

Dirk Geeraerts, ed. 2006: *Cognitive Linguistics. Basic Readings*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. viii + 485 pp. ISBN: 13: 978-3-11-019085-4; ISBN: 10: 3-11-019085-0

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Cognitive Linguistics (CL) is not only a scientific approach to the study of language, but undoubtedly one of the most rapidly expanding schools in linguistics nowadays. As a dynamic and attractive framework within theoretical and descriptive linguistics, it proves to be one of the most exciting areas of research within the interdisciplinary project of cognitive science. Part of its seductiveness arises from the fact that CL aims at an integrated model of language and thought, at the building of a sharp theory of linguistic meaning that reflects the human construal of external reality, taking into account the way in which human beings experience reality, both culturally and psychologically (27). In its description of natural language, CL attempts to bridge “the distance between the social and the psychological, between the community and the individual, between the system and the application of the system, between the code and the actual use of the code” (26).

However, as Geeraerts puts it, today’s CL constitutes “a flexible framework rather than a single theory of language” (2); “a conglomerate of more or less extensive, more or less active centers of linguistic research that are closely knit together by a shared perspective, but that are not yet brought together under the common rule of a well-defined theory” (2). CL integrates “branches that are not single, neatly delineated models of linguistic description, but rather bundles of closely related but at the same time competitive approaches” (466).

Given its dynamism, this ‘recontextualizing approach’, as it stands, is attracting an increasingly broader readership and has proved a fertile field for printing. Since its birth with Langacker’s lectures and Lakoff’s work on metaphor in the late 1970s and early 1980s, publishing in CL has been steadily increasing and has done so in successive stages. The late 1980s and 1990s saw an explosion of books in which innovations on the basic concepts and tenets were developed; from the turn of the century, good individual introductory handbooks were boosted (Ungerer and Schmid 1996; Violi 2001; Lee 2002; Taylor 2002; Dirven and Vespoor 2004; Croft and Cruse 2004; Evans and Green 2006). The year 2005 was the most fruitful for more definitive compilations and wider proposals showing relations between approaches and between CL and other domains of research (see pp. 469-85, and recent volumes, such as Ruiz de Mendoza and Peña 2005, enthusiastically and thoroughly reviewed in <http://www.linguistlist.org/issues/18/18-241.html>). As CL seems to be now coming of age and presents itself as a mature theoretical and empirical enterprise, it demands a reliable consolidation and a firm popularizing of its basic tenets. Thus during the past two years we have witnessed something of a publishing marathon in which two teams of researchers, led by Dirk Geeraerts and Vyvyan Evans, respectively, have brought out their parallel series of

books, meant to give the wide and heterogeneous audience of CL a detailed state of the art and an unyielding foundation for future research. For that purpose, different kinds of books have been prepared: a) CL Readers, compiling foundational papers and illustrating fundamental concepts, as in the present volume and Evans *et al.* 2007; b) comprehensive and detailed introductions to CL (Geeraerts and Cuyckens 2007; Evans *et al.* 2006); c) volumes looking into the future introducing current developments and new trends (Kristiansen *et al.* 2006, deliberately conceived as a companion and complementary volume to Geeraerts' *Basic Readings* and Evans and Pourcel forthcoming). To these may be added a so far unparalleled and necessary glossary of CL terms by Evans (2007) that is well worth mentioning.

Considering this lavish production, the purpose of this review will be very modest: to present and give a critical account of Geeraerts' selection of articles, aims and achievements. The comparison with Evans *et al.*'s *Reader* will therefore not be stressed. Let it suffice to say that the two books are self-standing, serve similar purposes and prove equally successful and authoritative. Save for some formal and pedagogical choices, both volumes offer a broad overview for introductory readers and a final chapter for further reading. Although Evans' *Reader* is more extensive and ambitious (28 articles, both classic and contemporary, selected to "represent the full range, scope and diversity of the Cognitive Lings Enterprise"), all the authors comprised in Geeraerts', save for Tuggy, find their place in Evans', and four articles in their selection coincide.

In the book under consideration, *Cognitive Linguistics. Basic Readings*, Geeraerts offers a coherent collection of twelve key writings on CL, rounded up with a 28-page Introduction —'A Rough Guide to Cognitive Linguistics'— and an Epilogue of similar extension, suggesting 'Trajectories for further Reading'. According to the travel metaphor pervasive in his account, Geeraerts embarks the reader on a voyage of discovery, with the promise that travels teach one how to see, the aim being not so much to seek new landscapes but to get new eyes for language and meaning.

The twelve chapters in the book correspond to twelve "fundamental parts of the theoretical conglomerate" constituting the discipline: cognitive grammar, grammatical construal, radial network, prototype theory, schematic network, conceptual metaphor, image schema, metonymy, mental spaces, frame semantics, construction grammar, and usage-based linguistics (2). Each of these concepts, which "far from being the only relevant or interesting" are "among the most basic ones" in CL (18), is introduced by a classic piece of CL writing, reproduced from the original with only formal modifications and some slight adjustments of chapter 4. The table of contents of the book reads as follows: Chapter 1: 'Cognitive Grammar. Introduction to Concept, Image and Symbol', by R. Langacker (1990, 1986); Chapter 2: 'Grammatical Construal. The Relation of Grammar to Cognition', by Leonard Talmy (1988); Chapter 3: 'Radial Network; Cognitive Topology and Lexical Networks' by Claudia Brugman and George Lakoff (1988); Chapter 4: 'Prototype Theory: Prospects and Problems of Prototype Theory', by Dirk Geeraerts (1989); Chapter 5: 'Schematic Network: Ambiguity, Polysemy and Vagueness' by David Tuggy (1993); Chapter 6: 'Conceptual Metaphor: The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor', by George Lakoff (1993); Chapter 7: 'Image Schema: The Cognitive Psychological Reality of Image Schemas and their

Transformations', by Raymond Gibbs, Jr. and Herbert L. Colston (1995); Chapter 8: 'Metonymy: The Role of Domains in the Interpretation of Metaphors and Metonymies', by William Croft (1993); Chapter 9: 'Mental Spaces: Conceptual Integration Networks', by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (1998); Chapter 10: 'Frame Semantics', by Charles Fillmore (1982); Chapter 11: 'Construction Grammar: The Inherent Semantics of Argument Structure: The Case of the English Ditransitive Construction', by Adele Goldberg (1992); and Chapter 12: 'Usage-based Linguistics: First Steps toward a Usage-based Theory of Language Acquisition', by Michael Tomasello (2000).

Some remarks should be made on Geeraerts' selection of articles. First, it pays due honour to introducers of concepts, that is, to key pioneering figures, such as Lakoff, Langacker, Talmy or Fillmore, even if the latter would not describe himself unreservedly as a cognitive linguist (24). These distinguished authors are brought together with representatives of what Geeraerts calls "first and second wave of researchers" (24): Fauconnier, Turner, Gibbs, Croft, Goldberg, Tuggy and the author himself, in the mid 1980s, and Tomasello, in the mid 1990s. Second and more important, in Geeraert's selection, the aim of usefulness prevails over that of historical account. Thus, for the sake of clarity he often introduces longstanding concepts through innovative, though well consolidated, perspectives. Significantly, most of the articles included in *Cognitive Linguistics. Basic Readings*, except for Fillmore (1982) and Tomasello (2000), were written in the 1990s.

As for its structure, it must be stated that Geeraerts' book has been carefully and pedagogically designed, so that the above mentioned articles keep articulated in turn around four defining lines of CL. That is, the notions introduced are in turn grouped together into four subsets of concepts corresponding to the four features of meaning, specific to CL (4-5). As advocated by Geeraerts, linguistic meaning is said to be *perspectival, dynamic, encyclopaedic and experience- and usage-based*.

- a) *Linguistic meaning is perspectival*. The fact that meaning is portrayed as a way of shaping the outside world (4) requires the understanding of the first two concepts: *cognitive grammar* and *grammatical construal*. That is "[T]he typical formal categories of grammatical description have to be reinterpreted from a semantic point of view" (7) and conceptual construal systems that are typical for the grammatical rather than the lexical subsystem of natural languages must be defined (9).
- b) *Linguistic meaning is dynamic and flexible*. Geeraerts focuses now on the fact that meaning is sensitive to contextual effects (10) and that language users adapt their semantic categories to transformations of the circumstances (4). Accordingly, three cognitive models for the polysemic architecture of expressions are introduced: *radial network* (with a seminal analysis of the preposition *over*); *prototype theory* (taken to be a broad set of models) and *schematic network*, in which movements from more specific to more general levels of categorization are made explicit. Tuggy's hypothesis that the relationship between vagueness and polysemy is a contextual one is emphasized.

- c) *Linguistic meaning is encyclopaedic and non-autonomous.* Under this heading, Geeraerts supports the idea that meaning has to do with the way in which we interact with the world. That is to say, meaning reflects our overall experience, biological, cultural and social, as human beings. The focus lies now on the well-known concepts of *metaphor* and *metonymy*, *image schema* and *mental spaces*, all of which receive a renewed and updated treatment.

The notion of metaphor, probably the best known aspect of CL (11), and one occupying a major place in the cognitive research programme, is introduced through a recent systematic overview of the theoretical and practical features of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Similarly, the concept of image schema, devised back in 1987, is shaped through Gibbs and Colston's account, which adopts a more psychological leaning and reinforces the need for experimental methods. As for metonymy, it is innovatively defined through the concept of *domain matrix*.

- d) *Linguistic meaning is based on usage and experience.* In this section, Geeraerts argues in favour of the importance of language use for our knowledge of language (5) and guides the reader to three main concepts: *frame semantics*, occupying a transitional position in his grouping of ideas, *construction grammar* and *usage-based linguistics*. As will be mentioned below, throughout the book Geeraerts defends the corpus research trend that is clearly emerging. In this respect, Tomasello's analysis of observed speech in the field of language acquisition is given particular relevance as central in the CL debate on one of the main tenets of Generative Grammar.

Geeraerts' voice and authority are best to be found in his two, initial and final, contributions to the book. In his Introduction, Geeraerts provides the reader with a roadmap and presents his carefully designed book, together with his own view of CL and of the place this framework may occupy for the future of linguistics. CL conceptual cornerstones are mentioned as well as its theoretical and empirical convergences with functionalist approaches and other disciplines devoted to the exploration of specific forms of context, such as sociolinguistics, pragmatics and text linguistics, or its interaction with other sciences of the mind. The book, however, does not elaborate on these extensions. Nor will the reader find further development on grammaticalisation and other diachronic approaches, prevalent psychological standpoints, critical cognitive linguistics, cognitive stylistics or cultural cognitive studies. The aim of the author does not seem to be to explicitly build bridges with generative grammar either. All that is no doubt left to be discussed and illustrated in the complementary volume edited by Kristiansen *et al.*.

But if Geeraerts' initial chapter starts off with this brief general discussion of the scientific content of CL theory, it goes on to describe what the author calls *the sociology* of the discipline. Accordingly, the Introduction outlines the people it involves, the local and international conferences where they meet, the channels in which they publish or through which they communicate. Main CL representatives, events, mailing lists, journals and book series are collected in its pages (21-24).

Despite the merits displayed in the introduction, the Epilogue proves most valuable and successful. Once the reader has left the introductory level (s)he may want to deepen

his or her understanding of the existing body of work in CL or of close domains. Therefore, the aim of this last chapter is to give a broadly conceived set of suggestions for further reading, in print or electronic, accompanying each of the chapters included in the collection. Geeraerts succeeds in giving the reader an idea of the vastness of the field and of the internal debates going on. On their voyage, readers learn that ‘there are plenty more fish in the sea’ and that ‘the more you dare, the more you win’.

Geeraerts achieves his aim through a precise and brave labelling of the existing literature. Publications are categorized as *representative*, *convincing*, *popularizing*, *broad*, *ground-breaking*, or *lively*, among other adjectives. The reader is led to distinguish between comprehensive introductions, volumes and monographs of specific interest, individual accounts of relevant issues, critical questions and new attempts to refine traditional conceptions, alternative theoretical points of view, philosophical or other ramifications, areas of application of theories and combinations of approaches. And (s)he is drawn to identify pioneers from followers or popularizers of theories.

Secondly, in his Epilogue Geeraerts deliberately signals some important research gaps, providing an encouraging point of departure for future investigation. He points to the lack of a systematic comparison between Langacker and Talmy (460); of a canonical position regarding problems of polysemy (462), of a theoretical status of the concept of *frame* (466), of more systematic work in variational (sociolinguistic) forces determining the occurrence of grammatical phenomena (468), or of sufficient attempts to formalize network analysis (461). However, his most repeated plea for the future refers to the need for intensifying experimentation and empirical research so that it becomes dominant in CL.

It must be noted that both in his Introduction and Epilogue, Geeraerts’ suggestions are wrapped in a conspicuously close and friendly, colleague-like style. The pedagogical and inviting nature of his book is reinforced through this interpersonal, persuasive variety of language, used to advertise an enticing trip. The CL “archipelago” will “win your heart” (20), provided you take a good “roadmap” with you to know “your way around”. Geeraerts’ travel book offers you “routes to explore”, places to visit and the “top-twelve” delightful sights you should not miss. A hospitable, open-minded, exciting, wide-ranging and innovative intellectual climate is guaranteed. Last but not least, this (cheap) trip promises to clearly broaden the mind and raise the spirits of first time visitors.

As will be clear by now, *Cognitive Linguistics. Basic Readings* is an authoritative and encouraging general introduction to CL by a professional whose longstanding devotion to cognitive semantics and innovative proposals within the field run unquestioned. The Reader proves both a coherent and representative collection of original papers covering all the major areas and key researchers of the field, and a motivating guide into CL. Thus, it will serve the needs both of undergraduate students who wish to gain a good understanding of the framework and of postgraduates who seek hints to study particular aspects of one topic in more detail.

Just before ending, let me put forward a couple of minor suggestions. Readers unfamiliar with CL might benefit from the inclusion of a glossary, given the complex technical vocabulary that CL has generated by now. And as for the visual summary of fundamental features, concepts and fields of research included on page 19, an even

clearer representation might be useful. Could there not be an arrow linking *construction grammar* or *frame semantics* with the feature *perspectival*? Regarding formal aspects, future editions will surely avoid some printing errors in the book: *Quantitative* (468), *Francesco Ruiz* (457).

In sum, the book by Geeraerts turns out an excellent overview of CL, successful in its aims, and can be recommended without reservation to readers interested in the subject matters. We can add that in this case 'the (reading) journey is the reward'.

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