

**Ego-centric Perspective and Grammar –
Zero-encoding of the Speaker and of Perception and Cognition Verbs as Indices of the
Speaker's Ego-centrally Oriented Stance in Construal**

Yoshihiko Ikegami
University of Tokyo

'Construal' is a crucial notion in cognitive linguistics. The speaker of language is known to have the ability of construing one and the same situation in a number of alternate ways and making different senses of it. It is also known, however, that being faced with one and the same situation, the speaker of one language prefers to construe it in one way, while the speaker of another language prefers to construe it in another way --- resulting in what Whorf (1956) called (different) 'fashions of speaking'. The present paper proposes to address this question specifically in regard to the speaker's preference between the 'subject-object opposition' type of construing stance (in which the speaker as cognizer is involved in, or involves herself through mental displacement into, the very situation she is to construe) and the 'subject-object merger' type of construing stance (in which the speaker as cognizer is detached from, or detaches herself through mental displacement from, the very situation she is to construe) (cf. Ikegami 2008, etc.). Cf. the two sentences in each of the following pairs: [getting lost and asking the way] 'WHERE AM I?' vs. 'WHAT PLACE IS THIS?', [reporting that no one else is in the same room] (NOBODY IS HERE EXCEPT ME' vs. 'NOBODY IS HERE'. Notice that in the first sentence in each pair (encoded in terms of the subject-object opposition type of construing stance), the speaker is duly encoded in terms of the first-person pronoun, while in the second sentence in each pair (encoded in terms of the subject-object merger type of construing stance), the speaker is not encoded (or encoded as zero). (Recall also the pair of sentences on Vanessa, discussed in Langacker (1990).) In the subject-object opposition type of construal, the speaker as cognizer mentally displaces herself out of the situation to be construed, leaving, however, her mental counterpart behind in the situation. She observes the situation from outside and sees her counterpart in the situation hence she encodes herself duly as speaker. In the subject-object merger type of construal, by contrast, the speaker as cognizer is embedded in the situation to be construed. She observes the situation from where she is located, being embedded in the situation. She observes her environment, but not herself (cf. Neisser's notion of 'ecological self'), herself being located at the vantage point of observation, hence she herself is not encoded.

It follows, therefore, that if the speaker speaks a language in which the preference of the subject-object merger type of construal constitutes its 'fashion of speaking', you can expect to find a relatively high frequency of the zero-encoding of the speaker. It is only when a contrast is intended (e.g. 'not someone else, but me') that the speaker feels herself pressed to explicitly encode herself. (This description applies well to the speaker of Japanese --- which suggests that the common zero-encoding of the speaker in Japanese has a perceptual-cognitive basis and is not something randomly indulged in. This is in clear contrast to a language like English, where the encoding of the speaker is, as a rule, grammatically obligatory.

Further related problems to be discussed are: preference between saying 'Going out, I saw the moon shining' as in English and saying 'Going out, the moon was shining' as in Japanese, correlatedly manifested features of the 'subject-object merger type of construing stance in decoding, the 'subject-object opposition/merger type' of the speaker's stance in the light of the evolution of language (e.g. does the speaker's stance shift from 'subject-object merger' type to 'subject-object opposition type' as language evolves itself into a practical means of communication?).