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Diversity and Unity in Cognitive Linguistics
An Interview with René Dirven

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SDK. René, recently you wrote an article with Ruiz de Mendoza, called « Looking back at 30 years of CL » (Forthcoming) which describes the start, the development, the highlights and the perspectives of the Cognitive Linguistics (CL) enterprise; now, these 30 years correspond to your 30 career years and in Europe when one thinks of the representatives of CL, one immediately thinks of René Dirven. CL emerged next to the well-established generative and functionalist schools. What was your first encounter with CL?

RD. When I came to Trier University in 1971, I had the great chance of meeting Günter Radden there.

SDK. Who became your very good friend and colleague. Was he working there or did you meet him on a conference?

RD. He was a colleague and I became a member of a team of five young and strongly motivated linguists. But most of all I cooperated with Günter. In 1976 we started the well-known LAUT (= Linguistic Agency at the University of Trier) symposia, where leading linguists gave a series of lectures during three days. Some of the first speakers were Charles Fillmore, John Searle, William Labov, Michael Halliday, Herbert and Eve Clark. Cognitive Linguistics appeared on the linguistics scene world-wide with the publication of Lakoff and Johnson’s Metaphors We Live By in 1980. For the post-generative world this booklet was the light rocket in a somewhat greyish linguistic sky. Our first contact with CL was with that book. We immediately invited George Lakoff to conduct the LAUD symposium in 1982.

SDK. Was it already LAUD with “D” or still LAUT with “T”?
RD. It was LAUD with “D”. LAUT with “T” is an acronym for ‘Linguistic Agency of the University of Trier’ but it is also a German word meaning ‘sound’. This association was lost when it became LAUD with “D”, because of moving from Trier to Duisburg. From the very beginning in 1976, LAUT was a huge success with over a hundred participants, solid discussions, and in 1984, for the first time, some 30 papers given by participants, later published in Paprotté and Dirven (1985), *The Ubiquity of Metaphor*.

SDK. At that time I was a young assistant working at the Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis and I can remember that you invited me together with my professor, René Jongen, to come to that symposium and contribute to the volume. I was very impressed by George Lakoff.

RD. Ron Langacker followed two years later in 1984, but at that time he was still a far less central figure in comparison with Lakoff and only 30 participants turned up. Still, CL had set foot in Europe and was received with great enthusiasm by scholars looking for an alternative to Generative Grammar or Generative Semantics. The proof was the organization of the LAUD symposium in Duisburg in 1989.

SDK. Had you already moved to the Duisburg University?


SDK. What motivated you to go for the CL enterprise? How did it all start?

RD. What motivated me most to go for the CL enterprise, and probably also many other scholars after they had been generativists for a decade or two, was this: Although most of the attractive CL ideas meant a radical change from generativism, there was no abrupt transition from generative to cognitive linguistics. This appeared in at least two respects. The revolutionary idea of conceptual metaphor underlying a whole set of linguistic or surface metaphors is comparable to deep structure/surface structure links in Generative Grammar. And the firm reliance on the generative methods of linguistic intuition and grammaticality judgments was continued by all major cognitive linguists. This lacuna in CL was not remedied until the insight arose in the late nineties that usage-based studies are to be empirical and quantitative-qualitative in nature, i.e., based for instance on corpus research. But it lasted till after 2000 to see the need for such a research methodology spread more widely (See Geeraerts et al. 1994;
The rupture with Generative Grammar consisted mainly in the rejection of an autonomous language faculty, an autonomous syntax, a fully modular conception of the mind and a fully modular organization of syntax, phonology, and semantics.

SDK. You were involved in the creation of the International Cognitive Linguistics Association and after that in the creation of two of its journals, first Mouton’s *Cognitive Linguistics*, then the *Annual Review of Cognitive Linguistics*, which has now developed into the *Review of Cognitive Linguistics*. Could you give us some historical highlights of events like these?

RD. Well, there was not only the journal *Cognitive Linguistics*, but various other channels that were set up at that conference. It all started at Duisburg University in Germany in the spring of 1989. With the help of my then assistant, now professor Martin Pütz, I organized the 22nd LAUD Symposium on Cognitive Linguistics, which in retrospect was rebaptized as the “First International Cognitive Linguistics Conference (ICLC 1).” It attracted more than 120 linguists from 15 different countries, amongst them the keynote speakers Wolfgang Dressler, Dirk Geeraerts, Robert Kirsner, George Lakoff, Ron Langacker, Hansjakob Seiler, Eve Sweetser, Len Talmy, Mark Turner and Anna Wierzbicka (see Geiger and Rudzka-Ostyn 1993). As the varied composition of speakers shows, the self-image of CL was not clearly outlined. It was still a modest symposium, certainly if compared to the mega-event of the tenth ICLA conference (ICLC 10) in Cracow in 2007. But as Langacker put it, that first conference “marked the birth of *Cognitive Linguistics* as a broadly grounded, self-conscious intellectual movement” (Langacker 1991b: ix). The symposium indeed became a true landmark in the cognitive linguistics movement: it was here that the *International Cognitive Linguistics Association* (ICLA) was founded, and both the series *Cognitive Linguistics Research* and the journal *Cognitive Linguistics* under the imprint of Mouton de Gruyter were launched. In the margin of the conference, also a “Cognitive Bibliography Project” was set up by Rainer Schulze and me. Now 20 years later, under the direction of you, Sabine De Knop, and with the cooperation of several editors and a number of associates, the bibliography project has finally culminated in two large electronic enterprises, namely the compilations of the “Bibliography of Cognitive Linguistics” (CogBib) published by Mouton de Gruyter and the online “Bibliography of Metaphor & Metonymy” (MetBib) published by John Benjamins. Bibliographies are not just heuristic tools to consult, but they also have a historical function. As Martin Pütz says it, “they highlight the accelerating pace of linguistic developments and their potential impact on the researchers’ minds of the cognitive community.” (Pütz 2007)
SDK. We could perhaps use the opportunity of this interview to talk about some problems with both bibliography projects.

RD. In fact, both projects have grown so strongly that it is no longer possible to continue them, if no new initiatives are taken by ICLA (or other associations) and publishers alike in order to find new methods to organise the whole machinery. Stopping the projects would be an enormous loss, since CogBib (Mouton), now counts about 13,000 entries and Metbib (Benjamins) about 9400.

SDK. I keep my fingers crossed that a solution can be found. But let’s come back to the new journal Review of Cognitive linguistics (Benjamins) mentioned before.

RD. Yes, I must say that the credit for it goes totally to Francisco Ruiz de Mendoza and his team; of course, I supported all his efforts as best I could. I did have a strong hand in the conception of and the manuscript hunt for the new Mouton series Applications of Cognitive Linguistics, led by Gitte Kristiansen.

SDK. In the presentation of their volume The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics, Geeraerts and Cuyckens (2007) claim that “in the past decade CL has developed into one of the most dynamic and attractive frameworks within theoretical and descriptive linguistics” (2007: book cover). This is a very strong claim! What has made CL so dynamic and attractive?

RD. The dynamicity of Cognitive Linguistics is largely due to the fact that it is not a single person’s enterprise, but that CL arises from the combination of various pioneering ideas that, acting as separable strands of one whole, have drawn together to give rise to a unified paradigm. Central to the whole paradigm is the cognitive commitment, i.e. the conviction that there is a fundamental unity and interaction among all cognitive faculties, including perception, attention, categorization, conceptualization, affect, memory, reasoning, and language (see Lakoff 1990, Talmy 1997).

The attractiveness of CL may be due to the fact that it has largely given up the traditional axioms that reduce language to a self-sufficient system, especially dichotomies such as syntax vs. semantics, lexis vs. grammar, semantics vs. pragmatics, langue vs. parole, competence vs. performance, and synchrony vs. diachrony. The belief in the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign has given way to a search for the motivation of linguistic organization on the basis of cognitive
principles. This change of direction stands in sharp contrast to the central claim of generative linguistics that language is an autonomous system, detached from any other type of knowledge, including encyclopaedic or world knowledge. In contrast, CL holds that there is no clear-cut distinction between linguistic and encyclopaedic knowledge (Haiman 1980; Langacker 1987). Additionally, in CL, the view of the interwovenness of language and other cognitive faculties has generally been synonymous with an extreme anti-modularity view, which is in line with a general anti-generative mind-set. However, a milder approach in all these matters is now growing. Whereas language itself is still seen as an internally non-modal system (e.g., by Glynn 2007), some cognitive linguists such as Taylor (2007) accept a mild form of modularity. Seen from an anatomic perspective, there are some scholars who would not deny that the various cognitive faculties may be organized on the basis of functional modularity, i.e., the encapsulation of information in distributed areas of the brain, for which there is a growing body of evidence in neuroscience, e.g., Coulson et al. (1998) and Calabretta, Di Fernando, Wagner and Parisi (2003).

SDK. These are all many milestones in the development of CL. But before we go on, could you tell us what are the philosophical roots of the cognitive-linguistic enterprise?

RD. CL is firmly rooted in two scientific traditions, i.e., gestalt psychology and phenomenology, two schools of thought that – though starting from different scientific bases – have developed strongly converging views. The main common insight they share is that human perception does not merely register the observable environment, but imposes structure on it. The main principle from gestalt psychology that was especially exploited by Talmy and Langacker and transposed to language structure is the perceptual strategy of figure and ground alignment. According to this principle the perception of an overall shape or scene comes about by dividing the perceptual field into a more prominent part, the figure, and a less salient part, called the ground. It is against this ground that the figure moves, is moved or stands out. That the structure of grammar can directly be linked to principles of gestalt perception was first shown by Talmy (1975; see also 1978 and 2000, ch. 5). He applies this perceptual principle to the structure of complex sentences, showing that the main clause functions as the figure and the subordinate as the ground. Thus perceptual structure is reflected in grammatical structure and the functioning of main clauses and sub-clauses is motivated by a cognitive, in this case, a perceptual principle.

It is one of Langacker’s great merits that he has generalized the principle of figure-ground alignment and extended it to almost all other levels of linguistic structure, i.e., both lexical structure and grammatical structure such as phrase structure, clause structure, sentence structure,
and pragmatic or speech act structure. At word level, Langacker specifies the ‘figure’ as profile and the ‘ground’ as base. Thus each conceptual entity, e.g., book or strawberry, consists of a profile and a base: the figure is what is profiled and the base is what the figure is profiled against. For the compound strawberry the base is the domain of plants, in this case a strawberry plant with roots, leaves and fruit, and the compound noun strawberry profiles the fruit. At phrase level, e.g., the strawberry on the plate, the conceptual link consists of the relation on and two things as participants in the relationship, i.e. strawberry and plate. Here and at all other grammatical levels, Langacker introduced the terms trajector – which does not necessarily identify a moving entity – and landmark.

SDK. Yes, but how are these notions of trajector and landmark related to the notions of figure and ground?

RD. Langacker sees the trajectory-landmark configuration as the syntactic specification of the notion of figure-ground alignment. The trajectory-landmark configuration is applicable to all conceptual relationships that are linguistically expressed as phrases, clauses, and units above the word, i.e., complex sentences. In the structure of a simple sentence or clause, the trajector is the subject, and the landmark is the (direct) object or the oblique complement. Further, each trajectory-landmark relation in a finite clause – or rather the situation or scene described in it – is simultaneously “grounded” in time and reality by means of the tense or modality system. A clause uttered in discourse functions in the interaction between speaker and hearer as a speech act. The figure-ground relationship also holds in this case, which is – in our view – Langacker’s most innovative extension of the figure-ground notion. That is, the speech act itself functions as the figure and the whole speech situation is the ground. The speech situation comprises the speech act participants (speaker and hearer), the speech act time and location, and the different elements of background knowledge. The speech situation is thus the whole context or the ground against which the linguistic expression communicated makes sense as the figure. Langacker (2008) offers an in-depth analysis of subordination in complex sentences.

While the figure-ground alignment pervades all levels of language structure, it must be stated that it is not the only psychological basis of a cognitive approach to language and linguistics. Equally important and pervasive are the cognitive factors of attention, especially explored by Talmy (1996, 2007a, and Forthcoming) and of perspective, viewing frame and mental scanning, explored and applied by Langacker (1995a, 1995b, 1999b, and 2001). But it would take us too far to go into all these avenues.
SDK. Yes indeed. You were suggesting before that CL is also rooted in philosophy. Can you say a few words about this.

RD. Whereas the psychological basis of CL stands firm, there is less agreement about its philosophical foundation. Two philosophical theories have been proposed, i.e., phenomenology (Geeraerts 1985; Violi 2003 and 2008) and embodied realism, also called experiential realism or experientialism, developed by Lakoff (1987), Johnson (1987), and Lakoff and Johnson (1999). According to Lakoff and Johnson, all individuals have access to the world by their embodied experience and perception of that world (experientialism), and they can all have the same experiences and perceptions because they all share the same bodily constitution in their contact with that world (realism). From a phenomenological point of view there is nothing wrong with this view, although it would be highly desirable to make explicit links between this philosophy and other philosophical trends or schools, e.g., phenomenology. A much bigger problem is that Lakoff and Johnson (1999) go far beyond these (implicitly) phenomenological insights in that they see experiential realism as a challenge to traditional Western thought, ranging from Aristotle to Descartes and to many present-day thinkers, whom they lump together under the label of ‘objectivism’ or ‘objectivist realism’ (Lakoff 1987: 183). The sharpest objection to Lakoff and Johnson’s notions of experiential realism and their critique of objectivism is formulated in Haser (2005), who criticizes Lakoff and Johnson’s presentation of objectivism and their quotations from the so-called objectivist literature, which are said to be very scarce and ambiguous. Up to now there has not been any serious refutation of Haser’s criticism of Lakoff and Johnson’s theory of experientialism and attacks of a putative objectivism. Even Lukes’s review of Haser (2008) mainly concentrates on her discussion of conceptual metaphor theory and thereby fails to see that it is the two philosophical constructs of experiential realism and objectivism that are even more at stake. Obviously, Lukes takes both constructs for granted and does not see any reason to refute Haser’s critique of them. Perhaps a more relevant question would be this: can and must Haser’s criticism be refuted? Would it not be better to search for the very roots of experiential realism? In fact, this route was already proposed 25 years ago by Geeraerts (1985, 1993, and Forthcoming), who places the deeper roots of CL in the phenomenologist revolution in philosophy, especially as presented by Merleau-Ponty (1945).

This phenomenologist stresses consciousness and intentionality in the joint interaction of the body and the mind with the environment. Embodiment is not a matter of the body alone, but of the mind through the body. Merleau-Ponty’s thesis is that “consciousness is present in the bodily or ‘corporeal’ experience of the world” (Geeraerts 1985: 355). Here we find all the basic epistemological tenets of CL: its realism, its experientialism, and its assumption of embodiment
in the sense of an embodied mind, or as Merleau-Ponty (1945) puts it, ‘an em-mind-ed body.’ These insights of Merleau-Ponty’s are taken up again by Violi (2008: 57-58), who combines Merleau-Ponty’s view with Peircean semiotics, in this somewhat longer quotation:

Through perception the subject meets the world in the first place and begins to give meaning to it. Phenomenological and perceptive meaning is transformed into linguistic meaning through the corps propre which founds, at one and the same time, the subjectivity of consciousness and the exteriority of the world. Here we can see another possible compatibility with Peirce’s philosophy: in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, too, external and internal world are not separate and in opposition with one another, but related to each other via the mediation of the corps propre that operates, in a way, as translator of perceptually constructed meaning into linguistic and conceptual meaning.

What we see then is that the ‘em-bodied’ mind or the ‘em-minded’ body imposes structure and meaning on the world while interacting with other subjects and with the world. Although phenomenology itself has been heavily criticized, e.g., by the philosopher Searle (2005), it must be clear that its approach is somehow compatible with the tenets of gestalt psychology and is even supported by its findings.

SDK. You were saying at the beginning that CL started with Lakoff and Johnson’s Metaphors We Live By in 1980, which you call “the light rocket in a somewhat greyish linguistic sky”, to use a metaphor. What was so revolutionary about Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)?

RD. There are at least five revolutionary aspects in Conceptual Metaphor Theory:
1) the priority attributed by CMT to the conceptual level over the linguistic one; 2) the invocation of image schemata as the perceptual basis of metaphor; 3) the function of metaphor as a prominent instrument of new categorizations; 4) its tool function in the evolution from concrete categories to abstract ones, and 5) the role of metaphor in creating coherence in reasoning, i.e., in text production and text comprehension. I will not try to keep these points strictly apart.

The priority attributed by CMT to the conceptual level means that in essence metaphor is a language-independent, more general cognitive process. This view has repeatedly been criticized on the grounds that for metaphor to arise one first needs a literal linguistic expression linked to its semantic-conceptual domain, e.g., the fruit of a plant, before it can be mapped onto a different domain, e.g., the fruit of one’s hard work (Bartsch 2002; Warren 2002; Haser 2005). However, this criticism is rather vacuous, since metaphor can be expressed, not only in language, but also in other modalities such as visual, audio or sensory-motor media, as attested
by the use of metaphor in drawing, painting, architecture, music, dance and gesture. The mere existence of non-verbal or multimodal metaphors (cf. Forceville 2008; Forceville and Urios-Aparisi 2009) is a clear counterargument, since there is no reason why verbal or linguistic metaphors should be submitted to different conditions than non-verbal ones. In fact, the same set of image-schemata can be claimed to underlie metaphors in all possible modalities.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) start from the assumption, fully spelled out in Johnson (1987), that metaphor is ultimately grounded in the human perceptual system and experiential world. The perceptual system is based on a number of pre-conceptual, most of all spatial, configurations which allow humans to react to, and manipulate, the world around them. This assumption is basically in agreement with the phenomenologist views propounded by Merleau-Ponty and Violi, as discussed before. Just as this is the case with figure/ground alignment, the perceiver imposes structure on the things perceived, as is clearly expressed in the following quotation taken from Violi (2008: 57):

According to Merleau-Ponty, meaning is in the first place articulated in our body, through perception. Also for the French philosopher perception is not merely the simple and passive record of an external world, already structured and pre-given in its configuration; perception is rather the active construction of a world already endowed with meaning and intentionality.

The label Lakoff and Johnson coined for such perceptual configurations is image schema (see Hampe 2005: 1), i.e., topological, pre-conceptual structures that encompass sensory-motor and visual schemas such as motion (animate, inanimate, caused or self-motion), containment/container, path (source-path-goal), link, part-whole, center-periphery, balance, contact, support, blockage, verticality (up-down), horizontality (front-back), and proximity-distance. As the human mind and language develop, image schemata serve as the basis for building conceptual categories, which may be expressed or not in language. These categorizations are mainly related to phenomena in the physical domain. For the conceptualization of non-physical categories, image schemata or concrete categories are seized upon and mapped onto non-physical domains. In other words, by means of metaphor, phenomena in concrete domains are used to come to terms with experiences in the more abstract mental domains.

SDK. Could you give a few examples of this for our readers?

RD. Let’s take non-concrete domains such as time, emotion and events/states.
Time is less tangible and less physical than space and tends to be approached in many cultures by the image schema of inanimate or human self-motion in space: the inanimate motion schema leads to the conceptual metaphor TIME IS A MOVING OBJECT (The years flew by), and the self-motion schema allows the observer to be seen as moving to a point in time, i.e., TIME IS A MOVING OBSERVER GOING TO AN END POINT (We are coming up to Christmas) (The upper case is used to mark the mere conceptual status of conceptual metaphors).

Emotions such as love or anger constitute a far more abstract domain. We tend to conceptualize the emotion of anger, via the image schema of containment/container, as a heated substance held in containment by the body, but trying to get out of its container. The pre-linguistic image schemata of containment and force enable the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER underlying a linguistic metaphor like burst with anger. In fact, any conceptual metaphor may be shaped by several linguistic expressions, in this case by, e.g., My blood was boiling, He was seething with anger, and He blew his top.

Events (and to a certain extent, also states) are approached as paths in the source-path-goal schema and hence events are captured in a complex event structure metaphor consisting of various subtypes such as states, changes of state, causes or forces, actions, purposes, means, and obstacles on the path. All of these abstract categories are conceptualized in terms of spatial image schemata: STATES ARE LOCATIONS (be in doubt), CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION (get into trouble), ACTION IS SELF-PROPELLED MOTION, PURPOSES (OF ACTION) ARE DESTINATIONS, MEANS ARE PATHS (TO DESTINATIONS), and DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO MOTION OR BLOCKAGE.

SDK: It sounds useful to explain experiences from more abstract domains in terms of concrete images, but there are also scientists who criticize or even reject Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

RD: Yes, many, even amongst cognitive psychologists. Although CMT has contributed abundantly to the understanding and explanation of categorization, it has been rigidly criticized by a group of scholars that we can subsume under the label of ‘categorization theory of metaphor’ (CTM), because they claim that the only or main function of metaphor is categorization. Although this is partly in line with CMT, they reject the claim that “our use and understanding of figurative language is mediated by unconscious metaphoric correspondences that structure human concepts” (McGlone 2007: 109). What is meant by ‘unconscious metaphoric correspondences’ is, of course, the kind of links based on image schemata and conceptual metaphor.
But in the very same year, Gong and Ahrens (2007) found out empirically that conceptual metaphors do contribute fundamentally to text comprehension. They first investigated the conflicting results of CMT studies (Nayak and Gibbs 1990) and CTM studies (Glucksberg et al. 1993 and 2003), which are ascribed to the two diverse methods employed by the two teams: 1) different task demands (a judgment task versus a reading task), and 2) the distinct visual presentations of stimuli (a paragraph presentation versus a one-by-line presentation). Gong and Ahrens carried out one off-line and four on-line tasks in order to examine which factors affect the access of conceptual mappings in on-going discourse. Their study supports the hypothesis that conceptual mappings exist and are accessed in on-going language processing when materials are presented in a paragraph style. They argue that the line-by-line presentation only creates an expectation for new information, and thus, does not facilitate the activation of conceptual mappings, while a paragraph presentation allows for conceptual representations to be built and accessed, regardless of what type of task is used. These findings also allow a wider conclusion: a major function of conceptual metaphor is also that of creating coherence in discourse and, as a consequence, better text comprehension. This function has been shown to be vital in lectures given by native English lecturers to foreign students not sharing the English framework of linguistic and conceptual metaphors (Littlemore 2001, 2003, and 2005).

SDK. Let’s now turn to the diversity of models in Cognitive Linguistics. What are the most relevant contributions of these various cognitive models?

RD. I would like to concentrate on and contrast the two most relevant contributions: Langacker’s Cognitive Grammar (CG) and Goldberg’s Cognitive Construction Grammar (CCG). And for that purpose I have also selected some examples. Langacker stands out in CL because he has rigorously stuck to the facts of language, that is, to the actual forms of language, or better, to the view of language as a symbolic pairing of form to conceptual content. This appears most clearly in two major footholds which are very much alike: 1) his consistent interest in surface structures and only in these ones, but then in all their differences with comparable constructions, and 2) his usage-based conception of language, which is the basis for the first point. Langacker is the first cognitive linguist to plead so unequivocally for a usage-based model of language. A minor point, to be discussed in this respect, is perhaps that he may not have completely realized the full implications of his own grand view.

On the generative-transformational view, each of the three example sentences below in (1) to (3) has a deep structure of its own, from which various surface forms may be derived via a ‘raising’ transformation. Fully in line with his equation of the subject with the figure or trajector
of a given scene, and of the object with the ground or landmark, Langacker (1995a and 1999b) shows that each of the (surface) subjects below has an entirely different value or function, or in other words, each subject is differently motivated and explained. Keeping the label raising for the sake of easy presentation, Langacker sees three raising constructions: subject to object, subject to subject, and object to subject. I will apply this to the subject and object of the verb teach:

(1) *We expect her to teach*: subject to object raising (SOR construction),
(2) *She is likely to teach*: subject to subject raising (SSR construction),
(3) *She is easy to teach*: object to subject raising (OSR construction).

In the first sentence with a SOR verb like *expect*, the raised subject of *teach* functions as the object of *expect*. Although the conceptual link between *expect* and the object *her* is a loose one, the person denoted by *her* is more prominent than in the comparable *that*-clause *We expect that she will teach*. That is, with the raised subject in (1) the teaching event is rather more dependent on the person denoted by *her*, whereas with the *that*-clause there is a more general and vaguer expectation, based on all possible factors.

In sentence (2) the modal predicate *likely* conceptually requires a situation as its subject, not a person. Whereas in the conceptual unit ‘X teaches Y’ X is an agent, in (2) *she* as raised subject is the figure in the figure-ground relationship, and only implicitly an agent. This causes a fundamental conceptual difference with the comparable sentence *It is likely that she will teach*. Here *it* denotes all the circumstances that make the event likely and it is therefore called a “setting” subject. But in *She is likely to teach*, the likelihood of the event is only or mainly dependent on the person denoted by *she*.

In contrast to the two predicates *expect* and *likely*, which express an assessment-of-the truth of a future situation, the predicate *easy* in (3) expresses an evaluation of the degree of realizability of the action to be performed. The difference appears from the comparable sentence *It is easy (for anyone) to teach her*, which only allows a *for*-complement, but not a *that* complement. The object-to-subject raising in sentences like (3) means a conceptual substitution of the figure by the ground, which implies that the ground must have very special properties to become the figure. In the teaching situation, it means that the person x who is taught possesses some inherent interactive or intellectual properties that make it easy to teach her. This meaning is not necessarily given in the comparable sentence *It is easy to teach her*, in which *it* as a setting subject may denote all possible circumstances that make things easy.
Generalizing over the three cases of raising, we see that the predicate-object relation in (1) and the subject-predicate relation in (2) and (3) are strongly marked in that they deviate from normal or compositional predicate-argument links. There is even a gradation in the strength of the deviation: in (1) it is weakest, since expect can take either a person or an event as object; (2) and (3) are stronger cases because lightly and easy are predicates that cannot normally take persons as subjects. Hence the subject raising construction overrides the compositional subject-predicate link and creates a new figure against the rest of the sentence as the ground. Seen from this perspective, the raising construction is not a purely syntactic operation, as Generative Grammar proposed, but the raising is both a conceptual and a syntactic operation, conventionalized in a number of raising constructions, which are therefore also very clear instances of form/meaning pairings.

SDK. These few examples illustrate rather well the syntax-semantics interface which is one of the characteristics of CL. But what about this other aspect you just mentioned, the usage-based conception of language?

RD. The theoretical foundation of Langacker’s close sticking to surface structures is his usage-based conception of language, which throughout the last decades has become one of the major tenets of Cognitive Linguistics. However, this model is interpretable in two directions, either as a model of language acquisition or else as a model of data-gathering in linguistic research. Langacker (1999a: 91) defines a usage-based grammar model as a model of language acquisition and grammar as a bottom-up endeavor strongly contrasting with the top-down rule deduction processes postulated by Generative Grammar. In a usage-based model, substantial importance is given to the actual use of the linguistic system and a speaker’s knowledge of this use; the grammar is held responsible for a speaker’s knowledge of the full range of linguistic conventions, regardless of whether these conventions can be subsumed under more general statements. It is a non-reductive approach to linguistic structure that employs fully articulated schematic networks and emphasizes the importance of low-level schemas. It is precisely at this low level of concrete language use that the psycholinguist Tomasello situates child language acquisition.

SDK. So, Langacker’s usage-based model was exploited for language acquisition issues as well.
RD. Yes. According to Tomasello (2003: 61), Langacker’s view of linguistics as a usage-based model of language has offered to psycholinguistics, for the first time, the opportunity to develop a usage-based model of language acquisition, since this model focuses on the specific communicative events in which people learn and use language. The most important contribution of a usage-based model is the insight that the psycholinguistic units with which individuals operate are determined, not by theoretical principles, but by the observation of actual language use in actual communicative events. Standing in a long tradition of empirical research on child language corpora, Tomasello interprets the notion of usage-based model as automatically implying the study of concrete language use in context. This second interpretation of ‘usage-based’ has taken much longer to become a widely accepted, let alone widely practiced, in the cognitive-linguistic world. One can even distinguish between two implications of a usage-based research model: one is the method of data gathering, i.e. the use of corpora, and the other is the very scope of CL’s research object, i.e., the research of social and regional variation as part of CL’s core business. The first group of scholars to see both implications was the Leuven group in Belgium, e.g., Geeraerts, Grondelaers, and Bakema (1994), and Geeraerts, Grondelaers, and Speelman (1999). A more general and theoretical reflection on the centrality of the usage-based approach was realized in the collective volume by Barlow and Kemmer (2000). But it was the German group around Gries and Stefanowitsch, e.g., Gries (2003a and 2003b), Gries and Stefanowitsch (2006), Hampe and Schönefeld (2003), Stefanowitsch (2003), Stefanowitsch and Gries (2003 and 2006), that launched and propagated the general breakthrough of corpus studies in CL. Still, most first-generation cognitive linguists like Langacker or Lakoff have continued to favour the introspective method of grammaticality judgments and Talmy (2007b) has recently even strongly defended it. The situation is even less hopeful for the variational dimension of a usage-based approach. Language variation is still widely absent from cognitive-linguistic research, whereas in fact it ought to be at the heart of its research agenda. Nevertheless, new efforts flourish such as the volumes by Kristiansen and Dirven (2008), Geeraerts, Kristiansen, and Peirsman (Forthcoming), and Harder (Forthcoming); and the 2010 LAUD symposium focuses on the topic of Cognitive Sociolinguistics, the proceedings of which are to be edited by Pütz et al. (Forthcoming).

SDK. So, this was the CL model inspired by Cognitive Grammar. How does Construction Grammar (CCG) differ from Cognitive Grammar?

RD. One of the greatest merits of construction grammar is that it has brought all possible, often idiomatic, or marked constructions into the scope of linguistic research, and that it has not
limited this scope to the more regular or compositional constructions. The first type of construction grammar, known as Berkeley Construction Grammar (BCG), was developed, alongside Cognitive Linguistics, by Fillmore, Kay, Atkins, and others who did however not subscribe to the cognitive commitment. Goldberg’s Cognitive Construction Grammar (CCG) or Croft’s Radical Construction Grammar (RCG) have the great merit to have saved Fillmore’s basic insights for Cognitive Linguistics by making them compatible with the cognitive commitment and working out their own ideas about constructions. All models of construction grammar have in common that they see language as largely idiomatic and consisting of many families of ‘fixed’ constructions. A construction in this constructionist view is any string of linguistic expressions (e.g., words) that have a constructional meaning of their own, which is “more” meaning than the compositional meaning of these expressions can account for, in many cases they even have a different meaning. Thus the examples in (2) She is likely likely to teach and (3) She is easy to teach are special or marked, because they do not attribute the properties expressed by those two adjectives to the subject she, but create meanings that go far beyond the common meaning of an attributive construction, as we find this in She is pretty.

The difference between the two cognitive models, Langacker’s CG and Goldberg’s CCG, is bigger than Langacker sometimes suggests. According to Langacker (1991a: 8), the difference between CG and CCG can be characterized as follows: whereas CG considers constructions to be reducible “to symbolic relationships” between forms and meanings, CCG assumes that “grammatical classes and other constructs are still thought of as a separate level of organization.” I will come back to this point in a few moments again, but first I want to point out that more is at stake than a ‘separate level of organization’; it is equally a question of ‘constructional meaning’, as has been pointed out by diverse ‘constructivists’ such as Lakoff (1987: 467, 538), Fillmore (1990), Goldberg (1995 and 2006), Kay and Fillmore (1999), Michaelis (2003) and many others. That is, construction grammar is, just like Cognitive Grammar, also based in gestalt psychology and starts from the existence of gestalt-like patterns or ‘established configurations’ that are both simpler to produce and have meaning relations between the composing parts above their ad hoc compositional meanings. According to Goldberg (1995: 4) such patterns or constructions “carry meanings independently of the words in the sentence,” as in the following sentences, the first of which is Goldberg’s well-known example of an extended caused-motion construction:

(4)  

a. Fred sneezed the napkin right off the table (onto the floor).

b. The audience laughed the actor off the stage.

c. He drank himself to death.
The surplus of meaning in these sentences is first of all that the verbs sneeze, laugh and drink have no causative meaning, but still in each sentence there is a causative relationship. The verbs sneeze, and laugh are intransitive, but here they have direct objects. The verb drink cannot have a human direct object, but in (4c) and (4d) it looks as if it has one. Since the ‘causative’ meaning of the sentence as a whole is, according to Goldberg (1995: 4), “not strictly predictable from the construction’s component parts or from other previously established constructions,” she proposes to derive (4a) from an intermediate constructional pattern. What could this look like? Goldberg proposes a schematic constructional pattern in the form of a predicate-argument structure containing an abstract composite predicate, i.e., CAUSE-MOVE, and three case roles as in (5):

(5) CAUSE-MOVE <cause theme source/goal>

Here Fred is the ‘cause’, the napkin the ‘theme’, off the table the ‘source’, and onto the floor the ‘goal’. Thanks to this higher semantic schema the verb form sneeze inherits a causative meaning from the abstract predicate CAUSE-MOVE and functions as an ordinary caused-motion verb such as to put in He put the napkin on the table.

SDK. Can such an abstract predicate CAUSE-MOVE be generalized over all similar constructions?

RD. Before going into an evaluation of this proposal, it may be instructive to look at the other examples in (4). The constructional meaning of the sentences in (4b), (4c), and (4d) is far more complex than the one in (4a). Unlike sneeze, laugh and drink do not possess nor engender any physical force dynamics of their own and can hardly be seen as inheriting this force from some abstract predicate, e.g., CAUSE-CHANGE. Moreover, what seems to be direct objects in (4b), (4c), and (4d) are at best instances of subject-to-object raising constructions. So in (4b), (4c), and (4d) there cannot be a predicate-argument structure of the type spelled out in (5). What is rather the case is that there are two situations, one of which causes the other to come about. In this view, it is not the subject-agent itself, but the action of the subject-agent that causes a change of state in the resulting participant situation. Since none of the verbs in (4b), (4c), and (4d) have a causative meaning, we could claim – with Goldberg – a constructional template of the form in (6) to underlie the sentences in (4b), (4c), and (4d):
One may even wonder whether, while replacing CHANGE by MOVE, this template would not be preferable for the sneeze example in (4a) as well. It would have the great advantage that we need not attach any feature of causality to any of the verbs in the caused-motion or the caused-change constructions. Remember that we do not attach any new meanings to the adjectives likely and easy in the raising constructions of (2) and (3) either.

SDK. Are there other objections to Goldberg’s acceptance of an underlying predicate-argument structure as in (5)?

RD. Yes. From a Langackerian point of view, there is also a wide gap between the CG and CCG concepts of grammatical schema. For CG all lower-level and higher-level schemas are always generalizations of surface structures, which consist of sounds, i.e., sound strings in the form of words and the symbolical grammatical relations between them in a sentence. These relations do not just consist of predicate-argument structure(s), but also of other cognitive operations such as, for instance, figure-ground alignment, often realized by means of conceptual raising, as shown in the discussion of the examples with likely and easy in (2) and (3). But for CG grammatical schemas do not, and even can not, contain lexical items, whether abstract like CAUSE-MOVE or concrete. This is by definition impossible because in the CG view, schemas are based on and reflect relations between strings of words or lexical items. In fact, a solution in that direction could be suggested by replacing the schemas in (5) or (6) by the one in (7), which is still a predicate-argument structure:

\[(7) \langle \text{action verb}<X>, \text{change relation}<Y,Z> \rangle \]

Here in the first half, ‘action verb’ stands for the class of action verbs such as sneeze, laugh and drink, and X stands for the agent. In the second half, ‘change relation’ stands for the wider class of predicates that, in addition to verbs and adjectives, also comprises conjunctions and prepositions like the goal preposition (in)to, which is the only, but also fully expressive surface element denoting a change of position or a change of state. The schema as a whole juxtaposes the two situations, e.g., for (4d) these are (She drank) and (her husband into ruin). The causality relation emerges from the very juxtaposition of an ‘action’ situation immediately followed by a ‘change’ situation. Both perceptually and conceptually, such combinations tend to be interpreted
as a chain of cause and consequence (For detailed argumentation, see Dirven and Ruiz de Mendoza, Forthcoming).

Finally: it is to be stressed again that these examples of the extended caused motion/change construction in (4) instantiate the subject-to-object raising operation. This helps us understand that the raised object is not a real direct object, but still gets a special meaning in that it functions as the affected object of the action in the first situation. Thus the integration of the two situations is complete.

SDK: Would you then want to conclude that Goldberg’s CCG is not usage-based?

RD: No, not really. Rather the contrary. Although my earlier analysis of the sneeze example may imply that Goldberg’s CCG, which accepts the existence of complex abstract predicates like CAUSE-MOVE, is theoretically not purely usage-based, the child-language materials she worked on were corpus materials, hence usage-based in the practical sense of the term. This may also have been the reason why Construction Grammar has met with such a massive response in CL circles (See e.g., Croft 2001; Croft and Cruse 2004; Boas 2003 and 2007; Fried and Boas 2005; Fried and Östman 2004; Östman 2005; Stefanowitsch 2006; Stefanowitsch and Gries 2006 and 2007). The big success of Construction Grammar may also largely be due to the fact that constructions are easily retrievable from corpora, because a construction often consists of fixed strings of words which can be computationally collected either in edited and tagged corpora or in other non-edited corpora in the internet. Thus a Google search for the middle construction with an extreme realization of object-to-subject raising in The book sells well provides over 66,000 instances of this sentence and the phrase sells well even 484,000.

SDK. Let’s now come back to your personal publications. They are so numerous that we cannot talk about all of them. I’d like to concentrate on one of your latest publications, the Cognitive English Grammar (CEG) (2007), which you wrote with your colleague and friend Günter Radden. I see this book as a new form of grammar book, which is very much inspired by CL. Can you explain to our readers what is innovative about it?

RD. Well, first of all I must say that CEG is not a grammar book in the usual sense of that term. It does not intend to give a survey of the most important “rules” of English grammar. Neither does it offer an inventory of the most relevant sentence patterns or constructions of English. It is rather geared towards a deeper understanding of the main elements in the simple sentence in English. Within these constraints, CEG brings several innovations. First of all, CEG introduces
and explains the theoretical framework used in its description of English grammar. This
cognitive framework focuses on two dimensions: 1) the three conceptual categories used in
human thought, i.e., things, relations between things, and combinations of these two categories
in situations; and 2) the cognitive operations on the situations conceived by the speaker. Some
of these operations are: construals (i.e., imposing a viewing frame on the situation and choosing
a level of specificity or generalization), opening mental spaces for the participants in the
situations, and inferencing. Hence, a second innovation is that CEG always tries to proceed
from the conceptual level to the linguistic expression of the conceived situation. A third
innovation is that these three conceptual units, i.e., things, relations and situations, also
determine the structure of the CEG. Part II analyses the structuring of “things” as expressed in
nouns and noun phrases. Part III analyses “situations” as temporal units and Part IV analyses
them as relational units with the various event schemata and their specific combinations of
thematic or semantic roles such as agent, theme, cause, experiencer, etc. While all these
innovations are strongly rooted in Langacker’s Cognitive Grammar, a fourth innovation departs
from it in that several other CL strands have been integrated into a unified theoretical model,
i.e., not only Talmy’s semantic approach, Lakoff and Johnson’s Conceptual Metaphor Theory,
Goldberg’s Cognitive Construction Grammar, but also Fauconnier’s Mental Space Theory and
Blending Theory (BT), also called Conceptual Integration Theory. This line of thought is also
followed by Langacker (2003), who is making various attempts to come closer to and integrate
views from both Fauconnier’s Mental Space Theory and Goldberg’s Cognitive Construction
Grammar into his Cognitive Grammar model. Since Fauconnier’s Conceptual Blending
approach has not been discussed in our talk yet, I can perhaps briefly illustrate it by a slightly
adapted example from CEG (2007: 293). It concerns the analysis of Goldberg’s example (4a)
Fred sneezed the napkin right off the table. This is seen as the blending of two situations, i.e.,
Fred sneezed suddenly and A force causes the napkin to move off the table, which serve as the
two input spaces. The blending or integration of the elements of the input spaces results in the
merger or blend and is symbolized by the lines connecting the elements in the input spaces and
in the blend.
In fact, this representation can be interpreted in two ways. It can be seen as the conceptual spelling out of Goldberg’s CCG view, whereby the elements A force causes … to move is equivalent to Goldberg’s abstract predicate CAUSE-MOVE and the arguments <cause goal theme>, as quoted in (5). A minor difference with the representation in (5) is that the force in input space 2 does not relate to the agent Fred, but to the whole situation in input space 1, i.e., Fred sneezed suddenly. The manner adverb has been added to account conceptually for the development of force and the element right (off the table). Although the difference in the two representations is a minor one, it is indicative for the intuitive unease about Goldberg’s analysis in (5).

A second interpretation of the representation in Figure 1 is to see the causal link represented by input space 2 as an element of encyclopaedic knowledge, uniting two successive events in perception as one causing the other, as suggested in the representation in (7). The great advantage of a Conceptual Blending approach is that one does not have to pin down oneself on either a conceptual-linguistic interpretation of the causal link or else a purely conceptual-perceptual one. Would it be conceivable that CL is going to look for viable solutions to its richly different approaches along these or similar lines?
SDK. This leads us to future developments. In the *Pedagogical Grammar* volume, which I edited with Teun De Rycker (2008), we acknowledged and stressed that you continue to be so much "au fait" not only with the theoretical-linguistic literature but also with the newly emerging trends in language pedagogy (2008: v). As you suggest other new developments in CL are needed. Could you say a few words about these new trends or developments?

RD. I would like to discuss a psycholinguistic and a linguistic trend: 1) the psycholinguistic emphasis of form-focused and task-based teaching and learning, and 2) the renewed emphasis of pedagogical grammar and contrastive analysis.

SDK. So, let’s start with the psycholinguistic views on form-focused and task-based teaching and learning as described in Ellis 2008, Robinson 2007, and Robinson and Ellis 2008, I presume.

RD. Yes. Ellis (2008) leans on associative learning and on Construction Grammar to develop his views of the associative learning of linguistic constructions. The psychological factors that affect both first language acquisition (L1A) and second language acquisition (L2A) positively are: frequency, contingency of various stimuli, competition between multiple cues, and salience. The combined operation of these factors shows up in the acquisition of English grammatical morphemes which control the acquisition of all linguistic constructions. L2A is far less successful than L1A because of the poorer working of the above positive factors and because of the stronger working of the following negative factors: interference, overshadowing of the less salient cue, blocking of cues resulting from overshadowing, and absence of perceptual learning. All these factors also lead to a different order in the acquisition of morphemes and constructions. They also affect transfer, which does not necessarily profit from similarity between L1 and L2 constructions. Although Swedish learners of German have the same verb-in-second-position principle (V2), e.g., *Morgen kommt er*, literally ‘Tomorrow comes he’, they do not transfer it to their German, because they have already developed the practice of putting the adverb at the beginning or end without inversion, e.g., *Er kommt morgen* or *Morgen er kommt*. The earlier learned subject-verb rule overshadows the cues for the V2 rule. So what is required in such cases is special attention, called “learned“ attention for the form of V2 constructions. This focus on form has now become a major topic in cognitive language pedagogy. The different operation of the same principles in L1A and L2A can also explain why most L2A never reaches the full end state, which in Generative Grammar was ascribed to a so-called age-dependent biological ‘critical period’ hypothesis, already refuted in Bohn (2005) on perceptual
and phonological grounds. The processes of transfer and “learned” attention also explain why form-focused instruction is a necessary component of L2A, and why successful L2A necessitates a greater level of explicit awareness of the L2 constructions.

Whereas Ellis more strongly concentrates on the quality of the stimuli in L2A, Robinson rather concentrates on the activity of the learner and on the programming of the learning task, i.e., on task-based learning. He refines the traditional, somewhat simplistic, distinction between input and output in L2A by adding the stage of ‘intake’. Not all input stimuli become intake, but only those that are first paid attention to, next observed, then recognised as relevant, and finally saved in memory. One of Robinson’s striking findings is that learning a second language is strongly stimulated by increasing task complexity and task sequencing. Robinson (2007) reports three experiments on Japanese learners of English as L2 who get the interactive task of discussing the thoughts and intentions of the characters in narratives. The results of these experiments are as follows:

(i) Task complexity, in terms of both conceptual and linguistic demands, leads to more complex speech, but does not affect accuracy, fluency and complexity.
(ii) Tasks requiring complex reasoning about characters' intentional states in narratives leads to significantly more interaction, and uptake of premodified input than simpler versions.
(iii) Anxiety to use complex speech diminishes as tasks increase in complexity.

It may be one of the major tasks of pedagogical grammar to define issues of linguistic complexity and of task sequencing in L2A.

SDK. A second trend you quote is the renewed emphasis on Pedagogical Grammar and contrastive analysis.

RD. Indeed. In your latest volume (De Knop and De Rycker 2008: 2), you have distinguished three main concerns of a pedagogical grammar: (i) providing the inventory of all the relevant linguistic units, especially of sentence patterns or constructions, in a given language on descriptive and explanatory grounds; (ii) finding areas of overlap and contrast between L1 and L2 and analyzing potential areas of interference in the development of the learner’s interim grammar (originally called “interlanguage” by Selinker 1972); (iii) identifying learning problems on the basis of differences in the conceptualization of situations and in the linguistic realization of the conceived situations.

The strength of this approach to language pedagogy is to be found in the fact that grammar in this context is not understood in the narrower sense of syntax nor that it is reducible to a number of abstract rules, but that it rather contains lexicon-bound schemas and construction schemas,
and comprises all levels of linguistic organization ranging from conceptualization and interaction to discourse, syntax, morphology, lexis, and phonology.

Pedagogical grammar depends for its success to a large extent on contrastive analyses (CA). Historically, contrastive research started off as a side-effect of structuralism and shared with it the naive belief that it was possible to set up a relatively simple inventory of the main grammatical structures or sentence patterns of a given language. In an applied-linguistic and contrastive perspective, it was two or at most three languages that were researched in contrast to one another. Clear illustrations of this belief are Kufner (1962) for English and German, and Agard and Di Petro (1965) for English and Italian structures. The exclusive interest of structuralism in sentence patterns (or surface structures) was countered in the generative-transformational paradigm by a search for common deep structures underlying various surface structures and for the possible transformational links between them. Such a fundamentally deeper conception of language also held out a crucial challenge, or even a blow, to CA, viz. how could it ever cope with the magnitude of the task of contrasting languages at a deeper or more sophisticated level? Obviously, this could not be done for the whole grammar of two languages, which in its turn led to the compartmentalization of contrastive studies. From the 1970s onwards, only certain selected grammatical domains such as causality, modality or complementation were contrastively analysed, but no attempt was made any longer to compare whole grammars. CA has never fully recovered from this compartmentalization and has only produced partial contrastive descriptions up to this very day. The moot question is now: Is there still a more ambitious future for CA? Is it possible for CA to produce contrastive description of the whole grammar of two languages, as initially aimed at in structuralist approaches? This would mean setting up an inventory of grammatical (surface) structures of two languages and combining them with rich and semantically coherent organization principles. For this purpose at least two conditions will have to be met: a solid common research instrument and intensive international cooperation. As for the research instrument, there may be a very great potential for CA in Cognitive Construction Grammar. Instead of the long forgotten idea of transformational links between semantically related or comparable surface structures, CCG has introduced the notion of alternations amongst a family of constructions, whereby each alternative has its own semantic function and value, as already shown for the raising constructions in (2) and (3) and for the caused-change construction in (4b), (4c), and (4d). Another example is the alternation between the ditransitive dative construction (\textit{give John a book}) and the prepositional dative construction (\textit{give a book to John}). The former expresses material or immaterial possession as in \textit{give someone an idea}, whereas the latter expresses material motion and is conceptually linked to the caused-motion construction. In fact, the dative constructions, the caused-motion
constructions and the caused-change constructions form a network of constructions grouping several families of constructions.

This whole area has been contrastively, both syntactically and semantically, explored for Dutch and English by Colleman (2008) and Colleman and De Clerck (2008 and 2009), and the members of Contragram (Contrastive Grammar Research Group at the University of Ghent, Belgium). It seems to be possible to set up inter-university research groups for two or more language pairs and program the main grammatical areas and allocate them to the participating research centres and thus to set up the framework for an international contrastive research project. Or can this just be a dream?

SDK. This sounds indeed very interesting! But, René, the time for our interview is almost over. Knowing that you are still very active in research, I would like to finish our interview by asking you if you have new projects.

RD. I am afraid my creative dreams are over. My low vision handicap does not allow me to be scientifically productive any longer. But I may perhaps finish by making an urgent call for international Cognitive Linguistics support for the Cogbib project among the CL community.

SDK. Well, René, I’ll do my best to send this call to as many linguists as possible! It has been a great pleasure, but also a great honour for me to have this interview with you. Accept all my thanks for that but also for having passed your passion for linguistics and more specifically for Cognitive Linguistics to so many students and colleagues. As was stressed in the Pedagogical Grammar volume, it is your “continued support and encouragement of others – in their own (cognitive) exploration of language and linguistics – that has been invaluable” (De Knop and De Rycker 2008: v).

Wishing you and your family all the best!

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About the interviewer
Sabine De Knop (Ph.D. in 1985 at the Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium) is Professor for German language and linguistics and since 2006 also head of the department of modern Germanic languages at the Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis in Brussels. As a chief editor of the Metbib project and the Bibliography of Metaphor and Metonymy (METBIB), The interdisciplinary resource on figurative language, distributed by John Benjamins Publishing Company, she is researching on metaphor and figurative language and has published a number of papers on the topic. Her research interests are currently pedagogical grammar and language typology (with a focus on the differences in the expressions of motion and location between Germanic and Romance languages) and the application of cognitive linguistics insights to foreign language teaching. Together with Teun De Rycker, she edited in 2008 Cognitive Approaches to Pedagogical Grammar – A Volume in Honour of René Dirven, published by Mouton de Gruyter and is preparing with Frank Boers and Teun De Rycker the volume Fostering Language Teaching Efficiency through CL (to be published in the Mouton de Gruyter Series: Applications in Cognitive Linguistics) at the beginning of 2010.