

Intersubjective Construal: Cognitive Grammatical meaning in intersubjective perspective

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Through its history, Langacker's (e.g. 1987, 2008) Cognitive Grammar has maintained a strong individual-psychological, representational emphasis in its conception of linguistic meaning. The theory does consider social and distributional aspects of semantics (e.g. the concept of 'conventionalization'), but these are presented as subordinate to the mental experience of a (representative) subject: "meanings are in the minds of the speakers who produce and understand the expressions" (ibid. 27). The few concessions made to account for interactional aspects of meaning are primarily programmatic and bear hardly any effect on the descriptive apparatus of the theory. My talk considers theoretical problems resulting from the psychologism of CG, with as well as suggests some solutions.

I will approach the Cognitive Grammatical conception of semantics with focus on the concept of construal – a term which in CG has been reserved to the subjective (in general, epistemological sense) aspects of linguistic meaning. Construal, in other words, refers to those semantic features of an expression, which do not result from some objective affairs external to the speaker but rather come up from and characterize the relation between the speaker and those affairs. These semantic features are called "the dimensions of construal".

The dimensions of construal are firmly rooted in the empirical linguistic evidence: the manifest capability to give distinct linguistic descriptions for an objectively same scene or event by adjusting certain perspectival properties of an expression. Furthermore, the dimensions are extremely efficient semantic-analytical concepts. However, their theoretical justification, as well as their ontological status relative to the psychologism of CG, is unclear. In my analysis, I will reconstruct the theoretical basis on which the dimensions are built and consider the criticism the dimensions have received (e.g. Itkonen 1997). The main objective, however, is to consider the compatibility of the dimensions of construal with intersubjective perspective on semantics (for further discussion on the term, see Zlatev et al. 2008).

My analysis will demonstrate that a substantial portion of different dimensions of construal refer in fact to semantic properties which either necessitate or enable what I call intersubjective co-alignment among multiple participants in a speech situation. By intersubjective co-alignment I refer to joint accommodation of semantic structures of any kind among multiple interlocutors. My analysis will argue for pervasiveness of such accommodation and in so being is compatible with interactionist accounts of construal (e.g. Verhagen 2007) while suggesting for more fundamental role of intersubjectivity in meaning construction and perspectivization.

Keywords: *Cognitive Grammar, dimensions of construal, intersubjectivity, perspectivization, social cognition*

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