

**A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF THE “WAY”  
CONSTRUCTION IN ENGLISH**

**UN ANÁLISIS BASADO EN CORPUS SOBRE LA  
CONSTRUCCIÓN CON “WAY” EN INGLÉS**



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## ABSTRACT

This investigation is a corpus-based study of the “way” construction in English. This linguistic phenomenon has been widely examined in previous works, but it is our contention that an analysis from a corpus-linguistics point of view may provide new data that have not yet been observed and that will help reach a better understanding of this construction. Hence, this dissertation encompasses, in the first place, an overview of the features of the construction based on previous studies in the framework of Construction Grammar together with an analysis of the “way” construction based on data extracted from the *British National Corpus* (BNC). The results have shown that the “way” construction exhibits additional features different from the ones proposed in the literature as well as some others which have not been observed so far.

**Key words:** Construction, constructional idiom, corpus linguistics.

## RESUMEN

Esta investigación es un estudio sobre la construcción con “way” en la lengua inglesa basado en análisis de un corpus de lenguaje real. Este fenómeno lingüístico ha sido extensamente analizado con anterioridad por varios autores, pero creemos que desde la perspectiva de la lingüística de corpus se pueden aportar nuevos datos que no han sido observados hasta ahora y que ayudarán a alcanzar un mejor conocimiento de la estructura. Así, el trabajo presenta, en primer lugar, una caracterización sobre la estructura basada en estudios anteriores en el marco de la Gramática de Construcciones que se completa con los resultados obtenidos de la investigación de los datos extraídos del *British National Corpus* (BNC). Los resultados apuntan a que la construcción con “way” exhibe, en ciertos casos, características distintas a aquellas anteriormente propuestas junto con otras nuevas que no han sido observadas hasta la fecha.

**Palabras clave:** Construcción, expresión construccional idiomática, lingüística de corpus.

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## **1. Introduction**

The concept of “construction” has been present in linguistics for a considerable amount of time (Goldberg, 1995:1). As Hoffman and Trousdale argue (2013:1), all the basis of the current linguistic approaches called “Construction Grammar” comes from a Saussurean notion that a linguistic sign is an arbitrary and conventional pairing of form and meaning, and from the fact that decades later some linguists started to explore the arbitrary form-meaning notion at all levels of grammatical description which involve such form-meaning pairings. Yet, “(...) there are many collocations, prefabricated utterances, idioms and minor constructions that buck the trends of a language in unexpected ways” (Goldberg, 2013:18).

One of these prefabricated utterances is the “way” construction, also referred to as “Verb One’s Way” construction or “X’s Way Construction”. However, throughout this investigation it is going to be simply named the “way” construction. With this study, our aim is to explore the use and the form of this construction by analysing data from an English corpus. The main reason to examine this topic arose from the fact that there are certain expressions in language, such as idioms or constructions, whose real sense does not match the literal meaning of the words which compose the sentence. Hence, this type of phenomena in general, and the “way” construction in particular, require a focus which goes beyond their lexical and syntactic features, and encompasses their semantic, pragmatic, and contextual aspects.

## **2. Objectives**

As just stated above, the aim of this investigation is to reach a deeper understanding of the form and use of this construction in English through the analysis of a corpus of real data in this language. Although the phenomenon seems to be well delimited from a syntactic and semantic point of view at a theoretical level, our objective is to offer previous investigation new results by adding the perspective of corpus linguistics, which provides unbiased and reliable data of how speakers use the “way” construction in real contexts. Thus, I will examine different aspects in relation with the verbs which appear more frequently in this construction as well as the registers where they are more common, and the types of subjects and complements which occur in the “way” construction.

### 3. Methodology

The analysis of the “way” construction in this study is divided into four main sections. Section 4 is a brief and precise explanation of the defining syntactic and semantic features of the construction. This is followed by a short introduction to the framework of Construction Grammar in Section 5, where the central ideas of this approach are outlined and which may be useful since the most relevant studies used as starting points for the characterization of the “way” construction in our investigation belong to this theoretical model. Although I share the central assumptions of Construction Grammar as regards the interaction of lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic factors in the use, and therefore, in the analysis of linguistic phenomena, the present investigation is, however, not entirely framed in this approach, since the aim of this paper is rather to contribute with new descriptive data which may help improve our knowledge of the “way” construction in English.

Section 6 offers a survey of the most relevant features of the “way” construction mostly based on the works of two authors, Jackendoff (1990, 1997a, 1997b) and Goldberg (1995, 2006). These have been selected for the elaboration of this section because they provide thorough and extensive accounts of this structure in English which have served as point of departure for many subsequent works. An additional author in this section is Ways (1996), whose diachronic evidence is useful for the analysis of the corpus.

Section 7 is the analysis of the construction, based on data extracted from the *British National Corpus* (BNC). This corpus was originally a project carried out and managed in the 1980s and early 1990s by the BNC Consortium led by Oxford University press, of which major members are major dictionary publishers Addison-Wesley Longman and Larousse Kingsisher Chambers; academic research centres at Oxford University Computing Services, the University Centre for Computer Corpus Research on Language at Lancaster University, and the British Library’s Research and Innovation Centre. It contains more than 100 million words from different types of texts (including the date when the texts were published) which are organized according to different genres: fiction, magazine, miscellaneous, academic, non-academic, newspaper, and spoken.

The search was performed using three variants of personal possessive pronouns: *his*, *her*, and *its*. The paradigm used for the analysis was [vv\*] *his/her/its way*, except for the verb *sleep*, which was searched using all of the possessive personal pronouns for reasons which will be explained later. Only these three personal possessive pronouns

were selected for the search in the corpus for two reasons: first, since one of the purposes was to analyse non-human and inanimate subjects, it was necessary to separate the neutral pronoun from the others; and secondly, it makes possible a more exhaustive search. Therefore, 300 examples per each genre (100 per pronoun) were analysed or, by default, the entire genre if the quantity of examples available did not reach such a number. The total number of the examples exceeds 1400 examples, which include both instances which belong in the “way” construction and some which do not. The analysis of these examples is divided into various subsections which focus on the frequency and types of verbs which appear in the construction, and the subjects and complements which typically occur in this sentence type.

#### **4. A preliminary description of the construction**

The “way” construction is one of the more complex syntactic constructions. It is composed by various elements: a human or inanimate subject, a transitive or intransitive verb, the *way* phrase together with a possessive, and a directional phrase:

- (1) John elbowed his way into the room.

The verb is not the element which assigns the argument structure to the rest of the verb phrase, but the whole construction itself (Jackendoff, 1997a:172-173). This argument structure is formed by three argument roles that are semantically required to complete the meaning of the construction: the theme –the entity which moves, the createe-way –the possessive phrase headed by the noun *way*, and the path –the directional phrase. (Goldberg, 1995:208). The result of this composition is usually the meaning of someone moving towards somewhere creating a path by the activity designated by the verb. Thus, from the example in (1) we extract the meaning of the subject *John* moving *into the room* by means of the activity denoted by the verb, that is, using his elbows. However, although this is the basic meaning, it is only one of some other less common ones, as we will see further on.

#### **5. Construction Grammar**

Linguistics and the study of language structure can be divided into two main approaches: formalism and functionalism. The basic difference between them is the fact that the former focuses more on the form of language whereas the latter analyses and

focuses on its function. They are usually considered as opposing fronts in linguistics, although some authors, such as Kuno (1980) and Newmayer (1999), believe that they may result complementary. Construction Grammar is one of these functionalist theories on grammar and “(...) constructionists have actually borrowed much from traditional ‘functionalist’ approaches” (Goldberg, 2013:30).

Despite the fact that Construction Grammar arose as an answer to Chomsky’s Generative Grammar theory, the notion of “construction” is also present in his model of language structure. The term can be traced back to Saussure at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century after which linguists considered that even “(...) roots (or lemmas) and affixes are conventional pairings of form and function” (Hoffman and Trousdale, 2013; in Goldberg, 2013:17). With an honourable place in linguistics, later on it was defined as the form and meaning pairing independent from particular verbs, that is, a construction is provided with its own meaning different from the meaning of the components which form the sentence. However, according to Goldberg (1995:1) this notion of syntactic constructions has been questioned by Chomsky (1981, 1992) during the last decades and claimed to be epiphenomenal. Nevertheless, according to Mateu (2002:16), Chomsky did not argue for the elimination of constructions from a linguistic theory, but he rather commented on the sole fact that their existence is not motivated by I-language (Internalised language) principles.

Differences among the grammarians who analysed language structure in terms of constructions are obvious and names such as Fillmore, Kay, Jackendoff, and specially Goldberg, whose contribution to this approach is enormous, are crucial for the development of the field. Nonetheless, as Goldberg (1995:6) underlines, however distinct their approaches might be, they still share some central tenets:

- 1- They share the basic conception that traditional constructions, that is, form-meaning pairings, are the basic units of language.
- 2- They show interest in characterising the entire class of language structure and that interest arises from the belief that a fundamental insight can be gained from non-core cases.
- 3- They account for the conditions which allow a construction to be used felicitously with the conviction that subtle semantic and pragmatic factors result crucial for the understanding of the constraints on grammatical constructions.

- 4- There is no strict division between lexical and syntactical constructions which differ in their internal complexity.
- 5- There is also no division between semantics and pragmatics.

It is, however, their emphasis on form-function pairing which separates constructionist grammarians from other generative approaches, which have the tendency to downgrade function, and from other functionalist approaches, which do the same with form. Yet constructionists seem to bring together these two approaches (Goldberg, 2013:30).

## **6. The “way” construction in the literature**

### **6.1. Jackendoff (1990, 1997a, 1997b)**

Jackendoff (1990:211; 1997b:547) is one of the first linguists to give an in-depth and detailed analysis of this construction. According to this author, the basic meaning of the construction is a description of “(...) the subject’s activity while travelling through space”, an activity extended during a period of time. Together with other similar constructions, the “way” construction is, according to him, rather radical, since the adjunct following the verb is the element which establishes the syntax of the VP rather than the verb itself. The construction disobeys the patterns delimited by the verbs that appear in this construction since many of them do not usually occur with NP and PP complements:

- (2) Bill belched his way out of the restaurant.
- (3) Harry moaned his way down the road.

Superficially, there exists a similar construction which uses a measure phrase. The contrast between both constructions can be useful for the establishment of the surface syntax of the “way” construction:

- (4) Bill belched all the way/the whole way out of the restaurant.

From the comparison of (2) and (4), we can observe that, while in (4) the elements after the verb can be preposed, as can be seen in (5), this cannot happen in (2), which points out that *All the way out of the restaurant* in (4) must be a constituent:

(5) All the way/The whole way out of the restaurant, Bill belched.

(6) \*His way out of the restaurant, Bill belched.

Furthermore, adding an adverb after *way* is possible in the “way” construction but not in the sentence with the measure phrase. However, placing the adverb after the verb is possible in the measure phrase (8) but it is not in the “way” construction. This suggests that *his way* occupies the position of a regular object while *out of the restaurant* is an ordinary PP which modifies the noun *way* in (7):

(7) \*Bill belched noisily his way out of the restaurant.

(8) Bill belched noisily all the way out of the restaurant.

The construction accepts a great quantity of intransitive action verbs, but their transitive varieties are not acceptable:

(9a) Sue whistled her way through the tunnel.

(9b) \*Sue whistled a tune her way through the tunnel.

This restriction strengthens the fact that the particle “way” occupies the position of a direct object (Jackendoff, 1990:212). They are intransitive verbs functioning in a transitive construction (Mateu, 2002:14).

As Jackendoff continues arguing, this requirement is of strong importance in the construction, since the verb must have a zero complement, that is, nothing which may be regarded as a complement of the verb can appear before *way*. This can be observed in further examples:

(10a) Babe Ruth homered his way into the hearts of America.

(10b) \*Babe Ruth hit home runs his way into the hearts of America.

An important point that he underlines is that there exist two constraints for the choice of verbs used in this construction. The first one lays on the fact that verbs must be inherently describing processes or repeated bounded events (Jackendoff, 1990:213):

(11) She shouldered her way between Anne and Derek.

(12)\*The window opened/broke its way into the room.

(13) \*Bill hid/crouched his way into the room.

*Open* and *break* are nonrepeatable events, while *hide* and *crouch* are stative or unrepeatable inchoative.

The second constraint is that, in Jackendoff's view, the verb must be a process with internal structure. That is, although verbs such as *sleep* or *fall* are processes and, thus, should be acceptable, they do not involve internal motion on the part of the actor, the doer of the action denoted by the verb, since they are inherently homogenous processes. That is the reason why they are not acceptable in this construction:

(14) \*Bill slept/fell/blushed his way to New York.

Both syntactic as well as semantic constraints condition the choice of the verb in the "way" construction. Therefore, Jackendoff (1990:219) argues that a pure syntactic analysis of this construction fails as a consequence of this complex syntactic and semantic mixture.

In terms of the different meanings of the construction, there are close paraphrases which may help understand its possible interpretation:

(15) Bill belched his way out of the restaurant. → Bill went out of the restaurant belching.

(16) Sue whistled her way through the tunnel. → Sue went through the tunnel whistling / or Sue got (herself) through the tunnel by whistling.

Thus, Jackendoff (1990:214) suggests that in the "way" construction the "(...) unexpressed conceptual structure of the verbs *go* or *get* is imposed on the conceptual structure of the verb". In the examples above, the main verb of the "way" construction moves to a subordinate position. The verb in the paraphrase does not have any complement, contrary to the "way" construction, where the PP becomes the path of the main verb *go* or *get*. With these paraphrases, Jackendoff proposes two interpretations for the construction: in the first one the verb denotes the means of motion whereas in the second the verb designates coextensive action and manner. However, the author considers

that this distinction is not clear enough and there are sentences which can be interpreted in both ways:

- (17) Sam joked his way into the meeting. →
- (18) Sam got into the meeting by joking. (means)
- (19) Sam went into the meeting (while) joking. (manner).

The conflation of both interpretations can be supported by the contribution of Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999) and Grady (1997) in the field of Cognitive Linguistics who proved that conflation is a conceptual mechanism used by speakers to pair subjective experiences with sensorimotor experience to produce primary metaphors. This is the case of the means and manner interpretations, which suffer the same type of experiential conflation (Luzondo, 2013:359).

Mateu (2002:5-16), on the other hand, states that, although the claim that the link between the verb and the subordinate conceptual event introduced by the operator *by* in (18) is a mere stipulation, it may be right because it is based on “(...) a morphosyntactic reason that appears to be involved in the 'resultative parameter', which distinguishes 'satellite-framed' languages like English from 'verb-framed' languages like Romance”. In satellite-framed languages, the directional/path relation can be left stranded around the verb, which allows the conflation of the verb and the manner component. In Spanish, however, the verb is already conflated with the directional/path relation. This fact does not permit the conflation with any other independent component such as manner which can be observed in (20b):

- (20a) Adele moaned her way out of stage.
- (20b) \*Adele gimió su camino fuera del escenario.
- (20c) Adele salió del escenario gimiendo.

Furthermore, the “way” construction is incompatible with the passive voice. Although there is an element placed in the object position, it is not a NP subcategorized by verb, that is, it is not the object of the verb since the verbs which occur in this construction do not usually have internal arguments that can be moved to the subject position. The “way” phrase just happens to be placed in the object position.

In addition, *His way* cannot be pronominalized, as illustrated in (21), it cannot be ellipted (22), or questioned (23), which altogether indicates that *one's way* does not really make reference to anything outside the construction, that is, it is not a referential phrase (Jackendoff, 1997b:548):

(21) \*Bill whistled his way into the room, and then he joked it down the hall.

(22) \*Bill whistled HIS way into the ROOM, while Harry whistled HIS down the hall.

(23) \*Which way/which of his ways did Bill poke into the room?

The noun *way* can undergo a modification by placing an adjective before it. In addition, these adjectives turn into adverbs or absolutes when paraphrased (Jackendoff, 1990:217):

(24) Bill belched his miserable way out of the restaurant. →

Bill went miserably out of the restaurant.

Bill, miserable, went out of the restaurant belching.

(25) The barrel rolled its ponderous way up the alley. →

The barrel went ponderously up the alley, rolling.

The barrel, ponderous (as an elephant), went up the alley rolling.

Finally, there are certain verbs which appear in this construction idiomatically. These verbs are *wend*, *worm* and *thread*, *make*, and *work*, which acquire special meanings in the construction. Furthermore, *wend* is found exclusively in this construction, as well as the verbal form of *worm* (Jackendoff, 1997a:173). These verbs are special because paraphrases such as (18) and (19) above, repeated here as (26) or (27), are not possible:

(26) \*Bill went out of the restaurant wending/by wending.

(27) \*Bill went out of the restaurant worming/by worming.

However, in a sense, the “way” construction can be considered a “constructional idiom” which does not base on the verb-meaning, that is, “(...) it is a specialized syntactic form with an idiomatic meaning, marked by the noun *way*” (Jackendoff, 1990:221). The meaning of the construction itself “(...) is learnable in the same way as word meanings

are learned” (Jackendoff, 1997b:554). In addition, both Jackendoff (1997b:553) and Goldberg (1995:200) believe that constructional idioms can assign special meanings to a wider variety of autonomous syntactic structures which can be detected as a consequence of their unusual complement structure for the verb, the VP structure unusual restriction, unusual selectional restrictions, and special occasional morphemes which mark the construction, as it is the case of *way* in this construction.

## **6.2. Goldberg (1995, 2006)**

Although both Goldberg and Jackendoff provide constructional approaches to the “way” construction (Mateu, 2000:2), they do differ in many aspects. First of all, in contrast to Jackendoff, Goldberg (2006:7) believes that the basic meaning of the “way” construction is “(...) someone moving somewhere despite obstacles”. Furthermore, as mentioned above, Jackendoff (1990) suggested two different interpretations, the means interpretation and the manner interpretation. However, for Goldberg (1995:202), the manner interpretation is an extension of the more basic and primary means interpretation as a consequence of manner’s reduced frequency. Furthermore, the semantics of the means interpretation motivates the syntax of the construction (provides it with meaning), whereas in the manner interpretation it does not. Luzondo (2013:359), on the other hand, defends that each use in context motivates the syntactic form of the construction, not being thus restricted exclusively to the means interpretation.

According to Goldberg (1995:202-203), there exists diachronic evidence for the means interpretation to be considered the primary one for this construction. The first citation of this construction dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> century:

(28) I made my way...unto Rome.

The verb *make* has had a privileged position in the construction for a considerable period of time since its semantics encodes part of the meaning of the construction, the creation of a path. The use of this construction with a verb different from *make* does not appear until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup>:

(29) [He] hew’d out his way by the power of the Sword.

The first examples of the manner interpretation of the construction are not found until the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

(30) The muffin-boy rings his way down the little street.

This diachronic evidence is eventually questioned by Ways (1996), whose substantial analysis deserves a different section which will be presented in the next subsection.

The location of the noun *way* in the object position, a place where it should not appear if the argument structure of the verb were followed, can be termed as the “object of result” (Jespersen, 1949, in Goldberg, 1995:203), suggesting that the path of the movement is not created yet and the mover must create it somehow despite difficulties:

(31) Sally made her way into the ballroom.

Levin’s suggestion (1993:99) about the similarity between this construction and the resultative construction has also been defended earlier by many other authors, such as Marantz (1992), who equates the “way” construction with the “fake resultatives” arguing that “Nor is the path named by *way* the physical road or location of the journey; it is the person named by the possessor of *way* extended in space” (Marantz, 1992, in Mateu, 2002:20). However, the parallelism, according to Goldberg (1995:217) is not so clear, since the resultative construction is very restrictive in terms of the verbs which can appear in it, while the “way” construction allows a wide variety of them. Nonetheless, she concludes that the idea of a possessed path is right.

Goldberg (1995:204) outlines that the most common interpretations of the construction involve, as in the example above, movement through some type of difficulty. However, Luzondo (2013:352) argues that Goldberg overlooks the role of contextual parameters, which can be exemplified with the following sentences:

(32) Paula drank her way through the whole bottle of vodka.

(33) \*Paula drank her way through the glass of lemonade.

Goldberg’s opinion about these two sentences is that the first one is much more acceptable than the second one since drinking a bottle of vodka implies a difficulty, whereas the same cannot be said about a glass of lemonade. Nonetheless, if the subject referent in (33)

is a person who hated lemonade and the one in (32) is an alcoholic who was used to drinking a bottle of vodka daily, the acceptability of the sentences would be reversed. However, it can also be argued whether the constraint of difficulty in movement might be just a “(...) mere description of the original prototypical semantics of the ‘way’ construction rather than a constraint” (Luzondo, 2013:356).

Coming back to Goldberg’s analysis, the verbs which can be found in the construction either denote the creation of a path or “(...) designate the means by which the motion was achieved” (Goldberg, 1995:204). In (34) what enables motion is the fight denoted by the verb:

(34) In some cases, passengers tried to fight their way through smoke-choked hallways to get back to their cabins.

Contain verbs as *thread*, *weave*, *wend*, have a slightly different meaning, where careful, deliberate and winding motion is involved:

(35) This time, with no need to thread his way out, he simply left by the side door for a three-day outing.

Contrary to what Jackendoff (1990) stated, basic-level motion verbs are acceptable only if the context implies motion despite difficulties. It is not only the case of the means interpretation, but also the manner interpretation (Goldberg, 1995:205):

(36) The novice skier walked her way down the ski slope.

When there are social barriers preventing the achievement of a goal, we find verbs which imply breaking the rules, as *bribe* or *buy* in certain contexts, which makes *way* the “(...) literal or metaphorical path created by the action denoted by the verb... which is supported by the fact that it can be modified” (Goldberg, 1995:206). This fact contributes to the belief that it actually has a role in the semantics of the construction:

(37) Joe bought his way into the exclusive country club.

Thus, Goldberg (1995:207) proposes that the construction can be said to be the fusion of syntax and semantics of the following expressions, in which (38) denotes the creation of a path, while (39) refers to the subject’s movement, resulting in (40), a construction with three complements and arguments:

- (38) He made a path.
- (39) He moved into the room.
- (40) He made his way into the room.

Thus, Goldberg (1995:207-210) provides the following representations to account for the syntax and semantics of the construction and the links between these two components:

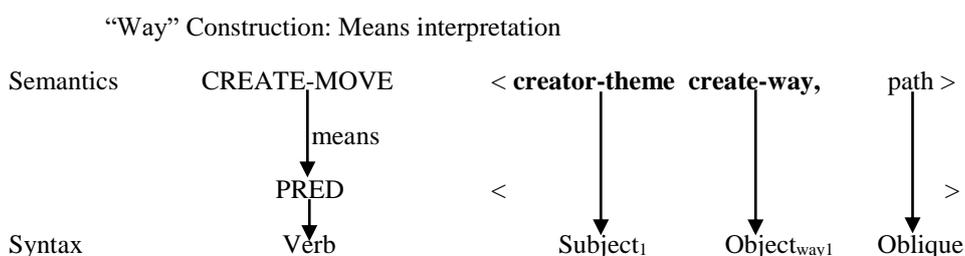


Figure 1

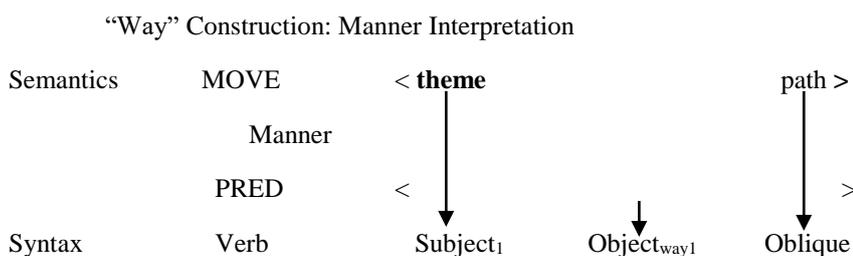


Figure 2

*Figure 1* represents the means interpretation in which the verb denotes both the creation of a path and the movement of the subject. We also have three argument roles imposed by the construction itself. In contrast, *figure 2* outlines the argument structure of the manner interpretation. The construction also denotes movement, but this time it does not convey the idea of the creation of a path. Thus, *way* is not motivated in the object position and the construction does not assign by itself the argument role of “way” in the construction (Goldberg, 1995:209).

However, the two interpretations might be caused by the sole fact that *way* is by itself polysemic since it accepts both meanings:

(41) Pat found a way to solve the problem. (means)

(42) He had a pleasant way about him. (manner)

According to Goldberg (1995:212-14) the construction presents several constraints which may apply to both or only one of its interpretations. Thus, similarly to what Jackendoff (1990) stated, the verb must designate a repeatable action or unbounded activity, which applies to both interpretations, means (43-44) and manner (45-46):

(43) Firing wildly, Jones shot his way through de crowd.

(44) \*With a single bullet, Jones shot his way through the crowd.

(45) He hiccupped his way out of the room.

(46) \*He once hiccupped his way out of the room.

In addition, the motion must be self-propelled, which excludes from the construction those verbs whose subjects are not responsible for the action of the verb, since they lack agentivity or self-initiation. As long as the motion is self-propelled, the subject does not have to be volitional, or even human, with two exceptions, which are *work* and *find*. However, this constraint does not apply to the manner interpretation:

(47) The large seed sprout quickly and dependably and the strong seedlings can push their way through crusted soil.

(48) The spending bills working their way through the Congress...

(49) ...its sacred textiles had been smuggled out of Bolivia and had found their way into American collections.

Goldberg (1995:213) claims that examples with inanimate subjects are unacceptable since they cannot cause their own motion. However, Luzondo (2013:353-4) argues that this constraint results contradictory since subjects which scarcely follow this condition can be found. Thus the subject referent must be rather susceptible to self-propelled or instigated motion.

The final constraint pointed out by Goldberg (1995:214) is that the action must be directed towards something, that is, “it cannot be aimless”. This is not a restriction on verbs only, but also on other parts of the sentence, such as prepositions, as the following examples illustrate:

(50) \*Joe shoved his way among the crowd.

(51) Joe shoved his way through the crowd.

In (50), the preposition *among* expresses non-directed motion, contrary to *through* in (51). This constraint is not compulsory in the manner interpretation, although direct motion seems to be the preference of this interpretation.

### **6.3.Ways (1996) and the historical background of the “way” construction**

Ways (1996:222-4), in contrast to Goldberg, proposes that not only do the first verbs different from *make* appear earlier in the means interpretation, around the 1650, but also that the manner interpretation has its basis on a much earlier and more general ME *go-your-path* construction “(...) in which the verb took an optional possessed path argument (...) in which any noun meaning something like ‘way’ appears to have worked”:

(52) To mandian lond, wente he his ride. (c. 1250.Genesis & Exodus, 3950)

The first verbs in this construction evolved to encode manner of motion. The appearance of *way* in this more general construction is a rather special case and the examples with this particle can be found from 1350 onwards. In this time, the most frequent verbs in this construction are *go*, *ride*, *run*, *pursue*, *pass*, and *wend*:

(53) I ran my way and let hym syt Smoke and shitten arse together. (1557. Welth & Helth)

By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the construction starts to be used with fairly more verbs. Many of them are verbs which involve difficulty or laborious motion such as *totter*, *shamble*, *churn*, *plod*... :

(54) The poor Dominie...weariedly plodded his way towards Woodbourne.  
(1815. Scott, *Guy M.* xxviii)

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we start to find verbs which imply the different noises which accompany an action rather than the action itself, such as *crash* or *crunch*:

(55) There is a full stream that tumbles into the sea...after singing its way down from the heights of Burrule. (1890. Hall, *Caine Bondman*, ii. iii)

Nonetheless, *go*, *make*, *work*, *pursue*, and *wing* still dominate the construction, and it becomes more productive along with the appearance of new usages built upon established predicates.

According to Ways (1996:224), the basis for the means interpretation of the construction does not appear until late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Around the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup>, we start to find verbs such as *pave* and *smooth*, which are verbs denoting the construction of a path, a meaning which is directly connected with the semantics of *way*. Other verbs which are included in the “way” construction in this period are *cut*, *furrow out*, *poke out*, *eat out*, and *force out*, “(...) coding the general physical exertion required to make one’s way”:

(56) Bacon was one of those that smoothed his way to a full ripeness by liquorish and pleasing passages. (1653. A. Wilson, *Jas.* I, 37)

Clearing and cutting verbs appear a century later. They become the main source of new predicates and, perhaps motivated by the use of cutting for battle scenes and the use of force in building a road, the fighting use emerges at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century:

(57) Fighting his way to a chair of the rhetoric. (1816. Scott, *Antiquities*, xxxi)

The indirectness of goal achievement in the means interpretation appears during the nineteenth century:

(58) How in the roost the thief had knav’d his way. (1821. John Clare, *The Village Minstrel* I. 18)

(59) Not one man in five hundred could have spelled his way through a psalm.  
(1849. Macaulay, *History of England* iii. I. 405)

In these two examples, verbs depict “(...) different social and psychological sorts of activity (literal or metaphorical) which enable motion” (Ways, 1996:226). Verbs which incidentally enable motion, thus being even more indirect, can also be found:

(60) Addison wrote his way with his Whig pamphlets to a secretaryship of state.  
(1890. T. F. Tout. *History of England*, 111)

Considerably abstract uses of the “way” construction appeared as a consequence of the well-entrenched manner and means interpretations around that period. These abstract uses tend to generalize over the already established usages, with examples which include verbs that do not code means or manner of motion, but rather incidental activities that accompany motion:

(61) He...whistled his way to the main front-door. (1866. Blackmore, *Cradock Nowell* xvi)

The use of both interpretations reached a situation in which the speakers “(...) reorganized the links that mediated this increasingly vast network of usages, uniting them into what then became the modern construction” (Ways, 1996:227).

## **7. Analysis**

In the following subsections the analysis of several aspects regarding the “way” construction is presented. The first one deals with the frequency of the construction in each genre as well as the most frequent verbs in each of them. In the second subsection a more in-depth analysis of the verbs that typically occur in this construction is offered. The third subsection analyses the different types of subjects that appear in this construction. Finally, the fourth presents a study of the different directional phrases that find their way into the construction.

## 7.1. Frequency

In this part of the analysis, we will see in which genre the construction is more frequent as well as the frequency of the verbs that it is formed with. An overall remark on this part of the analysis is the relatively little availability of examples with the feminine pronoun. The only genre in which the analysis of 100 examples was possible is Fiction. In the rest, none surpassed the amount of 50 examples.

From the results we can observe that the genre in which the “way” construction appears more frequently is Fiction, with a total of more than 82% of examples which belong to the construction. It is also the genre with the biggest amount of examples available, making it possible the analysis of 100 examples per each pronoun. *Make* is by far the most common verb followed by *find*. *Pick* and *work* appear in a considerably reduced quantity. In the category *others* we find verbs which occur less frequently, with a range between 5 examples, such as *edge* or *feel*; 4 examples, such as *force*, *shoulder*, and *fight*; 3 examples, such as *talk*, *wind*, or *weave*; two, such as *wend*, *hack*, and *worm*; or in only one sentence each, *glance*, *think*, *dodge*, *leaf*, *nuzzle*, *grind*, or *sing* among others. The results are shown in the following charts:

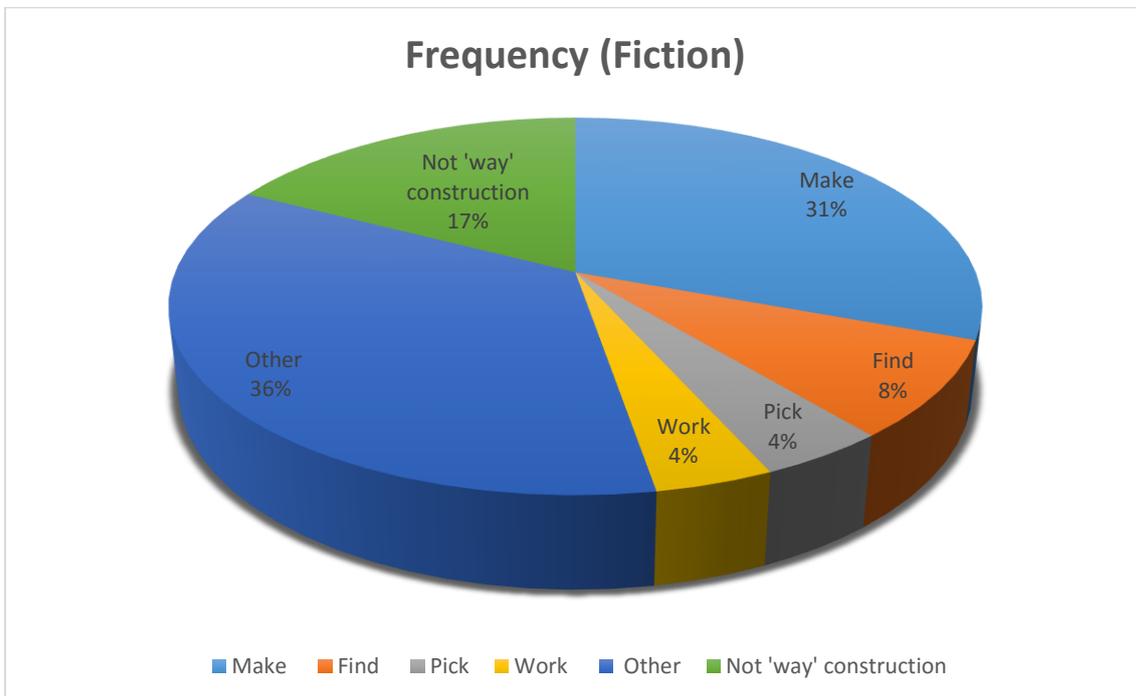


Figure 3

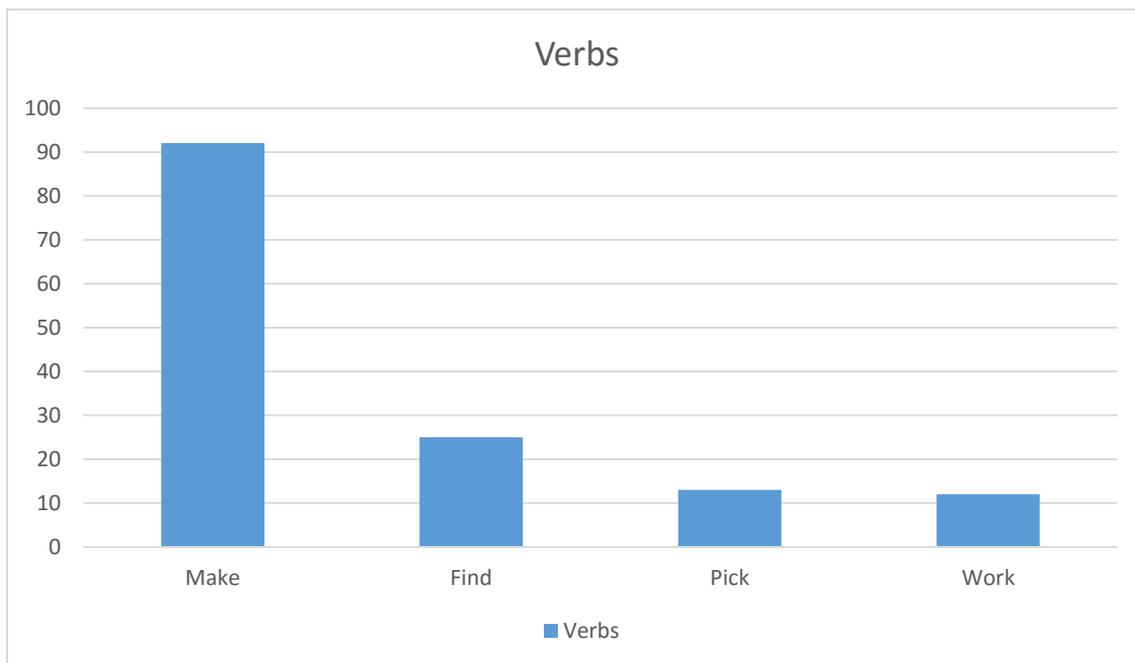


Figure 3.1

With a total of 221 examples available, Magazine is, in terms of percentage, the second genre with the highest frequency of the “way” construction. The numerous occurrences of *find* and *make* in this genre is a consequence of the high number of examples with the neutral pronoun. The masculine variety is richer in terms of verb types than the neutral one, which presents half of the verbs that appear with the masculine pronoun despite the fact that both of them have the same number of examples. *Wind* occurs in 7 instances and only with the neutral pronoun. Other less frequent verbs are *power*, *blast*, *weave* or *force*, which are found in 3 examples each. *Plot*, *wend*, or *claw* are found in 2 examples each; many others, such as *thread*, *twang*, *wriggle*, *eat*, or *sleep*, appear in only one sentence each. It is important to remark that 79 different verbs have been found in this genre, 10 more than in Fiction despite the fact that the amount of examples available for the analysis was nearly one third lower. This fact makes this genre the most productive in terms of verbs. The charts bellow summarize the results:

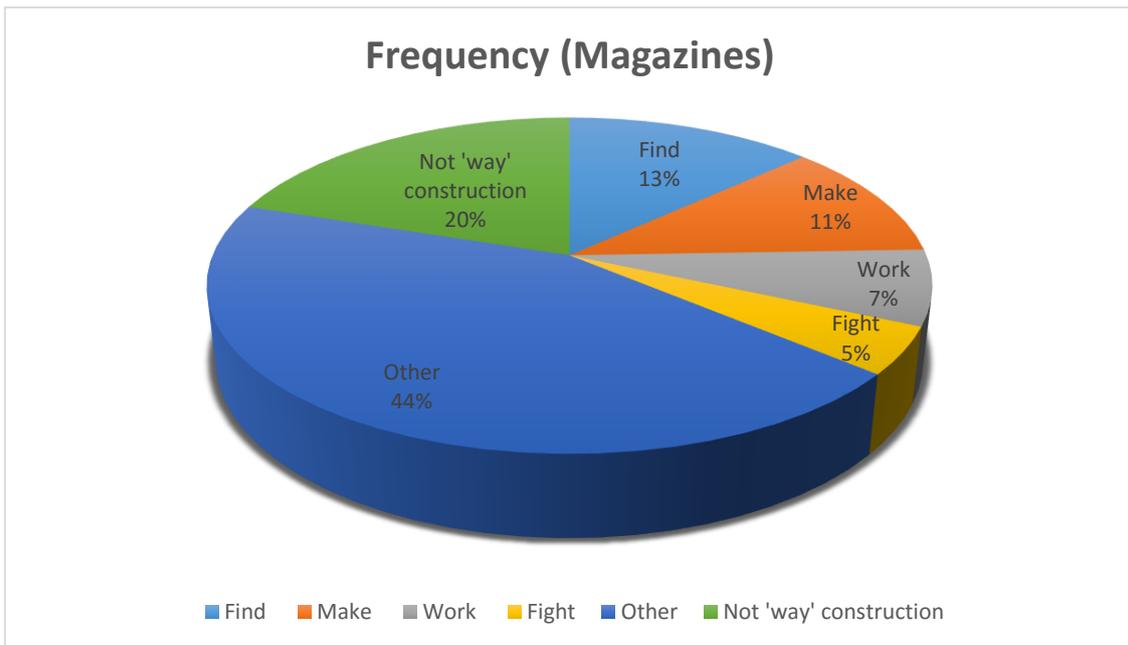


Figure 4

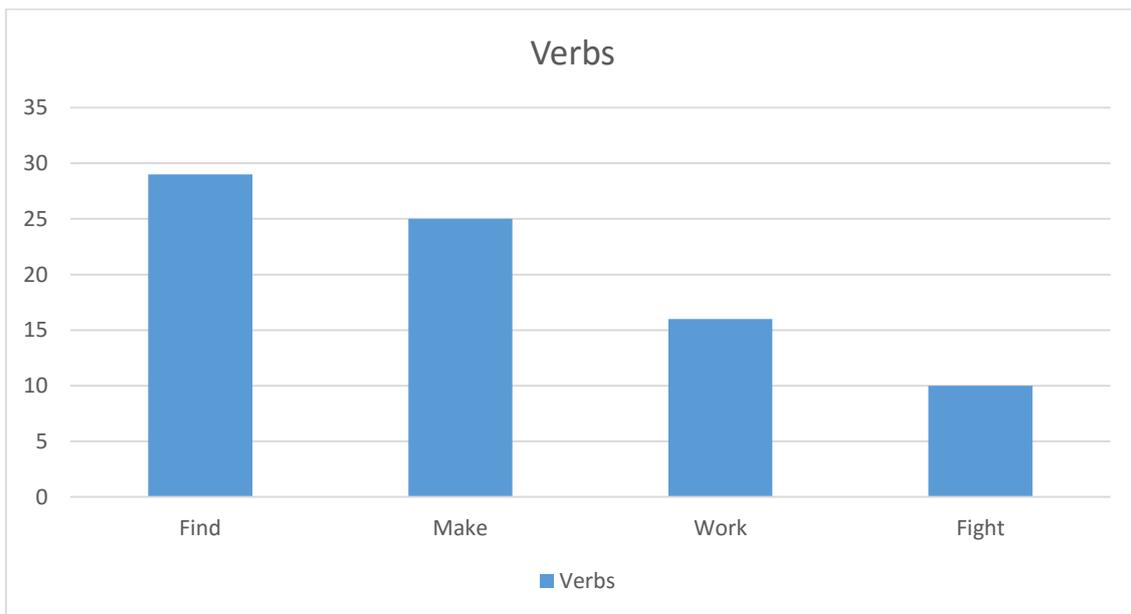


Figure 4.1

Miscellaneous, with a total of 248 examples, is the third genre with the highest frequency of the “way” construction. Similarly to Fiction, the most common verb is *make*. It is followed by *find* and *wind*. *Find* mostly accompanies the neutral pronoun whereas *wind* appears only with it. Other verbs, such as *force* and *fight*, are found in 9 and 6 instances, respectively. *Weave*, *eat*, and *worm* occur in 4 examples for the first one and 3 for each of the others. Many verbs are found in two sentences each, such as *pull*, *shoulder*, *talk*, or *win*. There are 37 verbs which only occur in one sentence each, such as *zigzag*, *skirmish*, *expand*, or *walk*:

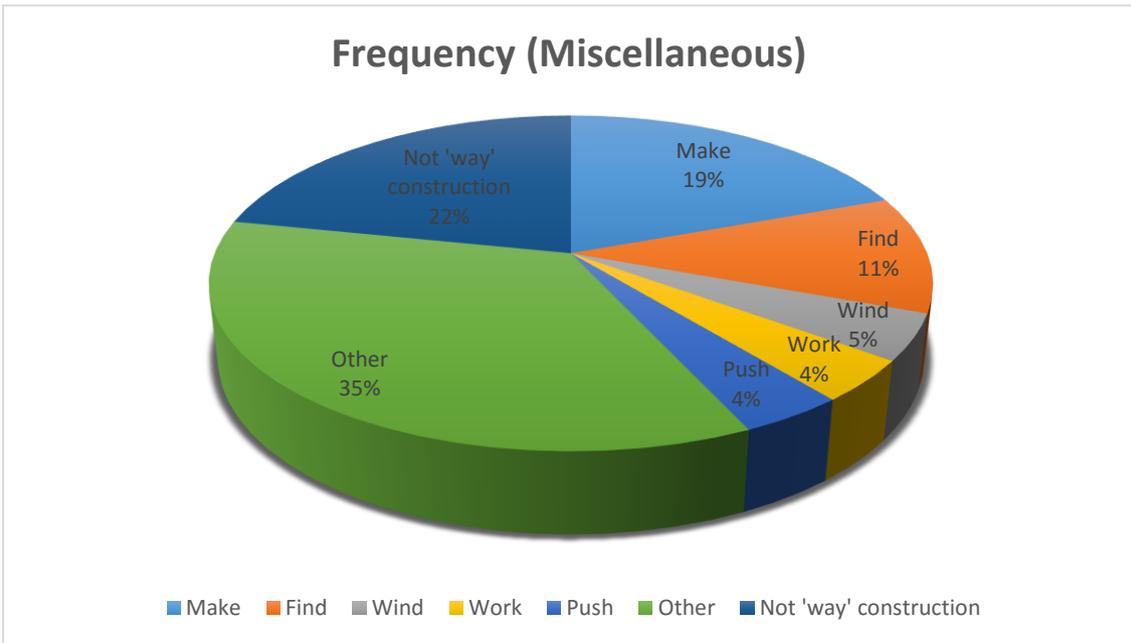


Figure 5

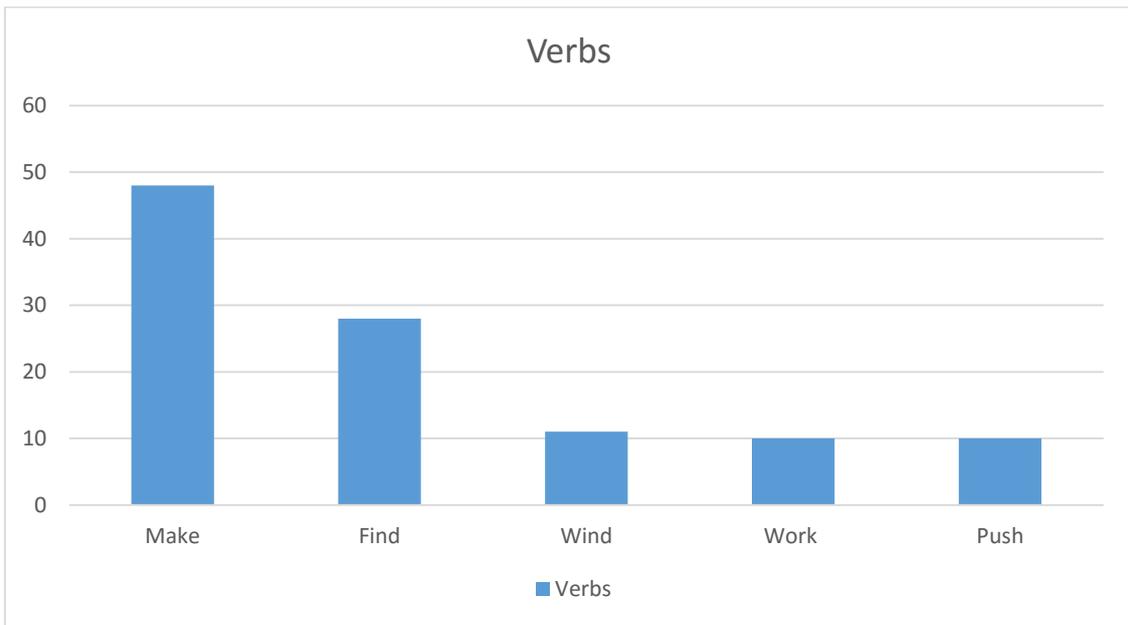


Figure 5.1

In Non-Academic texts 224 examples have been analysed, 171 out of which are occurrences of the “way” construction. *Find* is the most common verb in this section. This is again a consequence of its high frequency with the neutral pronoun since only 6 examples include either the feminine or the masculine pronouns. Others, such as *blast*, *inch*, *pick*, *bluff*, or *bore*, occur in two examples each. The remaining 39 verbs, including *cut*, *eat*, *chew*, or *grope*, are found in only one sentence each:

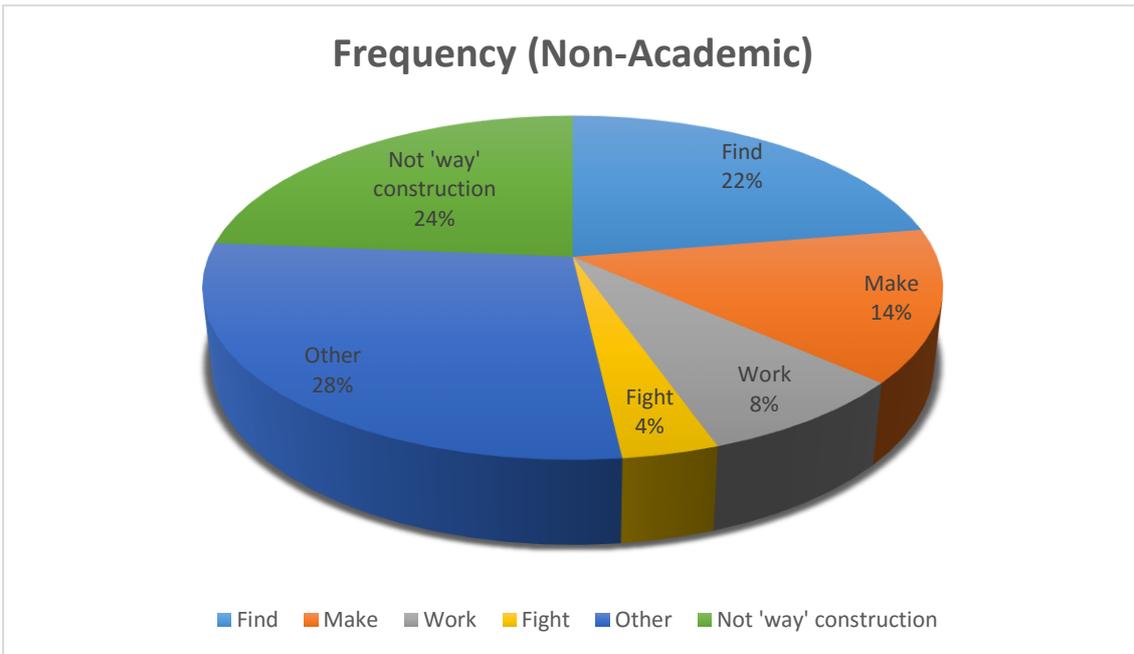


Figure 6

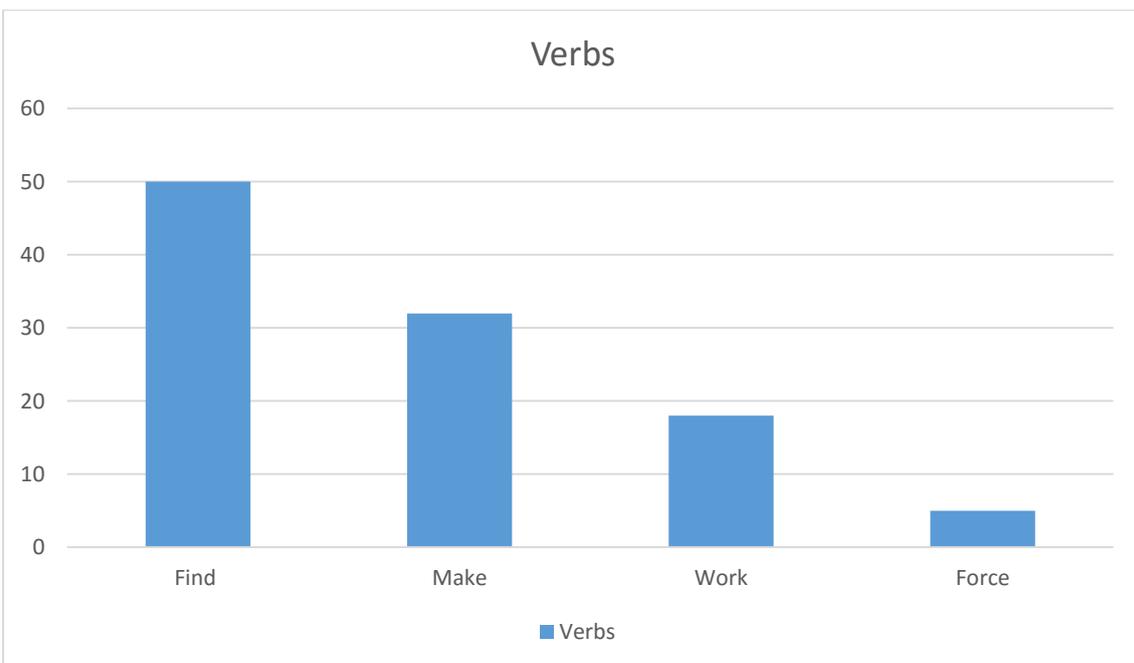


Figure 6.1

Taking into account the total number of 228 examples analysed, the Newspaper genre displays a considerable number of examples which do not fall into the “way” construction. Despite this, the language seems to be here fairly more productive in terms of verbs than in other genres, since there are many which exhibit a similar number of occurrences, similarly to what happens in the Magazine genre. This seems to be a result of a step back in the use of the verb *make*, which may be giving way to other verbs which directly focus on the description of the activity which makes it possible the creation of a

path as will be discussed in the section on verbs. Apart from *make*, *find*, and *work*, we find other rather frequent verbs, such as *force*, *fight*, or *kick*. Verbs such as *battle*, *talk*, or *power* are found in 2 examples each, whereas *fire*, *trick*, *wend*, *drum*, or *stonewall*, among others, occur in one sentence each:

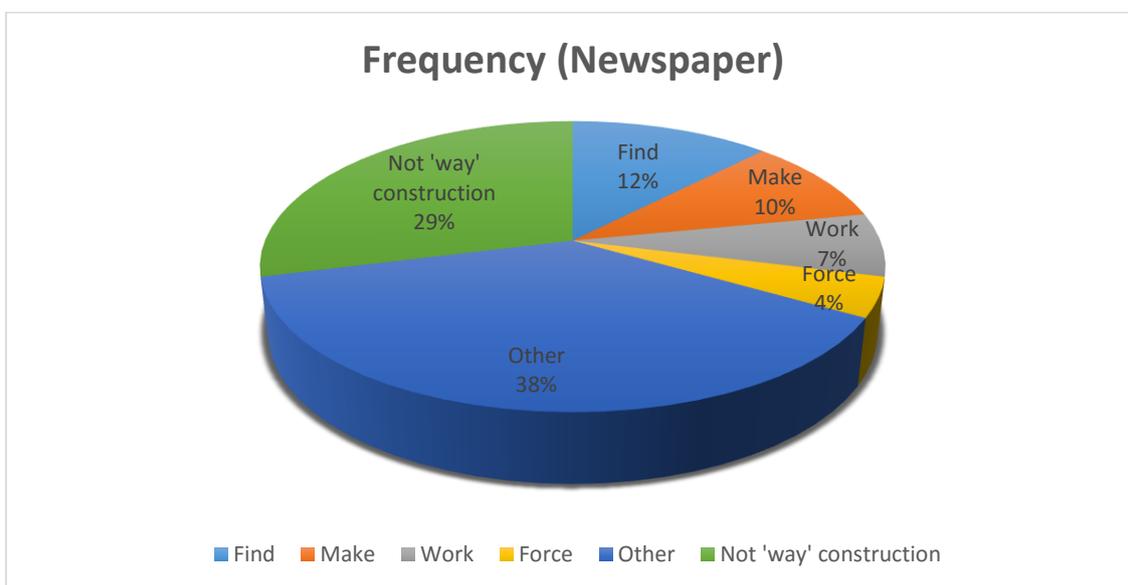


Figure 7

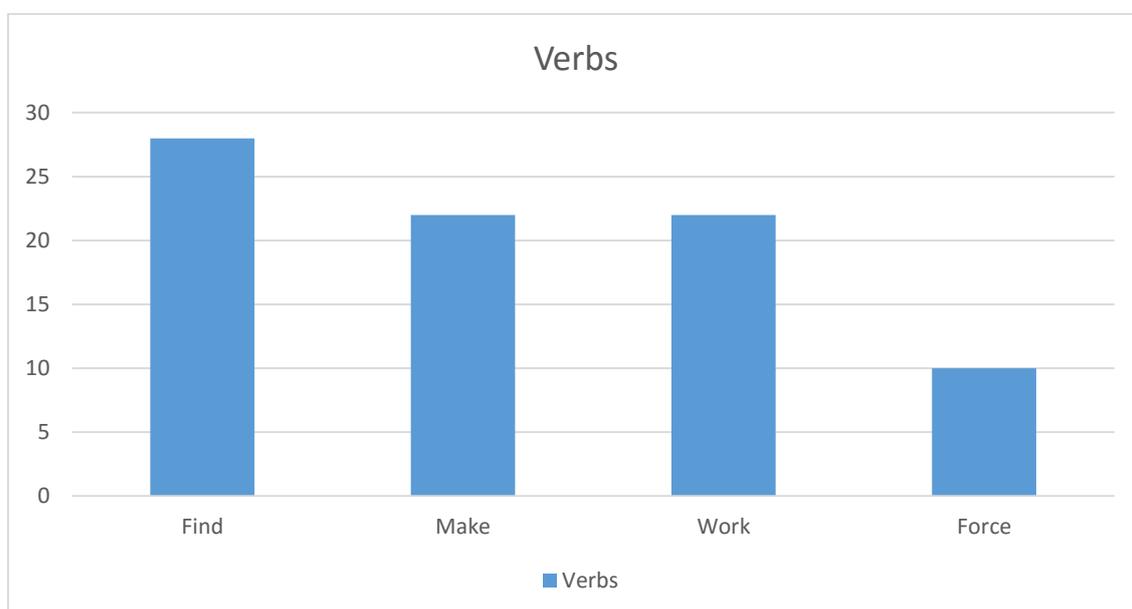


Figure 7.1

The Academic section presents many less examples than any of the previous ones, with only 125 examples available. *Find* is the most frequent verb in this genre, again as a consequence of the neutral pronoun. *Force* and *fight* have an equal share, with 4 sentences each. *Push* has been found in 3 examples and *bribe*, in 2. There are 18 other verbs with just one sentence each, such as *buy*, *hack*, *belch*, *cheat*, or *talk*:

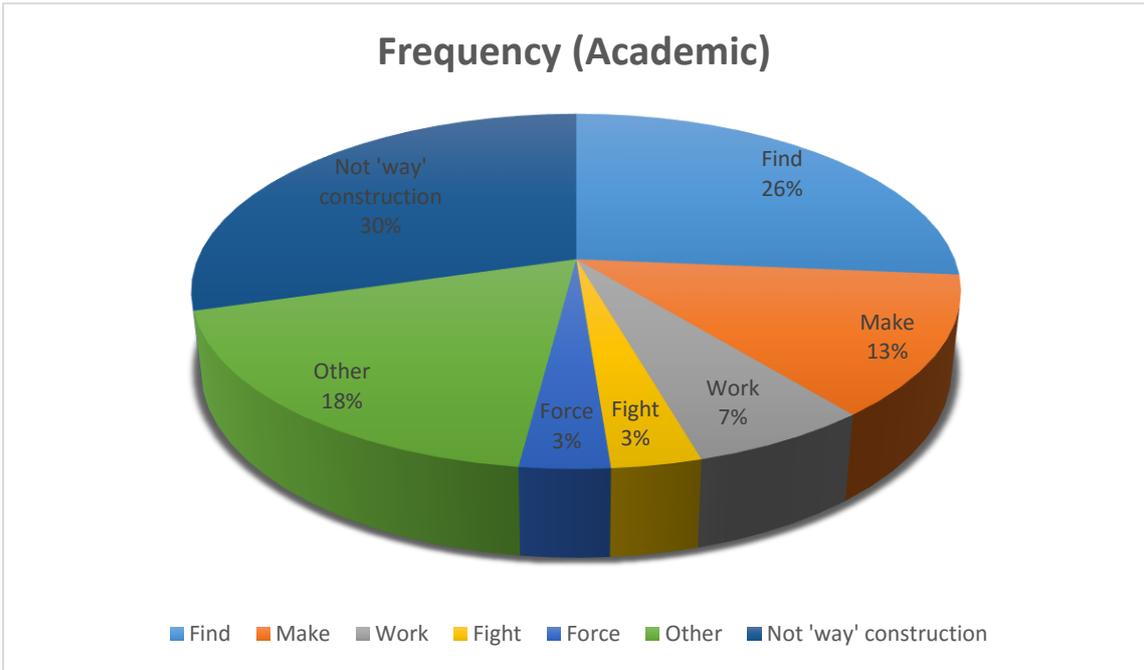


Figure 8

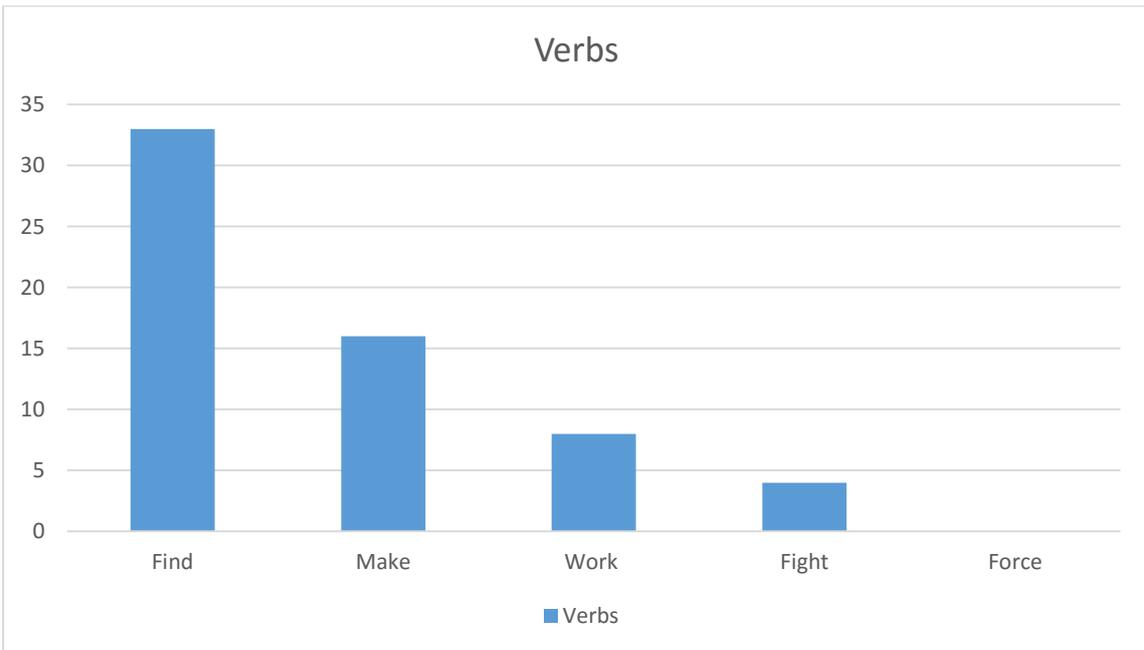


Figure 8.1

The Spoken register is, by far, the smallest one. The total number of examples available is only 58, with only 4 occurrences of the feminine pronoun of which only one forms the “way” construction. *Make* is the most frequent verb, followed by *work* and *find*. *Filter* and *wind* are found in 2 instances each and there are 8 verbs, *navigate*, *write*, *cheek*, *bludgeon*, *knock*, *fight*, *push*, and *munch*, with one example each:

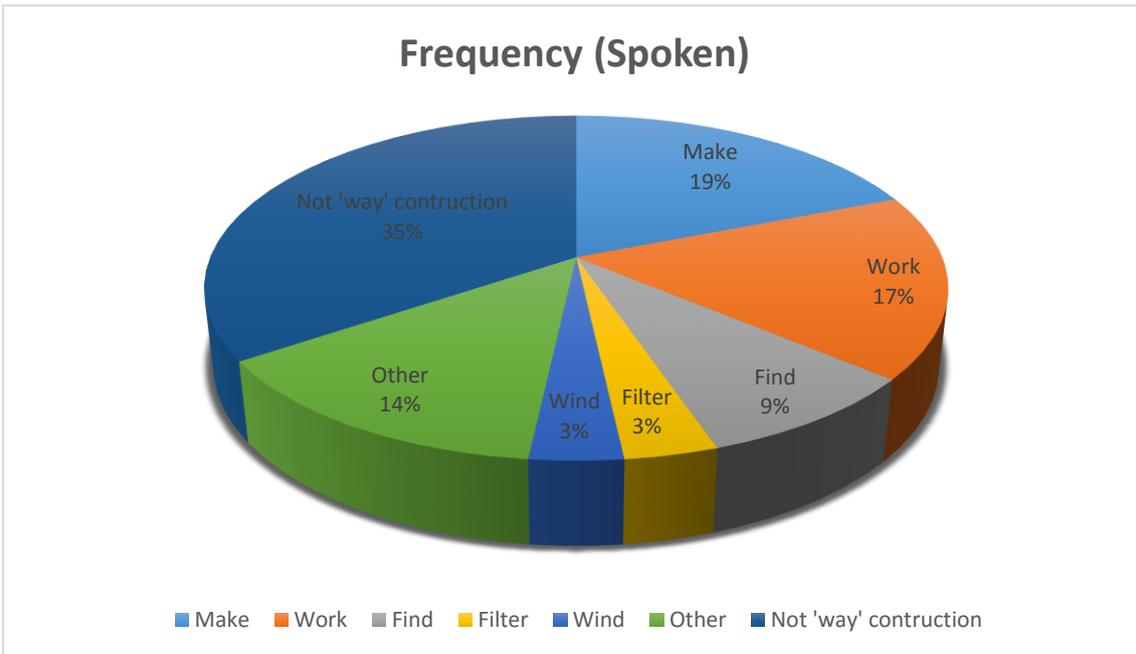


Figure 9

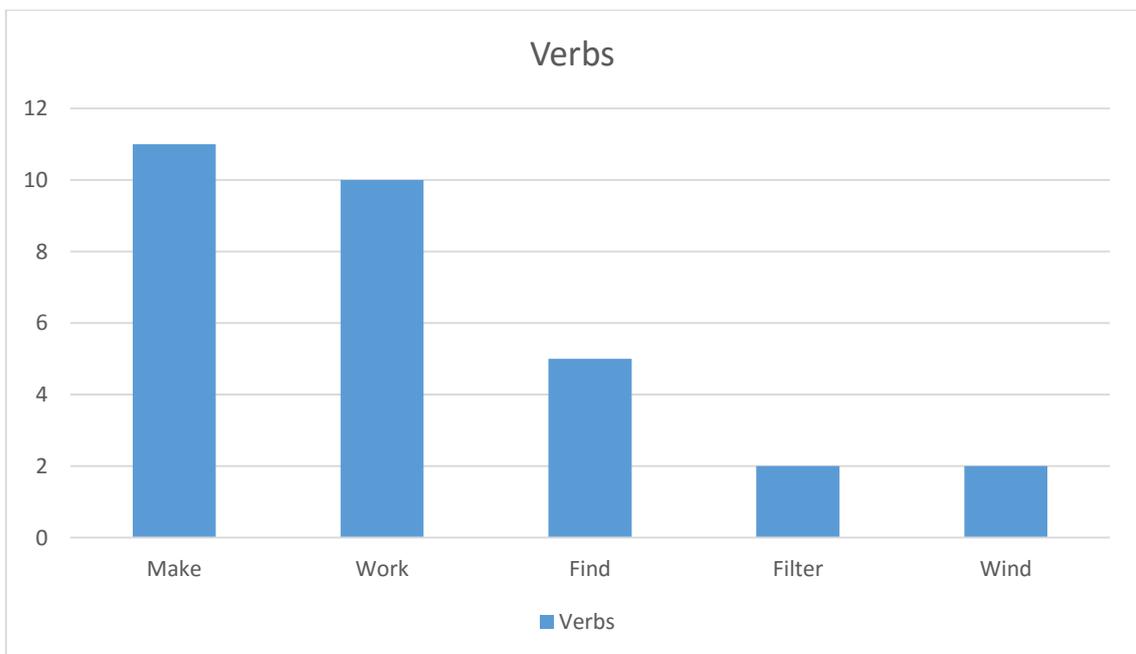


Figure 9.1

## 7.2. Verbs

As we have seen in the previous section, the verbs which tend to occur in this construction are varied. Nonetheless, the construction seems to show a preference in terms of what kinds of action these verbs describe. The three most frequent verbs are *make*, *find*, and *work*:

(62) She **made her way** to the door. (Fiction)

(63) I expect he was like all the rest indoors, couldn't **find his way** out of a paper bag. (Fiction)

The meaning of *work* is found in one of its synonyms, *labour*, although this occurs only with vehicle-related subjects (64). There are also much less frequent verbs, such as *build*, which share the basic meaning of “creation” that *make* exhibits (65):

(64) The van **laboured its way** up the final stretch of the brae. (Fiction)

(65) The government hopes that Japan can **build its way** out of the recession. (Newspaper)

Verbs denoting how movement is performed are the richest variety in sentences where the sense of *way* is more literal. Verbs such as *navigate*, which encode the means that enables the subject to move, are occasionally found (66). Many, such as *spin*, *wriggle*, *tootle*, *wind*, or *snake*, usually describe what the movement is like. Nonetheless, when *wind* or *snake* are used with subjects such as *road* or *river*, their meanings make reference to the appearance of the path (67):

(66) Última Esperanza, a sea-loch that reached 200 miles inland and from where Pacific shipping could, in theory **navigate its way** deep inside the Andean chain. (Non-Academic)

(67) ... and a third (branch line) **snaked its way** out over a drawbridge and a railway ferry to the island of Ostrw. (Non-Academic)

Other motion verbs, such as *walk*, can also be found, but these, as previously observed by Goldberg (1995), require the sense of difficulty in order to be acceptable:

(68) Maggie had also started to use the plan and **walk her way** to health and fitness. (Spoken)

Many verbs denote the actions of hitting, digging, or cutting when creating the path, such as *pierce*, *cut*, *dig*, *jab*, or *bore*:

(69) ...then the danger from the so-called China Syndrome, in which the hot fuel **bores its way** through the bottom of the reactor building, would be much higher. (Non-Academic)

Verbs of verbal expression, such as *talk* or *argue*, or verbs which describe how a person talks, such as *deadpan*, *splutter*, *waffle*, *twang*, or *stumble*, are usually found:

(70) Caroline had tried to **talk her way** into being permitted to enter a summer class. (Fiction)

(71) If he has to talk about his dog, before long he'll be **deadpanning his way** through an entire history of his dog's cousin Spot's last tail. (Magazine)

Verbs which make reference to the different noises that accompany movement, such as *munch*, *groan*, or *crash*, are frequent as well:

(72) He listened to Ron **crashing his way** out of the Britches. (Fiction)

Difficulty in motion is conveyed by a considerable amount of verbs. The most common ones are *force* and *fight*, the second one having a slightly more violent connotation. However, other verbs with similar meaning of effort in movement, such as *muscle*, *thrust*, *struggle*, or *scramble*, are frequent. Similarly, verbs which directly encode opening and creating the path by the use of certain body parts, such as *elbow*, or *shoulder*, are very common:

(73) Ella Bembridge ....and would have **forced her way** into the building to collect some of Dimity's treasures if she had not been forbidden to do so by Harold. (Fiction)

(74) Davis Love III has **muscled his way** into the inner-circle with his rock-steady performance in winning The Players Championship. (Newspaper)

(75) He **shouldered his way** through the crowd. (Fiction)

The use of projectiles to clear the path in order to move towards a particular direction can also be found in the meaning of verbs such as *shot*, *fire*, or *blaze*:

(76) He even thought of **shooting his way** to freedom after his arrest. (Newspaper)

As regards the two possible interpretations of the construction, the number of examples from the corpus which can be considered to convey the manner one is less than 5%. However, this interpretation seems to show a preference towards some particular classes of verbs. Although the means interpretation allows the appearance of all of the classes of verbs above, the manner interpretation favours two of them. The most common ones are those which describe how motion is carried out:

(77) ...he told Miguelito but the little man had **danced his way** forward. (Fiction)

The second type comprises verbs that convey anything which is perceptible by the sense of hearing, including any noise produced during motion or sounds caused by the subject:

(78) The school was empty when Miss Fogerty **clattered her way** over the door-scraper to her classroom. (Fiction)

From all the verbs analysed, the most interesting case is that of the verb *sleep*. Both, Jackendoff (1990) and Goldberg (1995) defend that the verb in the “way” construction must encode a repeatable event or an unbounded activity. This constraint can be questioned taking into account the fact that the verb *sleep* does occur in this construction, as can be observed in the following examples:

(79) All I really wanted was to teach quietly in a sleepy public school, to marry a nice quiet girl and to **sleep my way** through life... (Magazine)

(80) ... a female fatale who **sleeps her way** to the echelons of Moscow high life. (Magazine)

Jackendoff (1997a:173) points out that, when the verb *sleep* appears in sentences such as (80), it is acceptable because it acquires the special and sexist meaning of reaching the top of a social hierarchy by sexual favours, a repeatable event. However, this explanation cannot account for sentences illustrated by the example in (79). The sense of *sleep* here seems to be literal, with the clause meaning spending as much of one’s lifetime

sleeping. It could also be considered a repeatable event if we interpret it in the same way as Jackendoff analyses (80), but this time the person simply goes to bed and falls asleep as often as possible.

Another and much more appealing hypothesis that is eventually derived from the analysis could be the fact that the use of new verbs in this construction is still expanding, a matter which has already happened throughout history with other verbs, as reported by Ways (1996). In fact, the construction itself can actually be considered a syntactical blend (Fauconnier and Turner, 1994) in which many concepts fuse into a compact linguistic form. Since the construction seems to be admitting verbs such as *sleep*, which do not reflect motion through space but rather through time in this particular instance, creating a parallelism between the “time-away” construction, it could be argued that the construction is starting to blend more varied events into a single conceptual meaning as a consequence of speakers creating new extensions upon already established patterns.

### 7.3.Subjects

Nouns denoting animate beings are the most frequent type of subjects in this construction. They include both, nouns which refer to humans, and also those which refer to animals. It is possible to find both types with the masculine and feminine possessive pronouns:

(81) Even if **she** fell in, Gazer told himself, she could probably swim her way out. (Fiction)

(82) ...a fat, **steel-blue oil beetle** thrusting her way out of the earth... (Newspaper)

(83) Still shining the torch, Philip went closer to **the dog**. **It** jumped away snarling, barring **his** way through the fence. (Fiction)

In (83) it can be observed that the neutral pronoun *it* replaces the noun it refers to, *the dog*, which is later on changed within the construction, making reference to the sex of the dog by the use of the masculine pronoun *his*.

The examples with the neutral pronoun exhibit a wide variety of subjects. A high number of them makes reference to an animal:

(84) I called over the racket, and soon we had **a long snake** winding **its** way in and out of the tables and finally through the door. (Fiction)

Many of the subjects that could be found are nouns which refer to different types of vehicles:

(85) I watched **the Land-Rover** grind **its** way up the track till. (Fiction)

(86) She had been the only passenger to alight from **the two carriage train** which she could still hear dimly in the distance, chuffing **its** way over the Severn Bridge on its way to Lydney. (Fiction)

(87) ...**his ship** had nosed **her** way through the floating corpses of Greeks massacred by the Turks. (Miscellaneous)

A priori, these subjects do not seem to be animate. However, they are only objects whose movement is usually caused by the action of a human being over them. Exceptions can be found when the movement is produced by an external force. In addition, example (87) uses a feminine pronoun to refer to a ship, personifying its existence, which can be explained by the fact that ships are usually named with feminine names. Furthermore, similar subjects refer to groups of people treated as a unified entity which moves along a path as if they were a vehicle:

(88) ... he saw **a very different procession** making **its** way across the churchyard. (Fiction)

Goldberg (1995:212) argues that in the means interpretation the action must be self-initiated and the subject cannot be inanimate. However, as Luzondo (2013:353-4) claims, examples pointing out the contrary can be found. As a matter of fact, the great majority of nouns functioning as subjects are, actually, inanimate. A considerable variety of them could be found. There are many which refer to natural, or even atmospheric events:

(89) Beyond the gates, **the channel** which carved **its** way through salt-marshes and mud flats, out into the Estuary, was empty. (Fiction)

(90) **The wind** found **its** way to her face. (Fiction)

(91) Bird lime and other dirt obliterated **the dusky light** that might have made **its** way through this inadequate fanlight. (Fiction)

(92) ...where **the burn**, dividing into deep peaty tunnels, cut **its** way to the shore. (Fiction)

(93) ...she saw **the flicker of a candle** weaving **its** way down through the shop. (Fiction)

(94) **Something** at the back of his mind was **pushing its way** to the front and giving him a curious grey feeling. (Fiction)

Atmospheric and natural phenomena, such as *wind* or *river*, exhibit intrinsic movement, which allow their appearance in this construction. Nonetheless, in (94), an instance of the means interpretation, *something* states for a *thought*, which cannot push itself anywhere. It is the brain which selects the thought and moves it.

Many of these inanimate subjects are accompanied by the verbs *work* and *find*. These, as pointed out by Goldberg (1995:213), are special cases, in which the animacy of the subject is not required:

(95) **Paul's last work** might never have **found its** way into print. (Fiction)

(96) Firstly, there is an extremely long lead time before **a subscription increase works its** way through to our income and expenditure account. (Spoken)

In addition, we sometimes find inanimate subjects which somehow gain animacy as a consequence of the action denoted by the verb. In the following instance, a verb which would not usually occur with any inanimate subject is used with noun denoting the meaning of a recipient to boil water:

(97) Just a pleased acceptance of the company, and a chat while **the kettle sang its way** to the boil. (Fiction)

Finally, there is an important point to be commented on the context in which the construction occurs. One of Goldberg's basic assumptions is that there exists an impediment in motion and that the action happens despite this difficulty. In the following sentences there is no such impediment:

(98) Britain **ate its way through 3.3 billion of sweets** in 1988. (Miscellaneous)

(99) ...while she **was munching her way through her third chocolate bar...**

(Fiction)

The relevance of (99) might be questioned since it encodes an interpretation in which an accidental activity accompanies motion (Ways, 1996:227). Nonetheless, such interpretation cannot be argued as regards (98). On the one hand, such an amount of sweets eaten by the population of Britain might appear to be an impediment. On the other hand, eating sweets does not result an impediment for most people. Furthermore, eating such an amount of sweets rather points out that it was not a difficulty at all and people ate them because they liked them. The only examples in which devouring an amount of sweets would count as an impediment in motion are contexts where people do not like them or are forced to eat them. This has already been questioned by Luzondo (2013:352) and, throughout the present analysis, we can also suggest that, although the subject's impediment in motion seems to work with most means interpretation examples, there are still some exceptions where the context conditions the possible interpretation of difficulty in movement.

#### 7.4.Complements

One of the most relevant features of the construction is the presence of a directional phrase which points out the direction of the movement denoted together by the verb and *way*. This locative complement is mostly a prepositional phrase (PP):

(100) ... she stole quietly downstairs and made her way **down the path to the gate**. (Miscellaneous)

Prepositions can also stand alone in this construction:

(101) He was certainly not the man for the various blue-blood, hard-man, gangsterish marine and commando outfits that he used every social connection to wangle his way **into**. (Non-Academic)

However, there are certain cases, such as the following ones, where the PP does not directly follow *way*:

(102) But down in the Aldwych was the London School of Economics, where there were the first stirrings of student revolt, English-style, and **to which** the medical student often made his way. (Academic)

(103) The rocks **through which** the Colorado River has cut its way still lie roughly horizontally. (Non-Academic)

The reason for this movement is the fact that these sentences from the corpus include relative clauses which have undergone fronting, that is, a phenomenon, according to Kortmann (2005:45) among others, in which the preposition moves to the initial position together with the *wh*-marker.

Although the directional phrase is a crucial element of the construction, this, when formed by a PP, can be moved elsewhere in the sentence. The same does not happen with other complements that can be found in this construction, such as nouns, which only occur after *way*:

(104) ...just a few inches of that thin trickle of grey powder before it burnt its way **home**. (Fiction)

As a matter of fact, *home* is the only noun that occurs in the directional phrase. Nonetheless, the noun *home* had already been considered as an adverb when referred to as a direction back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Smedley et al. 1845:106). Thus, it can be said that, although it is formally a noun, its function is that of an adverb when used in this construction. Nevertheless, proper adverbs are, however, much more frequent and considerably more varied:

(105) ...a small ant was wending its way **homeward**. (Fiction)

In addition, there are extreme instances in which the directional phrase appears to be an adjective:

(106) It was later tackled by fisherman but battled its way **free**. (Newspaper)

(107) It rammed the boat several times and disgorged human remains before tearing its way **free**. (Newspaper)

These two sentences belong to the same newspaper article about a captured shark. Their similarity with the resultative construction, illustrated in (108), prompts a more profound consideration:

(108) He laughed himself **silly**.

In both sentence types exemplified in (106)-(107) and (108) we have an object of result represented by an adjective, which is also the goal of the action denoted by the verb. In addition, neither sentence allows its meaning to be guessed from the words that form them. In Christie's comparison (2011:1) between the fake reflexive resultative and the "way" construction we learn that both can be used in the same contexts, yet, from her examples, we observe that this possibility is only available when the directional phrase is performed by a PP:

(109) The rat chewed his way **through the wall**.

(110) The rat chewed himself **through the wall**.

(111) \*John laughed his way **silly**.

The possibility of using PPs and not adjectives as the directional component in the "way" construction differs from the findings in the corpus. Certainly, *Free* in (106) and (107) can be said to stand for a goal which becomes a destination, similarly to a PP, towards which the subject referred to by the pronoun *its* intends to move, that is, freedom, an objective which is finally achieved despite difficulties. This interpretation can be found in another sentence from a different newspaper article which reports the same piece of news and where *free* is replaced by a PP:

(112) It then trashed its way **to freedom**. (Newspaper)

As mentioned above, the directional phrase can occasionally be found elsewhere in the sentence as a consequence of the movement of the PP. Nevertheless, another aspect revealed by our analysis are certain examples in which the directional phrase has to be partially guessed by the reader since it does not occur in the same sentence and does not have the form of a PP:

(113) **The wind was against her now.** It buffered her fiercely, like an overgrown puppy who does not know his strength, and she had to fight **her way**. (Fiction)

Here the directional phrase does not occur in the same sentence as the “way” construction itself. In addition, this information is not stated explicitly in the sentence which appears before the one with the construction. However, the reader is able to infer what the subject referred to by *her* must go through, which, in this occasion, is the wind blowing against her. Thus, the meaning must be partially imposed by the background knowledge of the reader since no syntactical mark can be observed except for the pronoun *it* making reference to the subject of the previous sentence. Hence, we can say that not only can the directional phrase be formed by barely any word, phrase, or even sentence, but that it can also be moved to a position before the construction itself, or left completely empty, as in the example (113), where the information about the direction of the movement has to be traced back from other sentences different from the “way” construction.

## 8. Conclusion

The results of the analysis of the corpus have shown that the “way” construction is considerably frequent in most of the different genres under study. The verbs that appear in the construction are very varied, although the majority of them seem to cluster around certain semantic types: motion, manner of motion, hitting, digging, cutting, verbal expression verbs, and noises accompanying motion. As stated by Goldberg (1995), the manner interpretation is very rare, but the verbs which are found in this interpretation tend to belong to two of the mentioned above types: manner of motion, and those related to noises. In addition, with this analysis of the corpus, we can conclude that Jackendoff’s assumption (1990, 1997a, 1997b) as regards the verb *sleep*, which had been consistently crossed out of the “way” construction due to several constraints on verbs, a fact which is also supported by Goldberg (1995), is contrary to what is actually available in the *British National Corpus*. In the data analysed, it is possible to find examples with this verb, although its frequency is still very low. Furthermore, these new usages of verbs seem to be acceptable, which is a fact that might point out to a new step in the evolution of the construction. This process has been going on ever since its first known record in older states of the English language and appears to be at work.

Some of the constraints advanced by Goldberg (1995) on the prototypical subject of the “way” construction are not met in many occurrences from the corpus. Most examples do exhibit subjects with self-propelled motion, although there are instances where this is not a constraint anymore. Similarly, difficulty in motion seems to be the main semantic feature of one of the two possible interpretations of the construction. However, as already questioned by Luzondo (2013), this constraint is, in many cases, highly context-dependant, and occasionally the opposite is also found in the corpus.

The analysis has also revealed that the directional component of the construction is, as stated by Jackendoff (1990), mainly encoded by prepositional phrases, although these may move from their original place. However, adverbs are nearly equally frequent as prepositional phrases, whereas the appearance of nouns seems to be limited only to one of them, *home*. This, however, has been considered an adverb as well for a very long time. Adjectives used as the directional component are a new feature of the construction as found out in this investigation of the corpus. These seem to strengthen the link between the resultative and the “way” construction in certain contexts. Furthermore, a striking fact is the syntactical disappearance of the directional phrase from the construction in some instances, forcing the reader to infer the direction of movement from other sentences.

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