



PRIKAZI KNJIGA – BOOK REVIEWS – BUCHBESPRECHUNGEN

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Adam Głaz (2012). *Extended Vantage Theory in Linguistic Application: The Case of the English Articles*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, pp. 295, ISBN 978-83-7784-230-0.

Categorization, the process in which experiences and concepts are classified into categories, lies at the very heart of cognitive linguistics where it is argued to be one of the primary principles of linguistic organization. The problem has been tackled in various ways within the cognitive linguistic paradigm and a number of solutions for various linguistic domains of application have been suggested, all of which seem to be ultimately related to the Prototype Theory developed by Eleanor Rosch in the early 1970s. One of the most influential approaches to this theoretical and quite complicated problem is the diachronic semantics project elaborated by Dirk Geeraerts who proposed cognitively based tools for the categorization and semantic analysis of lexical data (Geeraerts 1997, 2006, 2010). This analytical apparatus has proved to be very successful and inspired other semanticists.

Adam Głaz is another scholar whose view of language and categorization has been shaped by the cognitivist approach and lexical semantics (Głaz 2002). In the study under review Adam Głaz presents a relatively little known cognitive model of categorization, Vantage Theory (henceforth VT), proposes its adaptation, called Extended Vantage Theory, and offers its application for the analysis of the English articles. It must be stressed that Adam Głaz is a widely recognized authority on VT. To mention just a few of his scholarly achievements, it suffices to say that he organized a theme session on VT during the 2007 *International Cognitive Linguistics Conference* and co-edited a special issue of *Language Sciences* devoted to the theory in 2010.

The latest monograph written by Adam Głaz consists of a short *Introduction* (pp. 15–18) preceded by *Acknowledgements* and a *Table of contents* which invite the reader to embark on the journey into the intricacies of VT and present the au-

thor's sources of intellectual inspiration. This introductory part is followed by the main body of six chapters (pp. 19–255), *Conclusion* (pp. 257–260), *References* (pp. 261–279), *Index of names* (pp. 281–286) and *Thematic Index* (pp. 287–295). All of the referential tools at the end of the book may prove very useful for the reader given the abstractness of the subject matter.

In *Chapter 1* (pp. 19–56) the author introduces the basics of VT – its origin, history and the main tenets. This is a concisely written and easy to follow part where colorful illustrations and a number of charts are provided to facilitate comprehension of the theory. At the end of *Chapter 1*, a synopsis and a mini-dictionary with key terms and their definitions are given.

I will now focus on some of the principles on which the theory is based as they are discussed in the book. According to the author, VT offers a unique view of categorization as space-time analogy (p. 55). In a nutshell, it is theorized that speakers act as observers who locate themselves, objects and events in space by means of spatial and temporal coordinates. Consequently, a linguistic category is understood as the sum of speaker's mental coordinates arranged around at least one vantage. Speakers construct categories on the principle of similarity (the dominant vantage) or on difference (the recessive vantage) in accordance with the vantage they concentrate on. In other words, vantages are “points of view” of the conceptualizing observer on a given category (p. 55). It is easy to notice that VT shares many of its theoretical tenets with other conceptions proposed within the cognitive linguistic enterprise. Some of these include: reduction of linguistic categories to space relations, the importance of perspectivization and figure-ground alignments, focus on analogy/disanalogy relations and dynamicity of linguistic processes.

VT – where categories are constructed as vantages or points of view – was proposed by an American anthropologist and linguist, Robert E. MacLaury, who tested its validity mainly on color terms. It was a model designed to meet particular needs – the categorization of color. *Chapter 2* (pp. 57–100) presents numerous examples of other applications of the theory within linguistics and related fields. The author surveys several studies dealing with linguistic data analyzed in terms of VT. These include, for example, Japanese native and borrowed terms (p. 75), bird naming (p. 77), Dutch historical semantics (p. 79), demonstratives (p. 83), lexis in written discourse (84), folk linguistics (p. 90), song lyrics (p. 93), language learning (95). The goal of the chapter is to show the variety and extent of VT-inspired linguistic analyses. However, this collection of illustrative examples gives an impression of being quite random and may be perceived as a real mish-mash. Moreover, most of the ex-



amples have little affinity with the analytic focus of the book, namely the English articles.

Although *Chapter 2* is relatively long, most of the case studies mentioned are rather cursory and sketchy. Nevertheless, Adam Głaz convincingly shows that VT is not yet another descriptive apparatus, heavily loaded with model-internal constructs without any, or very little explanatory potential. Quite the contrary, the model does offer insights into the nature of language and cognition. Its power, in my humble opinion, resides in the analogy it makes between categorization and spatial orientation.

The remainder of the book under review (chapters 3–6) offers an account of the use of the English articles in terms of an Extended Vantage Theory (henceforth EVT) which is a modification of VT for the purposes of a systematic description and classification of article usage. In *Chapter 3* (pp. 101–148) the author surveys the literature relating to the use of the English articles. He starts with a selection of what he calls “other than cognitivist proposals” and finally arrives at accounts proposed within cognitive linguistics (p. 101). He discusses the definite article first and then the same procedure is applied to the indefinite and the nil article. Unavoidably, the survey is limited in scope and quite selective. It does not contain any substantial reference to historical and comparative analyses, or insights from the extensive research on other than English languages where the category of articles has been abundantly discussed. These typological studies may be very informative for English as well. The author stresses, however, that his goal is to concentrate on “the most influential approaches to the English articles” (p. 148).

Chapter 4 (pp. 149–200) is an account of the author’s early attempts to explain the use of the English articles within the framework of VT and a discussion of the problems he encountered along the way. The prevailing majority of data analyzed in the chapter come from grammar books and conventional references, such as dictionaries. The skeletal classification of the basic usages of the English articles is extended onto more complex, contextually modified cases in *Chapter 5* (pp. 201–226). The author is interested in how discourse influences the use and interpretation of articles and to what extent the semantic variation and nuances in meaning underlying their distribution can be accounted for by means of EVT. He concludes that “the textual level is an entailment of the hidden cognitive processes of vantage formation, subjected to contextual forces” (p. 226). Much attention is devoted to the various manifestations of the reference-point phenomena and conceptualizing processes surfacing in the uses of the English articles.

Chapter 6 (pp. 227–255) is the most ambitious one. It deals with cases of article usage which are either seemingly unpredictable or result from more unique and idiosyncratic conceptual processes. They constitute a major challenge and a testing ground for EVT. Adam Głaz handles such problematic instances with skill and this is where his linguistic expertise is demonstrated at its best. However, it seems that these difficult cases are hard to explain without taking into consideration other cognitive linguistic models, such as conceptual blending and frame semantics – both of which are referred to in the chapter. Applying EVT to the analysis, the author generalizes that usages with the indefinite article are associated with the dominant vantage, those with the definite article are linked with the recessive vantage, and those without an article with the non-discriminatory mode of the dominant vantage. Within each of those, however, many more fine-grained distinctions are made with regard to the parameter of coordinate strength.

Summing up, it should be stressed that the book under review is a very interesting, innovative and valuable cognitive account of the use of articles in English. Additionally, it is the first monograph-length proposal to apply an adapted version of Vantage Theory to a specific area of language use. Generally speaking, VT goes a step further than prototype theory or Langacker's two-pronged categorization by prototype and categorization by schema. For example, the prototype model cannot account for the tension between the relative stability of prototypes and the evolution of the categories they underlie. VT, on the other hand, emphasizes the dynamic nature of category construction. Furthermore, it reconciles the systematic nature of categorization with its plasticity and the multiplicity of categories constructed by speakers of diverse languages.

Obviously enough, like most other monographs, the book will leave very different impressions on different categories of readers. Those who are skeptical about cognitive linguistics, e.g. readers with a background in generative grammar and theories which lend syntax the highest degree of independence are unlikely to be enthusiastic about finding motivation for formal linguistic processes in perspectivization and the fact that the same physical objects can be viewed and termed in more than one way. Others may find the book useful, but still remain unconvinced about the theory. I for one feel that the book is a must for all those interested in the problems of linguistic categorization and language-space relations.



References

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