

BOOK REVIEW

Book review

Xinghong Sun*

Sichuan University, Chengdu City 610065, Sichuan, China

*Corresponding author: Xinghong Sun, Sichuan University, Chengdu City 610065, Sichuan, China; 1948960121@qq.com

Received: July 21, 2020; **Accepted:** August 28, 2020; **Available online:** September 9, 2020

Citation: Sun X (2020) Book review. *Forum for Linguistic Studies* 2(1): 86–89. DOI: 10.18063/fls.v2i1.1208

Ewa Dąbrowska & Dagmar Divjak (Eds.). (2019). *Cognitive Linguistics – A Survey of Linguistic Sub-fields*. Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH. ISBN 978-3-11-062298-0, 248pp.

Cognitive Linguistics – A Survey of Linguistic Sub-fields, published by Walter de Gruyter GmbH in 2019, is a collection of the three-volume set on Cognitive Linguistics edited by Ewa Dąbrowska and Dagmar Divjak. Overall, the chapters provide extensive overviews of the major sub-fields within linguistics on a cognitive perspective. Leading international academics in current linguistic studies can be found in the writers' list. From the internal-oriented studies of language like phonology (Geoffrey S. Nathan), lexical semantics (Dirk Geeraerts) and construction grammar (Holger Diessel), to the external-oriented and applicable ones such as language variation and change (Dirk Geeraerts and Gitte Kristiansen, Martin Hilpert), first language acquisition (Danielle Matthews and Grzegorz Krajewski), second language acquisition (Nick C. Ellis and Stefanie Wulff), discourse (Christopher Hart), and finally, literature (Peter Stockwell), in this volume, the authors separately and systematically review the contributions Cognitive Linguistics made to different sub-fields in linguistics, and at the same time explore how Cognitive Linguistics gains inspirations from these areas.

Specifically, in chapter one, Geoffrey S. Nathan briefly compares approaches of different linguistic schools towards phonology studies and the corresponding obstacles, and then focuses on how to use the worldview of Cognitive Linguistics, especially cognitive grammar to explore and explain the main questions in phonology, mainly concentrating on the acquisition, production and perception of phonology. Unlike other linguistic schools, Cognitive Linguists hold a usage-based and frequency-oriented view on phonetic perception and acquisition, which is also a non-modular view on phonetic storage with a claim that phonological representation is of real sounds instead of lists of features. Experts in Cognitive Linguistics also try to explain sound production from an active construction perspective. Additionally, Cognitive Linguists also attempt to put forwards alternative approaches like “image-schema transformation” and exemplar theory to better illustrate some fundamental problems in phonology such as allophone and categorization.

Dirk Geeraerts provides a brief survey of the main lines of lexical semantic research in Cognitive Linguistics and draws a conclusion of the future trend in chapter two. According to the author, with the prototype model, theories of Cognitive Linguistics provide a strong explanatory power to meaning in both monosemic context and polysemic context. Meanwhile, semantic studies from the cognitive perspective also gives special attention to specific forms of onomasiological structure in the lexicon, developing the notion of salience in the description of semasiological structure. In conclusion of this chapter, contributions of Cognitive Linguistics in lexical semantics are demonstrated from two aspects: namely, semasiology and onomasiology.

In chapter three, *Holger Diessel* generally analyzes studies on grammar in Cognitive Linguistics. Unlike generative linguists' description for universal grammar, which accounts language faculty and general rules for grammar acquisition and analysis, Cognitive Linguistics proposes a usage-based way to guide grammar study and embraces an embodied view of grammar acquisition. Basically, according to the usage-based construction theory, linguistic structures can be analyzed in terms of complex signs (constructions) which are connected with each other by various links, signifying that grammar can be seen as a dynamic network of interconnected signs. According to the writer, the links can be categorized into four kinds, namely, taxonomic links, horizontal links, syntactic links and lexical links. By providing grammar study with a usage-based constructional approach, Cognitive Linguists bring new explanations for the study of special linguistic forms like idioms, passive sentence and transitive constructions.

The author of chapter four explores the intersection between Cognitive Linguistics and discourse studies, especially focusing on the synergy of cognitive linguistic assumptions and critical discourse analysis. Surveying the recent development in this intersectional field, the author claims that cognitive linguistic analysis is an important perspective in ideological research. For example, the research findings of conceptual metaphors are applied to analyze the media and politic discourse. Meanwhile, inspired by the categories proposed by Leonard Talmy for describing the structuring of concepts and conceptions, such as scenes and events, entities and processes, motion and location, and force and causation, this author further categorizes construal operations into four systems: structural configuration, framing, identification and positioning, aiming to synthesize these in one coherent theoretical framework, which relates construal to the domain-general cognitive systems.

What chapter five centers on is the relationship between language change and cognition. The author discusses language change from the perspective of Cognitive Linguistics and also mentions the social turn in cognitive linguistic studies, intending to offer a new angle to view language change by adopting a usage-based approach. That is, language change is a gradual and dynamic process grounded in language use. On the account of the lexical semantic change, grammaticalization, sociolinguistic change and historical developments of form-meaning pairings, this chapter expounds in great detail the diachronic changes of language and illustrates the phenomena such as metaphorical change, the form of polysemy, meaning broadening and narrowing and so on.

In chapter six, *Dirk Geeraerts* and *Gitte Kristiansen* argue that Cognitive Linguistics represents a recontextualizing approach, emphasizing meaning and function of language, adopting an experiential view of meaning and embracing a usage-based model instead of just focusing on the homogeneous aspects of the language system. The writers depict the investigations of variation from cognitive perspective in both interlinguistic and intralinguistic domains, especially reviewing

the cultural and lectal variations. According to their view, prototype effects and metaphorical conceptualization play significant roles in the cognitive representation of variation. Inversely, since language variation studies focus on meaning instead of form, “meaning of variation” and “variation of meaning” can at the same time form a central part of the future cognitive linguistic research.

Both chapter seven and chapter eight cover a cognitive-linguistic perspective on language acquisition. On the one hand, grounding that language is not inborn but acquired from real linguistic communication, *Danielle Matthews* and *Grzegorz Krajewski* describe children’s development of language system, from pre-word period to the stages of developing lexicon, grammar, and pragmatic skills. They mention that Child Directed Speech (CDS), the language which children hear, is repetitive and formulaic. Through participating in the conversations, a child is gradually able to distinguish the sounds in his/her native language and construct the lexicon for meeting the interaction purposes. At the same time, the concept of “construction” provides sufficient description for the grammar acquirement. Instead of innate linguistic biases, children learn their grammar from what they hear and what they use. On the other hand, in chapter eight, *Nick C. Ellis* and *Stefanie Wulff* explain second language acquisition and first language acquisition from the perspective of cognitive construction grammar. Firstly, they conclude that constructions exist in both L1 and L2, as the forms of meaning-form/function pairs. Secondly, the use of formulaic language fosters language development of both L1 and L2 learners, although for adult L2 learners it might be more difficult to produce chunks. Thirdly, during the process of acquiring and using the constructions, many factors such as frequency, salience, contingency of form-function mapping are relating to structure language. Finally, language should be learned in a situated action instead of from rules or rote-memorizations alone, since it is grounded in our embodiment and experience.

The final chapter concerns the cognitive approach to literature. In this part *Peter Stockwell* particularly highlights the studies on cognitive poetics. The researcher firstly outlines the emergence and development of cognitive poetics, and then shows the cognitive turn in poetics has a positive effect on the application of methodologies in literature analyses, such as reader response, corpus stylistics, textual analysis and so on. In line with the view of this chapter, through providing an embodied and empirical approach to analyze literature, cognitive poetics functions as both a latest critical theory and a scientific method with empirical roots, making the integration of art and science possible.

As summarized above, this volume contributes notable chapters introducing the studies in sub-fields in linguistics from cognitive linguistic perspective, including the research on phonology, semantics, grammar, applied linguistics, etc. This collection is undoubtedly an inspiring resource for researchers or readers to explore insightful stances in cognitive linguistic studies. The wealth of systematic overviews of main research in sub-fields demonstrated in each chapter lay a solid foundation for the future research in cognitive linguistic studies. In addition, this volume reveals some specific new research trends in linguistic studies, a recontextualizing tendency in linguistic studies in particular. Traditional linguistics tries to decontextualize language studies, focusing on the homogeneous aspects of the language system, while with a cognitive theoretical support many peripheral studies like language variation and constructions are now in the spotlight. Another merit of this collection that is noteworthy of our attention is that, besides the specific research content, authors expound most of the current research methods, such as psycho-experimental and neurobiological approach, and quantitative corpus analysis, which are all beneficial for the future

research in linguistics. One can trace the obvious line of the development of these new research content and methods to develop more detailed studies. Accordingly, this volume will surely guide scholars and readers who are interested in works at the junction of Cognitive Linguistics and other sub-branches of linguistics or even literature.

However, this collection concerns more about the comprehensive theoretical and methodological issues of cognitive studies on language, whereas explanations of basic theoretical notions should be provided with more fine details. In this sense, this work might be somewhat challenging for some readers who are beginners in cognitive linguistic studies. Besides, many discussions call for further empirical analyses to support abstract theoretical claims, for instance, the studies on syntactic and semantic bootstrapping of constructions. Another pity is that the dialogic and interactional view on language which largely contributes to cognitive linguistic studies, is not mentioned in this collection.

To conclude, the authors not only show how cognitive approaches contribute to the research on natural languages, but also give suggestions on the further intersectional studies in linguistics. In consideration of the insightful topics, well-organized structure, and refined analyses of sub-topics in language studies, this collection is a valuable reference book of both theoretical and experimental significance, for readers interested in researching natural languages.

Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest was reported by the author.

References

- Brône G and Zima E (2014) Towards a dialogic construction grammar: Ad hoc routines and resonance activation. *Cognitive Linguistics* 25(3): 457–495.
- Couper-Kuhlen E and Selting M (2001) Introducing interactional linguistics. In: Couper-Kuhlen E and Selting M (eds) *Studies in Interactional Linguistics*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, pp.1–22.
- Du Bois JW (2014) Towards a dialogic syntax. *Cognitive Linguistics* 25(3): 359–410.
- Ungerer F and Schmid HJ (2013) *An introduction to Cognitive Linguistics*. New York: Routledge.
- Zeng G (2016) A cognitive approach to the event structures of WH-dialogic construction. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 34(4): 311–324.
- Zeng G (2018) The dialogic turn in cognitive linguistics studies: From minimalism, maximalism to dialogicalism. *Cogent Education* 5(1): 1537907.