



# Language and Cognition

## Introductory

Although the philosophy of language has established itself as a separate philosophical discipline at a late date within the history of philosophy, language has been the inevitable object of philosophical reflection since the very beginning of the history of philosophy. To be sure, it was not often the independent subject of philosophical discussions, but it was nevertheless regularly considered within some philosophical disciplines such as ontology, logic, rhetoric, and poetics. Moreover, as the science of valid thinking, logic developed a concept of thinking that was closely tied to the use of language through the investigation of terms, propositions, and combinations of propositions into inferences, whereby special attention was paid to the issue of the truth value of propositions.

Hamann, Herder, Humboldt, and the German romantics began to develop the philosophy of language as a separate philosophical discipline in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They were all driven by the need to return to the issue of the original correlation of being, thinking, and speech that had fallen into oblivion in the preceding period in modern philosophy. However, the emergence and development of linguistics as a separate science of language was of decisive importance for the further development of the philosophy of language. At that time, linguistics was being developed as a scientific field of study in two ways: as language typology (Friedrich Schlegel, Wilhelm von Humboldt) and as comparative-historical linguistics (Franz Bopp, Jacob Grimm, *Junggrammatiker*), the latter of which was to confirm its position as the strongest branch of linguistics in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some time later, especially in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the prevailing positivism of comparative-historical linguistics found a serious opponent in the structuralism that was emerging in modern linguistics. Although the synchronic approach found many more adherents in structuralism than did the diachronic or historical approach, these two approaches were united in the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, the founder of structuralism in linguistics. The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw two linguistic movements that renewed the connection of linguistics to philosophy. The first of them was transformative generative grammar, whose author and most distinguished representative, Noam Chomsky, advocated the renewed study of the rationalist Port-Royal Grammar (1660) for the modern generative approach in the study of language and “universal grammar”. The second was cognitive linguistics, which strives to connect itself with philosophy as well as anthropology, psychology, neuroscience, and artificial intelligence into a multidisciplinary cognitive science.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, language became central to investigations in philosophy as well, and not only within one school of thought, but among its most dif-

fering and even opposed movements. One may therefore rightly speak about the “linguistic turn” that characterizes a significant part of modern philosophy based on the insight that thinking and language are both interconnected and perhaps even interdependent. This turning point has taken two main forms. On the one hand, it manifested itself within the analytic philosophy of language (Frege, Wittgenstein, the Vienna Circle) as the reduction of epistemological concerns to the problem of language, thereby developing a form of analysis of the logical structure of language, understood in principle nominalistically and in concord with the dominant scientific paradigm. On the other hand, Cassirer, and later Heidegger and Gadamer, but also the fields of phenomenology and philosophical hermeneutics developed, in accordance with Humboldt, a notion of thinking that is linguistically structured, and a notion of language as a medium for thinking that plays an important role not only in our cognition, but also in the formation of our conception of reality.

Modern linguistics pays great attention to the relationship between thinking and language. Following Herder, American linguists such as Edward Sapir see linguistics within the framework of anthropology and raise the question as to how the grammatical and lexical structure of a specific language influences the way its speakers think or form their concepts. The remarkably strong hypothesis that thought is dependent upon language was formulated by Benjamin Lee Whorf. In more recent times, cognitive linguistics has made the relationship between language and cognition the very core of its interest, thereby relating linguistics once again to philosophy.

Since many other sciences have begun to occupy themselves with language as the object of their research, e.g. psychology, sociology, semiotics, communicationology, biology, and neuroscience, some new interdisciplinary branches of modern linguistics have developed, each of which contribute to the study of the relationship between language and cognition from different viewpoints, e.g. psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, biolinguistics, and neurolinguistics.

Bearing in mind the development of investigations into and reflections upon language as outlined above, one of the main tasks of the international multidisciplinary symposium *Language and Cognition* within the 25<sup>th</sup> Days of Frane Petrić (Cres, September 25–28, 2016) was to examine the possibility of converging the philosophical and the scientific approach to language and speech by showing the limits and flaws of every reductionist approach, as well as by casting light on the conceptual framework within which science understands language from a philosophical perspective.

The following papers in English and German are based on a selection of English and German presentations held at this symposium, including both plenary lectures (Klaus Panther and Linda Louise Thornburg, and Mislav Ježić). Seven papers in Croatian from the same symposium are presented as published papers in the fourth journal issue of *Filozofska istraživanja* for the year 2017.

**Igor Mikecin**  
**Ljudevit Fran Ježić**