

How Main European Languages Conceptualize the Social. A Case of Linguistic Relativity

Tadeusz Sozański

www.cyf-kr.edu.pl/~usozans/

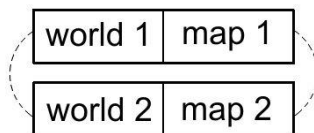
Pedagogical University, Kraków, Poland

- (1) Strong and weak semantic relativity (2–3)
- (2) Defining the subject matter of social science (4–10)
- (3) The social and the common (11–17)
- (4) Translating Aristotle's *koinōnía* (18-28)
- (5) Conclusion: language matters (29)

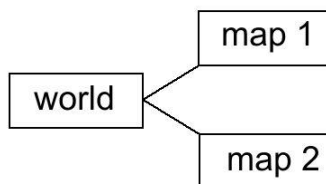
XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July 2010 Gothenburg, Sweden



(1) Strong and weak semantic relativity



Human beings ... are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. ...The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached. (Sapir, 1929)



Classical example: names for colors

*Scientific description of colors in terms of wavelength, luminosity and other physical variables vs. attribution of names to perceived colors with names dependent on the language. *Piros paprika* (red pepper) – *vörös bor* (red wine); *синий-голубой* (blue)*

XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



Social world, social science, and ethnic languages

Assumption

The *physical world* admits of a unique *scientific* image which is constructed with the use of the universal language of mathematics that is protected against the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis

Problem

Once non-mathematical discourse of social science draws on natural ethnic languages, are scientific maps of the *social world* anyhow affected by semantic relativity?



XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



(2) Defining the subject matter of social science

'Social' and 'society' in proto-sociological texts

A *social* phenomenon may be generically defined as an *interorganism behavior regularity* – W. Wallace (in *Handbook of Sociology*, ed. by N. Smelser, 1988)

Il n'y a **société** que là où s'exerce une action générale et combinée.

(There is no society without carrying out some general and combined action)

Comte, 1822, *Plan de travaux scientifiques nécessaires pour reorganiser la société*,

Die Produktion des Lebens ... erscheint ... einerseits als natürliches, andererseits als gesellschaftliches Verhältnis – **gesellschaftlich** in dem Sinne, als hierunter das **Zusammenwirken** mehrerer Individuen

(The production of life ... appears ... on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social relationship - **social** in the meaning of **joint action** of several individuals...)

Marx & Engels, 1845, *Die deutsche Ideologie*



XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



Canonical definitions by masters of sociological thought

Emile Durkheim

Est **fait social** toute manière de faire, fixée ou non, susceptible d'exercer sur l'individu une contrainte extérieure; ou bien encore, qui est générale dans l'étendue d'une **société** donnée tout en ayant une existence propre, indépendante de ses manifestations individuelles.

A **social fact** is any way of acting (doing), whether fixed or not, capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint; or, which is general over the whole of a given **society** whilst having an existence of its own, independent of individual manifestations.

Les Règles de la méthode sociologique, 1895



XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



Max Weber

Soziologie ... soll heißen: eine Wissenschaft, welche **soziales Handeln** deutend verstehen und dadurch in seinem Ablauf und seinen Wirkungen ursächlich erklären will. ... "**Soziales**" Handeln aber soll ein solches Handeln heißen, welches seinem von dem oder den Handelnden gemeinten Sinn nach auf das Verhalten *anderer* bezogen wird und daran in seinem Ablauf orientiert ist.

Sociology ... should be called a science that wants to interpretively understand **social action** and thereby provide a causal explanation of its course and effects. ... An action must be called '**social**' if in its intended meaning it takes account of the behavior of other actor or actors and it is oriented on it in its course.

Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, 1922



XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



Florian Znaniecki: 'social' with humanistic coefficient

Nie może być nauki o zjawiskach **społecznych** 'samych w sobie', w znaczeniu wszelkich w ogóle zjawisk, które socjolog ... zaobserwować może, gdy bada daną mu konkretną **zbiorowość ludzką** ... Lecz może być i już jest naukowe badanie zjawisk, które *same doświadczające i działające podmioty empiryczne*, należące do pewnej zbiorowości, *traktują aktualnie jako zjawiska społeczne, odmienne od innych zjawisk kulturalnych* ... technicznych, ekonomicznych, itd.

There can be no science of **social** phenomena 'in themselves' conceived as any phenomena that the sociologist ... can observe when he investigates a concrete **human collectivity** given to him... But there can be and already is scientific research on the phenomena which *experiencing and acting empirical subjects*, members of some collectivity, *treat by themselves as social phenomena, distinct from other cultural phenomena* ... technical, economic, etc.

Znaniecki, *Wstęp do socjologii*, 1922



XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



Depuis Montesquieu, le seul pas important qu'ait fait jusqu'ici la conception fondamentale de la sociologie (1), est dû à l'illustre et malheureux Condorcet, dans son mémorable ouvrage sur l'Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain, au sujet duquel une juste ap-

(1) Je crois devoir hasarder, dès à présent, ce terme nouveau, exactement équivalent à mon expression, déjà introduite, de *physique sociale*, afin de pouvoir désigner par un nom unique cette partie complémentaire de la philosophie naturelle qui se rapporte à l'étude positive de l'ensemble des lois fondamentales propres aux phénomènes sociaux. La nécessité d'une telle dénomination, pour correspondre à la destination spéciale de ce volume, fera, j'espère, excuser ici ce dernier exercice d'un droit légitime, dont je crois avoir toujours usé avec toute la circonspection convenable, et sans cesser d'éprouver une profonde réprobation pour toute habitude de néologisme systématique.

Cours de philosophie positive,
tome IV, Paris 1839, p. 252



XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden

The birth of neologism 'sociologie'

Question

Why Comte did not coin a purely Greek term to replace 'la **physique sociale**, c'est-à-dire l'étude du développement collectif de l'espèce humaine' (*Plan de travaux*, 1822)

Sociology in Modern Greek

κοινωνιολογία
koinōniologia
(science of society)



German sociological language: *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*

Ferdinand Tönnies 1887 *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*

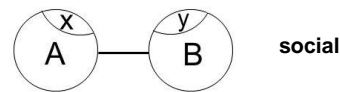
Gemeinschaft
Selbst (self) – Wesenswille

Gesellschaft
Person – Kürwille

Two elementary relationships



Selves A and B *unite* into a quasi-organic whole on the basis of an element x that is common to their 'deep' identities ('blood', 'land'–physical closeness, Geist–values)



Persons A and B find some elements x and y they need in each other's possession and establish a *connection* to exchange x for y

XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



Georg Simmel 1908 *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*
Form der Vergesellschaftung

Max Weber 1922 *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*

Teil II (Part II written earlier)

Teil I

Gemeinschaftshandeln (social action)

soziale Handeln

Gemeinschaft
(any social group)

soziale Beziehung

Vergesellschaftung

Vergemeinschaftung

(associative relationship) (communal relationship)

XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



(3) The 'social' and the 'common'

- The **Byzantine** pattern (Greek and East Slavic languages): the social is identified with the common (*koinós*)
- The **Latin** pattern (Latin, Romance languages and English): *socialis* and *commune* are distinct but complementary concepts
- The **German** pattern, turned into a theoretical distinction by Tönnies and Weber, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* being distinct but opposite concepts
- The **West Slavic** pattern. The difference in meaning between the two concepts is not too sharp, since the adjectives *społeczny* and *wspólny** (since mid 19th century – Polish counterparts of English 'social' and 'common') etymologically grow out from the common root.

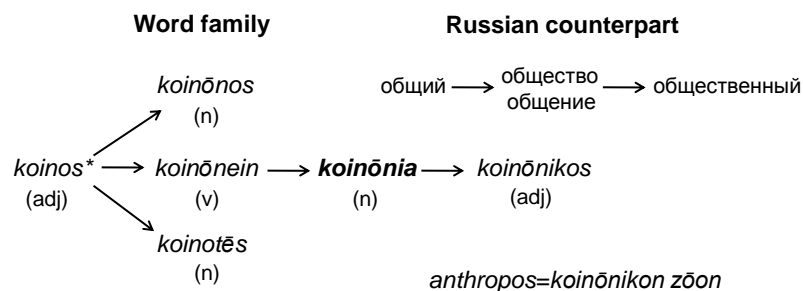
*In Czech: *společenský* and *společný*

XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



The Byzantine pattern

nothing shared 0 $\xrightarrow{\text{social=common}}$ + 'having all in common'

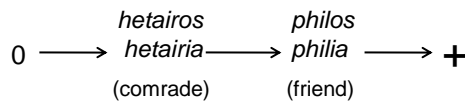


**koinos/ koinē/koinon/koina* m/f/n pl

XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



Few other Greek 'social' terms



The proverb 'what friends have is common property' ('*ta koina philon*') expresses the truth; for Friendship depends on community (*en koinōnia hē philia*).

Nicomachean Ethics

And all that believed ... had all things common (*eichon hapanta koina*)

Praxeis, 2,44

Koinōnia in *Nicomachean Ethics*

logōn kai praxeōn koinōnia.

intercourse in words and actions

patros pros hyeis koinōnia

relation of father to sons

ou gar ek dyo iatrōn ginetai koinōnia

there does not arise an [exchange] relation from two physicians

XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



Koinōnia in *Ta Politika*

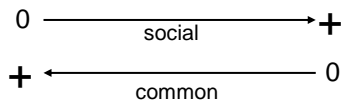
We see that every CITY-STATE (*polis*) is a COMMUNITY (*koinōnia*) of some sort, and that every community is established for the sake of some GOOD (for everyone performs every ACTION for the sake of what he takes to be good). Clearly then, while every community aims at some good, the community that has the most AUTHORITY of all and encompasses all the others aims highest, that is to say, at the good that has the most authority of all. This community is the one called a city-state, the community that is political (*hē koinōnia hē politikē*).

The first paragraph of *Politics*
 the latest English translation, Reeve, 1998

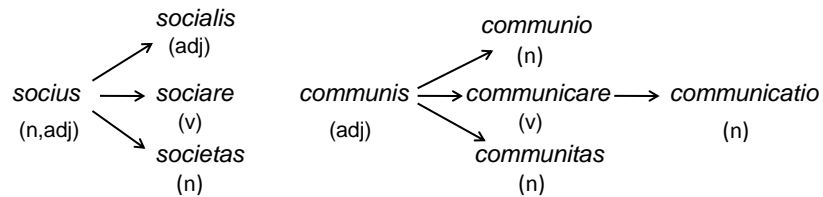
XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



The Latin pattern



Two independent complementary Dimensions; tension between them is possible but manageable



koinōnia photi pros skotos II *Corinth. 6,14* *societas luci ad tenebras*

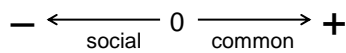
Greek: Don't enter into relations with pagans, light and darkness cannot be united!
Latin: Don't do this, even if it is possible to connect different elements!



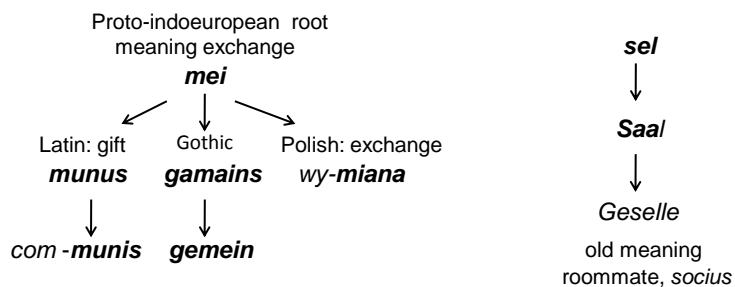
XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



The German pattern



Etymological issues



XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden

Tadeusz Sozański, *How Main European Languages Conceptualize the Social* 17

The West Slavic pattern

← social →
← common →

community
wspólnota (n)

social
społeczny (adj)

society
społeczeństwo (n)

comrade
towarzysz ***

towarzystwo
Polskie Towarzystwo Socjologiczne
Polish Soc. Association

s-poł**-em* (adv) → *spółka* (n) → *społeczny* (adj) → *społeczeństwo* (n)


Old Polish together → today: co. Ltd. etc.

* prefix/preposition: English: with, Latin: *co/cum/con*; Greek: *syn/sym*
 ** *pól*=half; etymology: *nał*, Russian, half, sex; *puoli*, Finnish, half)
 *** etymology: *towar* (tradable good), from Turkish, *davar*, cattle

XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden

Tadeusz Sozański, *How Main European Languages Conceptualize the Social* 18

4. Translating Aristotle's *koinōnía*



Que veons que toute cite est une communité. Et toute communité est instituee et establie et ordonnee pour la grace et a la fin daucun bien. (Lat tou

The beginning of Politics – Ancient Greek

Epeidē pasan polin horomen koinōnian tina ousan kai pasan koinōnian agathou tinos heneken synestēkyian

1st Latin translation

William of Moerbeke, 1260s

Quoniam omnem civitatem videmus **communitatem** quandam existentem et omnem **communitatem** boni alicuius gratia institutam...

1st French translation (from Latin)

Nicolas Oresme, 1370s

Nous veons [voyons] que toute cite est une **communité** [communauté] Et que toute **communité** est instituee et establie et ordonnee pour la grace et a la fin daucun bien ...

Oresme, first printing, 1489

XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



Koinōnia becomes *societas* in Renaissance Latin translations...

Leonardo Bruni, detto Aretino, 1430s (first printing 1478)

- *Quoniam videmus omnem civitatem esse **societatem** quandam et omnem **societatem** boni alicuius gratia constitutam...*

ΕΠΕΙΔΗ ἴπασαν ἀό-
λιν ὀρώμεν κοινωνίαν
πινάσσαν, ἡ καὶ πᾶσαν
κοινωνίαν ἀγαθοῦ τινος ἕνεκεν
συνεσηκῆσαν¹ ἔργῳ ἑῷ δοκοῦν



VM ἴ omnem ciui-
tatē societate qua-
dam contineri vi-
deamus, ἡ omnemq; socie-
tatem boni cuiusdam gra-
tia constitui (ad ἢ idem)

Similarly in later
Latin translations

Perionius, 1542;
Strebaeus, 1542;
Sepúlveda, 1548;
Lambinus, 1567;
Ramus, 1601
Exception:
communitas
Gifanius 1608

Ramus, 1601: The state *contains* a society

...and in the 1st Italian translation

Bruciolini, 1542: *Avegna che noi veggiamo ogni città essere una certa **società**...*



XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



16th century translations into modern languages

- Porque vemos toda ciudad ser una **compañia** y toda compañia ser ordenada por causa de algún bien **1509**, anon. 1st Spanish transl. from Bruni's Latin
 - Perchè e' si vede, che ogni città è una certa **compagnia** e perchè ogni compagnia è costituita per fine di conseguire qualche bene **1549**, Segni 2nd Italian translation
 - Puis que nous voyons toute Cite estre [être] quelque **compagnie** & toute compagnie constituee pour quelque... **1568**, Le Roy 2nd French transl. 1st from Greek
- 1584**, Abril, 2nd Spanish transl. 1st from Greek
- 1598**, I.D. 1st English transl. from French

PVE S vemos, que toda ciudad es vna cierta compañia, i que toda compañia se ajūta por causa de algun bien (porque todos hazē las cosas, que hazen, por causa de lo que fer bue



XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



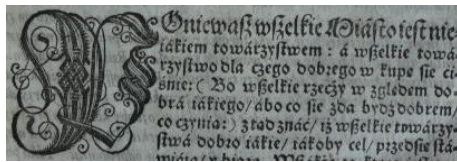
1st Polish translation

*Hē men oun eis pasan hemeran
synēstykia koinōnia kata physin
oikos estin* – Aristotle, d. 322 BC

*Quotidiana igitur **societas**
secundum naturam constituta
domus est* – Bruni, 1430s

- The **community** naturally constituted to satisfy everyday needs, then, is the household – Reeve, 1998
- La **communauté** naturelle nécessaire à la vie quotidienne est donc la famille – Louis, 1996, latest French tr.

- Dom tedy jest **towarzystwo i społeczność** wedle przyrodzenia [z natury] na wszystkie dni żywota [wszystkie dni życia] postanowione [ustanowione]



1605, Sebastian Petrycy
1st Polish translation
(from Bruni's Latin transl.)

<- beginning of Book I

XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



Koinōnia in the age of Enlightenment

1762, J.J. Rousseau, *Du Contrat social*

Société, 24 occurrences

La plus ancienne de toutes les **sociétés**, et la seule naturelle, est celle de la famille • Si l'opposition des intérêts particuliers a rendu nécessaire l'établissement des **sociétés**, c'est l'accord de ces mêmes intérêts qui l'a rendu possible. C'est ce qu'il y a de **commun** dans ces différents intérêts qui forme le lien **social**;

Communauté, 8 occurrences

Chaque membre de la **communauté** se donne à elle au moment qu'elle se forme, tel qu'il se trouve actuellement, lui et toutes ses forces • Le droit que chaque particulier [particular person] a sur son propre fonds est toujours subordonné au droit que la **communauté** a sur tous; sans quoi il n'y aurait ni solidité dans le lien **social**, ni force réelle dans l'exercice de la souveraineté

XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



18th and 19th century translations (i)

- As we see that every city is a **society**, and every **society** is established for some good purpose

1776, Ellis
2nd English tr..
- Every political society forms, it is plain, a sort of **community** or **partnership**, instituted for the benefit of the partners.

Since we see that every commonwealth is a **partnership**, and that every **partnership** is established for the sake of some good
(alternative 'literal' translation given in a footnote)

1797, Gillies
3rd English tr.
- Une cité est une **association**. Toute **association** se forme dans la vue de quelque avantage

1797, Champagne
3rd French trans.
- Es ist offenbar, daß ein jeder Staat aus einer **Gesellschaft** besteht. Eine jede **Gesellschaft**

1798, Schlosser
1st German trans.

XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



18th and 19th century translations (ii)

- Da jedes gemeine Wesen eine **Gesellschaft** vereiniger Menschen ist; jede **Verbindung**

1799, Garve
2nd German tr.
- Puisque tout État, comme nous le voyons est une **société**, et que l'espoir d'un bien est le principe de toute **association**

1803, Millon
4th French tr.
- Since we see that every city is a certain **society**, and that every **society** is established for the

1811, Taylor
4th English tr.
- Comme il est facile de voir que toute cité est une sorte d'**association**, et que toute **association**

1824, Thurot
5th French tr.
- Tout État est évidemment une **association**; et comme le lien de toute **association** c'est l'intérêt,

1837, Saint-Hilaire
6th French transl.
- Da wir sehen, daß jeder Staat eine Art von **Verein** ist, jeder **Verein** ...

1839, A. Stahr
3rd German tr.

XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



18th and 19th century translations (iii)

- Da wir doch sehen, dass jeder Staat eine Art von **Gesellschaft** ist und dass jede **Gesellschaft** um eines **1843**, Lindau
4th German tr.
- As we see that every state is a **society** and that every **society** is established... **1848**, Walford
5th English tr.
- Dappoichè noi veggiamo che ogni stato è una specie di **società**, e che ogni **società** **1853**, Ricci
3rd Italian tr.
- Todo Estado es evidentemente una **asociación**, y toda **asociación** no se forma sino en vista de algún bien **1873**, Azcárate, 3rd
Spanish tr. from French, Saint-Hilaire, 1848 (2nd ed.)
- Since we see that every state is an **association** of some sort and that every **association**... **1877**, Bolland
- Seeing that every State is a sort of **association** and every **association**... **1883**, Weldon
- Todo Estado es una **asociación** **1885**, Zozaya

XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



18th and 19th century translations (iv)

- Всякое государство представляет собою некоторую форму **общезития** **1865**, Скворцов
1st Russian transl.
- Der Staat ist offenbar eine **Gemeinschaft** und da jede **Gemeinschaft** **1872**, Bernays
- Alles, was Staat heißt, ist ersichtlich eine Art von **Gemeinschaft**, und jede **Gemeinschaft** **1879**, Susemihl
- Da jeder Staat sich all eine **Gemeinschaft** darstellt, und jede **Gemeinschaft** **1880**, Kirchmann
- Every state is a **community** of some kind, and every **community** is established with a view to some good **1885**, Jowett
best known 'old' English transl.

W. Newman. *Politics of Aristotle*, Oxford 1887. First analysis of the meaning of *koinōnia* in Aristotle's *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*

XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



20th century translations of *koinōnia* in Aristotle's *Politics* (i)

English

Rackham, 1932: **partnership**
 Barker, 1946; Warrington, 1959; Sinclair, 1962: **association**
 Lord, 1985: **partnership**
 Apostle & Gerson, 1986; Saunders, 1995: **association**
 Simpson, 1997; Reeve, 1998: **community**

French

Prélot, 1950: **société**
 Aubonnet, 1960; Tricot, 1962; Pellegrin, 1993; Louis, 1996: **communauté**

German

Rolfes, 1912; Gigon, 1995; Schwarz, 1989; Schütrumpf, 1991: **Gemeinschaft**



XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



20th century translations of *koinōnia* in Aristotle's *Politics* (ii)

Spanish

Estévanez, 1920: **asociación**
 Gallach, 1933: **agrupación**
 Ortiz, 1939: **asociación**
 Marías & Araujo, 1951: **comunidad**
 Massanés, 1954: **asociación**
 Gómez Robledo, 1963; Samaranch, 1964, **comunidad**
 ?, 1970: **asociación**
 Palli Bonet, 1974; García Gual & Pérez, 1977; García Valdés, 1988;
 Briceño, 1989; López & García, 2005; Santa Cruz & Crespo, 2005: **comunidad**

Italian

Costanzi, 1918; Calderaro, 1936: **associazione**
 Beccari, 1938: **società**
 Viano, 1955: **comunità**
 Saitta, 1961: **società**
 Laurenti, 1966; Venturi Ferriolo, 1980: **comunità**

Polish

Piotrowicz, 1953: **wspólnota**

Russian

Жебелёв, 1911: **общение**



XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden



5. Conclusion: language matters!

I am deeply convinced that social theorists should follow old masters of sociological thought who read sociological literature in few languages. **English** plays quite well its role of the *koinē dialektos* of the scientists. In the natural sciences, it supplements the **only fully international language – the language of mathematics**.

However, in the humanities, the prevalence of English may have affected to some extent the way in which some topics have been treated. For example, the theory developed by Anglo-Saxon philosophers of language claims that *illocutionary force* and *propositional content* – two components of any *speech act* – are independent, but they seem to be more so in English than in French and other languages which have the counterpart of *subjunctif* (the grammatical mode whose function is to connect in one statement the intention expressed by the speaker with the proposition expressing the desired state of affairs).



XVII World Congress of Sociology, 11-17 July, 2010, Gothenburg, Sweden