

Conception, Construal and Predication of Self-Awareness: A Preliminary Analysis

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When a semantic Subject becomes self-aware within a certain state or event situation and that awareness is foregrounded in construal and expressed in the predication, a common but rarely described strategy is to couple a metaphorically extended verb with a reflexive pronoun. This presentation examines the construal, predication and corpus distribution of that phenomenon. Termed *Onstage*¹ *Awareness* (hereafter OA), this is defined as the subject's foregrounded, Self-Aware component in construal, which may express itself in the predication as [(metaphorical) Verb + Reflexive]. This is formulated as: $OA \rightarrow [V^*(M)+R]$.

Conveying the concept of Self-Awareness in a non-reflexive, non-metaphorical predication in either first or third person is a common phenomenon, such as, respectively, "I was acutely aware of my precarious situation" and "John realized he was being overtly sarcastic". However, activated OA allows the narrator/speaker to foreground (put onstage) the subject's Self-Awareness as well as map semantic content from the metaphorically extended verb onto the subject's awareness-of-self event image.

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| (1) a. I <u>found</u> Jerry in New York. | b. I <u>found</u> myself in New York. |
| (2) a. Sue <u>caught</u> Jane shouting obscenities. | b. Sue <u>caught</u> herself shouting obscenities. |
| (3) a. Mr. Jones <u>made</u> the students go to gym. | b. Mr. Jones <u>made</u> himself go to the gym. |
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Considering the (a) examples above, the 'sources' and 'targets' of the actions are different identities, whereas in the (b) set, due to the reflexive constructs, the identities are deemed equivalent (or more accurately, two identities within the same self, the 'divided self'). Previous studies employing various frameworks have dealt with this issue at length. However, it is the premise of this study that necessarily prior to any semantic role assigned to the various parts of Self when 'divided', *awareness* of those parts, no matter how abstract, must be present, accessible for use, and foregrounded in construal. Self-Awareness is first and foremost conceived and construed. Only then can the option of metaphorically expressing it (or not) in the predication by the narrator/speaker be entertained.

English language corpus data is analyzed for OA frequency and distributional patterns. The data suggests that the overriding semantic motivation for the predication of examples such as those in (b) above is evidenced to be *Onstage Awareness* as described here.

¹ 'Onstage' as described in Langacker, Ronald W. (1997) *Consciousness, Construal, and Subjectivity. Language Structure, discourse, and the Access to Consciousness*. Advances in Consciousness Research, Edited by Staminov, Maxim I. John Benjamins Publishing Company. And Langacker, Ronald W. (2002) *Concept, Image, and Symbol; The Cognitive Basis of Grammar*. Mouton de Gruyter.