

Preface

This book is not a classic research paper in the sense that it does not offer an elaborated and complete analysis of one specific linguistic phenomenon. What it does instead is to ask many interrelated questions and provide some answers to them. Importantly, the offered answers should not be seen as complete and final solutions. The provided analyses are nothing but suggestions as to what a possible account could be like or what might be a possible direction to take. More specifically, this book is an invitation to all linguistically interested scholars, in particular young researchers, who like asking questions, wondering about seemingly simple things, and questioning standardly provided answers. The book is envisaged as a trip into a wide linguistic world. It starts with the simple questions: “What is tense?” and “What is future tense?” It shows that these seemingly straightforward questions turn out upon closer inspection to be quite puzzling. This is the more so since future tense can have temporal and also nontemporal interpretations. Major riddles concerning the so-called future tenses in Polish are presented against the background of comparable future constructions in other Slavic languages, mainly Slovenian and Bulgarian. To understand and later to solve these puzzles, the reader is invited to join the author on a scientific journey. We will be traveling through different smaller “linguistic worlds” such as typology and comparative linguistics, historical linguistics, theoretical linguistics (syntax and semantics), and neuro- and psycholinguistics. The individual chapters of the book represent these smaller linguistic realms. What is important however is that these smaller worlds do not exist in isolation but are all interrelated: insights coming from one specific research perspective (from one “linguistic world”) provide a foundation for another analysis (in a different “linguistic world”) as they make it possible to formulate a more precise research question, which can in turn be investigated from a different perspective to yield new insights and thus provide input for a further, more advanced analysis. This continuous process enables us to develop a better understanding of the future tense in general, and in the end to arrive at a more comprehensive view of the future tense in Polish and other Slavic languages. The reader will notice that by asking just one question and seeking to answer it, many other questions often emerge the answers to which

again lead to other questions. And even if the picture of the phenomena under investigation might seem to be blurred and confusing at first, it will gradually become clear. The reader will see that out of the apparent chaos, an increasingly coherent picture of the investigated phenomena will gradually emerge, thus allowing us to understand the initial puzzles better and better. While approaching a higher level of completeness and coherence, the present investigation will inevitably leave many questions open, thus necessitating further research on this and related topics. Maybe one interested reader or another will take up this challenge. This is what makes our work as linguists so fascinating. As a linguist you are in a way a world traveler, maybe not (always) in a physical sense, but you have the opportunity to travel around the world through different languages. But in studying the structure of languages, trying to understand the principles behind such structures, in seeking answers to linguistic puzzles, and in deriving far-reaching theoretical insights about the structure of grammar from the analysis of a small, well-defined empirical domain, a linguist is also in some ways a detective. So everyone who likes detective work is welcome to read this book. And perhaps the book will inspire one young scholar or another to enter this fascinating linguistic world.

Before starting our scientific adventure, let us clarify another question, namely: what linguistic prerequisites are needed in order to be able to join us on our journey? Knowledge of specific linguistic theories is not required, but a basic linguistic background would be welcome. Any unnecessary formalisms are avoided in the following text and, when needed, additional explanations are provided in footnotes or distinct subsections. This strategy has been chosen for two reasons. Firstly, since we will not be developing one particular analysis using one particular framework but rather will be discussing many different accounts assuming different frameworks, it seemed more reasonable to the author of the present book to provide additional explanations at places where such analyses are discussed instead of having an introductory theoretical background chapter at the beginning of the book. Secondly, since some (many) readers might already be familiar with the discussed frameworks, they can continue reading the main text and simply disregard explanatory comments in the footnotes. By contrast, a reader who might be less familiar with some particular approach will have the opportunity to read explanatory comments at relevant points and so be able to understand and follow the remaining text. The book also suggests a wide selection of different literature where the interested reader will be able to find more information about the topics under discussion. Additional information concerning the conducted ERP study (related to experimental material and statistical analyses) is provided in the appendices. A summary index of subjects at the end of the book is intended to make it easier for the reader to seek specific information.

Finally, a comment is in order about the abbreviations used in the gloss line in examples from languages other than English. Unless otherwise indicated, the abbreviations

viations used in the glosses follow the glossing conventions of the Leipzig Glossing Rules. The abbreviations used are listed on pages 15–17. In other cases, in examples quoted directly from other works, the original glossing conventions have been retained.

With these introductory remarks in mind, we can now begin our linguistic trip.

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