

Cognitive Grammar in relation to Linguistics is an interesting analog to Phenomenology in relation to Philosophy. Thematically, Cognitive Grammar approaches linguistic phenomena from the perspective of language users' experience of perceptual and situational structures — as such, language structure is a kind of formalization, communication, and/or re-construction of patterns of organization within consciousness. This perspective certainly seems amenable to Phenomenology more immediately than paradigms that connect language-meanings to logical propositions, or to the mechanical operations of semantic and grammatical rules. Meanwhile, methodologically, Cognitive Grammar embraces a style of analysis grounded in first-person perspective; the linguist's reflective judgments on which potential expressions in a given language would be deemed acceptable to typical speakers of that language, and why. True, that kind of subjective but evidence-based methodology — linguists using their own sense of syntactic propriety and semantic coherence to determine qualifications like the acceptability of particular sentences, but doing so in the guise of generic speakers' language-use rather than any idiosyncratic preferences the linguist herself may have — is common across many paradigms of linguistic research. In the case of Cognitive Grammar, however, the researcher imagines linguistic phenomena situated in hypothetical perceptual and interpersonal contexts. Issues like acceptability are accordingly assessed with consideration to the overall experiential, practical, and situational enacting and conceptualizing that would constitute the cognitive givens talked about and grounding communicative practice. Insofar as practical and experiential context is treated as intrinsic among the details needing to be consulted for trustworthy assessments of, say, acceptability — rather than comparing a given linguistic performance against dictionaries or style-books — Cognitive Grammar reveals a metatheoretic commitment to the practical/experiential enviroing of cognition in general as something that can be systematically investigated, enough to make linguistics work as a rigorous science.

Cognitive Grammar, in short, requires for the coherence of its scientific aspirations that a kind of first-personal but social-pragmatic analysis — which we can argue is quite akin to Phenomenology — can be performed which is also scientifically rigorous and amenable to third-person follow-up; phenomenological claims being reviewed and synthesized within a scholarly community. Cognitive Grammar needs a story of its scientific merit that overlap with Phenomenology's parallel story: that first-person reports do not devolve into stream-of-consciousness but can mine experience for regulative patterns and recurring desiderata that can be critically examined by a sufficiently sympathetic research community, giving rise to theories and models which can claim third-person objectivity, or at least claim that a reasonable disputative process exists to make claims toward objectivity evaluable and, as such, potentially believable. In short, the phenomenologist can claim that an organizing gestalt she thinks is formulative in her experience as both consciously immediate and logically unified, described from a reflective stance, is not a "subjective" phenomena in the epistemological sense of something idiosyncratic to her, but instead a first-personal phenomenon she can approach as something which others can find also in their own experience; similarly the cognitive linguist can consider her acts of producing or receiving linguistic artifacts, in representative perceptual-situational contexts, bearing in mind that she is a fluent speaker of one or more languages and can anticipate the language-processing practice of others. The very fact of fluency, or competence, implies a certain degree of credibility in ascribing linguistic beliefs to others. Accordingly, so long as we consider a speaker fluent in a language, we commit to finding her basically trustworthy in guessing how fellow speakers would respond to artifacts in that language, and therefore to generalize from subjective judgments outward. This is a good example of how first-person reflection can be scientifically operationalized for multi-party disputation; Phenomenology seems to envision a similar dialectic but one expanded outward from language to cognitive acts and experiential groundings in their totality.

From at least a metascientific perspective, at least, a dialog between Phenomenology and Cognitive Grammar seems promising. Both disciplines topicalize and fine-tune related but complementary methodological issues. Phenomenology, on the one hand, attends more vigorously to a philosophical problematic of origination and a "critique of metaphysics", making a willful "bracketing" of extra-experiential assumptions an intrinsic part of its method. Cognitive Grammar may be sympathetic to but not necessarily dependent on similar philosophical performances. For example, an important issue in modern linguistics is whether we have "innate" mental faculties for creating and understanding language or whether language originates as a specialization or repurposing of some other, more general or primordial faculty. Whatever our intuitions about that, surely those are the kind of assumptions that should be "bracketed" in a phenomenology-style analysis. By comparison, while Cognitive Grammar appears to be internally consistent irrespective of any particular opinion vis-à-vis linguistic innateness, I'm not aware of any crucial importance attached to either entertaining or suspending beliefs about innateness (or any other foundational linguistic-cum-philosophical subject matter, like whether a universal grammar underlies individual grammars or what sort of preceptual inputs qualify as *linguistic* stimuli during childhood). Certainly Cognitive Grammar methodology is not *constituted* by the *absence* of such belief, the way that Phenomenology is essentially shaped by its counter-traditional, "Cartesian" style.

Notice however that Cognitive Grammar does intrinsically orient analysis to disciplinary commitments — to the accuracy of subjective syntactic/semantics assessments and reports, to the value of hypothetical experiential episodes as proxies for actual ones, to the approximate commonality of experience among a language community — which cannot be just passively accepted (or rejected); they must be actively (even if unconsciously) presupposed in the research process. Phenomenology, given how it thematizes both the legitimacy of (experientially-grounded) presuppositions and the suspension of presuppositions drawn indirectly from scientific or philosophical beliefs, therefore points to a latent contrast in metalinguistic commitments between those that are tangential to and those that are constitutive of the Cognitive Grammar affiliated paradigms: without self-consciously withholding considerations on presumptive “metaphysical” linguistic matters (like innateness vs. linguistic empiricism), Cognitive Grammar does not necessarily endeavor to classify its practitioners’ beliefs on the axis of bracketing vs. disclosure — the commitments that can be suspended partitioned from those that seem either experientially irrefutable or transcendently prerequisite for any notion of experiential certainty in the first place. Scientists presumably feel that an *entirely* presuppositionless science is impossible, while a more philosophical angle can investigate how, nonetheless, presuppositions vary in their metaphysical posture. Belief in a “poverty of stimulus” suggesting innateness, say — or, conversely, belief that the rich experiential structure surrounding even small-scale language acts presents substantial language-acquisitional stimuli (thereby falsifying the premise of poverty and that avenue of advocacy for innateness) — can both be claimed to stand differently in the ebb and flow of cognitive-linguistic metatheory than commitments to, say, the disputational objectivization of first-person reports.

At the same time, Cognitive Grammar can be claimed to illuminate a wider, or at least a different, intellectual spectrum for the objectivizing dialectic than Phenomenology alone. What I mean is that Phenomenology’s path from subjective reflection to rationalistic claims is fairly repetitive: philosophers discuss specific hypothetical/prototypical episodes of consciousness and then write about them in an academic style which invites community reflection and to be read against certain scholarly traditions. Cognitive Grammar does all that too, but there are introduced by virtue of its linguistic subject-matter other discursive facets: the schematic representation of linguistic structure (e.g. parse trees); the diagramming of perceptual-situational *gestalts*; even technological applications... Scholars can debate which tactics for representing language structure are most suited or most organically consistent for describing language artifacts via the Cognitive-Grammatical lens. The representations specific to Cognitive Grammar can be contrasted with those developed in other grammar theories and their correlative research programs, such as Combinatory, Dependency, and Head-Driven Phrase-Structural Grammars. These disparate programs are, also, not exclusively focused on explanatory revelations about human language — contemporary linguists also have practical concerns, like text mining and Natural Language Processing. One question for semantic and syntactic theories is whether they are buttressed by computational evidence — whether software created according to the language models and representations are successful for useful tasks, like classifying documents, machine translation, or pulling information from Natural Language resources.

Cognitive Linguistics in general does not need to mimic these practical concerns — after all, if language understanding does indeed build off of integrated perceptual and experiential situatedness, we should be skeptical about the prospects for computers and “Artificially Intelligent” agents to parse language with anything like native fluency (even setting aside how a machine’s language processing, correct or not in terms of our desired practical ends, cannot be equated to human empathic understanding). Contrariwise, however, we can also speculate that if the gist of Cognitive Grammar is how a plethora of environing situations — the spatial and force-dynamic arrangements trenchant to our construal of practical scenarios — can be sorted into a relatively small set of canonical schema, correlated with details like noun tense and morphosyntactic modes of agreement, then a computational treatment of language need not perceive the full spectrum of situational possibilities in full nuance, but only ascertain which one of several schema are evidenced in a given linguistic artifact. Cognitive Grammar would seem to support intuitions that truly humanlike “AI” Natural Language Processing is an unrealistic goal but that, at least potentially, computational NLP can be achieved to some useful approximation, and employing cognitively realistic language models can help that project. But I have no firm commitments in either direction; my point is that the technological and computational dimensions of linguistics are relevant for Cognitive Grammar whether or not this approach is sympathetic to the, at times, reductionistic paradigms of conventional formal/computational linguistics. Unlike pre-communicative experience, language is structured by the rigors of coordinated thought and normative signification — as language users we must shoehorn private experience into prototypes that can be expressed to others. Language, in effect, reveals that even rawly immediate experience has a logical order that, to some approximation, can be studied in abstraction — first because language merely by existing shows that this abstracting does happen, in one fashion; and second because language is a platform for studying it. Via language we can empirically study the articulations of conscious experience transcribed into a normative semiosis.

Phenomenology, also, gathers consciousness as reflected upon into something partially abstract, or with a structure that can be abstractly re-considered. There are some parameters of organization that seem so primeval to experience as to be indubitable. One is the episodic nature of perception and of deliberate action; mental phenomena seem neither sliced into instantaneous moments nor streaming in expansive segments. Instead, conscious reality is a chain of continuous but brief interludes: in one hypothetical kind of scenario, I open a door, which exercises one family of sensible and kinaesthetic attitudes; then I walk across the room; then I look out the window, and so forth. Such episodes stick together in language and maybe in memory, if I have occasion to say, or to later recall, that “I walked into the room” — the state of affairs I commit to memory or verbiage is actually a sequence of smaller episodes. This in turn subsumes into larger units, like when a narration reads “I walked into my living room, sat at my desk, and began to read”. What stands out inviolably from this episodic bricolage is — minimally the temporality of, but more consequentially, the multiple scales of the temporality of consciousness. Episodes link together and sequentially coalesce into a more durational scale. Phenomenology marks this scale-transition terminology; *protention* and *retention*, for instance, connoting the episodic unity of consciousness over short time spans, is contrasted with concepts like *memory* and *anticipation*.

Meanwhile, an equally salient structuring principle lies in the epistemic attitudes that are carried into perceptual/enactive episodes: consider the contrast between casually looking at the window expecting to see the same scene as any other afternoon and looking inquisitively because I hear a sound outside. Or maybe I see Hugo sleeping on the sofa, a “seeing” which is actually somewhat inferential, because he’s always sleeping on the sofa this time of day. I don’t need to confirm — if I briefly glance and see him lying still and relaxed — that the tabby cat on the couch is Hugo and that he’s sleeping, for me to think to myself (and maybe say to someone else) that “Hugo is sleeping” or “Hugo is sleeping on the sofa”. Of course, such a scenario can be altered: if we have two tabby cats then I may want to look more discriminately to ascertain that it is Hugo on the sofa; or I may want to observe him for a few seconds to check *if* he is sleeping, which is a different perceptual event and a different conscious experience that passively seeing “Hugo sleeping” in the throes of an assuming that he is, in fact, sleeping, by analogy to how seeing daylight out the window is *passive* if it’s mid-afternoon but may be a premeditated investigation if I have just woken up and don’t know the time.

Here, too, is an apparently “transcendental” or “categorical” (allowing a Kantian echo) pattern in consciousness — the sliding scale of activeness and passiveness in perceiving; the varying degree of epistemic thematization saturating different parts of experience. There are things we take for granted based on the familiarity of our most typical environments, becoming part of the propositional hum of things generally disclosing themselves in ways that carry information but no surprises. There are other things we are consciously aware of wanting to know. Some of our information about the world comes from presumptive expectations that we only really register when they are violated — say I suddenly see Hugo, having awoken, jump down from the sofa; now I have to update my baseline conception of how things are obtaining in my immediate surroundings. In that case I would not be startled to hear him scratching the chair, as compared to if I had not seen him wake up: our construals are woven from baseline assumptions and then the occasional anomalies where my assumed picture must be revised. But layered within this cycle of passive experience and disruptive revision is another genre of epistemic episodes which is more deliberate and proactive; planning perceptual encounters around specific, epistemically thematized concerns, like looking out the window to trace an unfamiliar sound. This scale of epistemic passivity and activity can be set against — and in consciousness interweaves with — the scales of temporality.

We have then at least this matrix — the double-scale of temporal granularity and epistemic attentiveness — which seems to emanate from the depths of consciousness and yet have something like an abstract structure. Looking over the phenomenological (and philosophy of mind) tradition, we can find other such prereflective abstracta, like the contrast between hyletic sense-data (the purely embodied qualitative character of red or of silky smoothness) and qualia as propositional content (*red* and *smooth* as predicates); or the contrast between fully private experience (like corporeal sensations) and intersubjectively negotiated perception — we may not see the same scenes in exactly the same ways, but at least in productively *similar* ways, if we are in similar locales and vantage-points. A full catalog of these structures would involve a historical overview of Phenomenology as a whole, which is divergent from my aims in this paper. I want to highlight, however, that Phenomenology produces a philosophical narrative about certain ur-structures — described, if all goes well, not from prior scientific or world-view commitments but from commonsensical meditations on (mundane, everyday) consciousness — which can be thematized with the extra performative precision of scholarly discourse; with the care of finding the right language, entrenching usages, diagramming the conceptual relations which should be easier to memoize precisely because of terminological rigor (“protention”; “episodic”; “epistemic attitude”; “enactment”). These structures get lifted out of the experiential realm and begin to condensate into an abstract regime, something defended like intellectual turf, discussed and analyzed.

Cognitive Grammar also has ur-structures — for sake of argument, consider on one hand the linguistic double-parameters of spatial and force-dynamic schema and, on another, the phenomenological double-scales of temporal granularity and epistemic thematization. Once entered in the intellectual ledger, the cognitive-linguistic schema become subject to a range of formal systemizations, from technical representations of language structures to lexicons, compilations of parts of speech and type-theoretic lexical classifications as well as of inter-word relations, even computer code for representing or automatically building representations of language artifacts. There have not been thus far analogous options for elaborating the phenomenologist's ur-structures — no code-repositories curated by Phenomenology research groups, no technological enhancements of phenomenological literature, for the most part. This is doubtless a manifestation of the historical context where Phenomenology has emerged, but we are now in a different context. Perhaps some 21st-century phenomenologists will engage with computers as aggressively as Husserl engaged with mathematics in the *Formal and Transcendental Logic* or the *Investigations*.

Language, in short, is — at least on one level — a *formal system*, notwithstanding that it is also a human medium possessing an arguably irreducible layer of human subtlety and context-sensitivity. Linguistics in general, and perhaps Cognitive Grammar in particular, has to bridge experience and formalization. Spatial and force-dynamic schema are — for example and so to speak — one side of the bridge as perceptual *gestalts*; but their formal trace is excavated analytically through syntactic and morphosyntactic theories; and a systematic model of morphosyntax involves something like formal language-representation. Insofar as parsing structures are described via “parse graphs” — the parsed sentence notated, with the supplemental data marking the contrast between a sentence spoken in an unstudied human context and the sentence as an object of analysis, as a graph of inter-word relations — then morphosyntactic agreement is a parameter manifest in specific inter-word pairs. So morphosyntactic agreement qua linguistic phenomenon straddles the experiential and formal realms — it can be studied in terms of what perceptual situations call for a particular noun or verb to be aligned with a particular verb, adjective, or adverb; it can also be studied as an enrichment of a formal structure. Through such formal strata Cognitive Grammar is not siloed in its study of perceptual groundings, but widens its disciplinary circle to reach a constellation of formal techniques that resonate with grounding experiential intuitions in suggestive ways, revealing both the potential and limits of formalization.

I would like to juxtapose this interdisciplinary continuation of Cognitive Grammar with the academic dissemination of Phenomenology — how the professional philosophical milieu where Phenomenology is mostly practiced shapes its transition from first-person speculation to an intellectual enterprise which, at least in its ways of organizing social resources, operates as a science. Cognitive Grammar operates in a similar milieu, but the strata of formalization evident in linguistics adds a wrinkle that has no direct analog in philosophy. Alongside the discursive and institutional norms which guide the systematization of Cognitive Grammar — the discipline of academic writing, peer review, conferences — there are also structural norms sited in linguistic formalizations through which cognitive theories can be explored. This is a development which phenomenologists should observe carefully, because the structural elaboration upon phenomenological research can be augmented beyond *just* inter-textual disputation in an academically curated speech situation, and can engage with formal systems as logical and technological artifacts. Scholars, of course, debate, refine, and mathematize formal systems in similarly self-conscious academic circles; but insofar as they are modeled and simulated in technological and computational environments, formal systems *also* become technical artifacts which can be explored and manipulated. Alongside the “Communicative Rationality” of academic performance, they buttress a *technical* rationality of implementing computer models, crafting the algebra of formal systems, codifying inter-system translations, and so forth. Computational linguistics, to take one example, is a technical as well as an intellectual practice.

The paradigms of these research programs that emphasize engineering over academic disputation don't necessarily align seamlessly with Cognitive Grammar, and still less with Phenomenology. Despite their *internal* commitment to “bracketing” phenomenologists are still educated participants in the modern world and many presumably do accept in broad outlines the scientist's worldview. Many phenomenologists probably “unofficially” believe that mental phenomena have mundane neurophysical explanations (they are not magic or divine revelations or flux in a sacred ether), however opaque to consciousness itself. So Phenomenology is not *constitutively* antagonistic to a “natural science” of cognition and perception. In the Philosophy of Mind, moreover, the path to materialistic perspectives on mental phenomena seems to diverge in two directions — one being the direct study of material systems themselves that we reasonably believe are seats for the neurophysical correlates of consciousness, like neurons and synapses; the other is a more functionalist attempt to describe the systematic organization of such material systems, on the premise that it is easier to make scientific process by seeing the brain (or the entire embodied nervous system) as a large-scale functional system than by reductively studying the biology and physics of microscale constituents, like nerve cells. Sure, we may believe that vision is driven

by cells in the eye and optic nerve, as well as specific brain regions; but the explanatory gap between whatever organic properties we may discover researching these bodies and the lived immediacy of visual qualia seems no less expansive. At least as a supplement to such microphysical investigation, functionalist methodologies can potentially narrow, even if not eliminate, such explanatory gap. In Cognitive Grammar, for instance, the subtle variation between schematically similar situations is in a sense transcended by morphosyntactic rules; our language-forming process of mapping perceptual givens to morphosyntactic and lexical prototypes and finding a communicatively stable encoding for them certainly seems amenable to functional description: such meta-cognitive finessing of our preceptual surround is a good candidate of a *functionality* available to our minds, as we are (and in our being) intelligently intersubjective and information-processing life-forms. Insofar as we have formal presentations of perceptual and enactive structures that seem both subjectively realistic *and* faithful to a kind of inner logic, we have the possibility for a rapprochement between Phenomenology and cognitive functionalism, the two paradigms bridged by the *functional* utility of cycling between immediate and subtly particular experience and formally tractable concept-systems we use to construct productive precis of our environing situations — which in turn can be modeled as formal systems and investigated in that light. Language bears witness to this experiential-to-formal-to-experiential rotation in an especially ubiquitous and well-structured topos, which is why linguistic methodologies like Cognitive Grammar can be a useful case-study for phenomenological formalization in general.