Current Trends in Greek Linguistics

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Edited by

Georgia Fragaki, Thanasis Georgakopoulos
and Charalambos Themistocleous

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INTRODUCTION

GEORGIA FRAGAKI,
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AND CHARALAMBOS THEMISTOCLEOUS

Current Trends in Greek Linguistics is a collection of fifteen papers written by junior researchers of Greek linguistics. Our aim in editing this volume has been to highlight the ongoing linguistic research taking place in Greek. The collected papers attempt to look into issues that have already been discussed in the literature from a fresh perspective and bring to the fore aspects of the Greek language that have not been extensively examined so far. The authors follow both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, as well as a variety of theoretical frameworks, including cognitive linguistics, formal linguistics, corpus linguistics, variational sociolinguistics, critical discourse analysis etc. Through the application of theoretical concepts and the analysis of empirical data, the papers address a wide range of topics such as lexical temporal expressions and the conceptualisation of time, the subjunctive mood and its semantic features, adjective evaluation, strategies of verbal humour, the role of social variables, media and political discourse, segmental and supra-segmental phenomena such as prosody, tonal structure and hiatus resolution, aphasic speech, and the teaching of lexical clusters and idioms. It should be noted that the papers were peer-reviewed in several stages and this process contributed significantly to the exchange of ideas and the development of the arguments presented by the authors.

The book is divided into four sections: *Aspects of Meaning*, *Textual and Sociolinguistic Approaches*, *Phonetics and Phonology* and *Clinical Linguistics and Language Teaching*. The first section includes three chapters dealing with different aspects of meaning. On theoretical as well as on empirical grounds, the contributors of this section try to throw some light on three thorny issues of the current semantic agenda, that is the interpretation of lexical temporal expressions, the conceptualisation of time and the semantic properties of the subjunctive mood.

In the first chapter, Kostopoulos investigates prepositional, adverbial and nominal temporal constructions and offers an elaborated account for these expressions. The empirical data, which provide the basis for testing the validity of the assumptions made in this paper, come from tales and legal reports. By taking a cognitive semantics perspective and by arguing against a formal semantics approach, he shows how the interaction of such factors as the plasticity of a mental space, subjectification and accessibility to inferences contribute to the interpretation of lexical temporal expressions.

In Chapter Two Anna Piata studies the relationship between varying degrees of conventionality and the conceptual structure of time. The author builds on Fauconnier and Turner's Conceptual Integration Theory and provides a refinement of their theory, by taking into account the conceptualisation of time in different genres, namely newspaper articles and poetic discourse, taken from two respective corpora. In investigating the conventional and creative character of time expressions, this study puts forward three complementary criteria for detecting the degrees of conventionality of a temporal expression. As the analysis shows, both conventional and non-conventional expressions of time share the same underlying conceptual structure, yet the latter is creatively exploited in the case of poetic discourse and thus manifests emergent structure. Finally, an important finding of the study is that a creative discourse type such as poetry values the form-meaning relationship as an important player in meaning construction.

Konstantinos Sampanis aims at defining the semantic properties of the Modern Greek subjunctive mood with respect to the present indicative and the future indicative. In particular, it is suggested that the semantic distinction between these three verbal categories (namely the present indicative, the future indicative and the subjunctive) can be captured by assigning different values (plus /+/ or minus /-/) to the semantic features *assertion* and *realis*. Along with this analysis, Sampanis discusses some aspects concerning the mood characteristics of the particle *na* + verb construction in Modern Greek, as well as the usability of a semantic feature analysis from both a synchronic and a diachronic perspective.

The section on textual and sociolinguistic approaches includes five chapters dealing with a variety of subjects, ranging from evaluation and humour to news representation and sociolinguistic variables. Georgia Fragaki focuses on the evaluative use of Greek adjectives and the devices of evaluation employed in opinion articles. Following a corpus-linguistic methodology, she argues that in Greek, apart from adjective patterns, which have been identified and extensively discussed in other languages, a wide range of other evaluation devices are used. She proposes a

classification of three broad and non-exhaustive categories, comprising syntactic, semantic and morphological devices, which are further investigated by reference to the lexico-grammatical instantiation of evaluation in Greek through adjectives. Diverse linguistic phenomena such as predicative uses, word semantics (inherent or context-related) and morphemes are studied together as different facets of evaluation. It is pointed out that the study of languages like Greek can unearth a host of means of evaluation, which have not been widely discussed in previous literature, including below word evaluation, the use of the article and the creative use of adjective categories.

In Chapter Five Maria Kamilaki examines the use of learned elements as a strategy of verbal humour in written texts produced by young speakers of Greek. She analyses these data by using the framework of the General Theory of Verbal Humour proposed by Attardo. In particular, she explores the use of learned elements as regards three knowledge resources: *language*, *situation* and *target*. Kamilaki points out that, although learned elements are relics of the diglossic Greek tradition, they seem to be alive in young people's language and co-occur in their texts with non-learned elements, contributing to instances of linguistic creativity such as neologisms. According to the author, learned elements in the texts of young speakers can also be seen as a means of reinforcing their identities, either by confirming the cohesion of the inner group or by expressing their disapproval of members of the outer group.

The next two chapters fall into the area of, more or less, traditional variational sociolinguistics. They both use ethnographic methods in the collection of data and statistical analysis in order to detect statistically significant correlations of linguistic with social features. In particular, Nikos Vergis' chapter is dedicated to gender-based differences in the production of a rhotic consonant by speakers of the linguistic community of Anogia in rural Crete. The researcher studies spoken data from interviews with (both young and old) Anogian men and women, as well as their metalinguistic comments on the use of the rhotic, as elicited by a questionnaire. The analysis of the former shows that the variable of age is more crucial than that of gender, since elderly men and women use the rhotic more frequently than their younger counterparts. In addition, an important finding concerning gender differences is that young men produce more rhotics than young women, who tend to avoid its use. This finding is aligned, according to the author, with the metalinguistic comments of women, who appear to be reserved as regards the use of the rhotic when speaking to outsiders.

Irene Theodoropoulou examines the sociolinguistic variation of the social group of the so-called Generation of 700 Euros, based on ethnographic interviews. She is interested in examining whether there is a correlation between a phonetic and a syntactic linguistic variable and independent variables related to the socio-demographic profile of the interviewees, as well as the situational and linguistic context. She argues that the linguistic variables under study reflect a distinction between conscious and unconscious speech. According to her, unconscious linguistic variables correlate with social and interactional variables such as the prospect of finding a job in Greece or abroad, their stance towards the austerity measures taken by the Greek government and/or the topic of discussion, whereas factors that are related to the interviewees' identity appear to be much less influential. The author concludes that uncertainty is a key element of the generation's identity, which is evident in both their linguistic behaviour and their metalinguistic comments on their social group.

The last chapter of the section focuses on a relatively recent event, that of "Greek December" of 2008, and its representation in political and media discourse. George Polymeneas uses a critical discourse analytic approach to study the Prime Minister's addresses related to the event and newspaper reports on them. He finds that the Prime Minister manages to represent "Greek December" and the social actors involved in a way favourable to his political party through particular linguistic choices such as grammatical metaphor and transitivity. His aim is to depoliticize the event and to achieve consensus against the protestors, who are thus perceived as enemies to society. The author argues that in his third address the PM adopts a new approach, that of the newspapers, by presenting the conflict as one between the government and other political parties. Although newspaper reports present the PM's addresses differently, according to their stance towards the governmental party, both supportive and opposing newspapers collaborate with him towards the ideological narrowing of the event. The discourse used becomes increasingly informal, contributing to the representation of "Greek December" as an ordinary event, related to political party conflict.

The section on phonetics and phonology includes three experimental studies that explore segmental and supra-segmental phenomena. The first examines gemination in Cypriot Greek, the second studies the prosodic correlates of phonological boundaries and the last explores the interface of prosody and information structure. In Chapter Nine Spyros Armosti investigates the acoustic correlates of post-lexical gemination of plosives and affricates in Cypriot Greek, a topic that has not been thoroughly

explored previously. Cypriot Greek plosive and affricate lexical geminates are rather unusual, as they are distinguished from singletons by both longer closure and longer release. Plosive and affricate post-lexical gemination is impressionistically reported in the literature to differ from lexical gemination in its phonetic realisation, something which has not been subjected to empirical confirmation. Armosti's study finds that, while Cypriot Greek plosive and affricate geminates are longer than their singleton counterparts in terms of closure duration and ACT (i.e. frication and/or aspiration), post-lexical gemination (or super-gemination) is achieved by elongation of closure duration. Thus, longer closure duration can be considered the main cue to geminates (be they lexical or post-lexical), while ACT functions as an enhancing correlate for the lexical contrast between singleton and geminate non-continuants.

Evia Kainada examines the effect of prosodic boundary strength on the resolution of vowel hiatus in Modern Greek, by conducting two experiments. The first tested the production of instances of vowel hiatus in gradually stronger prosodic boundary environments, while the second tested the perception of these productions by native speakers of Modern Greek. Although such connected speech processes as hiatus resolution have been used as cues for the identification of prosodic constituents, the results from both experiments show that vowel hiatus resolution in Modern Greek is a gradient process above the prosodic word level. Thus, vowel hiatus resolution cannot act as a clear phonological marker of prosodic constituency, i.e. its resolution is not confined within a certain prosodic level. Specifically, the acoustic analysis of the production experiment showed varying degrees of assimilation between the two vowels with gradually less assimilation and less instances of complete vowel deletion higher in the hierarchy, a result which was corroborated by the perceptual analysis.

Charalambos Themistocleous studies the effects of focus and topic on the alignment and scaling of pitch accents in Standard Modern Greek and Cypriot Greek, elicited in comparable environments. The study examines the effects of contrastive topic, contrastive focus, information focus and broad focus on the acoustic manifestation of pitch accents. Contrary to previous studies proposing that the information structure categories are associated with different tonal units (or pitch accents), the results suggest that meaning has only random effects on the acoustic representation of speech melody and manifests itself mostly through tonal prominence distinctions. Thus, it argues for a binary distinction between postlexically stressed constituents that are associated with focus and contrastive topics and non-postlexically stressed constituents, associated with non-contrastive topics. Pitch accent form is not defined by meaning categories

but by the overall syntactic structure of the tune and the placement of postlexical prominence in the utterance. Consequently, the meaning of the Information Structure categories is not resolved by prosody but by higher domains. Furthermore, this study discusses the implications of the results for the understanding of the relation of meaning and prosody in Greek and makes proposals about tonal structure with crucial ramifications on the current autosegmental model of intonation.

The last section of the book combines papers from two different fields, neurolinguistics and language teaching. Both papers in the first field focus on the description of aphasic speech, while both papers in the field of language teaching deal with various types of prefabricated language, idioms and lexical clusters respectively. Chapters Twelve and Thirteen offer a complementary view of aphasic speech, since the authors follow a different approach. Michaela Neratzini examines the production of direct object clitics by a non-fluent Greek-speaking individual with aphasia. The data studied come from a sentence completion task, which was designed to test clitic production across three conditions (indicative, subjunctive, imperative). The latter are related in Greek to particular placements of the clitics (i.e. pre-verbally with indicative and subjunctive forms and post-verbally with imperative forms). The findings of the study suggest that clitic production is severely impaired in agrammatic aphasia and that difficulties are more prominent in the case of post-verbal rather than pre-verbal clitics. Moreover, the main error type, which was manifested across conditions, was clitic omission, a finding which is in line with previous research. Based on these findings, the author argues that syntactic movement, especially the one related to post-verbal clitic placement, is a crucial factor underlying language deficits in agrammatic aphasia. These results, in her view, do not support hierarchical accounts, such as the Tree Pruning Hypothesis, or accounts that attribute impairments in agrammatic aphasia to syntactic operations that cause a change in the basic word order, such as the Derived Order Problem-Hypothesis, but concur with the extended Derived Order Problem-Hypothesis, which attributes difficulties to the application of multiple movement operations.

Maria Varkanitsa aspires to broaden the scope of current research on Greek aphasia, by analyzing connected speech of six fluent and non-fluent patients. Aphasic speech production underwent quantitative analysis in terms of four measures (lexical selection, sentence productivity, grammatical accurancy and discourse productivity), as well as error analysis, according to which six error types were identified (phonological, morphosyntactic, lexical and semantic errors, neologisms and circumlocutions). The results of the analyses give a detailed account of the speech production of patients with fluent and non-fluent aphasia. In particular, the speech production of

fluent patients seems to be closer to that of normal speakers, presenting, however, less complexity and a large number of lexical and semantic errors, as well as morphosyntactic errors concerning agreement. On the other hand, the speech of patients with non-fluent aphasia is observed to diverge more from the speech of normal speakers in terms of sentence length and complexity, restricted use of parts of speech and occurrence of a large number of phonological, syntactic and morphological errors. On the basis of these findings, Varkanitsa suggests that, contrary to many studies in the literature, patients with aphasia may present mixed error patterns and error types may not be exclusively associated with specific aphasia types. Moreover, she emphasises the fact that the majority of morphosyntactic errors produced by both aphasic groups concern determiner-noun and adjective-noun agreement, a subject which has not been extensively examined in the Greek literature.

Moving to the field of language teaching, in Chapter Fourteen Georgia Sykara investigates idiom comprehension of second language learners of Greek. In order to determine the factors that have an impact on idiom comprehension, she uses a two task questionnaire to test the knowledge of intermediate and advanced students of Greek as a second language. Both tasks include equal number of idioms, manifesting different degrees of transparency (namely, transparent, semi-transparent, semi-opaque and opaque idioms), while they differ in the presentation of idioms in or out of context. Her findings show that there are three major factors affecting the way language learners comprehend idioms, namely the degree of transparency (the more transparent the idiom, the more easily it is understood), the existence of a particular context and the learners' language level (advanced students performed better than intermediate ones). These observations confirm prior findings of the relevant literature concerning English idioms and underline the necessity for the adoption of a new approach in the teaching of Greek idioms to second language learners.

The last chapter of the book comprises a corpus-linguistic contrastive analysis of lexical clusters in Greek and English with the aim of contributing to the teaching of phraseology in the two languages. Hector Ferlas examines the frequency and function of lexical clusters, i.e. sequences of words which significantly occur in a corpus of texts, and proposes a functional categorization of them. This is the first extensive study of lexical clusters in Greek, producing interesting contrastive findings. Thus, spoken English is found to contain many more lexical clusters than spoken Greek. In addition, Greek seems to favour title and personal clusters, while English prefers the use of grammatical clusters. Furthermore, only a few clusters in the data seem to correspond between

the two languages. For this reason, the author points out that this finding has to be taken into account when teaching prefabricated language to students of both Greek as a first language and Greek as a second/foreign language. Drawing on these findings, he discusses the treatment of lexical clusters and prefabricated language in school textbooks and textbooks of Greek as a second/foreign language and concludes that more research is needed in order to incorporate linguistic findings on prefabricated language in the teaching of Greek.

Finally, we would like to thank the contributors for their hard work and patience through several drafts and revisions of their papers. We are also grateful to the following scholars for their valuable help and advice in various phases of the project: Argiris Archakis, Amalia Arvaniti, Angeliki Athanasiadou, Mary Baltazani, Monika Bednarek, Spyridoula Bella, Dionysis Goutsos, Kleanthes Grohmann, Stamatia Koutsoulelou, Marina Mattheoudakis, Amalia Moser, Dimitris Papazachariou, Periklis Politis, Dominic Stewart, Marina Terkourafi, Arhonto Terzi, Nina Topintzi, Villy Tsakona, Stavroula Tsiplakou and Spyridoula Varlokosta. Our special thanks to Chris Lees for his help in the manuscript's editing.

ASPECTS OF MEANING

CHAPTER ONE

LEXICAL TEMPORAL EXPRESSIONS: COGNITIVE STRUCTURING AND TEXTUAL DISTRIBUTION

YANNIS KOSTOPOULOS

Introduction

Although the expression of time in linguistic communication has been exhaustively examined under several frameworks, there is very little we can theoretically claim about anything lying beyond what is commonly referred to as tense. Prepositional, adverbial or nominal constructions providing temporal orientation have been regularly overlooked by research on temporality. As Haspelmath (1997, 5) puts it, "[w]hile probably all grammars have something to say on tense […] many grammars are very incomplete with respect to NP-based temporal adverbials". In terms of semantic analyses, tense has been presented as a coherent system, generating specific interpretations according to stable semantic criteria; the use of grammatical time is, hence, rule-governed and predictable. On the other hand, non-inflectional temporal constructions have been examined barely to the extent that they overlap with other linguistic phenomena. Apart from some claims which occasionally appear in works concerned with broader grammatical categories, our theoretical knowledge on lexical temporal constructions is shaped and generated by wider considerations on indexicality (see, for instance, Lyons 1977; Levinson 1983; Fillmore 1997). It comes as a simple consequence that, beyond tense, the semantics of temporality appears unsystematic and unpredictable. Arguably, there are good reasons justifying this asymmetry. Tense appears to be a single and uniform phenomenon; prepositions, adverbs and nominal constructions belong to different grammatical classes and involve different syntactic and semantic factors. Nonetheless, one could arguably claim that, as in the case of other pre-theoretic assumptions that linguists share, the picture is

largely determined by the history of semantics; the historical priority of formal semantics seems to have shaped our point of view once again.

Placing at the centre of their attention matters such as sense, reference and truth, analytic philosophers and formal semanticists examined time to the extent that temporal expressions affect the aforementioned concepts. Equally, for temporal logic, the analysis of time was presented as a process of identification of the denoted reference, together with a respective assignment of truth conditions. In this sense, it is reasonable to treat tense as a complex phenomenon which calls for particular attention and treatment. Indexical temporal expressions seem to be equally interesting for formal semanticists; the call for reference resolution has always been a challenge that philosophers of language were delighted to undertake. But when the chance to take things one step further presents itself, it seems as though there is nothing left to resolve; calendricals behave exactly like definite descriptions, so they have been treated as some trivial aspect, not worth talking about. Surprisingly enough, these considerations on the hierarchy of interests were adopted by most linguistic frameworks without any further justification or evidence. But it is worth looking into whether this the whole story on temporal expressions.

In the big bag of whatever-goes-beyond-tense, linguists have not only assigned temporal expressions but equally our intuitions about how different these expressions can actually be. Labelling an expression as a calendrical might be some kind of interpretation. But this labelling does not predict any semantic distinctions between an expression like *in 1985* uttered by a Greek in 2011 and an expression like *in the year 1500 V.Y* found in the works of J. R. R. Tolkien. Similarly, the traditional story on deictic expressions has overlooked striking differences; the formal system has been made such that it cannot tell the difference we feel between expressions like *a long, long time ago* and *30 years ago*. Certainly, for the formal semanticist these facts might not have any significance to the modelling of language. But if speakers' intuitions play any role at all in linguistic description, then it is my opinion that there are still things to explain in linguistic temporal expression.

Despite the story told in formal descriptions, speakers behave following their own distinctions and seem to accommodate things in more than one bag. Evidence from both quotidian and fictive linguistic use illustrates strong tendencies concerning the distribution of lexical temporal expressions. Let's take for instance the case of tales. There might be many ways for one to combine dragons, bright little girls and brave boys; but for most linguistic communities there is just one place to locate them in time: *once upon a time*, *a long, long time ago*. As far as I am aware, though

there are tales referring to some definite locative description (Gianni Rodari's *Fairy tales over the phone* instantiate such a case), in terms of time, calendricals are absolutely excluded in fairy telling. On the other hand, when it comes to legal discourse, speakers and writers seem to avoid indexicality. Even when relating events is essential for the discourse aim at play, a clarifying calendrical description usually comes to repair the inconvenience of necessity: *the other day, that is, the 21st of December 2008*... Interestingly enough, although the latter construction is a common practice for legal reports, it gets immediately reduced to an indexical description once we come to narrate the very same events to some friend of ours. One might be tempted to evoke here terms like accuracy, clarity or specificity. Letting aside the fact that these notions are stylistic rather than semantic, we would still have to explain what it takes to be clear in temporal descriptions and why this clarity is required in some communicated instances rather than in others.

Usually, at this point, the semantic ineffability is covered up with genre explanation; many linguists and narratologists adopted this path. We are told that a tale is timeless (see, for instance, Gonda 1956). Semantically speaking however, a tale refers to a time; a remote or hazy one, but, still, a time. For some others, we should distinguish between two times, a realistic and a fictional/narrative one (see Benveniste 1966; Bache 1986). But even if one was complaisant to go on with a distinction between fiction and reality, this would not be more of an explanation. The stylistic proposal comes together with two considerable defects: (a) it implies that for some unexplained reason certain elements of grammar are connected to specific communicative circumstances, (b) it does not assign any semantics to the temporal expressions and, therefore it cannot make any predictions for the use of these expressions in unclassified contexts. On empirical grounds, it would not be difficult for one to find counterexamples for the suggested classification. It would be reasonable, thus, to hypothesize that there might be something more in the semantics of lexical temporal expressions, some property explaining speakers' behaviour, acting like a link between communication needs and the grammar.

In the work presented here, I try to explore this gap by highlighting the cognitive constructions underlying prepositional, adverbial and nominal temporal description. Adopting the framework of mental spaces presented in Fauconnier 1994 and taking into consideration factors such as subjectification (Langacker 1987; 1990; 1999; 2006) and cognitive accessibility, I aim to reveal some richer and more fine-grained semantics for lexical temporal expressions. As I intend to show, this cognitive

machinery is always at play and triggers constant interpretative structuring, usually overlooked by formal accounts. On the level of use, speakers form temporal descriptions manipulating this machinery and targeting for some specific cognitive organisation. The missing link, hence, between grammar and communicative circumstances is at the level of cognitive constructions. It is exactly these constructions that felicitously match with some particular discourse aims and stand at odds with some others.

The paper is structured in five parts. In the first section, I briefly discuss the formal semantics approach and argue for its inappropriateness. In the second section, I go through the narratologists' (and also text-linguists') approach to the phenomena under investigation. As I claim, the narratologists' suggestion might have provided useful insights concerning the distribution of temporal expressions, but it does not come with a respective theoretical interpretation. In the third section, I present the cognitive model I follow and the concepts I adopt in my analysis. After setting the floor, I examine on this new ground the default cognitive configuration arising in temporal descriptions. Cognitive factors are to be included in the picture and classes of expressions (calendricals, indexicals and indefinite descriptions) are to be interpreted against these factors. In the fourth section, I attempt to test my claims against real data deriving from tales and legal reports. As will be shown, these cases are neither special nor unique. The linguistic behaviour observed in these genres can be successfully interpreted by the cognitive model, without the need to evoke ad hoc classifications. The discussion concludes in the final section with some considerations for further development of my proposal.

One methodological clarification is due, before proceeding to the analysis. In what follows I adopt the term *lexical* or *non-infectional temporal expressions* for all adverbial, prepositional and nominal descriptions of time. The terms are totally arbitrary and pre-theoretic, aiming mostly at covering whatever goes beyond "grammatical time" (tense), and come with no further theoretical implications.

Nothing but the truth: Is that enough?

Most of the assumptions we hold on temporality derive from the field of truth-conditional semantics. Certainly, some accounts on linguistic time were detached from the formal tradition and revealed a great part of the cognitive mechanisms governing temporal expression (see, for instance, Cutrer 1994; Evans 2004). Still, the division of labour was first shaped by formal semanticists and thus, it is fair to briefly present the traditional model before considering its appropriateness.

Truth-conditional semanticists were concerned with matters like sense, reference and truth evaluation. For them, semantically analyzing a linguistic sentence means defining what the sentence denotes, what the denotation refers to, and what are the conditions making the logical meaning conveyed by a sentence (the proposition) truthful. Whatever goes beyond belongs either to pragmatics or to some other closed system, defining contexts for linguistic expressions (for a formal treatment for contexts of use see Predelli 2010). Under this view, temporal expressions come to the attention of the truth-conditional semanticists, because they define the time for which a sentence's predication holds.

There are many versions of truth-conditional treatments of temporality, usually spelled out in the framework of temporal or modal logic. These accounts are inspired by the work of Reichenbach on English tense (1947) and equally of Prior's considerations on time in logic (Prior 1957; 1969). In any case, there are two main approaches in dealing with non-inflectional expressions: (a) to assume some temporal operator scoping over the predication (see Allen 1984) and (b) to think of the temporal expression as a conjunct part of the proposition (see Davidson 1980). The interpretative assumption behind all these models is that an expression of time (Et) denotes (or refers to) a time (t) at which a predication holds (either as a logical operator or as a logical conjunction). In both scenarios, once that time is identified, the semanticist's job is done. The process might be a clear-cut matching or might call for tricky considerations. Calendricals like *in 1981* or *the 7th of March 1995 at 1.00 pm* are considered to act as definite descriptions, hence directly providing the temporal value of predication. So, in the sentence *In 1996, Phaedra graduated from school* we say that whatever *Phaedra graduatedfrom school* means holds for the time t1996 (or holds when the time 1996 holds too). In the case of indexicals, the reference of the expression depends on information concerning the time of encoding (or decoding, or intended time of decoding, depending on the account of the framework. For an interesting discussion on the formal semantics of encoding/decoding time, see Predelli 2005). So, in the sentence *30 years ago, Delia went to Delos* the predication *Delia went to Delos* holds for a time which precedes the time of utterance by 30 years. Equally, *a long, long time ago* refers to some past time preceding by a long, long time the time of encoding, and so on.

I am not going to argue against truth-conditional semantics and formal descriptions of temporal expressions. In fact, I don't think that there is anything wrong with them, if one is concerned with providing a formal description of language and a respective truth evaluation of propositions.

In this sense, I think that despite its problems and inadequacies (and certainly, there are quite a few) the formal account is loyal to the truth-conditional semantics' agenda. However, the issues I am trying to explore here are of a rather different nature.

The formal account cannot explain the distribution in use mentioned earlier. Whether you say to your friend *Peppy left 10 minutes ago* or *Peppy left the 29th of May 2011 at 1.15 pm* it wouldn't make any difference for the formal semanticists, as long as both expressions can refer to the same time. Saying that the deictic expression varies in its reference, while the calendrical appears to be more stable, is not an explanation for the fact that you would never use the calendrical form in a friendly conversation. Equally, the formal semantics account comes with no information about the cognitive mechanisms and interpretations involved in temporal descriptions. This disregard makes the formal model to overlook obvious facts about the semantics of temporal expressions. One could certainly set truth conditions for both *the year 2525* and *the 14th of July 1789*; still, for most people these expressions are very different, just because they mean a lot more than the formalist is ready to accept. It seems that the role of the cognitive subject (interpreter) is much more important than the denotation of a temporal expression. However, the way the truth-conditional account is formed renders the formal model inappropriate for providing any answers for either the cognitive part of the story or the communicative choices of the speakers.

Talking reality and talking fiction: The genre explanation

In opposition to formal semanticists, scholars concerned with actual linguistic realisation have noticed and underlined the strong tendencies in temporal expressions' distribution. In fact, researchers in narratology, discourse analysis and text linguistics are so much aware of this fact that they actually suggest explanations and classifications in order to interpret speakers' behaviour. Despite differences in theoretical motivation, all these different disciplines share a common practice in dealing with the phenomenon: tendencies in temporal expression should be attributed to the context and the discourse conditions they appear in. This can be called the genre approach. According to this methodological logic, tendencies in temporal expression are a linguistic fact, that is, they should be theoretically accommodated. The appropriate course of action is with some explanation by diagnosis strategy: first recognise an expressive pattern in several texts of the same genre and then link particular patterns with particular discourse contexts or genres. This research strategy has

provided the most prominent and influential accounts for the distribution of temporal expressions through texts.

According to a very popular version of this approach, temporal expressions should be divided into a special and marked system for narratives and an unmarked non-narrative one for everyday discourse (see Benveniste 1966). Similarly, Bache (1986) distinguishes between two modes of communication, a fictional and a normal referring one. A distinction between fictional and non-fictional discourse is also suggested by Adams (1985), who further claims for respective pragmatic structures. The common assumption in these approaches is that particular domains require for respective patterns of temporal expression; strong tendencies in distributions should, hence, be interpreted on the ground of distinct domains. In the same spirit scholars have argued for more detailed classifications applying to narrower domains or activity types (see Levinson 1979). Gee (1990, 120) claims that "certain forms of language […] are intimately connected to forms of life", while Georgakopoulou and Goutsos (1997, 20) argue that "only some kind of language is allowed in certain contexts". In this sense, the appearance of calendricals in contexts of legal discourse should be attributed to the requirements of this particular genre. On the other hand, tales should be thought of as instantiating the fictional domain and, hence, requiring for the temporal expression of fiction.

The problem with all these approaches and suggestions is that, despite their empirical character, they remain essentially pre-theoretic and methodologically non-explanatory. Replying with a "what" to a "why" is a description and not an interpretation. In the end, what genre analysis provides is a descriptive taxonomy of empirical facts, which, in fact, is not always accurate or valid (see the discussion on tales below). I think that whoever is keen to adopt such an approach would admit that the boundaries of modes or genres are not that well-defined as in the case of tales and legal discourse. Classifications might be useful for the linguist, but usually speakers and hearers are not aware of these taxonomies. The genre approach entails that expressions derive straightforwardly from the discourse condition they are meant to appear in. This raises the question as to whether this suggests that speakers would be unable to make expressive choices whenever they cannot define the genre their contribution belongs to. Moreover, there is always the pain of dealing with author's creativity. Should we say that whenever we come across a calendrical the author speaks reality and whenever she uses some indexical she reports imagination? I suppose that this fact simply illustrates that epistemic domains and discourse aims usually overlap in the same text. Empirically

speaking, hence, the division of labour between reality and fiction is not much of a solution. On the other hand, on epistemological level, the distinction between realism and imaginary implies that there is some reality out there in the world and that speakers report it without acting as interpretative subjects.[1] But speakers are primarily interpretative subjects. As Cruse and Croft (2004, 58) point out, "we are always already in a situation and construing it from some perspective". It is not very clear what "fiction" is meant to denote in the works of scholars who have used this term. But if the distinction between reality and fiction is based in terms of creativity and factuality, then the gamble is lost by the very first appearance of human mind in the play. In fact, as we will see, objectivity is just another way to conceptualise experience.

Let us return for a while to the classification of expressions and reconsider the case of tales. Tales have been characterised as "atemporal" or illustrating some very peculiar expression of time (Gonda 1956, 25; also Jean 1993). First, in terms of semantics, tale is not atemporal, as far as it refers to some time.[2] Second, if you leave aside the introductory temporal description typically used in all tales, temporal expressions appearing in a tale are identical to those you use most of the time in everyday communication. In terms of linguistic behaviour, there is nothing really peculiar in the case of tales, and, certainly, there is nothing justifying a classification matching certain linguistic elements with this particular context. So, the link between expression and discourse condition is not a tight one. Moreover, the fact that expressions can be linked with more than one condition implies that whatever property makes them suitable for some contexts, it should not be thought as a function (as the genre analysis suggests), but as a potential. Since that potential cannot be attributed to the discourse conditions, it is reasonable to consider that it lies in the interpretations triggered by the semantics of expressions. Considering that genre analysis does not make any semantic claim at all and that traditional semantics do not provide any answers for the phenomena at play, one should turn one's gaze towards theoretical models being able to reveal some richer and more fine-grained semantics for temporal expressions. I take cognitive semantics to be the best candidate for this role.

One last remark is due before closing the discussion on the genre approach. Some scholars might strike back arguing that the link between expressions and genres is not meant to be semantic, but one having to do with the stylistic conventions applying for each genre (e.g. Kress 1985; Bhatia 1993; Paltridge 1994; 1995). Definitely, this claim would release the genre analysis from the charge of erroneously defining discourse conditions or values for expressions (in fact, it would take out the

commitment to say anything at all about these things). This is definitely a way to go, and some people might find this alternative very appealing. Nonetheless, this would be just a tidier version of avoiding the burden. I assume that whoever is keen to adopt such an approach is equipped with some clear definitions for genres together with some plausible explanation for the nature of conventions and the way conventions are adopted and followed by the members of a linguistic community. I also take it as settled that one who goes for such an approach is ready to make some claims for cases where there are no conventions at all (e.g. narrator's creativity, whether ordinary or more sophisticated). Certainly, that would make a better taxonomy; but still it would not provide any theoretical explanation for the phenomena I am dealing with. I don't think that the way to go here is to choose an account which claims for validity only by virtue of not making any predictions or interpretative claims at all. After all, the tendencies in distribution underlined so far do not seem to be random. The appeal here is to go towards further exploring rather than tidying up.

Temporal expressions as cognitive structures

In the previous section, I outlined that explanations directly linking discourse conditions to respective grammatical elements are lacking both theoretical motivation and empirical ground. Equally, I have claimed that a traditional approach to semantics cannot provide any explanation for the phenomena at play, since the formal model does not consider anything going beyond the truth evaluation of propositions. What I am at pains to emphasise so far is that the only way for dealing with both the unrevealed semantics of temporal expressions and the tendencies in linguistic behaviour manifested in texts is by exploring the cognitive mechanisms involved in temporal descriptions. To this point I adopt the framework of cognitive semantics and, in particular, the model of mental spaces illustrated in Fauconnier (1994).

Cognitive semanticists detach their research motivation from the traditional query on propositional meaning and truth conditions; Fauconnier states, "regardless of whether propositions play a role in semantic theory or natural language logic, sentences are not carriers of propositions" (Fauconnier 1994, xvii). For cognitive linguists, language is not an autonomous system which can be described in its own terms, but reflects cognitive structures, concepts and inferential links, which a semantic theory should demonstrate. In this sense, meaning is equated with conceptualization (Langacker 1990, 1). In terms of semantic analysis,

cognitive linguists take linguistic items as not having "a fixed, limited and uniquely semantic representation, but rather as providing access to indefinitely many conceptions and conceptual systems" (Langacker 1990, 24). For Turner, "expressions do not mean; they are prompt for us to construct meanings by working with processes we already know" (Turner 1991, 206). In Fauconnier's figurative scheme, "language is the tip of the iceberg" (Fauconnier 1994, xxii). The semantic enterprise hence turns to be an attempt to represent the dynamic and multifactorial cognitive structuring underlying language.

According to Fauconnier's model, a significant part of cognitive structuring is organised as mental spaces. Mental spaces are abstract cognitive constructions generated locally in discourse by linguistic elements. As underlined in Fauconnier (1994), these constructions are not mental representations of reality (they are not directly related to the "real" world; they should be rather thought of as representations of the way we think. Mental spaces are generated by virtue of using certain linguistic items, the so-called space-builders, and might contain entities and holding relations. Space-builders are linguistic elements such as representational or referential verbs (*to think, believe, hope*), connectors (*if ... then*), prepositional phrases (*in Germany, in the picture, in Diane's mind*) and, most significantly for our aims here, temporal expressions (*in 1989, in the old days*) and tense.[3] These elements might create a new mental space or point to one already activated in the holding discourse. By default, in every configuration the space created or pointed by a space-builder is connected with a parental space, the space of speaker's/writer's or hearer's/reader's reality.

Within this framework, all the lexical temporal expressions we have been talking about so far are space-builders introducing mental spaces and a respective cognitive configuration. Let us explore this structuring a little more by examining a simple example like 1 below:

1. Στις 5 Μαΐου 2004, η Ίρα πήγε στην Ισλανδία.
On the 5th of May 2004, Ira went to Iceland.

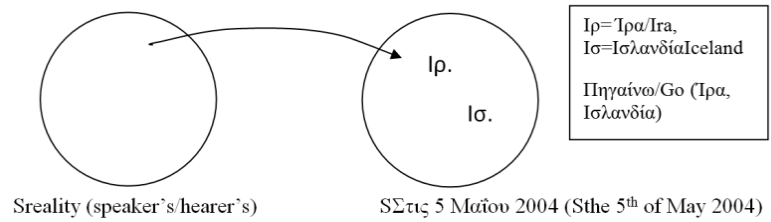

Figure 1. Configuration of spaces for the sentence in example 1

In 1, the temporal expression *Στις 5 Μαΐου 2004* (On the 5th of May 2004) generates a new mental space, the space SΣτις 5 Μαΐου 2004. In virtue of the information provided by the sentence, this space includes an entity IRA[4] a location ICELAND and a holding relation GO (IRA, ICELAND). Further, Sthe 5th of May 2004 is linked to some parental space, let us say, the space of speaker's reality, since there is no other linguistic context available here. So far, so good; but this is not the whole story. According to Fauconnier, linguistic elements involved in this configuration do not come stripped of their other cognitive properties; that is expressions evoke and involve in the cognitive machinery the full range of frames, scripts and encyclopaedic knowledge they are connected with. So, the entity IRA comes together with all the inferences one can derive from the use of the word and the same holds for the location ICELAND. One is legitimated (and, actually, expected) to make inferences leading to a richer interpretation of the structure adding concepts like icy landscapes, cold weather, snow or long legs, blonde hair, flirty attitude etc. (depending on the frames one holds in mind for both *Iceland* and the person called *Ira*). The same holds for the mentioned relation (*go*) and the various interpretations that this particular verb can take. Nonetheless, and though never explicitly mentioned in the literature (not as far as I am aware, at least), this inferential process holds for the words introducing the space, that is the space-builders. The expression *5 Μαΐου 2004* can be linked with various different inferences, depending again on the mental frame holding in one's mind. Hence, one might infer encyclopaedic knowledge having to do with the globe's financial situation on the 5th of May 2004, some other might infer information on the weather condition and some third might recall that the 5th of May 2004 is associated with Irini's name day.

These considerations might seem trivial and not really affecting the interpretation at play. But this is just because we tend to omit things taken for granted. In interpreting 1, one usually excludes a large amount of inferences and maintains some others. *Iceland* is normally interpreted as a sovereign country, having the structure of a modern state (airports, modern ports, passport controls) and other elementary ingredients of a contemporary West European country (electricity, some capitalistic-like economy, inhabitants wearing shoes and clothes). Equally, we tend to interpret *go* as a relatively short trip or travel (not one of some weeks or months), operated in terms of some modern mean of transportation (an airplane, a boat or a ferry) etc. The same holds for the entity mentioned with the name *Ira*; depending on our inferences and encyclopaedic knowledge, IRA might be having some posh conservative clothing, she might wear glasses, high heels and so on. It is not that important here to define this inferential linking any further. What really matters is that all these inferences are triggered and actually held, because of the restrictions that the frame of the space-builder imposes on the overall construction. Most of the concepts we evoked for either *Ira*, *Iceland* or *go* arise simply because we have placed the referred entities and the holding relation in the space Στις 5 Μαΐου 2004, that is, because we think of them in accordance to what the concept the "ΣΤΙΣ 5 ΜΑΪΟΥ 2004" infers for each one of us. If one changes the temporal expression acting as space-builder, the whole construction and cognitive machinery would be completely different. For instance, if one utters that *in 583, Ira went to Iceland*, then we would have abandoned a lot of inferential concepts we mentioned above. Possibly, ICELAND would not be a place having airports and passport controls, GOING could not be linked with airplane travels and IRA would not be wearing high heels. The inferential linking would be rather shaped and determined by the concept "(THE YEAR) 583", activated by this new space-builder.

One should be very careful with the notion of the phenomena we are dealing here. The inferential process is not affected by some "reality" holding for either the 5th of May 2004 or the year 583. It is not reality that shapes our inferences and the overall structuring. It is our thoughts and beliefs, the concepts we hold for the temporal expressions used, which are mental in nature and have nothing to do with some objective or historical reality. One is free to think of the concept "ΣΤΙΣ 5 ΜΑΪΟΥ 2004" as being in accordance with concepts like people living in caves and chasing dinosaurs. But again, these inferences would be generated by mental resources (frames, scripts, encyclopaedic knowledge) for the expression *Στις 5 Μαΐου 2004* and not by some reality of any sense.

Let us now alternate the calendrical temporal expression with some description of different class. Consider example 2 and the respective schematization:

2. Κάποτε η Ίρα πήγε στην Ισλανδία.
Once, Ira went to Iceland.

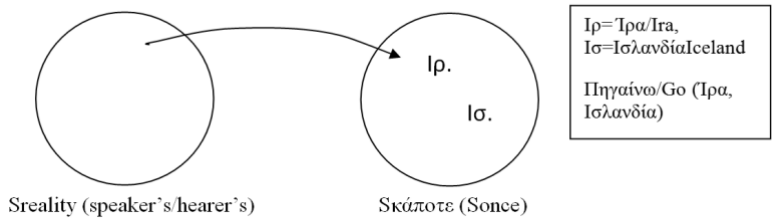

Figure 2. Configuration of spaces for the sentence in example 2

In 2, the basic configuration and cognitive structuring remain the same as we described it for the case of calendricals that we examined before. The only difference lies in the expression used as space-builder and, sequentially, to the inferences that this particular expression triggers. A common interpretation for *κάποτε* (once) would be "in some temporal space other than the one the speaker is currently placed in". Interestingly enough, in Modern Greek that space might be either past or future with respect to the speaker's reality space. In this sense, we cannot say that *κάποτε* infers or imposes to the structure any particular encyclopaedic knowledge or any specific frame. Normally, the inferences that one is expected to make for the properties of a temporal mental space built in virtue of indefinite expressions, such as *once*, are extremely abstract and local and, certainly, relative to other available linguistic information. So, if I say that *Once, Thanasis used to love Eleni* you will probably refine the structure of the targeted temporal space with information that you already possess on the referred entities and relations (if you have any at all), together with some slight modifications that you would take to hold on inferential basis (for instance, both Thanasis and Eleni are likely to maintain the property of being Greeks, but they would be probably interpreted as being younger etc). Certainly, this inferential validation or adjustment of frames and encyclopaedic knowledge is expected to be greater and more precise in the case of indexicals, where the triggered mental space is explicitly linked with the space of speaker's reality.