

# — ŁÓDŹ —

## STUDIES IN LANGUAGE

Edited by  
Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk

21

Piotr Stalmaszczyk (ed.)

### Turning Points in the Philosophy of Language and Linguistics



PETER LANG

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## Turning Points in the Philosophy of Language and Linguistics

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Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk

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## TURNING POINTS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS. PREFACE

### 1. Introduction

Philosophy of language and linguistic philosophy have, until recently, been confined to investigating problems of truth, meaning, interpretation and reference.<sup>1</sup> A quick perusal of introductions and textbooks published within the last 15 years (e.g. Mackenzie 1997; Precht 1998; Taylor 1998; Lycan 2000; Miller 2007; Morris 2007; Soames 2010) confirms this observation. Very characteristically, *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Language* (Devitt and Hanley, eds. 2006) is divided into two major parts, devoted to “meaning” and “reference”. The former investigates issues such as thought and meaning, meaning skepticism, formal semantics, speech acts and pragmatics, propositional attitudes, conditionals, vagueness, whereas the latter focuses on descriptions, indexicals, anaphora, and truth. On the other hand, *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Language* (Lepore and Smith, eds. 2006) is divided into parts dealing with “the nature of language”, “the nature of meaning”, “the nature of reference”, “semantic theory”, “linguistic phenomena”, “varieties of speech act”, and “the epistemology and

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1 The relation between linguistics, philosophy of language, and linguistic philosophy has been described by Mackenzie (1997: ix) in the following way: “Linguistics is the empirical study of natural language. Philosophy of language is concerned with the underlying nature of the phenomena that linguists study. And linguistic philosophy is an approach to the philosophy of language”. However, philosophers differ considerably in their understanding of the discussed notions (and disciplines); compare the following descriptions provided by Vendler (1974: 5), who claims that *philosophy of language* is a catch-all phrase, whereas *linguistic philosophy* “would comprise conceptual investigations of any kind based upon the structure and functioning of natural or artificial languages”, and by Rorty (1967: 3), according to whom ‘linguistic philosophy’ is “the view that philosophical problems are problems which may be solved (or dissolved) either by reforming language, or by understanding more about the language we presently use”. Additionally, Vendler (1974: 5) distinguishes *philosophy of linguistics*, which “comprises philosophical reflections on such linguistic universals as meaning, synonymy, paraphrase, syntax, and translation, and a study of the logical status and verification of linguistic theories”. To these, by now classical, descriptions one may add a recent formulation by Soames (2010: 1): “philosophy of language is, above all else, the midwife of the scientific study of language, and language use”.

metaphysics of language". Also most of the canonical texts collected in four volumes of the *Critical Concepts in Philosophy* series (Martinich, ed. 2009) clearly show that problems of meaning and reference remain the core of philosophy of language, even if extended to different aspects of language communication and understanding. And finally, according to Soames (2010: 1), the foundational concepts of philosophy of language (and philosophy as a whole) are "truth, reference, meaning, possibility, propositions, assertion, and implicature".

The above observations do not mean that philosophy of language is a homogenous field; on the contrary, it is possible to distinguish different stages, or "turns",<sup>2</sup> in its historical and contemporary development. Early attempts at reforming natural language led to considerable development and application of formal tools in linguistic analysis, hence triggering the "formal turn" (strongly related to Analytic Philosophy), whereas elucidations concerning different aspects of speech act theory, communication, language use, and the role of presupposition, implicature, and context resulted in the "philosophical turn".<sup>3</sup>

The origin of the formal turn may be seen already in the writings of Gottlob Frege,<sup>4</sup> with further developments associated with the work of Bertrand Russell, (early) Ludwig Wittgenstein, Rudolf Carnap, Jan Łukasiewicz, Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, Alfred Tarski, W.O.V. Quine, Richard Montague, Donald Davidson, Saul Kripke, and also Noam Chomsky. The philosophical turn is associated with the later Wittgenstein, John Austin, Paul Grice, John Searle, and philosophers as diverse as Robert Brandom, Hans Georg Gadamer, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Hilary Putnam, W.V.O. Quine (again), and Richard Rorty.

Recent studies in philosophy of language, especially those concerned with the relation between language and thought, language and mind, problems of language normativity, the nature of linguistic understanding, often take advantage of developments in psychology, philosophy of mind, and new trends in metaphysics and epistemology.<sup>5</sup>

Interest in Cognitive Science has lead to yet another, "cognitive", turn in the philosophy of language, or rather, given the multidimensional nature of Cognitive Science, several different cognitive turns. These most recent turns in philosophy

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2 This usage of the word "turn" follows Rorty (1967) and his discussion of the "linguistic turn" in philosophy.

3 For some general background on the formal and philosophical turns in the philosophy of language, see the respective introductions in Stalmaszczyk (ed.) (2010a, b).

4 See Dummett (1993: 5) on the origins of the linguistic turn (and analytical philosophy in general) in Frege's early work.

5 See, for example, Soames (2010), and the papers collected in Sawyer (ed.) (2010).

of language are also associated with the “cognitive revolution” (in the sense of Chomsky),<sup>6</sup> and developments in Cognitive Linguistics. According to Chomsky:

The cognitive revolution is concerned with the states of the mind/brain and how they enter into behaviour, in particular, cognitive states: states of knowledge, understanding, interpretation, belief, and so on. (Chomsky 1991: 5)

and

The cognitive perspective regards behavior and its products not as the object of inquiry, but as data that may provide evidence about the inner mechanisms of mind and the ways these mechanisms operate in executing actions and interpreting experience. (Chomsky 2000: 5)

Such an approach, coupled with precise formal models of language description and analysis, inspired debates and controversies concerning not only the nature of language, but also issues of knowledge of language and first language acquisition, all of them of utmost philosophical importance.<sup>7</sup>

Research within Cognitive Linguistics, carried out by, among others, Ronald Langacker, George Lakoff, Leonard Talmy, Mark Turner, Gilles Fauconnier, re-focused the study of language. As a result, several new topics emerged within contemporary philosophy of language. The methodological assumptions underlying cognitive linguistics have been characterized by Langacker in the following way:

A basic methodological principle of **Cognitive Grammar** (CG), and of **cognitive linguistics** in general, is reflected in the very rationale for choosing these names. They are “cognitive” in the sense that, insofar as possible, they see language as drawing on other, more basic systems and abilities (e.g. perception, attention, categorization) from which it cannot be dissociated. (Langacker 2002: 13)

The issues central to cognitive approaches to language, and hence one of the cognitive turns in philosophy of language, include, among others, the relation between language and cognition, the distinction between the literal and non-literal

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6 More precisely, this is the “second cognitive revolution”, as the first one should be associated with the Cartesian tradition, cf. Chomsky (2002: 69). Cognitive Linguistics might be thus considered as contributing to the third wave of the cognitive revolution.

7 For some debates and controversies, see the contributions in Kasher (ed.) (1991), and Antony and Hornstein (eds.) (2003). For philosophical implications of the Chomskyan approach, see the reviews of Chomsky (2000) by Bilgrami (2002), Moravcsik (2002), and Stone and Davies (2002).

in language and thought, metaphors in language and thought, identification of meaning with conceptualization, and non-formal approaches to meaning.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Contents of the volume

Most of the contributions gathered in this volume were presented at the first International Conference on Philosophy of Language and Linguistics, *PhiLang2009*. The conference was held in Łódź in May 2009, and organized by the Chair of English and General Linguistics at the University of Łódź. Two volumes, dealing with the formal and philosophical turns, respectively, have already been published, cf. Stalmaszczyk (ed.) (2010a, b). The current volume contributes predominantly, but not exclusively, to the cognitive turns, inspired by the Chomskyan revolution in linguistics, as well as Langacker's and Lakoff's (to mention the most prominent names only) Cognitive Linguistics. Furthermore, the individual texts contribute to the development of theoretical frameworks for studying language, which constitutes one of the main 'facets of the philosophy of language' (in the sense of Soames 2010: 1).

The volume opens with the texts of two plenary lectures, delivered by Katarzyna Jaszczolt and Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk,<sup>9</sup> followed by the invited contribution by Francisco José Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez and Francisco González-García.

**Katarzyna Jaszczolt** addresses the question as to whether *time* is a primitive concept or it is rather composed out of conceptually more basic building blocks. After a brief analysis of tense-time mismatches with examples from English, Polish, Thai and Swahili, she presents a hypothesis that time is conceptualized in terms of degrees of epistemic modality. Expressions with future, present and past reference are ordered on scales of epistemic commitment. Jaszczolt demonstrates that her theory of Default Semantics has no difficulty with representing tense-time mismatches in that it reflects the fact that information about temporality is conveyed via a variety of processes, some of them pertaining

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8 This is not to claim that topics such as metaphor are completely absent from the publications mentioned in the opening lines of this introduction. However, the references are not only limited – only one chapter on metaphor in the *Oxford Handbook*, and two such texts in Martinich (ed.) (2001) – but also the discussion is confined to the non-literal, figurative aspect of language use – cf. the chapter on “The Dark Side” in Lycan (2000). Very characteristically, in their Handbook chapter, Reimer and Camp (2006: 851–858) mention only the following “four influential theories”: simile theories, interaction theories, Gricean theories, and non-cognitivist theories.

9 For the texts of the remaining plenary lectures delivered during the *PhiLang2009* Conference, see Peregrin (2010), Corazza and Korta (2010), and Morris (2010).

not to the processing of the lexicon or grammar but even to pragmatic inference. The theory also gives support to the thesis of time as modal detachment.

**Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk** proposes to look at events as a phenomenon lying at the intersection of linguistics, cognitive psychology and philosophy. Events are treated as units of mental categorization, which can be either simple or complex. Simple events possess one or more focal roles and a number of accidental roles and a single temporal dimension for a change of a state of the art. Complex events are in a hyperonymic relation with reference to different types of actions, acts, activities and processes, combined in one act of perception. Events, in perception and linguistic expression, can be treated either as a fairly symmetric pair of entities, when two (or more) events or their parts are perceived as two (or more) parallel units or appear in a symmetric pattern, or else they can be perceived and linguistically expressed as what the author calls *asymmetric* events, covering the material, which refers to two (or more) events of unequal status in an utterance. In other words, asymmetric events cover ways in which a linguistic description of main events in a sentence is different (morphologically, syntactically, discursively) from a description of backgrounded events. The relationship between the more salient events expressed in main constructions and those whose profiles have been dominated by the more salient ones can be interpreted in terms of a *continuum* between constructions which possess autonomous profiles and those with profiles reduced in different ways. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk examines parameters which contribute to forming the asymmetry both within one utterance and also in terms of system differences between fully elaborated event descriptions and those which are gradually more and more de-sententialized and lose or lack their assertive force.

**Francisco José Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez** and **Francisco González-García** examine the treatment of illocutionary meaning in the Lexical Constructional Model (LCM) against the background of representative work carried out in the functional camp (e.g. Dik's Functional Grammar and the Systemic Functional Grammar approach proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen) as well as in Cognitive Linguistics. While acknowledging some important insights in these contributions, the LCM proposes a more comprehensive yet more fine-grained account of the dynamics of illocutionary meaning on both descriptive and explanatory grounds. The overarching claim substantiated in this contribution is that illocution should be best regarded as part of a dynamic meaning construction system whereby illocutionary meaning obtains from constructional subsumption, cued inferencing, or a combination of these two cognitive processes. This claim is illustrated with particular reference to the contrasts between a family of illocutionary constructions (e.g. "Can/Could you turn off the TV?") with a specific family of argument structure constructions, namely, small clauses (SCs henceforth) with verbs of causation, volition, expectation (e.g. "I want him dead") as well as liking and preference verbs (e.g. "I like it curly"). SCs within the latter group provide

evidence for the claim that illocutionary meaning can be conveyed through constructional subsumption and cued inferencing. At a higher level of granularity, configurations of this type exhibit varying degrees of fixation, ranging from the superimposition of “would” to “would like to see” onto the SC. Utterances of this type are regarded as metonymically grounded inferential schemas and therefore as amenable to being explained in terms of metonymic constraints, or more exactly, the high-level POTENTIALITY FOR ACTUALITY metonymy. These constraints, in conjunction with the feasibility of expressing illocutionary meaning through utterances without fixed elements, are identified as unique properties of argument structure constructions.

**Janusz Badio** outlines the theory of perceptual symbol systems and a related proposal of simulation semantics according to which conceptualization involves mental imagery. The underlying hypothesis is that both conceptual and perceptual processes share the same neural architecture. Linguistic forms are used to instruct one to build appropriate simulations that are rich in detail; perceptual symbols represent various aspects of our bodily experience that has been dismantled and stored. It can be recreated and even practiced in a top-down fashion, which allows productivity, creativity, and inferences. The article also mentions the philosophical background of simulation semantics.

**Tomasz Ciszewski** concentrates on methodological and philosophical implications underlying contemporary phonological theory. According to the author, phonological theory has been recently experiencing a serious methodological crisis which, however, is most often more apparent to outsiders in the field rather than the advocates of a particular theoretical framework. The contribution discusses methodological problems within three modern mainstream approaches (Phonetically Grounded Phonology, Optimality Theory, and Government Phonology). All three models, albeit in slightly different ways, have been successfully “immunised against refutation” by means of various ad-hoc proposals aimed at defending their main assumptions despite negative empirical evidence. In particular, the theories in question rely on a misconceived idea of simplicity or “formal elegance”, confuse correlation with causality or postulate non-verifiable phonological representations and formal mechanisms. Apart from theory-internal methodological shortcomings, however, they all promote a vision of phonology as a completely autonomous field and disregard the latest advances made in cognitive sciences or neurobiology on the one hand and acoustics, aerodynamics, and articulatory phonetics on the other.

The contribution by **Maria Jodłowiec** is devoted to a relevance-theoretic approach to metarepresentation and language. Relevance theory is a model of human overt intentional communication rooted in some observations about human cognitive functioning. In this approach, the fundamental assumption about how interpreters recover the communicator’s meaning says that ostensive stimuli provide direct evidence of the communicative intentions of the individuals who pro-

duce them, and these stimuli come with a tacit guarantee that they have been intended to be optimally relevant. There are communicative situations though, in which recovering the communicator's meaning involves taking into account information which is available to interpreters through metacommunicative insight. In such contexts, reading the speaker's mind or metarepresentation strategies are called for. This happens when an utterance yields an accidentally optimally relevant interpretation, an accidentally irrelevant interpretation, or an interpretation that will merely seem optimally relevant even though it is genuinely not so. All three cases are briefly discussed and the question of which came first in the process of phylogenesis: language or metarepresentation is addressed.

**Andrew Jorgensen** focuses on understanding semantic scepticism. Semantic scepticism is essentially the thesis that no sentence expresses a proposition. This thesis is *prima facie* self-defeating. Jorgensen examines Boghossian's attempt to show it entails a contradiction, and Soames' challenge that it is evidence against itself. As he further argues, neither argument is successful. The key to the defence is the recognition that scepticism requires rejecting only one of two necessary conditions on representation. Properly considered, the intuition that one understands semantic scepticism is in no way inconsistent with the truth of semantic scepticism.

**Henryk Kardela** examines, through the prism of Ludwik Fleck's theory of *thought style* (*Denkstil*), the development of some selected "facts" in linguistics, mainly in cognitive grammar as proposed and developed by Ronald Langacker. Assuming, as Fleck does, that facts are not objectively given but intellectually created and that any fact is possible if it fits the accepted thought style, the role of an individual researcher in the development of a linguistic fact must be seen to be considerably limited. "Individual exploits", as Fleck calls them, can only be successful if the time is ripe for their acceptance or when, to use Michel Foucault's wording, the discourse within which a scientific fact develops allows the "searching subject" to "become individuated" in the history of knowledge.

**Krzysztof Kosecki** discusses the concepts of *Subject* and *Self* in English personification metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson argue that being a whole, a person is metaphorically divided into two parts – THE SUBJECT and THE SELF (or SELVES). The same metaphor underlies many of the English *self*-compounds that describe mechanisms, e.g. "a self-propelled gun", and various abstract ideas, e.g. "a self-explanatory theory." Since, as claimed by Kövecses, the presence of "the bifurcated structure of subject and self" presupposes the existence of a person, it follows that the personification metaphor may be more common and may have a more complex structure that has hitherto been acknowledged.

**Jakub Mácha** investigates the issue of whether metaphors have a metaphorical or secondary meaning; he also relates this question to the borderline between philosophy and linguistics. Using examples from W. H. Auden and Virginia Woolf, he shows that metaphor accomplishes something more than its

literal meaning expresses and this “more” cannot be captured by any secondary meaning. What is essential in metaphor is not a secondary meaning but an internal relation between a metaphorical proposition and a description of its effects. In order to understand metaphors, we have to share an ability to construe metaphorical meanings at once. The aim of this ability is to uncover an internal relation that lies behind a particular metaphor. In an afterthought, Mácha considers the possibility of a lexicon or dictionary of metaphors.

**Ratikanta Panda** commences his contribution with the observation that the two disciplines of philosophy of language and linguistics can not be compartmentalized into theoretical or practical aspects of language study. Whereas philosophy of language concerns itself with the ultimate end of any language, i.e. the origin and meaning of its constituent words, linguistics concerns itself broadly with syntactic organization of those words, their semantic evolution. Thus, semantics comes out as the meeting ground between the two disciplines. On this meeting ground, the two sciences can profitably benefit from each other. The contribution focuses on the semantic aspect of a language as to *how “Meaning” emerges within a given context*. The context can be seen as a dynamic scenario which is influenced by the sociological reality of the speakers and the listeners most of all. How do people understand meanings amid this technology revolution? The issue is raised with reference to Wittgenstein’s use theory of meaning, and Panda argues that it is the social use that generates meanings of the terms.

**Wiktor Pskit** reflects on the development of basic concepts in the field of syntactic theory in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. He offers a discussion of the status of the notions of “category” and “construction” in three current approaches to syntax. The differences between the theories that are identified suggest that syntactic theory suffers from the lack of agreement on the kind of theoretical devices needed for the analysis of empirical data. However, as observed by Pskit, this state of affairs can be seen in a positive light since the competition of diverging ideas can be interpreted as evidence of dynamic development of this field of linguistic inquiry.

**Monika Rymaszewska-Chwist** presents an account of the nature of human mental activity and interaction with the external world from the perspective of the philosophy of *embodied realism* advocated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. The principal aim is to discuss some philosophical assumptions which underpin contemporary cognitive science. In the context of a brief overview of these assumptions, the author attempts to demonstrate that the philosophy behind cognitive science is a fruit of multi-generational struggle to answer crucial ontological and epistemological queries, and that embodied realism is an eclectic and unifying approach to the body-mind problem that has emerged in its definite form mainly thanks to the advancement of neurosciences with their insight into the nature of human brain and processes governing cognition.

**Slawomir Waciewicz** focuses on concepts as correlates of lexical items. The content of his article amounts to a somewhat controversial terminological proposal: the term ‘concept’ is most fruitfully construed as “a mental representations having a lexical correlate”. Such a definition makes it possible to treat ‘concept’ as a technical term across cognitive sciences, while also preserving most intuitions from a looser use of this word in the literature. The central points consist in appreciating the qualitative difference between the mental representations correlated with lexical labels and other mental representations, and in accepting this difference as an effect of the causal influence of language on cognition. The argument is supported by a review of recent empirical results.

**Lei Zhu** studies the foundations of linguistic science from the perspective of phenomenology. Following the phenomenological method of suspending concepts as “representations”, he observes that all linguistic discourses are reducible as representations of the speech sound. Moreover, drawing on the phenomenological distinction between *Leib* (body) and *Körper* (corpse), he further claims that the first and most important step in the establishment of modern linguistic discourse is the *Körper*-ization of the speech sound – a process started in phonetics and phonology by means of their arithmetic (in phonetics) and algebraic (in phonology) processing. It is in this way that speech as the original *Leib* of language is gradually analysed into the duality of ‘sound’ and ‘concept’. This also explains the seemingly dubious position (to some) of phonetics in modern linguistics, as no difference in conceptualised meaning can be analysed in pure and decontextualised phonetic contrasts. Like phonetics and phonology, linguistic analyses at higher levels, as part of the *Körper*-ization process of the speech sound, unanimously follow the ‘sound/concept’ duality – though it takes different forms in different theories. This, to use Derrida’s language, is how speech sounds are ‘written’ in modern linguistics. In other words, linguistics by nature is one of many ways of ‘writing’ about speech sounds, and that explains the incongruence between modern linguistics and some scripts like Chinese characters; both are writings of speech sounds and neither conforms to the other so long as it attempts to preserve the way it writes.

**Przemysław Żywicznyński** provides a short introduction to Classical Indian philosophy of language which has, so far, received minimal attention from the Western academia. The aim of his contribution is to bring this ancient scholarly tradition closer to the Western recipient. Thus, the author presents the intellectual climate of inter-sectarian debates in which theories of language and meaning were forged. He also shows the historical continuity between the grammatical mode of language analysis inaugurated by Panini and the later, scholastic approaches to the study of language- and meaning-related problems. Finally, more technical aspects of Indian philosophy of language are also discussed.

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## TIME AS DEGRESS OF EPISTEMIC COMMITMENT<sup>1</sup>

### 1. The concept of time: Basic questions

The human concept of time has intrigued philosophers and linguists probably ever since philosophy began and yet it is still a controversial issue. One of the fundamental questions is whether *time* is a primitive concept or rather is composed out of conceptually more basic building blocks. In what follows, I address this question at some length and proceed to a proposal of a semantic representation of temporal expressions that supports my hypothesis of the modal basis of temporality.

Linguistic semantic theories of temporality, as well as temporal logics, are usually classified by referring to the distinction between the so-called A theory and B theory proposed over a century ago by a Cambridge philosopher J. E. McTaggart (1908). According to the A theory, events themselves are characterised by temporality; they move, so to speak, from the future to the present and from the present to the past and there is real, genuine change in the world. According to the alternative view, called B theory, there is no real change and time is only a psychological category. Events are all equally real and are ordered on the earlier-than/later-than axis. In other words, on the B theory, time is the property of the observer rather than the events. McTaggart (1908: 111) presents these two options in terms of the A- and B-series:

... I shall speak of the series of positions running from the far past through the near past to the present, and then from the present to the near future and the far future, as the A series. The series of positions which runs from earlier to later I shall call the B series. The contents of a position in time are called events.

Arthur Prior's (e.g. 1967, 1968, 2003) tense logic is founded on the A theory, and so are some current cutting edge philosophical and semantic accounts of temporality (see Ludlow 1999 and in progress; Smith 1993; Brogaard 2006; also

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Parsons 2002, 2003, and for discussion Tallant 2007; Farkas 2008). However, the majority of formal semantic accounts espouse the B series whereby time, or passing of time, is not a property of the world but of the perception of relations between events, to mention only Reichenbach's (1948) seminal and widely employed (e.g. by Steedman 1997) account in terms of speech time, event time and reference time; recent approach by Le Poidevin (2007) benefitting from Mellor (1998); or the temporal relations in Discourse Representation Theory (Kamp and Reyle 1993; Kamp *et al.* forthcoming) and its offshoots (e.g. Asher and Lascarides 2003; Jaszczołt 2005, 2009b).<sup>2</sup>

McTaggart states that both theories lead to the conclusion that time is unreal: if time is a property of events, we still have to *assume time* in order to say that events move "in time", i.e. from the future towards the past. Moreover, no event can be at the same time future, present and past, so time has to be assumed. If time is a property of observers, it is unreal in virtue of being a psychological entity and, moreover, the concepts *earlier-than* and *later-than* themselves presuppose time. Be that as it may, time is unreal *tout court*. Perhaps, we could say after Husserl (1928), time is a form of, or a property of, consciousness: we remember events, experience or perceive them, and anticipate them – or, in Husserl's terms, there is retention (memory), primal impression (perception), and protention (anticipation). Or, to refer to McTaggart (1908: 127) again,

Why do we believe that events are to be distinguished as past, present, and future? I conceive that the belief arises from distinctions in our own experience. At any moment I have certain perceptions, I have also the memory of certain other perceptions, and the anticipation of others again. The direct perception itself is a mental state qualitatively different from the memory or the anticipation of perceptions.

This view of psychological time is clearly associated with the finiteness of human life – the idea developed later in Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1953): we are all born and we all die, and these events mark the boundaries of the human experience of time.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to ask: if this line of reasoning is to be adopted and time is unreal, that is there is no *real*, ontological time in the sense of flow and change, and all there is, is human *experience* of time, then how are we to begin to describe this experience, or how are we to define the concept of time? Is it a primitive, innate, indefinable concept, or is it a complex concept which is theoretically reducible to other simple, primitive concepts? In the terms of properties of consciousness, we can formulate this question using *supervenience* discussed in Section 4: can there be a supervenience relation between the temporal

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<sup>2</sup> For philosophical arguments in favour of the B theory see e.g. Mozersky (2001) and Oaklander and White (2007). For a selection of views on the philosophy of time see Le Poidevin and MacBeath (1993).

properties and some other, more basic properties? Is there evidence for such a reduction in the domain of epistemology?

Evidence pertaining to epistemology is likely to come from natural language semantics and this is where we begin. To put it simply: if there is evidence that humans speak about time using inherently non-temporal terms, then there is thereby substantial evidence in support of the thesis that humans think about time in terms of more basic concepts. Lexicalised and grammaticalised concepts are the best place to start – but we shall not shun “pragmaticised” concepts either, that is, evidence from pragmatic inference in discourse.

## 2. Language/concept mismatches<sup>3</sup>

Under the label “language-concept mismatches” we shall look at examples of tense/time mismatches, examples where there is no overt marking of time, such as tense, aspect or temporal adverbial, in a sentence, and finally we shall look at the expression of temporality in a contrastive, cross-linguistic perspective and address and tackle some interesting language-specific temporal markers, addressing the question of the underlying conceptualization.

It is a common feature of discourse across a variety of languages that a seemingly inappropriate tense is used to mark temporal reference, often seemingly clashing with the temporal adverbial. For example, a future event can be referred to by means of present tense forms in English, as in (1) and (2), where the use of the forms is called respectively “tenseless future” (after Dowty 1979) and “futurate progressive”.

- (1) Tom plays football tomorrow afternoon.
- (2) Tom is playing football tomorrow afternoon.

Similarly, in Polish, we can express futurity by means of present tense forms as in (3) which is a translation of (1) or (2).<sup>4</sup>

- (3) *Jutro po południu Tomek gra w piłkę.*  
 Tomorrow after noon Tom play 3SgPres in ball

These forms are not used to fill the gap in the system; futurity-marked equivalents in (4)–(6) are readily available and also in common use.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this section, I use “time” to mean the human concept of time.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this contribution, in the word-for-word translation I provide grammatical information only where it is relevant for the discussion.

- (4) Tom will play football tomorrow afternoon.  
 (5) Tom will be playing football tomorrow afternoon.  
 (6) *Jutro po południu Tomek będzie grał w piłkę.*  
 Tomorrow after noon Tom be + play 3SgFut in ball

The present is used to convey a pragmatic overlay pertaining to the degree of commitment to the truth of the ensuing event or the degree of planning; the overall message reads to the effect that, other things being equal, this is what has been planned for tomorrow, or this is what is *intended* for tomorrow.<sup>5</sup> In short, although the present verb form is not the default way of referring to the future in either of the languages under discussion, it can be applied for this task for the purpose of increasing the degree of commitment on the part of the speaker.

Our next example comes from Thai – a language where both tense and aspect are used as optional markers of temporality. The Thai sentence (7) can convey a variety of temporal locations and relations, such as those in the set of its English translations in (8)–(16) cited here after Srioutai (2006: 45) with Arabic and Roman numerals standing for tone markers:

- (7) *m<sub>3</sub>ae:r<sub>3</sub>i:<sup>1</sup> kh2ian n<sub>3</sub>i<sub>3</sub>y<sub>3</sub>ai:*  
 Mary write novel
- (8) Mary wrote a novel.  
 (9) Mary was writing a novel.  
 (10) Mary started writing a novel but did not finish it.  
 (11) Mary has written a novel.  
 (12) Mary has been writing a novel.  
 (13) Mary writes novels. / Mary is a novelist.  
 (14) Mary is writing a novel.  
 (15) Mary will write a novel.  
 (16) Mary will be writing a novel.

According to the judgement of native speakers, there is rarely a temporal ambiguity in (7): it normally has a meaning which the conversation at hand or the situation at hand allows the addressee to confer on it, at the same time allowing the speaker to assume that the addressee can recover his/her intention. This example of a mismatch differs from the previous one in that in this case the mismatch is realised as the lack of any overt marker of temporality in the sentence while the concept is clearly conveyed.

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<sup>5</sup> Notice the pragmatic ill-formedness of “Tom is ill tomorrow”.

As a particularly complex example of the latter type of mismatch, let us consider a grammatical category called *consecutive tense* in Swahili, realised as an affix *-ka-* and used as in examples (17) and (18).<sup>6</sup>

(17)

- a. ...*wa-Ingereza*      *wa-li-wa-chukua*      *wa-le maiti*,  
    3Pl-British                      3Pl-Past-3Pl-take                      3Pl-Dem corpses  
 "...then the British took the corpses,

- b. *wa-ka-wa-tia*      *katika*      *bao*      *moja*,  
    3Pl-Cons-3Pl-put.on      on                      board      one  
 put them on a flat board,

- c. *wa-ka-ya-telemesha*      *maji-ni*      *kwa*      *utaratibu*      *w-ote...*  
    3Pl-Cons-3Pl-lower                      water-Loc      with      order                      3Pl-all  
 and lowered them steadily into the water..."

(from Givón 2005: 154)

- (18) *Ni-ta-kwenda*      *soko-ni*,      *ni-ka-nunua*      *ndizi*.  
    1Sg-Fut-go                      market-Loc                      1Sg-Cons-buy      bananas  
 "I will go to the market and/to buy some bananas."

(from L. Marten, *p.c.*).

When *-ka-* follows a present or past tense form, it is translated as a marker of the order of narration (which, of course, by a general rule of rational conversational behavior mirrors the order of events),<sup>7</sup> normally *and*, as in (17). When it follows a future-tense marker, it may acquire an additional sense of causation: *so as to*, *in order to*, *so that*, as in (18). In each case it is a, so to speak, "chameleon" expression, adjusting its temporal reference to that of the preceding temporal marker. The closest we come to this phenomenon in English is probably the use of Past Perfect to mark the relation of temporal precedence. This phenomenon exemplifies yet another type of a mismatch: this time it is a mismatch between the seemingly universal concept of consecutivity and the devices used to render it in different languages, ranging from a fully independent consecutive sense in Swahili, through the, so to speak, "temporally ordered past" in English, to no marker in, for example, contemporary Polish:

- (19) *Tomek studiował*      *w Warszawie zanim podjął*      *pracę w Poznaniu*.  
    Tom      study 3SgPast      in Warsaw                      before      accept 3SgPast      job                      in Poznan.

6 Both after Jaszczolt (2009a: 90-91).

7 See Grice (1975); Asher and Lascarides (2003).

But sequence marking is more complex than tense marking for one simple reason: while we can safely assume that time is a universal category, although some languages or some constructions in some languages fail to mark it overtly, consecutivity is a less obvious candidate for a universal concept. So, while in the case of Thai we can safely claim that there is a concept/expression mismatch, in the case of consecutive tense we could perhaps equally plausibly appeal to linguistic relativity. On the other hand, perhaps, we could not: let us remember that the order of events can also be conveyed lexically (*and then, next, later, subsequently,...*) or left to pragmatic inference – be it from a Gricean maxim (Grice 1975: 27) “Be orderly”, Levinsonian heuristic (Levinson 2000: 32) “What is simply described is stereotypically exemplified”, or the rhetorical structure rule of *Narration* from Segmented Discourse Representation Theory (Asher and Lascarides 2003: 7) which says that “the event described by the first proposition temporally precedes that of the second”. In virtue of this reasoning, its claim to universality is considerable; the concept is normally lexicalized, sometimes grammaticalized as in Swahili, and, arguably, in the cases where there is no overt marking, it is always inferable pragmatically as the default interpretation.

To sum up, it is diaphanous from this set of examples that time can be expressed in natural languages in a variety of ways, and on a most general distinction, it can be expressed lexically, grammatically, or through pragmatic inference. Under the latter category we also allow the possibility of default interpretations where conscious inference does not in fact take place. We can also see that various properties of temporality are brought to the forefront: temporal location with reference to the speaker, temporal relation inherent between events, complemented by, on a different typology, the degree of probability or epistemic commitment on the part of the speaker. These interim conclusions will become our premises (P) for further argumentation. This is, on a very rough sketch, how it will proceed: (P1) time does not exhibit a one-to-one correspondence with temporal expressions in natural languages; (P2) time seems to be interwoven with degree of commitment; (P3) primitive concepts are not expected to exhibit mismatches or such interdependence; hence tentative conclusion (TC) Time is not likely to be a primitive concept; and a useful directive (D) the relation between time and degrees of epistemic commitment should be further investigated. The latter is the task to which I now turn, with an aim in view to shed more light on TC.

### 3. Temporal expressions: A motivated choice

It is common knowledge that in English, like in many other languages, there exist different means to convey each of the three temporal locations, namely the