

COGNITIVE SOCIOLINGUISTICS: LANGUAGE VARIATION IN
ITS STRUCTURAL, CONCEPTUAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Landau, March 15-18, 2010

University of Koblenz-Landau

<http://www.linguistlist.org/issues/20/20-410.html>

Deadline for abstracts June 1, 2009.

Aim and scope

Within Cognitive Linguistics and other cognitively oriented approaches to language there is a growing interest for language variation in all its dimensions. The 34th International LAUD Symposium is planning to explore the different facets of this emerging coalescence between cognitive, usage-based approaches to language and a sociolinguistic interest in language-internal variation in four theme sessions, each addressing one of the following questions:

1. How do social and cognitive perspectives fit together in a general, overall model of language?
2. To what extent is usage-based language variation socially structured, and how is such language-internal variation represented in the individual language user's (implicit or explicit) knowledge?
3. How does language-internal variation affect the conceptual aspects of language, i.e. linguistic meaning and linguistic categorization?
4. How does language variation interact with cultural models in a linguistic community? Does language variation follow from cultural models, or just reflect them or, on the contrary, determine them?

Theme Session 1: Social factors as foundational issues in a theory of language

The first session examines the role of social factors in the conception of language as such: to what extent should the social nature of language play a role in the linguist's conception of the linguistic system - and in the individual language user's acquisition and knowledge of the language? If we abandon the simplification of an ideal speaker-hearer, what are the descriptive consequences: what models and methodologies should we use to get a grip on the interaction between social usage and individual knowledge of the language?

Theme Session 2: Structural variation from a usage-based perspective

How are lectal variation, linguistic change, and language acquisition affected by taking a usage-based approach to language? Usage-based and meaning-based models of grammar introduce more variation into the grammar than a rule-based approach tends to do: the language-internal or discourse-related factors that influence the use of a particular construction may be manifold, and the presence or absence of a construction is not an all-or-none matter. In the analysis of this type of variation, it often appears that the variation is co-determined by 'external', sociostylistic factors: the variation that appears in actual usage (e.g. as attested in corpora) may be determined simultaneously by grammatical, discursive, and socio-stylistic factors. Furthermore, awareness (of linguistic factors and social dimensions) also plays a role in successful conceptualisation, together with structured patterns of subjective and objective perception.

Theme Session 3: Conceptual variation in language-internal and cross-linguistic categorization preferences.

To what extent do the phenomena that we typically focus on in Cognitive Linguistics and other meaning-related approaches - phenomena involving meaning and categorization - exhibit variation within the same linguistic community? Both the concept of semantic flexibility (as in prototype theory and radial networks) and the concept of cultural models played an important role in the emergence of Cognitive

Linguistics, but this usage-based variation of meaning and categorization is not standardly analyzed from a socio-stylistic point of view.

Theme session 4: Cultural models and cultural variation of cognitive models

Within Cognitive Linguistic research on cognitive models, there is a creative tension between scholars emphasizing the universal aspects of cognitive models and those pointing to the historical and cultural variability of such models. But the variability is often considered from a cross-cultural perspective only, without specific attention for the language-internal or culture-internal variability of cultural models. So, how does variability of cultural and cognitive models work within a community, and how does it interact with variability of language and language use? In particular, what are the cultural models that people use to think about language variation and language-related social variation?

Local conference organizer

Martin Pütz (Puetz At uni-landau), University of Koblenz-Landau.

Organizing committee

René Dirven, Dirk Geeraerts, Gitte Kristiansen, Martin Pütz, Monika Reif.

Confirmed Speakers

Main Keynote speaker: William Labov (University of Pennsylvania).

Plenary speakers: Penelope Eckert (Stanford University), Dirk Geeraerts (University of Leuven), Stefan Gries (Santa Barbara, University of California), Peter Harder (University of Copenhagen), Gitte Kristiansen (Universidad Complutense de Madrid), Dennis R. Preston (Michigan State University).

Submissions

Abstracts (500 words) should be sent to the conference organizer before June 1, 2009.

Notification of acceptance will be given by June 30, 2009.