THE PROCESS OF CONCEPTUALIZATION IN COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

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ANNOTATION

Categorization is the process in which ideas and objects are recognized, differentiated, and understood. Categorization implies that objects are grouped into categories, usually for some specific purpose. Ideally, a category illuminates a relationship between the subjects and objects of knowledge. Categorization is fundamental in language, prediction, inference, decision making and in all kinds of environmental interaction. It is indicated that categorization plays a major role in computer programming.

Key words:

Categorizations our ability to identify entities as members of groups. Of course, the words we use to refer to entities rest upon categorization: there are good reasons why we call a cat 'cat' and not, say, 'fish'. One of the reasons behind the interest in this area stems from the 'Cognitive Commitment': the position adopted by cognitive linguists that language is a function of generalized cognition. The ability to categorize is central to human cognition; given the 'Cognitive Commitment', we expect this ability to be reflected in linguistic organization. The other reason behind.

In the 1970s, pioneering research by cognitive psychologist Eleanor Roschand her colleagues presented a serious challenge to the classical view of categorization that had dominated Western thought since the time of Aristotle.

According to this classical model, category membership is defined according to a set of necessary and sufficient conditions, which entails that category membership is an 'all-or-nothing' affair.

The findings of Eleanor Rosch and her team revealed that categorization is not an all or nothing affair, but that many categorization judgments seemed to exhibit prototype or typicality effects. For example, when we categorize birds, certain types of bird (like robins or sparrows) are judged as 'better' examples of the category than others (like penguins).

In his famous book Women, Fire and Dangerous Things, George Lakoff (1987) explored some of the consequences of the observations made by Rosch and her colleagues for a theory of conceptual structure as manifested in language. An important idea that emerged from Lakoff's study is the theory of idealized cognitive models (ICMs), which are highly abstract frames. These can account for certain kinds of typicality effects in categorization.

For example, let's consider once more the concept BACHELOR. This is understood with respect to a relatively schematic ICM MARRIAGE. The MARRIAGE

ICM includes the knowledge that bachelors are unmarried adult males. As we have observed, the category BACHELOR exhibits typicality effects. In other words, some members of the category BACHELOR (like eligible young men) are 'better' or more typical examples than others (like the Pope). The knowledge associated with the MARRIAGE ICM stipulates that bachelors can marry.

However, our knowledge relating to CATHOLICISM stipulates that the Pope cannot marry. It is because of this mismatch between the MARRIAGE ICM (with respect to which BACHELOR is understood) and the CATHOLICISM ICM (with respect to which the Pope is understood) that this particular typicality effect arises.

The position adopted in cognitive linguistics is that there are commonalities in the ways humans experience and perceive the world and in the ways human think and use language. This means that all humans share a common conceptualizing capacity. However, these commonalities are no more than constraints, delimiting a range of possibilities. As we have seen, there is striking diversity in the two domains we have surveyed, which shows that the way English speakers think and speak about space and time by no means represents the only way of thinking and speaking about space and time.

According to cognitive linguists, language not only reflects conceptual structure, but can also give rise to conceptualization. It appears that the ways in which different languages 'cut up' and 'label' the world can differentially influence non-linguistic thought and action. It follows that the basic commitments of cognitive linguistics are consonant with a weak version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, a position that some linguists argue is gathering increasing empirical support.

There are two notable approaches to meaning construction that have been developed within cognitive linguistics. The first is concerned with the sorts of mechanisms central to meaning construction that are fundamentally non-linguistic in nature. Meaning construction processes of this kind have been referred to as 'backstage cognition. There are two distinct, but closely related, theories of backstage cognition: mental spaces theory, developed in two monographs by Gilles Fauconnier, and conceptual blending theory, developed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (2002). Mental spaces theory is concerned with the nature and creation of 'mental spaces', small packets of conceptual structure built as we think and talk. Conceptual blending theory is concerned with the integrative mechanisms and networks that operate over collections of mental spaces in order to produce emergent aspects of meaning.

Behind the idiosyncrasies of language, cognitive linguistics has repeatedly uncovered evidence for the operation of more general cognitive processes. Mappings between mental spaces are part of this general organization of thought. Although language provides considerable data for studying such mappings, they are not in themselves specifically linguistic. They show up generally in conceptualization. A striking case of a general cognitive operation on mental spaces, that is reflected universally in the way we think, is conceptual integration.

Conceptual integration consists in setting up networks of mental spaces which map onto each other and blend into new mental spaces in various ways. In everyday thinking and talking, we use conceptual integration networks systematically in the on-line construction of meaning. Some of the integrations are novel, others are more entrenched, and we rarely pay conscious attention to the process, because it is so pervasive. In a conceptual integration network, partial structure from input mental mental spaces is projected to a new blended mental space which develops dynamic (imaginative) structure of its own.

Most aspects of human life, not just language, bring in conceptual integration networks. This remarkable cognitive capacity has been studied in a variety of domains, such as mathematics, action and design, distributed cognition, magic and religion, anthropology and political science. It has been suggested that the capacity of conceptual integration evolved biologically to reach a threshold, double-scope creativity, that constitutes a necessary condition for the cognitively modern human singularities of art, creative tool making, religious thought, and grammar.

Problem questions: To what extent do the personal experience and interests reflect the speech of communicants.

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