

In search of conceptual structure

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Motivation in Language: Studies in honor of Günter Radden

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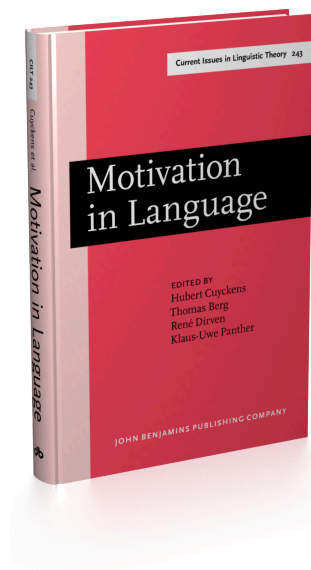
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IN SEARCH OF CONCEPTUAL STRUCTURE FIVE MILESTONES IN THE WORK OF GÜNTER RADDEN

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This survey can by no means offer a complete picture of Günter Radden's research, but it will highlight some of his most remarkable achievements in the pre-cognitive and cognitive climate of the past twenty-five some years. Everything that Günter Radden has approached, and not only his academic enterprises, has received his full devotion, energy, and love. His main academic point of attraction has always been the conceptual challenge, first in the conceptual dimension of semantic roles, and later in the full primacy of the conceptual over the formal-linguistic, as sought for and realized in cognitive linguistics.

1. *Towards a cognitive sociolinguistics*

Günter Radden's contribution to sociolinguistics is that he enriched the quantitative-statistical methods developed in the sixties and seventies with a qualitative conceptual analysis. This analysis employs case grammar categories or semantic roles, role configurations, and valence types. Importantly, it assumes that the class-specific, differentiated use of certain conceptual-grammatical categories such as Agent or Patient may point to the existence of substantial conceptual preferences in the speech of different social classes. Radden establishes that speakers of higher classes display a significantly higher number of the following construction elements: Patients in general, one-place predicates, adjectives used as predicates or as nominal modifiers, diversified semantic roles in subject functions, *that/whether/if* clauses, relative clauses, and passive constructions. Speakers of lower social classes, who, in contrast with middle class speakers, use a more informal type of language, use other construction elements: more Agent roles, typically associated with two-place predicates (or transitive verbs), less differentiated semantic roles in subject function, many more grammatically correct and complete sentences (which

may be due to the strong concentration on one type of semantic role), and many more phatic interpolations (*you know, you see*). These results lead Radden to the conclusion that higher class speakers manifest “a greater representational interest”, and lower class speakers a “greater action interest” (Radden 1979:375; my translation, R.D.). The former group also exploits the thematic variation in subject position a great deal more, and thus, in cognitive linguistic terms, it could be hypothesized that they draw upon all possible event schemata (such as the *ESSIVE* schema, the *PROCESS* schema, the *ACTION* schema, the *EXPERIENCING* schema, the *POSSESSION* schema, the *MOTION* schema, the *TRANSFER* schema, and the *LOCATION* schema), whereas lower class speakers prefer the specification of concrete aspects of information such as place, time, etc. (Radden 1979: 376), and therefore draw more strongly upon the action and location schemata. In sum, then, the conceptual and perceptual orientations found with speakers of different social classes mark a clear cognitive differentiation, which vindicates Bernstein’s (1958) biased and much contested thesis of elaborated and restricted codes, which are mainly based on superficial formal criteria. From their presence or absence Bernstein concluded, taking a rather big leap, that the elaborated code is predominant in middle class children and the restricted code in working class children. In strong contrast with Bernstein’s work, Günter Radden’s first work is really conceptually oriented and can even be seen as a precursor of a cognitive sociolinguistics, in which social-class differences become manifest in the preferential use of different conceptual categories.

2. *The conceptual elaboration of Case Grammar*

Although Fillmore, the father of Case Grammar, had expressed his discouragement with his spiritual child in the late seventies (1987:104), several linguists kept making use of his insights. Some incorporated case roles into their overall grammar theory; e.g. theta roles in Chomsky (1981) or role archetypes such as agent, patient, instrument, experiencer, and mover in Langacker (1991:285). It is one of Günter Radden’s most remarkable empirical accomplishments that he tested Fillmore’s cases on a large data-set of spoken sentences and gradually elaborated the case grammar repertory in greater detail. Table 1 gives a survey of Radden’s achievements in this respect. From this table, it can readily be seen that, aside from having first employed case grammar categories in a ‘cognitive sociolinguistics’ (cf. Section 1), Günter Radden has, over the years, made several contributions to the development of Case Grammar theory itself.

Archetypal role category	Radden (1979:336)	Radden & Dirven (1981: 237)	Radden (1989a: 421, 1989b: 552)	Radden & Dirven (in preparation)
Human roles	Agent Dative	Agent Experiencer - Possessive Beneficiary Comitative	Agent Experiencer Recipient 560 Possessor Beneficiary Companionship	Agent Experiencer Receiver/Recipient Possessor Beneficiary
Causal roles	Cause Instrumental	Cause Reason Instrumental Means	Cause Reason Instrument Means	Cause/Natural Force Reason/Purpose Instrument
Object roles	Patient Area Partitive	Patient Area Partitive/Entitive	Patient Area: 558 Partitive	Means Patient Area Wholes/Parts
Essive roles		Representative	Identification Class <i>Change of state</i>	Essive <i>Physical space</i>
Spatial roles	Locative Goal Source Path Direction	Place Goal Source Path Target Direction Destination	Place Goal+ Fig.564 Source+Fig.564 Path Target Destination	Place Close/Distant Goal Source Path Target Destination
Temporal roles	Time	Time	Time point: 571 Time duration: 572 Relational time: 575	<i>Temporal space</i> Point/Stretch/Span Duration/Time Path
Circumstantial roles	Manner Measure Result Condition	Manner Circumstance Measure Result Purpose Modality Comparative Concessive	Manner Accompaniment Measure Result Purpose Consequence Modal Comparison Concession	<i>Abstract space/settings</i> Circumstantial sur-rounding:/ se- quence/connection /accompaniment Causal/conditional /concessive /con- trastive settings

Table 1: Radden's specification of semantic roles

The first column presents the general types of semantic roles—setting off human roles from all other roles—according to which the many detailed case categories can be grouped. The second column offers a further specification of the seven archetypal categories of roles in the first column: Agent, Dative, Cause, Patient, Locative, Time, and Circumstance. Alongside the object role Patient, Radden (1979) also introduces Area and Partitive; the spatial role Locative is broken up into Locative, Goal, Source, and Path, and is complemented by Direction; finally, Circumstance is further specified as Manner, Measure, Result, and Condition. The third column offers a selection from a wider collection of case categories in Radden and Dirven (1981:237) used by the editors in their own contributions. The new list expands Dative into Experiencer, Possessive, and Beneficiary, integrates the many diverse semantic relations in figuratively used prepositional phrases, and introduces Comitative as in *agree with*; it adds Reason to Cause and Means to Instrument, and introduces the object role Entitive (the opposite of Partitive) for *the leg of the table*; furthermore, it brings in the essive role Representative (as in *regard as a loss*), it adds the spatial roles Target (*shoot at*) and Destination (*leave for London*), and introduces Modality, Comparative, and Concessive as circumstantial roles. By this time, the set of semantic roles has doubled from fifteen to thirty, whereby the ‘new’ roles are in fact subcategories of the archetypal categories of roles. The fourth column is taken from Radden (1989a, 1989b), which adds the role Recipient and expands the essive role Representative into Identification, Class, and Change of State, the temporal role Time into Time Point (*at three*), Time Duration (*during three hours*), and Relational Time (*three hours ago*). As these last examples show, the analysis of all possible prepositions in their literal and figurative uses always increases the number of semantic relations. The set of labels in the last column has not been finalized yet: it reflects the presently growing distinction between predicate linked semantic roles and sentence-nucleus linked settings (Radden & Dirven, in prep.), whereby temporal and circumstantial categories are seen as metaphorical mappings of physical space concepts into temporal and abstract space.

3. *Rescued from the wastebasket: The role of Area*

One of the strengths of Günter Radden’s work on Case Grammar is probably his data-driven approach. In working through these data, and struggling with many single problem cases, he must no doubt have been tempted, like many other case grammar workers, to throw the unanalyzable examples in the wastebasket. However, his persistence has certainly paid off: especially his system-

atic concentration on prepositional phrases (Radden 1981, 1985, 1989b, 1997, 1998a) has opened all kinds of new insights. One important new insight is his distinction between 'Immediate and ultimate recipients' (Radden 1998b). Another is the role of 'Area', which was introduced under the original title "Can Area Be Taken out of the Waste-basket?" (Radden 1978). In Radden's view, the notion of Area, as in *He told me about his secret*, is related to that of Patient, as in *He told me his secret*, but differs fundamentally from it, in that the predicate's action does not 'affect' the participant in the Area role. As such, from *He told me about his secret*, which includes the Area phrase *about his secret*, it may be inferred that he told me how difficult it was to live with his secret or how he had come to have it, but it does not necessarily mean that he revealed his secret.

Radden's insights into the Area role show gradual refinement. His first definition of Area runs as follows: "Obviously, these preposition phrases ... express the overall theme or area within the frame of which certain actions, states, or events are located" (Radden 1978:328). Clearly, by referring to the three categories 'actions, states and events', Radden still limits the discussion to verbs only. These 'area verbs' comprise verbs of knowing and verbs of communicating. Importantly, he also tries to distinguish between the Patient role (as in **Forget cognitive semantics*) and the Area role (as in *Forget about cognitive semantics*) in terms of the scope of the field denoted by the Area participant. As such, the paradigm of Cognitive Semantics is a wide field which can serve as Area, but it is too wide a field to become a Patient with *forget*. In comparing *forget* with *teach*, Radden finds that the verb itself imposes conceptual constraints, too. With *teach* wide fields such as 'music', 'phonetics', or cognitive semantics' are manageable and can therefore assume the Patient role (indeed, normally one teaches something—e.g. music/phonetics/cognitive semantics—not about something). This difference between wider and narrower fields is also felt in compounds with *teacher*, where one of the composite expressions can only denote a wider field: *the music/phonetics/cognitive semantics teacher*, and not a smaller topic, as shown by the unacceptable form **the gerund teacher*.

In his 1981 paper on the figurative use of prepositions, Radden diversifies the various subtypes of Area. In particular, he shows that (i) the preposition *about* denotes 'motion in any possible direction' and as such is the prototypical candidate for the general notion of Area (e.g. *talk about*); (ii) the prepositions *at*, *on*, *in* all designate more specific Area notions: a 'focused Area' (*be good at something*), a 'specialization Area' (*to lecture on*), and an 'encompassing Area' (*be good in classics*); (iii) the preposition *of* (weakened

from *off*) signals an ‘origin Area’: when one speaks or talks *of* something, it is suggested that one has only limited information—this difference is also manifest in *think of* versus *think about*.

Nearly a decade later, Radden’s view of Area has, on the one hand, been further specified, and, on the other hand, it has been widened to encompass various syntactic categories other than prepositional phrases (Radden 1989b:571). For one, the preposition *about* denoting ‘general’ Area (e.g. in *talk about*) now also includes *about* signaling Area ‘causing’ emotional reactions (in emotive predicates such as *be angry about*) and Area ‘of intent’ (e.g. in *be serious about*). The Area preposition *in*—in comparison with *about* far less prototypical—is now specified as: “The spatial sense of enclosure gives rise to figurative meanings which relate to some kind of *delimitation in some area or other...* or to a state or circumstance in which an entity is seemingly contained (Radden 1989b:558). Some examples are: (i) general Area (*reasonable in price*), (ii) material Area (*abound in fish*), (iii) partial Area (*I hit him in the face*), and (iv) Area of activity (*take part in, specialize in*). As well, when widening the syntactic categories in which Area can be realized, Radden showed a very great sense for conceptual similarities, with the Area role now also being spotted (Radden 1989b) in idiomatic adverbial phrases such as *as far as X is concerned, as for X, re X, concerning X*) and in derived adjectives (*an economic adviser, a religious fanatic*).

4. *Cognitive linguistics in a first synthesis*

Günter Radden’s 1992 article “The cognitive approach to natural language” was for a decade probably his best known and certainly his most quoted paper. In this paper, he synthesizes the inroads Cognitive Linguistics had made by the early nineties into the tranquil waters of century-old objectivist assumptions in linguistics and philosophy. Radden puts forward five innovative lines of thought which together constitute a revolutionary break with traditional thought: (i) iconicity, (ii) categorization, (iii) metaphor, (iv) cultural models, and (v) grammar as a conceptual system.

(i) *Iconicity*. The principle of iconicity (Haiman 1985; Givón 1985) stipulates that “our conception of reality is mirrored in the structure of language” (Radden 1992:514) and is thus indicative of the primacy of the perceptual over the linguistic. This manifests itself in the three iconic principles of quantity (more sound, or more form in general, is more meaning), of proximity (what belongs together conceptually is put together linguistically), and of sequential order (linguistic order reflects the temporal order of events). These

findings are also a breakthrough relativizing the Saussurean view that language is almost purely symbolic, and hence also predominantly arbitrary.

(ii) *Categorization*. The importance of Rosch's insights (1977, 1978), according to Radden, is that she put an end to the unshaken, Aristotelian belief in fixed categories based on the 'essential' features of things in the world, thereby revolutionizing our Western views on categorization. Similarly, in her psycholinguistic experiments, Aitchinson (1987:44) clearly illustrated how categories are not fixed, but may show great individual differences during a person's development.

(iii) *Metaphor*. In Radden's view, Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) brilliant new insight was that the mind itself operates in terms of conceptual metaphors, which in turn may underlie all kinds of linguistic metaphors. So metaphor is not in the first place a matter of words, of language, but a matter of mental images and of thought. In creating new metaphors, the human conceptualizer builds new concepts, and ultimately new meanings for words. The mapping of one domain of experience, e.g. warfare, to another domain, e.g. conversation or arguing, is a conceptual process allowing the mind to build up ever more abstract relations. Günter Radden was not only well-read in the conceptual theory of metaphor, but through a number of sabbaticals at the University of California, he also had first-hand access to the newest developments in metaphor theory, some of which are reflected in his 1992 survey article. As such, for instance, he was able to attend Lakoff's lecture on "Metaphor and Metonymy" in San Diego in 1990, where Lakoff posited that mappings between domains in specific-level structural metaphors (such as ARGUMENT IS WAR) tend to be culture-specific, whereas mappings between domains in generic-level metaphors (such as ACTIONS ARE SELF-PROPELLED MOTIONS) may be found universally (cf. Radden 1992: 525, 537 fn.23).

(iv) *Cultural models*. As the preceding findings suggest, man's linguistic knowledge is intertwined with his encyclopedic knowledge. Since such a large segment of encyclopedic knowledge is culture-specific, we need 'cultural models' for the interpretation of our linguistic categories. Thus, according to Radden, the linguistic item *Friday* may receive different interpretations depending on the cultural model it is part of: as the day between Thursday and Saturday in a purely 'calendric' cultural model, as the day of Christ's suffering and death in the Christian cultural model, as the day of bad luck and accidents in a cultural model of superstition, and as the last day of the working week and the transition to a long weekend in the cultural model of organized labor. In the same vein, the cultural anthropologist D'Andrade (1989) showed that students

performed significantly better on syllogism tests involving culturally realistic content (or cultural models) than arbitrary material.

(v) *Grammar as a conceptual system*. Radden describes the important achievement of cognitive linguists such as Talmy, Sweetser, Langacker as having shown that grammar operates as a conceptual organizing system. Talmy (1985) discovered that we use 'force dynamic schemata' in our understanding of human interaction, which we understand as the interaction of physical forces. Sweetser (1990) explained the two types of epistemic and deontic modality in these terms of force dynamics. Talmy (1988) and Langacker (1987, 1988) applied the organizing principles of perception to the grammar of a language. As such, each sentence, be it simple or complex, is organized in terms of the gestalt perception principle of figure-ground alignment. And just as an observer looks at a scene from a certain vantage point, a speaker may construe a situation from a certain perspective; a typical instance is mental scanning, whereby the same hill can be seen as gently rising from a river or as gently falling to the bank of a river.

Radden's own most innovative contribution to the new cognitive paradigm is his theory of metonymy.

5. *It is all metonymy*

The past few years have seen a very strong current of research on metonymy: Croft (1993), Dirven (1993), Thornburg and Panther (1997), Kövecses and Radden (1998), Radden and Kövecses (1999), the collective volumes of Panther and Radden (1999) and Barcelona (2000), and Radden (2000). Especially, Radden and Kövecses's (1999) paper "Towards a theory of metonymy" has become a trendsetter, in which Radden pursues his innovative intuition that, rather than metaphor, "it is all metonymy". In this paper, Radden examines three basic aspects of metonymy: (i) the various ontological realms in which metonymy operates; (ii) the basic relationships that are possible between the two elements of a metonymy, i.e. the vehicle (= actual linguistic expression) and the target (= intended concept or referent); and (iii) the cognitive principles motivating the choice of one vehicle over another.

An ontological realm in which metonymy operates, almost invisibly, is semiotics itself. The structure of the sign is itself metonymic, as the sign's form stands for the sign's meaning or the concept associated with it. Furthermore, the function of the sign is metonymic: although, in actual fact, the sign denotes a conceptual category, i.e. a representation of things or events of the world in the speaker's mind, speakers use signs, i.e. words, to refer to reality itself. In

addition to describing these two semiotic types of metonymy, i.e. 'sign metonymy' and 'reference metonymy', Radden characterizes our traditional understanding of metonymy as 'concept metonymy': a given sign is used, not to denote its own concept, but to denote another concept, closely linked to the first; put differently, concept metonymy may denote a concept that can be expressed by another sign (as in *The busses are on strike*, where *BUSSES* stands for *BUS-DRIVERS*), or it may denote a concept for which no sign exists (e.g. the more general concept *MOTHER* may be, and usually is, used to stand for a stereotypical and prototypical subtype of this category, i.e. *THE HOUSEWIFE MOTHER*). Generalizing, Radden concludes that even a concept's structure is metonymic, since the concept usually stands for its most prototypical member.

As for the relationships between the elements in a metonymy, Radden distinguishes two basic types: part-whole relationships (or vice versa) or part-part relationships. The part-whole or whole-part configuration typically occurs with things, the part-part configuration with events or states. Since a thing has internal structure, the whole can conceptually be selected for any of its parts, or any relevant part for the whole. This relationship not only applies to concrete objects, but also to mental entities such as present time, which may not only stand for past and future time, but also for genericness (*She speaks Spanish*), and for potentiality (*She is an angry person* in the sense of 'She can be angry'). The part-part configuration typically occurs with events or states, which conceptually consist of a relation and one or more participants. Frequently occurring relations in metonymies are action, perception, causation, possession, containment, and location. Thus, in the relation of causation, the cause (good health) stands for the visible effect in the expression *a healthy face*.

Radden notices a large number of cognitive principles triggering the choice of a metonymy's vehicle, which he groups under three main factors. The human experience factor makes us select human over non-human vehicles, subjective over objective ones, concrete over abstract ones, etc. The perceptual factor favors the selection of, for instance, the immediate over the non-immediate, the good gestalt over the poor gestalt, the bounded over the unbounded, etc. Cultural factors favor stereotypical vehicles over non-stereotypical ones, initial or final over middle ones, basic over non-basic ones, etc. In addition to these cognitive principles, communicative principles such as the principles of clarity and of relevance may also influence the choice of the vehicle. These cognitive and communicative factors and motivations may also be in competition; for instance, the selection of the non-human vehicle *busses* (standing for the bus-drivers in *The busses are on strike*) reflects that people interact more relevantly with the mode of transport than with the bus-drivers. Finally, there

are often overriding factors such as euphemism which cancel a cognitive or communicative principle: thus *go to the bathroom* is less clear than *urinate*, but the principle of clarity submits to that of politeness.

Radden (2000) extends the scope of metonymy to its interaction with metaphor and elaborates Taylor's (1989) and Goossens's (1990) thesis that a number of metaphors are based on metonymy. In Radden's view, there are three bases common to metonymy and metaphor, (i) i.e. common experience, (ii) implicature, and (iii) cultural models. First, an experiential basis common to metaphor and metonymy may be provided by phenomena in correlation, in complementarity, or by phenomena viewed in comparison. Two phenomena in correlation are, for instance, the simultaneously increasing height and quantity of a liquid as the liquid is poured into a container. When we (physically) observe these two situations, we can literally 'see' a link between the two. When we merely 'imagine' this correlation, e.g. when we 'fill up' the petrol tank of our car, we have a metonymic link. When we speak of 'rising' or 'high prices', we have a metaphoric link based on metonymy. And in 'sky-rocketing' or 'soaring prices', we have a pure metaphor in which the underlying conceptual metaphor could be *PRICES ARE FLYING OBJECTS*. The theory of a metonymy-metaphor continuum assumes that the two conceptual processes are not opposed, but that they constitute two extremes on a continuum of conceptual blending, ranging from mere correlation, via metonymy and metonymy-based metaphor to pure metaphor. Two phenomena in a complementary relation at the conceptual level are, e.g., husband and wife; this relationship constitutes the basis for metaphors such as that of partners 'bound together' or 'tied to each other' in marriage. Similar pairs are 'mind and body' or 'body and soul'. The comparison of similar elements leads to conceptual metaphors such as: *SIMILARITY IS CLOSENESS* (i.e. the elements are experienced together) and *DIFFERENCE IS REMOTENESS*.

Two phenomena/elements may not only have a common experiential basis, they may also be linked purely mentally by the process of implicature, a typical instance being the case of sequential events (what comes first tends to be seen as the cause) and resultative events (what you have 'taken', becomes your possession). As well, the naming of a place may carry the implicature of the standard activity associated with that place, e.g. *Children are going to the playground* is interpreted as 'Children are going to play'. This metonymic link of *PLACE FOR ACTIVITY* may become the input for a metonymy-based metaphor, such as *PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS*, as in *We have reached the end* to be interpreted against literal destinations as in *We have reached the station*.

Finally, cultural models constituting the metonymic basis for metaphors are found, for instance, in our Western folk theories of motion: we see an 'internal force' or impetus in a moving object as its propelling cause, which leads to the conceptual metaphor FORCE IS A SUBSTANCE CONTAINED IN AFFECTED CAUSES. Furthermore, the folk theory of communication, which is summarized in Reddy's (1979 [1993]) CONDUIT metaphor, conceptualizes communication as the transmission of information through a channel, and meaning as something which is to be taken out of the word containers. The container image schema also strives to conceptualize both the mind, which is a container for ideas, and the body, which is a container for emotions.

Given this huge body of metonymy-based metaphors (in fact, especially conceptual metaphors), it is very likely that many more metonymy-based metaphors will be found. In this respect, Radden's first findings have made major inroads into a further and deeper understanding of conceptual structure. The best tribute the linguistic community can make to Günter Radden is to respond massively to his invitation to delve deeper in this huge conceptual quarry.

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