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Essentials of cognitive grammar by Ronald W. Langacker (review)

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at the University of Umeå in Sweden. House of Languages is a sophisticated virtual learning space, which enables language learning to occur between individuals who are not geographically proximate. It is not effective to translate the same pedagogy used in a physical classroom to an online platform; therefore, beyond the high-quality visual experience, the benefit of House of Languages is the care that was taken to develop tasks that operate well in a virtual world.

The other two articles in the Pedagogy section tackle quite distinct issues. First, how can effective education be delivered to nomadic populations, especially in instances where access to digital resources is limited? This is the question addressed by ALEXANDRA LAVRILLIER in 'A nomadic school in Siberia among Evenk reindeer herders'. Her answer is that it is not easy: in order to offer education to children in nomadic cultures without removing them from their families for long periods of time (as has been the practice in Siberia), there needs to be a sustained financial commitment on the part of regional authorities. There also has to be a greater willingness to involve the families themselves in the educational process. The second issue is, how do we assess language learning in revitalization situations? This is taken up by ARIEH SHERRIS, TACHINI PETE, LYNN E. THOMPSON, and ERIN FLYNN HAYNES. They lay out a useful assessment strategy being employed at the Nk'wusm Language Institute for children learning Salish; the assessments are helping instructors to rethink more task-based learning in their adult curricula.

The final section on Revitalization consists of a nicely diverse set of case studies: YAN MARQUIS and JULIA SALLABANK on Guernsey, a Romance language spoken on the Channel Islands of Britain; COLETTE GRINEVALD and BÉNÉDICTE PIVOT on Rama, a Chibchan language spoken in Nicaragua; MARIA KOUNELI, JULIEN MEYER, and ANDREW NEVINS on a whistled version of Greek; and JAMES COSTA and MÉDÉRIC GASQUET-CYRUS on Occitan and Provence in France. Each case study raises a number of valuable points about revitalization, and as a whole, these articles stress the importance of recognizing the rights of speakers and recognition of the value of the languages. The future success of revitalization depends in part on providing to a community a necessary degree of autonomy from political, educational, and/or assimilatory pressures, and it also depends in part on a critical mass of individuals who value a language and are committed to its use. This group of articles, some explicitly, focuses on the reality that communities involved in revitalization are not homogenous. Individual goals and agendas will differ, and so revitalization also depends on working through these differences in a productive way.

As my description of the content of *Keeping languages alive* suggests, the range of topics touched upon in the book is wide, which does come somewhat at the expense of an overall coherence to the volume. However, readers will find much of value to mine from these high-quality articles.

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Essentials of cognitive grammar. By RONALD W. LANGACKER. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. 269. ISBN 9780199937356. \$26.95.

Reviewed by LAURA A. JANDA, *UiT The Arctic University of Norway*

Ronald W. Langacker and his COGNITIVE GRAMMAR (CG) have earned a privileged position within cognitive linguistics. L's books (Langacker 1987, 1991a,b, 2000) have given us the core concepts that define the framework of cognitive linguistics and continue to steer the research of most scholars in the field. In a sense, the current book is one that L has been writing all through his career. A distillation of his previous books, and a foreshortened version of Langacker 2008, *Essentials of cognitive grammar* is the first resource I would send a student or colleague to for a definitive, concise introduction both to L's work and to the entire field of cognitive linguistics.

The book is divided into two parts devoted to meaning (Part I, Chs. 1–3) and grammar (Part II, Chs. 4–8). The first part explores the essential role of meaning in language, motivating the 'con-

tent requirement', which states that 'the only elements ascribable to a linguistic system are (i) semantic, phonological, and symbolic structures that actually occur as parts of expressions; (ii) schematizations of permitted structures; and (iii) categorizing relationships between permitted structures' (Ch. 1, p. 25). The content requirement keeps all linguistic analysis in CG close to the language itself, avoiding purely theoretical constructs that lack grounding in language use. What the content requirement does permit is the identification of symbolic structures that link a semantic pole with a phonological pole, complexes of such structures (called 'symbolic assemblies'), and schematic abstractions based on these structures. Symbolic structures, both simple and complex, are the relevant units of analysis for CG.

Chs. 2 and 3 present the way in which meaning is grounded in human minds and experience and then extended and manipulated by means of metaphor, blending, and construal. The semantic poles of most symbolic structures are as a result polysemous, yielding networks of meanings in which some are prototypical and others more peripheral. The concatenation of symbolic structures into assemblies does not involve a mere accretion of meanings, but rather an interaction. Compositionality fails as a means for interpreting compounds such as *lipstick* or *redcoat*, which require reference to cultural practices and meanings that are quite peripheral to those of the components (*lip*, *stick*, *red*, *coat*). L here foreshadows the conclusion he draws in Ch. 8 that the meaning of a complex expression 'cannot be **computed** from lexical meanings and compositional patterns ... but is more accurately seen as being **prompted** by them' (245). Construal gives the language user the 'opportunity to vary the way in which content is portrayed along various scales such as specificity, focusing (figure vs. ground), prominence (profiling a trajector against a landmark), and perspective (with variations in the degree to which the focus is on the subjective viewer). The viewing arrangement for the construal of a given scene makes it possible to scan mentally along the temporal dimension, and summary scanning progressively builds up a detailed conception. A particular type of scanning that is relevant to grammar is the 'reference point relationship', which 'directs attention to a perceptually salient entity as a point of reference to help find some other entity' (83), as, for example, in possessive constructions (where the possessor is the reference point and the possession is the target) and perfect constructions (which involve a reference point in time).

Part II bridges the gap between the conceptual semantics in Part I and the structure of languages. Ch. 4 opens with the claim that grammatical classes (categories), such as 'noun' and 'verb', are definable in terms of meaning. The meaning that is most relevant for these classes is, however, the profiling that is facilitated by construal. L makes it clear that CG does not adhere to the narrow definitions of the traditional parts of speech (since these are subject to a certain amount of crosslinguistic variation), and that 'what determines an expression's grammatical category is not its overall conceptual content, but the nature of its profile in particular' (98). L's example is *bat*, which profiles either a long piece of wood or the action of swinging it. A noun profiles a THING, and prototypically a thing is a stable material object in space that is conceptually autonomous. However, a thing can be 'any product of grouping or reification' (105), meaning that abstract things are included. By contrast, a verb profiles a RELATIONSHIP, prototypically an immaterial event in time that is conceptually dependent on its participants.

Ch. 5 continues the focus on nouns vs. verbs, specifically on the parallels between the count vs. mass and perfective vs. imperfective. L shows how bounding and immediate scope differentiate between these types due to variable construal. With count nouns the default construal has an immediate scope that is large enough to encompass the contours of the object in question, as in the usual use of the word *cat*. But it is possible to 'zoom in' to an immediate scope that excludes those contours and profiles it as a mass noun, as in *cat all over the driveway*. We observe a parallel shift in the immediate scope when we go from a perfective like *the cow jumped over the moon* (including the full event) to an imperfective like *I am jumping with joy* (zoomed in to exclude the beginning and end of the event).

Constructions, defined as assemblies of symbolic structures, are the topic of Chs. 6 and 7. The grammar of a language 'consists of conventionally established **patterns** for putting together symbolic assemblies' (168). This is in essence a restatement of the claim in Ch. 1 concerning sym-

bolic structures as the basic unit for linguistic analysis. L reminds us that the component structures in an assembly 'motivate the composite structure to varying degrees', but do not serve as 'building blocks' (ibid.). The dynamic relationship between components and complex structures leaves room for redundancy (motivated as 'multiple symbolization'), which is regarded as a normal, expected phenomenon in language, rather than a problem.

L takes on the debate concerning Chomsky's famous sentence, *Colorless green ideas sleep furiously*, pointing out that mistakes have been made on both sides of the theoretical divide (190–92). Chomsky's detractors have wrongly deviated from the main issue at hand by focusing on the fact that the sentence does have a plausible interpretation. L argues that Chomsky was correct in claiming that the sentence is semantically incoherent given the default meanings of the words. According to L, Chomsky's error is instead that he uses this example to argue for the autonomy of syntax. CG succeeds in accounting for the infelicity of the sentence without positing autonomy, due to the fact that when the components are brought together in a symbolic assembly, 'their specifications clash instead of merging into a coherent conception' (191). From the perspective of CG, the hierarchical tree structures of generative grammar are 'a kind of gerrymandering'. CG, as L argues, 'accommodates the data without resorting to the dubious theoretical constructs of underlying structures and transforming operations' (212).

The book closes with Ch. 8 on 'Rules and restrictions'. L sorts linguistic descriptions into three types: (1) constructive rules (which do not have to resemble actual language structures), (2) filters (which state what cannot occur and thus cannot resemble actual structures), and (3) schemas (which necessarily resemble actual structures). Types 1 and 2 are basically negative models that exclude nongrammatical structures, whereas type 3, which is the type of description found in CG, is a positive model of language and adheres to the content requirement. It is L's conviction that positive models can give clues to both what is expected and what is not expected in a language, and that language is indeed built up from actual (positive) usage events. For this reason, CG is a usage-based model of language, viewing acquisition as the process of entrenching repeated patterns and extracting generalizations from them.

One could argue that L should take his own advice from this chapter in his initial presentation of CG. Sections 1.1–1.2 (pp. 3–14) define CG largely negatively, in contrast to other theoretical frameworks. This gives a first impression of a defensive tone, which might not be necessary or even appropriate for audiences that do not come from the perspective of formalist theories.

A number of themes run through the entire work, such as the recruitment of basic cognitive mechanisms for language (rather than reliance on special autonomous mechanisms), the status of predictability (as relativistic rather than absolute), and the nature of language. It is L's contention that many linguists, regardless of theoretical orientation, tend to forget that the very notion of 'language' as an entity is itself a metaphor, a convenient fiction. Language is a cognitive activity and therefore variable across people, even those within the 'same' speech community (215–17).

On the whole, this book is more accessible, with a better narrative flow, than L's preceding books. There is also a human dimension that was largely absent previously: L pokes fun at both himself (the first citation under 'Traditional views and fallacies' is of a quote from Langacker 1968:93–94) and at the reader (who will find the representations in Ch. 7 simplified 'doubtless to your relief', p. 183). The volume is spotlessly edited and meticulously indexed.

Despite these accommodations for user-friendliness, *Essentials of cognitive grammar* is not strictly speaking a textbook. It is more of an all-purpose book in the sense that it can serve both as an introduction and as a reference. This book is by its very nature restricted largely to L's view of linguistics, a feature it shares with Taylor 2002. The latter is necessarily less up to date, but includes study questions and suggestions for further reading at the close of each chapter, and it is a bit more comprehensive, including morphology (and also much longer, at over 600 pages). Other textbooks that present cognitive linguistics come with their own comparative advantages and disadvantages. Ungerer & Schmid 1996 is by now incomplete and out of date, focusing mainly on categorization, metaphor and metonymy, and figure vs. ground perspective. 2004 brought two books to the market, each of which gives a partial view of cognitive linguistics: Croft & Cruse 2004 devotes nearly a third of its pages to issues that are relatively peripheral in cognitive lin-

guistics (subsense units, hyponymy and meronymy, antonymy), whereas Dąbrowska 2004 sees cognitive linguistics mostly from the perspective of acquisition and gives a general orientation to the field only in Ch. 10. By contrast, Evans & Green 2006 is relatively comprehensive and specifically designed as a textbook, but intimidating in its bulk (over 800 pages). Given these alternatives, if one needs an introduction to cognitive linguistics in general or L's work in particular, this book is an attractive candidate.

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The development of Old English: A linguistic history of English, vol. 2. By DON RINGE and ANN TAYLOR. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. ix, 614. ISBN 9780199207848. \$135 (Hb).

Reviewed by BETTELOU LOS, *University of Edinburgh*

This is the second volume of Don Ringe's series *A linguistic history of English*. Both authors are responsible for the introduction; Ringe is the author of Chs. 2–7, and Ann Taylor is the author of Ch. 8 on syntax. As the authors remark in their introduction, piecing together the prehistory of Old English is a very different task compared to the work that was done for the first volume (*From Proto-Indo-European to Proto-Germanic*): we are getting closer to the present time and there is a wealth of surviving texts available, not just of Old English but also of its Germanic siblings; the availability of more factual information is also reflected in the availability of more scholarship.

After a short introduction setting out the aims and coverage of the volume, the second chapter, 'The development and diversification of Northwest Germanic', tries to determine which developments are narrowly datable to Proto-Northwest Germanic, the ancestor of North and West Germanic, and arrives at this list: (i) Proto-Germanic (PGmc) *ē changed to *ā, a change that persists in many of the daughter languages to this day, though not in English (cf. Dutch/Present-day English (PDE) cognate pairs like *slapen/sleep*, *wapen/weapon*, *maan/moon*); (ii) word-final *-ō became *-ū; (iii) word-final long high vowels were shortened in unstressed syllables, which accounted for the shortening of both *-ū and *ī; (iv) unstressed *-am- changed to *-um-. Change (ii) has to be ordered chronologically before change (iii) in this scenario, as it fed that change. The identification of a sequence of changes, a relative chronology, validates Northwest Germanic (NWGmc) as a clade (16). The morphological changes in NWGmc are primarily characterized by