

## KG proti GG: Langacker proti Chomskemu

### "An Introduction to Cognitive Grammar"

[W]e must recognize that linguistic semantics is not an autonomous enterprise, and that a complete analysis of meaning is tantamount to a complete account of developmental cognition. This consequence is terribly inconvenient for linguistic theorists imprinted on autonomous formal systems, but that is not a legitimate argument against its validity. (4-5)

It is commonly assumed... that judgments of grammaticality are categorical rather than a matter of degree; that semantics is fully compositional; that figurative language is properly excluded from the domain of linguistic description; and that a motivated distinction can be made between semantics and pragmatics. Although assumptions like these support the notion that language is self-contained and cognitively autonomous, there is little factual basis for their adoption. (17)

### *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*

Syntax was thought of as the domain of generality and regularity, of productive rules with fully predictable outputs; anything falling short of these standards was relegated to the purgatory of lexicon -- the domain of irregularity, idiosyncrasy, and lists. But this deeply ingrained, almost archetypal conception of syntax has very little empirical foundation. I am aware of no a priori or factual grounds for believing that grammatical constructions divide neatly into two groups on the basis of generality, or that the regular aspects of language structure can be segregated in any meaningful way from the irregular ones. Focusing our attention solely on constructions that pass the litmus test of generality and regularity does not promise to leave us with a coherent body of phenomena constituting a natural grouping on any other grounds. Indeed, the history of transformational grammar has seen an ever greater number of constructions exiled from the syntax to be handled by other, rather ill-defined grammatical components. Unfortunately, moving these phenomena from one box to another has singularly failed to illuminate them. (26)

One particular simplifying assumption is commonly made that merits special scrutiny; I will call it the **exclusionary fallacy**. The gist of this fallacy is that one analysis, motivation, categorization, cause, function, or explanation for a linguistic phenomenon necessarily precludes another. From a broad, pre-theoretical perspective, this assumption is gratuitous and in fact rather dubious, in view of what we know about the multiplicity of interacting synchronic and diachronic factors that determine the shape and import of linguistic expressions. Though pervasive, the assumption is usually tacit; illustrations are thus in order.

Consider a previous example, namely the problem of how to deal with forms like *stapler* in certain versions of the generative framework. There is an apparent dilemma: if the form is derived by rule, one cannot account for its special properties, i.e. the fact that it means more than just 'something that staples'; if it is simply listed in the lexicon, on the other hand, it cannot be assimilated to the productive V + *-er* derivational pattern, which it certainly seems to instantiate. The mistake is to assume that it has to be one and not the other. There is nothing intrinsically implausible about a position combining the central features of both analyses. (28)

Linguists are driven by esthetic considerations and by the dictates of scientific method to look for simple, elegant solutions to complex problems. This is proper and necessary, but only to the extent that such analyses are consistent with the reality of language. Linguistic phenomena are extraordinarily complex and interdependent. There are limits to the neatness and simplicity of linguistic descriptions that seek to account for these phenomena with any semblance of completeness and accuracy. Whatever our predilections, it is crucial that the conceptual and descriptive tools we fashion for analyzing language be in fact appropriate for the task. More simply put, we must strive for naturalness in linguistic theory and description. (30)

The notion of syntax as an autonomous formal system has encouraged the expectation that speakers should be capable of simple categorical judgments (grammatical/ungrammatical) on the well-formedness of

sentences, out of context and without regard for semantic considerations: either a sentence meets all the formal specifications or it does not. This is of course not what has been found. Degrees of well-formedness are now generally acknowledged. Typically, moreover, graded judgments correlate with subtle semantic differences. (36)

A theory of autonomous syntax [TG] cannot be expected to deal with figurative language as part of the syntactic component, for it is obviously a semantic phenomenon. Generative grammarians have in fact left it to be handled by other components, which means in practice that it has hardly been considered at all. (38)

[C]ognitive grammar claims that grammatical structure is almost entirely overt. Surface grammatical form does not conceal a "truer," deeper level of grammatical organization; rather, it itself embodies the conventional means a language employs for the structuring and symbolization of semantic content. Grammatical diversity is real instead of only apparent, and although grammatical universals can still be sought and formulated, they must be limited and flexible enough to accommodate the variability actually encountered. (46-7)

[T]he requirement of generativity entails the exclusion from the grammar (and hence omission from serious consideration) of both usage and figurative language, which are pivotal to an understanding of linguistic structure. Rather than ensuring explicitness, generativity has had the unfortunate effect of impoverishing the natural domain of linguistic inquiry, leading to maximal inexplicitness (i.e. silence) with respect to fundamental matters. These problems stem from the erroneous view that language is an autonomous formal system. (64)