

国际认知语言学经典论丛

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Classic Papers Series

Series Editor: Dingfang Shu (束定芳)

# Conceptual Structure and Conceptual Variation

## 概念结构和概念变化

Dirk Geeraerts



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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)

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## Mapping out My Research: Lines of Enquiry across Fields of Investigation

The present collection brings together a representative sample of studies from what has always been a core area of my research, viz. the study of semantic structure and semantic variation — and particularly, lexical semantic structure and lexical variation. The selection made for this volume is meant as an inroad towards the various research lines and research fields that I have been involved with, and accordingly, this introduction will try to show where the papers in the selection are situated within the overall geography of my research record. This will be done in two steps. First, I will identify the topics illustrated by the selection and point to related work that might be consulted to get a more detailed view of the topic in question. Second, I will indicate how my descriptive and theoretical work on lexical conceptual structure and conceptual variation links up with the other types and domains of scholarly activity that I have engaged in. (The chronological bibliography at the end, without in any way being exhaustive, lists the publications that are most relevant for the various lines and fields.)

The ten chapters of the selection represent what I consider to be ten specifically relevant **contributions** I have made **to the descriptive and theoretical study of lexical semantics and the lexicon**, viz.

- Chapter 1: a systematic analysis of the various dimensions and types of prototypicality
- Chapter 2: a demonstration of the fundamental instability of the distinction between vagueness and ambiguity
- Chapter 3: the elaboration of a referential methodology for prototype theory
- Chapter 4: a prototype-based analysis of metonymy that clarifies the distinction between metaphor and metonymy
- Chapter 5: the formulation of a 'prismatic' model of semantic compositionality
- Chapter 6: the exploration of diachronic prototype semantics
- Chapter 7: the defense of a cultural-historical perspective in conceptual metaphor research
- Chapter 8: the definition of lexical sociolectometry
- Chapter 9: the introduction of quantitative corpus methods in lexical research
- Chapter 10: a revival of onomasiological research.

These topics are related in various ways. Chapters 1 to 5 deal with conceptual structure in the lexicon as such, whereas 6 to 10 focus on conceptual and lexical variation, with chapters 6 and 7 specifically dealing with historical semantics. Chapters 3 and 9 particularly involve methodology, and 7 to 10 illustrate various aspects of the onomasiological turn that I have pursued in lexical studies, i.e. a shift from a predominant interest in the internal semantic structure of words and expressions to an interest in the variation between similar and competing concepts. Such an onomasiological interest in alternative ways of talking about things goes hand in hand with a heightened attention for the external, contextual factors that determine the choices that are actually made between those alternatives at the level of linguistic usage, and in that sense, the onomasiological turn is at the same time a social turn. The second part of this introduction will indicate how this social, onomasiological turn led to the broader notion of Cognitive Sociolinguistics, but first, a few more

words about the ten lexical topics are due. Each chapter will be presented in brief, with pointers to related publications.

Chapter 1. Geeraerts, Dirk. 1988. **Prototypicality as a Prototypical Notion.** *Communication and Cognition* 21: 343–355. [ 9 ].

In the course of the 1980s, prototype-theoretical forms of description brought a new impetus to lexical semantics, highlighting the relevance of salience effects for meaning description, and emphasizing the encyclopedic, non-autonomous nature of linguistic meaning. But as many diverse phenomena tended to be lumped together under the label ‘prototypicality’, a clarification of the concept was due. In the present chapter (and with some more detail, in the introduction [ 11 ] to a thematic issue on prototypicality of the journal *Linguistics* that I edited), I tried to provide such a clarification by distinguishing two dimensions of prototypicality: the distinction between an intensional and an extensional perspective on the one hand, and the distinction between differences of structural weight and flexibility on the other. Other aspects of prototype theory that I contributed to (apart from its application to diachronic semantics: see chapter 6, or its methodology: see chapter 3) include its functional motivation, as in my contribution [ 8 ] to Brygida Rudzka’s seminal collection *Topics in Cognitive Linguistics* of 1988, its representation, as in [ 21 ] and [ 48 ], and the relationship between the concepts ‘prototype’ and ‘stereotype’, as in [ 54 ]. A lot of this came together in a prize-winning Dutch monograph of 1989 [ 12 ].

Chapter 2. Geeraerts, Dirk. 1986. **On Necessary and Sufficient Conditions.** *Journal of Semantics* 5: 275–291. [ 7 ].

The semantic flexibility introduced by prototype theory is of a radical kind: it deconstructs the traditional distinction between polysemy (meaning differences that are part of the linguistic structure) and vagueness (or semantic underspecification, i.e. differences in the use of words and expressions that are not considered to be part of linguistic structures, but

that belong to cognition in a wider sense, or that merely reside outside of language). This chapter introduces the issue — a fundamental one for any theory of linguistic meaning — without exploring all possible aspects of it: for a more detailed treatment, see [ 18 ] (which is probably my most cited paper). Given the methodological advances that lexical semantics has gone through in the past decades (see chapters 3 and 9 below), the question arises whether the shift towards richer empirical methods has resolved the problems. In [ 92 ] it is argued that such is not the case.

Chapter 3. Geeraerts, Dirk. 1998. **Neologism at Short Range**. In Rainer Schulze (ed.), *Making Meaningful Choices in English. On Dimensions, Perspectives, Methodology and Evidence* 77–88. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag. [ 26 ].

Typically, a prototype-theoretical approach to meaning includes the extensional level into the description: specific exemplars of conceptual categories play a role in semantics, and accordingly, meaning description cannot be restricted to the quasi-autonomous level of the ‘linguistic system’, but needs to take into account actual linguistic usage and the things linguistic expressions actually refer to. In *The Structure of Lexical Variation* of 1994 [ 20 ], such a referential approach is implemented by analyzing clothing terms as they are found in magazines, i.e. in a combination of text and pictures that provide independent access to the referents of the expressions. This chapter presents a sample of the type of analysis conducted on that referential basis. In theoretical terms, the 1994 monograph crucially defines a research programme that continues to shape the investigations in the context of the Quantitative Lexicology and Variational Linguistics research team (QLVL) that I founded at the University of Leuven round the turn of the millennium and that I was able to develop with the continued support of my colleague Dirk Speelman, and that focuses on the interplay of semasiological variation (prototypicality), onomasiological variation, and contextual factors. In other words, the 1994 monograph embodies both the ‘onomasiological

turn' and the 'social turn' that were mentioned above. At the same time, the referential method illustrated in the present chapter was difficult to apply systematically, not only because it is time-consuming, but also because the necessary extra-textual information is not always available. Although QVL research went more and more in the direction of statistical corpus research (see chapter 9), a referential approach was used again in the web-based colour term studies represented by [ 84 ] and [ 90 ].

Chapter 4. Peirsman, Yves and Dirk Geeraerts. 2006. **Metonymy as a Prototypical Category**. *Cognitive Linguistics* 17: 269–316. [ 45 ].

Analyzing lexical semantic structure takes the form of establishing polysemy (see chapter 2), of determining the structural weight of the various meanings (see chapter 1), and then also of determining the type of relationship that holds between the various senses of a word. This is the point where Cognitive Linguistics links up with older semantic research on metaphor and metonymy. Specifically, there has been a tendency in Cognitive Linguistics to define the distinction between metaphor and metonymy in terms of, respectively, semantic shifts across domains and semantic shifts within domains. The present chapter argues, however, that it is more insightful to define metonymy itself as a prototypically structured category. The idea was further explored in [ 46 ] and [ 73 ], which continue the discussion about the demarcation of metaphor and metonymy, and specifically also in [ 98 ] and [ 99 ], where the various types of metonymy that fall out of a prototype-based analysis of metonymy serve as input for contrastive and diachronic analyses.

Chapter 5. Geeraerts, Dirk. 2009. **Prisms and Blends. 'Digging one's grave' from Two Perspectives**. In Wiesław Oleksy and Piotr Stalmaszczyk (eds.), *Cognitive Approaches to Language and Linguistic Data. Studies in Honor of Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk* 87–104. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang. [ 60 ].

Lexical semantics tends to concentrate on single words or groups of related words, with less attention paid to the compositional aspects of meaning. In [ 32 ], I presented a 'prismatic' model for compositional semantics, arguing that meaning phenomena in multiword expressions and idioms need to be studied along two dimensions: the compositional process on the one hand, and on the other the lexical semantic processes that may occur at the level of the component parts as well as at the composite level. Developing the prismatic model has not been one of my main lines of research, but the model has proved useful for analyzing reinterpretation processes, as in [ 22 ], for a better understanding the interaction of metaphor and metonymy, as in [ 32 ], and for describing the meaning of idioms, as in the present chapter.

Chapter 6. Geeraerts, Dirk. 1983. **Prototype Theory and Diachronic Semantics. A Case Study.** *Indogermanische Forschungen* 88: 1–32. [ 2 ].

Establishing the relevance of prototype approaches for the study of semantic change (and the other way round) occupied a major place in the first stage of my research career. Like [ 3 ] and [ 5 ], the present chapter is one of the papers that culminated in my monograph *Diachronic Prototype Semantics* of 1997 [ 24 ]. Later diachronic work is shaped by the shift towards a predominantly onomasiological perspective that characterizes my research trajectory at large: see the work on diachronic metaphors and metonymies mentioned in connection with chapter 7, and the work on lexical variation mentioned in connection with chapter 8. Paper [ 75 ] provides a general overview of cognitive approaches to diachronic semantics.

Chapter 7. Geeraerts, Dirk and Caroline Gevaert. 2008. **Hearts and (Angry) Minds in Old English.** In Farzad Sharifian, René Dirven, Ning Yu and Susanne Niemeier (eds.), *Culture and Language: Looking for the Mind inside the Body* 319–347. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. [ 56 ].

Conceptual metaphor theory as initiated by George Lakoff is a

cornerstone of Cognitive Linguistics, but the initial formulations of the framework tended to focus on the universal aspects of metaphors, deriving from a presumed universal embodiment of concepts. Paper [ 23 ] was very influential in nuancing that universalist stance: it pointed out that a number of the expressions invoked by Lakoff to explain the metaphorical conceptualization of anger seemed to have a historical background in the theory of humours, rather than a purely physiological basis. This cultural turn, which was later emphatically endorsed by Kövecses (a leading figure in conceptual metaphor theory), was further developed in a number of papers looking at the diachrony of anger expressions (and the word *emotion* itself): see [ 76 ] and [ 85 ], and the present chapter; a general appreciation of historical metaphor studies is to be found in [ 93 ]. At the same time, this type of cultural-historical metaphor research also illustrates the ‘onomasiological turn’ that was mentioned earlier: historically or culturally changing metaphorical patterns embody different forms of onomasiological construal, i.e. different ways of conceptualizing things, in the broadest possible sense of ‘thing’. If this onomasiological perspective is generalized, different forms of conceptual construal may be studied from a diachronic perspective: this holds for metonymical patterns, as in [ 99 ], but also for connotational meanings, as in [ 72 ].

Chapter 8. Geeraerts, Dirk. 2001. **On Measuring Lexical Convergence**. In Augusto Soares da Silva (ed.), *Linguagem e Cognição. A Perspectiva da Linguística Cognitiva* 51–61. Braga: Associação Portuguesa de Linguística. [ 31 ].

Onomasiological variation comes in two basic forms: choosing between different conceptual construals (as in the work referred to in connection with the previous chapter), and choosing between different lexical expressions of the same sense, i.e. between synonyms. Starting with a monograph in Dutch published in 1999, [ 28 ], lexical variation of this type has acquired increasing importance in my work and that of QLVL. Specifically, looking at variation between competing lexical

synonyms allows lexical variation to be treated as a sociolinguistic variable in the sense of Labov, and going beyond that, to be the input for lectometrical approaches that calculate similarities and differences (and then also convergences and divergences) between different varieties of a language. The present chapter outlines the basic ideas. Most of the attention in this line of research has so far gone to the relationship between Netherlandic Dutch and Belgian Dutch, but other areas are being explored: [ 62 ] and [ 70 ] look at lexical variation at the level of base dialects, with special attention for the influence of concept characteristics on lexical variation; [ 77 ] and [ 89 ] investigate loanwords and borrowability. Technical aspects of and advances in lexical sociolectometry are described in [ 36 ], [ 47 ], [ 74 ], [ 86 ], [ 87 ]. (For an extension of the approach beyond the lexicon, see below.)

Chapter 9. Speelman, Dirk and Dirk Geeraerts. 2009. **Causes for Causatives: the Case of Dutch *doen* and *laten***. In Ted Sanders and Eve Sweetser (eds.), *Causal Categories in Discourse and Cognition* 173–204. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. [ 63 ].

The methodological quest for a firm empirical footing for semantics led to an increased use of corpus data: quantitative corpus analysis has been a defining feature of the QLV approach since the formation of the research group at the turn of the millenium. This chapter illustrates how statistical modelling can be applied to a characteristically onomasiological issue, viz. the competition between two causative verbs in Dutch. Just as characteristically, the analysis pays attention not only to language-internal features like the arguments of the verbs, but also to external, contextual features like possible differences between Belgian Dutch and Netherlandic Dutch. Moving beyond the regression techniques illustrated in the chapter, we currently use a semantic vector space approach to enrich our corpus semantic studies. The approach can be used onomasiologically to identify synonym sets as input for lexical sociolectometry, as in [ 57 ] and [ 97 ], or, at a more detailed level, to



semasiologically explore the polysemy of items, as in [ 96 ].

Chapter 10. Geeraerts, Dirk. 2016. **Entrenchment as Onomasiological Salience**. In Hans-Joerg Schmid (ed.), *Entrenchment, memory, and automaticity. The psychology of linguistic knowledge and language learning* 127–144. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. [ 100 ].

It has been mentioned a number of times already that the progress of my research has been informed by an ‘onomasiological turn’ and a ‘social turn’: an increased attention for conceptual and lexical variation, and for the lectal and other contextual factors underlying that variation. This chapter presents the current state of my thinking on the combination of these two factors, a combination that is a cornerstone of Cognitive Sociolinguistics (about which more follows presently).

The focal area illustrated by this collection of ten papers branches out in various directions that are not as such included in the present selection, but that cannot remain unmentioned if the volume is to serve its purpose of suggesting trajectories for further reading. As charted in

