

The Cultural Cognitive Model: A Programmatic Application

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we propose an integration of cognitive linguistic and cognitive anthropology models. The key concept around the integration revolves is that of 'cultural cognition', manifested in the intersubjective categories and concepts that make up so-called 'cultural models' in language, thought, affect and action, whose main functions include: to represent schematized versions of the world and experience; to help interpret novel symbolic experience; to encode and express intersubjective experience; and to synchronize, direct and motivate social action.

In the first sections of the paper, we describe the theoretical underpinnings of the cognitive-cultural model; and in the last section we offer a sample programmatic application of the model to a possible (cross)cultural dictionary entry of 'World' and 'Self'.

KEY WORDS: cognitive linguistics; cognitive anthropology; cultural cognition; cultural model.

RESUMEN

En este trabajo proponemos una integración de modelos lingüístico-cognitivos y cognitivo-antropológicos. El concepto central sobre el que gira dicha integración es el de 'cognición cultural', que se manifiesta en las categorías y conceptos intersubjetivos que conforman los llamados 'modelos culturales' en lenguaje, pensamiento, emociones y acción, y cuyas funciones incluyen: representar las versiones esquematizadas del mundo y de la experiencia; contribuir a la interpretación de experiencia simbólica nueva; codificar y expresar; y sincronizar, dirigir y motivar la acción social.

En las primeras secciones del trabajo, se describe el modelo cognitivo-cultural, y en la última sección se ofrece una muestra de aplicación programática a una posible entrada de diccionario cultural sobre 'Mundo y Yo/Persona'.

PALABRAS CLAVE: lingüística cognitiva; antropología cognitiva; cognición cultural; modelo cultural.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-seventies, it has become increasingly clear that, in order to account for word-meaning or word-use, linguists must recognize the need for incorporating common intersubjective assumptions (world- and culture-knowledge) to their theoretical constructs. From this period dates the move from classical, checklist-based theories of meaning to prototype-based and frame semantics-based models of meaning (see especially the seminal article by Fillmore, 1975), which developed the idea of prototypical categories and scenarios, scripts or frames relating series of entities or events to properties and attributes thereof in a kind of simplified (ie. schematized) version of the world. Thus, to use Fillmore's well-known example, a 'bachelor' is not just "an unmarried male", a definition which would encompass not only ordinary males but also male adolescents, celibate priests, the Pope, or even certain men with disabling pathologies, etc. But of course language users know full well that the latter instances do not commonly fall within the referential scope of the word 'bachelor' because its denotational referent range normally (a) includes only male persons who stay unmarried beyond the usual age thought to be normal for marrying (in a given society), while (b) excluding male persons who have made special vows of celibacy due to religious reasons, or who, by nature, nurture or accident, become somehow handicapped to get married or lead a "normal" married life.

This culture-bound view of lexical meaning soon incorporated what G. Lakoff has termed "the generalization and cognitive commitments" (1990), namely (a) to characterize the general principles governing all aspects of human language (categories, constructions, inferences, semantic relations, metaphorization, implicatures, discourse, understanding, etc); and (b) to make accounts of human language accord with what we know about the mind and the brain (memory, imagery, conceptualization, perception, embodiment, schemas, etc). In this way, Frame Semantics and Cognitive Linguistics have provided a framework of concepts and insights that has proven extremely useful in furthering the cause of comprehensive accounts of meaning, beyond purely structural, taxonomic, and objectivist accounts (Johnson, 1993).

In a parallel fashion, many cultural anthropologists expressed early on their dissatisfaction with traditional ethnosemantic approaches of meaning analysis. They argued that componential analysis left out of lexical sets relevant information about what speakers have to know in order to use a word or a terminological system (eg. kinship terms) appropriately. Today most current anthropological accounts of meaning accept the premise that the distinction between word-knowledge and world-knowledge is extremely fuzzy, and that often a simple word encodes an implicit world of culture-bound assumptions. More particularly, they argue that word-knowledge and use presume so-called 'folk cultural models' which capture common intersubjective meanings (D'Andrade, 1989). This cognitive anthropological view of meaning has made it possible to bring into a closer relationship disciplines and fields that up to now had remained only loosely connected: cognitive science, cognitive linguistics, symbolic anthropology, cultural anthropology and cultural cognition (D'Andrade, 1995; Stiegler et al., 1990; Taylor and MacLaury, 1995). The implications

following from this newfound partnership **have**, as a corollary, **thrown** into question a number of classical methodological dichotomic separations: word-knowledge and world-knowledge (or semantic cognition and cultural cognition); dictionary and encyclopedia; structural lexicon and mental lexicon, etc. As a result, language, cognition and culture are studied as closely interwoven systems of knowledge (both declarative and procedural). The implications of this view boil down to a set of integrated assumptions and insights: (1) that culture consists of shared systems of meaning and knowledge (the culture-as-knowledge view); (2) that the study of such meaning systems entails **the** integration of thought, talk, emotion and action models; and that (3) the notion of 'cultural cognition' may be **seen** as the encapsulating notion integrating cognitive-cultural meaning systems (Holland and Quinn, 1987).

II. THE STRUCTURE OF CULTURAL MEANING SYSTEMS

The culture-as-knowledge assumption entails a view of symbolic behaviour stressing the constructionist and constitutive nature of the structures and processes of meaning systems (Grace, 1987; Shore, 1990; Searle, 1995). Cultural **meaning** systems get "packaged" into **intersubjective** schemas (or: 'cultural models in language and thought'), made up of constitutive **rules** (ie.: " X counts as Y for Z"), with associated prototypical scripts, scenarios or frames, whose main **functions** are:

- to represent the worldenvironment
- to help interpret the worldenvironment
- to direct and orient **actions**
- to cause systems of affect and emotion
- to **regulate** interpersonal action
- to help **create** new meanings

From this standpoint, a culture is a complex web of cultural **meaning** systems which **provide** its members with schematized versions of the world, motivational forces, belief-systems, evokment potentials, **institutional** orientations, etc. In the words of D'Andrade (1989):

The meanings of **lexical** items or vocabulary presuppose schematically **simplified** worlds: procedural devices used to **make** an interpretation of what, under **certain conditions**, counts as X (eg. a **lie**, a **fit** of anger, a **marriage**, a success) ... A cultural schema is not **just** a network of propositions or an imagistic thought. It is an interconnected pattern of interpretive elements. It **requires** a mental **object** with an addressable memory, priming effects, prototypical effects ... A schema, in **turn**, may be a trigger for action, volition and affect. It interprets and orients action, **belief** and emotion: what is desirable, avoidable, normative.

III. TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED CULTURAL-COGNITIVE MODEL

The ideal cultural cognitive model should seek to relate system-based notions of meaning to psychological and phenomenological (**subject-centred**) accounts, explaining how the **historically-opaque arbitrariness** of sign-formation can be experienced subjectively as a naturally transparent, motivational significance and agentive force (Martín Morillas, 1993). This account must also incorporate the ontogenesis of meaning consistent with developmental psychology (**early-** and **adult-** symbol-formation structures and processes). At the **same** time that the model grants the historical and local "grounding" of meaning-construction and comprehension (hence its relativity, conventionality and variability), it should acknowledge its permeability and commensurability. One dimension that **this** model seeks to incorporate to the more traditional distinction between conceptual and affective meaning components. is the experiential-sensorial as well as the "existential depth" (explicit, logical, axiological plus unconscious, implicit texture). From a cognitive point of view, the concept of cognition that is explicitly assumed entails a **shift** from formalist, feature-based theories of **cognitive** semantics to prototype and categorisation-based models, but extending the latter to incorporate aspects of social cognition, social cognition models and cultural psychology concepts, as well as **vygotskian** and **neowhorfian** models of language thought and culture. Thus, the implication is that an understanding of human cognitive systems cannot **limit** itself to the specification of structures and processes of knowledge representation following a computationally-based "methodological solipsism" model (Fodor, 1975), but rather should seek to embed the representational schemas in socio-cultural schemes and models including non-computational and non-representational models.

In order to develop a coherent integrated model **servicing** as a general framework for the investigation of cultural-semantic systems, it may be convenient to isolate key **areas** of research. Below are listed **some** of the most relevant ones:

a) Cognitive-semantic studies emphasising the types of schemata and conceptualisations which underlie culture-bound practices. **Here** a number of **areas** or research can be mentioned:

- (i) image-schemata involving sensorial, polysensorial, synesthetic, synergistic concepts and categories;
- (ii) metaphoric and metonymic mappings of cognitive, affective, praxis domains;
- (iii) mental representation of scripts and frames;
- (iv) **folk** cultural models (culture-bound "philosophies of experience"), ideologies, lifestyle, social myths);
- (v) **embodiments** (**rituals**, rites of passage, **institutional** practices).

b) Social cognition and ethnography of **speaking** studies focussing on notions such as: communicative **styles** as a result of socialization practices; social categorisation models based on attribution theory and intergroup communication (eg. in-group and out-group identity; **ethnic** and gender stereotyping, etc. (Clancy, 1986; Gudykunst, 1989).

c) Cultural Psychology studies emphasizing the axiological differences between individualistic and collective orientation systems and their **impingement** on subjective and **intersubjective** values, attitudes and **norms** (Triandis, 1990), such as the following:

- Universal vs localized aspects of human behaviour: psychic unity of mankind (in the Enlightenment or Romantic strands) vs relativistic, **whorfian** differences;
- Subjective culture vs Intersubjective culture;
- **Learning** style and cognitive styles;
- Affective and orientation style (eg. individualistic, self-seeking vs group **harmony** concepts; task-centredness vs human heartedness orientations)

d) Cultural Semiotic studies, whose basic notions concern aspects of the production and consumption of cultural symbols; spheres of knowledge as interest (art, science, morality, entertainment) as well as the ideological aspects of high and low culture (Bourdieu, 1990).

Many examples could be given of concepts and domains illustrating the above notions.

Here we will mention a few ones for the **sake** of exemplification: synesthesia in bio-sensorial percepts (smell/odor); **image-schemata** of experiential-abstract **terms** (el **mar/la mar**; der **Tod/la muerte/Death**); metaphoric and metonymic mappings of functional locus of self (soul/mind/heart- Seele- Dusa); **alma/mente/corazón**; cultural models of emotion **terms** (anger as heating of fluid in container; **love** as a journey); discourse metaphors (war metaphors in business discourse); **folk philosophies** ("senequismo"; "**Schmäh**"; "**kimochi**"); socio-cultural **gendered** models (caballerosidad/machismo); social **ideologies/myths** (the **American** dream of success and achievement); cultural semiotics (**body/self-image** and mental hygiene in advertisement); heteroglossia and **self-construction** (metaphors in self-technologies and self-help morality of psychotherapy discourse); axiological concepts and value systems in individualist and collectivist societies and **groups** ("**familism**"/**philotimo**); stereotyping in genderized talk; embodiment of non-verbal hierarchical signalling, etc.

These examples help to illustrate the consideration of linguistic meaning closely connected to the notion of 'cultural cognition', understood as a people's systemic network of schematized intersubjective mental representations embedded **in their** cultural practices as well as the cultural knowledge grounded in experience and cognition and serving as a guide for action and interpretation of experience (Shore, 1995). **This** view of meaning, cognition and culture, entails placing culture **in** the mind and placing mind in the social habitat; that is to say: understanding **the** nexus **linking specific** minds to particular cultural symbols underlying cultural practices. Cognitive-cultural schemata thus synthesise how individuals appropriate intersubjectively symbols from experience to consciousness to action. In this manner, culture is **seen** as a system of cognitive models or schemata which govern social activities and practices (especially language interaction); these models, **in** turn are derived from those activities and practices to **serve** as the mental representations encapsulating the subjective and intersubjective schematizations.

To sum up so far, we **have been arguing** for an integrated cultural-cognitive model of language, thought, affect and action, with a view towards going not only beyond the objectivist, logical-structural view of meaning (by **incorporating** phenomenological and experiential accounts of meaning-construction structures and processes), but **also** beyond **those** solipsistic accounts of meaning that tend to gloss over the intersubjective aspects of meaning-construction processes. We **have likewise highlighted** the functions of such intersubjective meaning systems, namely: to synchronise and coordinate the **creative** aspects

of cognition and social practice; to supply the possibility of sharing common orientations in terms of belief-systems, scenarios, **scripts**, social dramas, myths; to help subjects and groups re-appropriate in a novel and idiosyncratic fashion shared models (eg advertising, poetry); to re-utilise sensori-motor experience as a means of social **symbolisation through** metaphoric **signification patterns** involving rituals, routines, social micropractices (rites of passage, artistic expression, institutional practices). In the next section we sketch the outlines of an application of the model.

IV. A PROGRAMMATIC APPLICATION OF THE CULTURAL COGNITION MODEL

Lack of space forbids a detailed **analysis** of possible applications of the cognitive-cultural model set out above. Instead, we will just spell out (**rather than flesh out**) the general outlines of a specific **proposal** of application, namely a **sample** of a (cross)cultural dictionary entry. The entry we **have** in mind, which is broken down into AIM, HEURISTIC QUESTIONS, and DOMAINS, may be itemised as follows:

A) AIM: To build an 'emic' model of underlying cognitive structures from empirical facts, using a society's own categorial systems in **order** to describe the cognitive principles by which the society's members apprehend and describe the categories of World and Self.

B) MAIN HEURISTIC QUESTIONS:

- a) Which aspects of the world are saliently important for the culture?
- b) What **labels** are given for them?
- c) How is subjective, intersubjective experience classified?
- d) How do people **think** about and talk about these experiences?
- e) How do talk, thinking, acting, **feeling**, relate to each other and to the overall axiological-cultural system of values, mores, customs, rituals, embodiments, etc.?
- f) What **does** the way a culture "**talks**" about its members and the environment **tell** us about the way it "thinks" about them, that is, the way it typically **cognizes** and categorizes experience of World and Self?

C) DOMAINS INVOLVED:

- a) Categorization and Prototification of Natural and Non-Natural Concepts:

Phenomenologically **speaking**, **the world/environment** consists of a **virtually infinite** number of **discriminably** different stimuli and objects. An essential cognitive-cultural activity is the parcelling-out of the **world/environment** into categories and prototypes, taxonomies and domains. Many non-identical stimuli can be treated as equivalent. Typically, universal principles involve: **focal points**, saliency, codability, prototypes (e.g. **colors**). On the other hand, culture-bound specifics involve: elaboration of **language categories organized** into fields and domains with superordinate and subordinate categories; category boundaries may be fuzzy and blended. Categorization for Natural **Categories** (eg. 'colours') is **served** by the constructivist creation of image schemata, metaphoric and metonymic mappings, prototypes, reflecting in a **whorfian** fashion an ontology of first-, second-, third- **order** properties and relations, as well as superordinate and subordinate **features** and attributes. A general principal

for non-natural categories is Searle's principle of constituted categories: "X counts as Y for Z" (eg. 'marriage').

b) Categorization of Emotions (Prototypical Scripts, Scenarios, and Conceptual Mappings):

Most cultures **recognize** at least **six** basic human emotions (happiness, anger, sadness, fear, surprise, **disgust**) each associated with a culture-specific set of somatic-affective expressive correspondences as well as systems of encoding and interpretation schemas, scripts, scenarios and scripts (**Wierzbicka**, 1992). Specific cultural **information** is needed to account for differences in metaphoric mappings, prototypical scenarios and scripts and their attendant ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions (Kovecses, 1995; Matsuki, 1995).

c) Cognitive-Cultural Model of **Self/Person**:

All cultures encode their awareness of individuality, ie what the individual perceives as the boundaries between the self and the world, as well as the self and other selves, the individual and the collective (the 'us' and 'them'). The manifestation of this categorization is likely to be a specific view on the relationship between the demands of **private** life and those of social commitments. From this **conflict** may stem attitudes and concepts toward: relationships, bonding, courting, pnvacy, **altruistic** behaviours, entitlements, commitments, etc. These in turn may shape the manifestation of such values as: solidarity, individuality, membership-acceptance, empathetic ntuals and attitudes, etc.

The cognitive-cultural model of self **is** for the most part culture-bound. For **instance**, the Western Conception of Person, according to C. **Geertz** (1983), is that of a bounded, unique, integrated entity, motivationally and cognitively; a **dynamic** center of awareness, emotion and **judgement organized** into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background. The concept of self or personhood is socio-culturally mediated and socio-culturally **constructed**. This means that people **construct** their own and others' sense of self by **relying** on public resources, as well as on **private** experiences for self-construction. The concept of self of a given culture is an integral part of the cultural model of person of that culture. It includes the **image-schemata**, metaphoric and metonymic mappings, and **script-like information** with which a culture schematizes cognitively-culturally its members (**witness** expressions such as: "s/he has a screw loose"; "s/he is a **cheek**"; "s/he is out of his/her mind"; "slhe feels down"; "slhe has magic"; "'s/he has a soft heart"; "a man is **known** by the company he keeps"; "the face is the mirror of the soul", etc.; **Martín Morillas**, in press). It is, by **definition**, an **intersubjective** concept included in the cultural models of that culture, and hence in the cultural **meaning** systems that permeate it. The concept of self may be more or less explicit or **implicit**, conscious or subconscious, but it nevertheless manifests itself **linguistically** in complex and subtle ways: lexically, grammatically, semantically, pragmatically, discursively (ie. in simple or complex lexemes, **word-formation** processes, idioms, proverbs, ways of talking, discourse **patterns**, etc.)

d) Axiological Models (Values, Orientations, Motives, Beliefs, Ideologies):

Along the individualism-collectivism dimension a **number** of **categories** can be placed: **private** and public spheres; in-group and out-group **taxonomies**; concern with self,

achievement, self-esteem; work ethic; health and sickness; self vs group; self vs others (identity, equity, equality, difference, **divergence**). Axiological-orientational systems having motivational and directive force are deeply involved in such categories, as are **value-laden** concepts like power, justice, fairness, cooperation, competition, rewards, sanctions, etc.). Likewise, many of these axiological categories are liable to a stereotyping categorization, which generally betray a number of psycho-social tendencies (**illusory** correlation, essentialist logic, rigid cognitive style, etc.; see Hilton and von Hippel, 1996). Gender, **Ethnic**, Self and other stereotypes provide a **fertile** ground for the study of how **subjective** and **intersubjective** mental and cultural models interact.

Since the above categories belong to general and specific semantic domains (constellations and fields), they are liable to onomasiological meaning analyses (in terms of dimensions, parameters and features; see Martín Mingorance (1990), for a programmatic proposal developed in full by the Functional-Lexematic school), but it can be argued that a cognitive-cultural perspective integrating domains of analysis as well as specific constructs, methods and hypotheses from cognitive **linguistic** and cultural anthropological models may offer more encompassing insights for a proper understanding of the oftentimes seamless relationship of **language** to thought, affect and action.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Cognitive **Anthropolinguistics**, in the wake of far-reaching cognitive-semantic developments in the '70's, has emphasized the fact that understanding the meaning of a term entails understanding the **implicit** 'cognitive-cultural models' underlying it. A cognitive-cultural model works as a sort of intersubjectively-shared "simplified", "schematic" version of experience in the world. Cognitive-cultural models typically encode in a propositional plus motivational format **all** the information members of a culture possess that enables them to coordinate, interpret, and orient, their actions, beliefs, values, norms, etc. For cognitive anthropologists, terms like '**marriage**' 'anger' '**lie**' 'smart', '**self**' etc. are **all** 'constituted signs', **and** as such encapsulate a great **deal** of cultural information and locally-grounded knowledge. Of course the representation of the cultural **meanings** of such constituted signs cannot rely exclusively on declarative- propositional schemas or frames, for they must **also** incorporate procedural and non-representational **aspects**, since cultural meaning systems, as a special type of intersubjectively-shared information, **have** more than **just** representational functions, **possessing** a great **deal** of motivational-directive, affective, evoking and axiological-orientational force (D'Andrade and Strauss, 1992). **Furthermore**, cultural meaning systems work at many **levels**: they package information **simultaneously** about word and world (not **just** the real world, but **also** the ideal or **unreal** one), as well as about cognition, emotion and action. Their description therefore requires the integration of information about cognition, emotion, action and talk (from word through discourse to cultural models) **in** such a way that **justice** may be done to their representational, motivational, orientational, epistemic and axiological functions. From our standpoint, it is advisable for the **linguist** concerned with

the description and explanation of **meaning** systems to view language, cognition, emotion and action as interdependent and, therefore, to be accounted for **in** an integrated fashion. To this end, we favour a merging of cognitive **linguistic** and cognitive anthropological ideas, concepts and models. **The** basic **thrust** of this integration is twofold: that the way we "talk" is a projection of the way we "cognize" and "feel" (ie the way categorize things, **objects**, properties, events, etc., and they way we react to **them**); but, at the **same** time, that the way we cognize, **feel** and talk is for the most **part** also contingent upon the way we "live" socially (ie the way we go about our daily individual and social lives, the **tasks** the social milieu sets to our minds and selves).

From the theoretical cultural-cognitive model expounded above one may derive a number of more practical **projects**: cultural dictionaries, socio-cultural guides in pedagogic **grammars**, ethnographic descriptions, intercultural communication and cultural studies, etc. In this paper we **have outlined some** of **the** notions from the model that might be involved in the specification of **information** for a (cross)cultural dictionary entry of World and Self concepts.

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