

## Making cognitive linguistics more cognitive: A recourse to vantage theory

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The necessity to link accounts of human cognition with those of the use of language is probably no longer disputed, what remains controversial is how the aim should be achieved. A proposal is made here to apply Robert E. MacLaury's (1997, 2002) Vantage Theory (VT), a model of colour categorization, to language data. A successful attempt would mean that we have been able to – at least partially – bridge the gap between linguistics and cognitive psychology. By doing so, we would have related to the criticisms of the skeptics who view the solutions proposed in cognitive linguistics as impressionistic or arbitrary. Indeed, VT arose from the need to explain a rich array of data from a variety of languages (mainly those of Mesoamerica), unaccountable within the frameworks based on fuzzy sets or prototypes.

Moreover, in-depth comparisons of VT and Ronald Langacker's (1991, 1999) Cognitive Grammar (CG) reveal more parallelisms between the two models than could have been expected from cursory readings of the relevant literature. For example, the notions which occupy high positions in both theories, employed in non-identical but compatible ways, are those of *viewpoint* and *subjectification* in meaning. Specifically, VT can be shown to enrich analyses proposed in CG. Thus, the semantics of Langacker's example *The tree is in front of the rock* is said to involve the process of *zooming-in* through a series of viewpoints coordinated in a complex known as *vantage*. The same principles are said to obtain in other areas of language use (VT has been applied in analyses of discourse, lexical semantics, number, aspect, the use of articles, or writing systems).

Although application of VT to domains other than the categorization of colour requires its careful adaptation, the task is worth pursuing. If an anthropological-cognitive theory can be called upon in analyses of language, which by nature escapes rigid accounts, it would constitute a strong foothold for cognitive linguistics.

### References:

- MacLaury, Robert E. 1997. *Color and Cognition in Mesoamerica: Constructing Categories as Vantages*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
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Langacker, Ronald W. 1991. *Concept, Image, and Symbol*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Langacker, Ronald W. 1999. *Grammar and Conceptualization*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Linguistic applications of vantage theory <http://klio.umcs.lublin.pl/~adglaz/vt.html>