

## Construction Grammar and Latin: The case of *habeo*

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

Construction Grammar is a theoretical approach that emphasizes the importance of constructions, i.e. form-meaning pairs, in language.<sup>2</sup>

In Latin linguistics the idea that language is constituted by constructions is not original, and various interesting studies have been published. Of these, I intend to focus on those regarding so-called light verbs,<sup>3</sup> and above all in extending the very concept of light verbs.

After illustrating this concept, particularly with regard to Latin (§ 2), I will deal with the extension of the category (§ 3), exemplifying it through the case of *habeo* (§ 4).

### 2. Light verbs in Latin

In accordance with Jespersen's (1942, p. 117) definition, by *light verbs* I mean in English the same as *verbes supports* in French, *verbi supporto* in Italian, *verbos soporte* or *de apoyo* in Spanish and *Funktionsverben* in German. They are traditionally considered as verbs comprising two parts, that is, a verb and a noun, as happens in *to take a walk*, *faire une promenade*, *fare una passeggiata*, *dar un paseo* and *einen Spaziergang machen*. The term *light verb* describes the fact that the verb

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2 On Construction Grammar cf., among others, Croft, 2001; Croft and Cruse, 2004; Goldberg, 2006.

3 E.g., most recently, Marini, 2000, 2010, 2014; Baños, 2012, 2013a-b, 2014a-b.

only codifies grammatical categories – such as person, tense, aspect, mood and voice – whereas the predication is effectively conveyed by the noun, which is usually an abstract noun.<sup>4</sup>

The topic of light verbs has been studied more in terms of modern languages than Latin. However, following Rosén's seminal study (1981) on Early Latin, other interesting papers have been written on the subject. In particular, Roesch (2001), Brunet (2008) and Marini (2010) have pointed out that there are two possible approaches to light verbs, i.e. starting either from the verb or from the noun.<sup>5</sup>

In his various papers on light verbs in Latin, Baños, for instance, states explicitly that the most important part of the light verb construction is the noun. This means, for example, that if we want to know how 'to make war' is said in a corpus language such as Latin, first of all we have to verify the frequency of occurrence of *bellum* and *proelium* together with the possible supports, such as *gero, facio, ago, do, habeo, fero*. We thus find that *bellum* co-occurs with *gero* in 27% of occurrences, while *proelium* co-occurs with *facio* in the 25.2% of instances. On the other hand, *proelium gerere* is not attested, and the percentage of co-occurrence of *bellum* with *facio* is just 4.2%.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, Baños (2014a, p. 2-4) also underlines the fact that light verbs are a particular type of collocation, i.e. based on syntagmatic relations, where the noun can be referential to a greater or a lesser extent, while the verb can also be specific to a varying degree.

Indeed, according to Gaston Gross (2004, p. 357), for each light verb construction a distinction has to be made between a basic verb and other verbs ('extensions') which codify more specifically either the lexical value or the grammatical value (such as, for instance, the aspect). Therefore, the basic verb for *bellum*, for instance, is *gero*, although *bellum* can also co-occur with more specific verbs – such as *paro* 'to prepare for', *indico* 'to declare' and *administro* 'to carry out' – as well as with aspectual verbs which specify its phases – such as *suscipio* 'undertake', *traho* 'to draw out' and *conficio* 'to conclude'.<sup>7</sup>

The basic light verb is not only the most frequent form, but is also the most neutral, that is, the unmarked form. This is shown by the fact that it can have an equivalent synthetic form, as happens, for instance, with *bello* or *belligero* with regard to *bellum gero*.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the possibility of equivalence with a synthetic form is a crucial feature of light verb constructions, and it shows that the codifying of a single semantic idea can be made both with one lexeme, and with two or

4 Jespersen (1942: p. 117) creates the expression 'light verbs' in order to specifically refer to deverbal nouns co-occurring with an 'insignificant verb', such as *to have* or *to give*, for instance in *to have a wash* or *to give a look*, respectively. I use here *light verb* in this restricted sense, and thus positively leave out possible extension of this definition to other types of 'empty' verbs, such as auxiliaries, etc. On the other hand, the definition of *verbe support* originates within the *Lexique-grammaire* created by the Laboratoire d'Automatique Documentaire et Linguistique (LADL), under the direction of Maurice Gross. Indeed, this was the development of a concept introduced by Zellig Harris, who, in actual fact, has always spoken of *operators* (on this, see Ibrahim, 1996, p. 4 ff). The use of *Funktionsverb* for the same construction [V+NP] in German is firstly due to Polenz, 1963.

5 On light verbs in Latin see also Flobert, 1996; Hoffmann, 1996; Martín, 1996; Mendózar Cruz, 2015.

6 Cf. Baños, 2014a, p. 6 ff.

7 On this see, in particular, Baños, 2014b.

8 On this equivalence see, in particular, Baños, 2013a, p. 36-38.

more. The same thing happens, for instance, with *se promener* in French, *passaggiare* in Italian, *spazierengehen* in German, and *to walk* in English, with regard to *faire une promenade*, *fare una passeggiata*, *einen Spaziergang machen*, and *to take a walk*, respectively; on the other hand, only the analytic form, *dar un paseo*, is realized in Spanish.

Moreover, besides the basic light verb, a noun can also select another unmarked light verb, even though this seems to occur less frequently. This is the case, for instance, with *bellum infero* (7.9% of items), *bellum facio* (4.2%), and *bellum habeo* (1.8%).<sup>9</sup>

This means that languages possess a certain number of neutral light verbs, which can also change in diachrony. According to Rosén (1981, p. 130-59), in Early Latin these are, in the following order of frequency, *facio*, *do*, *habeo* and *cipio*; on the other hand, according to Baños (2014a, p. 7, fn. 9), in the Caesarian corpus we have *facio*, *habeo*, *do*, *committo*, *infero*, *gero* and *fero*. Their occurrence in light verb constructions is precisely the reason why these verbs are so frequent in Latin (and why their equivalent occurrences in other languages are similarly frequent). In this set of light verbs, *habeo* usually presents a state of affairs as a state. For instance, whereas in *bellum gero*, *infero*, and *facio*, the war is presented as an action with an agentive subject ('to make war'), *bellum habeo* means 'to be at war', as the following sentence from Tacitus makes clear:

- (1) *quippe bellum habere quam gerere malebat* (Tac. *Ann.* 15, 3)  
'as he would prefer to sustain rather than to make war'

Besides the different degree of predicativity in the verb, which can be 'light' to a greater or lesser extent, light verb constructions also differ in the degree of referentiality of the noun. For example, Baños (2012) identifies two different semantic values and constructions for *ludos facere* which he calls *ludos facere*<sub>1</sub>, meaning 'to celebrate games', and *ludos facere*<sub>2</sub>, meaning 'to make fun of somebody', which usually governs the accusative expressing the person. The fact that *ludos* is more referential in the first construction is shown by (a) the possibility of co-occurrence with a determiner or a modifier (2); (b) the possibility of coordination with another object (3); (c) the possibility of reference tracking, through either a phoric or a relative pronoun (2); (d) the possibility of passivization (4). Such linguistic operations are not allowed in the second construction; if there is a passivization of *ludos facere*<sub>2</sub>, it affects the accusative of the person and not *ludos* (5):

- (2) *Decem dies sunt ante ludos votivos, quos Cn. Pompeius facturum est.* (Cic. *Verr.* 1, 31)  
'It is only ten days to Votive Games that Gnaeus Pompeius is to hold.'
- (3) *... magistratu se abdicaverunt, cum ludos ludorumque causa epulum Iovi fecissent.* (Liv. 30, 39, 8)  
'... abdicated their office after they had conducted the games and in connexion with them a banquet for Jupiter.'
- (4) *ludi per decem dies facti sunt* (Cic. *Catil.* 3, 20)  
'games were held for ten days'
- (5) *Exploratorem hunc faciamus ludos suppositivum, / adeo donicum ipse sese ludos fieri senserit.* (Plaut. *Pseud.* 1168)  
'Let's make some fun of this counterfeit spy, until even he is aware that he is being made a fool of.'

9 Cf. Baños, 2013a, p. 28-34.

These facts suggest that the degree of integration of the noun in the construction of light verbs can vary. Indeed, for the second type of *ludos facere* Baños (2012) speaks of ‘syntactic incorporation’. Something similar happens with *verba facere*, which can mean both ‘to form words’ and ‘to speak’.

### 3. Towards an extension of the concept of light verb construction in Latin

The present study aims to extend the concept of light verb construction, including occurrences of Latin light verbs that do not co-occur with a noun in the accusative, but with something else, such as a noun in a different case to the accusative, a noun which is the complement of a prepositional phrase, or even an adverb.

That such an extension is desirable becomes clear if we for instance take into account the various light verb constructions that Latin employs to express the meaning of ‘to make a decision’.<sup>10</sup> Among others, apart from *consilium capere*, *consilium inire* (more accurately, ‘to come to a decision’) and *consilium suscipere*, with *consilium* in the accusative, there is *in consilium ire*, where *consilium* is the complement of a prepositional phrase governed by the verb. Likewise, when saying ‘to take (sb)’s advice’, Latin can employ both the expression *consilium sequi* and *consilio uti*, where the noun is not in the accusative because it is a non-prototypical object with the semantic role of instrument rather than patient. Figure 1 summarizes the various possibilities.

capere	}	consilium
inire		
suscipere		
ire	in consilium	
sequi	consilium	
uti	consilio	

Figure 1: ‘To make a decision’ in Latin

Although the equivalence between these expressions seem to be clear, I do not know of any unified study of such constructions as regards Latin. Admittedly, Baños (2014a, p. 5, fn. 7) seems to point in this direction when he mentions that although he only takes into account light verbs (*verbos soporte*) which co-occur with a direct object, other instances should also be considered. These might be less productive but are also fairly frequent, such as when the noun is in the dative (*memoriae tradere, usui esse*), in the ablative (*memoria tenere, supplicio adficere*), or when it is part of a prepositional phrase (*in suspicionem venire, in memoria habeo*). Moreover, Baños (2014a, *passim*) speaks of *complex verbs* (*predicados complejos*) in reference to light verb constructions, meaning that they are constituted by two parts: a verb which is partially or totally empty from the semantic point of view, and a noun which is the nucleus of the predication. Among these light verb constructions Baños (2014a, 7) considers, for instance, not only *mentionem facere*, but also *memoria tenere*.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Baños, 2013b.

The useful idea of complex verbs is not particularly widespread, even among linguistics of modern languages, with the exception of German linguistics, where the definition of *Komplexe Verben* (V+X) is adopted for all verbs formed of two parts.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, if we use this notion, an attempt can be made at demonstrating that a unified treatment of various light verb constructions is also appropriate for Latin. Indeed, in Latin we can, at the very least, presume the existence of the following constructions, instantiated, for example, through the light verb *habeo*:

Constructions (V + X)	Instantiations ( <i>habeo</i> + X)
V + NP <sub>[+ACC]</sub>	( <i>spem habeo, laetitiam habeo, rationem habeo</i> , etc.)
V + PP/NP <sub>[-ACC]</sub>	(( <i>in</i> ) <i>animo</i> / <i>animo habeo</i> , ( <i>in</i> ) <i>numero</i> / <i>numero habeo</i> , <i>pro certo habeo</i> , etc.)
V + Adv	( <i>bene</i> / <i>male habeo, satis</i> / <i>parum habeo</i> , etc.)

#### 4. A case study: *habeo* + X

To show that the different constructions *habeo* + NP<sub>[+ACC]</sub>, *habeo* + PP/NP<sub>[-ACC]</sub> and *habeo* + Adv should all be associated with the same abstract pattern *habeo* + X, the former construction – which is the ‘normal’ light verb construction – will not be considered, these features having already been taken into account above (§ 2). Therefore, the second part of this paper is devoted to the analysis of the other two constructions, that is, *habeo* + PP (§ 4.1), with its variant *habeo* + NP<sub>[-ACC]</sub> (§ 4.1.1), and *habeo* + Adv (§ 4.2).

##### 4.1. Case study 1: *habeo* + PP

The instantiation of the pattern *habeo* + prepositional phrase (PP) that will be analyzed specifically is *habeo* + *in animo*; this subsequently allows us to consider its variant, *habeo* + *animo* (§ 4.1.1). If this pattern really is an instance of light verb construction, we can expect (a) that its meaning can sometimes be more compositional and sometimes less, as happens with *ludos facere*<sup>1</sup> and *ludos facere*<sup>2</sup> (§ 2); (b) that, besides the verb *habeo* – which is the neutral verb, i.e. the basic one – other verbs can co-occur with *in animo*, as ‘extensions’ which codify more specifically either the lexical value or the grammatical value; (c) that the noun *animo* can be more referential when the meaning of the construction is compositional, and less referential in other occurrences.

Regarding the construction as a whole, *in animo habeo* means ‘to have in mind’, ‘to have in the spirit’, ‘to have the intention to, to intend’. Let us consider, for instance, the examples in (6)-(8):

- (6) *Est autem consolatio pervulgata quidem illa maxime, quam semper in ore atque in animo habere debemus...* (Cic. *Fam.* 5, 16, 2)

11 In German the existence of two parts in *Komplexe Verben* is made clear by the fact that the first part (the so-called *Vorverb*) rises to the second position in main clauses, whereas the second one (the so-called *Nachverb*), remains at the very end of the clause, thus creating a sort of ‘parenthesis’ (*Klammerung*). This syntactic behavior apply to all *Komplexe Verben*, independently of their second part category status (i.e. preposition/adverb, prepositional phrase, noun, etc.). Thus if we take for instance a *Funktionsverb* such as *einen Spaziergang machen*, we have sentences like ‘Er machte mit seinem Freund um 7 Uhr in der Villa Borghese einen Spaziergang’ (‘he took a walk with a friend of his at seven o’clock in ville Borghese’).

‘Now there is a source of consolation – hackneyed indeed to the last degree – which we ought ever to have on our lips and in our mind.’

- (7) ... *habendumque in animo semper illud Vergilianum: adeo in teneris consuescere multum est.* (Quint. *inst.* 1, 3, 13)

‘... and we must ever have in mind the words of Virgil: so strong is custom formed in early years.’

- (8) *Hoc neque ipse transire habebat in animo neque hostes transituros existimabat.* (Caes. *Gall.* 6, 7, 6)

‘This (river) neither did he himself design to cross, nor did he suppose the enemy would cross it.’

In all these occurrences, the verb *habeo* clearly displays its stative value, codifying an increasingly abstract ‘Location’. In fact, in (8), the value of the construction is much more abstract than in (6), there being a sort of continuum from (6) to (8). The abstraction of the meaning is strictly linked to the degree of abstraction of the ‘Location’, namely the noun in the ablative being the complement of the PP. Indeed, *animus* in (6) is contrasted with (a part of) the body, in (7) it is the organ of thought, and likely the seat of memory, whereas in (8) it is the originator of intention. Along this continuum *in animo habere* becomes a sort of *verbum putandi*. In fact, in (8) it is coordinated with *existimabat* and it does not have an entity as object – as happens in (6: *quam = consolatio*) and in (7: *illud Vergilianum*), but a propositional theme expressed by an infinitive clause. In other instances, the argument clause is introduced by *ut* plus subjunctive, also in a correlative structure, as happens in the following example:

- (9) *Praedium quom parare cogitabis, sic in animo habeto: uti ne cupide emas neve opera tua parcas visere et ne satis habeas semel circumire.* (Cato *Agr.* 1, 1)

‘When you are thinking of acquiring a farm, keep in mind these points: that you be not over-eager in buying nor spare your pains in examining, and that you consider it not sufficient to go over it once.’

In some cases, the propositional content of the object is represented by an interrogative (10) or a relative pronoun (11):

- (10) *Tempora exposui, rogavi ut diceret quid haberet in animo.* (Cic. *Att.* 8, 10, 1)

‘I put before him my circumstances; asked him what he had in his mind to do.’

- (11) *Quod quisque in animo habet aut habiturust sciunt.* (Plaut. *Trin.* 209)

‘They know, forsooth, what each person either has in his mind, or is likely to have.’

For both the compositional (12) and the abstract (13) meaning of *habeo + in animo* there is another verb that realizes a construction with *in animo*, and this is *sum*. Indeed, *in animo sum* can be considered the symmetrical form of *in animo habeo* from the diathetic point of view, as its subject could be the object of the *in animo habeo* construction:

- (12) *Eadem igitur opera accusent [...] Tibullum, quod ei sit Plania in animo, Delia in versu.* (Apul. *Apol.* 10)

‘On this principle the same verse may as well accuse Tibullus for singing of Delia in his verse, when it was Plania who ruled his heart.’

- (13) *Caesari nuntiatum Helvetiis esse in animo per agrum Sequanorum et Haeduorum iter in Santonum fines facere.* (Caes. *Gall.* 1, 10, 1)

‘The news was brought back to Caesar that the Helvetii were minded to march through the land of the Sequani and the Aedui into the borders of the Santones.’

The fact that the use of *in animo sum* largely overlaps with the uses of *in animo habeo* is not unexpected given the stative and locative values that are present in both verbs. Indeed, both can be considered basic constructions, the only difference being their diathetic orientation. Besides *sum*, there are several locative alternative verbs, i.e. ‘extensions’ (§ 2) for the more concrete value of the construction, as happens, for instance, in the following examples:

- (14) *Ne in animo quidem igitur sensus remanet.* (Cic. *Tusc.* 1, 82)  
 ‘No sense, therefore, remains in the soul.’
- (15) *Quare inest nescio quid et latet in animo ac sensu meo, quo me plus aequo hic locus fortasse delectet.* (Cic. *Leg.* 2, 3)  
 ‘There is, therefore, an indescribable sympathy which attaches me to the spot; it pervades my soul and sense with a peculiar fascination, whenever I reside here.’

On the other hand, possible synthetic forms similar to *in animo habeo* which express abstract values can be *verba putandi* such as *volo*, *cogito* and *decerno*.<sup>12</sup>

As for the referentiality of the noun that is the complement in the PP *in animo*, the PP can be coordinated with another noun only in the more concrete value (6: *in ore atque in animo habere*). Likewise, it can be modified when the construction does not have a *verbum putandi* meaning, as happens in the following example:<sup>13</sup>

- (16) *Propterea maximam curam in animo meo habeo, uti quam honestissime negotium istud odiosissimum transigatur.* (Fronto, p. 40)  
 ‘Wherefore in my soul I am most anxious that this very disagreeable business should be handled as honourably as possible.’

On the other hand, no instances were found where the noun is topicalized, e.g. through reference tracking by an anaphoric pronoun. The possibility of passivization is of no importance in this case, since the light verb does not govern a noun in the accusative as the second part of the construction.

Finally, the predicative value of *in animo*, in opposition to the semantic emptiness of the verb, is clearly shown by the possibility for the prepositional phrase of occurring alone, i.e. without the ‘support’ of the verb:<sup>14</sup>

- (17) *Huic verbo omnes, qui ubique sunt, qui Latine sciunt, duas res subiciunt, laetitiam in animo, commotionem suavem iucunditatis in corpore.* (Cic. *Fin.* 2, 13)  
 ‘Every person in the world who knows Latin attaches to this word two ideas – that of gladness of mind, and that of a delightful excitation of agreeable feeling in the body.’

#### 4. 1. 1. The variant *habeo* + NP<sub>[-ACC]</sub>

The construction *habeo* + *in animo* also has the variant *habeo* + *animo*. In the following excerpt from Livy, the preposition *in* has been added in Sigonius’s edition, whereas it is missing in the Codex Vindobonensis:

12 Something similar happens, for instance with *consilium dare*, which has synthetic equivalents such as *(per)suadeo* or *moneo*.

13 See example (15) for an instance where *in animo* is both coordinated and modified when co-occurring with another locative verb.

14 On the test of light verb omission see, e.g. Langer, 2004, p.180-1; see also Gross, 2001, p. 203, specifically on the omission of the verb *être* ‘to be’ in co-occurrence with prepositional phrases.

- (18) *Eumenes neque favit victoriae Persei, neque bello eam iuuare <in> animo habuit.* (Liv. 44, 25, 1)  
 ‘Eumenes neither wished success to Perseus nor intended to make war upon him.’

However, in this case the use of the construction as a *verbum putandi* is very limited with regard to its spread when the preposition *in* occurs. Moreover, particularly in Cicero, *animo habeo* often governs an object and a predicative (19), so that some ambiguity can arise regarding the parsing, i.e. the dependency of *animo* either from *habeo* or from the predicative, as is particularly clear in (20).

- (19) *Quodsi ille nec se nec L. Crassum eloquentem putavit, habuit profecto comprehensam animo quandam formam eloquentiae.* (Cic. Orat. 19)  
 ‘But if he did not consider himself or Lucius Crassus eloquent, he certainly had a mental picture of eloquence.’
- (20) *Pauca enim sunt quae usu iam tractata et animo quasi notata habere videamur.* (Cic. De orat. 2, 129)  
 ‘For there are a few points which I have perhaps already handled in practice and noted in my memory’

It is noteworthy that the same construction is also possible with *in animo*:

- (21) *‘Habebam,’ inquis, ‘in animo insitam informationem quandam dei.’* (Cic. Nat. deor. 1, 100)  
 ‘We have an idea of god implanted in our minds, you say.’

For *habeo + animo*, the alternative construction with *sum* is not feasible. On the other hand, the example (22) shows the possibility of alternative verbs, i.e. ‘extensions’ (§ 2), for the more concrete value of the construction, exactly as happens for *habeo + in animo* in the same conditions (23):

- (22) *Dum veniunt amici, solus filio procul stante multa secum animo volutans inambulavit.* (Liv. 40, 8, 5)  
 ‘While his friends were coming, he walked up and down alone, turning over many things in his mind.’
- (23) *Hoc eum iam pridem volutare in animo.* (Liv. 28, 18, 11)  
 ‘It had long been his (Scipio’s) constant reflection.’

As in its occurrence with the preposition, *animo* displays features revealing its referentiality, such as coordination, when its construction with *habeo* is looser (20).

#### 4. 2. Case study 2: *habeo + Adv*

With *habeo + Adv* the matter of the referentiality of the second part of the construction is certainly not applicable.

I will consider here the constructional nature of *habeo* co-occurring with *satis*. In fact, also in this case we can have two different degrees of integration in the construction, corresponding to two different structures: on the one hand, *satis habeo* means ‘to consider sufficient, to be content’ and can govern a propositional theme (24), while, on the other, *satis habeo* means ‘to have enough’ and co-occurs with a (partitive) genitive (25).

- (24) *Caesar suos a proelio continebat ac satis habebat in praesentia hostem rapinis pabulationibusque prohibere.* (Caes. Gall. 1, 15, 4)  
 ‘Caesar restrained his men from battle, deeming it sufficient for the present to prevent the enemy from rapine and forage.’
- (25) *In iis tignis parietes extruito iungitoque materiae, uti oneris satis habeat.* (Cato Agr. 18, 6)  
 ‘In these timbers build a wall and join it to the timber to give it sufficient weight.’

In this case, parallel constructions are possible with *sum* (26)-(27):

- (26) *Navibus circiter LXXX onerariis coactis, contractisque quot satis esse ad duas transportandas legiones existimabat...* (Caes. Gall. 4, 22, 3)  
 ‘Having collected together and provided about eighty transport ships, as many as he thought necessary for conveying over two legions...’
- (27) *Si populneam habebis, admisceto, ut ulmeae satis siet.* (Cato Agr. 54, 4)  
 ‘If you have poplar leaves, mix them with the elm to make the latter hold out.’

The exact word class of *satis* may be open to debate, i.e. whether it effectively is an adverb, or a noun, or an adjective. Nonetheless, the fact that *satis* essentially modifies the verb, at least in the more integrated construction, is shown by the juxtaposition – irrespective of whether there is univertion or not – in occurrences such as *satisdo* ‘to give security’ or *satisfacio* ‘to give satisfaction’.

## 5. Conclusions

To sum up, the aim of this work has been to put forward the idea that the notion of light verbs can be extended to all constructions where a verb being semantically ‘light’ is involved. This happens not only when it co-occurs with a noun in the accusative, but also when the noun is in another case or is the complement of a PP, as well as when the verb co-occurs with an adverb. Indeed, the same features characterize the union of a light verb with a second part, that is, the construction (V+X), in terms of (a) paradigmatic overlapping with other light verb constructions or other analytic verbs, (b) a different degree of referentiality of the noun involved, if any, and (c) the different concrete or abstract nature of the construction, which implies different degrees of integration between the two parts.

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