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A universal persuasive perspective

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A UNIVERSAL PERSUASIVE PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

Perspectivity is a natural and inherent mode of both constructing mental reality and producing language. In other words, imposing perspectives is to some extent what we must do when we speak, but to some extent it is a matter of choice that has significant communicative implications. The paper tries to explore the basic types of perspectivity that have a bearing on persuasive discourse.

Keywords

Persuasion, persuasive language, perspective, perspectivity

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Introduction

All languages can be treated as repositories of socially recognized ways of expressing particular mental intentions in the broadest possible sense. Those intentions may refer to "brute facts," but they also may reflect some "institutional settings" (Searle 1969, Tsohatzidis 2007). Those "institutional settings" are, on the one hand, socially recognized and expressed through language, but, on the other hand, language itself is constitutive in the process of those very social institutions coming to life and sustaining them. In other words, institutional settings presuppose "collective acceptance" of the rules that make up institutions. The relevant literature on what institutions are is ample, but it seems that without doing much harm to various positions on the subject, an institution may be thought of as a system of recognized patterns of behaviour that impose structure on some areas of human activity.

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In this broad sense of the term, *persuasion*, a social phenomenon, is an institution that is regulated by overt and implicit rules that are followed by speakers involved in the process of persuasion. A lot of them are obvious. If presented with a fact, as an element of an argumentative structure, one cannot just dismiss it. We simply follow the assumption of human rationality and we act within the limits delineated by the assumption. One may, of course, question the status of the opponent's claim, trying to show that what is being alleged as a fact is a mere opinion masquerading as a fact, but once the status of a claim is mutually recognized as a fact, the claim cannot be dismissed. What is left – if one wants to defend a position for which the fact is "inconvenient" – is an attempt to downplay the role of the fact, to show its irrelevance in the overall argument, or to counterbalance it with another fact that "weighs" more.

And yet, as we know, persuasion is only marginally based on presenting facts and simple calculations of the cumulative "weight" of facts presented by the parties involved. The essence of rhetoric is not finding the truth but gaining acceptance, as Schopenhauer puts it:

> The discovery of objective truth must be separated from the art of winning acceptance for propositions; for objective truth is an entirely different matter: it is the business of sound judgment, reflection and experience, for which there is no special art (2007:11).

And "winning acceptance" very often means just a skillful appeal to emotions or softening rational shields in order to smuggle in a perspective that is accepted for emotional rather than rational reasons. On the other hand, even those non-rational appeals may be either accepted or rejected, depending on whether one is "predisposed" to accept or reject them, following his idiosyncratic frame of reference against which such appeals are mentally evaluated. We constantly make such judgments, but we are still slaves to the institution of persuasion; the judgments may be ours, but they are reflections of what is socially accepted as possible persuasive paths. Such paths, naturally, are both culture- or language-specific and universal in the sense that they reflect what is recognized as a valid persuasive move, no matter what language is spoken or who speaks the language.

To say that all language is metaphorical or, for that matter, all language is communicative, is a communicatively empty statement. It is so, with all possible reservations, because any imaginable analysis of language, if it is to bring about any tangible results, or – in other words – to be formulated in terms of operational/procedural knowledge, has to be anchored in some distinctions. Without such distinc-

tions, no statements about language in general, or language in use, would actually allow us to say something new or something more about how language works. On the other hand, if only some language is postulated to be, say, metaphorical, and some is not, or some is more metaphorical and some is less, then distinctions can be drawn (whether it is actually the case or not is not an issue here), and – what follows – an analysis of what is or what is not, or what is more or what is less, metaphorical can be carried out.

And yet, even if communicatively or operationally empty, such statements predispose us to think about language and communication in a particular way. If one says, for example, that all language is essentially metaphorical, one communicates an important perspective that informs our overall approach to language and its analysis. And that means that new areas, so far neglected, obsolete or considered not worth investigating, are found interesting and promising. That also means that old problems and old answers are reformulated and the new perspective gives an insight into the nature of language that would not be possible if the old paradigm continued to reign supreme. Linguistics has witnessed such a process a couple of times, but let us just go back to one starting with the publication of *Metaphors We Live by* by Lakoff and Johnson (2003). As the publisher informs us on the inside flap:

> The now-classic Metaphors We Live By changed our understanding of metaphor and its role in language and the mind. Metaphor, the authors explain, is a fundamental mechanism of mind, one that allows us to use what we know about our physical and social experience to provide understanding of countless other subjects. Because such metaphors structure our most basic understandings of our experience, they are „metaphors we live by” – metaphors that can shape our perceptions and actions without our ever noticing them.

So no matter whether cognitivists see all language as metaphorical or not, emphasizing the role of metaphor in language has turned out to be a stimulus for a whole new range of research whose value cannot be overestimated.

What has been written so far refers just as well to perspectivation (the term "perspectivity" is also sometimes used) and perspective setting/taking in language. Perspective is an inherent mechanism in language use. To say something means to offer a perspective that either renders the speaker's point of view or is an attempt to impose a perspective on the hearer. In this sense, just saying that perspective is ubiquitous in language and is a common pervasive mechanism may be interesting not as a statement of a trivial fact about the language's very nature, but as a statement highlighting the need to look for com-

municative patterns that are meant to convey such and such meaning through such and such perspective/s.

There is, actually, nothing new in such a perspective on *perspective* in language. Trivially, if we take perspective to include structural choices, then investigating systematic patterns in mapping particular conceptualizations onto particular structural choices means investigating how meaning is reflected in (structural) perspectives. Nevertheless, perspective-setting and -taking is far more complex than that and needs a closer examination.

In the present article I focus in particular on one level of perspective setting, starting with the assumption that perspective setting is a multi-layered process in which the simplest elements (lexicon, structure, speech act, information distribution, etc.) are rather culture-specific, while at the most general level of metacommunication certain perspective patterns are universal. To do so I exclusively try to analyze and make references to persuasive language since it is evident that in this type of communication perspective serves an obvious aim. It remains true, however, that the following discussion of perspective in persuasive language applies, with all specific differences, to language used with other functions and for other purposes. But just as metaphor and metaphorical-ness are not self-evident concepts, neither is perspective, so it is necessary to clarify the basic notions.

Incidentally, using metaphor definitely means adopting a certain perspective, which – as cognitive linguists tend to emphasize – is often not a matter of choice but a necessity reflecting the metaphorical nature of the human mind. Conversely, language perspective is definitely a metaphorical concept that probably has its roots in the sense of vision and our ability to visualize things, but grasping even the basic mechanisms of language perspective requires going far beyond the simple parallels with visual perception.

Perspective in language use

Roughly speaking, perspective (in language) means a range of language choices that collectively constitute and reflect a mental state from/through which the content is presented. Perspective introduced in such a way is not external to the language but should be understood as an emergent structure that comes into being together with the message itself. Naturally, sometimes some elements of the structure are chosen especially for that purpose, and the central perspective-setting element is a stand-alone perspective-setting marker. Let us compare:

(1) *Do it*

(2) *Naturally, sometimes some elements of the structure are chosen especially for that purpose and the central perspective-setting element is a stand-alone perspective- setting marker*.

In (1) the implicit emergent perspective is that of a speaker who is in a position to give order/advice etc., to the hearer. In (2) *Naturally* creates the perspective in which what follows is taken as a matter of mutual consent to be obvious and unchallengeable. The examples show a couple of basic facts about perspective. First and foremost, any analysis of perspective is a matter of pragma-cognitive approach to language, an approach that emphasizes on the one hand the primarily mental nature of language embedded in human-specific cognition, and, on the other hand, the social nature of language as it is understood in pragmatics. Langacker comments on the issue in the following way:

> A cognitive approach to language can also be a pragmatic approach, for cognition figures crucially in linguistic behavior, social interaction, and contextual understanding. Despite its emphasis on conceptualization (broadly understood as encompassing all mental experience), cognitive grammar explicitly denies the existence of any sharp or specific boundary between pragmatic and linguistic considerations. It is in fact a pragmatically grounded theory of language in regard to its organization, its view of semantics, and even its account of grammar (Langacker 2009:77).

The examples also show that perspective-setting (just as perspective-taking) involves a high level of linguistic competence that allows the speaker to make a distinction between perspective that is explicitly expressed in language and perspective that is implicit in language. The implicitness/explicitness dimension is usually correlated with three types of choices that the speaker faces in presenting his message – choice of lexicon, structure and context. For a particular cognition that he wants to express he has to select lexicon and combine it into a meaningful utterance. But at the same time, as a result of his computation of textual and extratextual cues, discourse demands, and his overall interpretation of the communicative event, he decides what is to be made explicit in the utterance and what is to be left for the addressee to infer.

Another crucial characteristic of language perspective that is evident even in those simple examples is a relative difficulty of separating what in perspective-setting is a matter of natural or even necessary choice dictated by the conventions of language use from what is an actively introduced perspective by the speaker in order to bring about certain communicative effects. In other words, since there is no

perspective-less communication, there is no saying to what extent and in what ways the speaker does what he must and to what extent he actively imposes a perspective. This double nature of language perspective results from the fact that language both gives a systematic expression of human cognitions and serves as a mechanism regulating human interactions.

In the introductory paper to *Perspective and Perspectivation in Language*, Graumann and Kallmayer (2002:2) present two major conceptions of perspectivity:

• an epistemological conception as a general characteristic of human consciousness and knowledge as it has been initiated mainly (but differently) by Leibniz, Nietzche, Husserl.

• a social-interactional conception of perspective-setting and -taking as it was initiated by George Herbert Mead (1934) and Alfred Schutz (1962).

There is probably no saying whether, phylogenetically speaking, this general characteristic of human mind came first, and was the basis on which our ancestors could develop some forms of social interaction, or else whether it arose together with or within some rudimentary social interactions that were made possible only through the ability to assume and impose a new perspective on other members of the community. But, for sure, those two conceptions are complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

On the one hand, perspectivity is viewed as a general characteristic of human cognition. The totality of the external world, general experience, as well as individual external stimuli are not autonomous to the human mind, but are integrated within cognitive structures of an individual who is at the same time aware of the fact that these are his or her cognitions. The fact that "I" can experience my self as both the source and the aim of my experiencing the world allows me to accept and understand other perspectives as originating in selves other than me. On the other hand, even the basic forms of social interaction presuppose communicating perspectives. First of all, communicating anything means communicating, at the same time, the perspective of the source of the communication; and the awareness that there is no total overlap of perspectives that the interactants may have is not only *a priori* assumption but also the ultimate motivator for communication to take place at all. Secondly, it is only through mutual perspective-setting that any form of social cooperation is possible. One is acutely aware of the fact observing autistic people; here the essential problem is the inability of one part to conceive of somebody else's perspective in the broadest possible sense of the word.

All of the above boils down to a simple statement that language, communication, and knowledge – all of them – have a perspectival nature. And that means that perspectives expressed in/through language reflect necessary choices that constitute the very nature of language, and – at the same time – convey both very general facts about communication and knowledge that are imbedded in our language choices as well as particular, situation-specific assumptions reflecting this particular communicative event. Let us compare:

(1) *Do it!*
(1) *Do it, please!*
(2) *Do it! You CAN do it!*

The choices above reflect, first of all, a number of general facts about language that are mutually/socially shared. For example, they are based on the assumption that *do it* structure is conventionally used to express a directive speech act and that the nature of this speech act may be further specified by further language elaboration (Searle's IFID). So the absence of any elaboration in (1) may indicate that it is an order rather than a request, and the presence of *please* in (3) may indicate that it is a request rather than an order (although it may be just as well the other way round). But they also reflect (a mutually shared) perspective, or impose a perspective from which the speaker sees the whole situation. In (1) and (3) it is a perspective in which power or status differences make it possible/natural for the speaker to make an order or a request, while in (4) it is a perspective in which the speaker gives his assistance, encourages the hearer, assuming his indecision or lack of determination. All that is fairly well known, since I only use the notion of *perspective* to impose my perspective on what is discussed in pragmatics, so let me leave the final comment to Burkhardt:

> Utterances "count as" certain acts because the hearer is able to classify them, on the basis of their semantic, syntactic and situational features, as tokens of certain act types determinable and describable by act concepts. The "conditions of success" and the "felicity conditions" for the most part are but pragmatic reflection of semantic criteria (Burkhardt 1990: 124–125).

In analyzing what they call L-Perspectivation (language perspectivation as opposed to V(isual)-perspectivation) Stutterheim and Klein (2002) show conclusively that perspectivation comes into play at all levels of human language production. They claim that perspectivation permeates all four stages of this process: intake, update, forming

147

a discourse representation and constructing a linguistic form. Let us suppose that in the absence of any reaction to (1) the speaker decides to say once again:

(1) *Do it! Now or tomorrow, but do it. Such things can't be postponed for ever*

Here the perspective imposed is a lot more complex. The speaker has decided to involve a temporal dimension, along with the simple now/future distinction which situates the action to be taken within a temporal frame. And then the frame is used as a background for stating that in view of some rules/principles that they (the speaker and the addressee) adhere to, the action has to be performed (preferably [once again in view of the same rules/principles] closer to the NOW point on the scale). All those choices are expressive of an arbitrary perspectival choice in the social-interactional conception of perspective-setting and -taking. Firstly, the choice of the time frame as the background for further elaboration is arbitrary, and then how the frame is used is also arbitrary.

Despite the arbitrariness, such choices are restricted by the very nature of language. The authors enumerate the following constraints:

a. the partitioning of the text into main structure and side structures;

b. the assignment of specific meaning elements to the topic component or to the focus of a main structure utterance;

c. the 'filling' of various possible domains of reference within each main structure utterance;

d. the referential movement within the domains from one main structure utterance to the next (Stutterheim and Klein 2002).

All in all, it is clear that such choices in perspective setting are free and necessary at the same time; one has to make a decision about, for example, the main structure and possibly some side structures, but how it is done is a matter of free choice (within the limits that a particular language imposes).

The cultural level of perspectivation in persuasive language

So far we have been looking at possible sources of language persuasiveness that are inherent in language, emphasizing at the same time the role that cognition (cognitive construal and interpretation) plays in our understanding of what is being done by means of particular utterances.

This aspect of persuasive language reflects at least a couple of basic assumptions about language that – it seems – all cognitive linguist would subscribe to: (1) there is no boundary between language knowledge and general knowledge, (2) categories show prototype effects, (3) language is a network of interdependencies, (4) language is an inventory of conventional units, and (5) meanings are embedded in culture.

To realize how those basic claims are to be understood in the context of persuasive language, let us examine once again the same simple example. The claim that language knowledge and encyclopedic knowledge overlap means that in interpreting

(3) *Do it, please!*

one has to rely obviously on phonetics, phonology, grammar and semantics and also on the understanding of how this utterance fits into the various aspects of the interaction as well as general conventions regulating social life. This is the kind of knowledge that allows us to interpret the utterance as a sincere act of pleading, for example. The prototypical nature of language categories accounts for the fact that in some contexts (3) may be interpreted as a rather typical act of requesting and in some contexts a less typical act of ordering. The claim that language is a network of interdependences means that in interpreting the utterance we do not construe the meaning by simply adding constituent elements so as to arrive at accumulated meanings. In other words, we cannot just say that in interpreting the accumulative meaning of a string of lexical items we combine the meanings of constituent elements. It is even not enough to say that in doing so, we follow the famous statement by Firth: "You shall know a word by the company it keeps" and we recognize the fact that the crucial role in determining the semantic content is a matter of our realization of certain co-occurrence patterns. The claim emphasizes the fact that lexical elements are to be understood as nodes in a network of interdependences; *please* is such a node that activates a particular brain structure and through spreading activates "what we know about how *please* is used"; and that means, in turn, that we can interpret the whole utterance to fit the contextual demands against the whole background of linguistic experience that *please* brings in. The next claim, language is an inventory of conventional units, postulates that there are no procedures that allow a language user to correlate a particular situation with a particular utterance. In other words, hearing (3) one does not create a particular semantic representation but sees the utterance as a pattern reflecting his/social experience and by recreating

149

various aspects of this experience that are its correlates construes its possible meaning. And finally, since meanings are embedded in culture, *Do it, please!* as a type can be correlated with, for example, *Zrób to, proszę! Hazlo, por favor! Faites-le s'il te plait! Tu es, bitte!, etc.*, but real tokens used in all those languages, as a result of the assumptions about language expressed in claims 1–4, do not have the same meaning in the absolute sense. Perspectives that they impose are not correlates of the words used, but rather of respective experiences associated (activated) by seemingly corresponding words and patterns.

I don't think it necessary to go into any further details on the cultural level of perspectivation in language. Actually, it all boils down to a trivial fact that each language has its own patterns expressive of some perspectives, which – of necessity – are culture specific. At the same time, it is also obvious that a lot of such patterns may be analyzed on a more universal level. For example, particular types of speech act have a universal component (felicity conditions) and a number of language-specific manifestations typical of that particular language. Let us now move on to a more universal level of perspectivation.

The universal level of perspectivation in persuasive language

The universal level of language perspectivation refers to the meta-level in language at which certain universal extralinguistic assumptions concerning crucial facts about how social interactions are regulated operate. These facts are not actually facts about language but social facts. Essentially, persuasion is a social process in which an individual or a group tries to impose their perspective on another individual or a group. It is a social change (even if it happens in an individual brain) in which an intentionality of an agent is transformed into intentionality of others, but the change that has to be rooted in what society collectively considers to be valid, natural, and compelling basis for such a change to take place. To put it simply, the only way to persuade is to resort to mechanisms that are already there, that the other party recognizes and is ready to accept as a natural base for implementing or negotiating a change.

In the absence of such an axiomatic platform for persuasive processes we are eternally bound in the vicious circle of persuasion processes that have to be carried on ad infinitum. I want to convince you that A and in doing so I resort to B; but first we have to agree on B, so I resort to C, and so on. This problem in pragmatics has been referred to as *presumptive meaning* (Levinson 2000) *default reasoning* and includes

all types of "default meaning" – statistically obvious interpretation, highly predictable meaning, or information that is automatically re-trieved or activated. Essentially, various approaches to the problem seek the answer to the question where the boundary of our reliance on contextual knowledge is, where the "maximum cognitive benefit" is still justified by "cognitive effort", and where we have to stop inter-preting so that a desired level of what is communicated is achieved and the whole process is time- and cost-effective.

Persuasive communication is, obviously, restricted and regulated by the same demands, that is, in producing and interpreting persua-sive messages various default assumption operate in the same way, but in this case there need to be some additional assumption/s that regulate the change. It seems that there are at least three such mutu-ally recognized and shared (meta)assumptions that play the central role in persuasive discourse putting the brakes on our mental activi-ties, which would otherwise go on ad infinitum. Such assumptions must be, firstly, external, that is not initiated by the parties involved, and, secondly, have to be unquestionably compelling. To my mind, these mechanisms are captured by three theories:
1. French and Raven's model of social power
2. Brown and Levinson's Politeness theory, and
3. Fiske and Haslam's Relational Model theory

The now classic "The Basis of Social Power" postulates, originally five, and with later modifications, six sources of social power that are internalized on the social level. The authors present a model that re-flects internalized, that is, from the subjective point of view of the par-ticipants in an interaction, an objectively existing type of cultural re-ality that is either unquestionable or necessarily operating and as such not challenged by the participants. The authors enumerate the following types of power: coercive, reward, legitimate, referent, ex-pert, and informational. The model makes it possible to link the per-suasive value of language with socially stable conditions that serve as a natural "reference points", as the then gurus of persuasive commu-nication comment on the model:

> The French-Raven power forms are introduced with consideration of the lev-el of observability and the extent to which power is dependent or independent of structural conditions. Dependency refers to the degree of internalization that oc-curs among persons subject to social control. Using these considerations it is possible to link personal processes to structural conditions (Lazarsfeld and Men-zel 1961: 230).

So the persuasive value of

(1) *Do it!*
(3) *Do it, please!*
(4) *Do it! You CAN do it!*

depends crucially on whether one can be "punished" or "rewarded", or whether the speaker is perceived as an expert, an authority, a reliable source of information or a particular element within a hierarchically structured institution. There are, naturally, some reservations about whether the model reflects typical persuasive situations since it presupposes asymmetrical relationship between participants. But to cut a long discussion short, it can simply be indicated that it reflects a lot, if not the majority or all, of situations in real life when we engage, or are involved, in some sort of persuasive attempts (for a further, detailed discussion of prototypical and peripheral persuasion see: Seiter and Gass 2013).

On the linguistic level French and Raven's model can be easily correlated with Searle's notion of social institutions. Searle, who has been almost obsessively interested in socially embedded speech acts since *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (1979) was published, sees the interdependence of individual intentions (I-intentions) and collective intentions (We-intentions) as the foundation of social life itself. As Searle convincingly argues (Searle 2010), individuals are bearers of We-intentions, in the sense that all references to "group mind" or "group consciousness" are only metaphors and it is only in individual minds that collective "knowledge" can be accumulated.

Collective intentionality plays a large role in Searle's overall account of social reality. In *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995) collective intentionality is that which confers a function on artifacts and changes them into social facts. Pieces of paper function as money because we intend them to do so. Just as individual intentionality has the ability to change the world via speech acts, collective intentionality has, according to Searle, the ability to create social facts (Collective Intentionality – Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2014).

Be that as it may, French and Raven's model accounts for, as it has been said, "loaded situations", where – it could be argued – free choice is limited. While discussing persuasion we like to enjoy the comfort of being the sole source of the mental change that is brought about. We like to look at the process as a process involving autonomous individual or groups in which the decisions are equally autonomous. Levin-

152

son's theory and Fiske and Haslam's theory seem to focus more on such symmetrical communicative contexts.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory is fairly well-known, so there is no point in discussing its basic assumptions, but there are a couple of issues that are worth mentioning. First and foremost, the theory is known as politeness theory, but, as Gumperz notices in the introduction to *Politeness*, it actually touches upon the "foundations of human social life":

> A major reason for [interest in politeness], as the authors define it, is basic to the production of social order, and a precondition of human cooperation, so that any theory which provides an understanding of this phenomenon at the same time goes to the foundations of human social life (Gumperz 1987: xiii).

We may call the phenomena the authors describe politeness phenomena, but essentially, they write about two types of perspectives that are deeply anchored in social, or even biological, needs. Satisfying those needs, taking care of "positive" or "negative" face, is – to put it simply – imposing a perspective which either caters to the addressee's need to feel an autonomous individual, or a member of some social group. Incidentally, substantial part of all examples analyzed in *Politeness* are examples of persuasive language.

On the rhetorical level, using positive and negative politeness strategies is parallel to the concept of persuasiveness embraced by two Belgian researchers in rhetoric, namely C. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969). In their monumental *New Rhetoric* they try to present rhetoric as a theory of persuasion that relies on several basic principles. But despite their apparent simplicity, particular principles teach us that persuasive communication is rational if it recognises the fact that human cognition is the actual locus where consent is arrived at. Figures of speech have a rhetorical value only if in a particular context they may be used by a persuader as a means of identification with a particular audience. The basic concept they use is that of *presence.* It applies to presentation and selection of the content of persuasive messages in such a way that it takes into account cognitions of the addressee. In particular, it means that linguistic coding should make certain elements present in the cognitive structures of the addressee.

So from this perspective, *presence* is the presence of (although not necessarily very salient) the speaker's recognition of the hearer's basic needs, the persuasive value of which cannot be overestimated. Let us compare:

153

(4) *Do it. You CAN do it!*
(5) *Do it! Now or tomorrow, but do it. Such things can't be postponed for ever.*

In saying (4) the speaker decides to focus on (to impose the perspective related to) negative face, emphasizing the addressee's competence and abilities, while in saying (5) the focus is on the positive face, implying certain procedures that are either fairly universal or characterize a group.

While both French and Raven's model and Brown and Levinson's theory may better characterize both the context of a one-sided attempt to convince somebody else and an attempt to impose a perspective in a two-sided argument, Fiske and Haslam's theory is perhaps better suited to argumentation. The theory postulates four basic operational modes of interacting that are assumed when humans try to regulate social interaction. This is how Fiske comments on the model:

> Relational models theory is simple. People relate to each other in just four ways, structured with respect to (1) what they have in common, (2) ordered differences, (3) additive imbalances, or (4) ratios. When people focus on what they have in common, they are using a model we call Communal Sharing. When people construct some aspect of an interaction in terms of ordered differences, the model is Authority Ranking. When people attend to additive imbalances, they are framing the interaction in terms of the Equality Matching model. When they coordinate certain of their actions according to proportions or rates, the model is Market Pricing. Everyone uses this repertoire of relational capacities to plan and to generate their own action, to understand, remember, and anticipate others, to coordinate the joint production of collective action and institutions, and to evaluate their own and other's action. In different cultures, people use these four relational models in different ways, in different contexts, and in differing degrees. In short, four innate, open-ended relational structures, completed by congruent socially transmitted complements, structure most social action, thought, and motivation (Fiske 2004: 3).

To put it simply, the argument goes that what regulates our decision-taking processes are four templates that are implicitly assumed as a kind of background, or a yardstick, against which actions or decisions are measured. If what the model postulates is true, our actions are measured not in any objectively absolute sense, but always from within a system of assumptions that are natural (obvious, axiomatic) within a particular area of social interaction. The research shows that the elementary models play an important role in cognition including perception of other persons (Haslam 2004).

If one tries to argue in the following way:

(4) *Do it! You CAN do it!*

It is not clear what a particular frame of reference is for *CAN* to be interpreted more precisely. But within a particular set of contextual

assumptions, which may be further specified by accompanying co-text, the speaker makes a particular relational model a prominent perspective that he considers relevant:

(6) *Do it! You CAN do it! Everybody CAN do it!*
(7) *Do it! You CAN do it! You have the right to do it!*
(8) *Do it! You CAN do it! It's easy.*

The perspective in (6) may be Communal Sharing – the action to be taken is what we (humans, this particular group, etc.) do as a matter of course; in (7) the perspective may be that of Authority Ranking (your position in the group gives you the right to do so), or Equality Matching (everybody in the group has the same rights); in (8) the perspective may be that of Market Pricing (the action is beneficial and relatively cost-efficient).

An important corollary to this theory is that perspective setting in persuasive discourse operates on two levels. In a lot of cases the implicit relational model is unquestionable. In advertising, for example, the only perspective that the addressee takes for granted is that of Market Pricing (an add is good if it manages to highlight some benefits). But in some cases the relevant relational model itself may be the issue to be discussed. So in using perspective in persuasion effectively, the parties involved have to establish first the relevant model within which the issue can be further discussed.

But very often, there is no implicit model that both parties subscribe to, or – to be more precise – they both operate within the framework of different models, assuming [at the subconscious level] at the same time that their framework is the only one. Take a controversial issue like abortion. Typically, the issue is argued by two opposing parties who discuss the issue from within a certain set of assumptions disregarding the fact that the common basis (the axiomatic level) has not been established yet. Without such a basis the discussion leads unavoidably into a blind alley.

Incidentally, for a number of issues that are socially controversial there is no such a common platform (the abortion issue is, from this perspective, unresolvable). My assumption is, although I have not seen any explanation of the issue in sociological literature, that such models (mental and linguistic) evolved at a relatively early level of the species development, so they were naturally geared to solving problems that our ancestor faced. So the patterns entrenched in the cognitive and language structures are not suitable to solving problems created by modern civilization. The opportunity to use a life-support-

155

ing system, for example, makes us face decision that we are not prepared for in the sense that there are no fixed relational models that we collectively agree to embrace; in the absence of such models, some of us (as a rule, unconsciously, as something obvious and unchallengeable) choose this model, some that model, and, as a result, any argumentation (on the lower, factual level) is hardly possible.

Conclusions

Perspectivity definitely may be regarded as a mental and linguistic mechanism underlying persuasive attempts. Understood as a social-conceptual expression of agency, perspectivity operates on various levels at which language choices are made and fully reveals the dependence of linguistic (and behavioural) choices on socially-construed reality as it is entrenched in individual minds.

In particular, the persuasive potential of various utterances may be realized if the speaker skillfully activates a number of quasi-axiomatic assumptions about social reality, which are captured in the theories postulated by French and Raven, Brown and Levinson, and Fiske and Haslam. It is self-evident, however, that the discussion above is no more than a skeletal presentation of the potential that looking at persuasive language from the perspective of *perspectivity* may offer.

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157

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Jerzy Świątek – obecnie pracuje w Instytucie Filologii Angielskiej Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego; z WSE związany od 2011 roku. Prowadzi zajęcia dydaktyczne z językoznawstwa i pragmatyki komunikacji językowej, komunikacji międzykulturowej, przekładu i praktycznej nauki języka angielskiego. Zainteresowania badawcze obejmują teorię komunikacji, retorykę, perswazję i socjolingwistykę.

Streszczenie

Perspektywizacja (ang. *perspectivity*, niekiedy *perspectivization*) jest naturalnym i koniecznym sposobem konceptualizacji rzeczywistości i tworzenia komunikatów językowych. Oznacza to, że narzucanie perspektywy to w pewnym sensie konieczność, ale też w pewnym stopni kwestia wyborów mających istotne znaczenie komunikacyjne. W artykule autor stara się pokazać podstawowe obszary perspektywizacji, które mają istotny wpływ na wybory językowe w dyskursie perswazyjnym.

Słowa kluczowe

Perswazja, język perswazyjny, perspektywa, perspektywizacja