

## **Synergy in the construction of meaning**

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The “construction of meaning” is usually understood in a twofold way. On the one hand, lexical meaning, and grammatical meaning largely too, is seen as “given”, in such a way that the speakers simply have to recall that meaning from their lexical storage system. On the other hand, certain linguistic elements are seen as “constructed”, i.e., as the result of some special, individual cognitive operations; such is the case of metaphor and metonymy. This state of things reflects the traditional discussion on the nature of the process of building linguistic elements, especially in the grammar: whether grammatical constructions are built every time they are used, on the base of rules, or whether they are simply recalled from some kind of grammatical storage system.

The present talk analyses this issue from the perspective of *synergic cognition*, as defined by the author (Bernárdez, to appear). Synergic cognition develops the notion of distributed cognition, whereby a number of individuals cooperate in order to carry out a complex activity –also linguistic– with a lower individual cognitive effort. Synergic cognition adds a historical component, in such a way that the results of cooperative activities at a certain point of time is internalised by individuals who are then able to recall the way of carrying out a particular activity on an individual basis. That is, a historically cooperative activity is carried out by the individual on a later moment.

Synergic cognition is close to Pierre Bourdieu’s well-known notion of the *habitus*, as well as to some insights of historical linguistics and some philosophical schools, and allows establishing relations between language and culture, synchrony and diachrony. A number of examples are briefly analysed: metonymy and metaphor, grammatical constructions and Wierzbicka’s “cultural key words”.