



## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE AND MEANING IN COGNITIVE GRAMMAR

**O'mirbaeva Ariwxan Tolibekovna**

4 FT -24 1st year student of the department of  
Philology and Language Learning, Nukus  
Innovation Institute

**Abstract.** *This article explores the relationship between grammatical structure and meaning in cognitive grammar, emphasizing how linguistic forms are shaped by human cognition and conceptualization. Unlike traditional linguistic theories that treat grammar as an autonomous system, cognitive grammar argues that meaning emerges directly from grammatical structures. The study highlights key aspects such as the role of word order, grammatical categories, metaphor, and construction grammar in shaping meaning. Additionally, it examines how syntax and semantics interact, demonstrating that grammatical choices are not merely structural but also cognitively motivated. By analyzing various linguistic examples, the article illustrates that grammar is not just a set of rules but a reflection of human perception and categorization of the world. Understanding this relationship provides deeper insights into how language functions as a cognitive tool.*

**Keywords:** *Cognitive grammar, grammatical structure, meaning, conceptualization, syntax, semantics, metaphor, construction grammar, linguistic categorization, embodiment in language.*

Language is more than just a system of rules governing sentence formation; it is a reflection of how humans perceive and categorize the world. In cognitive grammar, grammatical structure is not viewed as an autonomous system but as inherently linked to meaning. In other words, grammar is a cognitive tool that shapes and is shaped by human conceptualization. Unlike traditional linguistic theories that separate syntax from semantics, cognitive grammar suggests that meaning emerges directly from grammatical structures. Consequently, exploring the relationship between grammatical structure and meaning is essential for understanding how language functions as a cognitive phenomenon [2, 364-368].

First of all, grammatical structures provide a framework for organizing and expressing meaning. Word order, for instance, plays a crucial role in determining the interpretation of a sentence. In English, the distinction between "The dog chased the cat" and "The cat chased the dog" arises from the syntactic arrangement of words. Although the lexical elements remain the same, their sequence changes the meaning entirely.

In addition, different languages use various grammatical mechanisms to encode meaning. While English relies on word order, highly inflected languages such as Russian or Latin use case markings to indicate syntactic roles. For example, in Russian, "Мальчик видит собаку" (The boy sees the dog) and "Собака видит мальчика" (The dog sees the boy) convey different meanings due to case endings



rather than word order. Thus, grammatical structure is not arbitrary but serves as a means of encoding conceptual distinctions.

Moreover, grammatical categories such as tense, aspect, and modality shape how events are conceptualized. For example, the difference between "She wrote a letter" and "She has written a letter" in English lies in how the speaker frames the event in relation to time. While the simple past tense situates the action in a completed past event, the present perfect implies relevance to the present moment. In this way, grammatical structures influence not only sentence construction but also cognitive interpretation.

In contrast to formalist approaches that treat grammar as an abstract system, cognitive grammar emphasizes the role of human experience in shaping linguistic meaning. That is to say, meaning is not an arbitrary feature of language but is grounded in perception, bodily interaction with the world, and cultural context.

One key example of this is spatial prepositions. Words such as "in," "on," and "under" do not simply denote fixed spatial relations; rather, they reflect how people cognitively structure space. A book is "on the table" because it is in direct contact with a surface, while water is "in the glass" because it is contained within an object. This conceptualization of space is not universal—languages differ in how they categorize spatial relationships. Therefore, grammar is shaped by cognitive patterns that arise from embodied experience [4, 16-26].

Furthermore, cognitive grammar highlights the role of metaphor and metonymy in shaping grammatical meaning. Many grammatical constructions originate from metaphorical mappings between conceptual domains. For example, the English progressive aspect ("She is running") represents an ongoing action as a continuous process, much like a visual scene unfolding before an observer's eyes. Similarly, abstract concepts such as time are often structured using spatial metaphors, as seen in expressions like "the past is behind us" and "the future is ahead." This demonstrates how grammar is closely intertwined with cognition and conceptualization.

On the one hand, syntactic structures shape possible interpretations of a sentence. On the other hand, meaning influences grammatical choices. For instance, the use of active and passive voice is not purely a matter of syntax but also depends on discourse and communicative intent. We will compare the sentences:

1. "The scientist discovered a new planet."
2. "A new planet was discovered by the scientist." [1, 295-313]

While both sentences describe the same event, their focus differs. The active voice emphasizes the agent (the scientist), whereas the passive voice highlights the



result (the new planet). In cognitive grammar, such constructions are not seen as purely syntactic variations but as meaningful choices that reflect different ways of conceptualizing the same situation.

Moreover, the theory of construction grammar, which aligns with cognitive grammar, suggests that grammatical patterns themselves carry meaning. For example, idiomatic expressions such as "give someone a hand" or "kick the bucket" cannot be understood solely by analyzing their individual words. Instead, these fixed constructions represent meaningful wholes. This indicates that grammar is not just a system of rules but a network of meaningful structures.

**Conclusion.** To sum up, grammatical structure and meaning are inseparable in cognitive grammar. Unlike traditional linguistic theories that separate syntax from semantics, cognitive grammar emphasizes the role of conceptualization in shaping linguistic structures. Grammar is not merely a set of formal rules but a reflection of human cognition, perception, and experience. From the organization of word order to the use of metaphor in grammatical constructions, every aspect of language is shaped by how speakers conceptualize the world.

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