

A construction of independent means: the history of the *Way* construction revisited¹

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The emergence and development of the *Way* construction was famously examined by Israel (1996) in a study which traced the modern form of the construction to three senses or subschemas, namely manner of motion (*He stumbled his way to the front door*), means of motion (*He dug his way out of the prison*) and incidental activity (*He whistled his way out of the room*). The present article moves beyond the late Middle English period – the starting point of Israel’s research – and looks at the precursors of the *Way* construction since Old English times, as well as its interaction with the Intransitive Motion construction (IMC) (*He walked into the room*). By approaching the data in terms of Goldberg’s typology (1997) of verb-construction relationships, which is finer-grained than Israel’s tripartite division, the analysis identifies the areas of conceptual and constructional overlap that have existed between the *Way* construction and the IMC in the course of history, and shows that the *Way* construction has gradually specialised in the expression of those relations which could not be readily coded in the IMC, such as means of motion and incidental activity. The study thus seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how the construction, the repertory of constructions making up the grammar of a language, may change over time.

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