

国际认知语言学经典论丛

Cognitive Linguistics
Classic Papers Series

Series Editor: Dingfang Shu (束定芳)

Readings in Cognitive Grammar

认知语法研究

Ronald W. Langacker

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丛书的出版,将极大方便国内教师、学生和研究者直接接触认知语言学领域原版经典论文。这些论文散见于各个时期的各种期刊或图书中,经过作者的精心搜集、整理并选定刊出,相信一定会发挥它们应有的作用,从而为促进我国语言学研究做出新的贡献。

Foreword

Most of the basic ideas and fundamental principles of Cognitive Linguistics appeared in the late 1970s and early 1980s in papers by Fillmore, Langacker, Lakoff, Talmy, etc. But graduate students of linguistics in China often complain that access to these “classic papers” was very difficult if not impossible, due to the fact many of them were scattered in different journals or book chapters, and some published in some obscure journals. To provide students of Cognitive Linguistics and other interested readers with a more accessible anthology of materials that not only documented the path of development of early Cognitive Linguistics, but also presented important principles and arguments of cognitive perspectives on language, I thought of editing a series of collections of classic papers by the founders and forerunners of Cognitive Linguistics. The first person I contacted was Ronald Langacker, whose participation and support, I believe, was crucial for the success of the project, as he is widely recognized as one of the most important founders of the Cognitive Linguistics movement. Ron, though occupied with many other commitments, fully supported the idea and promised to contribute to the series. And I went on to contact all the others whose work I thought made important contributions to the emergence, development, propagation and diversification of Cognitive Linguistics, including Miriam R.L. Petruck, one of Charles Fillmore’s students, without whose help, the volume by Fillmore would be practically impossible.

I must add that Ron was the first who completed the collection and offered to write an introduction to each of the papers collected in his volume to provide the readers with some background information about

the papers and explanations about some of the modifications that might have been made later on. This has become an attractive model that other contributors more or less followed in their own volumes.

My special thanks go to Dirk Geeraerts, whom I consulted on how the series should be organized, and who supported the project by contributing a volume of his own.

I should also give my thanks to Sun Jing, Director of the Academic Department of Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, who professionally and meticulously managed the whole project and patiently corresponded with all the authors and coordinated everything throughout the process.

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Professor, Shanghai International Studies University
Chief Editor, *Journal of Foreign Languages*
President, China Cognitive Linguistics Association (CCLA)

Preface

This volume presents and illustrates an approach to the analysis and description of language structure known as Cognitive Grammar (CG). It is not an elementary textbook, but a collection of previously published professional articles, and is thus most suitable for scholars and advanced students in linguistics and related disciplines. Though it starts with fundamentals, it represents just one component of a course of study leading to a broad and solid foundation in CG. For this purpose the book can best be used in combination with other sources of a general or introductory nature, such as Taylor 2002, Langacker 2007, and Langacker 2008 (of which Langacker 2013 is a shortened version).

CG cannot be considered new for it now has a history spanning forty years. The research leading to its formulation began in 1976, the first published article appeared six years later (Langacker 1982), and a comprehensive presentation of the framework followed within a decade (Langacker 1987, 1991). Since that time CG has continued to evolve, without, however, undergoing any fundamental changes. For the most part its evolution has been a matter of refinement, further articulation, deeper analysis, and expansion in the range of phenomena explicitly considered. It will, of course, continue to evolve in these respects. At least very roughly, the present volume reflects this evolutionary history and thereby indicates the nature of CG as an ongoing process rather than a finished or static model.

At the beginning, CG was a radical departure from standard views of language and linguistic theory. In particular, it contradicted fundamental

assumptions of generative grammar, notably the autonomy of grammar (its independence from lexicon and semantics) and the nature of linguistic meaning. Counter to the general attitude that thoughts and concepts could not be studied scientifically, CG claimed that meaning and grammar are conceptual in nature. Today the framework seems less radical owing to subsequent developments in linguistics, cognitive science, and related disciplines. While the many descendants of generative grammar are still predominant in the US and elsewhere, they now co-exist with the large and growing movement of cognitive linguistics, whose ideas are steadily becoming better known and more influential. Though central to this movement, CG represents just one approach: cognitive linguistics is broad and diverse, comprising many outlooks and kinds of investigation (Geeraerts and Cuyckens 2007; Dąbrowska and Divjak 2015).

Learning about CG is not easy. One reason is the vast literature that now exists in CG and in cognitive linguistics more generally; owing to limited accessibility, and its being situated in the Western linguistic tradition, this poses special problems for Chinese scholars. Another factor is that CG, though not implemented computationally or presented as a formal model, nonetheless involves considerable technical detail. Understanding it in depth, or with any degree of accuracy, requires precision of thought and analysis as well as the mastering of many terms and notations. A final source of difficulty is that CG results from non-standard ways of thinking about language and linguistic investigation. In particular, it departs from tradition by viewing meaning as the starting point for analyzing grammar, and conceptualization as the basis for describing meaning.

This book is hardly sufficient for a thorough knowledge of CG but may at least contribute to the process of learning about it. While it introduces the basic notions, its main purpose is to illustrate the framework's descriptive and explanatory potential through extensive discussions of

its application to diverse facets of language structure. The articles chosen are necessarily quite selective and far from being exhaustive in regard to any topic. They should, however, afford an indication of the framework's generality and an appreciation of what is involved in a detailed analysis. As specific examples of CG research, they will familiarize the reader with the concepts, terms, and notations employed, as well as suggesting ideas for further investigation.

The organization is roughly chronological, reflecting how CG has evolved through the years and suggesting likely future paths. Each article has a brief introduction indicating its place in this progression. Although the selections can be read independently (having first appeared separately), the background provided by previous ones should be helpful, as should be the unavoidable repetition. Except for mechanical corrections, the articles are reprinted in their original form. No attempt has been made to standardize the format of examples, diagrams, or references. The references have been collected in a comprehensive, updated bibliography at the end.

For learning about an elaborate framework like CG, introductory articles and textbooks are limited in what they can accomplish. A considerably broader exposure is required for an in-depth understanding of the framework, including its general way of approaching language structure and the specifics of its application to varied topics. Though hardly sufficient, the present volume is intended to help fill this need.

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The Symbolic Alternative

Introduction

In earlier years, versions of this presentation served as a general introduction to CG. It reflects the goal, important at that time, of providing a viable alternative to generative grammar, whose theoretical outlook was then predominant. Central to this outlook was its view of grammar as an autonomous formal system — purely a matter of form, characterized independently of meaning. The central claim of CG was radically different: that grammar is **symbolic** in nature, consisting in form-meaning pairings, and is thus inherently meaningful. A symbolic account of grammar is made possible by another radical proposal of CG: the adoption of a conceptual semantics based on **construal**, i.e. our capacity to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate ways. After presenting these notions, the article shows how such a framework can handle the various phenomena generally taken as supporting the autonomy thesis. Among the factors discussed are grammatical categories, grammatical rules, elements that appear to be semantically empty, and the fact that grammar cannot be fully predicted on semantic grounds.

The **autonomy thesis**, and more specifically the relationship between grammar and meaning, is not unreasonably regarded as the most fundamental and critical issue in modern linguistic theory. Yet consideration

of the thesis has often been less than a model of conceptual lucidity, with respect to both what it entails and what would demonstrate its validity. It is widely believed that the autonomy thesis is well established. I suggest, however, that the apparent basis for such a view involves equivocation concerning the nature of autonomy, erroneous assumptions about linguistic semantics, and failure to examine all possible alternatives.^[1]

I will understand the autonomy thesis as claiming that grammar constitutes a separate level or domain of linguistic structure — one with its own primitives, representations, etc. — *that is properly described without essential reference to meaning*. Now it is commonly assumed (explicitly in Newmeyer 1983) that such autonomy is established if any aspect of grammatical structure is less than fully predictable on the basis of meaning or other independent factors, i.e. if any facet of grammar has to be learned or stated explicitly instead of simply “falling out” as an automatic consequence of other phenomena. And of course, any clear-headed person must recognize that absolute predictability of this sort cannot be achieved: grammatical patterns and restrictions do have to be specifically learned and explicitly described. In that sense, grammar *is* autonomous.

Crucially, however, this does not entail the autonomy thesis as just defined. To proceed from non-predictability to the further conclusion that grammar represents a separate, asemanitic domain of linguistic structure is to embrace the **type/predictability fallacy** — it confuses two quite distinct issues, namely what *kinds* of structures there are, and the *predictability* of their behavior. Unconfusing these issues allows one to formulate a position describable as the **symbolic alternative**: that grammatical structures, patterns, and restrictions are indeed less than fully predictable, but that their description requires nothing more than **symbolic** elements (i.e. pairings between semantic and phonological structures).

If grammar reduces to symbolic relationships, then all grammatical elements must have some kind of meaning or conceptual import.

Standard lines of argument invoked to sustain the contrary position (and hence the autonomy thesis) tacitly presuppose what I consider to be an inappropriate view of linguistic semantics, namely an **objectivist** view based on truth conditions and classical categories (cf. Lakoff 1987). One type of argument consists of showing that the “same” meaning can be coded by expressions representing different grammatical classes (Newmeyer 1983: 9). For instance, the fact that either a verb or a noun — e.g. *explode* and *explosion* — can refer to the same event might be taken as indicating that they have the same meaning and consequently that the noun and verb classes cannot be semantically definable. Suppose, however, that one adopts a **subjectivist** or **conceptualist** view of meaning. One can then argue (and intuitively I find it quite obvious) that *explode* and *explosion* have *different* meanings; more specifically, the nominalization of *explode* to form *explosion* involves a kind of conceptual reification. If so, semantic characterizations of the noun and verb classes remain possible, at least in principle (see Langacker 1987b).

Also erroneous is the assumption that a grammatical morpheme must be meaningless unless one can formulate a single meaning that accounts for all its uses. We know, however, that lexical items are almost invariably polysemous, having not just one meaning but a family of related senses. Why should the same not be true of grammatical elements? In its different uses, for example, dative case in German has such meanings as ‘experiencer’, ‘recipient’, and ‘neighborhood’ (Smith 1987). There are plausible connections among these senses, and failure to reduce the German dative to a single *Gesamtbedeutung* [general meaning] would not entail that it is meaningless.

Language has the basic semiological function of permitting the symbolization of conceptualizations by means of phonological sequences. If one accepts this characterization, then a theory which embraces the symbolic alternative and achieves the reduction of grammar itself to symbolic relationships ought to be preferred on grounds of naturalness,

conceptual unification, and theoretical austerity. If workable, a symbolic account of grammar ought to be greeted enthusiastically by linguistic theorists and abandoned only with the greatest reluctance. My objective here is to sketch such a theory and argue that it is indeed workable. Called **cognitive grammar**, this framework has been under development since 1976 and by now has been successfully applied to diverse languages and a broad array of grammatical phenomena.^[2]

Although the term “natural” is subject to varied interpretations, I think it is not unreasonably applied to a theory of language that is solely and squarely based on the semiological function of language as a way of expressing meaning. Another respect in which cognitive grammar might well be considered natural is that only well-established or easily demonstrable cognitive abilities are invoked. Such abilities include the following:

- (1) (a) to form structured conceptualizations
- (b) to perceive and articulate phonological sequences
- (c) to establish symbolic associations between conceptual and phonological structures
- (d) to use one structure as a basis for categorizing another
- (e) to conceive a situation at varying levels of abstraction (schematization)
- (f) to detect similarities between two structures
- (g) to establish correspondences between facets of different structures
- (h) to combine simpler structures into more complex ones
- (i) to impose figure/ground organization on a scene
- (j) to construe a conceived situation in alternate ways

In view of its semiological function, moreover, linguistic structure could hardly be conceived in a simpler, more straightforward manner than it is in cognitive grammar. A basic claim of the theory is that language comprises *semantic structures*, *phonological structures*, and *symbolic links* between them — nothing more. A symbolic structure is said to

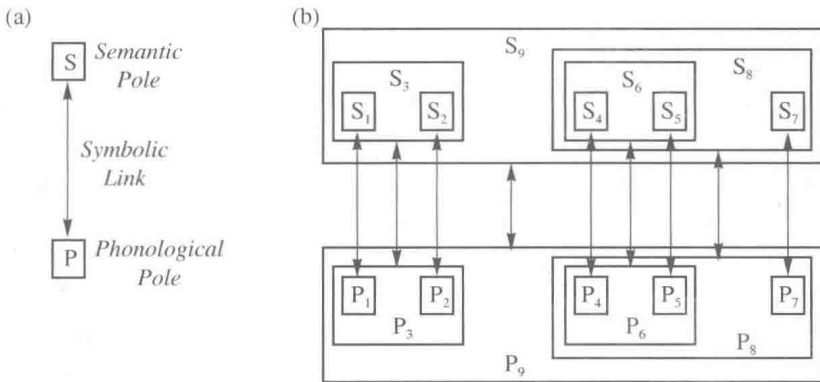


Figure 1

be **bipolar**: a semantic structure functions as its **semantic pole**, and a phonological structure as its **phonological pole**, as shown in Fig. 1(a). Semantic, phonological, and symbolic structures of any degree of complexity are capable of being formed and coalescing as established **units** (i.e. well-rehearsed cognitive routines), as sketched in Fig. 1(b). This much clearly *has to be* imputed to language. The central thesis of cognitive grammar is that *only this* need be imputed to it. In particular, lexicon, morphology, and syntax are seen as forming a gradation and as being fully describable by means of symbolic units alone. In this way the theory achieves conceptual unification.

Cognitive grammar achieves theoretical austerity by imposing stringent limits on the kinds of units one can postulate. The **content requirement** specifies that the only units ascribable to a linguistic system are (i) semantic, phonological, and symbolic structures that are part of overtly occurring expressions; (ii) **schematizations** of permitted structures; and (iii) **categorizing relationships** between permitted structures. Consider a phonological example. The syllables [tap], [bed], and [ræn] are parts of overtly occurring expressions. The syllable canon [CVC] represents a schematization over such structures. And the following formula, with a solid arrow, indicates the categorization of [tap] as an instance of the [CVC] category: $[[CVC] \rightarrow [tap]]$. The