

**Vyvyan Evans & Melanie Green. Cognitive Linguistics. An Introduction.  
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reviewed by Rolf Kreyer (Universität Bonn)

The introductory textbook, *Cognitive Linguistics. An Introduction* by Vyvyan Evans and Melanie Green, consists of three major parts: Part I, “Overview of the Cognitive Linguistics Enterprise” gives a general outline of cognitive linguistics. Part II focuses on “Cognitive Semantics”, and Part III discusses “Cognitive Approaches to Grammar”. In the following I will give an overview of each of the three parts, briefly sketching out the content of the individual chapters. The review will conclude with a critical evaluation of the book.

### **Synopsis**

Part I, “Overview of the Cognitive Linguistics Enterprise”, is the shortest of the three sections, containing about 150 pages. In four chapters the authors give a general outline of the cognitive approach to linguistics. Chapter 1, “What does it mean to know a language?”, can be regarded as a short introduction to linguistics from a cognitive point of view. It deals with the functions of language, its systematic structure, the linguistic approach to language and the question of how language is represented in the mind. Chapter 2, “The nature of cognitive linguistics: assumptions and commitments”, presents the main beliefs that underlie the general orientation and approach of cognitive linguistics. In particular, the authors introduce the notions of “Generalisation Commitment”, “a commitment to the characterisation of general principles that are responsible for all aspects of human language” (27) and the “Cognitive Commitment”, “a commitment to providing a characterisation of general principles for language that accords with what is known about the mind and brain from other disciplines” (27-28). In this context, important aspects, such as the fuzziness of linguistic and non-linguistic categorization, polysemy, or metaphor are discussed and illustrated. The chapter then explores the general empiricist orientation of cognitive linguistics and emphasizes the central role of the embodied cognition thesis, which claims “that conceptual organisation within the human mind is a function of the way our species-specific bodies interact with the environment we inhabit” (50). Chapter 2 concludes with a short sketch of the cognitive approach to semantics and grammar. In chapter 3, “Universals and variation in language, thought and experience”, Evans and Green focus on the relation of language and thought.

After a discussion of universals in thought and language, the authors portray similarities and differences in the conceptualisation of space and time across different languages. These considerations lead to a brief discussion of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis and the conclusion that “the basic commitments of cognitive linguistics are consonant with a weak version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis [...]” (101). The final chapter of the first part, chapter 4 “Language in use: knowledge of language, language change and language acquisition”, emphasizes the important role that language use is granted in cognitive approaches. More specifically, the authors discuss the usage-based view of language; a view which regards utterances as central to linguistic observation and description. The influence of context is thus granted a much more important role in cognitive linguistics than in more formalist approaches, since utterances usually rely on the context in which they are produced. Furthermore, the usage-based view sees a strong dependence of the language system on language use and assumes that “the relative frequency of linguistic units affects the nature and organisation of the language system” (147).

Part II describes and discusses the assumptions and aims of cognitive semantics on 320 pages. Chapter 5, “What is cognitive semantics?” examines “the four guiding principles that collectively characterise the collection of approaches that fall within cognitive semantics” (153), namely 1) conceptual structure is embodied, 2) semantic structure is conceptual structure, 3) meaning representation is encyclopaedic, and 4) meaning-construction is conceptualisation. The remaining chapters of Part II discuss various cognitive-semantic theories and approaches in the light of these four guidelines. In chapter 6, “Embodiment and conceptual structure”, the authors focus on Mark Johnson’s theory of “image schemas” and Leonard Talmy’s “conceptual structure” approach as illustrations of how the first and the second guiding principle, respectively, mirror in cognitive semantics. The encyclopaedic nature of meaning representation (guiding principle 3) is explored in chapter 7, “The encyclopaedic view of meaning”. The chapter starts off with a general discussion of the dictionary view and the encyclopaedic view of meaning and then continues to describe and contrast Charles Fillmore’s Frame Semantics and Ronald Langacker’s theory of domains as two important representatives of the latter view. Chapter 7 concludes by relating frame semantics to recent findings in cognitive psychology in order to “provide a sense of how the models of knowledge representation being developed in cognitive semantics are increasingly consonant with theories being developed in cognitive psychology” (240). Chapter 8 deals with “categorisation and idealised cognitive models”. Similarly to the previous chapter, the authors begin their discussion with a description of the classical approach to meaning and

categorization and point out the problems that arise when trying to capture meaning with sets of necessary and sufficient conditions. What follows is a detailed description and discussion of the experimental research by Eleanor Rosch and her associates within the field of Prototype Theory. Finally, George Lakoff's theory of idealised cognitive models is presented as an attempt to capture the findings of Prototype Theory in a model of cognitive representations. Chapter 9 is concerned with "Metaphor and Metonymy". In the first section, the authors convincingly argue against a "neat dividing line between literal and figurative meaning" (293) and introduce the cognitive semanticists' view that metaphor and metonymy, which traditionally have been regarded as instances of figurative language use, are understood as "phenomena fundamental to the structure of the conceptual system rather than superficial linguistic 'devices'" (293). As examples of how metaphors are integrated into cognitive models of the conceptual system the authors explore George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the more recent Primary Metaphor Theory by Gregory Murphy. The final parts of this chapter are devoted to the theory of conceptual metonymy as advocated by Zoltán Kövecses and Günter Radden and to an investigation of the interaction of metaphor and metonymy. Having prepared the ground in the two previous chapters the authors, in chapter 10 "Word meaning and radial categories", discuss the field of cognitive lexical semantics. They set out from an exploration of George Lakoff's model of words as radial categories, which is then criticized since its high granularity may run the risk of extreme proliferation of distinct meanings in the mental lexicon. As an answer to this problem, the authors present the Principled Polysemy approach as advanced by Vyvyan Evans and Andrea Tyler. This approach, according to the authors, provides clearer criteria for identifying the prototypical or central sense of a word and for distinguishing between distinct senses, thus counterbalancing proliferation of meanings. In addition, it emphasizes the role of context, thus giving more room to the on-line inference of new senses. While chapters 7 to 10 explore different facets of meaning representation the next two chapters are concerned with the construction of meaning and thus relate to the fourth guiding principle of cognitive semantics listed above, i.e. "meaning-construction is conceptualisation". More specifically, chapter 11 "Meaning construction and mental spaces" introduces the Mental-spaces model developed by Gilles Fauconnier. After a short description of the truth-conditional approach in formal semantics the authors emphasize the cognitive viewpoint that "meaning construction proceeds [...] on the basis of linguistic expressions "prompting" for highly complex conceptual processes which construct meaning based on sophisticated encyclopaedic knowledge" (365). As an example of how these processes are implemented in a cognitive-

linguistic model the authors present the Theory of Mental Spaces, focussing firstly on the ways mental spaces are constructed on the basis of the linguistic prompts, and secondly on how the discourse participants “keep track of the spaces that have been set up during ongoing discourse” (386). In this context, the role of tense and aspect in creating perspective, viewpoint and epistemic distance is explored. The next chapter, chapter 12, deals with the theory of “Conceptual blending”, as developed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner. This theory is presented as an attempt to remedy the shortcomings both of the theories of Cognitive Metaphor and Mental Spaces, such as the failure to explain the negative attitude expressed in sentences like *that surgeon is a butcher*. It is demonstrated how blending can account for novel meaning components that emerge during the on-line construction of meaning. However, Conceptual Blending cannot completely replace Conceptual Metaphors as a comparison of the two approaches at the end of the chapter shows: “[...] while Blending Theory accounts for much of what was originally thought to fall within the remit of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the latter nevertheless retains an important role in cognitive semantics in identifying primary metaphoric mappings that are directly grounded in experience” (440). Chapter 13, the final chapter of part II, “cognitive semantics in context”, contrasts cognitive semantics with truth-conditional semantics and Relevance Theory. It is found that “while the assumptions of truth-conditional semantics stand in direct opposition to the assumptions of cognitive semantics, certain claims made within Relevance Theory are more consonant with the cognitive approach” (465).

Part III is concerned with “cognitive approaches to grammar”. Chapter 14, “What is a cognitive approach to grammar”, prepares the ground for the following chapters by describing the major underlying assumptions regarding cognitive models of grammar, such as the symbolic and the usage-based thesis, the idea of grammar as a “a structured inventory of conventional symbolic units” (471) and the notion of lexicon-grammar continuum. In addition, a brief overview of four types of theoretical approaches to grammar is given, all of which are discussed in more detail in the following chapters. Another section in this chapter serves to make the reader familiar with some key terms in grammar. Chapter 15 explores “The conceptual basis of grammar”, investigating Leonard Talmy’s Conceptual Structuring System Model and Ronald Langacker’s Cognitive Grammar. With regard to the former, the authors present the four schematic systems that, in Talmy’s theory, make up the conceptual structuring system, i.e. the configurational structure system, the attentional system, the perspectival and the force dynamics system. What follows is a discussion of Langacker’s views on the conceptual nature of word classes and on the reflection of attention and force-

dynamics in the language system. The chapter concludes with a sketch of Langacker's idea of grammar as a network model. The next three chapters are solely concerned with Langacker's Cognitive Grammar. More specifically, chapter 16 investigates in some detail the Cognitive Grammar approach to word classes, i.e. the basic distinction of nominal and relational (temporal and atemporal) predications and their schematic characterizations as *THING*, *PROCESS* and *STATES*. Chapter 17 looks at Langacker's conception of constructions, exploring the structure of words, phrases and sentences. It is shown how Langacker's model deals with constituency and dependency relations and how transitivity, grammatical functions and case are given a conceptual and semantic interpretation. Finally, chapter 18 examines "the Cognitive Grammar analysis of the English verb string" (472) by looking at tense, aspect, mood and voice. The authors then leave the Langacker model and, in the next two chapters, focus on various approaches to Construction Grammar. Chapter 19, "Motivating a Construction Grammar", introduces the approach of Fillmore and his colleagues on the basis of a discussion of the *let-alone* construction and the *what's-X-doing-Y* construction, which leads to a sketch of the general architecture of the model and a short comparison of Kay and Fillmore's Construction Grammar with Langacker's Cognitive Grammar. Chapter 20 is devoted to the description of three more cognitively oriented models of Construction Grammar, namely Adele Goldberg's Construction Grammar, William Croft's Radical Construction Grammar and the theory of Embodied Construction Grammar by Benjamin Bergen and Nancy Chang. Of these, the first is discussed in some detail, presenting the underlying assumptions of the model, its applicability to verb argument structure, the way individual verbs and constructions interact and the organization of constructions in constructional networks. After a brief sketch of the other two approaches, the chapter concludes with a short comparison of the three models. Chapter 21, "Grammaticalisation", explores how cognitive approaches (broadly construed) are applied in diachronic linguistics. After a short introduction into the nature of grammaticalisation, the authors portray three approaches in some detail: Heine et al.'s Metaphorical Extension Approach, Traugott and Dasher's Invited Inferencing Theory and Langacker's Theory of Subjectification. The presentation of the major arguments and assumptions of the three theories is rounded up by a comparison of the way in which the three approaches account for the development of the future meaning of *be going to* out of the original motion meaning. The final chapter of Part III, chapter 22, "Cognitive approaches to grammar in context", "set the cognitive approach in a wider theoretical context" (741). More specifically, the authors compare and contrast the assumptions, aims and methodology of the cognitive approaches discussed with those of

generative and functional-typological accounts. Here, the focus clearly lies on a comparison with generative approaches, discussing key aspects like autonomy of syntax vs. the lexicon-grammar continuum, economy vs. efficiency and the relation of generative rules to cognitive schemas. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how more specific aspects, such as constituency, grammatical functions and case, and tense, aspect and mood, are dealt with in the two approaches.

The final part consists of one short chapter only, “Assessing the cognitive linguistics enterprise”. The authors discuss the achievements and the remaining challenges of cognitive linguistics. Among the first group, Evans and Green list the fact that cognitive linguistics is an approach that aims at an integrated model of language and thought, which “entails that linguistic phenomena are discussed in terms that are relatively accessible to neighbouring disciplines” (778). As a consequence, Cognitive Linguistics has influence on other cognitive sciences and also on the more remotely related social sciences or humanities. Another achievement, according to the authors, is the re-examination of the empiricist thesis thus “reopen[ing] channels of investigation into language and mind that take into account embodiment, experience and usage while remaining firmly committed to the mentalist approach” (778). The remaining challenges that cognitive linguistics is facing encompass the large number of competing theories, the lack of empirical rigour and the need to build bridges to generative theories. Concerning the last aspect the authors point out that, starting off as a reaction against Generativism, “argumentation by cognitive linguists has sometimes relied upon an over-simplified and outdated representation of the formal model” (781-782). Consequently, cognitive linguistics might run the risk of failing to realize that “both approaches stand to benefit from the recognition of the fact that they share many important concerns, not least in relation to the development of a theory of linguistic meaning that reflects human construal of external reality” (782).

### **Critical Evaluation**

The reader, and the reviewer, too, do not actually need to look into the book to be impressed by it: the mere thickness of the book (830 pages that come at a very affordable price) suffices to overwhelm (or maybe scare off) the reader. A look at the table of contents quickly proves what the number of pages already suggests: this book tries to give a really detailed and comprehensive account of the field of cognitive linguistics, and it is successful at this; the areas and number of approaches covered and the depth and detail of description and discussion are unparalleled so far. However, this also poses a potential threat: any introduction of this size and comprehensiveness runs the risk of overpowering the reader

(above all undergraduate students). The authors seem to be aware of this problem and approach it very elegantly. In the preface they provide the reader with a immensely helpful “manual” for their book which suggests three “routes”, of twelve chapters each, through the material: one for readers that are interested in a general introduction to cognitive linguistics, and further routes for those that are interested in cognitive semantics and cognitive approaches to grammar, respectively. What seems to be an unmanageable amount of information and material at first sight, thus, turns out to be essentially three introductory texts to the field of cognitive linguistics in one book. And, luckily, the reader is guided to those parts that he or she might be particularly interested in – a very effective way to clear a path for the reader through the wealth of material presented in this book.

The aim of the authors is “to provide a reasonably comprehensive general introduction to cognitive linguistics that is accessible enough for undergraduate students at the university level, while also serving as a work of reference both for linguists and for scholars from neighbouring disciplines” (xix). In my view, Green and Evans have without any doubt achieved this aim, but the reader needs to be aware of the fact that because of the heterogeneity of the envisaged audience some chapters of the book are considerably more demanding than others. While the “route” that provides the general introduction to cognitive linguistics is highly accessible and thus lends itself easily as material for an undergraduate course, some of the chapters in the other two routes (maybe five or six all in all) might be too demanding for students. These chapters no doubt serve well as a reference work for linguists but may not be ideal for undergraduate students and for scholars from neighbouring disciplines.

Still, the general accessibility of the monograph is very high and the authors provide the reader with every kind of assistance that can be thought of: where appropriate, figures are used to illustrate the concepts that are discussed and the relations between different approaches or individual aspects within one particular approach. Also, Evans and Green offer a large number of tables that sum up key aspects of the models that are being presented. Similarly, the authors make use of advance organizers at the beginning of the major parts, the individual chapters and larger subsections. The accessibility is further increased by many connections that are made explicit between the different parts of the book. This is particularly helpful in the more demanding sections where links to the relevant parts of the basic chapters provide an offer to the reader to prepare themselves for the more difficult material. Finally, as mentioned above, the different routes through the book are a highly innovative way of guiding the reader through the large amounts of information.

As for the content, the range of topics covered is very impressive and generally representative of the field; a slight criticism in this respect concerns the fact that Langacker's theory of Cognitive Grammar takes up a lot of space in this volume – more than three chapters. Here, the authors could have provided a less detailed description and could have given the usage-based view to language acquisition more room instead. Also, the section on “grammatical terminology” seems a bit out of place in an introduction of this kind: on 17 pages it aims to explain very basic notions in grammar, such as the different word classes, constituency and constituency tests, or the grammatical functions of phrases. Most of these terms are familiar to some extent anyway, and, if one wanted to be on the safe side, it would have been more useful, in my view, to give a short explanation of the relevant terms when needed. Apart from these two minor points the selection of topics is very good and the depth of description appropriate (keeping in mind that the book is an introductory textbook and a reference work at the same time). The authors provide an excellent overview of the whole field, emphasizing the major underlying assumptions, while at the same time showing the diversity and the range of different approaches in cognitive linguistics. In this regard, the comparison of individual approaches throughout the book is very useful. Furthermore, the authors do not contend themselves with merely defining the field of cognitive linguistics. Rather, the “cognitive linguistics enterprise” is put into a wider context by making connections to other cognitive sciences and by contrasting the assumptions, aims and methodology of cognitive linguistics with other approaches, such as Relevance Theory, formal approaches to semantics and, most prominently, Generative Grammar. In sum, Evans and Green give a very clear account of Cognitive Linguistics, its underlying assumptions and aims, the range of individual theories within the field, and the differences, too, but also points of contact with other major linguistic theories and movements.

Some remarks concerning the formal side of the book are in order here, too. I have already pointed out the large number of tables and diagrams. These, no doubt, contribute to the accessibility of the volume. However, the layout of the diagrams is not always perfect. In particular, some of the lines in the diagrams in chapter 12 do not seem to have found their proper place. It is therefore difficult to tell, for instance, which concepts within two different spaces are actually linked by the lines in figures 12.4 and 12.5. In these cases, the diagrams are not very useful. But generally the authors make very good use of figures and tables, which helps getting a grip on the (sometimes demanding) content. Also helpful in this respect are the exercises at the end of each chapter. They make the readers reflect key concepts but also encourage them to apply the models and approaches presented in the respective chapters. It

should be noted, however, that the book does not contain a key to the exercises. Finally, at the end of each chapter the authors provide an annotated reading list. These give an overview of the original papers and books (or chapters in books) on which Evans and Green's description is based, but also provide useful hints for those readers who want to study particular aspects of one topic in more detail.

On the whole, the book by Evans and Green is without any doubt an extremely valuable introduction to the increasing field of cognitive linguistics. The reader is made familiar with the basic principles that underlie the cognitive enterprise and with the vast range of approaches within this field. At the same time, the authors lead the reader to view this approach in a wider theoretical context and to compare and contrast cognitive linguistics with other important linguistic theories. The book is well-written and for the most part highly accessible. Also, the skilful use of tables and diagrams, as well as exercises and the suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter add to the general reader-friendliness of the volume. In sum, the book by Evans and Green is the most comprehensive and in-depth introduction to the field of cognitive linguistics at present and can be recommended to readers that are interested in the subject matter without any reservations. As far as I am concerned, I am looking forward to using large parts of it in my own undergraduate seminars in the future.