

INTERSUBJECTIVITY IN GRAMMAR, DISCOURSE AND COGNITION

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Although Cognitive Linguistics largely grew out of a concern with construal, a notion that is tied to the relation between a conceptualizer and an object of conceptualization, it has long acknowledged the importance of taking into account the relation between two or more conceptualizers – that is, intersubjectivity. Nevertheless, an integrated framework for the study of linguistic intersubjectivity still seems to be lacking. In order to build such a framework, we argue that two issues, among others, should be dealt with: the definition of “intersubjectivity” and the relation between linguistic intersubjectivity and general traits of human sociality.

1. The definition of “intersubjectivity”. As is well known, the very definition of “intersubjectivity” varies widely, as does the range of phenomena that this label is taken to encompass. For example, while Nuyts (2014) closely ties intersubjectivity to the domain of modality, all other approaches are significantly more comprehensive (see, for example, Traugott and Dasher (2002) and Traugott (2022); Verhagen (2005); Ghesquière et al. (2014) and Tantucci (2021)). However, even among those broader approaches, significant differences remain. For instance, Tantucci’s “intersubjective gradience model” exclusively focuses on grammatical elements that convey extra-propositional meanings (thus to the exclusion of demonstratives, for example), while Ghesquière et al. explicitly include demonstratives in the domain of “textual intersubjectivity”. This clearly shows the need for an integrated framework to deal, in a principled way, with the different phenomena that can plausibly be subsumed under the label of “intersubjectivity”.

2. The relation between linguistic intersubjectivity and general traits of human sociality.

Intersubjectivity has of course been investigated in a number of disciplines, particularly with an eye to identifying what makes human sociality unique. From the vantage point of cognitive psychology and evolutionary developmental biology, for example, Tomasello (2014, 2019) has maintained that human unique sociality is grounded on shared intentionality. From a microsociological / interactional perspective, on the other hand, Enfield and Sidnell (2022) have claimed that the distinctive trait of human intersubjectivity is accountability. How do such notions, among others, shed light on linguistic analysis? And, conversely, how can linguistic analyses contribute to our understanding of these crucial traits of human sociality?

The presentations in this session include descriptive and theoretical studies that deal with at least one of these issues, therefore helping advance the field and set it in firmer theoretical ground.

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