On the Meaning of English Adverb as good as: A Cognitive View

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0. Introduction
Cognitive linguistics is an approach to language that is based on our experience of the world and the way we perceive and conceptualize it. In this paper we will explore from the viewpoint of cognitive linguistics where the meaning of the adverb as good as, which can be interpreted as 'almost; nearly,' comes from.

1. The Problem
Okimoto (1996) introduces a meaning analysis of the group conjunctions as far as and as long as, which have often puzzled English learners. In it he points out that the distinction between the usage of as far as and that of as long as can be made by examining the meanings of the heads far and long. However, attempting to guess the meaning of as good as by only considering the head good is difficult. We will claim in this paper that the network model Langacker has developed shows a key to the problem.

2. A Proposal
As we have stated earlier, the group of words has the meaning of 'almost; nearly; practically' as in (1).

(1) a. He is as good as dead.
   b. The work is as good as finished.

But what is the relation between this meaning and the fundamental interpretation of good as 'high quality; high standard'? Furthermore, consideration of the following examples complicate the problem, for the common meaning of good in (2a-c) is 'certainty or reliability.'

(2) a. He is as good as his word.
   b. She claimed that he as good as promised to marry.
   c. An Englishman's word is as good as his bond.

However, if we look to the world of commerce, an interesting fact will emerge:

(3) a. a good firm
   b. a good debt
   c. good securities

Words like 'safe' or 'credit' are key words that refer to the type of reputation that superior companies must maintain in order to survive. The meaning of good extracted from the examples in (3a-c) is 'commercially safe and certain.' 'Certainty or reliability,' the meaning in (2), is a prerequisite of this meaning in (3). It is this 'certainty or reliability' that expands to 'commercially safe and certain' in the business world. The meaning 'almost; nearly; practically' in (1) is actually a result of combining the meaning 'certainty or reliability' and the comparison equality structure as ... as. In other words, the meaning of the compound derived from good is 'the right kind' as in the expressions I have good reasons for saying so and I have firm grounds for my judgment.'
3. The Network Model

Figure 1 below depicts a fragment of the network associated with the adjective good.

![Diagram](image)

Semantic units are indicated by boxes and the boldface represents the category prototype. Schematicity is indicated by a solid arrow, while extension is indicated by a broken-line arrow. This kind of network is called a schematic network in cognitive linguistics and a lexical network in English pedagogy.¹

In this paper we regard the core of good as 'being suitable' shown at the top of the diagram.² Its prototype is the unit [good (high standard)], which we have earlier called the fundamental interpretation of the adjective good. The semantic unit [good (sound)] derived schematically from the top instantiates the unit [good (healthy)] at the bottom in (4):

(4) a. Morning walks are good for your health.
   b. This medicine is good for a fever.

As an extension from human beings to things, the unit [good (certain; reliable)] is derived next to it. Thus, connected with the function of comparison equality as ... as, this semantic unit meaning 'certainty or reliability' changes into the unit meaning 'the right kind' as a derivation.

4. Conclusion

In this paper we have made a meaning analysis of the word group as good as, which is an interesting case where attempting to guess the meaning of it by only considering the head is difficult. Then we have proposed an alternative explanation to seek the meaning by using the network model Langacker has developed. We can see from this observation on the meaning of as good as that the network model shows the potential of a cognitive approach to English language learning.

Notes
2. See Masamura (2002).

References
Lakoff, G. and M. Johnson (1980) Metaphors We Live By, Chicago: U of Chicago P.

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