

## **Hans-Jörg Schmid: The Dynamics of the Linguistic System Usage, Conventionalization, and Entrenchment**

(United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. 2020. 397 p.)

As the title suggests, this book is written to offer a better understanding of the nature and location of the linguistic system. The author asserts that the linguistic system is an outcome of the different interactions between the communicative activities and the cognitive and social processes. According to Hans-Jörg, a living language is a language that has been used for communicative purposes by community speakers; it needs common knowledge and shared conventions to reach the communicative goals.

This book consists of an introduction and four parts. These parts are subdivided into twenty chapters. The introduction manifests the aims and questions in this book. The author inaugurates the book by depicting the English language as a Tinguely machine in an attempt to portray how the language system works. The Tinguely machine analogy manifests the linguistic system as "a continuously running dynamic feedback system consisting of the interacting subsystems of usage, conventionalization, entrenchment, as well as some forces that affect these subsystems." (p. 9). The author illustrates that the conventionalization notion represents the social processes that institute and boost linguistic use. On the other hand, the term entrenchment elucidates the cognitive processes in the mind of the interlocutors. Next, the author demonstrates his vision of the general characteristics of the linguistic system in the light of the introduced Entrenchment and Conventionalization Model (EC-Model hereafter), and it can be summarized as the following: First, the linguistic system is seen as a usage-based apparatus, and it is established on function and interaction processes. This system is partially designed and structured by the domain-general cognitive abilities and mechanisms. In addition, this linguistic system is believed to have a socio-cognitive basis in which the language has resulted from the interactions between social and cognitive exigencies; the social basis in this model demonstrates identity, shows solidarity, and asserts power and authority. The author concludes the introduction by asserting the dynamic nature of the linguistic system. This linguistic system is continuously changing in unpredicted ways. Its variation is seen as an outcome of the language users' activities. The introduction is rounded off with a concluding note about the terminology and the English bias, and a general survey of the book.

The first part of this book is divided into four chapters. This part is dedicated to describing the different aspects of language use that facilitate the processes of conventionalization and entrenchment, and they are influenced by the social and cognitive processes. For that reason, Chapter 2 demonstrates the usage of events' components. It provides a survey of the utterances' categories and the terminological definitions of the utterances' types. The author defines the

utterance types as condensed records with diverse kinds of information. These utterances are used for communicative goals in a diversity of contexts that are dynamically and jointly co-constructed in the social and cultural events.

Chapter 3 discusses interpersonal activities and their role in conventionalizing linguistic utterances. Co-semiosis and licensing notions can pave the way to utterances' conventionalization and entrenchment. The author defines co-semiosis as situations in which participants comprehend each other. Hans-Jörg illustrates that achieving mutual understanding between interlocutors can be reached by conventionalizing utterances in the interlocutors' communities to be eventually licensed. Furthermore, the author confirms that utterances' repetition has the potential to support the conventionalization process by adapting them in the new contexts that might eventually enhance the mechanism of memorizing and learning as well. The author points out those conventionalized utterances are seen as co-constructed activities in which interlocutors perform different norms to suit the conventional activity types. One example of these activities is turn-taking in a conversation. For instance, interlocutors acknowledge that questions are conventionally paired with answers, invitations with acceptances, or rejection.

Chapter 4 sheds light on the association and activation processes that work as a feedback cycle in the EC-Model on the lexical and syntactic levels. First, interlocutors have to identify the linguistic forms in order to interpret the utterances' meanings through different patterns of associations. The author explains that language processes take place in associative pattern forms, and he lists four types of associations: (symbolic, paradigmatic, syntagmatic, and pragmatic). These language processes' patterns are routinized and activated to be entrenched when this linguistic knowledge is activated. It helps the brain to generate context-sensitive hypotheses of what will happen next based on the stored representations.

Chapter 5 demonstrates the forces that can affect language usage, namely the processes of licensing and activating utterances in concrete communicative tasks. In spontaneous speech acts, individuals can rely on context and non-verbal signals to predict the meaning of some ungrammatical utterances. For that reason, these frequent ungrammatical spoken utterances can be conventionalized and later on entrenched, if they are more frequently used and repeated in a given community.

Chapter 6 summarizes the first part of the book. Part 1 is dedicated to manifest the usage activities and their key role in the EC-Model. They provide the needed input in the conventionalization and entrenchment cycles, and at the same time, they are influenced by the social and cognitive agencies at all the language levels, from the forms and meanings of the utterances to the communicative aims and contexts. The author demonstrates in Chapter 2 the essential concepts and types of usage. However, in Chapter 3, he introduces the interpersonal activities of usage. In Chapter 4, lexical and syntactic associations are exemplified versus the

pragmatic ones in an attempt to explain the dynamic and incremental nature of these processes. The last chapter of the first part of the book is dedicated to surveying forces that can affect the choice of a certain utterance and its effects on the processes of conventionalization and entrenchment.

The second part of the book tackles the conventionalization aspect of the EC-Model in four chapters. Chapter 7 is subdivided into seven sections to define conventions and demonstrate the essential conformity profiles and various driving forces. The author defines language conventions as mutually known practices needed for fruitful communication. The author asserts that conventionality is an adaptable multidimensional concept, and it is contingent upon six conformity behavior types. Conventionalization notion is subdivided into usualization and diffusion processes. The usualisation process entails onomasiological, semasiological, and syntagmatic dimensions, which are deployed in the process of the utterances' sense-making procedure. On the other hand, the diffusion process is seen as an integral part of usualization; it is made up of three dimensions: cotextual, contextual, and social. These dimensions provide the communicative social background base.

Chapter 8 manifests what the usualization process is. The process of usualizing utterances is carried out by the process of repetition of the linguistic utterances in the frame of diverse social contexts. For example, usualization contributes to the conventionalization of innovative utterances on the lexical level such as the words *selfie* and *detweet*. The author explains the low-level of usualization of the word *detweet* because of its low frequency of use. On the contrary, the word *selfie* is used more frequently, so it is more usualized in the interlocutors' minds as a result of its repetition and use. Hans-Jörg clarifies that the indexing capacity of any utterances is believed to be an outcome of the usualization and diffusion processes. Hans-Jörg illustrates the influence of the usualization process on utterances' variation, change, and persistence. In addition, he reiterates that utterances' repertoires conformity uncovers the dynamic nature of the utterances' situational social meanings.

Chapter 9 introduces the diffusion process of innovative utterances. The author defines diffusion as a feedback-loop process in which it works hand in hand with usualization to conventionalize utterances. The author illustrates that the usualization process works on the form and meaning of an utterance. Whereas, the diffusion process is concerned with the situational and community-related dimensions. Co-adaption is a constituent of the diffusion in which speakers pass the known utterances to the new situations on all the language levels. The author demonstrated three models of spatial diffusion in the second section of Chapter 9, namely the wave model of diffusion by Schmidt (1872), the gravity one by Hägerstrand (1952), and the utterance type's model by Trudgill (1986). Spatial diffusion is stated to be a reflection of the utterances aspects of power, culture, or ideology. The author mentions the *Americanism notion* as an example of the

impact of power in spatial diffusion. On the other hand, social diffusion influences the utterances' conventionality at the community-level dimension.

Chapter 10 elucidates the summary of the three chapters of the second part of this book. The author confirms that conventions are believed to be behaviors confirmed by community members in which they accord the use, interpretation, forms, and meanings of these utterances in specific contexts. He emphasizes that both usualization and diffusion processes are part and parcel of the utterances' conventionalization.

The entrenchment process is tackled in the third part of this book, which is distributed into four chapters. In Chapter 11, the author clarifies the general idea of the cognitive concept of the entrenchment process. The author defines the entrenchment process as the repeated reorganization of the interlocutors' linguistic knowledge in a speech community. Entrenchment is seen as a process of experience-based learning. For that reason, the author affirms that high-frequency vocabulary and patterns are easier to process than low-frequency ones. The author reiterates that the higher level of the utterances' repetition rate is, the more these utterances are linked to bodily experience and the more they are entrenched. Hans-Jörg confirms that both the routinization concept and schematization processes play a role in strengthening associations' patterns representing the commonality of the different usage events. The cognitive representation of these patterns is ranged from words and lexemes that are lexically fixed, to constructions that are anchored lexically and schematically.

Chapter 12 discusses the impact of the routinization of syntagmatic associations on shaping the linguistic structure. The routinization process represents the utterances' frequency of use. Hans-Jörg confirms that it is the driving force of different associations to connect or separate linguistic structures. According to the author, routinization has a direct effect on the level entrenchment degree of all the linguistic levels such as the knowledge of the lexical, super-lexical, lexico-grammatical, and phrases. For example, standard, and irregular word forms' processing and representation can be explained in the light of the associative and syntagmatic strengthening principle in which frequent irregular forms are regularized more than rare irregular forms.

Chapter 13 highlights the impact of routinization on the symbolic associations, i.e. the links between mental processes that control the linguistic forms' perception (onomasiology) and the process of articulation and the utterances' meanings representation (semasiology). The author believes that lexemes are represented by bundles of semasiological and onomasiological associations. The author explains that from the cognitive perspective, when polysemy is activated, symbolic and paradigmatic associations cooperate by elaboration and extension processes to explain the meaning of an utterance. Different forms compete to encode an idea by linking them to similar meanings. For example, when assessing the degree of entrenchment in fixed and semi-fixed expressions in comparison

with simple forms by utilizing the frequency counts, syntagmatic and pragmatic associations can supersede the symbolic ones to donate the meaning of these expressions.

Chapter 14 stresses the fact that the process of routinizing pragmatic associations is established by connecting cognitive and interpersonal activities in social contexts. These kinds of associations are context-dependent, and they are utilized to decode utterances' meanings. The author argues that the process of routinizing the pragmatic associations is located at the grammatical level of the language. For instance, the symbolic associations have a minor role while processing deictic pointers. The pragmatic and paradigmatic associations are used to encode deixis and references on the nominal level by decoding both the information from experiences and the linguistic options. For example, clauses' beginnings contain syntagmatic signposts that provide information about the sentence mode (declarative, interrogative, etc.) and the essential aspects of the communicative goal. However, the communicative goal can also be expressed not only by sentence mode, but also by intonation and stress that are derived from usage experience, salience, and iconicity. For that reason, the EC-Model proposes that inferring knowledge can be supported by the repeated use of the routinized pragmatic associations of a form by searching for metaphorical, metonymic, or ironical meaning.

Chapter 15 summarizes the third part of the book. It also clarifies the residing connections between the paradigmatic and syntagmatic associations and those between the symbolic and pragmatic ones. The four associations compete to routinize utterances. The author assures that the paradigmatic association is essential to identify similarities and differences between events' usage and utterances' types. The similarity and analogy level of utterances can trigger wider metaphorical meanings, semantic generalization, and specialization if they are usualized. For example, paradigmatic associations are involved in assigning a space to the new utterances that arise from syntagmatic and pragmatic associations in the onomasiological and semasiological space. The author points out that the cross-linguistic transfer can be seen as one of the paradigmatic patterns extensions. The author attested to the transfer of some grammatical features of German while learning because of the formal similarity and analogy between German and English grammar patterns. The author concludes the chapter by reiterating the claim that frequency-driven routinization is reinforced by various types of associations.

The last part of the book includes five chapters 16 to 20. Chapter 16 elucidates the EC-Model summary of the usage events, feedback-loop processes, and forces. The author illustrates that utterances' use encompasses events, participants' goals, and activities in the linguistic, situational, and social contexts. Conventionalization, on the other hand, is achieved by employing usualization and diffusion as feedback-loop processes. The author concludes the chapter by

listing the different forces that affect usage, conventionalization, and entrenchment to produce linguistic persistence, variation, and change. Some of the forces that affect usage are repetition, cognitive economy, salience, and power. The forces that influence conventionalization are co-semiosis, subjectivity, identity, mobility, and frequency of repetition. The entrenchment process can be affected by similarity and analogy, salience, and iconicity.

Chapter 17 highlights the dynamic nature of utterances' persistence and the cornerstone role of the usualization processes that enhance conventionalization and entrenchment. Besides, the author reports factors that reinforce persistence such as the speaker's economy and communicative efficiency.

Chapter 18 discusses utterances' usage effects on language variation. Utterances' usage is believed to be reinforced by repeating conventionalized utterances to support fruitful co-semiosis on all the language levels (semasiological, situational, and social and regional variations). On the onomasiological and semasiological level, variation has resulted from the interaction of syntagmatic and pragmatic associations with the paradigmatic ones in which the syntagmatic and pragmatic associations supply the cotextual and contextual information and the paradigmatic associations connect the potential variants in a given cotext and context. However, on the situational level of variation, pragmatic association leads the process of establishing style, register, and genre according to the individual knowledge and shared conventions. According to the EC-Model, social variation is handled by usualization and diffusion processes. For example, the usualization process inculcates the conformity of utterances' profiles in certain contexts by interlocutors of a certain community. On the other hand, diffusion inspires changes to suit these parameters by considering individual differences.

Chapter 19 demonstrates how language change is triggered by innovation, variation, and frequent repetition in nine models. Borrowing, salient innovation, and repetition are considered sources of change in usage. Furthermore, changes in the repetition frequency on the individual and collective levels are believed to actuate language change such as economy, efficiency, extravagance, and politeness. Diffusion, on the other hand, is dominated by speakers' attitudes and identity, in addition to the utterances' topology, and salience

Chapter 20 summarizes the essence of the EC-Model components. It portrays the interaction among the three basic components, i.e. usage activities, and social and cognitive processes, in the form of a double feedback-loop apparatus that revolves around usage activities. Many linguistic processes such as persistence, variation, and change are explained in a unified model. The interaction between the subsystems that affect the utterance types, the speakers, and their communities are also described in this complex-adaptive model. This model asserts that the linguistic system persists to adapt as long as the interlocutors use the language. The author explains thoroughly the concept of conventionalization by

distinguishing six dimensions: onomasiological, semasiological, syntagmatic, cotextual, contextual, and community-related. Conventionalization operates through two main processes. The first one is usualization that affects the form-related and meaning-related dimensions. On the other hand, diffusion influences the situational and social aspects to shape the structure, variation, and change. The author confirms that routinization is not only driven by the usage frequency, but also by the frequent associations developed in the cotext and context levels. The author reiterates that the third part of the book focused on manifesting the types of associations on the cognitive level. The author concludes Chapter 20 with some of the book's gaps, shortcomings, implications for future work, and a synopsis of what the linguistic system is, and where it is situated.

To conclude, the book's significance and originality for academic researchers in the field of linguistics cannot be questioned. It offers an authentic contribution to the understanding of the linguistic system concept. The book's strength lies in the fact that it combines both the theoretical and empirical multidimensional findings of previous research in the linguistic system area. It proposes an outlook on future research to validate the EC-Model. In addition, this book may attract not only linguists but also graduate and undergraduate learners who are interested in learning more about the nature of the linguistic system.

## References

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We acknowledge the financial support of Széchenyi 2020 under the **EFOP-3.6.1-16-2016-00015**.