CULTURAL STUDIES' INQUIRIES

WHAT IS LANGUAGE NECESSARY FOR?
WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR A LANGUAGE?

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The aim of the paper is to sketch the answers to the two questions posed in the title, closely and directly interrelated as they are. I will first take a stance on the relationship between a natural language and animal codes on one hand and other phenomena considered part of culture on the other. I will subsequently present a list and short outlines of qualities comprising the essence of any language, both inherently constitutive and irreducible, responsible first for making the boundary between all the various sets of signals exchanged by various animal species and human speech less of a blurred line and more of a chasm, and secondly – for language being a distinguished and unique entity among other sign systems.

LANGUAGE FACULTY AS A SINGULARLY HUMAN PHENOMENON

Already at the outset, I must discard a conjecture which pervades contemporary anthropology, neurobiology and primatology, according to which languages used today by the variety of human communities are to have resulted from an evolutionary transformation or development of either various hooting sounds (as posited vocal theories), or expressive gestures (as posited in gestural theories) of the great apes, particularly chimpanzees and orangutans, for some experts claim that their genetic code is 90% identical with the human genome[1]. Hence, I contest the notion that

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[1] For all the various evolutionary theories of the origin of language, see among others: Leakey 1996: 38-138; Pinker 1995; Aitchison 1996; Żywiczyński, Wacewicz 2015.

there existed in the history of speaking beings a protolanguage, used either ca. 4 to 1.5 million years ago by Australopithecus or much later (evolutionary scientists still debate the dating), for as late as in the Palaeolithic Age – i.e. ca 35 thousand years ago – by hominids, supposedly a missing link between animal signals and human language. Various accounts of such protolanguage, claiming for instance that it originally comprised solely names of individuals and events and did not include relation descriptions[2], or envisioning the order of emergence of various notions in various ages, including those semantically simple and universal[3], are unscientific in the sense that they are unfalsifiable. Also the relative ease in shifting back the origins of the proto-speech without any linguistic arguments a million years back or several tens of thousands years forward must raise serious doubts. Regrettably, there is no direct pathway leading from observation of material remnants, incl. skulls, skeletons, primitive tools and similar artifacts, to conclusions regarding a phenomenon entirely devoid of physical features, i.e. language.

A significant insight into the structure of human speech enabled the linguists of the 20th and the 21st century to describe its necessary, definitional characteristics, and hence to discover the mechanisms governing its operation. Either a given code does possess the mechanism, causing us to automatically recognize it as a language similar to ours, or it is does not feature such machinery and no enhancement entailing additional elements or entire complexes thereof is able to alter that. Let us hark back to a seminal passage from Wilhelm Humboldt's *Über das vergleichende Sprachstudium, 13*, where he considered speech an inherently human phenomenon:

> (…) it will prove useless even if we spend thousands and thousands of years to invent it. (…) In order for a human being to understand a *single* word not merely as a sensual impulse, but as an articulated sound referring to a notion,

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[2] The hypothesis was submitted in a book by W. Calvin and D. Bickerton (2001).

[3] C. Goddard, A. Wierzbicka, H. Fabréga Jr. (2013: 60-79), distinguish six stages of such development of the NSM, i.e. Natural Semantic Metalanguage. First conceptual primes, viz. 'hands', 'legs', 'head', 'face' were to have emerged in the second stage of hominid development, ca. 4-3 million years ago, due to their development of upright posture.

the speech has to be completely inherent in the person: all its complexity included (quoted after: Scheler 1987: 3, 42).

A rational stand on the origin of language was adopted by Ferdinand de Saussure (2006), considered the father of modern linguistics. Indeed, he subscribed to the paradoxical principle of concurrent fluidity and stability of language in time and its changeability and immutability in space. He was persuaded that if one wants to learn of the origins of a given idiom, one has to research its contemporary state; thus, he emphasized that the language of our even most distant forefathers did not substantially differ from the languages human communities use today, for both in time and in space, unless a violent disruption occurs, it retains its continuity, even though it constantly undergoes transformation. The general linguistics envisaged by the Genevan scholar was to provide a confirmation that the essence of linguistic phenomena is:

the same everywhere and (…) is has always been the same, so that is completely wrong to believe that problem of the origin of language might be anything other than a problem of the change that it undergoes. It would be another matter altogether if one believed that other forces had once been at work in language of which we can get no inkling from what happens today. However, it would be an arbitrary and unconvincing hypothesis, which would in effect attribute to early humankind faculties or senses inherently different from those that we have today (de Saussure 2006: 105).

There is a striking similarity between the theses by de Saussure and the thoughts of John Lyons, a British linguist younger from the Genevan by almost eighty years, who writes in paragraph 1.7 (bearing a meaningful heading *There are no primitive languages*) of his renown work *Language and Linguistics. An Introduction*:

It is still fairly common to hear laymen talking about primitive languages and even repeating the discredited myth that there are some peoples whose language consists of a couple of hundred words supplemented by gestures. The truth is that every language so far studied, no matter how primitive or uncivilized the society using it might appear to us in other respects, has proved upon investigation to be a complex and highly developed system of communication. Of course, the whole notion of cultural evolution from barbarism to civilization is itself highly questionable. But it i not

for the linguist to pronounce upon its validity. What he can say is that no correlation has yet been discovered between the different stages of cultural development through which societies have passed and the type of language spoken at these states of cultural development. For example, there i no such thing as a Stone Age type of a language; or, as far as its general grammatical structure is concerned, a type of language that is characteristic of food-gathering or pastoral societies, on the one hand, or modern industrial societies, on the other. (…) In the course of the nineteenth century linguists came to realise that, however far back one traced the history of particular languages in the texts that have come down to us, it was impossible to discern in them any signs of evolutionary development from a more primitive to a more advanced state (Lyons 1981: 27-29).

Finally, to conclude this section of my account I will mention the position of Andrzej Bogusławski and Ewa Drzazgowska (2016), the authors of a two-volume work on the history of linguistic thought, who refer to physiological considerations on the origin of language of the post- or neo-Darwinian current as mere conjectures whose 'nature is that of ludicrous anecdotes or misguided speculations' (ibid., Vol. I: 28) and follow in their book the strategy developed by the Société de Linguistique de Paris. In 1866, the society interdicted any debate about the origin of language, deeming it not a serious issue, mainly attracting lunatics and fantasists.

LANGUAGE – A PREREQUISITE FOR CULTURE

From various textbooks and at times even from original monographs of more scholarly nature, one occasionally learns that language being, as it may, an inherent element of culture is nevertheless one among many, incl. institutions and activities such as dance, painting, crafts and fashion. This is the image especially conjured up by considerations of various typologies of signs, which commonly resort to treating phrases of language as a subset of a shared category, located at the same level as symptoms or indices (such as tracks of an animal on the snow), icons (for instance someone's caricature) and symbols (for instance a white or red flag hoisted on the beach) (see: Bojar 1991: 31; Bobrowski 1998: 43-44; Łuczyński, Maćkowiak 1999: 10-12; Przybylska 2003: 12-18; Grzegorczykowa 2007: 15-21). To a certain extent, the state of affairs presented above is due to the influential force of the formulation provided in *Course in General Linguistics*, a work conceiving of semiology, i.e.

a newly designed science of signs which was to become a section of general psychology and focus, besides natural language, also on other sign systems (de Saussure 1959: 16). Though the work mentioned entails an indication that the new discipline should be subjected to linguistics, as languages used by people are the most common and the most complex of codes (ibid.: 44), what was imprinted in the minds of a large number of the readers of *Course…* was the appreciation of other semiotic systems on par with human speech.

Original writings by F. de Saussure leave no doubt as to the fact that the scholar considered natural language to be an institution distinguished from among others, of a nature that 'all other human endeavors, with the exception of writing, can only misguide our concept of its essence were we unlucky enough to trust in the value of their analogy' (ibid.: 199). Moreover, he added that whoever sets foot in the domain of language shall be deprived of any juxtapositions and comparisons 'with either celestial or earthly phenomena' (ibid.: 206). For language is the only semiological system which 'has to face the challenge of time' (ibid.: 242), simply because it is a subject to trans-generational transmission.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, a researcher commonly known to have been inspired by de Saussure's thought, in an interview with Georges Charbonnier underscored the fact that the line of demarcation between nature and culture is set not by the presence of instruments, as often pointed out by anthropologists, but of articulate speech. For language is:

> (…) the most perfect of all those cultural manifestations which, in one respect or another, constitute systems, and if we want to understand art, religion or law, and perhaps even cooking or the rules of politeness, we must imagine them as being codes formed by articulated signs, following the pattern of linguistic communication (Charbonnier 1969: 151).

In a similar way the relationship between language and other cultural codes was discussed by Roman Jakobson (1971: 698), who advised researchers of various systems of communication not to forget that:

> (…) language is for all humanity the primary means of communication and that this hierarchy of communicative devices is necessarily reflected as well in all other, secondary types of human messages and makes them in various ways dependent upon language, namely, on its antecedent acquisition and

on the human usage of patent or latent verbal performances to accompany or interpret any other messages.

Still more emphatically, for in a purely formal manner, the relationship between natural language and other semiotic systems was phrased by Andrzej Bogusławski. In several of his works (Bogusławski 1988; 2013; Bogusławski, Drzazgowska 2016, Vol. I: 18-20), he presented an argument ruling out the existence of any common ground between what is idiomatically called signs by laymen and language expressions that would never be referred by common language users as signs. He also submitted a hypothesis that between signs (such as, for instance, a whistle signaling the departure of a train) and language expressions there is a unidirectional implication, in the sense that a sign, as it is colloquially referred to, is established by virtue of language usage and not the other way around. What is more, the function of signs can also be assumed by isolated elements, such as, say, a black banner hung upon the university gate, signaling the funeral of one of the professors, whereas language expressions owe their existence solely to the oppositions they enter with other units. From such a point of view, any generalization framing language expressions and signs as classes of the same order, as well as those reducing the former to the latter, would inevitably lead to an infinite regress. Thus, Bogusławski's formal argument unequivocally entails that a prerequisite of mankind developing any cultural phenomenon or code, as well as interpreting any fact or matter of affairs in terms of signs, i.e. establishment of any process of semiosis, is the operation of language.

After these considerations, aimed at reminding the reader the real, for grounded in logical reasoning, relationship between the speech and all other intellectual faculties and developments of man, I will now turn to the discussion of the basic properties which are necessary for any language, thus enabling us to distinguish it not only from animal codes, but also from dependant on it secondary semiotic systems used by people to structure the cultural space. At the same time, one has to differentiate between the so called language universals, i.e. properties inherent in every human idiom without exception[4], from the linguistic qualities discussed here, the latter being determined logically. It is only these that will be the object on my focus

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[4] A list of such universals can be found, among others, in: Hockett 1950: 1-29.

here. The above sets differ in their range. For instance, all languages use sound as the carrier of messages, even though not only is it a superficial element in the process of communication, but, further still, in a specific understanding of the issue, it is entirely alien to the nature of language (de Saussure 2006). The point being that language (*langue*) understood as inherently incorporeal, interpersonal and constituted by a system of oppositions – leaves no room for individual physics-based phenomena. These can only be observed in single acts of speech (*parole*), a manifestation of the speaker's will. In fact, though sound is the most convenient means of transferring meaning, one should not forget that deaf people are perfectly able to communicate using another, i.e. manual and spatial form of expression.

DOUBLE DIVISION OF LANGUAGE

An indefeasible property of a natural language is its double division or – as it is sometimes phrased – its double articulation (from lat. *articulus* – 'particle'). The quality, logically related to the matter of linear nature of language expressions boils down to the fact that out of a constant flow of speech one can separated units of two kinds: firstly, the bilateral ones, in the sense that they have both the layer of expression and the layer of content; secondly, those that serve to differentiate meanings, their function being therefore diacritical, conveying no meaning by themselves. The issue of double division was most succinctly put in an important statement by a French structuralist, André Martinet (1960: 17-22).

Products of the first division (first especially in terms of hierarchy of importance) share a common quality of significance, but they differ in that they may belong to various subsystems or represent various ranks of expressions. For instance in a phrase: *Oto nasza pływalnia* ['Here, our swimming pool'] we can single out the predicative segment *oto* ['here'], distributively operating as a finite form of a verb, and the noun phrase *nasza pływalnia* ['our swimming pool']. Both these strings are of bilateral nature. The analyzed whole can also be divided directly into simpler elements, i.e. the words *oto*, *nasza*, *pływalnia*, i.e. at the level of lexical items. Finally, without leaving the domain of the first division we can indicate the smallest units of meaning in the considered example: *oto*, *nasz-*, *-a*, *pływ-*, *-alń-*, *-a,* each of these constituting actualization of the respective original

morphemes[5] (/oto/, /nasz/, /pływ/), word building ones (/alń/ – for forming names of places) and grammar ones (/a/ – feminine singular nominative case ending). In the second division, the string unfolding either in time (in an utterance) or in space (in a written text) we divide into unilateral units, that is phones: *o, t, o, n, a, š, a, p, ł, y, w, a, l, ń, a*, constituting realizations of specific phonemes (in a written text they are represented by appropriate letters or their combinations).

The double articulation of utterances and hence of language allows for the combinatorial feature of the system, thus ensuring its economy, simultaneously minimizing the user's effort involved in remembering huge amounts of meanings and oppositions they form. Using a relatively small number of particles of signification natural language can construe millions of lexical units; on the other hand, a couple tens of phonemes constitutes the expressive plane for all its bilateral elements. In the aforementioned paper, Jakobson (1971: 707) emphasizes that 'rich repertoire of definitely coded meaningful units (morphemes and words) is made possible through the diaphanous system of their merely differential components devoid of proper meanings (distinctive features, phonemes, and the rules of their combinability)'.

Such a twofold structure, a necessary quality of human speech, can be found in no other semiotic system.

DOUBLE DEMARCATION IN LANGUAGE

Additionally, any establishment laying claims to the status of natural language has to comprise of two classes of units, i.e. on one hand expressions constituting its vocabulary and on the other – operational units (see: Bogusławski 1978b) responsible for its grammar. Such features ensure the generative and creative character of the code. It is that very quality that enables users to transition from the *langue* – the system of elements stored in the collective memory of a given ethnic community that every language user draws upon – to the *parole*, i.e. individual utterances comprising linear sets of elements selected out of the vocabulary and structured according to grammar by virtue of sender's individual decision. Using the terminology

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[5] At this point Martinet (1960) uses the term 'monem'.

devised by de Saussure's, one could also speak of transferring from the associative (or paradigmatic) to syntagmatic relations. Jakobson, in turn, would phrase the process in terms of alternating between the axis of selection and the axis of combination.

Such double demarcation of language liberates us of the necessity to use ready-made sentences in a limited, though relatively large, class. It is difficult to even imagine such situation in practice. The discussed quality enables language users to benefit from a large but finite number of elements in order to generate infinite number of utterances, each of these being a unique and creative act, regardless whether it is an original poem or, say, the simplest answer to a question.

PROPORTIONALITY

The number of lexical and operational units of a natural language must be large enough to allow for its proportionality. It is so because the mechanism of human speech is essentially a matter of proportional sets. In the fields of philosophy and linguistics, the feature has been underscored by numerous authors since antiquity[6]. Among them a special mention is due to de Saussure, who claimed that language is nothing more than relations of relations, that it comprises solely oppositions, i.e. differences and identities, that it is a form not substance, its character being algebraic. He expressed a belief that one day it will finally be discovered that the linguistic values and relationships they enter 'can, as a matter of course, be expressed by mathematical formulae' (de Saussure 2006: 143). Independently of de Saussure and in a still more precise manner the essence of linguistic identities was conceived of by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922: theses: 3.141; 4,03; 4.032) and *Philosophische Grammatik* (1989: 297; 315-318). Within the Polish theoretical linguistics, this constitutive feature of language was on numerous occasions greatly emphasized by A. Bogusławski (1993).

The truth that everything in language rests upon proportions transpires in various ways throughout: in the history of any given idiom, in its everyday operation, in the process of speech acquisition by the youngest members

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[6] A comprehensive account of the manner analogy and proportionality have been treated within the linguistic and philosophical thought can be found in: Bogusławski, Drzazgowska 2016, Vol. 1: 356-367.

of any community. Let us choose a random example: the Polish *czytać* ['to read'] is to *czytał* ['he read'] what *biegać* ['to run'] is to *biegał* ['he ran'], what *chwytać* ['to catch'] is to *chwytał* ['he caught'] or *śpiewać* ['to sing'] to *śpiewał* ['he sung']. Between such analogous forms, there are in language, as Jerzy Kuryłowicz would put it, *distances égales* – equal distances (Kuryłowicz 1949). The names such as *ładowarka* ['charger'] or *niszczarka* ['shredder'] were coined according to a regular pattern of the Polish language, that is by complementing the appropriate verb root with a suffix *-arka*, as attested by numerous proportional fours, sixes and eights, etc., thus: *spawać : spawarka* ['to weld' : 'welding machine'], *wiercić : wiertarka* ['to drill' : 'a drill'], *zamrażać : zamrażarka* ['to freeze' ; 'freezer'], *suszyć : suszarka* ['to dry' : 'drier'], *ładować : ładowarka* ['to charge' : 'charger'], *niszczyć : niszczarka* ['to shred' : 'shredder']. The ever more common feminine forms such as *filozofka* [fem. 'philosopher'] and *geoložka* [fem. 'geologist'] are also derived according to the proportional model, embedded in the minds of the speakers. All innovations, both those within the norm and the beyond normal are by their nature analogical. The Poles keep using the incorrect infinitive form **wziąść* ['to take'], as they remember words such as *prząść* ['to spin'], *siąść* ['to sit'] and *trząść* ['to shake']. French children, as demonstrated by de Saussure, use an erroneous form of the past tense *je *venirai*, created from the verb *venir*, for the form conforms to the pervasive proportion, one of many embedded by language in our minds, in this case: *punir : punirai, partir : partirai, finir : finirai, mentir : mentirai*, etc. The form *honor*, known from classical Latin, replaced the former nominative *honos*, for once again the rule of identification applied: *victor : victorem = orator : oratorem = x : honorem*, from which it can be inferred that *x* should be replaced with *honor* (it is a well known example given in: de Saussure 1959: 163), even if it is an analogical and not strictly proportional alignment[7].

The systemic nature of language, oftentimes defined in academic textbooks in an oversimplified and altogether naive manner, cannot be framed and adequately explained without stating its necessary connection to the rule of proportionality. As mentioned above, natural language does not feature isolated elements. That circumstance distinguishes its units

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[7] However, the words *orator* and *victor* have different endings than *honor*; moreover, they refer to people and not abstract notions.

from among other signs originating in other cultural planes. Moreover, the proportionality of language also rules out any analogies with animal signals; otherwise one would have to assume that just like humans, animals are able to perceive the world in terms of differences and identities, hence – also to perform such sophisticated activities as coining of neologisms, word plays and complex logical operations.

Users being aware of the fact that a given system includes proportional patterns makes them perceive specific utterances not as a series of undifferentiated sounds (as is the case for instance with animal sounds, indivisible, as they are, into operational segments), but as a string in which subsequent portions of sound are related to appropriate portions of meaning. The expressions extracted by virtue of differences and identities are concrete language entities, constituting its lexical and morphological subsystems[8].

In the opening of this section, I submitted that every natural language must include a number of elements large enough to allow for operation of the proportionality requirement. However, de Saussure (2006) himself, though able to capture the essence of the mechanism of speech in such an ingenious manner by conceptualizing it as algebraic systems, was wrong to claim that for a language to come to existence only two forms are needed (for example *ba* and *la*), which would be able to organize all its necessary meanings on either one or the other side of there. The prerequisite number of forms and meanings related thereto cannot be lower than four, as only in such circumstances can one talk about a proportional four (see: Bogusławski 2009).

MEANS NECESSARY IN A LANGUAGE

I would like to devote the final part of the paper to presenting a short account of language stock of expressions necessary for generating any utterances and other means essential for that purpose.

1. Predicative and referential expressions

Speaking – as insightfully demonstrated by John L. Austin (1962), a representative of the British analytical philosophy – is constituted of many

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[8] For more about adequate delimitation of an utterance string see among others: de Saussure 1959: 102-106; Bogusławski 1976, 1978a, 1996.

different activities. However, two of them are absolutely fundamental, that is first of all the act of reference, i.e. the relation between what is being said and the relevant objects in the world, and, secondly, act of predicate (or stating), i.e. ascribing to a given object a series of qualities. In other words, speaking is pointing to objects in the world and characterizing them in terms of something. For instance, in a sentence: *Janek pracuje* ['Janek is working'] we point to a known person, named Janek, and we predicate of him that at the moment of speaking he is in the process of performing some work. Each fulfillment of both these acts requires a set of specialized language devices. On one hand, the speakers must have at their disposal referential or deictic expressions, such as proper names, various pronouns and articles, which enable us to talk not only about the things within the range of the index finger, while on the other – predicative expressions (independent from the above) constituted by various parts of speech. It is not very difficult to imagine a language bereft of a certain class of predicates, like, for instance, what we refer to as nouns, or even more so of what we call conjunctions; however, the distinction between deictic and predicative phrases must be kept, lest there be a threat of destabilization of the speech act. Moreover, it is of no consequence here that there are no pure indices in language – of the kind that would be entirely devoid of any predicative content, as even names are not free of some elementary meaning; it is the dominating position of one of those functions that allows for a clear-cut opposition.

2. Expression of the object and meta-object level

Every language, apart from the expressions for representing phenomena of the reality outside the language, must feature means of speaking about speaking, i.e. referring to other occurrences within the very language system[9]. Once again, it is a quality of the kind one would vainly look for in animal codes. Great apes certainly are able to signalize to their caretaker that they desire to receive food, they are however unable to formulate messages as to those very signals. It is a result of the fact, as underscored by A. Bogusławski in his linguistic theory, that animals much like humans

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[9] That property of the language had already been observed in Ancient India, ca. 500 years BC. For the history of considerations of the meta-language see: Bogusławski, Drzazgowska 2006, Vol. II: 486-522.

are in possession of some knowledge about the world, but they are not aware of their own knowledge, for they lack self-reflection.

In a natural language, there is not only the possibility to perform consideration of the system as a whole (that is the nature of my current paper), but also on the various elements of its code (e.g. *The word 'cat' is monosyllabic*) as well as already performed utterances (e.g. *'The word »cat« is monosyllabic' – is a good example of a meta-utterance*). The operations indicated above are performed within the *parole* by virtue of unspecific means; however, in the language itself (*langue*) we can find specialized elements performing metatextual functions. For in the stock of its expressions, an important place is given to units that in terms of their semantics constitute concise one-word commentaries on the speech activities performed at the time. In the Polish language such role is played by particles, the kind of: *raczej* ['rather'], *chyba* ['maybe'], *może* ['perhaps'], *bynajmniej nie*[10] ['not at all'], or a more distinctive meta-texts in the form of: *krótko mówiąc* ['in brief'], *innymi słowy* ['in other words'], *by tak rzec* ['so to speak'] and other similar expressions.

The impulse for researching meta-language within the domain of linguistics was provided by the achievements of great philosophers of the 20th century, particularly of Alfred Tarski (1933), who, while developing his theory of truth, assumed that knowledge of a given natural language implies the knowledge of its meta-language, which in turns implies the knowledge of its meta-meta-language, i.e. the ability to refer to expressions as the object of current discussion and transferring expressions from object to meta-level while retaining their meaning.

3. Means for transferring knowledge and communicating truth

The basic function of the language is the one referred to as symbolic, representative or referential. For various linguistic units are able to represent relevant objects in the reality both within and without the language, as well as all relations between these objects. Whereas all the various realizations of the system in the form of specific utterances serve primarily cognitive function. The main point of using a language in an individual act of speech is

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[10] The three particles of the mentioned series constitute minute stories informing of the speaker's inadequate knowledge to assert whatever follows.

to convey a portion of knowledge to the receiver. Language communication is first and foremost sharing knowledge with interlocutors. Effects such as manifesting one's emotional states, pressurizing the receiver, achieving phatic or poetic goals – all constitute secondary superstructures erected upon the cognitive aspects.

The research on reconstructing the system of simple and universal notions performed in various academic centers upon linguistic material differing fundamentally in terms of structure, provide persuasive arguments that one of the basic *indefinibilia* is a notion related to the Polish verb *wiedzieć, że__*, the French *savoir que__*, the English *know that__*, the Russian *znat' čto__*, etc. Bogusławski, having devoted to cognitive aspects of natural language his major works (1998; 2007), points not only to the explanative power of the notion of knowledge (a reflection of the fact that it is a component of a vast majority of compound phrases of various languages), but also to the fact that each meaningful statement possesses an epistemic implication. What it means is that a logical use of a sentence *p* implies that *someone knows that p*.

What is more, every asserted statement, that is one uttered in all seriousness and with the accompanying experience of certainty, additionally one that can be related using an emphatic phrase *ktoś powiedział, że__* ['someone said that__'], contains the so-called truth-claim, i.e. a specific attitude of the sender towards the truthful nature of their utterance. This essential element does not exhibit any segmental expression, the fundamental role being played here by prosodic devices, associated predominantly with the cadence intonation. Epistemic implication and truth-claim make speaking without any contact with knowledge and truth – a virtual impossibility.

In a paper suggestively titled *Veredicum laudare necesse est, vitam sustinere non est necesse* Bogusławski (2005) points to the fact that truth has a privileged position within language. It is logically distinguished in relation to goodness (thus also to virtues such as: kindness, mercy, magnanimity) as well as to beauty. He grounds his thesis upon an observation, supported by a logical argument, that complete and irrevocable approval for consciously disseminated untruth is self-contradictory, whereas the same kind of approval of truth does not exhibit any contradictoriness. For whoever approves of untruths uttered by another, cannot at the same time approve

of what from his or her point of view is true, i.e. their own positive evaluation of the falsities expressed. Such asymmetry does not apply to any other values and anti-values.

The linguistic primacy of truth over goodness and beauty finds corroboration in the data gathered within various languages. Cogent examples provided by Bogusławski are a testament to the fact that truth proves strikingly independent of other values. The sentence: *It would be beautiful/good, were it true* is not only perfectly acceptable, but – further still – it is often used, whereas an utterance: **It would be true, were it beautiful/good* has to be considered unacceptable.

Speaker's deliberate failure in terms of the truth of his or her utterance results in a creation of an inappropriate and harmful image of a related fragment of reality in the mind of the receiver, which, in turn, is associated with a risk of the latter's willingness to act inadequately. The implications of falsehood are therefore far-reaching both in the practical and the axiological perspective. Entire renouncement of truth within human communication, resulting in a breakdown of mutual trust, would threaten the foundation of language and eventually lead to the annihilation of social life. That is most certainly the reason why there is not a single ethical system which would treat telling the truth and untruth as an indifferent matter.

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In this short article I was able to signal only a selection of aspects related to the issue of necessity within natural language. Recapitulating my considerations, I would like once more to underscore the fact that it is an institution of the sort that cannot be juxtaposed with any other communication system whether in the realm of nature or culture. Even the trivial and – seemingly – purely structural properties of language introduce us directly and irrevocably into the reality of fundamental ontological, epistemological and axiological issues.

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Summary

The paper marks an attempt to answer two closely interrelated questions: What is a natural language necessary for and, conversely, what is necessary for a language? The first part presents a thesis that there exists a chasm between human speech and animal codes – a chasm which cannot be leveled by explanations of evolutionary nature. A series of ideas of distinguished scholars are referred advocating the logical primacy of language in relation to all other semiotic systems that create the space of culture. In the second part of the article, the inalienable properties of language are discussed, those that determine its essence and, at the same time, the uniqueness with respect to both the animal signals and all other sign systems. These features include: double demarcation, duality, proportionality, the possession of reference and predictive expressions, metalinguistic and metatextual tools, as well as tools for communicating the truth and knowledge of the world.