Situating the Lexical Constructional Model in functional-cognitive space: Some preliminary considerations

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1. Objectives of this presentation

• To offer a preliminary characterization of the Lexical Constructional Model (LCM henceforth) (Ruiz de Mendoza & Mairal 2006, 2007, *inter alia*) against the background of functionalist, cognitivist and/or constructionist models (Butler and Gonzálvez-García 2005; Gonzálvez-García and Butler 2006), now including the (usage-based) lexical-syntactic version of Construction Grammar (CxG henceforth) proposed in Boas (2003).
• To raise specific issues which have been important in the development of cognitivist and/or constructionist approaches about which the LCM may well want to have something to say to articulate a finer-grained position on the treatment of the syntax-semantics interface.

2. A macroscopic view of LCM within functionalist and cognitivist and/or constructionist approaches

• **Why do we need this comparison?**

The LCM is explicitly advertised as bridging the gap between functionalist models such as RRG (Van Valin 2005) and the cognitively-influenced Goldbergian strand of CxG (1995, 2006).

2.1. Some analogies

(i) Syntax is not autonomous with respect to semantics and/or pragmatics, but rather motivated

The LCM presumably follows RRG and the Goldbergian strand of CxG in adhering to the claim that syntax is by and large though by no means wholly semantically-motivated (cf. the radical semantic view of syntax espoused in Langacker's Cognitive Grammar). Further refinements for this position may come from the stand taken on the following:

• How about idiosyncrasies of the type "The prince envied him his fortune", idiomatic expressions ("by and large") that do not fit neatly into the "regularities of the language"?

• Are defective cases of syntax with no semantics to be posited? (cf. "existential there", "of" in postmodifiers ("a pile of books"), Jackendoff 2002, Culicover and Jackendoff 2005).

• Some further food for thought: "the lexical-semantic information associated with a word is to a very large degree conventionalized and can therefore not be predicted on general grounds" (Boas 2003: 121).

Moreover, semantics and pragmatics are closely intertwined in the frame-based lexical representations advocated within the LCM.

(ii) The semiotic system of language as a whole is agreed to be motivated by a relatively ample number of external factors, ranging from iconicity to e.g. parsing considerations

Unlike CxG, and exponents of functionalist approaches such as RRG and the FLM, the LCM places an uncompromising focus on a larger theory of meaning construction. The following

components are or may be easily integrated into the frame-based lexical representations invoked in this model (cf. Fried and Östman 2005):

- Encyclopedic knowledge

- Implicature and illocutionary meaning (Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi, 2006; Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal 2007a, b)

- The context of use or facts about the entire use of a given argument structure configuration (Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal 2007b)

- Discourse structure (cf. Discourse representations, Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal 2007b)

- Register

- Dialect variation

- Social value

(iii) Linguistic Universals

Although the LCM appears to endorse the cautionary position taken on the postulation of innate structures/universal grammar in functionalist, cognitivist and/or constructionist approaches, this model does make specific claims about what is universal, *viz.* lexical functions and primitives. However, proponents of the LCM would contend that the specific combination of both is language-specific (perhaps also construction-specific?) (cf. Croft 2003). Consider (1)-(2) below:

(1) *Yo   te   hac-ía/creía/pensaba   en   Dangriga*
     1SG   2SG.ACC   do-IMPPRET.1SG   in   Dangriga
     'I thought you were in Dangriga'
     (CREA, 1994, RODRIGO REY ROSA, LO QUE SOÑÓ SEBASTIÁN, NOVELA)

(2) I *thought/had you in Dangriga

In view of the fact that the LCM draws heavily on the NSM, an important difference between the NSM and construction-based approaches needs to be brought into focus here. As rightly noted by Michaelis (2003: 277), constructionist approaches posit a gradual distinction between lexical and grammatical meaning (for instance, constructions differ from words in their levels of specificity/schematicity), while the NSM, by contrast, rejects such a distinction. Abandoning this distinction has "leaves no source" for e.g. semantic conflict resolution that trigger coercion effects, such as "some rabbit" or "a coffee" (Jackendoff 1997). However, an important asymmetry between the LCM and the constructionist strand of Boas (2003) is that the latter endorses the view that "[a]pplying Frame Semantics to cross-linguistic data allows us to find a common reference frame for the semantic description of verbs across different languages (Boas 2003: 47).

2.2. Some divergences

At a more delicate level, a number of points of divergence can be pinpointed between functionalist and cognitivist approaches, as in (iv)-(viii) below.

(iv) Communication vs. cognition

Although functionalist and cognitivist approaches acknowledge the importance of communication and cognition, there remain shades of difference in the emphasis given to these two factors. Thus, cognitivist approaches prioritize a view of cognition which emphasizes general cognitive abilities, particularly conceptualization and categorization, while (some) functionalist models see cognition, as just one of the competing factors impinging on an explanatory account of the linguistic phenomena involved in communication (see also Fox,

Jurafsky and Michaelis 1999: vii, and Harder 1999: 37 for a similar position). The LCM allies itself closely with cognitivist approaches in putting cognition first. In particular, the semantic metalanguage invoked in the LCM is aimed to make explicit, at least in part, the connection between language and conceptual structure. Moreover, the external constraints impinging on the process of the process of lexical-constructional subsumption whereby lexical templates incorporate into higher-level constructional representations the former involve conceptual and cognitive operations such as high-level metaphorical and metonymic mappings.

(v) Syntax vs. Semantics

Functionalist models have concentrated more on the interrelation of structural and semantic factors. Cognitivist approaches, by contrast, have accorded considerably more importance to semantic aspects than to structural ones (see further Nuyts in press). The LCM, while claiming to account for the relationship between syntax, semantics and pragmatics, assigns more importance to semantic factors than to structural ones. Unlike CxG and RRG, the LCM places added emphasis on the lexicon, hierarchically organized into semantic classes. In addition, the internal constraints concerning concern the semantic properties of lexical and constructional templates regulating the process of lexical subsumption (i.e. the integration of lexical templates into higher-level constructional representations). In this respect, it seems to be more in line with the critical spirit of Boas (2003), who contends that Goldberg's analysis "is not precise enough to explain why the meaning of certain verbs is not affected by the meaning of the construction" (2003: 99). Therefore, Boas (2003: 112) vindicates "more lexical semantic information in the lexical entry of the verb itself in combination with the respective contextual background information".

However, there are at least two dimensions of structural factors that have a direct bearing on meaning construction that should be taken into account. First, it is necessary to incorporate categorial (i.e. morphosyntactic) information about the realization of arguments (Newmeyer 2003). Second, it is also necessary to take into account the impact of the inherent meaning-form properties of a given argument in determining the overall semantic interpretation of a given configuration (Gonzálvez-García 2006). Thus, for instance, consider the case of "believe":

(3)　　(a) The shock was greatest for those socialists who had believed **the rhetoric of the International (NP)** (BNC ANT 641)
　　　(b) The Romans believed **the amethyst prevented drunkenness and used to drink out of goblets studded with these purple gems**. **(that-clause)** (BNC C8A 1425) (objective, other-initiated, tentative/forceful judgement)
　　　(c) I believe **that *(to be) the case (NP + to-infinitive)** (BNC JK0 242)
　　　　　[although sometimes I have some doubts that it may be true at all]
　　　　　[on the basis of what the reports by the experts say]
　　　(d) Personally I would like to believe **it to be peacefully verdant**. **(NP + to-infinitive)** (BNC
　　　(e) But to believe **yourself secure**, was it necessary you should betray me? **(NP XP)** (LOB Corpus, K20:44)
　　　　　[I really think that you believed yourself secure betraying me]
　　　　　[I have first-hand evidence for this]
　　　(subjective, direct, categorical judgement)

(4)　　*believe*: [FACT$_{1,2}$ (true)$_2$] think' (x, y)

The lexical representation proposed within the LCM states that the second argument of the predicate consists of a proposition that refers to a mental percept that is true. However, in order to achieve a higher degree of descriptive and explanatory adequacy, the inherent meaning and form properties of a given argument (be it phrasal or clausal) need to be taken into account, since these play a crucial role in meaning construction in general and the unification of the

lexical template and a constructional template in particular. Thus, consider, by way of illustration, the asymmetries impinging on the realization of the XPCOMP in the verbless frame, none of which hold for its non-finite and finite clause counterparts:

(5)   y=NP, that-clause, NP +to-infinitive, NP(characterizing) + AP/PP(+figurative)/
          -Ed Participle (characterizing)

(6)   (a) I believe it necessary (AP)
          (b) I believed him in despair/*in London (PP)
          (c) I believe it a fair argument/*the case (NP)
          (e) He believed these waters haunted by ghost ships with the earth-bound spirits of their crews (Ed-Participle)
          (f) *He believed me there (AdvP)
          (g) *He believed me wasting my time (-Ing clause)

(vi) Conceptual/Representational Semantics vs. Interactional facets of meaning

There are important nuances regarding how conceptual/representational semantics is viewed. Thus, functionalist linguists appear to place conceptual/representational semantics on a relatively equal footing with respect to structural factors. By contrast, in cognitive models those matters pertaining to conceptual/representational semantics are assigned considerably more importance than, say, the interactional or interpersonal aspects of language. The LCM fits in more nicely with cognitivist approaches in prioritizing conceptual/representational semantics. However, this should not be taken to imply that interpersonal facets of the construction have been ignored, as shown, among others in Ruiz de Mendoza and Baicchi (2006).

(vii) Synchrony vs. Diachrony

Despite the fact that both functionalist and cognitivist approaches acknowledge the existence of a dynamic interplay between synchrony and diachrony, functionalist approaches have paid more importance to diachrony than cognitivist approaches (see further Nuyts in press). As it stands, the focus of research of the LCM is decidedly on synchrony rather than on diachrony.

(viii) The role of naturally-occurring data

Although both functionalist and cognitivist models are committed, at least in theory, to the study of naturally-occurring data, there is a longer tradition of research of this kind in functionalist approaches than in cognitive ones. The LCM model appears to be more in consonance with the cognitivist tradition in vindicating a thorough study of the usage of terms by a meticulous extraction of conceptual information on meaning parameters, restrictions, etc. from dictionaries, this information being later on validated by a corpus analysis.

3. Interim Conclusion: Regarding features (iv)-(viii), the LCM allies itself more closely with cognitivist and/or constructionist approaches than with functionalist ones.

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