

Cognitive Linguistics
between Universality and Variation

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Edited by

Mario Brdar, Ida Raffaelli and Milena Žic Fuchs

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P U B L I S H I N G

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COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS BETWEEN UNIVERSALITY AND VARIATION: INTRODUCTION

MARIO BRDAR, IDA RAFFAELLI
AND MILENA ŽIC FUCHS

The present volume contains a collection of contributions originally presented as keynote talks or as regular papers at the International Cognitive Linguistics Conference *Cognitive Linguistics between Universality and Variation*, held in Dubrovnik (Croatia), 30 September–1 October, 2008. More than 50 scholars from Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, Poland, Sweden, and the USA attended the conference.

From a metatheoretical point of view, it appears that the life of most linguistic frameworks is characterized by an intricate interplay of both centripetal and centrifugal forces. They start out as relatively compact edifices to which scholars are attracted by sharing some basic beliefs and approaches. In the course of time, as they develop, they start diversifying into submodels, some of which can eventually go independent.

Cognitive linguistics is in this respect no exception. We can point out at least two such powerful centripetal forces in cognitive linguistics, one is of ideological nature, and the other is methodological. Both are challenged by powerful centrifugal currents. The conference out of which this volume developed was intended to reflect on the interaction of these forces in cognitive linguistics, which is implied in the very title of the conference.

It is well-known that one of the core assumptions in cognitive linguistics is that large areas of language are motivated by the facts of human embodiment (physical, cognitive and social), i.e. by how these are reflected in cognitive structures, primarily through mechanisms such as conceptual metaphors and metonymies. If much of what we consider to be the central facts of human embodiment is shared by humans, and therefore universal, we should expect human languages to be, if not the same, then at least extremely similar. It is only natural that much of cognitive

linguistic research so far has been anglocentric. What is more, cognitive linguists have “naturally” exhibited more interest in demonstrating cross-linguistic similarities. In actual fact, the cognitive linguistic success in uncovering all that “hidden” systematicity and universality was long (and still is) advertised as one of its major comparative advantages over other approaches.

It seems that unconditionally stressing the universal aspects of language, often based on conscious introspection and decontextualized data (which appears to have been necessary while cognitive linguistic movement was establishing and profiling itself against the background of the formal-generative framework from which it emerged on the one hand, and emancipating itself from the then prevalent objectivist philosophical atmosphere in and around linguistics, on the other) has now gradually come to be felt to be a potential obstacle to the development of cognitive linguistics.

The attempts to redress such situation, heralded by the rise of usage-based models as envisaged by Langacker, are now becoming more and more conspicuous. Witness thus the theme session at ICLC 2001 organized Panther and Thornburg (*How universal are conceptual metonymies?*), which resulted in a special issue of journal *Jezikoslovlje* in 2003; or the special issue of the *International Journal of English Studies* in 2003, devoted to the interaction between cognitive linguistics and contrastive linguistics; or Kövecses's 2005 monograph entitled *Metaphor and Culture, Universality and Variation*. Similarly, cognitive linguistics undergoes test by fire as it now meets corpus linguistics and sociolinguistics (cf. theme sessions at ICLC in Logroño 2003, and Krakow 2007).

The other centripetal force has been the practice of conceptual unification. According to Langacker (1999: 24f), one of the most important methodological principles in cognitive linguistics is conceptual unification. The gist of it is that a theory should strive to offer a common conceptual basis for the description of the whole gamut of phenomena that come within its purview. In other words, as wide a range of phenomena as possible should be accounted for using a limited set of theoretical constructs. This is far more desirable than having specialized methodologies, conceptual apparatus, and terminologies for individual phenomena or clusters of phenomena. And if we look at the large body of cognitive linguistic literature on metaphor and metonymy, we realize that cognitive linguists have always gladly embraced this principle.

However, it appears that one of the unmistakable signs of their coming of age is when they start diversifying. In addition to expanding outwards, i.e. looking for evidence/vindication from ancillary disciplines, they also

diversify within, i.e. they develop new frameworks to account for phenomena previously outside their purview, but also developing competing frameworks that try to account in a new way for phenomena that have already been dealt with within a framework. Cognitive linguistics is again no exception in this respect.

After two or three decades of dynamic growth, it is now already past the point at which diversification sets in. This diversification process can be observed at several levels. In addition to the fact that certain cognitive approaches emerge as more or less independent theories/frameworks, cf. most conspicuously various brands of construction grammars rapidly developing away from each other, we also note that cognitive linguistics is freeing itself from the spell of anglocentricism and universalism, seeking vindication from various types of data coming from language acquisition, corpus linguistics, language typology, contact linguistics, and of course contrastive linguistics. These new types of data bring with them the “danger” of making it clear that innovations in the conceptual apparatus and the terminology may be necessary. This all might give the impression that cognitive linguists are across the board jettisoning the principle of conceptual unification, and that may bring into jeopardy the whole cognitive linguistic enterprise/movement.

Our claim is that cognitive linguistics can withstand the danger of disintegrating if conceptual unification is observed not only at the primary level. First, the established methodologies, conceptual apparatus, and terminologies should be kept constant and systematically fire-tested against new sets and types of data, and modified accordingly. In other words, replication work (or mopping up operations) requires an atmosphere of patience in which instruments are not changed all the time. Otherwise, cognitive linguistic work by its individual practitioners would become incomparable, and untranslatable into each other’s terms. Metaphorically speaking, the cognitive linguistic community would transform itself into an autistic community whose members do not communicate with each other. A second level at which conceptual unification can be observed to the benefit of the community is the level of integration. Individual practitioners of cognitive linguistics should try to integrate various tools they have developed, i.e. methodologies, conceptual apparatus, and terminologies in order to achieve more powerful, higher-level generalizations.

The participants were invited to focus on various points on the continuum in the cognitive linguistic agenda stretching from the study of the universal to the study of variation in space and time, between individual and society. As it transpires from the contributions selected in

this volume, it is impossible to disregard the methodological aspects of conceptual unification while tackling the universality vs. variation issue, i.e. while adopting usage-based and constructional approaches to linguistic phenomena, doing cognitive corpus linguistics, cognitive contrastive linguistics, cognitive sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, or diachronic cognitive linguistics. The volume is divided into four parts, roughly mirroring the methodological access points in addressing universality and variation.

Part 1, *Constructional Approaches to Grammatical Phenomena*, deals with various grammatical phenomena in English and Croatian, discussed within the model of Cognitive Grammar or the Lexical-Constructional Model. This part opens with Ronald W. Langacker's chapter entitled "Substrate, System, and Expression: Aspects of the Functional Organization of English Finite Clauses". His starting assumption is that linguistic expressions emerge from, draw upon, and are shaped by a conceptual substrate which includes both general and contextual knowledge, as well as apprehension of the ongoing discourse. It is common for systems into which expressive elements are organized to have a privileged member that is zero in terms of its form and the default in terms of likelihood of occurrence. It is hypothesized that the zero-marked default also represents a baseline regarding conceptual complexity, and thus a point of departure for characterizing other members. This is applied to the analysis of English finite clauses, with special reference to the auxiliary. It is argued that basic features of clausal structure can be explicated in terms of departures from a baseline substrate, in various dimensions and at multiple levels of organization.

Next two chapters focus on the dative in Croatian. Starting from the claim that morphologically marked cases in inflective languages do not represent semantically empty categories, but have inherent meanings of schematic nature, Branimir Belaj and Goran Tanacković Faletar study in their chapter the semantics of the dative in Croatian by analysing different types of sentence constructions: transitive and intransitive, transfer and non-transfer. Their main goal is to establish an integral superschema based on conceptualization of spatial relations that covers different dative meanings.

The chapter entitled "Dominion, Subjectification and the Croatian Dative" explores how the notions of the dominion and subjectification, and the proposed notion of the search domain may be advantageously used in the account of the category of the Croatian dative. Mateusz-Milan Stanojević and Nina Tuđman Vuković show that the organizing principles—the shift from patterns without mental contact to patterns with

obligatory mental contact, and the shift from relatively objective to more subjective configurations—are reflected in the distribution of nouns, non-clitic and clitic pronouns between the patterns and in some semantic and structural characteristics of each configuration. It is shown that the configurations in the Croatian dative are based on a very schematic reference-point construction, which varies from pattern to pattern with respect to the construction of affectedness of the dative and subjectification.

Francisco Ruiz de Mendoza and Alba Luzondo Oyón make use of the analytical and explanatory tools developed by the Lexical Constructional Model (LCM) in a study of the resultative construction which Goldberg (1995) characterizes as ‘X CAUSES Y TO BECOME Z’. After a brief discussion of Goldberg’s work on lexical-constructional fusion, which is considered not to be fine-grained enough, the authors propose two basic schemas underlying resultative/caused-motion constructions, namely $A > B$, in which the object is perceived as undergoing a transcendent change (e.g. *The magician turned the frog into a prince*), and $A > A'$, in which the object either changes a property or acquires a new one but does not suffer a substantial change of state (e.g. *The case just broke itself open*).

The same model is also used in the chapter by Ignasi Navarro i Ferrando on the lexical representation of English particles. The LCM develops at present an enriched formalism for the lexical representation of verbal predicates, but says little on the lexical representation of other types of predicate. Drawing from the Cognitive Linguistics tradition in prepositional polysemy, the author explores polysemy models of prepositions and the feasibility of their formalisation in terms of LCM’s lexical templates. He argues that syntactic information on thematic structure should be enriched by a spatial particle lexical template which adds image-schematic information based on topological, functional and dynamic relational patterns.

Part 2, *Constructing Meaning (Between Grammar and Lexicon)*, contains four chapters dealing with phenomena of form-meaning pairings, such as synonymy or antonymy, or idiomatic expressions. The opening chapter by Klaus-Uwe Panther and Linda L. Thornburg deals with the phenomenon of antonymy. It is argued that it is more than just a static conceptual relation structuring the vocabulary, but that it also manifests itself on other paradigmatic and syntagmatic levels of linguistic organization and function. They analyze four such manifestations of antonymy: intrinsic antonymy, where a word has two entrenched senses that are opposite to each other, e.g. *cleave* ‘split apart’ vs. ‘stick together’; the use of antonymy to create irony/sarcasm; antonymy on the syntagmatic

level in constructional schemas, e.g. *X and Y alike, whether X or Y, X as well as Y*; and oxymora and contradictions. Antonymy turns out to be a dynamically construed relation operating to varying degrees of productivity in the lexicon, constructions, and speech acts. In the actual production and comprehension of utterances the occurrence of antonymy necessitates the contextual adjustment of meanings—the *creation* or the *resolution* of opposite meanings, for which inferential skills of language users, including metonymic reasoning, are needed to construct interpretable utterance meanings.

The chapter by Sabela Fernández-Silva, Judit Freixa, and Teresa Cabré (“A cognitive approach to synonymy in terminology”) introduces an ongoing corpus-based research on synonymy in special languages in order to show how the description and explanation of this phenomenon can be improved by applying some tenets and methods of cognitive linguistics. The authors first review the evolution of the conceptual theory of terminology and outline the issue of synonymy and its specificity within the field of terminology. They suggest that motivation plays an essential role in concept naming and they show, by means of an analysis of the cognitive structure of the context within which the terms occur, how some cognitive structuring factors such as the subject field, the intention or the ICM are involved in lexical choice and can allow for a more accurate description of synonymy.

In the contribution entitled “Semantic decomposability of idioms” Svetlana Gorokhova analyzes Russian speech errors involving idiomatic expressions. Her main goal is to explore the reasons for the semantic decomposition of idioms during language production. The analyses reveal that the decomposition may be due to the idiom’s competition with another synonymous expression, to the activation of its literal rather than metaphorical meaning, and to the semantic interference of another word from the same utterance. It transpires from the analysis that idiom decomposition may be due to the idiom’s competition with another synonymous expression, either idiomatic or literal, to the activation of its literal rather than metaphorical meaning, and to the semantic interference of another word from the same utterance.

The last chapter in this part, “Imageable Idioms in Croatian” by Vlatko Broz, presents a cognitive-linguistic research of selected imageable idioms in a sample of 200 native speakers of Croatian. The research starts from the hypothesis that speakers share tacit knowledge about the metaphorical basis for idiomatic expressions that can be recovered by examining speakers’ mental images of those expressions. The results of the research show to what extent those mental images overlap and how the speakers

account for the motivation of meaning. The analysis shows a remarkably high degree of consistency in the subjects' images and responses which points to different cognitive mechanisms that motivate the figurative meanings of the selected idioms with animals and numerals. This research manages to explicitly articulate what is considered to be a shared tacit knowledge of culture which is in turn reflected in language.

The five chapters that make up Part III are concerned with the phenomena of interlinguistic and intercultural variation. In the opening chapter of this part, Zoltán Kövecses is concerned with metaphorical creativity in discourse. On the "standard" view of conceptual metaphors, metaphorical creativity arises from the cognitive processes of extending, elaboration, questioning, and combining conceptual content in the source domain. Kövecses proposes that such cases constitute only a part of metaphorical creativity and that an equally important and common set of cases is comprised by what he calls "context-induced" metaphors. Five types of creative metaphors are discussed in the chapter: metaphors induced by (1) the immediate linguistic context itself, (2) what we know about the major entities participating in the discourse, (3) the physical setting, (4) the social setting, and (5) the immediate cultural context. Such metaphors have not been systematically investigated so far, though they seem to form a large part of our metaphorical creativity.

The contribution by Goran Schmidt and Mario Brdar is intended as a contribution to the study of the general issue of cross-cultural variation in metaphor, i.e. universality of conceptual metaphor across languages and cultures. Its main concern is with the investigation of the differences in the expression of a presumably shared conceptual metaphor, *LIFE IS A GAMBLING GAME*, in English, Hungarian and Croatian. It is well attested in these languages, but in most cases the expression of the metaphor is slightly different. There are subtle cross-linguistic differences in the expression of the same conceptual metaphor concerning the degree of linguistic elaboration, kinds of linguistic expressions used, degree of conventionalization, degree of specificity, and the scope of metaphor. Our data show that the three languages overlap in part, but that Croatian and Hungarian are closer with the respect to the dominant cultural models revealed by metaphorical expressions.

The main objective of Antin Fougner Rydning's chapter is to show that translation studies and cognitive semantics can cross-fertilize each other. After introducing the central device of designation in translation, whereby an equivalent meaning to that of the original is expressed, and then making a link to the CTMM, which provides conceptual models of meaning representation, the chapter presents a qualitative exploratory study which

investigates different metaphonymization strategies used by professional translators. The purpose of this study, based on contextualized data from a translation assignment given to professional translators translating from English into Norwegian, is twofold: (i) to conceptually describe original English expressions appearing in a text and their translations into Norwegian offered by the professional translators, and (ii) to compare them by pairs (i.e. the original and its translated version) in order to show the conceptual levels at which the links between the original and the translation are made, which provides valuable insights into on the mechanisms of re-expression.

This is followed by two chapters dealing with the conceptualization and expression of emotions. The contribution by Ulrike Oster shows the existence of differences in the linguistic expression of emotions across languages and cultures, despite many similarities in the metaphorical understanding of emotions. Taking the example of English and German linguistic expressions for fear, Oster suggests that German “Angst” is perceived as a more intimate feeling than English “fear” and that the contrast is characterized by certain aspects within the metaphor FEAR IS AN ANTAGONIST, which on the whole is equally strong in both languages. However, in German, the metaphor subtypes involving DOMINATION and PAIN are stronger than in English. Moreover, the conceptualisation of the emotion as a POSSESSION is much more frequent and conventionalized in German than in English.

In the chapter entitled “Emotion meets motion. Estonian personal trait vocabulary motivated by embodied experience”, Ene Vainik and Heili Orav distinguish certain groups of Estonian terms of personality traits where there are either direct or indirect references to emotional experience and physical motion detectable. They argue for the theory of embodiment originated in the framework of cognitive linguistics as an explanation. We rely on the cognitive mechanisms which enable projections from the domain of physical motion to the more abstract domains like emotions, motivation and social relations. In the case of conceptualisations a distinction between the level of content and the conceptualizer’s position is made and the axiological aspects of personality traits are also accounted for. The authors conclude that emotion occurs as one of the causing forces of motion that is made up figuratively in the restricted field of the motion-related Estonian personality traits.

The volume is rounded off by Part IV with two chapters assuming a diachronic perspective. Ida Raffaelli aims in her chapter to show the importance of the conceptual category of ‘light’ in the formation of the Croatian vocabulary. It is stressed that the concept of ‘light’ has served as

the conceptual basis for the morphosemantic formation of some new lexemes. Some of these lexemes are only etymologically related to the concept of 'light'. Their actual meanings are metaphorical, being related to the domains of 'mental activities' or 'excellence'. Therefore, the author makes use of the model of morphosemantic fields introduced by Guiraud, claiming that it should be integrated into the Cognitive Linguistic framework, since it could reveal some new patterns of lexicalization in Croatian as a grammatically motivated language.

Finally, Christopher Shank explores the diachronic development and grammaticalization patterns of mental state predicates and the historical variable use (or non-use) of the complementizer *that* from Early Modern English to Present-Day English. The guiding hypothesis is that the increased frequency/use of the *I realize/think* zero-complementizer construction (due to grammaticalization) will result in a corresponding decrease in frequency/use of the *I realize/think that*-clause construction. The analysis shows a progressive increase in subjectified usage of *that*-clauses vs. zero-complementizer and that the *I realize/think* zero-complementizer context is the locus of the subjectified usage.

We would like to express our gratitude to referees who reviewed individual chapters, to all the members of the organising team of the conference, and to all the volunteers (including the students) who helped out so well during the two-day event by managing matters behind the scenes. We are also enormously grateful to all participants for their contributions, their fruitful interaction and their enthusiasm, all of which made this conference not only a very interesting but also a very congenial event.

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PART I:

**CONSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES
TO GRAMMATICAL PHENOMENA**

CHAPTER ONE

SUBSTRATE, SYSTEM, AND EXPRESSION: ASPECTS OF THE FUNCTIONAL ORGANIZATION OF ENGLISH FINITE CLAUSES

RONALD W. LANGACKER

1. Structure, function, and substrate

Linguistic expressions are anything but self-contained. Instead, they emerge from, draw upon, and are shaped by a **conceptual substrate** of indefinite extent (Langacker 2008a). Any aspect of our experience can be involved, including stable knowledge as well as apprehension of the physical, social, and discourse context. An important part of an expression's supporting context—relevant to both its form and meaning—is the **function** it is meant to fulfill. In various ways and to various degrees, an expression's **structure** is determined, constrained, or at least reflective of the functions served.

As a simple example, consider (1a), uttered by a surgeon in the course of performing an operation. One component of the substrate is the general cultural model of how surgery is performed, including the various roles—surgeon, nurse, patient, anesthesiologist—and the protocol defining their expected behavior. In particular, the nurse is supposed to hand the surgeon whatever instrument she requests. Crucial to the context is the very fact that an operation is being performed in accordance with this cultural scenario, and that the interlocutors instantiate the roles of surgeon and nurse. When the surgeon says *Scalpel* in this context, it is clear that the utterance serves the function of requesting this instrument. Given the overall situation, an expression consisting of just a noun is sufficient to fulfill the function. Resorting to an expression with greater structural complexity, like (1b), would be otiose even though effectively it conveys the same information. And (1c) would deviate from the scenario and be cause for alarm.

- (1) a. *Scalpel.*
 b. *I want you to hand me a scalpel.*
 c. *Do you think I should use one of those long, thin metal things with a sharp blade?*

There is no point arguing how much of its contextual understanding constitutes the “linguistic meaning” of (1a).¹ More relevant here is to recognize the appreciable extent to which an expression’s structure can be shaped by the functions served as part of a largely implicit conceptual substrate. We need to explicate these motivating factors if we want to understand language structure and properly describe it.

An essential facet of the conceptual substrate consists in the interlocutors’ apprehension of the ongoing discourse itself. A simple example will help make explicit some of the factors involved. Suppose two people are in a jewelry store, examining various items. One of them picks up a ring and says: *This diamond, it sparkles.* Shown at the left in Figure 1 are certain constructs relevant to describing this mini-discourse. The **ground** (G) includes the speaker (S), the hearer (H), and their interaction with one another (double-headed dashed arrow). The **objective scene** comprises the situation the discourse pertains to—the general scene which the interlocutors (as **subjects of conception**) are “viewing” and talking about (as **object of conception**). Single-headed arrows indicate their apprehension of this scene. They are of course aware of more than just the situation being described. At a given moment, the scope of their awareness incorporates other aspects of the immediate context, including their interaction and their role as conceptualizing subjects.²

This minimal discourse is broken down into two stages: a topic nominal followed by a comment clause. By saying *this diamond*, the speaker intends the outcome shown in the middle: momentarily, both interlocutors focus their attention on a particular instance of *diamond*, identified by virtue of being in the speaker’s proximity (given as an ellipse). In the context indicated, that is naturally understood to be the one on the ring the speaker is holding. The occurrence and effect of this utterance are now within the interlocutors’ scope of awareness, part of the substrate supporting the next

¹ Arguably everything mentioned is part of its meaning. The culturally established operation scenario is not unlike the speech-act scenarios which support the meanings of speech-act verbs (e.g. *order, ask, promise*) and the prototypical values of basic sentence types (e.g. imperatives and questions).

² Of course, each interlocutor apprehends this configuration primarily from her own position inside it. Only secondarily (if at all) do they enjoy the bird’s-eye view represented by the diagram.

expression: *it sparkles*. The effect of the pronoun *it* is to redirect attention to the diamond. It directs the hearer to focus attention once more on an entity—characterized only as third person, singular, and non-human (3sn)—that has already been focused in this manner and is therefore salient in the immediate discourse context. The effect of the clause overall is to introduce and profile a relationship anchored by this entity, namely the process of sparkling.³

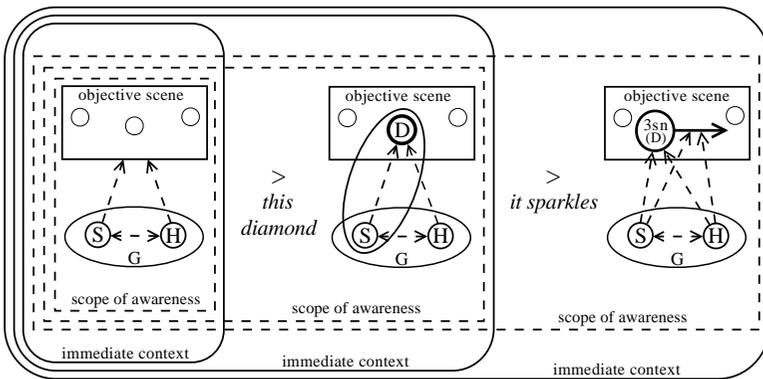


Figure 1. An example of structure building in discourse.

As a discourse proceeds, the context and scope of awareness are progressively augmented to incorporate both the occurrence of each successive utterance and the content it expresses. At each stage the objective scene is updated and modified in some manner: by introducing new elements, by redirecting attention within it, or by shifting it to some other portion of our mental universe (changing the topic). Through this process conceptual structure is being built on several levels (Langacker 2001a). One level consists in the growing history of speaker-hearer interactions constituting the successive speech events. Another is the history of expressions, including their form, the content invoked, and how they construe this content (e.g. in terms of focusing). A third level comprises what is known or established through discourse concerning the objective scene (irrespective of construal). A meaningful expression need not have any effect at this level. By itself, for instance, the pronoun *it* does not augment what is already established in the scene by the nominal *this diamond*.

³ This is a relationship in the sense that the diamond is the source or locus of a visual impression registered by potential observers.

However, the structure built at this level tends to be more durable than the history of interactions and expressions. After a stretch of conversation, for example, our interlocutors are likely to retain the information that the diamond sparkles even if they have forgotten who said it and how.

The substrate and the ongoing discourse determine the functions that need to be fulfilled, thereby shaping and constraining the expressions employed. In global terms, language has a **symbolic** function—allowing the symbolization of conceptualizations—as well as a multifaceted **interactive** one. Symbolization and interaction are both components of its **communicative** function, generally regarded as canonical. In more local terms, particular aspects of language structure serve more specific functions. To some extent, linguistic units and expressions are organized into **systems** comprising alternate means of fulfilling these functions.

For example, a **nominal** (i.e. a “noun phrase”) serves the function of **nominal reference**: as we saw in Figure 1, using it successfully results in the interlocutors momentarily directing their attention to what is intersubjectively regarded as the “same” conceived entity. One strategy for achieving this is through a combination of two more specific functions, namely **type specification** and **grounding** (e.g. *this diamond*). The lexical nouns of a language comprise a system of options for making a type specification. The “determiner system” provides a set of alternatives for the grounding function. For various reasons, though, structure and function do not always correlate so neatly.

Linguistic elements are often associated with particular supporting substrates, which are therefore part of their full characterization. In the “encyclopedic” view of meaning, the substrate for a lexical item is the set of cognitive domains it evokes as the basis for its meaning (Langacker 2008a: ch. 2). The substrates associated with grammatical elements naturally tend to be more schematic in their content and more closely tied to discourse considerations. A personal pronoun, for example, evokes the conception of a discourse situation in which a salient referent has already been singled out as the shared focus of attention. By contrast, the topic construction in Figure 1 presupposes the situation where a referent needs to be established as focus for purposes of interpreting the following clause, hence the topic nominal cannot be a pronoun (van Hoek 1995, 1997).

Although grammar is motivated by the functions served, it cannot just be identified with them. It may well be that the most schematic characterizations of grammatical elements are essentially functional in nature. All one can say about nominals in general, for example, is that they serve the function of directing attention to a discourse referent. That said, however, one still has to specify the conventional and often varied means a language

deploys for fulfilling the function. There may be alternate strategies for doing so (e.g. a pronoun like *it* relies on deixis rather than type specification). Even with the same basic strategy, the function can be subserved by expressions with different structures (e.g. *those with a bluish tint* indicates a type without employing a lexical noun). In short, elucidation of their functional motivation does not excuse us from actually describing grammatical constructions in full and explicit detail.

Importantly, the elements serving a given function do not always form a grammatical **constituent**. In (2a), those serving the function of nominal reference do form a constituent: the subject nominal (*the guy you were telling me about*). It is not at all clear, however, that this nominal decomposes into subconstituents corresponding to the functions of grounding (*the*) and type specification (*guy you were telling me about*).⁴ An equally good case can be made that the article and noun form a constituent that combines as a whole with the relative clause. Observe that these are non-contiguous in (2b), hence not a constituent in the classical sense. And clearly, the function of nominal reference is split between two constituents in such expressions.

- (2) a. *The guy you were telling me about just phoned.*
 b. *The guy just phoned that you were telling me about.*
 c. *You should not take offense at those remarks.*
 d. *Offense should not be taken at those remarks.*

In Cognitive Grammar (CG), constituency hierarchies of the sort assumed in classical generative theory are not considered essential or fundamental to grammar (Langacker 1997). To the extent that it emerges, constituency is flexible, often variable, and non-exhaustive of an expression's grammatical structure. What CG posits instead are **conceptual** and **phonological groupings** established on various grounds, as well as **symbolic links** between them. An expression comprises a complex **assembly** of semantic, phonological, and symbolic structures involving numerous dimensions and levels of organization. It is common for groups established on different grounds to overlap or intersect—only as a special case do they coincide, dovetail, or relate by nesting (proper inclusion). The structures traditionally recognized as grammatical constituents emerge when a certain kind of conceptual grouping happens to be linked symbolically to a certain kind of phonological grouping: the conceptual grouping is based on

⁴ The definite article makes reference to a contextually unique instance of the specified type. Here (but not always) the relative clause helps specify the type for which this contextual uniqueness is presumed.

correspondences between salient entities within the component conceptions and imposes a single profile on the composite whole; and the phonological grouping is based on linear contiguity (temporal adjacency) of the component elements. A classical constituency hierarchy emerges to the extent that symbolic groupings of this sort function in turn as component elements in symbolic groupings at higher levels of organization.

The subject in (2a) exemplifies a classical constituent fulfilling the function of nominal reference. This is not the case in (2b), where the elements serving that function are discontinuous in the linear sequence. We can still speak of a “nominal” or a “nominal expression” in semantic and functional terms—together, *the guy* and *that you were telling me about* specify a type of thing and single out a grounded instance of it as a discourse referent. The entities invoked for this purpose form a conceptual grouping, just as they do in (2a). Taken as a whole, however, this conceptual grouping happens not to be symbolized by any phonological grouping, so it is not manifested as a grammatical constituent in the classical sense. And in general, there is no need or expectation that all relevant conceptual groupings participate as wholes in symbolic relationships. This is quite familiar in the case of complex lexical items, for instance *take offense at*. Although its composite meaning defines a conceptual grouping, it is not necessarily a grammatical constituent even in (2c), where its elements are temporally adjacent, and certainly not in (2d). Its failure to be symbolized by a cohesive phonological grouping does not prevent us from recognizing the lexical expression and apprehending its overall meaning.

Grammatical constituency is a very special case of the general human capacity for hierarchical structure, where multiple entities at one level of organization function as a single entity at a higher level. Not every kind of hierarchical arrangement relevant to meaning and grammar is properly identified with grammatical constituency in the classical sense. In particular, certain hierarchies traditionally regarded as grammatical are better analyzed in terms of **conceptual layering**, with no analogous **symbolic** hierarchy. As a case in point, consider complement chains, which are normally accorded the grammatical constituency represented by the bracketing in (3a). However, intonation suggests the non-hierarchical arrangement in (3b). There is no indication, for instance, that *Chris knows* and *Doris left* constitute a phonological grouping to the exclusion of *Bob thinks*. Nor that the three of them are grouped phonologically to the exclusion of *Amy says*. On the face of it, the phonological organization is linear and chain-like rather than strictly hierarchical.

- (3) a. [*Amy says [Bob thinks [Chris knows [Doris left.]]]]*
 b. *Amy says / Bob thinks / Chris knows / Doris left.*

From the CG standpoint, there is in fact no good reason not to take the intonational evidence seriously. Within the assembly of semantic, phonological, and symbolic structures representing the overall structure of (3b), there is no real need or motivation for positing any **symbolic** structures larger than clauses. Everything that needs to be specified grammatically is captured by the chain-like symbolic assembly in Figure 2a, where each clause elaborates the schematic proposition invoked as landmark of the one that precedes (Langacker 2008b). The hierarchical arrangement in (3a) is not a matter of grammatical constituency, but rather the layering of **mental spaces** (Fauconnier 1985). As shown in Figure 2b, this layered mental space configuration is progressively articulated at the **conceptual** level as each successive clause is processed. It is just a case of structure building through discourse.

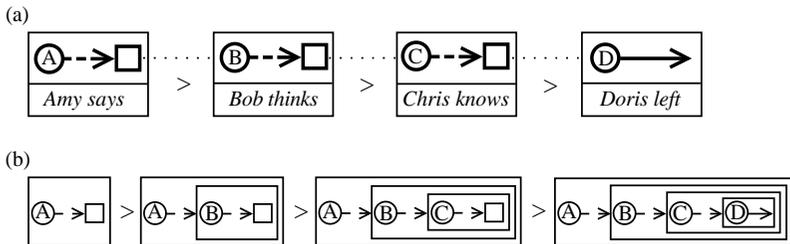


Figure 2. Conceptual layering with grammatical seriality.

2. Systemic organization

Systemic organization has long been a central notion of linguistic theory. I will not attempt to survey either its history or its role in particular theoretical frameworks. Although systemic organization has always been recognized in CG, it has largely remained in the background. I am still in the early stages of working out the specifics of its treatment in CG and coming to grips with the extent of its linguistic manifestations. They are indeed extensive. But despite its undeniable importance, it represents only one aspect of language structure. And while it is certainly true that an element's value stems in part from its opposition to other members of a system, this does not relieve us of the responsibility of describing each member individually, in its own terms.

We can recognize degrees of systemic organization, with respect to several related parameters. Most obviously, systems vary in their size, i.e. the number of members. A language has many fewer determiners, serving the function of grounding, than lexical nouns providing type specifications. English has more adjectives than basic quantifiers. Members of larger systems are generally regarded as being “lexical” in nature, and members of smaller ones, as being “grammatical”.

Among the elements serving a particular function, a distinction can often be made between a **core** system and an **elaborated** system of indefinite extent. For instance, among the English quantifiers we can discern a core system consisting of the following: *all, most, some, no, every, each, any, many, few, much, little, a few, a little*. We might further include, as part of a slightly elaborated core, expressions like *several, a lot of, a bunch of*, and the low counting numbers (*one, two, three, ...*). These shade off into an open-ended set of well-established quantifying expressions such as *numerous, {lots/hundreds/tons/scads/...} of, a {cup/gallon/barrel/pound/yard/...} of*, etc. A core system can be recognized as such on several grounds: it has fewer members; its members are generally simple and non-periphrastic; they tend to be more highly grammaticized; and they are commonly organized into subsystems and particular dimensions of opposing values.⁵

This last property is one of the factors distinguishing systems that are **tightly** or more **loosely integrated**. A second factor is whether a system’s members are **mutually exclusive** as means of fulfilling its function. By this criterion the English quantifiers constitute a tightly integrated system, while adjectives do not. The reason is that quantifiers all pertain to the same aspect of a nominal’s semantic characterization—quantity—whereas adjectives pertain to many different semantic dimensions: size, age, color, condition, etc. Adjectives can therefore co-occur, each being more specific than the lexical noun in regard to some property (e.g. *that large old dilapidated building*). But despite this loose integration, modifying adjectives collectively serve the function of elaborating the lexical type specification (*building*) into the more detailed specification (*large old dilapidated building*) invoked for purposes of nominal grounding.

⁵ For example, English quantifiers can either be **relative** (*all, most, some, no, every, each, any*) or **absolute** (*many, few, much, little, a few, a little*). The former divide into **proportional** vs. **representative instance** quantifiers (*all, most, some, no* vs. *every, each, any*). The absolute quantifiers exhibit oppositions in terms of count vs. mass (*many, few, a few* vs. *much, little, a little*), magnitude (*many, much* vs. *few, little, a few, a little*), and positive vs. negative (*many, much, a few, a little* vs. *few, little*). See Langacker (1991: §2.3.2).

I will be dealing mostly with small, core systems that are tightly integrated. Usually systems of this sort represent older strata of grammatical organization. The closeness of their integration may help them resist encroachment by the newer, less grammaticized elements that surround them (although they cannot hold out forever—witness *a lot of*, which is well on its way to supplanting *much* and *many*). These core systems thus constitute only a portion of the conventional units of a language and are less than fully representative. They are however of special interest, not only due to their pivotal role in grammar, but also because they show most clearly the motivation of grammatical structure in terms of conceptual archetypes and canonical ways of interacting with the world.

A common feature of these core systems is the inclusion of a “zero” member. One of my objectives here is to outline and explore a certain way of dealing with this classic problem in the context of CG. I have come to believe that zero members of systems are a key to analyzing grammar and elucidating its conceptual foundation.

Let us take the simplest possible case: a system of just two members, one of which is zero. An obvious example is grammatical number, where the typical pattern is for singular to be coded by zero and for plural to be overtly marked, as in English. This follows the well-known general tendency, based on coding efficiency, for zero-marking to be associated with the default member of an opposition. Observe that a term like **zero-marking** refers primarily to a member’s **form** (or the absence of such), whereas **default** pertains to its ease or likelihood of **occurrence**. Additionally, I see the need for a third expression, pertaining specifically to **conceptual complexity**: I will say that one member provides a **baseline** conception which others take as the point of departure for their characterization.⁶ It is of course natural and efficient for the three factors to coalign, so that the default member of a system is coded by zero and represents the baseline conception. I am not claiming that this is invariably the case, however.

One way of representing a system with a zero member is shown in Figure 3a. In this tabular display, the semantic function is named at the top, and the mutually exclusive alternatives for fulfilling it are given in the column below. This type of representation, though useful, gives no indication of there being any difference in status between singular and plural—one of them just happens to be symbolized by zero. I am not saying that this is wrong. Certainly it captures something valid: that marking a noun

⁶ To forestall confusion, I avoid the terms **marked** and **unmarked**, which are used in regard to all three factors.

for plural and indicating singular through the absence of such marking are both conventionally sanctioned options.

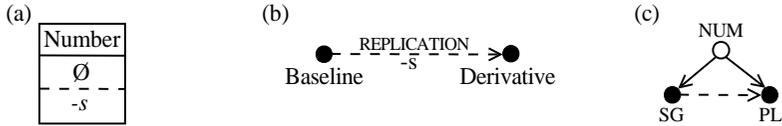


Figure 3. A system with a zero member.

There is, however, another way of looking at it, which also captures something valid. It involves taking seriously the notion of a baseline conception and a conceptually more elaborate alternative that invokes the baseline as a point of departure for describing it. Instead of the members being equal in status, one of them is simpler and **autonomous**, the other more complex by virtue of being **dependent** on the former for its characterization.⁷ I will say that the latter is **derivative**, being obtained from the baseline through some conceptual **operation**, as well as a formal operation serving to symbolize it. In the case at hand, the conception of multiple instances of a type is obtained from the conception of a single instance through an operation of **replication**. On this account the system has the configuration shown in Figure 3b, where an arrow indicates the conceptual and formal operations. The members are not on a par; rather, the derivative presupposes the baseline as part of the substrate supporting its conception. This does not preclude their being treated as alternate instantiations of the number category, as shown in Figure 3c. However, the concept “number” is more abstract and less fundamental than either “singular” or “plural”. It is further removed from concrete experience, arising secondarily by neutralizing the distinction between a single entity and multiple entities.

As a working hypothesis, I take this kind of organization to be typical of systems with zero-marked defaults. I believe, in fact, that it has broad linguistic applicability, extending to many cases not usually analyzed in terms of systems with zero members. I will now explore its application to English finite clauses, with special reference to the auxiliary.

⁷ In traditional terms, the opposition is **privative** rather than **equipollent**.