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The importance of the indirectness of linguistic expressions referring to actual persons, events and relationships has been stressed by researchers exploring language from the cognitive perspective. The distinction between the actual plane and the virtual plane, proposed in Langacker (1999), is one of the most lucid accounts of the phenomenon. In keeping with the interdisciplinary character of current research in cognitive linguistics, the proposed paper compares findings of cognitive linguistics with those put forth by international relations scholars.

Interestingly, also the discipline of international relations assumes a division similar to the one proposed in cognitive linguistics. It is common practice to draw a distinction between, for example, the operational environment and psychological environment, as elaborated, among others, in Farrands (1989). A careful analysis of the two distinctions, the one made in cognitive linguistics and the other made in some approaches to foreign policy, raises the question of whether the two disciplines make such conceptual distinctions only incidentally. In a discipline like international relations it is commonly assumed that indirectness is the norm owing to the fact that one refers to either intangible concepts (e.g. state, national interest, (in)security, etc.) or geographically distant events, places or individuals (e.g. the Balkans, Afghanistan, Pervez Musharraf, etc.). It is because in addressing such issues we almost never face the referents physically or do not have any kind of direct access to them.

Being part of a larger project, the paper asks the following questions. Assuming that it is possible to distinguish between actual and virtual entities, which of the two types is predominant in the language used to address issues in international relations? What are the regular patterns of virtual entities and relations present in this specialist variety of language? Or, do the distinctions made in cognitive linguistics and international relations provide any insights into our understanding of cognition?

Keywords: actual plane, virtual plane, operational environment, psychological environment, indirectness, virtual reality, virtual entity, international relations

1. Planes and Environments

The importance of the indirectness of linguistic expressions designating actual persons, events and relationships has been stressed by researchers exploring language from the cognitive perspective. The distinction between the *actual* plane and the *virtual* plane, proposed in Langacker (1999), is one of the most

lucid accounts of the phenomenon of indirectness in language. In his 1999 paper on virtual reality, Langacker eschews the common assumption that we use language to primarily describe and refer to the world around us directly. Let us keep in mind the phrase “the world around us” as we will need it later in this paper. The assumption that ‘[t]he principal nominal and relational elements of a clause refer specifically to actual individuals and an actual relationship in which they participate’ is challenged in Langacker (1999: 77). Instead, an alternative approach is posited according to which previously underestimated departures from the direct description of actual relationships and individuals prevail in language.

In keeping with the interdisciplinary character of current research in cognitive linguistics, the present paper revisits the proposals made in Langacker (1999) and applies them to the language used in press publications covering international relations. Press articles constitute a rich source of language expressions supporting or disproving theoretical assumptions made by linguists. Articles on international politics have attracted researchers’ attention to a limited extent. Definitely, they have not attracted as much attention as articles on (domestic) political or social issues. Some aspects of the discourse of international relations have been studied though. The metaphorical nature of the language of international politics has been discussed in Chilton (1988, 1996), Chilton and Lakoff (1995), Chilton and Ilyin (1993), Musolff (2004) and others. However, grammar issues have not been explored systematically to my knowledge. Elsewhere (Twardzisz, to appear), I explore phenomena linking derivational morphology to the currency of events on the international arena. Thus the present paper can also serve to fill the gap in the cognitive explorations of the language of international relations.

In the course of this paper two issues will be considered. First, Langacker’s concept of virtual reality will be applied to a selected aspect of the language of international relations. It will be argued that the mental construct of a virtual plane can account, in a systematic manner, for the frequent use of expressions referring to such fictitious concepts as *a Taliban-controlled Afghanistan*, *an unstable Pakistan* or *a tremulous Yasir Arafat*. Second, it will be argued that similarly to Langacker’s distinction between the *actual* plane and the *virtual* plane in cognitive linguistics, there is a comparable division into the *operational* environment and *psychological* environment in international relations. Both disciplines make the above distinctions independently of each other. If such divisions make sense in the two disciplines, one may wonder whether distinguishing between actuality and virtuality is a more general phenomenon that can be found in other areas of the humanities.

2. Langacker’s Concept of Virtual Reality Revisited

As noted above, the default assumption about language and linguistic expressions is refuted in Langacker (1999: 77) in favour of the postulate of various kinds of indirectness between linguistic expressions and the actual entities that those expressions designate. Apparently, cases of such indirectness are not marginal or incidental. Rather, they constitute the majority of all relations between language expressions and their referents.

Among the basic sources of such indirectness there are implicature and metonymy, both ubiquitous and fundamental in language and conceptualization. Metonymy occupies an important position in cognitive investigations and deserves a separate account (cf. Langacker, 1993; Barcelona, 2000; Croft, 2003; Dirven and Pörings, 2002; Kövecses and Radden, 1998 and others).

Metaphor and conceptual blending are probably among the best described and most often studied phenomena pertaining to the area of departures from the direct description of actuality. In metaphor, which is a general pattern of conceptual structuring, 'a *source domain* is evoked as a basis for conceiving or understanding a *target domain*' (Langacker, 1999: 80). Furthermore, all kinds of blended structures, inheriting certain properties from both the source and the target, are the result of complex metaphorical conceptualizations (cf. Fauconnier, 1997: 168-171).

Research into non-actuality has also focused on a particular aspect of virtuality (or fictivity, which is another term in use), namely *virtual motion* (also known as *abstract*, *subjective* or *fictive motion*) (cf. Langacker, 1986; Matsumoto, 1996; Talmy, 1996). Sentences such as *the road runs from A to B* describe an objectively static situation, which is accessed indirectly via the virtual dynamic configuration construing the subjective motion of the road itself or a fictive moving conceptualizer. Viewed more broadly, virtual motion is a special case of *virtual change*. A sentence like *the trees got shorter at higher altitudes*, which also describes an objectively static configuration, is accessed indirectly via the virtual configuration, the dynamicity of which is obtained by comparing different values on some scale (Langacker, 1999: 83-84, 86).

To refer to virtuality and actuality somewhat more tangibly, Langacker resorts to the notion of 'planes', which can be compared to 'spaces' (in the sense of Fauconnier, 1997). Hence, individuals and relationships are located either on a *virtual plane* or the *actual plane*, and these two need to be kept distinct (Langacker, 1999: 78). As noted earlier, the very notion of 'virtuality' is used interchangeably with the one of 'fictivity' without any difference in meaning. The use of an indefinite article preceding *virtual plane* is suggestive of the fact that there may be an infinite number of virtual planes understood as departures from the actual planes.

The two terms *actuality* and *reality* are kept apart in Langacker's paper. Reality is defined as "the history of what has happened up through the present, as conceptualized by the speaker" (p.79). Reality constitutes one (only) facet of actuality, evolving 'through time (*t*), continually "growing" toward the future as more and more occurs' (p.79). Actuality can accommodate any statements which may be either true or false while their possible negation, tense and modality are independent factors.

3. *Virtuality in Press Articles on International Affairs*

Press articles on international politics display two facets of the same

phenomenon pertaining to the notion of virtuality. Journalistic texts contain numerous instances of what may be viewed as fictitious departures from actual places and actual individuals. English codes such departures by means of an indefinite article in front of a proper name designating either a place/location or a person. Additionally, the noun may take pre- or post-modification or both. The lack of an article in front of a proper name is characteristic of an unmarked default situation in which a given name designates an allegedly unique individual or unique place. Occasionally, however, an article is used when the circumstances undermine the uniqueness of a given individual or location.

Let us consider a cognitive account of departures from the prototypical use of proper names in English (Langacker, 1991: 59-60). In the situation described there is an individual called Stan Smith, whose gender, quantity, uniqueness and definiteness are conventionally included in the proper name *Stan Smith*. But once the situation is further elaborated and we become aware of the existence of a few other individuals with the same name, formal modifications of the name *Stan Smith* are necessary to distinguish them in the same discourse. The argument goes that the otherwise proper name *Stan Smith* becomes a common noun in the grammatical sense (e.g. *the Stan Smith who ...*) as it takes the definite article and a restrictive relative clause. The grammatical sense encompasses the semantic sense in the cognitive framework. As a proper name, *Stan Smith* fits in an idealized cognitive model in which the first and last name, supposedly unique, are sufficient to identify an individual. However, if there are more persons with this name (and we are aware of it), the name is no longer unique and a different cognitive model of the world is resorted to. This is how the meaning of *Stan Smith* as a common noun is summarized:

Stan Smith becomes a common noun when the idealized model is supplanted in its matrix by the conception of a world in which multiple individuals are so named. In reference to this domain, the properties of being human, male, and called *Stan Smith* are not sufficient to identify a unique entity; rather they amount to a type specification capable of being instantiated by numerous individuals. (Langacker, 1991: 60)

Consequently, the name *Stan Smith* is automatically recognized as a common countable noun. However, the phenomenon we encounter in the language characteristic of journalistic texts is different. The authors of such texts do not make references to different individuals with the same name or different locations with the same name. The language data under consideration indicate that we deal with **different** instances of the **same** individual or place. It is as if we encountered the same individual or visited the same place on a different occasion, under different circumstances and our perception of this individual and location were each time altered. What is real is the person or place in the actual world. What is not real is an instantiation of that person or place indicating its common and countable character. The two entities are naturally in correspondence, the real one is somewhat 'natural', while the virtual one is more 'fanciful'.

It seems that the degree of departure of the virtual entity from the actual one heavily depends on the conceptualizer's imagination. There does not seem to be much in terms of conceptual restrictions curbing the fancifulness of the virtual departures. Therefore the count nouns, which are extensions of their source proper names, take various forms and meanings. The semantic modification of such extensions appears unlimited and mirrors the conceptualizations evoked by the meanings of such linguistic expressions. The intricacies of the complex conceptualizations are handled by means of the notion of *viewing arrangement*. The default viewing arrangement is never fixed and alternate viewing arrangements may be chosen depending on numerous factors which the conceptualizer can take into account. Altering viewing arrangements leads to departures from the default conception (cf. Langacker, 1999: 88).

3.1 Virtual Individuals

Journalistic articles covering international politics frequently use names of politicians as prominent actors of the international environment. Depending on the political system of a given state, these are names of presidents, monarchs, prime ministers, secretaries of state, chancellors, ministers, etc.. Also, depending on the current international agenda, unexpected events or numerous other circumstances, press articles favour particular names, be that of prominent statesmen, outspoken diplomats, blood-thirsty warlords or fallen dictators. The prevalence of certain politicians' names in journalistic texts is mostly event-driven. Events prompting interest in some names may range from stories of tribal clashes, border tensions and even cases of genocide to gossip news about embarrassing diplomatic blunders. Whether rightly chosen or not, here we will use the phrase *name of a politician*, even if a given individual's connection with civilized politics is less than symbolic.

Current journalistic texts on international affairs offer numerous ways of departure from the default world that we think we have direct access to. Under the uncertain assumption that we have direct access to the world in which persons called Vladimir Putin, Hillary Clinton, Nicolas Sarkozy, Yasir Arafat, Kim Jong-il and others operate, names like these tend to be used as the labels of the actual persons. Our knowledge of the actual world tells us that there is only one individual with this name and we are familiar with this person typically through the media. It is irrelevant whether more persons with a name such as *Hillary Clinton* inhabit the world or not. Even if there are other persons with this name (and we are aware of this), we tend to ignore this fact in the context of international affairs owing to the global prominence of the particular political figure. Therefore, we will ignore the possibility of the existence of other people with the famous name as this situation will be surely overshadowed by the salience of the particular referent with that name. However, what will not escape our attention is the proliferation of names of politicians used as common count nouns in press articles. The countability of such nouns is marked by the use of an indefinite article in the singular or the use of the very name in its plural form. Let us consider some examples:

- (1) Jordan's King Hussein, bald and drawn after months of cancer treatments, said Clinton has "the tolerance and patience of Job." **A tremulous Yasir Arafat** called the president "a great leader of the world." (*Newsweek*, Nov 9, 1998)

In another administration, there would have been various checks on this kind of collective delusion. **A Kennedy, a Nixon, a Clinton, and a George H. W. Bush** all would have considered evidence to some degree. (*Newsweek*, Jan 28, 2008)

Israel has always shown a willingness to make peace if a peace partner exists, as it did in the case of the late Anwar Sadat of Egypt and Jordan's King Hussein. Israelis are still waiting for **a Palestinian Anwar Sadat**. (*The Wall Street Journal*, Mar 2, 2009)

Similarly, names of politicians, also unique in actuality, are capable of serving as bases for fictitious instances of those names when used with the definite article and additional pre- or post-modification justifying some departure from the unique name.

- (2) It is an article of faith among U.S. foreign-policymakers that history will treat Boris Yeltsin well. **The Yeltsin** they see is **the Yeltsin** who stood atop the tanks in 1991, then prevailed in a free and fair democratic election – in Russia! – in 1996. (*Newsweek*, Dec 28, 1998 – Jan 4, 1999)

The New Gordon Brown. After months of missteps, the prime minister is revamping his image – again. (*Newsweek*, Jan 28, 2008) [title of article]

Let us then assume the following mechanism at work here. On the basis of several occurrences of the name *Yasir Arafat* in its common noun use (*an increasingly frustrated Yasir Arafat* [YA₁], *a tremulous Yasir Arafat* [YA₂], *an outraged Yasir Arafat* [YA₃]), the conceptualizer establishes a variable such as YA_N, which serves as a template for potential virtual conceptualizations derived from *Yasir Arafat*. Such conceptualizations are virtual for the author and recipients of the discourse of international relations as it is a well-known fact that there is (was) only one person with this name on the actual international arena. There are (were) no other impersonations of Yasir Arafat on the international stage that we are familiar with through the media. Thus, the above count occurrences instantiate directly-accessed virtual persons via which we arrive at the actual and unique person named Yasir Arafat. Only on a virtual plane can a conceptualization like *a tremulous Yasir Arafat* be assembled without semantic incompatibility. The conceptualizer, being aware that multiple virtual planes can co-exist, treats such formations as fictitious, but at the same time as 'normal' instances characteristic of this kind of discourse.

3.2 Virtual Places

The other type of mental projection whereby the name of a place, typically unique and by convention used without an article, is viewed as a virtual

instance of that name seems to undergo the same mechanism. There is a noticeable multitude of names of places (preferably those of states) used as common count nouns in press articles on international affairs. The countability of such nouns, like those above in 3.1., is coded by an indefinite article in the singular or the use of the noun in the plural form. The following examples each illustrate a semantic extension whereby a unique place name, as we conceive of it in actuality, is viewed as a fictitious entity, or better still, one of many possible fictitious entities that can co-exist in some sort of virtuality:

- (3) But is Azizah strong enough to harness a disparate opposition movement and build **a new, more just post-Mahathir Malaysia**? (*Newsweek*, Apr 26, 1999)

Khatami, with his split personality, is the perfect front man for **an Iran** that, these days, veers wildly between moderation and extremism. (*Newsweek*, Oct 5, 1998)

Earlier this year, when the Clinton administration wanted to bomb Saddam for sabotaging the U.N. inspection process, it could not get a single major power – except **a lukewarm Britain** – to back its saberrattling. (*Newsweek*, Sep 21, 1998)

Ethnic cleansing has wrecked forever the dream of **a multiethnic Yugoslavia**. (*Newsweek*, May 10, 1999)

Similarly to the virtual occurrences in (2), names of places, also unique in actuality, are capable of serving as bases for fictitious instances of those names when used with the definite article or the *wh*- interrogative pronoun *which*:

- (4) **Which Iran is the real Iran?** The country reaching out to the West or the terrorist-sponsoring regime that hauls newspaper editors to jail? (*Newsweek*, Oct 5, 1998)

Journalistic texts on international relations have recently assumed Europe, without distinguishing its particular states, to be an indivisible actor on the international arena. This conceptualization has resulted in numerous fictitious occurrences of *Europe* used as a common count noun:

- (5) But even globalization has allowed **a multicurrencyed Europe** to get away with things that won't now last. (*Newsweek*, Nov 1998 – Feb 1999)

A new Europe will not be built on the foundation of tariff reductions, standardized regulations and coordinated fiscal policies. (*Newsweek*, Nov 1998 – Feb 1999)

Annachaira Marcandalli also came to Yale from Italy for skills she can sell in **a changing Europe**. (*Newsweek*, Sep 28, 1998)

The Berlin wall may be down, and monetary union near, but the euro is unlikely to usher in **a truly unified Europe**. (*Newsweek*, Nov 1998 – Feb 1999)

Occasionally, it is also the name of a region, rather than a state or continent, of international significance that is directly accessed via a virtual extension, such as:

- (6) The Pakistan Hackerz Club has been making regular runs against American and Indian Internet sites. Its cause: **an India-free Kashmir**. (*Time*, May 22, 2000)

A mechanism related to the one described earlier is in operation here. If press articles on international politics show numerous occurrences such as *a Russia without Yeltsin* [R_1], *a forward-looking Russia* [R_2], *a multiethnic Russia* [R_3], *a lukewarm Russia* [R_4], *a strong Russia* [R_5], etc., then a variable such as R_N is a template for other virtual conceptualizations of the actual and unique entity *Russia*. R_1, R_2, \dots, R_N are virtual mental constructs directly accessed when the above formations with common count nouns are conceptualized. It is via these count occurrences that we arrive at the actual and unique state name *Russia*. A virtual plane, rather than the actual one, allows a conceptualization like *a lukewarm Russia* to be assembled without semantic incompatibility.

Both effects discussed above, virtual persons and virtual places, display the same mechanism. The common count nouns designating instances of place names and instances of names of politicians are mental projections of unique actual entities. The author/reader accesses the fictitious entity directly as it corresponds to the common count occurrence. Subsequently, the actual entity is arrived at indirectly. This situation presupposes a non-standard viewing arrangement (cf. Langacker, 1999: 88). Although 'objectively', occurrences such as those in 3.1 and 3.2 ought to be viewed as unnatural, to say the least, they are semantically and grammatically coherent. Their semantic and grammatical well-formedness is heavily dependent on an altered viewing arrangement which selects virtual entities as initial points of reference. On a fictitious plane, which may host numerous occurrences of the otherwise unique proper name, it is perfectly acceptable to conceive of entities which constitute departures from the default standard.

The examples in (1-6) have been selected to support one type of mechanism, but they do not necessarily imply that the presence of an article makes a given noun a virtual occurrence. The name *an Obama* in (7) corresponds to an actual person as the context of the sentence clearly imposes a viewing of the actual plane possibly populated by more persons with this name.

- (7) Still, for a Scot to become prime minister [=Gordon Brown], a woman to become chancellor [=Angela Merkel], **an Obama** to become leader of the Western world, they did have to work harder and be tougher than anyone else around them. (*Newsweek*, Nov 17, 2008)

Cases like these reverse the previously-discussed arrangements, as in (7) *an Obama* is one of the elements of actuality.

Another puzzling conceptualization, not uncommon in journalistic texts on international relations, is the following case. The common count noun *another Iraq* is a fictitious entity. The actual state Iraq is not explicitly mentioned in the sentence though it serves as motivation for further departures from the default viewing arrangement. Interestingly, the fictitious entity *another Iraq* not only serves as a direct access point for the actual place name *Iraq* but primarily for another actual place name, that is *Somalia*. The name *Somalia* is left out of the sentence while there is only the implication of it by means of *the volatile Horn of Africa*, and an allusion to it in the by-line [the bracketed text].

- (8) Now, by trying to prevent another terrorist haven like Afghanistan from developing, America may have helped create **another Iraq** [=Somalia], this one in the volatile Horn of Africa. (*Newsweek*, Apr 21 – 28, 2008) [from the article “Dilemmas of the Horn.” Washington wanted to keep Somalia from turning into another Afghanistan. Now it’s **an African Iraq**.]

The resultant virtual conceptualization *another Iraq* is a blend of the conceptualizations of the two actual entities Iraq and Somalia. Both actual entities, Iraq and Somalia, are indispensable for the fictitious mental projection *another Iraq*.

3.3 How Many Berlins are There?

Contrary to what we have said about departures from the actual plane toward virtual planes, typically accommodating proper nouns and common nouns, respectively, there may be contexts hosting the reverse arrangement. The situation referred to is the case where the actual plane has more than one entity with the same (proper) name and these two correspond to one unique name on a virtual plane. Whether the virtual entity designates a countable noun or not remains an open question as this is shaped by the contextual use of that virtual name. To illustrate this point, let us consider the following true story.

When on 12th June 1987, President Ronald Reagan delivered his famous Brandenburg Gate speech he referred to a virtual place, Berlin, as there were two Berlins in actuality at the time: West and East Berlin. For our linguistic purposes, we may want to ignore the intricacies concerning the political status the two (parts of) Berlin(s) between 1949 and 1990. Suffice it to say that West Berlin had the status of a free city, associated with West Germany, and East Berlin was the capital city of East Germany during this period. Thus, Reagan came up with the famous line which caused enormous enthusiasm among the listeners:

- (9) Es gibt nur ein Berlin.
'There is only one Berlin.'

The sentence implies that although the city of Berlin was divided into two Berlins (parts or sectors, using a different terminology) in actuality, for the author of the sentence and the intended audience at that time, there was only one virtual Berlin. The conceptualizer makes initial contact with the virtual entity and only via this entity, indirectly, makes reference to the actual place(s). The above case shows that there is no guarantee that virtual and actual planes divide between themselves common and proper nouns, respectively. There is no need to assume on an a priori basis that a common count noun corresponds exclusively to a virtual construct.

3.4 The Metaphoric Discourse of International Relations

A virtual plane also hosts conceptual metaphor based on a proper name (name of state) and a verb designating an activity. Consider the state-as-a-person metaphor (cf. Chilton and Lakoff, 1995) and a sentence such as: *France goes all the way down with Italy on ...* The sentence is both metaphoric and metonymic. *France* and *Italy* may correspond to humans under the state-as-a-person metaphor but also stand for politicians representing both states in international affairs. The sentence also codes an instance of fictitious movement which does not take place in actuality. The conceptualizer's direct point of access is a virtual plane on which all the virtual entities, relations between them and the process of movement are assembled. In a blended structure like the one above a state assumes person-like properties and the sentence is as semantically compatible only on a virtual plane. In actuality, France and Italy are stationary, or simply *are*, without any implication of their potential expression of agreement, disagreement or any other mental activity. For a sentence like *France goes all the way down with Italy on ...* to be grammatical it needs to be directly accessed on a virtual plane as it is a virtual construct. Only under these circumstances does the conceptualizer unproblematically comprehend this sentence. So, the mechanism operating here is the same as in the cases discussed in 3.1 and 3.2. It is a virtual plane, hosting virtual entities entering all kinds of virtual relations, that the conceptualizer directly accesses. Then, to establish mental contact with the actual entity further transfer is needed.

Virtual planes may host all possible extensions or projections of actual entities. Among them, there are metaphors, blends and generic entities. A virtual person is not a physical person, but the conceptualization of the prominent characteristics of a person as a type. A virtual state does not designate any particular state either. The state-as-a-person metaphor, formed on the basis of virtual components, is not part of actuality. It must be fully located on a virtual plane. In the state-as-a-person metaphor, the primary mapping identifies a person (P) with a state (S). The corresponding entities are types or arbitrary instances, rather than any actual person(s) or state(s). Resulting from the source-target correspondences is a blend, one element of which is a hybrid type of entity (P/S) combining certain properties of persons and states. It is a virtual situation, rather than a static configuration in actuality, which motivates the use of a dynamic verb such as *go*, for example.

Consequently, occurrences like *France goes all the way down with Italy on ...* are always a distortion of actuality.

Thus far my aim has been to approach a variety and prevalence of departures from the direct description of actual places and individuals in journalistic texts on international relations. Even judging by the small sample of language data, it is justified to presume that departures from the direct description of actuality are at least common, if not ubiquitous and fundamental, in press articles on international relations. It is also legitimate to assume that the above cases exhibit intricate instances of indirectness. A common count equivalent of a default proper name makes sense if it is placed on a virtual plane. A virtual plane with its mental projections of different entities is typically accessed straightforwardly. It is this virtual situation, in which, we believe, there are multiple fictitious entities rather than a single actual one, which motivates the use of an indefinite or definite article. Then, it is via a virtual entity that the conceptualizer indirectly makes contact with an actual entity which is part of the same world that the speaker believes to occupy. Such cases form departures from the direct description of actuality in a fairly regular manner.

4. *The World around Us?*

Interestingly, also the discipline of international relations, or one of its major schools, assumes a division similar to the one proposed in cognitive linguistics. It is common practice to draw a distinction between the *operational* environment and *psychological* environment, as elaborated, among others, in Farrands (1989). A careful analysis of the two distinctions, the one made in cognitive linguistics and the other made in foreign policy analysis, raises the question of whether the two disciplines make such conceptual distinctions only incidentally. In a discipline like international relations it is commonly assumed that indirectness is the norm owing to the fact that one refers to either intangible concepts (e.g. state, national interest, (in)security, etc.) or geographically distant events, places or individuals (e.g. the Balkans, Afghanistan, Pervez Musharraf, etc.). It is because in addressing such issues we almost never face the referents physically or do not have any kind of direct access to them.

Assuming that it is possible to distinguish between actual and virtual entities, it is not certain which of the two types is predominant in journalistic language addressing issues in international relations. Also, it is not clear what the regular patterns of virtual entities and relations in this type of language are. There may also be the more general question: do the distinctions made in cognitive linguistics and international relations provide any insights into our understanding of cognition and similar dichotomies in other disciplines?

Now let us address and further explore the question in the subtitle to this section: What if the world we describe is not really *around* us? It seems that the world of international affairs is almost never around us. It is almost always somewhere else. Both locations of events (e.g. Rwanda, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc.) and persons (e.g. Hamid Karzai, Hillary Clinton, Vladimir Putin, etc.) are

in most cases physically distant from or unrelated to us. As such, those events with their participants remain vague without referents immediately accessible to most of us. Thanks to global news networks, indirect access to international affairs is possible almost instantaneously (cf. the CNN effect).

Given our limited direct access to the events and persons from the international arena, it is logical that the language used to describe them should be indirect. Indirectness in international relations has attracted some attention owing to developments in foreign policy analysis. The most puzzling distinction between directness and indirectness in international relations is the one between the *operational* environment and the *psychological* environment. The distinction is employed in foreign policy analysis. The operational environment embraces the 'reality' outside the foreign policy system, as opposed to interpretations of it. The operational environment includes a wide range of interrelated factors, including social structure and culture, physical and economic environments and, of course, the structure of the international system (cf. Hough, 2004: 87). The psychological environment comprises the policy environment as policy-makers understand it. It includes their perceptions, images, assumptions and expectations about the world (cf. Hough, 2004: 86). Does that dichotomy strike a familiar chord with cognitive linguists?

The original idea was formulated in Sprout and Sprout (1956) and taken over and elaborated by other researchers. What matters in the process of policy-making is not conditions and events as they actually are (the operational environment, or objective reality) but what the policy-maker imagines them to be (the psychological environment – subjective and under the influence of numerous perceptual biases and cognitive stimuli). The two are not always in correspondence (cf. Clarke and White, 1989: 136). Foreign policy decision makers take decisions on the basis of their psychological environment, relying upon perceptions as a guide, rather than any cold weighing of objective facts. To put it another way, there has been a tendency for the images held by decision-makers to misrepresent their operational environment. Decision makers are also subject to many different influences. Particularly, the roles of perception and cognition are very strong. Foreign policy decisions are largely the product of 'images' which individual leaders have of other countries and leaders. Therefore, decisions are not infrequently based on stereotypes, biases and other subjective sources that interfere with the ability to conduct rational foreign policy (cf. Jackson-Preece, 2007).

In the non-realist paradigm of international relations, a state's foreign policy is shaped by individual perceptions and/or misperceptions, pre-existing beliefs, prejudices, stereotypes and biases. Foreign policy decision makers operate in a highly complex world and their decisions carry with them significant risks. The psychological environment is full of stereotypes and a great amount of incomplete information.

Proponents of the realist school tend to ignore the influence of psychological factors in foreign policy analysis. For classical realists, the state is the only actor on the international arena to be considered. The state is further undifferentiated into smaller components. The so-called non-state actors

(NGOs, INGOs, multinational corporations) are merely the state's tools. The realist foreign policy decision maker will not be happy about the variety and prevalence of departures from the direct description of actual relationships and individuals. The individuation and distortion of the otherwise unique actors significantly distorts the environment in which vital decisions are taken.

Both realists and non-realists claim that they want to make the right decisions. Their decision-making process is based on two different kinds of viewing arrangements, as cognitive linguists would say. Realists sift through what seems to constitute the real world (the actual plane?) without any distortions while non-realists heavily rely on different kinds of departures from reality (actuality?). Ironically, the word *realistic* is used by all for the description of their research goals independently of the paradigm assumed. Both realists and non-realists alike understand their foreign policy goals as based on firm, realistic foundations. Even non-realists tend to think of their foreign policy decisions as realistic by being non-realist.

5. Common Goals and Potential Pitfalls

The role and importance of departures from the directly observable world in two independent disciplines have been the focus of this paper. Cognitive linguistics and non-realist (pluralist) foreign policy analysis seem to share this common premise. Both disciplines rely on mental departures or extensions of the conceptions of entities occurring in the surrounding world. The entities and relations obtaining between them in the actual world are of secondary importance as they are mentally accessed via entities and relations conceived of on some fictitious plane or in the psychological environment serving as the initial point of access. The consequence of this line of reasoning is the postulate of indirectness. Both disciplines insist on approaching mental constructs in the first place and subsequently, or indirectly, the actually occurring entities. Different aspects of this supposedly common mechanism may be highlighted depending on the need: indirectness, departure, fictivity, etc. However, we should not ignore the unavoidable consequence of the application of the mechanism in question, namely distortions of the surrounding world. Unintended distortions are presumably unavoidable anyway, but there is the possibility of distortions which, in one way or another, *are* intended. There is no shade of doubt that journalistic texts on international relations contain a wide spectrum of language tools for *extending* the meanings of linguistic expressions, for example, metaphor (cf. Chilton and Lakoff, 1995), metonymy (cf. Barcelona, 2000), blending (cf. Fauconnier, 1997), morphological derivation (cf. Twardzisz, to appear). The question may be raised whether the effect referred to is more of an extension type or a distortion kind of thing. To some scholars, distortion is an undisputed fact whenever language is involved. As Woods (2007, p.91) notes: '[...] a practical assumption about the world that animates scholars to attend to how words *distort* rather than create reality' [stress mine – P.T.]. Given the choice, it would be better if those distortions remained part of the psychological environment (a virtual plane), rather than the operational environment (the actual plane).

In the linguistic part of the paper we have reviewed a sample of journalistic language for international relations. The choice of this particular genre was conscious as it assures the wealth and uniqueness of departure effects. This does not mean, however, that other types of discourse of international politics are short of similar extensions. The academic discourse of international relations, more rigorous and precise than non-academic discourse, also displays frequent instances of extension, departure or even distortion. Consider a few examples of such effects below:

- (10) The key argument in conclusion is that there was **a Tony Blair** before Iraq, one who was genuinely set on building a consensus around humanitarian intervention. (Daddow, 2009, p.547)

A nuclear-armed North Korea, I argue, still cannot win a major victory over the South and the United States. (Lee, 2007, p.436)

Evidence suggests that being a small offshore island off a politically restless continent has markedly affected the history, national attitudes and policy options of **a Britain** or **a Japan**. (Stern, 1995, p.84)

Undoubtedly, semantic extensions, conversions and all kinds of conceptual departures are not the sole province of journalistic texts addressing serious and global issues. Academic texts concerning international politics cannot divorce themselves from departures and, possibly, distortions either. The psychological environment in (pluralist) foreign policy making, alongside virtual planes in (cognitive) linguistics, are being given preferential treatment. Both disciplines invest an enormous amount of effort in order to stress the significance of the two related concepts.

While this apparent acceptance of fictitious and psychological factors in either type of analysis seems rarely challenged within the respective fields of study, one might posit the question from inside. The question is rather basic: Why do we resort to virtuality/fictivity so often? All the language expressions considered in this paper, to which we have ascribed a fictitious character, are secondary to or derived from more 'basic' expressions designating actual entities. Checking the ratio of the former to the latter might be useful, but with so many sources and masses of language data, the task verges on the impossible. Instead of hard evidence we are talking here of impressions resulting from analysing small and selected samples of language data. More 'basic' expressions (*Hillary Clinton*), corresponding to actual entities (Hillary Clinton), serve as bases for potential derivations, extensions, departures or even distortions (e.g. *a furious Hillary Clinton*). Interest in virtuality in cognitive linguistics is understandable, given the inalienable role of conceptualization and subjectivity in linguistic meaning. Insistence on psychological factors within non-realist foreign policy analysis is also internally justified. Refraining from the realist 'paradigm' may be the consequence of what Kuhn (1996) calls 'paradigm shift'. If the two non-realist approaches to their respective disciplines indeed constitute their reactions against the dogmas of the realist traditions in these fields, then they share a common foe. If Kuhn's arguments are right, understanding between

paradigms is not possible owing to differences between their terminologies and conceptual frameworks. Other disciplines, apart from linguistics and international relations, are also free to undergo such paradigm shifts.

While a shift toward virtuality in linguistics does not jeopardize anyone inside and outside the field, a shift toward the psychological environment in international relations may distort not only the language of international politics but also the decision-making process. The more depends on fictivity in foreign policy analysis, the further the analysis departs from reality. Departures from or even distortions of real-world facts may not be as benign for the beneficiaries of foreign policy analysis as the findings of cognitive linguistics for its audience.

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