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Meaning and Categorisation - Facing the Integration Challenge

Date: February 7 - 8, 2013**Convenors: Nikola Kompa (Osnabrück, GER) und Christian Nitz (Bielefeld, GER)**

Issues in categorization are pivotal to the research done by cognitive linguists, developmental and comparative psychologists, philosophers of language and mind, and cognitive scientists. The workshop brought together researchers from these fields in order to explore the diverse perspectives on the issue of categorization and meaning as manifested in their research. In so doing, it focused on four fields.

(I) *Categorization in applied cognitive science*: Prof. Jäkel developed and discussed principles of machine learning. (II) *Categorization and semantics*: Prof. Kompa laid out the challenges that are posed to linguistic theorizing by the varying standards we employ in categorization, Prof. Nitz defended a way to account for the semantic importance of categorization within modal semantics, and Prof. Geeraerts argued that the debate about the role of encyclopaedic information in linguistic category structure has been a major driving force in the history of word meaning research. (III) *Categorization, concepts, and communication*: Prof. Machery provided support for his theory of concepts as bodies of knowledge by arguing from empirical psychological data that there indeed are bodies of information we employ by default in categorization tasks, Prof. Rey defended and simultaneously deflated the Fodorian thesis that all concepts are innate, and Prof. de Ruiter explored behavioural and neurocognitive evidence for the claim that communicators solve the mapping problem - in human communication, there always is a *many-to-many* mapping of utterance (signal) and communicative intention (meaning) - by simulating each other's inferences. (IV) *Categorization in developmental and comparative psychology*: Prof. Moll, drawing on the difference between taking and confronting perspectives, explained empirical findings showing children below the age of four to be mostly unable to produce alternative labels within a given discourse episode, and Prof. Rakoczy argued that, although children and non-human primates categorize the natural world very much alike by discerning enduring objects governed by general regularities - 'ape metaphysics' is very much like 'man metaphysics' - , the normative dimension of norms and rules, whilst shaping how young children see the word, eludes non-human primates.

It was widely agreed that the lessons to be learned from the way categorization figures in these diverse fields of research are manifold. Beyond providing stimulation for projects aiming at specific issues linked to how we discern, class, and sort - issues in learning spring to mind - , getting clearer about how categorization works and how it affects what our terms and concepts mean is arguably key to a general account of meaning, understanding, and communication.

Participants

Dirk Geeraerts (Leuven, BEL), Frank Jäkel (Osnabrück, GER), Edouard Machery (Pittsburgh, USA), Henrike Moll (Los Angeles, USA), Hannes Rakoczy (Göttingen, GER), Georges Rey (College Park, USA), Jan de Ruiter (Bielefeld, GER)

Please direct questions concerning the organisation of the workshop to **Margit Hopf-Heusler** at the Conference Office (phone: +49 521 106-2794 / Fax: +49 521 106-2782). Questions regarding scientific content and contributions should be directed to the organizers.