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“Contextual Generative Power.
The role of context evocation in the construal and
signification of linguistic meaning.”

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Figure 1. *Essential Embeddedness and Reference.*

To the world
out of joint

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I marked the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

- Robert Frost

Acknowledgements

The original idea for this thesis emerged in October 2009 as I attended a lecture entitled *Communication, Code and Culture* given by Barbara Seidelhofer and H.G. Widdowson. In the course of this lecture, Prof. Widdowson made use of the “Scalpel.” example (which makes frequent appearances in the following pages) in order to illustrate the economy of contextualized language use and the idea that “the less meaning can be inferred from the context, the more meaning must be expressed through language”. I immediately turned the argument on its head and wondered how, why and how much context could be “generated” or “evoked” by a particular utterance. This simple, almost naive question, was the foundation of one ground-laying discussion with Professor Widdowson and many more with my girlfriend, fellow student of English and linguistics, and first contact in the discussion of any new idea or emergent perspective, Julia Skala. Gradually, a research project evolved, drawing on more and more theories and ideological foundations until the present thesis emerged.

Parts of this thesis have sprung from seminar papers written under supervision of Evelien Keizer (particularly the chapter on construal (5) and a few aspects of the chapter on meaning conceptualization (8)). Additionally, large parts of chapter 4 on contextualization and concretization have been presented at the 4th Austrian Students’ Conference of Linguistics (ÖSKL2011) in Innsbruck, and subsequently typed up for publication (which is still underway). Finally, the whole project has been presented (with the aid of the mindmap included as Figure 44 in the appendix of this thesis) at ÖSKL 2012 which I co-organized at the English Department of the University of Vienna together with a few fellow students. I am grateful to everyone involved in those early steps and owe much to the feedback and validations I have received.

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Additional thanks goes to my flat mates Miri and Julia as well as to my colleague and friend, Iris, who have all been in the end stages of writing their theses (on other topics of English linguistics) together with me. Any positive contribution to linguistic that this

this could be said to provide, owes its existence to the countless hours that Julia, Iris, me and, towards the end, Miri have spent writing frantically in Iris's and my cramped, little office, daunted by our approaching deadlines, but otherwise happy and content to work alongside each other from morning until evening, on holidays and weekends too, with the department almost deserted on those occasions, consuming pots and pots of tea, and chopping away at the blank pages and the unincorporated topics, references, data, chapters and ideas that separated us from our respective goals.

Apart from these unforgettable hours of blessed productivity, I also want to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of two of the great loves of my life.

Julia Skala has perhaps been the most stabilizing and at the same time, ever-challenging and up-heaving influence in my life, agreeing and disagreeing with me in seemingly all the right places, whether it involves linguistics, philosophy, love, art, science or life in general. In the development and fine-tuning of my critical and emotional faculties as well as the constant involvement and encouragement in many of the aspects and activities of my life that I consider to be most important, I owe, perhaps, no greater debt to anyone but her.

Kate entered my life at a point when I was relatively certain that I knew who I was. Subsequently, she changed my day-to-day living through her presence in so many ways for the better and through her absence in so many ways for the worse that I wouldn't have believed it possible. I have never before met anyone more set and yet open to change, more reflective and yet intuitive, more creative and yet conventional; and few, if any, that I have loved as strongly. Many of the following pages have been written in a desperate attempt to keep myself from writing to her.

Thanks also to my brother Roman for being a constant reference point in my life, even though both our journeys have been more than turbulent (and probably will continue to be). He will always be a piece of home for me, wandering the world.

Finally, I would like to tip my hat to time for stretching in all the right places to accommodate my and our all last-minute efforts.

Udo Schimanofsky

Vienna, January 17th 2013

Pots of tea consumed during work on thesis:

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 1st 1st 1st 1st 1st 1st 1st 1st 1st 1st 1st 1st 1st
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Abstract

Starting out from the general idea of context-dependence, the present thesis aims at developing a theoretically sound account of how utterances evoke specific situational contexts. This evocation of meaning or generation of a particular context as triggered by an utterance is seen as a result of that utterance's Contextual Generative Power (CGP). In order to provide a theoretical basis for the analysis of CGP, a multitude of theories relating to context, meaning, construal, evocation and meaning representation is reviewed and synthesized with original arguments. The consulted literature includes substantial contributions from the fields of general linguistics and language philosophy (Chomsky, Saussure, Allan, Pike), semiotics and the study of meaning representation (Ogden and Richards, McCloud), cognitive linguistics (Langacker, Taylor, Talmy, Goldberg), discourse analysis (Widdowson), literary theory (Ingarden, Vodička, Culler) and psycholinguistics (Bransford and Johnson) with particular focus on the role of context (Fetzer, Kamp and Partee).

From these theoretical foundations, a form-centred and use-based approach to the analysis of meaning as contextual reference is developed that aims at maximal descriptive accountability for the experiential reality of linguistic meaning. Pivotal to this analysis is the distinction between actual (physical) and natural (evoked) context as well as the notion of situational substrate, i.e. a structured conglomerate of contextual references derived from one or more specific situations (of linguistic use). Additionally, such notions as conventionality and creativity, salience and entrenchment, contextualization and concretization are introduced and developed for the analysis of meaning construal and evocation. In order to account for the formation of CGP, the diachronic resource of an utterance's chronicles of use is considered as well as more general principles of meaning formation. After rounding of these extensive preliminary elaborations with a discussion of meaning representation, the notion of CGP is explicitly developed into two analytical parameters: contextual reference specification or Link and contextual reference resonance or Pull.

The thesis and the concomitantly proposed theory aim at accounting for the schematic as well as the gestalt imagistic character of linguistic meaning and assigns context a central position in the realization as well as the analysis of that meaning.

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1. Introduction

Reference is effective by default: information, which is schematically recoverable is left un verbalized. [...] It all depends on how much verbal effort is needed to be indexically effective in making a schematic connection. (Widdowson 2004: 53)

In other words, the less meaning can be inferred from context, the more meaning must be expressed explicitly through language. If we believe these assertions put forth by Widdowson and concomitantly the idea of context-dependence (cf. Kamp and Partee 2004), we can use them to explain the felicitousness of the following utterance:



Figure 2. *A contextual generative utterance.*

Let the situational context or setting of this utterance be defined as a hospital/operation context. In this situation, it would be inappropriate/impractical/un-necessary for a surgeon to say: "Nurse, I need you to pass me the scalpel now, so I can make the incision above the [...] in order to [...]"; instead they would just say: "Scalpel." With this example it has been demonstrated that language depends on (the communicational needs within a) context. What has not been explained, however, is the fact that the situational context of the utterance in Figure 2 was probably already established or evoked in your mind before I explicitly defined it simply by the decontextualized utterance as such.

Since all kinds of utterances are frequently presented to us separate from the situational context on which they build (e.g. writing, quotes, reported speech, language samples, photographs of signs, notices, etc. and instances of linguistic displacement¹ in general) it should come as no surprise that establishing the necessary contextual connection also often draws on the utterance itself (cf. Widdowson 2004: 38, "semantic resource"). Thus, the utterance "Scalpel." evokes the rather definite contextual situation of a medical operation procedure, where a surgeon addresses a

¹ The term displacement refers to the (human) ability of "being able to talk about things that are remote in space or time (or both) from where the talking goes on" (Hockett 1960: 90) as defined and identified by Hockett as one of 13 "design features of language" (ibid.).

nurse and asks for the surgical instrument. In contrast, the utterances “Chair.”, “Rubber duck.” or even “Centrifuge.” are prototypically not as clearly linked to specific contextual situations – although we may construct or discover discourse situations, of course, in which they may be equally successful in the evocation of situational context. We may state therefore that words/phrases/utterances come with different default and dynamically modified measures of Contextual Generative Power (CGP), i.e. the power to evoke a specific context in the mind of the listener/reader. This basic view of meaning evocation will be the central notion of this thesis.

The idea to analyse meaning in terms of contextual effects or contextual reference as such is not a novel one (as will become clear in the course of this thesis). However, beyond merely surmising existing theories and treatments, this thesis also aims at developing an overall coherent conception of context and linguistic meaning that culminates naturally in an elaboration of CGP. Correspondingly, there are two tightly interwoven research questions that have guided the compilation of the subsequent pages: 1.) to what kind of conceptualizations of context and linguistic meaning can a concept such as CGP be related? and 2.) do the concept of CGP and the underlying assumptions provide a useful addition to existing theories? In order to answer these questions, a stringent review of a multitude of theories, books and articles has been undertaken that, together with some original arguments, forms the academic basis of this paper. Not only will this synthesis undoubtedly bring some new perspectives to linguistic enquiry, it will also be organized consistently around the notion of context and some concomitant theoretical tenets and as such point the way towards a coherent and systematic as well as use-based (cf. chapter 6) and maximally descriptive theory of linguistic meaning analysis and meaning evocation in terms of contextual reference² or, more specifically, CGP.

However, as will be clear to any ardent researcher in the various fields associated with the study of (natural) language(s), any discussion of (linguistic) meaning and context will necessitate (implicitly or explicitly) a rather elaborate discussion of what is actually meant by “meaning” and “context” in the account at

² While this orientation arguably constitutes the most significant asset of this thesis, it also conflicts slightly with some general trends in systemic linguistics and necessitates some elaboration on the traditional dichotomies such as *langue*/*parole* and *competence*/*performance*, the notion of grammar and the objective and limitations of generalization (cf. section 2.3, chapter 3, and section 9.3).

hand. Also, if we want to talk about CGP, it will be necessary to look at how meaning evocation as such comes about and how words are imbued with CGP to begin with. But first of all, it might be a good idea to give some indications as to the theoretical framework(s) and general assumptions that will be employed in this discussion of context evocation and the formation of CGP.

Although the present account cannot be subsumed under any one current linguistic framework, inclinations and accreditations to other approaches - most prominently: Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987, 1991, 2008), Discourse Analysis (Widdowson 2004, 2007), Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (1959) and some lesser known investigations into the so-called "continuity of reference" (Zelinsky-Wibbelt 2000, 2003) - will be made clear as the discussion progresses. Very generally speaking, I also subscribe to the underlying notions (if not to the actual framework) of Cognitive Construction Grammar (as put forth by Goldberg 1995, 2006) to the extent that I believe in the non-compositionality or holistic quality of meaning even if associated with formally compositional linguistic units (cf. 1995: 4; 2006: 221f, "non-reductionist"); and also to the degree that I hold the same basic principles of semiotic meaning formation to be relevant for the study of word meaning, utterance meaning, discourse meaning, etc. (cf. 2006: 18), which is why I use these terms alternately in the discussion of meaning evocation or meaning formation³. Where I differ from all these theories is that my approach to the analysis of meaning will be predominantly formalistic or structuralistic in the sense that I take linguistic forms, as opposed to cognitive grounding or communicative intent, as the basis for my analysis. This semiotic outlook on language essentially backgrounds agentive participants, the "human conceptualizer" (Dirven and Verspoor 1998: 15) or speech participants and their active role in the "on-line" negotiation of meaning (Widdowson 2007: 54), giving credence to the psychological reality of immediate and effortless evocation or triggering of meaning by words/utterances/discourse as such⁴. The ideological conflict

³ Note, however, that all of these terms essentially refer to meaning in use.

⁴ After all, you, as a proficient user of the English language, cannot help but to make (some) sense of these sentences as I laid them out before you here. Obviously, some degree of cooperation on your part is implied (which is what scholars like Grice (1991: 26ff), Widdowson (2007: 55ff) and McCloud (1992: 68f) have emphasized emphatically; although it should be noted that Grice's concern with the cooperative structuring of conversation, though foundational to the idea of joint meaning construction, is rather different from Widdowson's and McCloud's claims that meaning itself is also co-constructed).

between this view and those related to the aforementioned approaches is, on the one hand, resolved by a strict analytic focus on language in (the context of) use (on both parts), and, on the other hand, by an implicit acknowledgement of the essential validity of cognitive and communicative concerns and assumptions in the study of linguistic meaning (on my part).

Shouldering these few little basic assumptions and theoretical inclinations, the subsequent line of argumentation will commence by a general exploration of the notion of context, its relevance and (possible) conceptualization(s) within linguistic discourses (chapter 2). Next, we will stroll through the deeply entrenched valleys of basic linguistic dichotomies (i.e. *langue* and *parole* (Saussure 1959: 11ff), competence and performance (Chomsky 1965: 4)) and eventually climb partially unexplored but salient peaks in our exploration of Conventionality and Creativity (chapter 3) as well as Contextualization and Concretization (chapter 4). Having, thus, traversed from general issues of systematization into the realm of meaning evocation, we will explore the ramified paths of linguistic construal (chapter 5). Subsequently turning to issues of meaning formation and the imbuelement with CGP, we will trace the cyclic interrelation of use, context and meaning and the implications of a use-based approach (chapter 6) as well as the internal structure of the diachronic meaning resource referred to as chronicles of use (chapter 7). Finally, we will turn to the issue of meaning representation and conceptualization (chapter 8); and, after an expansive discussion of some very general meaning representation models (most prominently Ogden and Richard's semiotic triangle (1969:11)), we will end our journey with a characterization of CGP, a synthetic and descriptively accountable notion and an approach to the analysis of linguistic meaning firmly grounded in the preceding arguments (chapter 9), and, of course, some concluding remarks concerning some aspects of the scenery, the vindication of the stroll as a such and CGP's relevance and implications for the progression of linguistic inquiry (chapter 10).

This general outline is also represented in more condensed form in Table 1 below.

Nevertheless, the reader's/hearer's experience often seems to suggest that the meaning of an utterance (etc.) inflicts itself upon them as soon as they have empirically perceived its form. This subjective experiential impression is what I mean by "psychological reality".

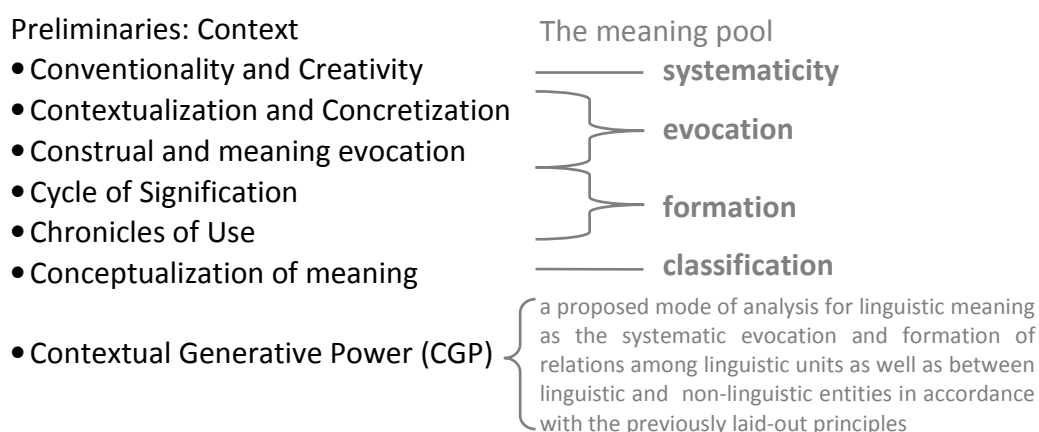


Table 1. *Outline.*

The overall structure of this thesis, as may have become apparent from Table 1 and the preceding remarks, is not exactly linearly oriented and developed. On the contrary, every chapter adds a new (but, as I feel, relevant) aspect to the discussion and only towards the end of the thesis are all these different aspects synthesized in the notion of CGP. Although this general organization may be hard on the reader of this thesis, I hope that anyone sticking it out will be rewarded – as with consideration of the “Scalpel.” example - with the emergence of a salient context that allows for meaningful interpretation and (hopefully) appreciation of the text by which it was triggered.

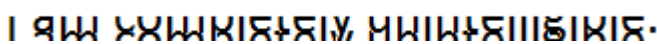
2. Context

Context Ruins Everything

- Joe Mathlete
title of a song by the
indie-pop band *The Mathletes*

There seems to be general academic consensus that “‘context’ is a notoriously hard concept to deal with” (Mey 1993: 8). Although or perhaps because the idea and relevance of context presents a time-old problem to any systematic inquiry or data analysis particular with regards to meaning, it has recently sparked off wide and extensive interdisciplinary interest (cf. Akman et al. 2001; Bouquet et al. 1999). In fact, along with the accountability for linguistic creativity (cf. chapter 3), the accountability for contextualized language use has become a major selling point for linguistic theories and models and lack of such context-sensitivity a cause for criticism and dismissal (cf. Langacker 1987: 38). From a broader historical perspective, the increasing interest in context can also be traced through the establishment of new theories and fields of inquiry: generative grammar – to supplement the insensitivity of early syntactic approaches to the underlying context of sentence meaning (cf. Harris 1993: 48f), pragmatics – to supplement the insensitivity of traditional semantics to the context of use, sociolinguistics – to supplement the insensitivity of traditional linguistics to social context, cognitive linguistics – to supplement the insensitivity of generative approaches to the context of perception and cognition, etc. What all of these have in common is that their earliest advocates were painfully aware that there were some uncharted assets of linguistic (or linguistically relevant) meaning beyond what was declared the focus of linguistic inquiry. Thus, the ongoing integrational quest for contextual accountability is nothing else than a quest for an ever more exhaustive formalization of meaning. Indeed, it could be argued that identification of context is really what meaning is all about.

Consider, for example, the language sample in (1) below.

(1) 

Now, on the one hand, (1) is in all likelihood unintelligible to you, it is as of yet totally meaningless. On the other hand, however, you probably recognize the fact that, nevertheless, this string of symbols, this text probably would be intelligible if you were

familiar with the underlying code. Thus, by putting it into the context of language you have identified (1) as a probably meaningful discourse act, even though unintelligible to you. Hofstadter (1999) refers to this as the “frame message” (166). Engendering a second layer of understanding, I could point out to you the coding mechanism, which may include reference to the typographical conventions, grammar rules, etc. of the respective language, but in this case it simply means telling you that I started out with a conventional English sentence, cut the orthographic representation of it horizontally in half and inverted the position of the resultant fragments. By receiving this information, which we could call the “outer message” (Hofstadter 1999:6), (1) has become even more meaningful. And as soon as you have applied your recently instilled knowledge of the code I employed in the construction of (1), you will have unravelled the final meaning layer, the “inner message” (ibid.). Going even further, we could agree that with the full recognition of each “message” (1) became more and more meaningful and, additionally, that every step of making (1) more meaningful was based on the consultation and application of a different context. In fact, a maximal scope of meaningfulness can be achieved by linking up (1) to the subsequent arguments (i.e. its textual environment/context) and recognizing its function in the present illustration that meaning is equivalent to a cognitive exploitation of and linkage to context⁵ (cf. Widdowson 2004: 8, 35; Silverstein 1992: 55). Or, to put it in Fetzer’s words: “[a]n utterance relies upon the existing context for its production and interpretation, and it is, in its own right, an event that shapes a new context for the action that will follow” (2004: 6).

The example at hand also ties in particularly well with Langacker’s notions of profiling and cognitive domain: from this point of view, (1) represents the “profiled” element of a message that only makes sense if it can be related to some domain which serves as “base” in the profiling process (1987: 183, 404). Thus, in recognizing the

⁵ The recognition of this meaning actually also involves the decoding of three layers: recognizing the potential meaningfulness of (1) in the context of my arguments (inner message), becoming aware of the overall structure and connectedness of the arguments (outer message), and recognizing the actual meaningfulness of (1) in the context of this overall structure. This contextualization process and the one just outlined differ in that they involve the recognition of different coding conventions. Recognition of this difference has led to the differentiation between semantics and pragmatics, which is, of course, also problematic for that very reason: because they involve essentially the same message structure and decoding mechanisms only with reference to different contexts (cf. discussion in section 8.1).

frame message of (1), it becomes a profile to the base of the domain of communication; in deciphering the outer message, it becomes a profile to the base of some specific language or other conventional (in the sense of predictable) coding system; and finally, in receiving the inner message, (1) becomes a profile to the rather complex domain of initial unintelligibility of messages due to inaccessibility of relevant domains. In fact, Langacker's profile and base dichotomy is the ultimate concession to the view that (conceptual) context is inevitable in the making sense of linguistic units (to use Langacker's own terminology). Or as Langacker himself puts it in a slightly more evocative way: "[i]t would not be unreasonable to describe the relevant circumstances as being "imbued with meaning" or as "part of the meaning" an expression has in context" (2008: 29).

However, I am getting ahead of myself. Although the preceding arguments illustrate that meaningfulness of an utterance/message can be equated with the context specification of that utterance/message as achieved or perceived by any given recipient, the recognition of this fact cannot be of any consequence unless it is supplemented with an independent definition of context itself. Fortunately, such definitions abound within linguistic discourse. Fetzer, for example, gives the following:

In its narrow definition, context is delimited to the local (or immediately adjacent) surroundings of the phenomenon to be investigated and refers to the immediately adjacent surroundings of a phoneme, to the immediately adjacent surroundings of a morpheme, to the immediately adjacent surroundings of a phrase, to the immediately adjacent surroundings of a grammatical construction, to the immediately adjacent surroundings of a lexical item, to the immediately adjacent surroundings of a sentence, to the immediately adjacent surroundings of an utterance; and it can also refer to the coparticipants and their immediately adjacent surroundings, and to the setting and its immediately [adjacent] surroundings. If the surroundings are cognitive material, for instance a proposition, a mental representation or an assumption, they are called cognitive context. If the surroundings are of an extra-linguistic nature, that is non-cognitive and non-linguistic material, they are called social context, and if the surrounding[s] are language material, they are called linguistic context [...] (Fetzer 2004: 4)

Fetzer's definition clearly emphasizes the wide cross-level applicability and scope of the notion of context, while nevertheless delimiting its conceptual borders by identifying context at all levels of analysis as the "surroundings of the phenomenon to

be investigated”, “local” or “immediately adjacent” in its narrow definition and “global” in a broader frame of investigation (Fetzer 2004: 3, cf. Van Dijk: 2008: 74f). It is important to recognize that even though this definition obviously involves subjectively drawn and inevitably fuzzy boundaries regarding to what actually counts as “surroundings”, it also is very explicit about the general conceptualization (fuzzy though it may be) of the notion of context as such.

One marked disadvantage of the definition is, of course, its length, and indeed a much shorter definition of context is presented occasionally (Widdowson 2004: 7; Van Dijk 2008: 5) by merely pointing out the etymology of the word: *con*-text, meaning “with (the) text”. A text can be defined as the written or spoken physical product of “the pragmatic process of meaning negotiation” that is discourse (Widdowson 2004: 8) or simply as a string of symbols that can be identified as (potentially) meaningful (in recognition of the “message” layers discussed above). In accordance with these classifications, anything beyond a text can (and does) serve as its context (or “surroundings”) and, hence, a resource for its felicitous interpretation. This definition, although in perfect coherence with the extensive one given above, highlights much stronger the essential equivalence between contextual specification and meaningfulness, exploitation of context and construction of meaning; and indeed if we classify everything beyond a text (i.e. a linguistic form or forms, the mere formal trace of discourse) as context, and if we subscribe to the premise that linguistic meaning depends on the reference to or representation of something else than that linguistic forms itself⁶, then meaning can be nothing else than the recognition of that reference or representation of context. Or as Widdowson puts it: “[u]nless it is activated by this contextual connection, the text is inert” (2004: 8), i.e. inactive in the evocation of meaning.

There are, however, a few problems with this conceptualization of context (and meaning). One is quite obviously the fact that a theory of context based on such a broad definition “risks becoming a Theory of Everything” (Van Dijk 2008: ix). This can be counteracted by introducing subcategories that make the scientific investigation of particular kinds of contexts more feasible. This has been attempted by Fetzer in the

⁶ This is in accordance with Hockett’s design feature of “semanticity” (1960:90).

definition given above. Sometimes the respective definitions of these subcategories are even deemed to capture the notion of concept more accurately than one unifying definition for context as such. Thus, Allan (1986) simply states at the beginning of his chapter on context that the term “is used here (as in everyday speech) to mean any one or more of three different kinds of things” (36). He then presents three different kinds of context and leaves it to the reader to discover the underlying abstractions that may be used to delineate the hypernymous notion. Allan distinguishes 1.) physical context, spacio-temporal location, SETTING or the world spoken in, 2.) THE WORLD SPOKEN OF, and 3.) TEXTUAL ENVIRONMENT or CO-TEXT⁷ (36f), whereby he declares the world spoken of⁸ as the “central notion” (41) or “core component of context” (54). Allan’s theory can also be made to correspond to Fetzer’s as illustrated in Table 2 below.

Allan’s context categories	Fetzer’s context categories
SETTING	social context
THE WORLD SPOKEN OF	cognitive context
TEXTUAL ENVIRONMENT	linguistic context

Table 2. *A contrastive typology of contexts based on Allan (1986) and Fetzer (2004).*

Unfortunately, only the third correlation (i.e. the one between textual environment and linguistic context) seems to work entirely seamlessly; undoubtedly, the other two require a bit of (hopefully fruitful) elaboration.

Basically, both Allan’s setting and Fetzer’s social context arguably focus on the exact configuration of the communicative situation in which a particular text occurs. However, while Allan’s term is primarily used to highlight issues of deictic reference (*this here, that there*) (1986: 37ff), Fetzer (in accordance with Van Dijk 1981) considers social context as “the context of a speech event [...] defined by the deduction of

⁷ The term “cotext”, although widely used and theoretically vindicated in linguistic discourse (Widdowson 2004: 58f), will not be employed in the account at hand, because it implies a fundamental structural difference in context and cotext that is not seen as methodologically helpful for the development of an over-all theory of contextual reference and evocation (cf. the concluding remarks of this chapter).

⁸ Allan adds a note amending that his notion of the world spoken of is similar to what “Dell Hymes ‘Models of the interaction of language and social life’ 1972: 60 calls [...] ‘scene’” (395). Widdowson, in turn, comments that Hymes’ notion of “*setting* refers to the situation and *scene* to the context of utterance, the latter having to do with how the parties concerned abstract what is relevant from the material circumstances” (2004: 42, emphasis added to highlight the contrastive use of the terms). Thus, we see that despite Allan’s naturalistic choice of terminology, what is actually meant here is a cognitive abstraction based on the/a world (spoken of) (cf. the discussion in section 2.2, elaborating the distinction between naturalistic and mentailistic perspectives on context).

context as comprising all of the cognitive context from a holistic conception of context as comprising all of the constitutive parts of a speech event” (2004: 7). Thus, although both accounts list roughly the same relevant phenomena (i.e. deixis) and entities for their respective types of context (i.e. the “coparticipants, [and] the immediate concrete, physical surroundings including time and location” (Fetzer 2004: 7; cf. Allan 1986: 37)), they differ radically in the degree of cognitive mediation and abstraction that they deem important for their respective categories. In this respect, Fetzer’s social context admits to a much greater degree of cognitive structuring and, consequentially, comprises a much more abstract category than Allan’s setting. This is also reflected in Allan’s alternative terminology: physical context. However, even though Allan’s account is considerably more structuralistic (as opposed to mentalistic or cognitivist) than that of other linguists, he does admit to the notion of cognitive mediation; only it enters his model at a different point.

The argument that leads to Allan’s insistence regarding the primacy of the world spoken of is based on the realization that the setting is strictly speaking only relevant for linguistic meaning (and analysis thereof) where it is referenced by the world spoken of and the co-text (or cotext) is only important to the degree that it is necessary for the identification of the world spoken of (Allan 1986: 54). Not only is this perceived hegemony of the world spoken of and the accompanying rationale once again indicative of the indispensable role that context plays in the construction of meaning; the concomitant emphasis placed on, to use Fetzer’s terminology, “cognitive material”, even in Allan’s essentially structuralistic framework, hints at the essentially cognitive structuredness of context as such (see section 2.2 below).

Both of these issues are reflected and acknowledged to some degree within the framework of Cognitive Grammar. Langacker recognizes them, but at the same time takes precautions against the systematically problematic unboundedness of context, by containing the (unbounded) notion of context in his (bounded) notion⁹ of a conceptual substrate (2008: 42) and accreditations to encyclopaedic knowledge (1987: 63, cf. Taylor 2003: 84ff). According to Langacker:

⁹ Fetzer and Oishi identify this conceptual delimitation of (unbounded) context as an essentially bounded concept or entity as “entextualization” (2011: 2).

An expression's meaning presupposes an extensive, multifaceted **conceptual substrate** that supports it, shapes it, and renders it coherent. Among the facets of this substrate are (i) the conceptions evoked or created through previous discourse; (ii) engagement in the speech event itself, as part of the interlocutors' social interaction; (iii) apprehension of the physical, social, and cultural context; and (iv) any domains of knowledge that might prove relevant. (Langacker 2008: 42, bold original)

In addition, Langacker explicitly dismisses what he calls "dictionary semantics" (2008: 39) and postulates instead that "meaning resides in a particular way of accessing an open-ended body of knowledge" (ibid.), i.e. encyclopaedic knowledge.

Even though these notions seem to account for contextual linkage within the framework of Cognitive Grammar and certainly illustrate the importance of context in the analysis of meaning, Langacker includes a separate entry in the glossary of his *Foundations to Cognitive Grammar*, which specifies:

contextual meaning The semantic pole of a usage event; the richly detailed conceptualization that constitutes our full understanding of an expression in context, including all aspects of the conceived situation (1987: 488)

This is a very intriguing notion: according to Langacker (2008), every linguistic generalization has an underlying schema that, in turn, has a semantic and a phonological pole (57). Now, the above definition of contextual meaning suggests that "a usage event", which we may intuitively identify as an instance of language use, a speech event or speech act (cf. Searle 1969: 16), also has a semantic pole. But how can an actual communicative situation have the same properties as an abstract generalization schema? The answer lies, of course, in the fact that Langacker is using the term "usage event" in a technical sense specific to his theory of Cognitive Grammar, referring to "[a] symbolic expression assembled by a speaker in a particular circumstance for a particular purpose" (1987: 494). From this, it becomes apparent that the notion of context is very bounded within Cognitive Grammar indeed: far from denoting everything beyond a text, it only relates to conceptualizations based on the unbounded entity of con-text, from which the conceptual substrate of an utterance (or "expression") is distilled.

Thus, Langacker awards the idea of cognitive mediation and abstraction ultimate supremacy in his conceptualization of context. This hegemony is already

hinted at in Fetzer's discussion of social context and Allan's elaborations on the primacy of the world spoken of, but through the notion of the conceptual substrate Langacker makes it clear that there is no meaningful context without cognition. This, given the name of Langacker's theory, should come of no surprise, but, as we will see, it is also not without problems (see section 2.1, page 25 below).

Beyond acknowledging the cognitive mediation and abstraction of context and its relevance for the discussion of linguistic meaning, Langacker also discusses context explicitly (1986: 401ff)¹⁰ and introduces three context categories of his own: 1.) "systemic context, i.e. the position of a linguistic unit within the schematic networks that collectively constitute the grammar of a language", 2.) "situational context: the particular circumstances (centered on the speech-act participants) that give rise to a particular usage event", and 3.) "syntagmatic context, pertaining to the combination of units in the formation of complex expressions" (ibid.). It will be clear that Langacker's conception of situational context roughly corresponds to Allan's setting and Fetzer's social context although (bearing in mind the definition of usage event as given above) with yet a higher degree of cognitive mediation and abstraction. Both the systematic and the syntagmatic context relate to an albeit highly abstracted conception of linguistic material. An equivalent to Fetzer's cognitive context or Allan's world spoken of is apparently not given. This seems surprising, but it is easily explicated by pointing out that a) any of Langacker's context categories is already conceived as cognitive by virtue of being an abstraction made by a user of a language, and b) any reference to cognitive material "beyond the text" or beyond the expression is, in accordance with Langacker's notions of the conceptual substrate and encyclopaedic knowledge, best presented as part of the expression's meaningfulness "even if such reference is maximally peripheral and schematic" (1986: 404).

From these elaborations, we can now construct a revised correlation chart (as represented in Table 3 below) that also includes a Cognitive Grammar conception of context and indicates hegemonic structure and the primacy of cognition (in bold).

¹⁰ In fact, the general conceptualization given at the beginning of Langacker's explicit discussion of context will be of relevance later on (see 6).

Langacker's context categories	Allan's context categories	Fetzer's context categories
situational context	SETTING	social context
[conceptual substrate]	THE WORLD SPOKEN OF	cognitive context
systemic & syntagmatic context	TEXTUAL ENVIRONMENT	linguistic context

Table 3. *Revision of Table 2, with reference to Langacker (1986) and the primacy of cognition.*

This expanded correlation indicates that the internal structure of each context category also plays an important role in the overall conception of context. Not only does the acknowledgement of cognition wreak havoc with hierarchical structure and the already hardly delineable conceptual boundaries of context (and meaning); Langacker's two context types, systemic and syntagmatic, corresponding to Allan's textual environment and Fetzer's linguistic context, make it clear that with higher degrees of abstraction (e.g. reference to a linguistic system and syntagmatic relations rather than mere co-occurring words) a totally different conception of context emerges.

Generally speaking, we have seen, so far, that context is widely recognized as a key-component in making sense of linguistic units. Consequentially, it can be no solution to simply disregard context (to a certain degree) and focus on the internal systematic consistency of language (cf. Generative Grammar and Van Dijk's criticism of this and related approaches (2008: 6)). Recognizing the importance of including context in linguistic inquiry, the unbounded and heterogeneous mass of context may be theoretically constrained by a.) the implementation of a typological categorization schema, and/or b.) the acknowledgement of cognitive mediation and abstraction. The resultant categories and abstractions definitely serve to delineate the concept a bit more clearly and add some meat to the bones of definitions that characterize context as "surroundings" of a text or something "beyond" a text. Nevertheless, the picture that has been drawn of context is still far from satisfactory; there still are blank spots that want filling in and problems that need to be addressed. Of course not all of these issues can be addressed within the limited scope of the account at hand. Therefore, I will content myself, as with this general introduction to the concept of context in linguistics, to only a few areas that I believe will be important for subsequent discussion.

Thus, section 2.1 will take up the problem of conceptual delimitation by investigating contextual linkage of utterances to situations of use; section 2.2 constitutes an elaboration on the notion of cognitive mediation and abstraction and fleshes out the conception of context as a mental construct; and finally, problems of systematic formalization of context are dealt with in section 2.3.

2.1. Natural and actual context

In the introduction above, the utterance “Scalpel.” has (originally) been presented as “decontextualized”. Supplementing this characterization with some of the definitions that have since been established, we could paraphrase it by stating that the utterance “Scalpel.” was (allegedly) presented in separation (or isolation) from its immediate physical, cognitive and textual surroundings, or removed from its context. By this context, we mean, of course, the context in which one would usually or naturally find the utterance, as an integral part of the discourse negotiation between a doctor and a nurse in an operating room during a surgery. This is not to say, however, that this is the only context in which the utterance can naturally appear; it simply seems to be the most prototypical (cf. Taylor 2003: 43ff) one. In fact, it also came up quite naturally within a linguistic discourse here and elsewhere (Widdowson 1990: 82). The decisive difference is that in these instances, the utterance is used as an illustration; it is integrated into its surrounding discourse, but in a very different manner; it is merely mentioned, not used (cf. Searle 1969: 73). When discussing context, the key point in this distinction is that the actual (linguistic discourse) context is backgrounded against the natural (medical operation) context; the utterance needs to be linked to both, but primarily and most saliently to its natural context in order to be made sense of and enable the further abstraction necessary to link it to its actual context.

So, when we say that an utterance is presented as decontextualized, it is not actually true that it is presented in separation of its physical, cognitive and textual surroundings; it merely has been physically or spatio-temporally displaced (or in the case of made-up examples, transferred from a possible (or impossible), a fictitious world into the real world) in a way that makes two sets of contextual information

relevant to its interpretation as illustrated by the example of the utterance “Scalpel.”
In Table 4 below.

NATURAL context	relevant context categories	ACTUAL context
surgeon (speaker), nurse (hearer) operating room/hospital T₀ (previous to T₁)	PHYSICAL ← participants → ← location → ← time →	Udo Schimanofsky (writer), you (reader) Udo Schimanofsky’s desk (production) / wherever you were, when you read it (reception) T₁: time of writing, T₂: time of reading (T₁ precedes T₂)
medicine elicitation of assistance in a surgery	COGNITIVE ← domain → ← relevance →	linguistics illustration of a linguistic phenomenon
“Swab.” “Sponge.” “Suction.” “Stitches.”	TEXTUAL¹¹ ← co-text →	by Williamson and conventionally the need of context-dependency (cf. Kamp and Partee 2004), we can use them to explain the felicitousness of the following utterance Figure 2. A contextual generative utterance. Let the situational context or setting of this utterance be defined as a hospital/operation context. In this situation, it would be inappropriate/impractical/un-
low → clearly defined deictic reference in an actual communicative situation; natural context is actual context	degree of cognitive mediation and abstraction	high → schematic reference to an imaginary (or at least spacio-temporally removed) situation (displacement); (prototypical) natural and actual context diverge

Table 4. *Natural and actual context of the utterance “Scalpel.”.*

As becomes apparent from Table 4, another interesting point in the comparison of natural and actual context is the respective degree of cognitive mediation necessary: in its natural context, the utterance “Scalpel.” merely serves as a linguistically reduced deictic reference and request that keys seamlessly and conventionally into the respective physical context; in its actual context as presented within this paper, the natural context is not directly accessible via sensory perception and, thus, the necessary conceptual substrate cannot not be abstracted from sensory input, but has to be entirely constructed from scratch (or from memory, schemata (see

¹¹ If we think in terms of systematic local and global differences in written and oral communication, the referential difference between use and mention, speech act typology, as well as possible alternative ways to achieve a similar communicative result (albeit differently construed (see 5)), there are also some considerable differences regarding systemic and syntagmatic context. However, elaboration of these would go beyond the purposes of this thesis.

section 4.1), etc.) in the mind of the reader. As a consequence to this increased cognitive mediation and the lack of direct sensory input, it could be expected that the reader is much more likely to experience a vivid mental image (see section 4.2) as an epiphenomenon to establishing the relevant connections to the utterances natural context¹².

From this foundational discussion of natural and actual context, it has become clear that the term “decontextualization” is intuitively misleading, because it suggests a separation from context. Fetzer can be seen as offering a solution to this terminological tension by suggesting the following: “In a dynamic outlook on communication, linguistic context can be decontextualized at a local level, and it can be recontextualized at a global level” (2004: 6). Thus, even though, for the purposes of communication, I did separate the utterance “Scalpel.” from its natural context by using it as an example (i.e. mentioning it), it is cognitively “recontextualized at a global level, where it is supplemented with further contextual information” (ibid.).

Now, in the introduction, Widdowson’s idea of a semantic resource has been referenced as an example of accreditation to the fact that a text as such can serve as a basis for a pragmatic understanding of a text as discourse. However, this is not merely a matter of semantics in the narrow sense. What enables the contextualization of decontextualized utterances such as “Scalpel.” is not only the semantic knowledge we have about the word *scalpel*, its denotation and the fact that it belongs to the semantic field of ‘medical operation equipment’ (Widdowson refers to this as “systemic knowledge” (2007: 53)); what really triggers the context evocation upon hearing or reading the utterance heavily relies on our knowledge about the natural, conventional or even prototypical situations in which the utterance has occurred or could conceivably occur (“schematic knowledge” (ibid.)). Thus, both systematic and schematic knowledge are essential to the recontextualization of a decontextualized utterance. In other words, as has been postulated the opening quotation to the introduction, an utterance is coherent with its context to the degree its recipient can

¹² The discrepancy between actual and natural context with decontextualized texts is an effect often exploited in literature and even pivotal in poetry, where the text is purposefully presented “surrounded by intimidating margins of silence” (Culler 2000: 24). This is sometimes even seen as central feature to the notion of literature (ibid. , cf. the short discussion of the roles of actual and natural context in literature on page 23)

bring their systematic and schematic knowledge to bear on it in a way that makes it “indexically effective in making a schematic connection”. The key term here is “indexically” (although we actually will have a bone to pick with “schematic” later on (see section 3.2)). Note that although Widdowson does not use the term “deictic”, one might intuitively think here of a direct reference to the discourse situation at hand. However, it is clear that the utterance “Scalpel.” as used in the linguistic context of the present account would obviously still be “effective in making a schematic connection” on some level even if it could not be coherently linked up to the present discourse situation.

This reveals a problem with our categorization that has not yet been addressed: the actual context does not have to be a natural context. If I had not been successful in embedding the utterance “Scalpel.” in my argumentation in a communicatively felicitous and meaningful manner, i.e. one that is “indexically effective in making a schematic connection” to the discourse situation at hand, you would have been unable to make sense of it in the context of my argumentation, even though you, the reader of this paper, would have understood the word *scalpel* and made the schematic connection to its (prototypical) natural context. Thus, we have established an important difference between natural and actual context: natural context, as it has been defined here, relies on the recognition of a schematic connection, whereas actual context to some degree inevitably provides a ground to the figure of an utterance (cf. Langacker 1987: 126, 404¹³).

The fact that decontextualization by application of systematic and schematic knowledge automatically reveals what is perceived as natural context and that any actual use of an utterance will be perceived as displaced or decontextualized, to a varying degree, from the this natural or prototypical context (or more precisely, the abstraction thereof formed as a reference point in the mind of a speaker) is roughly what Langacker means by decontextualization (1987: 401) and we will examine this notion and its implications more closely at the beginning of chapter 6 below. For the

¹³ Langacker actually comes to the conclusion that the ground constituted by the physical context or setting of utterances or linguistic units is usually (i.e. except in the case of deictic expressions) “both extrinsic and noncentral to their value” (187: 404). Although he also concedes that some units make salient reference to ground elements and ground elements may also be important when their properties are “more or less constant across usage events” (ibid.), this position still presents a marked difference to the discussion at hand.

present discussion, it is merely important to note that any insightful definition of decontextualization (as well as of natural and actual context) has to recognize the fact that such a process is a matter of degree, a matter of distinguishing natural and actual context, but essentially there can be no such thing as a text presented separated from context¹⁴ because there is always a set of physical, cognitive and textual surroundings present that constitutes the actual context of any decontextualized utterance¹⁵.

This concession is equivalent to the acknowledgement of essential embeddedness, symbolically represented in Figure 1, the frontis piece to this thesis, i.e. that any utterance is essentially embedded in a context by virtue of having a physical and textual form and establishing a cognitively mediated reference. Consequentially, every linguistic unit that is uttered is inescapable embedded in the context of its utterance. The concept of embeddedness is not new to the academic discourse and was introduced by Granovetter, who synthesized various accounts based on what he calls the “argument of ‘embeddedness’” (1985: 481) for the analysis of economical data. Said argument states that the focal elements of a given (economical) analysis “are so constrained by ongoing social relations that to construe them as independent is a grievous misunderstanding” (482). Despite Granovetter’s professed certainty that the concept would have “very general applicability” (507) and despite its obvious usefulness for the study of meaning - in particular considering the abundant research on so-called (context) integrational language models (cf. Duncker 2011 and see 2.3) - the term has, to my knowledge, not yet been claimed for linguistic analysis¹⁶. One notable exception is Fetzer, who does not reference Granovetter, but states that “the premises of embeddedness and context-dependency require

¹⁴ We could make a distinction here between the commonly used phrase “separated from its context” and “separated from context”, amending that the former makes sense, if the possessive pronoun refers to some conception of natural context (as it usually does).

¹⁵ Recognizing this inescapable contextual embeddedness (see below) actually compromises the distinction between sentences and utterances, because even sentences in their most abstract and decontextualized conception are only accessible to the degree that they are uttered (in writing or speech) and, as such, inevitably embedded in an actual context (cf. the explicit discussion of this in section 8.1).

¹⁶ This is not to say that the idea that social context is crucial to any realistic analysis and that any linguistic action (just like any economic action) is inevitably embedded in it has not been recognized in broad areas of linguistics (cf. e.g. Widdowson 2004: 19, Pike 1954: 2 on “Language Behaviour and Non-Language Behaviour Fused in Single Events”). But as of yet, it seems that Granovetter’s terminology (i.e. “embeddedness” in a technical sense) has remained predominantly specific to the field of economics.

sentences, utterances and contributions to be produced and interpreted in accordance with contextual constraints” (2004: 30).

In any case, it seems quite easy to extend the notion from “social” embeddedness (which after all can be seen as a high-level abstraction from physical and cognitive context (cf. Fetzer 2004: 7)) to include physical as well as cognitive/conceptual (and thus general) embeddedness. Embeddedness in all of these contexts is an undeniable reality regarding any linguistic sign(s) or unit(s), recognizing the fact that “[t]ext implies context right from the start, so textual interpretation necessarily involves a consideration of contextual factors” (Widdowson 2004: 35). The implications of recognizing this essential embeddedness in the linguistic domain is potentially problematic however; at least it is, if one subscribes to the Saussurean concept of linguistic value (1959: 111ff), which is often understood to mean that linguistic signs are “by nature purely differential” (121) and derive a certain value that is not fixed to their denotation or form, i.e. “the concepts [and forms] are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system” (117). Taking this view to its logical extreme, it has to be postulated that both concepts and forms, though they may be relatable to entities outside their respective and combined systems, are not affected by embeddedness as far as value is concerned (which is exclusively determined by their embeddedness in a linguistic system). However, arguably signs are not just meaningful by virtue of their values but also have a formal pole (i.e. sound or writing) that is concrete and definite and a semantic pole that represents a profile against a conceptual ground, and thus signs are essentially embedded. Now, the whole point of Granovetter’s concept of embeddedness is that embeddedness is not only a fact of the real world, it is also indispensable when it comes to meaning (and its analysis). If we agree with Saussure that a main component of linguistic meaning, in fact the aspect that makes social interaction and systematic analysis of language even possible, is a sign’s value, this obviously does not add up. Of course, as will be discussed in section 3.1, Saussure was predominantly interested in the systematic abstractions, the patterns underlying language use rather than establishing a maximally descriptive mode of analysing linguistic meaning. To emphasise this distinction within his own writing Saussure distinguishes two aspects of linguistic meaning: value, which refers to

the place of a form or meaning within the linguistic system, and signification, which refers more generally to the meaning of a sign. Saussure himself concedes then in no uncertain terms that, although both are relevant for the study of meaning, value is not signification (1959: 114). As such, the semantic pole (or signified) of a sign as well as its abstract form (or signifier) can be understood in terms of its value, which is embedded in the system of linguistic values, and in terms of signification, which recognizes the embeddedness of the sign in cognitive/conceptual and physical context¹⁷. In fact, from this perspective, Saussurean value and the concept of embeddedness seem to key into each other as both profess the dependency on the surroundings and the system as a whole.

If we take a closer look on the relationship between concepts (signifieds) and forms (signifiers) on which Saussure's concept of linguistic value is based, we see that although a concept is linked to a form in the union of the sign, both the concept and the form undergo a process of abstraction within the linguistic system that assigns them a specific value. Thus, speaking in terms of conceptual value, the concept is to some degree independent from the actual configuration of its orthographic or acoustic representation as long as that form corresponds (or is perceived to correspond) to the respective value in the system of linguistic forms. In other words, from a value-perspective it doesn't matter how I say or write a specific word as long as it can be identified. Thus, the concept associated with the word *scalpel* will be embedded in its own conceptual value system, but will be unaffected by the specific formal representation by which it is represented as long as that form is still identifiable as the word *scalpel*. This view is echoed by McCloud, who states that "[i]n *non*-pictorial icons [i.e. language and other highly conventionalized symbols] meaning is *fixed* and *absolute*. Their appearance doesn't affect their meaning because they represent *invisible ideas*" (McCloud 1993: 28, original emphasis). McCloud – like Saussure – does not mean that linguistic signs are immutable and entirely exempt from meaning

¹⁷ Most unfortunately, Widdowson (1978) makes a similar distinction although with a substantially different orientation: he associates signification with abstract grammatical meaning and value with meaning in use (11), relating the two terms to his distinction between usage and use as elaborated in 6. This is not unreasonable, for signification is indeed a vaguer notion for Saussure than is made out here: disregarding the influence of representation (see below), for Saussure distinct values may be associated with the same general signification (1959: 116). For the purposes at hand, this and Widdowson's version of the signification-value distinction will be disregarded in favour of a differently weighted classification.

change or flexibility, but he wants to point out that due to their high degree of conventionality and abstraction (as opposed to the mimetic representational nature of pictures) the meanings of letters and words are not affected by variations in visual design. Consequentially, all instances of the word *scalpel* listed in Figure 3 below are associated with same value (both in terms of signifier and in terms of signified), whereas, according to McCloud, a pictorial representation of a scalpel would be much more susceptible to a change in meaning triggered by a change in representation¹⁸

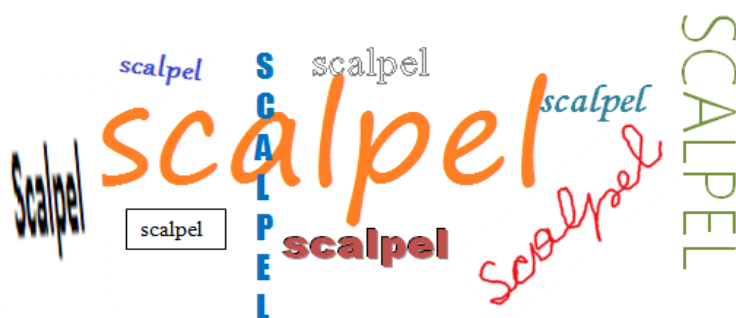


Figure 3. Variation in visual design/representation of the signifier *scalpel*

To some degree, this is true: we can clearly identify the same lexeme *scalpel* in all instantiations above (value of the signifier) and we also feel that the semantic denotational meaning, the meaning “core” (cf. Zelinsky-Wibbelt 2000: 92, Taylor 2003: 108), of *scalpel* remains the same in all representations above (value of the signified). On the other hand, there is a slight change, one that, building on Saussure’s differentiation, we could classify as a change in signification. Some of the instantiations of the word *scalpel* above (as well as their overall juxtaposition) e.g. foreground the writing or representational domain (cf. Figure 2 in the introduction which was styled in order to recall a usage situation, communication). Although in the system of linguistic signs, the value of *scalpel* arguably remains constant in all its instantiations, there is an undeniable difference in connotation with each representation. This becomes even clearer, if you consider Figure 4 below.

¹⁸ As far as representations are concerned, Saussure is admittedly more concerned with speech than writing, but he also touches on orthographic representation (1959: 23ff) and comes to a similar conclusion (119f), i.e. that the actual concrete form of a representation does not matter so much as the abstraction based on it, not the sound but the “sound-image” (11) or, expanding this metaphor, not the marks on paper, but the letter-image. This assertion, that the meaning of linguistic representations are not substantially affected by the manner of representation, relates to and is compromised rather strongly of course by the idea of (linguistic) construal, discussed in chapter 5 below.

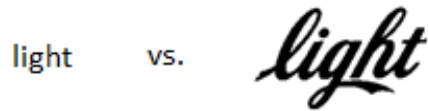


Figure 4. *Variation in visual design/representation of the signifier light*

I did not even go full haul, with this example, selecting white as the font colour and red as the background colour for the second instantiation of the signifier ‘light’, but even so we cannot pretend that there is not a pronounced difference in signification, even though both forms in Figure 4, might have the same abstract Saussurean value in the system of a linguistic forms. The left form is presented in a non-salient (cf. discussion of salience in section 3.2, Langacker 1987: 39ff) design, that is most likely to trigger prototypical natural contexts and concomitant senses of light, probably something along the lines of ‘illumination’ or ‘minus weight’. If the necessary cultural knowledge is accessible to you, however, the right form will undoubtedly be associated with the meaning ‘sugar-free’ in the natural context of soft drinks. This difference in interpretation can be traced to two important realizations.

Firstly, the actual concrete form that a signifier takes in the form of written or spoken linguistic data, does not only relate to a signified, i.e. some abstract conceptual meaning, it is actually to some degree constitutive of that meaning, non-arbitrary not only in its conventionality and analysability (cf. Langacker 1987: 12), but also in its essential embeddedness in a wide range of context. Thus, we would have to concede that far from being a mere “vehicle” (cf. Evans 2009: 63) for conceptual content, the form is not merely identified as an instantiation of one formal linguistic value and representation of some conceptual value, its concrete realization makes conceptual content accessible and relevant that would not even be touched upon by the conventional abstraction related to value.

Secondly, if we do not want to concede that the two forms in Figure 4 actually are two different signifiers, the abstract value of a signifier has to be differentiated from its concrete formal realization (i.e. sound or writing), or the linguistic construal (see chapter 5) from its orthographic/acoustic representation. This representation of any linguistic sign or unit, the real-life realization or instantiation of its abstract signifier schema (cf. Langacker 1987: 68 and 2008: 17 on schema instantiation) constitutes the most basic and most inescapable manifestation of context. In other

words, the form representation of any linguistic output constitutes a micro-context which is part of its actual context and plays a role in the evocation of the meaning (via natural contexts) associated with it (cf. Evans 2009: 16, “manner of utterance” as “contextualization cue”).

Actually, Saussure himself acknowledges this need to distinguish between the value of a signifier (the construal) and the actual form that it takes (the representation) and emphasises the essentially abstract nature of the former. Almost in the same breath, however, Saussure emphasizes the non-linguistic nature of mere form:

[I]t is impossible for sound alone, a material element, to belong to language. It is only a secondary thing, substance to be put to use. All our conventional values have the characteristic of not being confused with the tangible element which supports them. For instance, it is not the metal in a piece of money that fixes its value. A coin nominally worth five francs may contain less than half its worth of silver. Its value will vary according to the amount stamped upon it and according to its use inside or outside a political boundary. This is even more true of the linguistic signifier, which is not phonic but incorporeal—constituted not by its material substance but by the differences that separate its sound-image from all others. (Saussure 1959: 118f)

Looking back on the previous discussion, it seems quite apparent that here is a fallacy here, an inconsistency: it should be apparent to everyone that ultimately the value of a piece of money is not really separable from its material embeddedness. It is indeed “not the metal in a piece of money that fixes its value”, but the material reality of that metal nevertheless exerts an influence on the value it represents. Money may be an arbitrary and conventionalized way to represent value, but what that value actually means and signifies is shaped by the form it is represented in. After all, the knowledge that something may be worth 30 Euros is only meaningful, if something exists that can represent 30 Euros. Likewise it is with language (cf. Gibbs’s notion of “an embodied view of linguistic meaning” (2001: 1)).

For Saussure, the only part of the form that is relevant to linguistic analysis is the abstraction from it that corresponds to the formal value in the linguistic system (cf. section 3.1). However, as has been shown, it is simply not true that formal differences, as long as one underlying formal value can be identified, are irrelevant in the interpretation of a linguistic sign. By interpretation I mean here the recognition of

some formal representation as (conventionally) meaningful, i.e. systematically related and relatable to context. Widdowson, in this respect, makes an interesting distinction between “identify[ing] a stretch of language as text” and interpreting it by realizing the relationship it has to its context (Widdowson 2004: 36). This also corresponds to Hofstadter’s distinction between recognizing the frame message on the one hand and the inner message on the other hand as elaborated above. The point is that for Saussure interpretation of a sign in the linguistic sense appears to be seen as relying almost entirely on the sign’s value, the abstract construal; in fact, the interpretation of a sign to some degree is only possible, because an underlying abstract construal is recognized. While this is undoubtedly true, language, after all, only really exists in the concrete form of representational output, and even though there is more to language and linguistics than the mere totality and physical reality of that output (e.g. underlying abstractions, grammars, etc.), neither language nor linguistics could exist or be meaningful without it (cf. Allan 1986: 1).

This fallacy, which implicitly assumes the principled (linguistic) meaninglessness of concrete forms by virtue of a correlating abstract value within the linguistic system as a whole, might be called the value fallacy. It goes all the way back to Saussure’s fundamental distinction between signifier and signified (1959: 67), his general views on the subject matter and object of linguistics (6-22) and particularly to his elaborations on the value of the signifier (117ff) which eventually led to the phonemic and phonetic distinction. The latter was eventually even recognized as a generally useful distinction in linguistic theory by Pike (1954) who established the more abstract notions of emic and etic categories for the description of linguistic units from a systemic or a more generally descriptive perspective (Pike 1954: 8ff).

It is important to note that the value fallacy is only a fallacy to the degree that it is understood in the broader context of Saussure’s delimitations of the subject of linguistics. If we were to take the perspective of general semiotics, we could just postulate the existence of individual signifiers, wherever a formal difference is perceived that affects signification. However, the problem comes in when Saussure also insists on the notion of immutable value for distinct instantiations of one signifier. On the one hand, this is not done without reason, since the (etic) representations *scalpel*, **scalpel** and SCALPEL indeed all seem to represent the same (emic) unit

‘scalpel’. On the other hand, the consequence of this distinction is that the specific interpretation of what clearly constitutes the representation of a linguistic unit in one particular way (i.e. the interpretation of *light* as ‘sugar-free’) is seen as neither of linguistic concern nor import. Even though this point of view is corroborated by a long-standing tradition to largely disregard the associative meaning or connotation of a word and define its strict semantic meaning or denotation as focal point of analysis, it still seems to be called into question by the case at hand.

If we postulate that it is the object of linguistics to isolate and analyse the ways in which “people make meaning, and make *out* meaning in texts” (Widdowson 2007: xv on the study of discourse) the process and reality of the different evocation is clearly of linguistic concern. But even, if we take a much narrower definition (involving systematicity and a focus on conventionally meaningful forms, e.g. see an extract of Widdowson’s (1996) delimitation of the scope of linguistics restated in chapter 3) the issue would still fall squarely into the domain of linguistic inquiry. Of course, a case has to be made for the distinction between the field of linguistics in general and the more abstract notion of grammar (cf. section 2.3 and chapter 3). Arguably, a systematic account of generally applicable rules and principles (i.e. a grammar) is more justifiably based on the idea of value rather than oriented towards maximal accountability for contextual reference and aspects of meaning, even though these issues are of linguistic concern. However, as will be argued below, this dissociation of grammar from the context of actual language use (and general linguistic interests), although analytically useful in many respect, is not only problematic in an exhaustive description of linguistic meaning, but also highly inconsistent, because many grammar models do indeed strive to account for contextual embeddedness and reference (cf. section 2.3). If nothing else, we will see later on that the analysis of *light* and related phenomena proves highly revealing about meaning formation processes (i.e. imbuelement with CGP) to be discussed in more detail in chapters 6 and 7 below.

It is easily apparent that this analysis of meaning drawing on the (actual) micro-context of the linguistic representation is of particular relevance to the analysis of written data. As pointed out by Widdowson, the participants in written communication are only rarely placed in the same discourse situation (2007: 21);

usually, there is a delay and, with it, displacement, which is where the (partial) divergence of natural and actual context comes in. In fact, this side-effect of written communication is often exploited in literature, which usually intentionally backgrounds the discourse situation and context of reading (i.e. actual context) in favour of the natural context that the world spoken of relates to. Sometimes the natural context in question is left intentionally unidentified (e.g. if a narrative begins directly with a dialogue among unidentified characters), as a strategy to give immediacy to the world spoken of and the related events which are presented as unmediated (cf. Culler 1975: 134, and the discussion on the different degrees of cognitive mediation on page 16 above). On the other hand, the author may also draw specific attention to the written format and make it part of the plot (as in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, *Jane Eyre* (to some degree) or any of the wide range of epistolary novels). Both of these strategies can only be successful, however, because they are essentially embedded in the actual context of the literary genre¹⁹: anyone who has ever read a book knows that a) what he reads has been written by someone, i.e. it is a form of communication, and b) there will be a story, a narrative that focuses, in all likelihood, on other events than that communicative situation and draws on an entirely different set of contextual information. From these few considerations, it has already become clear that there is much to gain in an analysis of meaning and context by looking at the play with and on both of these notions in literature (cf. Culler's excellent *Literary Theory. A very short introduction* (2000), but also discussions of concretization in section 4.2 below).

Finally, there is one further aspect of actual and natural context that I want to address before moving on. It has been mentioned in the general introduction to context above that Langacker's maximal concession to the idea of cognitive mediation is not without problems. Here is one: although it may be true that the relevance of context is essentially based on cognitive selection and abstraction and not directly linked to physical reality as such, some contextual aspects, e.g. the micro-context of the form or the macro-context of the literary genre, are so tightly bound with any

¹⁹ This relates to the actual macro-context of the literary genre as well as to the actual micro-context of formal representation associated with that genre (e.g. line-breaks (in poetry), *Times New Roman* as font, (written forms in) books, etc.), whereas the latter is understood to trigger, formally perpetuate or key into the former.

utterance that it appears almost unwarrantable not to acknowledge the physical verisimilitude of that relevance. In other words, even though reference to context is essentially always an act of cognition, cognition is not the only factor relevant to its execution. This, the imposition of physical reality, is not denied within the Cognitive Grammar framework and other approaches that admit to a high degree of cognitive mediation (cf. Langacker 2008: 29, 2006: 114), but it is definitely backgrounded to a degree that sometimes borders on the verge of disregarding that some contextual facts are inescapably relevant, i.e. that any formally realized linguistic unit is essentially embedded in an actual context.

This fact can be accounted for, however, as has been attempted to elaborate in the preceding pages, by regarding the concrete realization of a signifier, the definite form of a linguistic unit as a kind of micro-context, an aspect of the actual context and a consequence of the essential embeddedness of any such formally realized (i.e. spoken or written) linguistic unit. This actual micro-context, by virtue of exhibiting formal coherence with other contexts, may in turn reference a displaced natural context in the mind of the recipient (cf. Figure 4), which is particularly apparent in the analysis of written (or recorded spoken) data due to the inherent inevitability of displacement. The distinction between signifier and signified as well as the distinction between meaning, signification and value, although useful in many domains of linguistic analysis has been shown to be problematic with regards to meaning and context because both forms and concepts are essentially embedded in complex and inter-systemic ways that hardly allow the categorical delineation of meaningfulness in different facets and degrees of formality. Instead, linguistic forms can be seen as holistically meaningful with reference to different kinds of context. It is this reference that determines the full meaning (i.e. denotational and connotational) associated with the form.

That this reference is essentially cognitively mediated and ongoing has already been intimated above. But what this cognitive structuredness of context and the implied dynamicity of the ongoing reference process actually entails and how it can (and should) be reconciled with a view of context as a physical reality will be discussed in the next section.

2.2. A dynamic mental construct

If it is the reference to context (its embeddedness) that makes up the meaning of a form, it has to be immediately amended (or rather reiterated) that both that reference as such and the particular context are by nature essentially dynamic and cognitively mediated. Let us start with yet another definition of context to set the ground for the related arguments:

The set of premises used in interpreting an utterance [...] constitutes what is generally known as the *context*. A context is a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world. It is these assumptions, of course, rather than the actual state of the world, that affect the interpretation of an utterance. (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 15)

This definition of context essentially echoes Firth's view that context is "best used as a schematic construct to apply to language events", and one that consists of "a group of related categories at a different level from grammatical categories but rather of the same abstract nature" (Firth 1957: 182)²⁰. The inherent appeal to the psychological or abstract nature of context, or its essential degree of cognitive mediation and abstraction, as has been noted above, constitutes an important amendment to context typology's like Allan's (1986). However, it is equally important to realize that even naturalistic perspectives on context that see context as such as a feature of the real world are not incompatible with the claim that some sort of mental abstraction process comes into play in the meaningful exploitation of context. In fact, it is possible to present these two views as two alternative perspectives on the same phenomenon: the naturalistic and mentalistic perspective on context.

It is clear that in order to use context as a resource for meaning construction there has to be some abstraction from reality (because, arguably, that is what meaning construction is all about). It is also very plausible to assume that abstraction rather than reality itself as the direct source of the relevant contextual information for the interpretation of an utterance. In a naturalistic conception of context, this process of abstraction is conceptually excluded from the notion of context; in a cognitive or

²⁰ In fact, Firth's implicitly stated criterion of relevance ("relevant features", "relevant objects" (1957:182)) is taken up as central tenet in Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory. Firth's views on context or "context of situation" are also picked up in some detail, reviewed, critiqued and further developed by Widdowson (2004: 39f), who also comments briefly on Sperber and Wilson's model (42) and this ideological debt to Firth (43).

mentalist conception, however, context is, in fact, defined as the product of that abstraction and distinct from reality²¹. Both are valid perspectives and both have their respective advantages for the analysis of context and meaning. The account at hand, is more inclined to the naturalistic perspective, postulating that the realization of meaningful conceptual connections between linguistic forms and context (be it physical, cognitive or linguistic) is how and why context becomes cognitively salient and, consequentially, meaning arises.

The recognition of the physical reality of actual context (i.e. context in a naturalistic conception) seems necessary to fully account for the online modification and negotiation of meaning that is typical for communication in particular and the interpretation of signs in general. Thus, the interpretation of a notice such as *Out of order* stuck to the wall next to a vending machine is aided by the actual context at hand which identifies the referent of the notice. If somebody were perceived to walk up to the vending machine and buy a sandwich, however, the erstwhile appropriate interpretation would be challenged and maybe modified (e.g. there might be a different referent, the notice may be old, or it might have been a ruse). Taking these considerations as a general example, it stands to reason that any interpretation process is informed by continuous back-checking of or reference to some aspects of context (Zelinsky-Wibbelt 2000: 7f). Although this reference is inevitably cognitively mediated, it has an actual physical basis that imparts certain details on any human conceptualizer (Dirven Verspoor 1998: 15). Those details may not even be consciously recognized as contributing to the interpretation process, but, as has been demonstrated in the discussion of Figure 4, there are subtle but decisive differences in the interpretation of certain signs that can only be explained with reference to actual context.

As for the apparent ideological dilemma that context (or contextually derived meaning) as a “psychological construct”, even as an extension on an otherwise naturalistic stance, seems to be in conflict with the formalistic or sign-centred perspective that I professed allegiance to in the introduction, I can offer a similar

²¹ These distinctions mirror, to some degree, the distinctions made between conceptual matter and semantics in section 5.3. Correspondingly, a naturalistic perspective implies a congruence or a subset relation between reality and context, while a mentalistic perspective implies a derivational relation.

argument as the one I offered for the adoption of this approach in the first place: one cannot help but construct a context; it seemingly inflicts itself upon any thinking and acting being just as meanings triggered by linguistic forms seemingly inflict themselves on the minds of language users. Therefore, in order to account for this experiential truth, it makes sense to analyze contextual linkage as centring on the linguistic unit or form, which actually serves as a trigger (cf. Widdowson 2004: 86, 2007: 31) for the activation of the corresponding connections to context, even though this activation process is obviously a cognitive one. Consequently, if it becomes necessary in subsequent discussion to focus on the fact of cognitive mediation and abstraction, I will therefore use the terms “psychological construct” (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 15), “schematic construct” (Firth 1957: 182), “conceptual substrate” (Langacker 2008: 42) “mental construct” (Widdowson 2007: 27)²², meaning or simply make the mentalistic perspective as such explicit; otherwise I will use the term context in its naturalistic sense.

However, even when taking the naturalistic perspective, there is one side effect of context as a mental construct, i.e. its inherent cognitive mediation and abstraction, that is inescapably relevant to any analysis of meaning as a form of contextual linkage; namely, what has been referred to as the “‘dynamic’ character” of context (Van Dijk 1977: 191). This property of context emerges naturally in a speaker-centred or even more precisely a communication-centred discussion of context as a mental construct. Thus, Widdowson conceives²³ of context as the “socio-cultural conventions from which the online pragmatic processing of language takes its bearings” (2004: 54); since this involves ongoing “conversational negotiation” (2007: 65), in which the participants frequently have to “shift [their] frame of reference and adjust their expectations” (2007: 30), it is clear that the underlying mental constructs also have to be shifted and adjusted to fit the communicative and interpretive purposes at hand.

²² As will be clear from the terminology alone, each of these highlights a slightly different aspect of context in its mentalistic conception.

²³ According to Widdowson (2007) all context is, in fact not “perceived” but “conceived” (21); this and similar assertions (e.g. “context is not an external set of circumstances but a selection of them internally represented in the mind” (Widdowson 2007: 20)) grounds Widdowson’s conception of context firmly in the realm of the mentalistic perspective.

On the one hand, this seems to imply unambiguously that context as a mental construct is dynamic. On the other hand, however, this shifting and adjusting in relevance and, therefore, in the selection of contextual information can be conceptualized as dynamic fluctuations in meaning that can only be accounted for with reference to context. Such a stance is indeed taken up by advocates of formal grammar such as Kamp and Partee (2004). Thus, within the framework of Kamp's Discourse Representation Theory (Fernando 2004: 118) and similar approaches the idea of context change potential has emerged which is based on

a conception of meaning that is "dynamic" in that an expression is interpreted (under that conception) by the change in context (or states) it induces. That is, the meaning of an expression e is the binary relation $\llbracket e \rrbracket$, called [...] its *context change potential* (CCP), on contexts (written $s, s', \dots$), recording its input/output behaviour,
 $s \llbracket e \rrbracket s'$ iff on input s , e can output s' .

(Fernando 2004: 117)²⁴

Put in simpler terms, this means that an expression's meaning can be analyzed in terms of the change in context that it entails. This is reminiscent of Fetzer's claim as stated earlier that "an utterance [...] is, in its own right, an event that shapes a new context for the action that will follow" (2004:7, cf. also Hayakawa 1942: 64). However, beyond that, the concept of context change potential, as illustrated in Figure 5, raises a couple of issues that have not yet been discussed.

²⁴ Readers unfamiliar with this kind of description (and associated formalisms) may turn to Hofstadter (1999) for a playful, if slightly eclectic introduction to the workings of formal systems in general or Van Dijk (1977: 19-42) for a very useful and brief introduction to formal semantics with particular attention to its application (and applicability) to natural language(s).

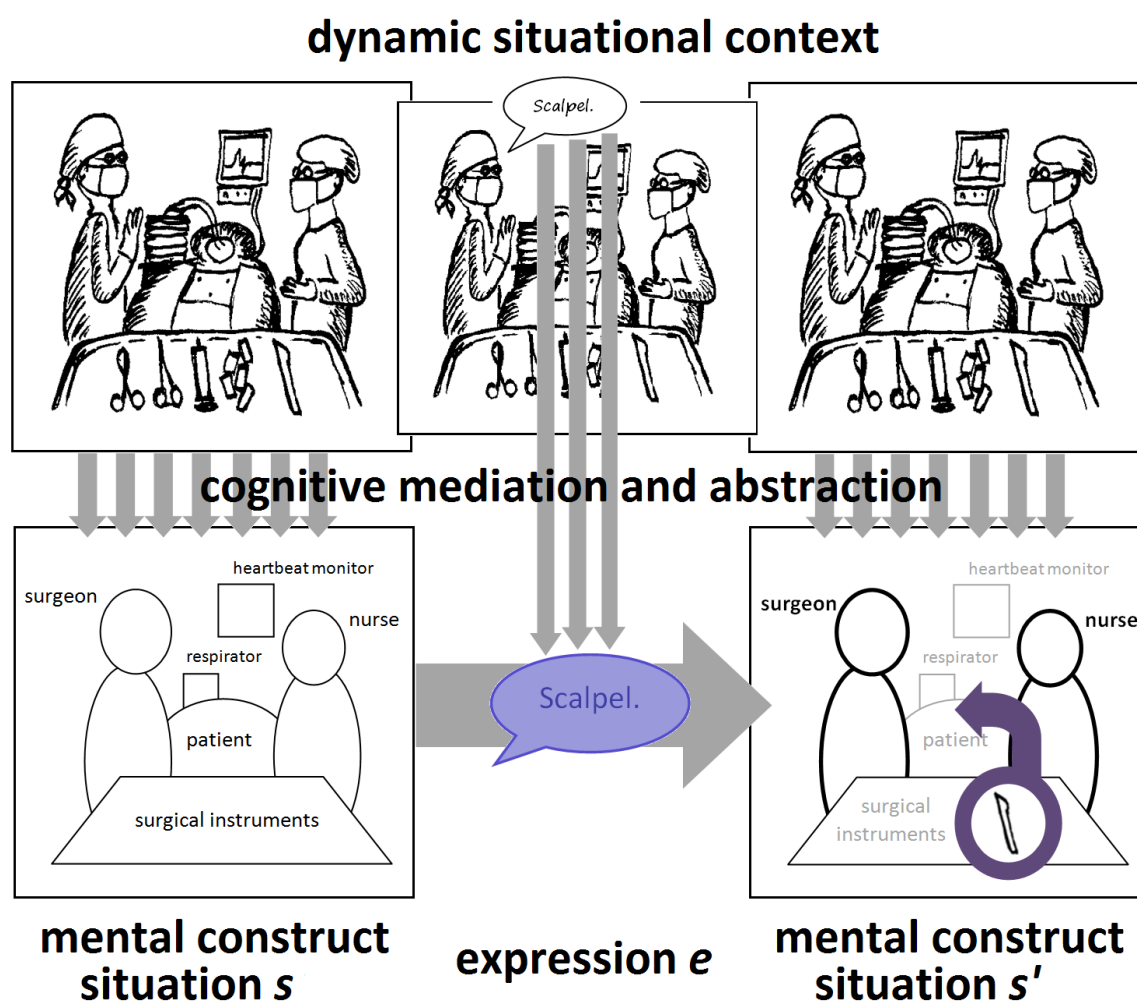


Figure 5. Illustration of the context change potential $\llbracket e \rrbracket$ for e defined as “Scalpel.”

Figure 5 shows at the upper left corner the representation of a real-life setting that can serve as a contextual basis for a discourse situation. Indeed, moving from this panel to the right, we see that by the occurrence of a speech act (second panel) which leaves no direct physical mark on the physical context after it has been uttered (third panel) a stable set of contextual components can be construed as a dynamic situational context. I am intentionally using the term *construed*, because this unified perception over time is, of course, already an abstraction (as is the bounded perception of just one moment in time of course). However, the degree of cognitive mediation and abstraction is very low in this case of construing a dynamic situational context so that we can almost see it as acknowledgement of reality. Context (in its most naturalistic conception) is obviously open to change through actions, speech acts, change of location and passing of time. As such an analysis of meaning in relation

to context inevitable has to be either dynamic and flexible or static and segmented. The latter option is implemented into the theories surrounding the notion of context change potential (indeed, an offshoot of Kamp's Discourse Representation Theory is Segmented Discourse Representation Theory (cf. Asher 2004: 29ff)). This also becomes clear when looking at the lower part of Figure 5, which gives a sequential representations of static mental constructs (cognitively) abstracted from the real-life context as indicated by the grey arrows. Representations such as the ones given there are highly schematic, i.e. they represent only in broad categories what is perceived to be relevant about the context at hand²⁵. Accordingly, the left-most panel in the lower half of Figure 5 represents a direct abstraction of the original context configuration (called situation *s*), while the speech bubble represents an abstraction of the utterance scalpel "Scalpel." (expression *e*). Finally, the right-most panel represents the mental construct derived from the context after the expression *e* has been uttered (this is called situation *s'*). Even though the actual sound output has left no mark on the context as such (see upper right-most panel), the abstraction has changed by the speech act which has made the scalpel on the table and the two speech participants (subjectively) more salient, and also, if recognized as a request, implemented an awareness of what is being requested as indicated by the purple arrow.

On the one hand, this idea of analysing meaning in terms of the perceived change in context it entails is quite intriguing. It has the definite advantage that the relevant aspects of context would be isolated by the comparison of fixed parameters (*s* and *s'*) without having to define fixed parameters of relevance as such (cf. discussion in section 2.3). In fact, a similar proposal has previously been put forward in the form of Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory. Their notion of "contextual effects" (1986: 108ff) can certainly be said to correspond to Kamp's idea of the context change potential and one of their rudimentary definitions of relevance actually recalls Fernando's characterization of the context change potential as stated above:

²⁵ Since the representation of dynamic situational context is just a sketch, albeit a considerably less schematic one, this is true to some degree for both representations. The difference is that the upper representation only stands for an essentially non-schematic portion of reality, while the representations in the lower half actually stand for schematic representations in the mind of some human conceptualizer (cf. Dirven 1998: 15, briefly explicated in 5 below).

Relevance

An assumption is relevant in a context if and only if it has some contextual effect in that context. (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 122, original italics)

On the other hand, however, even though this relativization of contextual unboundedness through relevance appears to be a very plausible and analytically useful move, it still seems apparent that *s'*, like *s* itself, is based on a cognitive abstraction from actual context. After all, it is not the case that we, as thinking and communicating beings, enter a certain setting, make one schematic mental construct of that situation and then are blind to any additional aspect of that context or detail that is not explicitly highlighted by verbal or other action. The process of perception, and therefore of cognitive mediation and abstraction is clearly ongoing. It follows logically, that the contextual effect observed by the formal realization of one utterance is not only determined horizontally with reference to previous schematic constructs, but also vertically with reference to context. One might argue that this influence is rightfully neglected, because it is not a direct consequence of linguistic activity. But, at the same time, it is clear that a realistic account of meaning effects as triggered by linguistic forms has to account for the embeddedness of those forms (and meanings) into the actual context of its use, even if that necessitates the acknowledgement of extra-linguistic factors²⁶.

This is recognized to some degree by Cognitive Grammar, which construes linguistic activity in the broader context of human cognition, conceptualization and perception (Langacker 1987: 12f). The implied multi-layeredness of dynamicity is also partially acknowledged by Widdowson's notion of "the negotiation of meaning" (2007: 53), but much more explicitly by Zelinsky-Wibbelt's "continuity of reference" (2000: 7f), which "allows the particular referential tokens to be adjusted in actual usage events to the specific requirements of each individual discourse situation" (ibid.). To some degree, this idea that reference to context is ongoing and results in an ever-shifting configuration of concepts also already hints at the problems of the schematic

²⁶ To some degree, this view has already been put forward and perpetuated of course within the theoretical assumptions underlying the field of Discourse Analysis. Nevertheless, I think that a general acknowledgement of the varied and influential contextual constraints that determine linguistic behaviour would also be beneficial in many other areas of linguistics and would provide a substantial supplement to many proposed (modes of) analyses.

meaning representation hypothesis, which simply cannot account for some meaning phenomena related to connotation and the triggering of some conceptual links by seemingly irrelevant details (cf. discussion in chapter 4)²⁷.

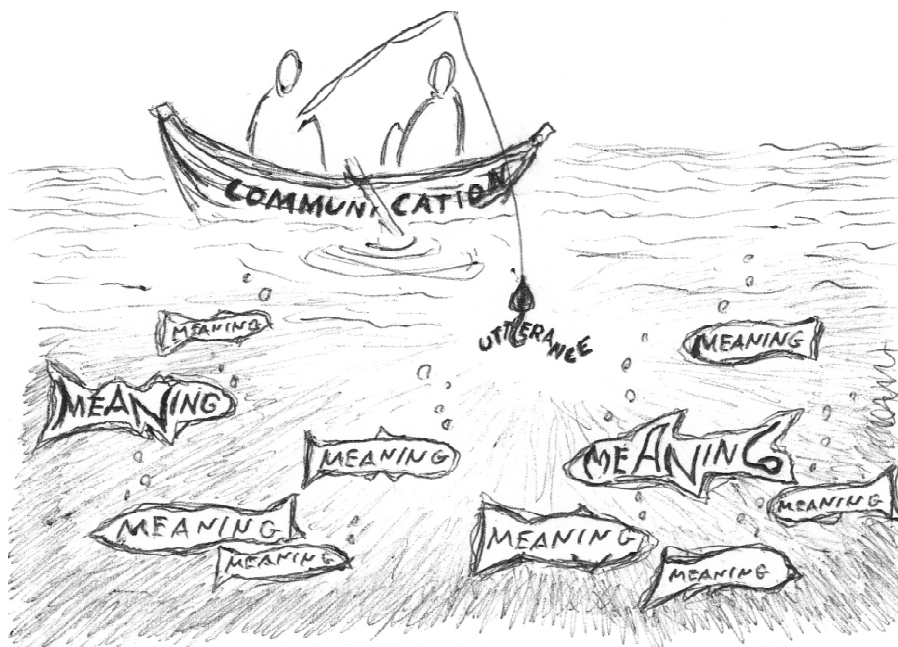


Figure 6. A fishing trip to Lake Context – the meaning pool.

It has become clear from these elaborations, however, that even the cleverest account sensitive to the dynamic nature of context or meaning can only approach the representation of that dynamic nature within a systematic and formalized notation by segmentation, and the unfixedness of certain variables. This can be expounded with the aid of a few metaphors (cf. Langacker 2006: 107f). Consider, for instance, Figure 6 above. Here, context is seen as a lake. Following that metaphor, any communicative situation can be compared to a fishing boat in which two or more people engage in the activity of fishing, i.e. making statements and utterances open to interpretation in the specific context. This act of interpretation obviously depends of the context, but only some contextual information will be deemed relevant for the interpretation of context. This relevant information corresponds to the fish that actually bites, i.e. attaches itself to the utterance, becomes a salient component to the contextual

²⁷ This is not to imply that schematic representation may not excellently serve to represent dynamic processes as illustrated in Figure 5; in fact, Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk in her visionary discussion of cognitive structure principles and how they could be employed in a dynamic reworking of semantic theory (1986) explicitly conceives schemas as “global patterns of events and states ordered in sequences linked by time proximity and causality, arranged in progression” (112).

ground. In many respects, this is not a bad metaphor and we could elaborate on it in various ways, e.g. by including (communicative) competence in stating that the experienced angler will, of course, be aware what kinds of fish are most likely to go for a specific bait (in a specific lake etc.).

However, there are two undeniable problems with it and both relate to dynamicity and fixed variables: firstly, the metaphor cannot account for the ongoing flexibility of meaning entailed by an acknowledgement of the continuity of reference (sure, it is possible that if the same utterance is made twice a different meaning attaches to that utterance, but there is no accounting in this representation for the fact that the meaning of the first utterance may have shifted simply by this re-statement of that utterance (cf. Schiffrin 2006) – after all, fish do not usually spontaneously mutate in the presence of other fish); and secondly, the temporary salience of specific contextual components does not entail their decontextualization (such as a fish being pulled from the water), they are still embedded in the macro-structure of context and as such can inevitably only be delimited vaguely (cf. Zelinsky-Wibbelt 2000: 7) and with fuzzy boundaries (cf. Langacker 2008: 138).

Another metaphor is represented in Figure 7, in which context is seen as the ground on which a spider fixes its net. The spider represents the lexical trigger, i.e. the utterance or word that is at the centre of a network of (meaningful) connections to context as represented by the cobweb. Since these meaningful connections may include links to other words or utterances, which, as has been stated, can also be considered part of the context, this implies spiders hanging their nets on other spiders. Even with this slightly weird spin this cobweb metaphor is still pretty useful but, unfortunately, exhibits the same deficiencies as the lake metaphor: although both map meaning construction and reference to context onto dynamic processes (i.e. fishing and the weaving of a web respectively), those processes are not fluctuant enough to account for the extraordinarily dynamic nature of context, which results from the complex interplay of a dynamic context and a dynamic mental construct, which both affect each other (vertically) but are also seen as a sequential configuration of segments (physical or conceptual) that are interlinked (horizontally) to present one dynamic whole.

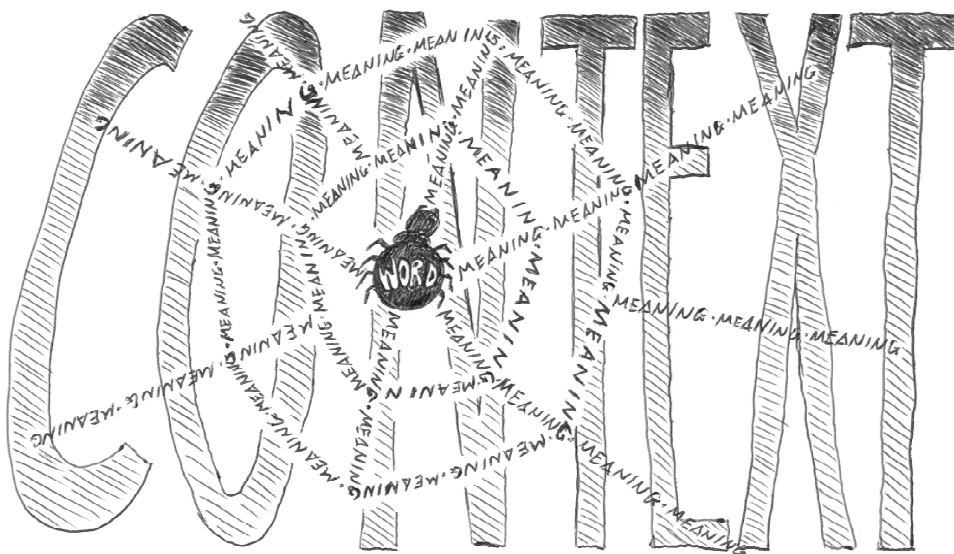


Figure 7. *The meaning web.*

2.3. Problems with formalization

In section 2.1 I have offered a brief critique of Cognitive Grammar and other approaches that admit to a high degree of cognitive mediation when it comes to context by pointing out that such a practice tends to understate the role and influence of physical context as such. As a result, problems relating to context (e.g. flexibility of reference (Zelinsky-Wibbelt 2000: 3)) are often reduced to issues of cognition and the schematic representation thereof via fixed parameters, when in fact non-schematic factors, fluctuant relevance and the configuration of reality as such (i.e. context in its naturalistic sense) are often undeniably relevant to the delimitation of the issues at hand. One aspect of this problem simply lies in the issue of discreteness when it comes to meaning representation as discussed in detail by Langacker (2006). From this perspective, one of the pitfalls of schematic meaning representation, particular of Langacker's schematic meaning network model, which is basically comprised of a schematic representation of different senses which are depicted as linked by "categorizing relationships between nodes" (Langacker 1987: 379) and arranged according to centrality (Langacker 1987: 158ff) to the overall meaning that the network represents (i.e. the most prototypical or profiled meaning, up a central position). An illustration of this is given in Figure 8 below, which is taken over from Langacker 2008: 226.

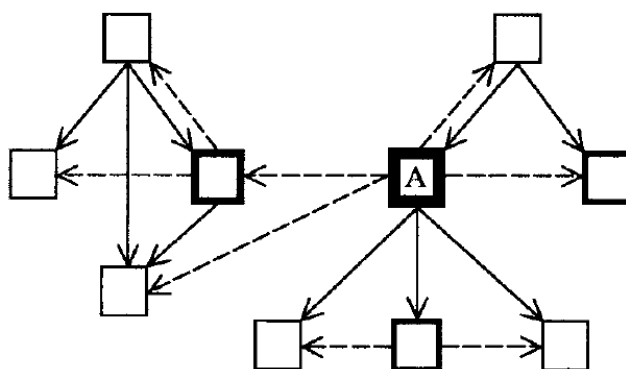


Figure 8. *Schematic (meaning) network schema (reproduced from Langacker 2008: 226).*

One of the problems with this representation (although it provides a distinct advantage over list-typologies (see below) in specifying a hierarchy and sense relation), is the fact that it inevitably specifies discrete senses, when, in fact meaning (as well as context) is evidently continuous to a large degree (cf. Langacker 2006). The schematic network representation was, in fact, proposed to paint a more continuous picture of meaning and explicate the view that meaning is essentially encyclopaedic rather than based on a dictionary-like structure of a mental lexicon (Langacker 2008: 38). The latter is obviously in line with the here propounded view that meaning depends on an essentially unbounded referential process to all kinds of context. However, the schematic meaning network, the figure head of this campaign toward continuous meaning representation and reference to context, has swiftly become one of the weak points of that very view on the basis of its discreteness. Another necessary ingredient and spear-head of any attack on it has already come up in the discussion at hand: relevance. Combining these two notions, the following critique can be concocted: even if meaning can be seen as dependent on an essentially open-ended or unbounded network of senses and knowledge (the so-called encyclopaedic knowledge, which basically corresponds to the totally of cognitively mediated and abstracted context²⁸), it is completely unwarranted to assume that all of the senses abstracted from this unbounded pool of knowledge are available at the same level of

²⁸ The portion of context then activated or deemed relevant for the interpretation of a particular expression would be Langacker's conceptual substrate. This and other notions such as centrality and activation mean, of course, that to some degree Cognitive Grammar is sensitive to the issue of relevance. However, it is important to note that relevance is only imposed as a filter on existent structures rather than implemented as a guiding principle in the individual emergence of these structures (cf. chapter 7).

discreteness. If it were, all senses even only marginally relevant ones would be considered as discrete entities and in any interpretation of the corresponding utterance they would have to be considered as such, which would mean an enormous amount of processing effort and is simply unfeasible. This is essentially an elaboration of the problem with the unboundedness of context mentioned above and, of course, as has been pointed out by Langacker (2006) it is not so much a problem of the theory as of the associated conventional representations. This notion of (representational) discreteness makes the problem of unboundedness very tangible: unboundedness is particularly problematic if it is subjected to representation via a set of discrete units; less so in a network model, which is essentially arbitrarily expansive (although this merely converts the issue into the also already mentioned problem of delimitating boundaries). Nevertheless, the basic point is, that even with the network structure, encyclopaedic knowledge is still represented like dictionary-knowledge to some degree because it distinguishes a representationally bounded, but conceptually unbounded mass of discrete senses (like a dictionary).

To escape this criticism, Langacker has introduced a new representational metaphor called the “topographic metaphor” or the “mountain peak metaphor” (2006: 126 and 147 respectively). According to Langacker, this metaphor stems from neurology where it is used to refer to the “state space” of neurological or cognitive systems (126). Adapted for the representation of meaning, valleys correspond to less salient meaning components and peaks to something like distinct senses (cf. section 3.2 for elaboration of the metaphor in relation to entrenchment and salience). Thus, the issue of discreteness is resolved; and even if the whole meaning topography is seen as potentially relevant, the issue of processing effort is also kind of resolved by the fact that no discrete senses have to be considered until relevance of a certain area has been established from which the meaning can then be concretized²⁹. One of the problems of this metaphor, however, is that it remains inevitably vague and difficult to apply in the actual linguistic analysis of particular instances of use.

²⁹ The notion that a particular meaning is derived not only by abstraction from reality, but also by concretization from the portion of already abstracted topography of encyclopaedic knowledge that is deemed relevant for a particular interpretation will be of pivotal importance in the discussion of meaning evocation in chapter 4 (specifically see section 4.2).

This cannot be said of other approaches that seek to incorporate the physical reality of context on the basis of fixed and discrete parameters which form something which might be referred to as list-typologies, i.e. a classification model that is based on discrete typological categories which, if listed and specified exhaustively are seen to provide an adequate representation of context or meaning in context. Unfortunately, when the physical reality of context as such is taken seriously and attempts are made to implement it into a systematic and formalized model of language in this particular way, the results have arguably been hardly more successful; more to the contrary in fact. Without recognizing the reality of cognitive mediation and continuousness, theories get stuck with arbitrarily fixed and unjustifiably discrete parameters, the (universal or even prototypical) relevance of which for linguistic meaning is often not attested within most of the accessible data. Thus, approaches such as Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (briefly reviewed by Widdowson 2004: 27-35, with a specific focus on the formalization of context), Barwise and Perry's situation semantics (1983; a short overview is given by Kempson 1996: 566f) and Hengeveld and McKenzie's typological exposition of Functional Discourse Grammar (2008) all aim to somehow incorporate situational context into systematic analysis or at least account for contextual embeddedness with the aid of universal primitives such as the theme/rheme distinction (Widdowson 2004: 29), the notions of field, tenor and mode and corresponding functions (Halliday and Hasan 1985: 12ff), "states of affairs" (Barwise and Perry 1983: 49, Hengeveld and Mackenzie 2008: 166), "Subacts of Reference" and "Subacts of Ascription" (Hengeveld and Mackenzie 2008: 88). These abstract categories are meant to capture the fact that linguistic resources are used in a specific and systematic way to make reference to context. However, as has been pointed out by Sperber and Wilson, the relevance of any categorization varies considerably from one situation to the next:

At each point in discourse, the hearer has in the forefront of his attention a different set of assumptions, which he may never have processed together before, and may never process together again.
(Sperber and Wilson 1986: 118)

While it is true that some structural properties of linguistic units seem to be specifiable in a predominantly formalistic analysis, the inclusion of the real world and discourse situations as reference points into any grammar is problematic precisely because of

this state of affairs that the relation to context is non-static and cannot be accounted for by one fixed set of variables.

Theoretical or linguistic categorizations are usually systematically and logically coherent and even constrained to some degree by the extent to which they are accounted for in the conventional repertoire of a language (cf. Hengeveld and Mackenzie's criterion of formal encoding (2008: 5)). Nevertheless, if context relations as codified in a language are sought to be included into systematic linguistic analysis this is supposedly done to better account for the nature of embedded meaning in use. If this inclusion is not informed, however, by the principles of relevance and situational dynamicity, they will inevitably fall short of just that and, at best provide a model of extended semantics. As Widdowson puts it:

[w]hat lies behind a text is discourse, not grammar. The study of discourse, in this sense, crucially involves relating text with context, so it *has* to be separated from the study of grammar. This is not of course to say that such study can be conducted *separately* from grammar, for this, as Halliday says, provides the essential semantic resource to be drawn on [...] (Widdowson 2004: 34-35, original emphasis)

This appeal to leave context to the discourse analysts is also to some degree taken up by grammarians, even Functional Discourse Grammarians like Falster Jakobsen, who conceives the maximal scope of grammar as a

model of possible or potential standard combinations of items in a language and the standard understanding of the manifestations of these combinations [...] Anything more specific than that will leave the field of modelling applicable to many instances behind, to become a mere description of specific circumstances. And this is not really the idea of grammar. (Falster Jakobsen 2005: 520)³⁰

Context to context, grammar to grammar. On the whole, this surely is a sensible partition and with the above stated aim in mind (i.e. to make modelling "applicable to many instances"), most of the categorical abstractions meant to account for contextual linkage and implemented into the various grammar models are also reasonably justified. But, if both grammar, i.e. an exhaustive model of "the

³⁰ In this context, i.e. the model-theoretic fear of contextual over-specification, the notion of powerfulness of a specific grammar theory sometimes emerges. Thus, Hengeveld and Mackenzie profess that "[t]here are so many aspects of the context of interaction that could be argued to have an impact upon a speaker's linguistic choices that modelling them within our theory would deprive it of much of its power" (2008: 10).

possible or potential standard combinations of items in a language”, and discourse interpretation can be linked to the same underlying processes, e.g. a continuous reference and evocation to certain elements of context triggered by linguistic forms, the situation would be quite different. After all, the connection of grammar and context would emerge naturally from the unifying underlying principle in this case.

There is still the ideological problem, of course, that analysis of such a process in its actual occurrence would necessarily be maximally descriptive, which is after all, at least according to the quote above, “not really the idea of grammar”. However, others have argued that contextual specification is in fact the central “idea” not only of grammatical analysis but of grammatical structure as such. Thus, Widdowson (1990), in response to the typical learners’ reproach that grammar is useless nonsense far removed from the practical reality of language and communication, asserts that grammar is a systematic verbal context-specification strategy to systematically enhance the “contextual plausibility” (80) of any represented propositions, suggesting:

[...] that it is the function of grammar to reduce the range of meaning signalled by words so as to make them more effective in the identification of features of context (Widdowson 1990: 92)³¹

As such grammar itself can be seen as a descriptive device that makes use of conventionalized structures to refer to specific contextual configurations. But language (generally³²) does not attempt to formalize context exhaustively; which is where the principled analysis of the underlying representation and evocation processes could and should come in to account for what grammar alone cannot explain (even though the interpretation of its structures is invariably affected by it). Last but not least, such an analysis would logically continue the trends towards contextual accountability within linguistics (as illustrated by the emergence of the theories and grammar frameworks mentioned above) as well as corroborate trends in general attempts to formalize context towards realistic and cognitive/experiential accountability (Van Dijk 2008: 109).

³¹ The here inherent idea of meaning scope reduction relates to the discussion of draining in section 8.2.

³² Cf. Fetzer and Oishi’s referral to “entextualization” as a topical interest of linguistic investigation that “examines how context as an unbounded entity is lexicalized and thereby assigned the status of a bounded entity and thus an object of talk” (Fetzer and Oishi 2011: 2)

The isolation of this underlying process of contextual reference and meaning evocation (centring on the phenomenon of Contextual Generative Power) and its development into a theoretically sound and grounded analytical principle will be the subsequent objective of this thesis.

Taking stock of what has been said about context on these preceding pages, it becomes clear that we have to acknowledge context, but it undoubtedly makes systematic analysis difficult. Far from ruining everything, however, we potentially get a much richer and more accurate linguistic description of meaning, if the notion of naturalistic context together with the mental construct subtracted from it can be implemented into a linguistic theory. We have seen that many types and kinds of context have been distinguished in the name of descriptive accuracy. However, aiming at the isolation of unified principles, we can easily disregard most of these categories in recognition of the fact that essentially similar processes of cognitively mediated and abstracted connection or connecting are at work: the distinction between physical, cognitive and linguistic context is therefore artificial and theory-driven, because the portion of reality that provides the physical context obviously also undergoes cognitive abstraction before it is made useful for linguistic meaning construction; cognitive or conceptual material can also be seen as part of reality (it too must have a physical base or medium); and finally, linguistic context is nothing more than an assembly of physically realized forms (i.e. sound or writing) and associated cognitive or conceptual structures. Nevertheless, in order to distinguish degrees of cognitive mediation and abstraction that result from the essential embeddedness but also the essential displacement and decontextualization of utterances (Langacker 1987: 401), it becomes necessary to distinguish natural and actual context. Finally, the dynamicity of context in both its naturalistic and mentalistic conception as well as the principle of relevance has to be recognized in order to appreciate the difficulty of formalization of context and the necessity of some sort of segmentation even in the most holistic description of connections to context. Thus, for the purposes of analysis at hand context is best conceptualized and represented as a situational substrate i.e. an inevitably static representation of the relation between a dynamic context and a dynamic mental construct, a relation that may also be referred to as meaning.

This is distinct from Langacker's conceptual substrate because it includes direct referential links to (the relevant components of) actual real-life context and not just a schematic conceptual representation of that context³³ (cf. chapter 8 for a discussion of the implications this perspective has on the conceptualization of linguistic meaning in the context of the linguistic sign). Basically, situational substrates could also be characterized as structured conglomerates of contextual references derived from one or more specific situations (of linguistic use). As such they constitute a theoretical proposal to account for emergent and dynamic meaning in terms of actual and natural context and will play a central role in the subsequent argumentative development of the overall theoretical framework elaborated in this thesis.

³³ The notion of a situational substrate is also relatable to Ogden and Richard's concept of an "engram" (1969: 53).

3. Conventionality and Creativity

poetic license. *a poet's freedom to use language creatively; a writer's freedom to break conventional rules in order to use language playfully and creatively, usually to create mood or enhance meaning*

- definition from a *poetry terms flashcard* collection found on the internet

To some degree, the world is structured by dichotomies, and philosophy or science even more so: ethics is about good and evil, mathematics is about proofs and theorems, engineering is about flying or falling, and modern physics (especially considering recent work on time travelling etc. (cf. Stewart and Cohen 2005)) often seems to be about fact or fiction. However, we usually feel that one of these categories is primary: ethics is more about what is good than what is evil, mathematics is more about proofs than about theorems, engineering is more about what flies than what falls, and physics is definitely more about facts than about fiction. At least that is what our intuition tells us. But if we stop to think about it, it becomes clear that the second (or secondary) element is not only essential to delimitate the first, there is also an ongoing process at work, an assimilation of the latter into the former: evil becomes moralized, theorems get proven, falling approaches flying (e.g. with the construction of parachutes), and fiction spawns theory which enables research which yields facts (cf. Stewart and Cohen 2002b). This is the fascinating nature of dichotomies and binary thinking, their fundamental separation and unification over time, their concomitant “splitting” and “lumping” (Goldberg 2006: 45); and perhaps one of the best examples for these tendencies comes from the field of linguistics.

Linguistics, as many (perhaps all) other fields of inquiry, has been shaped by a few basic dichotomies, which were originally designed to delimit the scope of the field. In his short but concise introduction to linguistics, Widdowson characterizes the situation as follows:

[L]inguistics has traditionally been based on an idealization which abstracts the formal properties of the language code from the contextual circumstances of actual instances of use, seeking to identify some relatively stable linguistic knowledge (*langue*, or competence) which underlies the vast variety of linguistic behaviour (*parole*, or performance). (Widdowson 1996: 96, original italics)

Indeed, Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole* (1959: 9, translated as "language" and "speech") and Chomsky's almost equally famed dichotomy of competence and performance (1965: 4) have left a deep mark on the field of linguistics. And as Widdowson notes, there is a similar abstraction or idealization underlying both categorizations: both Saussure and Chomsky intended to define linguistics "proper" in terms of the first element of their respective categorizations (*ibid.*), a systematic abstraction from "the contextual circumstances of actual instances of use", i.e. the essentially chaotic data base provided by the second element. These delineations as well as the ideological implications of their preferred, negotiated or oppositional readings by subsequent theorists and applied researchers have been far-reaching; in fact, while there have been increasing efforts to formalize and systematize actual language discourse (cf. 2.3 above) and, thus, reclaim language data that has been traditionally deemed outside the scope of linguistics as transferable into the systematic order staked out by *langue* and competence, there is also hardly a linguist who wouldn't concede that there is at least some element of disorder and idiosyncrasy that simply cannot be accounted for in a systematic approach to linguistic analysis. In other words, linguistics is about the conventional ways in which language is used and even very chaotic uses can often be subsumed under conventional processes. Conversely, however, there are some instances of chaotic or creative language use that simply cannot and even should not be accounted for in systematic analysis.

This latter claim is in line with Widdowson's map analogy, according to which it is the purpose of linguistics to shed light on the workings of language, communication and cognition by abstracting from language use in order to distil models. These models often bear little resemblance to reality, but as long as they provide useful information in terms of the purposes for which they were created, these abstractions (that remove them from reality) are perfectly justified, even necessary and useful. Similarly, a map, e.g. of a certain subway grid, only gives information relevant to its purpose (i.e. the navigation of that subway system) and is perfectly entitled to disregard those aspects of reality (e.g. proportional distances, altitude differences, etc.) which are not relevant for that purpose. Theorists and researchers, in their application or evaluation of a certain model, are often tempted to overlook this necessity of abstraction with a certain purpose in mind and are inclined to complain that a particular model is flawed

simply because it cannot account for one or the other aspect of language reality (Widdowson 1996: 18ff)³⁴.

While I basically concur with this portrayal, I still think that many theories may be a little hasty both in their assimilation and in their exclusion of seemingly chaotic data phenomena into/from systematic analysis. It will be clear that this issue of abstraction and idealization, and the seal of primacy and necessity frequently placed upon it, is of utmost importance to an approach that professes a) maximal descriptive accountability of actual instances of language use (for the purposes of an analysis of meaning) , and b) the prominent role of context as such among the relevant aspects under analysis. In accordance with this acknowledgement, I will subsequently strive to provide a brief analysis of the aforementioned dichotomies and elaborate on some ideological implications (section 3.1). This will be followed by a short elaboration of a third pair of categories as employed with the framework of Cognitive Grammar, namely entrenchment and salience (section 3.2). Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion on the use of the fundamental terms and concepts of conventionality and creativity in linguistic theory, and a conclusion on how a revised version of all these notions may be useful to the account at hand (section 3.3).

3.1. Langue and Parole, Competence and Performance

Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, first and posthumously published in 1916, is often considered to be the textual birth place of modern linguistics and more importantly of linguistics as a distinct discipline. It is a birth that was marked by dichotomies: signifier and signified, concept and sound-image, paradigmatic and syntagmatic, diachronic and synchronic; to name only the most influential of Saussure's binary distinctions. The one that is of most relevance for the account at hand, however, is the distinction between the concrete, systematic, well-defined and conventional inventory of structures (Saussure 1959: 14-15), the "principle of classification" (ibid.: 9) underlying all naturally occurring language data on the one hand, and the "heterogeneous mass of speech facts" (ibid.: 14) which gives evidence of its existence on the other hand; the distinction between langue and parole.

³⁴ Cf. Damasio (1999) who describes visual mapping as a "creative" process of abstraction (322), which, of course, relates to the notion of concretization as discussed in section 4.2.

From the very general characterizations given of these terms just now as well as the one given by Widdowson earlier, it is already clear that there are several underlying assumptions and factors that play a role in this distinction. For one thing, the isolation and specification of langue is an abstraction made by a linguist on the basis of parole, and, accordingly, langue is an abstract principle (or principles) of classification that impose the only “natural order into a mass that lends itself to no other classification” (ibid.: 9), i.e. parole. However, langue is still felt to be concrete and tangible to the extent that a) any abstractions incorporated into or constitutive of langue are conventional (i.e. they bear “the stamp of collective approval” (ibid.: 15)) and as such must have cognitive reality, and b) the linguistic signs that underlie it have concrete formal realizations (ibid.: 15). Although Saussure generally acknowledges the abstract and concrete, as well as the social and individual side to language in general (ibid.: 8), it is also made clear that the former element of each pair is definitely more incorporated into the notion of langue:

[Langue] is the social side of [parole], outside the individual who can never create nor modify it by himself; it exists only by virtue of a sort of contract signed by the members of a community. (Saussure 1959: 14)

[Grammatical structures and classifications, i.e. issues/manifestations of langue] exist in language, but as *abstract entities*; their study is difficult because we never know exactly whether or not the awareness of speakers goes as far as the analyses of the grammarian. But the important thing is that *abstract entities are always based, in the last analysis, on concrete entities*. No grammatical abstraction is possible without a series of material elements as a basis, and in the end we must always come back to these elements. (Saussure 1959: 138, original emphasis)

As we can see from these quotations, Saussure actually places heavy (even typographically aided) emphasis on the fact that the abstract concept of langue is irrefutably and unambiguously seated in tangible, i.e. formally concrete and material, linguistic representations. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the explicit and positive recognition of langue necessitates a higher degree of (cognitive mediation and) abstraction than the recognition of parole.

This could be seen in relation to the concepts of natural and actual context as elaborated in 2.2 above. Parole obviously implies the essential embeddedness in

actual context. The notion of langue could be seen as implying the evocation of a natural context. However, what is meant here is a more abstract evocation than the one discussed in the context of the “Scalpel.” example above. What is meant by natural context here relates to the recognition that e.g. the phrase *was writing* is actually an instantiation of the abstract schema on the basis of which past progressive is formed, which is part of the systemic inventory of the English language, i.e. its langue. Thus, the natural context of that structure is not a naturally occurring situation at all, but rather an abstraction made over naturally occurring situations (cf. discussion of Pull in section 9.2). This is true of many natural contexts of course (e.g. the natural context of the “Scalpel.” example is probably such an abstraction), but it is different to the extent that the natural context of ‘past progressive’ constitutes a much vaguer and more abstract situational substrate than the one of ‘medical operation/surgery’: the latter can be expected to be salient enough in the description of a specific culturally known situation to trigger a visual representation of that context, the former usually is not³⁵. This is due to the fact that ‘past progressive’ as a natural context is the product of a highly abstract backformation from actual contexts that is not successful in saliently (cf. section 3.2) describing an actual situation. In other words, the natural context of any explicitly stated abstracted classification incorporated in the notion of langue would only constitute a very vague situational notion. Thus, the high degree of cognitive mediation entailed by that back-formatted displacement/decontextualization does not result in a very vivid mental image (cf. section 4.2). Consequentially, langue is abstract both in its degree of cognitive mediation and abstraction and also to the degree that it fails to be associated with one particular (or salient) situational substrate.

The fact that the underlying system of language, the langue can be intuitively delineated albeit implicitly and in negative terms³⁶ e.g. by means of grammaticality judgements, is one of the foundational recognitions that lead to another dichotomy

³⁵ This is of course only a default assumption based on a general discourse situation as actual context. If the actual context is part of an academic paper e.g. on a cognitive approach to past time grammar with respect to EFL learning or on analysing the progressive aspect and its acquisition by EFL learners, or includes the authors of such papers as recipients/readers, this may be different and the natural context of ‘past progressive’ may be felicitous in its link to some situational substrate.

³⁶ Concerning the accessibility of implicitly prevalent systematicity in negative terms see the discussion of Goldberg (2011) and statistical pre-emption in chapter 9.

introduced by another pivotal scholar in the field of linguistic; namely Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance (1965). As has already been noted, Chomsky's dichotomy bears some strong similarities to Saussure's, but there are also some marked differences. Chomsky himself notes as the prime difference that

it is necessary to reject [Saussure's] concept of *langue* as merely a systematic inventory of items and to return rather to the Humboldtian conception of underlying competence as a system of generative processes. (Chomsky 1965: 4)

This difference, though of paramount importance for Chomsky, is not seen as the real issue in the account at hand however. Arguably, there is a more fundamental distinction in the general focal points and origins of the two dichotomies, of which the distinction between "a system of generative processes" and a system of classification is a mere entailment. This difference in perspective becomes evident, when we consider Chomsky's definition of his two notions:

We thus make a fundamental distinction between *competence* (the speaker's knowledge of his language) and *performance* (the actual use of language in concrete situations). (Chomsky 1965: 4)

Chomsky's notion of competence is clearly primarily not of social scope, but of individual; not focused on abstraction, but on rules for production. Of course these rules are still more abstract than the "actual use of language in concrete situations" as denoted by performance. However, rather than being abstracted away from use or implicitly present as an abstract classification schema (as *langue* in *parole*), competence is seen as the abstract basis from which actual use is concretized by "generative processes" until the (generated) linguistic units receive material and, thus, inherently less systematic form. Moreover, the evaluative implications of the term "competence" have enabled Chomsky to moor the notion of grammaticality as a by-product of a well-defined system of generative processes in the locus of the individual language user.

From the sum of the preceding elaborations on both Chomsky's and Saussure's dichotomies it is possible to draw a rough correlation chart as attempted in Figure 9 below. We have seen that both *langue* and competence are associated with the abstract system underlying the heterogeneous mass of linguistic data that is constitutive of both *parole* and performance (cf. Widdowson's characterization as

stated above). Beyond that, however, Saussure links the abstract system (langue) to the social reality of language to the extent that rules and conventions bear “the stamp of collective approval”, while every instance of use (parole) is seen as “an individual act” (1959: 14). Chomsky, on the other hand, links the abstract system (competence) to the individual “speaker’s knowledge of his language”, whereas the “actual use of language in concrete situations” (parole) is presumably seen in the context of communication, i.e. socially.

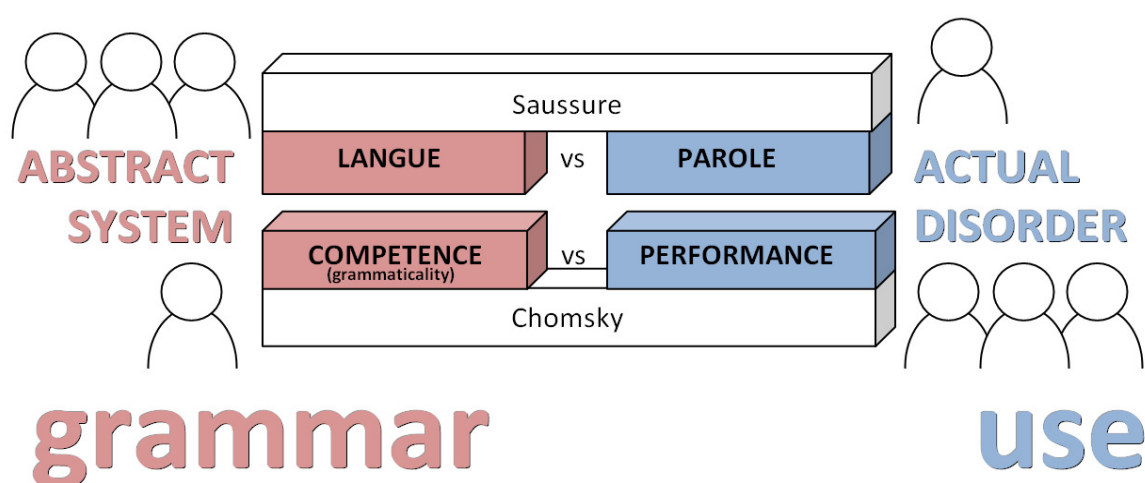


Figure 9. Saussure's and Chomsky's dichotomies of language rules and language output.

The fundamental problem with both distinctions is, however, the fact that the second and concrete element is seen to be only relevant to linguistic inquiry in terms of the first. As Chomsky puts it: “[t]here seems to be little reason to question the traditional view that investigation of performance will proceed only so far as understanding of underlying competence permits” (1965: 10). To some degree, this is justified, for unless certain patterns can be found in the heterogeneous mass of data, it surely cannot be analysed in a meaningful way. On the other hand, however, we must concede that all language data is meaningful to some degree merely by being recognized as “language data” (cf. the discussion of Hofstadter’s message model in chapter 2). Thus, the inherently implied rejection of the messy concrete manifestation of linguistic structures in actual use, their abstract purity contaminated by the stigma of actualization and communication is inept not only on the basis of the fact that language in use is the only material object of inquiry available (cf. the discussion on

page 24), but also by virtue of its implied meaningfulness through its identification as language data.

In particular, the exclusion of external factors, which actually just means the exclusion of actual context, distances linguistic analysis from actual use and makes it artificial to some degree. This is exemplified by Jackendoff (1996), who relays Chomsky's later distinction between concrete "external language" or "E-language" on the one hand and abstract "internal language" or "I-language" on the other hand and identifies it as the long-standing goal of Generative Grammar to account for the latter (Jackendoff 1996: 539). One of the underlying erroneous assumptions inherent to such distinctions is the view that conventional, rule-governed and correct use of language can be accounted for in a systematic way, while some of the features of actual use cannot be accounted for systematically; or else, it is assumed that any holistically complete systematic analysis accountable for all the mess of language use would go beyond the scope of proper linguistics, i.e. beyond the capabilities and interest of any systemic mapping of language in the form of a grammar. Both of these views have been challenged by the emergence of such fields as Discourse Analysis and grammar frameworks that aim at great accountability for language in use (e.g. Functional Discourse Grammar). The general view prevails, however, that there are simply some aspects of language use, although undeniably relevant to communication and meaning interpretation, that cannot or should not be modelled in a grammar, i.e. an abstract and systematic account of language.

One defining criteria in this respect is conventionality: if something is seen as a conventional unit or structure of language, whether by reference to a social consensus or an individual speaker's linguistic competence, it is relevant to language; if something cannot be identified as conventional, whether meaningful or not, it is not "a matter for the grammar" (Hengeveld and Mackenzie 2008: 12). These unconventional (if not non-linguistic (cf. *ibid.*: 11)) units or structures are at worst regarded as "disorder" or "chaos", neutrally as "detail" (cf. Widdowson 1996: 18), and positively they may be attributed to "creativity". It is this positive interpretation as well as a full implementation of the corresponding concept of creativity into linguistic analysis on even terms with the concept of conventionality that is the goal of this account in general and this chapter in particular. But before we come to that, we have to

consider one more pair of categories that emerged a little more recently and shall be of some significance to the present investigation.

3.2. Entrenchment and Salience

The terms “entrenchment” and “salience” have attained a specific technical meaning in linguistic discourse through their use, definition and elaboration within the Cognitive Grammar theory (Langacker 1987: 59-60 and 39-40, 2008: 16 and 66). Other than Saussure’s *langue* and *parole* or Chomsky’s competence and performance, the two terms do not form a basic meta-systemic dichotomy that is meant to delineate the scope of systemic linguistic inquiry. Rather, they are two independent inter-systemic categories of related and often intersecting scope and importance in the analysis of linguistic meaning and forms within the framework of Cognitive Grammar. Accordingly, they are at first best considered individually before we come to their joint relevance to the present account.

Entrenchment is a concept that has been introduced into linguistic discourse by Langacker to emphasize the continuous nature of automatization in a linguistic system, i.e. the idea that there are not clearly distinguishable units and nonunits in a language (even though it might be necessary to make such distinctions in the abstract system of a grammar), but rather that there is a “continuous scale of entrenchment” (Langacker 1987: 59). It is important to note that this acknowledgement goes directly against the implementation of “a sharp dichotomy” as well as the implicit assumption that there is “homogeneity among structures in either group” (ibid.) into linguistic analysis as is implied to some degree by Saussure and even more strongly by Chomsky (see above). Entrenchment, therefore, can be seen as conventionality with an implied gradience. In fact, Langacker makes a connection between those two terms although he implements the notion of gradience into conventionality as well. What he uses as a distinguishing criterion instead is actually the individual/social focus that has proved instrumental in the comparison of Saussure and Chomsky in the previous section:

For ease of discussion, I am conflating two parameters that eventually have to be distinguished: **entrenchment** or **unit status** (pertaining to a particular speaker) and **conventionality** (pertaining to a speech community) (Langacker 2008: 21, original emphasis; a similar point is made in more detail on page 38 of that book)

Thus, disregarding the implied awareness of continuousness in Langacker's use of the terms, *langue* could be seen as concerned with conventionality and competence with entrenchment. However, for the purposes of the discussion at hand, we will often also conflate the two notions under the header of conventionality. This is not to say that the distinction between meaning in the mind of an individual speaker, and meaning in a speech community and in a contextual environment (i.e. "localized" and "distributed" meaning (Langacker 2008: 29) is not a very important one, quite to the contrary. The conflation merely stresses the facts that, from a formalistic meaning-centred perspective, both kinds of meaning, localized as well as distributed, may be accounted for by the same kind of representations (schematic or non-schematic), even though the specific actualizations will most probably differ.

There are two other aspects of Langacker's notion of entrenchment that have not been discussed, both of them of great importance to the account at hand. The first one is Langacker's explicit acknowledgement of the direct relation between entrenchment and use (of a particular expression or structure) over time (Langacker 1987: 59); this aspect will be elaborated in more detail in chapter 7 below. The second relevant aspect of entrenchment is that it is associated with "ease of activation" (Langacker 2008: 230), i.e. how readily one specific unit, be it formal or conceptual, is selected to represent or is associated with a particular state of affairs for which it may serve as an abstract category. Apart from obviously constituting an indispensable asset to an account that is primarily concerned with the evocation of meaning, it is this aspect of entrenchment also that links it to the notion of salience.

Salience initially was introduced by Langacker in the form of "relative salience" to describe the difference between two different construals (see chapter 5) of the same situation, each of which "highlight[s] one facet of the conceived situation at the expense of another" (1987: 39). Later, it has been associated with "prominence" and used more broadly to describe a general state of relative importance or prominence (2008: 66). In this conception, salience clearly relates to perception and the cognitively mediated categorization inherent to it. The two notions of entrenchment and salience naturally overlap when it comes to ease of activation as illustrated by Langacker's peaks and valleys metaphor, briefly discussed in section 2.3 above, which shall be portrayed more extensively in the following.

Langacker starts out, as a way to resolve the problems of discreteness and paint a more continuous picture of meaning,

by comparing an element's range of meanings to a mountain range, which occupies a continuous expanse but is very uneven owing to rises, depressions, peaks, and valleys. Counting the senses of a lexical item would then be analogous to counting the peaks in a mountain range: how many there are depends on how salient they have to be before we count them, and they appear discrete in the first place only because we ignore how they grade into one another at lower altitudes. (Langacker 2006: 146)

Thus, salience becomes the delineation criterion for determining a maximal degree of entrenchment, or as Langacker puts it "higher peaks correspond to senses that are more salient and thus more deeply entrenched"³⁷ (2006: 147).

One interesting and highly relevant aspect about this relation between salience and entrenchment is that although both of them are seen as instrumental in the delineation of particular senses (or perceived units in general), they imply radically different criteria for this delineation. While entrenchment is about continuity and consistency, about automatization (Langacker 1987: 59, 2008: 16) through constancy and, quite frankly conventionality; salience is concerned with prominence, with sticking out, with difference, choice and alternatives, and in some very real way it is about creativity. Conventionality in every conception from Saussure over Chomsky to Langacker is about constancy over time, about an adherence to or manifestation of rules, and about generality. These are clearly aspects that are in accordance with the concept of entrenchment. When we are considering evocation or ease of activation, however, there are many instances that cannot be accounted for by these criteria. In fact, it often is their irregularity and specificity, in short, their creativity, which makes them salient.³⁸

³⁷ Langacker notes in this context, that the peaks and valleys metaphor, in this conception, is "incoherent" with the metaphor implied by the term of entrenchment (2006: 147), which suggests topographical deepening, the literal making an impact or an impression in the mind. However, this inconsistency (i.e. that counter-intuitively peaks represent the most deeply entrenched elements), though ideologically undesirable, need not bother us here.

³⁸ This is not to say, of course, that creativity is inevitably removed from or defiant of all systematic principles and rules. In fact, notions of creativity have always depended, to some degree, on a definition with relation to rules, even though they are of very different relevance than with relevance (see section 3.3).

To illustrate this point, think back to our discussion of signifiers in section 2.3 above: the two representations of the word *light* as depicted in Figure 4 were both instantiations of the entrenched and salient abstract unit ‘light’. However, the representation on the right (i.e. *light*) was decidedly more removed from the abstract schema that it instantiated and as such more irregular and specific than the instantiation on the left. On the other hand, however, it is this underlying creativity (i.e. the marked straying from the most conventional representation) that awards relative salience to that particular representation. Since this particular representational creativity and salience has been exploited through marketing and advertisement and used over and over again, it has, in turn, become conventional and entrenched. However, since linguistics is usually seen to be concerned with the entrenchment and salience of abstract categories only, these circumstances (although blatantly relevant to the interpretation and use of linguistic signs) are traditionally seen as non-linguistic concerns.

Even limiting ourselves to the realm of abstract forms (i.e. construals, in accordance with the distinction made in section 2.1 on page 23, however, we can find examples of a similar interplay between entrenchment and salience, conventionality and creativity. Consider, for instance the well-known utterance in Figure 10 below.

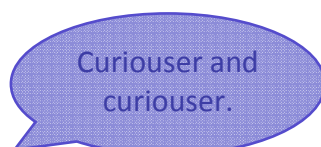


Figure 10. An example of entrenched salience/ conventional creativity.

If this utterance is known to you, it will in all likelihood immediately evoke the natural macro-context of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* and possibly also the (natural context of the) situation in which it was uttered by the character of Alice. It might, however, also evoke a very different situational substrate based on a natural context in which the utterance itself was used already displaced/decontextualized from its original context of the book. In either case, the reason that the utterance was felicitous in evoking the respective context is an intricate interplay of entrenchment (albeit not to the degree of reaching grammatical unit status) and salience: i.e. due to its grammatical irregularity (i.e. its creativity), the utterance is salient enough to provide an unambiguous reference to its original context of use. This has been

exploited by me and possibly other people who have quoted this particular utterance. Finally, if the decontextualized utterance was successful in evoking any of the natural contexts mentioned above, this is evidence of its entrenchment, to the degree that it can be used conventionally and relatively unambiguously to refer to (or evoke) one particular context. Other than with the example above, however, here, it is the original creativity (salience) and subsequent conventionality (degree of entrenchment) of the abstract construal rather than the concrete representation that exerted influence on the meaning that was most likely to be evoked by it.

In both the case of *light* and of “Curiouser and curiouser.” salience and entrenchment play an undisputable role in the referencing of a particular natural context. Both of these terms, in turn, have been associated with conventionality (as implied by Saussure’s *langue* and Chomsky’s *competence*) to the extent that an abstract system or grammar of language is composed of deeply entrenched elements that are awarded unit status and relative salience with relation to each other. Creativity, on the other hand, is a trickier and as of yet more undefined notion. Clearly not every element of *parole* or performance that cannot be accounted for within the system of *langue* or *parole* is necessarily a creative defiance or extension of that system. As has been argued before, many irregularities could possibly be accounted for in a systematic analysis, albeit one that is not traditionally considered a linguistic one. Nevertheless, creativity has been associated with any aspect of *parole* and performance that cannot be accounted for within *langue* or *competence* to the degree that any such irregular instances of use are seen as a) extensions of the rules of *langue* or *competence*, or b) the exploitation of another system. This has to be qualified by adding that only those irregularities that are perceived as sufficiently salient to be considered meaningful will be associated with creative use³⁹.

³⁹ It should be noted that this emphasis on salience completely backgrounds the notion of volition as identifying criteria of creativity. This emerges naturally from an even-handed distinction between conventionality and creativity; after all people do not necessarily have to be (consciously) aware of certain conventions to act in accordance with them. To some degree the notion of volition (i.e. deliberate and agential application) is definitely implemented in the prototypical conception of ‘creativity’. In its technical sense as conceived within this thesis, however, creativity includes non-deliberate or accidental creativity as well as non-conventional uses that are a direct consequence of external factors (e.g. in the case of typos) as long as they are perceived as saliently meaningful.

These categorizations have set the scene for a final synthesis of the elaborated concepts into the basic distinction of conventionality and creativity as relevant for the account at hand, which will be the purpose of the following section.

3.3. Model-theoretic license

Arguably, the term conventionality has by now been sufficiently linked to and grounded in general linguistic theory with reference to langue and competence. Even though this cannot be said about the notion of creativity, it nevertheless is not quite the blank slate within linguistic discourse that I have made it out to be. In fact, being able to account for creativity (in various conceptions) in the use of language has been used as a selling point for particular linguistic theories and frameworks for almost as long and as routinely as accountability for context (cf. pages 6-7 of the present thesis). What is meant by “creativity” in each of these cases differs greatly, however, from theory to theory and also from the notion as outlined in the present account.

Generative Grammarians, for instance, have frequently claimed that the generative framework is the only one that can satisfactorily account for what has been referred to as the ““creative” aspect of language use” (Chomsky 1965: v). What is understood as creativity in this case is merely the view that “language can (in Humboldt’s words) “make infinite use of finite means”” (Chomsky 1965: 8). This generative conception of creativity, although on the face of it “unassailable” (Taylor 2012: 246), has fallen somewhat into disrepute due to two main reasons. The first one is linked to the fact that much criticism has emerged concerning the Generative Grammar claim that a grammar which can accurately delineate all and only the grammatically correct sentences of a language can actually be defined (Taylor 2012: 249f). The second one consists of the fact that this highly rule-restricted conception of creativity, which in fact implies nothing more than a strict adherence to rules, is so blatantly not what is generally understood as creativity (ibid.).

A more modern conception of creativity emerged with the cognitive paradigm, in which the systematic and conventional use of creative in the sense of figurative language (e.g. metonymies, metaphors) became of prime concern to linguistic analysis (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980). This re-orientation of the focus of linguistic analysis and also of the notion of creativity has been marked by an increased interest in general

patterns of cognition and categorization (e.g. Taylor 2003). Creativity has since also been predominantly associated again with the individual speaker and concrete use rather than with rigorous adherence to an abstract system (Taylor 2012: 250, 262). Yet another conception based on an analysis of both the generative and the cognitive version of creativity (and subsequent dismissal of the former) has been put forward by Zelinsky-Wibbelt:

We rejected the generative definition of creativity as residing in the distinction between a finite linguistic competence and an infinite linguistic performance. Instead, we favoured the idea of creativity residing in conceptual vagueness as a principled condition enabling reference to an infinite multitude of linguistic states. (Zelinsky-Wibbelt 2000: 320)

It should be noted that this definition concerns itself exclusively with the activation of different word senses which may be of varying degrees of entrenchment/conventionality or novelty/innovativeness/creativity (cf. Langacker 2008: 38). However, the idea of “conceptual vagueness” or “contextual functions” (Zelinsky-Wibbelt 2000: 289) that enables (more) conventional as well as (more) creative reference is certainly intriguing and will be implicitly reflected later on (see 8).

It should also be noted that a notion of creativity based on such a fundamental principle as Zelinsky-Wibbelt’s flexibility of reference and the tolerance range of categories (2000: 3) can incorporate both “rule-governed” and “rule-changing” creativity (Botha 1968: 2000), or as Taylor calls it: (system-observing) creativity and (system-changing) innovation (2012: 250). Such an inclusion of creativity as accountable for rule-governed as well as rule-transgressive non-conventional uses is the object of the present approach. However, it should be clarified that rule-governed instances of creativity are still a far cry from the generative notion of creativity, because the only uses that are considered as (partially) creative are (partially) non-conventional ones, i.e. uses that are not determinable by the mere application of grammar conventions. Thus, the element of creativity in the actual use of an utterance may be as minimal as a mere choice between grammatically acceptable alternatives, but as long as this choice is governed by rules that are considered external to the conventional system of a language (i.e. the abstract system of rules, its grammar, langue or competence), it is regarded as creative to some degree. From this

perspective, there can be neither a purely creative nor a purely conventional linguistic construal or representation, because meaningfulness is always predicated by conventionality and the actual realization of linguistic forms always requires a minimal element of creativity through choice among alternatives (the result of which is not fully predictable, i.e. systematically apparent).

That this view of creativity and conventionality implies a set of principles that allows for the flexible discussion and analysis of particular instances of use has already been hinted at in the discussion of *light* and of “Curiouser and curiouser.” above. Beyond that, however, the here explicated notion of creativity as an inherent feature of language (parole and performance) that draws on rules other than those conventionally delineable by a grammar (langue and competence) is also instrumental in a complete analysis of meaning as it arises in the use of language as can be illustrated by discussion of the so-called word-object disambiguation probe⁴⁰ (Goulet 1975: 52f). This probe is a simple “language-game” (Wittgenstein 1953: 5), which may be used as a procedure whereby to test linguistic competence (in a general sense of the word) in so far as to determine that words are used with the inherent systematicity of words and not simply as objects with inherent properties. As such the probe lends itself to evaluating the linguistic proficiency of artificial intelligence programmes or highly advanced animal communication. The latter is actually the context in which Goulet initially presents the procedure, relaying the following fictional exchange between an also fictional gorilla named Oh, who has attained basically human-like communicative proficiency in his acquisition of sign language, and one of his wards:

/The rule of the game is that a “fish” will be called a “dog” ... so, first question: Does a dog have fins?/
Oh hesitated. /Yes, of course./
/Good. Now does a fish have a bark?/
/The rules of the game don’t tell us enough to determine that./
(Goulet 1975: 40)

In this example, the gorilla clearly passes the test, i.e. he has proven that he understands that words are merely arbitrary symbols the denotational scope of which

⁴⁰ The name presumably references Quine’s (1960) book entitled *Word and Object*, in which he elaborates on issues related to the use-mention distinction as discussed briefly at the outset of 2.1.

can be locally re-assigned. In other words, he has proven that he understands that words are conventional (*dog* conventionally denotes 'dog') but can also be used creatively (*dog* can also be used to denote 'fish').

Not only does this example of the word-object disambiguation probe necessitate the reconsideration of an inevitably fixed (denotational) "extension" as basis for the construction of meaning (cf. Van Dijk 1977: 35; for a simple elaboration of extensional and intensional meaning see Hayakawa 1942: 58f), it also proves that creativity (in the form of meaning dilation and the transgression of rules) is inherently linked to the very nature and the underlying principles of how words in particular and language in general mean(s). Although the example given in the exchange above seems extreme and highly artificial (which of course it is), a certain flexibility of reference and creativity of both use and interpretation is undeniable even in the blindest cases of natural communication⁴¹. After all, it is common knowledge that a word or utterance never means exactly the same thing to different people or in different situations or simply if uttered for the second time (cf. Widdowson 2007: 54, Langacker 2008: 29, Schiffrin 2006: 25ff). Thus, language use essentially involves creativity. Conversely, it is equally agreed upon that in order for communication to be effective, there has to be some common ground, some "communicative convergence" (Widdowson 2007: 54f), in short, some aspect of conventionality (cf. Langacker 2008: 29).

As has been hinted at in the general introduction to this section, there are two perspectives implied by dichotomies in general and by distinctions between *langue* and *parole*, competence and performance, conventionality and creativity in particular.

On the one hand, these dichotomies can be used exclusively. In the case of conventionality, this implies the notion of abstraction, the derivation of abstract rules and principles from actual data. Thus, conventionality is seen as a system of patterns (with relative salience and high degrees of entrenchment) that can be abstracted from data. The remainder of the data that cannot be accounted for in terms of these systematic abstractions can be conceptualized negatively as disorder or chaos,

⁴¹ To some degree, this is relatable to Langacker's notion of decontextualization as necessary quality of any expression (see the discussion in 7).

neutrally as detail that can be disregarded for specific purposes, and positively as creativity that, although elusive to systematic analysis, provides an essential aspect of the workings of language. On the other hand, dichotomies can be used inclusively; according to this perspective, langue and parole, competence and performance are both necessary to account for the entirety of linguistic reality, they simply constitute two types of language data that can be distinguished by the apparent ease or difficulty by which they can be accounted for purely by intra-systemic analysis, i.e. a collection of rules that is only motivated by the relation of linguistic signs to each other and to no external systematicity, i.e. a grammar. The delineation of a grammar is then simply a matter of definition and desirable degree of generalization and abstraction, while it is understood that both innovation and automatization play an important role in the emergence of language data as a whole. From the inclusive point of view, therefore, conventionality and creativity are two macro-systematic principles or trends that both determine linguistic structure.

The present account is obviously oriented in accordance with the inclusive perspective. It will be apparent, that this may involve the reference to what traditionally would be considered system-external factors (e.g. specific representations). However, not only is this in accordance with the general trend in linguistics to draw on a broader systematisation of language use (e.g. the whole cognitive linguistics paradigm is not only based on the patterns that arise in the use of linguistic forms and their relations to each other, but also on the links to more general processes of human perception and cognition); it is also a concession to the fact that any delineation of an abstract system is inherently arbitrary and as such questionable in terms of its descriptive accuracy. Of course any systematic analysis necessitates some form of abstraction and generalization (cf. Widdowson 1996: 18ff), but it seems that conceding that any instance of use, even the most unconventional and creative one, is relevant to a theory of language nevertheless goes a long way to insuring real descriptive accountability of that theory for actual language data and not just some ethereal concept of I-language. And after all, as has been argued, language use definitely relies on both conventionality and creativity, particularly when it comes to reference, context and meaning.

Therefore, for better or for worse, I take the model-theoretic license to inclusively incorporate not only conventionality but also creativity in my systematic analysis of language data, and thus, hopefully enhance (the descriptive depth and accountability of my analysis of) meaning.

4. Contextualization and Concretization

By transforming the image from a space of simple discrete points to a congruent space where each equivalent point is described by the intersection of particular qualities in its neighbourhood, we can then give the image in terms of distributions of combinations of those qualities. In short, every point is seen in definite contexts.

- J.Y. Lettvin, H.R. Maturana, W.S. McCulloch and W.H. Pitts
in *What the Frog's Eye Tells the Frog's Brain*

The previous chapters of this thesis have been concerned with general issues of classification, exclusion and inclusion, and the locus of meaning and meaning analysis. Taking into account what has been established so far, we may therefore concede that meaning may be conceptualized as a relation or holistic conglomerate of relations to context. Beyond that, the realization and interpretation of these contextual relations on different levels of meaningfulness emerges from an interplay of both conventionality and creativity. However, as of yet it has not been clarified how meaning actually manifests itself, what processes are involved in the recognition of contextual linkage and how the experiential reality of meaning could satisfactorily be accounted for. It is the purpose of this and subsequent chapters to answer these questions. Presently, I will make the point that two major processes are involved in the recognition of meaningfulness, and that essentially meaning only arises as a product of these two counter-oriented processes. As a starting point for subsequent discussion of this claim, consider the following statement:

- (2) Imagine an English room, with big, old English paintings, English armchairs and curtains and little English carvings on the furniture.

The word “English” does not give much concrete information, but it establishes a natural context or references a frame in cognitive linguistics terms (cf. Taylor 2003: 90-99), which enables, you, the reader of this paper, to make sense of (2). This is a form of contextualization. It should be noted that this is quite different from the evocation of a natural context with the utterance “Scalpel.” as discussed above. In the case of (2), it will most likely not be recognized as an utterance in the sense of a turn-constitutive textual contribution to an ongoing process of communication; in all likelihood, you will have contextualized (2) not communicatively but descriptively. Thus, the natural context that in all likelihood was evoked when reading (2) is not a

discourse situation in which (2) could conceivably be uttered, but a state-of-affairs of which (2) would be descriptive.

If you indeed contextualized (2) communicatively, e.g. as an opening statement by an actor to set up a scene, the underlying process of referencing a particular natural context or situation via a particular situational substrate is the same; i.e. both are instances of contextualization. What is referenced in both cases is schematized knowledge (cf. Widdowson 2007: 53) of particular cultural information or types of situations, which provides a ground, a natural context to the text. However, conceptual reception of this text does not stop there. You will, in all likelihood, not just have understood the semantic and pragmatic meaning potential of the text; but also have formed a concrete picture in your mind (of a respective room or a distinctive actor and stage setting) that far exceeds the information provided in the text and the abstracted information that can be gained from the referenced mental or schematic construct (you may have imagined a flower pattern on the curtains or heavy velvet for example, you may have imagined a portrait of a man or a woman or a landscape, etc.). This process of conceptualization beyond the abstracted and contextualized meaning may be referred to as concretization.

Those two concepts (contextualization and concretization) arguably are at the heart of any conceptualization of meaning and, accordingly, the making sense of linguistic structures, the whole enterprise of language. Philosophically speaking, there are two postulates that can be seen as conceptual preconditions for both these two process in particular and the discursive appropriation of the world (via language) in general:

A) Each and every thing exists in and of itself.

B) Each and every thing exists among and alongside other things.

These two ontological assertions entail two respective epistemological perspectives, i.e. things/linguistic structures and their meanings can be seen as meaningful in and of themselves or in relation to others. The latter perspective has been very famously and momentarily established as a conceptual foundation of linguistic efforts by Saussure (see the discussion of linguistic value in chapter 2 and discussions in chapter 3 above). And indeed, the analytic benefits and perspicuity of a description based on relative difference within a system of “values” is instantly obvious, when one considers that

meaningfulness through similarity and difference is ever-present in conceptualization, the very essence of categorization and abstraction by which we relate real-life objects to mental concepts as well as linguistic construals and representations. The study of linguistic variation and change in particular exemplifies the fact that 'sameness' and 'difference' are conceptually and phenomenologically co-dependent, and that both notions are essentially inescapable in the context of structured analysis:

It may seem obvious that we can represent the 'same' entity or event in other words as a resource for creativity, newness, and difference. But even re-use of the same words can create different meanings and functions – joining the realm of the innovative and new – simply because the redoing of word(s) always appears in a different text, i.e. at the very least in a next-position after a prior-position. (Schiffrin 2006: 31)

This passage illustrates clearly the pervasive meaningfulness of relative salience (through sameness and difference) and additionally links this relational making sense to the discourse of conventionality and creativity that we have been developing in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, Schiffrin also implicitly hints at the essential embeddedness of everything including language data, which implies that by the very fact of being related to the rest of the world, every instance of language use has an essentially unique position in that world. This is particularly plausible in light of the previous discussions about the problems involved in formalizing context based on its inherent dynamicity, continuousness and shifting relevance. Thus, the consistently realized relation to context not only as a mental and schematic construct but also to the real world (including the actual micro-context of the representation) actually necessitates an analysis of things in and of themselves.

This may seem like a paradox at first glance, but recognizing this individual distinctiveness as a natural consequence of essential embeddedness, which provides the basis for abstraction, means to acknowledge the concrete, holistic and analogous nature of reality, i.e. (naturalistic) context (in recognition of postulate A). Category boundaries that are the result of a systemic and schematic rendering of meaning rely on this contextual basis, even though they are at the same time revealed to be mere abstractions based on relative salience by a finer grained perception of it. The major point of this argumentation is, however, that a consistently carried out linkage to context does not only recognize the unique position of any linguistic expression in that

context, but also and particularly it entails the inherently unique and concrete quality of meaning that it evokes. This perspective is primarily associated with the concept of 'Gestalt', which originates in the field of psychology (Gestalt psychology) but has entered linguistic discourse on occasion and in fact has been instrumental in the establishing of some of the most crucial distinctions of cognitive linguistics (e.g. Zelinski-Wibbelt 2000: 32). The meaning of the statement in (1) can be seen as holistic Gestalt meaning, for example, by noting that it is neither entirely predictable from nor divisible into the respective meanings of "imagine", "an", "English", "room", etc., it is meaningful in and of itself. This holistic quality, i.e. presenting one meaning as a unified whole and not clearly segmented as in any schematic representation, associates considerations of Gestalt meaning with imagistic meaning conceptions and "mental imagery" (Bell 1991: 248), although this may be in turn contested by those seeking to emphasize the inherent schematicity of pictures (Mitchell 1986).

The ideological basis of Gestalt psychology and other psychological insights (e.g. Bransford and Johnson 1972) may have motivated more realistic approaches and trends in linguistics (in the sense of being accountable for meaning in use) such as discourse analysis (cf. Widdowson 2004, 2007) and cognitive linguistics (cf. Langacker 2008) as far as accountability with regard to the complexity of meaning is concerned. The general orientation of these approaches, i.e. toward an accountability for contextual effects, corroborates the preceding line of argumentation that contextualization invariably entails concretization. Even when the concrete, individuated mental image associated with one particular instance of language use is foregrounded (e.g. cognitive grammar investigations/portrayals of 'construal' (Radden and Dirven 2007: 21-30)), it is seen in the context of categorization and variational systematicity. On the one hand, this is in line with our argumentation and desirable; on the other hand, however, it brings with it the inherent problem that meaning is usually invariably presented schematically and as schematic. This is, of course, to some degree inevitable in systematic analysis and representation. Nevertheless, there is a concreteness to meaning that goes beyond what is conventionally specified and this should be accounted for.

Subsequent discussions in this chapter will, therefore, elaborate both the notion of contextualization and schematic meaning (section 4.1) and the notion of

concretization and imagistic gestalt meaning (section 4.2), and finally yield the conclusion that both notions are necessary to account for the experiential reality of meaning evocation (even though this may entail some representational and analytic difficulties) (section 4.3).

4.1. Frames and schematic meaning

Probably one of the most general definitions of contextualization is provided by Sperber and Wilson: “a deduction based on the union of new information {P} and old information {C} is a *contextualization* of {P} in {C}” (1986: 108). Another very general definition comes from Silverstein, who defines contextualization in its broadest conception as “some historical-realtime patterning of signs/pattern of signs, relative to a culturally-meaningful type” (Silverstein 1992: 58). A third, more text-centred definition that is in accordance (at least roughly) with our conceptualization of context as presented in 2 is given by Widdowson, who states that the interpretation of any given text relies on

relating the text to something outside itself, that is to say to the *context*: to where it is located on the one hand, and to how, on the other hand, it keys in with my knowledge of reality as shaped and sanctioned by the society I live in [...] (Widdowson 2004: 7, original italics)

A question that immediately arises from all these definitions, however, is what is meant by “information”⁴², “knowledge” and “culturally-meaningful type” respectively, and how these reference structures may be thought of. The answer that would generally be given seems to be: “schematically”. After all, Widdowson frequently emphasises that establishing a “schematic connection” is at the core of successful discourse interpretation (2004: 53), Langacker notes the inevitability of schematization (2008: 17), and Fauconnier and Turner paint a picture of meaning in the form of schematic “conceptual integration networks” (2006). “Schematic” in all of these contexts means an abstract generalization over specific uses or as Langacker puts it

⁴² Cf. Stewart and Cohen (2002a) who argue persuasively that “‘information’ is a measure of how much message you’re sending” (182) and as such different from meaning which actually relates to the qualitative content of the message, which essentially relates to context (187). Unfortunately, meaning has not been satisfactorily quantified so far (184) although qualifications of meaning abound (e.g. Osgood and Suci 1955).

“conventional forms and meanings are less specific than the **usage events** (i.e. the actual pronunciations and contextual understandings) on the basis of which [the corresponding lexical units] are learned” (2008: 17, original emphasis). This concept of schema is also related to the concept of frames, which was adopted from general psychology (cf. Goffman 1986) and used in linguistics by Fillmore among others. Fillmore, the founding father of frame semantics, defined the notion as follows:

By the word ‘frame’ I have in mind any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits. (Fillmore 1982: 111)

The framing words in a text reveal the multiple ways in which the speaker or author schematizes the situation and induce the hearer to construct that envisionment of the text world. (Fillmore 1982: 122)

This evidently relates to the necessity of context specification and Allan’s notion of the world spoken of as laid out in 2 above.

Undoubtedly, these are very useful concepts, for indeed we cannot deny that even though actual chairs for instance differ greatly in form and design, we nevertheless seem to draw on a certain generalization or abstraction schema that allows us to identify all these different objects as exemplars of the ‘chair’ category (cf. Taylor 2003: 69ff). There are also some widely circulated results from the field of psycholinguistics that seem to corroborate the assumption that the activation of general schematic knowledge is crucial to the understanding of any text. The most famous in this line of experiments are perhaps those published by Bransford and Johnson (1972)⁴³. In one of these experiments conducted by Bransford and Johnson, they read out the following passage to a group of test subjects with the instructions to listen carefully and afterwards write down as accurately as possible what had been described to them:

The procedure is actually quite simple. First you arrange things into different groups depending on their makeup. Of course, one pile may be sufficient depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to lack of facilities that is the next step, otherwise you are pretty well set. It is important not to overdo any particular endeavor. That is, it is better to do too few things at once

⁴³ Bransford and Johnson’s foundational research has since been corroborated and elaborated by scores of researchers, fine-tuning the results and interpretations of their experiments e.g. clarifying that so-called “schema activation” is a dynamic ongoing process that “affect[s] on-line comprehension, not just recall” (Smith and Swinney 1992: 303).

than too many. In the short run this may not seem important, but complications from doing too many can easily arise. A mistake can be expensive as well. The manipulation of the appropriate mechanisms should be self-explanatory, and we need not dwell on it here. At first the whole procedure will seem complicated. Soon, however, it will become just another facet of life. It is difficult to foresee any end to the necessity for this task in the immediate future, but then one never can tell. (Bransford and Johnson 1972: 722)

Another group of subjects was presented with the same passage and instructions; only before the passage was read to them, they were told: “The paragraph you will hear will be about: washing clothes” (ibid.). Obviously, the participants in the second group were shown to have much higher “comprehension ratings” than those in the first group (723). This is explained by the fact that the passage above is too generally written (and obviously decontextualized from any salient natural context) for the prototypical reader to establish a connection to any natural context and, thus, make sense of it in relation to that context. With the explicit activation of the natural context of “washing clothes” by the framing words as given above a schema is activated in the mind of the reader, which includes all the general knowledge about what washing clothes usually entails. Without this schematic connection most of the individual references in the text fail to be felicitous to a certain degree⁴⁴, i.e. they can be said to be blind (cf. the discussion of overt, covert and blind CGP in 9.4 below). Without making the connection to the ‘washing clothes’ schema, the text is not devoid of meaning, of course, but it is a) less easily comprehensible, and b) less definitely connected to reference points, i.e. less concrete (cf. Smith and Swinney 1992: 314).

Here again we see that consistently carried out contextualization leads to concretization (cf. Wierzbicka’s reading of Rosch that it is “precisely those concepts which represent ‘information rich bundles of attributes’ at one level which allow

⁴⁴ The degree to which this activation trigger has to be schematic is, of course, debatable, because it seems that the concrete actual context of a laundry room as physical setting for the experiment might also have provided a sufficient contextual grounding for a maximally explicit interpretation of the passage. In fact, Bransford and Johnson (1972) also report another experiment, where another passage keys into very specific and highly unconventional situational set-up. This set-up was presented to one of the groups in the form picture (718), and a similar result was recorded as with the previous experiment (719). The particular picture was of course also somewhat schematized, but nevertheless this seems to prove that it is not so much the inherent schematicity of the trigger itself that matters in establishing contextual links, but rather the degree to which it can aid in the meaningful contextualization and concretization of the passage.

‘gestalt perception’ at another” (1985: 172)), a notion that shall be elaborated in more detail in and of itself in the next section.

4.2. Vivid imagery and gestalt meaning

I mentioned in 2.1 that I would have a bone to pick with Widdowson’s use of the word “schematic” in the phrase “indexically effective in making a schematic connection”. Now, after the preceding discussions, there can be no doubt that the essentially schematic contextualization of an utterance plays an important role in the making sense of an utterance or text. The problem with putting emphasis on this schematic aspect, however, usually entails (for analytic convenience) to overlook that meaning, although it relies on the abstract realization of connections, is more than the mere sum of these schematic processes. These schematic processes and references to frames are a way to contextualize an utterance, i.e. interpret it in a meaningful way; but it is equally important to realize that these conventional and schematic connections are made between concrete elements of the real world (cf. Jespersen (1924) on the evocation of definite “concretissima” via the essentially abstract categories of language (63f)) and consequentially, meaning as such also has a concrete and a creative side.

Perhaps this deserves a little elaboration. Basically, two reasons for concretization have already been touched upon in the previous discussion: the first one is related to the continuous nature of cognitive meaning as illustrated by the topographic metaphor discussed in sections 2.3 and 3.2. Thus, if we see meaning as abstractly stored in the mind arranged like a landscape with only relative salience, the activation of a particular schema (or frame) via some contextual or lexical schematic triggers (or framing words) awards relevance to specific area in this topography. The abstractly stored meaning is then made meaningful by relation to the actual context at hand which makes it inevitably tangible and more concrete (in order to be meaningful) than the abstraction from which it was derived (cf. Stewart and Cohen 2002a: 191). Thus, by virtue of “conceptual vagueness” (Zelinsky Wibbelt 2000: 320) or what has been referred to as the “efficiency of language” (Barwise and Perry 1983: 5) meaning has to be concretized in order to make sense in or with relation to a specific situation.

A second explanation has been hinted at in our discussion of cognitive mediation and abstraction in section 2.3. There, it has been argued that reference to a natural context necessitates a higher degree of cognitive mediation and abstraction than reference to actual context, because the situational substrate of the latter can be derived directly from the surroundings, whereas the situational substrate of the former has to be made explicit to a much higher degree in the mind only. Accordingly, this explanation for concretization links up to mental imagery, because this making explicit of the situational substrate of a not directly accessible natural context naturally may involve the making explicit of visual aspects. These visual aspects are, of course, merely the most tangible element of a holistic meaning conception as instantiated by the evocation of a situational substrate⁴⁵.

In section 2.3, we have made a connection between meaning in literature and this phenomenon, i.e. the way that a connection to a natural context that diverges significantly from the actual context involves much more vivid evocation of a situational substrate's visual aspects. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that a theoretical basis for the analysis of concretization, although sorely lacking from the field of linguistics, has been provided within literary theory. According to Ingarden, who first introduced the concept into aesthetic discourse, concretization is, in fact, a prerequisite to aesthetic experience as such: "Wir können mit einem literarischen Werke nur in der Gestalt seiner möglichen Konkretisationen ästhetisch verkehren und es lebendig erfassen"⁴⁶ (Ingarden 1972: 359). What Ingarden means by this is that in order to experience a work of art one has to experience some (possible) meaning of it, which is inherent to the work of art itself, but has to be actively concretized between the work of art and its recipient/viewer (cf. Ingarden 1972: 354-358). This idea is relevant for linguistics: both art and language deal with real structural patterns of sound, scripture, paint, etc. which are potentially meaningful in the context of their (communicative) intent and effect. Thus, in both cases, this process of concretization traces the conceptual transformation of the *a priori* world into meaningful

⁴⁵ For a more explicit and informed discussion on how mental images may emerge from a neurological perspective (or from the perspective of a phenomenology of experiencing) see Damasio 1999: 322f.

⁴⁶ Translation: "We can only aesthetically deal with a literary work and apprehend it vivaciously in the form of its potential concretizations."

appropriations of human conception. Rudnick, synthesizing early elaborations of Ingarden (1961) and the later developed concept of concretization, notes:

[T]he natural object must show itself open to transformation into an aesthetic object by exhibiting and appealing to a schematic characteristic of a specific mode of Being. When the primeval emotion recognizes the underlying schema, the natural object is enabled to fill the gap between the potentially aesthetic object and the possibly aesthetic experience by attributing a hitherto only implied, but not yet realized meaning. The aesthetic object can now come into existence, which means it is **concretized** through the recognition of the meaningful schematic context that unites aesthetic object and experience. (Rudnick 1997: 626, bold added)

The evocation of a “meaningful schematic context” is, of course reminiscent of the mentalistic conception of context as discussed in section 2.2.

As has been indicated, this characterization of Ingarden’s ideas can be transferred (and almost surprisingly smoothly at that) into linguistic discourse as illustrated in Figure 11 below.

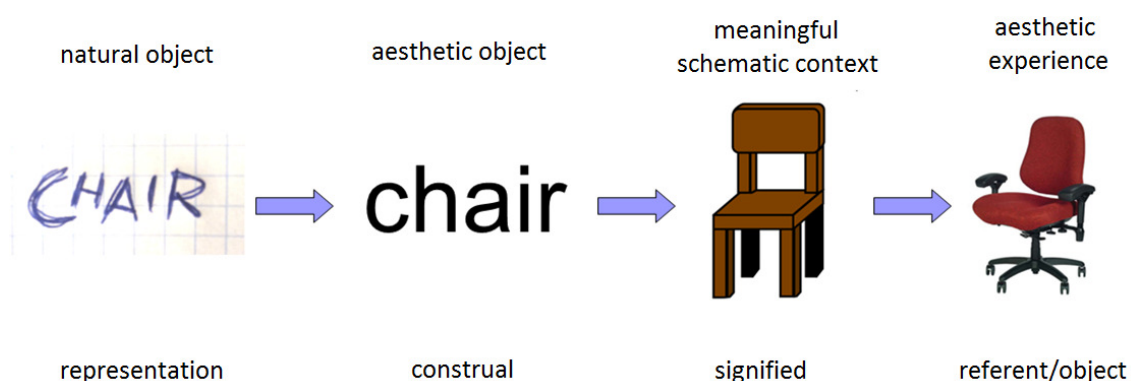


Figure 11. *Concretization (according to Ingarden (1972)) aligned with general semiotics.*

The real-time pattern of signs in the form of sound or writing (i.e. some kind of linguistic representation) is “open to transformation” into a ‘linguistic object’, because it represents a construal (an abstract signifier), which relates to a specific abstract signified or concept. The meaningful schematic context of this signified in turn relates to an actual referent. The referent, whether it is physically present or not, fictitious or real, is construed from the schematic context, i.e. the situational substrate derived from its natural context (and, in the case of its presence, its physical make-up, i.e. the actual context) and appears as concretization in the mind of the speaker⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ This line of argumentation as well as Figure 11 itself corresponds to (Mitchell 1986: 22), although Mitchell, in his development of a general theory of iconology, constructs the exact reverse: a concrete

This train of thought clearly complements general semiotic and linguistic principles as laid down by Saussure and his conceptual successors. However, it also conforms to Gestalt theory (and postulate A as stated above): Ingarden's concept as developed by Vodička suggests that every text is concretized again and again through each instant of its reception, and that the respective concretizations represent meaning beyond (and irreducible to) the text's schematized meaning components (Vodička 1976: 93-94). The holistic, individuated/subjective and imagistic character of concretization(s) (or concretized meaning) which is emphasized in Vodička's discussion of the concept is also associated with the term (and concept of) 'actualization':

A 'concretization' is a reader's actualization of a text. In a sentence such as 'The man stood in the corner', a reader will actualize the text by contributing a sense of the man's age, size, skin colour, clothing, facial appearance, emotions, etc., as well as the nature of the corner in question and the exact way he stood. (Cobley 1997: 153)

Actualization, of course, is not an unladen term in linguistic discourse. Van Dijk, for instance, makes use of it to describe how the intension and the extension of a word, i.e. its meaning and the reference for which it is appropriated (cf. Frege 1948), relate to each other. Thus, by identifying a real-life object as a table, it becomes part of the extension of the word *table* and is recognised as an instance of the implied 'table' category; the real-life object can then be seen as an "actualization of the table-concept" (Van Dijk 1977: 35). This actually ties in nicely with the conception of concretization as it has been elaborated in the course of the previous paragraphs. Thus, a decontextualized utterance or text, which is nevertheless successful in establishing a meaningful connection to some natural context, necessitates the actualization of the related situational substrate in the mind of the recipient in order to be made sense of (see Figure 12 below). The natural context is seen as an actualization (even though it only presents itself as a constructed situational substrate that gains phenomenological salience via a particular mental image⁴⁸) and regarded as

object that is represented by a schematic mental image and then even further schematized as a word (also cf. discussion of McCloud in 8).

⁴⁸ This conception of the mental image as the salient part of a situational substrate that occurs as an epiphenomenon to the activation of the situational substrate by the way implicitly provides a solution to the Wittgensteinian dilemma of whether one sees a picture of meaning or simply meaning itself (cf. Hacker 1990: 392ff., particularly 433).

equally necessary in the making sense of the utterance or text as the real-life object of the table is necessary to make a connection to the abstract 'table' concept.

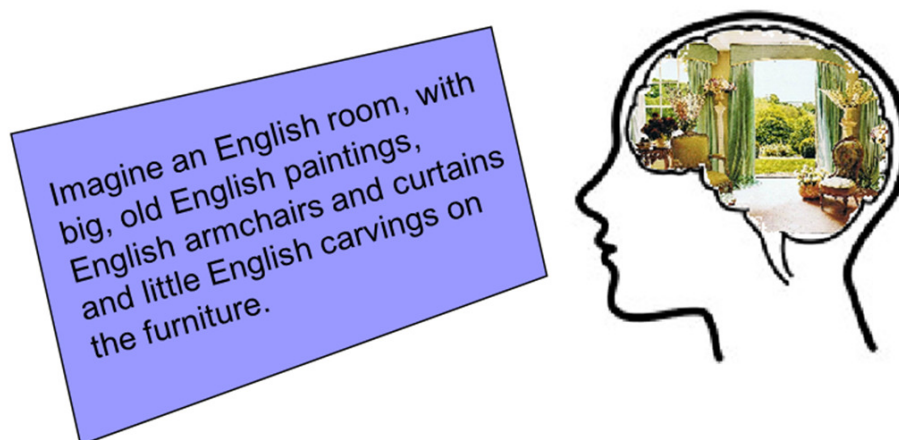


Figure 12. *Concretization (according to Vodička (1976)) as actualization or mental image.*

The inherent imagistic quality of meaning is widely recognized in linguistics (cf. particularly Jackendoff 1996: 551). However, it is usually very differently understood and conceptualized from the way it is entailed by this portrayal of concretization, actualization, and vivid imagistic gestalt meaning. Although meaning is widely perceived as continuous, holistic and predominantly imagistic within the framework of Cognitive Grammar, for instance, analysis and representation focuses much more on the schematic aspects of meaning, even of imagistic meaning. To some degree, this heavy emphasis on the schematic nature of meaning is due to the grammar-model-theoretic interest in establishing generalizations. Thus, it will be apparent that schematic meaning conceptions are much more suited to account for generalizations and meaning typologies than the idea of gestalt meaning. Another factor regards the limitations of systematic representation: systematic representations are naturally abstract and, thus, meaning itself is often perceived as exclusively schematically modelled in Cognitive Grammar, which is not the case (cf. Langacker 2008: 12). Nevertheless, it is true that the notion of image in the context of meaning correlates much more with schematic and conventional than with concrete and creative. Of course, the recognition of conventional patterns also inherently includes an element of creativity (see the discussion in section 3.3 above), but it seems clear that the process of concretization (although it necessitates a certain degree of conventionality to be communicatively useful) is in many respects a more intuitive process, guided by

association and not fully predictable, i.e. creative. Cognitive Grammar, as has been intimated, seems to be mainly interested in these conventional (and, thus, essentially more schematic) imagery. Thus, for example, it is postulated that grammar itself actually “embodies conventional imagery” (Langacker 1987: 39, cf. also Talmy’s mention of “imaging systems” (2006: 71)).

An account of imagistic meaning that only draws on contextualization, i.e. quantifiable schematic representations, has many advantages in that it provides a simplified and abstract synthesis that can be systematized and, thus, applied in computer programming and artificial intelligence research (cf. Marr 1982). However, such an account will not only fall short of the psychological reality and experience of imagistic meaning as something vivid and concrete, it will also inevitably dismiss details and aspects of associative meaning that are essential in the creative use of linguistic forms⁴⁹. Consequentially, a well-rounded analysis of linguistic meaning will have to acknowledge concretization as well as contextualization as an inherent process of meaning evocation in order to account for both the contextualized and the concretized reality of meaning.

4.3. Contextualized and concrete meaning

The process of meaning evocation is constituted by the realization of specific connections to context. It is guided by creativity and conventionality and includes contextualization as well as concretization. Contextualization implies schematic reference; concretization implies the actualization of holistic gestalt meaning with an inherent visual component as salient element. Although the former process is more readily associated with conventionality and the latter with creativity, it is also possible to conceive of highly creative contextualizations accompanied by rather conventional concretizations. The utterance “Scalpel.” is conventionally contextualized for example as elaborated above, which may entail highly creative concretizations that are

⁴⁹ This is in direct defiance of claims such as forwarded by Priest (2010) that “[p]rivate images are irrelevant to public meaning” (365). Such dismissals of imagistic meaning draw on the idea of an invariant meaning core that is unaffected by “private images”. This is in line with the idea of langue and competence as discussed above. But despite these claims, strong evidence and arguments have been forwarded that the exact configuration and salience of mental images in a particular situation of linguistic use undoubtedly has an effect on communication and comprehension (cf. e.g. Bransford and Johnson 1972: 718; and Bell 1991: 255 also briefly discussed below) and should not easily be dismissed.

different from individual to individual. It may also however be contextualized quite creatively with a far-fetched natural context e.g. an alien reading the word out aloud from an English-Alien dictionary, but concretized comparatively conventionally, e.g. the alien will be green and sitting in a flying saucer. Either way, meaning evocation inevitably entails contextualization and concretization, albeit to varying degrees of success and specificity (cf. chapter 9). Thus, meaning is essentially both schematically contextualized and concretized as a holistic gestalt. The former aspect is reasonably well attested and incorporated in linguistic theory (at least within the Cognitive Grammar framework). An exhaustive linguistic analysis that aims to account for both contextualized and concrete meaning, however, naturally faces some problems concerning representation as well as elicitation of data.

The problem is perhaps best illustrated with the aid of my first research project in the field of linguistics. As part of a sociolinguistic study on so-called Valley Girl Talk or Valspeak, I recorded different speech samples and designed questionnaires with simple Likert scale questions. Since I thought that the particular sociolect (including heavy use of *like* as filler and quotative, rising sentence intonation, etc.) would be associated with a particular mental image of what speakers of that sociolect would look like, I included an open-ended segment that was supposed to elicit at least the visual aspects of the respective concretizations. This segment was comprised of a schematic representation of a female body and the following set of instructions: “Add to or change features of the neutral body diagram on the right so that it fits your mental image of the speaker’s appearance.” On the one hand, the fact that this set-up proved reasonably effective in eliciting concretizations as triggered by specific speech samples, clearly provides some confirmation to the fact that mental images indeed play a role in the evocation of meaning. On the other hand, the elicited results – a sample is given in Figure 13 - also clearly showed some of the difficulties of working with concrete meaning.

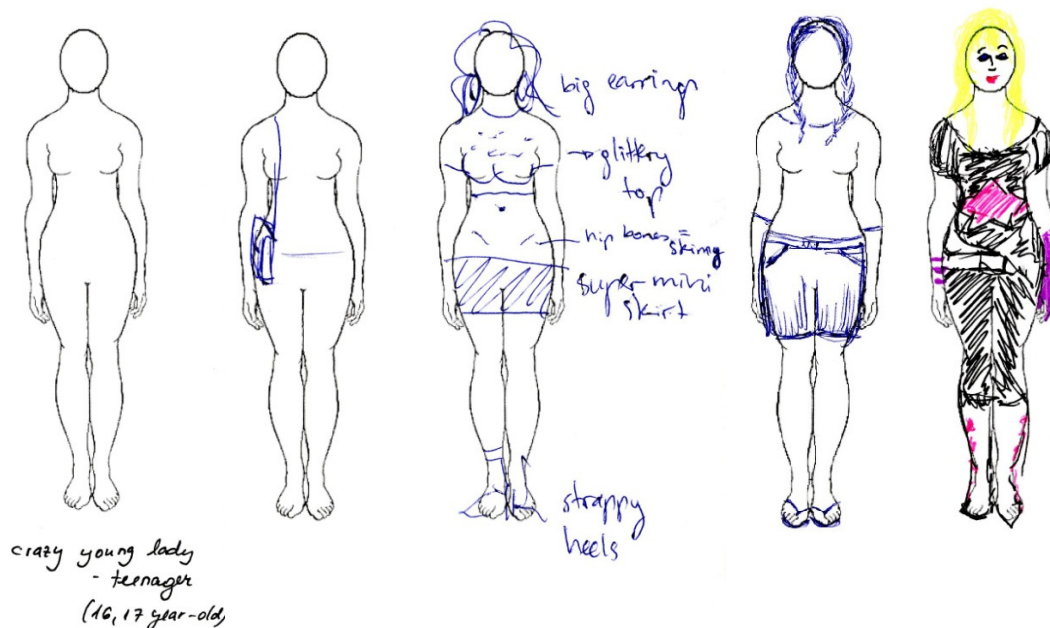


Figure 13. *Gradience in open-ended visual representation elicitation: readiness and proficiency.*

Although I was successful in systematizing the results by abstracting binary categories from the concrete images (e.g. “presence of a handbag”, “blond hair”, “high heels”), the data also showed that subjects were impeded by external constraints, most prominently their perceived and actual limitations in terms of drawing skills. Consequently, some, while clearly referencing a concrete mental image, were unable or unwilling to define it in any other way than (schematically) with words (see the image in the far left); others merely presented one representative feature that was perceived as the most salient aspect of the mental image (second example), while yet other felt that their drawing skills were not sufficient in establishing the contextualization of her concretization and supplemented additional verbal specifications (third example). Sometimes, aesthetic concerns of design evidently conflicted with representational accuracy (fourth example); and finally the resources made use of and conscious attention to detail (fifth example) also constituted an external factor that made the analysis of the concretizations as uniformly faithful representations of the respective mental images slightly problematic. This is not only a problem of elicitation, of course, but also of representation and analysis: concretized meaning is essentially representable and analyzable only in schematic terms; or is it?

Arguably, linguistic analysis can gain a lot from considering meaning in its concretized form, even if that form (whether elicited or not) is inherently

unpredictable, determined by many factors and essentially tied to one specific actual context of evocation and/or elicitation as well as representation. Thus, as long as the analyst is aware of the multitude of determining factors in any concrete representation of meaning (be it imagistic or verbal) and the inevitable gap between actualizations in the mind and actualizations on the paper, there is no reason why they should be excluded from the scope of linguistic analysis (see chapter 9 for further suggestions and a few examples for concrete representations). Although this would constitute a step towards descriptive accountability, there may be some reluctance to allow such blatantly unscientific data and representations to enter linguistic discourse. But data as such is neither scientific nor unscientific.

It has to be acknowledged that concretization and gestalt meaning are realities of meaning evocation that have definite influence on comprehension and communication. In fact, Bell discusses explicitly the marked and vital importance of creating an “imaged gestalt” in order to make sense of linguistic expressions (1991: 255). As far as I know there has been no specific research on this in the field of linguistics and definitely not under consideration of concretization as expounded here, but it nevertheless seems evident that just as the real-life actualizations of linguistic categories have a marked influence on linguistic meaning and behaviour, so will cognitive actualizations in the mind. After all, extensive research on the various senses of particular prepositions such as *over* (cf. Taylor 2003: 112ff) is based on the relative salience of specific concretizations and actualizations corresponding to the specific senses. Of course, these concretizations are again represented schematically in order to emphasize the fact that they can be generalized over a specific situation type. However, the concession that each use of *over* actually forms part of one distinct construal that is determined in relation to its physical, cognitive and textual context and as such evokes a meaning that is contextualized and concretized with reference to this specific context seems to be of great importance to qualify any more abstract categorizations and emphasize its limitations.

A maximally descriptive approach of meaning, definitely has to account both for the schematic aspect of meaning, which may be represented schematically, as well as for gestalt meaning, which may only be accurately presented as a holistic whole,

e.g. a picture. In any representation, both of these aspects are naturally subjected to construal, even though this is particularly apparent in the latter case.

From another perspective, however, contextualized as well as concrete meaning emerges from linguistic construal, which is a process that is of invaluable importance to our understanding of meaning and meaning evocation, as will be argued in the next chapter.

5. Construal and meaning evocation

It is a truism, but one frequently ignored in research, that how something is said is part of what is said.

- Dell Hymes (1972: 59)

It may be most effectual to start off the current analysis of linguistic construal with a simple and concise definition of the concept taken from the glossary of Radden and Dirven's *Cognitive English Grammar* textbook:

Construal refers to the speaker's choice among alternative ways of conceptualising and describing a scene; e.g. the choice between half full and half empty in describing the contents of a bottle. (2007: 337)

According to this definition, construal is a process of creation (e.g. description of the contents of a bottle), it is creative in a re-combinatory way (i.e. a "choice among alternative ways"), and it somehow spans the gap between the abstract process of cognition ("conceptualizing") and the comparatively concrete fact of linguistic output ("describing"). Not only does this portrayal differ from how the term construal has been employed up until now in this thesis (cf. the distinction between (abstract) construals and (concrete) representations made in section 2.1), it also presupposes a particular model of the conceptual world as reproduced in Figure 14. Thus, it is presumed that a human conceptualizer derives conceptual categories from the world as he or she experiences it, and, on the basis of these concepts, construes his or her thoughts by linguistic means, i.e. in a potent blend of what is typically referred to as lexical and grammatical construal. In very basic terms, construal (in this sense) refers to the process and product of conceptualizing the world and expressing these conceptualizations through language.

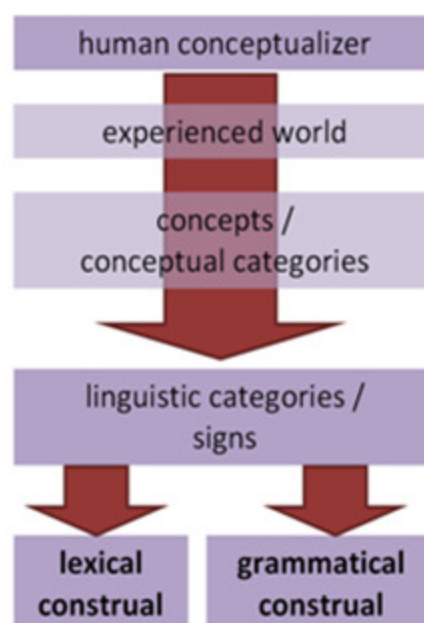


Figure 14. Model of the conceptual world
(adapted from Dirven and Verspoor 1998: 15)

As becomes apparent from Figure 14, considerations of this sort inevitably entail certain basic assumptions about meaning. Dirven and Verspoor, as many other linguists and philosophers of language, assumes that linguistic categories or semantic meaning is derived from conceptual meaning or concepts (some *a priori* non-verbal meaning in the mind), i.e. first a concept takes form in the mind of a speaker, then that concept is formulated in accordance with linguistic resources and results in a specific construal and finally a physically tangible representation. Thus, the process of construal can be seen as being about the relation between non- or pre-linguistic (i.e. conceptual) and linguistic (i.e. semantic) meaning. However, as will become apparent from subsequent discussions, this relation is far from clear. For one thing, recognition of the fact that one and the same situation (or concept) may be described by different linguistic means (cf. Radden and Dirven's definition given above) has considerable ramifications for the notions of conceptual and semantic meaning. After all, it is an age-old question to determine to what degree the assertions that *the glass is half full* or that *the glass is half empty* actually have the same meaning. They certainly describe the same situation; they indisputably employ different linguistic means in that description (i.e. they exemplify different construals). But is there a difference in the way we think (conceptual meaning) or merely in the way we talk (or think in words) (semantic meaning)? Popular belief is that there is an underlying difference in the way we think (e.g. optimism and pessimism), but at the same time we feel that we can conceive of the situation described by the two construals maybe imagistically in a way that does not impose these distinctions on it, i.e. we feel that there is such a thing as meaning without (linguistic) construal (illustrated visually by Figure 15 below) even though it may elude the representation by linguistic means.



Figure 15. *Half a glass of water.*

Of course, this reference to imagistic meaning brings us back to the notion of meaning evocation (via contextualization and concretization) as elaborated in the previous chapters; and indeed, the process of evocation is closely related to the issue of linguistic construal as will become clear in the subsequent discussions within this chapter.

From these few general elaborations several points of interest for the discussions at hand have emerged. First of all, a more thorough grounding of what is usually understood by the term construal together with a few examples of how it is conventionally applied in the analysis of linguistic data will be necessary as a foundation for further discussion (section 5.1). Secondly, I will argue that the specific sense of construal that has been developed within this thesis is, in fact, not necessarily opposed to the generally accepted notion of construal and can, with a few terminological clarifications, be seen as a natural logical extension of the traditional nomenclature (section 5.2). Finally, some implicitly assumed relations between semantic and conceptual meaning shall be discussed in order to shed more light on the processes of construal and evocation and determine where contextual reference enters the picture (section 5.3).

5.1. How construal usually is construed

Although, with the example of *the glass is half full* and *the glass is half empty*, imagistic meaning representation can be used to represent the one concept underlying two different (linguistic) construals, this is not always the case. In fact, it is often felt that the representation of a particular concept by linguistic means constitutes a particular way of viewing⁵⁰ that concept and imposes a corresponding

⁵⁰ A classification of construal according to construal types and different viewing operations as is typical of its discussion (cf. Langacker 1987: 138f, 2008: 55ff; Talmy 2006; Radden and Dirven 2007: 21ff) goes beyond the scope of this thesis. Although it should be noted that Talmy's (2006) account, which comprises a more intuitive analysis based on general principles rather than a typology that strives to incorporate rigid formal criteria, is perhaps best aligned with the general orientation of the present account, even though his original conception of construal is, of course, much less refined than e.g. Langacker's. A few simple examples of different construals of the same basic conceptual content, i.e. construals that presumably reference abstract situational substrates that are very similar (at least at a high level of schematicity) will be given subsequently and some further examples are also included in the discussion in chapter 8.

image on it. This is in accordance with a slightly more technical definition of construal as has been forwarded by Langacker:

[A]n expression's meaning consists of more than just conceptual content—equally important to linguistic semantics is how that content is shaped and construed. There are many different ways to construe a given body of content, and **each construal represents a distinct meaning; [...] an expression imposes a particular image on the content it evokes.** (1991: ix, bold emphasis added)

This definition clearly provides some linguistic grounding to the notion of construal and also links it up to the previously reported claim that grammar (and lexicon) “embodies conventional imagery”. The linguistic grounding that Langacker’s conception of construal receives within this passage can be distilled into three principles: 1.) the process of construal is seen as part of “an expression’s meaning” and constitutes it together with its “conceptual content”, 2.) there is a one-to-one relation between a construal and the meaning it represents, i.e. “each construal represents a distinct meaning”, and 3.) parallel and counter-directional to the process of construal (associable with linguistic output/speaking or writing) runs a process of evocation (associable with linguistic input/listening or reading) that involves the association of “a particular image” with conceptual content via a linguistic expression (i.e. contextualization and concretization). From these three principles, a cyclic relational procedure can be mapped out (see Figure 16 below), in which the process of construal is conceptualized as part of an expression’s meaning, whereas its product is seen as the expression itself, which in turn evokes the conceptual content (thus closing the cycle)⁵¹.

⁵¹ As with any cyclic relation this can be looked at in two ways: either starting from the form (or representation) or starting from the conceptual pole of that form, the signifier (or construal), the former being associated with the process of evocation and the latter with the process of construal. Jespersen makes a similar distinction, referring to these two perspectives as looking from “without” ($O \rightarrow I$) or from “within” ($I \rightarrow O$) respectively (1924: 39f).

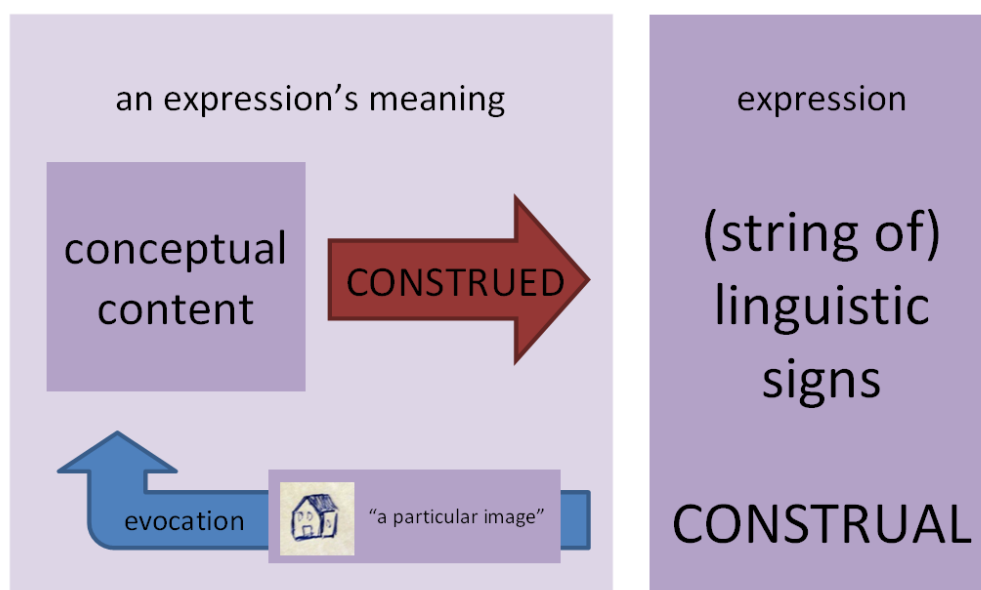


Figure 16. *The role of construal in the conceptualization of linguistic meaning (cf. Langacker 1991: ix).*

To make this discussion of construal and evocation a bit more accessible, let us consider a few concrete examples. First of all, it is important to note that construal in its general technical sense is a term that is primarily associated with the cognitive paradigm, and, accordingly, has been most extensively discussed by cognitive linguists. Cognitive Grammar research related to construal (unlike other branches of linguistics that also use the term (cf. Frazier and Clifton 1996)) is always concept-driven (as opposed to language-driven). This does not mean, of course, that analysis does not relate to language and actually occurring or at least feasible linguistic structures, it simply highlights the fact that any Cognitive Grammar research (on construal) is sparked off by considerations of conceptual (rather than linguistic) structuring.

Thus, Talmy (2006), for instance, first outlines the general capability of language to specify or imply “the location and deployment of perspective point one adopts from which to regard the event and the distribution of one’s attention over the event”⁵² (90), then moves on to subcategorize the established type of construal, listing two “principle members” (90) of the category, which are reproduced in (3).

- (3) the assuming of:
 - a. a steady-state long-range perspective point with global scope of attention

⁵² This general definition, which leads Talmy to the discussion of moving-perspective and steady-state perspectival mode (2006: 91), actually applies to many of the construal dimensions that Radden and Dirven subsume under the term viewing operations.

- b. a moving close-up perspective point with local scope of attention
(Talmy 2006: 91)

Finally, Talmy associates these abstract notions with a pair of sentences, reproduced as (4).

- (4) a. There *are* houses *at various points* in the valley.
 - b. There *is* a house *every now and then through* the valley.
- (Talmy 2006: 91, original emphasis)

By relating this sample analysis to the basic relational procedure mapped out in Figure 16 above the following representation can be traced (see Figure 20): a common conceptual content (presumably something like ‘houses in the valley’) is construed in two different ways (employing a steady-state mode and a moving-perspective mode), resulting in two different construals ((4a) and (4b)), which impose a different picture on the conceptual content by evocation. These pictures exemplify the general characteristics of each mode as laid out in (3).

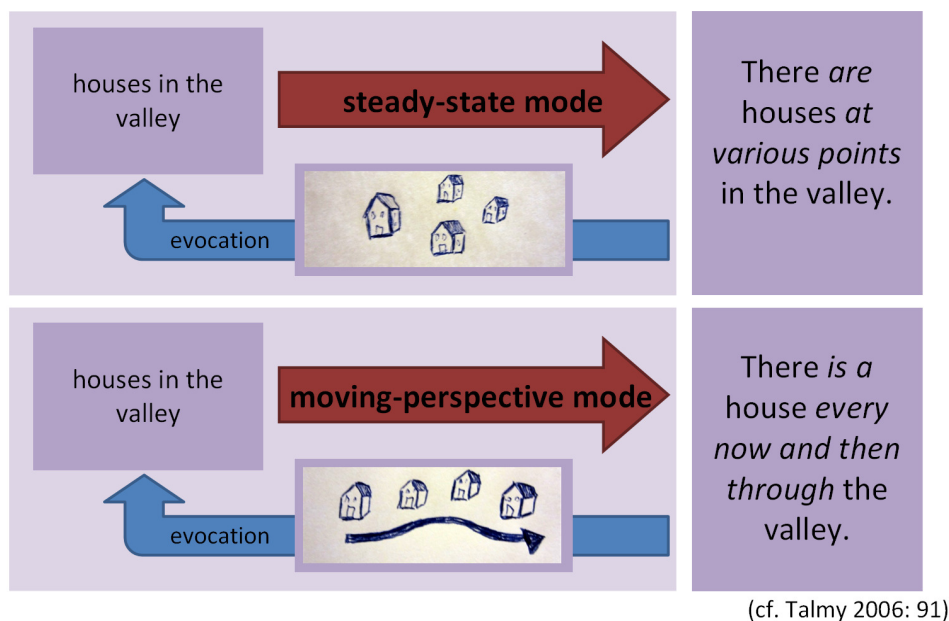


Figure 17. A tale of houses not alike in perspectival mode (following Talmy (2006))

This is of course a highly simplified representation, because as has been noted in previous chapters, in the context of evocation, the evoked picture is not only contextualized and as such schematic (as is implied by the representation in Figure 17), but also concretized as a holistic gestalt. Moreover, although this depiction instantiates the general procedure mapped out in Figure 16 above, there are still several aspects of that general schema that require elaboration. Does, for example,

the whole procedure mapped out in Figure 16 represent the process of construal or is it merely the encoding of concepts by linguistic means as represented by the red arrow? And to what extent is it justified to refer to the expression itself as construal, is that even warranted by the traditional portrayal of construal? All of these issues shall be discussed in the next section.

5.2. Contrastive and absolute construal

It will have become apparent from the previous paragraphs that the term *construal* is commonly associated with both the process of relating concepts to an abstract string of linguistic forms and its product, i.e. the string of abstract linguistic forms itself. This ambiguity will be dealt with at least within the graphic representations of the present account by using the participle *construed* to denote the process and the noun *construal* to denote the product⁵³. On the whole, however, the conceptual/terminological overlap is not untenable. In fact, the description of *the glass is half full* and *the glass is half empty* as two different construals merely acknowledges that the expressions are the products of two separate instantiations of one procedure (as illustrated by Figure 17). Usually, as has been demonstrated by consideration of the *houses in the valley* example provided by Talmy, such different expressions are considered as construals only in a typological and contrastive sense, i.e. they are seen as construals, because there are two different formal products derived from the same conceptual base that merely impose a different conceptual structure on that base. However, it may well be argued that any linguistic rendering of conceptual content invariably imposes some measure of conceptual structure on the concepts/situations it describes. Thus, for instance, the expression *houses in the valley* constitutes a construal of some human-built architectural structures as ‘houses’ and some relative depression in a landscape as ‘valley’. These are very conventional construals (cf. section 8.1), but they still could be seen as construals not necessarily in a contrastive sense, i.e. as instantiations of different viewing types, but merely in and of themselves, i.e. in an absolute sense. From this perspective, all linguistic expressions

⁵³ The verb, *construe*, is not used in order to avoid implicatures of agency in configuration such as *conceptual content > construed > construal*, where conceptual content is, of course construed in some linguistic form, and does not construe a linguistic form.

are construals because they all invariably impose a particular conceptual or rather semantic structure on concepts by translating them into words and phrases. This semantic structure obviously is distinct (although hardly separable) from the actual physical structure that represents it, i.e. *the glass is half full* and *the glass is half empty* constitute two different construals because they imply a difference in semantic structure, whereas *the glass is half full* and ***the glass is half full*** merely constitute differences in orthographic rendering, i.e. representation.

Thus, we have arrived at a portrayal of construal that is consistent with the notion as it has been developed in the thesis at hand. Despite this alignment, it will have been noticed that the representational pole of any utterance is not represented in Figures 16 and 17. This is the case, because the discussion in the present chapter so far has exclusively dealt with canonically recognized issues of construal. It should be clarified, however, that any form of observable linguistic construal inherently entails some form of physically tangible representation (spoken or written), and indeed the reality and impact of this inherent actual micro-context will enter the discussion later on.

Within Cognitive Grammar, the term *construal* is also used, at times, to refer to the particular image that is imposed on conceptual content by an expression (cf. Langacker 2008: 4). This obviously is not consistent with the use of these notions within the present account. Accordingly, the term *construal* will not be applied to the imagistic meaning component that is derivable from the conceptual structuring inherent to any complex linguistic structure, which will instead be referred to as imagistic meaning, evoked/mental image or in Langacker's words "a particular image". This mental image is, as has been elaborated in the previous chapter, the salient visual aspect of the situational substrate that is evoked in the process of contextualization and concretization of a particular utterance or expression. Whether this imagistic meaning is seen as schematic or as holistic and of gestalt character depends on which aspect (contextualization or concretization) is taken as reference criterion. Both processes are relevant and, thus, the most accurate description is a two-tiered one that takes both the schematic and the gestalt nature of meaning into account.

Even in Cognitive Grammar, which is not sensitive to the notion of concretization, this "particular image" that an expression, by virtue of being a

construal, imposes on its conceptual content is recognized as pivotal to the extent that it entails the patterning in conceptual structure that classifies and can be used to subcategorize types/dimensions of construal (as illustrated by Figure 17). Thus, the process of evocation is frequently subsumed under discussions of construal because the evoked image is taken to constitute a classification criterion for the underlying construal. Because the consideration of evocation is of particular significance in this thesis and goes far beyond categorizing types of construal, subsequent discussion will endorse the distinction between construal and evocation as two intimately related but also separate processes (and products). The momentousness of this distinction will also become clear later on in the discussion of contextual reference in section 5.3 below.

However, even though evocation and the mental imagery it entails are seen as pivotal with regard to the categorization of construals within Cognitive Grammar, they are not considered determinative of conceptual structuring per se. This is easily illustrated by such claims as the one that “[t]he conventional imagery invoked for linguistic expression is a fleeting thing that neither defines nor constrains the contents of our thoughts” (Langacker 1991: 12). If we assume that conceptual meaning and semantic meaning are closely related, even identical at times, this statement seems to be at odds with the preceding arguments and particularly with the claim that grammar “embodies conventional imagery” (Langacker 1987: 39). However, this apparent ideological conflict can be quickly resolved by the amendment that there are quite different assumptions afoot about the relation of concepts (the stuff of thought), conceptual content (concepts related (or relatable) to linguistic signs), and semantic content (the core meaning component of an expression).

The Cognitive Grammar notion of conceptual content as evoked by a specific construal roughly corresponds to the notion of a situational substrate derived from the actual context of use and any natural context that may additionally be involved in the interpretation of the construal. The conceptual content underlying the initial construal is obviously not the same, because it is grounded in the differing context of another speaker’s mind and obviously draws on a different situational substrate derived from some specific chronicles of use (see chapter 7), i.e. a contextualization based on many situations of use. These situations of use form a very abstract natural context (and

concomitant situational substrate) which results in the actual verbal actualization of a specific construal in the form of a specific representation. This resultant utterance is made sense of by the derivation of a new situational substrate from the actual situation of use at hand by the addressee, who may draw on very different contextual resources and, as such, will derive at the very least a slightly different meaning from the utterance.

Thus, the starting and end point of the cyclic relational procedure labelled (in accordance with Langacker's terminology) "conceptual content", although it would in principle be describable with the label of "situational substrate", nevertheless, constitutes two separate cognitively mediated entities. These two situational substrates are only relatable to each other through a further step of schematic abstraction. However, let us map out this line of argumentation step by step.

5.3. Concepts-semantics relations and contextual reference

In a unified perspective on meaning, the three notions of concepts (i.e. a priori thoughts and ideas), conceptual content (i.e. concepts that are actually selected for representation via linguistic means) and semantic content (i.e. the meaning evoked by a particular construal) have been seen as largely congruent. From this perspective of a congruence relation as mapped out in Figure 18 below, some form of socially consistent meaning is seen as universal to all human cognition⁵⁴, a position that has apparently been expressed by Lakoff among others (Casad 1995: 34).

congruence relation semantics = conceptualization

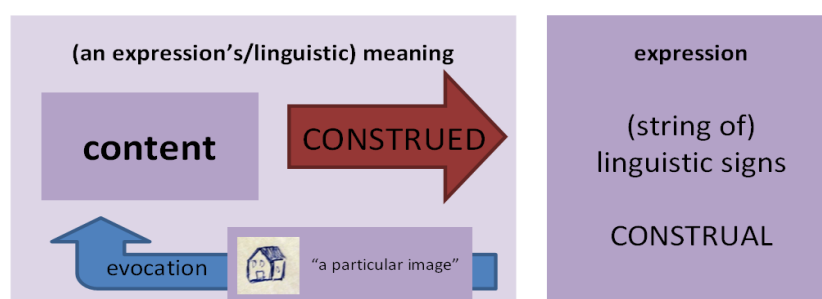


Figure 18. *Semantics and conceptualization – congruence relation* (cf. Taylor 1995: 6).

⁵⁴ Such a perspective either entails that meaning is to some degree unaffected by specific linguistic encoding or else that meaning is always construed (even before it is put into words) and therefore not significantly altered by linguistic representation. Either way, the basis for construal and the product of evocation are seen as largely identical.

In order to escape the problems that arise when this view is confronted with the issue of linguistic conventionality in the face of the fundamental unrestrictedness of conceptualization (i.e. linguistic resources are generally seen as more discrete and bounded than thought), a conceptual variant from the congruence relation can be offered, in which a subset relation between semantics (subset) and conceptualization (superset) is assumed as illustrated by Figure 19.

subset relation

semantics $\in$ conceptualization

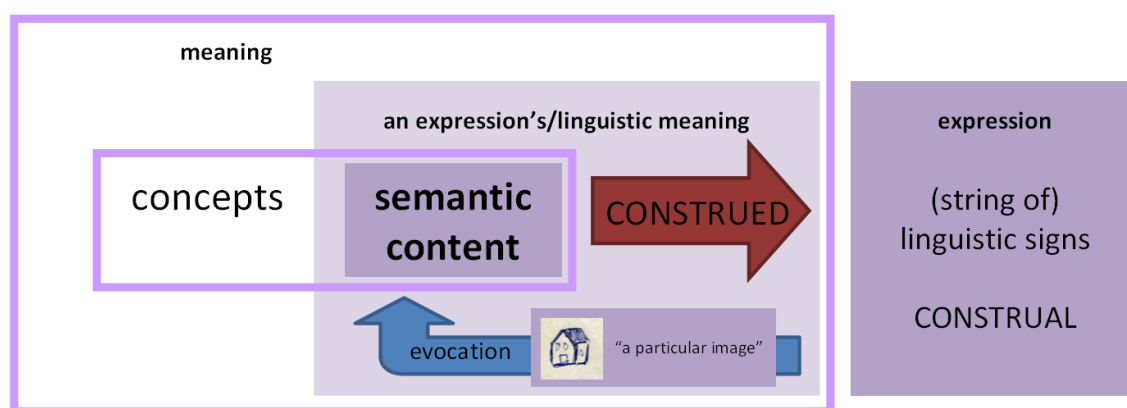


Figure 19. *Semantics and conceptualization – subset relation* (cf. Taylor 1995: 6).

This second relational configuration is apparently advocated by Jackendoff (cf. Taylor 1995: 6) and also by Casad (1995: 45). It also ties in with Langacker's framework, in which "a semantic structure is a conceptual structure that serves as the semantic pole of a linguistic expression" (Casad 1995: 32, cf. Langacker 1987: 98)⁵⁵, and reconciles the hitherto seemingly inconsistent observations that "imagery" is essential for the analysis of construal, and that imagery is inconsequential for "the contents of thought" by restricting the workings of construal and evocation in application to "the semantic pole of a linguistic expression".

If this dissociation of semantics and conceptualization is taken one step further, the result is a complete "semantic versus conceptual split" as apparently posited by Bierwisch (Taylor 1995: 6). The concomitant supposition of a derivational relation has

⁵⁵ Despite this distinction, Evans, who clearly and unambiguously distinguishes conceptual and linguistic (i.e. what I have referred to as semantic) structures, alleges that "cognitive linguistics [...] has tended to assume that [...] semantic structure is equivalent to, or at least, not significantly different from conceptual structure" (2009: 176); thus, giving credence to the fact that, from the perspective of a clear distinction, the difference between a subset and a congruence relation is a subtle one.

some staggering consequences for the cyclic relational procedure mapping that has been established above: if conceptual meaning and semantic/linguistic meaning/content are really seen as separate realms (with conceptual meaning being anterior to linguistic meaning), the process of construal (being itself part of an expression's meaning) links conceptual meaning with an actual linguistic expression, while evocation (by imposing a particular image on the conceptual content of the expression) makes the construal apparent/accessible and, thus, indicates semantic meaning. Thus, beginning and endpoint of the process are dissociated from each other, resulting in a telic rather than cyclic relational procedure as indicated by Figure 20.

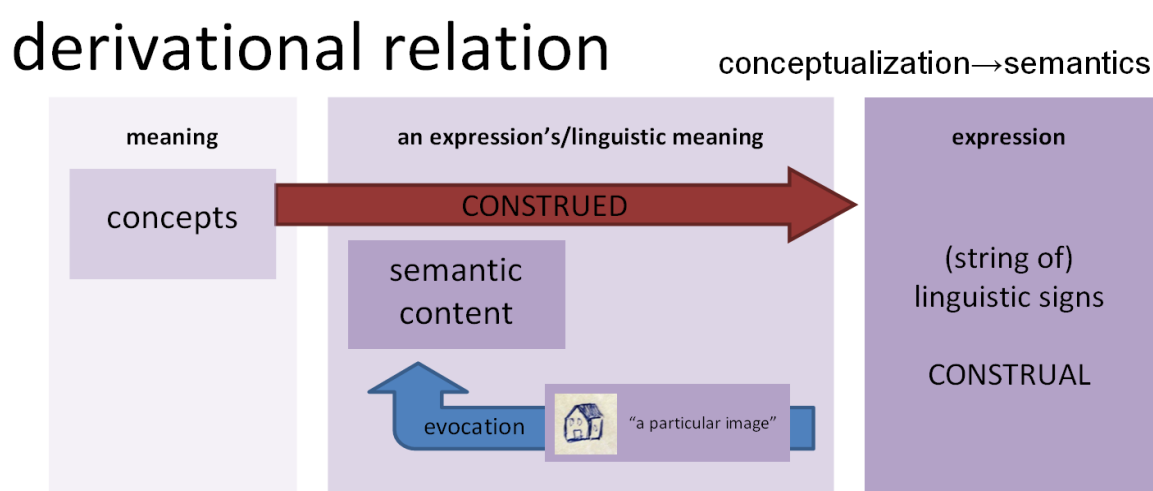


Figure 20. *Semantics and conceptualization – derivational relation* (cf. Taylor (1995: 6).

Although the derivational relation is not entirely consonant with the predominant and explicit notion of construal in Cognitive Grammar (which, as has been argued, is based on the supposition of a subset relation) it nevertheless has some merit: semantic structuring is indeed an additional meaning component that is imposed on conceptual content in the process of construal, and, accordingly, is inherent to semantic meaning, whereas any (linguistically) unconstrued concepts are unmodified/unqualified by it. A similar view is also propounded by Evans, although he takes “symbolic units” (2009: 87) as a basis for discussion and concludes that both “semantic and conceptual structure involve fundamentally distinct sorts of [mental] representations” (2009: 43), which he takes to imply that there is not so much one discernible derivational relation, but rather “two distinct representational systems

involved in meaning construction” (ibid.). This view, although it links up to what has been said at the end of the preceding section about the two distinct situational substrates involved, is not generally endorsed by the current account. Indeed, from the theoretical elaborations so far presented in the preceding pages, there is nothing that would lead one to suspect that there are two fundamentally different mental “representational systems” involved when it comes to semantic or conceptual meaning. Rather all meaning is seen as the cognitively mediated establishment of connections between different aspects of context. Thus, both semantics and conceptualization deal with situational substrates mapped onto specific contexts.

That these situational substrates are inevitably structured in different ways is not so much a consequence of different underlying systems, but rather of the different uses to which they are put by virtue of being referenced at different points in the relational procedure of construal⁵⁶. In some ways, the simplified conception of meaning construal and evocation as a linear, self-contained relational procedure has to be exposed as just that: a simplified conception. The notion of construal already admits to one extra-procedural choice motivation that softens and compromises the basic linear relation between the Saussurean signified and signifier. By conceding that there is construal, i.e. one concept may be expressed in different ways, we basically concede that how something is said affects what is said, i.e. the meaning. In other words, form is imbued with meaning. This has already been recognized within this thesis by identifying representations as meaning-constitutive actual micro-context and construal as equally meaning-constitutive abstract formal pole of a linguistic expression.

There is, however, a second extra-procedural choice motivation that comes in at the level of evocation that has hardly been recognized in linguistic analysis (or at least not in correlation with the notion of construal). Thus, as has already been indicated above, it is the highly abstract situational substrate derived from the chronicles of use of a specific expression that is employed in the process of construal. This process includes contextualization and concretization and results in the abstract

⁵⁶ This conception is convenient also because the assumption that situational substrates underlie both construal and evocation, easily enables the direct construal of another expression on the basis of a situational substrate evoked by a particular expression, as is the case with on-the-spot translations.

physical actualization of a linguistic expression which is both contextualized by virtue of being a construal and concrete/concretized by virtue of being a representation. This situational substrate could be identified as extra-procedural choice motivation A, which may result in different kinds of construal depending on the specific contextualization and concretization that the actual context of the communicative situation entails. The second situational substrate is based much more directly on the actual context of the utterance, however, taking the actualized utterance as a direct trigger for the evocation of a situational substrate based on the natural context of the utterance. This could be referred to as extra-procedural choice motivation B, which affects evocation and gives credence to the fact that one expression may evoke different meanings with different people and in different situations, because the underlying situational substrates diverge. Both extra-procedural choice motivations relate to the concession that “convention is not airtight as a coordination device” (Five Graces 2009), i.e. a rule-transgressional element of creativity comes in.

This admittedly highly abstract line of argumentation is made somewhat more tangible by the representation in Figure 21 below. In particular, we see that the extra-procedural choice motivations induce an element of chaos, unpredictability, or rather, creativity into the relational procedure. This element of creativity is particularly consequential when it comes to evocation. With construal, although the underlying basis may be a bit of a mystery, a clear and distinct formal product emerges; with evocation, however, analysis can take the linguistic expression as a firm starting point, but then inevitably enters muddy waters.

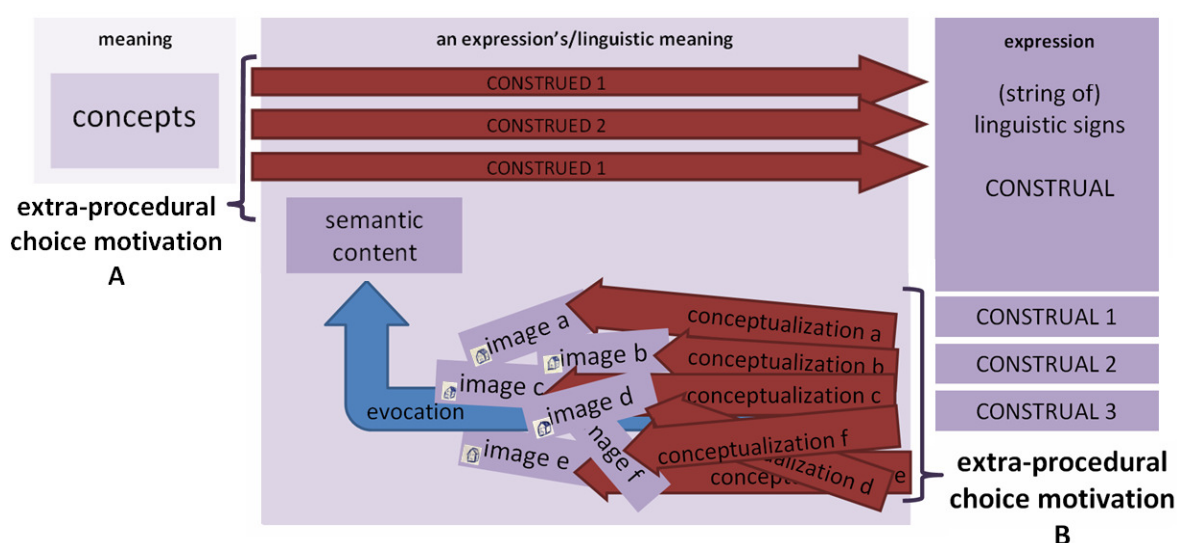


Figure 21. Extra-procedural choice motivation in the processes of (linguistic) construal and evocation.

As may have become apparent from the continued reference to the notions of actual and natural context in the preceding paragraphs, the ramified picture painted of construal and evocation by the admission of extra-procedural choice motivations constitutes nothing more or less than the implementation of contextual reference.

The recognition of extra-procedural choice motivations makes the implied element of choice that has served as the starting point for the current discussion of construal (and evocation) inevitably more complex. On the one hand, certain elements of conceptual structuring are subject to construal, e.g. whether half a glass of water is considered half full or half empty; objectively, there is nothing in the situation itself that points to either one construal. On the other hand, however, a particular construal or evocation may also be highly motivated by a particular contextual configuration, e.g. the linguistic construal of a situation in moving-perspective mode, when actually sitting in a moving vehicle at the time. But even the different construals of the glass of water are motivated by contextual constraints (e.g. whether the speaker is particularly thirsty or not), while a speaker may also choose to construe some aspects of the scenery in a steady-state mode even while residing in a moving vehicle.

To some extent, this complex relation between choice and contextual constraints is already hinted at in Langacker's discussion of arbitrariness with regard to construal:

Whether something is discrete or continuous is subject to construal. This is not to say that the choice is arbitrary. For the most part, the world is not the way we choose to think it is, but rather the way it is intrinsically, so particular ways of thinking about it are likely to prove more successful than others. Of course, a typical phenomenon is so complex that discrete and continuous descriptions are both appropriate, for different aspects of it. Or each may be revelatory and useful for certain purposes [...] (Langacker 2006: 114)

In accordance with this quote, we can concede that actual context is always complex. Nevertheless, some connections and references to it may seem more natural than others (which is how the notion of natural context arises). Both actual and natural context are essential in the actual derivation of a construal as well as the evocation of a particular mental image.

Rather than disregarding this complex interplay in favour of a more simplistic portrayal, we may postulate that the actual context in which the use of a particular

construal is embedded as well as the natural referent points that are perceived determine its relative conventionality or creativity. Accordingly, when one is actually standing still and looking down the valley, the steady-state mode construal would be the more conventional choice, whereas, when looking out at the valley from a moving car, the moving-perspective mode would be more conventional. Of course, if the actual context of use is entirely removed from the actual location of the valley, it depends on which natural context is referenced, i.e. which perspective is more easily activated or easily conceivable. Judging this obviously depends on the choice of reference system (cf. the discussion in chapter 7): a speaker/writer usually goes for what he or she perceives as the conventional construal, but they may also for varied reasons (e.g. poetic or playful language) go intentionally for a more creative construal; in either case, the resultant construal may be perceived as more or less creative or conventional by a listener/reader who obviously draws on a different natural context in the derivation of his or her situational substrate (again cf. chapter 7). Speakers may even feel, on occasion, that a particular choice of construal came particularly easy to them, but at the same time recognize that this is the result of a particular actual context which probably is not accessible in the same way to others. Thus, a particular construal may come easy but still be identified as creative, because it is linked to a very specific actual context rather than a more easily accessible and more abstract natural context. The conventionality or creativity of a particular construal, therefore, depends on the relative entrenchedness of the construal itself and the connection to a particular context as perceived by individual language users. This general distinction between more conventional and more creative construals, as relative to a particular context, will be picked up again in the discussion of meaning representation in section 8.1.

The main point is that both construals and evocations constitute connections to context (actual as well as natural) that may be differently realized. These different realizations are, of course, more varied and diverse than the contrastive discussion of two theoretically imposed notions (i.e. steady-state mode and moving-perspective mode) may suggest. That it is indeed a simplification and exclusion of more complicated (less salient) instances of construal can easily be demonstrated by augmenting the original set of the two construals used by Talmy to illustrate the

notion of perspectival mode (once more reproduced here as (5a) and (5b)) by an additional three examples that constitute (less salient) construals analyzable in terms of perspectival mode and related to the same conceptual content, (5c-e):

- (5) a. There *are* houses *at various points* in the valley.
- b. There *is a* house *every now and then through* the valley.
- c. There are houses *all over* the valley.
- d. House after house lines the way through the valley.
- e. There are houses at various points through the valley.

All of the construals in (5) entail the derivation of slightly different situational substrates and, accordingly, vary in their evocation and CGP.

The discussion of these issues will become more easily accessible once we have thoroughly introduced the notion of Contextual Generative Power (CGP) (see chapter 9). However, it is already possible to point out that, on the one hand, the process of construal (based on highly abstract situational substrates) results in an essentially embedded contribution to context in the form of a concrete representation. The process of evocation, on the other hand, entails the making sense of that representation by relating it to the actual context of use and associating it with a particular natural context (via a different situational substrate). The degree to which this evocation is successful in creating a contextualized and concretized gestalt meaning (as may be evident by the generation of a mental image) is referred to as the expression's CGP. Obviously the creative and conventional processes involved in linguistic construal (and actualization of a representation) play a role in the formation of an utterance's CGP, while the critical assessment of evocation provides a basis for the analysis and representation of CGP as such.

Before we turn to the issues of analysis and representation of meaning and CGP in chapters 8 and 9, the question of formation may merit a little more explicit treatment.

6. Cycle of signification

*It starts, it simply starts.
We cannot recall exactly how it began,
nor can we predict how it will end,
but we know that it starts.*

*With a single strand,
it is so purposeful, so intent.
It weaves upon itself, creating stability from novelty.
Begrudgingly we acknowledge its looping nature,
Fortifying lessons from a strand past,
Hardening the structure with every circular pass.*

- Michael Rushanan

first half of a {code} poem entitled *The Recursive Web We Weave*

KEEP OFF THE GRASS

- Grounds Management

The expression KEEP OFF THE GRASS arguably has a very strong CGP: immediately a natural context is evoked and we picture it in a foreboding, bold font on a sign stuck in the lawn at some sort of posh and immaculately well-kept park or garden. But how does this come about? Well, Widdowson uses this very example in a discussion of Grice's quantity maxim and makes the point that it has certain formal properties (most prominently its shortness) that make it very genre-compliant and appropriate to its purpose, i.e. it is the kind of text that we would expect to be printed as a notice rather than associating it with flowery prose or extensive legal texts (Widdowson 2007: 57). This is not the whole picture, however. It is not merely that "Keep off the grass." fulfils certain formal properties that identify it as the kind of text that might appear on a sign; we would, after all, not merely picture it as a notice, but a notice near some lawn. This circumstance relates, on the one hand, to the semantic resource that the text itself provides; on the other hand, it exploits our knowledge of the world, i.e. the fact that we know that it is often prohibited to set foot on well-kept lawns and this prohibition may be expressed with the use of notices or signs (cf. Widdowson's notions of "systemic knowledge" (of a language) and "schematic knowledge" (of the world) (2007: 53)).

The fact that we might never have encountered an actual sign in an actual context bearing exactly those words (presumably) does not substantially impede the CGP, because it is primarily the pragmatic message rather than the actual wording or construal that evokes the natural context. This is comparable to the fact that different representations of one word may still be identified as one underlying construal. This is not to say, however, that actual context is negligible. After all, the actual context of the expression as represented on this page was essential in the evocation of any natural context. From the perspective of evocation, this is true of all expressions: the essential embeddedness of a linguistic form into an actual context is an inevitably preliminary to the process of evocation.

While, in the previous chapter, the process of evocation was seen from the perspective of conceptual context and ideas, we will now take a closer look at evocation from a formal perspective, i.e. actual expressions in their actual contexts of use. Since the main premise of this account is that any expression evokes a specific natural context, i.e. any expression has a specific measure of CGP, an investigation of the essential embeddedness of expressions in actual contexts is a necessary preliminary for a formalistic explanation of how CGP comes about, i.e. how forms are imbued with meaning (evocational quality). To start of the discussion consider the following expression:

(6) Uwupu.

To the best of my knowledge, this expression has no meaning. It certainly does not look like an English word and a quick search of the internet yields no sensible results either. In fact, it is merely a randomly generated string of letters (sometimes called a captcha). Nevertheless, it is not completely meaningless. By actualizing it, putting a concrete representation into the actual context of this page, the expression cannot escape essential embeddedness, which inevitable imbues it with some meaning. After all, it is embedded in a reasonably coherent and cohesive linguistic text. Therefore, it is presumably used to make a point that is relevant to linguistic discourse. Clearly, we may derive a very preliminarily meaningful definition of the expression on the basis of these considerations:

- (7) **Uwupu.** – An expression used to make the point that any formally actualized expression is inherently meaningful by virtue of its essential embeddedness in some actual context.

This is a very vague and abstract definition, of course, but it indubitably specifies some meaning. It should be noted also, that this original use of (6) is inherently creative, because it is not a conventional or a previously entrenched unit. It is also conventional, however, to the degree that it is represented with conventional letters and constitutes a graphemic structure that is readily related with a corresponding phonemic construal (although the actual pronunciation of it may be a matter of debate). This combination of creativity (in the sense that the actual communicative use of (6) is unprecedented) and conventionality (in the sense that (6) conforms to the orthographic notational system of English) makes (6) salient and, therefore, eligible for entrenchment and even conventionalization. Thus, readers of this thesis can subsequently use (6) to unambiguously refer to this argument of meaningfulness through use, which we may call the *Uwupu*-argument⁵⁷.

Although this may appear to be a highly artificial line of argumentation with little consequence to actual language use, arguably, it traces exactly the initial acquisition process inherent to first language acquisition: unless we subscribe to the notorious “nativist hypothesis” (cf. e.g. Harris 1993: 217), we must concede that in a natural language learning situation, novel units or structures are acquired by the aid of essential embeddedness into natural and actual context, i.e. by relating them to its actual surroundings and - perhaps over time and by encountering more uses, perhaps on the spot - making some abstractions in order to conceive of some other natural contexts in which the unit or structure may fit (cf. Ellis 2002: 143, “the acquisition of language is exemplar based”). If the actual context itself is not a sufficiently helpful resource additional information or definition may be necessary and is often actively sought or elicited by language learners. Any such additional information only serves to link the novel unit or structure to actual or natural context like the lexical or imagistic triggers employed in the experiments conducted by Bransford and Johnson as discussed in 4 above. Thus, use inevitably (by virtue of essential embeddedness)

⁵⁷ This whole argument can be related, of course, to Wittgenstein’s notorious claims that at least “[f]or a large class of cases [...] the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (1953: 20) as elaborated e.g. in Baker and Hacker 1985, particularly 37ff.

entails the availability and exploitation of actual context, on the basis of which some abstractions are drawn, which together form a situational substrate, from which a natural context may be derived that informs any future use or interpretation of the acquired expression. As Hopper puts it: “[o]ur speech is a vast collection of hand-me-downs that reaches back in time to the beginnings of language” (1998: 159). This process may be referred to as the cycle of signification as illustrated in Figure 22.

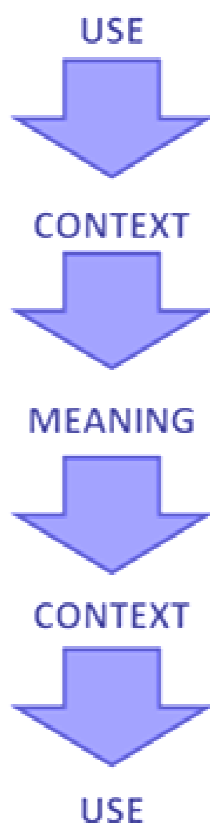


Figure 22. *Cycle of signification.*

It is a cycle to the extent that it is infinitely perpetuating, i.e. any subsequent use of *Uwupu*, for instance, will again entail the essential embeddedness in an actual context, from which a situational substrate will be formed, etc. This is particularly relevant because any additional use of *Uwupu* may change its meaning as well as its form. As different situational substrates are formed on the basis of actual contexts that share only certain characteristics with the originally conceived natural context (cf. Langacker’s definition of decontextualization given in 7) what we might call the meaning of *Uwupu* will inevitably undergo slight modifications and indeed the expression undoubtedly already has a different connotation than when it was initially

introduced into this text. Formally speaking, subsequent uses of *Uwupu* may at some point involve its actualization in the form of a spoken representation, which will inevitably establish a phonemic construal that will be part of the situational substrate derived from that use and inform the conceived natural context and, consequentially, future uses of *Uwupu* to the degree that it is accessible, of course⁵⁸.

A large-scale model-theoretic perspective on these considerations is provided by a group of scholars referring to themselves as the “Five Graces Group”⁵⁹. In their position paper entitled *Language Is a Complex Adaptive System* (Five Graces 2009) they lay out their own version of the cyclic signification process as follows:

- (a) Usage leads to change [...]
- (b) Change affects perception [...]
- (c) Perception affects learning [...]
- (d) Learning affects usage [...] (Five Graces 2009: 11-12)

Although this cycle evidently does not correspond one to one to the cycle of signification as mapped out in Figure 20 there is a certain correlation: e.g. in both discussions the idea of salience comes in in the form of a meaningful situational substrate or “perception”, which affects entrenchment or “learning”. Moreover, both the cycle of signification and the Five Graces cycle are based on individual uses of a specific expression which entail linguistic change. However, while the present account is firmly linked to the relation of individual uses to each other, the Five Graces try to abstract from these individual uses a relation to over-arching macro-trends that shape the language system. Their aim is to develop a “usage-based theory of grammar” (Five Graces 2009: 5) which models language as a complex adaptive system based on “patterns of use” (Five Graces 2009: 1). At first sight, there appears to be a slight terminological disparity here: is it a “usage-based” theory or one based on “uses”? However, it may even be intuitively apparent that there is no real conflict in this terminology: it is a usage-based theory, which means it is based on patterns of use, i.e. usage.

⁵⁸ I.e. a specific situational substrate is naturally only accessible to those that were present in the (communicative) situation on which it is based. Moreover, the different participants in one situation will probably also derive different situational substrates from the actual contexts at hand.

⁵⁹ For ease of reference, the position paper of this research group, which is relevant to the account at hand, will be referenced in the text as well as in the bibliography as Five Graces 2009. A full list of the involved researchers is given in the form of a footnote to the reference listed in the bibliography.

This intuitive definition of usage as “patterns of use” implicit in the deliberations of the Five Graces is ideologically momentous. After all, there are several researchers that identify their respective framework as usage-based (e.g. Langacker 2000, Bybee 2010) but there does not seem to be a strong proliferation of the term “use-based”. A more general distinction is offered by Newby, who informally distinguishes “systemic linguistics (syntax, morphology, semantics, phonology)” and “use-based linguistics (pragmatics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics etc.)” (Newby 2009: 7). Thus, in line with what appears to be general conception, a systemic use-based approach seems inconceivable. Considering context both in its naturalistic reality and as a (meaningful) situational substrate, conventionality as well as creativity, contextualization as well as concretization, and construal as well as evocation, this, as has been postulated in the introduction to this thesis, is exactly what the present account aims to inform however: a systemic use-based theory for a maximally descriptive analysis of linguistic meaning evocation.

This general distinction between use as the individual concrete speech event and usage as the systematically abstracted patterns derived from an analysis of many distinct uses has received some refinement by Widdowson (1978), who defines instances of usage as any utterances that comply with some abstract linguistic system. Utterances that, beyond this, also key into a communicative situation he calls instances of use (Widdowson 1978: 3). Concomitantly, usage involves an abstract, grammatical and semantic understanding of (a) language, and use a communicative, applied or pragmatic one. At first glance, this distinction may appear quite different from the differentiation between use and patterns of use as given above. Looking more closely, however, Widdowson uses exactly this distinction as a basis for developing a theory of speaker competence (in a general non-Chomskyan conception): any naturally occurring use of language will inevitably occur in the name of communication; it is only by the abstraction of grammatical patterns that speakers (or learners) of a language can apply these rules in order to produce “strings of sentences without regard to context” (ibid.). Thus, context-independency is a myth developed by an over-emphasis on langue and competence. Widdowson, who considers both use and usage as aspects of Chomskyan performance (because both relate to actual language data and not just I-language) (ibid.), actually laments that traditional

language teaching usually disregards that knowledge about the context-sensitive use of a (second) language in specific situations does not magically come about with the mere acquisition of abstract grammar rules and the abilities to produce grammatically correct sentences based thereon, i.e. usage. Thus, Widdowson notes that

[a]lthough there is a natural coincidence of usage and use in normal language behavior, these two aspects of performance tend to be treated separately by people concerned with the description and teaching of languages. Thus the grammarian illustrates the abstract rules of the system of the language he is describing by devising languages in isolation which manifest these rules. The language teacher designing materials has also generally been inclined to concentrate on usage [...] (Widdowson 1978: 4)

Taking these considerations into account, we can see that the relationship between use and usage is a very complex one. On the one hand, use typically incorporates usage; on the other hand, usage is abstracted from use. It should be noted that these relations are not contradictory, although they may be hard to grasp and conceptually reconcile. However, even with this highly expanded conception of the dichotomy different researchers may differ greatly with regards to the conclusions drawn from these distinctions. Widdowson, for instance, employs the use-usage distinction as theoretical foundation to argue for communicative language teaching, criticizing the use of artificial utterances such as “I am walking to the door.”, which may be called upon in a “situational presentation” of present continuous tense, but are exceedingly unnatural from the point of view of natural discourse and communication (1978: 8). Instead, he proposes the actualization of natural contexts in the language classroom in order to foster competent use (as well as usage) among learners.

If the conception of use and usage is underpinned by our elaborations on actual and natural context as given in section 2.1. above, an entirely different picture evolves with regard to language teaching. In fact, any simulation of natural context in the confines of a language classroom will inevitably be at odds with the actual context of the classroom. While it is true that abstract categories such as specific tense constructions are hard to acquire because there usually is no sufficiently specific situational substrate to allow for the concretized evocation of meaning (cf. the discussion in chapter 3, pages 72-73), at least the situational presentation that

Widdowson criticizes accurately aligns itself with the actual context at hand. In any case, even with the simulation of natural contexts removed from the actual context at hand, the fact remains that language learning invariably faces the problem of essential embeddedness: any linguistic unit or structure acquired in a language classroom will inevitably be placed in the actual context of a language classroom; which means that the situational substrate that enables its meaningful interpretation inevitably makes reference to what Widdowson clearly perceives as the artificial or unnatural context of language learning. Thus, unless the abstraction from actual context is exceedingly advanced and perfectly aligned with some abstract natural context (as e.g. simulated in the teaching situation), there is always the chance that an utterance such as “How much is it?” may be more readily associated with the actual context of the language classroom, i.e. identified as subject matter of English, by a learner of English as a second language than with the natural context of a selling-buying situation. On the one hand, we have seen that the evocation of natural context may be very successful in considering the *KEEP OFF THE GRASS* example; on the other hand, however, this is an inevitable problem to any learner who does not acquire a language implicitly in natural communication: an extra effort in terms of cognitive mediation and abstraction is needed to relate the situational substrate acquired in the actual context of language learning, to any subsequent actual context of a communicative situation. This extra effort may manifest itself (positively) in the form of a vivid mental image of the natural context, but also (potentially problematically) in the insurmountable connectedness of natural linguistic expressions in the actual context of the language classroom.

This is the price to pay for the short-cut that is provided by an explicit teaching of language, and especially a carefully structured exposure to grammatical rules and patterns that would otherwise have to be abstracted autonomously by an immersion in naturally occurring language discourse. There may be short-cuts in language learning, but there is no short-circuiting the cycle of signification (as has been illustrated by the *Uwupu*-argument). Any use of a linguistic expression, be it *KEEP OFF THE GRASS*, *Uwupu* or “Scalpel.” is essentially embedded in an actual context from which a situational substrate is derived which may be re-called as a natural context and the bases for subsequent uses. Due to the multi-layered dynamicity of contextual reference and context evocation (cf. section 2.2), this process is inherently fluctuant

and to some degree unpredictable and creative. Nevertheless, the underlying processes and principles of use-based evocation are open to schematic and segmented analysis and representation, and thus, to some extent, conventional. Both of these aspects are illustrated in Figure 23.

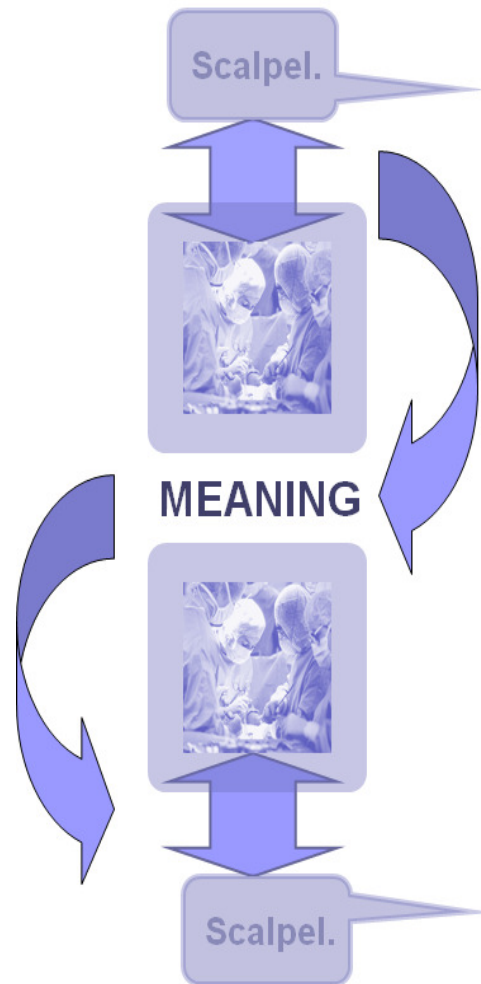


Figure 23. *Cycle of signification (slightly less schematic version).*

Although Figure 23 is explicitly mapped on the widely perpetuated “Scalpel.” example, the same process of signification can be seen to underlie novel expressions such as *Uwupu*. A marked difference between these two examples lies in their respective chronicles of use, a notion that will be elaborated in the next chapter.

7. Chronicles of use

*A word is dead
When it is said,
Some say.
I say it just
Begins to live
That day.*

- Emily Dickenson

As has been shown in preceding discussions, the notion of essential embeddedness as outlined in section 2.1 has far reaching consequences for the meaningful interpretation of any utterance in its actual context. However, the situational substrate derived from this actual context is not only instrumental for the interpretation of the utterance in the present moment; it may also be evoked (to varying degrees of salience) as a natural context in all subsequent encounters and uses of the same utterance. In other words, interpretation of an utterance, the derivation of a situational substrate, does not only rely on the actual context of the utterance, but also any salient natural context which is evoked partly by virtue of the formal and semantic qualities of the utterance (see chapter 6 above) and partly by reference to previously derived situational substrates. Of course, strictly speaking, the latter includes the former since any judgement on formal and semantic qualities is naturally based on very abstract situational substrates derived from the actual uses of various linguistic forms.

This conception of the diachronic interplay of situational substrates and the entailed matching of actual contexts with abstracted natural contexts ties in with Langacker's elaborations on context, its import for linguistics and his notion of decontextualization, outlined as follows:

All linguistic units are context-dependent. They occur in particular settings, from which they derive much of their import, and are recognized by speakers as distinct entities only through a process of abstractions. How far this abstraction proceeds for a given unit depends on (1) the variety of its settings, which determines the level of specificity at which its context is characterized; and (2) how consistently it appears in these settings, which determines their centrality to its value. Rather than context-dependency, it is this

process of partial **decontextualization** that requires explication.
(Langacker 1987: 401, original emphasis)

In accordance with this very intriguing passage, any utterance that is not completely novel (like *Uwupu* was in (3)), is inevitably decontextualized in the sense that it enters into discourse separated from its first actual and natural context and becomes embedded in a new actual context that is inherently (at least slightly) different. Thus, the notion of context, which has been portrayed in chapter 2 as a dynamic but basically synchronically referenced configuration of the real world, attains a historic dimension (as has already been developed in chapter 6 above); or as Mey puts it “often, [context] is considered by linguists to be the sum and result of what has been said up to now, the ‘prehistory’ of a particular utterance, so to speak [...]” (1993: 8). Within the present account, this diachronic notion of natural context associated with one linguistic unit or structure will be referred to as the expression’s or structure’s chronicles of use.

This diachronic notion of context naturally involves a higher degree of cognitive mediation and abstraction and reference to memory (as has already been indicated in the comparative analysis of actual context and natural context that diverges substantially from it in section 2.1). It is also closer to a mentalistic conception of context. However, our notion of the situational substrate prevents a purely mentalistic perspective, because even the most abstract situational substrate nevertheless retains referential links to some actual context (or contexts) on which it is based. This concession is essential, even while it is at the same time acknowledged that the degree to which these contextual links are deemed relevant, concretized or merely schematically referenced, and activated at all undeniably depends on mental processes and processing.

Recognizing the fact that language acquisition as well as meaning acquisition is a matter of “each individual’s own forgotten history” (Quine 1960: 9, on chunked and composite sentence reproduction) naturally entails an accumulative consideration of individual uses. To what degree these chronicles of use influence the evocation of meaning is determined by a number of principles which come into play in a both conventional (i.e. process-predictable) and creative (i.e. not result-predictable) manner and shape the natural context, from which it appears, as Langacker puts it,

essentially partially decontextualized. This shaping of natural context and focusing of relevance through diachronic contextual reference can be related to the modification and “emergent structure” of “mental spaces” as developed by Fauconnier and Turner (2006: 313ff) and “activation states” as outlined by Chafe (1987: 25ff) among others. Thus, evocation of or reference to a natural context of an utterance via a situational substrate can be seen as a linking-up of contextual reference points with a specific mental space. The degree of activation of particular links is related to the relative salience (or perceived congruence) of natural context with reference to actual context.

Generally speaking, a specific utterance’s chronicles of use are, on the one hand, a diachronic fact; on the other hand, however, they are a matter of cognitive mediation and abstraction, the contextualization and concretization of salient natural contexts (as mental spaces) and the activation of certain links over others. In other words, the chronicles of use constitute an utterance’s history (which is a real fact of an ever-changing world by virtue of the passage of time) as perceived and edited by the (collective or individual) mind(s) like chronicles to paper by a historian. Just like any chronographer naturally imposes a certain structure on the continuous flow of history, so are the chronicles of use structured in accordance with some general principles that effect relative salience and entrenchment. In fact, the combination of entrenchment and salience of a specific situational substrate and the natural context to which it relates emerge directly from reference to the actual context at hand and the relevant chronicles of use, i.e. natural context is a synchronic structure derived from actual context at hand and the diachronic evidence provided by the chronicles of use. Together, these two contexts (the situation at hand and the chronicles of past uses) basically determine which situational substrate is derived and, thus, the CGP of an utterance. Therefore, in order to account for CGP, a well-rounded analysis of its formation on the basis of an utterance’s chronicles of use is in order, giving some consideration to the structure principles that underlie their abstraction from the history of actual use.

Basically, we can distinguish two kinds of intricately interwoven structure principles: synthetic structure principles, i.e. the quantification of the basic procedure relating use over time and meaning, which account for entrenchment; and analytic

structure principles, i.e. the quantification of the circumstances under which instances of use over time occur, which account for salience.

7.1. Synthetic structure principles

The entrenchment of one particular utterance is a continuous process: it might be possible to determine a starting point (as with the case of *Uwupu*) but after that all use and non-use leaves an effect. As Langacker puts it:

Every use of a structure has a positive impact on its entrenchment, whereas extended periods of disuse have a negative impact. With repeated use, a novel structure becomes progressively entrenched to the point of becoming a unit [...] (Langacker 1987: 59)

This process of progressive entrenchment leads to automatization, which comes with an increase in “ease of activation” as has been mentioned in 3.2. This increased ease of activation, in turn, has an impact on the utterance’s CGP, because the respective natural context is more readily and routinely evoked. This may, on the one hand, increase the utterance’s CGP and entail the almost automatized evocation of a vivid mental image as the cognitively salient element of the partially entrenched natural context that relates to the particular situational substrate based on the actual context of use at hand, as is the case with the “Scalpel.” example. On the other hand, the entrenchment and automatization may have progressed so far, that the respective structure has lost some of its overt salience due to the advanced degree of abstraction, as in the case of grammatical units like the ‘past progressive’. I call it “overt salience”, because the relative salience still becomes apparent, when e.g. a proficient speaker of English (i.e. one where most grammatical units are reasonably entrenched) is confronted with ill-formed grammatical units such as e.g. *walkinged* instead of *was walking* (cf. the discussion of resonance and dissonance in chapter 9 below).

The whole process of entrenchment is based on repeated looping of the cycle of signification and the related acknowledgement that use entails change (of form as well as of meaning). Of course, this process has been discussed in a slightly simplified version so far, portraying an utterance’s meaning⁶⁰ as directly derivable from its

⁶⁰ Note that such claims always refer to apparent meaning (from a formalistic perspective), i.e. an utterance’s meaning is seen as the meaning evoked, not the conventional or prototypical meaning and

chronicles of use (including the actual context of use at hand). To some extent, this disregards compositionality, because obviously some novel utterances will contain only familiar words and, thus, the inherent semantic resource will play an important role in the evocation of meaning (cf. Widdowson 2004: 38; Langacker 1987: 12). The again, any semantic information derivable from entrenched units within a novel utterance can equally be linked to the chronicles of use of those units; so really the cycle of signification holds true, albeit with more ramified reference processes.

From these considerations a general synthetic structure principle can be derived, which relates individual uses of an expression ($U_1, U_2, U_3, \dots$) to its meaning (M):

$$\begin{aligned} U_1 &\Leftrightarrow M_1 \\ U_1 + U_2 &\Leftrightarrow M_2 \\ U_1 + U_2 + U_3 &\Leftrightarrow M_3 \\ U_1 + U_2 + U_3 + U_4 &\Leftrightarrow M_4 \\ &\dots \end{aligned}$$

The co-indexing of U and M relates one specific use (e.g. U_1) and one specific meaning (e.g. M_1) to the same actual context of occurrence. I call the resultant cumulative algorithm “synthetic” because it entails the combination of several parts, i.e. the reference to individual uses, in the derivation of one meaning. The use-based perspective on meaning perpetuated by this synthetic structure principle inevitably implies the non-arbitrariness of linguistic meaning (and use) to the extent that it is determined synthetically from chronicles of use. This acknowledgement of non-arbitrariness of meaning is, of course, based on the non-arbitrariness (but not absolute predictability or conventionality) of each individual use which is seen as meaningfully embedded in the actual context of a communicative discourse situation.

This line of thought seems reasonable enough. But there clearly is more to this matter than is explicitly specified by the synthetic structure principle as stated above. As Wierzbicka notes, for instance, “it is not only the set of components underlying this concept that is non-arbitrary and forms a structured whole; so too the order of the

not the meaning intended by the speaker. All of these meanings are analysable in terms of CGP, but they are still seen from a formalistic perspective, i.e. conventional meaning is the meaning evoked in a speech community and intended meaning is the meaning evoked in the mind of the speaker/writer rather than in the mind of a recipient.

components in that structured whole is non-arbitrary” (1985: 52). Wierzbicka does not mean diachronic order here, but actually refers to hierarchy in terms of which conceptual component is most central to a particular concept (cf. Langacker 1987: 158ff). Centrality is reflected in Cognitive Grammar by the structure of image schemas (Langacker 2008: 32), but has since been refined with the peaks and valleys metaphor as discussed in section 3.2. Wierzbicka’s point is, however, that if we take a compositional perspective on meaning formation, even while recognizing that meaning itself is a non-reductional gestalt⁶¹, the order of the contributive components will matter in the formation of the whole. Going one step further, not only the set and the order, but also the criteria for adopting a particular set and order of conceptual components as relevant is important. This is particularly true when discussing meaning formation as opposed to mere evocation, i.e. recognizing procedural compositionality, while rejecting resultative compositionality or reductionalism (cf. Langacker 2000: 19ff).

Actually, acknowledging the non-compositional nature of the result, in the sense of recognizing meaning as holistic gestalt, even while conceding that this gestalt is derived with reference to different entities (natural as well as actual context for one thing), calls for a revision of the strictly compositional notation of the synthetic structure principle. Accordingly, as a supplement to the segmented version of the synthetic structure principle above a more contracted version is given below:

$$\begin{aligned}
 &U_1 \Leftrightarrow M_1 \\
 &M_1 + U_2 \Leftrightarrow M_2 \\
 &M_2 + U_3 \Leftrightarrow M_3 \\
 &M_3 + U_4 \Leftrightarrow M_4 \\
 &\dots
 \end{aligned}$$

This version has the advantage of accounting for each individual use, while at the same time giving higher credence to the notion of synthesis, the derivation of a meaning which is not reducible to its component parts or the mere history of use of an

⁶¹ In fact, Wierzbicka, although subscribing to the notion of a conceptual whole is also one of the most vehement advocates of “reductive analysis” (1985: 45) of meaning, professing that it is the objective of lexicography to list a simple “set of universal semantic primitives” (1985: 9) and a method for defining the “conceptual structure” of words exhaustively with their aid (1985: 16). While this premise is not in line with the ideological orientation of the account at hand, many of the principles and reasoning as laid out by Wierzbicka about meaning in general undoubtedly are.

expression. A disadvantage of this contracted version is, of course, that it is no longer explicit about the formation structure. Thus, if we want to account for degrees of relevance of particular uses to the meaning at hand, this is not supported by a contracted representation.

The intuition that some of the uses are more important than others for the formation of meaning was, in part, reflected in the different font sizes of the uses in the segmented representation of the synthetic structure principle above, indicating that the essential embeddedness of the use at hand into actual context has most immediacy in terms of interpretation of any given utterance. Even this indication of internal hierarchy is not satisfactory. After all, temporal proximity of the use to the conceptualizer is only one relevant factor in the activation of the related situational substrate. What is needed is a way to account for the fact that uses (or rather the situational substrates derived from them) are not only exploited synthetically (i.e. in a combinatory and cumulative fashion) to account for an expression's meaning, but also analytically, i.e. in accordance with general principles of relevance. A short conceptualization of what these analytic structure principles might be shall be given in the following section.

7.2. Analytic structure principles

As has already been intimated in the general introduction to the chronicles of use above, analytic structure principles relate to salience to the degree that the situational substrate derived from a previous use is perceived as salient enough to affect the derivation of a situational substrate from the use at hand. One obvious precursor to this evocation of uses is obviously memory and recall to the extent that the only relevant aspects of previous uses that can be exploited are those that are retrievable from memory in the first place. Obviously there are some limitations to the explicitness, concreteness and sustainability of meaning representation in the mind over time. But the peaks and valleys metaphor (as illustrated in section 3.2) is considered a reasonable solution to this problem: each use leaves a mark in the topography of meaning, which is thus stored continuously and implicitly and can be concretized, if relevant for the purposes at hand. Incidentally, this view is reflected in the contracted version of the synthetic structure principle as stated above. On the

other hand, it is assumed that the actual contexts of more recent uses are generally more readily and explicitly accessible than those that occurred a long time ago, as is reflected in the segmented representation.

The deciding factor for the salience of a situational substrate derived on a previous use is its “cue validity” (Taylor 2003: 36) with respect to the respective expression as embedded in the actual use at hand. The concept of cue validity is usually evoked to identify certain features as relatively reliable category indicators. Thus, the feature ‘feathers’ has high cue validity for the category ‘bird’ in the sense that the presence of feathers is a good (if not fool-proof) indicator for ‘birdhood’ (ibid.). In terms of CGP, it can be said that the word *feathers* may reasonably well be associated (descriptively) with a natural context that includes birds. While this is a relation that is conventionally entrenched in how we think about the world, the cue validity of previous uses is in constant flux and determined dynamically in each new actual context of use. Nevertheless, all accessible previous uses (or related situational substrates) are assumed to be eligible for cue status as determined by analytic structure principles. In fact, considering a particular expression’s chronicles of use, not only the individual uses, but also the whole chronicles of use as such as well as parts of it are eligible for different degrees of cue validity. Thus, the frequency of an expression’s over all use (one principle) may be related to contextual specificity of individual uses (another principle) to attribute cue validity to the whole chronicles of use or isolate a sub-group of uses, which is considered relevant, because it has a high cue validity by the terms of both principles, i.e. a large number of uses occurring in consistently similar contexts.

Although it is almost impossible to exhaustively pinpoint all relevant factors that may play a role in determining cue validity, an attempt is made to account for the most salient of these analytic structure principles one by one in the following⁶².

⁶² To some degree, analytic structure principles as outlined individually below correspond to what Ellis (2002) calls “[d]eterminants of pattern productivity”, which, according to him, include “the power law of practice, cue competition and constraint satisfaction, connectionist learning, and effects of type and token frequency” (143). Accordingly, there may be some conceptual overlap between these notions and those subsequently elaborated.

Frequency

Raw or relative frequency of a specific expression is widely recognized as a key notion to any quantitative analysis grounded in usage-based frameworks (cf. Goldberg 1995: 134, Five Graces 2009: 14, Bybee 2010: 18). And clearly the mere fact of how often the use of a particular expression has been perceived already has some marked effects on that expressions salience and entrenchment. The initial distinction between “raw” and “relative” frequency already hints at a problem with this principle: frequency has to be qualified by other analytic structure principles in order to be considered meaningful. Thus, consideration of so-called frequency effects, contingency and constraints invariably includes reference to other analytic structure principles (cf. Ellis 2002). To some degree, this is true for all analytic structure principles: they are only effective in describing the formation process of CGP if seen in relation to each other as an interdependent network of competing determinants.

Beyond this, however, there is another problem with frequency (and other analytical structure principles) as far as the predictability of their impact is concerned: both a markedly high frequency and a markedly low frequency of use may have a positive effect on the CGP of the expression under analysis. This has been illustrated with the “Scalpel.” and the *Uwupu* example; the former of which has strong CGP, because it can be linked to a variety of accessible uses (if only in movies and TV-series), whereas the latter has strong CGP to the degree that it unambiguously evokes the natural context of this thesis (even though this might actually not allow for the derivation of a very concrete situational substrate due to the high level of abstraction in academic discourse). The point is that both very short and exceedingly long chronicles of use may have a positive impact on the formation of CGP. Then again, a low frequency (i.e. short chronicles) entails a limited availability of accessible context, which might make an utterance only vaguely interpretable or not at all. High frequency (i.e. long chronicles) of use can have the same effect, if the various contexts are too disparate to allow for the derivation of one salient situational substrate. Thus, frequency must be taken into consideration, among other things, with reference to contextual consistency.

Contextual consistency

The repeated reoccurrence of one linguistic form naturally has a positive impact on that form's entrenchment (cf. Langacker 1987: 59 as quoted on page 111 above). In terms of meaning, however, this is not a given. Only if the linguistic form can be interpreted in some meaningful way in each use, can a general meaning be derived which is open for entrenchment. The more consistent the situational circumstances are in which the linguistic form is used, the more salient the meaning becomes. Contextual consistency is also implicitly recognized as a potentially meaning-constitutive factor in an expression's chronicles of use by Langacker, who concedes that "certain properties of ground elements are more or less constant across usage events and thus escape the process of abstraction and cancellation that produces the units in question" (1987: 404). In other words, if certain contextual properties are consistent over a number of uses, these contextual properties are incorporated into the expression's meaning. This can also be related to Goldberg's use of the term "consistency": Goldberg (2006), following Israel (2002), attests that language learners "seek out both *local* and *global* consistency. Local consistency makes learners aim to be conservative and stick closely with the local instances that they witnessed. Global consistency makes learners seek out generalizations among systems so that the overall system coheres" (64). These distinctions also apply to the analysis of systematic exploitation of context: local consistency relates to sub-grouping of contextual consistencies, which naturally allows the derivation of more concrete situational substrates; global consistency relates to the effort made to relate all natural contexts of use to each other, which obviously runs the risk of deriving a very abstract situational substrate with a low degree of salience⁶³.

Contextual consistency, i.e. continued use of an expression in similar contexts of use, generally has a positive impact on CGP. The utterance "Scalpel.", for instance, is only felicitous in evoking the vivid mental image of a medical operation, because the

⁶³ It should be clarified that Goldberg's use of the term "consistency" and the one elaborated here, although relatable, are subtly different in terms of the perspectives implied. While Goldberg adopts a speaker-centred perspective, making consistency a matter of choice for the language user how to construe some specific chronicles of use, I use contextual consistency in a formalistic manner to refer to a fundamentally apparent congruence or disparity in contextual configuration. The distinction between local and global consistency is, therefore, slightly problematic for or at least incoherent with the general orientation of the account at hand, because it invariably implies a speaker-centred perspective.

contextual configuration in each accessible use presumably has been consistent to the degree that a generalization can be drawn, identifying the over-all consistent natural context of a medical operation. It is also possible, however, that an expression is used over and over in similar contexts, but these contexts themselves are too general or abstract to allow for the derivation of a salient situational substrate. Thus, contextual consistency must be taken into consideration, among other things, with reference to contextual specificity.

Contextual specificity

To some degree, contextual specificity can be seen as an abstraction based on contextual consistency: to recognize consistency, it is necessary to compare distinct contexts of use to each other; the only way to identify them as highly consistent is to compare them on the basis of several properties and, thus, specifying those properties in relation to each other. Accordingly, contexts which have been identified not only as consistent with each other, but as very consistent, inevitably have been specified to a high degree of detail. Nevertheless, it will be clear that the use of an utterance in a very specialized situation allows the association of that utterance with this highly salient situational substrate. This is the reason why last words are often attributed a high level of salience: because they occur in what is perceived as a highly specific, even unique actual context. The notion of contextual specificity is also accountable for the fact that “Scalpel.” can generally be assumed to have a stronger CGP than “Chair.”, i.e. because “Scalpel.” is most saliently uttered in a very specific context, whereas “Chair.” is uttered, although consistently, in the very general context of everyday discourse.

Of course, this also relates to the fact that “Scalpel.” is more readily contextualized communicatively, i.e. identifiable as a meaningful component of a communicative exchange. “Chair.”, on the other hand, is intuitively contextualized descriptively, i.e. associated with a natural context which it could describe (cf. Stewart and Cohen 2002b: 235). Thus, the utterance “Chair.” if contextualized descriptively is most likely to evoke just the mental image of a chair. This would be considered a weaker CGP than the one evoked by “Scalpel.”, not because the context evoked is not salient, but because it is much less complex and specific (cf. discussion of Pull in 9.2 below). It may also be objected that the two utterances are unevenly matched,

because they consist of only two words with vastly different degrees of lexical specificity. From this perspective, “Scalpel.” is perceived as more powerful in the evocation of context simply because *scalpel* is a more specific word than *chair*. Considering this objection, we must ask ourselves what is meant by “lexical specificity”. In fact, the term merely makes it clear that one particular word is consistently used in a very specific context, i.e. to refer to a very specific type of (actual or natural) object. Accordingly, lexical specificity is, to some degree, just an abstraction based on contextual specificity⁶⁴; and even utterances that involve more words of over-all similar degrees of “lexical specificity” like “How much is it?” and “What is this about?” will probably differ in CGP, because of the specificity (and consistency) of the contexts in which they occur.

As all analytic structure principles, contextual specificity may have a positive impact on the salience of the situational substrate derived from one or several uses for up to the entire chronicles of use of one particular utterance. There is, however, a critical degree of salience via specificity: highly specific contexts may be less meaningful to the average speaker, because they are not able to establish a connection to comprehensible natural context (cf. discussion in 2.1). If confronted with a decontextualized text that stems from e.g. a book on advanced formal logic, expert knowledge will be necessary in order to realize the actual context as a meaningful natural context and link it up to the meaningful natural and actual macro-context of the real world. Expert knowledge as such can, of course, be seen as an assembly of highly abstract situational substrates derived over time from actual contexts with increasing specificity. Even if genuine (i.e. conventional) expert knowledge is lacking, however, the average language user will usually be able abstract some sort of meaning from an utterance or expression provided that they encounter it often enough (essentially embedded in some actual context of use) (cf. Wierzbicka 1985: 140). This also explains the formation of folk categories associated with expert terminology such as “quantum” (cf. Stewart and Cohen 2002a: 196). Accordingly,

⁶⁴ The Five Graces actually make the point that homonymous or polysemous constructions are difficult to learn (2009: 12). This could be seen as a consequence of the inevitable lack of contextual specificity of such terms. In fact, the identification of one specific formal construal as polysemous, arguably, is an abstract categorization derived from the apparently diluted contextual specificity and consistency of such construals.

Taylor notes that “[f]olk categories [...] are grounded in the way people normally perceive and interact with the things in their environment” (2003: 75), or in other words: folk categories emerge from the context of actual use. A prerequisite for the formation of meaning in this manner is, of course, that distinct uses can be unambiguously linked and used to derive one over-all situational substrate because they all involve the same linguistic forms. Thus, contextual specificity must be taken into consideration, among other things, with reference to formal consistency.

Formal consistency

The Five Graces point out that “[l]ow salience cues are difficult to learn [...] because of the low contingency of their form-function association” (2009: 12). What is termed “contingency of form-function association” relates to the interdependency of formal and contextual consistency as has just been discussed. It is, of course, intuitively apparent that formal consistency is conducive to high cue validity or salience. After all, utterances such as “Curiouser and curiouser.” have such strong CGP, among other things, because they are consistently used in the same form. The utterance “More and more curious.”, although arguably only a slightly different construal of the same underlying proposition, has markedly weaker CGP, because it is not readily connected with the same salient natural context as “Curiouser and curiouser.”. The same is often true for translations into a different language. Accordingly, the CGP of the utterance “Hasta la vista, baby.” relies so much on formal consistency that the attempt to evoke the same natural context with e.g. a German construal will in all likelihood fail to be felicitous. If we extend the scope of formal consistency to include not only construal but also representations, the non-abstract representational issues of intonation, pronunciation, etc. (in the case of spoken language) as well as font (in the case of written language) come into play. From this perspective, the CGP of the utterance “Hasta la vista, baby.” can be further enhanced by increasing formal consistency with the utterances natural context of use and pronouncing it with a heavy Austrian-American accent. The same general process is at work in the case of song, where melody serves as an additional formal marker that, if consistent with a natural context, pinpoints contextual specificity. Accordingly, a high degree of formal salience (through consistency and specificity) as with song, has a positive and strong impact on entrenchment and the ease of activation, which is why melodies or the exact wordings of a song are particularly effective in evoking the song as a whole.

Strictly speaking, of course, issues of representation fall in the conceptual scope of contextual consistency, because, as has been elaborated in section 2.1, representation can be seen to provide an actual micro-context to the construal of a linguistic form.

Regardless of the specific scope, formal consistency is not always essential for the formation of CGP as has been illustrated with the KEEP OFF THE GRASS example. In the discussion of this example it has been noted that the exact wording of the utterance is not particularly important, because of the over-all contextual consistency and specificity of actual contexts in which these kinds of texts conceivably and naturally occur. Accordingly, the texts KEEP OFF THE GRASS and STAY OFF THE LAWN presumably are invested with similar measures of CGP, because they are both successful in establishing a connection to the same natural context. This holds true at least, for learners of English or speakers who have not been confronted with the actual notice, but merely recognize the underlying cultural schema. A simple internet search reveals, of course, that KEEP OFF THE GRASS is significantly more frequently used than STAY OFF THE LAWN. Additionally, the word *lawn* has slightly different connotations than the word *grass*, i.e. it is used in different contexts (e.g. the context of golfing), and, thus, the two words may trigger different natural contexts in their own right. All of this, if reflected in an individual's chronicles of use, may undoubtedly result in a difference in CGP. Of course any further specification of formal features, as has already been noted in the discussion of contextual specificity, can only be conducive to meaning evocation, if the additionally explicated criteria can be (meaningfully) associated with some natural context. Whether or not the relevant natural context is accessible for the derivation of a particular situational substrate does not only depend on whether or not something has happened or may conceivably have happened, but also whether this natural context is perceived as conceptually close to the actual context of use. Thus, formal consistency must be taken into consideration, among other things, with reference to proximity to a particular reference system.

Proximity to reference system

The analytic structure principle (or principles) discussed under this header relate perhaps most directly to "ease of activation" as invoked by Langacker (2008: 230; and see above). The activation and deactivation (cf. Chafe 1987: 29) of particular

connections to natural context are inevitably constrained by the perceived “distance” that has to be spanned in order to make the connection. This perceived distance will vary of course depending on the conceptual domain that is taken as a base to profile the connection (cf. Langacker 1987: 147ff). In accordance with this domain-dependent variation, we may differentiate several types of conceptual proximity., the most important of which are listed below:

Socio-cultural

Cognitive/Emotional

Spatial

Temporal

That all of these domains are conceptually structured in terms of proximity and distance has been attested by Trope and Liberman’s (2010) “Construal-Level theory of psychological distance”. This structuring becomes relevant for the discussion at hand, when it is related to the notion of activation, as it can be quite easily by pointing out that physical features of the actual context that are spatially close will naturally be more easily activated than those far away. Accordingly, the utterance “Scalpel.” in the actual context of a medical surgery is conventionally used to refer to the scalpel in the room not any other scalpels. Although this example relates to reference rather than evocation, the general principle equally applies.

Thus, although we might conceive of other natural contexts in which the utterance “Scalpel.” may be used, the one that immediately springs to mind is the one of the medical procedure, because it is socio-culturally speaking “close” in the sense that it is easily activated. On the other hand, however, the utterance “Scalpel.” has been used frequently in the actual context of the preceding pages. In principle, it is possible, that the temporal and spatial proximity of these uses trumps the socio-cultural proximity of the natural context and the utterance “Scalpel.” is more readily associated with the context at hand (see also chapter 10 for an elaboration of this point). Since the actual context at hand has not much situational salience (being a written text it is essentially open to continuous decontextualization and the inherently implied contextual inconsistency), this is unlikely, but the basic points are still valid. The situational substrate pertaining to some individual use may also simply be triggered because it is part of an emotionally invested situation for instance. Thus, the

lexical trigger *bee* may evoke a traumatic experience in someone's personal history and the lexical trigger *concentration camp* may evoke a traumatic event in someone's cultural (or personal) history. There obviously is a marked difference in both cases and that difference lies in whether we take a personal or a cultural/communal perspective on meaning evocation. Accordingly, different types of reference system can be distinguished, the most salient of which are:

Speech community

Speaker

This basic differentiation between personal and social reference frames is reflected in Langacker's distinction between conventionality and entrenchment (2008: 21, also see section 3.2) or localized and distributed meaning. To some extent, it also implies a binary conception of general and conventionally accessible word meaning which is more or less consistent for different people and in different situations on the one hand, and meaning that is essentially embedded in a more narrow conception of actual context and as such use- and user-dependent. Disregarding a few other implications for the moment, the former is usually referred to as semantic, the latter as pragmatic meaning. From this perspective, the semantic-pragmatic distinction is, of course, basically a matter of different degrees of universality, automatization and formalization (cf. Langacker 2008: 37; see also chapter 8 for elaboration). In order to make any sort of reasonably tenable statements about the degree to which a particular natural context is conceptually close to a speaker or all the speakers in a speech community, one has to consider the actual frequency with which a particular context is evoked. Thus, proximity to reference system must be taken into consideration, among other things, with reference to frequency.

In the preceding pages, I have attempted to explicate the rather complex theoretical notion of chronicles of use. The arguments that an expression's use makes reference to context which determines its meaning has led us to examine the diachronic influence of use over time. This history of use is appropriated for meaning evocation by several structuring processes. These processes can be classified as synthetic to the extent that they combine different situational substrates from actual instances of use in the derivation of one situational substrate based on the resultant

natural context and the actual context at hand. They can also be classified as analytic, however, to the extent that not all contextual information is assimilated equally, but rather structured according to salience and cue validity. Finally, both synthetic and analytic structure principles have been shown to form an interdependent network of factors that determine the situational substrate implicated by any expression's chronicles of use. This general correlation and theoretical structure has been pooled in the representation provided as Figure 24 below.

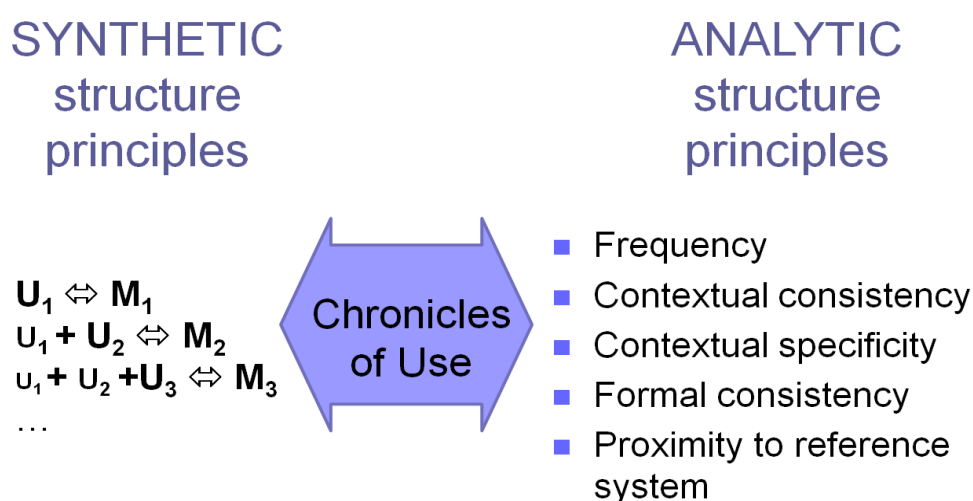


Figure 24. *Chronicles of use.*

Even though all these factors as outlined above are relevant in the derivation of a situational substrate and, accordingly, the formation of a particular utterance's CGP, CGP is only predicated by the interplay of these principles, but not fully predictable through them. On the one hand, this is accounted for by the inherent interplay of conventionality and creativity in the evocation of linguistic meaning. For, as has already been hinted at, entrenchment as well as salience depends on both factors: only an utterance that is sufficiently creative to be recognized as an individual and distinct use is eligible for cue status; while, at the same time, only an utterance that is sufficiently conventional to explicate connectedness to other uses allows the meaningful exploitation of chronicles of use. On the other hand, the interdependency of all the factors to the extent that each principle's scope can be expanded to include the others and they only make sense with relation to each other is an inherent feature of emergent complex systems (cf. Hopper 1998: 157, Hofstadter 1999: 708f, Five

Graces 2009: 12). Accordingly, Hopper notes that “[a] structure that is emergent [...] is never fixed, never determined, but is constantly open in flux” (1998: 157). This characterization is clearly scarcely more applicable to an object of structured analysis than in an analysis of meaning.

Unfortunately, however, this concession to the essentially emergent nature of meaning presents some problems to scientific practice, which habitually deals with constant and immutable facts about the world. At least this is the way that objects of analysis are usually conceptualized in scientific terms. That some of these habitual conceptualizations may be in need of revision in the light of what has been argued so far in the present account will be the central tenet of the next chapter.

8. Conceptualization of meaning

*A curious thing
about the ontological problem is its
simplicity.*

- Willard Van Orman Quine (1953: 1)
(formally rearranged as a “poem” by Jonathan Culler (2000: 24))

In the course of the preceding pages, meaning has been conceptualized in accordance with what has been said about evocation and formation. Hence, meaning, as elaborated here is conceived of as structured with reference to context by conventionality and creativity; it is contextualized and concrete; construed, evoked, emergent and to some degree imagistic; it is a direct consequence of the use of a particular linguistic expression and the essential embeddedness that use entails, and it makes (conventional as well as creative) reference to previous uses conceptualized as a particular expression’s chronicles of use. A by-product of this ongoing characterization is, on the one hand, a continued emergence of new formal output, letter by letter, page by page; on the other hand, this formal output is continuously integrated into the complex emerging natural context that can be derived from the text of this thesis. In the process of the latter, hopefully, patterns emerge that allow for the over-all meaningful interpretation of the present account.

This process of deriving a natural macro-context from a large body of linguistic data can be related to more general matters than my thesis; most prominently among them, to language itself. Hofstadter elaborates this derivational process as follows:

When a system of “meaningless” symbols has patterns in it that accurately track, or mirror, various phenomena in the world, then that tracking or mirroring imbues the symbols with some degree of meaning – indeed such tracking or mirroring is no less and no more than what meaning is. Depending on how complex and subtle and reliable the tracking is, different degrees of meaningfulness arise.
(Hofstadter 1999: P-3)

Hofstadter is obviously not talking about language per se here, since language or at least any natural language would usually not be characterized as “a system of ‘meaningless’ symbols”. Hofstadter’s interest lies in formal (i.e. rule-governed, typographical) systems in general. However, if we consider the context of language acquisition, we can definitely sympathize with this characterization of (a foreign)

language as “a system of ‘meaningless’ symbols” that becomes meaningful to learners of that language to the extent that they are successful in establishing links to “various phenomena in the world”. Hofstadter, who is primarily concerned with formal systems, warns his readers repeatedly not to muddle the workings of a formal system with the meanings assigned to it by interpretation/isomorphic mapping (e.g. Hofstadter 1999: 33, 52). At the same time this muddling of forms and the meanings represented or evoked by them is essential to the operation of natural languages, precisely because language is not just a rigidly conventional formal system but also interpreted creatively. This feature of natural language is also described by Hofstadter:

[I]n a language, when we have learned a meaning for a word, we then make new statements based on the meaning of that word. In a sense, the meaning becomes *active*, since it brings into being a new rule for creating sentences. (Hofstadter 1999: 52)

Thus, Hofstadter accounts for the creatively emergent nature of language through the notion of “active meanings”, which not only emerge from rules but also cause new rules to emerge as well. This view is strikingly reminiscent of the role that the cycle of signification and chronicles of use play in the formation of CGP. In fact, the two notions can be seen as an attempt to explicate that meanings are “active” in the sense that they determine use.

In accordance with these elaborations, something may (and in fact does) happen to language that is inconceivable to the workings of strict formal systems: the interpretation of the system may actually change the rules of the system; furthermore, these rules, in fact, do not precede the interpretation, they emerge from it and are as such inevitably emergent (cf. Hopper 1998: 155). While this is a necessary concession in any analysis of language and linguistic meaning, it has far-reaching consequences for this very analysis. By the very workings of active meanings, the muddling of form and its interpretation, any linguist’s representations of meaning always run the risk of being confused, at least superficially, with meaning as such. This problem has been touched upon in the discussion of image schemas in section 2.3 for example: the use of schemas to represent meaning does not necessarily entail that meaning is seen as schematic. But then again, because meaning is not something easily tangible and analytic representations invariably are, representation of meaning invariably becomes a statement about what meaning actually is or is conceived to be.

This can be related to Quine’s elaborations on “ontological commitment” and “reification of universals” (1953: 102ff). In short, the linguistic conception of the former term refers to the fact words commit themselves to the existence of referents; the latter term (again simplifying a great deal) refers to the fact that abstract or emergent phenomena (like meaning) may be reified (i.e. conceptualized as concrete things) through their representation, or more precisely, the ontological commitment of their representation. Or in Quine’s own considerably more enigmatic words: “What there is does not in general depend on one’s use of language, but what one says there is does” (1953: 103). Thus, talking about meaning as such is not predicated by the existence of meaning. But ontologically committing to the fact that there is meaning by representing it inevitably entails that meaning is represented and talked about in a certain way that is aligned with this commitment.

Accordingly, (concrete) representation or (abstract) construal of meaning is intricately related to the much deeper question of what meaning is. Subsequently both of these issues will be discussed in turn. This discussion is roughly oriented in terms of conventional representations of meaning (section 8.1) and (even more abstract) conventional conceptualizations of meaning (section 8.2), although, as has been argued, both notions invariably overlap and merge.

8.1. Reference, extensional meaning and linguistic sign models

One of the most canonical cornerstones in the analysis and representation of meaning is Ogden and Richards’ (1969) semiotic triangle as reproduced in Figure 25.

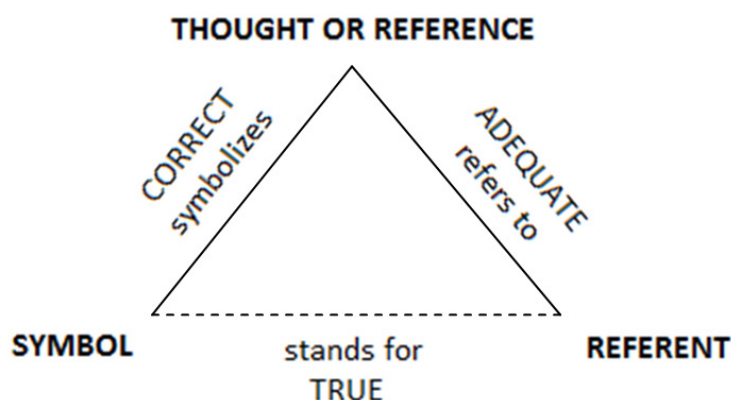


Figure 25. *Semiotic triangle after Ogden and Richards (1969: 11).*

This representation, in one form or the other, but always instantiating the same underlying construal, has been proliferated far and wide in introductory courses and lectures on language and linguistics and surely constitutes a foundation in many a linguist's understanding of meaning. Ogden and Richards elaborate Saussure's signifier/signified (cf. Saussure 1959: 65ff) model of the sign basically by elaborating on the inherent process of cognitive mediation and abstraction as well as relating it to the real world, i.e. stressing the representational nature of language⁶⁵. In accordance with these aims, Ogden and Richards represent a sign or symbol, which roughly relates to Saussure's signifier, i.e. a meaningful (linguistic) form, to thought. Drawing on ample discussions of the difference between meaning and naming, or sense and reference (cf. Frege 1948, Kripke 1980) they also concede that a symbol may also relate to or symbolize a reference. The thought or reference, then, refers to some sort of referent in the real world. The symbol and the referent are only related by what Ogden and Richards call "an imputed relation" (1969: 11).

To some extent, this acknowledgement of what has been called mediated reference makes Ogden and Richards' model more accountable for actual language use than other approaches, because the "truth value" of an utterance is not regarded as the central tenet in the process of signification as it often is in formal semantics (cf. Van Dijk 1977: 21), which is why formal semantics can be said to be "not strictly about meaning, but about reference" to the real world (Van Dijk 1977: 33). Nevertheless, Ogden and Richards' annotations regarding the other two relations may be a bit problematic at closer inspection: the relation between symbol and thought or reference is classified as (potentially) "correct" and the relation between thought or reference and the real world referent is described as (potentially) "adequate". The two relations themselves reflect the distinction between intensional or denotational meaning (which is independent from real life referents) and extensional or referential meaning (which depends on the conceptual connection to those referents) (cf. *ibid.*; Putnam 1975: 164). The classifications that are imposed upon those relations, however, reflect another distinction between abstract meaning and meaning in use,

⁶⁵ This has also been attempted by Peirce who related a sign (or "representamen") to the equivalent of that sign in a person's mind, which he called "interpretant" and also to the "object" that the sign "stands for" (Peirce 2006: 210).

between the realm of competence(/langue) and performance(/parole)⁶⁶, between semantics and pragmatics.

From a semiotic perspective, what lies at the crux of these distinction might be called the segmented conceptual mediation hypothesis, i.e. signs always and inescapably relate to the real world through thought, the relationship between symbol and referent is “an imputed relation” (Ogden and Richards 1969: 11); but moreover, it is presumed possible to focus on a certain kind of meaning by examining the relation between the symbol and thought (or reference) and at another kind of meaning by examining the further relation of that symbol through thought to an actual context of use. What is problematic about that?

Well, realisation of a conceptual (i.e. a meaningful) connection is always predicated on a cognitive process of course (see the principle of cognitive mediation and abstraction as introduced in chapter 2). Nevertheless, words, or at least their representations, are physically embedded and consequentially linked to the real world as all formally identifiable objects are. If we see their meaning as a formational product of their respective chronicles of use (or exploitation thereof), then we must invariably concede that meaning is not divorceable from use. In fact, we are unable to discuss it even in the most abstract sort of ways without linking it to some sort of concrete representation, some combination of linguistic units that are essentially embedded in an actual context of use. Accordingly, the implied segmentation in the process of signification through thought or reference is just not tenable. Thought or reference do not separate symbols and referents, they connect them; in fact, they are that connection⁶⁷. Thus, the separation of semantic and pragmatic meaning is predicated on a segmentation that, in reality, cannot be made. Meaning cannot be discussed out of context, it can merely be discussed in various degrees of decontextualization (cf. Langacker’s definition given above).

Consider, for instance, the following sentence reproduced from Widdowson (1990: 99):

⁶⁶ In fact, Ogden and Richards’ terminology “correct” and “adequate” recalls Chomsky’s classification criteria “grammatical” and “acceptable” for competence and performance respectively (1965: 11).

⁶⁷ This is not meant to imply that all thought is inherently bound up with linguistic symbols, it merely means that the meaningful interpretation of these symbols necessitates the relation of the symbols to some form of context through thought.

(8) The letter is in the drawer.

Widdowson uses this sentence to argue that there is a fundamental difference between “sentence meaning” and “utterance meaning”⁶⁸: if considered as a sentence (8) “poses no problem”, but considered as “a use of language, as an utterance, presented like this in isolation, it is quite incomprehensible, because we cannot attach any meaning to it” (Widdowson 1990: 99). While I understand this distinction and recognize its general usefulness in the area of linguistics, it cannot be denied that it imposes a gross simplification and even misrepresentation on linguistic meaning. Not only is (8) differently meaningful in its actual context of being a point in case in a line of argument, it is also meaningful both as a decontextualized utterance and as a sentence, because it (descriptively) evokes the natural context of some letter being in some drawer. Thus, (8) is comprehensible and meaningful as an utterance on two levels (three if we consider the actual context at hand) despite Widdowson’s assertions to the contrary. Of course, it can be argued that it would be even more meaningful if the natural and the actual context of the utterance were aligned and we could associate an actual drawer and letter with the utterance; but really, as has been argued in section 2.1, such dissociation merely entails a lower degree of cognitive mediation and abstraction. This difference in degree is the only difference there is; the underlying processes of contextual reference and the derivation of situational substrates in order to make sense of an utterance, at least in my opinion, are the same. This basic line of argumentation is corroborated by many researchers from different fields who have also professed dissatisfaction with the semantics/pragmatics distinction typically also because of the incoherence with some aspects of linguistic meaning and context (cf. Langacker 2008: 37, Taylor 2003: 133, Kamp and Partee 2004: 2, Evans 2009: 8, Fetzer 2004: 73f, Culler 1975: 75ff)⁶⁸.

More than this segmentation, it is also the implied two-step degree of cognitive mediation and abstraction that is implicitly proposed in Ogden and Richards’ model invites criticism. On the one hand, as has just been noted, I have also acknowledged gradience when it comes to cognitive mediation and abstraction. In fact, we could

⁶⁸ It should be noted that this criticism vastly differs in its individual shapes and guises, its directness or implicitness, and also in the suggested solutions, e.g. in whether the dichotomy is dismissed, redefined, or whether it is simply argued that one field of investigation includes or should include the other. Explicating each of these cases, however, obviously goes far beyond the scope of the present account.

account for the difference in cognitive mediation and abstraction between situations where natural and actual context is aligned and those where it is not by invoking Ogden and Richards semiotic triangle and labelling the top as “natural context” and the right corner as “actual context”. Thus, we would see that, if the actual context is not congruent with the natural context, the way of cognitive mediation is longer (in terms of the representation), which translates to a higher degree of mediation. However, this representation is painfully incongruous with the conceptualization of context: context is not a point to be referenced; it is a complex configuration of surroundings into which linguistic units are essentially embedded both formally and conceptually.

In fact, the way that we are able to schematically relate the different instantiations of the symbol *scalpel* (its representations) to one underlying concept (i.e. recognize each representation as the same construal) is analogous to the way that different real-world objects are related to the same concept, i.e. identified as scalpels, which is in turn analogous to how the real-world object and the sign are related to the same underlying concept (cf. Givón 2005: 1). All of these associations draw on the essential embeddedness of objects, concepts and linguistic units. Thus, Ogden and Richards’ “symbolizing”, “referring” and “standing for” all represent a similar process of reference to context. The key-concept is connectedness and whether it is seen as a mere linguistic (or semiotic) phenomenon or a quality of the world itself. In other words, either referents share intra-systemic connections with other referents, symbols with other symbols (by virtue of their real-life manifestations and physical co-occurrence) which implies the unmediated relatedness of symbol and referent (for the same reasons)⁶⁹, or the (meaningful/conceptual) relation of everything is seen as cognitively mediated. Whichever way we look at it (the former is more simplistic and might be more useful in application, the latter is more realistic), Ogden and Richards misrepresent the case by their steplike partial induction of cognitive mediation and abstraction into their model.

Despite these points of criticism (some of which relate more to the representation others more to the underlying conceptualization of meaning), Ogden

⁶⁹ Cf. Wittgenstein’s language-game built on the command “Platte!” (“Slab!”) and concurrent arguments about “ostensive definition” (1953: 4ff).

and Richards' semiotic triangle has served well in the representation of meaning for many purposes and it will not be dismissed here without further ado. Instead, I propose to supplement Ogden and Richards' representation of meaning with a lesser known representational model advocated by McCloud and reproduced as Figure 26 below:

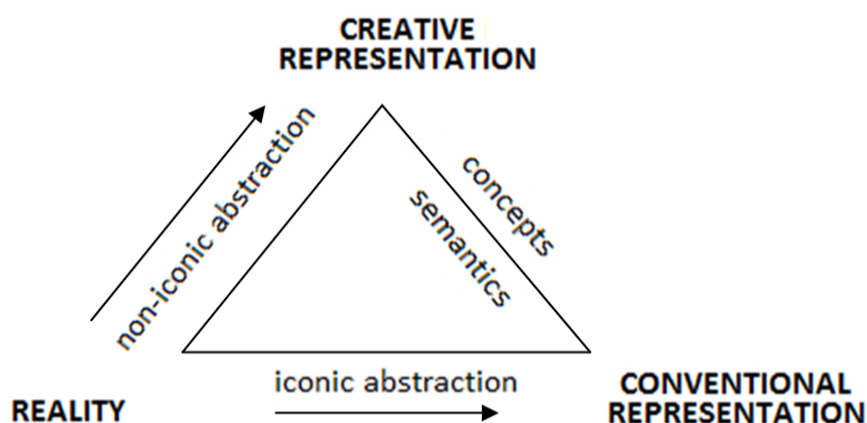


Figure 26. *Representation plane after McCloud (1993: 51), adapted for linguistic meaning.*

Other than with the semiotic triangle, which basically related three entities involved in the signifying process, McCloud's triangle delineates a plane on which individual signs may fall. This serves as an intuitive categorization aid for the analysis of signs. Thus, a symbol may be placed towards the left corner of the plane, if it represent reality as accurately as possible; it may be placed towards the right corner, if the symbol entails a high degree of abstraction away from reality in a conventional way (i.e. iconic abstraction); and it may be placed towards the top, if it entails a high degree of abstraction in a creative way (i.e. non-iconic abstraction).

McCloud's model is essentially a model of visual signifiers. Accordingly, in its original conception as intended by McCloud it was meant to primarily relate to pictorial representations as indicated by Figure 27.

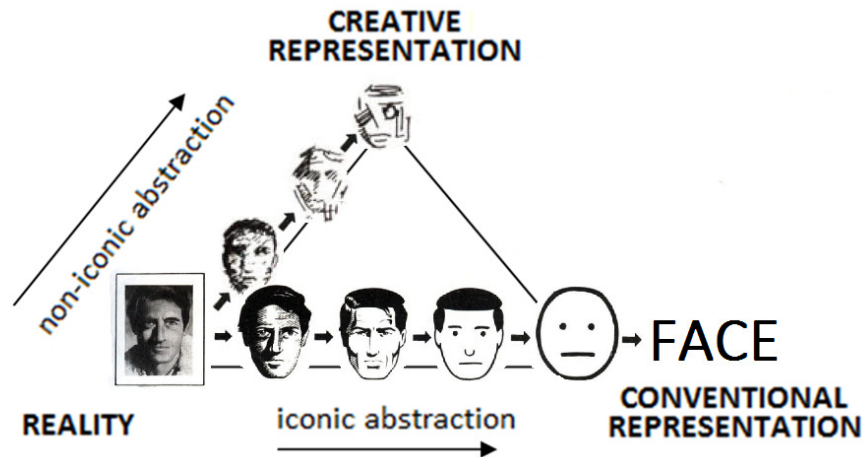


Figure 27. Representation plane after McCloud (1993: 51), instantiated with pictorial representations.

McCloud claims that there are (predominantly) conventional ways in which pictorial representations abstract from reality and (predominantly) creative ways. As indicated by Figure 27, McCloud claims that at some point iconic abstraction from reality reaches a point, where images are substituted with words (McCloud 1993: 46f). However, he also claims that, within language, there is the same basic variation as with visual representation (1993: 52ff). Accordingly, it is possible, to interpret McClouds model in exclusively linguistic terms as is illustrated in Figure 28, where the pictures represented in Figure 27 have been substituted by three different construals of the same referent.

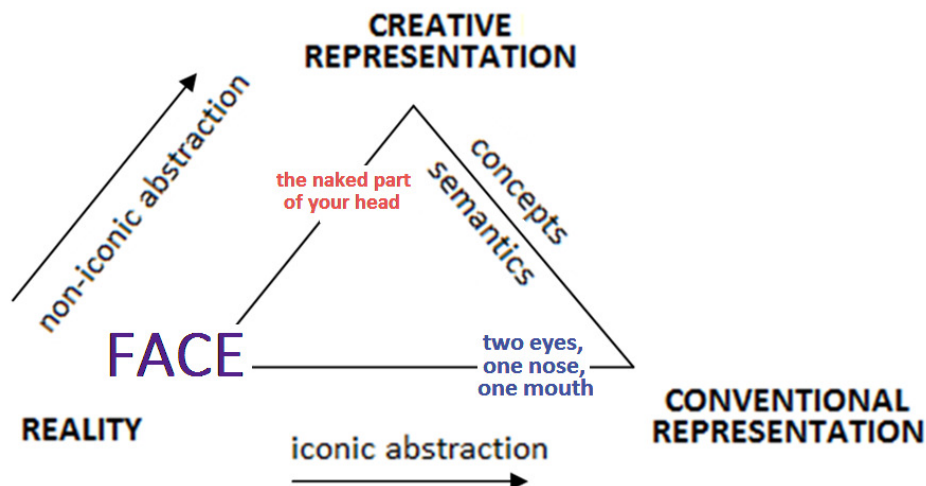


Figure 28. Representation plane after McCloud (1993: 51), instantiated with linguistic representations.

Here, "FACE" is seen as the least abstracted representation, because it presumably imposes no more conceptual structuring on the referent than is already there; it

merely evokes a face in the most general way possible with language. The more descriptive the representation becomes, the more the abstractions that are only implicitly inherent in the simple representation “FACE” are laid bare. Thus, it becomes clear that we conventionally impose a certain structure on things through language in the form of specific construals. “two eyes, one nose, one mouth” is seen as a highly conventional construal of a face, whereas “the naked part of your head” is seen as a very creative construal, because we usually don’t think of a face in those terms (or at least not primarily)⁷⁰. Obviously, these are rather clear-cut cases and in reality the distinction often is not that apparent. Also, there are several levels of conventionality and creativity that come into play depending on the respective reference system; the distinct consideration of construal and representation alone makes reference to two different representation systems (one verbal, one vocal or visual).

Generally speaking, however, it seems theoretically conceivable to structure a given body of linguistic construals (possible or actual) in accordance with how much semantic structuring they explicitly impose and to what degree this structuring is conventional or creative. Or at the very least, it is possible to think of linguistic construals in that way even if the concrete analytic application of this model may need further specification of some parameters. For the purposes at hand, however, it is good enough.

Now, when I introduced McCloud’s model, I did so, proposing it as a supplement to Ogden and Richards’ meaning representation. On the one hand, this supplementation seems a bit unlikely. As has been noted, although both are triangles, Ogden and Richards’ model is a relational schema that explicates general signification, whereas McCloud’s is a categorization aid for different signs. On the other hand, however, there are certain similarities in the respective parameters. At the very least it can be said that both models include reality as a reference point which is related

⁷⁰ The fact that the more creative construal also has less cue validity for the concept face is a by-product of its creativity. Of course, one might argue that the creative construal does not specify “necessary and sufficient features” (Taylor 2003: 21) of the concept ‘face’ and as such is not as salient a description, because of baldness and beards. The individual body parts listed in the conventional construal, however, are also not all necessary and sufficient features of the concept, because the nose for example is not necessary for the representation of a face (see Figure 27) and the mere list of body parts does not unambiguously describe a face either. Clearly, the most decisive difference is that “two eyes, one nose, one mouth” is the more conventional construal and as such more unambiguously associated with ‘face’.

(through a cognitive process of abstraction) to symbols or construals. Exploiting this similarity (and disregarding the differences for now), we can relate the two models surprisingly smoothly to each other by turning McCloud's representational plane upside down and fitting it to Ogden and Richards' semiotic triangle as has been done in Figure 29.

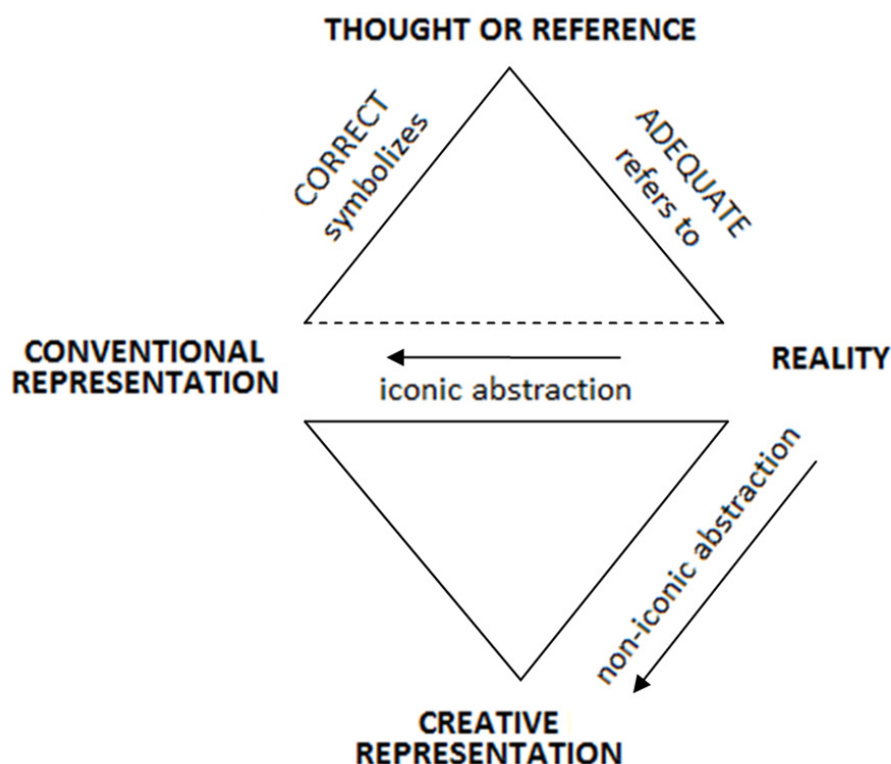


Figure 29. Combining Ogden and Richards with McCloud: a first attempt.

In this representation, McCloud's "reality" and Ogden and Richards' real-life object or "referent" have been aligned. Correspondingly, "conventional representation" has been conflated with Ogden and Richards' notion of the "symbol". This is not unreasonable, since language is often regarded as a body of highly conventionalized signs. Moreover, the combination of the two models makes it clear that referents and highly conventional representations can be related to each other by a cline of representations with varying degrees of iconic abstraction. This process of abstraction is cognitively mediated as indicated by the upper corner of the upper triangle. On the whole, this seems to be a rather agreeable representation. However, one of the main points of taking McCloud's model into consideration, the acknowledgement of more creative and more conventional linguistic construals, is rendered mute by it; this first attempt at combining the two models only relates iconic

abstraction to Ogden and Richards' "symbolizing" and "referring". This is untenable, of course. Creative construals, presumably involving creative thought and reference - as has been established, from a context-referential perspective on meaning, both are mutually inclusive – undoubtedly also partake in a process of signification. This can be acknowledged in representational terms by attaching another version of the basic Ogden and Richards' triangle to the non-iconic abstraction side of McCloud's representational plane as has been done in Figure 30.

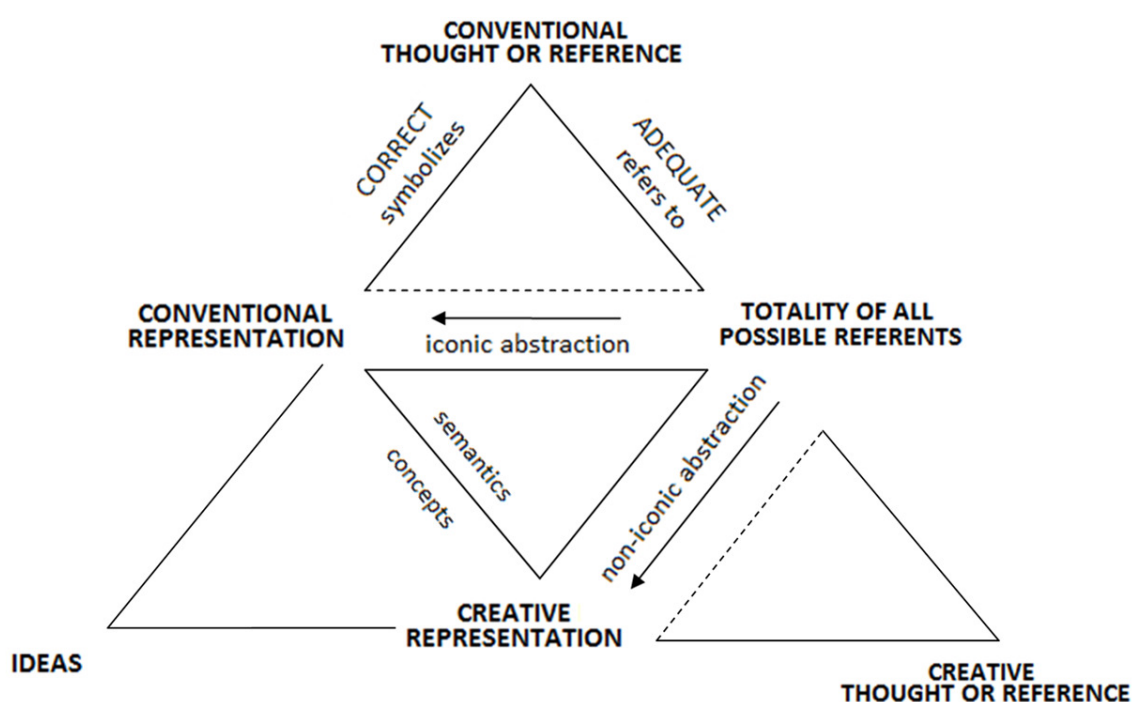


Figure 30. A synthesis of triangles: meaning and representation.

This may need a few elaborations. First of all, you may notice that the relation classifications as proposed by Ogden and Richards have been omitted in the triangle fitted to the non-iconic abstraction side of the previous representation. This is not simply due to the criticism already levelled about these classifications; much more does the acknowledgement of (more or less) creative representations corroborate that criticism. After all, creative representations of a situation are neither meant to be particularly "correct" nor "adequate". As with the use of metaphors, one might say that creative construals can be felicitous in establishing a particular contextual connection, one might even analyse the creativity in terms of source and target domains (cf. Taylor 2003: 135). But to analyse creative language use as "correct" or

“adequate” clearly misses the point about it. Of course, conventional rules are also at work, to some extent, in the formation of creative construals, and, of course, creative construals are usually also meant to be understood; but generally speaking, creativity wants to be “neat”, not effective. This is not to say that the laying bare of alternative (compared to conventional) semantic structuring undoubtedly may not be very effective and indeed facilitate comprehension and effectiveness (be it communicative or representational) of an utterance (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 177ff on “indirect understanding”).

Another amendment has actually been overdue since the adapted version of McCloud’s model has been introduced in Figure 26. This amendment concerns the semantics/concepts border as indicated in several representations of McCloud’s model, which has so far not been explicated. Basically, concepts are seen, in the account at hand, as situational substrates (to varying degrees of abstraction, contextualization and concretization) that are not analyzed or experienced as evocation of a particular construal. Although even those essentially non- or pre-linguistic situational substrates may include references to linguistic context, they cannot be traced back to one actual instance of construal that triggered them. Within the model at hand, i.e. the one centring on McCloud’s representational plane, concepts are seen as fully abstract entities, completely removed from the physical reality of linguistic signs (i.e. their representations) and existing merely as situational substrates with some sort of conceptual structure. Accordingly, along the cline of abstraction, construals move further and further away from reality (or the totality of all possible referents) until the border between semantics and concepts (i.e. non-representational in the sense of immaterial meaning) is breached. Some of these “concepts” might be closer to the border in the sense that they almost take verbal form, just as some representations might get close to the border with increasing degrees of abstraction away from reality and towards perceived (or conceived) conceptual structuring.

Finally, it may be pointed out that, in Figure 30, McCloud’s representational plane is implicitly construed as the material amalgamation space of creative and conventional signification processes; while continued abstraction finally culminates in

maximally abstract situational substrates which are labelled “ideas”. This is made explicit in Figure 31 below.

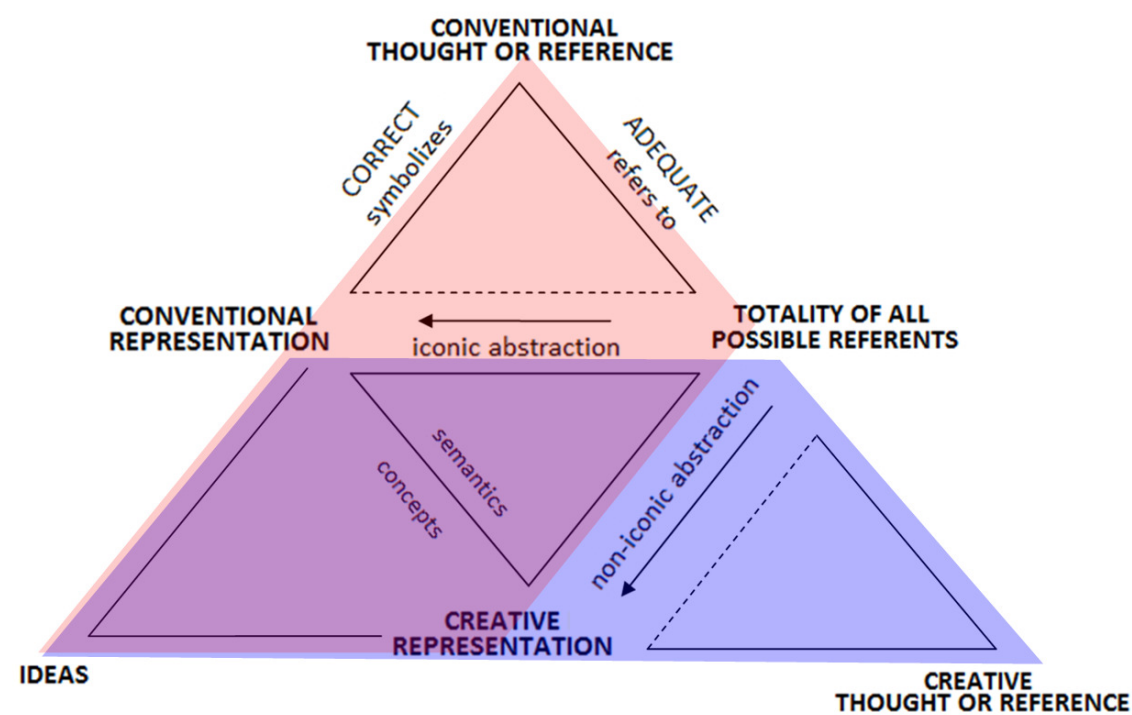


Figure 31. Conventional domain, creative domain and language plane

As may have become apparent in the previous discussion, the distinction of thought (whether conventional or creative) as well as the non-agentive notion of ideas is neither particularly clear nor analytically useful. Thus, all three notions can be conflated as conceptual or cognitive context as opposed to the real-world context or physical context that is constituted by the totality of all possible referents. Such conflation (imagine folding in the three corners of the triangle in Figure 30 or 31 above) would result in a meaning pyramid (see Figure 32 below).

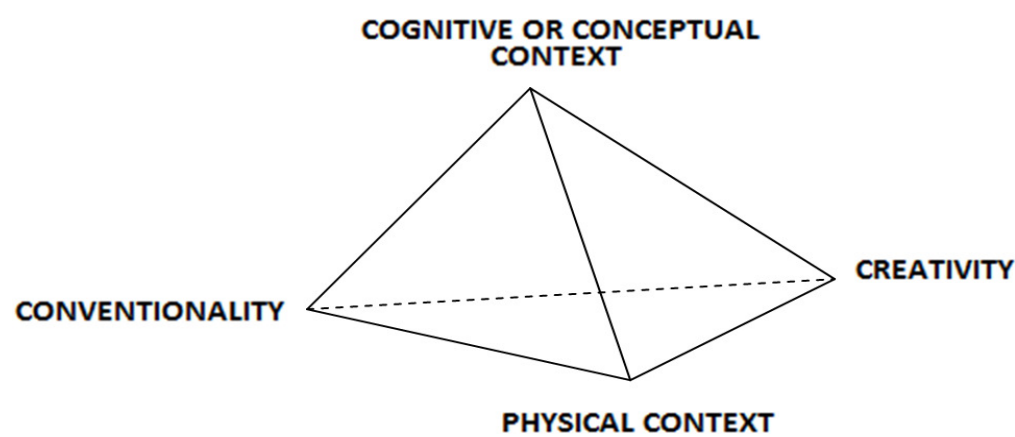


Figure 32. Meaning pyramid.

This resultant meaning representation model finally approaches a representation of meaning that is coherent with the theoretical elaborations in this thesis, arguing for the pivotal role of contextual reference in the formation and evocation of (linguistic) meaning. In the meaning pyramid, all actual instantiations of construals (i.e. their representations) would be situated somewhere on the base of this pyramid, they could be indicated as points on what we might (still) call the representational plane (roughly corresponding to McCloud 1993). The remainder of the pyramid indicates conceptual content that can be connected with the points on the representational plane; it is important to note that this conceptual content is not meaning per se, what makes the conceptual content meaningful - in itself and with relation to linguistic forms, the points on the representational plane - are the connections that can be established, i.e. the situational substrates derived. Thus, meaning(s) can be symbolized as lines within the meaning pyramid.

The schematized representation of (cognitive/conceptual) contextual reference material is, of course, a representational sacrifice. A justification for such a representation is offered by Langacker as follows:

It is not necessarily wrong to identify a correspondent as a discrete, point-like element [...], even should a finer-grained view reveal a continuous field of options. Analytically, its identification as a salient reference point may be accurate as a schematic characterization, thus allowing us to capture a valid generalization. Cognitively, it is not unlikely that the construction coalesces around the reference point owing to its salience. The reference point then anchors the correspondences by defining a neighborhood they must reach (i.e., their point of attachment must fall in its dominion). (Langacker 2006: 137)

This model gives us a pretty expansive basis for the mapping of construals/representations (as points) and their related meanings (as lines). At a closer look, however, we see that physical context is actually at a considerable notational disadvantage as opposed to cognitive or conceptual context; because whereas meaning relations pertaining to the latter can be mapped multidimensionally into conceptual space (i.e. the whole body of the pyramid above the representational plane), links to physical context have to be represented as a single line from the construal to that corner of the pyramid labelled “physical context”. This is obviously problematic. For

one thing, it is painfully apparent from the discussions in 2 that utterances such as “Scalpel.” are linked to several distinct aspects of physical context.

Additionally, there are a few further problems (or apparent problems) with the inclusion of physical context as a structuring dimension in the representational plane:

- a) There are some construals that would be conceived as not being representational of the real world at all, but merely of thoughts and ideas (e.g. abstract notions such as ‘truth’ or ‘grammar’). Of course, in accordance with the present account, these notions merely refer to very abstract situational substrates which are nevertheless linked however abstractedly to actual instances of use (cf. argumentation in 6 and 7), so, from that perspective, this does not present a real conflict.
- b) Construals have a physical form (i.e. a representation) and, thus, always are essentially embedded in actual physical context as much as in natural cognitive or conceptual context.
- c) Creativity and conventionality are highly abstract notions that qualify the form of representation (i.e. iconic or non-iconic abstraction) in a relative and gradable manner. Physical context clearly is not such a “gradable quality”.

At least some of these problems (primarily (b) and (c)) stem from the fact that I have been careless with my generalizations when fusing the two models of McCloud and Ogden and Richards, in particular regarding the conflation of “Referent” and “Reality”. Strictly speaking, neither of these notions seems to constitute a gradable quality that interacts with creativity and conventionality in the construal of linguistic forms. Clearly, what McCloud referred to with the claim that some representations are closer to reality (McCloud 1993: 28) was that some representation impose less conceptual structure on the represented object or situation than others (cf. discussion on page 135 above). With pictorial representation, this is a more tangible notion than with linguistic construals. Perhaps we could speak of a closer mapping to reality (as it is and not as it is perceived). Employing a slightly metaphoric term that borrows from the domain of visual representation we could specify the third gradable quality that delineates the representational plane, the base of our meaning pyramid, “resemblance”.

Unfortunately, with this move, the model has lost its accountability for physical context. Before we rectify this scope-reduction, however, it might be wise to reconsider some of the arguments listed under (a) and (b) above. It may have gone unnoticed that, in the course of our discussion, the terms “physical context” and “cognitive or conceptual context” have entered the discourse rather naturally in an elaboration of “reality” and “referents” on the one hand and “ideas”, “thought” and “concepts” on the other hand. These categorizations, although intuitively useful, have already been dismissed at the end of our discussion in chapter 2 in lieu of the more general notion of situational substrates, i.e. the cognitively mediated and abstracted bundle of references to context that facilitates the contextualized and concretized evocation of meaning.

As has been hinted at in (b), physical context, on the whole, corresponds to actual context, while conceptual or cognitive context could be more accurately described as what has been called natural context in the discussions at hand. This essentially includes situational substrates not derived from the actual context at hand but from previous actual contexts of linguistic use and also non-communicative situations. As such a reference to natural context includes an element of recursivity that has so far not been discussed: if natural use includes situational substrates derived on the basis of previous uses, this may lead to recursivity, because any previous interpretations of linguistic units inevitably also drew on actual and natural context. This element of recursivity, although in discussions of meaning typically seen as analytically problematic (cf. Kripke’s “noncircularity condition” and the logical fallacy of infinite regress (1980: 89f)), is not too surprising however in the context of meaning. In fact, Hofstadter makes a persuasive argument that meaning arises from recursive systematicity by making reference to the already briefly introduced notion of “frames” (see section 3.1):

[In terms of frames, o]ne could say that mental representations of situations involve frames nested within each other. Each of the various ingredients of a situation has its own frame. It is interesting to verbalize explicitly one of my mental images concerning nested frames. Imagine a large collection of chests of drawers. When you choose a chest, you have a frame, and the drawer holes are places where “subframes” can be attached. But subframes are themselves chests of drawers. How can you stick a whole chest of drawers into

the slot for a single drawer in another chest of drawers? Easy: you shrink and distort the second chest, since, after all, this is all mental, not physical. Now in the outer frame, there may be several different drawer slots that need to be filled; then you may need to fill slots in some of the inner chests of drawers (or subframes). This can go on, recursively.

The vivid surrealistic image of squishing and bending a chest of drawers so that it can fit into a slot of arbitrary shape is probably quite important, because it hints that your concepts are squished and bent by the contexts you force them into. (Hofstadter 1999: 644-645)

In the terms of the present account, it is probably important to amend that the continued (even recursive) reference to context through contexts is not interpreted as concepts being “squished and bent by the contexts you force them into”; rather, linguistic meaning, which is triggered by actual representations of linguistic construals is derived from the actual (and natural) context in which the construal is essentially embedded. Thus, the recursive reference can only be seen as squishing concepts, from a concept-centred perspective which assumes some stable unwavering entity in the first place. From a form-centred perspective on meaning evocation, however, meaning actually is an emergent quality of recursive reference.⁷¹

Of course, there are limitations to which this recursivity can be represented in a schematic representation as has been elaborated in this account. Thus, in accordance with Langacker’s elaborations on representation of a complex entity as a “discrete, point-like element” as given above, I will keep the general point-and-line representation as outlined above, with the concession that the points in natural context (i.e. what has formerly been called “conceptual or cognitive context”) actually represent further references to other situational substrates. Taking all these elaborations into account, we can distil an ultimate version of a meaning representation model in accordance with the account at hand (see Figure 33 below).

⁷¹ This is a pretty momentous argument and obviously would deserve more elaboration. Unfortunately, such elaboration would definitely go beyond the scope of the present account. Therefore, I must content myself with pointing out that recursivity is not necessarily undesirable in the analysis of meaning and refer to Hofstadter’s (1999) book (particularly pages) for a carefully constructed foundation to this claim (Also: cf. Peirce’s recursive sign model as explicated in Copley 1997: 25).

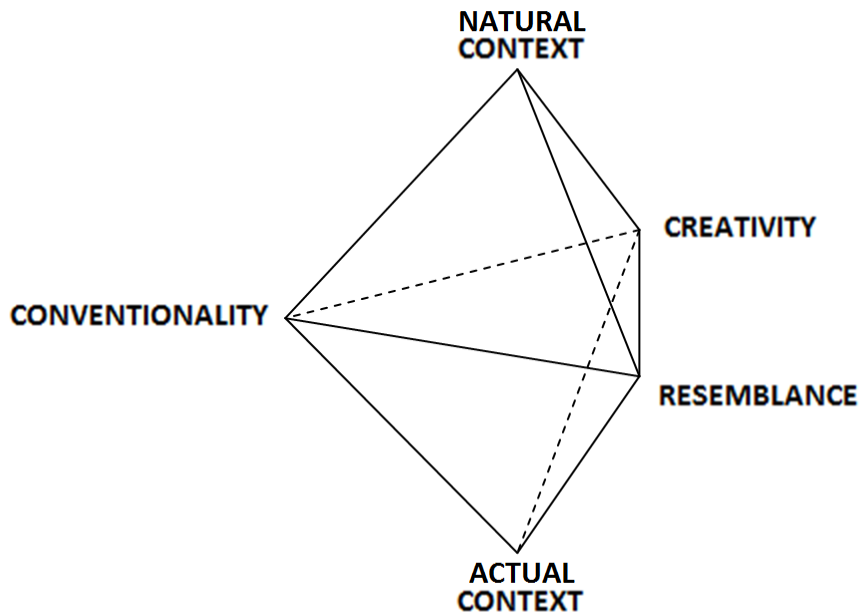


Figure 33. *Meaning prism.*

The result is a triangular dipyramid, which I will refer to as the meaning prism. From a geometry perspective this is exceedingly sloppy, but for our purposes it should do. Moreover, this terminology neatly captures the fact that meaning is “fractured” into an array of contextual references in this prism like light in an optical prism (see the schematic representation of a situational substrate in section 9.1). As with the meaning pyramid, construals fall along the representational plane, which is highlighted in Figure 34.

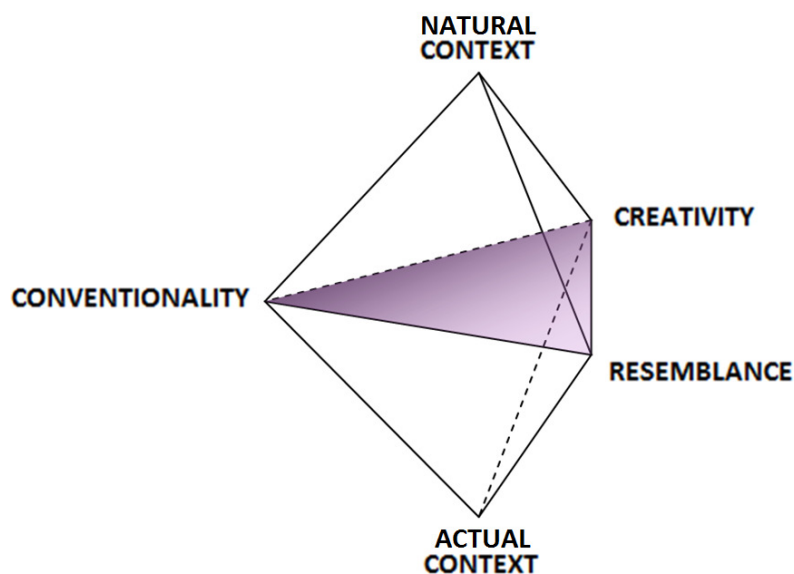


Figure 34. *Meaning prism with profiled representational plane.*

The situational substrate which is derived in the meaningful interpretation of one such construal may then be represented, as has already been said, as a conglomerate of lines that link one specific construal to different aspects of the context in which it is essentially embedded. These relevant aspects of context themselves are represented as points or merely as the endpoints of the connecting lines.

This is the end of our tinkering with meaning representation models in this account. From the two triangles, I have distilled a meaning representation model in the form of a meaning prism that seems fit to represent at least some important aspects of context-referential meaning. Nevertheless, there are still some relevant issues related to the general conceptualization of linguistic meaning that have not yet been sufficiently addressed. Therefore, before moving on to an explicit discussion of CGP, the central and eponymous notion of the account at hand, we will devote the next section to relatively condensed but correspondingly brief discussion of those issues.

8.2. Putting some meaning into it

It has been mentioned that the representational plane in the meaning prism is where all linguistic construals fall. Since, in the present conceptualization of linguistic meaning, meaning depends on the essential embeddedness of linguistic units into a particular context of use, the construals are not seen as conceptual abstractions. Instead they are invariably linked to a specific representation. This representation, as has been said, could be seen as the narrowest conception of actual context (i.e. actual micro-context). The recognition of the construal, on the other hand, is based on an abstraction based on the chronicles of use (particularly formal and contextual consistency) and could be seen as the most minimal connection to natural context.

This conceptualization is strikingly reminiscent to Saussure, who characterized linguistic signs as a phenomenologically weird cross-section of the real world (i.e. a concrete representation) and the mental abstractions and conceptual structuring that we impose upon it (i.e. an abstract construal), or “sound” and “thought” as he called it:

Neither are thoughts given material form nor are sounds transformed into mental entities; the somewhat mysterious fact is rather that "thought-sound" implies division, and that language works out its units while taking shape between two shapeless masses. (Saussure 1959: 112)

Saussure then goes on to compare the "two shapeless masses" with water and air, the interaction of which causes the manifestation of waves, i.e. physical instantiations of linguistic construals, as visualized in a figure reproduced here as Figure 35.

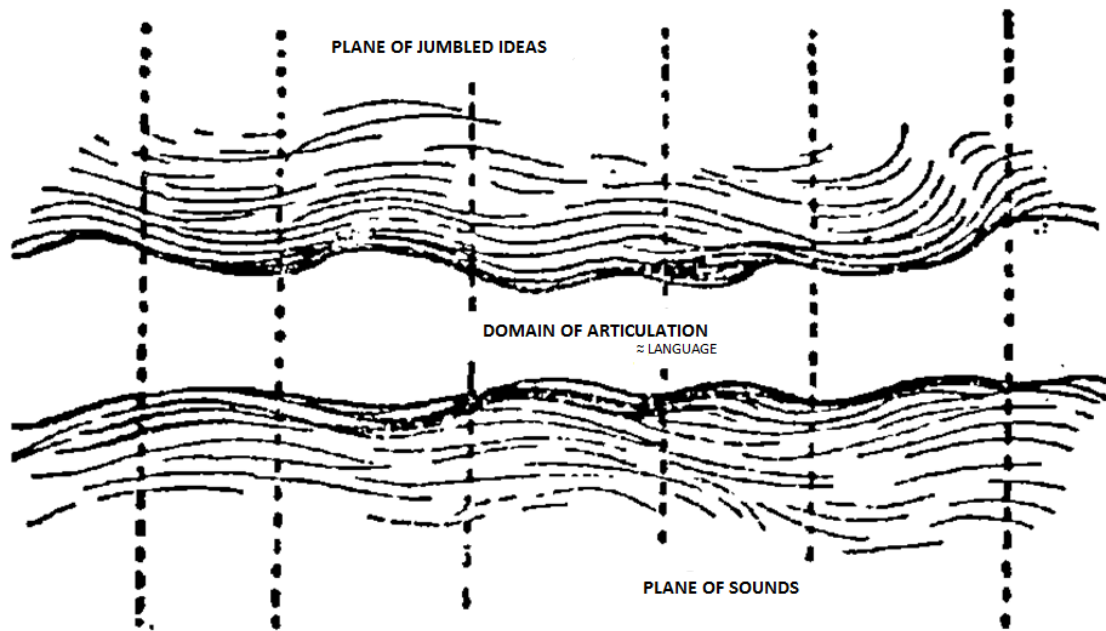


Figure 35. Amorphous "thought-sound" (slightly adapted from Saussure 1959: 112)

The dashed lines presumably represent different cross-sections in the sound-thought continuum corresponding to the conceptual borders between individual linguistic signs. The juxtaposition of the "two shapeless masses" with these interposed straight lines illustrate quite neatly that linguistic forms arise from naturally continuous and amorphous domains "under conditions that of necessity bring about the reciprocal delimitations of units" (ibid.: 112, cf. Givón 2005: 1). Correspondingly, there is a whole range of ways in which I can say (or write) one particular word (i.e. phonetic variation or variation in visual design) and there is a multitude of ideas and concepts that a certain construal can express (i.e. "flexible reference" (Zelinsky-Wibbelt 2000: 11)). However, as long as those different etic variants are relatable to the same emic unit (cf. Pike 1954) and can be said to belong to the conceptual domain (i.e. they are meaningful) as well as to the physical domain (i.e. they take an acoustic

(or orthographic) form), they are considered to be instantiations of the same basic symbolic structure or system of form-meaning pairings (cf. Langacker 2008: 3). Thus, language arises (horizontally) – to put it in the terms of Saussure’s slightly mystical conception – when thought and sound overlap, and is then inevitably (vertically) substructured into linguistic units by virtue of the distinctive formal and conceptual properties of any such item of “thought-sound” (see Figure 36 below) (cf. Hammarström 1976: 4, for elaboration on the emic/etic distinction between units and items).

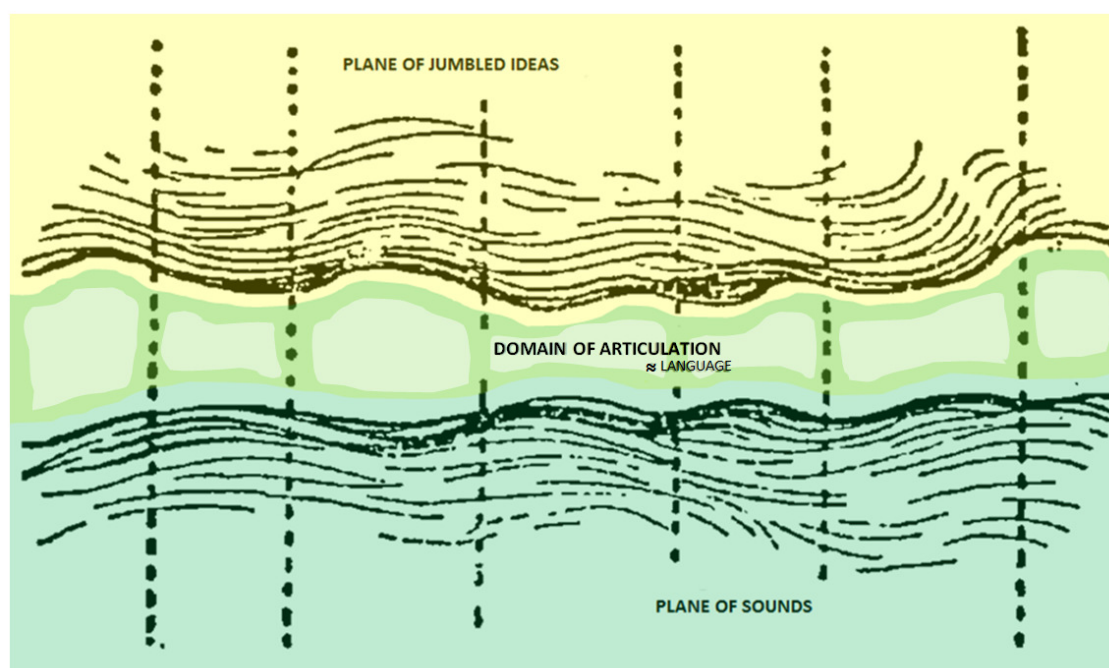


Figure 36. *Saussurean linguistic signs created through overlap and delineation.*

This paints, of course, a rather more ramified (if considerably less iconic) picture than Saussure’s more salient depictions of the linguistic sign as a coupling of signified and signifier (Saussure 1959: 65ff). Nevertheless, I called it “mystical”, because the idea of “thought” (meaning) and “sound” (form), “two shapeless masses” overlapping, the notion that through this process of ethereal comingling of two substances language comes about has an undeniable air of nature mysticism about it. As discussed in chapter 6, meaning as a human-made and socially honed product of interaction is probably more accurately described as coming about through general processes of abstraction and contextual reference whenever a particular form is put to

use, i.e. placed in a particular context and (potentially) recognized as meaningful within that particular context.

What lies at the heart of Saussure's and much subsequent thinking about linguistic meaning is the reification of a relation as an entity onto itself. Here, one could identify a relation to Bühler who calls the reification of meaning in Saussure's signified a product of "Stoffdenken", or less concise in the English translation "substance-oriented thought" (Bühler 2011: 490). This substance-oriented thought results in what Bühler calls "Stoffentgleisungen" or (again losing in translation) "material fallacies" (ibid.). Substance-oriented thought is a very unfortunate translation since in the English translation of Saussure's *Course* (1959) it reads "language is a form and not a substance" (122), so maybe material fallacy might be a better term after all. But Bühler's critique is quite clear nevertheless: Saussure treats language as an alloy of two substances, i.e. thought and sound, whereas for Bühler language is all about functions (2011: 34f).

Nevertheless, and despite Bühler's criticism and Saussure's assertion's that language is not a substance, the reification of the meaning-relation is, to some extent, unavoidable, it is, in fact deeply entrenched in the way we use language and think about language. Hofstadter, who inadvertently already includes a different reification by abstracting the notion of "rules" from meaningfully interpreted use over time, puts it as follows:

[T]here are *rules* which our usage of [a particular word] obeys. We may be unconscious of them, and tend to claim we operate on the basis of the *meaning* of the word; but that, after all, is only a circumlocution for saying that we are guided by rules which we never make explicit. We have used words all our lives in certain patterns, and instead of calling the patterns "rules", we attribute the courses of our thought processes to the "meanings" of words. (Hofstadter 1999: 60)

Accordingly, meaning as a thing or substance that some form or other "contains" (Saussure 2011: 114), "has" (Searle 1969: 42f) or "carrie[s]" (Hofstadter 1999: 160) is a reification of a dynamic relational process or connection; and the experience of a meaning product in the sense of some imagistic quale (cf. Damasio 1999: 9) is merely an epiphenomenon of that connection.

Acknowledging this is one thing, but escaping the deeply entrenched reification of meaning, which, as has been shown in the previous paragraph, happens quite unconsciously and in the use of conventional linguistic construals, is a whole other matter. Even Saussure was, in principle, already conscious to the fact that “[t]he characteristic role of language with respect to thought is not to create a material phonic means for expressing ideas but to serve as a link . between thought and sound” (1959: 112, emphasis added). But this characterization gives hardly more credence to the relational quality of meaning, because, as has been shown, it requires the reification of “thought” instead even though thought itself is nothing else than the realization of meaningful embeddedness of certain entities into some context.

In fact, with referral to context in the conceptualization of meaning, the situation does not necessarily change. Zelinsky-Wibbelt, for instance, talks of “contextual reduction” and “contextual extension” of a word’s meaning (2000: 3). This relates to the so-called “conduit metaphor” (Langacker 1987: 161, Zelinsky-Wibbelt 2000: 128), which conceptualizes (linguistic) form as a container or “vehicle” (Evans 2009: 63) that can be filled or drained of meaning. Thus, especially with reference to context, meaning is conventionally reified as a liquid or amorphous substance that is pressed into a specific form by reference to context. This also relates to the quote by Widdowson offered on page 44 in discussing the formalization of context in section 2.3: “it is the function of grammar to reduce the range of meaning signalled by words” (emphasis added), i.e. grammar drains words. Conversely, context may also be conceptualized in accordance with the conduit metaphor as is done by Hymes, who claims that “[w]hen a form is used in a context, it eliminates the meanings possible to that context other than the form can signal” (1968: 105, emphasis added), i.e. words drain context.

Ironically, this amorphous character of meaning, which could easily be explained by a systemic account for contextual reference, is often made analysable through segmentation into different senses (cf. Taylor 2003: 145). Then, an over-all meaning is abstracted from individual uses (cf. e.g. Tyler and Evans 2001). Finally, the interplay of senses and meaning is identified as the source for what has been called the “efficiency of language”.

By the *efficiency of language* we mean this: expressions used by different people, in different space-time locations, with different connections to the world around them can have different interpretations, even though they retain the same linguistic meaning. (Barwise and Perry 1983: 5)⁷²

The inherent abstraction and reification of a “core meaning” (cf. Zelinsky-Wibbelt 2000: 92) is definitely possible and decisive to analyse language use. However, arguably, such an abstraction is much better accounted for with reference to natural context as emergent from chronicles of use rather than some inexplicably fixed meaning that words are just assumed to “have” because their usage suggests that they do.

The reification of meaningful connections, as inescapable as they are (take, for example, the use of the word “meaningful” in this very sentence and the implied conduit metaphor), nevertheless are very undesirable for a tenable analysis of linguistic meaning, because the reification of a relation as a substance or thing inevitably obscures the real nature of the phenomenon and leads to faulty assumptions. Thus, it is the Saussurean reification of meaning as a signified that creates the illusion that form and meaning are connected, whereas the argumentations provided in the present account seem to suggest persuasively that meaning, in fact, is the (cognitively mediated and abstracted) realization of a connection between different forms, e.g. a linguistic form and aspects of its context. To reach this conclusion, one obviously has to overcome the reification fallacy of meaning as being a tangible entity that is situated inside a form or context. As Stewart and Cohen put it rather more iconically “Reification Can Damage Your Philosophy” (2002a: 198).

One way out of the dilemma of the inescapable reification of meaning, as has been suggested by Saussure and, incidentally, generative linguists, seems to focus on form. Form is concrete and tangible and a study of meaning as a relation of concrete forms clearly has the benefit of largely circumventing the pitfalls of reification (except, of course, that the reification of patterns as rules then becomes more prominent). Indeed the present account has been identified as formalistic (see introduction) to the

⁷² Cf. Widdowson 2004: 36, identification vs. interpretation, semantic vs. pragmatic decoding.

extent that linguistic construals embedded as representations into actual context of use serve as the starting point of analysis. However, there are difficulties in avoiding reification here too, as again is illustrated by Hofstadter.

[P]eople often attribute meaning to words in themselves, without being in the slightest aware of the very complex "isomorphism" that imbues them with meanings. This is an easy enough error to make. It attributes all the meaning to the *object* (the word), rather than to the *link* between that object and the real world. (Hofstadter 1999: 82)

Arguably, this "error" has been avoided in the present account: form is neither seen as a container for meaning, nor is meaning seen as interchangeable with form (or context for that matter). Rather, meaning is seen as a relation or connection as illustrated by the spider web metaphor presented in section 2.3 and the following quotation by Zelinsky-Wibbelt:

[T]he meanings of lexical units are in principle relational. The successful comprehension of an utterance then consists in constructing all of its direct relations as well as inferring all of its indirectly implied relations from the respective discourse context. [...] In this structure the individual lexical units derive their senses from their position within the complex relational grid of the components of an utterance. (Zelinsky-Wibbelt 2000: 97)

Even in this very refined conceptualization of relational meaning, there is one final pitfall that has to be addressed. The relational idea of meaning is practically realized in the field of computing and artificial intelligence research by the so-called connectionist approach (cf. e.g. Cottrell 1989). In line with what has been elaborated so far, the basic tenet of a connectionist approach to meaning is to construct meaning networks that basically derive meaning by establishing connections between different nodes representative of some form or other. From a meaning analytic perspective, however, the main problem with connectionist approaches is that, by saying that the connectionist network is all there is to meaning, they inevitably equate meaning formation with meaning evocation. This is problematic, because even though meaning is relational, it is not experienced as a relation, but as something onto itself⁷³. Therefore, a refined and wholesome analysis of linguistic meaning has to take into account both this relational quality of meaning as well as the imagistic gestalt that

⁷³ Which is, of course, the reason for the habitual reification of meaning.

arises as an experiential epiphenomenon to its relational nature, i.e. both its contextualization and its concretization.

The full conceptual explication of CGP - as propounded implicitly up until now and, at long last, explicitly in the next chapter - is an attempt to bring about just such an analysis of meaning.

9. Contextual Generative Power (CGP)

The final goal is to understand the basis for a vector space. A basis contains independent vectors that "span the space". We are at the heart of our subject and we cannot go on without a basis.

- Gilbert Strang in his *Introduction to Linear Algebra, Third Edition*

The central tenet of the notion of CGP is perhaps best surmised by a quote from Bransford and Johnson:

Many sentences provide cues that allow one to create contextual structures that are sufficient for processing sentences seemingly in isolation. (Bransford and Johnson 1972: 725)

Bransford and Johnson immediately hasten to add that this general quality is not universal, however; or at least not universally effective. Thus, the quote reads on: "In other cases one will need additional information, such as that built up by perceptual context or previous linguistic context in order to comprehend" (ibid.). These elaborations entail two main ideas: a) meaning is directly derivable from context; it is in fact identifiable as the realization of a connection to context, be it to actual context at hand or natural context as triggered by a linguistic expression, which is inherent to the "processing" and comprehension of language; and b) utterances are differently effective in establishing contextual connections, i.e. they come with different measures of CGP. The first of these ideas (a) has been developed throughout the preceding pages. Only by recognizing it can the full impact of the second idea (b) be appreciated. In full acknowledgement of both a and b, a study of linguistic meaning is equal to a study of CGP, i.e. the power to generate, evoke or reference a particular context.

These three terms (i.e. generate, evoke, reference) or the qualifiers derived from them, i.e. generative, evocational and referential, all highlight (or profile) different aspects of the same underlying process:

- a generative perspective implies a form-centred analysis, in which context is seen as generated (more or less from scratch) on the basis of a linguistic expression in the form of a procedural and maybe complex or multi-tier derivation; consequently, this mainly highlights natural (rather than actual) context

- an evocational perspective implies that a linguistic form brings contextual aspects into focus that were there but not realized as relevant before; like the generative perspective, it is form-centred and predominantly focuses on natural context, but it is not as process/product foregrounding, rather highlighting one ethereal connection to a snapshot-like impression of imagistic meaning as it emerges from an actual situation of use⁷⁴
- a referential perspective implies that both linguistic form and context exist independently from each other, but the former triggers a simple connection (or pointer) to the latter; this mainly highlights actual context

These general verbal portrayals are supplemented by the graphic representation in Figure 37. The upper line (labelled T₀) represents general assumptions about context and utterance at the time of uttering; the lower line (T₁) represents the generative, evocational or referential processes respectively as set in motion by an utterance. Bold elements are considered to be profiled (i.e. conceptually foregrounded).

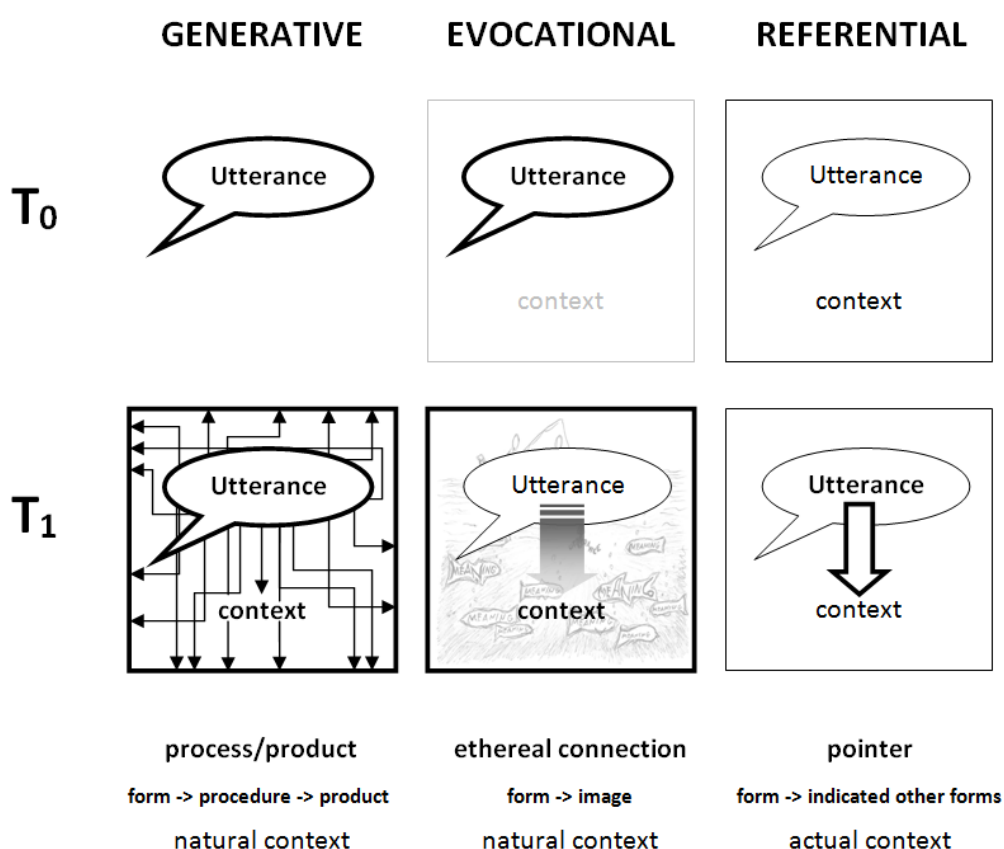


Figure 37. Generative, evocational and referential perspectives on context and meaning.

⁷⁴ This relates to Hengeveld and Mackenzie's portrayal of Functional Discourse Grammar, where evocation is associated with "[s]peaker-bound and pragmatic" meaning (2008:130).

In the present account, all three perspectives have been (and will continue to be subsequently) validated and perpetuated, but up until now the evocational and the referential have definitively received more attention. In fact, in many ways the construals they imply seem much more coherent with what has been argued than the one associated with the generative perspective. Additionally, the term “generative” is generally associated with Generative Grammar, a framework which obviously bears little resemblance (if any at all) with the present account. Nevertheless, the generative perspective best captures the experiential reality of meaning evocation as also described in the quote by Bransford and Johnson: “cues that allow one to create contextual structures” (emphasis added). Although the implied procedural derivation is not predictable, it is analysable and results in a product, i.e. an imagistic gestalt meaning, which is considered an epiphenomenon to the relation established. This foregrounding of both process and product is a decisive factor in an analysis of meaning as propounded here, and will play an important role in our subsequent discussion of CGP.

It has been indicated that a generative perspective mainly highlights the relevance of natural context; and indeed, although both actual and natural context play a decisive role in the meaningful interpretation of utterances, the phenomenon of CGP is most evident in the consideration of radically decontextualized utterances as presented in (9) below:

- (9) a. Go!
- b. Did you open it yet?
- c. I have been painting.
- d. He could take it, but only just.
- e. It climbed.

The actual context of this paper is (presumably) largely backgrounded in the initial interpretation of these utterances. Of course, by now, you, the reader of this thesis, will probably have been primed (by the preceding discussions) to regard decontextualized utterances as an expected feature in the ongoing discussion at hand. Nevertheless, as has been pointed out before, this contextualization relies on the very discontinuous actual context of reading and the natural context derived on the basis of rather abstract argumentation. Neither of these provides a sufficient basis for the derivation of a salient enough situational substrate to recognize the utterances in (9)

as actualizations of natural uses. Therefore, the utterances, although embedded in the actual context of this text and the natural context of my argumentation, do not link up to either in a concrete and tangible way. By recognizing this apparent maladjustment of the utterances to the actual (and natural) context at hand, a more salient natural context is derived or generated on their basis (or on the basis of the chronicles of use that you, the reader, have access to) to make sense of them.

Accordingly, all of these expressions apparently generate an immediate and concrete situational substrate (a concretization) based on a natural context despite their physical isolation from said context and potential for textual ambiguity. (9a), for instance, may evoke a race context (contextualization) and related to a specific situational setting or actualization in which a moustached gym teacher in a red over-all yells out the command at a bunch of scrawny-looking adolescent boys in running shorts and sweat-bands (concretization). Even if the concretization is not this extensively specified, the existence of some sort of concretization becomes evident in the consideration of (9c). Although the word *painting* in (9c) can be interpreted as referring to an artistic process as well as the act of craftsmanship performed by painting walls, any initial interpretation will undoubtedly favour one of these contextualizations by the derivation of one particular concretization.

This generative process obviously differs hugely with regards to the accessible chronicles of use. Thus, (9e), for me, is descriptively associated with temperature climbing, which generates a situational substrate that entails the mental image of an old-fashioned thermometer in which some red liquid rises. This is not due to the temporal proximity of 'heat' (it is winter at the time of writing), but merely because I associate the example with Taylor's discussion of polysemy and meaning chains which involves the consideration of different uses of the word *climb* (2003: 108ff). Taylor's discussion, in turn, is undoubtedly activated by the contextualization process triggered by the actual context at hand, which I perceive as linked to it. This interpretation may be considered as creative by someone else, but it obviously is entrenched to some degree in my mind, and, accordingly, may also be considered conventional.

A few things have become apparent from this discussion. For one thing, as has already been noted, CGP of a particular utterance in a particular actual context of use is analyzable, although it clearly is not fully predictable. For another, such analysis

clearly relies on the reference to actual and natural context. Finally, CGP is most evident in utterances that cannot be satisfactorily linked to the actual (or natural) context at hand; the term “satisfactorily” here means in such a way that they can be a) identified as natural and meaningful uses, and b) a salient situational substrate is derivable through this identification from the actual and natural context in which the utterances are essentially embedded. If the accessible chronicles of use as well as the actual (and natural) context at hand are not enough to allow for such satisfactory linking, a disparate natural context derived from the chronicles of use is necessary to facilitate the making sense of the utterances, i.e. linking it to a salient situational substrate. Of course, CGP is also at work in a less evident way when we identify a particular utterance as grammatical, because this entails reference to chronicles of use and a very abstract situational substrate derived from overall comparable uses as encountered by the speaker. However, as has been noted, the general phenomenon of CGP presents itself most saliently in the consideration of such decontextualized utterances as presented in (9).

These salient examples of CGP also facilitate most favourably a representation in accordance with the vector metaphor that has been implicitly propounded in the discussion of generative, evocational and referential perspectives above. Accordingly, if a salient situational substrate can be derived from the actual use of a decontextualized utterance, the emergent gestalt meaning, by virtue of its salience (and inherent concretization), can be represented visually. The utterance may then serve as a vector base from which a connection to the situational substrate is established by virtue of the utterance’s CGP. A corresponding representation schema instantiated by our well-established “Scalpel.” is provided in Figure 38 below.

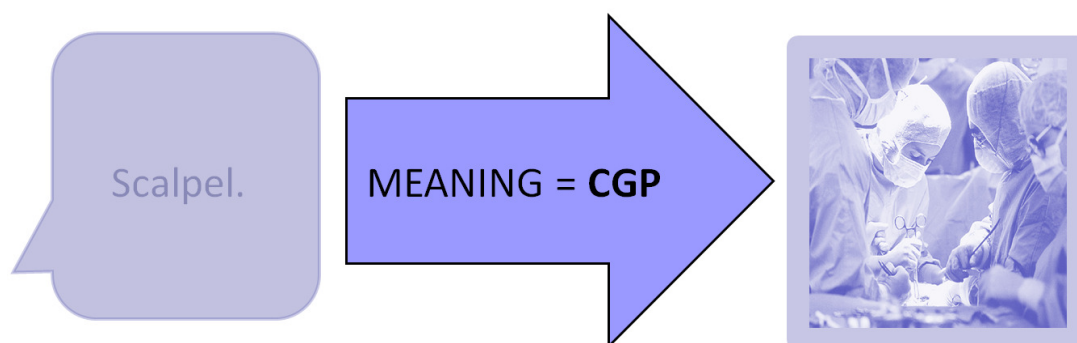


Figure 38.CGP. Introduction of the vector metaphor/representation.

This vector metaphor is not only representationally effective, but also, with a few additions, analytically useful. Thus, the most important criteria in vector notation as e.g. employed in the representation of forces in physics are vectorial length/strength and vectorial orientation. Transferring these notions to an analysis of meaning aided by vectorial presentation, we can associate the former with the specification of contextual reference, i.e. which aspects of context are considered relevant in the derivation of a salient situational substrate (process-oriented), or simply which situational substrate emerges (product-oriented). The inherent classification criterion for CGP, i.e. contextual reference specification, may be referred to as the established Link between an utterance and the situational substrate triggered by it. Vectorial length/strength, on the other hand, can be associated with the degree of vividness and salience of the mental image evoked (via a particular situational substrate) by a particular utterance (product-oriented) as well as with the interplay of salience and entrenchment, contextualization and concretization, conventionality and creativity, that brings about this vivid mental image (process-oriented). This other classification criterion for CGP, which might be described as contextual reference resonance, could be called the (conceptual) Pull of a particular utterance towards the situational substrate triggered by it. The notion of Link implies a typology of CGP (i.e. what kind of reference), while Pull implies a hierarchy (i.e. how strong/vivid).

This elaboration of the vector metaphor for representation and analysis of CGP is surmised in Figure 39 below.

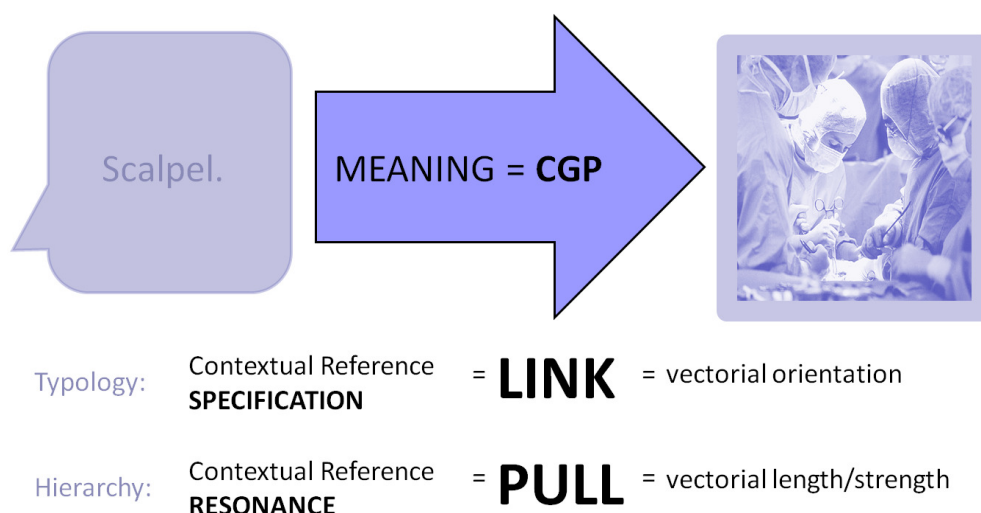


Figure 39. CGP. Elaboration of the vector metaphor/representation.

In accordance with the portrayal in Figure 38, the subsequent development of this final chapter will be devoted to a discussion of CGP via the notions of Link (section 9.1) and Pull (section 9.2.). Additionally, a short discussion of CGP, grammar and linguistics (section 9.3) as well as a few remarks on the representability and applicability of CGP (section 9.4) will be provided to round off the preceding elaborations and set the ground for the overall conclusion (chapter 10).

9.1. Link

It may already be apparent, just from the quick characterization given above, that the notion of Link is a very useful analytic parameter. As has been argued throughout this thesis, meaning depends on establishing a connection or connections, Links as it were, to context. Consequentially, a lot can be said about a specific utterance, a group of utterances or an entire language⁷⁵ by looking at how this intrinsic contextual reference is specified. Thus, the fact that the word *this* in the previous sentence establishes a Link to the sentence yet before is not only crucial to understanding the word *this*, but also indispensable to the interpretation of the whole text at hand, i.e. the continuous derivation of a meaningful natural context from the actual context in which it is embedded. It may be argued that this *this* example is actually not very representative, because a deictic like *this* is well known to rely on linkage to context. But even when considering the use of the words *context* or *deictic* in the previous sentence, we must concede that their meaningful interpretation relies on the establishment of a successful complex Link to various aspects of the actual context at hand as well as to abstract natural context derived from it and each of the words' accessible chronicles of use.

All these examples are of course easily contextualized and recognized as a natural contribution to the actual and natural context in which they are embedded. Interestingly, Links are, as has already been intimated, most salient with decontextualized examples like the "Scalpel." example or the examples given in (9). This has to do, of course, with the Pull of such utterances among other things, i.e. the

⁷⁵ In principle, as has been noted, the analysis of CGP is a use-based approach, which makes the generalization over several uses (i.e. analysis of a language/usage, development of a grammar) undeniably inconsistent with the overall orientation of the theory. This conflict will be discussed in more detail in section 9.3 below.

vividness of the mental image evoked and the necessity of that image for meaningful interpretation (cf. sections 3.2 and 9.2). In such cases, the basis for the Link as well as the connecting element, the goal, are more or less salient in the mind of the speaker, whereas with naturally embedded words or utterances Links often go unnoticed in the automatized making sense of ongoing discourse. The element of creativity that is necessary to make a meaningful connection to context with such examples as the ones presented in (9) seems to be crucial in the conscious recognition of a Link.

Consequentially, Links (as well as Pulls) are most easily identified from a product-centred perspective, i.e. one centring on the situational substrate that is linked with a particular utterance. When analysing this situational substrate and the contextual connections it implies, the analysis automatically shifts towards a process-centred perspective however, as has been shown in the short interpretation of (9e) given above. Within the present account, this process-centred analysis limits itself to reference to chronicles of use and the corresponding structuring principles that play a role in the procedural formation of CGP and derivation of one specific situational substrate. Whether a full specification of the situational substrate is best subsumed under the notion of Link or under the notion of Pull is not easily answered. Basically, it is precisely the double-appearance of meaning as a relation (from an analytic perspective) as well as a holistic gestalt (from an experiential perspective) as elaborated in section 8.2 above that is reflected in the two-tiered representation through Link and Pull: Link accounts for the relational quality (or the contextualization aspect), and Pull for the meaning gestalt (or the concretization).

Representation and analysis of Pull will be discussed in the next section. A representational schema for Link, i.e. a way of how such a contextual reference specification of a situational substrate, a Link, may be represented, has already been developed in section 8.1: the meaning prism. Thus, the Link that a particular situational substrate implies can be represented as a network of vectors, connecting one common basis (i.e. the utterance under investigation) to different aspects of context (actual as well as natural). This is illustrated in Figure 39 below.

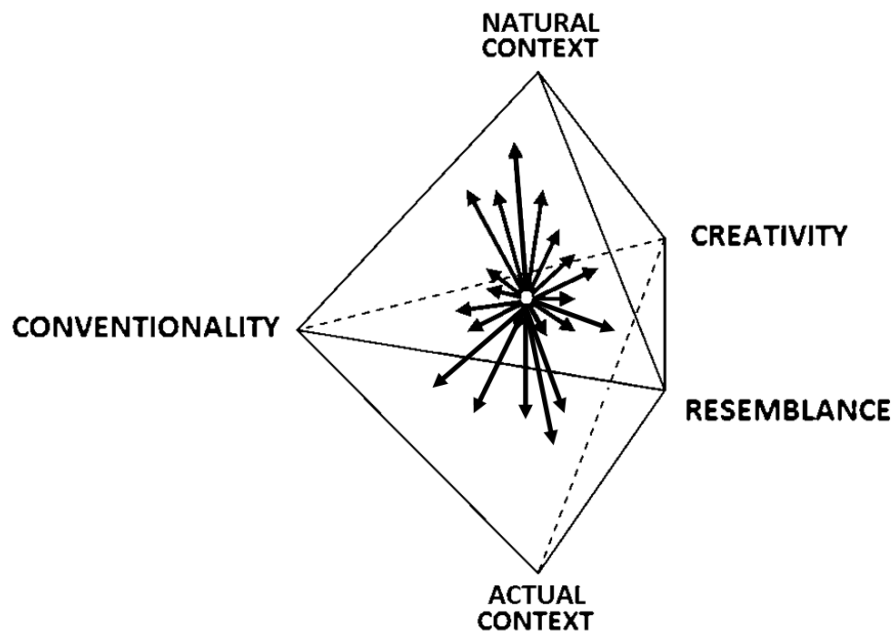


Figure 40. Schematic *Link* representation the meaning prism.

Of course, this representation immediately sparks off some questions about definite instantiations of this representational schema, whether it is even possible to represent a Link less schematically than in Figure 39 and to what degree a Link, or rather the Link representation of a situational substrate, should even specify different contextual connections, i.e. how specific is specific enough. These issues are not easily answered and shall all be addressed in their own right in section 9.4 below.

For now, I will limit myself to the discussion of one related issue that has already been raised in the general elaboration of the vector metaphor: there, it was stated that the Link notion implies a typology. This is a logical consequence of the initial characterization of Links as analytical conceptualizations of how contextual connections are realized, which implies different kinds of connections, i.e. different categories. This may have been misleading, however, because basically it is not in the interest of the CGP approach, an approach to holistic use-based meaning representation, to subcategorize and classify different kinds, types and classes of meaningfulness. The reason for this lies in the acknowledgement that this would necessitate abstraction away from use and to usage, which, in turn, would necessitate disregarding contextual facets that may play a role in the meaningful interpretation of actual utterances in use.

Nevertheless, such abstraction is undoubtedly a prevalent feature of many theories and arguably essential in the derivation of grammars (cf. section 9.3 for further discussion of this point). One example of such a theory is Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG), which distinguishes four different levels for the respective analysis of interpersonal, representational, morphosyntactic and phonological meaning⁷⁶ (Hengeveld and Mackenzie 2008). The underlying motivation for such subcategorizing is, of course, quite clear: it allows a theory to refer more adequately, definitively and modularly to certain data manifestations, thereby seemingly achieving more analytical depth. The more formalized and structured a theory becomes in this way, however, the more it is susceptible to critique, because it will be more easily contradicted by newly emerging data or become unwieldy with regards to language change, creative/non-conventional language use and fuzzy category boundaries. A solution to this dilemma lies in the inclusion of these problem areas into the theory (at a loss of “absolute predictability” in favour of “relativistic” predictability (Langacker 2008: 88) as has been attempted with cognitive grammar approaches (cf. Langacker 2008, Talmy 2006: 70) and to allow for general principles to guide even very specific analysis (cf. Goldberg’s construction hypothesis, 1995: 4; and Langacker’s portrayal of conceptual semantics 2008: 27ff).

Even though the present account has been put forth with these theoretical strategies in mind (rather than the one of recursively sharpening analytical tools (i.e. classifications)), we can make CGP relatable to some conventional classifications by imposing a typological substructure on the notion of Links (see Table 5 below). In doing so, I will refer back to the meaning prism established in section 8.1 above and reproduced in Figure 39.

⁷⁶ For Functional Discourse Grammarians only the first two levels (interpersonal and representational) would strictly speaking be concerned with meaning since they capture the “formulation”, whereas the other two exclusively deal with formal “encoding” (Hengeveld and Mackenzie 2008: 13ff). From the relational perspective of meaning that has been propounded in the course of this thesis, however, all identifiable relations that involve linguistic forms - even those among them, i.e. morphosyntactic and phonological relations – are considered meaningful and even likewise constitutive of meaning.

conventional classifications	possible Link substructure (with reference to meaning prism)
interpersonal and/or indexical meaning	Link fragments that connect to “ <u>downwards</u> ” into actual context
representational or semantic meaning	Link fragments that connect “ <u>upwards</u> ” into natural context
morphosyntactic or grammatical meaning	Link fragments that connect <u>different dots representing abstract construals of words and morphemes on the topside of the representational plane</u>
phonological meaning	Link fragments that connect <u>different points representing abstract construals of speech sounds on the topside of the representational plane</u>
phonetic meaning	Link fragments that connect <u>different points representing concrete representations of speech sounds on the underside of the representational plane</u>

Table 5. *Link substructuring (with reference to the meaning prism) related to conventional categories.*

We see at once that the Link notion bucks the imposition of some of the finer distinctions. In particular, the substructuring into morphosyntactic/grammatical meaning (specifying the formal relation of a word to other words) and phonological meaning (specifying the formal relation of a “sound-image” (Saussure 1959: 11) to other sound-images) necessitates the previously unnecessary distinction between morphemes and phonemes as two different kinds of formal construal (dots and points⁷⁷ on the representational plane, if you will). The conventional distinction is, of course, a sensible one in its own theoretical context, because, from a formal (or rather a formational) perspective, morphosyntax and phonology comprise rather distinct sets of rules that constitute clearly distinct systems. From a very basic semiotic point of view, however, such as is adopted under the banner of CGP, the underlying processes of meaning imbue and evocation are the same.

Thus, it is possible to present you with a decontextualized phoneme, a decontextualized word, a decontextualized utterance and a decontextualized piece of discourse (a text), and in all cases you would observe the evocation of some context or other. Naturally, there will be degrees of Pull and different kinds of Links; we might

⁷⁷ Or spots, dots and points, acknowledging yet another difference in scope for words and morphemes.

even be able to establish some generalizations over type, e.g. we would initially expect the Pull of a phoneme (like e.g. /ʃ/) to be weaker than that of a word, because the phoneme repertoire is highly conventional and restricted, and accordingly a single phoneme is used in a diverse varieties of situational contexts with almost no (or only highly abstract) overall contextual consistency or specificity. On closer reflection, it becomes clear, however, that the phonetic representation of a single decontextualized phoneme will probably evoke similar naturally occurring sounds (e.g. the sound of a waterfall) or some conventional use that is often regarded as more vocal than verbal (e.g. in a request for being quiet, *sh!*). The written representation of a single phoneme, at least in the conventional notation involving phonetic symbols, will conceivably evoke the more abstract context of ‘linguistics’ or ‘phonology’.⁷⁸ In both cases, we see that the Pull of the phoneme could actually be quite considerable, although the Link would be substantially different than what we usually mean when talking about phonetic or phonological meaning.

On the one hand, this is to be expected, because linguists are typically only interested in experientially salient Links, i.e. ones that entail the experience of mental images, in the field of semantics and pragmatics. Phonology, phonetics and morphology deals per definition with linking that is deeply entrenched and highly conventionalized to a degree where it has undergone maximal automatization. On the other hand, however, it is the CGP inherent to and especially the salient Link established by these more abstract units when looked at in decontextualized occurrence that has been of great interest in recent linguistic research. Thus, studies from different linguistic frameworks and research paradigms have endeavoured to determine the decontextualized meaning of *-ing* or *-ed* (e.g. Langacker 2009: 221) or some formally consistent construction (e.g. Goldberg 1992). Only recently has this kind of research included talk about the “meaning of” a particular grammatical element (Langacker 2009: 221), but the general interest in isolating the linking tendencies of grammatical elements (i.e. in what ways they specify context) has prevailed

⁷⁸ If the phoneme in question is particularly alien to the L1 repertoire of a hearer/reader, it might even evoke the whole sound system and broader linguistic context it stems from. Thus, the decontextualized occurrence of /θ/ or /ð/ (the so-called “th”-sounds) is not unlikely to evoke the abstract context of ‘English’ (concretized perhaps by some language learning situation) if presented to a German native speaker.

throughout the entire history of linguistics (cf. Langacker 2009: 219 for a short illustration of how Generative Grammarians specified the Link of *–ed*); in fact, it may be seen as the most central endeavour in the whole enterprise of linguistics⁷⁹.

Of course all these approaches and studies aim at abstracting from individual uses to overall usage. They aim not at maximal use-based descriptiveness but at abstraction away from actual context as far as possible. Considering the arguments propounded in the account at hand, this endeavour to achieve a holistic meaning analysis of decontextualized elements is as well-intended as it is inevitably destined to fail. Actual context is not an irksome nuisance to the analysis of meaning; it is as crucial to its derivation as it should be to its analysis. This obviously means that the interpretation of any decontextualized utterance, although informed by the natural context of many uses as provided by the chronicles of use⁸⁰, inevitably relies on establishing a link to actual context and any analysis of meaning that disregards this essential embeddedness of linguistic construals will inevitably fall short of descriptive accuracy in its representation and analysis of language.

Another distinction that becomes necessary in mapping conventional levels of meaning analysis on the respective CGP terminology and concepts is the differentiation between a topside and an underside of the representational plane, recalling Saussure's time-worn sheet-of-paper metaphor (1959: 113). Since construals (i.e. natural micro-context of a concrete form) and representations (i.e. actual micro-context of an abstract form) always co-occur in actual use (as is also implied by Saussure's metaphor), this distinction does not come naturally to an analysis of CGP. Thus, further substructuring for a distinct representation of emic as well as etic categories (i.e. construals and representations respectively, cf. Pike 1954) is inherently difficult, not only because the etic approach is essentially construed as anti-relational/"nonstructural" (Pike 1954: 8), but predominantly because the different perspective to linking is reflected in the schematic representation only in the different orientation of vectors, not in the dissociation of two distinct bases.

⁷⁹ For elaboration on how the actual contexts of linguistics in general or a specific research paradigm in particular has an impact on the explicit elaboration of Links see 9.3.

⁸⁰ The accessibility of chronicles of use can be modified or entirely simulated in linguistic research with reference to corpus data. However, this is not without its problems either as argued in 9.3.

Let me elaborate this point. Etic analysis does not (or rather aims not to) relate the data under analysis to each other, but merely to external identification criteria (e.g. articulatory system). Thus, phonetics is built on the premise that actual sounds can be peeled away from their conceptual representations (and respective relations) and examined in their own right as real physical objects linked to actual physical contexts and reference systems. This distinction is difficult to reflect in terms of CGP, since it has been acknowledged that representations and the underlying abstractions (i.e. construals) are practically and theoretically inseparable, when it comes to meaning imbuelement and evocation (see my critique of Ogden and Richard's segmented conceptual mediation hypothesis above). Thus, the distinction between emic and etic is naturally implemented into the CGP approach not in the dissociation of different bases, but in the recognition of different, but concomitantly operating Link structures. Thus, an emic analysis of any of the types of Link fragments as specified above would (meta-analytically) include a Link to the relevant relational reference system, e.g. the sound system of English, whereas an etic analysis would only include (also meta-analytically of course) a Link to the relevant classification criteria with no explicit reference to the system as a whole (cf. section 9.3).

All in all, however, the mapping of a Link representation onto conventional linguistic meaning categories seems neither particularly natural nor particularly desirable. This is not necessarily a drawback of course. On the contrary, if a new approach would correspond entirely straightforwardly to existing ones, what would be the point in developing it in the first place?

Since CGP basically emphasises contextual linking as the sole mechanism in the formation and evocation of meaning, it should come as no surprise, however, that it can be mapped far more easily and naturally on types of context than levels of conventional linguistic analysis. Consequently, the schematic Link representation of a situational substrate as introduced in Figure 40 above as well as some of the more natural Link substructuring introduced in Table 5, correspond neatly to Allan's (1986) characterization of contexts as presented in chapter 2. A direct mapping is illustrated in Table 6 and Figure 41 below.

kind of context	possible Link substructure (with reference to meaning prism)
SETTING	Link fragments that connect <u>"downwards" into natural context</u>
THE WORLD SPOKEN OF	Link fragments that connect <u>"upwards" into actual context</u>
TEXTUAL ENVIRONMENT	Link fragments that connect <u>different points on the representational plane</u>

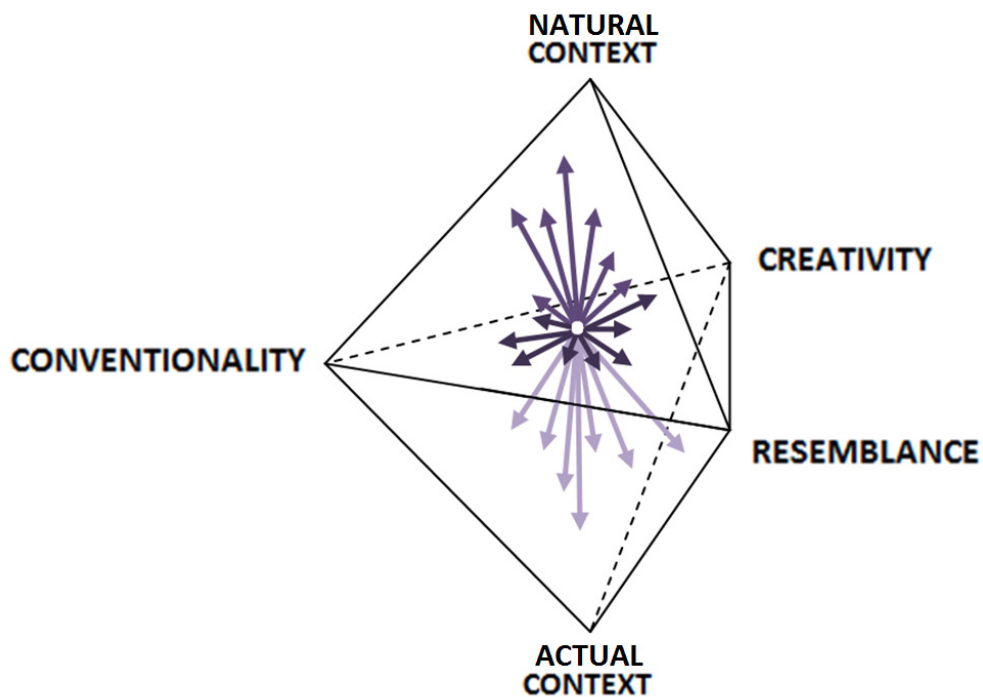


Table 6 and Figure 41. *Link substructuring (in the meaning prism) related to Allan's (1986) context types.*

While this substructuring comes indeed more naturally, the appearance of seamless ideological correspondence is deceptive. Thus, as has been intimated in the discussion of emic analysis above, any specification of relations to the textual environment are only meaningful because they are accounted for in the situational substrate derived from natural and actual context. And this is also true for the other connections. Accordingly, there is no use in specifying that a particular utterance entails the contextual reference specification to a specific aspect of context without seeing this specification in the context of the entire meaningful Link structure as a whole.

Nevertheless, this substructuring or categorizing of Links does not only serve to make the approach relatable to existing treatments, it also enables the focalization of specific meaning aspects, which might be necessary for practical analytical application, e.g. analysis of syntactic scope relations or indexicalization (see section 9.4 for

discussion of one concrete example from the field of sociolinguistics). It is, however, important to note (and in any case readily apparent from the glitches in the translation of conventional meaning typology into CGP terms) that the holistic meaning construal that CGP constitutes is deemed primary to any substructuring that may be rendered necessary for practical application. It is this holistic meaning construal, the evocation of a gestalt, the experiential vividness of the imagistic meaning quale, the context reference resonance, the Pull of a particular utterance that will be the topic under discussion for the next section.

9.2. Pull

As has been argued in the course of the preceding pages, the notion of Link has far-reaching consequences in the field of linguistics and has been implicitly developed under many forms and guises. In some respects, the notion of Pull is equally important and has also been central to the development of linguistics as is manifest e.g. in the notion “ease of activation” or the more general concept of salience. Nevertheless, while the implied typology of the Link notion (i.e. that there might be different meaning categories) seems perfectly acceptable and in line with general theory, the hierarchical structuring implied by the notion of Pull seems downright unscientific. After all, are there really words and utterances that can be said to be more meaningful than others? Some researchers in the field of semantics (or lexicography) have claimed that there are (cf. Wierzbicka on “semantic complexity” 1985: 185f). But even beyond those concessions, it is certainly common practice, in linguistics, to make assertions about the relative grammaticality, communicative effectiveness, appropriateness or felicitousness of certain utterances. All of these categorizations relate to different norms of (usually conventional) meaningfulness. In many ways, they are all subsumed under the general notion of context reference resonance, or Pull.

The continuous derivation of natural context basically entails the ongoing emergence of a harmonious whole. Harmonious, here, means coherent. However, which kind of coherence – coherence with a perceived system of grammatical rules, coherence with communicative expectations and intentions, coherence with the general state of things in the world – is not inherently specified. What is experientially accessible in actual use is that sometimes something doesn’t make sense, it cannot be

(sufficiently) connected to context to allow the derivation of any kind of salient situational substrate. In this case, no clear Link can be established, which also means that there is no salient Pull; in the same way that both vectorial orientation and vectorial strength/length are intrinsic features of any vector. When a Link can be established on the other hand, this also entails the experience of meaning. This meaning, its inherently situational origin, contextual dependency and holistic gestalt character is most saliently perceived (as has already been remarked in the discussion of Link) in the consideration of highly decontextualized utterances such as the ones presented in (9). The high degree of cognitive mediation in referencing a meaningful natural context as well as the missing real-life actualizations in these cases (cf. section 4.2) particularly necessitate the vivid concretization of a situational substrate in the mind of a reader in order to make sense of these utterances (cf. also the general discussion of (9) above).

Accordingly, by noting that a particular (decontextualized) utterance has relatively strong pull, reference is made to the salience of its harmonious evocation of some natural context via an appropriate situational substrate. The more complex and salient this natural context is compared with the formal complexity of the utterance that triggers its evocation, the stronger is the utterance's Pull in this particular situation. The continuous development of a natural context that allows the meaningful interpretation of the actual arguments brought forth in the course of this account is obviously complex. But it does not appear so complex considering that it emerged from an actual context that includes a correspondingly ramified and expansive combination of actual linguistic representations. If a large portion of this natural context of meaning analysis would be evoked by uttering the single term "CGP." (as might be the case, if the present account is part of the expression's accessible chronicles of use), the Pull of that utterance would be considered quite strong. However, since this is a very abstract discussion, chances are high that the utterance "CGP." may not be enough to derive a really salient situational substrate in the sense of a concretization in the mind, taking the form of a vivid mental image. Thus, because the natural context it relies on is too abstract and not linked clearly and unambiguously enough to an actual context of linguistic use, "CGP." would probably

still be considered to have relatively weak Pull in comparison with the widely perpetuated “Scalpel.” example.

Concomitantly, an utterance would be considered to have relatively weaker Pull, when it is contextualized descriptively, because this implies only reference to a particular contextual configuration. Communicative contextualization, on the other hand, also invariably includes a reference to this contextual configuration as well as a complex Link to the natural contexts relevant to language use. Consider, for instance, the following utterance presented as (10):

(10) It was a nice morning.

For reasons of formal consistency and contextual consistency with the natural contexts of narrational language use, (10) will most likely be contextualized descriptively like the opening line to a story. This basically entails the evocation of a nice morning (in whatever concretization). Because the utterance is so reminiscent of narrational language use, however, (or because it has been identified so by me), it may also be quite effortlessly contextualized communicatively, which may entail the concretization of a girl in a Victorian dress reading a book in a garden⁸¹. The point is that this concretization essentially entails both contextualizations to make sense of the utterance and is as such seen as indicative of a stronger Pull. On the other hand, of course, an utterance may be contextualized communicatively without contextualizing it descriptively as might happen in encountering a foreign text and recognizing only the frame message and part of the outer messages. Generally speaking, however, a communicative contextualization will entail a descriptive contextualization, just like the natural context evoked by “Scalpel.” includes reference to a scalpel.

In all these contextualizations and concretization Pull describes the vividness of the mental image evoked. This vividness does not only depend on chronicles of use, degree of cognitive mediation and abstraction, decontextualization and other matters previously discussed – most generally speaking, as has been pointed out above, Pull relies on the experience of a holistic meaning that links up harmoniously to the harmonious whole of some natural context (via a situational substrate). It is this perspective on the notion of Pull that also allows its description as context reference

⁸¹ This concretization is most likely the result of blending the descriptive contextualization, i.e. the nice morning, and the communicative one (cf. Fauconnier and Turner 2006: 332).

resonance. In many cases, this resonance operates at a high degree of entrenchment and automatization and is not as apparent as with the discussion of examples such as (10). However, its presence can be revealed differentially, if some utterance does not fit, like jarring notes in a familiar melody. This may happen in the course of a talk among friends, when one misses some contextual reference and suddenly a remark is at complete odds with the accessible natural context. Thus, the lack of Pull of a particular utterance is felt as a dissonance in meaning. This phenomenon is relatable on an even more abstract level to the analysis of grammaticality, where ungrammatical sentences ring wrong in our ears because they cannot be aligned with the accessible chronicles of use and the natural context of language use derived thereof. Goldberg (2011) makes a similar point in elaborating the notion of “statistical preemption” (3ff):

Consider for a moment, the [...] case of morphology. How is that we know we should use *went* instead of **goed*? Clearly it is because we consistently hear *went* in contexts where *goed* would have been at least as appropriate: this is statistical preemption. (Goldberg 2011: 3)

Clearly, Goldberg’s notion of statistical preemption corresponds smoothly to what I have called dissonance. Moreover, her concurrently laid out rationale referring to the actual contexts of previous uses also ties in perfectly with the arguments advanced in the present account. Relating both to the discussion at hand, we can say that *went* has a greater grammatical Pull than *goed*. On the other hand, however, removed from the natural context of grammaticality, *goed* would probably be considered to have a stronger Pull because it will, in all likelihood, evoke a particular communicative situation (e.g. related to language learning).

In accordance with these considerations, the notion of Pull (or context reference resonance) seems well formulated not only to account for the experiential reality of linguistic meaning as the imagistic/salient part of a situational substrate, but also to account for phenomena of well-established analytical interest like grammaticality and communicative effectiveness. The exact impact of both Link and Pull as well as the theoretical concept of CGP as a whole on the general program of linguistic inquiry will be attempted to gage in the next section.

9.3. CGP, grammar and linguistics

The actual context of linguistics clearly contributes to the activation of a different situational substrate when discussing “meaning” than the word would evoke in other contexts. In some ways, like many other sciences and philosophies, linguistics is about isolating particular parameters under controlled conditions and making generalizations on the basis of these carefully designed experiments. Thus, if a linguist were to take professional interest in the word *scalpel*, he or she would probably start out by classifying it as a noun, a count noun maybe, a few notches below the basic level of ‘knife’ in a categorization hierarchy (cf. Taylor 2003: 49). All of these classifications are entrenched links in the natural context of linguistics (or cognitive linguistics and linguistic categorization in the case of the last one); and they all establish meaningful connections to this natural context. If a linguist wants to contribute more than this to the linguistic analysis of *scalpel*, it is possible to consult the chronicles of use and gain some insight through that, discover a new pattern. Of course such a pattern is only a valid linguistic observation if it can be validated by many speakers’ intuition, or even better the analysis of corpus data. This process exemplifies the careful and scientifically tenable construction of a grammar, i.e. a collection of rules and categorization abstracted from many instances of use in order to create a natural reference frame for use, grasp the complex natural context of language use in as much detail as possible with as simple, general and schematic statements as possible.

On the whole, this is what every linguistic as well as non-linguistic theory, framework, grammar, approach and study aims at. And the present account is no exception of course: by professing that the same basic tools of analysis can be applied to any instance of use, I am already making an abstraction, a generalization, a step away from use and towards usage. This is unavoidable. However, there is one aspect of language that makes this endeavour as outlined above painfully more difficult than in any natural science, and that is the phenomenon of active meanings (cf. introduction of this term at the beginning of 8 above). The objects of physics are subjected to the laws of physics, the objects of chemistry to chemical laws, but no word or utterance is ever fully subjected to the laws of language, because, after all, its very occurrence, the actual context of its use might have altered those laws already.

The only way out of this dilemma, as I see it, is to formulate a theory that implements continuous reference to context on all levels of language use as an intrinsic feature to the understanding and analysis of language. Grammar is an abstraction that is not made objectively from corpus data, but subjectively and continuously from actual use as an emergent natural context⁸². Or as Hopper puts it “[g]rammar is [...] not uniform, but relative to context. This is seen in the fact that, typically, speakers’ intuitions about sentences deprived of a context are uncertain.” (Hopper 1998: 162). The Pull as well as the Link of any given utterance in any given context of use make it understandable in that context and the natural macro-context of language use derived from overall chronicles of use. But it is not pre-determined, schematic and predictable, but creative as much as conventional, resulting in the derivation of a situational substrate that is concretized as much as it is contextualized. To some extent, this is perfectly in line with Widdowson’s previously mentioned arguments (see 2.3) that grammar basically is a highly systematic context specification device (1990: 86-97), or a collection of deeply entrenched and conventionalized Links and Pulls. However, beyond recognizing this automatized context reference specification and resonance, we must also recognize that it is just an abstraction from use and that actual making sense and interpretation of utterances and discourse is ongoing and creative and as such has a continuous effect on the ethereal natural context that is reified or entextualized (cf. Fetzer and Oishi 2011: 2) in the misleadingly rigid notion of ‘grammar’. The complementary notions of emic and etic analyses really just differ in the degree to which this abstraction is taken seriously and exploited in the meaningful interpretation of particular elements.

Beyond this maximal concession to the emergent character of grammar and inherently to the contribution of creativity as well as conventionality in actual language use, CGP also aims at experiential accountability for the imagistic meaning quale that arises as an epiphenomenon from the Link established. Accountability for the Pull of an utterance, and not just grammatical or communicative resonance, is definitely a very important step towards descriptive accuracy in an analysis of linguistic

⁸² Wierzbicka, although she doesn’t subscribe to the notion of radical context dependency at all, makes a similar point by professing that “[c]hasing the phantom of ‘objectivity’ through supposedly scientific methods one loses the only firm ground there is in semantcis: the terra firma of one’s own deep intuitions” (1985: 43).

meaning. But what does this aim at descriptive accuracy and experiential accountability entail for the representability and applicability of CGP? In short, is the notion of CGP practically useful beyond general theoretical elaborations? I believe that it is and will endeavour to corroborate this claim in the next and final section of this chapter.

9.4. Representability and applicability of CGP

It has been noted that CGP is most evident when Link fragments are easily unifiable as one Link and Pull to one salient situational substrate as is the case in the interpretation of so-called decontextualized utterances. A suggestion of how to represent the Link of a situational substrate in very general and schematic terms has been given in section 9.1 by reference to the meaning prism. But to what degree is such a representation useful to the analysis of actual use? I would argue that the general schema presented in Figure 40, even though difficult to instantiate with actual individual uses, may well serve as a conceptual basis for any verbal Link specification. Such verbal specifications have been provided throughout this account simply by describing what kind of contextual aspects might be evoked by a particular utterance. The main problem with this mode of verbal representation is that it has not been associated with any particular notational method and parameters so far. In fact, however, the use of fixed parameters for the description of contextual linkage has been dismissed as unsatisfactory for the analysis of contextual reference early on in our account (see section 2.2). In accordance with the arguments that led to this rejection, we can note some principles that could be used as general guidelines in the verbal specifications of meaning:

1. meaning representation should neither be systematically schematic nor systematically exclusive, but intuitively correct for the immediate description of one utterance in actual context of use
2. the elaboration of the “Scalpel.” example among others has indicated that a form-centred contextual linkage perspective on meaning will probably be mapped with closer reference to one specific situation of use (i.e. actual context); this concession to the situational uniqueness of meaning inevitably

entails that creativity plays as much of a role in the derivation of meaning as conventionality

3. as a consequence to the fact that form-centred use-based analysis of meaning will only be systematic in its descriptive accountability it is expected to converge in terms of formal properties with literary or graphic representations of meaning in order to emphasize the inherent concretization as well as the contextualization process and product

Although these criteria have been formulated with Link specification and representation in mind, they are equally applicable, if not more so, to the representation of Pull and the phenomenon of CGP as a whole.

As with any representation of meaning that does not make use of fixed and bounded parameters, one problem arises from this characterization, i.e. the problem of how specific the representation of a Link or Pull should be. This is a representational and analytic problem, but also an ontological problem: how specified is a Link actually and how vivid and concrete is a Pull? The only solution to this problem in both conceptions can be intuitive correctness, i.e. a specification or representation has to be exactly as concrete and specified as is deemed necessary to account for the meaning of an utterance in an actual context of use. Of course what is deemed “necessary” may vary depending on the purposes of the interpretation (cf. Widdowson’s map metaphor as outlined in chapter 3). The fact of the matter is that the phenomenon of active meanings (cf. Hofstadter 1999: 52) makes it impossible both for the language user and the analyst to predict up-front which contextual facets may be linked up to, because both actual and natural context and the inherent chronicles of use that determine the derivation of meaningful situational substrates are in constant flux.

In fact, from this perspective, the problem of specificity and discreteness solves itself through the constraints of actual use, because any concretization inevitably emerges not abstractly and in isolation from actual use, but inevitably concretely and as a product of actual context. In accordance with this, many concretizations of the Pull exerted by the utterance “Scalpel.” have already been provided in the course of the present account. Some imagistic versions are reproduced in Figure 42 below.

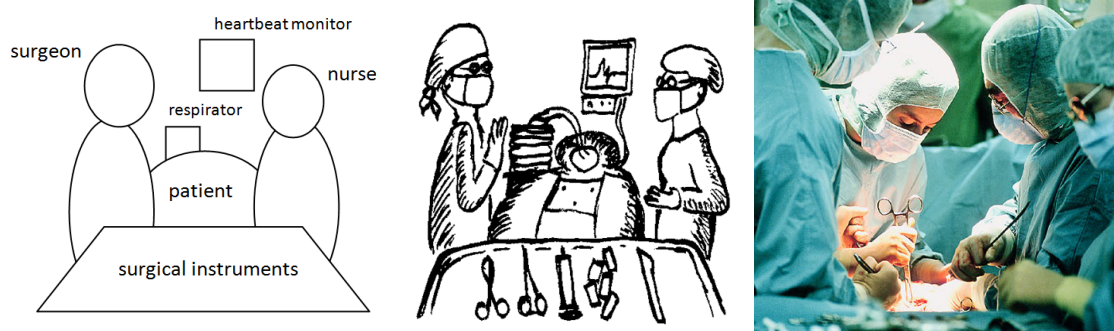


Figure 42. Representations of *concretizations* conceivably evoked by the utterance “Scalpel.”

All of these representations, even the highly schematic representation on the far left are more concrete in representing the evoked situational substrate than the utterance “Scalpel.” itself is. All of them are constrained in detail and explicitness by the actual context of their production and the purposes of interpretation from which they arose. On closer reflection, the same can also be said about the simplified representation sample of CGP in accordance with the vectorial metaphor as provided in Figures 37 and 38⁸³.

This whole perspective on actual meaning representation as naturally and intuitively emerging from an actual context of use may be seen as unsystematic or even unscientific, but it is exactly this unsystematic and unscientific use and interpretation of language that is so characteristic of the natural emergence and derivation of meaning in the everyday use of language. Instead of embracing this use-based flexibility and continuity of reference to context in creative as well as conventional ways, linguists have often striven to demarcate the predictable aspects of language (in the definition of langue, competence and grammar) only to discover that their systems are invariably dissociated from actual linguistic use and the workings of meaning.

One might argue that such dissociation is necessary not only for making a theory generally informative, but also to make it practically applicable for the analysis of large quantities of linguistic data. In accordance with this argument, the notion of CGP, by virtue of being maximally descriptive, would be expected to have little

⁸³ This whole discussion on representation, discreteness and specificity can be related to (although it is not always in line with) Wierzbicka’s arguments on semantic definitions (cf. Wierzbicka 1985: 16f, on “Discreteness and vagueness”; Wierzbicka 1985: 59f, “Essential doesn’t mean necessary”).

practical applicability in the analysis of “patterns of use”, beyond what is said about individual instances of actual use. Basically, this is in line with the general orientation of the approach. However, as has been argued in implicitly and explicitly in both sections 9.1 and 9.2 the notions of Link and Pull can be conceptually constrained and modified for the purposes of such analysis (in the understanding that intrinsic and generally relevant aspects of holistic meaning will be disregarded in the abstraction process inherent to any such analysis of usage).

Basically, the notion of CGP will be analytically useful whenever conjectures about actual or natural contexts of use are relevant to the analysis or interpretation of particular linguistic expression. One simple example of how the notion of CGP may thus be applied in a practical study would be the back-testing of sociolinguistic findings. There is considerable sociological evidence for instance that “certain linguistic forms [are recognized] as appropriate to speakers of a particular gender [...] *adorable* is judged to be female, and *Damn it!* is judged to be male” (Coates 2004: 159). This classification incorporates a clear assumption about the natural context of use of the linguistic expressions *adorable* and *Damn it!*, i.e. about the respective gender of the speaker in the communicative contextualization and concretization that the decontextualized expressions trigger in an actual context of use. To test this finding, one could easily present people with a written text (in order to decontextualize the expressions from the actual context of production) that includes one of these expressions and ask them to contextualize the text and concretize their interpretation. Asking the informants to supplement this contextualized concretization with a reflection of what prompted their interpretation, we could distinguish three salient kinds of manifestations of CGP:

overt – “I thought this was written by a woman because of this word”

covert – “I thought this was written by a woman, but I can’t say why”

blind – neither “man” nor “woman” was a favored choice, no significant difference in comparison with the control text

Thus, with minor local modification of the notions of Pull and Link (both of which are specified in terms of gender-specificity of language use) and a temporary disregard of the inherent fall-backs of generalization over uses, the notion of CGP allows the back-testing of specific sociolinguistic findings or hypotheses. This line of

investigation also raises a couple of other interesting research questions: e.g. is there a gap in usage and CGP, i.e. is *adorable* used as consistently by women as it is identified to be used by women? Is there a critical mass of usage that establishes significant CGP? etc.

This simple example illustrates only one possible way of applying the notion of CGP in practical quantitative analysis. Although it is, of course, conceivable to conduct similar studies without reference to the notion of CGP, I would argue that the theoretical framework as developed in this thesis as a whole nevertheless adds further depth to such an analysis, while the example shows indicatively that the notion of CGP is indeed not only theoretically, but also practically useful.

10. Conclusion

We have started the present account with the consideration of one decontextualized utterance reproduced in Figure 43 below.



Figure 43. *A contextual generative utterance in second position.*

This utterance is reproduced exactly in the same form (and format), the same construal and representation as in the introduction to this thesis; nevertheless, its significance is incontestably altered by the change in actual and natural context that has been brought about by the intervening pages (cf. Schiffrin 2006: 25ff on meaning difference in “second position”).

We have started out by relating this utterance to the idea of context-dependence (chapter 1). Subsequently, it has been instrumental in the elaboration of context and the crucial distinction between actual context in which any utterance is essentially embedded through its physical representation, and natural context which is evoked most saliently in order to make sense of an utterance that cannot be satisfactorily linked to the context at hand (section 2.1). It has been argued that context is dynamic and reference to it continuous (section 2.2) and that this inherently makes its systematic formalization problematic (section 2.3). From these considerations, and in accordance with a naturalistic perspective on context (while conceding the inevitable involvement of cognitive mediation and abstraction), the notion of a situational substrate has been developed and identified as pivotal in the interpretation of the utterance in the actual context at hand and with reference to the natural context evoked.

Even the notions of conventionality and creativity (chapter 3) have been linked to the utterance as relevant and mutually inclusive factors in accounting for all the meaning effects that it may entail, recognizing the fact that classical dichotomies such as *langue* and *parole* or competence and performance exclude from the field of linguistic enquiry many factors that may be crucial to establishing communicatively relevant and salient connections to actual as well as natural context of an utterance

(section 3.1). It has been argued that the situational substrate derived in the course of an interpretation of the utterance “Scalpel.” is constitutive to an understanding of the utterance in context because it is both salient and entrenched.

The evocation of natural context of the utterance, i.e. of a medical operation or surgery, has subsequently been identified as reliant on schematic meaning (section 4.1) as well as vivid imagistic gestalt meaning (section 4.2), which comes about concurrently through contextualization and concretization (section 4.3). This salient experience inherent to the evocation entailed by the utterance “Scalpel.” has been subsequently associated with the precedent process of linguistic construal (chapter 5), both of which imply the inherent creativeness as well as conventionality of linguistic meaning.

In discussing how a specific construal and evocation comes about, the utterance has been contrasted and compared with other utterances such as *Uwupu*. and KEEP OFF THE GRASS to illustrate that all meaning is linked to context and use in an ongoing cycle of signification and in fact emerges from this ongoing process of embedding (chapter 6). In recognition of the fact that this concession implies a diachronic perspective on meaning formation, the analysis of the utterance has been enriched by the elaboration of the concept of chronicles of use which are referenced in the derivation of a particular situational substrate (chapter 7).

In a more abstract manner, the analysis of the utterance “Scalpel.” has been enriched by discussions and reworking of traditional perspectives and methods of meaning representation and conceptualization (chapter 8). And finally, all of these abstract elaborations have been conceptually concretized in the notion of Contextual Generative Power (CGP), which has been demonstrated to account for the utterance’s generating, evoking and/or referencing. particular aspects of context (chapter 9). Through elaboration of the vectorial metaphor the notion of CGP has received further conceptual salience and the inherent notions of context reference specification or Link (section 9.1) as well as context reference resonance or Pull (section 9.2) have been introduced to account for both the relational and the experientially salient holistic nature of meaning.

Over all, the utterance “Scalpel.” has been essentially embedded in the development of a complex and abstract theoretical framework that aims at a

maximally descriptive form-centred and use-based context-referential analysis of linguistic meaning, which has undoubtedly left its mark on the utterance's CGP.

Although I believe that the arguments presented in the course of this thesis are suggestive for future research and provide a most momentous re-evaluation of many aspects of linguistic meaning and linguistic meaning analysis, it is true that the general theory has not yet been empirically tested or subjected to extensive peer-evaluation. Nevertheless, it seems clear that an analysis of linguistic meaning stands much to gain in the consideration of use, context and the experiential reality of meaning as form-triggered contextual linkage as well as an imagistic experience in the mind. The related notions of CGP and situational substrate, highlighting the connection to use and situational context, but also emphasizing that meaning is a conglomerate of ethereal, cognitively mediated connections with actual and concrete contextual reference points, seem particularly useful and appropriate for the conceptualization and representation of linguistic meaning. Of course, whether the actual context of this text, the present account, will be successful in linking up to the natural context of linguistic enquiry remains to be seen.

What remains certain, however, is that this discussion has left its mark upon the words and utterances it employed as well as on the context it referenced. It has been said that "[n]ot only a language, but every lexeme of a language, is an entire world in itself" (Mel'cuk 1981: 57). That world is context; and meaning, as fluctuant and ethereal as it is, is the only link and pull, the only ship to sail and the only map to navigate that world.

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Abstract in German

Ausgehend von der allgemeinen Idee der Kontextabhängigkeit, wird in der vorliegenden Diplomarbeit eine theoretisch fundierte Reflektion darüber erarbeitet, wie Äußerungen einen spezifischen situativen Kontext hervorrufen. Diese Evokation einer bestimmten Bedeutung oder das Erzeugen eines bestimmten Kontexts ausgelöst durch eine Äußerung wird der Kontextgenerierenden Kraft (Contextual Generative Power (CGP)) der Äußerung zugeschrieben. Im Interesse einer theoretischen Grundlage für die Analyse von CGP, werden eine Vielzahl von Theorien über Kontext, Bedeutung, Construal, Evokation und Bedeutungsrepräsentation einer Begutachtung unterzogen und anschließend mit eigenen Argumenten ergänzt und untermauert. Die behandelten Quellen beinhalten wesentliche Beiträge aus den Bereichen der allgemeinen Linguistik und Sprachphilosophie (Chomsky, Saussure, Allan, Pike), der Semiotik und Bedeutungsdarstellung bzw. -konzeptualisierung (Ogden und Richards, McCloud), der kognitiven Linguistik (Langacker, Taylor, Talmy, Goldberg), der Diskursanalyse (Widdowson), Literaturtheorie (Ingarden, Vodička, Culler) und Psycholinguistik (Bransford und Johnson) mit besonderem Augenmerk auf die Bedeutung von Kontext (Fetzer, Kamp und Partee).

Aus diesen theoretischen Grundlagen erwächst ein form- und situativer sprachgebrauchsorientierter (use-based) Zugang zur Bedeutungsanalyse als Kontextreferenz, die auf maximale deskriptive Rechenschaft im Bezug auf Erlebniswirklichkeit sprachlicher Bedeutung abzielt. Ausschlaggebend für diese Analyse ist die Unterscheidung zwischen tatsächlichen (fassbaren) und natürlichen (evozierten) Kontext (actual/natural context) sowie das Konzept eines Situativen Substrats (situational substrate), also eines strukturierten Netzwerks von Kontextreferenzen, die aus einer oder mehreren bestimmten Situationen (des tatsächlichen Sprachgebrauchs) abgeleitet werden. Darüber hinaus werden Begriffe wie Konventionalität und Kreativität, Salienz und Entrenchment, Kontextualisierung und Konkretisierung eingeführt und für die Analyse linguistischer Bedeutung, Construal und Evokation adaptiert. Um dem Zustandekommen von CGP auf den Grund zu gehen, wird die diachrone Ressource, die die Gebrauchschroniken

(chronicles of use) einer bestimmten Äußerung darstellen, eingeführt sowie weitere allgemeine Prinzipien der Bedeutungsbildung in Betracht gezogen. Diese umfangreiche theoretische Fundierung findet ihr Ende in einer Diskussion über Bedeutungsdarstellung. Letztendlich wird der Begriff CGP explizit in zwei analytisch anwendbare Parameter entwickelt: Kontextreferenzspezifikation oder Link und Kontextreferenzresonanz oder Pull.

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit sowie der darin vorgeschlagene theoretische Ansatz erkennen sowohl die schematische Dimension als auch den bildhaften Gestaltcharakter sprachlicher Bedeutung an und weisen Kontext eine zentrale Stellung in der Realisierung und Analyse dieser Bedeutung zu.

Curriculum Vitae

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1995-1999 Volksschule (primary school) Mühlfeld, Neunkirchen, Austria

Currently

Udo Schimanofsky is a student of English and student assistant, specializing in linguistics, at the University of Vienna. He is currently working on his diploma thesis on the role of context evocation in the construal and signification of linguistic meaning as well as organising the V. Österreichische Studierendenkonferenz der Linguistik ([5th Austrian Students' Conference of Linguistics – ÖSKL 2012](#)).

Research Interests

- Context and meaning theories in linguistics
- Cognitive linguistics
- Reference and grammar modelling
- Language philosophy

Selected presentations

- "Contextual Generative Power." *V. Österreichische Studierendenkonferenz der Linguistik (ÖSKL2012)*. University of Vienna. November 2012.
- "Contextualization and Concretization." *IV. Österreichische Studierendenkonferenz der Linguistik (ÖSKL2011)*. University of Innsbruck. November 2011.
- "The right not to like it. Utilizing students' negative attitudes towards literary texts in the EFL classroom." *Sprachendidaktik: Der wissenschaftliche Nachwuchs im Dialog (3). 6. Tagung der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Sprachendidaktik*. University of Vienna. May 2011.