Theme Session 4: Evaluation and Appraisal in Linguistic Cognition

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Evaluation through morphology

The paper proposes a cognitive explanation of evaluational morphology by examining how semantic changes originate in conceptual processes that exploit morphological forms to express evaluative meanings. Generally, morphological forms code collective, universal knowledge which is conventional and linguistic. Evaluation thus draws on a linguistic construal of the world which uses differentiation between collective and individual knowledge and experience (see Boldyrev, 2002). This process is managed at both conceptual and linguistic levels.

Conceptually, it is an emotional-evaluative configuration of collective knowledge that results in transition to the sphere of individual knowledge and leads to an individual appraisal of actions, situations or objects. Emotional evaluation is thus certain reaction to objects and events that affect a speaker's world in ways that appear important. Given their subjective nature, emotional evaluation exploits a personal scale of values. On a linguistic level, non-prototypical usage appears in cases like the morphology of superlatives (a most attractive girl) and in progressive forms of verbs (She is always grumbling). Focusing on the former, we find that in prototypical usage of superlative forms, we compare one person or thing with others of a kind. E.g. First class is the most expensive way to travel. In this case, it is asserted that no other way of travelling is as expensive as this one. A speaker relies on conventional knowledge about ways of travelling. By contrast, in using these forms non-prototypically (evaluatively), people generally state a high degree of quality. In This is a most wonderful picture a picture is conceptualized as very wonderful. While there may be other wonderful pictures, these are not considered. The speaker relies on individual knowledge about the picture's quality and expresses a personal emotional-evaluative attitude.

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Two types of categories which deal with appraisal and evaluation

It is argued that linguistic resources shape two types of categories which deal with appraisal and evaluation: (1) appraisal categories of perceived objects and (2) categories of words and grammatical