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Cognitive Linguistics

*Convergence
and Expansion*

Edited by
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Stefan Th. Gries
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John Benjamins Publishing Company

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Volume 32

Cognitive Linguistics. Convergence and Expansion
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Introduction

Convergence and expansion in cognitive linguistics*

Mario Brdar, Stefan Th. Gries and Milena Žic Fuchs

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1. Background and introduction

The present volume is a collection of contributions originally presented as keynote talks or as regular papers at the International Cognitive Linguistics Conference *Converging and Diverging Tendencies in Cognitive Linguistics*, held in Dubrovnik (Croatia), October 17–18, 2005, as well as some chapters specially commissioned for this volume. As the title of the conference indicates, the initial key notions were *converging* and *diverging* tendencies in cognitive linguistics. However, papers presented at the conference, and the subsequently commissioned ones paved the way to shifting the stress to *convergence* and *expansion*, as is reflected in the title of the volume.

This shift reflects not only how the ideas behind the conference and this volume developed, but more importantly reflects the nature of developments in cognitive linguistics itself, in the sense of stressing the converging tendencies anchored in the core of the enterprise, and the expansions that go from the core into different directions.

The question of course is what is understood by convergence and expansion, especially in contrast to convergence and divergence. The issues that the conference focused on are the issues taken up in this volume and have been issues long in the making. They in a sense reflect the nature of the cognitive linguistic enterprise through emphasizing the fact that cognitive linguistics is not a unified theory of language, but, as has been stressed time and again, a flexible and evolving theoretical framework. Whether this evolving theoretical framework can stabilize into a unified theory is an open question. Or, one could ask, whether such unification and conformation would ultimately be a necessary or even welcome development. Would such a development, resulting in uniformity, possibly hinder future “natural expansions” that move away from the core,

* The editors wish to thank the series editors Klaus-Uwe Panther and Linda Thornburg and Hanneke Bruintjes at John Benjamins for their continuing support as well as an anonymous reviewer, all of whom helped us move this project along.

that is the basic tenets of cognitive linguistics, thus preventing and blocking new insights into matters of language and cognition? Would such a development open up a possibility of true divergence in the sense of triggering off competing theories based on radically different fundamental notions?

The questions above outline the possibility of diverging tendencies and their possible implications. However, the chapters in this volume indicate that at this point in time cognitive linguistics is on the one hand firmly grounded through its basic tenets of meaning, non-modularism, and embodiment, as is elaborated in the introductory chapters by Langacker and by Barcelona and Valenzuela. On the other hand, chapters in this volume also show tendencies of expansion in terms of connecting with other disciplines and methods, or integrating other fields of inquiry. Needless to say, the chapters in this volume do not cover all possibilities of either convergence or expansion, whether already existing ones, or ones that may appear especially through the integration of cognitive linguistics with psycholinguistics and neuroscience, or further research on societal mechanisms. Thus the aim of this collection is primarily to illustrate the main lines of development in cognitive linguistics, namely, the ever-present focus on research within linguistics proper and expansions into other fields of inquiry.

The present volume aims at reflecting on these tendencies and showing the vitality, open-endedness, and the dynamic nature of the cognitive linguistic enterprise as it converges and expands. Its chapters are divided into three parts. Part 1, “Setting the scene”, contains two overview chapters by Langacker, and Barcelona and Valenzuela, which can be seen as an extension of the present introduction, as they present two alternative views on the central theme of the present volume: convergence and expansion in cognitive linguistics, first seen from a personal perspective, and then set in a more “objective”, historical perspective. These are followed in Part 2, “Consolidating the paradigm”, by chapters that come under the rubric of *convergence* by Nuyts, Steen, Panther and Thornburg, Belaj, Barcelona, and Langacker. Part 3, “Expanding the paradigm”, is comprised of chapters dealing with different directions of *expansion* by Gibbs and Ferreira, Gries, Stefanowitsch, Tissari, Harder, and Kövecses.

2. The contributions to this volume

2.1 Setting the scene

The first chapter in this collection, “Convergence in cognitive linguistics”, is based on the comments of **Ronald W. Langacker** delivered at the very end of the conference and represents his personal perspective on converging and diverging trends in cognitive linguistics. He stresses an overall tendency has been toward unification and is optimistic about that a coherent overall view is gradually emerging, and that it will provide a firm basis for investigating language, cognition, and many aspects of human endeavor. The chapter by **Antonio Barcelona** and **Javier Valenzuela**, “An overview of cognitive

linguistics”, is a detailed account of the history and development of cognitive linguistics since its inception in the late 1980s to the present day. It duly recognizes the main research currents, their theoretical and methodological premises, as well as their main results and applications.

2.2 Consolidating the paradigm

Part 2 is introduced by **Jan Nuyts**’s chapter, “Pattern versus process concepts of grammar and mind: A cognitive-functional perspective”, in which he discusses the tenuous relationship between CL and traditional functional linguistics, focusing mainly on the pattern or construction-oriented approach to grammar predominant in CL and the rules or process-oriented approach to grammar prevailing in traditional functionalism. In contrast to claims put forward by Langacker and Croft that the process concept is misguided, Nuyts argues that it is in fact indispensable in a cognitively and functionally plausible model. His analysis of the different theoretical views shows that the two models are to a large extent compatible, reflecting different perspectives of the same phenomena. Concluding that although the issue of process vs. construction concepts of grammar is an extremely complex one, Nuyts pinpoints common ground on the basis of which he expresses the hope that linguistics will be able to avoid a tripartite division of paradigms and that it will end up with a two-paradigm division.

In the chapter “Metaphor in language and thought: How do we map the field?” by **Gerard Steen**, the author puts forward the suggestion that metaphor research in cognitive linguistics can benefit from a clearer description of the field in which three dimensions of doing metaphor research can be distinguished. Namely, metaphor can be studied as part of grammar or usage, or as part of language or thought, and finally as part of sign systems or behavior. By comparing various characteristics of the three basic dimensions he comes up with eight distinct areas of research that are characterized by their own assumptions and claims pertaining to metaphorical meaning. By mapping the field of metaphor research Steen comes to the conclusion that the interrelations between phenomena in these distinct areas with their diverging degrees of evidential support require careful formulation, and what is more, he stresses the need for a more meticulous approach to the interpretation of various types of evidence found in cognitive linguistics.

Klaus-Uwe Panther and **Linda L. Thornburg** in their chapter “Emotion and desire in independent complement clauses: A case study from German” study standalone complement clauses in German from a cognitive-linguistic and pragmatic speech-act construction perspective, starting out from the observation that a subordinate-clause structure is used to communicate an independent speech act. They begin by noting a variety of characteristics that these constructions share (across languages) and then study the conceptual frames and mappings involved in two kinds of constructions. They conclude that meaning is much less compositional than is traditionally assumed, meaning is dynamically construed through cognitive operations and with world knowledge, and meaning motivates selected aspects of syntax.

In “Schematic meaning of the Croatian verbal prefix *iz-*: Meaning chains and syntactic implications” **Branimir Belaj** studies the meaning of verbs containing the Croatian prefix *iz-*. Based on data from a small corpus, he postulates a single schematic meaning – ‘transition from an intralocative to an extralocative position’ – together with different motivated links that altogether constitute a prototype category. He also discusses additional evidence for the proposed network, namely several syntactic peculiarities that are correlated with the semantic extensions.

Antonio Barcelona, in “The conceptual motivation of bahuvrihi compounds in English and Spanish”, studies a sample of the prototype category of exocentric bahuvrihi compounds. After a brief overview of their main and typical characteristics, Barcelona studies in detail to which degree such compounds are based only on the metonymy CHARACTERISTIC PROPERTY FOR CATEGORY. On the basis of a small sample of 40 bahuvrihi compounds (20 in English, 20 in Spanish), he shows that this metonymy is responsible for the exocentric nature of these compounds and that the characteristic property mapped by that metonymy is conceptualized literally, metonymically, or metaphoric-metonymically. Finally, he summarizes a few differences between English and Spanish bahuvrihi compounds, a particularly interesting one of which is the much wider structural variety of the Spanish examples.

Ronald Langacker’s chapter “On the subject of impersonals” is an analysis of impersonal *it* in which he argues that *it* is in fact a meaningful element. More specifically, although *it* is vague and non-delimited, it is used referentially to profile what he calls the relevant field, i.e. the conceptualizer’s scope of awareness for the issue at hand. Nevertheless, *it* is the pronoun that delimits the search space of possible referents the least, allowing for all kinds of different given or inferable entities, basically only excluding human and plural referents. The chapter concludes with an initial exploration of other impersonal constructions and discussions of what would be the next steps of exploration.

2.3 Expanding the paradigm

In the first chapter in Part 3, “Do people infer the entailments of conceptual metaphors during verbal metaphor and understanding?”, **Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr.** and **Luciane C. Ferreira** study entailments of conceptual metaphor. They begin by summarizing the current state-of-the-art in research on how conceptual metaphors really are and discuss a few points of critique that have been raised in the past such as the potential unfalsifiability, the choice of domains, the level of generality of mappings, and the as yet unknown role that conceptual metaphors play in online comprehension. They then report the results of an exploratory study on entailments of metaphors from four target domains in which subjects rated to which degree a first statement implied other statements that were or were not related to the first via the same metaphor. They found that subjects give higher ratings for entailments derived from the same metaphor and

caution cognitive linguists to be more careful with regard to their assumptions of metaphorical entailments.

Stefan Th. Gries's chapter "Corpus data in usage-based linguistics: What's the right degree of granularity for the analysis of argument structure constructions?" is concerned with which level of analysis, or granularity, is most appropriate in corpus-based studies. In much the same way that lexicographers can be divided into lumpers and splitters depending on how fine distinctions between senses they prefer, usage-based studies can choose more or less fine-grained levels of resolution. Gries's chapter tests to what degree distinctions between inflectional forms and lemmas, as well as between spoken and written data are merited in the analysis of the preferred verbs of argument structure constructions and their semantics. He finds that, contrary to what is often assumed, the finer-grained perspectives do not yield superior results and argues that, if finer resolutions are desired, then bottom-up exploratory methods should be used to identify the most revealing distinctions.

Anatol Stefanowitsch's chapter "Cognitive linguistics meets the corpus" illustrates ways in which corpus-based methods can be used to study phenomena from cognitive linguistics and/or construction grammar. In a first part, he looks at how corpus data can be brought to bear on the question of a particular expression's acceptability (using percentage distributions) can be used to make claims about what is acceptable, "always" the case, and what constitutes counterexamples. In addition, he exemplifies how chi-square tests for independence can reveal associations between linguistic variables. In a second part, he discusses how the collostructional method of analysis can help to identify the semantics of constructional patterns and how such approaches can provide the kind of negative evidence that many think corpora cannot provide.

The main aim of **Heli Tissari's** chapter "Oops blush! Beyond metaphors of emotion" is to relate the metonymic, embodied basis of emotion metaphors as conceived by Kövecses to the concept of affects discussed in the tradition founded by Silvan Tomkins. Tomkins' claim that the responses of the body to stimulation constitute the affect itself can be seen as a challenge to the theory of conceptual metaphor according to Tissari. By analyzing shame she provides insights as to how work on conceptual metaphors and the understanding of affect as fundamentally embodied phenomena might cross-fertilize each other and result in a deeper understanding of the phenomena at hand.

Peter Harder's chapter "Conceptual construal and social construction" can be seen primarily as a contribution to analysis of the social dimension of linguistic conceptualization. In contrast to what may be called the standard approach in cognitive linguistics, that is to understand concepts via their experiential and bodily grounding, Harder discusses the processes that are at work when emerge concepts acquire a role in the social processes. This duality is understood in terms of the distinction between conceptual construal and social construction. More precisely, Harder highlights the social processes that shape conceptualization and opts for an overall framework that

integrates processes of social construction with the conceptual domain. His claims are based on the analysis of the well known ‘cartoon crisis’ in Denmark, i.e. the series of events that erupted after a newspaper published cartoons of the prophet Muhammad.

In “The biblical story retold: A cognitive linguistic perspective”, **Zoltán Kövecses** relying on Neville’s (2001) semiotic approach to symbols found in the Bible, goes a step further in developing a cognitive linguistic analysis that provides interpretation of the meaning and significance of some of the central symbols and the basic story itself. Kövecses provides insights into how the symbolic meaning derives in large part from conceptual structures and conceptual mechanisms that are shared by a large number of speakers of English, as well as other languages belonging to the European cultural sphere. By identifying major metaphors and metonymies that play an important role in the interpretation of the Biblical symbols and the story, he formulates his basic claim that a large part of the dominant features of Christianity can be understood on the basis of the everyday conceptual system, from which follows that the understanding of these features does not require an entirely independently existing conceptual apparatus that would somehow be unique to the interpretation of the sacred.

The present volume thus clearly has a double function. Firstly, it is an attempt to provide a sense of perspective in cognitive linguistics by trying to trace its steps to where it is at present and outlining where it might be headed to. Secondly, it does so by tackling a wide range of topical issues pertaining to both the methodology and the subject matter of cognitive linguistics research.

PART 1

Setting the scene

Convergence in cognitive linguistics

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In contrast to the generative tradition, the overall tendency in cognitive linguistics has been convergent rather than divergent. At the outset it was quite diverse, as it did not stem from any single theory, scholar, or object of description. The passing years have seen the recognition of common interests and the integration of various strands of research. Conceptual unifications have been achieved (e.g. the constructional approach to lexicon and grammar; metaphor and grammatical composition as instances of conceptual integration). There has been convergence with other theoretical approaches (even generativism, as it has evolved). From an initial focus on semantics and grammar cognitive linguistics has made contact with other disciplines, methodologies, and sources of evidence. A coherent overall view is emerging.

Keywords: blending, construction grammar, functionalism, generativism, metaphor

In reflecting on the issue of converging vs. diverging tendencies in cognitive linguistics, I was struck by how predominantly convergent these tendencies appear to be, at least from my own perspective. The evolution of cognitive and generative linguistics may in fact be seen as precisely opposite in this regard. In the early years of the generative era, this movement enjoyed a high degree of theoretical uniformity (the “standard theory” deriving from Chomsky 1957, 1965). Its subsequent history has famously been one of progressive divergence, starting with generative semantics and the “linguistics wars” (Harris 1993), and eventually producing the diverse array of formalist theories we are blessed with today.

By contrast, cognitive linguistics was quite diverse at the outset and can still be so characterized. It does not stem from any single theory, scholar, or object of description. Instead, its origins lie with numerous individuals and groups, each developing their own approach to specific areas of inquiry. Among these early initiatives were Chafe’s proposals for a semantically based grammar (1970, 1974), pioneering work by Talmy (2000a, 2000b) and Wierzbicka (1996) in conceptual semantics, Fillmore’s