

# Morphosyntax & semantics – lecture 8

## Grounding

# What's wrong with these expressions?

- *Floyd break glass*
- *Dog bite cat*
- *Child sleep*
- *Man eat apple*

# The ground

- The ground is broadly understood situational context of speaking, including (but not limited to):
  - the speaker and the hearer
  - the time of speaking
  - the place of speaking
  - nearby people and objects

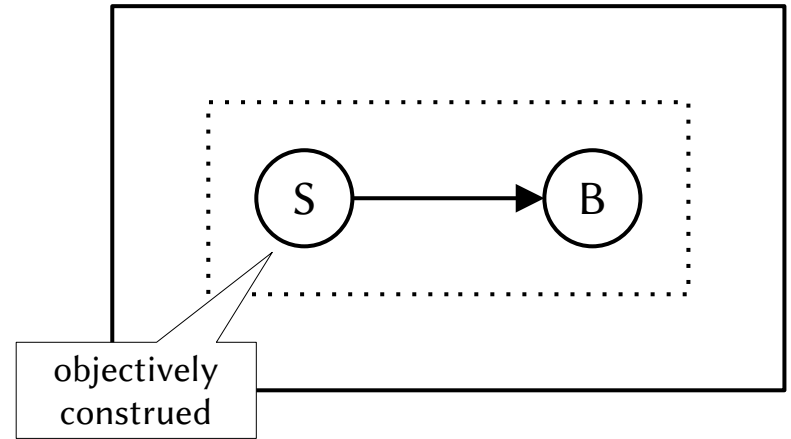
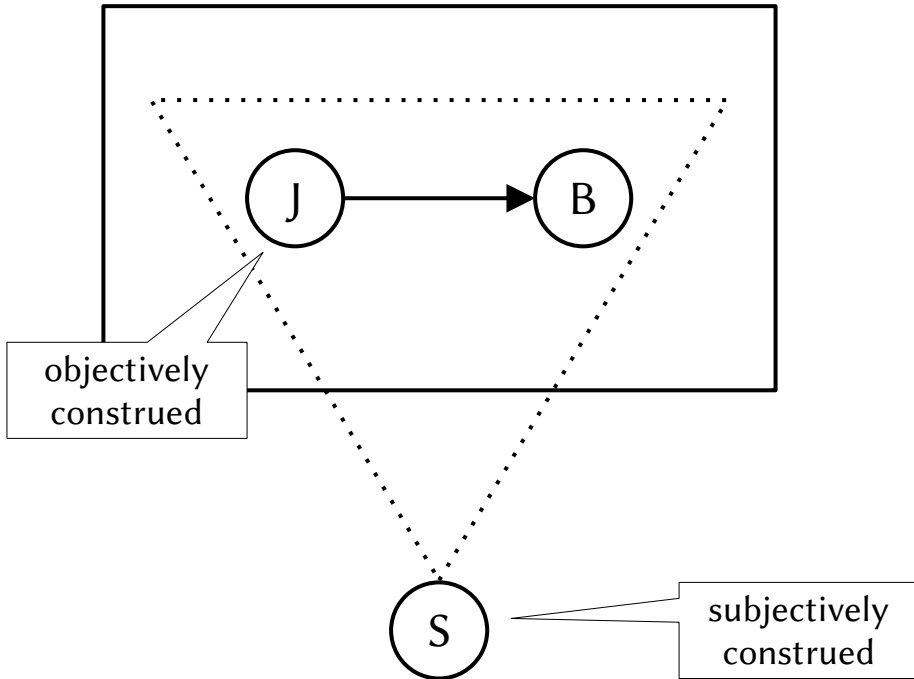
# Viewing arrangement

- Viewing arrangement is best understood through a theater metaphor.
- The object of conception (i.e. whatever we conceptualize) is “on the stage”. The conceptualizer is frequently “off the stage” and “in the audience” apprehending the stage; e.g. *John is reading a book*.
  - In such a case, the object of conception is **objectively construed** and the conceptualizer is **subjectively construed**.
- Sometimes the conceptualizer or some other element of the ground is on the stage too; e.g. *I am reading a book*.
  - In such a case, the conceptualizer or the on-stage element of the ground is **objectively construed**, because it is an object of conception.

# Viewing arrangement

*John is reading a book.*

*I am reading a book.*



# The ground in words

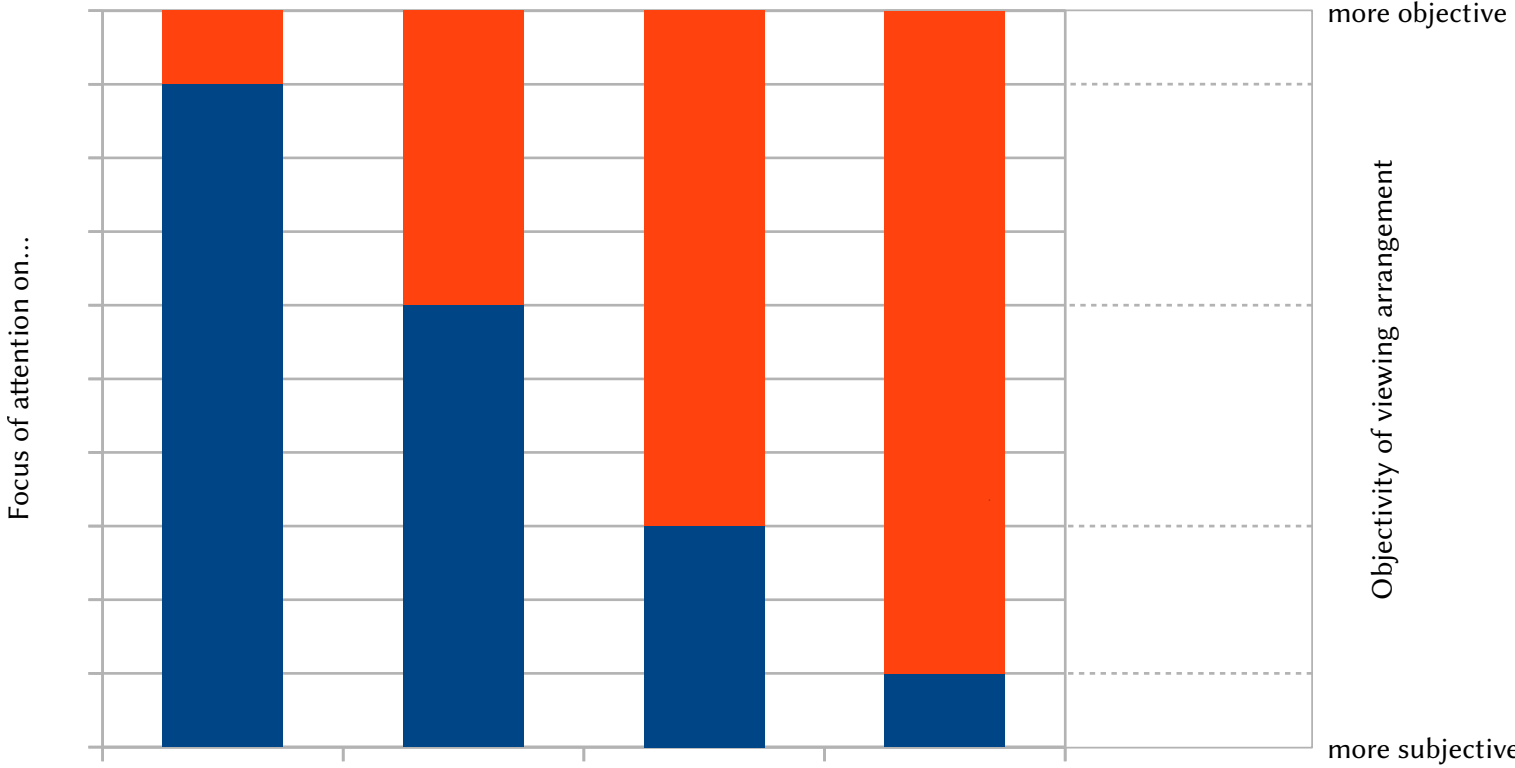
- Some words profile elements of the ground.
  - *I, you, here, now, etc.*
- Some words don't profile the ground, but some reference to the ground is necessary to understand them.
  - *yesterday, over there, etc.*
- Some word don't profile the ground, but relate other words to the ground. In composite expressions, they inherit the profile from the element elaborating their e-site. They are called **grounding elements**.
  - *this, that, these, those, etc.*

# The ground in words

- The ground is also present in the meaning of words and expressions is “colored” by impressions, opinions, evaluations, expectations, etc. of the speaker. In cases like this, the expression is somewhat more subjectively construed.
- For example, *cat* is objectively construed, but *kitty cat* is construed more subjectively, because it signals speaker’s emotional attitude towards the animal.

# Objective vs. subjective viewing arrangement

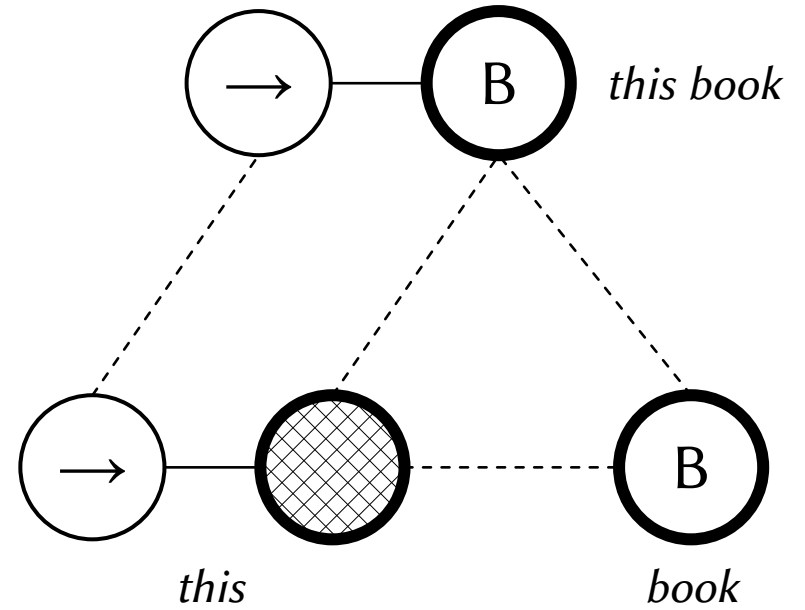
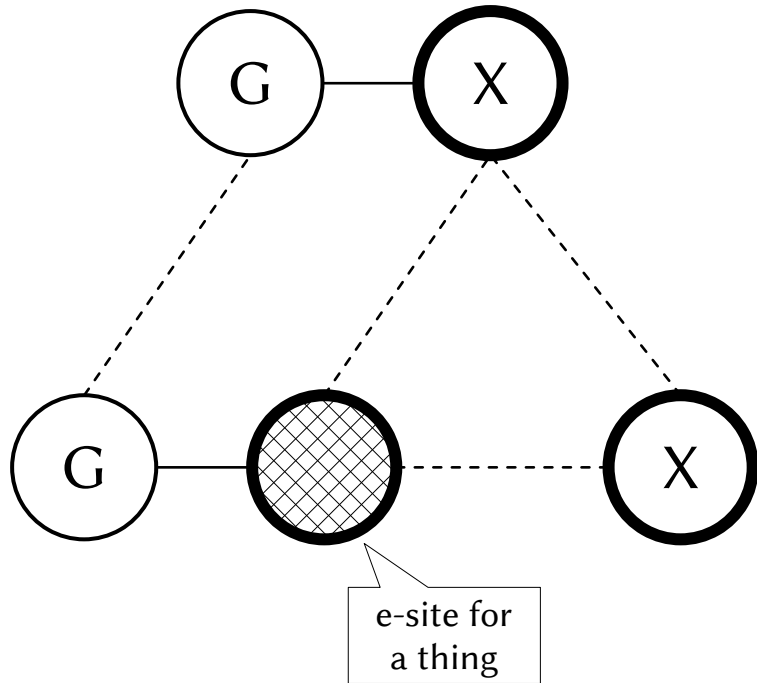
- the offstage (subjective)
- the onstage (objective)



# Nominal grounding

- Grounding a noun consists in identifying its referent in space and/or “picking out” the referents from a pool of eligible candidates.
  - grounding demonstratives: *this, that, those, these, the*
  - grounding quantifiers: *all, most, some, no, every, each, any*

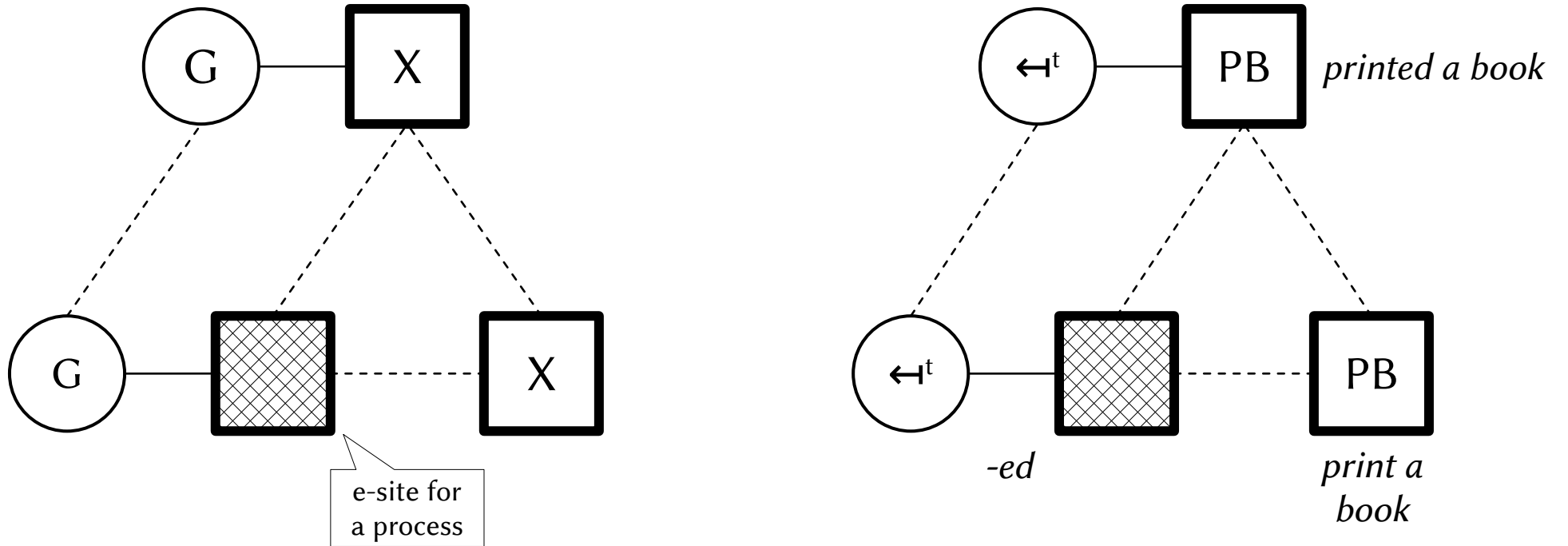
# Nominal grounding element



# Clausal grounding

- Grounding verbs consists in specifying the occurrence of an event.
  - tense: time of occurrence
  - aspect: internal structure of event (duration, repetition, etc.)
  - modality:
    - speaker's certainty about the event (epistemic modal verbs)
    - permissibility of the action (deontic modal verbs)
    - possibility of the event (alethic modal verbs)
  - speech act: speaker's intention

# Clausal grounding element



# What's the relation to the ground?

- *you*
- *It's several kilometers away.*
- *up in the sky*
- *communist vs. commie*
- *indisputably*
- *innumerable*
- *disgusting*
- *perhaps*
- *Eat a banana!*
- *fucking shoes!*
- *Ouch!*

# References

- Langacker, Ronald W. 2013. *Essentials of Cognitive Grammar*. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press.
  - Section 3.4
- Langacker, Ronald W. 2008. *Cognitive Grammar. A Basic Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
  - Section 3.4, Chapter 9