

A Glimpse of Cognitive Linguistics as a Modern Discipline in Linguistics

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Abstract. *This article provides an overview of Cognitive linguistics as a modern linguistic discipline. This thesis examines the theoretical foundations, their core principles, and major concepts that demonstrate the process of approaching with cognitive understanding to languages. The research also sheds light into how cognitive linguistics can be included in contemporary linguistic studies and discovers its applications in the areas such as metaphor theory, categorization, and discourse analysis.*

Key words: *cognitive linguistics; conceptual metaphor; categorization; theoretical foundations; main scholars; discourse analysis; construction grammar; cognitive approach; modern linguistics; linguistic analysis.*

Theoretical background of cognitive linguistics is worth mentioning to begin with. The beginning of cognitive linguistics goes back to the late 1970s and early 1980s as a response towards the dominant generative grammar tradition. While language was seen as autonomous mental module governed by formal rules by generative linguistics, cognitive linguistics proposed a fundamentally distinct notion: *Language is an integral part of general human cognition*. This process was highly influenced by improvements in cognitive science, psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, and anthropology.

The discipline was structured primarily through the work of some scholars such as George Lakoff, Ronald W. Langacker, and Leonard Talmy. Lakoff's critique of objectivist views of meaning, Langacker's theory of cognitive grammar, and Talmy's research on conceptual structuring collectively laid the foundation for what is now considered as the cognitive linguistic framework. Cognitive linguistics had become a coherent research paradigm, strengthened by conferences, magazines, journals, and some academic associations such as the International Cognitive Linguistics Association (ICLA). They all above contributed to the development of the paradigm mentioned.

Emphasizing the human factor in language caused cognitive linguistics to challenge several long-standing assumptions in linguistics: experience, conceptualization, embodiment and cultural background, perceptions. This individual-centered orientation is one of the main reasons why cognitive linguistics is known as a modern and dynamic linguistic discipline.

Cognitive linguistics comes with several different and fundamental principles that differentiate it from formal, structural and generative approaches.

Language Reflects General Cognitive Abilities based on this principle, linguistic phenomena, without considering memory, perception, reasoning and categorization, cannot be explained. Language comes from general cognitive processes as opposed to specialized linguistic mechanisms. Cognitive linguists

argue that comprehending grammar and its meaning demands understanding how the human mind functions.

Conceptualization is also considered as the basis of meaning. Cognitive linguistics considers meaning as a product of mental representation and conceptualization not as an abstract connection between form and reference. The meanings expressed in language is directly constructed by how people perceive the world around them, structure experience, and form mental categories.

It is assumed that conceptual structures can be fundamentally influenced by sensorimotor activity and physical interaction with the world and it can also be said as the term called “*embodiment*”. Concepts such as UP-DOWN, FRONT-BACK, or NEAR-FAR can be rooted from basic bodily experiences and later turn into building blocks for abstract meaning.

Cognitive linguistics emphasizes that linguistic knowledge arises from patterns of usage. Grammar is not considered as a rigid formal system but the network of usage-based constructions is saved into memory. Moreover, linguistic structures are shaped with the contribution of frequent exposure, analogy, and cognitive learning.

Meaning is constructed in the interaction between speaker, listener, and context instead of being in the process of being fixed. Cognitive linguistics concentrates on the flexibility and creativity of meaning-making processes.

Conceptual metaphor theory was introduced by Lakoff, he also argued that metaphor is not only a linguistic phenomenon but a cognitive notion. Based on George Lakoff people comprehend abstract concepts (e.g., time, morality, emotion) via metaphorical mappings emerged from physical and everyday experiences. Lakoff’s works primarily altered how scholars perceive meaning and conceptual structure.

Langacker is well-known for developing Cognitive Grammar, by introducing a theory that views grammar as a network of symbolic unions linking form and meaning. He refused the notion of grammar as an autonomous formal system, demonstrating instead the way grammatical structures reflect cognitive processes such as attention, construal, and profiling which is precisely comprehended by individuals.

Talmy gave significance to the concentration on how language constructs conceptual information, especially in the domains of space, motion, and force dynamics. His works on some areas including image schemes, conceptual typology, and event structure provided a great deal of contribution to the insights into how similar conceptual structures can be encoded by various languages.

The theoretical foundations of cognitive linguistics has been outlined by examining its historical development, fundamental principles, major contributors, and interdisciplinary connections. These theoretical notions present the basic contribution for understanding the fundamental concepts and applications of cognitive linguistics.

Cognitive linguistics is structured setting some steps of central concepts that explain how language and interactions. These concepts demonstrate the cognitive processes through which individuals create meaning, construct metaphors, and build linguistic structures.

Categorization is one of the main cognitive functions through which people construct knowledge and traditional linguistic theories observed categories as clearly identified sets with rigid boundaries. However, Eleanor Rosch’s research which was introduced with the introduction of Prototype Theory in the 1970s and it became foundational in the field of cognitive linguistics.

According to Prototype Theory, there are some categories that represent their notions. They do not possess strict boundaries, having central, most representative members and they also include less typical members further from the prototype. Categories can be organized around experimental similarities but not around formal rules. For example, in the category “bird” saying a sparrow is more prototypical than a penguin. The notion mentioned redescribed linguistic thoughts and showed that language reflects cognitive categorization, not consisting formal logic.

The part which consists of image schemes are recurring patterns of the perceptual and spatial process which construct human notions and they are straightforward, pre-conceptual constructions arising from bodily interactions with the surrounding world.

There are some common image schemas which include:

- CONTAINER.
- PATH.
- BALANCE.
- SOURCE-PATH-GOAL.
- UP-DOWN.
- CENTER-PERIPHERY.

These schemes mentioned above help to form the basis for constructing more complex concepts and linguistic expressions. The CONTAINER schema, for instance, can be reflected in expressions with these examples below:

- “in trouble,”.
- “out of danger,”.
- “falling into depression,”.

Therefore, image schemas are evidently essential for the aim to be able to understand and comprehend how physical experience can play a crucial role to shape abstract meaning.

There is also a theory which is called “*conceptual metaphor theory*” introduced by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980, and this theory is considered to be one of the most influential contributions of cognitive linguistics.

CTM claims that metaphors are not just merely linguistic decorations but they can reflect deep, systematic patterns of human thoughts and abstract concepts are comprehended through more accurate and concrete, bodily expressions, and we can represent some examples:

- **TIME IS MONEY.**
- **AGUMENT IS WAR.**
- **LOVE IS JOURNEY.**

Metaphor can therefore considered to be a mental mapping from a source domain to a targeted domain. The way human mind structures abstract knowledge through embodied experience and notions is clearly explained in this theory.

There is also conceptual blending theory, or we can say, conceptual integration, and it is a cognitive process in which two or more mental spaces align to make a new, emergent meaning.

Mental spaces are small conceptual packets functioned during the process of thinking and communicating. There are some circumstances when blending happens. Firstly, it can happen when two input spaces interact, secondly, when shared structure is provided by a generic space and when a blended space arises with new meaning but impossible to occur when a blended space is found in the original spaces.

Example: “the surgeon is a butcher.”

- Surgeon is considered as a skilled professional.
- Butcher is someone who cuts meat and deals with it roughly.
- Blending can create a negative evaluation meaning that the surgeon is incompetent.

Conceptual blending can widely be used so as to analyze creativity, humor, advertising, and innovative language usage.

Frame semantics can also be counted as one of the most important parts of linguistic usage and frame semantics was developed by Charles Fillmore and he argues that meaning is interpreted within cognitive “frames” context is provided by background knowledge structures, for example:

- The word *buy* activates a frame involving a commercial transaction frame: buyer, seller, goods, money, exchange.
- The word *teacher* activates a frame consisting: classroom, board, student, instruction, knowledge.

Frames demonstrate word meanings cannot be comprehended in an isolated form and they depend and rely on rich cognitive contexts, without the connections between them it is unlikely to be understanding to deal with.

There are the terms called *construal* and *perspective* in cognitive linguistics. Construal refers to the way speakers mentally conceptualize and present a circumstance. It explains why the same event can be illustrated by various linguistic expressions and why different aspects cannot be highlighted.

It can be evident with an example:

- “the boy broke the window”.
- “the window was broken by the boy”.

Although the meaning and the event are the same, the conceptual concentration shifts. Construal consists of *attention, perspective, focus, profiling, specificity, subjectivity*.

Grammatical constructions are also important in linguistics. Grammar consists of constructions that are form and meaning pairings and even sentences can be meaningful patterns without typical verbs, for example, “out the door he went”. Syntax and semantics are impossible to separate and they cannot be isolated.

Major concepts of cognitive linguistics, including categorization, prototypes, image schemas, conceptual blending, frame semantics, construal blending, frame semantics, construal, and construction grammar are taken into a consideration and reviewed precisely. These concepts highly demonstrate the main and central claim of cognitive linguistics: human cognition is deeply linked and connected to language and work with the collaboration of languages and language is shaped by bodily experience and expressions, perception, and cultural background knowledge.

In conclusion, it can be confirmed in this thesis that cognitive linguistics suggests an understanding and coherent, scientifically grounded model for comprehending language as a cognitive and conceptual phenomenon. Linguists can explain how meaning is created, and how it can emerge, how categories are formed, and how speakers construct and structure their experience through linguistic expressions due to the contributions of cognitive linguistics. Cognitive linguistics is highly relevant for modern linguistics, interdisciplinary research, the process of teaching languages, and the studies of culture, thoughts, and notions. I believe that this research work has allowed me to improve both my academic skills and my enthusiasm in linguistics. The knowledge obtained will be useful for my future investigations and studies including professional growth. I believe that the work I have done will be a real contributory and valuable source for those who have the willingness to understand the basic principles of cognitive linguistics and the place in linguistic research.

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