Proposing “ID Tracking Model” of Conceptualization
—Getting Diagrams to Make (More) Sense Without Making Use of Motion Metaphor—

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Abstract
This paper proposes a model of conceptualization, called “ID Tracking Model” (IDTM, henceforth), which assumes: (i) that elements of conceptualization are STATES rather than THINGS, and (ii) that things are “represented,” rather than “construed,” as TRAJECTORIES which one can “keep track of” without a metaphorical basis [2].

My motivation to develop the IDTM is three-fold: (i) IDTM is an attempt to provide diagrams in Cognitive Grammar [3] (CG-style diagrams, henceforth) with more expressive power; (ii) an attempt to constrain the diagramming conventions in Cognitive Grammar (CG-style diagramming conventions, henceforth) to reduce their arbitrariness, thereby providing a rigorous method for the “visualization” of semantic structures; and finally (iii) an attempt to provide an adequate model of conceptualization unbiased from motion-based worldview.

These motivations are related to (at least) three issues about CG-style diagrams. For the first issue, it is shown that on describing the meaning of sentences like X BREAK Y WITH Z, CG-style diagrams are unable to specify the binary interaction R between X and Y in a systematic way, though R can be lexically realized by USE on certain perspective like in X USE Z TO BREAK Y. CG fails to capture this fact, because it can’t describe R independently of the relation between X and Z, and that of Z and Y. This restriction is shown to be unnatural and undesirable. For one thing, this is exactly what disables CG-style diagrams to distinguish X BREAK Y WITH Z from X USE Z TO BREAK Y, and it is exactly what makes CG-style diagrams fail to describe semantic structures of case markers (e.g., -o, -de, -ni) in Japanese.

For the second issue, it is shown that a number of CG-style diagrams suffer from serious indeterminacy as to their interpretation, mainly because CG-style diagramming conventions are inconsistent. Specifically, it is hard to tell which profiles correspond to which lexical units for a given diagram. If one cannot tell which morpheme realizes which part of a profile, diagramming is arbitrary. There is no way to check if a diagram is “correct.” IDTM-based diagrams rescue here.

For the third issue, IDTM embodies a “Gibsonian” approach [1] to conceptualization in that it seeks “invariants” in human cognition, without making use of any kind of “ontological metaphors” [2], thereby making itself a promising alternative to the “billiard-ball model” and the “action chain” view of causation [3]. It is shown that both the billiard model and the action chain view reflect too much a naïve — and inadequate — worldview from which everything is construed in terms of “motion,” literally or metaphorically. By rejecting this kind of “bias,” IDTM-based diagrams get demonstrably more language-neutral, thereby successfully capturing abstract realities of human conceptualization patterns.

References