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TITLE: On the ubiquity of cognitive processes in coding and inferring meaning

The starting point for this presentation is the understanding of meaning construction as a trade-off between meaning as coded on the basis of lexico-constructional mechanisms and meaning as inferred on the basis of linguistic and extralinguistic cues. Both kinds of meaning-making activity yield internally consistent meaning representations or "meaning structure" of four broad types: predicate-argument structure, implicational structure, illocutionary structure, and discourse structure. Furthermore, both coded and inferred meaning arise from the same set of underlying cognitive process. Thus, for each of these representational types we postulate an underlying cognitive model type. Predicate-argument representations are based on the cognitive exploitation of high-level non-situational cognitive models (e.g. the 'action' frame, whose subdomains include the roles of actor, object, instrument, result, etc., is central to constructions in the area of transitivity). Implicational structure is the result of exploiting low-level situational cognitive models; for example, 'getting a tooth fixed by the dentist' can be activated by mentioning a relevant part of the 'going to the dentist' situational model (A: Did your tooth stop hurting? B: Yes, I finally called the dentist). illocutionary structure arises from the metonymic activation of high-level situational cognitive models (e.g. stating a need can be taken as a request on the grounds of a social convention whereby we have to act in ways that are beneficial to others provided that we have the capacity and it is reasonable for us to do so). Finally, discourse structure pairs two or more high-level non-situational cognitive models logically (e.g. cause-effect, evidence-conclusion, etc.), temporally (e.g. precedence, simultaneity, etc.), or conceptually (e.g. similarity, contrast, etc.). On the basis of these initial assumptions, we proceed to examine a wide range of meaning-making linguistic phenomena and account for their motivation in other cognitive processes. For example, we find 'upscaling' and 'downscaling' gradable cognitive models not only in overstatement and understatement (as should be expected) but also in some lexical and grammatical phenomena involving strengthening and mitigation. Or we find echoing not only in reported speech or in irony (as postulated by relevance pragmatics theorists) but in constructions coding implicated and illocutionary meaning (e.g. Don't you X, as in "Don't you daddy me", where "daddy" echoes the speaker's attempt to appease her interlocutor)

and in some discourse relations (e.g. paraphrase, restatements, etc). The presentation concludes with a listing of cognitive processes and the areas of meaning representation where each of them plays a role, whether in the domain of coded or inferred meaning, plus an examination of the principles that constrain such processes. Since the evidence points in the direction of a limited set of processes being ubiquitous in meaning construction, the resulting account is endowed with a higher degree of generalization than explanations that do not take into account meaning regularities based on the principles of cognitive modeling.