

Provisions for

Pragmatic cross-linguistic categories

Tabea Reiner

tabea.reiner@lmu.de

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OVERVIEW

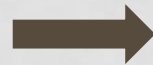
- **Intro:** Cross-linguistic categories in syntax, semantics or pragmatics?
- **Proposal:** Preparing for the establishment of cross-linguistic categories...
...by a categorical distinction between grammar and the lexicon – based on semantics
- **Conclusion:** The role of semantics reconsidered and open questions

Syntactic cross-linguistic (universal?) categories?

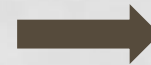
- have proven difficult to establish & maintain
- however: difficult \neq impossible
- important: no “semantic categories in disguise”

Example for semantic-free analysis:

lig mun fot
mun fot lig
lig dit
dit lig
**mun lig fot*



mun and *fot*
form a unit
to the
exclusion of
lig



Semantic cross-linguistic (universal?) categories?

- semantic categories culture-specific (Haspelmath 2007:127-128)
- so: cross-linguistic semantic categories have to be abstract enough (ibid.), e.g. 'quality'
= comparative concepts
vs. descriptive categories (Haspelmath 2010)
- however: what is the use of a comparative concept if we cannot compare the categories by which it is expressed in different languages? (Rijkhoff 2016:334)
- possible additional problem: language & thought

Pragmatic cross-linguistic (universal?) categories?

- advantages
 - Topic (i.e. what is being talked about) and comment seem to figure in any language.
 - Topic and comment seem to figure in any sentence.
 - Basic comparative syntax is easy:
 1. Which part of the sentence corresponds to the topic?
 2. Which part of the sentence corresponds to the comment?
 3. Are there any ordering restrictions on these two parts?
 4. repeat for other languages
 5. compare the ordering restrictions...
...without even thinking about S, V or O!

Pragmatic cross-linguistic (universal?) categories?

- problems

- comparison is very basic
- correspondence always clear?

examples:

Ital. *canta* '(s)he is singing'

People are sitting here.

- only a pseudo-problem: pragmatic categories not necessarily basic and their markers may have other functions in addition (Matić & Wedgwood 2013)
- even pragmatic cross-linguistic categories do not seem able to capture phenomena like agreement or inflectional classes

Provisions for cross-linguistic categories

- precise definition of syntactic (i.e. grammatical), semantic, and pragmatic categories?
- grammatical meaning = self-referential meaning
non-grammatical meaning = non-self-referential meaning (Reiner 2014)
- can occur within a single linguistic unit, but are distinguishable analytically

How does that help us do typology?

- enables us to use comparative concepts **and** compare the different ways of realization: grammatically or not
- Example:

Engl. *bring* vs. Russ. **принести**

expressed non-grammatically
(no self-referential meaning involved)

expressed grammatically
(self-referential meaning involved)

boundedness

The role of semantics reconsidered

- not: semantic categories vs. other categories
- but: semantics helps distinguish grammatical from non-grammatical realizations of comparative concepts...
- ...and enables comparison!
- What about agreement and inflectional classes?
They involve self-referential meaning!

Open questions

Where to locate the self-referential meaning of structures?

1. locate structures, including their meaning, in single elements? “extreme valency theory”
2. locate the meaning of structures in templates? “CxG without lexicon-grammar-continuum”
3. locate the meaning of structures in compositional semantics? “formal semantics without uninterpreted structure and without syntax/semantics-interface”

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Thank you
for your
attention!