

**Construal and language dynamics:
Interdisciplinary and cross-linguistic perspectives on linguistic conceptualization**

Theme session proposal for the 15th International Cognitive Linguistics Conference,
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Convenors:

Stefan Hartmann, University of Bamberg

Michael Pleyer, University of Koblenz-Landau

The concept of construal has become a key notion in many theories within the broader framework of Cognitive Linguistics. It lies at the heart of Langacker's (1987, 1991, 2008) Cognitive Grammar, but it also plays a key role in Croft's (2012) account of verbal argument structure as well as in the emerging framework of experimental semantics (Bergen 2012; Matlock & Winter 2015). Indirectly it also figures in Talmy's (2000) theory of cognitive semantics, especially in his "imaging systems" approach (see e.g. Verhagen 2007).

According to Langacker (2015: 120), "[c]onstrual is our ability to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate ways." From the perspective of Cognitive Grammar, an expression's meaning consists of conceptual content – which can, in principle, be captured in truth-conditional terms – and its construal, which encompasses aspects such as perspective, specificity, prominence, and dynamicity. Croft & Cruse (2004) summarize the construal operations proposed in previous research, arriving at more than 20 linguistic construal operations that are seen as instances of general cognitive processes.

Given the "quantitative turn" in Cognitive Linguistics (e.g. Janda 2013), the question arises how the theoretical concepts proposed in the foundational works of the framework can be empirically tested and how they can be refined on the basis of empirical findings. Much work in the domains of experimental linguistics and corpus linguistics has established a research cycle whereby hypotheses are generated on the basis of theoretical concepts from Cognitive Linguistics, such as construal operations, and then tested using behavioral and/or corpus-linguistic methods (see e.g. Hilpert 2008; Matlock 2010; Schönefeld 2011; Matlock et al. 2012; Krawczak & Glynn *forthc.*, among many others).

Arguably one of the most important testing grounds for theories of linguistic construal is the domain of language dynamics. Recent years have seen increasing convergence between Cognitive-Linguistic theories on the one hand and theories conceiving of language as a complex adaptive system on the other (Beckner et al. 2009; Frank & Gontier 2010; Fusaroli & Tylén 2012; Pleyer 2017). In this framework, language can be understood as a dynamic system unfolding on the timescales of individual learning, socio-cultural transmission, and biological evolution (Kirby 2012, Enfield 2014). Linguistic construal operations can be seen as important factors shaping the structure of language both on a historical timescale and in ontogenetic development (e.g. Pleyer & Winters 2014).

Empirical studies of language acquisition, language change, and language variation can therefore help us understand the nature of linguistic construal operations and can also contrib-

ute to refining theories of linguistic construal. Interdisciplinary and cross-linguistic perspectives can prove particularly insightful in this regard. Findings from cognitive science and developmental psychology can contribute substantially to our understanding of the cognitive principles behind language dynamics. Cross-linguistic comparison can, on the one hand, lead to the discovery of striking similarities across languages that might point to shared underlying cognitive principles (e.g. common pathways of grammaticalization, see e.g. Bybee et al. 1994, or similarities in the domain of metaphorical construal, see Taylor 2003: 140), but it can also safeguard against premature generalizations from findings obtained in one single language to human cognition at large (see e.g. Goschler 2017).

For our proposed workshop, we invite contributions that explicitly connect theoretical approaches to linguistic construal operations with empirical evidence from e.g. corpus linguistics, experimental studies, or typological research. In line with the cross-linguistic outlook of the main conference, we are particularly interested in papers that compare linguistic construals across different languages. Also, we would like to include interdisciplinary perspectives from the behavioral and cognitive sciences.

The topics that can be addressed in the workshop include, but are not limited to,

- the role of construal operations such as perspectivation and specificity in language production and processing;
- the acquisition and diachronic change of linguistic categories;
- the question of whether individual construal operations that have been proposed in the literature are cognitively realistic (see e.g. Broccias & Hollmann 2007) and whether they can be tested empirically
- the refinement of construal-related concepts such as “salience” or “prominence” based on empirical findings (see e.g. Schmid & Günther 2016);
- the relationship between linguistic construal operations and domain-general cognitive processes;
- the relationship between empirical observations and the conclusions we draw from them about the organization of the human mind, including the viability of concepts such as the “corpus-to-cognition” principle (see e.g. Arppe et al. 2010) or the mapping of behavioral findings to cognitive processes.

Please send a short abstract (max. 1 page excl. references) **and** a ~100-word summary to **construal.iclc15@gmail.com** by August 31st, 2018. We will inform all potential contributors in early September whether your paper can be included in our workshop proposal. If we are unable to accommodate your submission, you can of course submit it to the general session of the conference. The same applies if our theme session proposal as a whole is rejected.

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