Cognitive Grammar I: lexical classes

1 Nominal versus relational predications

As we saw in Chapter 22, in Cognitive Grammar nominal predications profile conceptually autonomous regions of a domain (or domains), while relational predications profile interconnections between those regions. Relational predications can be further subdivided into temporal and atemporal relations. In the light of these distinctions, consider the following examples:

(1) Monica is buying her husband a big surprise.
(2) Monica knows the date of Tommy’s birthday.
(3) Jimmy is fond of eating.

a. Categorise each of the words in these examples according to whether you think they are nominal or relational (temporal or atemporal) predications.
b. What were the criteria you used to make your decisions?

2 Nominal predications

Consider the nouns listed below.

(1) group    (6) ice
(2) dot      (7) equipment
(3) wine     (8) grass
(4) swarm    (9) computer
(5) archipelago (10) stone

On the basis of the discussion in section 2. of Chapter 22, classify each noun in terms of the following distinctions:
a. i) bounded or unbounded;  
    ii) homogeneous or heterogeneous;  
    iii) expansible/contractible or replicable.  
b. On the basis of your classification, state whether each noun is a count noun or a mass noun.  
c. What kind of linguistic evidence can be used to support your conclusions?  
d. Finally, comment on any difficulties you encountered.  

3 Relational predications  
Consider the underlined expressions in the following examples, all of which represent relational predications:  

(1) Susan thought John was genuine.  
(2) Eating her breakfast, she read the newspaper avidly.  
(3) She slept with a lock of his hair under her pillow.  
(4) Those lovely letters resembled poetry.  
(5) She sprinkled the water over the flowerbed.  
(6) Susan wanted to marry him.  
(7) John walked through the park in a trance.  

a. On the basis of the discussion in section 4. of Chapter 22, categorise these relational predications in terms of the following distinctions:  
   (i) temporal or atemporal;  
   (ii) simple or complex.  
b. Now consult Table 22.1. How would you classify each of these relational predications in terms of the properties of their TR and LM?  
c. Finally, comment on any difficulties you encounter.  

4 Classifying symbolic units  
Consider the following symbolic units:  

(1) THING  
(2) PROCESS  
(3) COMPLEX STATIC SCENE  
(4) team  
(5) (to) cross  
(6) across  

a. Based on relevant ideas in Chapter 22, classify each of the symbolic units in these examples.  
b. Now compare and contrast these symbolic units.
5 Grounding predications

Consider the following compound nouns. In these expressions, one of the nouns heads the compound, and the other is a modifier. When these expressions occur with a grounding predication, only the head noun is grounded, and may show agreement with the grounding predication.

(1) nuclear scientist
(2) police officer

a. In your own words, provide a definition of a grounding predication.
b. Investigate the agreement relations between grounding predications and each of these nouns, and state which noun is the head and explain how patterns of agreement between grounding predication and noun reveal the head.
c. Explain why the modifying noun is ungrounded.