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New Perspectives on Language Processes and Language Categories in Slavic Languages. Papers Originating from the 21st International Congress of Linguists

The 21st International Congress of Linguists, held in Poznań in September 2024, aimed at presenting the full scope of current linguistics and focused on integrating languages, communities and technologies.¹ The sessions and focus streams at this congress mainly covered language domains and different linguistic approaches, with an exceptional section dedicated to the Slavic language area.

The section on Slavic languages focused on deixis in grammar, pragmatics and discourse. In general terms, it showed that the Slavic languages are firmly embedded in the Indo-European linguistic tradition concerning their grammatical properties, with further developments of aspectual, temporal and modal properties. At the same time, sociolinguistic properties of Slavic languages closely reflect social relations and ideologies. In the sociolinguistic spectrum of Slavic languages, Russian is an exceptionally dominant language, whereas most Slavic languages were in a subordinate position

¹ The plenary papers, section introductions and focus stream introductions were published by Brill in 2025 under the title of *Contemporary Linguistics Integrating Languages, Communities, and Technologies*, edited by David Bradley, Katarzyna Dziubalska-Kołaczyk, Camiel Hamans, Ik-Hwan Lee, and Frieda Steurs.

throughout most of their histories (and some acquired relative dominance in multiethnic states). The changing sociopolitical situations were reflected in attitudes towards language norms and purism as a defensive mechanism against being overruled by foreign identities. In all instances, the choice of language norm was a complex and ideologically loaded matter. The presented papers in this section of the congress showed that language choice is fundamentally connected with societal discourses and power relations, and even objective news reports are presented with an additional layer of evaluation and expressivity, expressed by lexical, grammatical and even phonetic means. Attitude and perspective are pervasive underlying mechanisms affecting both interpersonal and representational levels of language. This becomes obvious in the choice of aspect and tense on the representational level, and even variant forms of quantified phrases are governed by specificity or definiteness, depending on the language. In this way, deictic embedding and perspective determine a large array of grammatical and pragmatic variation.

Based on the invitation by professor Michał Głuszowski to publish in *Theoria et Historia Scientiarum* a selection of the papers presented in this section, a blind-review process was carried through for papers submitted to this journal. I am happy to present to you the papers that were clearly positively evaluated by recognized experts in the field. These papers cover several of the mentioned important areas.

First of all, the paper by Gabriela Múcsková “Dynamics of Linguistic Prescriptivism and Purism in Slovakia in the Context of Political and Scientific Development” shows how Slovak purism and prescriptivism (a larger notion than purism, aimed at also regulating grammatical, phonological and pragmatic conventions) closely followed the political situation of this country. Slovak purism was mainly directed against Czech lexemes, adopted in Slovak due to long-lasting Czech influence before and during the common state. Following up on the movement to recognize Slovak as a language independent of Czech, that culminated in the *Law on the Slovak language* (1968), there followed a golden age of Slovak purism in the 1970s and 1980s, that significantly contributed not only to the formation of the Slovak language norm, but also to the formation of the national awareness.

Interestingly, a parallel development occurred in Croatia within the Yugoslav state, in which the Croatian language was dominated by Serbian in the Serbo-Croatian standard language. Croatia also saw increasing language awareness in the early 1960s that culminated in the Declaration on the name

and position of the Croatian literary language published in 1967. This was followed by strong communist oppression countered by a struggle for language autonomy, that finally led to the dissolution of the Yugoslav state unity. In both discussed cases, language was a pillar of identity, and purism was a shield to defend this identity whenever threatened.

The paper by Božena Bednaříková titled “The Role of Word-formation in Signalling Expressivity in News Reporting (A Case Study)” discusses expressive word-formations occurring in main news reporting on TV, where a-priori no expressivity, but only so-called objectivity would be expected. Comparing data from 2018 and 2025, the author shows that expressivity in news reporting is generally increasing, and so is the connection with evaluative contexts on the main news-reporting channels (but not so in commercial news). This is an important finding about evaluative (and potentially manipulative) linguistic means of presenting the main news to the public. According to the author, “expressivity is due to a disruption of the systematic correlation between form and meaning within the internal structure of a word, particularly in the relationship between the word-formation base and the formant”. However, if we look into “disruption” in more detail, it becomes obvious that it is in fact an overlaying of neutral meaning with an evaluative, mostly negative (e.g., *Němčour* ‘a German, pejorative’), or positive component (the latter, e.g., expressed by means of a diminutive ending). Lexical means may thereby intersect with grammatical means (e.g., expression of proximity by the possessive dative). Interestingly, the largest overall increase of expressivity across all public media was observed with the use of intensifying prefixes, where expressivity and evaluation in fact arose from connection with evaluative contexts as a matter of implicature.

The paper by Igor Dreer “On the Encoder’s Perception of Occurrences: A Parallel Corpus-based Study of Transposed Tense Usage in *Kolymskie rasskazy* by Varlam Šalamov and *Sumchi* by Amos Oz and Their Hebrew and Russian Translations” discusses the use of tense in a comparative Hebrew – Russian perspective, based on translations. His analysis of relatively parallel text corpora, also by means of mathematical modelling, shows significant similarities in conceptualizing the present and past tense as *experienced* and the future tense as *not-experienced*, interlocked with *proximate*, characteristic of the present, and *remote*, characteristic of the past and future tenses (in line with the Columbia School of Linguistics). In addition to similarities, the author ascribes differences between Russian and Hebrew to different com-

municative strategies. These may in fact also be influenced by verb-aspectual differences between Russian (with deictic binding of the outcome of perfective aspect, in contrast to imperfective aspect) and Hebrew (which lacks this distinction). The analyses also show that *proximity* vs. *remoteness*, a spatiotemporal and existential property of sentence-level, by way of *remoteness* transgresses into the conditional domain in Russian, accounting for the different use of the future tense in Russian vs. Hebrew.

Verbal aspect is a phenomenon on the predicate level. When predicates are nominalized, this may affect aspect semantics. This topic was extensively investigated by Olena Pchelintseva's paper "*Zatłuczenie się kota: Aspectual Range of Polish Verbal Nouns*" based on Polish verbal nouns derived from inchoative/ingressive and delimitative verbs, compared to such Russian and Ukrainian verbal nouns. Comparing dictionary entries with corpus data and questionnaire-based informant reactions, the author reaches the conclusion that inchoative and delimitative verbs in a significant majority of instances lose the semantics of outer boundaries in the formation of verbal nouns, and focus on the event in its entirety, as a total indivisible whole. This effect occurs increasingly from Russian to Ukrainian to Polish, in parallel with increased capacity to form verbal nouns. The author insightfully remarks that "the weakening of the quantitative-temporal limitation of the action" may be related to (differences in) the semantic structure of the perfective verbs themselves. Indeed, this reminds us of Bondarko's (1971, etc.)² analysis of the Russian perfective aspect as based on the features of Totality (*celostnost'*) and Boundary Delimitation (*ograničenie dejstvija predelom*). Apparently, only the first feature remains in verbal nouns, as an effect of semantic bleaching, that may allow for additional contextually indicated inferences (such as resultative, attenuative, distributive or multiplicative readings).

The paper by Yoshiki Mori and Yehor Duma titled "(In)definiteness-driven Agreement Patterns in Ukrainian Numeral Phrases" discusses so-called optional verbal agreement with quantified numeral phrases. The authors carefully distinguish between syntactic agreement and semantic agreement (the latter is largely acceptable in East Slavic) with numeral phrases in Subject function; semantic agreement refers to plural predicate forms with Subject numeral phrases, although the numeral form is grammatically singular and would motivate a singular (neuter) predicate form. For Ukrainian and

² Bondarko, A.V. (1971) *Vid i vremja russkogo glagola*. Moskva: Prosveščenie.

Russian, the authors show that semantic agreement is conditioned by definiteness of the Subject numeral phrase; it is ungrammatical if the Subject noun phrase denotes an approximative quantity (expressed in East Slavic by the noun-numeral order), which is by definition indefinite; on the other hand, plural agreement is required with reflexive and reciprocal predicates. The authors define definiteness as ‘previously known’, i.e., previously mentioned in the context. At this point, we may add that experience with at least Russian shows that semantic agreement can also occur if the numeral phrase has not been previously mentioned in the context, but pertains to some general knowledge, or knowledge by the speaker not yet present in the addressee’s frame of reference; the latter is usually referred to as specificity. In this sense, it may be a topic for future research to investigate to which extent semantic agreement may also be conditioned by specificity. In addition, there is a crucial role of animacy as a potential task for future research.

This selection of papers provides new perspectives on language processes and different kinds of perspective underlying or affecting linguistic categories.