

Linguistic Theory and the Biblical Text

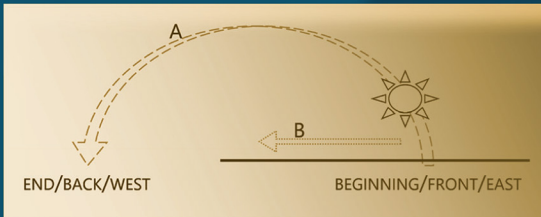
EDITED BY WILLIAM A. ROSS AND ELIZABETH ROBAR

Cognitive Linguistic Theory

Functional Grammar

Historical Linguistics

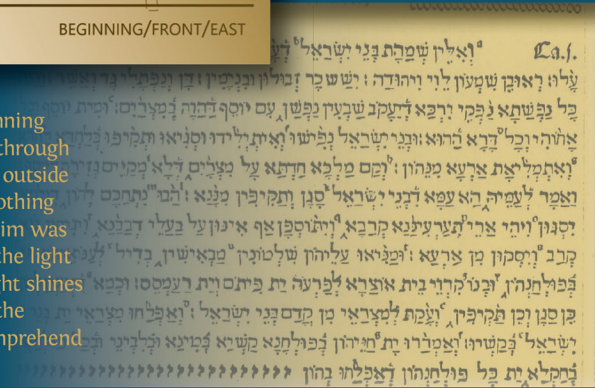
οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν. ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων· καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν.



Complexity Theory

Generative Linguistics

This was in the beginning with God. All things through him came to be, and outside of him came to be nothing that came to be. In him was life and the life was the light of people, and the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it (Jn. 1:2-5)



Pragmatics of Information Structure

Computational Linguistic Analysis





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COGNITIVE LINGUISTIC THEORY AND THE BIBLICAL LANGUAGES¹

William A. Ross

Study of the Bible has always involved study of its languages. But the study of language has not always involved linguistic theory as such. It has only been over the past sixty years or so that western biblical scholarship has begun to appropriate and apply insights from general linguistics to better understand the ancient texts. Over that time, the bulk of linguistically-informed biblical language research has adopted formalist linguistic theories, such as structuralism or generativism.² This trend is due in part to the

¹ I am grateful to Elizabeth Robar, Travis Wright, and my two peer reviewers for their useful input on earlier versions of this chapter. My thanks go to Joey Hyatt for his capable research assistance preparing the bibliography.

² Taylor (2002, 4–5) concisely explains formalist approaches as those that “regard a language as a self-contained system, whose properties are encapsulated in a Grammar, i.e. a device which generates, or defines, the set of well-formed sentences which constitute the language. A general feature of formalist approaches is to regard a language as a disembodied object, which is independent, as it were, of the speakers who use it and the purposes for which they use it.” More specifically with reference to mainstream generativism, ‘formal’ tends to mean

fact that formalist theories are older and better known in comparison with the alternatives. But it is also due to the tendency of interdisciplinary research never to be truly up-to-date on all fronts. That being the case, it is only in the last twenty years that biblical scholarship has come into direct contact with Cognitive Linguistics, a topic that is the focus of this chapter.

1.0. The History of Cognitive Linguistics

It is important to understand at the outset that Cognitive Linguistics is not a unified field of research. It is, as Geeraerts (2006b, 2) puts it, “an archipelago rather than an island,” one whose members are described below (cf. Geeraerts and Cuyckens 2007a, 5–6). Even so, Cognitive Linguistics is a research perspective that is characterised by several key theoretical commitments concerning language, and these commitments do grant coherence and unity to the discipline as a whole, if not total uniformity. As discussed further below, it was not until the 1970s and 1980s that major developments—and controversies—in general linguistics at large created the necessary conditions from which the foundational pillars of Cognitive Linguistic theory would begin to emerge. But to understand why and how that happened requires a broader historical perspective than one might expect.

Cognitive Linguistics is not unique among theories for its focus on language as a mental phenomenon. Generativism, for example, is also ‘cognitive’ in a basic sense, in that it attributes a

explicit, non-embodied, and rationalist, which makes semantics describable with abstract, rule-governed predicate logic.

mental status to language.³ But Cognitive Linguistics does represent the revival of interest among linguists in the meaning-bearing function of language for communication alongside its psychological character. In other words, Cognitive Linguistic theory is interested not only in knowledge of a language, but also in language as a *form* of knowledge, even an “integral part of cognition” itself (Janda 2015, 131). For most of the twentieth century, this kind of outlook had receded entirely from view in linguistic theorising, in favour of an almost exclusive focus on extrapolating abstract structures or rules taken to account for language as a self-contained system. But it was not always so.

1.1. Early Modern Foundations

Linguistics emerged as a scientific discipline—if one wishes to use such terminology—in the nineteenth century, as it became distinct from the older and broader practices of philology.⁴ This was the era of diachronic, comparative linguistics.⁵ In many

³ Hence the capitalisation of ‘Cognitive Linguistics’ as a point of distinction from other theoretical approaches that also consider cognitive aspects of language (Siewierska 2013, 485 n. 1).

⁴ Linguists themselves disagree over whether and how linguistics can be considered a ‘science’, properly speaking. Harris (1993, 11) satisfyingly dismisses such bickering, saying that linguistics “is some sort of systematic, truth-seeking, knowledge-making enterprise, and as long as it brings home the epistemic bacon by turning up results about language, the label [‘science’] isn’t terribly important.”

⁵ Diachronic study looks at the development of phenomena over time, as compared with synchronic study, which looks at phenomena within a specific point or period of time.

ways, this phase of language study and its particular methods arrived upon the broader tide of historical reconstruction and comparativism that was rising throughout the academy at large in this period (De Mauro and Formigari 1990; Bod 2013, 143–83). Scholars tirelessly sought parallels in sound-meaning pairs as a way to chart the history of what would come to be known as the Indo-European language family.

Although many of their conclusions have stood the test of time remarkably well, nineteenth-century comparative linguists were also prone to indulging in wild speculation (see Eco 1995). These scholars were heirs to the old notion that languages are linked to the thought patterns of the people who use them (Robins 1997, 152–206). Some took this idea down dark, more deterministic pathways in the intensifying atmosphere of Romantic nationalism in *fin de siècle* Europe (see Olender 1992; Turner 2014, 125–46; Joseph 2020, 145–63). But at a general level, most scholars viewed the study of language as concerned with communication and also as a corollary in some way to the study of the mind and therefore to all of human society. Language was understood as essentially psychological and thus imbricated with human experience (Campbell 2003, 93–94; Geeraerts 2010, 9–16).

1.2. Formalist Peregrinations

The study of language changed shape at the turn of the twentieth century. Perhaps the most important bellwether was the posthumous appearance of the *Cours de linguistique générale* by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) in 1916, which set out to

define the task of linguistics. Saussure's work had lasting effects. One was to reorientate linguistic inquiry away from diachronic questions of historical reconstruction, which had predominated previous scholarship, towards synchronic questions. Another was to move away from viewing language as a social phenomenon. Instead, Saussure distinguished linguistic behaviour (*parole*) from the supposed abstract system underlying it (*langue*). Only the latter was the proper object of linguistic research, understood as a self-contained system of interrelated signs.

This basic outlook became the foundation of structuralism as it took root in America in the work of Franz Boas (1858–1942), Edward Sapir (1884–1939), and especially Leonard Bloomfield (1887–1949). It was the latter in particular who dispensed with the mind as entirely irrelevant to linguistic inquiry and description. Bloomfieldian structuralism as it was articulated in his 1933 *Language* was highly systematic and method-orientated, positioning itself as having no overlap with other disciplines. Behaviourist theory helped justify the anti-psychological posture of structuralism, which instead focused on creating mechanisms to empirically verify linguistic descriptions of phonology and morphology. Ultimately, structuralism came to be entirely about the signifier but not at all about the signified; always the winter of grammar but never the Christmas of meaning. The latter was messy and much better left to the psychologists or sociologists (Bloomfield 1933, 140; cf. Harris 1993, 16–28; Robins 1997, 222–59; Campbell 2003, 95–100).

The face of linguistics changed again in the mid-twentieth century as the empiricist outlook of structuralism began to give

way to the new theoretical paradigm developed by Noam Chomsky (1923–), the intellectual progenitor of transformational (later generative) grammar. The history and key commitments of generativism are recounted elsewhere in this volume (Naudé and Miller-Naudé) and need not be given in any detail here (see also Blevins 2013; Freidin 2013). But with Chomsky, linguistics became rationalist once again, turning attention back to the relationship between language and the mind. In broad strokes, Chomsky's approach focused on syntax and aimed to articulate the formal principles that describe how the mind of a speaker generates grammatical sentences given the parameters of a specific language. These principles were understood as being both universal across all languages and innate in the human mind. Generativism remained the predominant linguistic framework for most of the twentieth century, certainly in North America and in many cases elsewhere, until a theoretical parting of ways occurred in the 1980s (Robins 1997, 260–63; Campbell 2003, 100–03).⁶

1.3. Cognitive Realisations

The advent of Cognitive Linguistics is linked with a broader movement away from formalist theories that is known as functionalism (see Buth in this volume). Although generativism is interested in cognitive aspects of language as a system for expressing thought, it also gives little to no attention to the

⁶ It is probably correct to say that generativism is still the dominant linguistic framework today, although only in certain areas, especially syntax.

communicative purpose of language, and intentionally so.⁷ This orientation is not unique to generativism but can be traced back to Saussure's disinterest in *parole* in favour of *langue*. By contrast, functionalist theories focus on language as a means of communication and how grammar arises from use of the language. Functional and Cognitive Linguistics have distinct but very much overlapping histories, such that linguists disagree as to whether and how the latter is properly understood as part of the former (see Van Valin Jr. 2003; Nuyts 2010). Still, the two labels identify a set of theoretical frameworks that are rightly understood as fellow travellers on a road that has departed from the highway of generativism.

That departure was complete by the late 1980s, after over a decade of increasingly heated controversy within Chomskyan circles over theoretical developments known as Generative Semantics.⁸ Certain participants in the debate were increasingly dissatisfied with the level of abstract restrictiveness that generativism had reached. In contrast to this formalism, the Cognitive

⁷ In the words of Chomsky (2002, 76–77): “Language is not properly regarded as a system of communication. It is a system for expressing thought, something quite different.” Another example is Chafe (1994, 8; quoted in Ariel 2010, 76), who states that “there are many important things about language that can never be understood by constructing sequences of words that begin with *John* and end with a period, and asking oneself whether or not they are sentences of English.” Cited in Ariel (2010, 76). My thanks to Travis Wright for drawing my attention to these quotes.

⁸ See the lively history by Harris (1993), now updated in an excellent second edition (2021).

Linguistic and functionalist approaches agreed that language is not an autonomous mental system but rather is integrated with human cognition as a whole.⁹ One of the leading figures advancing this idea in the Cognitive Linguistics movement was George Lakoff (1941–), who in 1987 published one of the seminal texts in Cognitive Linguistics, entitled *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*. It was in that same year that Ronald W. Langacker (1942–) published *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*, which would become another foundational text for Cognitive Linguistics, alongside *The Body in the Mind* by Mark Johnson (1987). As discussed in the next section, these texts and others soon to follow set out key theoretical commitments, largely in direct contrast to generativism, that make Cognitive Linguistics uniquely centred on the nature of linguistic meaning as part of human cognition as a whole. Today, Cognitive Linguistics is widely recognised as one of the major frameworks in theoretical linguistics as a discipline, and it continues to grow in popularity and application in numerous venues around the world (Taylor 2007, 566–71, 574–76; Nerlich and Clarke 2010, 590–92; see also Howe and Sweetser 2013, 123–24).¹⁰

⁹ In generativism specifically, language is handled as a separate module within the human mind that is unconnected from other cognitive abilities, hence it is fundamentally disembodied.

¹⁰ For a more in-depth discussion of the origins of Cognitive Linguistics, see Ross (forthcoming).

2.0. Key Theoretical Commitments and Major Concepts

Cognitive Linguistics as it has developed over the last forty years is focused on understanding the communicative function of language, specifically in terms of the experiential basis for structured relationships that exist between language and cognition. At a basic level, Cognitive Linguistics views language as a dynamic but shared repertoire of form-meaning pairings used to symbolically encode and transmit thought to others. Language in this sense involves a “repository of world knowledge, a structured collection of meaningful categories that help us deal with new experiences and store information about old ones” (Geeraerts and Cuyckens 2007a, 5).

2.1. Four Commitments

Four key theoretical commitments characterise Cognitive Linguistics as a whole and help bear out its view of language. The descriptions of these commitments below are brief and abstract, but are illustrated further below with the six concepts that flow out of them.

2.1.1. Language Arises from Embodied Cognition

Cognitive Linguistics hypothesises that the human mind has no autonomous or innate faculty of some kind where language processing occurs, separate from other cognitive processes, which is a basic assumption in Chomskyan generative grammar. Instead, Cognitive Linguistics maintains that linguistic knowledge is represented in the mind and processed in basically the same way as

all other conceptual structures. Linguistic knowledge—the pairing of form and meaning—is therefore conceptual, an integral part of cognition in general, and organised and governed in the same ways as the cognitive abilities that are applied in other bodily tasks such as visual perception and sensorimotor activity. Language is distinguishable as a cognitive ability, but it is not unique in terms of the mental processes that are involved. An important corollary of this view of cognition is that linguistic meaning itself is embodied—not purely rational—since it reflects human experience in the world (Croft and Cruse 2004, 2–3; Geeraerts 2006b, 4–5; Janda 2015, 132–33).¹¹

2.1.2. Language is Perspectivised

A fundamental commitment of Cognitive Linguistic theory is that conceptual structure—and thus also linguistic knowledge—is not reducible to mere truth-conditional correspondence to the external world. Rather, language bears meaning because it construes the world in a perspectivised, embodied way, imposing a structure upon it rather than just reflecting objective reality.¹² So in

¹¹ For example, in his discussion of the word *grasp* from a cognitive scientific perspective, Feldman (2008, 166) explains how “the embodied neural approach to language suggests that the complex neural circuitry that supports [the physical action of] grasping is the core meaning of the word.”

¹² A basic example would be the word *sunset*, which only bears meaning (indeed only exists within language) because of the physical organisation of external objects relative to human perception. Note that this commitment does not entail an endorsement of philosophical relativism. From its earliest stages, theorists within the Cognitive Linguistic

Cognitive Linguistics, conceptual structure is likewise subject to construal in its organisation and how categories are formed. To articulate this commitment another way, grammar is conceptualisation, since linguistic structure reflects conceptual structure.¹³ Cognitive Linguistics thus maintains that language provides various ways of portraying and profiling the information being communicated (Croft and Cruse 2004, 1, 3; Geeraerts 2006b, 4; Evans and Green 2006, 40–43).

2.1.3. Language is Symbolic

Cognitive Linguistic theory emphasises the primacy of meaning in linguistic analysis by assuming that the basic function of language is to express thought and therefore must involve meaning, including pragmatic meaning. The way language expresses thought is by using symbols, which consist of forms—whether spoken, written, or even signed—and meanings with which the forms are paired by convention. Linguistic symbols bear meaning that is associated not with a particular referent in the external world, but rather with a concept or mental representation, which itself is derived from categorisation of our experience in the

movement have argued against both foundationalism and relativism, as for example in Johnson (1987, 194–212). He argues (202) that “we *are* in touch with our world but always in a mediated fashion. There is thus no single, God’s-Eye way of carving up the world. But it does not follow from this that we can carve it up any way we wish.” See also Harder (2007, esp. 1253).

¹³ Moreover, linguistic utterances are meant to elicit a shared conceptual structure between speakers.

external world. Notably, because Cognitive Linguistics hypothesises that linguistic cognition is indistinct from cognition in general (the first commitment), categorisation occurs not only with physical entities but also with language itself. As a result, linguistic phenomena are not strictly divided into the traditional ‘levels’ of phonology, morphology, syntax, and so on. Rather, language is viewed as a unified phenomenon for which these terms serve as convenient labels for what are in reality overlapping categories. (Evans and Green 2006, 6–7, 28–30; Geeraerts and Cuyckens 2007a, 5).

2.1.4. Language is the Conventions of Use

As noted above, Cognitive Linguistics shares with functionalism its focus on language as a means of communication and actual usage events among speakers. In Cognitive Linguistic theory, knowledge of language is understood to emerge from use, such that the abstraction of linguistic categories and structures by language learners and users occurs inductively. On this view, a language is nothing more than the set of form-meaning pairings used by convention in a speech community (Croft 2000, 26, 95–99).¹⁴ Those form-meaning pairings, moreover, occur at every level of language, from morpheme all the way up to syntax and even discourse. A corollary of this commitment is the unpredictability of language owing to variability in usage events over time, which leads to language change. Language change occurs

¹⁴ Cognitive Linguistics tends to use the term ‘utterance’ for communication usage events, which are understood as particular, actual instances of spoken or written forms by a language user (Evans 2007, 217–18).

not only because speakers themselves change, but because the external world does, too (Croft 1990, 257). At the same time, language change is not considered unpredictable. Although Cognitive Linguistics is not interested in uncovering linguistic universals in the same sense as in formalist theories, it does acknowledge universal tendencies in human language use that are constrained and motivated by shared cognitive abilities and processes, and therefore result in similar patterns of diachronic change across languages (Croft and Cruse 2004, 3–4, 71–73; Geeraerts 2006b, 4, 5–6).¹⁵

2.2. Six Concepts

In addition to these four key theoretical commitments in Cognitive Linguistic theory, there are numerous concepts that flow from them. While there are more than space allows for here, the six concepts discussed below are widely considered central to Cognitive Linguistics as a framework for the study of language. In anticipation of the next section, each concept discussed here is illustrated with reference to the biblical text and languages.

2.2.1. Image Schemas

Since Cognitive Linguistics understands conceptual structure to be grounded in embodiment, semantic structure is reckoned the same way. That is what it means for language to be embodied. In other words, part of what makes language meaningful is the

¹⁵ On grammaticalisation theory, see especially Narrog and Heine (2011), Hopper and Traugott (2012), and Kouteva et al. (2019).

human embodied experience with which it is associated.¹⁶ One of the foundational ways of illustrating and accounting for this conceptual association between embodied experience and linguistic meaning is what Cognitive Linguistics calls the image schema, originally developed by Johnson (1987). According to Sullivan (2017, 398), image schemas are “simple cognitive structures that represent spatial configurations independently of a single sensory modality.” They arise directly from repeated sensory interactions with the world, including the visual, auditory, haptic (touch), and vestibular (balance) systems of the body. Image schemas are not detailed ideas, but are rather abstract or ‘schematic’ in nature (hence the name), and thus provide a foundation for richer conceptual and semantic structures. In this sense, image schemas are pre-conceptual and subconscious.¹⁷

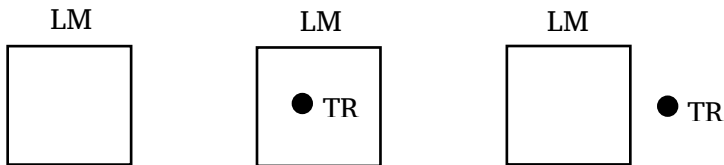
To label and describe image schemas, Cognitive Linguistics uses SMALL CAPITALS and simple diagrams, respectively. For example, because the human body has a unidirectional visual apparatus (i.e., eyes that look in one direction), axial orientation is inherently part of embodied experience. This simple reality of human embodiment gives rise to a number of image schemas,

¹⁶ Or, as Evans and Green (2006, 158–60) put it, “Semantic structure is conceptual structure,” and conceptual structure is embodied.

¹⁷ In a series of studies, Mandler (1988; 1992; 1996; 2005; 2010) has shown how image schemas arise in conjunction with physical and psychological development during early childhood (even in the womb) through what she calls perceptual meaning analysis. See also Evans (2014, esp. 118–26; 2015, 122–53).

such as FRONT-BACK, LEFT-RIGHT, and—given the universal experience of gravity and three-dimensional space—UP-DOWN and NEAR-FAR as well. These image schemas are interconnected in human visual experience, as are many others. For example, Figure 1 shows the CONTAINER image schema at the far left. The diagrams in the centre and at right involve the CONTAINER image schema as well, but do so as part of the related image schemas for IN and OUT, respectively.¹⁸

Figure 1: Image schemas for CONTAINER, IN, and OUT



Note too the use of ‘LM’ and ‘TR’ in Figure 1, which stand for ‘Landmark’ and ‘Trajector’, respectively. These terms refer to elements that are related in any given construal, but are profiled in different ways as either focal (Trajector/TR) or non-focal (Landmark/LM). For example, in the centre diagram, the TR entity is IN the CONTAINER LM, while in the right diagram the TR is OUT (Evans and Green 2006, 176–91; Gibbs and Colston 2006; Evans 2007, 106–08; Oakley 2007).¹⁹

¹⁸ Other image schemas that CONTAINER helps to structure could be elaborated, such as TOP-BOTTOM, OVER-UNDER, and FULL-EMPTY, etc.

¹⁹ There are numerous image schemas that Cognitive Linguistics has collectively identified, although these are not exclusive of others that may be proposed. See Evans (2019, 235–36) for a synthesised list.

The notion of an image schema may seem simple, but because it helps analyse conceptual structures it also has significant explanatory power for linguistic structures, as illustrated in the clauses in example (1) below.

- (1) (a) וַיֵּצֵא יוֹנָה מִן־הָעִיר
 ‘Then Jonah went out of the city’
 (b) וַיֵּשֶׁב מִקְדָּם לָעִיר
 ‘and sat east of the city,’
 (c) וַיַּעַשׂ לוֹ שֵׁם סִכָּה
 ‘and he made a booth there for himself.’
 (d) וַיֵּשֶׁב תַּחְתֶּיהָ בַּצֶּל
 ‘And he sat under it in the shade’ (Jon. 4.5a)

In (1a) Jonah is a TR that is portrayed as OUT of the boundaries of the city, which itself is construed as a CONTAINER LM. In addition, the verbal event in (1a) is structured by the SOURCE-PATH image schema that involves linear motion. Similarly, Jonah’s resting place *מקדם* ‘east’ of the city in (1b) involves a CENTRE-PERIPHERY image schema in which the city is construed as central and Jonah’s spatial position in (1b) as peripheral to the scene. (As discussed in more detail in §2.2.5 below, the geographical sense ‘east’ for *מקדם* arises from a FRONT-BACK image schema involved in the semantic structure of the word.) In (1d), Jonah is again a TR, but now profiled against two LMs, one being the booth as an elevated SURFACE under which Jonah sits and the other being the shade produced by the booth as a CONTAINER in which Jonah is located.²⁰

²⁰ Note, too, that utterances involve perspective or situatedness in the spatial construal (Croft and Cruse 2004, 58–63). In (1) the construal is

2.2.2. Frame Semantics

An important aspect of the commitment to embodied cognition in Cognitive Linguistic theory is the related thesis that meaning is encyclopedic in nature. That is, semantic structure (form/meaning pairing) is inextricably linked—in fact it is understood to ‘grant access’—to a complex inventory of structured knowledge about the world. That knowledge is encyclopaedic in that it derives from both physical and sociocultural dimensions of human experience.²¹ The theories of Frame Semantics and Conceptual Domains are two approaches in Cognitive Linguistics to extrapolate this understanding of linguistic meaning. These theories are distinct, but in many ways complementary. This section focuses on Frame Semantics, leaving Conceptual Domains aside until the next section.²²

A semantic frame is a schematisation of experience that is represented conceptually and held in long-term memory. In essence, a frame is a knowledge structure of interrelated concepts associated with an identifiable, culturally-embedded scene in human experience. Frames contribute to meaning construction by virtue of their gestalt quality. That is, without knowledge of the relationship structure of the frame as a whole, knowledge of

allocentric, taking a kind of bird’s-eye view of the scene, rather than a ‘Jonah’s-eye view’. On the typological diversity of spatial models of construal, see for example Mawyer and Feinberg (2014).

²¹ As van Wolde (2009, 51–103) puts it, words are “tips of encyclopedic icebergs.”

²² Frame Semantics originated with Fillmore (1982; 1985), while Conceptual Domains were developed by Langacker (1987).

any given concept within it is incomplete. Fillmore (2006, 373) makes this same point, explaining that a frame is “any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits; when one of the things in such a structure is introduced into a text, or into a conversation, all of the others are automatically made available.” For example, the concept associated with the word ‘Monday’ is linked to, prompts, and can only be fully understood within the frame WEEK, which is simpler and more basic than its parts.²³ Although frames are basic modes of knowledge representation in this sense, they are not static. Rather, a frame is updated, modified, and adapted on the basis of ongoing experience (see further Evans and Green 2006, 206–47; Ungerer and Schmid 2006, 207–18; Cienki 2007; Evans 2007, 85–86).

Understanding frame semantics comes more easily by illustration. In CL, a semantic frame is denoted using SMALL CAPITALS, much like an image schema. So, for example, the BAKING frame includes categories for at least one participant, the BAKER, who is in the BAKING role working with elements like INGREDIENTS and TOOLS that themselves have properties like WET, DRY, SHARP, and HOT. In an ancient Greek context, the BAKING frame provides the background and motivation for categories associated with words like *σεμίδαλις* (‘fine flour’), *ζύμη* (‘leaven’), *ἀναμάσσω* (‘to knead’), *φύραμα* (‘dough’), *κλίβανος* (‘oven’), and *ἄρτος* (‘bread loaf’).

²³ I am grateful to one of my peer reviewers for his helpful illustration.

An interesting example of the BAKING semantic frame at work appears in Matthew 16. The following account appears as Jesus and his disciples are travelling by boat:

- (2) (a) Καὶ ἐλθόντες οἱ μαθηταὶ εἰς τὸ πέραν ἐπελάθοντο ἄρτους λαβεῖν.
 ‘And the disciples came to the other side and had forgotten to take bread.’
- (b) ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ὁρᾶτε καὶ προσέχετε ἀπὸ τῆς ζύμης τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ Σαδδουκαίων.
 ‘And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”’
- (c) οἱ δὲ διελογίζοντο ἐν ἑαυτοῖς λέγοντες ὅτι ἄρτους οὐκ ἐλάβομεν.
 ‘And they began to discuss among themselves, saying, “It is because we took no bread.”’
- (d) γνοὺς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· τί διαλογίζεσθε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, ὀλιγόπιστοι, ὅτι ἄρτους οὐκ ἔχετε;
 ‘But Jesus, aware of this, said, “You men of little faith, why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread?”’ (Matt. 16.5–8)

With the note about their lack of bread in (2a), the scene is set for Jesus’ comment in (2b). He cautions his disciples against ἡ ζύμη (‘the leaven’) of their religious opposition. In (2c) the disciples, having no bread with them but hearing Jesus mention ζύμη, become confused. Understanding how words grant access to semantic frames that structure encyclopaedic knowledge helps account for that confusion, as the word ζύμη naturally prompts the BAKING frame, although that is not the right frame for understanding Jesus’ warning. The preceding events involving bread and the disciples’ ongoing mental preoccupation with having

forgotten to bring any on their journey further explain their initial (mis)interpretation in (2c) of Jesus' words in (2b). But as seen in (2d), Jesus' comment is in fact not straightforwardly about bread, but rather about teaching. The connections between those two ideas are extensive and rich, as are the implications, and they are explored in more detail in §2.2.4 below. Before doing that, however, another major concept within Cognitive Linguistics needs explanation.²⁴

2.2.3. Domains and Conceptual Metaphor

One of the best-known parts of Cognitive Linguistics as a whole is conceptual metaphor theory, originally developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980; see Tay 2014).²⁵ In essence, the theory holds that metaphor in language is no mere stylistic or rhetorical feature, but in fact helps to structure cognition and meaning itself via embodied experience. Conceptual metaphor involves two domains, a source and a target, the former being mapped or 'projected' unidirectionally onto the latter such that richer or more complex meaning arises through correspondence. A domain is

²⁴ Further illustration of frame semantics for Hebrew appears in Ziegert (2021, 29–31) and de Blois (2004). See also the application of frame semantics to English available online at <https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu>, accessed 29 June 2023, which also offers a very useful glossary of terms.

²⁵ Cognitive Linguistics has also proposed a theory of metonymy, which is not outlined here for reasons of space, though some have proposed metonymy as an even more basic cognitive process than metaphor. See Croft (2006); Evans and Green (2006, 310–27); Polzenhagen et al. (2014).

similar to a semantic frame, as discussed above, but is not necessarily associated with experience of a particular scene. Rather, domains are cognitive entities of varying levels of complexity and organisation that provide background information against which a concept is understood. Typically, concepts are structured with multiple domains in a kind of matrix.

Some domains are basic, deriving directly from embodied experience, and are thus pre-conceptual. As such, basic domains are similar to image schemas, but the latter are built upon the former, which are also not necessarily imagistic. Examples of basic domains, which again are denoted in Cognitive Linguistics using SMALL CAPITALS, would include SPACE, TEMPERATURE, TIME, VOLUME, and COLOUR, among others (see further in Evans and Green 2006, 234–35). These domains often provide the source in pervasive conceptual metaphors that structure linguistic meaning, but more complex domains may also appear. What makes these conceptual and not merely rhetorical metaphors is their motivation and usefulness at the level of thought itself. Several examples below will illustrate this theory (Evans and Green 2006, 230–47, 286–310; Ungerer and Schmid 2006, 114–27; Evans 2007, 33–35, 61–62; Grady 2007).

The first example demonstrates the pervasiveness of certain conceptual metaphors across languages and cultures owing to motivation by common human physical experience, as shown in example (3).

- (3) (a) יִרְגְּזוּ כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ כִּי־בֹא יוֹם־יְהוָה כִּי קָרוֹב
 ‘Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day
 of the LORD is coming; it is near’ (Joel 2.1)

- (b) כִּי אֲלֶף שָׁנִים בְּעֵינֶיךָ כְּיוֹם אֶתְמוּל כִּי יַעֲבֹר
 ‘For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday
 when it is past’ (Ps. 90.4)

One of the most pervasive conceptual metaphors is to understand TIME in terms of either SPACE or MOTION. In (3a) we see the FUTURE EVENTS ARE AHEAD metaphor, which arises from our experience of looking in the direction in which we are physically moving, so that as entities get closer to us they become visually larger. Physical movement through space also involves temporal progression, such that arrival at a distant destination corresponds to a future point in time. Along these same lines, a converse metaphorical entailment appears in (3b), where PAST EVENTS ARE BEHIND.

The second set of examples is more specific to the conceptual environment of ancient Israelite prophetic literature, in which the relationship between God and his people is portrayed as a marriage. This idea appears vividly in Ezekiel 16, where in verse 8 God says: “I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became mine.” In that chapter and others throughout the prophetic books there are statements like the following:

- (4) (a) וַתִּבְטַחִי בְּיָפְיֶךָ וַתִּזְנִי עַל־שְׁמֶךָ
 ‘But you trusted in your beauty and became a whore
 because of your fame’ (Ezek. 16.15)
- (b) כִּי עַל־כָּל־גְּבֻעָה גְּבַהָה וַתַּחַת כָּל־עֵץ רֵעֵן אַתָּה צַעָה זֹנָה
 ‘For on every high hill and under every green tree you
 have lain down as a whore’ (Jer. 2.20b)

At the foundation of verses like these is the conceptual metaphor COVENANT IS MARRIAGE. However, a number of derivative

metaphors also emerge as a result of the structure of MARRIAGE—at least as it was understood in the ancient Israel—as a conceptual domain. For example, in (4a) God’s people are condemned in the broader contexts of the sentences in (4) on the basis of the metaphor IDOLATRY IS ADULTERY. The same metaphor appears in (4b), but with the additional implication that HIGH PLACES ARE SITES OF SEXUAL LIAISON. Of course, both examples in (4) are linked to the broader conceptual metaphor WORSHIP IS SEX.²⁶

2.2.4. Mental Spaces and Conceptual Blending

Conceptual blending is a theory initially posited by Fauconnier (1994) and further developed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002), who argue that meaning is constructed in larger units of language (i.e., the sentence level and above) by integrating knowledge structures in novel and creative ways that give rise to a ‘blend’. Conceptual blending is a basic, effortless cognitive process in human thought and imagination that is prompted directly in the dynamic context of communication. Again, Cognitive Linguistic theory hypothesises that language grants access to encyclopaedic knowledge of the external world as a kind of prompt for conceptualisation. This approach entails that meaning construction is grounded in language use, such that there is no principled division between semantics and pragmatics, as in formal approaches (Turner 1991, 206; Birdsell 2014).²⁷

²⁶ Further illustration of conceptual metaphor theory for Hebrew appears in Ziegert (2021, 31–33).

²⁷ That is, they are not absolutely distinct. Cognitive Linguistic theory places semantics and pragmatics on a continuum of form-meaning pairings that may move from the pragmatic pole to the semantic pole

Meaning construction through conceptual blending involves the integration of mental spaces. Fauconnier (2007, 351) defines mental spaces as “very partial assemblies constructed as we think and talk for purposes of local understanding and action. They contain elements and are structured by frames and cognitive models... [and] are connected to each other by various kinds of mappings, in particular identity and analogy mappings.” As Evans and Green (2006, 369) put it, “you can think of a mental space as a ‘thought bubble’.” Mental space theory is distinct from conceptual blending theory, but the two are closely related and function in a similar way to conceptual metaphor, though with important differences. Whereas conceptual metaphor involves unidirectional mapping of domains, conceptual blending involves selective integration of mental spaces into a novel elaboration. Whereas conceptual metaphors are stable and widely shared knowledge structures held in long-term memory, conceptual blends may be temporary and unique conceptualisations of information for creative purposes specific to ongoing discourse (although even blends may become conventionalised in long-term habitual cognitive structures).

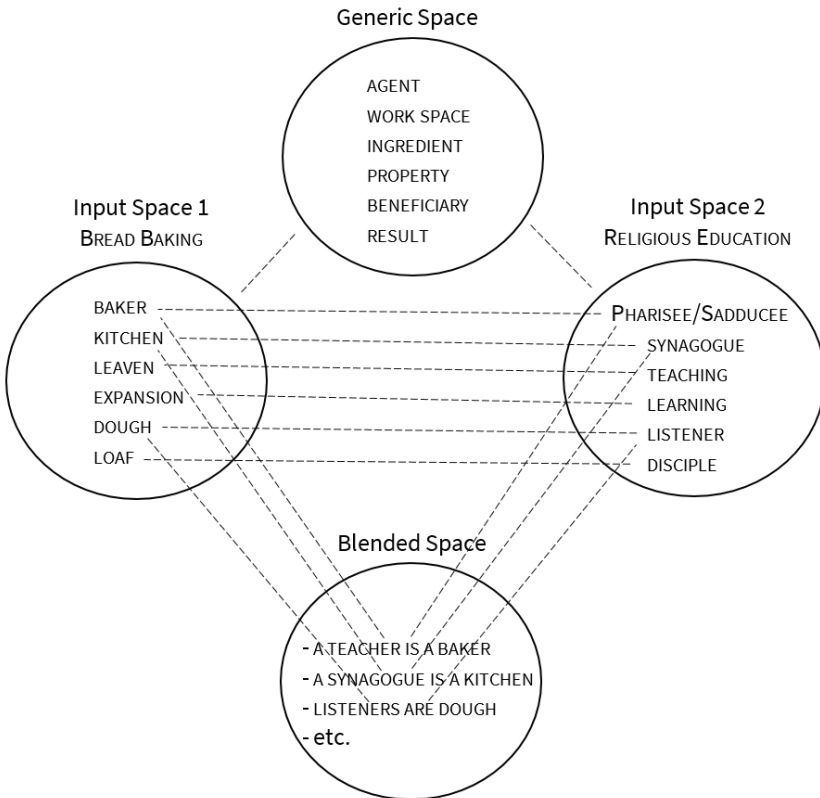
Consider the example of conceptual blending in (5) below. This text is part of the same passage as example (2) above, and describes the resolution to the disciples’ misconstrual of Jesus’ warning.

as they become conventionalised in the language over time through entrenchment. On pragmatics within Cognitive Linguistics, see Panther (2022).

- (5) (a) πῶς οὐ νοεῖτε ὅτι οὐ περὶ ἄρτων εἶπον ὑμῖν; προσέχετε δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ζύμης τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ Σαδδουκαίων.
 “How do you not understand that I did not speak to you about [actual] bread? But beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”
- (b) τότε συνῆκαν ὅτι οὐκ εἶπεν προσέχειν ἀπὸ τῆς ζύμης τῶν ἄρτων ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ τῆς διδαχῆς τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ Σαδδουκαίων.
 ‘Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of [actual] bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’ (Matt. 16.12–13)

Figure 2 presents a representation of the conceptual integration network involved in this passage, which could no doubt be further elaborated.

Figure 2: Conceptual integration network in Matt. 16.5–13



At the left and right are two mental spaces (called ‘input spaces’) represented by circles, each containing properties, roles, and relations and each structured by a semantic frame. The input spaces share features that are explicated in the generic space at the top of the figure. Through conceptually projecting and integrating input features, a novel conceptualisation emerges, represented at the bottom in the ‘blended space’. Note that this mapping is selective; not all properties and elements in the input spaces are necessarily involved in the blend (Fauconnier 1994;

1997; Fauconnier and Turner 1998; Evans and Green 2006, 363–444; Evans 2007, 12–13, 114–15; Fauconnier 2007).

As noted above in §2.2.2, at first the disciples misunderstand because they are conceptualising Jesus' comments within the BAKING semantic frame alone. But after Jesus reminds them that obtaining actual bread for food is not the real problem (Matt. 16.9–10), they reconceptualise his words in terms of the blend portrayed in Figure 2. Jesus' clarification in (5a) prompts dynamic and temporary meaning construction in the context of their communication. As the features of each input space are integrated in the conceptual blend, novel meaning construction occurs. That meaning is represented in a limited way in the blended space, where the implications can be conceptually elaborated. For example, in the blend, the PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES (or perhaps just TEACHERS) ARE BAKERS, the SYNAGOGUE IS A KITCHEN, and anyone there as A LISTENER IS DOUGH. As Jesus explains, TEACHING IS LEAVEN, which has a disproportionate and determinative effect upon the outcome of DOUGH, for better or worse, when it is baked. In this sense, then, a DISCIPLE IS A LOAF OF BREAD. In a context where bread was a major part of daily diet and local bakers and bread quality would have been well known, this conceptual blend would have had readily accessible explanatory power.

2.2.5. Prototypes and Semantic Extension

The cognitive approach to lexical semantics understands words as lexical items whose meanings are associated with a complex but structured conceptual category (or categories). This view of

categorisation was originally posited by Rosch (1978) and developed by Lakoff (1987), Taylor (2003), and others. Cognitive Linguistic theory hypothesises that conceptual categories form because humans gather as much information about our environment as possible with the least possible cognitive effort. The categorisation process also occurs because humans perceive consistent correlation between features of the external world. The principle of economy gives rise to differing levels of inclusiveness for categories and their members, while the principle of correlation informs the organisation of category members around a central exemplar, which is called a prototype. As such, the categories are radial, organised around the prototype to include other, gradually more peripheral members that are distinct but related. Prototype theory applies to lexical semantics insofar as any given word also forms a category—held in the ‘mental lexicon’—with a prototypical meaning (or sense) at its centre and with other meanings extending from the prototype in a semantic network.²⁸ This model of lexical semantics integrates other aspects of Cognitive Linguistic theory, especially image schemas, semantic frames, and conceptual metaphor theory. It is primarily

²⁸ Note that prototype theory is applicable to both onomasiology and semasiology. The former deals with how words are used to categorise (or name) objects in the external world, whereas the latter deals with the network of concepts (or meanings) of a word understood as a category itself. Cognitive lexical semantics deals with both, but the discussion below is semasiological. The term mental lexicon refers to the inventory of words known by a language speaker, which is organised and detailed but nevertheless latent knowledge. See further Aitchison (2012); Taylor (2012).

by these cognitive mechanisms that Cognitive Linguistics has accounted for word meaning as a semantic network in which less prototypical senses derive from more prototypical senses through motivated (though not always predictable) meaning extension (Taylor 2003, 41–83; Evans and Green 2006, 328–63, 445–67; Geeraerts 2006c; Evans 2007, 175, 176–77; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2007; Geeraerts 2010, 182–272; 2015).

To illustrate prototype theory, cognitive semantics, and embodied cognition, we will revisit *מקדם* from example (1b), above. This lexical item is a compound of the preposition *מן* ('from') and *קדם*, the latter of which will come into focus here first. The prototypical sense of this nominal appears to be *front* as an embodied, spatial concept. This sense appears in some texts, as in the adverbial uses in (6) below:

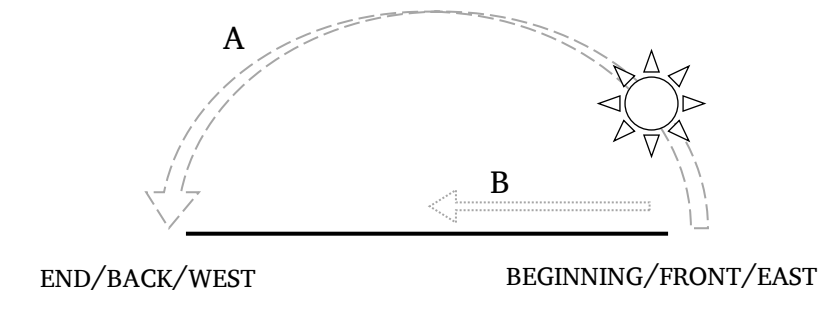
- (6) (a) אָחוּר וְקִדְמָ וְצִרְתָּנִי
 'You encircle me in back and in front' (Ps. 139.5)
- (b) הֲנִי קִדְמָ אֶהְלֵךְ וְאֵינְנוּ וְאֶחָזֵר וְלֹא־אֶבִּין לוֹ
 'Look, I go forwards and he is nowhere;
 backwards, but I do not sense him' (Job 23.8)

In the HB, the spatial concept *front* is more often expressed using prepositional constructions involving the word *פנה* (the human 'face'), such as *לפנים* ('before', 'facing') or *(על-)פני* ('[at the] front of'). Even so, the *front* meaning associated with both *פנה* and *קדם* arose from the embodied construal of the human face as the axial front of a person given the orientation of visual perception.²⁹

²⁹ The same construal underlies the verb *קדם* 'to meet, confront', which likely derived from the nominal.

Two other senses of קדם extend from the spatial prototype, each of which is motivated by different metaphorical construals of SPACE and TIME as semantic domains. Owing to embodied experience and encyclopaedic knowledge, the period of time categorised as a DAY is associated with the light of the SUN, which—as depicted with the arrow labelled A in Figure 3—follows a consistent directional trajectory from the temporal BEGINNING of the period in the east to its END in the west.³⁰

Figure 3: Semantic extension of קדם



³⁰ Although space constraints prohibit fuller substantiation of this lexical semantic proposal, it is noteworthy that the polysemy of the Hebrew word ימין supports it, as the word can mean both *right (side)* or *south*. The former is the spatial prototype; the latter is a metonymic extension that can only be motivated within an eastward-facing construal, as I am proposing for קדם. It seems that eastwardness was construed as the unmarked/default directionality (e.g., Zebulun's boundary runs קדמה מזרחה, 'forwards, towards sunrise' to Gath-hepher in Josh. 19.13). In addition, eastward orientation was significant in other aspects of Israelite culture, as in the geographical orientation of the entrance to the Tabernacle and later Solomon's Temple (like many other ancient Near Eastern religious structures) towards the east (see Exod. 26.18–22; 1 Kgs 7; cf. Gen. 3.24 below).

Those earliest and latest temporal periods of the DAY period may be metaphorically construed as its spatial FRONT and BACK through the cognitively routine conceptual metaphor TIME IS SPACE, or, more specifically in this instance, THE BEGINNING IS THE FRONT. The texts in (7) illustrate this sense.

- (7) (a) יהוה קנני ראשית דרכו קדם מפעליו מאז
 ‘The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his way,
 before his deeds of old’ (Prov. 8.22)
- (b) והיו בניו כקדם ועדתו לפני תבון
 ‘Their children will be like before, and their congrega-
 tion will be established in my presence’ (Jer. 30.20a)

Given the movement of the SUN across the sky during the DAY period, this metaphor entails gradedness, such that EARLIER IS MORE FRONTWARD and vice-versa. It is in this way that the prototypical spatial meaning of קדם ‘front’ can extend metaphorically to the temporal sense ‘before’.

A second semantic extension occurs, however, when the concept of directionality is added (with the affixed preposition מן) to the spatial construal of a DAY, as depicted with the arrow labelled B in Figure 3. The examples in (8) demonstrate this meaning, as does (1b) above.

- (8) (a) ויגרש את־האדם וישכן מקדם לגן־עדן את־הכרבים
 ‘So he drove out the man and positioned cherubim
 east of the garden of Eden’ (Gen. 3.24)
- (b) ויעל כבוד יהוה מעל תוך העיר ויעמד על־ההר אשר מקדם לעיר
 ‘And the glory of the LORD went up from the middle
 of the city and stood over the mountain that is east of
 the city’ (Ezek. 11.23)

This conceptualisation of קדם is also graded but involves geographical positionality of an entity relative to the SUN at the metaphorical FRONT of the DAY (מקדם). In this way, the third sense ‘east’ is motivated by the conceptual metaphor EASTWARDNESS IS PROXIMITY TO SUNRISE.³¹

2.2.6. Cognitive Approaches to Grammar

The study of grammar was at the centre of the emergence of Cognitive Linguistics out of generativism in the 1970s and 1980s. Since that time, two broad approaches to grammar have appeared as trunks of a single Cognitive Linguistic tree; distinct but grounded in the same spot. On the one hand there is Cognitive Grammar, a broad theoretical framework developed by Langacker (1987; 1991) that is to date the most influential (see the overviews in Langacker 2007 and Bennett 2014). It is also very detailed and expansive, to the extent that the introduction by Taylor (2002) covers topics ranging from phonology and morphology to verbal tense and idioms. On the other hand, there is

³¹ The use of מן (‘from’) with קדם in this sense indicates a different construal of focal and non-focal entities as compared with English directional expressions. When correlating entities with cardinal directions, native English speakers construe eastward positionality as completed movement from the focal entity⁽¹⁾ to the non-focal entity⁽²⁾ (e.g., Jonah⁽²⁾ was [positioned *to* the] east of the city⁽¹⁾). Hebrew speakers, however, appear to have had EAST as a directionally-stable third concept in the construal, such that eastward positionality of the non-focal entity⁽²⁾ was construed as completed movement from the EAST⁽³⁾ towards the focal entity⁽¹⁾ (e.g., Jonah⁽²⁾ was [positioned *from* the] east⁽³⁾ of the city⁽¹⁾).

Construction Grammar, the roots of which appear in Kay and Fillmore (1999) and Goldberg (1995), and which was later developed by Croft (2001) and others.³²

It is important to note that the six key concepts of Cognitive Linguistics discussed so far have been focused on semantics, specifically how meaning emerges in linguistic structures from conceptual structures. Cognitive approaches to grammar use these same key concepts to focus more directly on the linguistic system itself. In doing so, there are certainly differences between Cognitive and Construction Grammars, but they nevertheless share two guiding principles and are therefore compatible (see further Broccias 2006). The first is the symbolic thesis, which holds that the basic unit of grammar is a form-meaning pairing as a linguistic unit. In contrast to formalist approaches, this thesis entails that grammatical structure is not treated separately from meaning. Cognitive approaches to grammar take all form-meaning pairings into consideration as a unified and structured inventory of conventional linguistic units, from the level of bound morphemes, to lexical items, to syntactic configurations, understanding these units as existing along a continuum. The second guiding principle is the usage-based thesis, discussed above in §2.1.4. Within the realm of grammar, this thesis entails that each language user develops a kind of mental grammar through experience, with no sharp division between knowledge of a language

³² See the overviews in Croft (2007) and Ramonda (2014). See also Hoffmann and Trousdale (2013) and the recent work by Hoffmann (2022). The earliest Construction Grammar proposal was Fillmore, Kay, and O'Connor (1988).

and use of a language (Croft and Cruse 2004, 225–90; Evans and Green 2006, 475–511; Ungerer and Schmid 2006, 244–56).

This section will focus only briefly on two examples to illustrate Construction Grammar in particular, building on §2.2.2 above. Construction Grammar helps to account for both ‘irregular’ idiomatic expressions as well as ‘regular’ syntactic expressions as linguistic units called constructions. While the former are not discussed here for reasons of space, the example in (9) below helps illustrate the latter in terms of the argument structure of constructions at the sentence level.

- (9) Σπλαγχνισθεὶς δὲ ὁ κύριος τοῦ δούλου ἐκείνου ἀπέλυσεν αὐτὸν καὶ τὸ δάνειον ἀφῆκεν αὐτῷ.

‘Then out of pity that servant’s master released him and forgave him the debt.’ (Matt. 18.27)

This use of ἀφίημι as a ditransitive verb meaning *forgive* is common in the New Testament (cf. Matt. 6.12; 12.31), involving a syntactic construction that we will call *Forgive Y Z* and that can be represented as X RESOLVES Y FOR Z (or, even more simply, CAUSE-RECEIVE with the Y resolution in view). In this construction, X is the AGENT, Y the PATIENT, and Z the BENEFICIARY (SVO^{dir}O^{ind}), with each argument expressed in the nominative, accusative, and dative cases, respectively.³³

Goldberg’s Construction Grammar approach to verb argument structure can also help account for sense distinctions by virtue of semantic frames. For example, the *Forgive Y Z* Construction in (9) involves the FINANCIAL TRANSACTION frame in which

³³ For further discussion of this construction and how it can be represented at semantic and syntactic levels, see Goldberg (2006, 20–22).

the conceptual metaphor SIN IS DEBT TO GOD appears. But the verb ἀφίημι also has a *permit* sense, which still has three arguments but involves a different construction and semantic frame, as shown in (10).

(10) καὶ οὐκ ἤφιεν λαλεῖν τὰ δαιμόνια, ὅτι ᾔδεισαν αὐτόν.

‘And he would not permit the demons to speak, since they knew him.’ (Mark 1.34b; cf. Matt. 8.22; Luke 8.51; Rev. 11.9)

The construction here might be called *Allow Y to Z* and can be represented as X ALLOWS Y TO PERFORM Z ACTION. This is a variation of the CAUSE-RECEIVE construction, where X is still the AGENT and Y the PATIENT, but Z is now another verb in the infinitive (SVOI), which will involve its own construction. The semantic frame varies depending upon what fills the Y and Z roles, but in many cases it is an AUTHORITY or CONTROL frame.

3.0. Cognitive Linguistics in Biblical Studies

Because Cognitive Linguistic theory itself is not a single set of clearly defined procedures and approaches, as noted above, it is no surprise that the use of Cognitive Linguistics within biblical scholarship is similarly variegated (Howe and Sweetser 2013, 122). The earliest application of Cognitive Linguistics to the study of the Bible and its languages was the use of conceptual metaphor theory by Brettler (1989), a substantial revision of his doctoral dissertation. ‘Use’ may be too strong a word, however, as the interaction is limited to five total citations of the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), all of which appear in the introductory chapter on method. The word ‘cognitive’ does not appear

anywhere in Brettler's work and even 'conceptual metaphor' occurs only once (23).

Still, Brettler's study brought Cognitive Linguistics in its early phase to the attention of biblical scholarship, particularly in the study of Hebrew. Green and Howe (2014, 1) call this a "first wave," which was followed in the 1990s and early 2000s by a number of journal articles and conference papers that mostly applied Cognitive Linguistic theory to the Hebrew Bible. The "second wave" of influence they identify as the formation of 'The Use of Cognitive Linguistics in Biblical Interpretation' consultation at the 2006 annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, under the leadership of Mary Therese DesCamp, Joel B. Green, Bonnie Howe, and Eve Sweetser. Howe and Sweetser (2013, 124–25) give a useful overview of the first six years of activity in this group, which ultimately culminated in the publication of a volume of collected essays that nicely balances Hebrew and Greek studies (Howe and Green 2014).³⁴

Biblical scholars have of course continued to employ Cognitive Linguistic theory in their work to great effect, both independently and in connection with the SBL annual meeting. The following discussion highlights contributions in each of the respective biblical languages. Because Howe and Sweetser (2013, 125–

³⁴ It is my honour to serve presently as a member of the steering committee of the current iteration of this same group, now known as the Cognitive Linguistics in Biblical Interpretation programme unit. At present, members of the committee are working towards an edited volume introducing Cognitive Linguistics for biblical scholars that is to be published with SBL Press.

27) provide a useful survey of Cognitive Linguistics in biblical studies up through 2012, this section focuses on work that has appeared in the ten years since then, but is by no means exhaustive.³⁵

As may be evident already in this section, it is true that most of the application of Cognitive Linguistics in biblical scholarship has so far gone to Hebrew. By far the best introduction to and overview of this Hebrew scholarship to date is van der Merwe (2021). In a bibliography of just over one hundred publications dealing with Cognitive Linguistics in biblical studies in the last ten years (which is nevertheless surely not exhaustive), almost sixty percent of the bibliography relates to Hebrew, with just under twenty percent to Greek. Overall, the great majority of publications are essay-length, appearing in either journals or edited volumes. Despite their narrower scope, these contributions do not merely address finer linguistic matters. For example, Ross (2019) considers how attention to the conceptual blends constructed in Ps. 51 offers a different and perhaps better understanding of the final verses than has otherwise been considered. Many interpreters regard vv. 18–19 (Hebrew vv. 20–21) as a later interpolation, assuming that the plea that the LORD would “build up the walls of Jerusalem” is an abrupt change of topic that must have arisen in a postexilic context. But these verses in fact interact and cohere with the entire psalm to prompt a conceptual blend in which David himself is Zion/Jerusalem whose damaged spiritual walls require restoration by God the builder. This

³⁵ Key works from these earlier years would include, for example, Danove (2001) and van Wolde (2009), among others.

application of Cognitive Linguistics thus goes beyond language itself to help address interpretive debates and even compositional history.

In the scope of publications, far fewer in number are monographs that apply Cognitive Linguistics to the biblical languages. When these do appear, such studies tend to be the published form of doctoral dissertations (a notable exception here is van Wolde 2009). As such, these works can be extremely helpful on a broader topic, but of course still remain limited by default in what they address. A good example here is Robar (2015), who employs Cognitive Linguistics to address the function of the Hebrew *wayyiqṭol* form at a discourse level to indicate schematic continuity (see also Robar 2021). Biblical scholarship has also begun to see Cognitive Linguistics applied in part or whole in collaborative edited volumes. For example, Ross and Runge (2022) present a collection of essays focused on understanding the semantics of postclassical Greek prepositions in Cognitive Linguistic perspective, particularly using prototype theory, pointing to new possibilities in lexicography and drawing out interpretative implications. Similarly, the volume edited by García Ureña et al. (2022) applies cognitive semantic theory to the lexicography of colour terms related to green within the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin Scriptures, analysing meaning at both the lexical and symbolic or cultural levels.

Rarest of all at this point are large-scale works that employ Cognitive Linguistics in the more standard or traditional categories of biblical studies publications. While there are some grammars, for example, that do reflect a much more up-to-date linguistic

framework, such as van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze (2017), to date none attempt to apply Cognitive Linguistics systematically. It is also fair to say that syntax has received virtually no attention within biblical scholarship from a Cognitive Linguistic perspective, despite the remarkable explanatory power of Construction Grammar for phenomena that so far have been examined only within a generative framework. Lexical semantics has fared better than syntax in biblical studies, but still lexicography proper has seen comparatively few results in print. However, following calls by van der Merwe (2006, 88–89) for attention to encyclopedic information in lexical entries, Reinier de Blois has been at work editing the *Semantic Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew*. Although the project is ongoing, its approach is based firmly in Cognitive Linguistic theory and the initial results are highly promising.³⁶

4.0. Prospects for Research and Application

This essay has only begun to outline the theory and potential of Cognitive Linguistics, which is now widely recognised as one of the major linguistic frameworks, one that continues to grow in popularity and application in numerous venues around the world. One of those venues has certainly been biblical studies. Yet despite the fact that Cognitive Linguistics has been present within biblical scholarship for thirty years, its effects and influence are far from pervasive, for several reasons. One simple reason is that, while much of the activity in biblical studies involves

³⁶ The dictionary is freely available online at <https://semanticdictionary.org/>, accessed 4 May 2023.

the biblical languages, only a small proportion of scholarship focuses directly on refining contemporary understanding of the biblical languages themselves.³⁷ Another reason, alluded to at the outset, is that even scholars who engage regularly with the languages tend not to be acquainted with linguistic theory *per se*.³⁸ Knowledge of the differences between structuralism and generativism, for example, is nowhere within the expertise of many, perhaps most, biblical scholars. Given the scope and complexity of linguistics itself, that is rather unsurprising. But the practical effect is to leave biblical scholars in the dark as to what sort of theoretical framework underpins their favourite biblical language tool and what that might entail, if they even understand that there are indeed entailments. It is precisely this situation in the discipline that this volume seeks to remedy, at least in part (to mix several metaphors) by offering some teaser trailers, landmarks for orientation, and goods to test out.

In the end, however, biblical scholars must learn a hard lesson: If we truly wish to understand Cognitive Linguistics as a theoretical framework and apply it to better understand the ancient languages, it is directly to the primary literature itself

³⁷ One might add that there is a sizeable portion of biblical scholarship that gives little to no attention to the biblical languages at all. Proficiency in the biblical languages seems ever more to be a specialisation unto itself.

³⁸ There are exceptions that prove this general rule, notably the volume by Hornkohl and Khan (2021), which brings together specialists in Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew and theoretical linguists.

that we must go. Although some may worry they have no business or no hope in so doing, it is worth noting that the abundant proliferation of introductions, handbooks, and companions over the last decade or so has not been limited to areas of biblical scholarship. Happily, the same phenomena characterise other disciplines as well, including linguistics. On a very simple level, then, one of the most promising prospects for Cognitive Linguistics in biblical studies is for biblical scholars to take up and read such resources as are listed in the section below. Understanding and applying Cognitive Linguistic theory is much more easily within reach than might be expected. For those already acquainted with Cognitive Linguistics—or at least those on their way—the prospects for research in the biblical languages and application in interpretation of Scripture are virtually limitless.

5.0. Further Reading

See the annotated bibliography in Howe and Sweetser (2013, 129–31). Note also the following resources:

5.1. Handbooks, Companions, Glossaries

1. Dancygier (2017)
2. Dąbrowska and Divjak (2015)
3. Taylor and Littlemore (2014)
4. Evans (2007)
5. Geeraerts and Cuyckens (2007b)

5.2. General Introductions

1. Croft and Cruse (2004)

2. Dirven and Verspoor (2004)
3. Evans and Green (2006), now updated by Evans (2019)
4. Geeraerts (2006a)
5. Ungerer and Schmid (2006)

5.3. Foundational Texts

1. Fauconnier (1994)
2. Fauconnier and Turner (2002)
3. Johnson (1987)
4. Langacker (1987; 1991)
5. Lakoff (1987)
6. Lakoff and Johnson (1980)
7. Talmy (1988)

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