

## Particle verbs with *weg-* in German: a constructional analysis

Françoise Gallez

Université catholique de Louvain & Université Saint-Louis de Bruxelles

[francoise.gallez@uclouvain.be](mailto:francoise.gallez@uclouvain.be)

### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to provide an analysis of German particle verbs with the particle *weg-* ‘away’ as in *Tattoos weglassern* (lit. ‘to laser tattoos away’ within the framework of Construction Grammar (Goldberg, 1995, 2006; Ziem & Lasch, 2013). The meaning of German *weg-*verbs often being non-compositional, morpho-lexical approaches turn out to be unable to properly account for the meaning of *weg-*constructions. The constructionist approach allows us to shed light on the relationship between morphology and syntax within *weg-*constructions and to account for both lexicalised and non-lexicalised instances of verbs with *weg-*. The analysis is based on the distinction between transitive and reflexive *weg-*constructions, which can occur as caused-motion and resultative constructions. The discussion of various variants of the German *weg-*construction suggests that the *weg-*constructions under investigation are linked to each other in a family of constructions.

**Keywords:** Construction Grammar, argument structure, particle verbs, German, family of constructions

### Résumé

Cet article propose une analyse des verbes à particule allemands avec la particule *weg-*, tels que dans *Tattoos weglassern* ‘faire disparaître les tatouages au laser’, dans le cadre théorique de la Grammaire de construction(s) (Goldberg, 1995, 2006 ; Ziem & Lasch, 2013). Le sens des verbes allemands avec *weg-* ne peut être rendu uniquement par l’analyse morpho-lexicale du verbe et de la particule. En incluant dans la description d’autres éléments présents dans des unités de forme et de sens plus larges que le verbe, la Grammaire de construction(s) permet de montrer la relation entre morphologie et syntaxe au sein des constructions et de décrire les instances lexicalisées et non lexicalisées des verbes avec *weg-*. Cette analyse constructionnelle s’appuie sur la distinction entre les constructions transitives et réflexives. Elle rend compte de la diversité des instances des constructions allemandes avec *weg-*, des similitudes et différences entre celles-ci, et montre qu’elles sont reliées entre elles dans une famille de constructions.

**Mots clefs :** Grammaire de construction(s), structure argumentale, verbes à particules, allemand, famille de constructions

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Constructions with particle verbs are frequent and productive in German and therefore contribute to the expansion of the German lexicon. These verbs have been the subject of morphological and structural studies (for a discussion, see amongst others Krause, 2011; Müller, 2002) and in recent years they have been examined within the framework of Construction Grammar (see, for example, Goldberg (2016) for English; Olofsson (2014) for Swedish; Knobloch (2009), Dewell (2011), (2015), Felfe (2012), (2018), Gerdes (2012/2015), Dalmas & Gautier (2013) and Gallez (2020) for German). Constructions featuring the particle *weg-* ‘away’ are interesting from a constructionist perspective because the *weg-*construction is located at the interface between the caused-motion construction (CMC) and the resultative construction (RES). Moreover, the *weg-*construction is productive and features numerous verb classes. This paper analyses the similarities and differences between the variants of the *weg-*construction in German and shows how they are linked in a family of constructions.

I will analyse German constructions with verbs where the particle is *weg-*, as in examples (1) and (2) below:<sup>2</sup>

- (1) *Nur Ärzte dürfen wohl bald Tattoos weglassern.* (GP)  
 Only doctors [may well soon tattoos.ACC WEG-laser.INF]  
 ‘Only doctors may soon laser tattoos away.’
- (2) *Sie haben die Scheidungsgerüchte weggeküsst.* (GP)  
 They [have DET\_rumours-of-divorce.ACC WEG-kiss.PTCP]  
 ‘They have kissed the rumours of divorce away.’

The verbal particle *weg-* is derived from the polysemous adverb *weg*, which expresses a motion or its result. As a particle, *weg-* can be combined with verbs that do not express any motion or result (change of state), such as *küssen* ‘to kiss’ in example (2). Such non-lexicalised<sup>3</sup> complex verbs with *weg-* are common in German, especially in spoken language and in the press.

However, the meaning and use of verbs with *weg-* can often not be inferred from the morphological and semantic description of the particle and the verb alone, especially when the particle verb is not lexicalised. It is therefore a question of going beyond the level of the complex verb and taking account of the construction in which this verb is embedded. By assuming a continuum between form and meaning, Construction Grammar (CxG) (Goldberg, 1995, 2006; Ziem & Lasch, 2013) allows for a fine-grained analysis that considers not only the uses defined in the lexicon, but also usage extensions of the verbs, and therefore supplements the morpho-lexical approach. This framework is also relevant

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to two anonymous reviewers for their detailed comments on this paper and their suggestions for further research; any errors that remain are my own.

<sup>2</sup> For illustration, where possible, the verb phrase (VP) is glossed in the examples.

<sup>3</sup> By “non-lexicalised verbs” I mean verbs that are not listed in dictionaries. The meaning of these verbs is often non-compositional.

because it makes it possible to describe transparent and non-transparent uses of the verbs in the constructions. I will examine how the meaning and use of these verbs are expanded when they occur in specific constructions.

The analysis of the *weg*-construction is particularly interesting because of the polysemy of the particle *weg*-, the differences in arguments and verb uses in the transitive and reflexive constructions and their interconnection in a family of constructions.

The construction being studied is called “*weg*-construction” because the particle *weg*- is the common argument in the instances under investigation. Moreover, in instantiations of the constructions with so-called *passe-partout verbs*,<sup>4</sup> the meaning of the particle plays a major role in the definition of the constructional meaning, which in these cases results from the conflation of the meanings of the particle and the construction. Following Kempcke (1965/1966), Knobloch (2009, p. 548) claims that this is especially the case when the meaning of the verb “fades away” in the construction.

Since conventionalised and non-conventionalised constructions with *weg*-verbs are common in the German press, the discussed instantiations of the *weg*-construction were extracted from a user-defined press corpus from the IDS Mannheim (DeReKo).<sup>5</sup> The data set was supplemented with additional items from German press articles extracted via Google News.<sup>6</sup> Examples from the IDS Mannheim are marked with abbreviations of the newspapers as cited in DeReKo<sup>7</sup> and the other examples are marked with GP (German Press). Further examples have been taken from the literature on CxG and/or particle verbs, and are referenced as such.

In the data there are both conventionalised and non-conventionalised instantiations of the *weg*-construction. Among the instantiations discussed, there are CMCs, such as example (3) below with the verb *schneiden* ‘to cut’, and RES constructions, as in (4):

- (3) *Den Spargel sorgfältig schälen und die holzigen Enden*  
 The asparagus carefully peel and [DET\_woody\_ends.ACC  
*wegschneiden*. (BRZ06)  
 WEG-cut.INF]  
 ‘Peel the asparagus carefully and cut away the woody ends.’

<sup>4</sup> According to Knobloch (2009, p. 547-548), *passe-partout verbs* are verbs such as *machen* ‘to make’, *bringen* ‘to bring’ that can be used as generic verbs and are nearly function verbs. They are compatible with various constructional environments and are polysemous in their particle-verb combinations.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www1.ids-mannheim.de/kl/projekte/korpora/>. The data covers German press corpora from the IDS from 2000 to 2015.

<sup>6</sup> <http://news.google.de>

<sup>7</sup> See appendix.

We also find innovative instantiations with verbs that denote a new reality (see also *new verbs* in Olofsson, 2014, p. 15), such as (4) with the verb *twittern* ‘to tweet’.

- (4) *Diktaturen lassen sich nicht so einfach*  
 Dictatorships [let oneself.ACC NEG so easily  
*wegtwittern* [...]. (NUN09)  
 WEG-tweet.INF]  
 ‘Dictatorships cannot be tweeted away so easily [...].’

Constructions in which a lexicalised verb acquires a new function (in the sense of Olofsson, 2014)<sup>8</sup> through embedding in the *weg*-construction and whose argument structure is expanded or reduced in this construction are also possible. In (5), (6) and (7), the verbs *trinken* ‘to drink’ and *waschen* ‘to wash’ occur with objects that do not belong to the conventionalised objects of these verbs.

- (5) *Das trügerische Verlangen, Sorgen wegzutrinken.*<sup>9</sup> (BRZ07)  
 The deceptive desire, [worries.ACC WEG-ZU-drink.INF]  
 ‘The deceptive desire to drink away worries.’
- (6) *Dann ein Single, der sich Kummer und Einsamkeit*  
 Then a single, who [oneself.DAT sorrow\_and\_loneliness.ACC  
*wegzutrinken versucht.* (BRZ07)  
 WEG-ZU-drink.INF tries]  
 ‘Then a single person trying to drink away his sorrow and loneliness.’
- (7) *Und eine Million Regentropfen konnten Terrys Trauer nicht*  
 And a million raindrops [could Terry's\_grief.ACC NEG  
*wegwaschen.* (HAZ08)  
 WEG-wash.INF]  
 ‘And a million raindrops could not wash away Terry's grief.’

The focus in this paper is on these new, less conventionalised or *ad hoc* instantiations of productive constructions. It is not a question here of deciding or proving whether the instantiations of the constructions under investigation will establish themselves, but rather of shedding light on the *potentiality* (Gerdes, 2012/2015) of the German language. Hence, I will describe the variety of uses of the particle verbs with *weg*- and the constructional instantiations of these verbs.

This paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, the constructions under scrutiny, *i.e.*, the CMC and the closely related RES construction, are briefly defined. Section 3 looks at the specific characteristics of the *weg*-construction. Section 4 shows that there are variants of this construction that are linked to each other in a family of constructions. The conclusion discusses the scope for application and further research.

<sup>8</sup> Olofsson (2014) uses the term *function* and claims that the verb acquires a new function in the construction, for example an incremental function, or it expresses the cause, the manner, the means or the result.

<sup>9</sup> In such examples *zu* is a formal marker for VPs in the infinitive in German. In this paper it is glossed as ZU.

## 2. Definition of the constructions

This paper is based on Goldberg’s Construction Grammar framework (1995, 2006) because this approach considers both the CMC and the closely related RES construction, as well as the interaction between these constructions.

According to Goldberg (1995), constructions are form-meaning pairs that have their own meaning beyond their constituent parts. She further argues that the constructions determine the meaning of the verbs that are embedded in them (1995, p. 4), *i.e.*, through coercion the verb meaning is extended in a systematic way within a given construction. In line with Goldberg, Ziem and Lasch (2013) discuss the following German example:

(8)	<i>Er</i>	<i>hustet</i>	<i>den Schaum</i>	<i>vom cappuccino.</i>
	SYNT S	V	OBJ	OBL
	SEM Agent	CAUSE-MOVE	Patient	Location
	‘He coughs the foam off the cappuccino.’			

In (8), the verb *husten* ‘to cough’ keeps its central meaning but becomes a causative verb through mapping with the meaning of the construction [CAUSE-MOVE]. The number and the nature of the arguments are also modified by the construction.

Following the continuum between form and meaning, the description model of the CxG includes both semantic (agent, patient, location) and syntactic elements (subject, verb, object, oblique argument), as represented above in (8).

*Weg*-constructions investigated here are to be understood as transitive constructions, *i.e.*, CMC or RES construction, in which the object represents the figure of motion (see Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Agustín Llach 2016):

The caused-motion construction (*She pushed me into the kitchen*) and the resultative construction (*The child licked the bowl clean*), [...], are built on the basis of transitive patterns (*She pushed me; The child licked the bowl*) denoting what we can call effectual actions, *i.e.*, actions whose impact on an object results in a change of location or a change of state. (Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez & Agustín Llach, 2016, p. 161)

In Sections 2.1 and 2.2, the CMC and the RES construction are analysed in more detail.

### 2.1. Caused-motion construction

At the syntactic level, Goldberg (1995, p. 152) defines the CMC “(in active form<sup>10</sup>) structurally as follows (where V is a non-stative verb and OBL is a directional phrase): [SUBJ [V OBJ OBL]].”

<sup>10</sup> Here the passive form and its substitutes are also considered, where the patient of the action denoted by the verb occurs in the nominative case.

According to the definition of constructions as form-meaning pairs, she proposes the following central meaning for the CMC: “[T]he causer argument directly causes the theme argument to move along a path designated by the directional phrase; that is, ‘X CAUSES Y TO MOVE Z’” (Goldberg, 1995, p. 152). Goldberg provides the following schematic formalisation of the argument structure of the CMC:

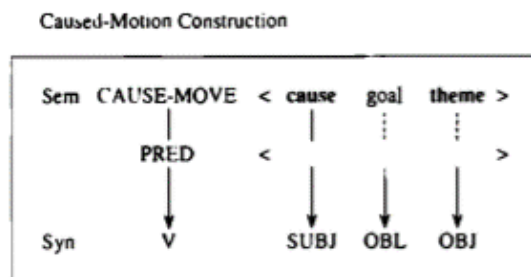


Figure 1. The caused-motion construction (Goldberg, 1995, p. 160).

In the CMC, the subject refers to the causer of the expressed motion while the causal action is expressed by the verb. The motion is not caused by the subject but by the action denoted by the verb: CAUSE-MOVE. However, not all the verbs occurring in the CMC denote a cause or a motion. In examples (2) and (8) above, the verbs are neither causative nor manner-of-motion verbs, but they acquire this meaning through mapping with the meaning of the CMC (coercion).

The object of the construction designates the moving entity. If the object is the direct object of an embedded transitive verb, it is called *selected object* (see for example Goldberg & Jackendoff, 2004); if the object results from the extended argument structure of the construction, it is called *unselected object*, e.g., *the foam of the cappuccino* in (8). This issue is further discussed for the *weg*-construction in Section 3.3.

The oblique argument denotes the goal of the motion. According to Goldberg, the oblique argument is a prepositional phrase (PP). In the present study, the particle *weg-* is treated as an argument of the construction because in instantiations without a PP the oblique argument slot is occupied by the separable verbal particle, which is the only element that permits the interpretation of the construction as CMC, as in (9).

- (9) AfD: *Partei­gründer Lucke*                      *wurde weggebuht.* (GP)  
 AfD: [Party founder\_Lucke.NOM              was      WEG-boo.PTCP]  
 ‘AfD: Party founder Lucke was booted off/away.’

Goldberg’s definition of the CMC implies real motion. She considers the RES construction as a metaphorical extension of the CMC in which the result is seen as a metaphorical goal (Goldberg, 1995, p. 81). Since metaphorical motion is also considered in the present study, the argument structure of the RES construction is described in more detail in Section 2.2.

## 2.2. Resultative construction

At the syntactic level, the argument structure of the RES construction is similar to that of the CMC. Goldberg (1995, p. 189) represents the RES construction as follows:

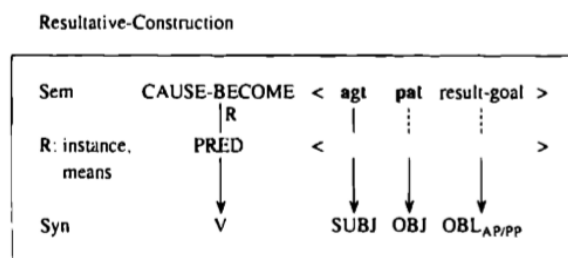


Figure 2. The transitive resultative construction (Goldberg 1995, p. 189).

It consists of a subject, an object and an oblique argument in the form of an adjectival phrase (AP) or a prepositional phrase (PP). The oblique argument expresses a result that can be seen as a metaphorical goal. In the constructions under scrutiny, the oblique argument is instantiated by the particle *weg*.

Goldberg (1995, p. 188) cites the following semantic condition for the emergence of this construction: “Resultatives can only be applied to arguments which potentially undergo a change of state as a result of the action denoted by the verb”.

Like the CMC, the RES construction is not only compatible with verbs whose lexical meaning coincides with the meaning of the construction. Verbs that do not denote a result or a change of state also occur in the RES construction, as in (10) and (11) with the particle *weg* :

- (10) *Die Methode, eine Tätowierung durch die Behandlung mit  
The method [DET\_tattoo.ACC through the treatment with  
dem Laserstrahl wegzubrennen [...] (U05)  
the laser-beam WEG-ZU-burn.INF]  
'The method of burning away a tattoo by treating it with a laser beam [...]*
- (11) *Sie urlaubt den Spott einfach weg. (GP)  
She [holidays DET\_mockery.ACC simply WEG]  
'She simply holidays the mockery away.'*

In this paper, I claim that the *weg*-construction is located at the interface between the CMC and the RES construction since it instantiates either a motion (“X causes Y to move Z”, Goldberg, 1995) or a change of state, *i.e.*, a disappearance (“X causes Y to become Z”, Goldberg, 1995).

Section 3 describes the arguments of the German *weg*-construction in more detail.

### 3. Argument structure of the *weg*-construction

This section discusses the characteristics of the *weg*-construction. The focus here is on the specific elements of this construction, namely the particle *weg*- as oblique argument, the object and the role of the verb in the construction, as well as the interactions between these elements. First, the particle *weg*- is defined, then the role of the verb and the object in the construction are discussed and explained with examples from the corpora.

#### 3.1. The oblique argument

The particle *weg*- contributes as an oblique argument to the expression of the motion or change of state in the construction. According to the Duden (2015) and DWDS<sup>11</sup> dictionaries, the adverb *weg*, which also occurs as a verbal particle, denotes either (i) the process of motion or (ii) its result. In the *weg*-construction there is always a resultative dimension, but the result is either the endpoint of a motion or a change of state of the object, *i.e.*, the latter disappears or is destroyed. In the second definition (ii), the result is emphasised: as a consequence of the action denoted by the verb, something is removed, eliminated, no longer present. These two meanings of *weg*- can be found in the constructions under scrutiny and this suggests that the specific position of the *weg*-construction is at the interface between the CMC and the RES construction.

In *weg*-constructions, the goal or the result is generally not further specified. However, the particle *weg*- can be combined with a second oblique argument that denotes the source or the goal of the motion, as in (12) and (13), respectively.

- (12) [...] *die Sehnsucht, sich aus dem Alltag wegzuzaubern.* (U13)  
 [...] the longing [oneself.ACC out of the everyday-life WEG-ZU-conjure.INF]  
 ‘[...] the longing to conjure oneself away from everyday life [...].’
- (13) *Er wurde mit Obamas Zustimmung auf einen gut gepolsterten*  
 [He.NOM was with Obama's approval to a well padded  
*Nato-Posten wegkomplimentiert.* (T10)  
 NATO post WEG-compliment.PTPC]  
 ‘He was complimented away to a well padded NATO post with Obama's approval.’

#### 3.2. The verb

As mentioned above, in CxG, the construction has its own meaning, which is inherited by the verb used in this construction. A variety of verbs can be used in the *weg*-construction, e.g., verbs that are classified in lexical approaches as causative manner-of-motion verbs or denote a change of state (affected object), but also verbs that do not belong to these semantic categories. The verb keeps its

<sup>11</sup> Digitales Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache ([www.dwds.de](http://www.dwds.de)).



lexical meaning, for example the verb *lachen* ‘to laugh’ in (14) and (15) and the verb *schwitzen* ‘to sweat’ in (16), but it also inherits the meaning of the construction (Goldberg, 1995) as it fuses with the argument structure of the construction (Felfe, 2018, p. 297), e.g., the CMC in (14) and the RES construction in (15) and (16).

- (14) *Hillary Clinton lacht sie alle weg* (GP)  
 Hillary Clinton [laughs them\_all.ACC WEG]  
 ‘Hillary Clinton laughs them all away.’
- (15) *Ukraine: Er lacht Krise, Krieg und Korruption weg* (GP)  
 Ukraine: He [laughs crisis\_war\_and\_corruption.ACC WEG]  
 ‘Ukraine: He laughs away crisis, war and corruption.’
- (16) *Schwitz die Pfunde weg* (GP)  
 [Sweat.IMP DET\_pounds.ACC WEG]  
 ‘Sweat away the pounds.’

The *weg*-construction can instantiate verbs for which there is a lexicalised *weg*-variant, as well as verbs that are not lexicalised but whose occurrence is attested in instantiations of the *weg*-construction in the corpora.

It is interesting to note that verbs whose meaning does not imply concrete motion contribute to the expression of actual motion in the CMC, such as *buhnen* ‘to boo’ in (9) above, in which real motion is expressed. Conversely, verbs that denote concrete motion can occur in constructions with a metaphorical meaning. As we will see, this is due to the interaction between the verb and the arguments of the construction.

Intransitive manner-of-motion verbs (such as *springen* ‘to jump’, *schwimmen* ‘to swim’, etc.) – see Levin (1993) – also occur in the transitive *weg*-construction, as in (17) and (18). Their argument structure is extended by the construction.

- (17) *Lieber Sorgen wegschwimmen als wegschwemmen!* (GP)  
 Rather [worries.ACC WEG-swim.INF than WEG-wash.INF]  
 ‘Rather swim away worries than wash them away!’
- (18) *Pfunde wegspringen* (M00)  
 [Pounds.ACC WEG-jump.INF]  
 ‘Jumping away pounds.’

In this construction, however, other activity verbs are also attested, which do not express either a motion or a change of state, such as *streiken* ‘to strike’, *i.e.*, ‘to go on strike’ in (19). In this instantiation the meaning of *to strike* maps with the meaning of the construction (CAUSE-MOVE).

- (19) *Wie Schüler ihren Direktor wegstreikten.* (GP)  
 How pupils [their\_director.ACC WEG-strike.PRET]  
 ‘How pupils struck their principal away.’

Contrary to Goldberg's assertion that no stative verbs occur in CMCs and RES constructions (see also Levin, 1993, p. 100-101), there are verbs that denote a state and/or a process in the German *weg*-construction, such as *strahlen* 'to beam' or *schlafen* 'to sleep' in (20) and (21). In (20), the verb *strahlen* maps with the meaning of the RES construction and expresses the cause of the disappearance of the rumours.

- (20) *Jenny Elvers strahlt die Magersucht-Gerüchte weg.* (GP)  
 Jenny Elvers [beams DET\_anorexia-rumours.ACC WEG]  
 'Jenny Elvers beams the anorexia rumours away.'
- (21) *Ich dachte, ich könnte es einfach wegschlafen.* (GP)  
 I thought I [could it.ACC just WEG-sleep.INF]  
 'I thought I could just sleep it away.'

Quirk *et al.* (1997, p. 178) define such verbs as verbs with stative meanings rather than stative verbs because they can be used to express a dynamic meaning. This is the case when the meaning of these verbs merges with the dynamic meaning of a given construction. In addition, Richter and Van Hout (2010), in their study of German resultative constructions, also claim that verbs that have properties of both stative verbs and process verbs, such as *sitzen* 'to sit' or *schlafen* 'to sleep', are compatible with the RES construction. They call these verbs *state + process verbs* (Richter & Van Hout, 2010, p. 2013).

In the *weg*-construction, even verbs whose meaning seems to contradict the constructional meaning occur, e.g., *loben* 'to praise' in (22).

- (22) *Lobt der Papst seinen treusten Diener weg?* (GP)  
 Praise the Pope [DET\_most\_faithful\_servant.ACC WEG]  
 'Does the Pope praise away his most faithful servant?'

The examples above show that the semantics of the verb interacts with the meaning of the construction. Accordingly, the verb semantics is particularly relevant for distinguishing between different instantiations of the respective constructions and for determining whether or not a verb can occur in a given construction. This issue is addressed in section 4 for the transitive and reflexive *weg*-constructions.

The verbs in the construction also narrowly correlate with the object. For this reason, I will now examine the specific characteristics of the object in the *weg*-construction.

### 3.3. The object

In the *weg*-construction, the object occurs either as a nominal phrase (NP) required by the verb or by the construction, or as a reflexive pronoun in the accusative case. In this context, Goldberg and Jackendoff (2004, p. 536) distinguish between selected and unselected objects, as mentioned in

Section 2.1. Selected objects are required by the verb independently of the construction as in (23), whereas unselected objects are required by the construction, as in (24) and (25).

- (23) *Dafür* *wird* *an vielen Orten* *der Schnee* *per Hand*  
 To that end [is in many places DET\_the snow.NOM by hand  
*weggeschaufelt*. (GP)  
 WEG-shovel.PTCP]  
 ‘To that end, the snow is shovelled away by hand in many places.’
- (24) *So schön* *lacht* *Sylvie van der Vaart* *den Krebs* *weg* (GP)  
 So beautifully [laughs Sylvie van der Vaart DET\_cancer.ACC WEG]  
 ‘Sylvie van der Vaart laughs away cancer so beautifully.’
- (25) [...] *ein Punchingball*, *um Aggressionen* *wegzuboxen* (M14)  
 [...] a punching ball, [to aggressions.ACC WEG-ZU-box.INF]  
 ‘[...] a punching ball to box away aggression.’

According to Goldberg (1995) and Goldberg and Jackendoff (2004), there are two kinds of unselected objects:

1. The unselected object is an NP, such as *den Krebs* ‘cancer’ in (24) and *Aggressionen* ‘aggressions’ in (25).
2. The unselected object is a reflexive pronoun, as in (26). Goldberg (1995), Goldberg and Jackendoff (2004), Dewell (2011) and Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez and Agustín Llach (2016), for example, call such instantiations of the construction *fake reflexives*.

- (26) *Die Abenteuer aus 1001 Nacht* *helfen ihm, sich* *wegzuträumen*  
 The adventures from 1001 Nights help him [himself.ACC WEG-ZU-dream.INF]  
*in eine andere Welt*. (RHZ11)  
 into another world  
 ‘The adventures from 1001 Nights help him to dream himself away into another world.’

The nature of the object plays a major role in the classification of the *weg*-construction as either CMC or RES construction. The object NP can denote a concrete object, a living being or an abstract concept. If the object is concrete and is not affected by the action but only “relocated”, the *weg*-construction can be classified as CMC. If the object is affected by the action denoted by the verb, the *weg*-construction is a RES construction. If the object denotes an abstract concept, such as *Stress* ‘stress’ or *Sorgen* ‘worries’ in (27) and (28), then the construction expresses a metaphorical motion or a disappearance. Constructions with such objects are very productive and occur with many different verbs. They can be classified as phraseme constructions (Dobrovol’skij, 2011) with two fixed slots: the object and the oblique argument *weg*-.

- (27) *Wir kochen den Stress* *weg!* (GP)  
 We [cook DET\_stress.ACC WEG]  
 ‘We cook the stress away!’

- (28) *Sorgen*            *einfach* *wegschwimmen* (GP)  
 [Worries.ACC simply WEG-swim.INF]  
 ‘Simply swim worries away.’

Since there are differences in the argument structure and instantiations within the family of *weg*-constructions, I now turn to the description of this family of constructions, specifically to the transitive and reflexive *weg*-constructions.

#### 4. The family of *weg*-constructions

The abstract *weg*-construction can be classified into two categories at a lower level, namely transitive and reflexive *weg*-constructions. These two constructions share the same argument structure at an abstract level, but they show differences in the selection of embedded verbs and in the extension of the argument structure at a lower level. In this section, I examine the similarities and differences between these two constructions and show how they are linked in a family of *weg*-constructions. The transitive construction is described first, then the reflexive construction. Finally, I summarise the differences and similarities between the two.

As mentioned above, the focus here is on the compatibility of the construction(s) with verbs whose meaning does not coincide with the meaning of the construction. For this reason, we will switch from motion and change-of-state verbs to other categories of verbs, including *state + process verbs*.

The verb classes below are taken from Levin (1993) and from the description of communication verbs at the IDS Mannheim.<sup>12</sup> I also refer to the frameworks of Olofsson (2014) and Richter and Van Hout (2010). Following Levin (1993, p. 15), Goldberg (1995), and Goldberg and Jackendoff (2004), it is assumed that the semantic properties of verbs (verb classes) are closely related to their syntactic behaviour. I argue that semantic properties of the verb and the verb interaction with the arguments of the construction determine whether or not it can be embedded in a given instantiation of the *weg*-construction and whether this construction is to be classified as either a CMC or a RES construction.

##### 4.1. Transitive *weg*-construction

This section describes the specific characteristics of the transitive *weg*-construction using examples from the corpora. First, I address the direct object, then I describe the dative object that can appear as an additional argument of some *weg*-constructions, and, finally, I provide some examples of the verbs that are common in this construction and briefly discuss the phrase constructions.

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<sup>12</sup> See <https://www.owid.de/docs/komvb/start.jsp>

### 4.1.1. The direct object

As mentioned above, the transitive *weg*-construction can occur with selected and unselected objects, as in (29) and (30), respectively.

- (29) *Sie sind ungemein schnell - im Bier wegtrinken.* (NUZ06)  
 They are incredibly fast in [beer.ACC WEG-drink.INF]  
 ‘They are incredibly fast - in drinking beer away.’
- (30) *Manuela Wilkens hat versucht, die Angst wegzutrinken.* (T12)  
 Manuela Wilkens has tried[DET\_fear.ACC WEG-ZU-drink.INF]  
 ‘Manuela Wilkens has tried to drink away the fear.’

Moreover, the affectedness of the object also plays a role in the classification of the transitive *weg*-construction as a CMC or a RES construction. The transitive *weg*-construction can be classified as CMC when the object is concrete, unaffected and “relocated”, as in (31) with *streiken* ‘to strike’, *i.e.*, ‘to go on strike’. In (32), the object is neither concrete nor “relocated” but disappears; it is therefore a RES construction.

- (31) *Wie Schüler ihren Direktor wegstreikten.* (GP)  
 How pupils [DET\_principal.ACC WEG-strike.PRET]  
 ‘How pupils struck their principal away.’
- (32) *Die Probleme einer ganzen Branche lassen sich nicht wegstreiken.* (T05)  
 The problems of\_an entire industry [let themselves.ACC NEG  
 WEG-strike.INF].  
 ‘The problems of an entire industry cannot be struck away.’

### 4.1.2. The dative object

One peculiarity of the transitive *weg*-construction is that a dative object is used in some instantiations. This dative object occurs as NP, as personal pronoun or as reflexive pronoun in the dative case; see (33), (34) and (35)-(36), respectively.<sup>13</sup>

- (33) *Passiert es auch mal, dass jemand dem anderen etwas wegisst?* (U03)  
 Happen it also sometimes that someone [DET\_other.DAT  
 something.ACC WEG-eat.PRES]?  
 ‘Does it also happen that someone eats something away from the other person?’
- (34) *Jetzt hat der Kerl mir das ganze Eis weggegessen.* (BRZ07)  
 Now has the guy [me.DAT DET\_whole\_ice-cream.ACC WEG-eat.PTCP]  
 ‘Now the guy has eaten away all my ice cream.’

<sup>13</sup> My emphasis.

- (35) Er trinkt sich die Probleme weg. (NUN07)  
 He drinks [himself.DAT DET\_problems.ACC WEG]  
 ‘He drinks his problems away.’
- (36) *Kohlschreiber kündigte immerhin selbstbewusst an, sich*  
 Kohlschreiber announced at least confidently [himself.DAT  
*nun in Madrid „den Frust wegzuspielen“.* (U15)  
 now in Madrid DET\_frustration.ACC WEG-ZU-play.INF]  
 ‘Kohlschreiber at least announced confidently that he would now “play away his frustration” in Madrid.’

According to De Knop and Mollica (2017) and Welke (2011), such objects are free datives. Among the various categories of the free dative as defined by Welke (2011), there are mainly two variants in the constructions under scrutiny: the *dativus commodi* (beneficent) or *incommodi* (maleficent). Free datives mainly occur in constructions or instantiations of constructions that mean ‘to take something away from sb.’ or ‘to free oneself from something’, as in (35) and (36).

The free dative is optional in some constructions, but other instantiations of the construction are not possible without a dative object; see (37) with *reißen* ‘to tear’. Instantiations of the *weg*-construction with the verbs *essen* ‘to eat’ or *trinken* ‘to drink’, for instance, occur with and without a dative; see (34) and (35) above.

- (37) *Zwischen die Wagen war ein Schlauch gespannt [...] der*  
 Between the wagons was a hose stretched which  
*ihm von hinten die Beine wegriss.* (BRZ07)  
 [him.DAT from behind DET\_legs.ACC WEG-tear.PRET]  
 ‘A hose was stretched between the wagons [...], which tore off his legs from behind.’

There are also *weg*-constructions that do not allow a dative object, such as (38) with the verb *strahlen* ‘to beam’, because in this instantiation there is no reference person from whom one “takes” the rumours away.

- (38) *Das Paar strahlte die bösen Trennungsgerüchte weg.* (GP)  
 The couple [beamedDET\_nasty\_break-up-rumours.ACC WEG]  
 ‘The couple beamed the nasty break-up rumours away.’

The question of whether or not a dative object is possible in a given construction is not clear-cut and merits further study. Moreover, a more fined-grained analysis of the reflexive pronoun in the dative case as the source of the denoted motion could possibly contribute to a better understanding of the distribution of the *weg*-construction on a continuum between the CMC and the RES construction.<sup>14</sup>

The next section will focus on the specific characteristics of the verbs that occur in the transitive *weg*-construction.

<sup>14</sup> I am grateful to one of my reviewers for this suggestion.

### 4.1.3 Embedded verbs

The transitive *weg*-construction instantiates numerous different verbs. Table 1<sup>15</sup> offers an overview of verb classes that are common in this construction (for a more fine-grained description of the verbs, see Gallez, 2020). This selection is based on the occurrences found in the data.

Verb classes	Examples
Motion/manner-of-motion verbs	<i>Am Anfang habe ich nur geholfen, [...] Schutt <b>wegzufahren</b>.</i> (U05) 'At first, I just helped [...] haul away debris.'
Verbs of movement (without motion)	<i>Schließlich ist Weihnachten, da darf man [...] die Weihnachtskilo <b>wegtanzten</b>.</i> (GP) 'After all, it's Christmas, so you're allowed to dance [...] away the Christmas kilos.'
Change-of-state verbs	<i>Die gesamte Südspitze war <b>weggesprengt</b>.</i> (RHZ12) 'The entire southern tip was blown away.'
Removal verbs	<i>Nach den Worten eines Unternehmenssprechers sind 70 Prozent der Trümmer <b>weggeräumt</b>.</i> (T00) 'According to a company spokesman, 70 percent of the debris was cleared.'
Contact-by-impact verbs	<i>Er sitzt fest, [...] wie ein Mann, der Feinde <b>wegboxt</b>.</i> (T03) 'He sits firm, [...] like a man who punches away enemies.'
Verbs of cleaning	<i>Ist dir schon aufgefallen, dass an vielen Haustüren die Kreidebuchstaben nicht <b>weggeputzt</b> werden?</i> (NUZ09) 'Have you noticed that on many front doors, the chalk letters are not cleaned off/away?'
Communication verbs	<i>Diese Kritik konnte er nicht wegmoderieren, <b>wegalbern</b> schon gar nicht.</i> (Z08) 'He couldn't moderate away this criticism, and he certainly couldn't fool it away.'
Verbs of ingestion	<i>Eine zweite tote Sau [...] wurde ebenso ratzeputz <b>weggegessen</b>.</i> (M06) 'A second dead sow [...] was also eaten away in one go.'
State + process verbs	<i>Um Stress, Nervosität und Aggressionen <b>wegzuschlafen</b>, brauchen wir, [...] seinen – ganz besonderen Matratzenbezugsstoff, (...)</i> (BRZ07) 'To sleep away stress, nervousness and aggression, we need [...] his - very special mattress cover fabric, (...)'
Verbs of thinking	<i>Die Steinbeker können wir nicht mehr aus dem Leben in unserer Stadt <b>wegdenken</b>.</i> (BRZ09) 'We can't imagine life in our city without the Steinbeker.'
Verbs of cheating	<i>Dabei gibt es Tricks, mit denen sich schnell ein paar Zentimeter <b>wegschummeln</b> lassen.</i> (RHZ09) 'But there are tricks that can be used to quickly cheat away a few centimetres.'

<sup>15</sup> For the sake of readability, the examples in the tables are not glossed.

Verb classes	Examples
Verbs of giving/taking	<i>Die beiden Letztgenannten sprechen sich bei Wahlen ab, um sich gegenseitig keine Wähler <b>wegzunehmen</b>.</i> (RHZ05) ‘The latter two collude in elections so as not to take voters away from each other.’
Sound-emission verbs	<i>AfD <b>wegbassen</b></i> (GP) ‘To bass away the AfD’
Expression-of-feeling verbs	<i>Trennungsschmerz wird <b>weggelacht</b></i> (GP) ‘Separation pain is laughed away/off’
Conjure verbs	<i>Er hat unsere Überstunden [...] <b>weggezaubert</b>.</i> (HMP14) ‘He [...] conjured our overtime away.’

Table 1. Verb classes in the transitive *weg*-construction.

I will now briefly elaborate on some of the verb classes listed in Table 1, more specifically the ones whose meaning does not coincide with the meaning of the construction, *i.e.*, verbs that do not denote motion, manner of motion or change of state.

Verbs of contact by impact such as combat verbs occur in numerous instantiations of the construction with selected and unselected objects. They occur in CMCs when the object is caused to move by the action denoted by the verb. In other cases, constructions with such verbs are RES constructions.

According to the data, many instantiations of the *weg*-construction feature verbs of cleaning, which is not surprising since cleaning often involves a result or the removal of dust, etc. Such verbs are also used with unselected objects, as in (39).

- (39) *Welche Relevanz und Legitimität hat ein solches Ergebnis?*  
 What relevance and legitimacy has a such result?  
*Kann man es einfach so weg-wischen?* (T14)  
 [Can one it.ACC simply WEG-wipe.INF]?  
 ‘What relevance and legitimacy does such a result have? Can it simply be wiped away?’

The verbs *essen* ‘to eat’ and *trinken* ‘to drink’ and synonyms or semantically related verbs, possibly in another language register, such as *saufen* ‘to booze’, occur with selected and unselected objects in the transitive *weg*-construction. With selected objects, the object is ingested. Unselected objects mainly denote a psychological burden. In such cases, the object of the verb is implicit, *e.g.*, alcohol in (40).

- (40) *Manuela Wilkens hat versucht, die Angst wegzutrinken.* (T12)  
 Manuela Wilkens has tried [DET\_fear.ACC WEG-ZU-drink.INF]  
 ‘Manuela Wilkens has tried to drink away the fear.’

Some instantiations of the transitive *weg*-construction with verbs of ingestion include a dative object, as in (41) and (42), and mean ‘to take sth. (away/off) from someone’.



- (41) *Passiert es auch mal, dass jemand dem anderen*<sup>16</sup>  
 Happens it also sometimes that someone [DET\_another.DAT  
*etwas weisst?* (U03)  
 something.ACC WEG-eat.PRS]?  
 ‘Does it ever happen that someone eats something from another person?’

This dative object also occurs as a reflexive pronoun:

- (42) *Dann ein Single, der sich Kummer und Einsamkeit*<sup>17</sup>  
 Then a single who [oneself.DAT sorrow\_and\_loneliness.ACC  
*wegzutrinken versucht.* (BRZ07)  
 WEG-ZU-drink.INF tries]  
 ‘Then a single person trying to drink away his sorrow and loneliness.’

In instantiations of the *weg*-construction with verbs of cheating, the object does not move, nor is it removed, but is only hidden, as with the verbs *mogeln* and *schummeln*, which both mean ‘to cheat’.

The transitive *weg*-construction also instantiates numerous communication verbs that can be classified into the following categories from the IDS dictionary of communication verbs:<sup>18</sup> modal and medial verbs, as well as verbs that refer to the sequence of speech or to the nature of the information conveyed. These instantiations occur with selected and unselected (concrete and abstract) objects. There is also evidence for expressive verbs with a positive meaning, such as *jubeln* ‘to cheer’ in (43).

- (43) *Das Volk jubelt Rousseff weg* (GP)  
 The people [cheer Rousseff.ACC WEG]  
 ‘The people cheer Rousseff away.’

Verbs of sound emission also occur in the transitive *weg*-construction. Levin (1993), Engelberg (2009) and Goschler (2011) have already pointed out that such verbs can occur in motion constructions.

Verbs of giving and taking can be used in the *weg*-construction. Constructions with *take*-verbs are attested with and without dative object. If they occur with a dative object, there is a deictic aspect towards the agent.

As mentioned above, verbs that do not denote any action or activity can also occur in the *weg*-construction. In the transitive instances under scrutiny, there are no stative verbs, but instead, there are *state + process* verbs, e.g., *schlafen* ‘to sleep’, *hungern* ‘to starve’ or *strahlen* ‘to beam’. Such instantiations occur with unselected objects and feature RES constructions. Verbs that denote a process of thinking can also be embedded in the *weg*-construction. Many instantiations with the verb *denken* ‘to think’ contain the adverb *kaum* (hardly) or a negation, as in (44).

<sup>16</sup> My emphasis

<sup>17</sup> My emphasis

<sup>18</sup> See <https://www.owid.de/docs/komvb/start.jsp>

- (44) *Sie sind bei uns ein Grundnahrungsmittel und nicht mehr von den Tellern wegzudenken [...]. (BRZ05)*  
 They are at us a staple-food and [NEG longer from the plates WEG-ZU-think.INF]  
 ‘They are a staple food for us and we can no longer imagine our plates without them [...].’

Verbs that denote a non-verbal expression of feelings, such as *lachen* ‘to laugh’, *lächeln* ‘to smile’, etc., are also compatible with the transitive *weg*-construction. Within the *weg*-construction, they contribute to the expression of a CMC when the object stands for a living being (+ animate), as in (45), and a RES construction in other cases, e.g., (46).

- (45) *Hillary Clinton lacht sie alle weg. (GP)*  
 Hillary Clinton [laughs them\_all.ACC WEG]  
 ‘Hillary Clinton laughs them all away.’
- (46) *Kann man die Krise wegtanzen? Oder sogar einfach weglächeln? (RHZ09)*  
 [Can one DET\_crisis.ACC WEG-dance.INF Or even just WEG-smile.INF]  
 ‘Can you dance the crisis away? Or even just smile it away?’

The verb *zaubern* ‘to conjure’ occurs in numerous instantiations of the *weg*-construction. These instantiations express a concrete or metaphorical motion or a disappearance. They contain concrete and abstract objects, as in (47) and (48), respectively.

- (47) *Der Vogel, den man wegzaubern möchte. (Z06)*  
 The bird [that.ACC one WEG-conjure.INF wants]  
 ‘The bird that you want to conjure away.’
- (48) *Er hat unsere Überstunden durch einen fiesen Trick weggezaubert. (HMP14)*  
 He has [DET\_overtime.ACC through a nasty trick WEG-conjure.PTCP]  
 ‘He used a nasty trick to conjure our overtime away.’

#### 4.1.4 Phraseme constructions

Some instantiations of the *weg*-construction are partially fixed. Engelberg, König, Proost and Winkler (2011, p. 101-102) claim, following Engelberg (2009), that there are privileged associations between verbs and specific argument structure constructions, and between the arguments within a given construction. This is, for example, the case for constructions with the objects *Stress* ‘stress’, *Krise* ‘crisis’ or *Sorgen* ‘worries’, in which numerous different verbs occur. These verbs denote various activities or processes that contribute to stress reduction and/or can be considered a leisure activity, as in (49) and (50).

- (49) *Ja, die Krise ist da, aber VW will sie wegfeiern. (GP)*  
 Yes the crisis is here but VW [wants it.ACC WEG- celebrate.INF]  
 ‘Yes, the crisis is here, but VW wants to celebrate it away.’

- (50) *Wir kochen den Stress weg!* (GP)  
 We [cook DET\_stress.ACC WEG]!  
 ‘We cook the stress away!’

This is also the case for constructions with *Hirn* ‘brain’, which occur with a great variety of verbs and convey the meaning ‘to get high from the action denoted by the verb’, as in (51) and (52).

- (51) *Umgangssprachlich heißt es, dass man sich sein Hirn  
 Colloquially says it that one [himself.DAT DET\_brain.ACC  
 "wegsaufen" kann.* (GP)  
 WEG-booze.INF can]  
 ‘Colloquially, it is said that you can “booze your brains away”.’
- (52) *Die können ruhig zuhören, statt sich das Hirn mit  
 They can really listen instead [themselves.DAT DET\_brain.ACC with  
 ihrer Musik wegzupusten.* (T07)  
 their music WEG-ZU-blow.INF]  
 ‘They can go ahead and listen instead of blowing their brains away with their music.’

Such constructions can be classified as phraseme constructions (Dobrovolskij, 2011) with at least two fixed slots: the oblique argument *weg*- and the object.

## 4.2. Reflexive *weg*-construction

Goldberg and Jackendoff (2004) consider the fake reflexive construction to be a subcategory of the transitive construction with unselected objects. This construction is described here at the same level as the transitive construction because it shows specific characteristics that are not shared with the transitive construction. The reflexive construction partly features the same verbs as the transitive construction, including *state + process verbs*, but there are subtle differences between the instantiations of the constructions, e.g., in reflexive constructions featuring the verb *lachen* ‘to laugh’ where the construction does not have the same meaning as the transitive construction with this verb. Moreover, in reflexive constructions there is less variety in the embedded verbs and some instantiations only occur with one single verb in our data. In addition, there are verbs that have a very specific meaning in the reflexive *weg*-construction, such as *schießen* ‘to shoot’ in the context of drug use or alcohol consumption.

Reflexive constructions occur with selected and unselected reflexive pronouns, but in the present study, I will focus on the unselected reflexives because they contribute to extending the use of the embedded verbs, e.g., in (53) with the verb *träumen* ‘to dream’.

- (53) *Und man darf sich wegdreamen, gern nach Brasilien.* (RHZ13)  
 And one [can oneself.ACC WEG-dream.INF] willingly to Brasilien.  
 ‘And one can dream oneself away willingly to Brazil.’

Table 2 lists the verbs that are common in the reflexive *weg*-construction. They are illustrated with corpus examples (see Gallez (2020) for more details).

Verb classes	Examples
Motion verbs	<i>[...] sein Land könne es sich nicht leisten, sich von Russland <b>wegzubewegen</b>.</i> (U13) ‘[...] that his country cannot afford to move away from Russia.’
Contact-by-impact verbs	<i>Ich glaube, der hat sich <b>weggeschossen</b></i> (HMP10) ‘I think he has shot himself away.’
Sound-emission verbs	<i>[...] die unstillbare Sehnsucht, dies alles und vor allem sich selber <b>wegzuknallen</b>.</i> (U10) ‘[...] the insatiable longing to bang (shoot) away all this and, above all, himself.’
Communication verbs	<i>Das Land versuchte also, sich vom Beihilfeverdacht <b>wegzuargumentieren</b>.</i> (RHZ12) ‘The state thus tried to argue itself away from the suspicion of state aid.’
Process verbs	<i>Und man darf sich <b>wegträumen</b>, gern nach Brasilien.</i> (RHZ13) ‘And one can dream oneself away willingly to Brazil.’
Verbs of thinking	<i>Aus der alltäglichen Bedrohung hilft eigentlich nur eines: sich <b>wegzudenken</b> in eine gewaltfreie und dadurch schönere Welt.</i> (NUZ03) ‘There is actually only one thing that helps to get away from the everyday threat: to think oneself away into a non-violent and thus more beautiful world.’
Expression-of-feeling verbs	<i>Mein Freund hat sich <b>weggelacht</b></i> (T05) ‘My friend laughed his head off.’
Conjure verbs	<i>Vielleicht ist es ja wirklich die Sehnsucht, sich aus dem Alltag [...] <b>wegzuzaubern</b> [...]</i> (U13) ‘Perhaps it really is the longing to conjure oneself away from everyday life [...]’

Table 2. Verb classes in the reflexive *weg*-construction.

Table 2 shows that the reflexive construction only partly instantiates the same verbs as the transitive construction. In the same way as in the transitive construction, motion verbs occur in the reflexive *weg*-construction, but since the reflexive pronoun is selected by the verb in these instantiations, they are not discussed further here. It is interesting to note that, according to the data, no change-of-state verbs are attested in the reflexive construction with a reflexive pronoun in the accusative case, although such verbs convey the same meaning as the RES construction, which can be realised by *weg*-constructions. Movement verbs (e.g., *tanzen* ‘to dance’) were not found in the reflexive *weg*-constructions either, although they are compatible with the CMC and the RES construction. Reflexive *weg*-constructions do not instantiate verbs of ingestion such as *essen* ‘to eat’ or *trinken* ‘to drink’, but, as we will see, other verbs are used in constructions that occur in the context of alcohol consumption.

The reflexive and transitive constructions with the same verb do not always convey the same meaning, see e.g., the constructions with *lachen* ‘to laugh’ discussed below.

I will now briefly discuss some of the verbs whose meaning does not coincide with the constructional meaning, focusing on verbs with a specific use in the reflexive construction.

Contact-by-impact verbs such as *schießen* ‘to shoot’ are attested in the reflexive *weg*-construction. Like other instantiations with *hängen* ‘to hang’, etc., the construction is a RES construction that means ‘killing oneself’. Verbs of sound emission such as *knallen* ‘to bang’ are also used in the reflexive *weg*-construction. However, they are to be understood metonymically: the bang stands for the shot from a firearm. The meaning of these instantiations is the same as in the example with *schießen* ‘to shoot’ in Table 2.

The reflexive *weg*-construction also instantiates communication verbs, e.g., *argumentieren* ‘to argue’ or *loben* ‘to praise’. However, there are fewer subcategories than in the transitive construction.

In the same way as in the transitive construction, there are verbs that do not denote an action or an activity but a process or a state and a process, for example *träumen* ‘to dream’ in (53) above or *denken* ‘to think’ in (54). These instantiations denote a metaphorical motion.

- (54) *Aus der alltäglichen Bedrohung hilft eigentlich nur eines:*  
 Out-of-the everyday threat helps actually only one-thing:  
*sich wegzudenken in eine gewaltfreie und dadurch*  
 [oneself.ACC WEG-ZU-think.INF] into a non-violent and thus  
*schönere Welt.* (NUZ03)  
 more-beautiful world  
 ‘There is actually only one thing that helps to get away from the everyday threat: to think oneself away into a non-violent and thus more beautiful world.’

In the reflexive construction, contrary to many instantiations of the transitive construction, instantiations with the verb *denken* ‘to think’ do not include a negation or the adverb *kaum* ‘hardly’.

The verb *zaubern* ‘to conjure’ also occurs in several instantiations of the reflexive *weg*-construction that express a metaphorical motion.

As mentioned above, some instantiations of the reflexive construction occur with only one, or very few, verbs from a verb class. This is the case, for example, in instantiations with the verb *lachen* ‘to laugh’ – as in (55) – that are not possible with other verbs from the same verb class, e.g., *lächeln* ‘to smile’. Instantiations with the verb *lachen* denote a change of state but, although the object is affected, the meaning conveyed by the construction is not a disappearance but a ‘loss of control’.

- (55) *Mein Freund hat sich weg-gelacht.* (T05)  
 My friend has [himself.ACC WEG-laugh.PTCP]  
 ‘My friend laughed his head off.’

Constructions with the same meaning occur with the verb *schmeißen* (lit. ‘to throw’ together with the PP *vor Lachen* ‘laughing’/‘with laughter’, as in (56).

- (56) *Da hat sich Opi Paul vor Lachen fast weggeschmissen.* (U08)  
 Then [has himself.ACC Grandpa Paul with laughter almost WEG-throw.PTCP]  
 ‘Then Grandpa Paul laughed so hard, he almost lost it.’

It is interesting to note that the verb *schmeißen* does not occur with its lexical meaning, *i.e.*, ‘to throw’, in the reflexive *weg*-construction.

In this construction, several verbs occur with specific contextual meanings. This is the case, for example, in instantiations of the reflexive *weg*-construction in the context of drug use or alcohol consumption, where the verb acquires the meaning ‘to lose control’, e.g., in (57) with the verb *schießen* ‘to shoot’.

- (57) *Er sei kein Komasäufer, weil er sich nie vornehme, „sich wegzuschießen“.* (NUN07)  
 He is DET.NEG binge-drinker because he himself never  
 plans [himself.ACC WEG-ZU-shoot.INF]  
 ‘He is not a binge-drinker because he never plans to “shoot up”.’

In this context, the verb *schießen* does not mean ‘to shoot with a firearm’, as in the example for the verb class *contact-by-impact verbs* in Table 2, but ‘to fix/to shoot’. Its meaning is extended to alcohol consumption in (57). Such uses of verbs in the *weg*-construction are frequent in spoken language.

The reflexive construction and the transitive construction described in the previous sections are linked in a family of constructions that is addressed in Section 4.3.

### 4.3. Characteristics of the family of *weg*-constructions

Like authors such as Goldberg (1995) and Felfe (2018, p. 311), I claim that constructions are linked to each other in a family of constructions. I refer to the concept of family in Wittgenstein's sense, as described in Proost and Winkler (2015), according to which a family consists of several members that share similarities with other members of the same family, but not necessarily with all of them.

Transitive and reflexive *weg*-constructions share the same argument structure at an abstract level. They share the same oblique argument, *i.e.*, the particle *weg-*, and both constructions instantiate CMCs and RES constructions, depending on the nature and interaction of the arguments in the construction. Both constructions are productive and do not only occur with verbs that convey the same meaning as the construction, *i.e.*, motion verbs or change-of-state verbs. Transitive and reflexive *weg*-constructions also instantiate communication verbs, contact-by-impact verbs, etc. (see Tables 1 and 2) with selected or unselected objects. One specific characteristic of all *weg*-constructions is the embedding of *state + process* verbs and other verbs that seem to be incompatible with the meaning of the

construction. However, there are differences in the distribution of the verbs occurring in the transitive and the reflexive construction. According to our data, the reflexive construction occurs with fewer verbs than the transitive construction. This could be due to the fact that in reflexive constructions, the subject and the object denote the same entity. Moreover, some verbs are exclusively used in either the transitive or the reflexive construction, and verbs that occur in both constructions do not always undergo a similar extension of their use and meaning; see the transitive and reflexive constructions with the verb *lachen* ‘to laugh’ discussed in Sections 4.1 and 4.2. The occurrence of selected and unselected objects as NP or reflexive pronoun shows the great variety of extended uses of the verbs through the embedding in the *weg*-construction. The interaction of the objects with the verbs also contributes to determining whether a *weg*-construction is to be understood as a CMC or a RES construction.

In the transitive construction, there seem to be relatively fixed combinations with objects that occur in numerous instantiations, e.g., *Sorgen* ‘worries’, *Stress* ‘stress’, etc., which denote a negative concept that has to be eliminated. Such constructions can be classified as phraseme constructions and occur with many different verbs. This observation also shows that CxG is a relevant framework to unveil transparent and phraseological units. In the reflexive construction, there are also very specific use extensions of particular verbs in particular contexts, e.g., drug use and alcohol consumption. In such instantiations, the meaning of the verbs often “fades away” and the meaning of the construction comes to the fore.

Figure 3 gives an overview of the family of *weg*-constructions discussed in this section.

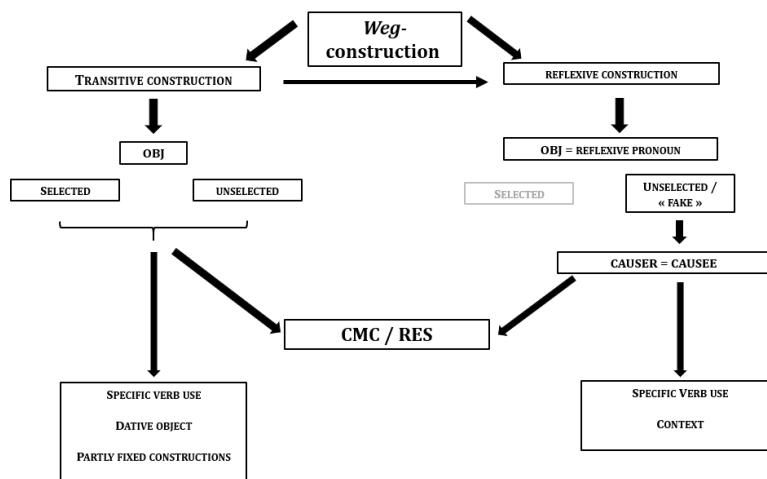


Figure 3. The family of *weg*-constructions.

## 5. Concluding remarks

The analysis of *weg*-constructions within the framework of Construction Grammar has unveiled the similarities and differences between transitive and reflexive constructions, as well as the great variety of instantiations within the family of *weg*-constructions. By distinguishing between selected and unselected objects (Goldberg & Jackendoff, 2004), Construction Grammar provides a descriptive framework for conventionalised and non-conventionalised instantiations of constructions, as well as for transparent and partly fixed constructions. The present study has also shown that numerous verb classes are compatible with the *weg*-construction. However, the analysis of the semantic verb classes could possibly be supplemented with a description of the semantic frames involved (see, amongst others, Ziem, 2014; Dalmas & Gautier, 2018), e.g., for partly fixed transitive constructions with the objects *Stress* ‘stress’, *Sorgen* ‘worries’, *Hirn* ‘brain’ or other instantiations that are constrained to a given context, such as sporting activities for transitive *weg*-constructions with the object *Pfunde* ‘pounds’, as in (16) and (18) above.

It can also be concluded from our study that, in addition to the idiosyncratic features of the interactions within the constructions, the context and the cotext should also be taken into account to describe the constructions. This raises the question as to what extent some constructions are preferentially used in specific text genres (see, for example, Engelberg, Koplénig, Proost & Winkler, 2012). A genre- and register-specific description of the constructions analysed in this paper would shed light not only on the interactions within the constructions, but also on their usage. It would also account for the specific use of verbs in a given text, as in (58) and (59).

(58) *Wenn es ein Motiv gibt, das Bob Dylan vom Anfang seiner Karriere bis heute begleitet, dann ist es der Versuch, sich singend wegzusingen [...] (U11)*

‘If there is one motif that has accompanied Bob Dylan from the beginning of his career to the present day, it is the attempt to sing himself away [...].’

(59) *Dort ist Basteln Planetensport und bisweilen so verwegen, dass Krims Kramuris Lieblingscousin Krempel sich aus Versehen mit einem Überschallpapierflugobjekt selbst weggebastelt hat. (U06)*

‘There, doing handicrafts is a planetary sport and sometimes so daring that Krims Kramuri’s favourite cousin Krempel accidentally “crafted” himself away with a supersonic paper flying object.’

Since constructions are language-specific (see, amongst others, Goldberg, 1995; Ziem & Boas, 2017), a contrastive analysis of the family of *weg*-constructions would shed light on their equivalents in other languages.

Both a genre- and a contrastive analysis would be relevant for foreign language teaching and learning as well as for translation studies.



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## Appendix

### 1. Data: User-defined corpus from the IDS Mannheim

Texte	T(%)	Wörter	W(%)	von	bis	Quelle
13.441	0.113%	6.039.584	0.204%	2000	2012	spektrumdirekt
1.098.481	9.252%	201.067.187	6.799%	2005	2013	Braunschweiger Zeitung
105.505	0.889%	95.465.917	3.228%	2000	2014	Die Zeit (Online-Ausgabe)
3.860.861	32.519%	780.400.189	26.390%	2000	2014	Rhein-Zeitung
273.199	2.301%	44.077.024	1.491%	2007	2015	Burgenländische Volkszeitung
872.545	7.349%	262.636.794	8.881%	2000	2015	die tageszeitung
4.665	0.039%	3.737.647	0.126%	2015	2015	Die ZEIT
99.871	0.841%	38.208.442	1.292%	2000	2015	FOCUS
348.887	2.939%	68.910.154	2.330%	2005	2015	Hamburger Morgenpost
261.738	2.205%	45.612.443	1.542%	2007	2015	Hannoversche Allgemeine
1.362.810	11.479%	351.727.905	11.894%	2000	2015	Mannheimer Morgen
1.596.872	13.450%	352.967.005	11.936%	2000	2015	Nordkurier
559.642	4.714%	165.249.475	5.588%	2000	2015	Nürnberger Nachrichten
416.747	3.510%	129.034.444	4.363%	2002	2015	Nürnberger Zeitung
940.018	7.918%	391.580.623	13.242%	2000	2015	Süddeutsche Zeitung
52.898	0.446%	17.269.028	0.584%	2006	2015	VDI nachrichten
2.122	0.018%	1.204.930	0.041%	2009	2015	Zeit Campus
550	0.005%	718.224	0.024%	2010	2015	Zeit Geschichte
1.669	0.014%	1.239.833	0.042%	2009	2015	Zeit Wissen
<b>11.872.521</b>	<b>100.000%</b>	<b>2.957.146.848</b>	<b>100.000%</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>19 Quellen</b>

## 2. Abbreviations used in the IDS corpora

brz	Braunschweiger Zeitung
foc	FOCUS
hmp	Hamburger Morgenpost
haz	Hannoversche Allgemeine
m	Mannheimer Morgen
nku	Nordkurier
nun	Nürnberger Nachrichten
nuz	Nürnberger Zeitung
rhz	Rhein-Zeitung
u	Süddeutsche Zeitung
spk	spektrumdirekt
t	die tageszeitung
vdi	VDI Nachrichten
z	Die Zeit
zca	Zeit Campus
zge	Zeit Geschichte
zwi	Zeit Wissen