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Distance in language, language of distance

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Introduction

1. Starting point

"The universal semantic prime, if we choose to speak in such terms, is in the final analysis the spatial concept of distance."

(Fleischman 1989: 38)

1. Starting point

(temporal) distance "[…] systematically extended […] to convey distance along axes not only within grammar […], but in the pragmatic component as well" (Fleischman 1989: 2)

⇨ 'distance' in language

- morpho-syntactic categories
- effective in interpretation
- discourse-pragmatic relevance
- social interaction

1. Starting point

(temporal) distance "[…] systematically extended […] to convey distance along axes not only within grammar […], but in the pragmatic component as well" (Fleischman 1989: 2)

⇨ basic questions

- common denominator
- definition
- realization in language

2. 'Distance' in language and linguistics

- semantic component of morpho-syntactic categories
  - Macedonian verbal system as including 'distanced' forms showing "an action viewed as distanced in time or reality" (Lunt 1952: 91)
  - 'distance' as abstract category encompassing the functions of tense, taxis, aspect and mood in the Bulgarian verbal system (Fielder 1996)

- factor in interpretation
  - central role of 'distancing' for evidentiality (Joseph 2002)
  - 'distance' based on 'suspended factivity' (Topolinjska 2009)

2. 'Distance' in language and linguistics

- basis for discourse-pragmatic effects
    - point of view
    - text structuring

- factor in social interaction
    - social distance as a basic principle that influences people's use of language (Spencer-Oatey 1996)
    - distant vs. non-distant address (e.g. Betsch & Berger 2009)

2. 'Distance' in language and linguistics

⇨ 'distance' in linguistic analysis

- application to different phenomena

- reference to different domains and distinctions

2. 'Distance' in language and linguistics

⇨ 'distance' in linguistic analysis

- distance in language

- language of distance

2. 'Distance' in language and linguistics

⇨ 'distance' in linguistic analysis

- distance in language

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⇨ no consistent terminology

The overall potential of the concept of 'distance' for the description and explanation of linguistic structures and behavior has not yet been discussed in all its facets.

2. 'Distance' in language and linguistics

⇨ 'distance' in linguistic analysis

- distance in language

- language of distance

⇨ no consistent terminology

> We need a thorough description of the basic metaphor in terms of its source domain and the possibilities of transposition to a target domain.

3. Elaboration of 'distance'

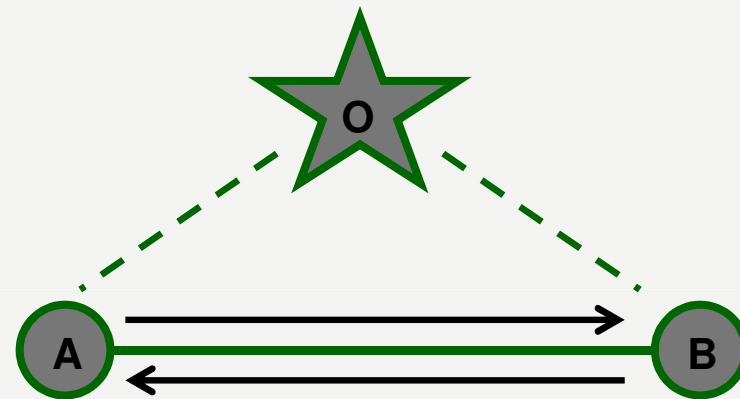⇨ 'distance' as metaphor (Dancygier & Vandelanotte 2009)

- source domain
  - two points separated in space
  - additional space in between
  - observer viewing both

- transfer to target domain

⇨ application to linguistic categories, structures, usage patterns

SOURCE DOMAIN

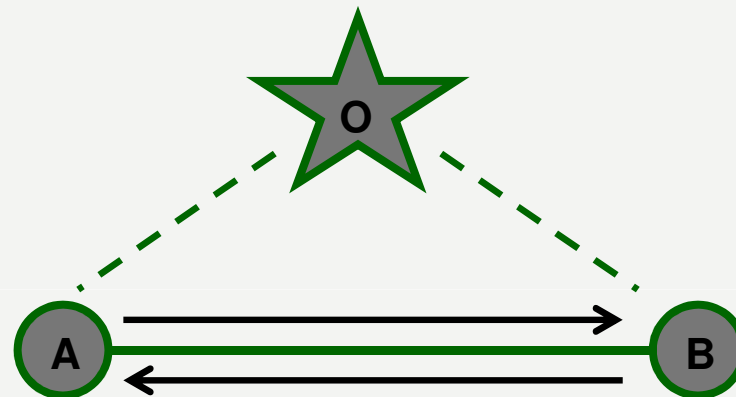**observer**

near / not near
    A   B   **locations**

direction   **space in-between**

TARGET DOMAIN

near / not near
-proximal
-distal

observer
-speaker
-addressee
-narrator
-character

locations
-origo
-self
-other

direction
-presupposition
-inference

space in-between
-space
-time
-knowledge
-factivity

⇨ Application to the linguistic analysis of different levels of language.

3. Elaboration of 'distance'

- distance in language

  - form and meaning

    – morphology (e.g. verbal and nominal categories)

    – lexicon (e.g. egocentric elements)

    – syntax (e.g. embedding structures)

    – pragmatics (e.g. terms of address, imperatives)

  - interpretation, text and interaction

    – point of view

    – text and discourse structure

    – politeness

    – irony

3. Elaboration of 'distance'

'Distance' emerges as relational notion that may be interpreted differently, according to the conceptual and linguistic levels it applies to.

3. Elaboration of 'distance'

⇨ aim of this conference

contribute to a more precise understanding of the nature of 'distance' as structuring factor both on the level of the language systems and in its functioning and interpretation on the utterance and discourse level

4. Contributions

- 'distance' involved in

    - spatial and temporal categories

    - construction of point of view

    - text and discourse structuring

    - social interaction

4. Contributions

- 'distance' involved in

  - spatial and temporal categories

    - **Evangelia Adamou**: *Distance in tensed nominals: a typological perspective*

    - **Imke Mendoza**: *Distance in discourse. Evidence from Polish, Russian and German*

    - **Sonja Zeman**: *"Near" present, "distal" past, and 'future of fate': temporal distance and its perspectival effects on the textual surface*

4. Contributions

- 'distance' involved in

  - spatial and temporal categories

linguistic phenomena	manifestation of distance
nominal and verbal expressions and categories	space in-between → time reference → anaphoricity → epistemicity

4. Contributions

- 'distance' involved in

  - construction of point of view

    - **Grace Fielder***: Triangulation. Navigating distance in interaction*
    - **Barbara Sonnenhauser**: *Hear-say, inference, surprise: (self-) distancing in Balkan Slavic*
    - **Anastasia Meermann**: *Truncated perfect in Serbian – a marker of distance?*

4. Contributions

- 'distance' involved in

  - construction of point of view

linguistic phenomena	manifestation of distance
discourse markers, perfect-like forms	observer → positioning towards interlocutors and proposition

4. Contributions

- 'distance' involved in

  - text and discourse structuring

    – **Lieven Vandelanotte**: *The language of distance in grammar and discourse*

    – **Maxim Makartsev**: *Evidentials in Balkan Slavic and Albanian as a text-structuring device*

    – **Yoshinorii Nishijima**: *Rhetorical use of non-evidentials in the work of Frank Kafka*

4. Contributions

- 'distance' involved in

  - text and discourse structuring

linguistic phenomena	manifestation of distance
meta-linguistic expressions, narrational patterns	observer → text structuring → rhetorical effects

4. Contributions

- 'distance' involved in

  - social interaction

    - **Liljana Mitkovska, Eleni Bužarovska, Marija Kusevska**: *Macedonian 'da ne' constructions as distance markers*

    - **Tatiana Kuznetsova**: *Constructing distance in the world of blogs: who are the Others?*

    - **Galina Putjata**: *Concept of privacy and adjustment of proxemics in Russian, Spanish and French speaking immigrants*

4. Contributions

- 'distance' involved in

  - social interaction

linguistic phenomena	manifestation of distance
speech acts, blogs, gestures	near / not near → politeness → self vs. other → privacy

5. Prospect

⇨ illumination of the various facets of 'distance'

- as regards basis and components of the metaphor
- as regards its manifestation in language

5. Prospect

⇨ illumination of the various facets of 'distance'

- language of distance
- distance in language

… and, hopefully, a fruitful discussion and stimulation for all participants for their further research!

References

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