Thank you all for coming, thank you for the invitation, and congratulations to Professor Li for his work over the years in organizing these forums, which I think have made a great contribution to cognitive linguistics in China. There are ten lectures. The first two today are kind of a review, and they go over the basics of cognitive grammar as formulated some time ago. I will try to present it in a new way. The next four talks present some newer ideas which have been developing over the last ten or fifteen years, and then the last four talks apply these to various aspects of language, in particular nominal structure, and in the last lecture clause structure.

1 Interactive Cognition

(1) (a) Cognition is fundamentally interactive, arising from engagement with the world. A subject of conception engages some facet of the world that functions as an object of conception. The subject’s role is always active, even for perception.

(b) How the subject views the object is not determined solely by the object’s nature but depends on the subject’s own activity, reflecting its capabilities, previous history, and present circumstances. There is no neutral perspective.

(c) Construal: Our ability to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate ways.

(d) Construal is unavoidable because the world does not just imprint itself in our minds, producing a full miniature copy. Rather, our view of the world is mentally constructed.

(2) S - - O

S = subject of conception (conceptualizer)
O = object of conception
W = world
This first talk is on meaning and construal. You see this is divided into sections, starting with interactive cognition. Many people think that if you do cognitive linguistics, you cannot deal with interaction, but that is completely wrong. There is no basis for that whatsoever, because cognition is fundamentally interactive. It arises from engagement with the world. There is a subject of conception who engages some facet of the world that constitutes an object of conception. Here [in (2)] we have subject of conception, S, and object of conception, O; this is the conceptualizing relationship. W stands for the world, a very simplified world, obviously.

How the subject views the object is not determined just by the object’s nature, but it depends on the subject’s own abilities and the subject’s own activity reflecting its capabilities, previous history, and present circumstances. There is no neutral perspective. And construal is our ability to impose a perspective—this is the ability to conceive and portray the same situation in different ways. It is unavoidable because the world does not just imprint itself in our minds, it doesn’t just copy itself inside our heads. We have to construct our view of the world through cognition, so it is mentally constructed.

Now, still there are many factors that constrain the variations so that we can construct similar views of the world. We occupy the same physical world; we have the same basic type of body that defines a range of potential interactions and experiences. These are largely the same for everybody. Social interaction is crucial for cognitive development and for constructing our mental world. And that includes, of course, language and communicative interaction; that is an ongoing means of sharing knowledge and aligning our views. Language, of course, is essential to all these. Lexicon and grammar form a continuum, all elements of which are meaningful. Every lexical and grammatical element incorporates a particular way of construing conceptual content, so there is no neutral construal, linguistic descriptions are never neutral, they are always imposing some way of construing conceptual content.

(3)  **Factors that constrain variation:**
(a)  We occupy the same physical world.
(b)  We have the same basic type of body, defining a range of potential interactions and experience that are largely the same for all individuals (embodiment).
(c)  Social interaction is crucial for cognitive development and constructing our mental world.
(d)  Communicative interaction is an ongoing means of sharing knowledge and aligning views.