

The Pragmatics Encyclopedia

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and activities (*see*, for example, Goody 1995; Enfield and Levinson 2007).

Despite theoretical diversity, there are clearly common themes in recent cognitive anthropological work. The current trend is towards more integrated theories of mind and culture, along with an insistence on the role of culture (and thereby, of cultural difference) in cognition (*see*, for example, Sperber 1987, 1996b; Shore 1996; Levinson 1997, 1998; Bloch 1998; Brown 2002). The role of culture is explored not just in the content and structure of mental entities (meanings), but in cognitive processes such as memory, motivation, and reasoning. Work is increasingly interdisciplinary, with attention to the rapidly accumulating knowledge about human mental processes within the cognitive sciences, but with a (healthy) scepticism about exorbitant claims for universals based overwhelmingly on work in English-speaking societies. A further trend is attention to how children learn cultural knowledge, and how it affects their cognitive development (e.g. Ochs 1988; Schiefelin 1990; Brown and Levinson 2008). Current work reflects changing views of 'language' and 'culture', away from monolithic entities to cultural practices located and learned in interaction with others in one's social networks, as well as the deconstruction of culture, with different bases for cultural knowledge, 'common ground', which is seen as more fragmented, partially shared, and ideologically based (*see* Fox and King 2002 for a review). There is also a broadened view of language as social interaction, and a perspective on interpretation rather than on language production. This includes levels of linguistic patterning invoked by 'contextualization cues' (Gumperz 1992), complex transpositions, markers of stance, the cueing of context through subtle, subliminal cues reminiscent of Whorf's view of the subliminal nature of grammatical patterning. These can vary significantly across languages, networks, and cultural groups. These modern trends bring much work in cognitive anthropology squarely within the sphere of interest of students of linguistic pragmatics.

PENELOPE BROWN

See also: Cognitive linguistics; cognitive pragmatics; cognitive psychology; cognitive

science; cultural scripts; culture; intercultural communication

Suggestions for further reading

- Bloch, M. (1998) *How We Think They Think: Anthropological Approaches to Cognition, Memory, and Literacy*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Levinson, S.C. (2003) *Space in Language and Cognition: Explorations in Cognitive Diversity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Strauss, C. and Quinn, N. (1997) *A Cognitive Theory of Cultural Meaning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cognitive Linguistics

Cognitive linguistics is a modern school of linguistic thought and practice which is concerned with the relationship between human language, the mind and socio-physical experience. It emerged in the 1970s arising from rejection of the then dominant formal approaches to language in linguistics and philosophy. While its origins were, in part, philosophical in nature, cognitive linguistics has always been strongly influenced by theories and findings from other **cognitive science** disciplines, particularly **cognitive psychology**. This is particularly apparent in work relating to human categorization, as evidenced in work by Charles Fillmore in the 1970s (Fillmore 1975) and George Lakoff in the 1980s (Lakoff 1987). In addition, earlier traditions such as Gestalt psychology has been influential, as applied to the study of grammar by Leonard Talmy (Talmy 2000) and Ronald Langacker (Langacker 1987). Finally, the character of cognitive linguistic theories have been influenced by the neural underpinnings of language and cognition. This is evident both in early work on how visual perception constrains colour terms systems (Kay and McDaniel 1978) and more recent work on the neural theory of language (Gallese and Lakoff 2005).

Cognitive linguistics constitutes an 'enterprise' rather than a single, closely articulated theory. This follows as it is populated by a number of complementary, overlapping and, occasionally, competing theories. The cognitive linguistics enterprise derives its distinctive character from a number of guiding assumptions. In particular,

cognitive linguists assume (1) that language is the outcome of general properties of cognition (the generalization commitment, Lakoff 1990); (2) that conceptual **representation** is the outcome of the nature of the bodies humans have and how they interact with the socio-physical world (the thesis of embodied cognition, Lakoff 1987; Johnson 1987); (3) that grammar is conceptual in nature (Langacker 1987; Talmy 2000); and (4) that **meaning**, as it emerges from language use, is a function of the activation of conceptual **knowledge** structures as guided by **context**; hence, there is no principled distinction between **semantics** and **pragmatics** (Fauconnier 1997).

Cognitive linguistic practice can be divided into two main areas: cognitive semantics and cognitive (approaches to) grammar. The area known as cognitive semantics is concerned with investigating the relationship between experience, the conceptual system and the semantic structure encoded by language. Specifically, scholars working in cognitive semantics investigate knowledge representation (conceptual structure) and meaning construction (conceptualization). Cognitive semanticists have employed language as the lens through which these cognitive phenomena can be investigated. Consequently, research in cognitive semantics tends to be interested in modelling the human mind as much as it is concerned with investigating linguistic semantics.

A cognitive approach to grammar, in contrast, is concerned with modelling the language system (the mental 'grammar'), rather than the nature of mind *per se*. However, it does so by taking as its starting point the conclusions of work in cognitive semantics. Meaning is central to cognitive approaches to grammar, which view linguistic organization and structure as having a conceptual basis. From this it follows that cognitive linguists reject the thesis of the autonomy of **syntax**, as advocated by the generative tradition in linguistics.

Cognitive approaches to grammar have also typically adopted one of two foci. Scholars such as Ronald Langacker (Langacker 1987, 1991a, 1991b) have emphasized the study of the cognitive principles that give rise to linguistic organization. In his theory of cognitive grammar, Langacker has attempted to delineate the principles that structure a grammar, and to relate these principles to aspects of general cognition.

The second avenue of investigation, pursued by researchers including Fillmore and Kay (Fillmore *et al.* 1988), Lakoff (Lakoff and Thompson 1975; Lakoff 1987) Goldberg (Goldberg 1995, 2006) and Croft (Croft 2002), aims to provide a more descriptively and formally detailed account of the linguistic units that comprise a particular language. These researchers attempt to provide an inventory of the units of language, from morphemes to words, **idioms** and phrasal patterns, and seek accounts of their structure, compositional possibilities and relations. Researchers who have pursued this line of investigation are developing a set of theories that are collectively known as construction grammars. This general approach takes its name from the view in cognitive linguistics that the basic unit of language is a form-meaning pairing known as a construction.

It is cognitive semantics, rather than cognitive approaches to grammar, which bear on the study of pragmatics. Hence, the remainder of this article considers some of the main theories and approaches in this area.

Encyclopaedic semantics

Approaches to the study of meaning within cognitive linguistics take an encyclopaedic approach to semantics. This contrasts with the received view which holds that meaning can be divided into a dictionary component and an encyclopaedic component. According to this view, which is associated with formal linguistics, it is only the dictionary component that properly constitutes the study of lexical semantics (the branch of semantics concerned with the study of word meaning). There are a number of assumptions associated with the encyclopaedic semantics perspective:

(i) *There is no principled distinction between semantics and pragmatics*

Cognitive semanticists reject the idea that there is a principled distinction between 'core' meaning on the one hand, and pragmatic, social or cultural meaning on the other hand. This means that cognitive semanticists do not make a sharp distinction between semantic and pragmatic knowledge. Knowledge of what words mean and knowledge about how words are used are both types of 'semantic' knowledge.

Cognitive semanticists do not posit an autonomous mental lexicon which contains semantic knowledge separately from other kinds of (linguistic or non-linguistic) knowledge. It follows that there is no distinction between dictionary knowledge and encyclopaedic knowledge: there is only encyclopaedic knowledge, which subsumes what we might think of as dictionary knowledge.

(ii) Encyclopaedic knowledge is structured

Cognitive semanticists view encyclopaedic knowledge as a structured system of knowledge which is organized as a network. Moreover, not all aspects of the knowledge that is, in principle, accessible by a single word, have equal standing.

(iii) Encyclopaedic meaning emerges in context

Encyclopaedic meaning arises in context(s) of use, so that the 'selection' of encyclopaedic meaning is informed by contextual factors. Compared with the dictionary view of meaning, which separates core meaning (semantics) from non-core meaning (pragmatics), the encyclopaedic view makes very different claims. Not only does semantics include encyclopaedic knowledge, but meaning is fundamentally 'guided' by context. From this perspective, fully specified, pre-assembled word meanings do not exist, but are selected and formed from encyclopaedic knowledge.

(iv) Lexical items are points of access to encyclopaedic knowledge

The encyclopaedic approach views lexical items as points of access to encyclopaedic knowledge (Langacker 1987). Accordingly, words are not containers that present neat pre-packaged bundles of information. Instead, they selectively provide access to particular parts of the vast network of encyclopaedic knowledge.

Specific theories in cognitive semantics which adopt the encyclopaedic approach include frame semantics (Fillmore 1982; Fillmore and Atkins 1992), the approach to domains in cognitive grammar (Langacker 1987), the approach to dynamic construal (Croft and Cruse 2004), and the theory of lexical concepts and cognitive

models – LCCM theory (Evans 2006, to appear).

Cognitive lexical semantics

Cognitive linguistic approaches to lexical semantics take the position that lexical items (words) are conceptual categories. A word represents a category of distinct yet related meanings organized with respect to a prototype, a central meaning component (Lakoff 1987). In particular, Lakoff argued that lexical items represent the type of complex categories he calls radial categories. A radial category is structured with respect to a prototype, and the various category members are related to the prototype by convention, rather than being 'generated' by predictable rules. As such, word meanings are stored in the mental lexicon as highly complex structured categories of meanings or senses.

This approach was developed in a well known case study on the English preposition *over*, developed by Claudia Brugman and George Lakoff (Brugman and Lakoff 1988). Their central insight was that a lexical item such as *over* constitutes a conceptual category of distinct but related (polysemous) senses. Furthermore, these senses, as part of a single category, can be judged as more prototypical (central) or less prototypical (peripheral). Hence, word senses exhibit typicality effects. For instance, the ABOVE sense of *over* – *The picture is over the mantelpiece* – would be judged by many native speakers of English as a 'better' example of *over* than the CONTROL sense, as in *Jane has a strange power over him*.

While the Brugman/Lakoff approach has been hugely influential, there nevertheless remain a number of outstanding problems that have attracted significant discussion. For instance, this view has been criticized as it entails a potentially vast proliferation of distinct senses for each lexical item (Sandra 1998). A proliferation of senses is not problematic *per se*, because cognitive linguists are not concerned with the issue of economy of representation. However, the absence of clear methodological principles for establishing the distinct senses is problematic. More recent work such as the principled polysemy model of Evans and Tyler (Evans 2004; Tyler and Evans 2003) has sought to address

some of the difficulties inherent in Lakoff's approach by providing a methodology for examining senses associated with lexical categories. With the also quite recent use of empirical methods in cognitive linguistics (*see* Cuyckens *et al.* 1997), and particularly the use of corpora and statistical analysis (Gries 2005), cognitive lexical semantics has now begun to make serious progress in providing cognitively realistic analyses of lexical categories.

Conceptual metaphor theory

Conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999) adopts the premise that **metaphor** is not simply a stylistic feature of language, but that thought itself is fundamentally metaphorical. According to this view, conceptual structure is organized by cross-domain mappings which inhere in long-term memory. Some of these mappings are caused by pre-conceptual embodied experiences, while others build on these experiences in order to form more complex conceptual structures. For instance, we can think and talk about QUANTITY in terms of VERTICAL ELEVATION, as in *She got a really high mark in the test*, where *high* relates not literally to physical height but to a good mark. According to conceptual metaphor theory, this is because the conceptual domain QUANTITY is conventionally structured and therefore understood in terms of the conceptual domain VERTICAL ELEVATION.

Mental spaces theory and conceptual blending theory

Mental spaces theory is a theory of meaning construction developed by Gilles Fauconnier (1994, 1997). More recently Fauconnier, in collaboration with Mark Turner (Fauconnier and Turner 2002), has extended this theory, which has given rise to a new framework called conceptual blending theory. Together these two theories attempt to provide an account of the often hidden conceptual aspects of meaning construction. From the perspective of mental spaces theory and blending theory, language provides underspecified prompts for the construction of meaning, which takes place at the conceptual level.

According to Fauconnier, meaning construction involves two processes: (1) the building of mental spaces, and (2) the establishment of mappings between those mental spaces. Moreover, the mapping relations are guided by the local **discourse** context, which means that meaning construction is always context-bound. The fundamental insight this theory provides is that mental spaces partition meaning into distinct conceptual regions or 'packets' when we think and talk.

From this perspective, linguistic expressions are seen as underdetermined prompts for processes of rich meaning construction: linguistic expressions have meaning potential. Rather than 'encoding' meaning, linguistic expressions represent partial 'building instructions', according to which mental spaces are constructed. Of course, the actual meaning prompted for by a given utterance will always be a function of the discourse context in which it occurs. This entails that the meaning potential of any given utterance will always be exploited in different ways dependent upon the discourse context.

The crucial insight of blending theory is that meaning construction typically involves integration of structure from across mental spaces. Such integration draws upon background (encyclopaedic) knowledge and contextually available information giving rise to emergent structure: structure which is more than the sum of its parts. Blending theorists argue that this process of conceptual integration or blending is a general and basic cognitive operation, which is central to the way we think.

VYVYAN EVANS

See also: Cognitive anthropology; cognitive pragmatics; cross-cultural pragmatics; cultural scripts; philosophy of language; philosophy of mind

Suggestions for further reading

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