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The dialogic turn in cognitive linguistic studies: From minimalism, maximalism to dialogicalism

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Abstract: Theoretically speaking, semantic minimalism and semantic maximalism are two current dominant assumptions on the nature of meaning in the linguistic communication. The former lays more emphasis on the syntactic basis of sentence meaning, while the latter stresses much over the pragmatic properties of utterance meaning. This paper, grounded on the studies of dialogicalism from the perspective of philosophy of language, and of the distinction between type-level sentence and token-level sentence from the perspective of schema-instance cognitive principle and cognitive construction grammar, advocates the *cognitive dialogic construction grammar* approach to the meaning in linguistic communication. According to the basic claim of this approach, the adjacent two utterances in a conversation are construed as the instantiations of a shared schema in the view of schema-instance cognitive principle. The interactions between speaker, hearer, and utterances in a conversation significantly imply the nature of meaning constructed in the linguistic communication, namely, being temporary, dynamic and dialogic construction-based. The cognitive dialogic construction grammar approach to the construction and acquisition of meaning

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This study claims a *Cognitive Dialogical Construction Grammar* approach to the utterance meaning in linguistic communication based on the view that utterance pairs in conversations are virtually dialogic construction units. This approach to meaning focuses on the syntactic resonance and semantic inheritance between paralleled linguistic structures and, in the meantime, concerns the meaning negotiation between speakers, suggesting that speakers take *dialogic constructions* to make utterances in conversations. The *Cognitive Dialogic Construction Grammar* approach to meaning broadens the cognitive studies on grammatical constructions, indicating the dialogic turn in Cognitive Linguistics from Minimalist and Maximalist view of single sentence meaning to Dialogicalist view of utterance meaning. This study is supposed to throw some light on the research on conversational analysis as well as language acquisition grounded on the instance-(schema)-instance relations between utterances in spoken discourses.

indicates the ideology of dialogicalism and the dialogic turn in the current studies in Cognitive Linguistics, meanwhile throwing light on the studies on conversational analysis as well as language acquisition.

Subjects: Discourse Analysis; Pragmatics; Grammar; Syntax; Cognitive Linguistics; Semantics

Keywords: dialogic construction; syntax; semantics; pragmatics; conversational analysis

1. Introduction

Questions, such as “what is meaning?” and “how meaning is constructed and construed?”, are the general concern of linguistic studies as well as the research in philosophy of language. Minimalism (Borg, 2004, 2012; Cappelen & Lepore, 2005) and maximalism (Jaszczolt, 2016) are the two current dominant views on the nature of meaning in linguistic communication. For minimalists, the meaning of a sentence is fundamentally rooted in its syntactic structure; the use of the sentence is not taken into account in interpreting the sentence meaning. Borg (2004) generalizes this view on meaning as *minimal semantics* that focuses more on the analysis of type-level sentences. In the eyes of maximalists, utterances are token-level sentences, and contextual factors play a major role in the construction and construal of utterance meaning. This paper, based on dialogicalism from the view of philosophy of language, and on the integration of the dialogic syntax and construction grammar from cognitive linguistic studies, claims *cognitive dialogic construction grammar* approach to the meaning in linguistic communication, indicating the current cognitive studies on the theory of dialogue and the dialogic turn in Cognitive Linguistics Studies (Linell, 2009; Weigand, 2017).

2. Minimalists' view on single sentence meaning

Minimal view on meaning is the semantic theory proposing non-use-based accounts of meaning. A minimal semantic theory is a theory that seeks to give the literal meaning of types of words and sentence types (relativized to a context of utterance) in a given natural language, and that's pretty much it (Borg, 2004, p. 54). For her, semantic meanings rely significantly on the formal structures of linguistic expressions as well as the language module of Fodor style. The interpretation of the sentence should be free from the speaker's mental states as well as from non-deductive inference.

As for “minimal” about minimal semantics, Borg (2004, 2012) explicates that semantics need not explain speaker's communicative abilities that are in the domain of pragmatics but give the specification of the truth conditions of type-level sentences.

Sentence type is a propositional schema which, given the other resources at his cognitive disposal, is all a hearer needs in figuring out what claim(s) the speaker is making (Carston, 2008, p. 361). As a matter of fact, the “type-concepts” of these sentences are basically abstracted from their shared syntactic patterns that are instantiated by attaching more lexical resources to these patterns, as sentences (1), (2), and (3) demonstrate.

(1) Courtney will continue (Borg, 2004, p. 38).

From sentence (1), we can conceptually observe a schematic structure: Courtney will continue X, which might be specified by sentence (2) or (3) (to list just two examples):

(2) Courtney will continue **bowling**.

(3) Courtney will continue **university education**.

Obviously, the meaning of sentence (2) or (3) implies that there are more than one possible interpretations of the type-level sentence: *Courtney will continue*. In this way, the meaning of sentence (1) or any Borgian type-level sentence can be examined based on the truth conditional approach. In contrast, sentences (2) and (3) are then of token-level in the view of minimalists. The understanding of such token level sentence is constrained by specific information, such as speaker,

hearer, time and space, etc. However, these contextual factors in construing sentences (2) and (3) do not fall into the scope of minimal semantic studies. The meaning of the type-level sentence is thus derived via computational and formal rules without the accounts of the relations between speakers, utterances, physical settings, etc. in real-time conversations. Accordingly, the minimal view on meaning could not precisely and fully uncover the speaker's intention.

Nonetheless, insights on meaning from minimalists represented by Borg (2004, 2012) and Cappelen and Lepore (2005) undoubtedly throw new lights on the debate regarding the interface between semantics and pragmatics, to a large degree revealing the distinctive role of a theory of linguistic meaning from that of a theory of communication.

3. Maximalists' view on single utterance meaning

Jaszczolt (2016) investigates in detail the *semantics of linguistic interaction*, which offers a maximalist view on utterance meaning. In contrast with minimal view on meaning, the claim of maximalists emphasizes more on pragmatic factors in understanding the meaning in communication, while concerning less the truth conditions of the syntactic structure of an utterance. Meanwhile, the task of semantic theory should center on the representation of the interaction between the output of syntactic processing and that of pragmatic inference. According to Jaszczolt (2016), contextualism (Recanati, 2002, 2004, 2010) is also in the camp of maximalists on meaning theory.

For the minimalists, utterances that are token-level sentences in Borg's term virtually denote communication acts that function key roles in the process of mean construction. The interpretation of an utterance is generally grounded on the five basic information sources, which are listed as (1) world knowledge, (2) word meaning and sentence structure, (3) situation of discourse, (4) properties of the human inferential system, and (5) stereotypes and presumptions about society and culture (Jaszczolt, 2016, p. 80). All the five sources of contextual information have equal status in the meaning construction in linguistic communication and can be depicted by *merge representation*, a formal approach to both the compositional meaning of the utterance but also the pragmatic knowledge an utterance entails. In particular, merge representation is supposed to depict the context and the interaction among information sources in determining the primary meaning of utterance, which is intended by the model speaker and recovered by the model addressee.

Compared with the minimalists' view on the meaning of the type-level sentences, the maximalists' interpretation of utterance meaning essentially focuses on the default understanding of the token-level sentences that are termed in *minimal semantics* (see Borg, 2004). According to *default semantics*, defaults are automatic, common-sensical, and, of course, salient (Jaszczolt, 2016, p. 105). However, it is obvious that the *merger representation* claimed by maximalists could not exhaustively describe all the information sources, even some salient but decisive factors in understanding utterances. What is more, this approach to utterance meaning regrettably excludes the information sources that are from the adjacent utterances produced by a dialogic partner.

4. Non-dialogic perspective shared by minimalists and maximalists

It seems that both minimalist and maximalist camps are radical in understanding linguistic meaning in communication. On one hand, in terms of "minimal" about minimal semantics, Borg maintains that semantics need not explain speaker's communicative abilities that are in the domain of pragmatics. By strongly defending the formal approach to meaning, minimalists offer thought-provoking, but at the same time, extreme, views on the interface between semantics and pragmatics. However, minimal semantics is not absolutely minimal as it still considers pragmatic factors in reasoning the meaning of sentence such as specific time, location or speaker, etc. On the other hand, for the maximalists, they attach too much importance to the pragmatic aspects of utterance meaning, particularly on the speaker's

default cognitive abilities and mental states. Nevertheless, the basic syntactic and semantic structures contributing to the meaning construction are disregarded to great extent.

It is striking to see that both minimalist and maximalist camps highlight the way to construe meaning on the single sentence level instead of talking pairs. As a result, they cannot disclose the interactional relation of utterance structures, cognitive process, and interpersonal communication. Even though maximalists concern themselves with the meaning from the perspective of communicative interactions between language users, they still lay the emphasis of studies on the level of single utterance. However, it cannot be denied that the meaning in linguistic communication is transferred from the speaker to the hearer. The engagement of intersubjectivity of interlocutors in linguistic communication cannot be paid least attention to, still yet be completely ignored in interpreting the meaning of utterances. Thus, in view of the utterance relation in conversations, the meaning emerging in the process of communication should be accounted for on the level of pairing sentences. Accordingly, to take utterance relation into consideration, both minimal and maximal camps on meaning cannot satisfactorily expound the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatics features of linguistic constructions in a unified way at the same time.

5. Dialogic view on the meaning of paired utterances

Traditionally, the researches in conversational analysis investigate utterance meaning predominantly with the consideration of such aspects as linguistic structure, information content, topics of conversation, information on speakers, the role of social and cultural knowledge, etc. These studies generally pay more attention to the meaning of the single utterance in local or global conversational context.

Dialogues are the essential forms of the linguistic communication (Bakhtin, 1981). Monologues could not fully express the meaning intentionally conveyed by speakers (Bakhtin, 1981; Voloshinov, 1973 [1929]). Basically, an utterance functions its role in dialogues. In ancient times, *dialogues* were used as the forms to record the profound philosophical thoughts as in the cases of Confucian dialogues in ancient China and Socratic dialogues, including Plato's Dialogues, in ancient Greece.

The theories of dialogue initiated by Bakhtin (1981), Habermas (1979, 1998), Bohm (2004), etc. from the point of view of philosophy of language attach most attention to the intersubjectivity between interlocutors in conversations, significantly suggesting the *dialogicalism* in studies on meaning. The common goal shared by these theories of dialogue is to explore the conditions for ideal and successful dialogues. Specifically, probing into the elements for ideal dialogues through the analysis of literature texts, Bakhtin (1981) asserts that *dialogues* in the communication reveal the nature of human being's existence. *The self* can go beyond his or her own world by starting dialogues with *the others*. Habermas (1979, 1998) speaks of *universal pragmatics* in the discussion on the general presuppositions of *communication acts*, with an aim to identify and reconstruct the universal conditions for possible interpretations of the meaning in the communication. For Habermas, *dialogue* is one kind of communication acts. He assumes that the speaker's speech acts are valid only when this speaker claims to be (1) uttering something understandable, (2) giving the [hearer] something to understand, (3) making himself or herself understandable, and (4) coming to understand with another person (Habermas, 1979, p. 2). Therefore, in the eyes of Habermas, to reach a consensus of opinion and to achieve an ideal dialogue: speakers should say something true and comprehensible with right attitude. In terms of the theory of dialogue proclaimed by Bohm (2004), Bohm advocates five main characteristics of the thoughts in dialogues, which are *fragmentation*, *participation*, *proprioception*, and *the literal and unlimited aspects* of thoughts. Bohm's analysis on dialogues is trying to explain the prerequisites for lasting conversation with equal status of speakers in the communication.

Dialogically speaking, the interpersonal interaction of human beings is mirrored in linguistic communication which is cognitively assumed to be built on paired utterances. Hence, based on the studies of *dialogicalism* from the view of philosophy of language, *intersubjectivity* between

speakers and the interaction among language, cognition and world must be paid sufficient attention in the meaning studies of paired utterances.

5.1. Dialogic constructions in natural languages process

Natural language is the object of linguistic researches from the cognitive-functional perspective (Du Bois, 2014; Goldberg, 1995, 2006; Halliday, 1994; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Langacker, 1987, 1991; Talmy, 2000). There are three major hypotheses that guide the cognitive linguistic approach to natural language studies: (1) language is not an autonomous cognitive faculty, (2) grammar is conceptualization, and (3) knowledge of language emerges from language use (Croft & Cruse, 2004, p. 1). The general goal of cognitive linguistic studies is to discover the link of the linguistic structures with the ways that human beings experience and construe the objective world. Cognitively speaking, the production as well as the use of language is grounded on the interaction of human beings with the objective world they live in. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 3) claim three fundamental embodiment principles for cognitive linguistic researches: (1) the mind is inherently embodied, (2) thought is mostly unconscious, and (3) abstract concepts are largely metaphorical. The embodiment view on meaning quite appropriately underpins the language study with the cognitive dialogic construction grammar approach (Brône & Zima, 2014; Du Bois, 2014, 2014; Fried, 2009; Nikiforidou, Marmaridou, & Mikros, 2014).

The dialogic construction grammar approach to meaning especially investigates the schema-instance relation between pairing utterances, differing from the minimal and maximal views on linguistic meaning based on the single sentence level.

5.1.1. Construction

Construction is the abstract label for grammatical structure of language. The cognitive studies on construction with the umbrella term “Cognitive Construction Grammar” generally cover the following paradigms: Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 1987, 1991, 2008), Construction Grammar (Goldberg, 1995, 2006), and Radical Construction Grammar (Croft, 2001).

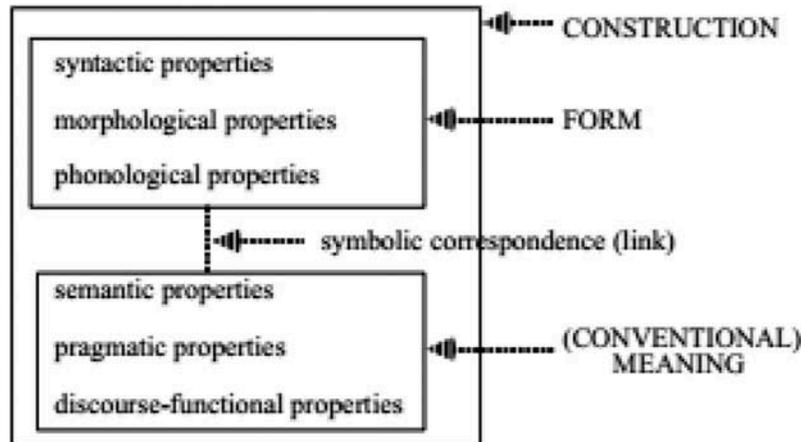
The most fundamental claim of Cognitive Grammar is that grammar is **symbolic** in nature (Langacker, 2008, p. 5). A symbol then is referred as the pairing between a semantic structure and a phonological structure. In other words, there is the link of symbolization between the two structures. As Langacker (1987, p. 82) describes, constructions are therefore symbolically complex, in the sense of containing two or more symbolic structures as components. For Langacker, a construction is the composite structure integrated by semantic pole and phonological pole of a particular grammatical expression.

To take *jar lid* as an example, the integration in this construction can be represented by $[[\text{JAR}]/[\text{jar}]] + [[\text{LID}]/[\text{lid}]] = [[\text{JAR LID}]/[\text{jar lid}]]$, where the uppercase and lowercase letters, respectively, signify the semantic and phonological poles. $[[\text{JAR}]/[\text{jar}]]$ and $[[\text{LID}]/[\text{lid}]]$ are two symbolic assemblies indicating two composite structures. In communication, these two compositions are further integrated into a larger construction, namely, $[[\text{JAR LID}]/[\text{jar lid}]]$. In this sense, Langacker points out that grammar and lexicon form a continuum.

Constructions are taken to be the basic units of language (Goldberg, 1995, p. 4). Goldberg defines that a construction is the **form-meaning pair** (Goldberg, 1995, p. 4), or grammatical constructions are conventionalized **pairings of form and function** (Goldberg, 2006, p. 3). Goldberg (2006, p. 5) explores further and states that all levels of grammatical analysis involve constructions: learned pairings of form with semantic or discourse function, including morphemes or words, idioms, partially lexically filled and fully general phrasal patterns.

As for the views from Croft (2004, p. 257), constructions are fundamentally **symbolic units**, as illustrated by Figure 1.

Figure 1. The symbolic structure of a construction (Croft 2004, p. 258).



We can see from Figure 1 that, on the one side, the form of a construction is characterized by phonological, morphological as well as syntactic properties, while the (conventional) meaning of a construction entails the semantic, pragmatic, and discourse-functional properties on the other hand. There is the symbolic correspondence link between form and meaning, suggesting the mapping relation from meaning to form based on the features of a symbolic unit. For this consideration, the lexicon, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and discourse of a given linguistic expression form a continuum in the process of meaning construction.

Subsequently, the symbolic view on meaning and continuum view in construing the grammatical structure slightly differ from the modularity view on meaning that is hypothesized by componential syntactic theories and is also the assumption made by the minimalist camp of meaning studies. In view of modularity, the meaning of a linguistic expression (lexicon or larger construction) is separately interpreted from different modules, which are specified as phonologic component, syntactic component, and semantic component, plus linking rules. Yet, to understand the expression based on different modules will presumably ignore the mapping relation or symbolization between the form and the meaning of the construction.

However, in light of cognitive linguistic studies, the understanding of linguistic meaning in communication should be a non-modular process. Langacker (2008, p. 40) argues that a fixed boundary between semantics and pragmatics cannot be drawn on a principled basis in a way that makes linguistic sense. Instead, there is a gradation at the semantics/pragmatics boundary. Taking account of this cognitive feature of linguistic meaning, the pragmatic aspects of utterance meaning have placed too much emphasis by maximalists, while for minimalists, the syntactic configuration has the priority in determining the meaning of the single sentence.

5.1.2. Dialogic construction

In the linguistic communication, there are structural mappings that are implicitly or explicitly exhibited between adjacent utterances. Dialogic constructions are locally entrenched form-meaning pairings within the boundaries of an ongoing interaction (Brône & Zima, 2014, p. 458), as shown by dialogue (1) featuring the question-answer talking turn in Chinese and dialogue (2) indicating two juxtaposed statements in English:

Dialogue (1)¹:

Policeman: Ni lai le ji tian le?

You have been here how many days (modal particle)?

Passenger: Wo lai le shi tian le.

I have been here ten days (modal particle).

(English Translation):

Policeman: How many days have you been here?

Passenger: I have been here for ten days.

Dialogue (2)²:

BOLLING: I'm trying to help you out here.

BECKEL: I know you're trying to help me out.

In accordance with the attributes of grammatical constructions defined by Ronald W. Langacker, Adele E. Goldberg, and William Croft, dialogues (1) and (2) are form-meaning or form-function pairs that indicate the construction unit at the discourse level in linguistic communication, namely, dialogues (1) and (2) are dialogic constructions. They can be demonstrated in current discourse space in the conversation, as shown by Figure 2.

From Figure 2, we can view that in the transient context (denoted by “...” within the frame), the use of an utterance denotes the usage event of the given linguistic expression. The current dialogic event, which consists of U1 and U2, associates with usage events of the previous utterance and the anticipated utterance to form the current discourse space (CDS for short) of a dialogic construction. The double-direction arrows suggest the interaction among U1, U2, S1, and S2 in the conversational ground that specially refers to the time, space, speech event, and other contextual factors.

5.2. Essentials of cognitive dialogic construction grammar

In conversational analysis, the dialogic construction grammar approach to the meaning of linguistic expressions is in essence grounded on the theoretical integration of dialogic syntax (Du Bois, 2007, 2014) and Cognitive Construction Grammar (Croft, 2001; Croft & Cruse, 2004; Goldberg, 1995, 2006; Langacker, 1987, 1991, 2008) within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, primarily concerning the emergence of grammar (syntactic) patterns in local dialogues, claiming that the turn-taking of an adjacent pair has the status of dialogic construction unit. Particularly, the theory of dialogic syntax (Du Bois, 2014) focuses on the parallelism and the resulting dialogic resonance in conversation. Resonance is defined as the catalytic activation of affinities across utterances (Du Bois, 2014, p. 372). This dialogic

Figure 2. Dialogic construction in current discourse space.

U1 = Utterance 1;
U2 = Utterance 2; S1 = Speaker 1;
S2 = Speaker 2;
Ground = (physical setting, time and space, etc.).

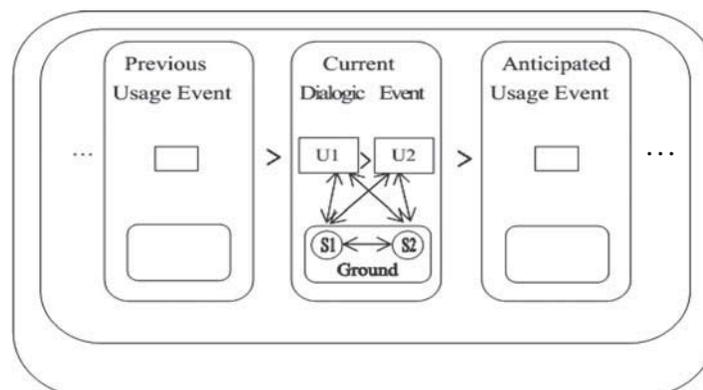
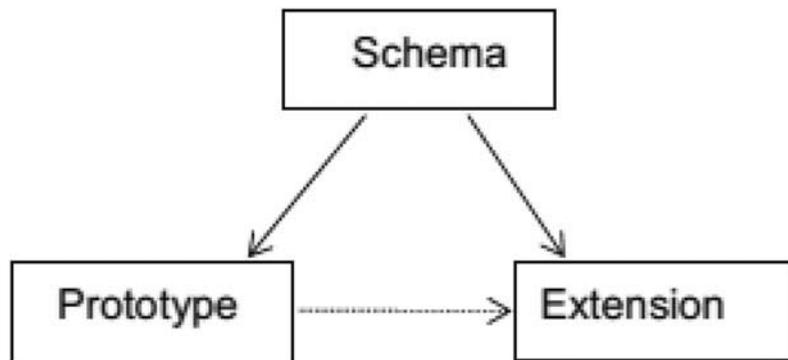


Figure 3. The schema–instance relation in the sense of Langacker (1987, p. 373).



paradigm of meaning studies apparently reveals the underlying mechanism in conversation, that is, speakers take dialogic grammatical constructions to make their utterances and then express their thoughts on the basis of schema–instance relation among utterances.

5.2.1. Schema–instance cognitive principle

According to Langacker (1987, p. 371), a schema is an abstract characterization of a category and is shared by the central and peripheral members of a category. All the members of the category are the instances of the schema with different degrees of specification. The schema–instance cognitive principle in the sense of Langacker is illustrated by Figure 3.

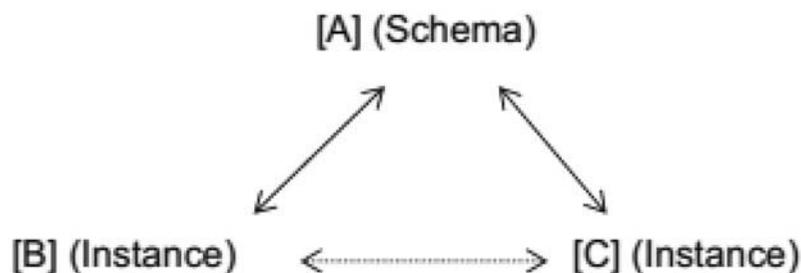
As shown in Figure 3, a schema is elaborated by a prototype and its extensions (as demonstrated by solid lines with one-way direction). The one-way dotted line suggests that extensions of the schema contain peripheral features of the category by modifying some details of the prototype. There are only partial overlapping features between the prototype and its extensions, while the schema generalizes the feature of all the members of the category.

In contrast, as for the linguistic categorization by schematicity, Taylor (1989, p. 59) insists that the term “prototype” can be understood as a schematic representation of the conceptual core of a category. Differing from Langacker’s unidirectional relation among schema, prototype, and extensions, Taylor assumes that the relation between schema and its instances as well as between the instances is bidirectional, as exemplified by Figure 4.

As can be seen from Figure 4, Unit [A] is the schema that generalizes the commonality of Unit [B] and Unit [C]. [B] and [C] are distinctive from each other in the specifications when instantiating schema [A] (as suggested by the two-way dotted line), whereas the bi-directional solid lines denote that a schema is the abstraction of all instances, which in turn inherit features from the schema.

As for the cases of dialogue (1), the schematic structure “X have been here for Y days” is shared by the utterances of policeman and the passenger, while the schematic pattern “X is trying to help

Figure 4. The schema–instance relation in the view of Taylor (2002, p. 125).



Y” is activated and elaborated by two speakers’ utterances in dialogue (2). For dialogue (1), the paralleled syntactic structures are paired with the function to seek new information “how many days”, while the juxtaposed utterances in dialogue (2) imply that the role of this dialogic construction is to verify the given formation “you are trying to help me out”.

5.2.2. *Schema–instance relation in dialogic constructions*

Parallelism is often achieved as a consequence of the dialogue participants’ reaction to a certain priming remark (or utterance) and their creation of resonance through schematization and extension (Sakita, 2006, p. 493; Zeng, 2016). Utterance pairs with explicit or implicit parallel features evince that speakers in conversations selectively employ the former linguistic resources used by their dialogic partners. These resources can be intonation, lexicon, grammatical pattern, function, etc., as can be further exemplified by dialogues (3) and (4), which are also illustrated by diagraph 1.

Dialogue (3):

PETER-VAN-SANT: What was Jennifer afraid of?
ANNE-GOULD: Jennifer was afraid that he was going to hurt her and kill her.

Dialogue (4):

PETER-VAN-SANT: Why did she think that?
ANNE-GOULD: She was afraid of him blowing up and losing control.

Diagraph 1 shows that in dialogues (3) and (4), ANNE constructs her utterances by selectively choosing the words (she, afraid, that, etc.) and grammatical patterns (Wh-question word + auxiliary + S + V, etc.) that are used by PETER. In this dialogue series, PETER’s utterance “what was Jennifer afraid of?” functions as the priming remark triggering a schema: “Jennifer is afraid of X”, which is immediately instantiated by ANNE’s utterance: *Jennifer was afraid of that he was going to hurt her and kill her*.

Thus, in the view of the schema–instance relation between utterances, both PETER and ANNE’s utterances in the first talking turn are the instances of schema: *Jennifer was afraid of X*, while in the second talking turn, PETER and ANNE’s utterances then instantiate the schematic structure “She thought that because X” with different degree of specification.

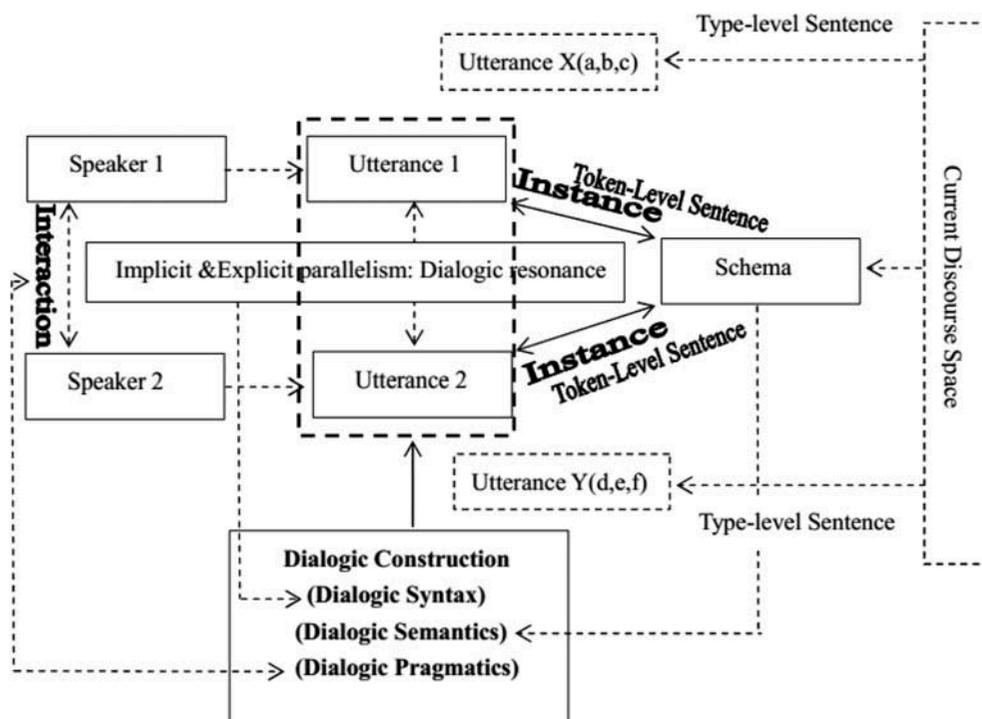
In the ongoing process of linguistic communication, the meaning of the dialogic construction is dynamically constructed and continually emerges from the stance-taking negotiation between interlocutors on the basis of syntactic resonance and semantic analogy within juxtaposed utterances. The construction and construal of the meaning of a dialogic construction based on schema–instance relation in CDS can be displayed in great detail by Figure 5.

As Figure 5 describes, Utterance X, dialogic utterances consisting of Utterance 1 and 2, together with Utterance Y, constitute the CDS of a dialogic construction (indicated by a bold black dotted line frame). If an utterance (utterance X) is investigated at the single sentence level in CDS, it is a type-level sentence that can be instantiated by inputting contextual information *a*, *b*, or *c*, which is then developed into a token-level sentence in the minimalist’s view of meaning. In the same token, Utterance Y can be further specified into the token-level sentence with the aid of more information *d*, *e*, or *f*. In the case of the

Diagraph 1. The parallelism in PETER–ANNE’s dialogues.

PETER-VAN-SANT	What	was	Jennifer	afraid	of															?
ANNE-GOULD			Jennifer																	
		was		afraid		that	he	was going to	hurt	her	and									
									kill	her										.
PETER-VAN-SANT	Why	did	she	think		that														?
ANNE-GOULD			she																	
		was		afraid	of		him		blowing up and losing control											.

Figure 5. Dialogic constructions in CDS (CDS = current discourse space).



expression “It is raining”, it essentially designates the structure of type-level sentence “It is raining at the place P at the time T”. This schematic “type-level” sentence then can be elaborated by the following sentences (to list just two cases):

- (4) It is raining *in London now*.
- (5) It is raining *in Reading at 12 o'clock today*.

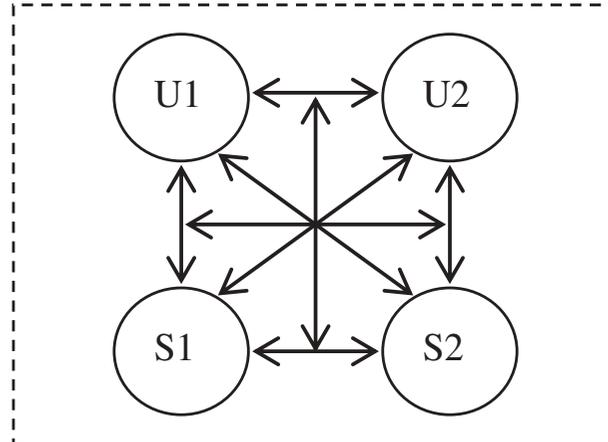
From the standpoints of cognitive and dialogic studies on the meaning of linguistic expressions, there is the instance–(schema)–instance relation between Utterance 1 and Utterance 2 (as suggested in Figure 3), which, however, are both treated as type-level sentences in the sense of single sentence level from the minimalists’ viewpoints. Specifically, Utterance 1 produces a schema that can be specified by Utterance 2 through the re-use of linguistic resources of Utterance I. Both Utterance 1 and Utterance 2 are the instances of the schema. To put it another way, all the single type-level sentences of minimalists’ sense are fundamentally token-level sentences. Or more precisely, they are the instances of a schema from the perspective of dialogic construction grammar studies.

Syntactically speaking, on the basis of the schema–instance relation in a dialogic construction, Utterance 1 and Utterance 2 might have implicit or explicit paralleled structures in that the two utterances share common forms including morphological, lexical, syntactic properties, resulting symmetrical configurations between utterances and the resonance from the viewpoint of dialogic syntax.

On the level of dialogic semantics, speaker 2 constructs the meaning of Utterance 2 by selectively re-apply the linguistic resources of Utterance 1 such as intonation, words, patterns, function, etc. Utterance 2 functioning as the extension of the schema is cognitively viewed as the modification of Utterance 1 that can be regarded as the prototype of the same schema (Sakita, 2006, p. 492–493). The schema–instance relation in a dialogic construction semantically implies that the

Figure 6. Interactants in a dialogic construction.

S1 = Speaker 1; S2 = Speaker 2;
U1 = Object 1; U2 = Object 2.



meaning conceptualized in Utterance 1 is partially or completely inherited by Utterance 2. The inheritance link in a dialogic construction naturally lays a foundation for the semantic analogies between utterances.

Figure 5 also informs us that, grounded on schema–instance cognitive principle, there are partially or completely shared event structures between utterances when Utterance 2 is positioned in alignment with Utterance 1 in the conversation. The degree of event structural coupling (full coupling, partial coupling, and non-coupling) between utterances roughly corresponds to the general types of interpersonal cooperation (full cooperation, partial cooperation, and non-cooperation) between speakers in a dialogue, thus revealing the interaction between interlocutors and demonstrating the pragmatic properties of the dialogic construction.

Accordingly, dialogues (1) and (2) mentioned in Section 5.1.2 activate the schema “X have been here for Y days” and “X is trying to help Y”, respectively. Both of these two dialogues show symmetrical structures on syntactic level, and the dialogic partners in these two conversations cooperate with each other on syntactic resonances to express their thoughts. In particular, in dialogue (1), the speakers arrive at an agreement in terms of the interrogative focus *how many days*, while speaker 2 in dialogue (2) expresses his dissatisfaction based on the feature of syntactic parallelism.

In consequence, the dialogic syntactic resonance, the semantic inheritance between utterances as well as the pragmatic cooperation between speakers in a dialogue can be accounted in a unified way at the same time on the basis of schema–instance cognitive principle. The properties of the pairing utterances at the level of dialogic syntax, semantics, and pragmatics ultimately make joint contributions to the construction and construal of meaning of a dialogic construction. Therefore, based on dialogic construction grammar approach to linguistic meaning, the properties of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of an utterance in a specific conversation can be well revealed simultaneously. The dialogic approach to linguistic meaning in communication also evidences that the aspects of lexicon, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of linguistic expressions in natural language form a continuum in interpreting a given utterance in dialogues.

5.3. Interactants in a dialogic construction

In the view of Dialogic Construction Grammar, a dialogic turn-taking consists of utterance(s) uttered by the speaker and that (those) by the hearer. The interactants embodied in a dialogic construction are actually specified as the relation between speakers, utterances as well between speaker and utterance, as Figure 6 suggests.

It is clear to see from Figure 6, in a dialogue (as shown by the dotted line frame), Speaker 1 utters Utterance 1, prototypically followed by Speaker 2 responding to Speaker 1 by uttering Utterance 2. In the case that Speaker 2 does not say anything, there is no true sense of interaction between speakers, and the meaning of Utterance 1 is then interpreted purely on single sentence level on this condition. But factually, the interpretation on Utterance 1 is definitely and necessarily correlated with the meaning of another utterance, Utterance 2 hereof. The multiple interactions (as denoted by bi-directional arrows) in a dialogue are thus exemplified by the interrelations among Speaker 1, Speaker 2, Utterance 1, and Utterance 2. It is obvious that the interpersonal interaction, termed as the intersubjectivity from the dialogic view, engages in the understanding of the utterance meaning from the perspective of dialogic construction grammar studies.

The interactional relation elaborated by Figure 3 virtually manifests the underlying features, which are temporary, dynamic, and dialogic construction-based, of the linguistic meaning in communication. Specifically, during the real-time conversation, an adjacent pair of utterances might only exist for few seconds and then disappear instantly. The meaning of the dialogic utterances is merely temporarily entrenched in the local dialogic context. As the conversation goes on, the meaning conveyed by the pairing utterances emerges in the negotiation between speakers in the interaction of contextual information sources, indicating the dynamic process of meaning construction in the real-time conversations.

6. Conclusion

For minimalists, they concern themselves mainly with the semantic structures of single type-level sentences, whereas the maximal view of meaning lays importance on the pragmatic analysis of the single token-level sentences. From the view of cognitive linguistic studies, the dialogic approach to the utterances implies that the aspects of lexicon, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of linguistic constructions virtually form a continuum in the interpretation of the meaning in linguistic communication, further developing the minimal and maximal views on the understanding of linguistic expressions. Dialogically speaking, the interaction between utterances brings about implicit or explicit structural symmetries that lead to dialogic resonances as well as the resulting semantic analogies on the basis of schema–instance cognitive principle, signifying the construction unit status of paralleled utterances with the pairing of form and meaning or form and function. By assuming that utterance pairs are dialogic construction units, cognitive dialogical construction grammar studies, focusing on the syntactic resonance and semantic inheritance with the view of schema–instance relation between paralleled utterances, and in the meantime concerning the meaning negotiation between speakers at the pragmatic level, reveal the cognitive mechanism that speakers take *dialogic constructions* to make utterances in the linguistic communication. Accordingly, the *dialogic* approach to meaning broadens the cognitive studies on grammatical constructions, indicating the dialogic turn in Cognitive Linguistics from the focus on single sentence meaning by “minimalism” and “maximalism” to meaning of utterance pairs by “dialogicalisms”. Meanwhile, the dialogicalist view of meaning is supposed to throw some light on the research on conversational analysis as well as the language acquisition grounded on the instance–(schema)–instance relations triggered by adjacent utterance pairs.

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Notes

1. The dialogues in Chinese are collected from Media Language Corpus sponsored by Communication University of China.
2. The dialogues in English are collected from Corpus of Contemporary American English.

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