

Victor Chernyshov

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0960-8464>

Maryna Moskalenko

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6135-5652>

DOI 10.31558/1815-3070.2020.40.2.8

УДК 81

## CONTEMPORARY THEORETICAL APPROACHES IN COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

*Розглянуто сучасні теоретичні підходи у когнітивній лінгвістиці. Засобами історичного, концептуального та порівняльного аналізу автори досліджують процес становлення та внутрішньої еволюції сучасних теоретичних підходів у когнітивній лінгвістиці. Узагальнюючи результати дослідження, автори доходять думки про те, що у процесі становлення та еволюції когнітивної лінгвістики існує тенденція до розширення досліджуваної сфери, що реалізується за допомогою поступового звільнення від рудиментів модульного підходу, характерного для традиційної лінгвістики, та поступового поглиблення міждисциплінарних зв'язків з суміжними дисциплінами – природничими та соціальними науками, психологією, філософією, тощо.*

**Ключові слова:** когнітивна лінгвістика, міждисциплінарність, семантика, сучасні теоретичні підходи, філософія мови.

Cognitive linguistics is a relatively recent, but quickly expanding field of linguistic (and interdisciplinary) studies that produces a growing body of entirely new linguistic (and interdisciplinary) knowledge. Arrival of new researches inevitably brings new approaches to the field. An increasing number of new approaches, however, require their examination, generalisation, and mapping in order to specify as much their particular place in the field as their function and their possible future contribution to the field in a broader scope.

A number of studies have already been carried out to cover the topic during a few last decades. Among those that contributed immensely to the present study should be mentioned the works of William Croft, Alan Cruse, Hubert Cuycken, Vyvyan Evans, Gilles Fauconnier, Dirk Geeraerts, Melanie Green, Stefan Th. Gries, Randy A. Harris, Laura A. Janda, Ronald W. Langacker, George Lakoff, and some others.

The paper's main *purpose* is providing a comprehensive study of theoretical approaches in contemporary cognitive linguistics.

The logic and framework of present study require the use of the following *methods*: analysis (historical, conceptual (subject-matter), and comparative analyses) as well as synthesis and generalisation. The analytics allows distinguishing the specific features (and structures) in the examined data with respect to their historical, essential, and common or individual features as the generalisation enables the general picture of the examined subject-matter in order to create its conceptual model.

Almost any historical phenomenon has at least two dimensions: one, representing its external situation and another that refers to its internal evolution, and cognitive linguistics is of no exception in this respect. Its appearance and external historical development, though having been caused by a number of external, and mostly acci-

dental factors, started the process of its internal becoming and evolution, which, in contrast, appears to be a subject to strict (cause-and-effect) regularities, determining its inner structure and the very logic of its evolution even today.

*Historical development of cognitive linguistics.* It is universally acknowledged that cognitive linguistics originally emerged in the early 1970s. Its appearance, on the one hand, was a result of the crisis of generative linguistics and general dissatisfaction with formal approach to language, as on the other hand it originated as one of the branches of rising cognitive science, introducing, in contrast, the functional tradition. In 1960s–1970s, its appearance preceded a period of “linguistic wars” that brought in a new linguistic approach, emphasising the primordial importance of semantics, rather than syntax (see Harris).

*Internal evolution of cognitive linguistics.* “Cognitive linguistics has become explicit by the introduction of the notion of a usage-based theory of grammar” (Geeraerts “Ten Lectures” 12). Since that moment it seems we can speak of cognitive linguistics as an explicit phenomenon, which also makes possible, alongside with tracing its development, the examination of its “internal evolution” (Geeraerts “Ten Lectures” 11).

Internal evolution of cognitive linguistics went a long way from modular cognitive semantics and cognitive grammar to more general (for not to say *holistic*), interdisciplinary approach of later researches. Sometimes it is said about the “*quantitative turn*” (Janda) or “*social turn*” (Geeraerts “Ten Lectures” 1–30) in cognitive linguistics, which is certainly true.

In 1950s, Noam Chomsky, in order to overrun the limitations of the old-school linguistics, had to found his Generative Linguistics project on the principles rather similar to biology than to formal sciences (mathematics, logic), which affected methods: deduction replaced induction (like induction came to replaced descriptive method in structuralism). In the case of cognitive linguistics, one should rather speak of a variety of methods in different approaches: there is no such thing as the only method of cognitive linguistics. Moreover, it seems that each new approach tried to build its constructions on a new foundation: biological approach gave way to psychological one, and the later was replaced by either sociobiological or sociopsychological approaches.

In a notable book of theirs Vyvyan Evans and Melanie Green explain that “Cognitive linguistics is described as a ‘movement’ or an ‘enterprise’ because it is not a specific theory. Instead, it is an approach that has adopted a common set of guiding principles, assumptions and perspectives which have led to a diverse range of complementary, overlapping (and sometimes competing) theories” (Evans 3).

It is well known that the conceptual development of cognitive linguistics begins with “three major hypotheses as guiding the cognitive linguistic approach to language:

- language is not an autonomous cognitive faculty;
- grammar is conceptualization;
- knowledge of language emerges from language use” (Croft 1).

However, looking closer to the matter it is easy to notice that there is not such a thing as a general “Cognitive Linguistics approach”, but a number of theoretical approaches conceptualised in more or less distinct and different way by different scholars or groups of scholars, which coincide only in parts, but almost never in

whole. Further we would like represent the main conceptual positions that have laid the foundations to different theoretical approaches in cognitive linguistics.

*Cognitive grammar.* Since early, Ronald Langacker's *cognitive grammar* was one of the two main principal theoretical approaches in cognitive linguistics. The basic principles of this approach were developed in contrast to Noam Chomsky's *generative linguistics*, and first formulated at length in 1987 by Langacker in his two-volume set, titled *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*. Although before the book appeared in 1987 his experience in the field counted more than a decade, yet in his own words, "Earlier, more limited publications have offered only fragmentary glimpses of the total framework" (Langacker "Foundations" 3).

As a theoretical approach, cognitive grammar stems from Langacker's hypothesis on *a continuum of symbolic structures*. According to Langacker, the language is a system of symbols, the semantic aspect of which is expressed rather in *image schemas* (which are patterns of mental activity) and *conceptual archetypes* than in *propositions*: "the world we live in and talk about is mentally constructed through processes involving abstraction, conceptual integration, and subjectification. These means of disengagement are clearly reflected in grammar". (Langacker "Cognitive Grammar" 540). Later, Langacker (and some others, e. g. Goldberg, Croft) developed an "applied version" of *cognitive grammar*, also known as *construction grammars*, which was "in a sense a lexicalist approach to syntax" (Geeraerts "Ten Lectures" 12).

*Iconic models approach.* Today we can hear sometimes of *iconic models approach* in Cognitive Linguistics, which, on our opinion, is an attempt introducing Peirce's terminology within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics. Willy Van Langendonck in the *Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics* (2007) says on this account: "Explanations in cognitive linguistics tend to be cognitive, functional, pragmatic, or experiential. The notion of iconicity fits perfectly in this view, since it assumes that a number of linguistic structures reflect the world's structure and not the brain's" (Geeraerts, Cuyckens 396–397)

*Cognitive semantics.* George Lakoff is the author who developed another fundamental theoretical approach in cognitive linguistics, having laid a foundation stone to a theoretical approach that came to be known under the name of *cognitive semantics*. As it has already mentioned above, in the 1950s–1960s, Lakoff was one of the initiators and active participants of the "language wars" that eventually enabled the appearance of cognitive linguistics. Being at first an adherent of generative grammar, in the early 1960s Lakoff began to fill disillusioned with its promises, wishing "to bring Logic" and "to develop empirical methodologies to the study" (Oliveira 88). This effort also resulted in the denial maintaining the traditional division of linguistics into morphology, syntax, pragmatics, and phonology.

Lakoff's cognitive semantics project was heralded by his book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980); earlier works, such as e. g. *Irregularity of Syntax* (1970) or the article "Instrumental Adverbs and the Concept of Deep Structure" (1968) rather belong to previous period. However, the most seminal work of his that contributed to the field – *Women, Fire, And Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind* – appeared only in 1987.

Starting the project, his initial aim, in his own words, was to bring together whatever results he could find that supported an experientialist view of mind (see Lakoff “Women” 587) as well as to reopen debates on central philosophical questions: “The mind is inherently embodied. Thought is mostly unconscious. Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical” (Lakoff “Philosophy” 1). Thus, at its very beginning his project had at least three defining features, distinguishing it from the rest: (1) aspirations for bringing the empirical element in linguistics; (2) understanding the philosophical depth of the questions (and willingness to push them far deeper); (3) understanding the primordial role of semantics in language. Over years, to these three points Lakoff added the idea of “embodied mind”, obviously borrowed from George Berkeley’s idea of a human as a “neural being” (see Brockman).

Other authors, who one or another time have been associating themselves with cognitive semantics and contributed immensely to this approach are Dirk Geeraerts, Brice Wayne Hawkins, Postal, John Robert Ross, Leonard Talmy, and some others.

*Corpus Linguistics.* Another cognitive linguistics theoretical approach is known as *corpus linguistics*. Although it is sometimes considered to be a set of methods, a number of authors treat the corpus linguistics as a particular theory. However if we acknowledge it to be a theory, another question remains: whether corpus linguistics belongs to cognitive linguistics, or it is but a separate field of research and study? Whatever it is, it is often considered to be a theory that belongs to cognitive linguistics, and it seems it is now the third in popularity among researches after cognitive grammar and cognitive semantics.

Corpus linguistics uses the methods of *annotation, abstraction, and analysis*. The key-text for this approach is a paper “*Knowledge Discovery in Grammatically Analysed Corpora*” (2001) by Sean Wallis and Gerald Nelson. The authors directly explain that “Corpus linguistics attempts to gain linguistic knowledge through the analysis of collections of samples of naturally-occurring texts and transcribed recordings. Corpora are composed of selections of material, usually of a normalised extent, taken from a variety of written and spoken genres. Material may be sampled over time, geography or language. Corpus texts (henceforth we take ‘texts’ to include transcriptions) are usually annotated by augmenting further levels of description that illustrate specific aspects of language production. In particular, it is common to provide some kind of grammatical annotation” (Wallis, Nelson 305–306).

It is also notable that recently Stefan Gries (who himself does not consider corpus linguistics as a theoretical approach, but a set of methods in cognitive linguistics) delivered ten lectures on corpus linguistics as a part of *Distinguished Lectures in Cognitive Linguistics* series given by prominent international scholars at the China International Forum on cognitive linguistics since 2004 (see Gries).

*Mental Models and Mental Space Approach.* Another cognitive linguistics theoretical approach is known as *mental models* approach or *mental spaces* approach. In fact these two can be rightfully considered as two separate approaches, but as far as the present study allows us but to trace general outlines of them, we consider it permissible to put these two together. The author of *mental model* approach is Philip Nicholas Johnson-Laird, as the author of *mental spaces* approach is Gilles Fauconnier.

Philip Nicholas Johnson-Laird's *opus magnum* is the book, bearing the same title as the approach it was coining, i. e. *Mental Models: Towards a Cognitive Science of Language, Inference and Consciousness* (1983). A number of later works have been written by Johnson-Laird in cooperation with Ruth M.J. Byrne. The main contribution to the field is the assumption that reasoning is determined by mental models rather than by logical form of it. It should also be noted a considerable impact of psychology in this approach. The foundation stone of mental models is *fundamental assumptions* or *axioms* which distinguish them from mere representations in the psychology of reasoning. Each mental model is a possibility, founded on what different ways have in common, so it can be said that they are based on the principle of truth, since they represent only that which is truly possible. In their later works Johnson-Laird and Byrne state that iconic character of mental models that bridges them with the *iconic approach* of which we have already said above.

Gilles Fauconnier is one who introduced *mental space* approach in cognitive linguistics. Fauconnier's *opus magnum* is *Mental Spaces: Aspects of Meaning Construction in Natural Language* (1994). Fauconnier continues in tradition introduced by Lakoff, but applies it to solve the problems that appeared within the framework of truth-conditional semantics (normally associated with Donald Davidson and his book *Truth and Meaning* (1967)). Truth-cognitive semantics represents the statues of situations as possible worlds. It is said that alongside the real world there are worlds with situations that are possible, but lack actual existence. "Fauconnier proposes an alternative model of representing the status of knowledge that is metaphysically more attractive and allows for elegant solutions to a number of problems in semantic and pragmatic analysis. Fauconnier replaces the notion of a possible world with that of a **mental space**, and argues that the mental space is a cognitive structure" (Croft 8). According to Fauconnier, *mental spaces* are *idealised cognitive models* (Fauconnier 240), which does not necessarily coincide with the actual state of affairs in the real world.

Later transformations of Fauconnier's mental space approach in collaboration with Mark Turner brought to developing a theory known as the *theory of conceptual blending*. According to which different elements of conceptual space "blended" in a subconscious process to become the matter of everyday thought and language (see Ritchie 31–50).

Conceptual analysis has demonstrated a variety of theoretical approaches in cognitive linguistics. However, it remains unclear how all these different approaches come together under the same title of cognitive linguistics. In order to answer this question we are going to carry out a brief comparative analysis with respect to three basic categories: *aim*, *subject-matter*, and *method*.

*Cognitive grammar* aims at investigating "a continuum symbolic structure" in order to rediscover the *language* as a part of cognitive structure that can only be found beyond grammar: that is why Langacker needed *image schemas* as the patterns of mental activities (Langacker "Cognitive Grammar" 540), which latter found their application in *construction grammar* or *iconic models* approach.

Starting his *cognitive semantics* project Lakoff's goal was purely tentative: he wished to solve a number of puzzling philosophical (metaphysical) questions. He believed he could do this referring to empirical data, and with the methods characteristic for empirical rather than formal sciences.

*Corpus linguistics* aims at understanding texts: everything is a text, and the text is nearly everything. As for methods it tries to combine annotation, abstraction and analysis, which are analytical and descriptive/prescriptive methods.

*Mental models* approach aims at discovering the fundamentals of human reasoning, using psychological procedures and the work of imagination.

*Mental spaces* approach purposes revealing the inner, subconscious mechanisms of our language and thinking as far as they differ from any common realities of the actual world, but constantly affecting the later through subconscious process of blending.

All aforesaid enables us to draw a *conclusion*.

Historical development and the internal evolution of cognitive linguistics witness a strict tendency for contextualisation and holistic knowledge of language. Previous tendency for narrowing and specialising linguistic knowledge that was characteristic for formal linguistics approach gave way to a bold effort of cognitivists for functional and (though usage-based but) universalised linguistic knowledge. The same tendency eventually makes cognitive linguistics to go beyond its own limits to undertake an interdisciplinary effort, making a contribution to knowledge about human cognition as a whole. Thus, it has turned from modular approaches, characteristic for traditional linguistics, to holistic ones; or, in other words, from more or less narrow (exclusive) specialisation to a broader (inclusive) interdisciplinary researches in area of cognitive science. Contemporary theoretical approaches in cognitive linguistics are mostly considered to claim their interdisciplinarity at the intersection of linguistics, psychology, social sciences, and philosophy.

### References

1. Brockman, John. "Philosophy in the Flesh" A Talk with George Lakoff". *A Parte Rei: revista de filosofia*, 14, (2001), source: [http://www.edge.org/3rd\\_culture/lakoff/lakoff\\_p1.html](http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/lakoff/lakoff_p1.html)
2. Croft, William and D. Alan Cruse. *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Print.
3. Evans, Vyvyan and Melanie Green. *Cognitive Linguistics. An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006. Print.
4. Fauconnier, Gilles. *Mental Spaces: Aspects of Meaning Construction in Natural Language*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Print.
5. Geeraerts, Dirk. *Ten Lectures on Cognitive Sociolinguistics*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018. Print.
6. Geeraerts, Dirk and Hubert Cuyckens (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Print.
7. Gries, Stefan Th. *Ten Lectures on Corpus Linguistics with R. Applications for Usage-Based and Psycholinguistic Research*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2020. Print.
8. Harris, Randy A. *The Linguistic Wars*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. Print.
9. Janda, Laura A. *Cognitive Linguistics: The Quantitative Turn. The Essential Reader*. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2013. Print.

10. Langacker, Ronald W. *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*. Vol. 1: *Theoretical Prerequisites*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987. Print.
11. Langacker, Ronald W. *Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.
12. Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Philosophy In The Flesh: the Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.
13. Lakoff, George. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. Print.
14. Oliveira, Roberta Pieras de. "Cognitive Semantics: In the Heart of Language. An Interview with George Lakoff". *Forum Linguistico, Fpolis*, 1 (1998), 83–119.
15. Ritchie, David. "Lost in space: metaphors in conceptual integration theory". *Metaphor and Symbol*, 19 (2004), 31–50. Print.
16. Wallis, Sean and Gerald Nelson. "Knowledge Discovery in Grammatically Analysed Corpora". *Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery*, 5 (2001), 305–335. Print.

## CONTEMPORARY THEORETICAL APPROACHES IN COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

**Viktor Chernyshov**

Department of General Linguistics and Foreign Languages, National University "Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic", Poltava, Ukraine.

**Maryna Moskalenko**

General Linguistics and Foreign Languages Department, National University "Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic", Poltava, Ukraine.

### Abstract

**Background:** Cognitive Linguistics is a relatively recent, but quickly expanding field of linguistic (and interdisciplinary) studies that produces a growing body of entirely new linguistic (and interdisciplinary) knowledge. Arrival of new researches inevitably brings new approaches to the field. An emerging number of new approaches, however, require their examination, generalisation, and mapping in order to specify as much their particular place in the field as their function and their possible future contribution to the field in a broader scope.

**Purpose:** is to provide a comprehensive study of theoretical approaches in contemporary Cognitive Linguistics.

**Results:** Historical development and the internal evolution of Cognitive Linguistics witness a strict tendency for contextualisation and holistic knowledge of language. Previous tendency for narrowing and specialising linguistic knowledge that was characteristic for formal linguistics approach gave way to a bold effort of cognitivists for functional and (though usage-based but) universalised linguistic knowledge. The same tendency eventually makes Cognitive Linguistics to go beyond its own limits to undertake an interdisciplinary effort, making a contribution to knowledge about human cognition as a whole.

**Discussion:** Thus, it has turned from modular approaches, characteristic for traditional linguistics, to holistic ones; or, in other words, from more or less narrow (exclusive) specialisation to a broader (inclusive) interdisciplinary researches in area of Cognitive Science. Contemporary theoretical approaches in Cognitive Linguistics are mostly considered to claim their interdisciplinarity at the intersection of linguistics, psychology, social sciences, and philosophy.

**Keywords:** Cognitive Linguistics, contemporary theoretical approaches, interdisciplinary approach, philosophy of language, semantics.

**Vitae.** Victor is a Candidate of Philosophy, Associate Professor, Associate Professor of Department of General Linguistics and Foreign Languages at National University "Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic". Areas of his research interests include philosophy of language, cognitive linguistics, comparative linguistics, applied linguistics, theory of translation.

**Correspondence:** prepod.pntu@gmail.com

**Vitae.** Maryna Moskalenko is a Lecturer of Department of General Linguistics and Foreign Languages at National University “Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic”. Areas of her research interests include cognitive linguistics, comparative linguistics, applied linguistics, theory of translation.

**Correspondence:** triksi1309@gmail.com

Надійшла до редакції 02 жовтня 2020 року.  
Рекомендована до друку 19 жовтня 2020 року.