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*Word Meaning and Context: a Critical Examination of Contrasting Perspectives*

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**Word Meaning and Context: a Critical Examination of Contrasting Perspectives**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis conducts a critical review of Ray Jackendoff's conceptual semantics and Ronald Langacker's cognitive grammar from the perspective of Roy Harris' integrationism. The particular focus is on the role of context in word meaning and whether it is feasible to posit that words have a determinate semantic core. In both conceptual semantics and cognitive grammar the discussion of semantic determinacy and the role of context centres on the feasibility of separating semantic from pragmatic meaning. Despite substantial theoretical differences, it is found that both approaches draw similar conclusions on this matter; i.e. that a determinate semantic core exists, and that it is, therefore, possible in practice, to study specifically semantic meaning separately from pragmatic effects. It is then argued that on the topic of context the work of Langacker, Jackendoff and fellow conceptual semanticist Steven Pinker shows evidence of inconsistency between theory and practice, which could be seen to emanate from initial problematic assumptions about the nature of language and communication. Furthermore, it is argued that the position on context and determinacy reflected in both approaches leaves the metalinguistic cognitive frameworks offered by conceptual semantics and cognitive grammar unable to account for the dynamic and creative view of context and word meaning advocated by Harris' integrationism. Additionally, the thesis considers the contribution made by the linguist to semantic analysis, and argues that, following Harris' axioms of integrational semiology, the role of the semantic analyst is *fundamentally creative*. Therefore, any notion of the semanticist *discovering* 'semantic facts' is misguided, and the 'products' of analysis are better viewed as metalinguistic 'creations' which reflect the experience of the analyst and aims and practices of mainstream linguistic analysis.

## **Acknowledgements**

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# **Word meaning and context: a critical examination of contrasting perspectives**

## **Contents**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction .....   | 1  |
| The Problem Space .....  | 1  |
| Thesis Aims.....   | 4  |
| Thesis Outline.....  | 5  |
| Chapter one: Conceptual Semantics.....   | 7  |
| An Overview.....   | 7  |
| The Conceptual Semantic Framework.....   | 8  |
| The Principal Aims of Conceptual Semantics.....  | 11 |
| The Decomposition of Words into Conceptual Primitives.....   | 12 |
| Conceptual Semantics and Context .....   | 15 |
| The Importance and Role of Contextual and Pragmatic Factors in the Conceptual Semantic Framework ..... | 15 |
| Steven Pinker .....  | 16 |
| Ray Jackendoff .....   | 18 |
| On the Possibility of Separating Linguistic and Contextual Meaning .....                               | 19 |
| Is the Conceptual Semantics Position on Context Coherent? .....  | 26 |
| Chapter two: Cognitive Grammar.....  | 32 |
| An Overview.....   | 32 |
| Symbols and Linguistic Units.....  | 34 |
| Domains, Content and Construal.....  | 36 |
| Cognitive Grammar and Context .....  | 44 |
| The Prospects of Separating Semantic and Pragmatic Meaning .....                                       | 44 |
| Cognitive Grammar, Minimal Context and Coherence.....  | 50 |
| Chapter Three: Integrationism.....   | 55 |
| Generalities .....   | 55 |
| Weak Segregationism .....  | 59 |
| Context Reconceived: an Integrational Perspective .....  | 67 |
| Integration .....  | 70 |
| The Time-Track of Communication.....   | 75 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Problems with Traditional Notions of Repetition .....        | 76  |
| Cotemporality and a Very 'Provisional Determinacy' .....     | 78  |
| Repetition Revisited: an Integrational Account .....         | 82  |
| Stepping Outside the Time-Track.....                         | 87  |
| What of the Prospects of an Integrational Linguistics? ..... | 94  |
| Conclusion.....  | 98  |
| Reference List.....  | 101 |

# Introduction

## The Problem Space

At issue in this thesis is the problem of how to understand word meaning and disagreements over the kind of explanatory account of word meaning that are evident in contemporary linguistic research. What do we understand by 'the meaning of a word'? And where do we look for an answer, or answers, to such a question? In particular, what role in our account of word meaning should the role of communicational context of word use play? Do words have a common core of meaning, known and accessible to all users of that word independently of context of use? Is it possible to reliably identify different words on semantic grounds?

In modern linguistics issues of semantic determinacy and the role of context in utterance interpretation often centre on the possibility of separating *linguistic* meaning from *contextual* meaning; the latter usually coming under the banner of *pragmatics*, the former (*linguistic semantics*). That such a separation is possible in principle remains the majority view in the linguistics field as a whole (e.g. Horn and Ward 2004) and is inexorably bound to the idea that language is *divisible*, or *extractable*, from the rest of human activity, and therefore amenable to study in its own right. Such an idea, however, has been challenged in recent decades by Roy Harris' *integrationism* (e.g. Harris 1981, 1996a and 1998a). Harris (1998a: 5) argues that language should be viewed as a facet of *communication* and that any approach which takes *language* (as opposed to communication) as its point of departure is "starting from the wrong end". Taking communication to be a process of integrating past experience with the demands of the present and future intentions (Harris 2008: 109), integrationism sees 'the linguistic' as having no privileged status over 'the nonlinguistic' with respect to the communicational tasks individuals face in particular situations. In this sense, integrationism offers a radical alternative to mainstream, *segregational* (Harris 1998a: 9), approaches, which have traditionally been content to see a division of labour in research on

language, with semanticists dealing with 'the linguistic' on the one hand, and pragmatists 'the nonlinguistic' on the other.

This thesis is an attempt to explore the possibility of separating semantic and pragmatic meaning with a critical comparison of three contemporary approaches to language and communication. Alongside integrationism the theories selected for critical scrutiny are Ray Jackendoff's *conceptual semantics* (e.g. 2002) and Ronald Langacker's *cognitive grammar* (e.g. 1987 and 1991a). One reason why the work of Jackendoff and Langacker are suitable choices for the present study is that their work is representative of two of the most important research paradigms in modern linguistics: *generative grammar* and *cognitive linguistics*, respectively. A second reason is that both theories have a direct concern with meaning in general, and lexical meaning in particular. A third reason is that both scholars show evidence of sharing some of Harris' concerns over the protean nature of linguistic meaning and the feasibility of making a principled distinction between semantic and pragmatic meaning, and yet continue to follow what Harris would consider an orthodox approach.

For Harris, perhaps the most important unifying factor between those approaches he terms 'orthodox', or segregational, is a conception of language as a system of correlations between ideas (or concepts—i.e. meanings) and verbal symbols (or words—i.e. form); this conception is one of the central tenets of what Harris calls *the language myth* (e.g. 1981) and the basis for what Harris has termed the *determinacy*, or *fixed code* fallacy (Harris 1981: 10). This model of language Harris describes as "bi-planar" which "envisages language as separable into two planes of form and meaning, which are interconnected but distinct" (1981: 11). This bi-planarity upholds a commonly held lay perception of language that there are, essentially, two kinds of information that can be known about an expression: "we can ask questions about the form of a sentence; for example how it is spelt, or how it is pronounced, or how its elements are arranged. Or we can ask questions about what it means, or what the words or constructions in it mean" (Harris 1981: 11). However, whether such lay perceptions are a suitable basis for a general, 'scientific' theory of language is open to debate, and has been

questioned by those taking an integrational approach to communication. This will be taken up in Chapter Three.

An important proponent of this bi-planar conception of language, and perhaps the first to develop these commonly held lay notions into a comprehensive 'scientific' account was Saussure (1983). In the final passages of his study of the work of Saussure, Harris (1987: 237) wrote that for such an essentially simple model as Saussure's, the surprise is not that the model ultimately fails as a representation of language and communication, but that it proves so robust. There is much to learn, urges Harris, by looking to see "where it will fracture" under the weight of its own contradictory implications. Though the nature of these 'contradictory implications' will receive more detailed explanation throughout this thesis, for Harris, the cracks first appear when considering the ability of the language system, as presented by Saussure, to account for the indeterminacy inherent in communicative activity. If Harris' diagnosis is correct, it stands to reason that the same 'fractures' seen in Saussure's work should be visible, upon close inspection, in some of the latest theories in linguistics; and in order to find these fractures the first thing to look for should be how they attempt to deal with issues of determinacy of meaning, and the contribution context has to make.

The issues in question can be boiled down to the question of whether words have (1) a determinate meaning *outside* of any particular context of use, or (2) a meaning which is wholly due to the context of use. A third option naturally presents itself here, that words have (3) a determinate acontextual meaning which is then *affected* in some manner by the context of the communicative situation. Should Harris' objections to semantic determinacy, as expressed in options (1) and (3), prove to be justified, then one could expect to see *inconsistencies* or *contradictions* in the theories studied on these matters. In Harrisian terms, (1) would represent a strongly segregational approach, where the situation of use does not impinge on linguistic meaning at all. Of the scholarly work under consideration for this thesis, Steven Pinker's (e.g. 1994, 2007, and 2013) version of conceptual semantics perhaps comes closest to this view. Chapter one considers Pinker's position (alongside Jackendoff's)

on the relation between linguistic meaning and context in some detail. Harris' own *integrational* approach is best reflected in (2), which sees the (linguistic) sign as "not independent of the situation in which it occurs or of its material manifestation in that situation" (Harris 1998c: 24). The integrational approach is discussed in depth in Chapter Three. The intermediate position offered by option (3) Harris (1996a: 147) terms *weak segregationism*, which perhaps provides the most fitting characterisation of Jackendoff's version of conceptual semantics (to be examined in Chapter One) and Langacker's cognitive grammar (to be examined in Chapter Two). The work of both scholars will be considered in light of the integrational critique of orthodox linguistics in Chapter Three.

The questions of whether linguistic meanings are fixed outside context of use, or if it is possible to divide meaning along semantic and pragmatic parameters, amount to the same, or at least very similar, problems. Though this equivalence will be argued for throughout this thesis, the main line of argument can be summarised as follows: once a linguist whose interest is meaning, or semantics, has decided that semantic and pragmatic meaning can be divorced from one another, they are left with little option other than to ascribe some form of acontextual meaning to the 'semantic half' of the equation. In this case, the linguist is left only with options (1) and (3) above, as option (2) comes with a built in acknowledgement that such a division cannot be made in principle. So arriving at the conclusion that semantics and pragmatics can be divided brings with it the acceptance that a degree of acontextual linguistic determinacy exists, be it of the partial (weak segregational) or full variety. The problems with any approach taking this line will be considered in depth in Chapter Three.

## **Thesis Aims**

The first aim of this thesis is to investigate the prospects for conducting linguistics along separate, semantic and pragmatic lines. In doing so, it is hoped that, if present, any "fractures"—i.e. contradictions, inconsistencies, or problems in dealing with the complexities

of situated communication—will become apparent in the theories of conceptual semantics and cognitive grammar.

Although this thesis is sympathetic to the integrational account of language and communication, and therefore, cannot be considered impartial, it is hoped that an honest attempt has been made (in Chapters One and Two), to judge conceptual semantics and cognitive grammar *on their own terms*, before moving onto a more focused critique along integrational lines in Chapter Three. This being said, although not always made explicit, Harris' writing is used as a guide as to which aspects of the theories are most likely to reveal problems with regard to lexical meaning and context. The critique in Chapter Three is intertwined with an exposition of the most relevant facets of integrational theory; however, rather than *assume* the veracity of the central tenets of integrationism, a bid has been made to *argue for* the superiority of an integrational—as opposed to a segregational—approach to language and communication. This is a second aim of this thesis.

A third aim of this thesis is to consider the role of descriptive linguists such as Pinker, Jackendoff and Langacker in semantic analysis. It will be argued that the very asking of the question as to whether semantic and pragmatic meaning can be separated indicates a misconception of this role, and expresses an overconfidence with regard to the degree of objectivity that it is possible to achieve when conducting linguistic analysis. Another way of articulating this issue is to consider what the linguist *is actually doing*, in integrational terms, while conducting linguistic analysis. This aim will be taken up in Chapter Three.

## **Thesis Outline**

The first chapter addresses conceptual semantics from the perspectives of Ray Jackendoff and Steven Pinker, though the work of Jackendoff, the principle architect of the theory, is given greater prominence. A consideration of Pinker's work is included however, in part because his books written for a general audience, such as *The Language Instinct* (1994)

have done much to popularise many of the themes discussed in this thesis and are therefore often accepted by non-linguists as representing scientific consensus. The chapter begins with an overview of the relevant aspects of the theory of conceptual semantics before moving on to conduct a more critical survey of some of the problematic aspects of the approach. The second chapter engages with the work of Langacker and the theory of cognitive grammar; beginning with an overview of those aspects of the theory most pertinent to lexical meaning and context before conducting a survey of some of the more problematic aspects of the approach.

The third chapter takes a different approach to the first two. Perhaps the principle difference is that the integrationist position is argued for, rather than against. This is because it is believed that integrationism offers a means of addressing the acknowledged difficulties of separating semantic meaning, having developed its own principles in order to bring out the full implications of the issues to hand. While Chapter Three does provide an overview of the central tenets of integrationism, within the integrational literature these are often expressed in opposition to what integrationists consider to be orthodox linguistics. To this effect, the integrationist position is contrasted with conceptual semantics and cognitive grammar throughout this chapter, beginning with a comparison of the general aims of the respective enterprises and a contrast of the (weak) segregational and integrational approaches. The integrational view of the role of the analyst is then developed, alongside an argument that the metalinguistic and reflexive assumptions and practices of the linguist do not make it possible to describe language 'objectively', or to attribute atemporal, trans-contextually determinate meanings to linguistic units. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the charge, made by generative (e.g. Borsley and Newmeyer 1997) and cognitive linguists (e.g. Trask and Stockwell 2007), that integrationism sets forth a critique of contemporary linguistics without offering a way forward for linguistic analysis in keeping with its own principles. This involves a brief survey of some of the current work being conducted by what Pablé (in press) has termed "second generation" integrationists.

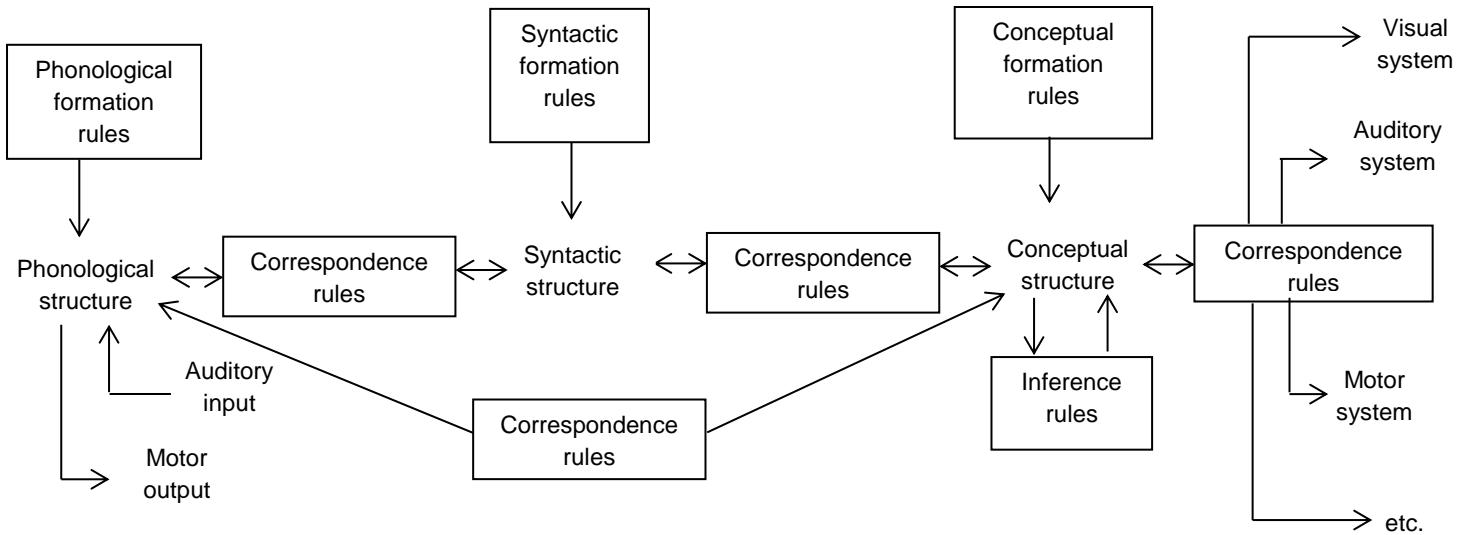
# **Chapter one: Conceptual Semantics**

## **An Overview**

Conceptual Semantics (henceforth CS) can be seen as a speculative further development of Generative Grammar (e.g. Chomsky 1965) which attempts to incorporate a theory of semantics alongside the syntactic structures of Chomsky's nativist programme (Jackendoff 1991: 10). The result is a theoretical framework that describes what its practitioners propose forms the universal mental scaffolding that underlies human language and cognition. This cognitive scaffolding is composed of an innate, and necessarily finite, set of fundamental units of meaning, known in the literature as *primitives* (e.g. Jackendoff 2002: 334 and Pinker 2013: 197), which, by being combined in a systematic manner, following certain "principles of combination" (Jackendoff 1990: 9), form the semantic basis of the lexical systems of the entire world's languages.

It should perhaps also go without saying that the nativist view of mental processes and concepts is wedded to a determinate semantics: without a degree of trans-contextual determinacy, nothing conceptual could be innate. Taking the position that a degree of semantic determinacy exists is, therefore, a necessary consequence of adopting the CS framework as a model for cognition. The problems with a determinate semantics are a major topic of discussion in Chapter Three. The principal concern in the second half of this chapter is to highlight some of the problems and inconsistencies in CS theory on the topic of semantic determinacy and context, which, it is hoped, will lend weight to the integrational view of communication argued for in the third chapter. The present chapter begins with an exposition of the aspects of the CS framework most relevant to the topic of word meaning and context.

## The Conceptual Semantic Framework



**Fig.1.1** The overall layout of the theory of Conceptual Semantics (adapted from: Jackendoff 1990: 16, 1991: 11 and 2002: 199)

In **fig. 1.1** the overall linguistic and conceptual structure, as proposed by Jackendoff (1990: 16, 1991: 11 and 2002: 199), is shown. **Fig. 1.1** has been modified slightly, so that the horizontal arrows between *phonological structure* and the rightmost *correspondence rules* box are now bidirectional to reflect Jackendoff's (e.g. 2002: 273) later writing on the matter; the relevance of which will be considered shortly.

Central to the diagram are *phonological*, *syntactic* and *conceptual* structure. These represent Jackendoff's (2002: 125) modular "tripartite parallel architecture", which in part is a reaction to the "syntactocentrism" (Jackendoff 2002: 107) of the work of Chomsky and Generative Grammar more generally. *Syntactocentrism* is criticised by Jackendoff for viewing syntax as of primary importance, at the expense of semantics and phonology. Conversely, on Jackendoff's (1990: 16) view, there are "three autonomous levels of structure: phonological, syntactic, and conceptual", each of which is generative, in that they are composed of discrete parts which are combinatorial within the parameters laid down by distinct sets of *formation rules* which govern the range of primitives and how they are combined to form

speech sounds, grammatical sentences and concepts, respectively. Additionally, there is a further interface—dealing with *inference*—which, Jackendoff (2002: 273) asserts, accounts for "one's sense of the communicative context, including one's sense of one's interlocutor's intentions. Thus the work of this interface is closest to what is often called "pragmatics"".

Jackendoff's framework is modular, in that the brain is regarded as "a collection of specialists rather than an all-purpose cognizer" (2002: 219). In **fig. 1.1** the phonological, syntactic and conceptual structure elements are termed "integrative modules" (Jackendoff 2002: 205), and are "strictly domain specific" in that each of the integrative modules "deal[s] with only one level of structure" (Jackendoff 2002: 220). The correspondence rules, dubbed "interface modules" by Jackendoff, on the other hand, "deal with two" and so are "bi-domain-specific"; these interface modules are how the integrative modules "talk to each other" (Jackendoff 2002: 221). On Jackendoff's view, interface rules have an intimate relationship with words, or, rather, lexical items (which can be morphemes as well as whole words). This is because the "proper way to regard" a lexical item is as a "small-scale three-way interface rule" (Jackendoff 2002: 131). Each lexical item, on this account, therefore "lists a small chunk of phonology, a small chunk of syntax, and a small chunk of semantics, and shows how to line these chunks up when they appear in parallel phonological, syntactic, and conceptual structures" (Jackendoff 2002: 131).

The function of the (two leftmost boxes representing) correspondence rules is, therefore, to "translate" (Jackendoff 1991: 11) between conceptual structure, phonology and syntax. This means that any given conceptual structure will correspond to a particular syntactic and phonological structure. As stated above, the arrows in **fig. 1.1** along the horizontal axis are all bidirectional. This has the effect that<sup>1</sup>:

"[O]ne can start with any piece of structure in any component and pass along logical pathways provided by the constraints to construct a coherent larger structure around it. For

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<sup>1</sup> Jackendoff's statement, though expressed in the modern terminology of cognitive 'science', actually serves to highlight the traditionally Saussurean (1983) principles on which CS is based.

example, one can start with a piece of phonology and, via the interfaces, construct corresponding syntax and semantics; or one can start with a piece of semantics and via the interfaces construct corresponding syntax and phonology." (Jackendoff 2002: 198)

Thus, although "each level of structure [syntax, phonology and semantics] is characterised by its own set of primitives and combinatorial principles" (Jackendoff 2002: 198), given a set of features from phonological or conceptual structure, it is possible to construct the missing information from the other two tiers (e.g. syntax and semantics from an initial phonological structure). For example, a collection of the necessary primitives combined in such a manner as to constitute the conceptual structure behind the lexical item *give*, would map on to a (here simplified) phonological structure [gɪv], and to a ditransitive syntactic argument structure (such as *give him the ball* or *give the ball to him*). These theoretical points are crucial to Jackendoff's justification for studying a specifically linguistic semantics.

On the rightmost edge of the diagram lie other capacities, such as vision and hearing. It is interesting to note how these, moderated by their own correspondence rules, map onto the same conceptual structure as does language. Of central importance to CS theory, this has been termed by Jackendoff the "Conceptual Structure Hypothesis" (1983: 17); and though this particular phrase is not used in later publications (e.g. Jackendoff 1990 and 2002), the general principle holds throughout his later work, which argues for a single conceptual structure component similar to that found in **fig 1.1**. Jackendoff, in more recent work (e.g. 2002: 273), maintains: "it is important to stress that ... all these interfaces need to converge on a *common cognitive structure* [italics added MS]". A decade on, we are invited (Jackendoff 2012: 124) to view the relationship between spatial structure and conceptual structure as *linked*, analogous to the different settings available on Google Maps: regular, satellite and hybrid: the foremost corresponding to conceptual structure, satellite view to spatial structure and the hybrid option being close to how the two systems work in conjunction. This shared, or linked, conceptual structure has a number of ramifications. However, for present purposes it will suffice to say that linguistic concepts can be seen to

form a subset of conceptual structure, i.e. those concepts which are expressible in language (Jackendoff 1983: 18, 2002: 124), while other modalities, such as vision, have their own set of concepts, related to spatial structure for instance, all of which are drawn, linguistic and otherwise, from "a single level of mental representation" (Jackendoff 1983: 19).

### The Principal Aims of Conceptual Semantics

Jackendoff (1991: 10) writes that the particular aim of the work being done in CS is to "articulate each of the systems of principles" shown in **fig. 1.1**. In practice this means working towards identifying:

"(a) the formation rules for conceptual structure, that is, the primitives and principles of combination that collectively generate the infinite class of possible concepts - both lexical concepts (word meanings) and phrasal concepts (including sentential concepts or propositions); (b) the rules of inference, pragmatics, and heuristics; (c) the correspondence rules between conceptual structure and the other representations with which it interacts."  
(Jackendoff 1991: 11)

Accordingly, these three elements need to be taken in conjunction with one another as they are "intimately interdependent" (Jackendoff 1991: 11). The extent to which Jackendoff has been successful in integrating these three components is, however, questionable. A survey of book-length publications by the author (e.g. Jackendoff 1983, 1990, 2002, 2007 and 2012) suggests that the role of "inference, pragmatics and heuristics", specifically pragmatics, has been given rather less attention than other aspects of the theory, such as the goal of outlining the "primitives and principles of combination" of concept formation. The following statement is revealing on this matter:

"I have skipped over many of the usual topics of pragmatics such as conversational implicature, irony and metaphor, in the hope that connoisseurs will be able to determine for themselves how to integrate them into the present framework" (Jackendoff 2002, p418).

The ability of CS to account for contextual considerations in communication will be returned to at some length in the section entitled Conceptual Semantics and Context.

### **The Decomposition of Words into Conceptual Primitives**

Pinker takes a rather narrow view of what constitutes semantics; only those semantic distinctions which have a grammatical counterpart are of interest (Jackendoff 2002: 291). Jackendoff summarises this stance as follows:

"For Pinker ... all that is at issue is the syntactic behaviour of words; since the syntax-semantics interface cannot "see" all of meaning, a complete decomposition is unnecessary and even irrelevant."

Pinker's (2007, p31) primary interest, for example, is how verbs, or perhaps more accurately, argument structures, are organised in the mind. In particular, Pinker is concerned only with those aspects of verb meaning which "play a role in syntax and morphology" (Jackendoff 2002: 289). This has the result that any semantic differences between nouns such as *red* and *yellow* or *cat* and *dog* are not of concern (Jackendoff 2002: 289). In terms of **fig. 1.1.**, this would be expressed as taking a particular interest in the interface module (correspondence rules) between syntactic and conceptual structure. In contrast, for Jackendoff (2002: 339) characterising the decomposition of words into their conceptual primitives is an important (long-term) goal, whether or not these primitives have a bearing on syntactic structure.

One of Pinker's motivations for pursuing the aim of determining the role of conceptual structure on syntax, and in particular verbs' argument structure, is to solve a riddle of language acquisition in children, which Pinker coins "Baker's paradox" (2013: 8). The development of the mechanics needed to resolve the issue is the subject of both editions of Pinker's *Learnability and Cognition* (1989 and 2013) and is the (tacit) focus of chapter two of Pinker's *Stuff of Thought* (2007). The nub of the 'paradox' is how children are able to make

generalisations concerning which ditransitive verbs are amenable to being placed in both a prepositional dative argument structure (*She gave the book to him*) and the double-object dative argument structure (*She gave him the book*). While most verbs that take the prepositional form will also take the double-object form, this is not universal, as demonstrated by the following examples, taken from Pinker (2013: 9):

John donated a painting to the museum.

\*John donated the museum a painting.

John reported the accident to the police.

\*John reported the police the accident.

(Sentences preceded by an asterisk are deemed unacceptable/ungrammatical.)

The framing of this problem as a *paradox* rests on a number of assumptions as to the nature of language acquisition, which unfortunately falls beyond the purview of the present discussion. However, of current relevance is that Pinker attests that the formalisms of CS provide the key to unlock the enigma. Specifically, the solution involves making a distinction between "broad- and narrow-range lexical rules" (Pinker 2013: 245). For example, the verbs *pour* and *fill* share certain similarities, such as "pertain[ing] to moving something somewhere" (Pinker 2007: 49) and taking a prepositional dative argument structure. These similarities occur due to the verbs sharing certain 'broad-range' lexical rules. There is, in Pinker's parlance, however, a certain "semantic fussiness" (2007: 49) to the words, revealed by the finer distinctions in how sentences containing the verbs are usually constructed, as illustrated below (adapted from Gropen et al. 1991: 116):

- (1) Betty *poured* water into the cup/ \**poured* the cup with water.
- (2) Mike *filled* the cup with water/ \**filled* water into the cup.

The reason for the discrepancy between uses is that the two verbs *pour* and *fill* are concerned with a different aspect of motion. *Pour* focuses on the movement of liquid from one place to another, with *fill* describing the changing state of a container. The differences, therefore, arise because the verbs follow separate 'narrow-range' lexical rules. Such narrow-range rules begin to reveal some of the innate primitives of which verbs are composed and thus their discovery advances one of the main goals of CS, that of 'articulating' the 'conceptual formation rules' for all verb meanings.

As a further example of the kind of work conducted in CS to uncover semantic primitives, we now turn to the idea of nouns and verbs being BOUNDED or UNBOUNDED. This distinction is perhaps most readily apparent in the case of the traditional distinction between count (e.g. a brick) and mass (e.g. water) nouns, where count nouns are BOUNDED, and mass nouns UNBOUNDED. Within the CS framework, the concept referred to by a singular count noun is considered BOUNDED if the referent cannot be further divided and still be considered to be *the same thing*, so *half a dog* is not, by most accounts, the same thing as *a dog*. This is in contrast to mass nouns: divide water and one still has something identifiable as water, hence such items are termed UNBOUNDED. So far, such a distinction is in keeping with the traditional grammatical categories of mass and count nouns; however, it is argued by Jackendoff and Pinker that with the notion of BOUNDED and UNBOUNDED certain "fundamental conceptual features [i.e. primitives MS]" (Jackendoff 1991, p18) begin to be revealed. One important reason for taking such a position, according to Pinker (2007: 169), is that "[i]t's not just nouns that care about boundedness and individuals; verbs do too". This can be seen, for instance, in the case of a verb such as *run*, where the phrase *Simon ran* can be seen as a process with no natural endpoint, and is therefore atelic, and so UNBOUNDED. However, the addition of the prepositional phrase *to the store* introduces an (implicit) endpoint (when the shop is reached), making the phrase telic, and therefore BOUNDED. It is the ubiquity, and general applicability of the semantic constituent (+/-) BOUNDED that makes it a strong contender for being conceptually (or semantically) fundamental, i.e. primitive.

Whether or not such decomposition can be said to be complete, and therefore truly primitive, remains an open question. Jackendoff (2002: 236) employs an analogy with particle physics—atoms decompose into electrons, protons and neutrons which in turn are composed of quarks, which themselves have discrete properties such as *spin* and *charge*—to argue that a degree of patience is required, as the enterprise is still in its nascent stages:

"I don't think the parallel question in physics worries its practitioners too much. The history of the last two hundred years is a continual quest to explain deeper and deeper regularities. Semantics is just getting started; let's show some patience. In the meantime, we do the best we can to extract and characterize relevant generalizations." (Jackendoff 2002: 336)

It should be noted that the idea of semantic primitives rests on the assumptions inherent within a nativist, modular view of cognition, assumptions which have been identified as problematic and come under heavy criticism from many quarters. Although beyond the purview of this thesis, examples of such criticism can be found in the fields of philosophy (e.g. Cole 1999 and Narasimhan 1997), cognitive psychology (e.g. Barsalou 1999 and Epstein 2016), and cognitive linguistics (e.g. Lakoff 1987). However, what is of particular relevance is that the search for determinate units of meaning (i.e. primitives) is central to the CS enterprise, which has important ramifications with regard to the ability of the framework to incorporate the complexities of situated communication.

## **Conceptual Semantics and Context**

### **The Importance and Role of Contextual and Pragmatic Factors in the Conceptual Semantic Framework**

In the discussion that follows it will be argued that the work of Pinker and Jackendoff underplays the importance of context in linguistic meaning, despite claims made to the contrary, and despite the stated aims of the CS enterprise. In particular, it is claimed that, CS makes certain assumptions about the cognitive structure present in humans—a

representational system of innate and fixed universal concepts—then looks to language to help illuminate this system; but rather than looking at how language is actually used by people on a daily basis in genuine communicational episodes, a supposed realm of 'linguistic' phenomena is *extracted* and considered in isolation from all the other factors that combine to form a communicational episode. In order to make this argument, it is first necessary to examine what the two scholars have written on the importance of context and the effect this has on meaning. The discussion begins with the views of Pinker.

### **Steven Pinker**

On occasion Pinker (1994: 224) is unequivocal on the importance of context with regard to meaning, such as with the bold statement:

- (1) "Conversation out of context is virtually opaque."

Less explicit, though still acknowledging the importance of context, is Pinker on language acquisition in children:

- (2) "a child, if suitably equipped, could learn three rules and five words from a single sentence *in context* [italics added MS]". (Pinker 1994: 286)

More specifically, and unsurprisingly, the importance of context is recognised regarding deictic lexical items such as the articles of English and other "conversation-specific words like *here* ... *that* ... and *you*" (Pinker 1994: 80). For example:

- (3) "Outside of a particular conversation or text, then, the words *a* and *the* are quite meaningless." (Pinker 1994: 80)

Particularly pertinent is (1) which would appear to suggest any utterance taken out of context loses virtually all meaning. However, such claims to the importance of context are outweighed in Pinker's work by comments downplaying the role of context and which

therefore sit uneasily with the above citations. Perhaps the clearest example from Pinker is the following:

- (4) "If you use a word, then as long as it is not too obscure I can take it for granted that if I later utter it to a third party, he will understand my use of it the same way I understood yours."  
(Pinker 1994, p151)

(1) and (4) are clearly contradictory, with the latter being a declaration, albeit tacit, that context does not influence how a word is construed; it may, therefore, be pertinent to consider a possible reason for the anomaly. The comment in (1) is made in reference to a transcription of the *Watergate Tapes* which ultimately led to President Nixon's resignation (Pinker 1994: 224). Highly unusually for Pinker—and CS in general, including Jackendoff—the object of study in this case is part of a transcription of actual talk and thus better reflects a conversational episode than the 'decontextualised' linguistic 'data' typically used by practitioners of CS.

This suggests that the methodological approach chosen to study language has a direct bearing on how the role of context is to be construed. It should not be surprising that an approach which takes decontextualised utterances as 'data' comes to view context as relatively superfluous to the construction of meaning. Examples of such 'acontextual' data abound in the CS literature, for instance the aforementioned examples (where no other information about the specifics of the occasion of use is given (Gropen et al. 1991: 116)):

Betty *poured* water into the cup/ \**poured* the cup with water.

Mike *filled* the cup with water/ \**filled* water into the cup.

This methodological approach, where linguistic data is constructed and presented independently of actual situations of use, could also account for the apparent inconsistency to be found on the topic of context in Pinker's work. The CS approach begins an enquiry into the nature of language by investigating the mental processes involved in linguistic activity.

However, at the same time *a priori* assumptions on the nature of our mental apparatus constrain the possibilities of how language itself can be envisaged. Thus, a modular conception of cognition, particularly one where concepts are innate and fixed, invites a conception of linguistic semantics as determinate. Not only does this conception contradict a number of Pinker's remarks on the topic, and, as will be seen, much of Jackendoff's writing on the subject; any problems inherent in this position are further accentuated when the attempt is made to use this conception of language as a "window into human nature" (Pinker 2007), i.e. to help elucidate the CS conception of cognition. In this respect, the whole CS enterprise has a rather unfortunate circularity: the conception of cognition constrains, or dictates, how language is to be conceived; whereupon, this constrained view of language is then used to investigate cognitive structure.

### **Ray Jackendoff**

Similar problems can be found in the work of Jackendoff. Perhaps the most striking difference between the scholars is that the role of context is taken more seriously in Jackendoff's writing. However, this only serves to accentuate the incongruity of concentrating research on a putative determinate semantic core of meaning.

As previously mentioned, on Jackendoff's (1991: 10) view, a chief aim of CS is to "articulate" the *conceptual formation rules*, *correspondence rules* and *inference rules* shown in **fig. 1.1**. Of particular interest here are the inference rules, which besides inference deal also with "pragmatics and heuristics" (1991: 11). These rules have an "intimate and interdependent" relationship with the other sets of rules, to the extent that none "can be pursued in isolation". Following Jackendoff's lead, therefore, the inference is clear: context must be a consideration in any discussion of meaning. This view continues to receive support in later work, for example Jackendoff (2002: 280):

"[T]he message conveyed by an expression is indeed heavily influenced by one's understanding of the context".

However, this statement undergoes almost immediate qualification further on in the same passage:

"[O]n the other hand, the expression must convey something with which the context can interact. If it did not, a hearer could in principle know from the context what message was intended, without the speaker saying anything at all! *It is important to factor out the respective contributions to understanding made by linguistic expressions and by context* [italics added MS]; this cannot be done by focusing on context alone." (Jackendoff 2002: 280)

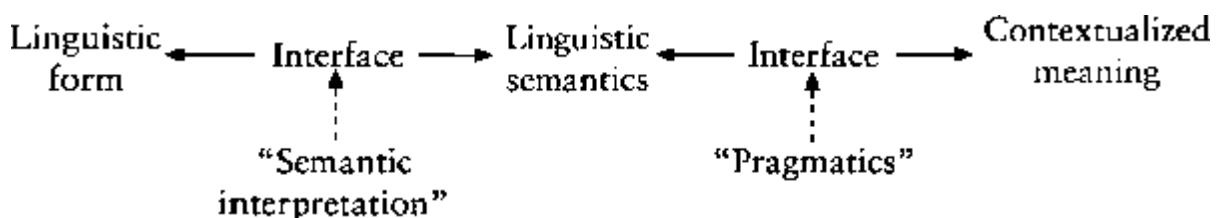
On the face of it, this does not appear to be a contentious position. The idea is that (spoken) linguistic communication involves conveying messages between interlocutors; the messages carry an inherent determinate meaning, but this meaning can change due to interaction with the context in which the communication takes place. Finally, the meaning will not be revealed by looking at context alone without consideration of the message itself. There is, however, an important assumption inherent within this position. While it may be uncontroversial to write that a message cannot be understood by looking at contextual factors alone, the idea, that it is possible to separate "the respective contributions to understanding made by linguistic expressions and by context", is a far more vexed issue. The following section examines Jackendoff's writing on the prospect of making a principled separation of semantics and pragmatics.

### **On the Possibility of Separating Linguistic and Contextual Meaning**

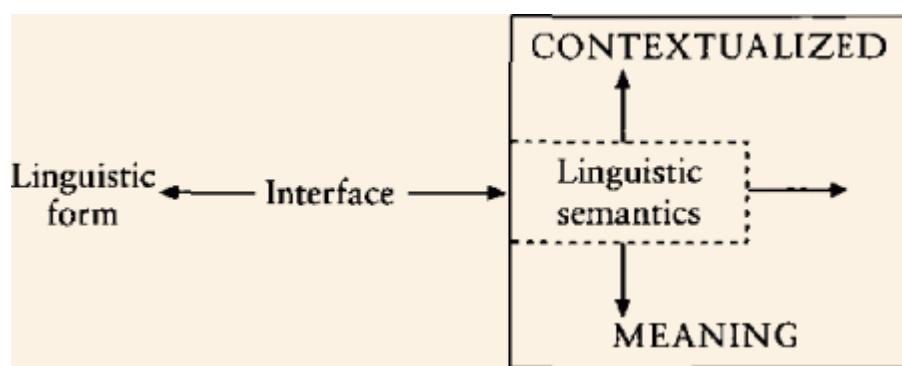
Throughout his work Jackendoff (e.g. 1983, 2002) discusses in some depth whether "it is possible to delimit a specifically linguistic part of semantics, distinct from nonlinguistic knowledge, thought, and contextualized meaning" (2002: 281). For Jackendoff, and the CS enterprise in general, the study of semantics is a mentalistic enterprise (2002: 267); therefore, the discussion of the prospect of a distinct semantics concerns whether there is a separate level of mental structure which deals specifically with linguistic semantics, as opposed to a single conceptual system for all conceptual structure, including other sources

of meaning such as pragmatic and contextual factors. However, as will be seen, arguments for a common conceptual structure can also be read as arguments for the interlaced and inseparable nature of pragmatic and semantic meaning.

Jackendoff posits two possible ways in which this organisation could occur in what he has termed the *f-mind* (or *functional mind*—2002: 21). F-mind is Jackendoff's "term of art" for the mid-level tier between conscious thought and the brain's neurological substrate in which cognitive processing takes place. In Jackendoff's words, the f-mind "might be characterized as the functional organization and functional activity of the brain, some small part of which emerges in consciousness and most of which does not" (Jackendoff 2002: 21). Two possible organisations of the f-mind are schematically represented in **fig. 1.2** and **fig. 1.3** below:



**Fig. 1.2** Showing *linguistic semantics* as "a separate level of structure" (taken from: Jackendoff 2002: 282)



**Fig. 1.3** Showing *linguistic semantics* as "a subset of contextualised meaning" (taken from: Jackendoff 2002: 283)

The principal distinction between the two is that the structure represented in **fig. 1.2** takes linguistic semantics to be composed of "different kinds of units than contextualized meaning"

(Jackendoff 2002: 283). In practice this would mean that the conceptual primitives which constitute linguistic meaning were qualitatively different in nature to those which compose contextualised meaning and would therefore require a further interface to 'translate' between the two—in a similar manner to the relationship between syntactic and phonological structures in **fig. 1.1**. On the other hand, **fig. 1.3** sees linguistic semantics and contextualised meaning as both drawing from the same conceptual pool and they thus "deal with the same primitives and principles of combination" (Jackendoff 1983: 105). On this view, therefore, linguistic semantics is a "subset" of contextualised meaning which is then "enriched" by contextual factors. This is sometimes referred to by Jackendoff (e.g. 2012: 63) as "enriched compositionality". Jackendoff's enriched compositionality will be considered in more detail in Chapter Three.

On balance, of the two models Jackendoff (2002: 282) makes clear his preference for that represented by **fig. 1.3**, stating: "we must consider the domain of linguistic semantics to be continuous with human conceptualization as a whole." A number of disparate arguments are put forward in support of this position. One of these arguments concerns methodological practice, as it would not be possible to demarcate the boundaries of contextualised meaning and linguistic semantics without first investigating both in order to "tell us whether our hypothesized distinction is correct" (Jackendoff 2002: 284). The inference being that whatever the theoretical leanings of the investigator, it would be a mistake to neglect the study of either semantic or contextualised meaning as "we can't tell whether there is a seam without establishing what lies on both sides of it".

A second argument, centres on the fluidity between the verbal and non-verbal when making categorisation judgements (1983: 77 and 2002: 288). An example of this can be seen in the similarity between the following sentences (taken from: Jackendoff 2002: 288):

- (a) That [*pointing*] is a dog.
- (b) That [*pointing*] is an animal.

- (c) A dog is an animal.

With these sentences, one of Jackendoff's (1983: 105) aims is to illustrate that, "the principals involved in judging a sentence true potentially involve extralinguistic information as well as information within the sentence itself"; while (c) is analytic (and its truth condition is, therefore, in principal at least, inherently determinable) sentences (a) and (b) "require examination of the visual field to determine the object being pointed to" (Jackendoff 2002: 288). Despite the different modalities involved in their evaluation, Jackendoff argues (1983: 77ff.) both types of sentence require the same "formal machinery" (2002: 289) in order to be understood. Or, rather, processing the judgement in (c) requires nothing extra from our mental apparatus over (a) and (b). It is thus superfluous to requirements, on Jackendoff's view, for the type of sentences shown above, to require distinct conceptual structures: "hence semantic and conceptual structure collapse to a unified level" (Jackendoff 1983: 105).

A third line of reasoning for a unified conceptual structure is the inadequacy of previous arguments made for the separation of semantics and pragmatics (Jackendoff 2002: 285). Four proposals advocating such a division are outlined below:

- (a) It is necessary to distinguish the "dictionary" meaning of lexical items from their "encyclopedic" meaning, the latter including at least all personal associations with words. Only the former is supposed to be in the purview of linguistic semantics.
- (b) Certain semantic properties such as analyticity, logical entailment, and truth conditions belong to linguistic semantics, while others, such as heuristics, default logic, and connection to the real world, belong to some other enterprise, perhaps pragmatics.
- (c) Certain semantic properties, such as argument structure, aspectual structure, illocutionary force, and the mass/count and singular/plural distinctions, have grammatical reflexes; these belong in linguistic semantics. Others, such as color,

metrical size, and species (beyond human/non-human), do not; these belong to general knowledge.

- (d) Languages differ in their semantics, because of the semantic distinctions they grammaticalize and because of their patterns of lexicalization. Therefore each language must have its own language-specific semantics, which may or may not be separate from a language user's general patterns of knowledge and belief.

(Taken from Jackendoff 2002: 282)

The general problem, on Jackendoff's view, is that previous theoretical attempts to separate semantics and pragmatics have either set too narrow a purview of semantics—(c) and (d)—or else the boundary between the two is too difficult, or impossible, to demarcate—(a) and (b). For example, (c) results in the differences between colour terms such as *green* and *blue* or the words for concrete nouns such as *llama* and *porcupine* falling beyond the remit of semantics as they exhibit no grammatical difference in terms of the syntactic structure the lexical items map onto. Conversely, were (a) to be followed to its logical conclusion, a blurring of the lines between what is to be considered 'dictionary' meaning and what 'encyclopaedic' meaning becomes apparent, so that, for example, while the notion that dogs like to chase cats would likely come under encyclopaedic information, the verb *chase* itself would have its own dictionary style definition (Jackendoff 2002: 285). More problematic, are pairs of words such as *murder* and *assassinate* (2002: 286). The difference between the two, on Jackendoff's view, is that an assassination involves a political motivation; however complex ideas such as this would seem to belong to the encyclopaedic domain and yet "linguistic semantics ... must be able to distinguish the meanings of these two words." Ultimately, therefore, Jackendoff (2002: 285) concludes that none of the four proposals "captures the desired distinction" between semantics and pragmatics, dubbing them "non-ways to separate linguistic semantics from conceptualization [italics added MS]".

A further two reasons for favouring a continuous, rather than discrete, conceptual system for semantics and pragmatics concern the motivations for wanting to separate semantics and pragmatics. First of these is the wish to avoid the complexity inherent in any consideration of contextual matters; in Jackendoff's (2002: 283) words:

"One motivation, I suspect, is a lurking fear that general-purpose knowledge and belief are a bottomless pit, and that in order to make the enterprise of semantics manageable it must somehow be restricted. And therefore some distinction must be made so we can stop before drowning in endless detail."

Ultimately however, Jackendoff (2002: 283) deems fear an unworthy reason to not give context its full due in a framework that aims to account for meaning.

A more "legitimate desire" to separate pragmatics and semantics, according to Jackendoff, follows Frege's (1892 cited in: Jackendoff 2002: 284) distinction between the "public meaning of a word and its personal associations"; the desire being, in this case, to rid semantics of the complexity and subjectivity inherent within personal associations. This motivation, therefore, bears a strong similarity to the theoretical attempts to divide semantics and pragmatics already discussed above. To explain the distinction between public meaning and personal associations Jackendoff (2002: 284) writes that certain connotations of a word belong to the *public sense* of a word, while others fall under the category of *personal associations*. For example, with a word such as *dog*, the public meaning would, presumably, include such characteristics as *mammal*, *animate*, *four-legged* and *pet*; whereas, the fact that a pet-owner's dog has a penchant for chewing on only the most expensive items of furniture would belong to a personal sense of the word. However, upon closer inspection, a similar problem is encountered as in the attempt to make the distinction between semantics and pragmatics along dictionary and encyclopaedic lines; i.e. that there is no clear location on which to draw the dividing line. This is because there is no clear general distinction between the public and the personal. For instance, two people with similar life experiences, siblings say, may have very similar personal associations of a word and so to those two

individuals these personal associations may come under the public sphere, though only in a very limited sense, as in the wider community these connotations would fall back under the banner of private associations.

To illustrate this problem further, Jackendoff uses the word *language* as an example, stating that, depending on to whom he is communicating and in order for the communication to be successful, he will have to suppress certain personal associations of the word to take into account his interlocutor's different personal experiences and areas of knowledge. So when talking to a fellow linguist he is able to "invoke associations that come from shared experience" but must "put them aside in attempting to get my message across" when talking to his dentist (Jackendoff 2002: 284). Furthermore, there is a spectrum of potential interlocutors for whom some of the technical associations Jackendoff has of the word *language* may be appropriate from "psycholinguists to philosophers to neuroscientists to biologists". One explanation, quickly dismissed by Jackendoff (2002: 284), is that he may have "a multiplicity of words *language* in [his] vocabulary", a second, and the one favoured by Jackendoff, is that there is no need to make a "strong theoretical distinction along Fregean lines to distinguish "public" from "private" meaning" (Jackendoff 2002: 285) because there is no "strong dissociation in kind between the two kinds of information". The distinction is, rather, a result of "a sort of Gricean principle of conversation: one produces utterances in such a way that one can expect the hearer to reconstruct the intended message." Jackendoff's position is, therefore, that language users tailor their use of lexical items in such a way as to be generally easily understood by their interlocutors. However, quite how Grice's maxims of conversation ("redubbed as "preference rules" by Jackendoff in earlier writings (1983: 155) and "enriched composition" in later work (e.g. 2012: 63)) are represented in conceptual structure is left unexplored by Jackendoff, as is the structure of the semantic core of the word *language* itself on this proposal.

## Is the Conceptual Semantics Position on Context Coherent?

Having surveyed the arguments marshalled by Jackendoff in favour of a single conceptual system for semantic and pragmatic meaning, we arrive at a position to appreciate the reasoning behind the conclusion that "we must consider the domain of linguistic semantics to be continuous with human conceptualization as a whole" (Jackendoff 2002: 282). This echoes the verdict reached two decades earlier and stated as: "semantic and conceptual structure collapse into a unified level" (Jackendoff 1983: 105); this shows that Jackendoff's thinking has been consistent on this matter.

It is therefore surprising to find that this conclusion has very little practical application with regard to linguistic study; for we are eventually informed, in the final paragraph of the discussion (here reproduced in full), that:

- (5) "To sum up our discussion of the ecological niche for specifically linguistic semantics in the f-mind: there is such a niche, but not as a separate level of structure. Distinctions like "logical/non-logical" and "dictionary/encyclopedia" seem impossible to draw, and don't appear to make any useful functional distinction in an account of the f-mind. Rather, linguistic semantics per se is the study of the interface between conceptualization and linguistic form (phonology and syntax). It therefore studies the organizations of conceptualization that can be expressed or invoked by language. In particular, *lexical* semantics studies the organizations of conceptualization that can be bundled up in a single word (or to be clearer, in an interface rule whose other end is a morpheme). But all such work can be pursued in the framework of a functional architecture simply like Figure 9.1<sup>2</sup>, where there is no level of "strictly linguistic meaning" intervening between linguistic form and concepts." (Jackendoff 2002: 293)

Jackendoff's argument appears to be that, although it is ultimately impossible to mark a fixed boundary between semantic and pragmatic meaning, it is possible to study the meaning of particular words and phrases without consideration of the situation of use. The basis of this

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<sup>2</sup> The figure 9.1 referred to is a variation on the diagram represented in **fig. 1.1** in this work. Though there are minor differences in emphasis, they can be considered equivalent for purposes here.

position is that it is possible to discount any contextual or pragmatic effects on meaning by focusing purely on the interface module linking phonological structure and conceptual structure (see **fig. 1.1**); i.e. the relationship between the form of a linguistic sign (i.e. in verbal discourse, the sound of a word or morpheme) and its content (i.e. the meaning of a word or morpheme) (Jackendoff 2012: 43). This renders, in respect to methodological practice, the preceding discussion on the difficulties involved in identifying specifically linguistic semantic meaning by Jackendoff somewhat inconsequential. This is because, on Jackendoff's view, words already have a determinate *form*, i.e. a given phonological structure, which is itself identifiable independently of context (see for example: Jackendoff 2002: 7 and 2012: 43). As previously described, if a lexical item can be identified by its form, it is possible to describe the corresponding conceptual (and syntactic) structure of that item. This is clearly demonstrated in Jackendoff's (2012: 43) writing:

"The first thing a meaning has to do is to be linked to a spoken (and/or written) form of the language. The form *this* has a meaning attached to it, while the form *that* doesn't. What makes a word a word is that it is a pairing between a pronounceable piece of sound—a "phonetic" or "phonological structure"—and a meaning."

If the modularity thesis appears to provide theoretical justification to those investigating language in pursuit of predetermined pairings of word forms and meanings, this is because the modular conception of cognition in effect 'builds in' the linguistic methodology preferred by Jackendoff and Pinker, which aims to elucidate the conceptual primitives underlying the determinate meaning of words. Support is also given to the kind of division of labour—implicitly advocated by Jackendoff (2002: 418) when stating that the study of how his framework can incorporate pragmatic factors can be left to others—because each (integrative) module is "domain-specific". It, therefore, does not seem too unreasonable that the nature of each module could be studied separately, under separate research programmes, so that particular scholars may concern themselves primarily with the

conceptual structure (semantic meaning) module while others attend to the module dealing with inference (pragmatic meaning).

However, in reality, the necessity for a determinate semantics is a crucial weakness in the nativist modularity thesis. A major problem is that the bi-planar<sup>3</sup> model advocated by Jackendoff leaves the CS approach unable to account for the creative and dynamic conception of context argued for in Chapter Three. A further issue is that the ideas of a division of labour and semantic determinacy clearly contradict some of Jackendoff's own statements on the subject. In other words, semantic determinacy is a given, and as such, makes it impossible to deal with the contextual effects that CS scholars, have, on occasion, recognised. Having gone to such lengths to refute previous attempts to delineate a specifically linguistic semantics, and highlight some of the problems inherent in curtailing the meaning of words, as with the example of *language*, the claim that there is "such a niche" after all seems remarkably unsubstantiated. The definition of lexical semantics offered in (5) assumes that words have a formal identity—an identifiable integrity—despite, for example, Jackendoff's description of the open ended semantic indeterminacy of the word *language*.

Furthermore, the idea that it is desirable, or possible, to study a purely linguistic semantics makes a very uneasy bedfellow for the following statements, both highlighting the need to investigate the role of context in meaning:

"[W]e can't tell whether there is a seam without establishing what lies on both sides of it. Thus investigating linguistic semantics without also investigating contextualized meaning cannot in any event tell us whether our hypothesized distinction is correct." (Jackendoff 2002: 283)

"The goal of Conceptual Semantics is to articulate ... the formation rules for conceptual structure (both lexical concepts (word meanings) and phrasal concepts) ... [in addition to] the rules of inference, pragmatics, and heuristics ... [neither] of these goals, of course, can be pursued in isolation; they are intimately interdependent." (Jackendoff 1991: 10f.)

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<sup>3</sup> Technically, Jackendoff advocates a tri-planar structure (semantics, phonology and syntax), though the qualification is purely cosmetic in regard to the critique offered in Chapter Three.

These, in turn, contrast significantly with the following passage—cited previously but here reproduced for convenience—which comes towards the end of what is arguably Jackendoff's most comprehensive work to investigate both the theory and practice underpinning CS:

"I have skipped over many of the usual topics of pragmatics such as conversational implicature, irony, and metaphor, in the hope that connoisseurs will be able to determine for themselves how to integrate them into the present framework." (Jackendoff 2002: 418)

The principle issue would seem to be Jackendoff's attempt to circumvent the problems he raises on the prospects of separating semantic and pragmatic meaning, because of a prior and unshakeable commitment to the modularity thesis, from which fixed linguistic forms and meaning naturally proceed. Rather than confront the issues of differentiating between semantic and pragmatic meaning directly, it is assumed that words are composed of a prior intersubjective units, and then linguistic semantics is defined in reference to this position. Jackendoff is left open to accusations of operating a methodological sleight of hand on this issue, one that attempts to conceal the fractures in the approach offered by CS. On the one hand, Jackendoff argues against the prospect of distinguishing semantic from pragmatic meaning but then on the other, claims that the determinate aspects of semantic meaning can be studied independently of consideration of pragmatic and contextual factors.

Jackendoff is clearly aware of some of the issues at play; for example when writing on the topic of how the conceptual structure of the word *point*, as in *score points in a game*, might be elucidated. Following Searle (1995, cited in: Jackendoff 2002: 376), Jackendoff (2002: 376), cogently argues, that the conceptual structure of the word *point*, in the *game* sense above, "cannot be constructed independently of its embedding in a whole elaborate social frame". Thus, to 'understand' the word *point*, it is necessary to understand the game being played and "what it means to win or lose [it]" (Jackendoff 2002: 376). Considerations such as these are not, according to Jackendoff, unusual, but are rather, "just the tip of the iceberg" and demonstrate that there is "a great deal more complexity to be explored in word

"meanings". Jackendoff urges the reader not to "shrug all this off as "encyclopedic" meaning" and therefore be seen as "not part of linguistics" because:

"[A]s Chapter 9 argued [this chapter is where Jackendoff's main discussion of the prospects of dividing semantic and pragmatic meaning takes place MS], on the one hand there is no principled dividing line between linguistic and encyclopedic meaning, and on the other hand *someone* has to study these more complex aspects of meaning eventually. So why not linguists?" (Jackendoff 2002: 376)

This is the point at which Jackendoff's claim of not giving in to the fear of the complexity brought about by the consideration of pragmatic concerns begins to look disingenuous. It is difficult to find evidence of an embrace of the complexity of context and pragmatics within the CS literature (e.g. Jackendoff 1983, 1990, 1991, 2002, 2012 and Pinker 1994, 2007, 2013), and a survey of the methodological practices employed within CS finds little in the framework, as it currently stands, that may be used to capture this complexity. It is perhaps telling that Jackendoff's (2012: 63f.) most clearly elucidated passages on how context may affect meaning are to be found in a publication aimed more at the general reader, which therefore eschews a degree of the complex formalisms typically found in Jackendoff's work. These passages will be briefly considered in Chapter Three. In these terms, therefore, it could be argued that Jackendoff's CS begins to take on the character of a 'promissory note' when the role of context is considered; in that the rigid framework offered by CS will always struggle to account for the complexity of situated communication. This will be seen to have particular relevance (and a degree of irony) when the prospects of an integrational linguistics are considered (cf. Borsley and Newmeyer 1997: 64).

Whether the type of linguistic *extraction*, as witnessed in the CS approach, is warranted, or should be even considered permissible in linguistic study, is a topic of major importance to Jackendoff, and a strong case is made for the intertwined nature of semantic meaning and context. However, the theoretical underpinnings of CS, require that the words of a language be known and identifiable, with a determinate and stable semantic core, an assumption

which in the end, not only allows, but forces, Pinker and Jackendoff to proceed as though any problems with making a distinction between semantic and pragmatic meaning have already been resolved.

## **Chapter two: Cognitive Grammar**

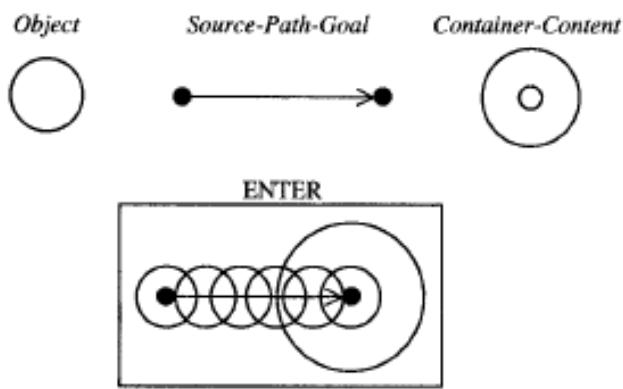
### **An Overview**

Cognitive Grammar (henceforth CG) was devised by Ronald Langacker and has been "hugely influential in developing the field of Cognitive Linguistics [henceforth CL MS]" (Bennet 2014: 29). Similarly to Jackendoff's CS, CG is largely the product of *a priori* reasoning (e.g. Langacker 1999: 23) and attempts to offer an account of the cognitive processes underpinning language use. In contrast to Jackendoff's programme, on Langacker's (1997: 236) view 'linguistic knowledge'—rather than being constituted in innate conceptual primitives—"resides in structures that become cognitively entrenched" through embodied interaction with the environment. The object of investigation for Langacker, therefore, is these entrenched structures, looked at from a phenomenological standpoint, as opposed to a processing standpoint. In practice this means that the object of study is the "entities that emerge from processing" thus representing a "higher level of cognitive organization" (Langacker 1997: 239), the processing itself, coming under the purview of neuroscientists, rather than linguists (although there is the hope that at some point in the future "the two levels of investigation will ultimately converge" (Langacker 1997: 240)). In this sense the CG enterprise offers a similar prospect to that of CS, in that both attempt to elucidate a *mid-level* mental tier, 'above' neuronal processes but not available to immediate conscious introspection (Langacker 1997: 239; cf. Jackendoff's *f-mind* 2002: 21).

Perhaps the most pertinent difference between CG and CS to the current discussion is the former's relative *dynamicity*. On Langacker's (2013: 30) account, CG is able to capture, and represent, the active negotiation of the values of linguistic elements and non-static nature of linguistic meaning witnessed in the "dynamicity of actual language use". This is perhaps most clearly articulated by Langacker's (2013: 30) avoidance of the term *concept*, with its connotation of "ping-pong balls in a box" (Langacker 2013: 221), instead preferring

*conceptualisation* to better highlight the dynamicity of mental experience. The dynamic nature of Langacker's (2013: 32) approach is also shown in the choice of "format ... ascrib[ed] to thoughts and concepts". Langacker (2013: 32) presents this choice as one between a conceptual structure that is *propositional* or *imagistic*. For example, Langacker describes Jackendoff's algebraic formulae as propositional, and while there is the suggestion that Jackendoff's notation could in principle be used to represent the structures posited in CG, he inclines to more *imagistic* accounts (2013: 32). The archetypal *imagistic* account in CL is the *image schema*—foundational ""preconceptual" structures that give rise to more elaborate and more abstract conceptions".<sup>4</sup> Langacker provides the example of *enter*, giving a propositional notation in (1) (taken from: Jackendoff 1983, cited in: Langacker 2013: 32) and an *imagistic* account in **fig. 2.1**, reproduced below:

(1) [EVENT GO ([\_THING X], [\_PATH TO ([\_PLACE IN ([\_THING Y])])])]



**Fig. 2.1** (Taken from: Langacker 2013: 33)

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<sup>4</sup> As an aside, it is interesting to note that some cognitive linguists have proposed that image schemas could be innate. Deane (1996: 85), for example, suggests that "there is ample room for a position [within the CL paradigm] which claims, for instance, that grammatical structure is based upon image schemas, and that image schematic structure is innate [emphasis in original]"; a position Deane himself has defended and tentatively (though reasonably) ascribes to Langacker (1993: 454), who is "comfortable with the notion that [image schemas and] aspects of construal might be universal because they stem from facets of our common biological make-up." This indicates that many of the supposed fundamental differences between CL and CS are matters of degree, an analogous situation can be found in the issue of autonomous syntax, see also: footnote 9.

Langacker, preferring **fig. 2.1** over (1) because it more directly reflects mental experience (2013: 33), makes extensive use of diagrams of a similar nature throughout his work. These diagrams, Langacker stresses, are to be seen heuristically (2013: 10) rather than as "precise and rigorous formal representations" although they still provide "a level of precision and explicitness sufficient for most purposes, together with a kind of usability that facilitates discovery" (Langacker 2013: 10). Langacker's focus on the dynamicity of the model he presents gives reason to hope that CG may be better able to account for the vagaries of contextual considerations.

The two seminal texts for CG, both authored by Langacker, are *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar (volume I): theoretical Prerequisites* (1987) and *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar (volume II): Descriptive Application* (1991). What follows cannot possibly do justice to these two tomes, let alone the prodigious output subsequently published by Langacker. Hence, what is offered should not be seen as a comprehensive overview, but rather a selective account based on a number of key priorities, i.e. those aspects of the theory that are considered most salient to the role of context in meaning construction.

## Symbols and Linguistic Units

One idea at the centre of the CG account is borrowed from Saussure, i.e. that of the bipolar symbol—bi-planarity in Harrisian terms (e.g. 1981: 11)—"a pairing between a semantic structure and a phonological structure" (Langacker 2013: 5). In this sense the approach is very traditional; the radical aspect of the theory presented by Langacker is that *grammar* is "symbolic in nature". This has the consequence, according to Langacker (2013: 5), that, in contrast to traditional linguistic theory, *grammar is meaningful*. For Langacker, therefore, notions such as *noun*, *subject* and *progressive aspect* are "susceptible to general semantic characterization", rather than being "purely grammatical constructs" (2013: 5). More generally, how morphemes are combined into "progressively larger configurations" is "inherently symbolic" as well, and so also meaningful in its own right. In contrast to

generative approaches, such as Jackendoff's, the lexicon and grammar are not distinct from one another but rather: "lexicon and grammar form a gradation consisting solely in assemblies of symbolic structures".

Langacker (2013: 15) states that for language to function semiologically—i.e. "for meanings to be symbolised phonologically"—only three kinds of structure need be posited: *semantic*, *phonological* and *symbolic*. In a move which Langacker (2013: 15) describes as the "pivotal and most distinctive claim of CG" these three elements are the *only* linguistic structures *permissibly* postulated within the CG paradigm. This strict limit forms the basis of what is known as the *content requirement* (Langacker 2013: 24). The *content requirement* limits the type of structures permissibly posited in CG to what is "*directly apprehended*" by language users, or else can be "derived from directly apprehended structures through the basic cognitive process of *schematization* (abstraction)" (Langacker 1997: 235).<sup>5</sup>

On this account, therefore, language is a system of symbolic structures, which, rather than being distinct entities in themselves, offer a *correspondence* (Langacker 1987: 77) linking *phonological structure* (including also gestures and orthographic representations) and *semantic structure*—the conceptualizations that provide the meaning to linguistic expression. Thus, symbols are bi-polar in that they have a *phonological* and *semantic pole* (Langacker 1987: 77). It is the phonological and semantic poles that are *apprehended* by speakers, i.e. that of which speakers have a conscious awareness. The former "comprising the utterance in all its phonetic detail", the latter "consisting of how the expression is actually comprehended - its full, richly detailed contextual understanding" (Langacker 1997: 235).

Once they become conventionalised in a language, symbolic structures achieve the status of *lexical items* or *linguistic units*. With these terms Langacker (2013: 16) introduces the idea of *fixed expressions* within a language. These are "specific at the phonological pole", and

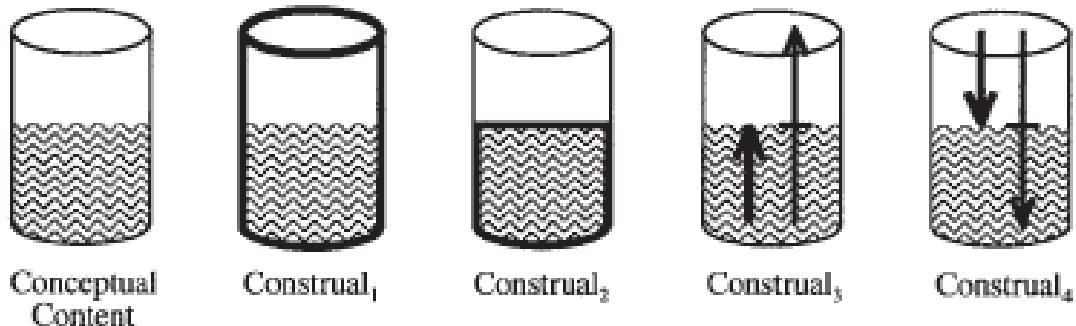
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<sup>5</sup> The notion of apprehension will be developed in the upcoming passages; schematization will be taken up in more detail in chapter three. (In Langacker 2007: 451 (notes) *apprehension* is defined, rather loosely, as "merely indicat[ing] mental occurrence. It is intended as being neutral between speaking and understanding.")

although more flexible at the semantic pole "actual expressions tend to be rather specific" (Langacker 2013: 21). Within CG lexical items are not necessarily single words or morphemes but can be fixed expressions incorporating a number of constituent parts, such as idiomatic phrases (e.g. Langacker 2013: 16). Some words and expressions are considered *novel* rather than *conventional* and would therefore be classed as *nonlexical* expressions, though the boundary between these categories is not strict, but rather a matter of degree. For example *moonless* is, on Langacker's terms conventional and therefore classed as a linguistic unit, *dollarless*, on the other hand, is novel, and so denied such status (Langacker 2013: 16). Whether a word appears in a dictionary is not necessarily a reliable guide for its inclusion in the *unit* category either. For example, Langacker (2013: 16) suggests *ireless*, being only vaguely familiar to himself, and almost certainly novel and unfamiliar "for most speakers" is a doubtful candidate for unit status.

### **Domains, Content and Construal**

The semantic pole of a symbol, the *meaning*, "resides in conceptualization" (Langacker 2013: 43). Meaning can be broadly seen to consist of both conceptual *content* and a "particular way of *construing* that content" (Langacker 2013: 43). A rough analogy could be to see content as a painting and construal as how one might look at the picture (Langacker 2008: 55). As an example, Langacker offers the *conception* (viewed as a neutral term between *concept* and *conceptualisation* (Langacker 2013: 46)) "of a glass containing water occupying half its volume" (Langacker 2013: 43). This, Langacker assumes, it is possible to evoke in a "fairly neutral manner". However, once it has been "linguistically encoded" a particular construal is imposed. **Fig. 2.2** shows a number of possible construals of this "neutral content".



**Fig. 2.2** (taken from: Langacker 2013: 44)

Langacker offers the following captions for each of the construals given in **Fig. 2.2**:

- a) *the glass with water in it*
- b) *the water in the glass*
- c) *the glass is half-full*
- d) *the glass is half-empty*

A further way of thinking about construal involves Langacker's (2013: 70) notions of *landmark* and *trajector*. The *trajector* is the most prominent participant in the construal, while *landmark* refers to any other salient participant(s). For example, if we say *the lamp is above the table* the lamp is the trajector, table a landmark. Conversely, with *the table is under the lamp*, the roles are reversed and *table* becomes the trajector. In Langacker's terms, the *content* remains the same in both utterances but the meaning differs due to the different *construals* they offer.

Langacker (2013: 38) takes an *encyclopaedic view* of linguistic semantics as opposed to a *dictionary view*. One big advantage with this approach is that it offers a way through the difficulties raised by Jackendoff (2002: 281ff) on deciding where (linguistic) meaning stops (Langacker 2013: 36).<sup>6</sup> Langacker (2013: 39) states:

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<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that this differs from Jackendoff's (2002: 285) discussion of *semantics = dictionary; pragmatics = encyclopaedia*, as Langacker's account, in these terms, would be expressed as *semantics = encyclopaedia*.

"On the encyclopedic view, a lexical item is neither totally free nor totally fixed. It is not totally free because the expression evokes a certain range of knowledge and specifies a particular way of accessing it. It is not totally fixed because centrality (preferential access) is a matter of degree and subject to being overridden by contextual factors"

This view of linguistic determinacy would be classified as weak segregationism by integrationists (e.g. Harris 1996a: 147); this is a topic that will be developed in Chapter Three. For present purposes it is the mechanism governing how certain domains are selected and given prominence that is of concern.

As a means of referring to *content* (which can then be *construed*) in a "uniform way", Langacker (2013: 44) introduces the term *domain*. Domains can be divided into *basic* and *nonbasic* varieties (in earlier writing the latter were dubbed *abstract domains*, see for example Langacker 1987: 150). Basic domains are irreducible, and although Langacker (2013: 44) declines to give a definitive list, they include such notions as *space*, *time*, *colour space* ("the range of colors we are capable of experiencing" [not colours per se MS]), *temperature*, *taste* and *smell*. Basic domains are relatively few in number; however, the range of nonbasic domains is very wide. Langacker (2013: 45) states that "there is no requirement that a nonbasic domain be fixed, established, or conventionally recognized". Nonbasic domains can arise through conceptualisations which are "sensory or intellectual, static or dynamic, fixed or novel, simple or complex". This makes them somewhat difficult to categorise. For example, the sensations of being *wet*, or *blowing up a balloon*, are included under the category of nonbasic domain. But so too are "concepts like JUSTICE, VERTEBRATE, and BATTING AVERAGE", as is "apprehension of the situational context" and the "previous discourse" of the communicational exchange. Such domains are hierarchical, in that certain conceptions presuppose others. For instance, NECK presupposes knowledge of *anatomy*, BATTING AVERAGE notions of *arithmetic*. In this regard domains share similarities with Fillmore's (1982) *frames* or Lakoff's (1987) *idealized cognitive models*, although, on

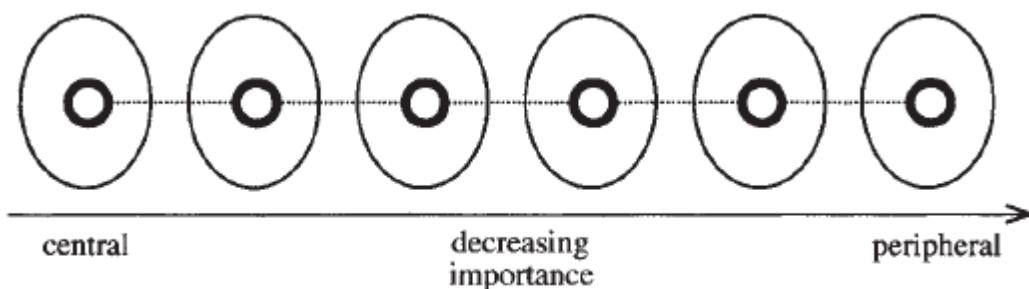
Langacker's (2013: 46) view, domains have the benefit of expressing the "greatest generality".

On Langacker's (2013: 47) account, therefore, an expression invokes a set of domains. This set is known as a *matrix*. In the usual course of events multiple domains are evoked, and in these cases the matrix is considered *complex*. To illustrate this, Langacker chooses the expression *glass*, and provides a number of domains which "evidently figure in its conceptual characterization". These are reproduced here in full:

1. Space [a basic domain].
2. Shape [roughly that of a cylinder, closed at one end]. This nonbasic domain presupposes space, as the domain in which a shape conception is manifested.
3. Typical orientation in space [long dimension aligned along a vertical axis, with the closed end at the bottom]. Among the other domains this incorporates are space, verticality and the shape conception.
4. Function<sub>1</sub> [container for fluid]. This presupposes the typical orientation, the concept of a liquid, and that of a container (which in turn incorporates such notions as spatial inclusion, potential motion, force and constancy through time).
5. Function<sub>2</sub> [role in the process of drinking]. This incorporates function<sub>1</sub>, as well as the conception of the human body, of grasping, motion with the arm, ingestion, etc.
6. Material [usually the substance glass].
7. Size [easily held in one hand].
8. Others [domains pertaining to cost, washing, storage, dropping and breaking, position on a table at mealtime, matching sets, method of manufacture and so on].

It can be seen from these examples that the domains associated with an expression can be very open-ended and overlapping, as befits an encyclopaedic view of semantics (Langacker 2013: 47).

In any particular instance of use not all domains will be *activated*. This introduces the notion of *centrality*—"the likelihood of a particular domain being activated when an expression is used on a given occasion" (Langacker 2013: 48). In the examples for *glass*, therefore, domains 1 through to 7 are central, the list in 8, on the other hand, peripheral. Differences in centrality can account for semantic variation in lexical items; this is the case with *dagger* and *knife* (Langacker 2013: 49). Here the contrast in meaning is more acute in terms of the probability that any one domain is activated in use, rather than the inventory of potential domains; i.e. the function of stabbing someone is more central to *dagger* than for *knife*—though still a possibility for the latter. Langacker diagrams the notion of centrality as follows:

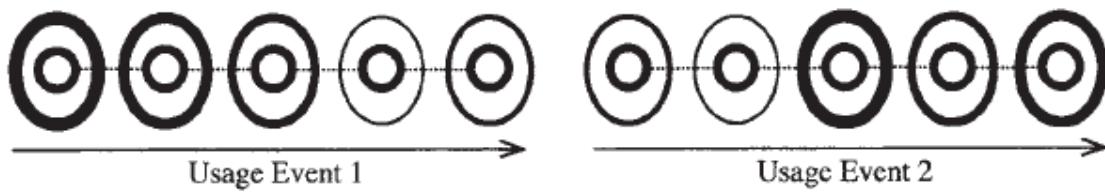


**Fig. 2.3** (taken from: Langacker 2013: 48, "degrees of centrality are indicated by concentric circles. The ellipses represent domains.")

As well as being part of the semantic make up of lexical items, the probability of any particular domains being activated is affected by context (Langacker 2013: 49). Langacker (2013: 49) states that:

"Contextual factors can obviously focus attention on a domain that might otherwise not be accessed at all or only at a lower level of activation. This in turn might lessen the activation of an otherwise salient specification."

On this account it may be useful to see context in Langacker's approach as a spotlight which shines on to the most relevant domains, or aspects of potential meaning, associated with an expression. This is shown in **Fig. 2.4**, a variation of **Fig. 2.3**, that shows how contextual factors can affect which domains activated and to what extent. More central domains can be suppressed, and domains that are usually peripheral, brought to the foreground. This can vary from one usage event to another (Langacker 2013: 50).



**Fig. 2.4** (Taken from: Langacker 2013: 50, "the thickness of a line indicates the degree to which the domain is activated".)

To exemplify how context can affect domain activation Langacker (2013: 49) returns to the example of *glass*.<sup>7</sup> Langacker (2013:49) suggests that (1)(a) is canonical as it activates domains 1-7 from the list above, whereas (1)(b)-(d) "skew the pattern by highlighting various domains of lesser centrality: breaking, matching, placement, and washing". Langacker's list of examples using the word *glass* is presented here:

- (1)           (a) *He took another sip from his glass.*
- (b) *This antique glass is quite fragile.*
- (c) *The glasses on that table don't match.*
- (d) *Plastic wine glasses are hard to wash.*

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<sup>7</sup> Though it is a topic which will be revisited in more depth, it should be noted that in this instance Langacker takes a very limited view of what might constitute context.

Within the terms of CG, language structure emerges through use; i.e. CG is a *usage-based* model of language. One reason for taking this position is the *content requirement*; i.e. that "usage events are the source of all linguistic units" (Langacker 2013: 220). This perhaps entails Langacker's (2013: 215) claim that "there is no such thing as a language", the very notion of the existence of languages (such as English) being a "fiction", and while the fiction may be "convenient", "unavoidable" even, we must not be "misled by the metaphorical conception of a language as a bounded container holding discrete and separate objects" (Langacker 2013: 216). Rather than there being things we can point to and identify as specific languages, Langacker (2013: 217) writes that "there are simply lots of people—hundreds of millions of them—who talk in roughly similar ways". On this account each individual has an *idiolect*, conceived by Langacker (2013: 217) as "a distinct [individual] linguistic system". However, these differences between individuals "may nevertheless be overshadowed by the extensive commonality enabling members of a community to freely communicate" (Langacker 2013: 218). This leaves both speakers and linguists alike "prone to abstract away from the differences and focus on the massive similarities" through a process of idealization and reification [italics added MS] (Langacker 2013: 218). Although "pretending that languages and linguistic units are wholly discrete would have to be regarded as misguided" under Langacker's treatment this is almost immediately qualified by:

"The fact is that structures *do* emerge with varying degrees of robustness, definition and stability. Language is patterned, organized activity exhibiting extensive regularities that need to be discovered and described [italics added MS]."

Langacker's (2013: 218) linguistic units, therefore, are reifications of "entrenched cognitive routines", identified by both linguists and speakers (linguists through conscious analysis, speakers largely unconsciously) as regularities exhibited in language use. They are "conventional" in that they represent "established linguistic practice in a certain speech community. Here Langacker's focus in the passages under discussion is on the role of the linguist, who, presumably, fulfils the *need*, expressed above, to "discover and describe" the

regularities found in language. However, on Langacker's usage-based account, a similar process occurs at the level of the individual, who also extracts and abstracts commonalities from actual usage events through a process of *schematization* (Langacker 2013: 17). It is to this that we now turn our attention, with the role of the analyst being considered further in the upcoming section: Cognitive Grammar, Minimal Context and Coherence, and in greater depth in Chapter Three.

Langacker (1997: 234) writes of "internalizing" the conventional patterns of a language. This *internalisation* involves a process of *decontextualisation* (Langacker 1997: 236) "by which linguistic elements achieve varying degrees of emancipation and context-independence". On Langacker's (1997: 236) account, language users will encounter expressions on "multiple occasions", which will "engender contextual understandings that are similar in certain respects and diverge in others". The similarities will, over time, become "entrenched" while those features "that do not recur" fail to achieve conventional status, but rather "simply cancel out". These commonalities are *extracted* from actual usage events and in being so are *abstracted* (Langacker 2013: 17). Such abstractions are "necessarily *schematic* (i.e. characterized in lesser specificity and detail)" (Langacker 1997: 236), hence the term *schematization* (Langacker 1997: 17) for this process.

In summary, with Langacker's CG we are presented with a framework which shares many of the same aims as Jackendoff's CS. Perhaps the biggest difference between the two, for the purposes of the current discussion, is Langacker's attempt to capture some of the dynamicity of situated communicative activity; represented by notions such as an *encyclopaedic* conception of semantics, *conceptualisations* as opposed to *concepts*, and *domains* being more or less *central* in particular instances of use. However, the following section suggests that Langacker's position on the divisibility of semantic and pragmatic meaning is, in effect, very similar to Jackendoff's, and this indicates some fundamental issues regarding the role context has to play in the theory.

## Cognitive Grammar and Context

We have seen how Jackendoff (e.g. 2002: 280) has wrestled with the two related questions as to whether a principled division of semantics and pragmatics can be made and to what extent word meaning is dependent on context. Our provisional conclusion was that, despite aspirations to the contrary, the CS framework struggles to account for contextual considerations. Langacker (e.g. 2013), has a similar concern with the prospects of making a principled division between pragmatic and semantic meaning.

### The Prospects of Separating Semantic and Pragmatic Meaning

As noted earlier CL's *generalisation commitment* should prohibit, in principle, a divorce between 'linguistic' and 'pragmatic' meaning. Langacker's general position on this matter appears unequivocal:

"The distinction between semantics and pragmatics (or between linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge) is largely artifactual, and the only viable conception of linguistic semantics is one that avoids such false dichotomies." (Langacker 1987: 154)

"The encyclopedic view of meaning denies the existence of any precise or rigid boundary between semantics and pragmatics or between linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge." (Langacker 1997: 235)

"I do not believe that a fixed boundary between semantics and pragmatics can be drawn on a principled basis in a way that makes linguistic sense." (Langacker 2013: 40)

Aspects of Langacker's approach, however, contradict this perspective, in particular, his stance on the role of "mental adjustments" that occur during language use:

"The study of its interactive basis is therefore essential to a full account of the acquisition, structure, and use of language. I insist, however, that it is not equivalent to such an account, which must also encompass the specific mental adjustments that enable speakers to communicate in a conventionally sanctioned manner. To focus exclusively on the interactions

per se would be as pointless as ignoring them altogether—either option omits an essential component of language, neither of which can be well understood without the other.

When we talk about 'a language', 'a linguistic system', or the 'grammar of a language'—and more obviously when we speak of 'acquiring' a language or 'internalizing' the conventional patterns it comprises—we put primary emphasis on the mental adjustments that occur. I maintain that these adjustments and the processing they engender constitute a legitimate, substantive, and essential target of study in their own right (which is not to deny that their investigation has to be informed at every stage by the interactive function of language)." (Langacker 1997: 234, cf. Jackendoff 2002: 418: "I have skipped over many of the usual topics of pragmatics...")

The phrase "in their own right" sits uneasily with the stated need for investigation to be "informed at every stage by the interactive function of language". The following comments on the nature of usable linguistic data and the different approaches to research found in cognitive linguistics help to clarify Langacker's take on such matters:

"I would resist a possible claim that the only data properly used for linguistic description be drawn from actual speech behavior, collected by audio or video recording. I like to think that I am working on real problems, even if I do not go around with a tape recorder, but at the same time I am awfully glad that a lot of people do just that. ... Not everybody can engage in typological studies, or psycholinguistic experimentation, but surely we need major research programs in these areas. A division of labor is obviously unavoidable. The most we can realistically expect, in practical terms, is that those pursuing a given line of investigation maintain a certain level of awareness of what is happening in the others, and that serious efforts of coordination are made when feasible." (Langacker 1999: 23)

The problem for Langacker is that the stronger the argument for the "mental adjustments" occurring during language use as a "legitimate, substantive and essential target study *in their own right* [italics added MS]" the weaker his stated position on the indivisibility of pragmatic and semantic meaning.

The assertion being made is that if any proposal to divide semantic and pragmatic meaning represents a "false dichotomy" (Langacker 1987: 154) and, therefore, any attempt to make such a split is, essentially, an imposition of the analyst (Langacker 2013: 13), then identifying any mental adjustments as being specifically in the domain of (linguistic) semantics would seem no less arbitrary. This could be seen as a continuation of the long tradition of seeing language as a phenomenon of the 'mind' (e.g. Chomsky 1965 and Saussure 1983) and as an object of study which can be treated *sui generis*. However, such a conception of language is at odds with one of the central tenets of CL in general, and CG (Langacker 2013: 8) in particular: the *generalization commitment*, which represents an obligation to:

"[I]nvestigat[e] how the various aspects of linguistic knowledge emerge from a common set of human cognitive abilities upon which they draw, rather than assuming that they are produced in an encapsulated module of the mind." (Evans 2012: 131).

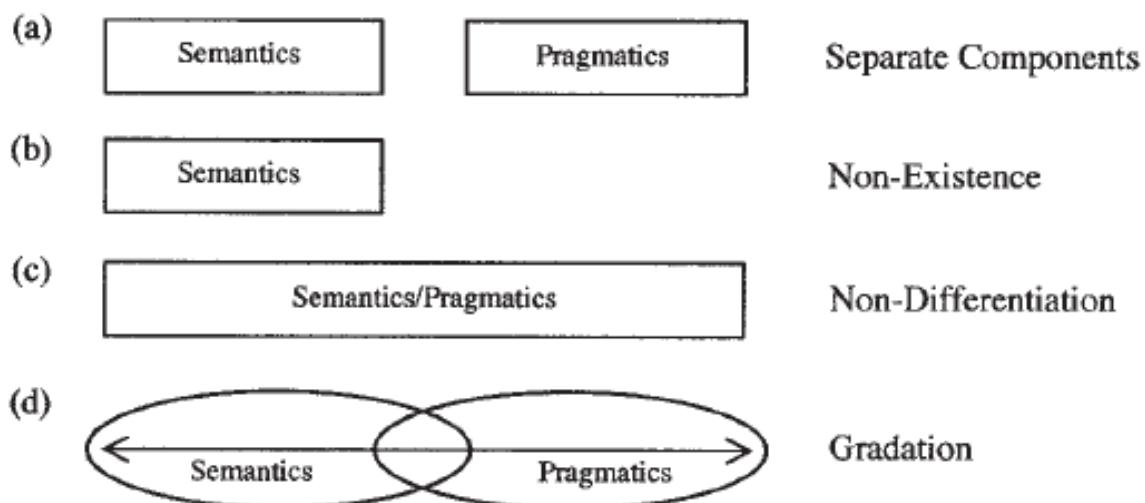
Thus, it might be argued, the generalisation commitment offers support to an approach to linguistic study that has a broader scope than that taken by Langacker, i.e. one which considers the integrated and intelligent bodily actions that individuals construct in situated circumstances. The claim that Langacker treats language as unique among cognitive activities is reinforced by imagining his approach being taken with other cognitive endeavours, such as those involved in sporting or musical activity. It would, perhaps, be more difficult to make the case for an approach that proposes to study, in their own right, the 'mental adjustments' occurring when playing a game of football, or the oboe in concert, for example. However, given the generalisation commitment, it is not clear why language should be treated any differently.

Langacker's methodological and theoretical priorities ultimately feed into his "non-technical definition as to what constitutes "linguistic meaning":

"[B]esides elements that are *indisputably semantic*, an expression's meaning includes as much additional structure as is needed to render the conceptualization coherent and reflect what speakers would naively regard as being meant and said, while excluding factors that are

indisputably pragmatic and not necessary to make sense of what is linguistically encoded [italics added MS]." (Langacker 2013: 42)

We are perhaps now in a position to better understand how the very notion of pragmatics and semantics as representing a "false dichotomy" with no "rigid boundary" between the two is able to sit alongside the declaration that certain elements are "indisputably semantic" within Langacker's approach. Langacker takes the view that pragmatics and semantics form "a gradation", and while there is "no precise boundary between the two", "at either extreme of the scale lie phenomena that are indisputably either semantic or pragmatic" (Langacker 2013: 40). Langacker's position is therefore represented by (d) in **fig. 2.5**.



**Fig. 2.5** (Four possible conceptions of the relationship between pragmatics and semantics; as proposed by Langacker 2013: 40)

In summary, one interpretation of Langacker's position could be that while there is no "principled basis" on which to separate pragmatics and semantics, it is, in practice, for purposes of analysis, possible to exclude (by what criteria is unclear) elements of meaning which lie somewhere in the middle of the gradation (and whose status as either pragmatic or semantic is therefore contestable) and concentrate on only those elements which are

"indisputably semantic". Ultimately, this position is very similar to the conclusion reached by Jackendoff (2002: 293) on the same topic; i.e. that there is a "niche for specifically linguistic semantics". Langacker's approach, however, must presumably be at the expense of elucidating those domains which represent the cognitive structures dealing with the "apprehension of the situational context" and the "previous discourse" (Langacker 2013: 45). Put in these terms, Langacker's "division of labor" arguably amounts to the stipulation of an indisputably 'semantic' domain with other domains of language use, particularly those which are "indisputably pragmatic", being parcelled out to other disciplines. Again, Langacker's position closely resembles that of Jackendoff (2002: 418), who is happy to leave the integration of his framework with pragmatic concerns to "connoisseurs" other than himself.

Langacker's (2001) paper *Discourse in Cognitive Grammar* does offer a preliminary discussion of how language users may conceptualise on-going discourse in real-time communication. However, the hope, expressed by Langacker, who himself "cannot claim any serious expertise in regard to discourse", is that the work will act as "a catalyst for scholars with the proper expertise to investigate their [CG and discourse] relationship more systematically" (2001: 144). In this sense, rather than filling a lacuna, the paper serves better to highlight the existence of a gap in the CG research paradigm. It may be argued that any such gap is currently in the process of being filled, particularly in the sphere of *cognitive stylistics*, through the use of Langacker's CG in the analysis of political (e.g. Browse 2018) and literary (e.g. Harrison 2017) discourse. However, such extensions and applications of CG do not set out to address the theoretical issue being raised here, namely the contradiction between Langacker's position that any "distinction between semantics and pragmatics is ... [a] false dichotom[y]" (Langacker 1987: 154) and his contention that it is possible to identify "mental adjustments" (Langacker 1997: 234) which are "indisputably semantic" (Langacker 2013: 42). The identification of any mental adjustments as being indisputably semantic rests on the idea of a semantic/pragmatic spectrum. However, the spectrum model of semantic/pragmatic meaning is asserted, or stipulated, in Langacker's

work, rather than *argued* for: "[t]he *claim* is that semantics and pragmatics form a gradation, with no precise boundary between the two [italics added MS]" (Langacker 2013: 40). At no point does Langacker substantiate this claim. In particular, Langacker's discussion does not make clear why, in reference to **fig. 2.5**, (d) is to be favoured over (c). This is a topic that will be returned to in Chapter Three, but the question seems particularly pertinent considering the general cognition and embodiment theses of CL. While the presence, or otherwise, of a "discrete boundary" along this spectrum *is* debated, this is not the case with the existence (or heuristic potential of the metaphor) of a spectrum itself. Nor is it explained how such a spectrum may arise, or be created, and by whom.

This suggests, therefore, that there is a tension at the heart of Langacker's programme between theory and analytical practice. On the theoretical side, it is clear that Langacker sees any "division of language into separate components" such as "semantics and pragmatics" as an imposition by the analyst (2013: 13). This is entirely in-keeping with the generalization commitment (Evans 2012: 131). However, Langacker's insistence on carving out a *linguistic niche* for study leaves him open to accusations of not only failing to take the generalization commitment seriously, but, of in effect constructing a CG equivalent to the CS linguistic module. This is not to be taken as an assertion that Langacker implicitly supports a modular view of cognition along the lines advocated by Pinker and Jackendoff—he clearly does not: "[r]ather than constituting a distinct, self-contained entity (a separate "module" or "mental faculty"), language is viewed as an integral facet of cognition" (Langacker 2013: 8). However, in practice, the separating out of a set of putative cognitive mechanisms accounting exclusively for 'semantic' meaning implies that language, unlike any other human activity (such as playing football and the oboe), has a 'special place in the mind', i.e. is, somehow, cognitively *sui generis*. While this is a given for generativists working within the CS paradigm, it is a much more problematic stance for anyone sharing the theoretical commitments of CL. For, as Langacker (2013: 13n9) informs us, although "by training and

inclination, I personally favor discreteness, *language has chosen not to cooperate* [italics added MS]."

Put another way, it is suggested that a potential problem with Langacker's CG is that methodological practice is yet to fully accommodate the theoretical advances made in CL; such as the move to looking at cognitive activity more holistically, i.e. as embodied interaction with the environment (e.g. Langacker 2013: 4), and turning away from the idea of innate primitives towards a "usage-based model of language structure" (Langacker 2013: 220). While, in this author's opinion, these represent improvements on the nativist and modular account offered by generative grammar and CS—because they promote a conception of language which sees it as part of broader patterns of human communicative activity—they are also, it is suggested, the cause of a degree of tension in Langacker's work. One way to view this tension is through a comparison of CG and CS. While it is clear that the theoretical underpinnings are substantially different, it is not clear that this is the case with methodological practice. Perhaps the greatest similarity between the approaches of CS and CG is that both *assume*, if not *require*, that it is possible to describe specifically semantic (as opposed to pragmatic) meaning in terms of an underlying cognitive framework. This may follow from a modular, innate account of language, but seems a non sequitur if the starting point for linguistic investigation is a view of cognition as non-modular and embodied.

### **Cognitive Grammar, Minimal Context and Coherence**

Langacker (2013: 50) writes that "language use is never acontextual". It may be useful to set this statement alongside the previously mentioned assertion that "an expression's meaning includes as much *additional structure* as is needed to render the conceptualization coherent"; for what, exactly, is the additional structure that is needed? For example, in Langacker's treatment of *glass*, the utterances given above as instances of the use of the lexical item evoking noncanonical domains are said to provide examples of how the probabilities of which domains become activated are "altered by context and use"

(Langacker 2013: 49). However, the only contextual considerations on display are themselves linguistic; the reader is told nothing of *who* the speakers are, *where* they are, or *what* circumstances they find themselves in. At first blush, the only clues for answers to these questions are to be found in the statements themselves. However, utterances such as: *the antique glass is quite fragile* (Langacker 2013: 35), of course, do not provide answers to such questions. It would seem, therefore, that Langacker's strategy is to apply a *generic* or, 'default' context, to the utterance to provide the additional structure required for coherence.

If it is the case that Langacker's analyses involve the application of a generic context to a particular (otherwise isolated) expression or utterance, then the practice bears comparison to what Fauconnier (1994: xxvii) terms the construction of "minimal contexts". Fauconnier (1994: xxvii) discusses the practice, common among linguists, to enquire whether non-linguists find a particular expression meaningful, or as conforming to grammatical norms, as a means of determining whether a linguistic expression should be considered semantically or syntactically acceptable. This method, and the opinions of the participants, is then used as justification for labelling semantically or syntactically anomalous utterances with a preceding asterisk to indicate their non-standard status. However, Fauconnier (1994: xxvii) (convincingly) argues that "native speakers' judgements in isolation do not inform us about meaning and form per se, but rather about the subject's ability to construct appropriate minimum contexts". In a similar vein, Langacker (2008: 464) writes that upon encountering the expression *the cat is on the mat* most people would understand this as: "referring to a typical domestic feline reclining on a flat piece of woven material spread out on the floor". Langacker (2008: 464) continues:

"This interpretation is not really acontextual, however. It is better described as invoking an imagined context based on default-case knowledge. The default for cats is a domestic feline, the default for cat behavior is sleeping, and the default for mats is that they are spread out on the floor. In accordance with these defaults, the expression evokes a familiar scenario as the basis for its interpretation."

Although never explicitly spelled out in Langacker's writing, it could be argued that the "additional structure" required to render an expression coherent (Langacker 2013: 42) equates to the analyst transposing a "minimum context" onto an utterance in much the same way as the subjects discussed by Fauconnier, or as described by Langacker in the case of an (English language) speaker, or reader, encountering the expression *the cat is on the mat*.

However, this conception of context is not unproblematic, and misses what, perhaps, is the most salient aspect of the context in which Langacker's examples are situated; that is, they occur in a linguistic textbook. Erving Goffman (1981: 30), for example, questions whether such "isolated, well-formed sentences" as used by the grammarian, can be seen to "carry meaning" without "the general understanding that this effort is an acceptable, even worthy, thing to do". Furthermore, Goffman continues, 'understanding' such isolated 'data' requires "someone with linguistic interests, someone who is posing a linguistic issue and is using a sample sentence to further his argument", for it is only "in this special context of linguistic elaboration, an explication and discussion of the sample sentence will have meaning" and "at least some" of that meaning, must come from "the institutionalization of this kind of illustrative process" (1981: 31). Thus, according to Goffman, any meaning arrived at through linguistic analysis is not distinct from that analysis, but is arrived at, in part at least, due to the particular nature and practices of the communicative activity in question.

Goffman's claims are supported by Langacker's cogent assertion that "language use is never acontextual" (2013: 50), which has a further, and deeper, implication: that language cannot be decontextualised only recontextualised. The notion of constructing and transposing 'a context' onto a linguistic expression suggests that, for the purpose of analysis, context can be reduced to a linguistically defined, mental conception. However, just as is the case with Fauconnier's *participants* and the *language user* imagining default mats and cats, for Langacker, when conducting analyses such as those for *glass*, the transposed, "default" (Langacker 2008: 464) context, is just one facet of the overall context in which he finds himself. The transposed context is subsumed within a larger context, which, in the cases

described above, presumably involves a linguist plus any cultural associations and expectations of academic research.

The issue with Langacker's definition of linguistic meaning has to do with the *criteria* being used to assess when "coherence" has been achieved. For such criteria cannot but be subjective, and affected by the context in which Langacker conducts his work—in a linguistics department, following a particular (linguistic) academic tradition—with all the extraneous baggage this brings. In other words, factors such as the linguist's personal experience, and the aims of any particular analysis, cannot be discounted through appeal to the transposing of a minimal context onto the data. Furthermore, application of a notion of "minimal context", is a metalinguistic activity in itself, and is not necessarily typical of mundane communicative practice, but is, rather, a particular type of communicative activity and a product of the academic tradition of linguistics. It seems unlikely, for example, that, in the 'normal course of events', i.e. when not engaging with a linguist at work, or with a linguistic textbook, the aim of a language user is to apply a "default" context to an utterance encountered in a communication episode, but rather, to make sense of the communication activity in terms of whatever are the *present* communication requirements. In this sense, viewing the kind of metalinguistic investigation on display in Langacker's work as though it were typical of ordinary communication has the potential to skew any model of cognition based on such a methodology. This raises questions over the legitimacy of only "maintain[ing] a *certain level of awareness* [italics added MS]" of approaches which take data "from actual speech behaviour".

These theoretical points will be discussed in more depth in chapter three. However, as a forerunner to that discussion, it may be useful to consider an integrational perspective on the notion of coherence, and at what point it can be considered to have been achieved. Harris (1998a: 68) recounts an episode of encountering the word *moshpit* (in a journalistic article) for the first time, and his attempts to assimilate (*integrate* in Harrisian (e.g. 2008: 109) terms) the expression into his current communicative activity. For Harris, this was achieved, to his

satisfaction, through the consulting of a dictionary and talking to a "seasoned pop guitarist"; the information contained within the article itself leaving him "little the wiser" (Harris 1998a: 69). The key phrase here being *to his satisfaction* because, in Harris' (1998a: 69) words:

"Meaning' is the value we seek to attribute to words so as to make some kind of sense of this or that episode of communication in which they feature. Our search for 'meaning' stops when we have discovered how to integrate the occurrence of the word into enough of our linguistic experience to satisfy the requirements of the case."

Meaning therefore, on Harris' account, is specific to a situation and our search for "meaning stops" when current requirements are satisfied. This is analogous to achieving coherence, because whether present needs are satisfied, or coherence achieved, depends on what criteria are being used, and these too, an integrationist would argue, are situationally dependent. Therefore, whatever Langacker's criteria are for achieving coherence, they cannot be universal, but only specific to the particular enterprise being undertaken, i.e. uncovering what is "linguistically encoded" (Langacker 2013: 42) in a particular expression. Of course, the communicative activities of Harris in integrating an expression such as *moshpit*, and, Langacker *glass*, are not obviously equivalent, in that while Harris was unfamiliar with the term *moshpit*, the same can hardly be said for Langacker (2013: 49) when analysing a word such as *glass*. However, in Harris' opinion, the differences should not be overplayed, for rather than being a "special case", coming across a new word only makes the communicative process involved in meaning making more salient, and we only "hubristically assume that our past linguistic experience provides all the information we need in order to assign semantic values in present and future cases" (Harris 1998a: 70). Why this is the position held by integrationists is explicated in the following chapter.

## **Chapter Three: Integrationism**

### **Generalities**

Turning to consider integrationism we find an approach to meaning and context radically different from CS and CG. Roy Harris, throughout his work (e.g. 1981, 1996a, 1998a), is unstinting in his criticism of 'orthodox linguistics' which he sees as in thrall to the 'language myth' (1981). Undoubtedly, Harris (e.g. 1997: 307; 2002b) would categorise both CS and CG as variants of just such an 'orthodox linguistics'. This critical regard is not entirely one-way, in that integrationism has come under fire from scholars working in 'orthodox' paradigms. For instance, Peter Stockwell (Trask and Stockwell 2007: 120), a prominent researcher in cognitive poetics—a research paradigm which shares many of the foundational tenets with CG—offers a critical, though not altogether unsympathetic, summary of the prospects of an integrationalist linguistics:

"While persuasive as an idealization, it is difficult to see what an integrationist practical analysis would actually look like, since every analysis would need to be unique and unrepeatable, and this strikes at the heart of any claim of linguistics to be scientific, generalisable or replicable."

As the above quote suggests, the integrational critique calls into question linguistics' status as a scientific discipline. Harris is quite explicit on this matter: "if it is true that communicational events cannot be decontextualized, then every episode of communication must be unique. And of what is unique, there can be no science. Hence no science of 'signs'. Semiology R.I.P." (Harris, 2009: 70, cited in: Duncker 2017: 29). The main issue, for integrationists, with regard to linguistics' status as a science, is the failure to clearly identify an object of study. Nigel Love (2009: 31, cited in: Orman 2016: 30), describes this as linguistics "perennial problem". The reason for this struggle to identify an object of study, according to Jon Orman (2016: 30), is that no such objects are identifiable in principle, as: "there can after all, be no science of the indeterminate". If the integrationist position is

correct on these matters, then the only way to gain an object of study is by attempting to reify aspects of communicative exchanges. Jon Orman (2016: 29) expresses this sentiment as follows:

"[W]here language is concerned, the kind of determinate object required for scientific enquiry can only be obtained through reification, abstraction and by decontextualising language from the real-life communicational episodes which give rise to it in the first place."

A further problem, which might be considered, is that not only does science require an object of study; it requires at least a reasonable level of objectivity on the part of the scientist. Again, if Harris' critique is taken seriously, the achievability of this objectivity is itself questionable due to the reflexive nature of linguistic enquiry.

One contention raised by Stockwell seems to be over the question of how to proceed with linguistic analysis in a manner in-keeping with the insights offered by Harris' work. *Prima facie*, the issue at hand may be taken to be a question about the *extent* to which generalisations are permissible, or the *kind* of generalisations which are feasible, within linguistic analysis. Langacker's stance on this matter is informative. On the topic of the diagrams used extensively by Langacker throughout his work, the reader is cautioned (2013: 10) that while some "diagrams are just picture-like sketches" and others are "meticulously assembled from an inventory of specific notations systematically used with precisely defined values" *all* should be seen as "heuristic in nature" (Langacker 2013: 10); one reason being that "no semantic representation proposed in CG is ever considered exhaustive. ... [As] complete semantic descriptions cannot be realistically envisaged" (Langacker 2013: 11). A related point is made by Langacker (2013: 218) concerning the extent to which "speech communities ... approximate linguistic uniformity". While acknowledging that "even the closest-knit community exhibits linguistic variation", it is concluded that ultimately, "both speakers and linguists are prone to abstract away from the differences and focus on the massive similarities [italics added MS]". With these observations Langacker seems to be accepting that variation and difference are integral facets of language (use), while still

arguing that it is possible and useful to make generalisations by abstracting perceived commonalities which occur across communicative episodes. This can be done, because, not only do the similarities outweigh the differences, but, furthermore, with the comment that abstraction is a process common to speakers and linguists, there is the suggestion that the conscious "abstractions" of the *linguist* mirror those conducted by the *speaker* unconsciously during on-line communicative episodes.

There are parallels to the reasoning that it is possible to abstract away similarities from the differences in language use, and the reasoning behind the decision to pursue a study of language which divorces semantic and pragmatic meaning. As Langacker (2013: 37) states, "imposing specific boundaries is both arbitrary and misleading"; the argument for doing so, in part, rests on the idea that any description arising from such "arbitrary" methods can still capture enough of the 'truth of the matter' to provide a useful heuristic for thinking about the cognitive processes underpinning language use. This, it might be conjectured, could be Stockwell's underlying objection to the integrational approach: that while, strictly speaking, the tenets of integrationism are correct, i.e. that every communicational exchange is *unique*, Harris is being unnecessarily pedantic when it comes to linguistic analysis, for, while it may be impossible to exhaustively capture every (semantic) aspect of a communicative exchange, it is still informative to consider the similarities that occur across such events. However, if this is a fair summary of the issue from the perspective of Stockwell, and by extension Langacker<sup>8</sup>, then perhaps the challenge posed by integrationism is being underestimated. For the integrationist critique runs deeper than this; arguing that the type of analysis offered by CS and CG requires the linguist to engage with language in a *certain manner*, a manner borne from the historical and cultural traditions of Western thinking on

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<sup>8</sup> Langacker (2013: 28) makes reference to "the interactive position" in his work; describing it as "certainly correct"; there are many parallels to this position, as described by Langacker, and that of integrationists. For example on the "interactive" view "meanings are seen as emerging dynamically in discourse and social interaction. Rather than being fixed and determined, they are actively negotiated by interlocutors on the basis of physical, linguistic, social and cultural context."

language; i.e. the language myth. It is, perhaps, on this front, that the linguist's objectivity is most vulnerable.

However, there is a further (though related) criticism of integrational linguistics implicit in Stockwell's statement—one that accuses integrationists of having, so far, failed to demonstrate how linguistic analysis should be conducted following the writing of Harris. Borsley and Newmeyer (1997: 43), working within the generative paradigm, are forcefully explicit on this point when they write that integrationism is "noteworthy for its failure to erect even the barest foundations of an alternative approach". Though admittedly dated, the accusation is a serious one, and worthy of further discussion. The extent to which integrationists have been able to offer a real alternative to orthodox linguistics is an issue that will be taken up in the final section of this chapter.

In what follows, a defence of the integrationist position will be made—over the course of which, areas of disagreement between Harris' ideas and Langacker and Jackendoff's work will be highlighted. However, Langacker's work will be given greater prominence in this respect; chiefly because the *dynamic* nature of CG and the *flexibility* of his model (in part expressed by presenting the approach as a *heuristic*) make CG a *less* obvious target for such criticism. A secondary reason is provided by Harris, who has been uncompromisingly scathing of Jackendoff's approach; for example, in a review of Jackendoff's (2002) perhaps most complete account of CS, Harris (2002a) concluded that:

"Some books are out of date even before they are published. It is not that Jackendoff is belatedly trying to shut the stable door on language long after one particular theoretical horse has bolted. The generativist horse never bolted: it was found dead in its stall. Jackendoff's book is an attempt to resuscitate a corpse."

Whether or not such a dismissal is warranted, this, and the more robust (from the perspective of withstanding the integrationist critique) framework offered by Langacker serve

to suggest that many of the criticisms of Langacker's work arising from the integrational literature will cause no less of a problem for Jackendoff's approach<sup>9</sup>.

## **Weak Segregationism**

Once the argument for divorcing pragmatic and semantic meaning has been made, Langacker and Jackendoff are able to proceed in the endeavour to generalise lexical meaning across specific instances of use. Viewed from the perspective of Harris' identification of the "fractures" (Harris 1987: 237) that become visible in Saussure's model upon close scrutiny, Jackendoff and Langacker's reservations over the possibility of divorcing pragmatics and semantics can be read as doubts over whether any determinate semantic meaning is at all recoverable. This is because, had either of the scholars concluded that such a split is indeed impossible they, in effect, would be giving support to a conception of the relationship between pragmatics and semantics as represented by (c) in Langacker's (2013: 40) diagram (**fig 2.5** in the present work), which shows no differentiation between the two. This image is perhaps the closest to the view taken by Harris, who sees a "complete parity of status" (1998a: 82) between the linguistic and nonlinguistic, and hence claims no specifically semantic meaning is recoverable from actual instances of communicative action. Were this step to be taken, therefore, this "parity", partly captured in the *principle of cotemporality* by Harris (1998a: 81), would lead the linguist towards an integrational approach to linguistic enquiry, entailing that the sign does not have an existence beyond specific occasions of situated use. However, despite explicit acknowledgement of the problem, the view shared by both authors (e.g. Jackendoff 2012: 63 and Langacker 1998: 649) is that a core of intersubjective and trans-situational semantic determinacy can be safely assumed as a precondition for linguistic analysis.

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<sup>9</sup> This is further bolstered by what might be seen as the broad similarities between the approaches. In part this can be seen in the CS and CG sections of this work. For an in-depth technical discussion of the similarities and differences see: Deane (1996); Goldberg (1996); Jackendoff (1996) and Taylor (1996); all of which are taken from a special edition of the journal *Cognitive Linguistics* which looks at areas of convergence and divergence between Jackendoff's CS programme and cognitive linguistics.

Both Langacker (1999: 23) and Jackendoff (2002: 418) envisage a division of labour within the field of language research, where individual linguists are free to concentrate on describing the "mental adjustments" that underlie language use (Langacker 1997: 234) or, in Jackendoff's (2002: 293) parlance, to study the "niche for specifically linguistic semantics"; thus, providing other linguists with a theoretical framework to utilise, and build upon, while conducting research into situated language use. Although drawing on contemporary ideas from cognitive science, such an approach has a long tradition, being comparable to that advocated in the first half of the twentieth century by J.R. Firth (1957; cited in: Harris 1996a: 162), of whom, Harris (1996a: 162) writes, "envise[d] an academic division of labour, with an initial segregational analysis of the utterance being encased, as it were, in a further account of how the utterance is related to its context". This approach is categorised by Harris (1996a: 162; see also 1996a: 147) as *weak segregationism*. It should be noted that while the label of weak segregationism is invariably pejorative in Harris' work, Langacker and Jackendoff are explicit in their acceptance of a degree of semantic determinacy, combined with the involvement of contextual factors in situated meaning. Therefore, the label need not in itself be read as a criticism. However, despite such 'concessions' to context and indeterminacy, Harris still finds fault in such an approach.

Jackendoff and Langacker's justifications for the validity of concentrating on specifically linguistic semantics differ in respects that are important with regard to the theoretical underpinnings of their particular research paradigms. In the case of Jackendoff (e.g. 2002) the rationale rests on the ostensible existence of a finite set of innate primitives that form the building blocks of linguistic meaning. For Langacker, a domain of specifically linguistic semantics is ultimately warranted by the putative processes of *abstraction* and *schematisation* (2013: 219), through which the semantic regularities that occur during repeated language use become entrenched as conventionalised linguistic units. However, from an integrational perspective, whatever the differences between the respective models supplied by Jackendoff and Langacker, neither presents an analytical framework that can

provide a realistic account of communication. Rather, the CS and CG research paradigms attempt to address questions that, according to Harris (e.g. 1981, 1996a, 1996b and 1998a), do not have coherent answers, because the questions themselves misconstrue the nature of communicative activity. Harris challenges the view that there can be a general theory of the meaning of words. While recognising the importance of the reflexivity of language (e.g. 1996b, 1998a: 24) and the value of questions such as *what is that called?* and *what does that mean?* in everyday communication (Monk 1996: viii) as soon as such questions are allowed into linguistic enquiry outside particular instances of use, i.e. "when we attempt to ask, out of all specific contexts, what 'meaning' is in general, we are in the grip of a metalinguistic illusion" (Monk 1996: viii, see also Harris 1996b: 181). Or, in other words, any search for a set of principles which will delimit, in general, and without regard for particular instances, a sphere of specifically linguistic facts, is misguided.

Pablé and Hutton express an attitude towards semantic description typical of that found in the integrational literature, which also highlights integrationism's *lay orientation* (see for example Harris 1998a: 146 and Pablé and Hutton 2015: 19):

"The meanings of words in an utterance or a text cannot be calculated or determined by *any* formal analysis, and no amount of notational ingenuity can bring to interpretation a greater degree of precision than that available to ordinary language users themselves.[italics added MS]" Pablé and Hutton (2015: 13)

Langacker's (2013: 49) description of the "domains" activated by "noncanonical uses" of the word *glass*, for example, demonstrates a degree of confidence on the part of the analyst that Pablé and Hutton would feel is unwarranted. Pablé and Hutton's assertion suggests that the linguist is in no better position than the language user to determine which "domains" are activated in particular instances of situated communicative activity. In fact, as will become apparent, the integrationist position argues that the *only* authority on such matters is provided by the interlocutors involved in the interaction, whose opinions are, of course, in no sense guaranteed to correspond. One problem for the analyst is that he or she is at an

immediate disadvantage compared to the actual participants of any communicative exchange under formal scrutiny; chiefly because 'the linguistic element' is necessarily recontextualised prior to any formal analysis. Langacker's *glass* analysis serves to illustrate some of these issues at play. The example sentences provided by Langacker (2013: 49), such as: (6) (c) *the glasses on that table don't match*, are shown in isolation, yet it is assumed that the expressions inherently provide enough contextual information for an analysis to be conducted: "examples (6)(b)-(d) skew the pattern by highlighting various domains of lesser centrality: breaking, matching, placement and washing" (Langacker 2013: 49). No other contextual information is provided in support of these examples (see also previous discussion on Fauconnier's (1994) *minimal context*). This is an example of a methodological practice which sees language as amenable to study in its own right, i.e. the 'data' in question is 'purely linguistic', in that it is not connected to any particular instance of use or situation, and so the answer to any questions concerning the *who*, *where*, *when* or *why* of the matter are left unanswered, or rather, seen as peripheral to the enterprise of linguistic analysis. This is a practice, therefore, in which "linguistic intercourse" is taken to be "a form of human behaviour which is *sui generis*" (Harris 1998b: 6) and therefore subjectable to segregational analysis.

The matter of contention, according to Harris (1998a:13), between *segregational* and *integrational* approaches is "whether, or to what extent, linguistics is entitled to decontextualize<sup>10</sup> human linguistic behaviour in order to isolate, describe and explain various aspects of it". In turn, these descriptions involve attributing particular kinds of determinacy to linguistic units or meanings independently of, and prior to, particular contexts of communicational engagement. These, as has been discussed at length, are questions that have vexed Jackendoff and Langacker. The potential issue of contention becomes real, however, once the decision has been made that the benefits of attempting to isolate

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<sup>10</sup> Following the integrationist conception of communication it is questionable whether it is *possible* to decontextualise, as opposed to recontextualise, linguistic behaviour in such a manner. In this respect, therefore, it is not simply a question of whether this represents best methodological practice.

specifically semantic meaning outweigh the potential problems inherent in doing so. Harris (1998a: 13) asserts that any linguistic descriptions offered by such an approach are "automatically suspect" because "all decontextualization distorts". According to Harris; segregationism and integrationism are "diametrically opposed", representing a "fundamental dichotomy" (1998a: 14). The choice represented by this dichotomy is "between taking 'the language system' as basic and explaining verbal communication in terms of its use; or taking communication as basic and explaining everything else in the linguistic domain by reference to the requirements<sup>11</sup> this imposes on human behaviour". Due to this fundamental dichotomy, Harris (1998a: 14) is pessimistic towards any potential for a compromise between integrational and segregational approaches. Such pessimism extends to weak segregational models of language, such as those proffered by CS and CG, which, according to Harris (1996a: 147f.), do not represent an improvement on more purely segregational models of language; i.e. those which permit no contextual considerations to intrude into semantic analysis. To the contrary, Harris asserts that "the features which distinguish the segregational approach from the integrational approach stand or fall together" (Harris 1998a: 14). Before turning to consider Harris' reasons for taking such an uncompromising stance on this issue, a closer look at weak segregational approaches is in order.

Harris (1996a: 147) describes two variants of weak segregation. The first of these acknowledges that context can have a bearing on linguistic meaning and hence the basic "communicational unit" is, "in practice, the sign-in-its-context" (Harris 1996a: 147). Conversely, the second variant concedes that linguistic meaning is not fully determinate (Harris 1996a: 151), but is, rather, only determinate in part (Harris 1996a: 152). Jackendoff's approach falls unambiguously into the former camp; words are seen as having definite meanings, but, when combined into larger units, rather than displaying basic Fregean compositionality, are subject to an *enriched compositionality* (Jackendoff 2012: 63).

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<sup>11</sup> The principle requirement imposed by the integrationist conception of communication is that we are creative sign users, i.e. *language makers* (Harris 1980), as opposed to *language users* (Clark 1996; see Jones 2016: 41).

Jackendoff's principle of enriched compositionality allows the linguist to take account of the heterogeneous mass of "other stuff" that lies beyond grammatical rules and the "meaning of its parts" that make up the overall meaning of a "compound expression" (2012: 63). This "other stuff" potentially includes the previous discourse (2012: 66) and the type of phenomena sometimes described in the literature as *pragmatic inferences*, or *Gricean implicature* (2012: 64).

To illustrate one facet of enriched composition, Jackendoff (2012: 64) provides the following hypothetical dialogue:

Amy: Hey, d'ya wanna get some lunch?

Tom: There's that nice Italian place around the corner.

In this example Jackendoff (2012: 64) states that the 'real' meaning of Tom's utterance is not to be found in "the meanings of the words alone but also from the discourse context". In this sense, Tom's utterance implicitly includes an answer *yes* to the previous utterance and the suggestion that an Italian *restaurant* (cf. *place*) would be a suitable establishment in which to eat; thus, the *yes* and *restaurant* form part of the "other stuff" not included in the meaning of the parts of the utterance, but rather provided by "discourse context" (Jackendoff 2012: 64). It is important to note that this type of analysis cannot proceed in the absence of the assumption that words have something akin to a *literal* meaning (see Toolan 1996: 24) which is then enacted upon by context.

Langacker's approach is less easily categorised using Harris' taxonomy. On the one hand the encyclopaedic conception of linguistic semantics sees the potential semantic content of an expression (in terms of domains) as open-ended; thereby introducing a degree of semantic indeterminacy into an expression's meaning (2013: 47). For example, for the concept [BANANA], Langacker (1987: 154) posits a number of "specifications", which range from elements that might be expected to be found in a 'dictionary' definition, such as bananas being a particular colour, and the fact that they can be eaten, to the kind of

information that one may be unsurprised to find in an encyclopaedic entry for *banana*, such as that they usually come from tropical areas. Such notions, according to Langacker (1987: 154), are all "part of the meaning of *banana*", and, in effect, are part of an unlimited set. For instance, the idea that monkeys are often portrayed eating bananas in children's cartoons, or that comical effects can ensue if a banana peel is left carelessly on a busy thoroughfare, could all, presumably, be included within the meaning of *banana* on Langacker's view. This degree of indeterminacy gives Langacker's work the flavour of the second type of weak segregationism cited by Harris. On the other hand, context has a role to play in determining which, and to what extent, domains are invoked in a particular instance of use; so, for example, continuing with the theme of bananas, monkeys are not likely to feature in a person's "conceptualisation" (e.g. Langacker 2013: 30) of *banana* when told by a colleague that he only had two bananas for lunch in an attempt to lose weight. This aspect of Langacker's approach aligns with the first of Harris' categories of weak segregationism, in that the context in which the word is used has a bearing on how the linguistic unit will be conceptualised by the hearer.

However, from an integrational perspective these theoretical qualifications of a simpler, determinate semantics are obfuscatory (Harris 1998a: 14). The situation with Jackendoff is clear cut; linguistic determinacy is alive and well in what Harris might call his "fixed-code-plus' account of meaning" (1998a: 80). Langacker's encyclopaedic account of meaning may, *prima facie*, appear to avoid this particular charge. However, Langacker remains open to Harris' (1996a: 153) accusation that theorists taking such a stance are "reluctant to abandon a belief in *some* core of semantic invariance that underwrites linguistic communication [italics in original]". One way this "core" is preserved in Langacker's approach is in the positing of, the previously discussed, semantic/pragmatic spectrum (2013: 40). This allows the CG practitioner to concentrate on the "indisputably semantic" (Langacker 2013: 42) elements of semantic meaning lying at one end of the spectrum, while letting in just enough of the "additional structure" required to "render the conceptualization coherent". CG is, according to

Langacker (1998: 649), well-equipped to handle such determinate phenomena: "[t]o the extent that language does exhibit determinacy and compositionality, the theory of cognitive grammar handles it unproblematically". Further evidence that such a core exists in Langacker's thinking is provided by remarks such as the following, which are not uncommon in the literature:

"When uttered in context, a sentence may invoke or convey considerably more than *what it actually says*. [Italics added MS]" (Langacker 2013: 39)

"Relevant here, though, is *the literal meaning*, where each word is strictly understood in *its most basic sense*. [italics added MS]" (Langacker 2013: 190)

"If [*I'm in the phone book*] is taken *literally* ... we can only include that the speaker is very small or cramped. [Italics added MS]" (Langacker 1991b: 189)

"[W]hat a sentence *literally* says [apparently] conflicts with how it is actually understood. [Italics added MS]" (Langacker 1991b: 193)

It is clear from these examples that a commitment to the existence of a core, or literal (see also Toolan 1996: 24), meaning remains present in Langacker's writing. There are similarities between Langacker's position with regard to the existence of a semantic core and that of the pragmatic/semantic spectrum. While the *precise* nature of these cores *may* be open to debate, their existence is not *argued for* in Langacker's writing but, *assumed*. In the aforementioned analysis of *glass*, for example, Langacker (2013: 47) presents the reader with a list of central domains which "*evidently* feature in its conceptual characterization [italics added MS]", some of which are "so central we can hardly use the expression without evoking them" (Langacker 2013: 48). However, the reader is offered no rationale for *why* they are 'incontrovertibly evident'.

Ultimately, the assumption that such a core exists, rests on shaky foundations because it requires the notion that an investigation into semantics can begin with the question: *what is the meaning of x?* This is a perfectly reasonable question to ask within the stream of situated

communicative activity, as part of mundane metalinguistic practice. Indeed, in the course of everyday communicative activity we often find recourse to ask interlocutors questions such as: *what did you mean by that?*, or, *did you really mean disinterested?* However, the problems arise when the attempt is made to decontextualise the question itself (Harris 1998a: 81), so that the question is asked of a word or expression outside particular situated instances of use.

### **Context Reconceived: an Integrational Perspective**

To understand why the bid to uncover semantic generalities across a majority of cases is problematic, and the reasons for the integrationist insistence on *radical indeterminacy*, (i.e. total indeterminacy of form and meaning) it is necessary to consider the integrational conception of context and its relationship to communication and meaning. From an integrational perspective meaning is the "product of particular communication situations" (Harris 1981: 185), and communication, if likened to a game, would be a "game in which there is no referee, and the only rule that cannot be bent says that players shall improvise as best they can" (Harris 1981: 186). These two observations are given more formal substance in the two axioms of integrational semiology (Harris 1996a: 154):

- 1      *What constitutes a sign is not given independently of the situation in which it occurs or of its material manifestation in that situation.*
- 2      *The value of a sign (i.e. its signification) is a function of the integrational proficiency which its identification and interpretation presuppose.*

Harris (1996a: 154) writes that these axioms require a theory of contextualisation that moves beyond traditional notions of context. A paradigm instance of the type of traditional thinking being referred to by Harris is David Crystal's (2010: 444) definition of context as "the non-linguistic situation in which language is used".

Langacker (1987: 401) advances a more nuanced description of context, yet, as "in many discussions of linguistic communication" (Harris 1996a: 154), one which still distinguishes between *linguistic* context (referred to as *discourse* context in Langacker (2013: 71)) and *situational* context (cf. Langacker 1987: 401 and 2008: 464). For example, the situational context may determine how the expression *the cat is on the mat* is understood by a hearer. To illustrate this Langacker (2008: 464) provides the example of a person having just "seen a cartoon tiger get knocked unconscious in a boxing match", in which case the hearer "will readily interpret *the cat is on the mat* as describing the prostrate feline on the canvas". As an example of discourse context Langacker provides the example of two questions: *where is the lamp?*, and, *where is the table?*, each contributing a different context in which to situate an answer (Langacker 2013: 71). This is why, on Langacker's (2013: 71) view, the answer *the table is below the lamp* is a suitable reply to the latter question but not the former. However, no contextual framework which makes use of broad, generalised distinctions of this type is compatible with an integrational notion of context (Harris 1996a: 155).

On Harris' (1998a: 104) view, context "is not some specific set of background facts which contribute to, or are presupposed by, this or that episode of communication", but rather:

"Context, in short, for the integrationist, is the product of contextualization; and the people responsible for contextualization are the participants themselves. Signification and contextualization are not independent elements but facets of the same creative activity."  
(Harris 1996a: 164)

Context, therefore, as perceived by Harris, is created through contextualisation and "each of us contextualizes in our own way, taking into account whatever factors seem to us to be relevant" (Harris 2009: 71, cited in: Pablé and Hutton 2015: 10). It is this personal element to contextualisation that makes whatever constitutes the context of a situation a subjective matter. It is not, therefore, the place of the analyst to determine what constitutes the context of a particular communicative interaction, not only in advance of any analysis, but after the fact also. This is contrary to Langacker's practice of assigning a minimal context to an

expression in order to provide conceptual coherence (Langacker 2013: 42), as in the case of the pugilistic tiger outlined above, or assuming that enough contextual information is provided for analysis by disembodied expressions as with the *table* and *lamp* examples. Harris (1996a: 164) is explicit in expressing his opinion on the futility of such practices:

"[T]here is no question of defining the context in advance by listing some number of constituent items from an inventory of possible circumstantial factors. Whether such a definition could in principle be provided retrospectively is equally dubious ... not only will the retrospective assessment be made with the wisdom of hindsight, but it will also presumably be relative to some current state of affairs which might not have obtained had things turned out differently."

Writing on the topic of what can be construed as *the same* context across different communicational episodes Harris (1998a: 105) provides an illustration as to how this subjectivity may work in practice:

"The context will be 'the same' when it is perceived by the participants as being 'the same' in communicationally relevant respects. But that perception, clearly, may vary from one participant to another. Consider how a conversation between *A* and *B* might be affected by the arrival of *C*. Depending on the relationships between the three persons, on the topic of conversation, on the relevance of that topic to the continuance of the conversation, on whether *C* was expected, etc., *C*'s arrival might or might not be perceived as creating a new context. Or it might do so for *A* but not for *B*, depending on their willingness to say certain things in *C*'s presence, etc."

This conception of context applies not just to contextualisation but to signification also, which, it is important to bear in mind, from an integrational perspective, is not a distinct process—both being "facets of the same creative activity" (Harris 1996a: 164). Thus, the same principles that apply to contextualisation also apply to the integration of signs into our communicative lives; i.e. it is a creative, subjective process with "no objective framework or set of given meanings to fall back upon" (Pablé and Hutton 2015: 10).

## Integration

There are innumerable reasons as to why two individuals involved in the same situated communicative event may contextualise, or integrate, what somebody says differently from one another. Following a similar pattern to the example provided by Harris with regard to context, the following hypothetical instances will, hopefully, serve to illustrate the ideas in play.

- *A* announces, to *B* and *C*, that she intends to celebrate her birthday by going on a bicycle ride. This is fantastic news to *B*, who has recently purchased a new mountain bike and is eager to try it out, and responds by suggesting possible routes to take. *C*'s bicycle, on the other hand, is in need of expensive repair, and money is tight, but, not wanting to disappoint *A*, *C* remains silent while calculating what will have to be forgone to pay for the necessary bike-parts.
- *B* and *C*, drinking tea in *C*'s kitchen, hear a radio announcer, *A*, read out the half-time football scores. *C*, previously undecided whether to meet friends for a drink later is uplifted by the three goal lead her local team has gained, and decides that celebration is in order, immediately messaging her friends to ask about time and place. *B*, however, is working this evening and realises the local team is playing at home and so will have to set off for work early to beat the match traffic.
- *C*, is regaling *A* and *B* with a holiday anecdote from a time when she went to Cancun and met a well-known celebrity. *B*, being better acquainted with *C*, has heard the story before, and is distracted by what she takes to be *C*'s over eagerness to impress *A*; in part detected in the tone of voice and body language. *A* is feigning interest while wondering why *B* is friends with such a person.

Such vignettes are not to be taken too seriously (and should certainly not be read as 'analyses'); the aim primarily being simply to give a flavour of the intertwined nature of contextualisation and signification. Integrationists are, in practice, perhaps more likely to use the personal anecdote "as a way of illustrating and explaining questions of meaning and

interpretation" (Pablé and Hutton 2015: 39). Pablé and Hutton (2015: 39) acknowledge that "[a]s a methodology this might seem informal or unreliable [and] does not seem to be scientific in any of the generally accepted usages of that term" thus leaving the integrationist open to accusations of introducing a strong bias to their work. However, Pablé and Hutton counter this criticism with the observation that observer bias is an *inevitable* part of any linguistic analysis, as "[w]e see what we expect to see, or what we hope to see, and we have a strong desire to find our hypotheses confirmed" (Pablé and Hutton 2015: 39). (Langacker (1991a: 507) has voiced a very similar opinion: "what one finds in language depends in large measure on what one expects to find".) It will likely be noticed that personal anecdotes and scenarios such as those above have a very different focus to the types of analyses conducted by Jackendoff and Langacker, furthermore, it would not surprise should many commentators taking more 'scientific' approaches to linguistic study feel that the integrationist approach leaves much to be desired. (However, the differences might not be as clear as first assumed; Jackendoff (e.g. 1991, 2002) and Langacker (e.g. 1987, 2013) make extensive use of invented and anecdotal examples and scenarios in their work. In this sense the difference could be seen to be the status accorded to the *reflections* of the integrationist and the *analyses* of the cognitive semanticist.)

This goes to the heart of one of the major differences between integrational and cognitive or 'scientific' approaches. In part this might be explained by different researchers hoping to uncover different answers through their respective paradigms. However, one thing that will always be lacking in an integrational approach is an attempt to give a definite answer to the question *what does that mean?*; instead the focus is more likely to be on how various activities are *integrated* into the chain of events by communicators (for indicative examples of such research see Jones 2011 and 2017). At this juncture perhaps a more detailed explanation is called for of Harris' account of *integration*.

Harris (2008: 109) observes that on the "vast majority of occasions" when we speak to people we "are trying to integrate [our] own activities with theirs, or they are trying to integrate their activities with [ours]". In other words:

"[We] are constantly engaged in patterns of activity which the parties involved are endeavouring to influence in one way or another, whether to make certain things happen, or stop them happening, speed them up, or facilitate or modify them." (Harris 2008: 109)

Only rarely, Harris (2008: 110) continues, "does verbal communication go unaccompanied by non-verbal communication", and both are "closely integrated". Body language, for example, is integrated with speech and other actions as part of a "continuum of activities", all coming under the banner of communication, "in which the role of words varies from case to case" (Harris 2008: 110). Human activity also involves integrating action with "familiar physical objects" such as "knives, forks, motor cars, television sets and all the rest of the equipment for daily living with which human beings surround themselves" (Harris 2008: 109). The most important factor in any particular episode of communication, on Harris' view, is "*who it is [we]* are interacting with" which is "in most cases effected non-verbally", i.e. we know the person, or make inferences based on appearance, their actions or the situation (2008: 110).

Harris (2008: 111) identifies four kinds of integration, three of which have already been touched upon:

- The integration of one's own activities with those of others
- The integration of activities with the physical world
- The integration of verbal with non-verbal communication

And a fourth, not yet mentioned:

- The integration of the present with the past and future

Integrating the past with the present is an essential component of communicating, in that we draw upon our "complex and multi-layered experience [of communicative situations MS]"

which "reflects the myriad contexts in which we have participated" (Pablé and Hutton 2015: 24). Integrating the present and future is, perhaps, most immediately obvious regarding activities involving such metalinguistic phenomena as *warnings*, *requests* and *invitations*; however, it is difficult to conceive of any human action which is not, at least in part, motivated by some anticipation of the future.

As an example of how integration might function in practice it could be instructive to consider a further example. A favoured 'object of study' in the CS and CL literature, first popularised by Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 35), has been "*the ham sandwich is waiting for his check*", or variants thereof (see also, for example, Jackendoff 1990: 242). Typical analyses involve issues such as metonymy (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 35) or "rules of construal" (Jackendoff 1990: 242); the present aim is not to problematise such types of analyses but rather to draw a comparison between these approaches and what may be the areas of most interest from an integrational perspective; i.e. how activity involving the expression might be integrated into the general stream of activities occurring in the café.

In the following example one waiter (Amy - the speaker) says to another (Bob - the hearer) *the ham sandwich wants the bill*, in a busy café environment. Presumably, this speech has a direct relevance to an issue at hand (see Harris 2008: 109), i.e. a customer who ordered a ham sandwich would like to pay and leave the restaurant; and Amy would like Bob to proceed in a course of action to facilitate this. It is also informative to consider how Amy could have instigated this action non-verbally; for example, with a gesture to a colleague to indicate the customer, followed by another where thumb is rubbed against index and middle fingers to indicate 'money'. However, the utterance certainly would not happen in isolation. It occurs amid the hustle and bustle of regular café activity. Part of this activity may, perhaps, involve Amy taking to the kitchen a plate covered with the debris of a ham sandwich; perhaps Bob had already noticed the customer putting away her reading material and so was already anticipating such a request. Maybe Bob knows the customer's habits and

guessed she would be leaving about this time. All these factors may function just as much as the utterance to help move along proceedings.

The verbal and non-verbal distinction is further eroded when the possible reactions of Bob to Amy's action are considered, for which the possibilities are obviously endless. Amy's utterance may be taken by Bob to be a polite request, and met with a verbal reply along the lines of *ok*, *gotcha* or *wilco!* However, this need not be the case; maybe a nod of the head would suffice, or perhaps Bob takes Amy's actions to be an unwarranted demand, acknowledging Amy's utterance with only an annoyed glance. Bob might, to some observers, seem not to notice the utterance at all, yet Amy is still satisfied that Bob's actions have been successfully integrated with hers when Bob is seen to reach for the pile of bills next to the cash register. At all points in the chain of events Amy and Bob are integrating verbal and non-verbal activity, their action and the physical environment, past experience, and anticipation of the future with the present, in order to make (or stop) things from happening (see Harris 2008: 109).

When considered in this light, some of the problems of a segregational approach become apparent. How much of a role the utterance plays in the activity is unclear in principle, and cannot be determined in advance, or even after the event; it seems quite possible the course of action would not require any verbal involvement at all. This raises the question as to how useful the spectrum metaphor applied to semantic and pragmatic meaning is in aiding understanding of the communicative activity; calling into question its status as a "heuristic" (Langacker 2013: 10). Whatever the meaning of *the ham sandwich wants the bill* might be, if such a question is indeed a sensible one—even in the case of a particular instance of communicative activity—that 'meaning' is deeply rooted in the personal experience of the individuals involved, and to the place in which the action occurs. The fact that this (admittedly hypothetical) event occurred between two waiters, in a café, is far from incidental. Peter Jones (2017a: 15) writes that "linguistic communication is only possible within specially organized frames of situated activity", where, for the participants, there is a

sense of a temporally directed 'order of business' to which they are contributing. These "frames", adapted from Goffman's notion of "situated activity system" (Goffman 1972: 8, cited in: Jones 2017a: 10), are, in part, metalinguistic phenomena, constructed by, in this case, the café staff and customers. These ideas will be returned to, in the following section, when *the ham sandwich wants the bill* is considered from the perspective of an overhearing-customer, as a means of considering the role of the analyst in linguistic analysis.

The integrational approach befits a view of the language-user as being "immersed in the never-ending, dynamic stream of time" (Pablé and Hutton 2015: 9). This "stream of time", or *time-track of communication* as it is sometimes known (e.g. Harris 1998a: 81), is a vital strand in the integrational approach to communication and of upmost importance in understanding the integrationist view that meaning is always a function of integration, i.e. situated contextualisation. In many respects these considerations may seem quite uncontroversial. The question the reader is asked to bear in mind in the upcoming section, however, is to what extent linguists, including Jackendoff and Langacker, take into account such factors when conducting semantic analyses. To clarify, the point is not whether the issues are accounted for on behalf of hypothetical language users, but, to what extent this central feature of communication is acknowledged to be part of the particular form of situated communicative activity that linguistic analysis itself represents.

### **The Time-Track of Communication**

The notion of the time-track of communication arises out of the observations from lived experience that we perceive time as progressing—and that events prior to the present have a bearing on the current situation. For Harris (1981: 155), this *succession in time* holds the key to a communicationally realistic conception of context. Put in terms of integration, succession in time expresses the idea that what has gone before affects—though does not determine—how the present situation, with its particular demands and affordances, will be contextualised, or integrated, into ongoing experience and practice by an individual agent.

According to Harris, it is the recognition of this basic fact of succession in time which leads to the conclusion that every communicative event is unique:

"The basic function of succession in time, for the language-user, is to provide a unique contextualization for everything that is said, heard, written or read. ... The contextualization provided by succession in time ensures that every linguistic act is integrated into the individual's experience as a new event, which has never occurred before and cannot occur again." (Harris 1981: 155)

Consequently, the 'current situation', however familiar it may appear to the participants involved, cannot have occurred before, if only because, the very perception of the new event as a repetition or reoccurrence of the prior, distinguishes that new perception from the first; i.e. there is a difference between experiencing something as a novel event and experiencing it as a 'repetition' of something that is judged to have happened before.

### **Problems with Traditional Notions of Repetition**

It is no more possible to "say the same thing over again" than it is to score 'the same' goal over again in football (Harris 1998a: 82). The belief, claims Harris (1998a: 82), that such an action is possible, only comes from taking too simplistic a view of linguistic repetition. However, the qualification "too simplistic" suggests that repetition, in *some* sense, is possible, and indeed our everyday experience informs us that not only is repetition possible, but is an essential part of being able to successfully operate in the world, and maintain any sense of personal identity. (*I get the same over-crowded bus to work every day, have the same boring conversations with colleagues, same arguments with incompetent line-managers—I really need to make some changes in my life!*) This is suggested by Harris (2008: 112) when stating: "unless we could relate the here-and-now to [the past and future], our lives would not be those of human beings".

Before moving on to look at 'less simplistic' conceptions of repetition, it may be worthwhile to consider an example of an occasion when, while it may look as though we are presented with a situation involving repetition, the reality is anything but (Harris 1998a: 82):

A says: 'It looks like rain.'

B says: 'What did you say?'

A says: 'It looks like rain.'

While this may look to be a simple situation of A repeating a previous utterance, Harris (1998a: 82) argues this is only the case if we ignore the idea that communication is temporally and spatially bound, i.e. "speech communication can only take place where and when it does on a given occasion". With this in mind it becomes clear that while the 'same' words may have been repeated, A does not "say the same thing" (Harris 1998a: 82) in the second utterance as was said in the first. The utterances are different in at least three ways: 1) the second utterance is a quotation of the first; 2) they may be paraphrased differently, for example: "what I said was that it looks like rain" would seem a quite reasonable substitute for the second, and not the first; and 3) while the second utterance is a reply to B's question, the first is not.

It is not just the idea of particular utterances being repeated that is problematic, but also the idea that particular communicational episodes can be repeated also. An illustration of this idea is provided through the experience of reading academic literature. It is a very common experience to draw different interpretations from a written document across different readings separated in time, whether these readings immediately follow one another or are separated by longer stretches of time. (In the latter case it may be that in the meantime other texts have been studied that offer a differing perspective on the initial text.) A traditional approach to context (for example what Drew and Heritage (1992: 19 cited in: Hewings and Hewings 2005: 22) have called the "bucket approach"—where context is envisaged as "contain[ing] and constrain[ing] what can be said and how") might lead us to see 'the same

situation' across different communicational episodes: same words in the same book, same reader sitting in the same chair at the same time of day, having had the same thing for breakfast. Such a perspective therefore takes 'the text' to be identical across successive readings. From an integrational perspective, however, while the 'text'—in the sense of a physical artefact with its marks on paper, type-face, page layout, bindings and so forth—may remain constant, the same cannot be said for the text as a linguistic phenomenon, as having meaning for the reader. The text in this sense does not remain constant across communicative episodes: a later reading cannot be the same as the first reading because, if nothing else, the context is different by virtue of the reader having read the text (as a physical artefact) before.

### **Cotemporality and a Very 'Provisional Determinacy'**

On an integrational view, therefore, the meaning of a text is the product of how it is contextualised by the reader, and any such contextualisation is always in the "here and now" (Maturana 1988: 4, cited in Pablé and Hutton (2015: 11). In other words:

"[M]eaning is never closed. Our interpretation or reading of what is done, said or written is always provisional and subject to revision." (Pablé and Hutton 2015: 11)

To assume otherwise, for example that on each reading the reader is somehow homing in on a 'literal' or 'core' meaning of the text<sup>12</sup>, is, in effect, to assume that the text has a meaning that sits outside the time-track of our lives, or, put another way, that linguistic acts "have some special temporal status of their own, which somehow puts them outside the sequentiality of the rest of our existence" (Harris 1998a: 81). To think otherwise, is perhaps to fail to see that signs are what we *make* of 'material' we find in our environment, not the 'material' itself. To see linguistic units as having a temporal status that differs from our nonverbal activity would, however, contravene Harris' (1981: 157) *principle of cotemporality*.

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<sup>12</sup> Asking the author would do no good in such a situation (see Harris (1998a: 71) on speaker intentions), but additionally, in what clear sense could any deeper understanding of 'the text' that arose through readings subsequent to that conversation with the author be said to be 'in' the text?

This principle rests on the "extremely banal observation" (Harris 1998a: 82) that *succession in time* applies just as much to the linguistic as nonlinguistic, i.e. "linguistic acts have no special status *vis-à-vis* non-linguistic acts in respect to their integration into the sequentiality of experience" (Harris 1981: 156).

This is illustrated by the following simple example provided by Harris (1981: 156) to demonstrate that we ultimately "interpret chronological succession for linguistic acts in exactly the same way as chronological succession for non-linguistic acts":

The following "conversational sequence"

A: 'Can you meet me at seven o'clock?'

B: 'I'm afraid I have to work late.'

Differs from the sequence

B: 'I'm afraid I have to work late.'

A: 'Can you meet me at seven o'clock?'

In the same way as:

A: opens the window

B: shuts the window

Differs from:

B: shuts the window

A: opens the window

In this sense "linguistic acts are assumed to be immediately relevant to the current situation, unless there is a reason to suppose otherwise, just as non-linguistic acts are" (Harris 1981: 157). The "immediacy" of communicational acts, suggests that, "insofar as what is meant is determinate, it can only be a provisional determinacy, relativised to a particular interactional situation". The phrase *provisional determinacy*, as Harris (1998a: 84) states, is oxymoronic,

in that a determinacy that is provisional is no reliable guide to what has come before, or may come after. This is perhaps one reason why Harris (1998a: 82) deems cotemporality a *principle*, i.e. because it has extensive ramifications for linguistic enquiry. One such ramification is that cotemporality entails linguistic indeterminacy (Harris 1998a: 84). This is because:

"[T]o say that communication is intrinsically time-bound is to say that all assignments of meaning are made by time-bound agents. We have no alternative but to interpret particular episodes of communication by integrating them into the unique temporal sequence of events which constitutes our previous experience. Which in turn entails that where two or more participants are involved a message must be open to two or more interpretations. And these cannot be guaranteed to coincide. Furthermore where they conflict, no one interpretation holds a privileged position *vis-à-vis* another."

These are not purely theoretical issues, as the recent furore over allegations of antisemitism in the British Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn's stewardship shows. One such area of dispute was how Corbyn's 2013 speech, given (and recorded) to a conference in London addressing Britain's legacy in Palestine (Glancy 2018), should be interpreted. In the speech Corbyn declared that (British) Zionists "clearly have two problems. One is that they don't want to study history, and secondly, having lived in this country for a very long time, probably all their lives, they don't understand English irony, either" (Corbyn 2013, cited in: Lipstadt 2018). Corbyn (2018) writing for the Guardian newspaper several years after the initial event wrote that it is wrong to equate anti-Zionism with racism. In defence of his 2013 speech Corbyn attempted to explain that he "described those pro-Israel activists as Zionists in the accurate political sense, not as a euphemism for Jewish people" (Corbyn 2018, cited in: Glancy 2018). However, Corbyn's own interpretation of his communicative actions has certainly not been universally accepted. Josh Glancy (2018), writing in the New York Times, who self-identifies as a Jewish labour voter, and while appreciating "that parsing anti-

Zionism and anti-Semitism can be a tricky business" concludes that Corbyn, on the strength of his 2013 speech, "is a man who traffics in an ancient prejudice against my people".

Deborah Lipstadt (2018), writing for the Atlantic, clearly does not agree with Corbyn's own assessment of his use of the term Zionist either, taking the terms *Zionists* and *Jews*, in reference to Corbyn's 2013 speech, to be interchangeable:

"Corbyn may have said "Zionists" and not "Jews," but listening to the speech, the two seemed interchangeable. It wasn't their ideology he attacked, but what he deemed their lack of Englishness—that "Zionists" might live in Britain for a very long time, even all their lives, and still remain alien, unable to grasp either history or irony. For this Jew, this was a cut to the quick. For what is it but a sense of history and irony that has sustained Jews through the vicissitudes of their collective experience?"

Corbyn's speech, and the reactions to it, as Harris (1998a: 84) writes, demonstrates that any "message" is not only open to different interpretations, but also that there is no semantic or referential aspect of a word that may not be open to objection and challenge. While this is hardly a revolutionary observation, it is not at all clear how any type of linguistic analysis could arbitrate between the conflicting interpretations. Was Corbyn's speech anti-Semitic, or anti-Zionist, and what is the difference between the two? In Corbyn's speech, was Zionist interchangeable with Jew? These are questions which cannot be adjudicated through appeal to linguistic analysis as they do not have objective answers; i.e. the questions are not 'scientific'. They are, rather, part of the on-going critical apprehension and response to "communicative practices and products" that all of us, as "ordinary language users" engage in as part of everyday communicative practice (Jones 2007: 366). Although some participants may, themselves, think there are scientific grounds of some kind to which to appeal (as in the case of Corbyn claiming that he was using the term Zionist in its "accurate political sense") the disagreement and continuing debate between interlocutors strongly suggests that communication does not revolve around stable and intersubjectively identical

units, but is rather constantly open to negotiation and renewal, as are any 'meanings' or interpretations taken from a communicative exchange.

Anthony Wootton (1975: 33) argues for a similar point, using *riot* and *demonstration* as examples. Wootton suggests that one difference between the terms is that *riot* presupposes that "laws are being broken". However, questions such as: *are laws being broken by necessity or voluntarily?* and *"does the breaking of any law by any number of participants warrant" the use of the term riot over demonstration?* (Wootton 1975: 33) become relevant when the terms are used in specific situations. On occasion, Wootton (1975: 33) reminds the reader, the answers to these, and similar, questions can be so ambiguous as to require arbitration through legal enquiry. Perhaps the principle point being made by Wootton (1975: 34) is that all such judgements are defeasible.

### **Repetition Revisited: an Integrational Account**

Despite denying that utterances, words, or communicative situations, can be repeated in any objective sense, in actuality, the integrationist position does not at all deny the possibility of repetition; but rather takes any judgement of what is deemed to be a repetition to be situationally-bound and subjective. Therefore, the criteria for judging similarity will vary from one occasion to the next and are themselves subjective and context-bound. Take the following, imagined, communicative interaction, for example (adapted from Love 2007: 706):

What's your brother's name again, [pɪ:θə]? Yes, [pɪ:tər]

What's your brother's name again, [pɪ:θə]? No, [pɪ:tər]

From an integrational perspective, there is no objective answer to the question whether the above provides examples of repetition. Just as what is 'the same' context for one person, may not be for another; what is judged to be two instances of the same word is a situated judgement; "there is no higher court of appeal" (Harris 1998a: 145) as to what is, and what is

not, two instances of the same word - only the situationally-bound judgement of an individual at a particular time and place (see for example, Love 2007: 706).

The following example<sup>13</sup>, perhaps pushes at (and beyond) the limits of Love's (2007: 706) remarks that often a repetition will not be "anything objectively *like* the original" but, rather, "will merely be similar to the first in whatever dimensions of similarity" are contextually relevant and useful. However, from an integrational perspective, it may be more useful to think about what is "carried forward" (Jones 2017a: 14) from one interaction to the next. This could be a more fruitful way to 'frame' the issue; rather than, for example, debating whether one instance of language use is a repetition of another. While such issues may have great import in the general cut and thrust of everyday human interaction, such a debate, from an integrational perspective, when conducted along the familiar lines of traditional linguistic enquiry, is a sterile one.

(1) Brenda: *it's bin night tonight*

(2) Simon: *you've got your shoes on*

The scenario can be extended by imagining a future, related interaction:

(3) Cathy: *how's Simon been recently, any better*

(4) Brenda: *he's still a lazy so and so, if that's what you mean*

(5) Cathy: *really*

(6) Brenda: *yeah, only last night he told me to take the bins out*

(7) Cathy: *and you in your condition, what was his excuse*

(8) Brenda: *he said I'd got my shoes on*

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<sup>13</sup> This example is very loosely adapted from a transcription used by Jonathan Potter (1996: 108) in his book *Representing reality: discourse, rhetoric and social construction*. The original utterance *you've got your shoes on* was used as a "request" for an interlocutor to investigate a suspicious noise heard at night, outside the house where the interaction took place.

(9) Cathy: *typical*

Rather than be concerned with the question as to whether Brenda repeats what was originally said by Simon, and if so, whether she repeats what was said once, or twice, Brenda's subsequent conversation with Cathy might be seen as a *response* to her initial conversation with Simon. Perhaps she took Simon's comment concerning shoes to be a demand, an excuse, and/or a sign of the pair's worsening relationship. If her aim is to convey this impression to Cathy, then describing her interaction with Simon as *him having told her to take the bins out*, could, perhaps, better facilitate the *integration* of Cathy's experience and opinions on the matter with Brenda's own wants and needs, than would a more closely 'word for word' account. In this way Brenda's response to her initial conversation with Simon is *reflexive*—in that it demonstrates that Brenda has reflected on her previous encounter with Simon and 'remade it' for the purposes of her present communicational engagement with Cathy. Jones (2017a: 14) describes this reflexivity as a property of people, not language, born of people's ability to creatively, and constructively, "take a particular interaction forward".

The value of this account can be seen when considering alternatives to how Brenda might have recounted her conversation with Simon. She may, memory allowing, have given what she considers to be a verbatim account, or, could have stressed that Simon's motivation for acting as he did possibly arose from a concern that Brenda has not been following doctor's orders to get more exercise since her operation. What may be important to Brenda, is not what Simon said (in some verbatim sense), but how she integrated Simon's activity into her own in the first instance, and how she hopes to integrate her activity with Cathy's.

Jones (2017a: 15) argues that, what is carried forward from one interaction to the next need not be the "words", instead, what is "extracted" from a communicative situation, are such metalinguistic phenomena as "compliments, lies, questions, hesitations, confessions etc." (Jones 2017a: 14). Of course, we *may* 'repeat something verbatim', and often have recourse

to such a verbal strategy; however, when doing so, "we are not somehow identifying the abstract unit of vocabulary" underlying the previous utterance but rather "we are simply repeating what we said—*i.e.* *producing another utterance* [emphasis added MS]" (Love 2007: 706); which is, again, a creative act, created in response to past experience and the demands of the present.

In this light, Langacker's (2013: 218) defence of the linguist's abstractions on the grounds that they *mirror* those of language users is called into question. The argument is not that abstractions such as those made by Langacker are not possible—Langacker's own work is very clear evidence to the contrary—but, rather, that any appeal that the linguist's abstractions should be viewed in the same light as those made by communicators in more mundane circumstances, may be misguided for an approach that hopes to maintain a scientific status. One reason is that any 'abstractions' made by the ordinary speaker may be contested, ridiculed, and apologised for, and so cannot provide the scientific rigour required by those linguists, such as Langacker, who claim scientific credentials. On a similar topic, Wootton (1975: 82) discusses some of the problems encountered when attempting to analyse "parent-child talk in the home", stating that:

"[a] child or adult can always fault the categorisations that we [analysts MS] made by virtue of the fact that the meaning of an utterance is never provided for by any specifiable and checkable set of conditions which would allow an analyst to be sure of, and able to defend, his reading of the piece". (Wootton 1975: 82)

The root of the problem, for Wootton (1975: 85) is that: "the basis upon which such classifications are made is not explicated and open to replication by other analysts, and that the relation between the categorisation arrived at by the investigator and the sense extracted from an utterance by a hearer is uncertain". This is certainly the case in mundane situations, such as that represented by Brenda, who may have taken Simon's utterance as a *demand*, and taken this classification of his contribution 'forward' into her exchange with Cathy. However, this 'abstraction' is not 'objective' or 'stable', as it can be open to further debate

and clarification or re-consideration on Brenda's part. For example, this assessment of Simon's behaviour could be challenged by Cathy (*he'd never do such a thing, surely he must have had his reasons*) or by Simon during a future exchange (*I was only suggesting you take the bins out, you silly thing, sorry if it came across as a demand*); thus, the abstractions of the ordinary speaker are not 'scientific'; being totally negotiable, and, therefore, only have a very "provisional determinacy" (Harris 1998a: 84): they are calculated for the purposes of a specific communicational encounter. While Langacker (2013: 10) may see his analyses as never being "completely exhaustive", there is an assumption that it is possible to identify, and abstract, core/literal meanings, which are intersubjective and stable across episodes of use. These abstractions are quite unlike those of the lay speaker in everyday communicative interaction.

Again, it is the principle of cotemporality which prevents such 'linguistic facts' being uncovered; in that, for such 'facts', or 'linguistic units', to be stable, they would have to sit outside the time-track of communication. Harris expresses the type of abstraction made by many linguists thus:

"[It] is not a viable strategy unless one abstracts from the actual temporal course of events involved in communication and resorts to identifying the sign by some set of a-temporal qualitative features. These are usually features that can be defined by reference to static properties of a perceived form, which is, *by this very process of abstraction*, assimilated to a stable material object, regardless of whether there is in fact any such object involved at all." (Harris 1996a: 154)

Jones (2017a: 12) proposes a distinction between the abstractions of the ordinary language user, as previously described, and the abstractions of the analytical linguist; the former being activity "that everybody engages in, and must engage in", the latter being "logically impossible". One reason for the linguist's abstractions being logically impossible is indicated by Harris in the above excerpt, i.e. to identify, and abstract, stable units these would have to be "a-temporal"—i.e. sit outside the time-track of communication.

## **Stepping Outside the Time-Track**

Another way of expressing the principle of cotemporality is to say that it is not possible to *step outside* the time-track of communication. Quite how this stepping-out would be achieved is unclear; Harris is unequivocal on the impossibility of such a venture:

"The integrational perspective sees us as making linguistic signs as we go; and as having no alternative but to do this, because language is time-bound. For the integrationist, we are time-bound agents, in language as in all other activities. There is no way we can step outside the time-track of communication." (Harris 1998a: 81)

It may seem, expressed in these terms, foolhardy to make any attempt to do just what Harris is describing as impossible—i.e. step outside the time track of communication. However, to provide an intersubjective answer to the question *what is the meaning of x?*, this is exactly what would be logically required. All interpretations of a particular utterance are time-bound—it is not possible to decontextualise the question of what an expression 'means'—all such judgements are inexorably tied to the communicative situation in which they occur.

To begin to illustrate what is meant by this assertion, it may be useful to return to the case of the waiters, and the customer, who, having ordered a ham sandwich, now wants the bill. Rather than pose the question, *what does x mean?*, x, in this case, being *the ham sandwich wants the bill*, an integrationist may want to consider how the whole situation involving the utterance in question could be integrated differently by a waiter, customer and linguist. Previously, this was viewed from the perspective of the waiters, and how the utterance might be integrated into *their* activity; hopefully now with some appreciation of how Amy (the speaker) could have 'taken forward' the customer's request for the bill, as a means of facilitating further activity (see Jones 2017a: 13), with (presumably), the aim of ensuring the customer receives her bill. Upon hearing Amy's remarks, Bob integrates the exchange with Amy into *his* activity to facilitate the task at hand—getting the bill to the customer (again, presumably)—other courses of action would, of course, be available; from quitting the

thankless job on the spot, to paying the customer's bill himself). It is informative, however, to consider the differences between how the remark may be integrated by the waiter, compared with the overhearing-customer.

We may speculate how the customer (Jane), who ordered the ham sandwich, would almost certainly integrate what a linguist may take to be 'the same utterance' (*the ham sandwich wants the bill*) quite differently from Bob (she would be unlikely, for example, to get out of her seat and walk over to the till area to retrieve her own bill). One of the most obvious differences is that, for Jane, the utterance does not have a specific purpose, in the same way, or perhaps to the extent, that it does for Bob; one reason being that the utterance was not 'meant for her', not created for whatever purposes Jane has to hand. Instead, the event may go almost entirely unnoticed, or, perhaps, be seen as something of a *curio*, a possible 'conversation piece', to be integrated into communicative activity with a dining partner in the café, or another person at a later time (*isn't it funny that I was referred to as a ham sandwich*). In this sense, Jane may consider the actual words that were used, and subsequently reflect on the use of the term *ham sandwich*, in a way which the waiters perhaps would not in the normal course of events. In this sense the language used may be less "transparent" (Jones 2017a) for Jane than they are for Bob, in that the words themselves come into greater focus.

That Jane is able to 'consider the words' is incontrovertible, and would seem to be a necessary ability to be counted as a fully-fledged member of a language community. This is perhaps most clear in the case of literacy where it is difficult to conceive of how we could "have the cultural practice of writing if we could not refer to a word or utterance, not make such (e.g. English) reflexive remarks as "*You write it like this*", or "*Write down what she says*"" (Taylor 2000: 488). However, such metalinguistic practices are also a vital facet of spoken communication. For affirmation of this assertion, one need only consider the consequences of not being able to ask about such things as *what someone was talking about*, *what something is called*, or *what someone meant* (Taylor 2000: 485) in our everyday

conversational practices. However, just as when we 'repeat' something previously said, we are not "identifying abstract unit[s] of vocabulary" (Love 2007: 706), the same can be said for when we 'identify a word' or 'sequence of words'. Rather, we are creatively 'putting into action' our metalinguistic know-how, which involves our well-exercised and finely-honed abilities to recognise patterns and similarity; though, as ever, the criteria for what is similar, or constitutes a pattern, and therefore, 'the same word', are situationally-bound.

The suggestion is, that while for much of our communicative experience we may not "say or hear words" (Voloshinov 1973: 70, cited in Jones 2017a: 10)—and Bob's integration of *the ham sandwich wants the bill* would seem to be a strong contender for an occasion where this might be the case—but that our metalinguistic and reflexive dexterity *enables* us to bring 'words' into greater or lesser focus. There are many occasions when 'focusing on the words' has a useful function; trying to ascertain whether the manager's words should be seen as a suggestion that a promotion may be on the horizon, for example, or when 'choosing one's words carefully' to, negotiate a suitable pay rise to go with the expected promotion. Though undoubtedly common, it is not clear that this type of activity is characteristic of communication generally, or, analogously, that Jane's integration of the *ham sandwich* exchange would be more representative of communication generally than are the communicative practices of the waiters in this example.

Perhaps the most important issue for the current discussion is whether this 'third party stance' provides Jane with a more objective position (than that of the waiters) from which to view the communicative situation. It is not clear that this should be answered in the affirmative. Jane's position certainly does not provide an access route which will lead outside the time-track of her communicative activity; she can choose to act on hearing the utterance or not; but any action, such as talking about the utterance to another person, will inevitably be bound by the principle of cotemporality, as is all human communication. For Jane to discuss the *ham sandwich* comment with an interlocutor, she has no choice but to "turn

language back on itself" (Firth<sup>14</sup> 1957, cited in: Harris 1998a: 100), i.e. use language to talk (or write, sign etc.) about language. This involves the creation of sound waves (or inscriptions, gestures etc.), which are then available as 'material' for other communicators to integrate as signs into *their* stream of communicative activity—i.e. is the same as all other human communication, no matter to what extent the communication may exhibit reflexive and metalinguistic practice.

Though the analogy should certainly not be pushed too far, the approach of the linguist can be viewed as more akin to the customer in this example than the waiter. The similarities include issues such as the extent to which the 'words used' are brought into focus, the extent to which the words were 'meant for' the customer, compared to the waiter, and, therefore, how instrumental the phrase may be in terms of facilitating further activity. However, perhaps the most crucial similarity is that Jane is using her metalinguistic abilities to talk about a communicative situation and offering a response to a particular episode in her communicative experience. This is a reflexive and *creative* process on Jane's part, and though certainly different, her integration of the action, and, her subsequent reaction to that integration, is no more, or less, objective than the integration and response of the waiters. In these respects, the linguist is in exactly the same situation as Jane. No amount of creative, metalinguistic ingenuity can ever 'turn off' the linguist's own creative, reflexive relationship with the 'data' under consideration—in other words, the linguist's 'seeing' linguistic data is the product of a particular communicational relationship with the material under investigation—at no point does the communicative *process* become a first-order linguistic *object* (Love 2017: 705). Any data under analysis can only ever be 'material' (sound waves, inscriptions, video recording etc.) with the potential to be integrated as signs-in-context by the analyst; just as any 'products' of the analysis provide further 'material' with the potential to facilitate further communicative activity further along the time-track of communication, be it

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<sup>14</sup> Harris (1998a: 100) writes that Firth failed to acknowledge the reflexive character of "everyday discourse", concentrating solely on this characteristic of linguistic analysis. Integrationists, particularly through the work of Taylor (e.g. 2000), have come to recognise the importance of reflexivity in all communicative activity.

in the form of spoken communication (in a seminar setting for example) or written form (in a linguistics textbook for instance). This is what it means to say that it is not possible to step outside the time-track of communication, or, in Love's (2007: 705) words, that language is "interpretatively terminal".

Linguistic analysis is a reflexive, metalinguistic, communicative process and is, therefore, *creative*, not *descriptive* (Jones 2017a: 15). If there are no linguistic objects to be found, any 'findings' arising from theoretical linguistic 'description' are metalinguistic "constructs" (Jones 2017a: 15) in that they are created by the linguist in the course of the particular form of metalinguistic activity that is linguistic description. To illustrate the creative facet of linguistic description Harris discusses an analogy used by Wittgenstein (1974: 77 cited in: Harris 1998a: 98), which compares painting and the investigation of language:

"If we look at the actual use of a word, what we see is something constantly fluctuating [and when we investigate language we (Harris 1998a: 98)] set over against this fluctuation something more fixed, just as one paints a stationary picture of the constantly altering face of the landscape."

With this analogy Harris (1998a: 99) argues that by using painting as an example—as opposed to, say photography—Wittgenstein recognises that the principle of cotemporality is applicable to "both our verbal activities and to our intellectual enquiries into those activities", in that both the activity of painting and any changes in the landscape occur simultaneously and in real time. Harris then asks the question of what is actually shown by the artist's painting, and whether anything is actually 'recorded' in the picture. Harris' answer to these questions is perhaps worth consideration in full:

"The answer most in line with integrationist thinking is one which treats the picture as a creative construction by the painter. This construction is based not only on what the painter sees - or saw a few moments ago - but on many previous experiences of looking at landscapes *and painting*. It is, furthermore, a construction which reflects the painter's current interest in certain aspects of visual experience and certain features of the landscape; for no

painting can capture everything visible. It may also reflect much else, depending on the purpose for which the painting is being executed, the taste of potential buyers, etc. In short, the painting is itself a contextualized product of the integration of past, present and projected future activities by the painter. ... Furthermore - and this is perhaps the most important point - the integration of activities in question actually affects and is crucial to the production: the painter looks at the landscape with a different eye when painting. Recontextualizing the landscape is a *sine qua non* for painting it." (Harris 1998a: 99)

From this perspective it is possible to see how the linguistic descriptions offered by Langacker and Jackendoff are themselves creative acts and that the 'objects of investigation'—or linguistic 'data'—for Langacker and Jackendoff are not reifications of instances of (hypothetical) language use, but are, just yet more signs-in-context, or, at least, 'material' which becomes a situated sign-in-context when integrated into the communication stream of the linguist conducting the analysis. This is the principle difference between the painter and the linguist (Harris 1998a: 100), in that the product of the painter's enterprise—the painting—has a relationship to the landscape being painted that is quite distinct from the relationship between the 'material' that is subject to analysis, and the 'products' of the linguist, which, as previously described, are of exactly the same order.

We are now, perhaps, in a position to consider the *actions* of linguists, such as Jackendoff and Langacker, in light of an integrational critique. An early step in the process is to approach the 'data' under consideration in a particular way, a manner, in some ways more alike the customer than the waiter in the *ham sandwich* scenario, though quite distinct from both. This approach involves focusing on the words being studied, looking at them as words, or combinations of words, rather than as part of a stream of communicative activity, as might do the waiters. This, however, is perhaps the initial, and most fundamental, error on the part of the descriptive linguist—to fail to recognise that the signs-in-context being studied can only be integrated into the linguists' activity, i.e. the signs (the linguistic 'data') which the linguist claims to *study* are actually the product of the linguist's own sign-making practices in

context, backed by many previous experiences of looking at ‘words’ in this way in accordance with particular academic traditions.

The fundamental error in supposing that pragmatic and semantic meaning can be divorced lies in the failure to recognise that such a separation is a function of the ‘pragmatic context’ of linguistic analysis itself as a communicative process. The particular perspective which linguists bring to their analysis of language is inseparable from any results arising through that analysis. When conducting a linguistic analysis, Jackendoff and Langacker proceed to integrate past experience, which, in part, could be seen as bringing to bear their, not inconsiderable, metalinguistic skills—born of decades of practice in the educational and academic institutions of where they live and work—with the goal of facilitating the aim of their respective research paradigms, i.e. to uncover generalities of semantic meaning.

However, the issue of *uncovering* is problematic. It is here that Langacker’s (1991: 507) observation that “what one finds in language depends in large measure on what one expects to find” really hits home with maximum force. Langacker’s remark is indeed insightful, but fails to acknowledge the creative aspect of linguistic analysis. As in landscape painting, so in linguistic analysis: nothing is *found*, only *created*. There is nothing to be discovered, and so the expectations of the analyst no doubt have a large effect on the enterprise, but in a manner similar to the beach-goer who has far more say in how a sandcastle will turn out than in what may be found amongst the flotsam and jetsam brought in by the tide. While our metalinguistic know-how may *enable* such phenomena as described by Jackendoff and Langacker to be identified, the ability to do so does not in itself confirm that such descriptions should be given priority over the lay metalinguistic and communicative practices of the ordinary speaker.

## **What of the Prospects of an Integrational Linguistics?**

What then, of the prospects of a linguistics conducted along the principles of integrationism as discussed in these passages? As previously mentioned, Borsley and Newmeyer (1997: 64) make an extremely negative assessment of the prospects of an integrational linguistics: "there is no sign that they [integrationists MS] are developing an alternative approach to linguistics. 'Integrational linguistics' is no more than a name for a promissory note" (cf. the previous assessment of the ability of CS to account for contextual complexity). Though certainly less damning, this assertion is echoed in Stockwell's (Trask and Stockwell 2007: 120) aforementioned summary of integrational linguistics, which states that: "[w]hile persuasive as an idealization, it is difficult to see what an integrationist practical analysis would actually look like". Does integrationism offer more than a promissory note?

It may be argued, that in certain respects, if Harris' work is taken in isolation, this assertion may be seen to have an element of truth within it. Wolf and Love (1997: 311) express the following opinion of Harris' work:

"[T]he core of Roy Harris's contribution to language study consists of a rejection of the assumptions underlying mainstream theorising, together with an outline of the principles of a conceptually sounder approach"

It would seem, however, that the term "promissory note" is an overly pejorative label to apply, and that Wolf and Love's characterisation of aspects of Harris' work as providing an *outline* is a more accurate description. As early as 1981, in the seminal publication *The Language Myth* Harris explicitly addresses the question of what a "demythologised linguistics" would look like (1981: 164). Included in Harris' (1981: 165) description of a demythologised, or integrational, linguistics is the assertion that:

"First and foremost, an integrational linguistics must recognise that human beings inhabit a communicational space which is not neatly compartmentalised into language and non-language. The consequences of this 'non-compartmentalisation principle' are basic for the

methodology of linguistic studies. It renounces in advance the possibility of setting up systems of forms and meanings which will 'account for' a central core of linguistic behaviour irrespective of the situation and communicational purposes involved."

A further characteristic of an integrational linguistics would be that:

"The basic principle which an integrational linguistics will be concerned to give adequate expression to is that language is continuously created by the interactions of individuals in specific communication situations." (Harris 1981: 167)

For Harris the starting point for linguistics should be:

"[A]n investigation of the renewal of language as a continuously creative process. Awareness of this process is the all-pervasive—and perhaps only authentic—characteristic of the individual's involvement in language. In this sense, the aim of a demythologised linguistics would be to provide an account of linguistic experience." (Harris 1981: 164)

At the very least, therefore, it would appear that Harris attempts to indicate a starting point that may lead to a more "authentic" linguistics that could better provides an account of communication as experienced by real life human communicators. Of relevance to this issue is Pablé's (2018: 5n5) distinction between 'first' and 'second' generation integrationists. Under this categorisation, Harris and Love would be classed as first generation integrationists, whose work was, perhaps, primarily concerned with producing highly critical, yet extremely cogent, accounts of mainstream approaches in linguistics, while 'outlining' what an integrational approach may look like. Among the second generation integrationist scholars, Pablé (2018: 2) highlights the work of Jones (e.g. 2018) and Duncker (e.g. 2017), as showing how, "building on Harrisian core concepts" new directions may be forged for "an integrational semiology". Additionally, there are up-and-coming scholars (e.g. van den Herik 2017) working within the integrational paradigm, who are attempting to make connections between integrational ideas and certain 'unorthodox' approaches to cognition, such as Hutto's (e.g. Hutto and Myin 2013) *Radical Enactivism*.

Jones (2017a), for example, has developed ideas in the Soviet scholar Valentin Voloshinov's work on linguistic reflexivity and transparency (Voloshinov 1973: cited in: Jones 2017a: 10), with Erving Goffman's notion of "situated activity systems" (Goffman 1972: 8, cited in: Jones 2017a: 10)" to provide a new perspective on how everyday communication takes place within, the previously mentioned, "specially organized frames of situated activity" (Jones 2017a: 15). This approach aids a more holistic assessment of how communicative activity occurs within "activity frames" and how the everyday linguistically reflexive practices of communicators help "to progress instrumentally relevant and efficacious communicative moves within ongoing lines of action" (Jones 2017a: 15). On Jones' view, such an approach helps "to distance us from the highly intellectualised view of linguistic interaction in terms of 'rules and units' or 'code plus inference' which still dominates the language sciences" (Jones 2017a: 15).

Integrationists have also attempted to find common ground with other, current, approaches in linguistics and 'cognitive' fields of research. One, relatively early example was *distributed cognition* (e.g. Clark 1997). In 2003 a conference of the mind AND world working group was held to help facilitate a productive exchange between researchers in "various aspects of distributed cognition with avowed integrationist linguists, or researchers sympathetic to the integrationist project" (Spurrett 2004: 497). Although the results of the exchange were not entirely upbeat, there being "clear grounds for both optimism and pessimism" at least "a conversation of sorts does seem to have been started" (Spurrett 2004: 498). It is hoped that a better prospect is offered through the intellectual engagement between integrationism and radical enactivism. Jasper van den Herik (2017), for example, has begun to attempt to address questions that, traditionally, have been more the preserve of cognitive scholars using integrationist ideas about metalanguage and reflexivity. This paper makes a tentative exploration of linguistic knowledge using ideas from Hutto's radical enactivism, an account of cognition which eschews the notion of "internal representations" (van den Herik 2017: 17), combined with "an account of linguistic knowledge in terms of Rylean (e.g. Ryle 1946, cited

in: van den Herik 2017: 22) know-how" (van den Herik 2017: 18) and Taylor's (1990, cited in van den Herik 2017: 18) "criterial relations". Though still in the early stages, it would seem unfair to accuse integrationists of failing to engage constructively with other academic disciplines.

Duncker's work (e.g. 2017) is particularly pertinent to the current discussion, in that it challenges Love's (2007: 706) assertion that, linguistics is "logically impossible". The reason for optimism, on Duncker's (2017: 29) view, is that while episodes of communication are "unarguably unique and non-reproducible" it remains possible to conduct linguistic enquiry into "dynamic processes". The key to a logically possible linguistics, for Duncker, is reflexivity, which rather than "making linguists uneasy" (see Love 2007: 705) should be seen as "the solution" to conducting linguistics, so long as the "temporal track of reflexivity is analytically preserved" (Duncker 2017: 29). Duncker's work shows that the reflexive and creative processes of individual communicative agents can be "monitored analytically over quite extensive periods of time" if "these matters are approached in a way that does not in principle differ from how communicating participants themselves exploit the reflexivity of language" (2017: 40). This may be read as an assertion that rather than shy away from the issues raised in this thesis, linguists ought to embrace the realities of situated communicative activity while accepting the role of the linguist as being part of that communicative process; only once this is done may linguistics proceed along realistic, and feasible, lines.

## Conclusion

So what of the prospects of CS and CG? The two theories, despite substantial theoretical differences, and variations in approach, ultimately face the same charge: a reliance on some kind of determinate semantic core for which, it has been argued, the case is not made, but only assumed in the work of Jackendoff and Langacker. In this sense, from the integrational perspective taken in this thesis, the similarity between approaches outweighs the difference. There are of course differences, one, particularly crucial, is that as a means of accounting for the view of communication advocated in Chapter Three, the CS approach can only lead to a dead end. The nativist modular view of cognition presented in the CS framework is too closely wedded to semantic determinacy. If the idea of semantic determinacy is to be jettisoned, then the thesis of modularly-organised, innate primitives must follow a similar trajectory.

However, despite offering a framework that is possibly better equipped to describe the indeterminacy inherent in communication, in terms of the correspondence between theory and practice, the charge against Langacker is the more serious. Langacker's approach, in practice, clashes with the professed commitment to a non-modular, embodied conception of cognitive activity, due to the way research is conducted by concentrating on the 'semantic' aspects of meaning. This suggests it may be beneficial for CL and CG practitioners to look to more holistic approaches to communication, such as that offered by scholars working within the 'outlines' set out by Harris, with the aim of developing an approach which can better accommodate the theoretical developments made within the CL paradigm.

There is something defeatist in Stockwell's (Trask and Stockwell 2007: 120) summary of integrationism. It would seem more fitting with the spirit of academic pursuit to embrace the challenge of developing new approaches, if, that is, those new perspectives offer the promise of a better, and more realistic, understanding of communicative processes. It has

been argued in this thesis that integrationism does offer such a promise, even if realising that promise means questioning the very nature of what we, as linguists, are doing. There is strong evidence in Jackendoff and Langacker's writing that they have thought a great deal about 'what they are doing' qua linguists and this is felt no more keenly than in the passages concerning the division of pragmatic and semantic meaning. It is difficult not to read these passages as expressing at least some reservations about the nature of linguistic enquiry, and the decision to "carry on as before" (see Harris 2002b: 3) seems premature in light of the insights offered by Harris.

The question is raised, therefore, of what Jackendoff and Langacker *are* doing when 'describing language', or, rather, describing the cognitive processes underlying language. This thesis has attempted to investigate this question in terms of integration, and, if the answers proffered are at all accurate, then Jackendoff and Langacker's very asking of the question whether semantic and pragmatic meaning can be separated suggests that they themselves are not fully taking into account what linguists qua linguists are doing when conducting research. However, even if this is the case, it may be hasty to conclude that, therefore, CS and CG have nothing of value to offer. Even if what Jackendoff and Langacker offer is a misconception of language and communication, value may still lie in investigating the type of linguistic analysis conducted by such scholars as metalinguistic, communicative activity. The fact that human communicators are able to achieve such complex and detailed metalinguistic feats as Jackendoff and Langacker should be of interest to researchers whose concern is to study the metalinguistic practices at play in communication. It is only through such a type of investigation that it will be possible to determine what, if anything, the communicative activity of Langacker and Jackendoff can reveal about the metalinguistic ability of human communicators.

Finally, though perhaps in itself not a reason to favour one approach over another, integrationism seems to offer a more *positive* portrayal of the nature of human communication and agency; highlighting, as it does, our ability:

"[B]orn and honed in our real life experiences of social action, to intervene purposefully and effectively in the real situations which confront us, the power to acquire and possess such a feel for the relevant contours and possibilities of a given context that we can creatively adapt our own efforts to its unique challenges and transformational possibilities." (Jones 2017b: 209)

Thus, the innovation that lies behind all human endeavours is brought to the fore; rather than seen as a problem to be abstracted and generalised away. In this respect, integrationism offers a far richer portrait of human communicative experience, and indicates a way to approach communication which embraces the dynamicity and creativity experienced by all individuals making their way in the world.

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