

Stylistics and Cognitive Grammar

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1. Introduction

The following sentences describe the same event:

1. The little girl went for a paddle.
2. The toddler ran about in the shallow water.
3. Millie kicked her feet in the paddling pool and we all got splashed.
4. We were splashed by the water from the paddling pool.

There are clearly a number of differences in how the event is described in each example which place emphasis on different parts of the scene and which therefore have a direct bearing on how we interpret it. The character in the sentences is named differently in each and consequently carries different information: the girl is ‘little’ in the first sentence, but her age is further specified as a ‘toddler’ in the second sentence. In contrast, in the third sentence, ‘Millie’ confers greater familiarity between the speaker and the girl. Similarly, the location of the paddling also becomes more specific as the sentences progress: the first two sentences do not describe where it took place, bringing up a number of possibilities which are likely to vary between readers (for example, for me, the sea seems to be a likely choice for paddling). In the third and fourth sentences these possibilities are closed off where a domestic location (‘the small paddling pool’) is explicitly mentioned. The final two sentences also introduce a first-person speaker (‘we’), who we know must be close enough to be in the splash zone, whereas the narrator of the first two sentences is off-stage. Finally, in the fourth sentence, the voice is changed so that Millie’s agency (as the one who does the splashing) is not mentioned at all, and instead the ‘we’ participants become foregrounded. It can be observed, then, that all of these language choices carry meaningful information. They set up specific details of the scene, provide information about speaker positioning and proximity, and attribute agency through syntactic configurations, all of which are outlined by the speaker/writer to be interpreted and conceptualised by the listener/reader in a process of intersubjective negotiation. We engage in this process every time we read a text.

This chapter explores how Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987, 1991, 2008) provides a theoretical apparatus which can account for these conceptual differences, and therefore can be considered a new and valuable addition to the stylistics toolkit. The chapter outlines the key concepts of Cognitive Grammar for stylistic analysis – namely, image schemas, construal operations and clausal roles – and gives an overview of how the theory has been applied previously, from its early road-testing in stylistics through to more extended contemporary accounts and its application in a range of research contexts. More specifically, it demonstrates how these central concepts can be used to explore the stylistic representation of point of view in texts, following the work of contemporary research in this area. The chapter provides an example analysis of character perspective in Ishiguro’s (2021) novel *Klara and the Sun*, before suggesting further avenues for operationalising the Cognitive Grammar model. Finally, the chapter argues that the burgeoning work in this area demonstrates Cognitive Grammar’s ability to refresh, develop and extend traditional approaches to point of view analysis in stylistics, while offering an account of the reading experience sensitive to the intersubjective negotiation of meaning which occurs between writers and readers.

2. Historical perspectives

Cognitive Grammar is a theoretical model of grammar originally devised by Ronald Langacker (1987, 1991) and shares key or ‘primary commitments’ (Lakoff 1990, p. 40) with other cognitive linguistic models. The ‘generalization commitment’ outlines a set of principles which accounts for all parts of language, from lexical to syntactic. The ‘cognitive commitment’, on the other hand, refers to how our use and understanding of language is underpinned by cognitive processes: namely, embodiment and image-schematic patterns. Cognitive Grammar outlines a number of schematic templates for linguistic production and reception, from smaller linguistic structures to larger clauses and stretches of discourse. The model is premised on the idea that these structures are ‘constructions’ built up of a pairing between form (the ‘phonological pole’ of a word or clause) and meaning (the ‘semantic pole’, which is the semantic meaning of a word or clause) (see Langacker 2008, pp. 183–214). These two poles are integrated through a

symbolic relationship whereby grammatical form and semantic meaning are inextricably connected. While there are other cognitive grammars, Langacker's Cognitive Grammar (differentiated in the literature by its capitalization) is seen as the leading framework.

Original accounts of Cognitive Grammar are known to be theoretically complex, and 'its idiosyncratic notation and terminology [may] leave some readers cold' (Heath 2014, p. 276). Part of this complexity is due to the fact that Langacker's original model was always intended to be theoretical, and though potential avenues for practical applications are outlined in, for example, the final 'Frontiers' chapter of his 2008 text, the initial theory seems removed from naturally occurring examples of language. Despite this, stylisticians who have used Cognitive Grammar in the application of literature and discourse explore how the model invites a nuanced and intuitive way of analysing texts which builds on and contributes to existing stylistic tools, while also offering new psychologically-informed perspectives on experiences of reading texts. The emphasis of cognitive linguistic models on embodiment – the process describing how our physical interaction with the world is connected to our production and reception of language – makes it an effective framework for a cognitive stylistic analysis, in particular, which aims to explore both text choices, on the one hand, and readers' experiences of reading these text choices, on the other (see 'Stylistics and Real Readers', this volume).

2.1. Applications in Stylistics

The potential for Cognitive Grammar to be used for stylistic analysis is first outlined in Stockwell's *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction* (2002), where he examines stylistic prototypicality, action chains and, crucially, signposts the flexibility of it as a model: because readers interpret linguistic structures differently, '[t]his would seem to suggest that the 'rules' of cognitive grammar are different from linguistic rules as they are traditionally understood, in that they do not absolutely constrain linguistic expression' (p. 67). Hamilton's corresponding chapter in the companion volume *Cognitive Poetics in Practice* (Gavins and Steen 2003) builds on this introduction to consider how construal and profiling work in Wilfred Owen's poem

‘Hospital Barge’ to direct reader attention in this poignant scene. Both the theoretical introduction and the practical application advocate the movement ‘towards a stylistics that is fully bound to a cognitive dimension’ (Stockwell 2002, p. 59); for ‘[t]o best understand literature we need to understand it within the context of the life of the mind’ (Hamilton 2003, p. 64).

Following these incipient studies, there have been a number of exploratory and extended applications of Cognitive Grammar in literary linguistic analysis. Harrison et al.’s (2014) edited collection draws together innovative studies from a number of researchers and focuses on the analysis of the ‘texture’ (Stockwell 2009) of literature. Literary texts are also under consideration in Harrison (2017), Nuttall (2018) and Giovanelli (2022), the first book-length treatments of the Cognitive Grammar framework, which explore its capacity for scalability as well as the affordances it offers for the study of the representation of worldview in fiction. These studies are both text- and reader-centred, combining reader response data with close text analysis.

More recently, researchers have integrated Cognitive Grammar with existing and more established stylistic, linguistic and rhetorical models. Browse (2018a), for example, combines classical rhetoric with cognitive linguistic models to examine the audience reception of political text and talk (see also Hart 2019). Harrison and Nuttall (2020) consider another type of discourse data, online reader reviews, by using Cognitive Grammar as a theoretical apparatus for examining the extension of conceptual metaphors. Their paper investigates how mapped properties of metaphors used to describe reading experiences, in particular, can be construed and re-framed by readers. In the edited collection *New Directions in Cognitive Grammar and Style* (Giovanelli et al. 2021), McLoughlin similarly combines Cognitive Grammar with existing cognitive frameworks, in this case, conceptual blending and Text World Theory, to consider how reader attention is refocused through the elaboration and specification of linguistic choices in a poetic text. This edited collection further showcases the versatility of the model where applications to music (Neary), education (Cushing, Zacharias) and multimodal

biographies (Finn), among other studies, demonstrate the range and breadth of texts and complementary stylistic frameworks available for Cognitive Grammar analysis.

Applying Cognitive Grammar synergistically with existing models and theories has further enabled researchers to refresh approaches to traditional stylistic concepts. Browse's (2018b) paper revisits Halliday's famous transitivity analysis of Golding's *The Inheritors* and argues that, while systemic functional grammar focuses on describing the ideational structure of a text, Cognitive Grammar instead places readers at the forefront: offering a conceptual apparatus that highlights how readers conceptualise and interpret meaning. Another cornerstone of stylistic study – the representation of point of view and character/narrator perspective in texts – has also been revived through Cognitive Grammar analyses, and in particular the representation of world views and 'mind styles'; those points of view which are particularly noteworthy or distinctive, such as perspectives of characters with dementia (Harrison 2017), or who experience disorientation and fear (Harrison 2019) or alcohol-induced amnesia (Giovanelli 2018; Rundquist 2020) (see also Nuttall 2018). Considering both production and reception ends of the communication event, researchers are also beginning to explore the phenomenon of reconstrual: both in terms of how readers reconceptualise perspective through multiple readings of the same text (Harrison and Nuttall 2019; Harrison and Nuttall 2021), and also in terms of literary creativity and revision and at the site of writing production (Giovanelli 2019, 2021).

3. Cognitive Grammar in Stylistics: Critical issues and topics

The next section introduces and illustrates key concepts of the Cognitive Grammar model. While it is not possible to provide a full introduction to the framework here, this overview and the example analysis (in Section 4) considers some central dimensions of the model, including image-schemas, construal operations and clausal roles. All key terms from the original theory are italicised on first mention.

3.1 Image schemas

Cognitive Grammar argues that linguistic constructions are symbolic and can be conceptualised as schematic templates. An image schema (Langacker 2008, pp. 32–33; Johnson 1987) refers to conceptual templates we have in our minds which help us to understand sensory experiences such as touch, movement, force and space by framing the relationships between concepts in particular ways. In everyday language we frequently encounter image schemas which express space or location. We might draw on a CONTAINER image schema, for example, to help us conceptualise emotional states:

‘He left in a state of distraction and a winter coat’ (Eugenides 1993, p. 102)

In this sentence, the preposition ‘in’ signals the ‘state of distraction’ as a contained, bounded space, in which the character is situated. The sentence goes on to describe a more literal situation – the character wearing a winter coat – and the humour of this zeugmatic line is created in positioning the containment of the emotional state alongside the containment provided by a physical, everyday item of clothing. Emotions as containers can be observed in other expressions (e.g. falling *in* and *out* of favour, being *in* a bad mood, etc.).

The entities, and the relationships between them, within image schema templates can be further categorised. The *trajector* (Langacker 2008, pp. 70–73) of an image schema is the prominent figure within the clause, whereas the *landmark* (Langacker 2008, pp. 70–73) is a more secondary, backgrounded entity. In the example above, the trajector would be the ‘he’ character, who initially holds our attention in the sentence. The landmarks would be the ‘state of distraction’ and the ‘winter coat’, which describe the conceptual and physical containment background of the figure. Landmarks are not as attentionally prominent as the trajector of an image schema.

3.2 Construal operations

One of the central claims of CG is that meaning does not simply exist within the conceptual content of a clause or sentence, but instead depends on the way in which that content is presented or construed. In any discourse situation there are at least two *conceptualizers*

(Langacker 2008, pp. 445–453): the writer/speaker, and the reader/hearer. Construal is a process that occurs on both sides of a communicative event: the linguistic producer can choose to construe a scene in a particular way, and a linguistic receiver will interpret the linguistic construction in a particular way. The construal of any conceptualiser will be influenced a number of factors, including their physical position, their disposition on a given day or by other contextual factors such as their idiosyncratic, schematic and experiential knowledge.

Following the account of the model by Giovanelli and Harrison (2018), which simplifies the original breakdown offered by Langacker (2008), construal can occur along three dimensions, *focus and prominence*, *specificity*, and *perspective*.

3.2.1 Focus and prominence

One way in which linguistic construals can vary is through *focusing* (Langacker 2008: 57 – 65), which describes what we choose to pay attention to within a conceived scene. Lexical choices allow conceptualisers to instantiate *domains* (Langacker, pp. 44–54), which are knowledge structures enabling access to encyclopaedic knowledge. Lexical choices can sometimes instantiate multiple domains, and descriptions in literature can draw on several domains simultaneously:

Personally, I like a chocolate-coloured sky. Dark, dark chocolate. People say it suits me. I do, however, try to enjoy every colour I see – the whole spectrum. A billion or so flavours, none of them quite the same, and a sky to slowly suck on. It takes the edge off the stress. It helps me relax.

(Zusak 2005, p. 14)

In this extract of the opening chapter of *The Book Thief* (Zusak 2005), the narrator (Death) references lexical descriptions that draw on a number of domains. The description of the ‘dark chocolate’, the different ‘flavours’, and the ‘chocolate-coloured sky’ that he might ‘suck on’ instantiates the domains of FOOD and EATING. Of course, Death is also describing the physical appearance of the sky and the ‘whole spectrum’ he experiences, and so a domain of COLOUR is also referenced. The crossover of these domains references how the character Death in this

book consumes human souls as particular flavours: a comparison and interanimation highlighted in the title of this opening chapter: ‘DEATH and CHOCOLATE’.

Focusing and attention can also be directed to refine the *scope* (Langacker 2008, pp. 62–65) of the conceived scene. Scope is the coverage given by a particular word to its conceptual content. For example, the words ‘page’ and ‘spine’ (*immediate scope*) (Langacker 2008, pp. 63–65) can be understood in relation to a ‘book’, or even a ‘library’ (*maximal scope*) (Langacker 2008, pp. 63–65) more broadly. In fiction, these part-whole relationships can be manipulated to conceal or reveal certain narrative details. Consider, for example, the following extract from the end of the short story ‘The Continuity of Parks’ (Cortázar 1964):

Through the blood galloping in his ears came the woman's words: first a blue parlor, then a gallery, then a carpeted stairway. At the top, two doors. No one in the first bedroom, no one in the second. The door of the salon, and then the knife in his hand, the light from the great windows, the high back of an armchair covered in green velvet, the head of the man in the chair reading a novel.

This short story is described as an ‘Escher-type narrative’, which is a category of an ‘impossible fiction’ (Ashline 1995) which plays around with the boundaries of narrative ontology. The story is about an unnamed man who begins reading a novel in his salon. The story then switches to the novel the first man is reading, and reveals that a second unnamed man (the character within this novel) intends to commit a murder. These final four sentences describe the second man’s movements through a house looking for his murder victim. The lexical descriptions single out sections of the immediate scope of parts of the scene: he passes two ‘doors’ (immediate scope), which are revealed in the next sentence to belong to empty bedrooms (maximal scope). The ‘door of the salon’ is singled out as a location marker (for the maximal scope of ‘the salon’, which is repeated, significantly, from earlier in the story) and body parts of both characters become focused and on-stage in the description (‘his hand’, ‘the head of the man’) though the maximal scope – and identifying features – of each character are left off-stage. The structure guides readers’ attention to particular parts of the physical location, and reveals the maximal scope of descriptions slowly: the distinctive ‘green velvet’ of the armchair, for example, is mentioned last. A list format is created whereby we follow, sequentially, the instructions of ‘the

woman's words', and this invites us to compare these descriptions with those mentioned earlier in the story. Finally, this guides us to the progressive realisation that the 'head of the man in the chair' belongs to the first character we encountered.

3.2.2 Specificity

A scene may be construed with a high level of detail and specificity, or in a vaguer and more schematic way. These different levels of detail can be arranged in taxonomic hierarchies which scale from the highly schematic to the highly specific. Within these hierarchies, each new concept is a further *elaboration* (Langacker 2008, p. 17) on the description that precedes it:

A cat > a large cat > a large, adult tiger > 'a wet, trembling, half-drowned, heaving and coughing three-year-old adult Bengal tiger in my lifeboat' (Martel 2001, p. 99).

Levels of specificity in literary descriptions have a direct bearing on the reading experience. Vagueness can sometimes disclose a narrator who is unreliable, mentally compromised, or perhaps who wishes to hide something. More schematized descriptions can invite readers to play a more active role in the conceptualization of the discourse by requiring them to fill in the gaps based on their own schematic knowledge. On the other hand, texts can keep readers at a distance and close off alternative interpretations by more fully specifying the conceived scene. In the fully-specified description in the example above, for instance, the detailed description of the tiger Richard Parker works to override previously schematic descriptions of his character in *Life of Pi* (Martel 2001). Earlier in the novel, Richard Parker is represented more vaguely and only in personified terms, while the fully specified description here requests that readers reconstrue their conceptualization of Richard Parker's identity: he is not, in fact, a human, and despite his pitiful 'wet, trembling, half-drowned, heaving and coughing' state, he is also a 'three-year old adult Bengal tiger' and consequently a creature to be feared.

3.2.3 Perspective

Finally, construal can also be considered alongside the dimension of perspective, which can alter depending on how the conceptualiser is positioned in relation to the conceived situation, and whether they invite attention or not. This can occur through different linguistic mechanisms. Deictic expressions, for example, can encode a vantage point by clearly positioning a conceptualiser in time and space, as well as socially and textually.

The first time our house was robbed, it was our neighbor Osita who climbed in through the dining room window and stole our TV, our VCR, and the Purple Rain and Thriller videotapes my father had brought back from America

(Adichie 2017, p. 3)

Here, the perceptual deictic markers ‘our’ and ‘my’ identify the speaker as one who is proximally close, and has a possessive relationship with the listed items (‘TV’, ‘VCR’), locations (‘house’) and characters (‘neighbor’, ‘father’). The verbs situate this event (‘the first time our house was robbed’) in the simple past, and other descriptors such as the VCR and the named videotapes also function to date this narrative. Relational markers, such as the name ‘Osita’ also carry social meaning: some readers may be aware that this is a Nigerian name, for example.

An account where attention is drawn to the conceptualiser places them on-stage as the object of attention. Consequently, the conceived scene they are describing recedes into the background and is said to be more *subjectively construed* (Langacker 2008, pp. 260–264). On the other hand, a conceptualiser can move into the background, and more focus instead can be placed on the conceived scene being described. In these contexts, readers encounter a scene which is *objectively construed* (Langacker 2008, pp. 260–264). Literary texts often move between subjectively and objectively construed accounts, placing greater or lesser emphasis on the perspective of a character in order to achieve particular effects. The following extract is taken from the novel *Lean Fall Stand* (McGregor 2021, pp. 4-5). In this opening scene, the character Thomas gets into difficulty when a sudden storm appears while he is taking photographs on an Antarctic research expedition, and he becomes separated from his group:

It was difficult to think with the weather scouring wildly around him

He didn't know where the radio was. He couldn't see the others. He needed to find his camera. [...]

They had come down from the field hut by skidoo, down the bank from the plateau and across the skiway. The skidoos were parked a safe distance from the water. Doc had driven one to the foot of Priestley Head before climbing up to the cliffs. No more than ten minutes away. When the storm cleared, they would regroup.

These paragraph fragments demonstrate Thomas's perspective in relation to the scene. Initially, the scene is subjectively construed, as Thomas's thoughts and confusion are foregrounded through explicit descriptions of it being 'difficult to think', and through the verbs of cognition ('know', 'see'). His thoughts are also modalised through explicit epistemic ('He couldn't see') and boulomaic ('He needed to find') clauses. The first four sentences of the final short paragraph start off more objectively. Here, Thomas's evaluative position is backgrounded as facts are listed more categorically. This style shift could be interpreted as the attempt of Thomas to take stock of the situation: moving beyond his own immediate danger to review, rationally, the locations of the skidoos, the water, and his team member, Doc. Of course, it is impossible to have a completely subjective or objective account in language, and in this latter paragraph Thomas's perspective can be seen, perhaps more implicitly, in his evaluation of the skidoos being a 'safe distance' and in the estimation of time in 'No more than ten minutes away'. It may be more helpful to think of construal objectivity and subjectivity as scalable ideas, with attention shifting between scene and conceptualiser at alternating points within any given scene.

3.3 Clausal roles

Langacker outlines an image schema for clause structures, which he calls an action chain. He discusses verb choices in terms of an image-schematic transfer or FORCE or ENERGY. Prototypically, one entity within a clause (an *agent*) (Langacker 2008, p. 356) carries out an action that impacts on another entity (the *patient*) (Langacker 2008, p. 356). Clauses can include other entities that become involved in the action, or carry additional information which describes the manner in which the action is performed. It is argued that all verbs are construed

in terms of the way that energy moves through a clause. The participants who are involved in the way that the energy is transferred are said to have ‘archetypal roles’ (Langacker 2008, p. 356). These are labels that describe the role held by the clausal participant. For example, a *mover* (Langacker 2008, p. 356) is an entity which changes location; an *experiencer* (Langacker 2008, p. 356) is a participant who is involved in a mental process; a *zero* role (Langacker 2008, p. 356) describes a participant who does not change state or location, and so on.

It is simplest to see how this action chain template works in physical actions, as this is a more prototypical schema. Consider, for example these three sentences from Mantel’s (2009) *Wolf Hall*:

He gathers his papers for the day. Pats his wife, kisses his dog. Goes out.

(Mantel 2009, p. 44)

Here, the character Thomas Cromwell (‘He’) is the agent and initiator of actions in the first clauses. He is mentioned explicitly in the first clause (‘He gathers’), and while not reinstated linguistically, he is also the assumed agent in the subsequent three: ‘Pat his wife, kisses the dog. Goes out’. The humour in this description is created in the inversion of the patient roles: it would perhaps be more typical for the husband to kiss his wife and pat the dog, but these roles are swapped. It could perhaps be argued that the fragmentation of clauses, and that Cromwell is not reinstated as the clausal agent following the first sentence, places greater attention on the actions and character movements within the story. Readers can trace him as the *energy source* across the clauses, but greater significance is given to his preparations for the day and his departure from the house. Of course, the representation of action and energy within clauses can be re-shuffled and construed in different ways, such that more or less responsibility is placed on particular clausal participants. For example, the agency could be defocused entirely: the more ambiguous clauses ‘his wife was patted, his dog was kissed’ would attribute the energy source to an unknown and unspecified agent. Writers shift the attribution of roles and agency to shift focus. In some discourse contexts, for example, parts of a clause can appear vague, lacking in detail or sufficient specificity, or otherwise left out altogether. If this process

obscures who is responsible for a particular action or event, this is an example of ‘mystification’, a strategy frequently used in news and political discourse contexts to conceal or redirect blame (see Hart 2021).

4 Extended example analysis

So far in this chapter I have outlined some of the key concepts that underpin Cognitive Grammar which are centred on ideas of space and embodiment. This next section draws these ideas together for an example analysis of the opening extract of *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro (2021). The novel follows an AF (Artificial Friend) called Klara. The opening extract is set in a store in New York, where Klara and other AFs are waiting to be bought and taken to new homes. The novel starts without an explanation as to Klara’s identity, and so readers are invited to make inferences about her worldview through her distinctive language choices:

Extract 1

When we were new, Rosa and I were mid-store, on the magazines table side, and could see through more than half of the window. So we were able to watch the outside – the office workers hurrying by, the taxis, the runners, the tourists, Beggar Man and his dog, the lower part of the RPO Building. Once we were more settled, Manager allowed us to walk up the front until we were right behind the window display, and then we could see how tall the RPO building was. And if we were there just at the right time, we would see the Sun on his journey, crossing between the building tops from our side over to the RPO Building side.

(Ishiguro 2021, p. 1)

Based on the description and style within this opening paragraph, readers can start to build up a picture of Klara. She is described throughout the novel as being particularly observant, and one of her ‘unique’ abilities is ‘her appetite for observing and learning’ (Ishiguro 2021, p. 43). At the same time there is clearly something about her description that seems either naïve or child-like: for example, her nominalisation of the ‘Beggar Man’, her personification of the ‘Sun’ making ‘his journey’. Furthermore, her general fascination with ‘the outside’ suggests someone who is unfamiliar or unexperienced with it.

Her worldview and the unusual language choices in this opening paragraph can be explored through an account of Cognitive Grammar’s construal. Through the first-person

narrative, Klara is identified as a conceptualiser who relates the conceived scene – in this instance, her experience and perception of being in the store – to readers, who are then required to conceptualise that content in turn. When given the opportunity to ‘watch the outside’, Klara first gives attention to the moving trajectors within the conceived scene in front of her: she describes ‘the office workers hurrying by, the taxis, the runners, the tourists, Beggar Man and his dog’. Because Klara’s description is limited to ‘more than half the window’, she is able to see only the immediate scope of parts of the scene outside. In other words, she is not able to see entities in their entirety initially: at first, for example, only ‘the lower part of the RPO building’ is prominent in her construal. As her physical position is adjusted, however, the scope of the scene broadens and she is able to ‘see how tall the RPO building was’; the maximal scope of the building, in its entirety. This incremental widening of scope foregrounds the RPO building as a significant part of Klara’s landscape and it becomes a large and fixed *reference point*, a salient and easily identified feature, around which other parts of the scene are oriented (‘we would see the Sun on his journey, crossing between the building tops from our side over to the RPO Building side’). The heightened awareness of the boundaries of the observed space foregrounds the extent of Klara’s confinement within the store and the limitations regarding what she is permitted to see. Furthermore, that she and Rosa wish to ‘watch’ the outside, rather than the more typical collocate ‘see’, suggests a sensitive interest in the world outside the window.

Klara’s fascination with the outside world is further signposted through the granular descriptions she offers which provide high specificity. When she is moved to the window display, for example, she lists in detail everything that she can see:

Extract 2

And not only could I see every window right up to the rooftop, I could sometimes see the people inside, standing, sitting, moving around. Then down on the street, I could see the passers-by, their different kinds of shoes, paper cups, shoulder bags, little dogs, and if I wanted, I could follow with my eyes any one of them all the way past the pedestrian crossing and beyond the second Tow-Away sign, to where two overhaul men were standing beside a drain and pointing. I could see right inside the taxis as they slowed to let the crowd go over the crossing – a driver’s hand tapping on his steering wheel, a cap worn by a passenger.

The listing of highly specified details of the conceived scene shows her closer physical proximity to the outside world. Klara is able to elaborate on descriptions of the people outside: who are originally construed as a mass ('passers-by'), and then broken down according to smaller component details: their 'shoes, paper cups, shoulder bags, little dogs'. The highly specified details also work to refine the scope of her descriptions: she singles out the immediate scope of 'a driver's hand' and 'a cap worn by a passenger', creating an attentional zooming-in effect. It appears as though she is paying closer and closer attention to the scene outside the window, as she can 'follow' the unfolding action in a way that she could not when positioned further inside the store.

Klara's role in the clauses changes across both extracts. Extract 1 describes how the 'Manager allowed us to walk up the front until we were right behind the window display' (emphasis added). Although both Klara and Rosa are assigned mover roles in this sentence, and relocate from one position to another ('walk up the front'), this action occurs at the behest of the Manager, who is the agent at the head of the energy chain. The fact that Klara and Rosa are only permitted to relocate when 'allowed', despite clearly wanting to look outside, is indicative of the subservient role that AFs hold in this alternate reality. By contrast, the passers-by are 'hurrying by', 'standing, sitting and moving around' more freely. Though Klara holds an agentive role across other clauses, she is mainly assigned experiencer status, which means that is described through verbs of cognition and perception rather than physical action. Extract 2 for example describes what she 'could see' in four clauses. Where there is a mover role in Extract 2 (albeit modalised), 'I could follow with my eyes', Klara's eyes are the agents, rather than her in her entirety: she is only allowed to watch but not to take action. That this information occurs at the end of the clause means that readers are required to 'rescope' (Giovannelli 2022) the process, and an initial construal of Klara as mover becomes reclassified. The epistemic ('could' appears five times here) and boulomaic ('wanted') of her language and her prominent experiencer status means that the speaking 'I' moves on-stage. We are aware that the scene is

being viewed and recounted through a subjective construal. In other words, Klara's voice, and our understanding of her voice, is at the centre of the reading experience.

We have already observed how Klara is positioned spatially in relation to the surroundings she describes. What complicates Klara's vantage point further, however, is that it is revealed that she visually processes the world differently from readers:

Extract 3

By now the lights had been dimmed, and I spotted the other AFs in the backgrounds of several boxes, lining the walls mid-store, preparing for their sleep. But my attention was drawn to the three center boxes, at that moment containing aspects of Manager in the act of turning towards us. In one box she was visible only from her waist to the upper part of her neck, while the box immediately beside it was almost entirely taken up by her eyes. The eye closest to us was larger than the other, but both were filled with kindness and sadness. And yet a third box showed a part of her jaw and most of her mouth, and I detected there anger and frustration. Then she had turned dully and was coming towards us, and the store became once more a single picture.

(Ishiguro 2021, p. 26)

Rather than seeing the world as a single, holistic picture, Klara's perspective differs from ours through the fact she processes new scenes as a series of 'boxes'. This pixellation is most marked in the novel where Klara attempts to process human emotions, as in this scene, where Manager is both angry and frustrated. When first reading this extract, the description of the 'several boxes' within the context of a store seems to be a literal one, in that readers may draw on their encyclopaedic knowledge to assume that the AFs in the store might be kept within physical boxes which line the 'walls mid-store'. Readers are required to reconstrue this fact later on, however, where it is revealed in Klara's description that her perception of the Manager is fragmented within these viewing boxes. Reconstrual occurs where an adjustment of the interpretation of a sentence is required, in light of an adjustment in scope or a respecification of a description (see Harrison and Nuttall 2019, 2021; Giovanelli 2022). This also occurs earlier on in the novel in Extract 1, where she mentions: 'When we were new, Rosa and I were mid-store, on the magazines table side, and could see through more than half of the window'. Without the wider context of Klara and Rosa's identity, the 'new' description could refer to someone who was recently appointed as a store assistant, rather than newly made.

Compared to the previous two extracts, which foreground parts of the physical scene, the strange isolation of the Manager's face within Klara's descriptions places greater emphasis on Klara's perception of emotions. The parts of the manager's face which show how she is feeling – her eyes, her jaw and mouth – are more fully specified and foregrounded in Klara's conceptualisation. Interestingly, Klara's understanding of the 'boxes' of viewing mirror the container schemas she draws on for construing emotional states: she mentions, for example, how 'The eye closest to us was larger than the other, but both were filled with kindness and sadness' (emphasis added). This parallelism highlights Klara's worldview and how she uses her physical understanding of frames to elucidate how she processes emotions.

This brief Cognitive Grammar analysis has shown Klara's distinctive construal of the fictional world, and how we as readers in turn construe Klara's descriptions which allow us to draw inferences about her character profile. Klara is positioned as a child-like but inquisitive character who is fascinated by the world outside and has a great capacity for deciphering human emotions. Though she is an AF, readers are invited to align themselves with her perspective and feel empathetic towards her position. Langacker's (1991, p. 307) empathy hierarchy outlines the extent to which different entities may attract reader empathy:

speaker > hearer > human > animal > physical object > abstract entity

Of course, Klara is pulled more towards the left-hand side of the scale through her voice and humanlike characteristics. At the same time, certain peculiarities (such as her means of processing visual information, the way she defamiliarizes descriptions of the outside world, her requirement to be solar-charged, and so on) mark her out as a more abstracted version of a human. This debate – about what it means to be human – is at the centre of the novel.

5. Recommendations for practice

The breadth of existing studies and applications demonstrate the sheer versatility of the Cognitive Grammar model. Given the complexity and scope of the full theoretical framework,

in can be helpful to isolate one or two concepts for initial stylistic application. The following activities will hopefully provide a useful guide for those interested in exploring this area.

Construal

Construal is a helpful starting point for any Cognitive Grammar analysis. Though it is possible to explore the construal operations of any discourse, examining the representation of distinctive, unusual, or even non-human narrators, can reveal some interesting patterns.

Choose a book you have read recently which features an unusual narrator. Once you have selected an extract, think about the following questions:

- How schematic or specific is the description of the scene?
- Is the narrator on-stage or off-stage, and if so, what language choices position them in this way?
- Examine the clause structures. Is there a clear *energy source* and *energy sink* at the level of the sentences, and across the extract as a whole?
- And finally, what do these observations reveal about the identity or character of the narrator?

Reconstrual

- Texts or scenes with a twist or a reveal can bring about a reconstrual of the narrative. When you re-read these types of texts, the language of the story remains the same, but the reader interpretation will be altered in light of new information. Choose a short story or an extract from a text with a twist (detective fiction works particularly well for this) where you are familiar with the resolution. How does the text manipulate reader attention on a first reading, and how does this change during a second reading? Can any ideas from the Cognitive Grammar model help explain this experience or any alterations in your readerly construal of the story?
- Find some early drafts of a text and compare the revisions with the final published version. What has been changed in the writerly construal of the narrative? Are there any variations in the prominence, specificity or perspective that are particularly noteworthy?

6. Future directions

As noted in Section 2.1 of this chapter, there are a number of synergies between Cognitive Grammar and existing stylistic frameworks such as Text World Theory, conceptual metaphor theory and mind style, among others. Rather than supplanting these models, Cognitive Grammar has been shown to work effectively to elaborate on and extend these methodologies, though this is only starting to be explored.

Other potential avenues for further research include:

- *Ethical positioning.* The ways that texts invite reader alignment and the impact this has on ethical stance (see Nuttall 2015).
- *Pedagogical affordances.* Another emerging area in Cognitive Grammar applications is its potential for connecting English language and literature in secondary school teaching (see Harrison and Giovanelli 2020).
- *Scalability.* The Cognitive Grammar model has a lot of specialist terms and concepts, and further work needs to be done regarding the clarification and consistency in application, particularly when scaling up from clausal to broader discourse structures.
- *Linguistic production and reception.* Construal occurs at both ends of the communication process and therefore impacts on both the writerly production and the readerly reception of language. While the term ‘construal’ itself arguably gives greater emphasis to reader interpretation, the creative choices and processes of writing also require further study.
- *Naturalistic and experimental reader response studies.* Finally, integration with reader data from naturalistic and experimental studies would help further extend and substantiate the ways in which these generalized concepts can be applied to describe specific effects, the ways that readers and writers intersubjectively negotiate meaning and the distinctive interpretative exchange of reading.

7. Related topics

Functionalist stylistics, cognitive poetics, point of view and modality, Text World Theory

8. Further reading

For an overview of the original work on the model, see Langacker's publications. *Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction* (2008) is a helpful starting point.

Harrison, C., 2017. *Cognitive Grammar in Contemporary Fiction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Nuttall, L., 2019. *Mind-style and Cognitive Grammar: Language and Worldview in Speculative Fiction*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Giovanelli, M. 2022. *The Language of Siegfried Sassoon*. London: Palgrave.

These texts provide an extended account of Cognitive Grammar for literary application. Harrison (2017) examines how the model can be scaled in the analysis of contemporary literary discourse, whereas Nuttall (2019) considers how concepts from Cognitive Grammar can inform and enrich an analysis of worldview and mind style in fiction. Giovanelli's (2022) study integrates literary scholarship with Cognitive Grammar for extended analyses of the language of Siegfried Sassoon's poetry.

Harrison, C. and Giovanelli, M., 2018. *Cognitive Grammar in Stylistics: A Practical Guide*. London: Bloomsbury.

This textbook provides an accessible overview of the framework, and particularly those concepts most useful for stylisticians. The book guides researchers in the practical application of the theory through a number of illustrations, activities and examples.

Giovanelli, M., Harrison, C., Nuttall, L. (eds), 2021. *New Directions in Cognitive Grammar and Style*. London: Bloomsbury.

At the time of writing, this is the most recent edited collection in the field, drawing together work from a number of contemporary researchers in applied linguistics, cognitive linguistics and literary linguistics. This collection showcases how Cognitive Grammar can inform text analysis in a number of contexts, from fiction to non-fiction, to multimodal discourse and pedagogic applications.

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