

Morphosyntax & semantics – lecture 1

Cognitive Grammar

Topics in linguistics

- Language in society (sociolinguistics)
- Language and culture
- History of language
- Origin of language
- Language in the brain (neurolinguistics)
- The sound system of a language (phonetics & phonology)
- Mechanism behind language use (“grammars”).
- ...

Cognitive skills

- Categorization
- Focusing of attention
- Perception of similarities
- Perception of relations
- Alternate mental representations of an event
- Metaphor and metonymy
- ...

Cognitive linguistics

- Cognitive linguists believe that cognitive skills are essential for understanding language.
- In cognitive linguistics expressions are believed to reflect speaker's way of thinking about the given situation.
- Cognitive grammarians believe that cognitive skills are essential for understanding the mechanisms behind language use.

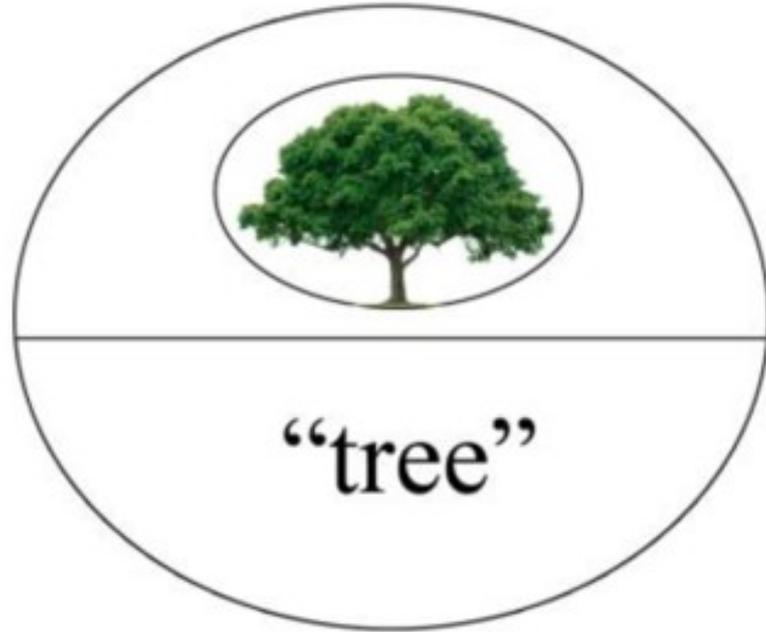
Prescriptive vs. descriptive grammar

- Prescriptive grammars aim at determining the “correct” and “proper” way of using language. They involve strong evaluations of various words, constructions, etc.
- Descriptive grammars aim at describing how language is used. They do not evaluate words, constructions, etc. in terms of “correctness.”
 - Modern linguistics heavily favors descriptive grammars.
 - Cognitive Grammar is a descriptive theory.

Symbolic thesis

- The thesis states that words and linguistic constructions of any length (complex words, phrases, sentences, etc.) are pairings of phonological and the semantic structures.
- Phonological forms are not sounds produced by speakers. Instead, they are mental representations of sounds, written texts, gestures of sign languages, and other forms encoding linguistic meanings.
- Semantic forms are conceptual representations of objects and events in the minds of speakers.

Linguistic sign (based on de Saussure)



References

- Langacker, Ronald W. 2008. *Cognitive Grammar. A Basic Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
 - Chapter 1
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- Saussure, Ferdinand de. 1966. *Course in General Linguistics*. Translated by Wade Baskin. McGraw-Hill.
- Taylor, John R. 2002. *Cognitive Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
 - Chapters 1-3