructions, i.e. taxonomically linked, to discuss how the processes of entrenchment and conventionalisation (Schmid 2020) have paved the way from propositional to parenthetical and thus non-compositional uses of the constructions – often showing an interplay of various types of stance.

To this end, this study is organised around four axes: (i) collocational constructions and patterns; (ii) variation and change in complementation constructions; (iii) evidential and epistemic constructions; and (iv) subjective and intersubjective constructions.

To ensure both diachronic breadth and synchronic depth, historical data will be drawn from resources such as *Early English Books Online* (EEBO) and the *Corpus of Historical American English* (COHA). These will be complemented by contemporary corpora, including the *British National Corpus* (BNC) and the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA).

References

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