

ARTYKUŁY

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CONSTRUAL OF EVENTS AND ATTENTION IN PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY AND COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

The present paper sets the stage for the study of construal operations of events in language. The author argues that it is the cognitive salience/prominence that are the ultimate goals in event construal. They arise due to the operations of attention. This is why the article presents its different models and theories. It also explains how attention and consciousness relate. The discussion of philosophical and psychological models of attention is performed in agreement with the Cognitive linguistics convergence hypothesis. Cognitive Linguists have never used a single model of attention, though this term and concept is one of the most important ones in cognitive semantics. The author tries to compare discussions of attentional phenomena in CogLing and psychology.

GOALS AND MOTIVATIONS

The purpose of this article is a review of selected philosophical and psychological models of attention, and relations between attention-consciousness vis a vis the proposals voiced by cognitive semantics (Johnson 1992, Lakoff 1987: chapter 7, Sinha 1999, Turner 1992) and cognitive grammar (Langacker 1991, Talmy 2001, Croft and Cruse 2006) regarding construal operations. This objective has been motivated by the author's theoretical position from which attention is considered key guiding mechanism in construal options. In other words, attention gives rise to variable linguistic choices from a language producer's perspective, and it is a mechanism that ranks for salience entities in the consciousness of a language producer and comprehender. The author also considers it fruitful to seek converging evidence of mental-linguistic phenomena, a general goal that cognitive linguists subscribe for. The level of *events*, things that happen (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2011: 35) has been selected because of their dynamic character, which the theory of linguistic construal and imagery in language underline (cf. Langacker 1991, Taylor and MacLaury 1995, Talmy 2001, Croft and Cruse 2006).

ATTENTION IN PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY

There is no single model or theory of attention. Instead, a researcher is faced with a number of competing alternatives. According to Mole (2009), it was Descartes whose voice on this topic was one of the first to hear. He claimed that the mind needs attention in order for ideas to become clear for a person. Already on this view attention operations are not regarded amenable to introspection, only the final ideas are. For Berkeley, in *Principles of human knowledge* according to Mole (2009), thinking involves dealing with ideas whose sources lie in physical experience. For John Locke attention is a useless term. All that is needed, Locke claims, is a theory of thinking. Kames (1769: 18 in Mole 2009) argues that attention is the mechanism that helps in the reception of physical impressions, so it is directed outwards so to say. 18th century witnesses a view that regards attention relevant for perception, memory and action. In the 19th century, Titchner (1908, 1910 in Mole 2009) notices its role in receiving sensory data, Bain (1898 in Mole 2009) in action, and Stout (1891 in Mole 2009) in reflective thought. But it was James (1890), who became interested in both sensory data (exogenous attention) and conceptual preparation (endogenous attention that is attention directed inwards).

Other researchers followed James in the twentieth century giving rise to the following theories of attention: capacity limitation, feature integration, coherence and competition, spotlight, and finally motor theories (Nęcka et al. 2006). For lack of space they are presented in a very sketchy manner.

Capacity limitation theories have two versions, and they agree that a “bottleneck”, or a limit to the quality and quantity of data, exists somewhere in the system. The first version represented by Broadbent (1958) argues that the limitation applies early – the attended data passes through, whereas the unattended data is blocked from further processing. The second version argues that the bottleneck is applied in some later stage of information processing, and the sensory stimuli are processed, though without conscious awareness. This second view according to Mole (2009) is now uncontroversial.

The feature integration theory was proposed by Treisman (2003: 97), and it attempted to answer the question how it is that, given two objects at different locations, the brain can integrate their features. Treisman proposes the construct of frame to solve this dilemma. Others think the problem is only artificial.

Coherence theories represented by Neisser (1976), Allport (1987), and Neuman (1976) all cited in Mole (2009) argue the capacity limitation imposed on our attention has the role of guarding the human processor against information excess, which is connected with our embodiment. These authors all agree that attention supervises variable, unconscious, parallel streams of processing. For competition theories this parallel processing of information is likened to a race for processing resources, in which attention has an important role.

In the spotlight theories of attention, it is understood in terms of space. It is as if placed on a given object (cf. Logan 1996). One problem with this analogy is that attention is also necessary for many non-spatial categories of perception, memory, conception and abstract thought, e.g. height of tones in music. Last, motor theories of attention treat it as necessary for maintaining action plans and goals.

ATTENTION AND CONSCIOUSNESS

How do consciousness and attention relate? The model that will be advocated here was presented by Jackendoff (1997). In the afterward of his *Language Faculty*, the scholar says that people are not conscious of the sensory or conceptual processes that lead to a display of conceptual content in consciousness. Attention then is treated as a process or a set of processes, themselves not amenable to introspection, but resulting in a conscious conception. A person is aware of a broader attentional scope, for instance, because (by analogy to vision) the viewing angle is larger and the details get lost, and so do the consciously attended contents of the scratch-pad. Baars (1997) in psychology, and Chafe (1994), who is a cognitive linguist and discourse specialist, share this view. Very importantly, however, consciousness is not an interface between unconscious schemata (e.g. linguistic ones) and the contents of our conscious mental acts (Paradis 2009). The former are never simply transformed into the latter, but they exist independently. If one can pay attention to anything, it is only the data displayed (to use a metaphor) on the scratchpad that s/he is conscious of. Consciousness, in other words, can only act on: physical stimuli, mental (conceptually driven) imagery, and phonetic images – language without sound (otherwise called sub-vocal speech).

Connected with both attention and consciousness is the concept of salience or mental prominence. Its cognitive reality has been confirmed by research in psychology (e.g. gestalt psychology) and language (cf. Giora 2003). Salience in linguistic communication is effected by a choice of language form to match the specifics of a conceptualization. In other words, it is salience of selected entities in a conceptualization that language producers instruct about verbally, and which language comprehenders recreate from the linguistic evidence provided.

The creation of salience is also a matter of construal. The term (construal) was defined as a relation between a conceptualizer and an entity that becomes the content of his conceptualization. I am inclined to reserve the term for the pre-linguistic phase of communication, the phase that can do without language form. When a speaker wishes to communicate it (the specifically construed conceptualization), he codes it in language form in agreement with the conventions of the language he uses. In sum, the term construal is better thought of as belonging to the realm of imagery, mental simulation and other forms of representation that brains

use in thinking; coding by contrast, should be held in reserve to discuss how these yet unexpressed representations become signalled (verbally or non-verbally).

Returning to the original goal of this section, the relation between attention and consciousness, there is an unconscious gap between conscious access to at least some details of a conceptualization and also conscious (at least to a large extent) form that is effected either in a controlled, automatized or autonomously automatic processes. One is aware of a conceptualization and sound of language. In between there is a chasm covered by what Langacker (1991) calls *correspondences*, that is symbolic links between meaning and form. Controlled entities can only be the ones that we are conscious of: specific construal of a conceptualization, intention and goal, language output, but not the specific ways in which procedural memory implements schemas governed by procedural memory.

COGNITIVE CONSTRUAL

The theory of linguistic construal is an important part of conceptual semantics, and also Cognitive Grammar. Even if a little repeatedly, construal was defined as a relation between a conceptualizer and the conceptualized, or the language user and the scenes, events as well as objects. Theoretically, a language user has an almost unlimited number of ways s/he can think **and** talk (or write) of them. Practically, culturally transmitted linguistic convention in language acquisition copies to some extent at least the ways our embodiment predisposes us to sense and think about the world. For example, English speakers tend to say *the lamp is above the table* instead of *the table is below the lamp*, even though both codings express the same objective reality. These examples show that construal is always subjective as it depends on our embodiment and pragmatic goals. For example, if you want to sell something, you will rather say it is *cheap*, whereas a potential customer might say it is *rather expensive*. Still another example that illustrates the same point is a situation in which one person describes something as *frightening* and another as *funny*.

Researchers have proposed a number of construal operations. The following table provides them in a condensed table format.

Table 1. Comparison of categories of construal operations

Langacker (1987)	Langacker (2008)	Talmy (2000 and earlier)	Croft and Cruse (2006)
Selection Perspective Abstraction	Prominence Perspective Specificity	Schematization Perspective Attention Force dynamics	Attention Judgment/Comparison Perspective Constitution/Gestalt Force dynamics

Even a cursory glance at these categories justifies a conclusion that attentional operations and prominence effects are at the forefront. They are most obvious when one notices the very terms *prominence* and *attention* included in the above taxonomy. Other categories and names of construal operations also presuppose them. First, *selection* describes the process of placing an entity in focus, which results in the item's greater salience. Selection may involve *domain*, *scale* or *scope* (Langacker 1991). Domains or *frames* (to use Fillmore's 1977 term) are those aspects of the totality of our encyclopaedic, embodied knowledge that is activated and ranked for salience by an expression. *Perspective* is either physical, or conceptualized. Describing a physical scene in front of us, we necessarily assume a certain position in the three dimensional space; this also applies to imagined and abstract scenes. As an example, the sentence *Go and wash the dishes!* imposes the perspective of a person who is in a position to get somebody to do something. By contrast *Can you give me a hand with the car this afternoon* signals an imaginary perspective of a person requesting help. Without going further into more examples, I want to argue that any of the above mentioned categories of construal operations involve some kind of attentional and salience effects, which are psychologically real and get reflected in the use of linguistic form. Moreover, the effects of construal operations can remain non-verbalized, conceptual, imagistic, modal or amodal (cf. Barsalou 1999), and when they are coded we can speak of linguistic construal. The question whether the smallest change of form always accompanies some, even the smallest change of meaning remains unanswered hypothesis to be tested experimentally in a behavioural study, for instance.

ATTENTION RESEARCH AND COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

In the sections above I concentrated on the theories and models of attention and its relation to the concept of consciousness. The listed models all point to various aspects of attention; similarly, consciousness was shown to be a fuzzy category as well. It was, however, proposed (after Chafe 1994, Jackendoff 1987, and Baars 1997) that consciousness should be treated as a scratchpad on which the products of attentional operations, adjusted for prominence, get displayed, and to which people have introspective access. Of course a host of other issues become strictly related with this discussion. One of the most relevant ones for linguistic processing and communication are: control and automaticity. However, they are topics in their own right, and I will not attempt a review of literature here, let alone an answer. Instead, I will try to present some connections and similarities between the Cognitive Linguistics and psychological traditions in treating attention phenomena.

Most importantly, CL has never been committed to a single theory or model of attention. Yet it is an important variable in conceptual semantics. So the links between these two traditions are often indirect. Psychological research has been predominantly dealing with exogenous attention, that is attention directed to physical sensations. Language studies, especially cognitive semantics in general and the theory of construal in particular are more focused on how linguistic form is capable of ranking domains of knowledge and entities for salience and later presentation in discourse. Let us have a look at related cognitive linguistics terminology.

Langacker (1991) contains numerous threads leading to this topic. They are: *profile/base alignment, figure/ground distinction, mental scanning operations, windowing in discourse, designation, reification, cognitive definitions of grammatical categories (noun, verb, adjective, adverb, etc), temporality/atemporality, grounding, attentional frame, Autonomy/Dependence (modification/complementation), e-site* – to mention only a few. They go back to attention models discussed earlier because they explain how salience is effected and conventionalized in language symbols. Because there is no room here for more systematic treatment of this idea, I will provide only a few examples. *Profile/base alignment* invokes the idea that (by analogy to vision) attention can have variable scope, where a certain frame will contain different entities and their relations. Not all of them, however, are equally important. A division into background and foreground, primary and secondary figure is performed in an automatic way, even pre-linguistically. Multiple features and sensations fuse into gestalts, objects and events. Next, *mental scanning* describes the observation that attentional focus is dynamic; this was referred to in the work on intonation units by Chafe (1994). *Summary or sequential scanning* operations may involve a temporal profile characteristic of verbs, or they may lack it in the case of nominal expressions – that illustrates a mental ability hinted upon by coherence, competence as well as motor theories of attention at least to some degree. *CogLing definitions of grammatical categories* show that the mind is capable of transformations of a single concept so that it can have multiple grammatical categories. By way of example, to *jump* is a verb, or a noun, *a jump*, or a gerund *jumping*, depending on how attention cuts out and selects portions or features of the temporal frame necessary for its structural description. In conclusion, I want to stress that psychological and CL research terminology and interests are different, but at least some attempt is worthwhile undertaking to achieve converging evidence.

An important effort at fitting attention to language research is also Talmy's (2007) *Attention in Language*. In this work Talmy starts from language form and asks what are its attentional effects in terms of the prominence of selected entities in a conceptualisation. Prominence, greater or smaller attention on something, to use the scholar's term, has been presented under the following set of factors:

- a) properties of a single morpheme,
- b) morphology and syntax,
- c) forms that set attention outside themselves,
- d) phonological factors,
- e) properties of the referent,
- f) relation between reference and its representation,
- g) occurrence of representation and properties,
- h) temporal progression.

For lack of space, only brief definitions and some, however incomplete, characterization will be provided. Under category (a) the presence of a morpheme (defined as a minimal unit with form and meaning, including complex morphemes: idioms and metaphors) is more prominent than its absence. Nominal expressions outperform verbs in this regard, analytical expressions such as *my brother's son* outperform the associated single morpheme *nephew*. As for category (b) syntax, different word orders will effect in different prominence. Subjects are said to be more prominent than objects. The so-called basic sentence patterns SVO, SVOO, SVCO and other describe basic scenes of human experience (cf. Goldberg 1995), and their participants coded into subjects, objects, complements, and verbs are more salient than adverbials of time, place, manner and so on. The gestalt representation of an idiom, if well entrenched, will be more salient than the component parts (which is not to say that the components may not be analyzed, if necessary). For example, the use of *she doesn't do a hand's turn in the house* will render the meaning of HELP greater than literally, physically TURN. Now, (c) – forms that set attention outside themselves involve all kinds of deictics. Context modulates their referents, and salient aspects of the semantic pole. In the sentence *The trumpet is sitting next to the bar*, the use of metonymy provides mental access to the musician playing the trumpet who is now sitting at the bar. But the sentence *I could hear the trumpet in the distance* activates the sound of the instrument, whereas its appearance is much more salient in *I saw a beautiful trumpet on the display*. Phonological factors (d) involve stress and intonation, which may direct greater attention to important components of a conceptualization. The properties of the referent (factor e) can be illustrated by differences in the designatum of an expression. *Trod, strut, hop, jump, walk, or run home* all involve self propelled two-legged locomotion, with important differences that we all understand, which testifies to our abilities to configure and conventionalize in language scenes and events differing with respect to only one or a few features. The ability to juxtapose features of objects and events also shows human ability to use endogenous attention to activate different subcomponents of knowledge topics, formats and specificity levels. Factors (f) and (g) express an observation that more attention goes to the meaning of an utterance (discussed under reference) than its form, at least most of the

time. Last, under the rubric *temporal progression*, it is stressed that the idea or concept currently presented is more salient than ideas and concepts that have already been expressed or will be expressed. The term that Givon (1990) uses for this phenomenon is called *referential distance* or *referential accessibility*. Chafe (1994) in similar vein speaks of different status of information in discourse: active, semi-active, inactive. It is also important to stress that all the discussed factors (and some other that have not been investigated and considered yet) do not operate in isolation, but they play a concerted effort towards modulating a conceptualization. One should not think, however, that the intention is always realized with 100 % precision. Human intelligence, language ability, experience, time to plan as well as affects, emotions, inhibitions and motivations modulate choices. There are better and worse performers, and even the same performer's (language user) behaviour is variable on different occasions. The next section will deal with events and some aspects of their construal.

EVENTS AND THEIR CONSTRUAL

What are events? *Events* can be pre-theoretically understood as “things that happen” (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2011: 35). Zacks and Tversky (2001) treat *action* as a more general term than *event*. The former is intentional and goal directed, whereas *events* need not be. Moreover, action is defined as objective, and events as construed by observers in conception or perception (Zack and Tversky 2001: 3). Davidson (1980) treats events on a par with objects on account of the observation that like objects, they bind variables. Kim (1975/1996) provides an alternative and treats them as properties of objects. Another proposal by Quine (1985/1996) was that events are bounded regions in space-time. The conclusion Zacks and Tversky (2001: 6) draw is that it is fruitful and psychologically justified to discuss events by analogy to objects. In a similar way, Bach (1986: 5-16) reminds us of the often quoted parallels between mass-count distinction regarding nominal expression and aspect as far as verbs go. Both nominal and verbal categories can have a beginning, middle and end, can or cannot be counted, repeated, replicated, and so on as is well known from descriptive grammar of English.

Like objects, events display partonomic structure (entity *x* is part of entity *y*, e.g. taking a swing is a part of throwing) and taxonomic structure (throwing a spear is a kind of throwing). Their partonomies are exemplified by our ability to distinguish variable levels of specificity as in the example below (Zacks and Tversky 2001: 10).

- (1) stepping down from a curb
crossing a street
walking to school

working to pass from the third grade
 getting an education
 climbing to the top in life

In still another example, a single event described with the use of the following sentence:

(2) John grabbed me by the hand,

can be broken down into several steps that John must have undertaken in his final act of grabbing somebody by the hand:

(3) John came up to me → He looked at me → He stretched his arm →
 He grabbed me by the hand.

Any usage event (Langacker 1991) is motivated by a host of contextual and pragmatic factors that are decisive in the final decisions speakers make. In (2) only the final act of taking by the hand is made explicit, but everyone understands that the actions explicitly coded in language in example (3) only foreground the preliminary stages. They are, by contrast, backgrounded (because they do not receive direct linguistic expression) in (2). Foregrounding and backgrounding information is evidently performed with the use of language, here a speaker may wish to decide to foreground only selected phases (beginning, middle or final) of an event.

Different event type classifications are provided. As an example Vendler (1957 in Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2011: 37) divides them into:

- activities – homogenous events with no natural finishing
- accomplishments – non-homogenous event, with a culmination
- achievements – culminating event
- state – a homogenous event extended over time

There are various modifications of this classification. Kenny (1963) fuses accomplishments and achievements into *performances*; Ingarden (1935) only has achievements and processes, while Bach (1986) speaks of *eventualities* as the most superordinate category, broken down into *states*, and *non-states*, and states are divided into dynamic states *sit, stand, lie*, as well as the static ones, such as: *be drunk, be in NY, have x, own*; the non-states are further analyzed into processes (*walk, push, be mean*), and events are either protracted (*build, walk to Boston*) or momentous: happenings (*recognize*) or culminations (*die, reach the top*). By contrast, Croft (1998: 67-111) only has *events* that consist of *states* and *actions*. As the reader can see, chaos reigns supreme regarding typology of events.

Apart from event typologies, one can also speak of their schemas and models. In Cognitive Grammar, Langacker (1991) proposes two such models. One is the so-called action chain model, which is a schematic mental representation

of physical energetic interaction in which a moving object hits other objects and transfers some of its energy, in result of which the other objects also move. The other model, called the stage model by Langacker (1991), refers to the *event* by analogy to a theatre performance with actors, and the main participants are on stage with an observer outside it. The participant roles in both these models are also the semantic roles of experiencer, agent, patient, location, etc. These role archetypes are based on our embodied experience and interactions in the physical world, and they also provide conceptual bases for various metaphorical extensions as described by Lakoff and Johnson (1999).

A lot of research regarding *events* tries to answer the question how people actually segment the flow of experience into events (cf. Tversky, et al. 2004, Bohemeyer et al. 2007, Zacks et al. 2007, Tversky et al. 2008) how events are represented (Barsalou 1997, 1999) or how lexis code events (Hovav and Levin 2010). The first line of research is important as it goes down to the perceptual foundations of human knowledge. It turns out that researchers converge on the conclusion that the boundaries in event segmentation are best predicted at moments during which the most parameters of action performed by a participant change. Such changes are often associated with change of goal, too. As for event representation, Lancaster and Barsalou (1997) claim that events are “cross-classified” in various brain centres, and there are different routes to their activation: location, participant, temporal sequence. Tversky and Taylor (1997), however, conclude that even if that is true, in narrative comprehension subjects typically tend to use a single cue, that is they either represent a narrative by reference to participants or actions, rather than time.

There is also proof that event representations are analogic and have modal format in the brain. This would be impossible without the particular way attention mechanisms support it. This is what Barsalou (1999: 604) says about it:

Attention is central to schematic symbol formation. By focusing on an aspect of perceptual experience and transferring it to long-term memory, attention overcomes the limits of a recording system. Attention is a key analytic mechanism in parsing experience into the schematic components that ultimately form concepts [and events – authors comment] ... its role [in the theory of Perceptual Symbol Systems – authors comment] is to create schematic symbols that compose simulators. ... Once a simulator becomes established, it in turn controls attention (cf. Logan). ... Thus, attention becomes a **semantic feature** [emphasis mine] ... The control of attention can also contrast a focal concept against a background simulation ... Perceptual Symbol Systems ... provide natural accounts of traditional attentional phenomena. For example, automatic processing is the running of a highly compiled simulation, whereas strategic processing ... uses productive mechanisms.

Attention helps dismantle the flow of action into components, but after that the components are skilfully bound and they control the processing of visual scenes, narrative production, comprehension, and action. Similar views are expressed by Dean (1992: 59), who says that “many predicates are perceptually” grounded. Johnson (1987) calls them embodied schemata. Dirven and Verspoor (2004: 70

in Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2011: 44) identify the following conceptual schemas relevant to events: BEING, HAPPENING, DOING, EXPERIENCING, HAVING, MOVING, and TRANSFERRING.

Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2011: 41) provides the following parameters of event construal. First, *constitutive* parameters include sentiments and emotions, which express emotional bias people apply to what they see, speak about or try to understand. The example provided in this context is *a half full bottle* or *a half empty bottle*. The second parameter involves circumstances. The label attached to the third aspect of construal is wide background that involves whatever elements of context, ground or scope of view against which the processing of an event takes place. And last, *event intrinsic properties* are viewing arrangement, perspective, schematicity (amount of detail with which action is described).

An alternative in approaching construal operations of events is the use of either of the categories expressed in Table 1 (see above, this article). Let us take a few examples from Langacker's (1991) categorization of construal operations. Assuming a language producer's perspective, in presenting a narrative it is important to select the so-called most reportable event e_0 , and start the telling from some prior event e_{-x} and continue till some other event past e_0 to e_{+x} (Labov 1997, 2001), which represents the scope of a narrative. The event from which the story begins is selected on the grounds that it is the earliest event in the retelling, which still has some causal connection with the most reportable event in the story, that is the event that gives the primary motivation for the story. Scope of attention in this description embraces events and their temporal progression from e_{-x} through e_0 to e_{+x} . As it also turns out, this description also matches what is called the narrative schema with in-built causal structure, where the two cognitive event models (the billiard-ball and the stage models) are image schematic for a number of situations, also metaphorical (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1999). Selection also refers to the communicative intention, as well as to the level of a single event. Chafe (1994) successfully analyses discourse into the so-called intonation units, which he claims are linguistic correlates of consecutive attention foci. Each such intonation unit can express an event, with one to one match between an intonation unit and event. However, it is also possible to distribute the structure of a single event into a few intonation units, which in attentional terms amounts to greater prominence of components due to their sequential rather than summary scanning (cf. Langacker 1991). Another example of attentional selection relevant to language coding of events is the choice of a frame and knowledge domains, often unconscious and automatic and matter of convention but psychologically real (at least in the case of native speakers (cf. Paradis 2009)). In describing a meeting one can say *He defended his point of view*, or: *I was attacked from all sides*, where the source domain selected for the portrayal of linguistic communication is WAR. The selection of vocabulary is another example of selection in a dynamic discourse context. As compared to

grammatical schemas, though, access to it (vocabulary) is conscious (Paradis 2009). Speakers may choose to configure the participant that will be the primary figure of a scene-event, and the point of view they will assume relative to the described event, as in *The bus arrived* as opposed to *I saw the bus arrive*. Last, the particular aspect of perspective also involves the subjectivity/objectivity dimension, which answers the question how much the speaker wishes to place himself in the on-stage region of a conceptualization, or how much he wishes to remain construed subjectively in the described event. The third aspect of construal presented in Langacker (1991) is *abstraction*, which refers to the amount of detail presented. Hence, it is at least theoretically plausible to speculate that a more fine-grained presentation of past experience should categorize it into a bigger number of events than a presentation that is more schematic. It is argued here that in the construal of events attentional operations lead to the choice of various linguistic operations, and symbols whose primary goal is to adjust the salience of intended substructures of a conceptualization. A speaker for example is given an option of coding an intention into, *John came home + he took a book.*, or *Having come back home, John took a book.* The complex sentence lowers the salience of the event of John's returning home because subordinate sentences are dependent, whereas the matrix ones are autonomous (conf. A/D alignment in grammar, Langacker 1991). A similar effect of backgrounding and lowering the salience of some components is performed by phonological compression, where some phrases or words are pronounced much more rapidly and sometimes more silently than the neighbouring ones. When Talmy (2007) speaks of salience effects, he stresses that they are not absolute, but context dependent. In other words there is no absolute scale against which their strength can be assessed.

CONCLUSIONS

The article has reviewed theories and models of construal, attention in philosophy and psychology for the sake of explaining the most important theoretical background ideas for the study of the construal of events. Cognitive linguistics starts from conceptual semantics, and it further motivates studies of grammar and discourse. Events, as was shown, are dynamic units of thought and language. Their elusiveness is one of the problems that a researcher deals with. The typology, schemas, types, parts and appearance in discourse can be explained by reference to the typologies used in psychology and philosophy, and cognitive linguistics. There are numerous, albeit sometimes indirect, ideas in cognitive grammar that relate it to models of attention in psychology. The future research in this regard should specify in greater detail and systematicity the relations just referred to. Also, probably behavioural research techniques and methods will

have to be used, because the variables in question (e.g. salience) need independent (not just linguistic, introspective analysis) proof.

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