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## **Introduction**

### **The role of change in usage-based conceptions of language**

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#### **1. Outlook**

Rooted in theoretical works of the late twentieth century (e.g., Langacker 1987, 1988), the usage-based study of language has become a visible trend in linguistics in the past decade (Kemmer & Barlow 2000, Langacker 2000, Tomasello 2003, Bybee 2006, 2010). This still developing approach challenges the focus in linguistics on the linguistic system in its own right, i.e. in isolation from its use in human interaction and its relation with general human cognition, which dominated linguistics in the twentieth century. In contrast, usage-based models of language assume an intimate relation between linguistic structure and usage. Yet, usage-based models are not one homogeneous theory of language but rather converging ideas within a larger functional/cognitive framework.

While usage-based approaches to *language* have become more and more established and accepted in the past twenty years, the aspect that we wish to put in the foreground is the notion of *change*. The authors who have contributed to this volume – while displaying usage-based approaches from different angles and with a varying share of theoretical and empirical issues – are all committed to cases or issues of language change in the light of usage-based accounts. The general objective in this volume is not so much the claim that language change is driven by language usage. This claim probably would not be perceived as controversial any longer and it would probably conflict only with orthodox believers in the postulate of first language acquisition as the sole locus of change. Rather, we as editors wish to argue that instances of language change need to receive more central attention in usage-based approaches to language and, ultimately, are central for our understanding of the nature of human language.

This introductory article aims at preparing the different discussions in this book, by sketching the theoretical background of usage-based approaches to language, by showing why change and variation are crucial and ultimately necessary aspects of usage-based accounts, and finally, by suggesting the possible theoretical impact of this line of thinking.

#### **2. Original context of the notion ‘usage-based’**

Originally, the notion of ‘usage-based’ was used to highlight a methodological and theoretical contrast between Cognitive and Generative Linguistics. The earliest use of the notion ‘usage-based’ in a linguistic context can be found in Langacker (1987: 46), where it is employed in a descriptive sense to distinguish his concept of ‘Cognitive Grammar’ from ‘Generative Grammar’. Initially, Langacker draws on the term primarily to endorse his claim that “irregular and idiosyncratic phenomena” need to be accommodated into a convincing theory

of language. A little later, in Langacker 1988, he again contrasts ‘Cognitive Grammar’ (or ‘Cognitive Linguistics’, for that matter) with generative presuppositions about linguistic theory. He then specifies (1988: 131):

In describing cognitive grammar as a “usage-based” model of language structure, I have in mind the “maximalist”, “non-reductive”, and “bottom-up” character of the general approach (as compared to the minimalist, reductive, and top-down spirit of the generative tradition).

‘Bottom-up’ here means that usage data are the basis for the mental representations in contrast to the generative tenet that these representations originate in some language faculty, i.e., a genetically determined module in the human brain. Although Langacker’s 1987 (and 1991) monograph is one of the first prominent theoretical studies that explicitly and generally question both generative methodology and an important share of the theoretical presuppositions of generative linguistics, Langacker nevertheless retains a number of crucial concepts that have been introduced by the generative framework. What is most of all retained as a common ground is the idea that the structures that form the linguistic system are located in human cognition (hence *Cognitive Linguistics*).

The crucial theoretical novelty in Langacker’s approach was that mental representations are based on usage rather than on an innate language faculty.<sup>1</sup> ‘Usage’ here is understood as interaction between speaker and hearer. The main contrast is then that the access of speakers to usage data was either taken to be significant (Cognitive Grammar) or irrelevant (Generative Grammar).

The contrastive spirit in the use of the term ‘usage-based’ is also reflected in later characterizations of the usage-based approaches to language. Kemmer & Barlow (2000: viii-xxii) list the following key features that are shared by most usage-based models:

- an intimate relation between linguistic structures and instances of use of language,
- the importance of frequency,
- comprehension and production as integral, rather than peripheral, to the linguistic system,
- focus on the role of learning and experience in language acquisition,
- linguistic representations as emergent, rather than as fixed entities,
- importance of usage data in theory construction and description,
- the intimate relation between usage, synchronic variation and diachronic change,
- the interconnectedness of the linguistic system with non-linguistic cognitive systems,
- the crucial role of context in the operation of the linguistic system.

Not all of these points are equally central for a usage-based understanding of language. Some of them seem (nowadays) almost trivial, but should be seen as a response to the huge impact

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<sup>1</sup> Geeraerts & Cuyckens (2007: 5-6) point out that there is another fundamental distinction between Cognitive Grammar and Generative Grammar. While the former sees mental representations of linguistic structures as representing world structures and thus as knowledge about the world, the latter views mental representations as an individual knowledge about language alone. But this distinction, crucial though it is, does not concern us here.

some Chomskyan presuppositions have had on linguistics. In other words, had there not been very influential claims to their contrary from the generative tradition, it had not been as important to point them out. For instance the interconnectedness of language with other areas of cognition deserves mention because the Chomskyan project started off by claiming not only the autonomy of the language faculty, but also a relative autonomy of certain areas of linguistic description such as syntax and morphology. Also, that language data should be taken from usage is ultimately a response to the methodological assumption that the best access a linguist can get to language was the speaker's intuition. It is reminiscent of this theoretical opposition when Harder (2012: 507-8) refers to the generative framework as the starting point of usage-based approaches.

Kemmer & Barlow's list is intended to characterise usage-based approaches in their entirety. This offers a potential for different foci or different viewpoints on a number of details. The almost natural consequence of this variety of aspects is that, as with many other linguistic notions, the more linguists commit themselves to usage-based approaches, the more ideas there are about what exactly usage-based means or does not mean. There are therefore various viewpoints about which of the features that Kemmer & Barlow 2000 summarise are more central and which are more peripheral. Accordingly, the contributions that are included in this volume cover an array of perspectives that can all be situated within the spectrum of usage-based approaches as listed above. In spite of the necessarily resulting diversity in details, all texts in this volume share the thought that language change is inextricably linked with linguistic usage.

As indicated above, the position that human language is primarily a cognitive phenomenon forms in principle a common ground for all theoretical models that are derived from both Generative and Cognitive Linguistics. We will indicate further below (§ 3) that, particularly if one acknowledges usage (speaker-hearer interaction) as the / a pivotal motor in the formation of linguistic structures, this 'cognitivist position' is certainly a plausible, but by far not a necessary presupposition. For the moment, we will remain neutral to this question, but acknowledge that usage-based approaches have usually been by default also cognitivist approaches. We first wish to discuss the interrelation between usage and structures that forms the defining element of 'usage-based approaches' in general.

### **3. The interplay between usage and grammar**

The crucial question is how exactly does usage affect structure. On the cognitivist assumption that linguistic structure is located in human cognition and that this structure is essentially usage-based, mental structure can be thought to interact with usage in online mental processing, i.e. in the production of language utterances (selecting an appropriate structure to communicate one's intentions and translating linguistic structure into an acoustic string) and the comprehension of language utterances (mapping an acoustic string on a linguistic structure and interpreting from it the speaker's intention). Given that processing functions as an interface between structure and usage this brings along that usage basically boils down to the exchange of an utterance in the speaker-hearer interaction (a so-called usage event). It is

assumed that the mapping of structure and usage in production and comprehension is not ‘flawless’ (see below, § 4), so that structure is open to variation, and hence to change.

Often, but not exclusively, it has been the study of grammaticalization and related research that has addressed the question of how usage gives rise to linguistic innovation. Accordingly, a good number of types of language change that are relevant for usage-based approaches have been identified and analysed in this research context. In the following, we will briefly sketch some important examples – types of innovation and change that exemplify ways in which usage and structure interact and therefore contribute to a usage-based perspective or, as we believe, even necessitate it.

In order to give rise to new meanings out of old ones – this is meant to include both new grammatical functions and lexical semantic change – usage-based approaches generally assume that in each usage event speaker and hearer engage in the negotiation of (new) meanings. The varying contexts of usage events invite the interlocutors to make **inferences** that interpret, enrich and modify the conventional meaning of utterances. Through repetition, these ‘Invited Inferences’ (Traugott & Dasher 2002), which are context-dependent and cancellable, may become part of the conventional meaning of an expression and thus of the linguistic structure. Ideas about the details of these scenarios vary: Traugott and colleagues have mainly focused on the fact that the speaker actively encodes pragmatic inferences in the expression (Traugott 1989, Traugott & König 1991, Traugott & Dasher 2002). Heine and colleagues on the other hand have investigated the role of ‘bridging contexts’ in which these expressions invite for an innovative interpretation on behalf of the hearer (Heine, Claudi & Hünnemeyer 1991, Heine 2002, Diewald 2002). Irrespective of these differences, the general idea that bending and eventually reshaping meaning, first through context-dependent inferences, then through repetition and conventionalization, can only be accounted for if we grant speaker-hearer interaction an active role in these processes. This is, for instance, conveniently shown in Gipper’s study (this volume) of the emergence of a mirative marker in Yurakaré out of an evidential marker. Her contribution demonstrates how synchronic data from hearer-speaker interactions in an isolate language in Bolivia reveal an ongoing change in the function of a verbal suffix. Hayase (this volume) similarly discusses the emergence of the suspended dangling participles *considering* and *moving on* in English. It is argued that these constructions come to develop (inter)subjective meanings through pragmatic strengthening in the speaker-hearer interaction.

Some expansions of the conventional use of an expression are motivated by pragmatic, social or psychological needs of the interlocutors. It is not that much the speaker’s aim to achieve any semantic effects, like additions or specifications, but innovative usage is triggered for instance by the mere wish to achieve the highest possible attention for the point a speaker intends to make, by the attempt to achieve a best possible basis for a potentially face threatening claim or simply the best possible self-image irrespective of the actual proposition. Formally, the simplest effects of this behaviour are cases of ‘**reinforcement**’ – the speakers’ tendency to augment highly frequent and therefore rather mundane expressions with additional material (e.g., *not at all* vs. *not*). The socio-psychological motivation for this behaviour is often labelled ‘**extravagance**’ or ‘**expressiveness**’ (see, e.g., Keller 1994: § 4).

Negotiating one's social stance or simply exerting politeness strategies are instantiated by resorting to new unexpected ways of expressing things. The negotiation of social codes between the speaker and hearer is essential, often more essential than the proposition of an utterance, as Ishiyama (this volume) points out.

A primarily logical pattern that has often been observed and referred to when explaining various types of language change at different levels is that of **analogy**. Basically, analogy is a construed correspondence between a known pattern and some element that is to be categorised or fit into a new instantiation of that pattern. The given pattern then serves as a model for a new structure. As this is logically an inference, many, if not all meaning changes are potentially analogical in structure. Most obviously, metaphorical extensions of lexical meaning share this pattern, for instance. However, analogy has long been acknowledged also as a model pattern for formal or structural changes. For instance, Fischer (2007, 2008, 2011) has repeatedly argued that speakers do not formulate expressions in a linguistic vacuum but they draw on existing linguistic structures while shaping new ones. Along these lines, De Smet (this volume) illustrates the innovative power of analogy by discussing the development of the present participle in French out of Latin gerunds and present participles. He argues that we are dealing with an innovative category as the present participle is neither a real gerund nor a real participle in syntactic terms. This new category emerged as a result of categorial incursion, whereby present participles are systematically reinterpreted as gerunds, or analogical extension, whereby gerunds gradually copy and take over the distribution of present participles.

Acknowledging the role of analogy in language change is of course a major endorsement of the cognitivist position. These types of transfer from a known structure onto a new pattern cannot be accounted for without cognitive activity on part of the individual speaker – in the form of analogical inferences during online mental processing. At the same time, a necessary precondition of such an analogical transfer is that there is some novel aspect in each usage event for which a known pattern is being employed. This, in turn, attests to the context-dependence of this process. If the individual usage events were irrelevant for this kind of innovative behaviour, then there would be neither any need nor any possibility to shape a new structural (or semantic) pattern.

The importance of existing structures for the shaping of new ones is also prevalent in the works of a group that is referred to as Danish Functionalists. They are represented in this book in the contributions by Heltoft, by Kragh & Schøsler and by Nørgård-Sørensen. The underlying presupposition in these studies have a lot in common with Langacker's general ideas, but they also draw on traditional structuralist thinking as that of Otto Jespersen and Louis Hjelmslev, and the work of Andersen (2006) on language change. They see the existing synchronic 'structure' as an active factor in innovation – albeit one that can only take effect in usage, that is, in the interaction between speaker and hearer. They analyse grammar as structured in paradigms, and by drawing on this notion they go beyond the traditional notion of a paradigm as in, say, morphological inflection. They include any paradigmatic relation, that is, any set of forms that can substitute each other. For instance, idiosyncrasies in paradigms ('empty distinctions' in Nørgård-Sørensen this volume) or invited inferences in

constructions (Kragh & Schøsler this volume) can cause analogical reinterpretations ('reanalyses' in their terminology) of structure that lead to the rearrangement or refunctionalization of existing paradigms (in this wide sense) or to the emergence of new ones. In these processes, "the rational, abductive inference of grammars *from utterances* [...] precedes any recombination of observed and stored utterance partials", according to Andersen (2006: 82-3; italics added).

Beyond the description and analysis of various types of language change that suggest close interdependency of linguistic usage and linguistic structure, there is another factor that has been long acknowledged to play a crucial role in language change and which cannot be accounted for without taking the usage side into consideration: the effects of **frequency** on language change. In essence, the frequency of linguistic forms in discourse has two effects: a higher frequency allows for the phonetic reduction of a form and it endorses its entrenchment in the linguistic system; a decreasing frequency necessitates clear articulation and may have the effect of an eventually complete loss of an expression.

According to the cognitivist position, the repetition of such usage events may also give rise to changes in the linguistic structure because the repeated co-occurrence of a string of elements for instance leads to the establishment of neuromotor routines that facilitate their production. These routines do not only lead to an increasing reduction of phonological substance in usage but will ultimately affect the mental representation of these elements as one unit (cf. Bybee & Scheibman 1999, Bybee & Thompson 2000, Bybee 2010). In Bybee's (2010: 20) words: "the effect of usage is cycled back into the stored representation of the word".

What the cognitivist position does not take into consideration is that these undisputed effects are not the result of absolute frequencies of expressions, but of their frequencies per context. The reduction of an expression, in the sense of a string of articulation units (phonemes), is possible if (and only if) it can be expected in a specific situation. If the same string is unexpected, it cannot be reduced.<sup>2</sup> These expectations are never part of one interlocutor alone. To the very least, these effects are caused by expectations both on part of the speaker and of the hearer, but in the same way by the assumptions of the speaker about the hearer's expectations (cf. Zeige this volume: § 3). These small adjustments have an impact on the speech production. This leads to altered usage, which in turn may lead to new adjustments. Kemmer & Barlow (2000: ix) have employed the notion of a 'feedback loop' for this kind of interaction between usage and structure. Other descriptive labels or metaphors that have been used to refer to this phenomenon in language use are, for instance, 'circular causality' or 'self-reinforcement' (cf. Auer & Pfänder 2011: 2).

In addition to the possible reductions of forms, an increase in frequency automatically also results in the increase of the degree of conventionality of an expression or construction. The

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2 For instance, the phonetic string of the German expression *wiedersehen* 'see again', can be (and is) reduced drastically if (and only if) this string is used in the highly conventionalised formula for saying 'goodbye' (*Auf Wiedersehen* 'on seeing (each other) again'). Reductions can go as far as a bisyllabic /vɪ<sup>ə</sup>zen/ for a four-syllabic /vi;dʒe@n/. This is not possible if the string is uttered in a situation, in which the interlocutors do not part, even if it specifically refers to the formulaic 'farewell' rather than to the lexical 'see again', as for instance in reported speech.

more often a linguistic form occurs, the more routinely it is processed in both production and perception and hence the more likely it is re-used by an individual speaker. At the same time, the fact that a once innovative form or meaning becomes accepted by the speech community (conventionalised) is inextricably linked with its increase in frequency. The spread and acceptance of the form in the overall speech community increases, so that an individual speaker can also expect any other interlocutor to be familiar with that form.

There may be other examples of types of changes or of factors that demonstrate the interdependence of usage and structure. But the above may suffice to show that there are at least some types of change that cannot be accounted for exclusively by system internal factors, but that require some reference to the interaction between speaker and hearer. What all these phenomena or aspects of language change share is their context-dependence. In principle, they all require the uniqueness of each individual context or speech situation (usage event). If the specific circumstance of an individual usage event did not play any role, there would be no need for innovation. Routinely unaltered procedures would then be the most efficient way of employing linguistic structures.

#### **4. From a cognition-centred to a communication-centred usage-based perspective**

As we have seen, the notion usage-based was originally used in the context of whether the mental representations of linguistic structures are rooted in language usage or in some assumed ‘language faculty’ in order to produce utterances (§ 1). In studying the relation between usage and structure, the interest in the role of usage has gradually become more independent from this original context, though the implicit tenet was retained that the essential core of human language lies in an inventory of structures (and forms), which in turn exist as ‘mental representations’ in the individual (§ 2). A usage-based model of language in this perspective quite literally means ‘grammar is based on usage but located and processed in the human mind’. Despite the prominence of ‘usage’ in the term ‘usage-based approaches to language’, these models essentially focus on cognition; they present a **cognition-centred perspective**.

In the previous section we indicated how this cognitive approach is instantiated. However, we also indicated how the phenomena with which we exemplified this also share significant features that are outside human cognition. The most important of these features is the dependence on the individual context, or on the individual usage event. Innovations, at least those of the types sketched above, generally work only under the very specific circumstances that the characteristics of a communicative event provide. While it is plausible to assume that analogical inferences and routinization through frequency are results of an individual speaker’s processing, there also needs to be some conventional understanding prior to the innovation which gives the speaker sufficient certainty that his/her (innovative) signal is perceived successfully by other interlocutors. Conventional here means that a linguistic system cannot be located exclusively in a speaker’s mind, but, in order to be useful in communication, the same system needs to be shared by other speakers of the same speech community to a high degree. The context-dependence of these processes and the conventional

character of the structures a speaker can draw on are both features that are located in the communication event or, in broader terms, in the community of speakers. A grammar, therefore, while plausibly conceived of as a cognitive system, also needs to be analysed as a social system, one that is instantiated in communicative activity (or, for that matter, speaker-hearer interaction) rather than in cognitive activity, which is by nature exclusively the activity of one individual alone. In contrast (or in addition) to a cognition-centred perspective, these social and communicative aspects of linguistic structures require a **communication-centred perspective**.

Usage-based approaches have never denied those aspects that we mention here. But by default there has always been an underlying claim that linguistic “structures [are] posited by the analyst as a claim about mental structure and operation” (Kemmer & Barlow 2000: viii) – what we have referred to above as the ‘cognitivist position’. At this point, we would like to argue that it is at least as plausible to claim that what analysts perceive as linguistic structures are a social or a communicative system. The difference would be that the linguistic system is not one that is in each speaker’s mind individually, but one that is shared by many. In short, the difference in perspective results in either a cognitive system or in a social system, respectively. We do not wish to claim that there are two different ontological entities, one cognitive and one social, but that the ontological status of the linguistic system should not be seen as exclusively cognitive in character. Kemmer & Barlow (2000: vii-viii) briefly discuss different distinctions that are partly akin to this distinction between a cognition-centred perspective and a communication-centred perspective, but they explicitly commit themselves to the internal system, and thus to a cognition-centred view on language (2000: viii). We nevertheless believe that Kemmer & Barlow’s list (§ 1) of characteristics of a usage-based approach potentially includes both cognition-centred and communication-centred aspects.

While we do not wish to introduce or promote yet another dichotomy of two strictly separate domains, we agree with Peter Harder, one of the prominent proponents of the ‘Social Turn in Cognitive Linguistics’ (Harder 2010) who argues (2012: 519) that

a pragmatically-oriented cognitive linguistics needs to recognize three different but intimately connected objects of description: the flow of usage (1) is the basic level, but in addition there is (2) language as a property of the speech community [...], and finally (3) language as a property of individual speakers (that which qualifies them to be members of the speech community).

Harder stresses that he does not wish to establish an opposition between the cognitive and the community level, but he maintains that “the individual level just does not capture all there is to say” (2010: 6). For an example of a general idea of how individual cognition and collective thinking can be brought in line see Harder (2010) or for concise programmatic summary see the passage in Harder (2010: 5-7). See also the discussion in Zeige (this volume: § 1) and the references there.

While we are bringing up an aspect that has only recently been made explicit and has not yet made its way into texts representative of mainstream usage-based approaches, there have been

theoretical contributions around for a while that do represent exactly this communication-centred perspective and which are, although they usually do not make this explicit, usage-based in this non-cognitive sense. We are thinking, for instance, of Hopper's (1987) notion of *Emergent Grammar* or of Keller's (1994) *Invisible Hand*. The most prominent representatives of usage-based studies have all referred to these theoretical approaches (cf. Langacker, Kemmer & Barlow, Croft and others), but generally have ignored the crucial difference that neither the notion of *Emergent Grammar* nor the *Invisible Hand* theory make claims about cognitive instantiations of linguistic structures. Instead, they show how linguistic structures are formed ("emerge") *through* communication according to the patterns of social systems. Gipper (this volume) convincingly shows how this is instantiated in spoken linguistic discourse and therefore rightly promotes the importance of "instances of social interaction" as a source for linguistic investigation.

Hopper (1987: 140) argues that much of the linguistic thinking of the twentieth century is dominated by one central assumption, "the assumption of an abstract, mentally represented rule system which is somehow implemented as we speak. It is an assumption which is very deeply entrenched in our field, and indeed is virtually an official dogma". Hopper challenges this by locating the essence of language in usage itself, that is, in communication and, thus, in society. With reference to Clifford's (1986: 19) notion of 'culture', Hopper characterises 'grammar' as "temporal, emergent, and disputed. [...] [G]rammar like the speech event itself must be viewed as a real-time, social phenomenon" (1987: 141). A little later in the same text, he adds that "structure, or regularity, comes out of discourse and is shaped by discourse as much as it shapes discourse in an on-going process" (1987: 142) This last thought in the quotation is reminiscent of Kemmer & Barlow's (2000: ix) 'feedback loop' (cf. above) – which, interestingly, is a metaphor coined in analyses of both technical and social systems. We interpret Hopper such that "shaped by discourse" means 'shaped in the interaction of two or several interlocutors rather than in the mind of an individual'. In the distinction proposed here, Hopper's approach is first of all, usage-based in character, but it is also quite decidedly communication-centred and thus stands in a substantial contrast to the cognitivist tradition.

Another theoretical approach that is at least 'usage-based' in spirit is Rudi Keller's application of the *Invisible Hand* metaphor to linguistics. Not only does it provide a theoretical basis for a community-centred perspective in its most radical variant, i.e., in assuming the essence of 'human language' in the speech community rather than in an individual speaker. It also illustrates the way in which the cognitive activity of individual speakers (language users) can shape collective entities like language structures that are not individual, but shared by a larger community. What Keller offers is more of a meta-explanation, an explanation of the nature of linguistic structures, not, or only indirectly an explanation of individual grammatical data. According to Keller, a grammatical system is an 'Invisible Hand phenomenon' – neither natural (i.e., evolved outside the domain of the human species) nor artificial (i.e., designed by man). Invisible Hand phenomena are created by deliberate human actions (utterances, communication events), but structured only by collective, unplanned collaboration (the set of all discourses a community of speakers engages in). It is in this sense that Keller's approach is fundamentally usage-based: linguistic structures evolve (and constantly re-evolve) while we speak. And in this sense it is very much

akin to the idea that linguistic representations are emergent rather than fixed entities (Kemmer & Barlow 2000: xii-xv) – a point based on Paul Hopper’s (1987) notion of an *Emergent Grammar*.

More recent evolutionary models on language change as for instance proposed by Croft (2000) – but see the criticism in Andersen 2006 – have tried to include this communication-centred perspective and tried to bring it in line with the more traditional cognition-centred one. In these approaches, the linguistic system is seen as a **self-organizing system**, a **self-reproductive system**, or a **complex adaptive system**. This necessarily entails that language is in principle dynamic rather than static and that synchronic stages are random snapshots of what is a constantly (re-)emerging system. This ultimately entails that the dichotomy between synchrony and diachrony be, if not abandoned entirely, at least taken as marginal in linguistics, as a characterization of individual perspectives, but not of a distinction between two (sub-)disciplines each of them with research questions and methods on their own.<sup>3</sup>

The distinction between cognition-centred and communication-centred perspective is a theoretical one, as it reflects the distinction between a cognitive and a social system. Not every study of a linguistic detail that is usage-based in spirit requires this distinction or a commitment to either side to be made explicit, as it will not be relevant for all contributions in this volume. Yet, the question is addressed, most comprehensively in Zeige’s contribution (this volume). He discusses the idea to study language change in a way modelled after Niklas Luhmann’s Theory of Social Systems. Zeige depicts how the repetition of linguistic usage events can give rise to two representations of linguistic structure, one as part of a cognitive system, where usage events are mapped onto mental representations, and one as part of a social system, where the usage events are processed in communicative structures. According to this model, both system types co-exist (and co-emerge). Therefore communicative structures are in many ways similar to cognitive structures, but they differ from them in that social structures are essentially non-individual. Zeige suggests that it is possible in this framework “to build, in addition to a cognitive theory, a usage-based theory of language and language change that is based on communicative processes and the social domain” (Zeige this volume: Conclusion).

In sum, a usage-based approach to language generally means that the circumstances and the input of the speaker-hearer interaction essentially need to be taken into account in an analysis of linguistic structures. Usage-based approaches in this sense make a cognitivist position plausible. In addition, they reveal the context-dependence of individual utterances as well as the conventional character of the system behind these utterances. These latter observations suggest that there must also be something outside the mere cognitive activity, which is essential for the nature of the linguistic systems – and these aspects are grounded in communication, or, more broadly, in the society (cf., for instance, Gipper this volume, § 1.2). In the next section, we will briefly show that this line of argument almost necessarily results in the study of language change as a source for our understanding of a linguistic system.

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3 By contrast, Auer & Pfänder (2011: 2-3), themselves representatives of what has been termed ‘cognitive sociolinguistics’, do not only distinguish between ‘emergent’ (diachronic) and ‘emerging’ (synchronic) grammar, but also transfer the synchrony/diachrony-dichotomy onto other adaptive systems for instance in life sciences.

## 5. Usage, variation, and change

The previous section has shown that there are some aspects of the linguistic system that are potentially located outside human cognition. The two key features here are the context-dependence of linguistic expressions and the conventional character of linguistic structures. We wanted to indicate that grammar is not only stored in an individual's mind, but that structures also exist as a system shared by the members of the speech community. Both, the context and conventions are primarily aspects outside the cognitive system. Contexts are always different; there are no two usage events that provide exactly the same conditions. Conventions are shared; they are therefore a social system, not a cognitive one.

In spite of the fact that the conventional character of human language has in principle been accepted by all theoretical orientations in linguistics, formalist schools have treated linguistic structures / grammar as based on static rules.<sup>4</sup> There is however an essential, non-compatible difference between 'conventions' and 'rules'. 'Rules' are by nature fixed and 'designed', that is, they require to be either explicitly agreed upon or to be naturally given. A 'convention' by contrast is a silent, non-explicit agreement. A convention can be *made* explicit, however, it does not originate in an explicit agreement, but in a customary congruence in the behaviour of two or more individuals. Because of this, a convention implies that the individuals have the chance to vary in their behaviour. And speakers do take this opportunity. This is exactly how speakers deal with linguistic structures. It is only from the point of view of the (social) norm that variation is perceived as deviation. And yet, in spite of the need to regularise when describing linguistic structures, there is not one aspect of a language's grammar for which deviations could not be attested. These deviations do not disrupt the system, they modify it. They even have the potential to stabilise the system, for instance in cases in which irregular morphological patterns are regularised through analogical levelling (cf. Nørgård-Sørensen this volume). This way, however, change is never destructive to the grammatical system, but always essential to it.

One of the most important observations that triggered the emergence of 'usage-based' approaches to language in the beginning was that speech production and comprehension are not 'flawless' (see above). It was felt that these idiosyncrasies in speakers behaviour need to be accounted for and therefore to be incorporated into a holistic theory of language. The metaphor of a 'flaw', however, only makes sense, if one presupposes 'rules'. One can also turn this argument upside down: because we acknowledge that the speakers' behaviour is subject to variation – from the point of view of a norm: deviation – the very essence of a linguistic system is that it is dynamic. Change, therefore, is not an epiphenomenon of what is in essence a synchronic system. Change is the sustenance of any linguistic structure, indeed of the linguistic system itself.

Grammatical features cannot be sufficiently understood if they are merely described ('formalised', 'modelled') as rules alone. The essence can only be understood if the entirety

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4 While, it is true, virtually all formalist frameworks have in the meantime acknowledged that rules are subject to change, all formalist theoretical models were forced at some stage of their respective histories, to include language change and variation *ex post facto*. None of the extant models has been designed for grammar as a dynamic system.

of factors that play a role in a usage event are included in an analysis. And this necessarily involves the variability of every type of linguistic utterance. This, in turn, requires that we see their modifiability and adjustability as part of the nature of linguistic structures and hence, of the linguistic system itself.

What we wish to promote with this book is the benefit of studying change in order to understand the linguistic system. To our mind, this is a necessary consequence of the observation that usage (speaker-hearer interaction) contributes to the production and reception of linguistic structures and expressions and that this interaction is context-dependent and follows variable conventions rather than fixed rules. And this, we think, implies that the study of language change and the study of linguistic usage necessarily require each other and that both are essential (and not epiphenomenal) for our understanding of human language.

## 6. Overview of the contributions

Now that the theoretical foundations of this book have been laid out, we provide a short overview of the contributions included in this volume. As mentioned before, the articles present a wide variety of usage-based approaches to language change, taking different theoretical perspectives and with a varying share of theoretical and empirical issues. The first two articles of the volume take a rather theoretical approach challenging the explanatory value of some established usage-based mechanisms and models of language change.

**Hendrik De Smet** opens the volume with the pertinent question ‘Does innovation need reanalysis?’. Reanalysis plays an important role in many models of language change as the main source of syntactic innovation. This mechanism of change is traditionally defined as the assignment of a new syntactic structure to a surface string without any immediate overt manifestation of that change in the surface sequence. De Smet challenges the explanatory value of reanalysis on both empirical and theoretical grounds. He argues that reanalysis downplays the gradualness of change and overestimates the role of ambiguity, illustrating his claim by means of a wide range of examples of language change taken from English, Dutch and French. De Smet also suggests alternative usage-based mechanisms which accommodate for changes that are traditionally subsumed under reanalysis. He for instance shows how analogy can be the driving force behind the formation of the new category of present participles in French out of the Latin gerund and the Latin present participle.

**Lars Erik Zeige** contributes to the volume with a critical reflection ‘On cognition and communication in usage-based models of language change’. The starting point of his contribution is the observation that traditional usage-based models on language all have a strong focus on the speakers’ and recipients’ cognition and that this leaves open questions with respect to the sphere of interaction between interlocutors in linguistic usage. Zeige draws our attention to Niklas Luhmann’s Theory of Social Systems of which he argues that it provides a model that could be fruitfully adapted to the study of language change from a usage-based perspective. He examines this model to this end and compares it with standard cognitive models, in particular with Langacker’s Cognitive Grammar. Discussing eight

selected theoretical areas, he demonstrates that there are theoretical advantages in a model that is equally based on communication and cognition. Rather than treating communication as a result of cognitive activity (and thus as theoretically secondary), Zeige argues that a model that takes both communicative and cognitive processing as equally relevant will have a stronger explanatory potential for understanding language usage and language change.

The following three contributions present linguistic case studies exploring how semantic change is rooted in usage. **Osamu Ishiyama** starts off with a discussion of ‘The nature of speaker creativity in linguistic innovation’. He links general speaker creativity with the speaker’s strive for the social success in communication. His main claim is that the role of speaker creativity for language change is not that much a categorical question, but a matter of degree. He thus argues that the speaker’s wish to be socially successful in a given conversational interaction always potentially triggers creativity, albeit with varying consequences for the use of a linguistic expression. His main examples come from the study of forms of (polite) address in European and Asian languages, but he also relates these to other semantic extensions that are motivated by communicative success.

**Sonja Gipper** contributes with the article ‘From inferential to mirative: An interaction-based account of an emerging semantic extension’. She shows how interactional approaches provide us with clues about pathways of change on the basis of synchronic data only. She looks at Yurakaré, an isolate language spoken in Bolivia by about 2000 people. Her study is based on spoken synchronic data that suggest inferential chains and bridging context which in turn strongly allow the assumption of a change in which an evidential marker acquires a mirative function. In addition, Gipper’s paper provides insights into the semantic and inferential links among various shades of evidential modality. On a theoretical level, Gipper argues that synchronic data alone can provide sufficient material to develop diachronic hypothesis and she stresses the crucial role of context for the linguistic system.

**Naoko Hayase** takes up another case of semantic change in ‘The motivation for using English suspended dangling participles: A usage-based development of (inter)subjectivity’. The topic under investigation are so-called suspended dangling participles such as *considering* in an utterance like *He is so nice, considering*. Hayase hypothesises that these participles have developed out of an ordinary dangling participle construction, as illustrated by the sentence *Considering his family background, he is well-behaved*. She proposes a usage-based scenario for this development. Initially, *considering* is used as an elliptical form. The suspended form gradually establishes a constructional meaning of its own through pragmatic inference and its high token frequency. The suspended dangling participle construction first starts to function as a subjective marker and later as an (implied) intersubjective marker. The semantic shift observed in this article highlights the important role of context in use for semantic change.

The volume finally consists of three articles which are written within the theoretical framework of Danish Functionalism. As also mentioned in Section 2, much of their work on language change is inspired by Henning Andersen. While seeing the main contribution of speakers’ interaction in the spread of an innovative use of a form or a construction, they stress

the role of structural analysis on part of the individual speaker. The following contributions share the view that structure (most importantly in the form of paradigms) can be abductively reanalysed, which in turn results in linguistic innovation.

**Kirsten Jeppesen Kragh & Lene Schøsler** contribute with the article ‘Reanalysis and gramma(ticaliza)tion of constructions. The case of the deictic relative construction with perception verbs in French’. The authors go deeper into the development of the so-called deictic relative construction in French, as exemplified by *Je vois Pierre qui arrive* ‘I see Pierre coming’. This construction differs from ordinary relative clauses in that it has a relation of interdependence with the antecedent, a so-called nexus relation. Kragh & Schøsler hypothesise that deictic relatives developed out of relative clauses such as *le conte vit son écuyer qui était assis sur son cheval noir* ‘the count saw his horseman who was sitting on the black horse’. Such examples allow next to a relative clause reading with a focus on the antecedent ‘horseman’ also a nexus reading where ‘the horseman sitting on the black horse’ as a whole is in focus. Kragh & Schøsler argue that such ambiguous instances function as bridging contexts that allow speakers to make a new abductive hypothesis about the semantic structure of the construction. They moreover show that deictic relatives first spread in texts that are close to oral communication and later is transferred in more formal writing, confirming their hypothesis that semantic reanalysis is initiated by individual speakers in their spontaneous usage.

**Lars Heltoft** takes up the semantic development of Danish indirect object constructions in ‘Constructional change, paradigmatic structure and the orientation of usage processes’. Heltoft distinguishes between the linguistic content of a construction from its conceptual structure. Linguistic content of constructions in his view (similar to the other proponents of Danish Functionalism) is organised in paradigmatic oppositions, similar to those found in classical morphology. Studying semantic change thus involves analysing the linguistic content of a construction in relation to other constructions in the same paradigm. Heltoft consequently analyses the semantic development of the simple indirect object construction in relation to the prepositional indirect object construction in Danish. His analysis emphasises the fundamental interaction of structure and usage in actual language change, thus providing a critique of usage-based approaches that downplay the role of structure in language change.

**Jens Nørgård-Sørensen** closes the volume with ‘Filling empty distinctions of expression with content: Usage-motivated assignment of grammatical meaning’. He presents an analysis of the innovative potential of what he calls ‘empty distinctions’, that is, morphological distinctions that do not (or no longer) serve to encode any distinctive grammatical functions. These empty distinctions, Nørgård-Sørensen argues, are filled by speakers with grammatical meaning. He thus presents an interesting alternative scenario to the ‘exaptation’-metaphor, of which he criticises the inadequacy of transferring biological processes to linguistic ones. He presents three different case studies: the morphologization of German umlaut patterns to a plural marker, the emergence of the ‘virile’/‘non-virile’ distinction in Polish noun morphology, and the reinterpretation of the accusative/genitive distinction in Russian.

Nørgård-Sørensen argues that these innovations represent speakers' strategies to come to terms with paradigmatic idiosyncrasies that lack a functional distinction.

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