

THE CURRENT STATE AND TOPICAL ISSUES IN COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

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Abstract. Cognitive linguistics (CL) is an approach that views language deeply connected to human cognition and experience. The article explores the history and evolution of cognitive linguistics, its central hypotheses, and the contributions of key scholars such as Lakoff, Langacker, and Talmy. It highlights the foundational principles of CL, including the rejection of structuralist and generative theories. The article also examines core concepts such as conceptual metaphor theory, image schemas, and frame semantics, which have shaped the development of the field. Furthermore, it discusses how cognitive linguistics has developed into several trends, namely cognitive grammar, cognitive semantics, and cognitive stylistics.

Key words: cognitive linguistics, cognition, concept, categorization, meaning, conceptual metaphor theory.

Cognitive linguistics emerged in the late 20th century as a reaction against formalist approaches, particularly Noam Chomsky's generative grammar. Unlike structuralist and generative theories, cognitive linguistics prioritizes meaning and conceptualization, arguing that language is shaped by human cognition and embodied experience. Influenced by cognitive psychology, philosophy, and cognitive science, the field gained momentum in the 1970s and 1980s. Scholars sought to explain language in relation to general cognitive abilities and knowledge structures. The official establishment of cognitive linguistics occurred in 1989 with the founding of the International Cognitive Linguistics Association (ICLA) and the launch of the journal *Cognitive Linguistics* in 1990. Cognitive linguistics has been shaped by numerous influential scholars, both internationally and within Russia and Uzbekistan. Key figures such as Charles Fillmore, who developed Frame Semantics, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, known for their work on conceptual metaphor theory, Ronald Langacker, the founder of cognitive grammar, and Leonard Talmy, who contributed to the study of cognitive semantics, have laid the foundational theories for the field. The aim of cognitive linguistics is to investigate the connection between language and mental structures, with an emphasis on how language both reflects and influences human cognition. Cognitive Linguistics, as described by William Croft and D. Alan Cruse, operates under three fundamental hypotheses. The first hypothesis states that "*language is not an autonomous cognitive faculty*" [1]. This hypothesis argues that linguistic representations of all level are intrinsically linked to general cognitive structures. Language is seen as a specialized form of cognition that relies on the same mental processes used in perception and reasoning. The second hypothesis states that "*grammar is conceptualization*" [1]. This idea, proposed by the founder of Cognitive Grammar

Langacker, means that grammar is not a set of arbitrary formal rules detached from meaning. Rather, grammatical structures are seen as cognitive representations that shape how speakers conceptualize experience. The last hypothesis, which states that *"knowledge of language emerges from language use,"* [1] suggests that language understanding is not innate or pre-determined; instead, language is viewed as a dynamic system that evolves through interaction and experience, with meaning and structure developing inductively based on specific linguistic encounters. At the core of Cognitive Linguistics lies conceptualization, which is the cognitive processes through which we perceive, organize, and interpret ideas. Unlike formal linguistic theories that treat meaning as fixed, this approach, as articulated by Langacker, posits that language is a direct reflection of dynamic mental categorizations. For example, the word love does not denote a singular, rigid concept but rather a spectrum of experiences—romantic passion, familial bonds, and platonic affection—each shaped by individual and cultural contexts. This perspective aligns with Eleanor Rosch's work on categorization, demonstrating that meaning is fluid and context-dependent. Cognitive Linguistics emphasizes schemas — mental frameworks that organize knowledge based on recurring experiences. A restaurant schema, for instance, includes expectations like seating, ordering, and payment, allowing us to navigate social interactions efficiently. Fillmore's Frame Semantics further develops this idea, showing how language activates these schemas. When we say, "We dined at a fancy restaurant," we implicitly invoke a network of associated concepts (menus, waitstaff, ambiance), illustrating how schemas underpin linguistic meaning. Another basic notion of Cognitive Linguistics is embodiment, the idea that bodily experiences fundamentally structure thought and language. Lakoff & Johnson argue in their work *"Metaphors We Live By"* that abstract concepts like "time" and "emotion" are understood through physical metaphors. These mappings arise from sensory and motor experiences, supporting Gibbs' findings that even abstract reasoning is grounded in bodily perception. This challenges classical views of cognition as purely abstract, highlighting instead its deeply embodied nature. Rejecting the notion of metaphor as a stylistic device, Lakoff & Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory reveals its foundational role in cognition. Metaphors like "time is money" ("spending time," "wasting hours") demonstrate how we conceptualize abstract things via concrete ones. Fauconnier and Turner's later work on blending theory expands this, showing how new meanings come from combining different ideas. For example, the phrase "a heart of gold" brings together the idea of emotional warmth (kindness) and material value (gold). This shows that metaphors are not just about language but also play a big role in how we think and understand the world. Cognitive linguistics has further developed into three main areas of study: cognitive grammar, cognitive semantics, and cognitive stylistics. Cognitive semantics is one of the branches of cognitive linguistics that studies meaning as a conceptual phenomenon rather than a purely linguistic or truth-conditional one. Unlike traditional semantic approaches that focus on the relationship between words and the world, cognitive semantics emphasizes the role of human perception, conceptualization, and encyclopedic knowledge in

constructing meaning. The idea that meaning is not confined to dictionary definitions but is deeply embedded in cognitive structures such as frames, domains, and mental spaces is central to this framework. Key theories within cognitive semantics include Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson, Frame Semantics by Fillmore, and Mental Space Theory by Fauconnier and Turner. Scholars like George Lakoff, Leonard Talmy, and Charles Fillmore argue that meaning is dynamic, context-dependent, and inseparable from general human cognition. Cognitive semantics also rejects the strict division between semantics and pragmatics, viewing meaning as emergent from language use rather than fixed in isolation. Developed by Ronald Langacker, Cognitive Grammar challenges traditional views of grammar as an autonomous system of rules. It instead proposes that grammar is inherently meaningful and intertwined with cognition. A core principle is that language consists of symbolic units—pairings of form and meaning—ranging from words to complex grammatical constructions. Unlike formalist theories that separate syntax from semantics, Cognitive Grammar argues that grammatical categories (e.g., nouns, verbs) are conceptually grounded: nouns profile *things*, while verbs profile *processes*. Additionally, Langacker introduces the notion of construal, where linguistic expressions reflect different ways of perceiving and structuring experiences (e.g., *the glass is half full* vs. *half empty*). The theory is usage-based, meaning grammar emerges from and adapts to actual

language use rather than being an abstract, innate system. Other key concepts include profiling and the lexicon-grammar continuum, which blurs the line between vocabulary and syntax. Cognitive Grammar's focus on meaning and cognition has influenced broader linguistic studies, including construction grammar and typology. Cognitive stylistics, or cognitive poetics, is an interdisciplinary field that bridges linguistics, literary studies, and cognitive science. It examines how readers mentally process and interpret literary texts. It explores the cognitive mechanisms that underlie stylistic choices, such as metaphor, narrative perspective, and textual ambiguity. While traditional stylistics only focuses on textual features, cognitive stylistics emphasizes cognition and how schemas, mental spaces, and conceptual metaphors shape interpretation. For example, schema theory that explains how readers integrate prior knowledge (top-down processing) with textual cues (bottom-down processing) to construct meaning. Text World Theory developed by Werth and Gavins is one of the key models in cognitive stylistics that analyzes mental world-building during reading. Conceptual Blending Theory proposed by Fauconnier and Turner is another key model which explains creative meaning-making in poetry and fiction. Scholars like Peter Stockwell, Elena Semino, and Jonathan Culpeper argue that cognitive stylistics enriches literary analysis by revealing the mental processes behind aesthetic effects, such as empathy in narrative or the tension in metaphorical language. The field also debates whether *cognitive poetics* the main focus of which is literary artistry and *cognitive stylistics* that prioritizes linguistic rigor are distinct, though both share a commitment to empirical, interdisciplinary approaches to literature and cognition. In conclusion, Cognitive Linguistics offers a comprehensive view of how language and thought are

intertwined. It challenges traditional views by showing that meaning is not fixed, but dynamic and shaped by our experiences, perceptions, and the body. Through key concepts like conceptualization, schemas, embodiment, and metaphor, this approach reveals that language is more than just a tool for communication—it's a reflection of how we understand and interact with the world.

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