RHETORIC AND TIME: COGNITION, CULTURE, AND INTERACTION

by

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Temporal cognition, cognitive bias of time-saving heuristics in decision-making, neo-Whorfian linguistic relativism, pragmatic theories of interaction and inferential processing, and cross-cultural research are emerging methodologies for enhancing contemporary understanding of high-stakes rhetoric. As a unified framework they can provide strategic communicators much needed insight into the psychology and practice of time-management in the digital culture of the attention economy.
Introduction: What Is Going On Here Now?

“Time is mysterious; tea-time doubly so” – Douglas Adams

By way of introduction, a statistic: According to a survey of the Oxford Language Corpus, the lexical item “time” is the most commonly used noun in the English language. It is difficult to draw conclusions about how people value and relate to words, constructs, and their meanings based on lexicographical prominence alone. But in this case a cultural intuition suggests itself: Time seems ever more relevant to us because we commonly perceive ourselves of being in possession of increasingly less of it (Hassan 19). This withering observation points to the slippery nature of time as a concept and an experienced reality. Of course, the general anxiety of “holding” onto time is perennial. There is nothing intuitive about mortal finitude. Just as it is a brutal empirical fact, so too is time a prime generative source of human meaning that arises out of universal mechanisms of the mind (Turner 17).

Temporality informs the bodily basis of human meaning, notions of human agency, and, synchronized activities involving joint attention (Turner 113). The latter shows us that meaning is more than a property discreotely residing in minds, but also the cooperative product of minds creating shared meaning through interaction. Perhaps the most singular form of human temporal synchronization is communication. Language is a tool and users have to adjust its cultural “settings” so that members interact in the right time and in proper measure. There is, however, no such thing as a default setting. The

individual is enculturated from earliest development and grows up with a language suffused with culture, world view, and conceptual storehouse (Oakley 126).

Three placeholder inspirations help animate my fascination with time, meaning, and culture. First is Erving Goffman’s instinct to ask the question: “What is it that’s going on here (Goffman 1974: 45)?” The Goffmanian curiosity is especially alert to the patterns organizing everyday experience. I formed a very acute intuition of how people relate to time and language based on six years of writing instruction in a course designed to expose engineering students to the conventions of professional communications. The students were typically tasked with presenting simulated research proposals in written and oral form to an audience of their peers role-playing as potential decision-makers.

The gist of my observation was that many students struggled with frontloading their claims. They seemed to experience difficulty processing the concept of rhetorical exigency. Exigency refers to the sense of urgency that necessitates a rhetorical intervention (Katriel 178). In workplace communication it is often the pragmatic needs of the decision-maker that constrains the structure of the argument (Wasson 210). The real world scenarios of a decision-maker simultaneously evaluating competing proposals, multi-tasking, or concentrating on optimizing time in an already overburdened schedule rarely registered with students as possible realities.

It was in the absence of time urgency as a factor determining the reception of their arguments that I perceived the operative assumption guiding their presentational

strategies. They were relatively scrupulous about respecting assigned allotments of space (assignment length) and time (duration of presentation). But they were crucially missing a standard of relevance that reflected real-world conditions. They instead subscribed implicitly to a concept of an abstract rational decision-maker. This imaginary construct was decoupled from environmental pressures and cognitive biases. Decisions were not polluted by time constraints because the real guiding imperative was the systematic presentation of the truth.

The question is how such an ideal of rationalism got so entrenched in their thinking about communication. It was clear that they thought they were using language for its intended purpose. For these students, communication was designed for rational minds to exchange informational content. It was a channel for impartial transmission of objective knowledge (Lakoff 250). It was an accurate representational instrument to report what was “out there” in the natural world. It was not time-sensitive and could not be rushed or hurried along.

Would these students recognize the great Harvard polymath Harry Austryn Wolfson’s directive to examine words closely? “Words,” he said, “At their best and fullest, are nothing but floating buoys which signal the presence of submerged, unuttered thoughts (qtd. in Holton x).” Indeed, the notion that words contain complex semantic inventories and that concealed in utterances are depths of meaning animate my perspective. It is the same disciplinary spirit that informs the cognitive approach to linguistics in its semantic and pragmatic realizations (Evans and Green 513). Finally,
what student response would there be to Kenneth Burke’s exhortation that one need, so to speak, “put in one’s oar” into an argument after having taken its measure (110)?

I locate my project in the rhetorical tradition as my central interest is in strategic communication. The rhetorical choices that language users make are influenced by culture and cognition (Oakley 1998). The relationship between the two is bridged by language through interaction. Notions of time permeate all aspects of this process, and so are changeable with varying cultural, cognitive, and interactive conditions. But the unifying concern with language use as a form of decision-making, with time as a resource, and with linguistic activity as a means of temporal resource management combine to define my approach as rhetorical.

The questions animating my work proceed from the way users of language access temporal cognition and recruit temporally-defined behaviors in strategic communication. What sort of interactional and cultural constraints operate in time-sensitive scenarios of high stakes rhetoric? What role does a large scale integrative process such as globalization play in the evolution of professional standards of interaction and time management as a cultural leveler? How is it impacted by the technological reality of a global wireless network enabling instantaneous information sharing and connectivity?

These major research questions ground my study, although they can be narrowed to a core rhetorical concern: What constitutes the effective deploying of communicative resources for time-constrained language users to attain culturally bounded optimal
outcomes? Of course, the answer is that resource deployment is situational and contingent on a variety of factors and needs. As such, the concept of time and the practice (or better yet, skill) of right timing are part of the overall management of rhetorical resources. This fact, naturally, was not lost on the classical tradition of rhetoric.

The rhetorical lexicon is populated by terms such as chronos (the concept of time) and kairos (the opportunistic use of time). The latter refers to the sense of right-timing and proper measure, aspects of general language usage that I will argue are vital to human interaction. Modern research on kairos has in turn reinvigorated the study of rhetoric and the theory of composition. Scholars such as Lloyd Bitzer, James Kinneavy, and Carolyn Miller positioned kairos as a central concept of rhetoric (Baumlin and Sipiora 2002). Bitzer’s famous 1968 essay, “The Rhetorical Situation” located kairos as a primary rhetorical device to leverage exigence (the urgency powering the rhetorical intervention).

Kinneavy’s influential essay “Kairos: A Neglected Concept in Classical Rhetoric” (1986) moved the discussion into theory of composition and configured kairos in ethical terms (in addition to its strategic value) as a necessary component of a modern pedagogical program. Knowing when to intervene was raised up as a civic virtue and teaching kairos was now an imperative for producing good citizens. In other modern theories of rhetoric, kairos is treated as a conceptual center-piece if not invoked by name.
Such is the case with Kenneth Burke, arguably the major rhetorician of the 20th century, who emphasized the momentariness of decision-making in rhetorical action and contextual aspects of rhetoric as dramatical “occasion.” Burke’s understanding of rhetoric was “kairotic” on many levels. First, in Burkean parlance, decoupling motives from rhetorical scenes requires understanding the “when” or the situational temporality of the event (even though “when” is noticeably absent from the interrogative form of the dramatistic pentad) (Burke 1969: 56). Rhetors are not only motivated to engage in time, but the audience has certain temporal expectations that must be satisfied. On the level of man-as-symbol-using-(and abusing)-animal, temporality decisively interpenetrates with subjectivity. The self concept is to a considerable degree an aggregate of a certain construal of symbols at a given point in time (Burke 1969: 237).

The mainstreaming of kairos has accompanied a renewed interest in the interactional nature of meaning that cuts across complementary disciplines. I extend the focus on time-constrained interaction by augmenting the rhetorical framework with viewpoints from pragmatics (in the form of Relevance Theory) and behavioral economics (in the form of temporally related cognitive biases). Both perspectives link up to the kairotic rhetorical tradition that emphasizes the process of decision-making and its temporal basis in goal-oriented activity (Sperber and Wilson 1990: 145). Relevance Theory seeks a thrifty and parsimonious account of inferential processing in attempting to derive principles for how languages users extract and encode meaning in utterance production and comprehension. The driving relevance theoretic assumption is that the search for meaning is bounded by satisfying criteria of what is and is not relevant
(Sperber and Wilson 1995). This boundedness works to limit cognitive processing which in turn conserves temporal (and caloric) resources. In Relevance Theory the language user is *ceteris paribus* a time conscious decision-maker and resource-allocator.

But decision-making in the classical sense of atemporal and unrestricted rationalism is a concept that has also undergone serious revision especially in the last decade or so. Recent work in unpacking cognitive bias shows how environmental pressures can pervasively disrupt rational judgment (Kahneman and Tversky 2000). Externally imposed time limitations and internal biasing effects from memory constitute entrenched forms of rational deviation. Research into bias also includes a class of heuristic time-saving strategies that enable adaptive mechanisms of expedient and effective processing (Kahneman 2011: 32). In other words, thinking faster when decision-making is time constrained has its evolutionary advantages.

In similar manner, I seek to extend the rhetorical notion of chronos into newer fields of research. However, in its classical iteration chronos was treated as an objective fact. This, to be sure, represented a huge conceptual achievement. The idea of chronological time was not unique to ancient Greek culture (Hughes and Trautman 1996). Many ancient cultures attained astronomical and calendrical sophistication. But chronos represents a temporal concept that can be retrofitted in culturally distinct ways. The difference is not necessarily chronological in the form of alternative means of calculating dates and measuring time. As Merlin Donald notes, time valuation, culture, and lifestyle are deeply interconnected. As much can be appreciated by the historical fact
that, “At one point in the Roman Empire, the calendar had 180 festival days. Half of the year was taken up by special feasts, all of which had significance to the citizens (Donald and Andreassan 75).” Even though we possess a similar calendrical structure derived from the same basic cultural artifact, the evaluative criteria of what constitutes the appropriate “sanctification” of time is radically different. Designating approximately half the year as a holiday strikes our temporal sensitivity premised on a conventional work week as culturally alien.

Current research into chronos as a concept has enhanced many domains that seek to understand the nature of the mind, brain function, and the workings of language as a cultural tool (Evans 2006a: 18). Some of the most exciting developments in the study of time are occurring simultaneously on the cognitive science front (research into the human conceptualization of time), psycholinguistic front (how speakers map spatio-temporal metaphors across cultures), the neuroscientific front (the neural basis of time perception through experiments using high stress conditions), the deontic front (how social time impacts evaluative, behavioral, and biological routines), and the cosmological front (redefinitions of the nature of time based on cutting edge theoretical physics).

The basic distinction in my chapter breakdown is twofold. The first is a general one between meaning and action. The second is between culture as generic and local in our current moment of globalization. In the first breakdown, the division of labor is somewhat arbitrary. This reflects the acknowledged difficulty in distinguishing clean lines separating the research programs of semantics and pragmatics. On the one hand,
human meaning is not the creation of brains in vats. The bodily basis of meaning works as counterweight to excessive logical abstraction. Meaning is also produced through interaction and between minds. In other words, meaning depends crucially on social contexts. But construing meaning as an exclusively social phenomenon suffers from what might be termed a “larynx in box” fallacy.

The second cultural breakdown recognizes the difficulty with defining culture in the context of globalization. The idea that globalization is a novel phenomenon can be difficult to justify. Since ancient times, large scale cultural processes have colonized and homogenized smaller cultural zones. At the same time, there is no inescapable direction of influence. Globalizing culture does not universally level the playing field or assimilate local norms (Vaish 2010). Local forms can persist through resilience and can also interpenetrate with and exert their own influence on supposed global monoliths. Still, the integrative nature of culture-spanning information sharing technology does seem like an incontrovertible fact of 21rst century life (Hassan 110). The standards being exported on a global scale are characterized by a uniformity of form and meaning that originated in the cultural petri dish of western professionalism.

The first chapter deals with the concept of time. It is therefore primarily concerned with the meaning of time, the domain of semantics. I look at how the large scale concept of chronos is in actuality an aggregate of smaller related temporal concepts (Evans 2006a). I parse the differentiation in the conceptual fabric of chronos. I note how cultural anthropology moved from making categorical distinctions between chronos and
non-chronos construals of time to more nuanced distinctions based on cultural difference within a general context of shared conceptual resources (Levine 14). The nature of temporal cultural artifacts is explored to show how the industrial notion of social time is evolving into something quite different based on the new reality of the attention economy and the wireless network and mobile communications revolution on which it is scaffolded (C. Davidson 212). The cultural emphasis is more generic, focused on the streamlining of globalizing norms associated with cloud computing applications such as Google’s time-management tool, Google Calendar. I pause to consider a cutting edge paper in neo-Whorfian economics that posits a relationship between time conceptualized in specific languages and its behavioral implications for prudential decision-making (Chen 2012).

The second chapter is based on time as an interactional factor. I take up several frameworks related to the general mandate of pragmatics. In other words, I investigate in a general sense how language alters social reality, including social time. Pragmatics is concerned with language in its interpretive context (Wierzbicka 1991: 24). An important interpretive key is temporality. I seek out the interactional motivations of my students and propose that they are recruiting deep intuitions about the operations of conversation based on the theories of H.P. Grice. I examine Gricean rationalism through his Cooperative Principle (CP) and Donald Davidson’s notion of the principle of charity (POC) (Grice 1975; Davidson 1974). Both provide articulated accounts of why interlocutors might look past exigency as a time constraint on interaction to a vision of unencumbered rational exchange. But I also note that Relevance Theory might provide a more thrifty account of the influence of temporal constraints on cognitive processing in interactive scenarios. The
body of work that has come to be known as behavioral economics attracts my attention as it, like Relevance Theory, does not implicate an idealized rational decision-maker. The work of Daniel Kahneman on cognitive biases, especially the time-economizing heuristic mode of reasoning that characterizes elite decision-makers serves to underscore my point (2011). I also note the profound effects enculturation on the ways we relate to time. At the campus level in which my students are immersed, the salient aspect of pedagogical influence of rhetoric as the simple and clear exposition of the truth is noted. I argue that this rhetorical mode expounded by Mark Turner as the Classic Style is ideally suited for the intellectual space of the university (Thomas and Turner 1996). The notion of enabling conventions is what powers it and contributes to its success (33). But the Classic Style, as Turner acknowledges, is only one stylistic option and is not universally applicable. My students apparently experience difficulty disambiguating from the Classic Style in role-playing scenarios that demand greater sensitivity to time-constraints.

The third chapter begins my cultural case study, meaning immersing my inquiry in a specific cultural instantiation of temporal cognition. The suitability of Indian English is demonstrated, along with the lexical item that forms much of the discussion, the indigenous IndE scheduling verb “to prepone” (Sedlatschek 2009; Kachru, Kachru and Sridhar 2008). I note how temporal metaphors and their cross-linguistic spatial mappings constitute one of the chief research agendas of neo-Whorfian psycho-linguistics. The work of Lera Boroditsky and Daniel Casasanto are prominent among a younger coterie of researchers charting the relationship between mind, world, and language (Casasanto and Boroditsky 2008; Boroditsky 2011; Casasanto 2008). The role of culture and its influence
on language is given due attention in the form of Indian temporizations. The salience of prepone is assessed as a natural, economical, and elegant antonym for postpone. The latter, it is noted, does not exhibit a non-particle verb antonym in standard varieties of English. The rationalization for this curious absence (usually neologisms are coined to fill semantic voids, all the more so when the word is easily coinable from an existing stem) is accounted for using a subtle explanation of the commodity metaphor of time and the homologizing of events to entities tracked along the timeline as a fictive path. The Indian mode is marked as distinct because entities can conceptually “exist” prior to their point of origination (due to the cyclical time concept and its theological companion piece, transmigration or karma) (Grimes 1996). In the Western tradition, the ab initio point in time is absolute and not permeable. Therefore it is illogical to prepone an event (i.e. migrate it to a point preceding its origination) in the same way that it is absurd to refer to individual existence prior to conception.

The final chapter is concerned with the cultural case study from the interactional standpoint. I take up the case of dugri, the Israeli style of interaction premised on straight-talking (Katriel 2004). But does directness correlate with time-economizing strategies of discourse? Dugri is also confrontational or what is known in rhetorical terms as agonistic, and the same time-saving orientation is speculated on. In both modalities, a thrifty relationship with time does not necessarily follow. In fact, I argue that politeness strategies might constitute sophisticated time-saving techniques as they forestall costly reparative relationship work that would constitute the fallout of direct and confrontational addressing strategies. It is claimed that the rationalization for dugri is partly the
outgrowth of the sabra mentality of the early Zionist pioneers that sought to overturn centuries of perceived repression and emasculation in the form of rabbinic authority (Almog 2000). But the interactional force of dugri is equally attributable to the same rabbinic notion that language is a snare for sinful temptation of all sorts and potentially deeply socially injurious (Baumel 2006). It therefore regards language as ideally parsimonious and so a thrifty conception of time in interaction is mandated, surprisingly consistent with age-old Jewish precedents.
Chapter 1

Temporal Cognition: Time, Meaning, and Culture

“The schedule is sacred” was an observation made by Edward T Hall, anthropologist and foundational figure in the study of inter-cultural communication (45). He was referring to the smooth running mid-century American workplace. It was well organized and ran efficiently, reflecting an ordered and prosperous society. The sacralization of the schedule meant that Americans related to time and temporality (the experience of time) in certain predictable and culturally codified ways. These relations informed how time was arranged, managed, and valued. Notions of work and leisure are largely temporal constructs. The influence of time also extends to communication. This should not come as a surprise, for Hall also remarked that “culture is communication and communication is culture (186).” In other words, cultural artifacts like the schedule exert an influence on language usage.

Behind the artifact is a concept, and the semantic networks linking a polysemous concept like “time “are vast and complex. Behind linguistic habits are decisions, and this is especially the case with utterance types that are intended to accomplish something pragmatic in the world. But artifacts change with the cultural winds, and our use of language is as responsive to enculturation as it is to cognitive routines. Our concepts are not frozen entities; they too are susceptible to the influence of language usage and
cultural innovation. The interpenetration of culture and cognition as coordinates that are constantly being recalibrated one in relation to the other forms the basis of the second turn of the cognitive revolution of the 1970s (Leavitt 165).

Our 21st century information revolution is largely based on the new promise of time. For the information sharing that comes with unlimited connectivity is instantaneous. In the economics of attention that accompanies the new digital economy, opportunity is measured in attention spans (Lanham 2006: 8). The proliferation of mobile devices that centralize tasks previously distributed throughout the 20th workplace create new possibilities for mobility and creativity. At the same time, they are sources of great distraction and require new forms of monitoring how time is managed (C. Davidson 24). The schedule, as Hall made clear, was at the center of a cultural system that prided itself in its functionalism. The segmentation between work and non-work was important for its integrity. Without a schedule there was the fear of time non-productively spent and, further, anarchy. But now in the age of Google, these very distinctions appear increasingly meaningless. In a managerial culture, one’s work time could be rigorously planned out and mapped. It was a sign of professionalism and the proper valuation of time as a commodity.

The domain of leisure, however, was more than a respite from the tyranny of the schedule. It was time that was supposed to be portioned toward activities that could not be assessed using the same work-related cost-benefit analysis. Time with family was not meant to inhabit the same schedule as the workplace as the two were fundamentally and
qualitatively different (Perlow 32). Google calendar, however, does not automatically endorse this primordial work-leisure separation. A Google account owner, of course, could set up two discrete calendars, one exclusively for work with the other populated by non-work events. But the mid-century schedule was not designed to contain such dual functionality. It would seem somehow blasphemous to schedule time watching your son’s soccer game along with high level corporate negotiations in the same column of meaning (Schor 67). The same could be said for leisure time that was outside the family domain and violated its moral fabric. In the same schedule, for instance, one could not input a secret assignation with a prostitute. The three events could simply not coexist together in the same continuum. Even though the three events exist in the same more or less objective flow of time as intuitively grasped by the human mind, they are culturally marked as mutually exclusive. With Google calendar, however, all three can quite naturally inhabit the same culturally encoded temporal space as long as they can be designated as one of “life’s important events.”

This does not mean, of course, that domestic routines weren’t scheduled or calendars used with precision to track family events (Zerubavel 1989). The moral distinction being made along temporal lines was that, at least until the advent of centralized web-based time management applications, the two domains needed to balance each other. Many a dystopian 20th century literary scenario turns on the threat of what we would now call a form of workaholism. The fossilization of the self in the workplace and the wrong valuation of familial bonds often show up in stereotypes of Edwardian bourgeoisie (Bruckner 2011). In the Sherman brothers’ famous ode to the sanctity of the
schedule, the aptly named patriarch Mr. Banks sings the praises of importing the language and management style of the workplace wholesale into his home life. The song “The Life I Lead” contains the lyrics, “I run my home precisely on schedule / At 6:01, I march through my door / My slippers, sherry, and pipe are due at 6:02 / Consistent is the life I lead!” The problem is not one of Mr. Banks avoiding his family for the workplace, but that of him ecstatically wanting to remake his household in its image. When not rhapsodizing about work, he picks up the theme of empire with himself as benevolent monarch ruling over his family. In both cases, Mr. Banks is fetishizing the schedule as representing the ideal of orderliness in its temporal, social, and civic guises: “A British home requires nothing less! / Tradition, discipline, and rules must be the tools / Without them - disorder! / Catastrophe! Anarchy! - / In short, we have a ghastly mess (Sherman Brothers 2010)!”

The restoration of balance occurs with the counterweight of Mary Poppins, the new governess. Her seeming to exist outside the laws of nature is to drive home the point that she is not a slave of time. Of course, this is deeply ironic because technically she is the ultimate servile subject of time as a domestic servant. Her time was not her own, and the efforts that she devotes to effectively raising children that don’t belong to her cannot be relished as a return on a parental investment. But even though she is part of the same social class tasked with making the household run like a precision instrument, with parts whirling away unseen, she leads the Banks children on creative expeditions. They in turn learn more about using time imaginatively as children developmentally are supposed to do. The children save the father from being consumed by work, and they end up rejoicing
in what for the Edwardians must have been the purest display of spontaneous and non-productive time expenditure – kite flying.

The notion that a cultural artifact such as the schedule can exert such a strong conditioning influence on its users does violence to our entrenched intuition of man as the rational animal. The tools that we use should not manipulate the mind; the mind-tool directionality should only go one way according to deep cultural intuitions we have about decision-making. Starting with Adam Smith, the concept of *homo rationalis* forms a fixture of economic thought. In this codification, human decision-making is essentially a running cost-benefit analysis (Kahneman, Krueger et al. 2006). Factors are weighed with dispassion and “cool reason.” Hypothetical scenarios are generated, and optimal outcomes evaluated. Decisions are cognitive yields reflecting sophisticated habits of mental abstraction. But decision-making is an inherently time-constrained activity. In fact, the temporal factor drastically changes the grounds of reasoning. The temporal factor although viscerally felt by our Pleistocene ancestors as an environmental pressure (i.e. a leaping tiger) is still, for our enculturated mind, founded on a concept of time that we recruit to make sense of what it means to make decisions as time-bound creatures. Strategic communication to some degree draws on the same ideal of the rational actor unmoored from contingency and freed from worrying about external constraints on choice-making. Where does this notion come from and what value does it serve? How can we reconcile it the real world demands of pragmatic language usage or the cost-analysis choices that we often are compelled to make in a trade off between rationality and relevance in generating the maximally effective message?
The thought experiment is a familiar one: Chained in a cave, forced to watch the play of shadows on the wall’s surface, the prisoners mistake the images for the real thing, insubstantial and fleeting shadows for reality. The prisoners know nothing of life outside their cave imprisonment. The shadow play is produced by background illumination from a fire with a variety of entities and objects passing in front of it. The prisoner who escapes his chains and exits the cave only to return for the purpose of freeing the enchained remnant is the philosopher. The process is traumatic and agonizing. The prisoners truly believe their condition is normative. The liberator must coerce prisoners into the outside world. The new experience of sunlight is singularly blinding. But let us add one new component to Plato’s cave allegory: the presence of a small ticking egg timer. This egg timer has no determinate setting; it just keeps ticking by the cave’s margins. Let us also stipulate for the sake of preserving felicitous conditions that the egg timer is outside the peripheral visual field of the immobilized prisoners and that the sound of the timer is only heard as an echo. Nevertheless, the prisoners know that the ticking sound represents the chronometric passing of time (and not inchoate noise) and that it could at least conceivably cease at some unknown point in the future. They have no idea what this possible cessation might entail nor do they know the original purpose of the timer.

The anomalous egg timer is hardly an inconsequential artifact in our revised scenario. The indirect experience (through echoing) of the timer for the prisoners would dramatically change their conceptualization of time from their counterparts in the non-
timer version of the allegory. Our prisoners would have a far richer and more complex notion of temporality even granting all the same constraints being in place. Without the egg timer they could only rely on familiar biological processes of their circadian rhythms. Of course, being in a trapped in cave they could not make astronomical observations. As radical as the transformation would be for the prisoners, it would be most intensely felt by the liberated philosopher. Not only would he possess a new understanding of the meaning of time, but he would now be thrust into the predicament of being an agent in time. In other words, he must make decisions about the wise use of time in his rescue effort. Perhaps the timer exists for a malevolent reason. Maybe its expiration will be a signal to execute the prisoners? The philosopher must make effective and accurate decisions based on the possibility of a very real (but non-confirmable) time constraint. These decisions are not simply self-referential. The philosopher must budget his temporal resources to achieve his coercive goals. What set of strategies would optimize interactional efficiency? He would presumably have to use language in order to convince, shared information that would be construed as maximally relevant.

He might even opt for deception strategies if he makes the judgment call that the timer could expire with disastrous consequences at any second. A Buddhist parable from the Lotus Sutra makes a similar point: A father seeing his house ablaze knows that he cannot waste time in reasoning with his young sons to flee the inferno (Watson 1993: 56-57).\textsuperscript{4} He recognizes that their self-preservation instinct is developmentally too immature

\textsuperscript{4} The actual parable is bogged down in intra-doctrinal details. The relevant passage begins: “The father understood his sons and knew what various toys and curious objects each child customarily liked and what would delight them. And so he said to them, ‘The kind of playthings you like are rare and hard to find. If you do not take them when you can, you will surely regret it later. For example, things like these goat-carts,
to inform their decision-making. So he resorts to bribery and falsehood as expeditious – and under normal conditions morally inexcusable - means of gaining consent. The pretense here is that ordinary, accurate, and truthful explication can legitimately give way to an “over-ride” function that is ruthlessly result-oriented if the circumstances so demand.

The difference between the parables is that the house on fire represents a real and imminent threat. The egg timer, on the other hand, is a proxy of sorts, the indicator of a threat level of varying potential or none at all. And the philosopher must engage in more effortful and time-consuming processing than the father through the various counterfactual scenarios that would need to be played out in front of the mind’s eye. He must attend to situational aspects, maximizing the salience of contextual factors to whittle down the number of probable scenarios. But this investigative process is not as exhaustive as it sounds. We regularly speed up processing through unconscious cost-cutting strategies that often involve a cognitive bias of one form or another in which some measure of acceptable accuracy is sacrificed for the payoff of greater streamlined decision-making (Kahneman 2011). This is one of the foundational observations of behavioral economics. In the next chapter we will consider time-saving cognitive biases as researched by Daniel Kahneman.

Plato had good reasons to omit the temporal context. The job of the ideal Platonic philosopher is to contemplate imperishable and changeless truth. Even for Plato the task
of the decision-maker in the world was to subscribe to the same convention. Every act of moral reasoning turned on a vision of the truth as ideal and permanent. The notion that we should adopt a fiction for a greater purpose was itself repurposed by the practitioners of rhetoric, the hated rivals of Socrates. The practice of rhetoric for the ancients was the art of decision-making geared toward persuasive ends. They were not terribly concerned with the predicament of reasoning as if temporality were not a factor even though the world is fundamentally bound by time constraints, the conundrum of abstraction. The rhetorical insight was that maximum persuasion was possible in a field seemingly cleansed of conventional persuasive sign posts. So the most convincing propositions were those that took a stealth form. The best rhetor didn’t come across as if he were trying to use vulgar persuasion (Thomas and Turner 1996). He was the embodiment of cool reason, detached from temporal constraints like urgency. But this was just a pleasing façade; beneath the surface he was a master of assessing the relationship between time (chronos) and timing (kairos) in the artful production of his message.

The most important proving grounds for rhetorical activity were the market place (agora) and political theater (polis). It was there that time needed to be opportunistically made use of. There were and continue to be distinct temporal forces at play in economic behavior and in the forming of political consensus. The first can be characterized as egocentric activity ultimately in the service of a common good. The second goes under the pretense of serving the social good, but masks egocentric activity. Time constraints in the first relate to the transactional nature of the economic sphere. Buyers and sellers are motivated to reach agreements by the “on record” profit motive. Political players on the
other hand require more “off record” incentives to reach agreement. These can be in the form of favors or other forms of political advantage. The point is that both domains are home to high stakes rhetoric and require corresponding time-rationing. To navigate these domains successfully meant above all doing so with the awareness that time mattered.

Time constraints on decision-making tend to throw off the accuracy of this type of cogitation. Economic theory has long since recognized the trade-off between accuracy and efficiency in the quest for maximizing productivity (Drucker 1999). Our modern workplace – industrial and managerial - is largely a working experiment in using time judiciously because it is construed as a commodity, a “thing” to be valued. As consumers we want to conserve time so that we can preserve our options. As manufacturers we want to produce more at lower cost and in less time without deleteriously sacrificing quality and accuracy. But if certain tasks are performed too slowly or are not synchronized effectively then quality can suffer. In the same way, the notion of the rational agent is bounded by limiting factors that affect computational resourcefulness. Herbert Simon’s famous scissor analogy in which one blade represents cognitive limitations and the other environmental structures illustrates how the realities of making decisions in the world “cuts away” at pure rationality (Gigerenzer and Selten 2002: 4).

As we have seen, the concept of the decision-maker underlying kairos is emblematic of an age old tension between contemplative and active modes of reasoning. The latter implies bounded rationality in time as against the abstraction of the former. Each possesses its own self-justification and cultural usefulness. But it is the relationship
between type (homo rationalis) and token (kairotic reasoning) that forms the basis of its complexity. With the concepts of time and temporality, the complexity shifts to the relationship between tokens. Indeed, the conceptual complexity here is more a function of cultural variation. We can appreciate the diversity by looking again at the material record of cultural artifacts (Everett 2012). It comes as no surprise that some pre-literate cultures do not possess egg timers. This fact alone has huge anthropological implications. Indeed, the originary observations made by anthropologists contrasted cultures that recruited a chronos-like concept of time from those that didn’t (Levine 1997). These latter cultures tended to construe time quite differently than the standard chronos-like notion of a countable and measurable time stream of flowing events. The alterative to chronos was not a haphazard series of random events. It was just a matter of these non-chronos cultures relying on different natural patterns to set their cultural rhythms. These would not necessarily be organized with the same calendrical rigidity as chronos systems and the structure was rather more revisable.

Chronos-like concepts of time are far more the rule than the exception. Building on the anthropological distinction, work in the psychology of time set about sorting through the incredible variety of chronos-based cultures and their peculiar variations. These unique temporal models can exert their cultural distinctiveness residing in profound and far reaching behavioral influences. Ground-breaking research is confirming the hypothesis of Benjamin Whorf that specific languages types can strongly obligate their speakers’ cognitive routines (Wierzbicka 2005). One of the faster growing archives of work consists in linguistic studies that purport to show how spatial metaphors of time
vary across cultures, inclining their speakers to conceptualize using their culturally encoded sense of time directionality in non-linguistic tasks (otherwise the claim would be circular!) (Boroditsky 2011). This research that attempts to expose the plasticity of time conceptualization will form the basis of my third chapter. The importance of these studies lies in its contention that cultural norms can be deeply ingrained in conceptualization via language usage. This does not mean that language usage is wholly determinative; instead it confirms that grammatical systems and semantic inventories can strongly predispose their speakers to think and even reason along certain grammatically pre-defined grooves (Deutscher 2010). There always exists the possibility of speakers opting out of the established routine as languages are not closed systems. They constantly adjust to new conditions and recruit representational resources to accommodate fresh realities.

The next generation of so-called Whorfian scholars is prominently represented by Lera Boroditsky, Daniel Casasanto, Guy Deutscher, and others. A 2012 working paper by Keith Chen of Yale, “The Effect of Language on Economic Behavior: Evidence from Savings Rates, Health Behaviors, and Retirement Assets,” attempted to link together the Whorfian hypothesis and economics, merging effects of language and cognition with decision-making over time (Chen 2012). Chen argues that speakers of future-tense reference languages (FTR) are less likely to make prudential and health-conscious future-oriented decisions. Chen marshals impressive statistical data to model his hypothesis, and even promises a forthcoming collaboration with Boroditsky, one of the more dominant authorities in the field. In other words, even though his claim is as startling as it is new, it can be guaranteed to receive exhaustive future scholarly attention.
Chen begins rather uncontroversially with the observation that languages vary in how they partition time. Some languages use grammatical markers such as tense to distinguish whether an event occurs in the present or future. Chen claims that the obligatory aspect of a language has far-reaching behavioral implications (12). Speakers of strong-FTR languages are less prone to save money, invest prudently, and make health conscious lifestyle choices. The hypothesis is global in its ambition, drawing data from every major region of the world. Chen asserts that he even factored in the demographic of populations of same speakers living as small islands in communities of majority speakers of an official language (39).

The question that Chen seems to answer in the affirmative is: Does a particular morpho-syntactic tense marker influence temporal decision-making? Chen’s linguistic-savings hypothesis falls into the moderate Whorfian approach that sees such markers as obligating but not fully determinative. All things being equal, speakers who use grammatically distinct forms to frame future events engage in degraded future-oriented decision-making.

Chen relies on the European Science Foundation’s “Typology of Languages in Europe” (EUROTYP) to classify languages as either possessing strong or weak FTR markers. The general criterion of grammatical future-time marking (GFTM), as we shall see, is controversial. Chen’s notes a consistent geographic distribution of weak FTR languages (18). So a swath of “futureless” Europe covers much of its northern and central regions.
Finno-Ugric languages, for instance, do not distinguish between future and present time. The same lack of explicit future marking characterizes Estonian. Most Germanic languages also fall into the category of weak FTR, with the rather strong “outlier” exception of English.

Just because weak FTR languages disincline speakers from using clear grammatical markers to express future reference, that in no way implies an inability to distinguish past from future or express futurity. The underlying motivation of the hypothesis seems to be that marking off future events creates disconnect between the self and the future. This kind of mental partitioning using grammatical tense markers results in speakers of strong FTR languages feeling a sense of remoteness from the decisions they will nevertheless have to make at some point – imminent or more remote in the future. The opposite side of the hypothesis is that lack of tense markers engenders a co-identifying of present and future, with the present being more immediately accessible, actionable, and worth dedicating the requisite cognitive effort to achieve optimal results (40).

Of course, English typically allows speakers to use the present tense to indicate future reference. Constructions such as “He leaves for Montreal tomorrow” or “If there’s a knock on the door, answer it” are habitual and unexceptional. Chen does not regard these forms as deviant and invalidating (as they also exist in other languages, such as French and Hebrew to provide just two examples) (18). He draws on research that marks such usage as an anomalous class of invoking scheduling events and law-like properties.
of the world, and not prototypical future referencing. Still, the statistical discrepancy between weak and strong FTR is significant: Chen found that so-called Weak-FTR speakers were 30% more likely to save money, add to retirement funds, and observe health conscious lifestyle habits (44). However, the data does not irrefutably establish the claim. Chen is at pains to make the case that the relationship between differences in language and behavior is causal and not correlative or a coincidental derivation from cultural traits and non-linguistic factors.

The force of Chen’s hypothesis is that language type can be incredibly invasive in terms of its cognitive effects and its impact on decision-making. Chen’s claim could be countered by a hypothesis that would imagine strong FTR languages would provoke the opposite types of behavior. After all, the act of habitually marking out a tense would presumably draw greater salience to itself and thereby make the user attend to a possibly greater degree. The data, as mentioned, bears out Chen’s original hypothesis, but by no means exhausts all possible explanations. The shaping effects of cultural artifacts can be equally influential. If we appreciate the weight of both factors, cognitive and environmental, we begin to recognize that time conceptualization in its chronos and kairos varieties is even more profoundly significant for an understanding of strategic communication in the age of Google and globalization.

The lesson here is that time matters to human communication. We know intuitively that time matters because all human communication occurs in time. Using language while adjusting to temporal cues and constraints represents a massive chunk of
the attentional budgeting that goes into the cognition of forming strategies for communicating effectively. The professional domain in which time concepts and their strategic enactment matter most and contain the richest history is the modern workplace.

The evolving workplace will conform to new habits of attention, but won’t necessarily suffer a decline in productivity. In fact, since the dawn of the internet age OECD data points to an increase in worker productivity (C. Davidson 2012). So alarmists bemoaning the stupefying influence of the internet are overstating their case, although it has an undeniable leeching effect on attention. Another intuition that requires puncturing is the notion that the worker in the information economy clocks less hours than his gritty hard-working forebear. Studies of American labor show the opposite trend in effect (Schor 1993).

The industrial workplace inculcated a set of habits of attention that are now suddenly archaic. For the last hundred years, educational institutions have churned out workers trained to attend to values maximizing performance in industrial contexts: “specialization, hierarchy, individual achievement…linear thinking, focused attention to task, and management from top-down” (C. Davidson 115). Adapting to the information workplace will entail new modes of communication and norms of interaction scaffolded onto new concepts of information, rules governing its exchange, and fundamental habits of attention.

The architecture of the workplace concretized the ethos of task specificity and its
attendant values of time efficiency and optimal productivity as outlined by Frederick Winslow Taylor (Head: 2003). Buildings had discrete zones allocated to recreational activities. Work areas were domains where work hours could be fully maximized – free of distraction, disturbance, and dislocation. This approach to spatial design was meant to cultivate a culture of extrinsic motivation. Workers in their cubicles or precisely positioned on the factory floor were not expected or warranted to provide feedback on questions of efficiency or the workflow process. Self-motivation outside of the “carrot and stick” paradigm of organizational psychology was not yet considered a viable option (Pink 2011). Even today, the workplace still only hesitantly and awkwardly lurches in the direction of a motivational system informed by values of autonomy, purpose, and mastery. The middle manager’s role in this habitat was to assign tasks and to see them performed on time and as error-free as possible.

The concept of the workplace is largely being reworked by virtue of the shifting workday, which has now effectively and fluidly morphed into a 24 seven “punch-clock” (Hassan 2007). On the one hand, workers are increasingly endowed with more personal freedom and choice-making capability in how they structure their work commitments. On the other, the dreary reality that work life can potentially interrupt and irrupt into all aspects of one’s existence is posing a considerable challenge to the mind set that was perhaps overly conditioned by 20th working conditions cleanly segmenting between work and private spheres. Indeed, it is the very concept of “interruption” that is largely rendered irrelevant by the extreme decentralization and distribution of work (Perlow 2012). What sort of metric could adequately model the gains of one relative to the breaks
in the other? The fact that the workday is becoming increasingly difficult to define, especially for so-called knowledge workers in the information economy, leads to far-reaching epistemological questions (C. Davidson 2012). The problem is compounded by the way we naturalize our existing assumptions. Even though the industrial workplace seems increasingly archaic, it too was once regarded as new fangled and innovative. As such, it is but an artificial construction, regardless of how inevitable its bricks and mortar and managerially-driven realization may seem. The venerable institutions and systems that cluster about it – the MBA programs and labor codes – all feed into the general air of its historical necessity. The strong relationship between time and task boundedness is deeply culturally encoded. We need only look at the agrarian and pre-industrial counterparts to 20th century notions of work and leisure. Even allowing for rigid caste systems and guild structures, economic behavior was generally far less specialized, occupation and leisure time less distinguished (Schor 1993).

The evolving mindset toward new workplace realities is hampered by the cognitive difficulties in framing such transformations as “upgrades.” The 20th century way of thinking about work was the product of a century’s worth of development, and it was understood in teleological - not vestigial -terms. But it takes some creative exegesis to interpret the new 21st-century habits of work dispersal based on “endeavor based work, global teaming, crowd sourcing, mass collaboration, [and] connectedness” as evolutionarily contiguous with the productive worker of the industrial world (C. Davidson 2012). Underscoring the counter-intuitiveness of the information revolution is the very real cultural challenges faced by the blurring of home and office boundaries. Is
the blurring really so advantageous? How ought the remote worker identify with the 20th century ideal of efficiency without the corresponding governing strictures of work hours, office space, and professional deportment?

The industrial workplace was governed by the schedule, not personal preference or autonomous decision-making. Breaks were not taken according to individual inclination; for instance, a lunch break did not necessarily imply hungry employees. Work was the focal point of the day, with orbiting activities being defined it. There was a pre-work routine and after “clocking out” an after work ritual defined by leisure and family time. The work part of the day was the most regulated, and these regulations were backed up with the potential of enforcement from either the employer or the union. The question of non-work time allotment was puzzled over by theorists concerned with the potential fraying of routine that might accompany multiple shifts in context (Drucker 1999). This would presumably entail a squandering of mental focus for laborers, creatures of habit only through entrainment.

The industrial workplace was premised on the execution of single, specialized, and scheduled tasks (DeVoe and Pfeffer 2011). Productivity was a function of meeting expectations on time. But this was more than a mechanical requirement. It was a human imperative controlled through supervision and a system of incentives and the threat of countervailing disciplinary actions. Industrial production was most thoroughly expressed in the assembly line as a system of coordinated and carefully-timed movements. The human component in the assembly line was not ingenuity or creativity, of course, but
uniform behavior and compartmentalized task management. This workplace ethos did not spring into being fully formed. It was to a great degree the theoretical labor of Frederick Winslow Taylor. His *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911) is more than a key document of management theory. The industrial workplace is largely a Taylorist creation. As such, the eminent scholar of management, Peter Drucker, regarded Taylor’s work as “the most powerful as well as the most lasting contribution America has made to Western thought since the Federalist papers” (1955: 280).

The 20th century workplace represented a particular vision of time management. It was defined by its organizational structure, formalized codes of conduct, fixed schedules, and management charts. It was a template shaped by hierarchy, stratification, and measurement. Productivity was assessed in terms of units and then weighed against quality. Management was used to oversee labor, but was then subdivided to create a whole new species of middle-management, interfacing between the production and executive floors.

Threading the dichotomy between work and leisure used to be the challenge. For the industrious American, the problem was restraining the work drive from consuming one’s familial and social obligations that constituted much of the stuff of leisure. But now the threat is not that workaholism will overwhelm non-work personal time, it is that the demarcation between these two zones no longer appears easily distinguishable (Perlow 2012). Our computing devices, especially compacted with the rise of the smartphone, centralize all our professional and personal networking needs. The notion of the weekend
or vacation as a block of time somehow immune from work-related concerns is no longer operable. The old markers – chronometric and cultural - of leisure and those of the workday are dissolving with the makeover in flexible scheduling and the loosening of formal codes of conduct (Zerubavel 1989).

Even as a constraint, the schedule was a deeply humane cultural artifact. It was meant to reign in exploitative labor practices, including pernicious child labor. Some states could market themselves using the new language of individual worker rights, but in order to circumvent the new restrictions of labor laws. This was especially appealing to the desperately poor, who were more interested in work that paid rather than humanitarian gains made. The opportunism was reflected in cash-strapped states like North Carolina that sought to brand itself as a "right to work" zone in which the desire to maximize wages through hours worked trumped fears of exploitation and overwork (Wisner 2011: 390).

The human capacity to manipulate time is a crucial part of our inheritance of enculturation. We schedule, manage, arrange, and segment time using a variety of cultural artifacts. Some of these devices are immensely complex. They can have real-world reverberations that transcend their original technological innovativeness. The mechanical clock, for instance, is hugely important for its chronometric value. But the clock and its wrist-worn counterpart, the watch, are perhaps even more culturally significant for launching the modern computing revolution (Gleick 2000). For it was in the 15th century with the invention of the mainspring that mechanical clocks could be
liberated from their vertical dependency on the pendulum powered oscillator. The race to miniaturize had begun and the watch was, as it were, the original personal computer. A well-crafted watch, for example, can contain as many as four hundred components (Jensen 2006). The essential computing principle that would form the basis of Moore’s Law is that cheap processing power is a function of increasingly small size. Tiny silicon chips populated by dense forests of transistors can perform billions of computations. The sea change in information connectivity is a revolution supported by software. But the foundational hardware on which our wireless world runs is the result of cultural processes that started with the miniaturization of time-keeping devices.

In *Of Clocks and Clouds*, Karl Popper organizes complex systems into two types: Clock-like systems are regulative, orderly, and predictable, while cloud-like systems are harder to take apart (1965). Identifying individual components in cloud-like systems is a slippery task, understanding their operational processes even more so. Jonah Lehrer referred to them as “an epistemic mess” (“Breaking Things Down” 2010).5 He went on to lament, “The mistake of modern science is to pretend that everything is a clock” (2010). Popper’s position on the matter was actually the opposite. In the clock-cloud continuum, Popper affirmed that “All clouds are clocks, even the most cloudy of clouds” (210). To claim that Popper’s famous category distinction is purely about material systems is tempting. Lehrer’s discussion revolves around neuroscientific imaging, and the possibly false hope of solving the explanatory gap of mind-body interface with ever more subtle brain scanning technology. Perhaps Popper’s clock-centrism comes across as scientific over-reach.

5 Due to recent allegations of plagiarism it is Lehrer’s career that is now a “mess.”
But surely that is not the extent of Popper’s categorization; otherwise why frame it in such clearly marked chronometric terms? Popper is just as much interested in temporality and its implications for the human condition. In fact, his insights were delivered at Washington University in St. Louis in lecture form with the sub-heading: “An Approach to the Problem of Rationality and the Freedom of Man” (1965). So Popper was fixating on the problems of determinism, free will, and their constraints on the human decision-making faculty.

Popper was plowing fertile philosophical ground here. He was not questioning the nature of temporality as was Martin Heidegger at roughly the same time. Heidegger was dissatisfied with traditional temporal notions of uniformity and linearity. For him, time was not to be usefully described in Aristotelian terms as a series of “now moments” extending on a line into the infinite future. In this ordinary conception of time, the present is the “now” instantaneously flowing from future to past. The Heideggerean temporal framework did not privilege the “vulgar” present (Critchley 2009). Heidegger was equally contemptuous of Augustinian time with its theological emphasis on the eternal “now” inhabited by God from which worldly temporality derived. Instead, Heidegger’s temporality was far more future oriented and anticipatory. Humans are primarily propelled by their being-towards-death, captured in the word pun of “coming towards” (zukommen) and the future (zukunft) (Couzens Hoy 2009: 197). The Heideggerean orientation is inherently heroic, based on the individual’s titanic choice to overcome one’s past cultural baggage or “having-been-ness” (gewesenheit) that impedes embracing future choice (200). This seizing moment of transcendence occurs as a quasi-mystical
flash or “glance of the eye” (augenblick), paralleling the Greek kairos as an opportune or even redemptive moment of complete transformation (Critchley). The substance of the experience is mystical in that it involves a breaking down of the illusory barriers of future, past, and present. But for Heidegger these “ecstases” are not located outside of the time, and as a radical “original” experience it nevertheless does not persist after death (Critchley).

Essentially, Heidegger was reworking our basic observation that time perception influences decision-making. The choices we preference are a function of our particular relationship to time. This attitude is the result of cognitive habits and the forces of enculturation. It infects our language, and the line between strategic and strategically neutral language is blurry at best. Our attempts to modify the belief status of our targeted addressee span all registers, modes of discourse, and historical and cultural conditions. The ways we go about achieving our persuasive goals as language users are multifarious and subtle. These strategies consist of chains of decisions made with various levels of deliberation, mastery, and effort. What time means to the decision-maker and how those decisions are enacted in time (simulated in the mind’s time or implemented in the real world) can differ richly from culture to culture. But some global technological innovations can potentially alter the temporal playing field for all language users, no matter the cultural inflection. On the other hand, amidst the homogenizing force of Google time and the growing ubiquity of mobile devices, consequential cultural statements on time can still be detected.
Our experience of time contrasts sharply with the scientific notion of what time is. For us, time is a jumbled and chaotic experience, not the universal, undisturbed God-like stillness and flatness that fundamental laws of physics seem to present. In the latter, time is undifferentiated – no past, future, or speciously flowing present. Philosophy is as much an attempt to reconcile (i.e. seek consolation in) our own finitude as it is trying to square these two radically different images. The “tenseless” view of time, as mentioned, denies flow. Fundamentally relativistic, temporal properties are no more than contingently relational coordinates of precedence and simultaneity (Callender 2011). But most disorienting to human scale temporal perspective is the complete lack of significance attached to the present moment in tenseless time. The “now” moment is the present only in so as it is constituted by co-occurring events. The opposing view is represented by so-called “tensers,” who inscribe egocentric distinctions of past, present, and future on objective reality. Tensers affirm a present simpliciter, or a non-relational present moment that doesn’t depend on contemporaneous coordinates for its identity. A further tenser development is the notion that only the “now” is existent (presentism), based on the strong temporal intuition that a mind-independent present moment is confirmed by everyday experience. Interestingly, there is no corresponding spatial intuition of an incontrovertible “here.” So is the present moment as objectively tensed more a hallucination than an intuition? In other words, is “nowess” the result of a perceptual flaw? This conundrum is not resolved by resorting to an explanation based on phenomenal properties. While the property of, say, red as one element of the color spectrum can help the viewer carve up the visual field based on that-which-is-not-red, the present experience of now is all-inclusive; there is nothing of the now that is non-present.
Indeed, the persistence of the tensed versus tenseless argument throws into relief the semantic complexity of the relationship between temporal indexicals such as “now” and their non-indexical counterparts such as “present.”

The intangibility of time and the fact that we still experience it indirectly but not through a perceptual aperture marks temporality as unique condition of being human. We still attempt to frame the experience by resorting convenient cultural artifacts. Google Calendar is a prime 21st century example of this human predisposition to make a material (and virtual) material anchor for a process that is conceptually quite slippery. For the Google user, it does not matter where he lives. It could be in Brazil or Bahrain, the Google Account owner launches his free time management application, Google Calendar. The hardware in question makes no difference to the scenario. It could be a desktop computer or a mobile device. If the latter, synchronizing data is natively supported on Android mobile phones, while third party software is readily available for iPhones. He looks at his weekly agenda on his desktop screen. He inputs several special non-repeating events into his calendar: job interview at Starbucks, chess tournament for eldest child, periodic medical check-up for clean bill of health, etc. At first he mistakes the time for the chess tournament, and so has to drag-and-drop the event from a Saturday to a Sunday but at the same time of 10 AM. He then has to alter the duration of his job interview which overlaps with his regular late afternoon workout. On just this one occasion the daily block of time representing his workout is advanced a half an hour. After confirming the orderliness and accuracy of his updated schedule, he quickly synchronizes

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6 To be fair, the same question of cognitive trade-off applies to transference of spatial indexicals such as “Here”, realized in non-indexical form as, say, “Self.”
his calendar with his natively supported Android mobile phone with the realization that he is running a bit behind schedule. Is this the future that encroaches on cultural distinctiveness?

On the other hand, the current claimant to the title of world’s tallest clock tower is the Abraj Al-Bait in Mecca Saudi Arabia (Barrows 2011). More than eclipsing London’s iconic Big Ben architecturally, the Mecca clock is a powerful temporal statement. The Mecca clock rejects Greenwich Mean Time, instead running on Mecca time (a divergence of approximately 21 minutes). 21 minutes may seem insignificant, but the symbolism is profound. GMT is at base an artificial convention, one that has nevertheless been adopted as the global standard. To diverge from such a widely held established norm requires a strong motivation. Erecting a symbol for the world’s 1.5 billion Muslims (ummat al-mu'minin) in the holiest city of Islam would certainly satisfy that criterion (Peer 2012). The potency of the symbol is all the more apparent when we consider the grandiosity of the project next to the paucity of its concrete outcomes. The Swiss-designed clock crowns a Saudi Binladin building complex with an estimated 2012 price tag of $15 billion (Barrows). But the global Muslim population will not be resetting their timepieces to Mecca time, nor are they so obligated. Muslims will continue to tell time by the particular GMT-based regional standard that applies to wherever they live. So is the Mecca clock only for the benefit of Mecca residents, pilgrims, and other travelers? Instead, it creates a powerful universalizing symbol and center around which to unify even though its practical effects may be negligible.
On the level of language, we need only look at the cultural situation in Brazil. A recent law was enacted in 2007 banning the Portuguese present participle in government communication. The decree was hardly regarded as censoring free speech. Instead, it was widely appreciated for addressing an unpleasant reality of official communication: the intentional issuing of vague promises to falsely create the veneer of progress. The bureaucratic blandness of the continuous tense has reached a breaking point. Decree No. 28.314 was issued by Federal District Governor Jose Roberto Arruda and posted on the government website. It stated that “The present participle is hereby fired from all federal district entities… As of today, it is forbidden as an excuse for INEFFICIENCY (“Brasilia Governor Bans Verb Form” 2007).”
Human communication can be chess-like in its strategic and interactional complexity. It can be goal oriented like chess, and is deeply cooperative, though at times rivalrous and egocentric, relying on mutual agreement for the achieving of desired outcomes in time. But chess outside of time is still chess, perhaps even more so as an abstracted set of notational moves, whereas atemporal communication is an oxymoron. Or in Stephen Yarborough’s words: “Time is irrelevant to chess because chess, as such, even when played by human beings, is nonsocial. It can just as easily—if not more easily—be played by and with machines” (Yarborough 2010: 10).7

Even if we readily concede the reality of time in communication8, we are still faced with something of a paradox in the interrelationship between the two functions of language: semiotic and interactive. The first can be construed as the manipulation of signs using symbolization across situations (Oakley 2009). The “symbolization” aspect marks our concern here as uniquely human; animals may use signs but there is no confirming evidence that they manipulate symbols as integrated activation networks of semantic information in long term memory that approximates human conceptual structure. The “across situations” aspect is what makes language interactive; situations presuppose a larger ecology of discourse. This grounding of language in social discourse

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7 Potential for near endless creativity in a bounded system is another parallel: Recursion in the first and the so-called Shannon number in the second, that there are more possible moves in a game of chess than observable atoms in the universe.
8 Not a reality-or-unreality of time statement.
complements interactivity and forms one part of the “dual grounding” hypothesis that postulates linguistic activity as being fundamentally social as well as embodied (Sinha 1999). Now if we remove the “across situations” segment of our definition we are left with pure symbolization, but symbols are manipulated by bodies in space and time (cf. the embodiment grounding). So the paradox of language as being at once freestanding code and a dynamic social activity is defused to the degree that dual grounding forbids detachment and is predicated on co-dependence.

The paradox within a paradox is that even in its interactive mode language is not designed to be terribly self-reflective; we are not hardwired as language-users to “look under the hood” to observe its automatic programming and the manifold workings of its internal assemblies. Our communication is natural, effortless, and – arguably – more or less successful. This is partly due to the temporality of communication. We humans communicate in order to have our intentions recognized. To do this we by default must lay claim on the attention of others, and this has to happen within moments. In the same way, the recognition process cannot be delayed without placing the success of the utterance in jeopardy. Attention is constrained by a multitude of biological (processing capacity) and environmental (hungry tigers) factors. It is notable that a most impressive aspect of language is that regardless of its innateness or cultural origins, we use it to teach our children, to pass on acquired knowledge over time beyond the lifespan of the individual user. Even other primates do not seem to relate to language in this generational-instructional manner.9 The paradox resides in the tension between human

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9 Not to be confused with cultural evolution. Even flies do that: Drosophila use social information to make decisions on egg-laying locations (2012).
communication as a time-constrained everyday activity marked by dynamism, rapidity of
exchange, and complexity of conveyance of information (reports of internal and external
states) and the human tendency to fashion ingenious models to explain the why, how,
and what of this “normaley of complexity.” Such modeling activity often offers up
abstractions – such as COMMUNICATION IS A CONDUIT - that does not always do
full justice to the temporality that informs our linguistic dual groundings (Lakoff 1999).

Clearly animals do not theorize about their communicative faculties, but they do
use signs to signal urgency as much as any other emotional state. It would be interesting
to speculate as to a hypothetical species somehow completely decoupled from typical
survival imperatives: What would their sign system look like in an environment devoid of
the forces of natural selection? To return to chess for a moment; although any
grandmaster worth his salt is proficient in speed chess, players of all levels acknowledge
that it is practically a different species of game. None of the standard chess rules or goals
of the game are altered, however: the same pieces, the same board. But the presence of a
time clock makes for a radical qualitative change in how the game is felt, and how it is
played. It matters greatly if you have twenty minutes to make a single move or if twenty
minutes represents the entire duration of the game. Apportioning time becomes as
integral a strategic advantage as any other positional expertise. Errors made are often due
to the salience of time pressure at the expense of wider attentional distribution across the
board.
Language that displays this sensitivity to time-constraints is inherently pragmatic, putting aside grammatical issues of tense, aspect, and modality for a future discussion. The three time-sensitive questions that, as we shall see, inform pragmatics are: To what degree do temporal concerns influence and even determine the trade-off between explicit encoding and implicit conveyance of relevant information? To what degree does the time imperative affect the structure and salience of the information conveyed? And how do cognitive biases stemming from time-pressures interact with the first two concerns in decision-making? These questions are basic to all human communication, but surface in more consequential form as a subject of rhetoric. The most useful analogy to throw light on the pragmatics-rhetoric interface is that of a tightening versus widening windowing lens of attention (Oakley 2009). Pragmatic aspects of language use are parcelled into communication at the lens’ widest aperture. But rhetoric in high stakes communication shows the lens zoomed in tightly while remaining in focus on the specific domain in which strategic sensibility, time-pressure, and consequentiality all interact together. It can also be argued that pragmatics is fundamentally rhetorical since it turns on the idea of choice (Burke 1967: 11).

In this chapter I claim that for decision-making in high-stakes rhetoric to be of the soundest strategic and consequential value it needs to take full account of how people think about and are unconsciously influenced by time when they persuade, form judgments, and make decisions. I am also interested in the poor decisions that people make in such rhetorical contexts and how these reflect an impoverished conception of the inter-relationship between time and discourse. The linkages between poor rhetorical
performance and the language paradoxes mentioned above should now become clear. In a schematic sense, everyday users recruit intuitions about what language is fundamentally about, what conversational rules it is premised on, and what implications the mandate and rules of communication might hold for particular classes of social interaction. In other words, notions about language that presume idealized conversational actors (not to be confused with formal generative approaches that model ideal speakers based on grammatical competencies) tend to invoke less vivid temporal ecologies.

A good way to get at the substance of these intuitions is to look at their more formalized expressions, and these can be found in the work of the great philosophers of language. My specific interest is in theoretical frameworks of communication that might give the impression that time-pressure is of secondary importance. This is not to say that these theories are inadequate, flawed, or ignorant in any way in assessing time as a pragmatic factor; they merely might give the impression that time is not as valued as it ought to be for communicators in high stakes scenarios. In other words, philosophers of language, it can be argued, flesh out intuitions everyday speakers have about language as a system and as an activity. At the same time, the non-scientific basis of intuition has been worrisome to linguists even since Chomsky’s early period (1955: 86-87).

It is to them that we turn for a more coherent and systematic model as well as for terminological place-holders. To that end, I am particularly interested in two philosophical notions grounded in rationalism, mutual agreement, and the maximization of understanding that go a long way to explaining in highly sensible form what drives
people to communicate and what irreducible beliefs enable conversation. These are Quine’s Principle of Charity (also known as the principle of rational accommodation) and H.P. Grice’s Conversational Principle (Quine 1960; Grice 1975). Essentially, both principles seem to assume at some level an ideal world in which actors are more motivated by truth concerns and conditions, and then are so moved to cooperative action. Both concepts are richly elaborated on by their respective intellectual heirs and dissidents, and I take some of this vast literature, much of which is linguistic and cognitive, into consideration of my outline of time-sensitive rhetoric.

But how accurate is this world-view and to what degree is it complicated by temporal imperatives? My view is that communication is as much defined by contest as it is by communitas. In either case, people think about time costs when generating utterances. But this cost-analysis is not a terribly rational process, since people do not make judgments about time using the same analytic resources as they do money. In any case, I would also contend that a rhetorical stance that does not signal heightened temporal awareness to its participants is doomed to failure. As much as this type of an approach is everywhere relevant and in every historical period, there is a special urgency now for a rhetoric motivated by pragmatic time constraints. I will discuss the cultural, social, and technological dimensions of the contemporary global information revolution as change-agent for high stakes communication in another chapter.

My analysis begins with a justifiably famous literary example: Mark Antony’s fourfold repetition of “Brutus is an honorable man” in Act 111, scene ii of Shakespeare’s
Julius Caesar (1599). For Kenneth Burke, in his famous “Antony on Behalf of the Play” (1965), Antony’s address contains the seeds of twentieth century demagoguery, indirect incitement at its dubious best. For Wayne Booth and then Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber, the question is one of emerging irony: At one point does Antony’s refrain metastasize from sincerity into sarcasm (Booth 1975; Sperber and Wilson 1990)? But what if, counterfactually, the situation was different? Instead, imagine that just before Antony could address the Roman mob, they behaved in predictable violent mob-like fashion and set upon him as a stooge of Caesar. Or take another alternative scenario: Antony instead is told to immediately report to (for the sake of imagination) a cool-headed senatorial committee on the oversight of transfer of authority empowered to make the final decision on post-civil war succession. Imagine that Antony appears before this influential assembly of powerful men and wants to deliver the essence of the message that he was planning on orating at Caesar’s funeral, and that he actually respects their authority, hoping to use the occasion to solidify his claim that currently seems precarious against that of the conspirators. Let us also assume the presence of some sort of ancient but fairly accurate time keeping device ceremonially limiting what Antony could say to roughly one and a half minutes (approximately halving the time of his “Friends, Romans, countrymen” speech, at least according to Marlon Brando’s 1953 rendition). In this counterfactual, what sort of rhetorical choices would Antony make? Would we hear “Brutus is an honorable man” repeated four times? If not, why not?

It would make sense to assume that the time-factor would interface with the decision-making factor in generating alternative judgments and perhaps outcomes.
Without resorting to counterfactuals, Shakespeare’s version is pregnant with the suspense of how Antony will use his time and the risks associated with its usage. Antony must have known that time was not a luxury he could afford. He was, after all, second-in-line in eulogizing Caesar. He could not rely on the natural benefits of a first impression for securing the valuable and limited attention span of the Roman crowd. Second, he was, at least at first, dealing with an audience that was - if not downright hostile - not predisposed to his side, reflected in the cautionary line “Twere best he speak no harm of Brutus here.” Deirdre McCloskey’s definition of rhetoric as “all that moves us without violence” is germane at this point, based on the Greek distinction between persuasion (peitho) and violence (bia) (2010). If attacked by the mob as in scenario one, a crucial set of time-related judgments would kick in for Antony. These would be activated by the survival instinct, and would probably necessitate immediate flight. So in somewhat of a paradox, Antony used rhetoric to defuse the threat of violence to his person, only to channel it into future incitement against his enemies.

But if time was so scarce for Antony, if the threat of violence so imminent, why repeat himself four times? Why not simply get to the point: if Antony possessed the hidden will of Caesar, and its populism goes some way to refuting the accusation of tyranny, shouldn’t he simply present it to the people? Show the people the facts and they will accede to the message if it is truthfully and accurately of a confirming and not disconfirming nature. Be explicit and honest. Pursue a parsimonious strategy of expression. After all, anything that you say can be used against you… This strategic option is not unreasonable on the face of it. Intuitively, we can grasp as Shakespeare does
that Antony needed to gradually shift the emotional allegiance of his audience. Antony was, of course, not of the crowd in that he was a self-consciously high-borne Roman patrician even claiming divine descent from Herakles. Yet he was also of the crowd, popular with his soldiers and at one point holding the office of tribune to the plebeians (50 BCE). In other words, Antony took the measure of his audience and was well equipped to do so, and then made temporal judgments based on allocating certain pragmatic effects throughout his message (and these could be non-linguistic as well, i.e. tearing off the shroud from Caesar’s corpse) (Lyne 2011). He evaluated the cost of implicit rhetorical *gradatio* against that of the time it would take for the attention of his audience to wander and for this loss of attention to coalesce into life-threatening violence against his person. If the “Brutus is an honorable man” refrain was intended to be repeated forty times instead of four based on a rhetorical-temporal miscalculation, then Antony in all likelihood would not have made it alive to the fortieth iteration.

To address these questions we need to unpack the so-called conduit or code metaphor of communication and evaluate its role in pragmatic theory and by extension rhetoric. We must also outline a definition of time-pressure, positioning our example Antony in relation to his contemporary counterpart. In effect, we must sketch out an ideal rhetorical scene and postulate qualities for our model communicator. Time-urgency here refers to the subjectively experienced feeling of being pressured by the durative limits of an event frame. For the individual who is time-pressured, time is an all too quickly exhaustible and diminishing resource. The metaphor immortalized by Benjamin Franklin
- Remember that time is money (1748)\textsuperscript{10} – is as moralistic as it is metaphoric. We are to attend to the passage of time as if it were money. In other words, we are to account for our decisions and activities using the same system of accountancy that we apply to monetary resources and by extension other scarce commodities that by virtue of their scarcity are valuable. The only way we can relate to this condition of the passage of time is to see it as unfolding uni-directionally with an inexorable mortal flow toward death.

Without affording salience to the promise of our individual end in the form of death we could not appreciate our lifespan as a brief glimmer of existence that needs to be savored. This is, of course, a culturally rooted metaphor, entirely Western and infused with a non-hedonic capitalist sensibility. A variation on the metaphor of human life having great value only in terms of its conformity to prescribed moral ideals is the ironic volitive modal, “May he live forever!” In Frank Miller’s 1998 graphic series \textit{300}, the Spartan leader Leonidas insults his betrayer, the hunchback Ephialtes with the curse “May you live forever!” before embarking on his doomed last stand against the invading Persians. Although ironic to our ears, it is not clear that Leonidas meant it as a stealth insult. For Leonidas, an honorable life cut short confirmed retrospectively a life well lived since threat of death equated desire for glory. Passing years and old age at the very least expressed suspicion of the possibility that a glorious death was attainable due to cowardice or incompetence\textsuperscript{11}, and therefore was a source of shame. Franklin’s metaphor of time as a commodity, so integral to later economic theory, does not quite do justice to

\textsuperscript{10} The metaphors behind temporal cognition are approximately eight according to Vyvyan Evans (2006). The commodity metaphor is not grounded in core conceptual structure, unlike spatializations of time. The metaphoric dimension of time will be the subject of my next chapter.

\textsuperscript{11} And hence the irony as getting killed in battle might call one’s combat skills into question.
time: Money once lost can be regained, but not so with time. In the sense of a non-renewable resource, the gravitational-granular metaphor of time slipping through one’s fingers is more apt.

But how do we signal awareness of augmented time-valuation, and why not simply go on record with a declarative, “I know your time is important therefore…?” Would that not in fact save time? This is a rhetorical concern of the highest importance. It is, after all, as a speaker quite easy to signal one’s own subjective experience of time pressure. Predictable manifestations of time-constraint might take the linguistic form of jumbling words together, increased speech rate, expressions that indicate disconnected thought, etc. They may also appear as somatic markers: fidgeting, pupil-dilation, nervous facial ticks, etc. But there is nothing in this laundry list of symptoms that points to skilled communication. A speaker who demonstrates rhetorical awareness of time urgency might use his limited time resources to maximize the conversational conveyance of salient meanings. Or as Michael Israel put it in a somewhat different context: minus dicimus, plus significamus (Say less, but signify more) (2011: 89). In other words, he would instantiate his awareness, but would not state the matter explicitly. Putting it on record would be confirming what is already mutually known, therefore would imply redundancy and as such wasting time, a complete demonstration of the contrary intention.

The situation is rendered more complex by the fact that time imperatives are by no means necessarily shared equally by all participants in a communication. In fact, the more common reality is one of unequal distribution, especially if we factor in the
subjective reality of phenomenological time and its various colorations of vividness. In other words, actors may well be under the same empirical constraint, but the experienced vividness of their unique feelings of time pressure might lead them to very different personal colorations of the event. Mental states, especially ones arising from non-cognitive processes and biased intuitions, are of first order importance even if they are difficult to access and control. So even if someone is delivering a presentation and knows the time-constraint, and knows that his hearers possess the same knowledge (i.e. they know that he knows); the participants may still have radically different construals of what it feels like to be under time pressure. This is not an argument that individual minds differ from each other in the granularity and coloration of their perceptions, thereby implying an impossibility of deriving common insights into shared processes. Instead, it is a cautionary observation that one should not make “hard” deductions based on subjective mental states alone. So how do we gauge if it is the addressee feeling the time “crunch”? Non-verbal expressions might give a clue as to the mental state of the person listening. But it is just as possible that explicit behavioral indicators of felt time-urgency might not be easily discernible or even present. Evaluating time-constraint in this scenario is then a much more complex proposition with a correspondingly greater threat level for the possible outcomes of miscommunication.

A speaker who is presenting a proposal to a group of decision-makers knows beforehand that his specific time allotment belongs to him to utilize at his rhetorical discretion. But even if, as is typically the case, the duration of the presentation is recognized by both speaker and audience, it does not follow that within the presentational window time-
urgency ceases to determine communicative success. In a word, it does not follow that, say, the ten minute block of presentation time is voided of all urgency and is simply credited to the speaker to do as he pleases as long as he retains the pretense of coherence and expresses his most salient point by the end of his presentational block. In fact, it matters quite a bit in the estimation of the hearer if the presenter can or cannot be interpreted as presuming optimal relevance and thereby conferring salience to his utterances. In this process is the skill of the speaker truly evaluated - a criterion far more significant than his use of decorative terms (although, as we shall, trope usage is not a deviation from this principle). Hearers will also respond differently to salient points relative to their occurrence in the messaging. So the speaker should not presume that the initial charity of interpretation afforded him at minute one will govern minute 10. The opposite may also apply such that there is nothing inevitable about a deficit of interpretative charity discerned in minute one necessarily carrying over until the final minute as if by some immutable natural law. Of course, the first scenario is far more likely than the second. The prospect of recovery after an initial strategic blunder that somehow compromises the initial presumption of charity is admittedly dim. If anything, perception of speaker offense even where none is intended will grow more scrutinizing and suspicious as time progresses. In a word, good will is often only minimally recoverable (note therefore the exceptional success of Antony who while not starting with a self-caused charity deficit thrust himself into a disadvantageous default scenario). Note that with the single exception of the case of the speaker who commits an initial error, we are dealing with an ideal speaker not characterized by skill-deficit in the form of lack of fluency, competency, resourcefulness, or preparedness. Instead, we are confronted with
the capable speaker attempting to navigate the daunting and complex interplay of contextual factors and cognitive habits in time-based decision-making.

It thus seems axiomatic as a first principle of sorts that our ideal speaker must begin by acknowledging the salience of time-urgency as a key factor in communicative success as well as its absence being a source of miscommunication and pragmatic failure (Barron 28). Causing unintentional but often irreparable offense to the addressee is a worst case scenario. But failing to signal awareness that time requires consistent moment by moment optimization is a surefire recipe for undermining one’s status with an audience of stakeholders without making any explicit (i.e. linguistically realized in the sentence meaning of the utterance) errors of verbal judgment. What might this look like practice? Imagine a ten minute presentation in which the presenter is ostensibly attempting to persuade an audience of decision-makers to approve a technical proposal. Rather than state his most salient claim and its proofs at the outset of the presentation (say, minute one or two) he defers his central point until near the end of his allotted time (say, minute eight or nine). Instead, most of his presentation is taken up with technical exposition dealing with functional aspects of the proposal. According to his assessment of his own judgment, his reasoning is sound. He needs to be as maximally informative as possible so that he can instruct his audience and thus provide them with necessary facts so that they can make a rational judgment free of bias and undisturbed by temporal factors. In other words, the facts speak for themselves, so speaker needs to expose hearer to as many of them as possible. But this is more or less a leisurely process since without
all the appropriate facts being visible to the rational mind, an informed decision is simply impossible.

This scenario exhibits minimal concern for audience time constraint, but not in the objective sense of hard limitations on speaking time; these are being scrupulously observed with the presentation finishes exactly on the 10 minute mark. Instead, what is being impinged on and threatened is the hypothetical time of the hearer. The possibilities latent in the busy schedule of a decision-maker are - it seems safe to argue - constantly proliferating. For instance, a competing priority might suddenly over-write the current engagement thereby necessitating an unforeseen but unavoidable early exit. Or it could be that a very real possibility of an abutting future obligation might rank higher in importance than the current event. If only the time starved decision-maker could abbreviate his current commitment so as to conserve temporal resources (Perlow 2012). So while the time-insensitive presenter is self-satisfied with his precise observance of the actual limits of the presentation even though the payload of the salience was delayed until near its end, he should not rest easy on his accomplishment. From the time-perspective of the decision-maker, an unquantifiable chunk of time has been wasted (Kahneman, Krueger, et al. 2009). To him this is one of the gravest of possible offenses. After all, there is so much else he could have been doing with his time, so many other possible time-expenditures populating his counter-factual imagination. If the speaker would only have gotten straight to the point, foregrounding that most salient part of the communication then an actionable decision could have been made as soon as possible. How could this person be so thoughtless? He could have simply employed basic mind-
reading techniques. After all, in similar scenarios with colleagues and superiors, our
decision-maker has always projected himself into their conditions, imagined the rivalry
between competing priorities, and the desire to get things done through parsimonious and
cost-effective use of time. It doesn’t seem like a terribly unreasonable imposition.

In fact, high stakes decision-makers are more likely to form judgments about time
using a specialized analytical metric. Conventional decisions about temporal spending
tend to rely on heuristics or quick and easily short cuts to forming a judgment based on
intuitions derived from mappings in long term associative memory. They are not as
precise, exacting, and calculated as our decisions concerning monetary expenditure
(Becker 1965). This is so even though economic theory tends to view both money and
time as scarce commodities. Due to entrainment, decision makers in high stakes
environments account for time in much the same way they do money. In other words,
they are much less heuristically inclined. And since heuristics are by their very nature
short-cutting strategies more prone to error-production, we can conclude that the
decision-maker’s more exacting regime of time-expenditure extends to communication
outputs.

A common survey finding is that individuals with higher incomes report feeling
more pressed for time (Aaker, Rudd, and Mogilner 2010). This perception is plausible in
that the affluent indeed often work longer hours, leaving them with objectively less free
time. As such, time becomes worth more money as its scarcity increases. The conjoining
of scarcity and value applies to time as it does to other sought after commodities that are
in short supply – diamonds or drinking water, depending on relative access to even a basic element. The psychological reality is that as our time becomes more valuable, we feel as we have less of it at our disposal. In fact, even one’s self-perception (regardless of its objective veracity) as affluent may provoke feelings of time pressure as suggested by priming experiments. DeVoe and Pfeffer had 128 undergraduates report the total amount of money in their bank accounts (Devoe and Pfeffer 2011). Students responded to the question using an 11-point scale, but for half the students, the scale was divided into $50 increments, ranging from $0-$50 (I) to over $500 (II). The others were given a scale divided into much larger chunks, ranging from $0-$500 (I) to over $400,000 (II). On the $50 increment scale most undergraduates circled a number on the higher end of the scale, leaving them with the sense that they were relatively well-off. And this seemingly trivial manipulation led participants to feel that they were rushed, pressed for time, and stressed out. Mere inducement of the feeling of affluence led students to experience the same sense of time pressure reported by genuinely affluent individuals. Other studies confirmed that increasing the perceived economic value of time increases its perceived scarcity (Devoe and Pfeffer 2011).

The perception of time scarcity is thus correlated to and in part derives from the sense that time is extremely valuable (King, Hicks, and Abdel Khalik 2009). A safety valve to reduce stress-induced time pressure, then, would be encouraging generosity with one’s time, even, as it were, “giving it away.” In the form of volunteerism (using one’s own time to help others) or the 20% policy of companies like Google implemented as an intrinsic motivator for innovation (as opposed to extrinsic competitive monetary bonuses)
that affords employees essentially one day a week to pursue individual interests, time can be a revitalizing resource that actually has the opposite effect of increasing the likelihood of burnout (Pink 2011). A salient cultural trend over the last fifty years, the increase in perception of time pressure bears no correlation to the static work week. But an explanation is perhaps suggested by ever expanding leisure hours and rising incomes.

There is no reason to think that signaling awareness of time-pressure as a salient characteristic of any high stakes communications scenario won’t have a dual effect. On the one hand, it can act as a sort of processing-economizer that decision makers will automatically key onto. In fact, this implicit signaling activity makes no claim for the substantive merits of whatever proposal is under consideration. It merely but significantly alerts the decision-maker that the speaker is fully understanding and conversant with the temporal ecology that he now inhabits (that is, the realm of the decision-maker) – even if temporarily. But if the signaling is missing or garbled then the legitimacy of the presentation and the credibility of the presenter are instantly rendered suspect. In fact, it would be more plausible to make such an indiscretion a cause for instant judgmental disqualification. After all, if the decision-maker doesn’t detect the signaling emanating from one candidate he can simply proceed to the next in a crowded field of merit-based competition.

Daniel Kahneman would refer to this short-cutting as attribute substitution, or the notion that the complex nature of evaluating individual intelligence or suitability often involves time-saving proxies to arrive at judgments that fail to account for the global
situation in question (2011). So why would decision-makers – those disciplined minds trained to account for time costs as if it was monetary expenditure - commit what seems like a blatant oversight? The answer is that once this sorting process is completed via heuristic processing, decision-makers would then switch into analytic processing mode to evaluate competing proposals that had passed the baseline test of appropriate temporal-signaling. From this we can infer that the most critical phase of the presentation - when the swath of disqualifying judgment is at its most devastating - comes closer to the messaging outset rather than the tail end.

The task of the presenter is to use linguistic resources so as to effectively, but implicitly, signal through linguistic conveyance whatever information the decision-maker would deign optimally relevant and to make it accessible as soon as possible without sacrifice of clarity or impairment of meaning. Once that bar is crossed, the presenter is not quite in the safe zone. For then he must continue arguing for the continuing relevance of his rhetorical appeal as he introduces new elements that must now be referenced in the context of whatever he had previously claimed demanded maximal attention and on whatever he had conferred optimal salience. This is not an impossible scenario, and it may well be that the presenter consumes the full allotment of our model ten minute presentation with the decision-makers exiting with the feeling that the event was bursting with salience and an entirely worthwhile expenditure of time.

As I will discuss in another chapter, the decision-making terrain has been radically altered by the new attention economy. These new conditions and relationships as outlined by Richard Lanham and others has increasingly led to the increased valuation
of time as a metric of attention, the new scarce commodity in the wireless global marketplace of information hyper-saturation (2006). As mentioned from the outset, TIME AS MONEY has a long history of enshrinement as an American civic virtue suggesting the pursuit of ever increasing economic growth and wealth accumulation. Now decision-makers typically have instantaneous access to greater competitive and qualified offerings from a global menu of options. They currently toggle with unprecedented effortlessness between alternatives on inconspicuous wireless handheld devices (Lanham 2006: 254). What was formerly a more or less captive audience is now one in which must be aggressively and skillfully secured. It is pointless to complain about technology as an attention-sapping force that challenges old notions of attentional monopoly and focal concentration. A rhetorical approach that does not concede this point in theorizing the relationship between persuasion and technology is more or less instantly archaic and irrelevant.

As we have seen, a particular type of communicative disposition would seem to be more predisposed to miss the salience of time-pressure as an ecological fixture. Just as we attempt to scale up the profile of the ideal communicator who is optimally positioned to exploit the new realities of digital age decision-making, the flipside should also receive its due attention. In other words, we should try to understand what constituent elements contribute to speaker inability to capitalize on the temporal imperative. If an underdeveloped sense of discriminating between description and persuasion as rhetorical desiderata, then we need to inquire into the causal factors at work. The educational value for those communicators buffeted along in their navigation of the professional sphere should not be under-appreciated.
It would be difficult to estimate how chronic the problem actually is. On the one hand there are the myriad generations of workers whose formative years preceded that of the internet revolution. No doubt through the pressures of market forces and through personal ingenuity there were many who managed to successfully adapt to the new information reality. Yet technological adaptation is one thing, and communicative awareness quite another. In light of some arguments on the degrading effect of social media on basic interpersonal social skills such a claim is not far fetched. Since social media is still overwhelmingly the provenance of the younger generation, there would seem to be a convergence of constituencies in need of exposure to temporally-sensitive rhetoric. A third type would be those who regardless of generational affiliation lack an aptitude for appreciation of wider rhetorical situations. Sadly this group would represent the most difficult to educate as they consider themselves temperamentally unsuited to detecting social cues.

What about the university and its institutional trends that supposedly set the standard for producing the next generation of skilled communicators? My contention is that students are exposed to a veridical style of persuasion that is ideally suited for intellectual inquiry. A thorough discussion of this “classic style” is to be found in Mark Turner and Fancis-Noel Thomas’ same titled *Clear and Simple as the Truth: Writing Classic Prose* (1996). The style has many virtues of in its ideals of clarity and expressive elegance. But this classic style of relating to the truth, however positive its effects on moral and cognitive development, does not help the cause of workplace communication, especially when it comes to professional advancement though ambitious attempts to get proposals approved by stakeholders. If this style defines itself as adopting the enabling
convention of its own immunity from the vicissitudes of time pressure, how can we expect new communicators to import it into the workplace as a successful model when sensitivity to temporal factors is first order importance?

An enabling convention doesn’t have to be an assumption that its adopter currently or would ever sincerely subscribe to. But it must be one that the adopter could authentically come to espouse given the appropriate conditions and the available intentions. The class style is not just impractical but genetically incompatible with the wireless workplace – as the classic style would itself acknowledge (Thomas and Turner 32). But students are just gaining intellectual purchase on this university-friendly style when they receive their diplomas. So how can this up and coming set of leaders acquire the communication skills to impress decision-makers whose patronage can significantly impact career prospects for the speaker-presenter?

The crucial point is that lack of perception of time-urgency does not devolve from bad behavior, skill-deficiency, or intellectual ineptitude. Instead, the phenomenon that I want to here analyze relies on fundamentally sound intuitions about the philosophical and regulative grounds of conversational conduct. People tend to correctly perceive that communication - conversation or presentations which is less interactive, involves far less turn-taking, but is perhaps better suited to highlight the importance of the hearer’s inferential processing) is deeply imbricated with human-scale concepts of cooperative rationality and mutual intelligibility.

These basic conditions, it would be sensible to argue, are what enable the clear presentation of the objective truth, constituted by a meticulous arrangement of verifiable
facts. From the perspective of the scientific method, truth is decidedly not contingent and temporally-bounded. Since arriving at the truth is in our mutual best interests from even a utilitarian standpoint, why would anyone in their right mind tamper with or violate these first principles of interaction? In fact, shouldn’t they contribute by assisting in the disclosure of the facts by helping to clear up speaker ambiguity or just sitting patiently as receptive spectators to the gradual unfolding of the truth? Why should this charitable interpretive stance - charity in the sense of participants being rationally inclined to disregard negative contextual features (for instance, acknowledgement or obliviousness to time-urgency) while partnering in the admittedly messy process of message-formation and meaning-completion - be anything but an operative principle, especially in scenarios characterized by their consequentiality?

The notion of charity is a fixture in the philosophy of language, most memorably discussed as the Principle of Charity (POC), linked to W.V.O Quine with further elaboration by Donald Davidson. The usefulness of POC is as an explanation for the human tendency to maximize agreement (Quine) and intelligibility (Davidson) to enable fluid communication, which typically characterizes most linguistic behavior (1970). The Cooperative Principle as conceived by H.P. Grice states that conversation is mostly a rational and cooperative activity in the sense that utterances must conform to a set of standards so that hearer’s can predictably infer speaker meanings - even if, for a variety of expressive reasons common to all languages (i.e. the universality of irony), speaker and sentence meanings do not perfectly overlap (1975). Stephen Levinson expanded the CP in designing his so-called “interaction engine” which is completely Gricean in
character, but seeks to explain language-independent but specifically human “proclivities” or “properties” that power the linguistic faculty (Levinson 2006).

So if cooperation is so pervasive, how can we claim our model scenario as representative? How do we make sense of our indignant hearer-decision-maker, distracted from speaker’s intention by perception of his temporal-imperative not being respected? As we have seen, the negative inferences from such an interaction can corrupt the decision-making process. At the same time, speaker’s attitudes and beliefs are based on valid intuitions about the nature of conversation (independent of enrolling in a linguistics course or even self-directed deep thinking). These emerge from limited introspection, informal conversations, and are reinforced by habits and skills acquired by and reinforced through the educational milieu. It is only in the workplace that harsh experience prompts the deprogramming process through trial and error. But reflecting on episodes of communication failure in order to systematically revise one’s habits is undermined by lack of appropriate interpretive resources. To acquire these tools, communicators should be acquainted with Gricean pragmatics. This is so because it was Grice who exerted and continues to exert influence on revising the intuitive “conduit” model of communication (Korta and Perry 2011). In the Gricean paradigm, communication is more mishmash between what is said and what is meant than standard information transmission via a predictable coding system.

In the general pragmatics-semantics division of labor, the first deals with the interaction of contextual factors and linguistic meaning in the manifold construal of utterances. The initial philosophical trajectory of pragmatics was a turn away from
formalist systemization as represented by the work of Gottlob Frege and Bernard Russell. Ludwig Wittgenstein, in his second act as a philosopher, decisively moved away from the Russell in a push-pull set of impulses that carried wide ranging implications for language research. The “pull” aspect was the new interest in actual linguistic usage and the underappreciated complexity of verbal interaction. The “push” aspect was rooted in more of a dismay with the prospects of the current philosophical enterprise as embodied in his rival Karl Popper and his notion that philosophy was a discipline populated with solvable problems (Mey 2001). But just how messy is language? And to what extent does it tongue-tie our best efforts at generating hypotheses grounded in concepts such as “rationalism” and “cooperation.”

Grice’s seminal distinction between speaker meaning and sentence meaning has temporal ramifications. The sentence meaning was largely semantic, and Grice did not push this particular envelope all that much. He proposed a so-called Modified Occam's Razor (MOR), an application of parsimony to constrain excessive utterance interpretation, thereby sorting interpretations into their proper semantic or pragmatic domains: “Senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity” (1989: 47). In this formulation, Grice was grappling with an easily overlooked reality. We tend to constrain our own interpretations, which is a natural time-saving device. We don’t exhaustively scroll through all the possible ways we can construe a particular utterance. This economy of interpretation is rule-governed, informed by a set of heuristic that Grice coined “maxims.”
Grice saw sentence meaning as a means of transmitting speaker’s meaning, the integral stage of the process being the recognition by the hearer of the expressed intention of the speaker. If this were carried off in unproblematic fashion, then communication could be considered successful and the expectations of the speaker fulfilled. Or as Grice put it: “‘[Speaker] meant something by x’ is (roughly) equivalent to ‘[Speaker] intended the utterance of x to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention’” (Grice 1957/89: 220). Here Grice may not have radically broken with the traditional code model of communication (for the two are complementary), but he certainly added a layer of inferential processing (and thereby a psychologizing tendency) to what was formerly conceptualized as the somewhat mechanical transmission of signals encoded at one end of the channel with the recipient doing the message decoding on the other end.

The code model is fundamentally of a part with the rationalism, simplicity, and elegance of John Locke (Zuffery 15). But it could not be said to accommodate the messiness and variety of real world language usage. How so? Grice was not terribly concerned with the decoding of propositional meaning (reference assignment of deictic markers being an exception), and its computational implications for the comprehension process. But he was very interested in inferential processing as a sort of recovery device for implicated meaning and its product – what Grice dubbed implicatures (Sperber and Wilson 1981). Although the conduit metaphor seemed to imply parsimonious strain on processing, thereby being an ideal of time efficiency, such was really only the case when it applied to truth-conditional propositions. Ambiguity, double-meanings, and indirection
in the conduit model seemed the result of either excessive speaker ineptitude or ingenuity. But in any case, the result was greater processing effort, and therefore more time intensiveness. What seemed like a lean model was actually only capable of modeling a smallish class of utterances.

The question for Grice revolved around abstraction, but not formalism in the generative sense of positing ideal competency. Grice was interested in the mechanisms that prevented communication breakdown. After all, in spite of all the linguistic messiness that defied the simplistic code transmission model most communication, it turns out, is not boondoggle. So his abstracted speaker must be plugging into some conversational ideal. But what was this communicative assumption? It would have to even transcend verbal language and be relevant to non-linguistic interaction. It would have to explain even the most minimal conversational activity, even routines that merely simulated meaningful talk exchanges such as across-the-fence phatic banter - what Grice referred to as “aping” (1989: 112). As such it would be “superordinate” over any other rules of conversational engagement. The maxims would be derivative, but not “arbitrary conventions” like fashionable etiquette, or as Levinson put it, “table manners” (Levinson 2006). Of course, some critics of Grice have assigned “table manner” status to the maxims, and accused Grice of being the one banishing the so-called uncivilized from his table (Wierzbicka 1991). Cultural critics did not see deviation from the maxims as violations; rather it was their culturally valid way of doing things. The charge of cultural chauvinism is perhaps extreme. They were meant by Grice to be a unified set of
descriptive guidelines, not a series of exhortations and not a “disconnected heap” that would dissolve in cultural diversity.

The unifying notion was, of course, Grice’s Cooperative Principle, formulated as: “Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at this stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (1975: 45). The CP presupposes a high degree of rational planning and sensitivity to contextual (i.e. pragmatic) features of the interaction. On the surface it seems self-evident, although perhaps its emphasis on ideal behaviors was excessive. For Grice cooperative effort meant “to some extent, common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction,” and its implicit recognition as such by participants (1989: 26). The CP powers what Levinson’s dubbed the “interactional engine,” the uniquely human set of capacities to engage in mind reading, mirroring, meaning recognition, and social cognition (Levinson 2006). A world in which language exists without the CP is perhaps impossible to imagine. Through adherence to the maxims of Quantity (informativeness), Quality (truthfulness), Relation (relevance) and Manner (clarity) conversational rationality is promoted. Violations of the maxims, as Grice put it, “dispromotes” said rationality (Grice 1989: 370). The promotion of rationality suggests optimal processing, especially if cooperation is the social ideal. Who, for instance, would want to “dispromote” rationality and thereby turn conversation into an onerous time-consuming bore? Crippling the processing speed by opting out of the CP would mean that some other ideal has (temporally) supplanted that of rationalism? But what could that be?
But some difference of opinion exists on the inherency of cooperation. For instance, Istvan Kecskes parcels theories of communication into two general types: smooth (i.e. those that privilege positive aspects of the communicative process such as context-dependency, cooperation, and politeness) and rough (i.e. those placing more of an explanatory premium on the selfish and rivalrous streak of communication resulting in misunderstandings and outbreaks of language aggression) (2010). The smooth-rough divide helps frame a paradox of communication summed up by Rappaport as “We almost always fail… Yet we almost always nearly succeed” (2003: 402). Kecskes argues that current theoretical approaches skew in favor of the positive-smooth paradigm. The idealistic approach is based on the model that the conscientiousness speakers in constructing their utterances for their hearers is matched by that of hearers in decoding intentions through complex processes of inferential reasoning. The principle of a cooperative rapport between participants overrides or at least attracts more attention to than the more egocentric principle of knowledge-salience. Intention-recognition is an integrally sociocultural phenomenon in which context plays a decisive role. The positive-smooth model of communication regards the process as mostly unproblematic as long as speaker intentions are realized and corresponding pragmatic inferences made. What licenses and enables the intentional-inferential interface is mutual agreement on common ground information. The over-emphasis on cooperative sensitivity to context as against selective egocentric attention – in fact, more of a sort of chicken and egg causal conundrum than is typically appreciated - marks the theoretical terrain such that, as Kecskes puts it dryly: “Nowadays, everybody seems to be a contextualist” (2010).
The Gricean approach subscribes to an interactional model grounded more on the a priori intentions of the speaker than on the co-construction of meaning. As such (and Sperber and Wilson’s Relevance Theory falls into the same category), its framework is characterized by modularity: First comes the what-is-said stage followed by that of what-is-implicated. While Grice emphasized speaker meaning, theoretical developments have slanted in a more hearer-centered direction (Kecskes 2010). By contrast, an alternative approach would be to foreground the trial-and-error nature of interaction with meaning an emergent property and the decoding of intentions a much more haphazard process, informed by a spirit of try and try again. From the perspective of cost-efficiency, this paradigm would clog up processing speed and appear to be effort-intensive. But does a shift in perspective bear any implication for speed of comprehension? What matters is accuracy of modeling, which would then tell us about actual processing trade-offs and not speculative ones. In that sense, it does indeed matter which framework is more faithful in representing the actual operations of inferential processing.

To that end, pragmatics can be said to have “near” and “far” sides when it comes to the contours of utterance construal, with the first referring to the what-is-said part of the utterance and the second to the beyond-what-is-said; namely, speech acts and implicatures (Korta and Perry 2011). The near-side approach clears up matters of ambiguity and indexicals (the judicious anchoring of pronouns and temporal markers like “now” in reference assignment), while far-side concerns reside in how information is conveyed by and actions performed through saying, signaling or gesturing (i.e. encompassing expressions that are linguistic and extra-linguistic). The model speaker
attempting to generate a pragmatic utterance begins by holding sincere beliefs about the truth-conditions that he wants to express.

The utterance is then made in conformity to whatever those particular truth-conditions are. The hearer-interpreter, who is likewise predisposed in his sincerity of belief, after making phonemic, morphological, and syntactical sense of the utterance, then uses logical deduction to reconstruct those truth-conditions and the attendant beliefs they support. In pragmatics, however, there is an added or “ampliative” operation of inferential processing, specifically, in the Gricean sense of communication-specific principles that function heuristically (i.e. not with algorithmic input-output specificity) (Huang 156). Of course, what heuristics lack in accuracy they make up for in processing speed. The maxims are far-side economizers, but they are not strictly speaking parsimonious. The flouting of the maxim is regarded by Grice as an acceptable trade-off if the speaker attains the goal of intention-recognition. But the simple explanation that flouting takes longer than strict observance is not quite true. By detouring around literal meaning, maxim-violation might be the more cost-effective yet riskier option.

The implications for rhetoric are drawn out by Sperber and Wilson (1990; 1998). They claim that the history of rhetoric is largely one of paradoxical displacement: the branch of elocutio or the study of schemas supplanting the other four branches and becoming a synecdoche for rhetoric as a whole (1990: 140). The problem is that classical rhetoric has a very thin justification for non-literal expressions. They are simply cosmetic substitutions. Their effect was noteworthy and completely aesthetic: the text or appeal
was made more pleasant, and thereby more persuasive. But on the level of content no discernible alternation was effected. Sperber and Wilson then argue that it was the Romantics who first broke from the model of rhetoric-as-ornamentation (1990: 140).

For them, language was mystical and ineffable, meaning that expressions were all uniquely different. They summed up this school by invoking Coleridge to the effect that the “felicitous trope cannot be paraphrased” (Sperber and Wilson 1990: 145). In effect, rhetoric had to confront the pragmatics of tropes. So to recall Antony’s repetition of “Brutus is an honorable man” – although it would seem on the surface meaning ideals of parsimony, its non-literalness may redeem its apparent processing redundancy. In other words, it may be more cost-effective to use a non-literal expression even one constructed as a series of repetitions. By using irony and repetition Antony is able to at first echo the sentiment of the crowd. But by the fourth iteration, the relevance of invoking Brutus is only to reference his diminished reputation against his former standard, thus accentuating the fall. All of this, of course, is done under the veil of plausible deniability, an unavailable option in literal expressions, even those of maximal parsimony.

In its straightforward sense, a charitable interpretation is one characterized by the interpreter imputing the most positive reading possible of an action or statement on the part of the actor who performed it. This generous stance informs intuitions about language interaction, perhaps to an unreasonable degree. For instance, if someone says something that appears blatantly irrelevant or irresponsible, then one is duty-bound according to charitable motivation to search out unforeseen pockets of relevance or to
rehabilitate the statement from bad taste or blasphemy. This is the normal everyday sense of extending charitable interpretations. It often makes an appearance on the internet when a strongly worded statement is fired off without due deliberation. One might say, “Given that I know so and so to be reasonable and good, I will attempt to construe the intentions and even meaning of what appears on the surface to be a badly worded and thoughtless statement as somehow more consistent with what I know to be his reasonableness and goodness.” In other words, charity can imply extending considerations of truthfulness a bit into the region of acceptable distortion for the greater good of comity. So as a moral principle, charity would seem to be of the highest stock of ideals. It is especially praiseworthy when applied to speakers whose discourse on surface reading appears stupid or ignorant. As a catalyst for thought it works sort of like Socratic irony, expect without the public exposure of the fool as ignoramus to the world. The learner feels as if he accomplished an action of unusual sophistication by himself, but recognizes the nurturing role of the charitable interpreter. The limitations of this sensibility are immediately apparent in the realm of the time-pressed decision-maker. He has no need to apply charity as an ideal since it does not add anything to his ecological surroundings. If the speaker assumes that the hearer is constitutionally obligated to be charitable, he is in for a grave disappointment. The charitable stance presumes the exact opposite of the temporal imperative: that the hearer should freely allocate extra-processing resources beyond what is sufficient so as to assist in achieving the necessity of comprehension. From the decision-making perspective this is exactly backwards.

In its more philosophical guise, the Principle of Charity (POC) represents a conceptual plank in Quine’s (1908-2000) program of “radical translation” in his Word
and Object (1960). This was part of a larger inquiry into the nature of truth and meaning in language. His student Donald Davidson (1917-2003) would go on to extend POC in his thought experiment of “radical interpretation,” thereby developing the field of truth conditional semantics. Quine’s version of POC states that nonsensical or false utterances are more likely the result of impoverished translation techniques than reflecting actual incoherent views that would otherwise be attributable to the speaker by the translation. In Quine’s words:

The maxim of translation is that assertions startlingly false on the face of them are likely to turn on hidden differences of language....The common sense behind the maxim is that one’s interlocutor’s silliness, beyond a certain point, is less likely than bad translation--or, in the domestic case, linguistic divergence. Quine 1960: 59.

Quine’s version of POC implied more about meaning in language than that bad translation manuals are the fault of their authors. POC as an epistemic stance mandates that speakers attempt to maximize agreement in order to mitigate the vicissitudes of interpretation and indeterminacies of translation. As such, POC is elegant in its demands on processing. Do not spend unnecessary time on attempting to reconcile a radically discordant proposition. Instead, attribute translational causes, which are more likely surface effects than deep fissures of mutual incomprehensibility. Behind this notion is the longstanding minimalist project of understanding the comportment of natural language through behavior of actual users: What set of basic conditions make a form of linguistic behavior intelligible in the first place?
Quine was not the first to go down this road. Ludwig Wittgenstein was the gnomic master of the thought experiment. His classic conundrum from *Philosophical Investigations* was as follows: “If a lion could talk, we could not understand him” (327). This was not a statement on the limitations of animal communication. Wittgenstein was stressing that language as a means of communication is based on more than shared semantic inventory. What made the whole experience of language as a vast accessible and interlinked system of meanings was consensus of belief. With shared beliefs come intentions and pragmatic action (128). The lion’s language could never be thoroughly understood even if a “lexical” set of growls, roars, and purrs could be decoded and classified. We could never gain comprehension through assemblage of tokens, no matter how exhaustive. Our limitation is in not being feline, and so accessing their utterly alien way of life, expressions and behaviors.

Quine’s version of POC was then a means of interpretation. Since humans are quite alike vis a vis each other (unlike, say, lions), it follows that most foreign beliefs are, as Ian Hacking put it, “in many commonplace matters, pretty much the same as our own” (148). POC should therefore encourage speakers on the one hand to look charitably on the truthfulness of sentences within a given corpus of utterances, while on the other imposing pragmatic constraints on *interpretation as translation* since as Hacking aptly observes “most people do communicate a good deal with relative ease” (151).

In other words, Hacking seems to be promulgating a variation of MOR. Now it is true that we do this all the time, and Davidson even claims it to be inevitable, bundled
into our intentional make-up as conscious agents (Broadbent 2010). So Quine’s POC does turn out to be a time-saving device unlike the everyday notion of charity that seems to imply voluntary processing increase. Language variation over and against matters of truth and falsity also implies cost effectiveness, though not on its face. From an everyday perspective, truth is simply a yes-no proposition, while variation requires breaking out the dictionary and performing laborious searching. But Hacking said that beliefs are pretty much the same across the human species (not to be sure, doctrinal beliefs) so the dictionary isn’t even really necessary. It is enough that we are all human and should not let something like variability get in the way of understanding.

Davidson seems to have understood this aspect of POC shifting emphasis from agreement to understanding. Davidson imagines an utterly alien language, but not in the xenolinguistic sense. In his scenario an interpreter is trying to understand another being with an unknown culture, who speaks an unknown language. Both of these artifacts are completely alien to the interpreter. For Davidson matters is his interpreter’s ability to detect in the foreign speaker an attitude of “holding true” (Joseph: 56). As Davidson put it: “Roughly, the principle states that in order to understand another being, one has to assume that the other being is in accordance with himself, and that he speaks the truth” (Davidson 1984).

Do our assumptions about people “holding true” turns on notions of rational decision-making? While we make decisions of imputing charity, must our alien speaker decide on some level to “hold true”? Classical theories of decision-making share a
distinctly cognitive bent in the form of ideal rational actors making decisions using a choosing calculus of weighing alternative options in dispassionate search for optimal outcomes. More recent currents of thought stress the centrality of non-cognitive processes in decision-making (Kahneman 2011). These can reside in murky emotions or unconscious biases. For instance, research now suggests decision-makers are moved at least as much by incremental emotionally-charged effects on their decisions as they are by absolute consequences (Han, Keltner, and Lerner 2007). Likewise, mental strategies such as counterfactual thinking, epitomizing the rational ideal of thinking through trade-offs by means of plausible scenarios actually plays a significant role in enhancing a person’s self-worth quite aside from its functional usefulness as a modeling tool. Also notable is that research recognizes that people respond differently to events contingent on placement in a given time line: Delays that are more remote to the start of an event are felt to be less salient than those closer to the start time, even if the delays are of the same duration (Kahneman 2011).

From the perspective of pure rationalism, the above should be relatively immaterial or discountable variables. Yet the exact opposite seems to be case. There is no single logical yardstick for decisions, especially those grounded in temporality. For instance, as events approach in time they become more vivid, even if the event is one of mere probability and not actuality. The classic example is that people pay more for insurance with clauses specifying death by terrorism than for non-specified protective insurance. The mind can formulate a specific and proximate image of death by terrorism
no matter how remote the likelihood and it will assume greater salience than any number of possible yet unformulated and non-vivid terminal scenarios.

From the long view of evolution, cognitive biases may end up seeming more like adaptations than design flaws. In evolutionary thinking, cognitive bias can be accounted for in three ways: as selection elevating useful shortcutting (i.e. with substantial performance track record) to the level of a workable alternative, but not the normative processing default; as an adaptive alternative if it yields a lower error threshold to standard unbiased problem-solving approaches; and as a task-solving mechanism that somehow circumvents the mind’s design limitations (Haselton, 2005). The fact that adaptive decisions often require speedy processing (i.e. escaping tigers) entails heuristics that function as handy rules of thumb that, however, are rather more susceptible to breaking down into errors of judgment. Although this breakdown can be tracked systematically (a significant chunk of what constitutes and motivates the behavioral economics disciplinary agenda), the basic reasonableness of heuristics - that in spire of powerful constraints of time or capacity decisions nevertheless require being made – is apparent in its wide distribution across cognitive tasks. Decision-making, then, under severe restrictions on time may well not recruit optimal strategies, but the streamlining of processing through this or that simplifying shortcut appeals to the general logic of getting things done with the least amount of mental effort, most advantageous gain, and avoidance of injurious consequences.

Cognitive biases and reliance on heuristics are not detachable from social
perception, hierarchy, and ontology. For instance, those in high power positions (or individuals perceived or perceiving themselves as such) are prone to use specific types of heuristic shortcircuiting. Lower accuracy is one result of time-saving processing strategies. But as we saw with heuristics of time expenditures, there are balancing factors at work. For instance, stereotyping, which draws on the heuristic of representativeness (the pattern of resemblances of A to B such that A is judged representative of B), is a common decision-making time-optimizing device. What counts as “individuating information” in the form of attention to more granular features of the evaluative criteria that might yield greater accuracy is not as cognitively attractive as stereotyping based on the confirming (rather than disconfirming) information (Haselton 2005). For decision-makers, enhancing accuracy is not the highest imperative such that it would override time-saving heuristics. Indeed, the takeaway here for the decision-making habits of individuals who largely determine the outcome of high stakes communication scenarios seems to be that “More powerful individuals enjoy the luxury of allocating cognitive efforts elsewhere” (Saini and Monga 2008).

A powerful cognitive bias linked to the connected process of intention-recognition and inferential-processing that strongly determines pragmatic understanding is fundamental attribution error (FAE) (Fielder and Freytag 2009). FAE is the inferential overreach that motivates people to match internal mental states to expressed behavior without warrant given the circumstances of the situation. But FAE licenses the matching any way as an economizing processor. The bias at work here comes from a respectable mechanism of thought. For instance, making predictions based on the inferred operations
of a given actor’s personality, especially a “snapshot” inference deriving from limited exposure, is grounded in the reality of “personality.” Personality is a concept of some durative consistency, stability, and integrity.

Therefore, cost-effective judgments may well be valid. At the same time, the disposition to engage in FAE is linked to cognitive load: The more “weight” placed on the burden of processing through stress, the stronger the attributional tendency. Research confirms that FAE is a culturally-constituted cognitive bias (Haselton 2005). High-context and interdependent cultures, such as those typically associated with the East Asian sphere, tend to exploit the FAE less than Euro-American cultures. The explanation is that greater emphasis on autonomy is linked to more “atomized” (as opposed to interdependent) decision-making (Krull, Loy, and Lin 1999). FAE is also responsible for inflating one’s own positive estimations, a general function of the general phenomenon of unrealistically generous self-assessment of one’s own cognitive capacity (Fielder and Freytag 2009).

In Attention and Effort, Kanheman notes that “Much of our mental life appears to be carried out at the pace of a very sedate walk” (Kahneman 1973). This is because many daily tasks are of the routine sort and require minimal effort, fitting into familiar cognitive grooves such as reading a book or driving a car. In the first, redundancy and lack of active rehearsal translate into a relatively minimal processing effort. So the speed at which a task can be performed (in other words how it can optimize on time) without running into predicable failure is an important constraint on how the mind makes internal
processing demands. An implicit ranking system typically develops from this logic of trading off time and processing effort. But the intuitive notion that a task is difficult does not result in a set computational equation for determining effort to-be-expended. For instance, effort might be momentary and irregular within the global dimensions of the task itself. Therefore, the amount of work required for a task-completion is contingent on the specific cost-labor contours of the task as a whole and in its fine granularity.

The most salient type of time pressure is that which is more deeply structured into the nature of the task. Tasks heavily dependent on short-term memory involve especially acute time pressure as the cognitive load must be managed against the rate at which stored information degrades under the temporal constraints. So, for instance, the retention in memorizing a string of approximately nine numbers is impacted more by time pressure than accessibility. But the same principle can be seen in normal communication, especially the high stakes variety.

As DeVoe and Pfeffer note, greater feelings of time pressure are linked to less patient behavior. The documented fact that people increasingly feel starved for time – as if 24 hours is not enough time in a day – is linked to the perception that work consumes more time and effort than ever before (2011). These feelings of stress and overwork are not inconsequential, and generate predictable psychological outcomes. The stress of workplace time pressure is strongly affected by number of hours worked per week. Organizational psychology confirms that quantitative demands on employees cause the most stress. However, in spite of the intuition that the reign of the work day is growing
ever more expansive, evidence suggests the opposite to be the case. Therefore some additional factor other than number of hours clocked or even workplace conditions must be at play in the feeling of increasing time pressure. The trend in current time-management research now focuses on responses to work stressors.

Of course, if time scarcity results from objective shortness of time because of excessive demands surrounding a given task, then the resolution is simple: Change the conditions and add more time to the task at hand. But if what is scarce is not objective clock time per se, rather it is the individual difference in personal reaction to time constraints due to prevailing conditions or the feeling of being overwhelmed by future tasks, then we’re occupied with a problem of a psychological nature.

As mentioned, the worth of a person’s time can determine perception of time pressure. Biased perceptions of the true condition of a commodity (scarce or not scarce) result from attaching high value to it. The correlation between greater financial wealth and enhanced perception of time pressure can be explained by the wider set of options for spending one’s time that are uniquely available through higher income. Free time, then, must be weighed in an ever more complex equation of opportunity cost that is qualitatively different from low income earners who may, through unemployment, have time to spare, but nothing to spend it on. So level of personal income may well correlate to experience of time pressure, a somewhat counterintuitive assumption due to the cultural stereotype of the idle rich. In fact, the hypothesis would turn in the complete opposite direction: if time is increasingly valuable, then “wasting” it is increasingly
prohibitively disallowed. The fear of wastage results in elevated perception of time pressure.

In addition to the workplace context (high income = high stress positions promoting time-pressure) it is also reasonable to surmise the dynamic being inverted: personalities drawn to high stress environments such as Type As would gravitate to higher income positions with more demands on their time (Levine 1997). What the research does not confirm, however, is how the recognized phenomenon of economically valued time as positively correlated to greater perception of time pressure maps on to social positions in which cultural – i.e. intellectual or ideological – capital is the valued “currency” (Saini and Monga 2008). Does the same feeling of time pressure still register as a salient factor? This concern is relevant in so much as much high-stakes communication takes place in the realm of cultural institutions in which important decision makers, while affluent, do not match the incomes of high earners in the for-profit sector. In the same vein as non-affluent people being experimentally manipulated to perceive themselves as having greater affluence and therefore under increased time pressure, feelings of time pressure can be induced with the behavioral effect of greater impatience in granting requests from or assisting strangers. There is nothing particularly shocking in these experimental results, some of which were first produced in the seventies. But what is significant for how this body of research impacts our notion of the ideal hearer-decision-maker. How could it be possible not to make time-pressure a rhetorical notion of the utmost salience?
The Gricean cooperative scheme, with its derivative maxims, represents an ideal abstraction of verbal communication. But cooperation as an a priori mental state has not been empirically confirmed. The fact that joint effort in recognizing mutual intentions is a complex process means that it can place considerable processing strain on interlocutors. It can also turn into a high stress activity characterized as much by non-cooperation and self-interestedness as by mutual agreement. Some contextualist schools do not hold the line on affirming the fundamental nature of the cooperative principle. Relevance theory, for instance, essentially grants interlocutors freedom to be as cooperative or as uncooperative as they please, such that cooperative intent represents a preferencing of a choice to satisfy certain self-interests.

Our model scenario of the time-pressed decision-maker is not a realm committed to the CP. If we return to the scenario of Antony before the committee we see similar patterns at work. He needs to impress his decision-makers. He ought to presume that his hearer is time-pressed, but even if he doesn’t, we know that based on the urgency of his own mission he will behave accordingly. Might he still use non-literalisms to persuade his new audience? But this audience is hungry for salience. They want to make decisions for the inverse reason that contemporary cosmopolitan decision-makers stress over multiplying hedonic options. The Roman committee is terrified of the threat of more outbreaks of violent chaos.

So does Antony sacrifice elegance in favor of frugal parsimony? Does he impute charitable motives to his stern hearers, seeing in them rational partners in a cooperative
venture of mutual-understanding? The answer is that Antony would make rhetorical adjustments based on his new audience. Practicing optimal relevance he would open by disclosing Caesar’s will, the game-changer for succession. Then he would conclude his business; quickly leaving the senate hall, he would hurry to ascend the podium by the shrouded body of Caesar. He would look down on his audience and after some prefatory remarks about his Roman friends, burying Caesar, and good and evil, would intone, “For Brutus is an honorable man...”
Chapter 3

The Costs of Rescheduling: The Case of Indian English “Prepone”

Within India there is nothing wrong in using this word [prepone]; we all understand what it means. The fact that native speakers don't use it is not our problem. After all, when you have `postpone', then why not prepone? – The Hindu (2004)

And every language is a vast pattern-system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but analyzes nature, notices or neglects types of relationship and phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness. - Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956: 252)

Thinking about time is a complex activity mediated by culture with implications reaching into the domain of communication. I will use the case of Indian English to illustrate the infiltration of culture into temporal thinking. A variety of factors provide India with the ideal cultural grounds for such a discussion. First, broadly speaking, two large scale concepts of time are operational in India: cyclical and linear. In the West, we essentially operate on linear time. Even our cultural and religious institutions are stamped by linearity (Zerubavel 1989). Linear time encompasses related concepts of historical time, teleological momentum, and a spirit of human progress. Of course, this conceptual cluster is marked by intense cultural bias. The concept of linearity was used to polemic effect, especially during India’s colonial period. The notion that linearity was somehow
not quintessentially Indian provided a cultural rationalization for perceptions of India’s economic and cultural backwardness (Doniger 2009). The essence of the argument was that cyclical time acted as an oppressive cultural construct, negating individual autonomy because it supposedly implied that human effort was futile. This desultory opinion of Indian time was part of a larger critique of the alleged negative Indian outlook of life and human agency in the world. But as social historian Romila Thapar has shown, “There is evidence of both cyclical and linear time in early India” (Thapar 2004). Linear time was used to chart monarchial lineages and for official functions. It should not therefore be regarded as an ameliorative foreign importation.

Cyclical time, however, is more closely identified with India in the world’s popular imagination. In the Indian context, cyclical time is characterized by massive temporal expanses and the periodic rebooting of the cycle. The Sanskrit word for time is kala, and Monier William’s traces it to verb root kal, meaning “to calculate” (1899). Aside from denoting time, kala also refers to the color black. But this too might have a temporal basis, alluding to the universal dissolution that culminates the end of a complete chronal cycle (Doniger 2009). Core pan-Indian theological doctrines are also linked with cyclical time such as the transmigratory wheel of birth and death (samsara) and the related concept of karma (Grimes 160). In the West, cyclical time is a vestigial concept from Platonic philosophy via Pythagoreanism. If cyclical time contains any present currency whatsoever, it would be in new-age esoterica.

As we shall this, “double-scope” approach to time is significant for related
concepts such as motion and agency as expressed in the temporal context of event structuring and adjustment (Fauconnier and Turner 2002). This chapter will take up the cognitive activity of scheduling, pointing out how language as a cultural tool both enables and constrains certain types of fictive motion or “the figurative attributions of motion to static objects in space” (Ramscar 2009). I argue that events are human generated cultural artifacts. They can be conventionally regarded as “offspring” that we establish in time construed as a virtual line, spatialized as a path or conceptualized as an immersible substance. We possess great cognitive maneuverability in “moving” along the timeline and establishing events of all kinds. Humans can also change events that they plan in time, and the evolutionary advantages of event rescheduling are rather obvious for group selection success. If individuals can coordinate future actions together their chances for survival increase. If they can react to shifting environmental conditions and accordingly modify scheduled events to advantageous effect, their chances increase exponentially.

I note that cultural factors can complicate this extremely supple cognitive activity. If we homologize events as entities, then time becomes the pathway on which said entities travel or the substance in which they are immersed. But being created and moveable in the manner of individuals, a logical paradox ensues. What happens when we want to change an event and move it to a point in time before its original inception? Would it not be conceptually like moving a human individual to a point in time prior to the individual’s point of origination – birth or conception? Of course, human language users rearrange schedules all the time contingent on whim and need. Mentally scheduling events would not be useful evolutionary cognitive ability if it suddenly went offline when
confronted with illogical homology.

A popular Indianism illustrates this point very well. In Indian English (IndE), the conventional and supra-regional way of rescheduling an event so that it advances in time closer to the individual is expressed using the verb “to prepone.” For typical example of usage might be, “The meeting set for next week Friday has been preponed to tomorrow.” IndE therefore possesses a very economical and natural exact antonym for the mental act of pushing an event into the future from its original start date – “to postpone” – that International Standard English does not seem to have. The latter makes due with awkward constructions such as “to move an event forward” or “to advance an event in time” that involve considerable ambiguity.

The question to be asked is, why does IndE, a regional variation of English, boast such a lexical resource when its more mainstream counterpart does not? Can it be explained as a simple linguistic quirk associated with indigenous usage? Or is there a more robust explanation in which temporal cognition as influenced by culture figures prominently? And finally, how does such an analysis enhance our understanding of strategic communication? What future is there is for prepone in terms of global uptake, and what would such neologism mean for usage habits as well as the conceptual structures on which they are scaffolded?
Indian English (IndE) is one of the modern republic’s more conspicuous colonial inheritances. India can make an arguable claim to being the world’s second largest population of English speakers (although the difference between “speaker” and “user” is controversial). English in India represents yet another layer of linguistic development on top of an already massive historical edifice of culture traditions spanning from Sanskrit to Perso-Arabic to Tamil (Kachru, Kachru, and Sridhar 2008). It would be a mistake to think that the conceptual storehouses from these traditions are vacuum sealed in their linguistic systems. On the contrary, concepts native to earlier layers of Indian culture are to be found even in IndE, a more or less predictable outcome from a society in which multilingualism of one kind or another has been the norm for centuries.

English possesses many different constructs to express the mental action of event scheduling. The conceptual resources required to generate virtual scenarios of futurity populated by events are considerable. The schedule is a cultural artifact of great cognitive sophistication. But planning events is only one step. The system needs to be flexible enough to permit adjustments based on shifting conditions. The linguistic apparatus for not just planning events but rescheduling them must match the original conceptual richness that licenses the individual to think them into existence and modify them in the mind in the first place. Indeed, it could be argued that the definition of language is that it contains the potential to create form-meaning pairings that represent the vastness and richness of the conceptual world of its users.

But saying all languages are endowed with the representational potential to make
lexical structure reflect conceptual structure does not mean that every language realizes this endowment in the same way or to the same degree. Some languages might well have more sophisticated and flexible representational capabilities when it comes to certain cognitive domains. It could be argued that variation in representation can be tracked even within the same language. Variability might well be a function of cultural and regional instantiation of a given language (Kachru, Kachru, and Nelson 2009).

The question of whether speakers of IndE relate to time differently than non-speakers is a suggestive one. On other one hand, being able to express a conceptual reality with greater concision and elegance might be a negligible phenomenon. After all, the argument is not the concept of prepone is inaccessible to non-IndE speakers. Perhaps they coined prepone because there is instead a noticeable disinclination to use particle verbs in IndE. In other words, instead of explaining the exceptional usage as a result of conceptual surfeit, it could be a sort of lexical “work-around” for the common problem that many second language speakers (L2) face adjusting to idiomatic particle verbs (“move-up”). As we shall see, these can be especially clunky and confusing when used to express temporal states. As such, prepone would represent more of a morpho-syntactic solution than a conceptual one.

A discussion of India’s linguistic ecosystem and the role of IndE in it, the metaphoric underpinnings of temporal cognition, and the hypothesis that culture, language, and thought are related to each other in feedback loop of mutual influence constitutes the next step in investigating these set of problems that ultimately affect
communication as a strategic practice on a global scale. These are not typical questions asked of Indian English as it continues to play both a distinct and significant role in terms of linguistic policy, national identity, and economic development, but perhaps they should be.

The nature of temporal cognition can be glimpsed through the windowing of language. But language provides more than a window into thought (Everett 2012). Linguistic structure can be obligating in the sense of focusing and reinforcing certain categories and not others (Deutscher 2010). The meaning of “obligatory” here refers to, on the one hand, the ordinariness and unconscious functioning of natural language. On the other hand, the imposition of language on category formation while involuntary does possess a sort of opt-out mechanism in the form of meta-awareness. If we think hard enough and employ the appropriate discernment we can at least become aware of the disposition of our “pattern-system.” The point, however, is that time is one such lexical concept that is very much a cultural product of one’s individual linguistic ecosystem.

The principle that language can shape conceptual processes is known as linguistic relativism. Several relevant conclusions stem from the hypothesis associated with Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, outstanding linguists in the anthropological tradition (Scholz, Pelletier, and Pullum 2011). First, the idea that language can affect thought in a determinative sense does not entail a value hierarchy of languages. If it follows that different languages shape thought differently, then one might be alarmed that a linguistic ranking system would logically result. The thinking might go that a language
is only as good and sophisticated as the conceptual repertoire that it enables. Yet the push-back instinct of political correctness also needs to be suppressed in the name of scientific investigation. Although shared universal concepts are part of the human cognitive endowment, if different languages do indeed obligate its speakers along customized conceptual grooves, then one language can (and perhaps should) be evaluated in relation to another (Everett 2012).

This means that certain languages may well, after future analysis, exhibit more conceptual sophistication (for selecting fine-grained shifts in the color spectrum, for instance) or flexibility than others. But this is not a value judgment on the speakers of the language, their behaviors, or on the language they speak. It is axiomatic from the tradition of language study that conceives of language as a cultural tool that individual languages satisfy the expressive needs of their users (Everett). Any actual or perceived deficit in referential capacity registered through some new environmental stimulus can be remedied by the endless potential creativity of language. Indeed, linguistic fecundity is what drives changes in language from the coining of new words to the upgrading of old rules of grammar.

It also follows that the optimal method for tracking language relativistic effects is through cross-linguistic analysis (Wierzbicka 1991). In other words, it just plain makes sense to look at different languages from a cognitivist standpoint. In fact, one doesn’t even need to go too far outside the comfort zone of one’s own language. Of course, striking and interesting results can come from comparing genetically unrelated languages.
Much of the older more controversial Whorfian studies centered on contrasting English with Asiatic and Native Indian languages (Gumperz and Levinson 2006). Part of the redeeming value of more recent neo-Whorfian studies, aside from focusing on testing for non-linguistic effects (and thereby escaping the circularity of language related tests confirming linguistic bias), is that they renew the focus on cross-linguistic experimentation.

My interest in the subject is, however, not primarily motivated by the growing Whorfian archive or even by what would pass as a linguist’s investment in the phenomenon of language mediating and moving thought along particular trajectories. From the standpoint of strategic communication, the issue of Whorfianism holds a strong appeal. This is because the basic premise of strategic communication is using language as an instrument to modify opinions. Whorfianism is relevant and interesting to this general rhetorical orientation on a number of levels that often go unappreciated. The underlying commonality tying Whorf to rhetoric is that both start from the premise that language is more than a means of reporting reality.

Whorfianism and rhetoric differ not so much in their relative claims (compare, for instance, Burke theory of terministic screens)\textsuperscript{12} as is in the goals that flow from them. Rhetoric has a prescriptive mandate, and strives for the optimal deployment of linguistic resources. It can be manipulated to analytic ends, and boasts an abundant lexicon for describing utterances and discourse in rhetorical terms. At the heart of rhetoric is both a rational assumption about how people communicate and somewhat of an incantational

\textsuperscript{12} See Burke, 1965.
mystification of the language faculty (Kennedy 1980: 50). When wielded by a superior speaker, a skilled rhetor, language can sway and mesmerize the hearer on an unconscious level. It can compel without physical coercion, a sort of word magic (Burke 1969: 304).

The Whorfian, however, is interested in understanding the interrelationship of language and culture from a more dispassionate vantage point drawing from a range of social scientific and empirical methods. But at the heart of communication - and this distinguishes the Whorfian from his essentialist and formalist counterparts - is a similar belief in the affective power of language. But this force of suasion is felt on the preconscious level as the byproduct of the cultural ordering of categories. Nevertheless, cultures are comprised of individuals, and the individual evaluative capacity whether devoted toward sharpening an argument or selecting a cultural trait is arguably rhetorical.

Still, the Whorfian is not terribly interested in the strategizing aspect of communication or its persuasive yields. In fact, the Whorfian and rhetorician are attracted to two different levels of mental processing, reflecting dual modalities of the linguistic faculty. Language is to a great extent run along an unconscious mental track following Kahneman’s two-tiered model of cognition (2011). In other words, much of our experience with language is automatic and routinized, even though linguistic activity is cognitively rich and complex. But this faster track of thought can be slowed down through the imposition of conscious deliberation and greater involvement of executive decision-making. Thinking more systematically and slowly entails greater cognitive load, consumes increasing attentional resources, and is more processing-intensive.
A desired outcome in rhetoric is for strategies that are by definition the product of conscious thinking to produce conscious effects (i.e. the audience knows they are being subjected to persuasion and consent to it). But the most sought after outcome is when strategies are deployed and the audience does not take conscious notice of being persuaded. The most compelling type of manipulation is that which occurs on the level of the unconscious. It seems plausible to at least suggest that if unconscious processes can be manipulated then the Whorfian hypothesis holds out great potential to anyone wanting to master strategic communication, Whorfian Rhetoric.

Indian languages contain their own conceptual storehouses, and these reflect the lived cultural experiences of their speakers over time. They can show remarkable conceptual consistency across vast swaths of history, especially if they are genetically related. Languages that share feature similarities share conceptual DNA to some degree. In the context of India, this idea of linguistic relatedness is especially noteworthy. After all, it was through Sanskrit that Sir William Jones in 1786 made one of the all-time great linguistic discoveries, that of the familial relationship between Sanskrit and other Indo-European languages (Kachru, Kachru, and Sridhar 2008). Jones, before mastering Sanskrit, was a philological genius, well-trained in Greek and Latin along with a love of Persian poetry. Indian grammarians were comparative linguists long before Jones and recognized that Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages were not entirely foreign to each other. Indo-European languages are related most prominently through cognate nouns and similar verbal roots (such as the Latin “ignus” and Sanskrit “agni” for fire). But they also share similar large-scale structures and strategies. For instance, widespread linguistic
borrowing is common throughout the extended Indo-European as well as the use of compound verbs.

India is linguistically rich as well as conceptually. Of course, the first is a fertile seedbed for the second. In linguistic terms, India enjoys great resource wealth. As codified in the so-called 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution, modern India officially recognizes 22 languages. Consider that by comparison Sweden is endowed with twelve languages. In the 2001 Census Report, the even larger typological picture of 122 languages, 234 mother tongues, and 1562 different spoken languages came into focus (Bhatt and Meshtrie 2008). Most speakers of Indian languages fall into the Indo-Aryan grouping, of which Hindi is one. At the same time, it should be noted “Hindi” is a linguistic placeholder, designating twelve different spoken varieties. The four other genetic groupings that define the linguistic map of India include Austro-Asiatic, Dravidian, Semito-Harmitic, and Tibeto-Burman. Multilingualism is and has long since been a fact of life in India. The current national figure is that one fifth of the population – approximately 250 million – is multilingual (Crystal 2003). At the same time, government instituted multilingual education is eroding and most languages (with Hindi as an exception) are experiencing negative growth (Kachru, Kachru, and Sridhar 2008).

Still, the role played in India by English is exceptional even by Indian standards of linguistic pluralism. On the one hand, the economic progress of the last decade would be unimaginable without Indians speaking English. English is a crucial component in Indian upward social mobility. The aspirational nature of English was brought home by a
recent New York Times report with the telling observation that “Neighborhood private schools have unstated admission requirements: at 3 and 4, the child is required to be toilet-trained and speak English” (“India’s New ‘English Only’ Generation” 2012).

Indian technology centers such as Bangalore, a new cosmopolitan reality is emerging and with it a curious phenomenon, that of Indian youth being raised with English as their only mother tongue. In a mixed context of mutually incomprehensible languages (as urban employment “hotspots” attract the most skilled workers regardless of their linguistic disposition), English is one of the few shared cultural commonalities. English can serve to unify new social elites and alienate them from their traditional linguistic backgrounds at the same time.

Indian English (IE) is a product of the process that has resulted in South Asia being a classic linguistic convergence area (sprachbund), hosting many languages both genetically related and unrelated (Singh 2004: 187). When unrelated ones come into contact with and influence each other, a zone of convergence is created. English, of course, was not the first language to radically change Indian’s linguistic topography. Braj Kachru, the foremost authority on IndE, refers to India’s relationship with English as Englishization (1983).

Kachru places English in historical context. He notes that preceding movements of Persianization and Sanskritization were in their own distinct ways as culturally transformative. Sanskrit terms form much of the pan-Indian philosophical and social-organizational vocabulary (Kachru, Kachru and Sridhar 2008). Significant theological
contributions to Hinduism are Dravidian in origin, but make use of a Sanskritic scaffold. Persian, for its part, was the language of Mughal governance and court poetry. The latter would be overtaken by Urdu as the Mughal Empire was increasingly Indianized. In this period that saw considerable vernacular development, court patronage of Sanskrit jostled with Persian for prestige. In vassal areas that were steeped in Hindu tradition, Sanskrit was undisputedly preeminent.

In 1615, during the reign of King James I, the East India Company petitioned the Mughal emperor, Jahangir for its first trading post in Delhi. English at the time was surely considered nothing more than a linguistic curiosity (King 2008). More than a century later, the English realization that knowledge of India’s major languages of influence was necessary for greater economic inroads crystallized in the establishing of the Asiatic Society in 1784. Its founder was none other than Sir William Jones who took up the study of Persian and Sanskrit with zeal, unmotivated by cultural chauvinism. In fact, Jones not only translated seminal works from both Persian and Sanskrit, he compared the latter favorably to Latin and Greek. But with greater involvement in governance came an eventual self-understood dispensation to use language as a tool for ameliorative public policies.

The British came to style themselves as “new Mughals,” but this was a somewhat ironic designation since the Mughals were relatively indifferent to the social and linguistic conditions of the vast majority of their subjects. There would be occasional Mughal backsliding into violent intolerance and persecution. But for every fanatical
Aurangzeb there was a more or less tolerant Akbar, who first established a compelling ideology of coexistence. It was in Akbar’s regime that the native Indian concept of *maryada* or coexistence was co-opted as an imperial social virtue (Chandra 1992: 34).

In traditional Hindu thought, the current degenerate age (*yuga-dharma*) meant that one of the ruler’s primary tasks was that of managing sectarian differences. Imperial authority was coterminous with protection of propriety (*maryada purushottam*). Maintenance of traditional codes of conduct and peaceable interrelations of caste and kinship had cosmic connotations. Indeed, the concept of balance (*santulan*) was partnered with *maryada* to justify the fourfold caste system (*varnashram*). This indigenous premium on social equilibrium was taken up and syncretized by Akbar as tolerant sectarian coexistence. Deeply ingrained in most every domain of culture, it continues to pervade all forms of social interaction (Doniger 2009).

As we shall see, the high virtue of co-existence in India (and its enemy, the regionally-distinct expression “communalism”) affects temporal strategies, and by extension the concept of time. In the Indian context, the act of rescheduling benefits from two precise lexical referents (prepone and postpone). In other words, the lexicon is “geared” toward facilitating disambiguation of shared events in the form of meetings or other cooperative commitments. Unlike its non-Indian counterpart, in the IndE conceptual scheme of things linguistic resources need to be in a state of potential mobilization so that they can be for conflict avoidance. The fear presupposed by rescheduling in Indian contexts is that of causing social offense.
The prime directive of co-existence through non-offensiveness is registered in a general Indian strategy of assimilating confrontational threats rather than clashing with them head on. There is still abundant vocal polemic in Indian culture, to be sure. But the attitude of reconciling into the appearance of a harmonious whole is a pronounced Indian cultural motif. We see Hinduism, for instance, often co-opting belief systems that were originally propounded as heterodox reactions against it. Buddhism is one such case in point, even though Buddhists themselves would not acknowledge that they have been re-integrated into the Vedic fold (Hiltebeitel 2011).

The same cannot quite be said for neighboring Pakistan. Even though Pakistan ranks English as a state language, it is not a symbol of national unification. Pakistani nationalism is instead oriented around Urdu, a language with Persian, Arabic, and Hindi elements written in Perso-Arabic script. Interestingly, the fact that the “Father of Pakistan,” Mohammed Ali Jinnah, only knew a smattering of Urdu tells us something of the relative novelty of language as an identity prop in the modern world. On the eve of Independence, the majority language of what would then become West Pakistan was Punjabi at 64% (Kachru, Kachru and Sridhar 2008). Urdu fulfilled the role of marking off Muslim from Hindu in spite of the great overlap and commonalities shared by the two languages. Presently, however, through their divergent national identifications, the two are more or less mutually unintelligible. My study does not extend to English spoken in Pakistan, and it would be very interesting to assess what level of entrenchment lexical items such as “prepone” display in related but strikingly different conceptual terrain.
Indian English has existed in a number of different forms. At one level it was an idiolect of Anglo subjects of the Raj who had effectively “gone native.” In that guise, IndE was characterized by code-switching and was necessary for interaction with the Indian domestic underclass. But it was also, conversely, a social marker of insider status, indexical of Anglo perseverance in a foreign cultural setting. An example from Kachru is instructive. The scene is that of Anglo or half-blood Indian complaining about house repairs and its impact on hospitality: “And when the maistries are putting up jill-mills, and making such a gol-mol, that I say darwaza band to everybody. But when all is tik, I hope you will tiff with us” (1983). Decoded into standard British English, the above sample can be read as “And then the carpenters are putting up Venetians, and making such uproar, I'm obliged to say ‘not at home’ to everybody. But when all is put to rights, I hope you will lunch with us” (1983). The native “coloration” is quite apparent from the highly Indianized lexicon. The syntax is more or less in conformity with general norms (an exception being the construction “darwaza band” or “not at home” that uses Hindi-Urdu negation principles).

The Anglo layer of IndE is not especially apparent in contemporary forms. The aspect of code-switching is still a common feature, but with much less density. Not every second word in modern IndE has to be from a nativized import. Interestingly, speakers of IndE generally have extensive lexical storehouses from their mother tongues on which to draw (Sedlatschek 2009). But because IndE is primarily enlisted more in the cause of mere communication rather than indexing social membership, the code-switching is enough to impair basic comprehension. Such is not the case, however, in the urban Hindi of privileged youth. The social sophistication on display through the liberal use, even
saturation, of English code-switching marks it as dialect used very much in the same way as early Anglo IndE.

The more recognizable layer of IndE for modern speakers stems from the bureaucratic origins of its continental dissemination as the language of officialdom. The bureaucratic jargon is easily discernible in the following 1891 sample: “The extreme stimulus of professional and friendly solicitations has led me to the journey of accomplished advantages to proceed with these elucidating and critical comments; wherein no brisking has been thrown apart to introduce prima facie and useful matters to facilitate the literary pursuits of lily-like capacities” (Kachru 1983). This segment could be characterized as Babu English, spoken the Indian born class of trained officials that fanned out across the Raj. Two salient features worth remarking on are (1) overdone formality and (2) overworked complexity of the prose. The relationship between these two aspects is clearly more than incidental.

Complex sentence structure allows for embedding multiple forms and instances of rank inflation, endearments, flatteries, and other forms of social niceties that could be described, under certain felicitous conditions, as politeness effects (Brown and Levinson 1987). At the same time, the web of formal complexity and structural impenetrability creates the syntactic grounds for plausible deniability in the event of a possible insult or face-threatening event – intentional or not. Current discourse patterns in IndE are much more accessible, but the balance is still tipped in favor of formality and jargon. And although these elements seem representative of British colonial interests, they also quite accurately mirror the policies of social cohesion cultivated by the Mughals to ensure
conflict avoidance, social stability, and co-existence. These policies are, in turn, reflections of earlier nativized Vedic traditions of assimilating contrary forms and starving potential schismatic outbreaks of their oxygen as sources of conflagrations of sectarian violence.

The tendency, somewhat comic by our standards, toward complex syntax and mannered prose in IndE militates against my claim that prepone represents parsimonious and economical lexicalization. If the third sample is representative of anything, it is that the values of parsimony and economy had yet to take root. In fact, government signage throughout India continues to reflect the stilted quality of 19th century habits, a fact exploited by travel writers such as Pico Iyer to sartorial effect (“English in India: Still All the Raj” 1997).

Drawing generalized conclusions from regional forms such as IndE runs up against typical shortcomings in methodology. For instance, feature-list descriptions of IndE tend to be decontextualized in their data characterization (Sedlatschek 2009). Individual items are not presented with an eye to their stability in the lexicon or usage domains as well as overall linguistic relevance. As a result, many guides to IndE are more introspective in orientation. But this situation is changing with the advent of more sophisticated corpus-driven research and a more nuanced approach to local norms of usage.

The prospects of targeting individual Indianisms such as “prepone,” assessing their status as regards external influences (from, say, American English) and suggesting
inroads to nativization are not easy or automatic. British English and American English as change-agents must also acknowledge their own internal development and evolution, especially in the second half of the twentieth century. The assumption that British English and American English are more ‘static’ than IndE is unsupported by more recent and expansive data sets (Sedlatschek 2009).

The case of “prepone” raises diachronic issues, although it tends to fall on the endonormative (inward-looking, relying on local sources) side of lexical change that has characterized IndE from the 1970s until the present. At the same time, strong exonormative (greater reliance on foreign forms) trends can be tracked, especially in the last decade from American English.

The search for a supposed supra-regional form of IndE is a valuable research mandate, but one unlikely to be realized due to its many regional expressions and the sliding spectrum of competencies of its speakers. In terms of the first, the pan-Indian audience of major Indian newspapers would mark this genre a likely candidate. Prepone is commonly used in print media, with some bastions of formal style (for instance, elite boarding and finishing schools adopting a rarer intolerant policy). In any event, prepone seems to fall in naturally with the general stylistic gravitation toward a more formal variation that print media tends to warrant.

The mapping of a linguistic gradient or cline spanning speaker proficiency would result in establishing an empirical standard for IndE. But such a goal is more or less elusive, and greatly impacts any numerical estimation of actual IndE speakers. The status of prepone as a popular and accessible Indian idiom is without doubt. The next phase in
its lexical life will surely be online. In fact, the future exposure of prepone to non-Indian
users will surely occur through the internet. It is an increasingly popular item on chat
forums devoted to neologisms, working in India, and language variation.

The internet as a source of linguistic data has proved transformative (if not yet
dispositive). Web-based searches using refined Google searching criteria are invaluable
for both identifying low-frequency items and situating them in larger contexts. Google is
now an undisputedly powerful tool for simple and effective procurement of available
data. Google’s search fields are so exceptional due to their customizability and restriction
options. The Primary Corpus, the Kolhapur Corpus or ICE—India are specialized closed
searching tools. They aren’t redundant and are highly searchable. They enable systematic
investigation across registers, modes and text types and accurate quantification of
research findings. But even though they endure competition from open search tools such
as Google, the two engine-types share common limitations. They do not provide fine-
grained conceptual analysis. They crunch numbers and generate data spreadsheets. Still,
as we see with “time,” notions of lexical prominence can be conceptually suggestive. In
the context of India, they are also valuable means of acquiring date on called NRI (non-
resident Indian) diaspora speakers. 13 Commercial search engines are not without their
drawbacks, but it would seem that they are now a permanent fixture of the linguistic
research landscape.

A core claim of World Englishes (WE) as a research discipline is that regional
expressions of English transform the language on the level of grammar (Kachru, Kachru,

13 (The Indian Express, The Hindu, The Hindustan Times, The Tribune, The Telegraph and the Deccan
Herald), across three quality newspapers from South Asia (Pakistan’s Dawn, Sri Lanka’s Sunday Times
and Bangladesh’s Independent)
and Nelson 2009). However, the evidence from IndE seems to indicate that the scale of lexical and morphosyntactic modification is not so far-reaching. But IndE research focuses on patterns of usage, loanwords, and lexical innovation. One has to exercise great caution when theorizing about the latter. The flimsy form of reasoning known as “No Word for X” meme results from a clumsy handling of Whorfian assumptions. It denotes the facile argument that the presence or absence of a particular item in the lexicon is somehow indicative of a larger moral, cultural, or cognitive trait.

In many instances, the claim turns out to be simply false from an empirical standpoint. One classic example is that of John Wayne’s western, *Hondo* (1953). Wayne’s character claims that Apaches have no word for “lying” as in the use of deception. Here we see moral stereotyping emerging from a supposed lexical limitation. Often the moralizing claims revolve around lying or accountability with a well-stocked archive found on the University of Pennsylvania-based website, Language Log. In the same vein, the supposed lack of a German semantic equivalent to “mess” is meant to explain Teutonic neatness or Arabic not having a word for “compromise” as a means of understanding Middle Eastern unrest (“‘No word for X’ archive” 2009).

But as simplistic as it is as an argument form (and its abuse in popular science writing is legendary), the notion that the lexicon can register conceptual proclivities should not be dismissed. We cannot discard the Whorfian baby with the meme bathwater. My analysis of prepone is an attempt to skirt this issue. I argue that the presence of prepone in IndE is indicative of a distinct Indian conceptualization of time activates a “double-scope” effect by recruiting cyclical and linear temporal perspectives (Fauconnier
and Turner 2003). I also claim that easy access to both prepone and postpone in IndE as complementary natural and economical rescheduling terms streamlines what is generally speaking unsanctioned behavior, failure to meet one’s original temporal commitments. But for IndE users the pair of terms is construed as resources for conflict avoidance and smoothing out potential rupture of social offense. The gap separating Whorf and meme is, in the final analysis, explanatory.

The casual throwing around of correlations linking language, culture and thought can be justly ridiculed. But languages are not static and they adapt to new cultural conditions. So in the case of prepone it is possible to argue that a need might exist to express certain Indian concepts which have no widely trafficked equivalent in English. As with prepone, the lexical item does not have to be neologic. It can capitalize on existing word patterns that descend from an ancient combinatorial source. So with prepone, the Latin root “ponere” means “to place,” “put,” or even “ordain.” Ponere is cognate with the English “posit” and the French “ponte” (bridge). The prefixing capability of Indo-European stems is considerable, ponere being compatible with at least twenty compatible forms.

Interference from indigenous Indian languages can then play a role in the nativization of IndE. This involves the carrying over of certain first language (L1) features into the new habitat of the second language. For instance, interference from Hindi has been noted in the outsized prevalence of copulative compound nouns in IndE. Thus the preference in IndE for the word formation type N-cum-N that mimics the
favored use of the Hindi conjunction “aur” (“and”) as in *assistance-cum-information* or *exhibition-cum-sale* (Sedlatschek 2009).

In general, coordinative compounds are more commonly used in Asian languages, even ones with no genetic relation like Sanskrit and Japanese. Sanskrit makes rich and productive use of the so-called dvandva (literally “paired”) compound. English uses coordinate compounds relatively sparsely, partly because, unlike Sanskrit, it does not favor agglomeration (the massing of smaller units into large morphosyntactic entities) (Monier Williams 1899). According to the OED, the use of the Latin preposition “cum” was originally restricted to English proper names (Oxford English Dictionary 1989). The official-sounding Latinism would certainly appeal to the IndE mindset that was largely conditioned by the bureaucratic backdrop of British imperial rule. The bureaucratic milieu of IndE during the colonial period also contributes to the success of prepone in the lexicon. As mentioned, the dawn of modern scheduling language corresponds to the inauguration of widespread train travel. The proper functioning of the railway system required impressive scheduling finesse, and delays were a recognized reality of travel. The Indian railroad system continues to be emblematic of what is in the US a more or less vanished way of life. Rail travel in India is precarious if measured by punctuality, but the system as a whole is remarkably successful. The entrenchment of “prepone” very much reflects the Indian cultural urge to coordinate furiously in order to achieve a final state of social contentment.

L2 forms of English are also especially receptive to internalizing aspects of the pedagogical and institutional conditions under which they are learned. So the South
Asian coloration of IndE is in large part a function of its acquisitional context. The British formalism that has long been a feature of IndE may then ultimately cede ground to newer “Angloversals” or shared traits picked up through universal teaching practices that may become more common as the L2 movement coheres around a set of uniform standards. Outer Circle Englishes are also molded by the “learnability” of complex aspects of the language, with the argument being that the more difficult the structure or form, the more variable it is to change and customization (Bhatt and Meshtrie 2008).

Learning difficulties that might impact IndE can cut across all aspects of the linguistic system, ranging from particle verbs, article usage, words with overlapping-but-not-synonymous meanings, tense forms, and conventions for interrogatives. For instance, prepone might owe some of its charitable reception to the difficulty new users often encounter with particle or phrasal verbs. It could conceivably benefit from being a non-phrasal alternative for event rescheduling. The comfort level that users equate with a construction can override competing alternatives from higher prestige variants. For instance, IndE displays an infatuation with Briticisms and Americanisms, what is known as its exonormative orientation. Prepone can be historically traced through the OED, but with no evidence of its wide dissemination and standardization in the lexicon at any given period (Oxford English Dictionary 1989). Even though American English is exerting inexorable influence in India, it could be that prepone represents confluence of favorable factors that ensure its long term survival.

Due to the well charted history of language contact in India, the subject of loanwords – imported from Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic – has garnered consistent
interest among researchers (Kachru 2005; Shastri 1992; Hankin 2003). In addition, over the centuries European languages such as Portuguese have come into contact with English in South Asia.

Borrowing from India’s background languages is more common today and enhances IndE with new lexical resources. India’s so-called indigenous contributions to international English are well known. Words like “brahmin,” (Sanskrit), “thug” (Hindi), and “loot” (Hindi) are commonly accepted as having entered the supra-regional category of English lexis. Other native words from the subcontinent adopted into IndE continue to be used in more restricted circulation.

Variation within IndE can be ascribed to lexical enrichment as well as to lexicosyntactic features, particularly in the form of particle verbs. Verbs combined with particles such as up, down, out, and away form standard complementation patterns. But it is also recognized that particle verbs “cause problems” for new learners and are frequently used to idiosyncratic effect. Still, the intelligibility of these non-standard usages is rarely compromised. They are accepted as part residing on one of the far ends of “the continuum of acceptability.” The other end is inhabited not by particle and prepositional deviations, but from “deviant complex constructions” (Sedlatschek 2009).

A representative example is the insertion of the particle “up” after verbs in what speakers of international standard forms of English would judge superfluous. For instance, the phrase “Parents… spend all their income in fulfilling up the wishes of their child” would not strike many speakers of IndE as anomalous even though according to grammatical correctness it ranks as a case of inserting a particle where it is not required
(Kachru 2003). However, it bears mentioning that even in international standard English the verb-particle relationship is not without ambiguity. For instance, the semantic difference between “find” and “find out” is sometimes not obvious. The first implies seeing something or someone and locating it within a set of coordinates. The second, on the other hand, recruits an epistemological framework as in acquiring or generating new knowledge about an entity or situation, generally as an agentive process. But in IndE the distinction is not a sharp one due to the promiscuous PV (particle verb) usage.

Corpus analysis can track particle verb usage patterns and frequency rates across the English-speaking world, throwing more light on phenomena such as meaning conflation in PV and non-PV verbs that share a common lexeme. As would be expected, the PV propensity is not constant throughout World Englishes. Singaporean English, for instance displays higher rates of occurrence than British English. Within specific registers of IndE variation also exists such that educated speakers are less likely to employ PVs, possibly because they are more cognizant of general prescriptive norms (Kachru, Kachru and Nelson 2009).

For instance, acceptable usage for any but the most educated register would include examples such as “The daily schedule has been prepared in such a way that… people can not find out enough time for physical relaxation.” Or within the semantic field of searching, the example of “The Indian Olympic Association should… conduct proper coaching camps to find out the talents… to involve the youths in sports” isn’t a collocation flagged for confusion (Sedlatschek 2009).
Is there a conceptualization trend cutting across expressions referring to abstractions? The semantics of finding are mirrored by that of the collocation “lower down” as construed in terms of degeneration and progressive diminishment. So the phrase “Boys who… under the influence of vulgar western culture go to pubs… only lower down their morals” would seem to involve an extraneous particle. But its inclusion makes an emphatic point that an abstract concept and its debasement is at issue.

Unlike “lower down” prepone operates with a morpho-syntactic frugality. Its elegance lies in it being the natural antonym for “postpone.” Its conceptual complexity is rooted in its cultural fluency with and attunement to large scale Indian concepts of time. The Vedic concept of time is traditionally as expressed in later theological texts such as the Puranas and Itihasas is cyclical, and these rotations are by definition endless. The massive cycles are referred to as yugas, with a single cycle consisting of a four part composition. Each is supposed to last for a set amount of time, although how the exactitude of chronal reckoning is derived is never made clear (although it is purported to derive from astronomical calculation). The yuga cycle (known as a Divya Yuga) is also one of progressive degradation, beginning with a golden age and degenerating into what is our current cycle. So the first Satya (satya means truth) Yuga lasts 1,728,000 years. Then the second Treta Yuga endures 1,296,000 years. The third, Dvapara Yuga is predictably shorter, clocking in at 864,000 years. The fourth Kali Yuga is set to last 432,000 years (we are currently in its 52nd century). A yuga cycle amounts to 4.32 billion years (Donger 2009).
But in the infinity that is the ultimate and divine reality reduces even the concept of the yuga to insignificance. For one day of the creator deity Brahma consists of a thousand yuga cycles, and his nights last as long as his days. After Brahma expires at the age of one hundred there is a great universal void. But the cycle reboots when Brahma is reborn. One of the most dramatic moments in Hindu theology is when, in the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna declares himself to be sole exclusive overseer of this massive process of entropy and renewal. Krishna associates himself with Kala or time, and refers to himself as “the great destroyer of the worlds” (11.32).

On the micro-end of Hindu chronology, the unit of the truti is said to measure a 33750th part of a second. The concept of truti was defined by the philosopher Bhaskaracharya, defined as “a period taken to put a needle through a lotus leaf.” Greater and greater aggregates of trutis are given their own designation and refer to longer human scale durations such as that of one day and night being the length of what is known as 30 muhurats. Another Hindu chronologist, Suryasiddhanta, locates the smallest known unit of time as that equaling the length of a normal healthy breath (approximately 4 seconds or a parana) (Grimes 1996).

Nevertheless, for prepone it is the imagistic mapping of human nativity as a temporal act, the fons e origo of the individual, onto event structuring as a cognitive process that helps explain why some cultures are less troubled with coining specific lexical items to refer to a procedure that, on a certain symbolic level, appears logically impossible. Even though the mental activity is one performed effortlessly and naturally, the residue of its inconceivability is left over in the lexicon. In a word, in Indian English,
to prepone is analogously consistent with the concept of the pre-existence of the individual self. In non-Indian English such a concept makes no sense because it possesses no cultural traction. Therefore speakers of so-called prestige varieties of English do not employ an economical, natural, and elegant antonym to “postpone” even though such a word is accessible and easily coinable.

Does that mean that to non-Indian prestige users prepone is semantically unintelligible? Of course not; it instead means that prepone resonates with a vague conceptual awkwardness because it denotes a complex mental activity and a logical conviction at the same time. An entity comes into being at a specific point in time. Before that moment of creation the entity does not physically exist. Ergo it is impossible to refer to such an entity as a physical being in time. The Asian traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism are quite comfortable with concepts of pre-existing selfhood (atman), if only because some sectarian schools of thought are engaged in relentless polemic against the very age-old idea (anatman).

So the implication might be that one ought to invoke Rudyard Kipling’s Ballad of East and West “Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet” (1889). In principle, however, “there is neither East nor West” in globalization. In professional contexts, the winds of cultural change emphasize time-saving communication in the form of thrifty and parsimonious language that more or less abhors ambiguity. Meaning that cannot be directly accessed and easily processed is not the type of meaning that will more readily undergo global uptake. From such a perspective, it is a safe bet that prepone will enter the global English lexicon in the near future. It might still
bear the stamp of its Indianess, but perhaps only through the pride its indigenous users have in its lexical innovativeness.

In addition to what might be called the argument from karmic agency, I will outline another independent rationalization for the noticeable absence of prepone from the non-Indian lexicon. The argument from transmigration justifies the suitability of prepone in Indian contexts. But there is also an argument to be made for the non-suitability of prepone in Western contexts that is Western-culture specific. In essence, it revolves around the fact that scheduling language is largely the commercial and economic product of modernity.

Scheduling is a normal and useful ability. Rescheduling represents its practical versatility, and it too is a normalized mental function. But even cognitive abilities that are fundamental and indispensable to social evolution can be subject to cultural evaluation. In the case of rescheduling it could be argued that while socially ubiquitous, it is not an ideal universally sanctioned behavior. In other words, from a cultural standpoint rescheduling can be construed as implying potential lack of commitment. As Hall remarked, the sacralization of the schedule is a central component of modern economic life. Of course, complex scheduling activities governed many aspects of pre-modern life. The case of the ancient Egyptian Pharaonic institution comes to mind as one that was intensely regulated. As Alan Segal notes, “Regulations covered not only the king’s administrative actions but also his personal freedom to take a walk, bath, or even enjoy his wives and concubines (Segal 2004). The Pharaoh lived a life of total ritualized
activity because his life was a sacred symbolic drama. His ordered existence represented national stability and natural order.

But Hall’s sacred schedule really refers to the modern social contract that animates the ideal of commerce. The individual schedule is indeed a symbol of organized existence. But scheduling shared events, the cultural artifact of the business meeting, for instance, works on a different symbolic order. Unlike other transactional commitments, the conventional scheduling of meetings is not weighted with the same legal penalties for defaulting. Here the resource at stake is that of time, and if one party is late or is a no-show then the proverbial wasting of time is the social offense on record. Before the advent of institutional coercion in the form of liability measures, the deontic power of binding vows using religious oaths served the same purpose. Being punctual to a meeting or showing up at all requires risking one’s social capital to a degree.

The act of rescheduling plays out in the mind the possibility that a commitment to a shared event might not carry binding force. It generates a conceptual loophole and actionable opt-out clause. In other words, it undermines a very powerful and entrenched social institution through doubt. But at the same time, rescheduling is a confirmed reality. We often cannot meet our temporal obligations to others. Social offense can be easily averted by disambiguating the planned event and moving it to a more favorable time. In the industrial 20th century work environment, when the pace of business was speeding up and yet the mobile communications revolution had not arrived

Many behaviors that are naturalized and ubiquitous are still nevertheless denied complete legitimacy. How the unsanctioned nature of rescheduling is tagged in language
can be appreciated through two mechanisms available in English. The first is registered as lexical vagueness, the absence of an economical and natural antonym to “postpone.” The use of particle verbs such as “advance forward” or “push up” are notoriously empty of deictic precision. They are semantically amorphous for a language that possesses an embarrassment of riches when it comes to creative wordplay. It could be argued that suddenly in this conceptual domain of rescheduling, English switches into a high-context language, recruiting the need for richer communication networks. This strategy could attract attention to the unsanctioned aspect of rescheduling, obligating speakers to exercise greater care and deliberation in the disambiguation of shared events.

It functions as a cautionary measure, increasing the processing needed to coordinate and event using vague reference points. Increased processing translates generally into prolonged thinking and more deliberate judgment. A similar strategy is at work in Jewish divorce law. When a kohen, or member of the priestly caste, desires a divorce, he is compelled to fold the divorce document (get) in a complex arrangement (Steinsaltz 2006). The time-intensive and effortful complexity of the activity is supposed to make the kohen more discerning and reflective in his decision-making as his position is anomalous – if he has second thoughts after affirming the divorce, he cannot remarry his wife as, in Jewish law, it is legally forbidden for a kohen to marry a divorcee.

If rescheduling is derogated in the corporate world of the sacred schedule of which Hall was such a keen observer, then the question must be asked: Why license one form of rescheduling by affording it a parsimonious, clear, and concise lexicalization (i.e. postpone) and not the other way around, or both? An experiential argument is that most
rescheduling needs result from the contingencies mandating that events be deferred into
the future. Such is the more or less universal reality of mismanaged time and unforeseen
circumstances. We tend to put things off and delay rather than anticipate our deadlines
and pay our bills before their due dates. Indeed, this observation of human conduct is
treated with the force of law if we refer again to Jewish legal business. A debtor who
claims without documented proof that he repaid a debt prior to the originally established
date of repayment is axiomatically disbelieved. So the lexical utility of “postpone” far
outweighs that of “prepone.”

The nature of the language-thought linkage deserves revisiting from the academic
framework. To begin with Ludwig Wittgenstein, one of his more significant contributions
to the philosophy of language is that of the constraining power of language on thought.
He upended the traditional notion of language as a tool subservient to the expressive will
of the rational agent. As Wittgenstein put it: “The limits of my language mean the limits
of my world” (*Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt*) (1922).
This new *sprache-welt* configuration has not been without its detractors. Nor has it lacked
proponents, especially in more recent empirical attempts to produce confirming
laboratory results.

Benjamin Whorf, one of Sapir’s students, is closely associated with the
hypothesis that language is a shaper of thought. Whorf famously claimed that “We
dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages” (1956: 213). In its “strong”
form the so-called Whorfian hypothesis is construed to mean that the language one
speaks has a determinative effect on thought. In its “weaker” form, however,
Whorfianism means that a specific language can obligate its speakers into certain conceptual “grooves.” These grooves can be difficult to break out of, but they are not inescapable.

One source for assessing the extent and nature of the influence of language over thought is to examine speakers of more than one language. What sort of conceptual repertoire do they make use of? Is their mental vocabulary singular or plural? A third alternative is that the influence of the mother tongue is so dispositive that any other acquired languages are regarded as somehow foreign.

The claim that learning new languages has an augmentative effect on one’s mental life is a venerable one. Humboldt thought that an additional language represented “a new standpoint in the world-view hitherto possessed” (Wierzbicka 2009: 4). His operative assumption was that “every language contains the whole conceptual fabric and mode of presentation of a portion of mankind” (But the adult acquisition of a new language was inherently flawed, contaminated by traces from our existing reservoirs of linguistic knowledge: “We always carry over, more or less, our own world-view, and even our own language-view, [such that] this outcome is not purely and completely experienced (Wierzbicka 2009: 4).”

Steven Pinker rejects the notion that language is a strong shaper of thought as unscientific (2008). He consigns the Whorfian hypothesis to the dark ages of cognitive science. Now that we “know how to think about thinking” the equation of language with
thought appears positively benighted. But this may be a rough handling of Whorf’s more subtle insight. For instance, Whorf recognized that a common substrate of concepts informed all languages (Casasanto 2008). Thus the absurdity of every language having its own proper conceptual vocabulary and thereby logically entailing cross-linguistic unintelligibility was avoided.

The concept of time is really not a singularity, but a cluster of semantic networks. These represent an inter-related set of meanings. While these meanings are linked together by shared associations, some are more “primitive” than others in that they are rooted in fundamental cognitive aspects of the human condition. For instance, time represented using three dimensional coordinates of some kind seems to cut across languages and cultures. The monetized notion of time as a scarce commodity so central to economic theory, however, is a cultural artifact, shared by some cultures to varying degrees, but by no means present in all. Simply put, a core capacity of the human sensorium is perception of space. But even though economic activity is a basic human – arguably, even primate – behavior, monetization is not universal. Language systems and their conceptual storehouses would naturally reflect the given cultural realities of a particular time, place, and social organization.

Time is an experienced aspect of the cognitive inheritance. Vyvyan Evans lists the COMMON PLACE VIEW OF TIME as an entrenched metaphor of time (2006). In this conceptualization, roughly paralleled by the Greek concept of chronos, time is a fundamental component of the universe. On the hand, this view seems entirely intuitive
and unremarkable. However, cosmologists are very much divided on the existence of
time as a part of the physical make-up of reality. For the Greeks, the orderliness inherent
in kosmos was unthinkable without chronos. But our actual empirical perception of time
is in no way so solidly grounded.

Biological systems are governed by time-based rhythms at all levels of
complexity. This is what is known as circadian rhythms. Our internal time is independent
from solar time, although that too plays a powerful role in how humans relate to time. Of
course, we are the only species with meta-awareness of time as a force coordinating and
determining biological processes. The enigma of time perception is that this awareness is
indirectly acquired. We do not possess biological means for perceiving time as we do
space using the brain’s executive functioning. The fact that we do not possess
independent neurological tools for perceiving time is puzzling in as much as time is
nevertheless such a pervasive and universal human experience (Falk 2008).

The flipside of the common place, then, is what Evans refers to as THE
METAPHYSICAL PROBLEM OF TIME (2006). This conceptual strand of time views
temporality as essentially relational and subjective. If time is unreal then it could only be
described as an epiphenomenon of mental events. It can be assumed that there is no
definitive proof that time is either cosmic (real, from the physicist’s standpoint) or
acosmic (unreal, from the philosopher’s standpoint).

One does not need a developed physics originating in Aristotle and proceeding
through Einstein to chart out the positions of time as primitive attribute, relational
dependent or internal state. Time as a linguistic problem is partly one of using motion
language that in turn implicates three dimensional space as a means of thinking and
talking about temporal perception. The fact that time is so commonly spatialized across
completely different language systems also entails a culture problem. But spatialization is
not monolithic, and variation between cultures is part of any explanation for how a given
culture construes time. A cultural system is a unified framework of meaning for the
coordination of everyday life. As such, temporal concepts are elaborated, to use the
cognitive linguistic terminology, by conceptual content from the larger cultural domain.
In other words, the structure of spatialization is customized by the particular
configuration of cultural conditions. Language, of course, plays a significant role in this
general enculturation process in that concepts temporal and non-temporal are lexicalized,
and then used in the creation of online meaning. They, in effect, enter the circulation
system of a particular culture, and usage patterns then determine their entrenchment or
senescence as active agents of meaning.

Evans’ claim is that time is not a primitive in the empirical sense (2006: 7). Nor is
he convinced that time is purely a mental phenomenon. But temporality is a deeply
experienced internal phenomenon, a convergence of circadian, solar, and socio-cultural
layers of experience, divided into unconscious and conscious levels of commitment. The
degree of conscious involvement is felt in the over-writing by social time of its more
biologically responsive counterparts. Even cultural notions of time that go against the
grain of solar induced rhythms such as sleep cycles are more preconscious as expressions
of established cultural practices. They represent institutional and communal directives or habits, and don’t activate conscious decision-making. So work schedules interfacing with time zones can create inconvenient dilemmas for the information worker, the laborer, and the financial planner depending on when the official work day begins, the nature of daylight savings time, or the opening of global financial markets.

Concepts are the output of perceptions redescribed by the mind. Time ranks as a most intriguing domain of conceptual structure because our feeling of “flowing” time in the form of impermanence and change is not backed up by direct sensory observation. Yet the conceptual content of temporal representation is more or less conventionalized. Our conscious access to the world is limited by progressive filtering, windowing cognition by virtue of embodiment and the fact that conscious thought itself represents a sliver of our overall cognitive product. In the same way that our cognitive architecture relies on second-order concepts such as cause and effect, continuity and change, and empathetic understanding, the human sense of chronology is, in the Fregian sense, a predicate that we properly apply to another concept, and not an actual object.

The question of how languages construct time is one of co-option in the sense that we commonly and from a cross-cultural perspective seem predisposed to use representations from the physical world to create conceptual structure in order to represent something non-physical, like the abstract notion of time. A neurological explanation, of course, does not currently exist. We cannot describe the brain mechanisms through which conceptual content that represents material stuff is converted
into intangible entities. But this would require an adequate physicalist account of the production of thought out of brain matter, itself one of the great intractable problems of science.

Still, the advantages of being able to think about things we can never see or touch is manifest from cognitive and evolutionary perspectives. Presumably, the capacity for cognition to transcend the physical world based on human experience enlarges our potential for creative thinking, symbol-manipulation, and decision-making in ways inconceivable to imagine were these capacities not regular and default mental resources. Metaphoric thinking and analogical extension are also forms of cognitive transcendence, with the underlying substrate of a metaphor licensing the counterintuitive equation “A=B” using minimal cognitive processing (attested to by its ubiquity in human thought and language) that must surely qualify as a breakthrough in cognition of revolutionary proportions (Lakoff 1999).

Time is spatialized in language, and the spatialization is in turn concretized in cultural artifacts ranging from timelines to clocks to calendars (Falk 2008). Our reliance on time deixis is extreme. We use words like forward, back, long, and short to supply basic coordinates for orientation in our interactions. The implicitness of spatial representations is even felt on the level of orthography, with writing direction as culturally determined based on the directionality of time as a spatialized conceptual representation. When talking about the past the Aymara gesture in front of them and when talking about the future the gesture-behind them (Sinha 1999).
Futurity makes for an interesting case in cross-cultural variation. It can be spatialized as extending in front of us (in English), behind us (in Aymara), or below us (in Mandarin Chinese) (Sinha 1999; Boroditsky 2011). Mandarin speakers are more likely to sequence images in vertical arrangements to represent temporal events than English speakers (Boroditsky 2011). Tests involving non-linguistic skills provide empirically confirmable proof for cross-cultural differences in spatio-temporal metaphors, and represent advances over previous studies that made similar claims but relied on potentially circuitous linguistic evidence. Different languages can also privilege either time-moving or ego-moving metaphoric temporal conceptualizations. Mandarin, for instance, favors time-moving metaphors more than ego-moving representations.

In spatializing time, languages suppose two relationship types between the individual perceptor and time expressed in linear form. The first is that of the stationary observer situated so that a moving timeline is passing before the viewer. The second supposes a stationary timeline along which an observer moves. As mentioned, different languages can recruit one or the other conceptualization to various extents depending on the cognitive salience of the metaphor within the matrix of the cultural system.

Representations of duration are also subject to cultural variation. In Greek, duration is conceptualized more often in terms of amount. By contrast, English recruits metaphors of distance to express duration as in “long time” or “short interval” (Boroditsky and Casasanto 2008). A difference in language is not necessarily indexical of
a deep difference in thinking. But nor does it automatically imply a superficial and inconsequential deviation in thought.

Sapir’s position was that language was “a cultural or social product” and needed to be studied as such (Scholz, Pelletier, and Pullum 2011). The notion of language as emerging from and being a prime window into culture marks Sapir as an Emergentist. Indeed, he can be seen as one of the founding figures in this informal school of thought. The assumption of the alternative framework is the language is highly reducible to a formal “vocabulary” of syntax and a delimited set of combinatorial rules. This school, which is not totally incompatible with Sapir’s stated vision of the study of language, can be described as Essentialism, with its key intellectual ancestor being Noam Chomsky.

Sapir, of course, was active before Chomsky’s seminal attack on Behaviorism. But he was clear-eyed in assessing the stakes when he dismissed formal obsession with “pretty patterns” in language. In other words, for Sapir it was indispensable that the study of language as a system tell us something about “human conduct in general” (Sapir 1929: 214). In that sense, Sapir’s program was informed by a preoccupation with language as a generator of meaning. The notion that meaning is detachable from linguistic form stands as a peculiar Chomskyan deviation, but fits with his theoretical drive toward a decontextualized universalism. In Chomsky’s words: “[T]he study of meaning and reference and of the use of language should be excluded from the field of linguistics” (Chomsky 1977: 139). But this syntax purism was never fully actualized, and is more a
measure of difference in outlook and goal. In the former, the emphasis is always more or less on meaning creation and conveyance.

Emergentists have always concentrated on meaning and the mechanisms of its conveyance. One domain of interest is the focus on language and the particulars of its context. So a research agenda coalesces around construction-types and their use as devices for communication in particular scenarios. Alternatively, another domain involves the linkages between language and mental phenomena and processes such as cognition, perception, and conceptualization.

Our perception of the natural world is inherently selective (by virtue of human embodiment), and the selection criteria is motivated by the specific linguistic system encultured into members of a given speech community from birth. The mind “cuts up” these impressions of reality into concepts, and these categories are ascribed significance based on membership in the prevailing cultural system. They form into a distinct pattern, one in which meaning and form are enmeshed as the form of the patterning creates distinct networks of meaning. But Whorf never claimed that the language system in the mind was the same as what is known as mentalese or the most basic pre-linguistic components that enable thought. Furthermore, the Whorfian position is hopelessly distorted in the “No Word for X” meme as the linguistic carving instrument for Whorf was grammar, not the lexicon.
A modified Whorfian view is given by Dan Slobin. His thesis is that when speakers are engage in cognitive task that results in a linguistic activity such as speaking or writing, an online effect is created such that the language selected for task completion is the one in which thought is temporarily encoded. In other words, as long as the individual language user is committed to a linguistic task the language for thinking is obligatorily that in which the task was intended and executed. According to Slobin, “Whorf’s hypothesis that conceptual plasticity is limited by language is not incompatible with Chomsky’s claim that language – even syntax – is hardwired into the brain” (Slobin 1996).

The possibility that some thought is sealed off to the mind has long intrigued specialists. In the same way, the idea that learning a new language is somehow cognitively expansive has an appeal for the layperson. A reasonable position seems to be that notion that language could entail certain obligating cognitive patterns in its automaticity without supposing that any specific region of thought lies unthinkable and proscribed based on the specific language in question.

A well-known example of a Whorfian obligatory lexical distinction is that of the blue color spectrum in Greek and Russian (Deutscher 2010). Revealing these sorts of cognitive grooves that languages effortlessly steer their users into is largely the work of cross-linguistic analysis and ingenious experimentation to achieve confirming empirical results. The spatio-temporal representations in English and their counterparts in unrelated language systems like Chinese could qualify as one such other. Grammatical distinctions can engender equally subtle yet persistent effects. A common observation is that of
forced choice in 2nd-person pronouns between informal/intimate and formal/distant relations in many of Romance languages such as French and Spanish as well Asian languages such as Hindi. It could then be speculated that speakers who are compelled to register such distinctions through regular use are more attuned to the relational coordinates of speaker and interlocutor.

The cognitive “turn” in linguistics owes its distinctive mandate to scholars such as Gilles Fauconnier, George Lakoff, Ronald Langacker and Leonard Talmy (Oakley 2009). By the 1980s it was clear that a new movement in linguistics was afoot, distinct from its formalist and functionalist counterparts. For one thing, there was a foundational cognitive commitment. Modeling language ought to take advantage of new work in the brain sciences and the increasing relevance of neurological evidence. Second, the general cognitive repertoire ought to be sufficient for an account of how linguistic knowledge is constituted. There was no need to go outside a generalization commitment to postulate a specialized linguistic module for language production. Interestingly, the first principle has increasingly come to reinforce the second.

Beyond situating linguistic knowledge as a biological problem, the cognitive turn inspired an active interest in how knowledge is represented in the mind and how meaning is constructed through online processing, both of which capitalize on language as a windowing mechanism. The so-called Cognitive Semantic school is represented in notable works by Lakoff & Johnson (1980, 1999), Fauconnier (1985) and Fauconnier & Turner (2002). Word meanings also come into play, adding a more lexical dimension to the semantic enterprise (Evans 2004). Cognitive approaches have increasingly
complemented other sub-branches of linguistics ranging from discourse analysis and pragmatics to sociolinguistics and stylistics. In a word, Cognitive Linguistics manages to maintain a coherent identity, contain within it a plethora of methodologies, and extend its reach across many disciplines. The reason it does not splinter into rival factions is because it was never designed to be managed in a top-down fashion. There is no single and centralized authority inhabiting some Cognitive Linguistic throne.

The human capacity to conceptualize time is a phenomenon of considerable complexity. The question is one of how we represent time given that temporal experience is based in bodily mechanisms for enabling and organizing perceptual data. Even though the concept of time is one that people understand intuitively and relate to, for the most part, as a unitary phenomenon, its conceptual structure is anything but simple. For one thing, it is inaccurate to invoke a single essentialized concept of time. Instead, time is a multiplex of different coherent and smaller-scale cognitive temporal representations. These are integrated into more global conceptual structures that inform our working notions of time. Linguistic and cultural encoding can add new experiential layers to conceptual structure.

Perception is never free of processing and filtering. It is not a neutral reporting device for objective representation of our external environment. Indeed, our perception is inherently a windowing activity. Part of its selectivity is that perceptual chunks are framed in temporal intervals. This is crucial aspect of processing as we need to continually “refresh” the representation of our perceptual experience. In other words,
sorting through and selecting of sensory information involves more than representing spatial configurations of entities. It is a dynamic process of packaging perceptions into manageable temporal units.

Language is a patterned behavior, one engaging in the sophisticated manipulation of symbols (Everett 2012). Theories of language that attempt to link it to musicality, particularly in evolutionary origin make use of the fact that both expressive forms are deeply rhythmic. Research attempts to demonstrate that a common timing mechanism exists across a range of unrelated languages would provide the basis for substantiating the claim that the human ability to measure duration and its instantiation in language is species-specific.

As Evans observes, temporal experience or what is known as temporality is more phenomenological than metaphysical in orientation (2006). It is a matter of that which is “between the ears” and not what is “between the stars.” Our introspective awareness of duration, simultaneity, and the experience of time “slowing down” and “speeding up” as well as consciousness of a sense of “now” comprise the set of advanced cognitive abilities characterizing internal time.

Durative experience is fundamentally subjective and relational in nature, a function of information processing: the greater the density of stimulus and cognitive load, the more “slowed down” the passage of time (Brockman 2009). In other words, duration is not an objective property of any given event. Indeed, the sense of duration is predicated on the
focusing of attention on the event. Duration is a matter of how we attend to things, not part of the thing itself. Many factors contribute to our interaction with and proclivities in attending to events. But the phenomenon of protracted duration, when time seems to slow down, can be induced by certain experience types: shock, novelty, pain, heightened emotion (although variable as it can produce the opposite effect as well), and boredom are environmental contributors. More deliberate and conscious focusing of attention in the form of meditation and concentration activities can produce similar effects.

The expression of “time dragging on” reflects this common intuition, although as a collocation it begs certain questions of idiomatic meaning. After all, usually in causative relationships the object undergoing dragging is not agentive; it is being pulled. Part of the exertion is that of coming up against a resistant inertial force. So in the case of time, what is doing the dragging? There exist contexts when an entity propels itself, and when its capacity for motion is partially incapacitated. It could be rooted in a division of the sort between mind and body. An exhausted student can drag himself to class, which seems on the face of it more of an impairment of will than body even though exhaustion is a physical product. Or it could be a strictly physical limitation coupled with a powerful intentional force such as “The soldier, after being shot in leg, dragged himself into the fox hole.” In the temporal sense, both meanings are conceptually coherent. In the first, entities naturally immersed in time can therefore logically be dragged along in its current (although this raises another question of motivation and force: what is impelling the current and controlling its strength?) at varying speeds. In the second, self-motivating frame of time dragging itself the logic of the image requires - if not the personification of
time – at least the possibility that sentient characteristics could be applied to it. Of course, this is a deeply rooted poetic trope with diverse cultural manifestations.

The opposite experience is one of temporal compression, when time seems to “speed up.”

The expression “Time flies when you’re having fun” encapsulates this common stock of feelings, although abbreviated to “tempus fugit” the connotation shifts to a cautionary note in the form of an intimation of mortality. Generally, this experience results from minimal information density in the stimulus package. But the event in question and the cognitive activity invoked by it need not be simple and impoverished. Routine tasks are often potentially complex, but through practice and entrainment they engage more impoverished levels of stimulus complexity. In tasks of this order, conscious awareness of self and situational context is to great extent occluded.

Instantiated in the English language, words like time, past, present, and future are lexical concepts. They are fixed and conventionalized expressions in the lexicon. According to Evans cognitive models of time involve an integration of lexical concepts (2006). Large scale representations are not just the aggregation of anomalous conceptual units. They possess an overall coherence that makes them flexible, rich, and productive for the needs of everyday language use and for navigating cultural systems. So when individuals plan events and schedule meetings we are implicated in a large scale conceptual apparatus. This natural and effortless immersion in a conceptual world of great complexity is even more evident when people reschedule meetings by “moving”
them “forward” or “backward” in time. The same is true for event preparations when we describe them as “approaching” or “receding” in time.

Psychologist Boaz Keysar recently hypothesized that the process of decision-making in an individual’s native language would be different in a foreign language (2012). On its face the claim seems counterintuitive. We tend to think that people make choices and modify them based on external environmental factors and internal cognitive constraints. These cues and biases are what affect the process of regular decision-making, rendering it more or less systematic. The variable of language selection (obviously, a scenario only available to non-monolinguals) would seem to have no effect (since it doesn’t qualify as either a external or internal pressure). A more charitable interpretation might be that due to unfamiliarity with the foreign language relative to one’s mother tongue (even for more or less fluent bilinguals) the effect would be negative in the same way that pragmatic effects or contextual features of language use are more predictably distorted in non-native languages. However, Keysar now confirms the opposite finding: foreign language use actually reduces decision-making biases.

Drawing on Kahneman’s distinction between slower cognitive-intensive and faster less analytic unconscious modes of thought, Keysar proposed that reasoning in a non-native language would result in greater cognitive demands. At this point, cogitation could proceed on one of two tracks. It could slow down as a consequence of imposed deliberation from using a non-native language system. Slower cognitive processing is the hallmark of L2 thinking, and with greater thoroughness the expectation would one of
heightened accuracy. Or, alternatively, cognitive exhaustion caused by labor intensive non-automatic functions stemming from thinking in a non-native language would entail a cognitive “shortfall.” That is, suffering from resource depletion, the mind makes recourse to cognitive short-cutting, and resultant acceptable bias.

Kahneman’s insights into risk perception as a form of intuition (and not as a systematic trade-off of weighing best options) revolutionized prospect theory (2011). In a well known experiment, Kahneman proposed the same problem to two groups of test-takers, with only the framing of the scenario differing. The core elements and the outcomes drawn from them were exactly the same. The situation was a hypothetical: Save 200 people while necessarily sacrificing 400 or take a chance and save the entire group of 600 or none at all. Kahneman discovered that the first option was preferred when framed in terms of “saving.” However, the “losing lives” framing generated a preference for the alternative of all-or-nothing scenario (as against 400 losses as acceptable casualties) (Kahneman 2011).

The arguments against the Whorfian position are premised on the idea that thought is independent of language, although caution is needed to avoid succumbing to absolutizing categories from one’s native language as somehow representative of the essence of human thought. There is a pronounced tendency to take concepts encoded in English and reify them as “human” categories of thought. Pinker, for instance, often ascribes fundamental categories to so-called “human nature” while not clearly acknowledging their cultural provenance (Pinker 2008). But here the trap of language can
prove circuitous indeed, for how does one cleanse a lexicon of its cultural and semantic moorings, even when discussing supposedly universal attributes?

Whorf, in fact, was not interested in claiming that “foundational categories of reality” are cultural impositions (Wierzbicka 2005). He was not blind or antagonistic to the notion that a “common stock of conceptions” informed all languages in spite of admittedly radical linguistic variation. Whorf held that there must exist a sort of “universal language” as a necessary concomitant of the communicability of ideas by language” (1956: 36).

Anna Wierzbicka has waged a fierce attack on Whorf’s critics, without subscribing wholesale to the Whorfian hypothesis herself. She excoriates Pinker for reducing “Whorf, Sapir, and Geertz to a common denominator with the behaviorists Watson and Skinner, as the supposed adherents of the blank slate idea” (1995). For Wierzbicka even basic lexical categories can differ in their semantics relative to linguistic and cultural instantiation. She has made a productive career of contrasting English and Polish words for root concepts such as “friend” and “soul” as well as targeting classic theories of conversational rationality for what basically passes for mid-century Anglo priggishness. Her dismissal of Paul Grice’s maxims as just so much Oxford linguistic chauvinism is a case in point (1991: 11).

Wierzbicka has been reiterating this argument for the better part of two decades. Different languages contain different vocabularies of emotion and thereby entail
alternative ways of interpreting and categorizing feelings, suggesting “different ‘cultural scripts’ on how one can “handle” one’s feelings, control them, shape them, direct them this way or that (1995).” We often mangle and misconstrue the meaning of foreign emotion words as they transition into new linguistic habitats (e.g., the German Angst wrongly identified in English as “anxiety”).

One of Pinker’s arguments against the Whorfian hypothesis is the very limited emotional palette of the human condition (Casasanto 2008). Pinker observes that the expressive possibilities for our emotions come in a vast array of hues depending on cultural coloration. But human emotions themselves – the core feelings that all normal individuals feel – are actually, chromatically, quite few (Pinker 2008).

Certainly, the other aspect of globalization in the West centers on fragmentation of identity, deracination of common values, and descent into dizzying post-modern relativism. This sentiment is partly associated with increasing hyphenated cultural identities and so-called “hybridization” expressed in linguistic form as, at the very least, bilingualism.

The question of what is happening in the two conceptual worlds of a bilingual speaker does not have a simple answer, for they do not have to be sealed off one from the other. A single utterance may contain “code switching” in the form of conceptual flowing between domains of experience. There is certainly no law that states that a coherent utterance cannot contain within itself meanings from distinct linguistic systems.
The process of enforming concepts in language is not a transcriptive one. The act of linguistic expression involves crucial online meaning and is more give-and-take than one-way in its directionality. Language, in spite of its polymorphism and productivity, is often an imperfect means to express the complexity of thought. But that doesn’t mean it is without considerable resources for ingenious work-arounds. Or as Pinker memorably observes: “We often grope for words, are dissatisfied with what we want to say…. And when we get frustrated by a mismatch between our language and our thoughts, we don’t give up, defeated and mum, but change the language. We concoct neologisms (quark, meme…), borrow useful words from other languages (joie de vivre, schlemiel…), or coin new metaphors (waste time, vote with your feet…)” (2008).

For Pinker this is proof positive that Wittgenstein’s famous declaration that “the limits of my language mean the limits of my world” is a logical absurdity. But here Pinker may be misrepresenting the philosophical point under contention. Wittgenstein makes much more sense when understood alongside his equally influential insight from his *Philosophical Investigations* into the naturalness and imperceptibility of the way our concepts shape our world:

The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something — because it is always before one’s eyes.) The real foundations of his enquiry do not strike a man at all. Unless that fact has at some time struck him. — And this means: we fail to be struck by what,
once seen, is most striking and most powerful. 1922.

The specific language bequeathed to members born into a specific cultural system obligates its individual users into conventionalized patterns of perception, and makes it that much harder to see that which remains hidden. This fact does not disallow the possibility of a parsimonious set of universal and innate human concepts, and one would imagine that these could be located in every lexicon in some word or word-like form.

So Chomsky’s strong monolingual view on language, one influential for several decades, is ascribable to his overall lack of interest in linguistic diversity in relation to language as a system. His famous Martian hypothesis makes it abundantly clear that variation among languages is a superficial phenomenon, and a surface distraction from the real task of searching out the formal properties of Universal Grammar (Everett 2012).

In terms of the study of meaning, the cognitive semantic approach is seen as an alternative to its conditional counterpart. The latter is arguably more restrictive as a research protocol since it is based in the more abstract lineage of formal logic. Insights into meaning are to be drawn from truth conditional analyses. That is, the meaning is judged in terms of its logical conformity to objective truth standards. The cognitive semantic program, by contrast, is more concerned with conceptual change, metaphor interpretation, and indirect non-literalisms. In other words, real world language and online meaning creation is regarded as a cultural process that is anything but trivial. A
preoccupation with meta-linguistic representation is only problematic if it takes us away from these vital phenomena of human conceptualization.

But cognitive and conditional frameworks are not by definition mutually hostile to each other. For instance, a version creation that enables an under-determined semantics is compatible with the cognitive approach. This is because concepts are constantly being negotiated and reformulated through interaction. Meaning creation then requires a sophisticated repertoire of inferential reasoning and the ability to engage in constant mind-reading and intention detection. This activity is known as pragmatic processing and is associated with the tradition of H.P. Grice, to be discussed in the second chapter. At the same time, Grice grounded his approach to utterance meaning on the notion of truth and defeasible reasoning, making it more or less compatible with conditional approaches.

So the line separating so-called objectivists (a la Davidson) from subjectivists (a la Lakoff) in terms of the nature of meaning does not have to assume a hardened cast of mutual exclusion (Jaszczolt and Turner 2003). In other words, investigations into meaning can be schematic and propositional in the sense that, say, a concept may possess a core meaning (propositional) that could generate a cluster of associated meanings through a consistent and regulative process (schematic).

Both frameworks play into the modeling of an accurate account of how utterance interpretation takes place. Grice was actually sympathetic to the notion that truth-conditional content of the utterance and that of the sentence were more or less in
alignment with each other. That is, the utterance represents what the speaker intends to communicate. The form of its expression or site of its encoding is what is known as sentence meaning. There is nothing unusual in human interaction when the two meaning-forms do not completely overlap. In fact, such is the normal condition of human communication.

But Grice thought that disambiguation was rarely radical, and that meaning discrepancies could be resolved by the low-effort addressing of deictic issues and lexical ambiguities (see Grice 1989). The levels of pragmatic enrichment have changed since Grice’s day, some contesting that semantic representation is more impoverished than merely complete. In other words, meaning truly resides more in paralinguistic factors and certainly outside the husk of the sentence.

As Casasanto points out, the Whorfian hypothesis is partly controversial because another major question of cognition gets loaded onto it: namely, do we think in language (2008)? Strictly speaking, linguistic relativism is concerned with the set of questions surrounding language as a shaper of thought. To what degree does language determine thought? How does it exert its shaping power over cognition? What are its implications for human behavior and culture? How can it be confirmed through experimentation?

It is quite easy to muddle these questions together since the most extravagant version of language influencing thought would be one in which language and thought are interchangeable. With no daylight between the two, the influence would be automatic and
irrefutable. But even though introspection shows us that we possess inside and outside voices, very rarely is the former conflated with thought in its entirety. On the face of it, natural language as synonymous with thought appears inadequate.

After all, language requires a great deal of extralinguistic input to resolve issues of deixis, ambiguity, and indirection, the classic providence of pragmatic processing. It is also evident that linguistic resources aren’t necessary for creatures that may lack consciousness, but certainly engage in behaviors that contain some trace elements of thinking: babies and animals, for instance, do not react entirely through instinct. But adding the most confusion is that the science of correlating language to thought is still in its infancy. We have very little traction on the configuration of language features to cognitive processes.

The moderate position is that the language we speak supplies us with a distinctive conceptual repertoire. But that in no way discounts the cognitive processes underlying language as being general and universal. No matter the language spoken, the neural connections are probably the same throughout the species.

Whorf wrestled with the relationship between customized conceptual-cultural repertoires and conceptual universals: “Are our own concepts of ‘time,’ ‘space,’ and ‘matter’ given in substantially the same form by experience to all men, or are they in part conditioned by the structure of particular languages (1956)?”
Research into cross-linguistic lexicalization of time has proved very rewarding for the Whorfian cause. Significant variation among languages in the way speakers mentally represent duration, established through measuring relevant non-linguistic tasks, correlates with Whorf’s idea that at least certain types of thinking may well be mediated by language. As such, different languages may constitute different intermediaries. Steven Pinker dismissal of Whorfianism as “wrong… all wrong” may then be a disservice to an increasingly compelling line of research (Pinker 2008).

Pinker’s criticism was at least directed toward the legitimate fact that some Whorfian research was not especially dispositive. For instance, Bloom’s (1981) claim that Chinese speakers are counterfactually impaired because Chinese does not possess subjunctive markers was problematic. Aside from the internal credibility of the tests themselves, they were designed to assess linguistic tasks. But much more tractable research has recently been attained through experiments gauging the influence of language on non-linguistic cognition (avoiding a circularity argument).

A cross-linguistic fact is that people employ the near identical language for talking about time as they would space. In English, duration is measured in the spatial dimension of length. We move events on linear pathways: Meetings can be pushed back or moved forward in time. Vacations can be long or short. The talking about time using spatial language is an extension of spatial representations that help us think about time.
But culture intrudes in the particular way the spatio-temporal metaphor is mapped (Sinha 1999).
Chapter 4

Time-Saving Interaction: The Case of Straight-Talking Israeli Dugri

*ad bellum purificandum* - epigraph Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (1945)

In this chapter I examine the intersection of temporality, civility, and language in order to understand what sort of social implications interactional strategies incur for their users. As with the previous chapter, the focus on culture is front and center. Here my cultural case study is that of modern Israel. The modern Israeli discourse form known by the slang term “dugri,” or straight talk, is predicated on a truth-telling mode of interaction that is remarkable for its self-consciously confrontational and direct manner.

Do the interactional stances of directness and confrontation function as effective time-saving devices? Were they even adopted for the purpose of economizing on time as weighed against some other benefit of discourse? The question of cultural adoption is one of adaptation, but the adaptive process in cultural evolution can be difficult to track. This is because social variables are more difficult to reconstruct and link together in chains of causation than biological markers. The case of dugri recommends itself for careful analysis because of its experimental origins in the utopian aspects of the Zionist project.

The “laboratory” conditions for dugri as the chosen interactional style of the sabra or native-born Israeli Jew are ideal because they are more self-enclosed (as endogamous and regionally-specific) and deliberately self-fashioned (as part of a modern revolutionary ethos), making the phenomenon more tractable for systematic study.
But the notion of direct and confrontational interaction is, naturally, larger than
the story of dugri. Research into direct speech is an important mandate of pragmatics. If
language is used as a tool to shape categories of thought (as exemplified by current neo-
Whorfian experimentation) it is also a tool to shape social relations and institutions. The
power to shape social reality through language is pervasive in human verbal conduct. The
question is what strategic value is served by using directness as a mode of pragmatic
conveyance? A temporal rational might seem natural as direct address and compressed
messaging economize on time in the act of message delivery. Directness might also
intensify the message in terms of its lucidity or emotional force. Interestingly, even more
scholarly attention is allocated to its opposite, indirection. The same animating question
continues to apply: What sort of advantages accrue to interactants in communication
scenarios when they decide to use direct or indirect strategies?

Indirect speech acts form a crucial basis of the now established field of politeness
theory. The emergence of politeness studies is marked by the 1978 publication of
Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson’s Politeness: Some universals in language usage
(with the influential revised edition issued in 1987). Brown and Levinson posited that
gradated levels of indirection were cross-cultural features of what constituted polite
language. Increasingly indirect forms of address represented the correspondingly more
deferential and submissive attitude of the speaker. The opposite was claimed to be
equally valid, such that the imperative mood, command verbs, and lack of title inflation
characterized by directness tend to mark contempt for social rituals of interaction. As
such, more direct language correlates with impoliteness or rude behavior.
Indirection-as-time-saving-strategy in the context of politeness (as opposed to, say, a pure deception strategy) might appear counter-intuitive. After all, if indirect in trajectory then by definition the act of communication would take longer. But the durative criterion is not the only temporal economizer that needs to be factored into the larger discourse-related scheme of things. For instance, indirection could be productively thought of as an expedient “workaround” to avoid (or at least forestall) intensive reparative relationship work that direct confrontation could plausibly necessitate. We approach many indirect requests as polite rituals carrying minimal emotional resonance. They are codified formal niceties, and register as nothing more in everyday interaction. So we hardly think about the interactional tactics implicit in such innocuous requests as “Could you please pass the salt?” The response is a predictable one, even that of the snarky adolescent who answers “Yes, I can” and then proceeds with inaction.

The hypothetical consequences of a direct refusal in the form of perceived offense can then require considerable reparative work with corresponding expenditures of time. So even though indirection is more time-consuming in the short term, it operates with counterfactual scenarios of potentially damaging confrontation (bracketed by enabling conventions of mutual knowledge and plausibility deniability) that seem by comparison far costlier in terms of temporal stakes. In other words, judged by its focus on the endgame of interaction, strategies of indirection spanning politeness and pseudo-transactionality (i.e. what is known as “bullshit”) may well end up exemplifying, in the long term, sophisticated time-saving techniques.
The related concept of confrontation is one that need not overlap entirely with directness. Confrontations of the bitterest kind can be conducted and couched in polite forms of interaction. Even forms of interaction that are not directly confrontational can be inflected for injurious intent and to cause maximal damage. The case of gossip is instructive, especially considering the rehabilitative approach of evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar who argues for its social utility as a bonding agent cohering large groups in the cooperative overseeing of reputation management (1998).

Gossip, even though it contains the capability of serving malicious ends in its unsanctioned and evaluative modes, can prove useful as a means of cultivating indirect reciprocity. Indirect reciprocity is not premised on immediate “payment” of favors. Nor does it insist on the specific grantee of the favor repaying the “debt.” The ultimate settling of debts is cooperative and self-serving in the form of “I help you and somebody else helps me.” So trading information with third parties about people who are not present is a time-efficient strategy for leveraging the experiences of other individuals. Indirect reciprocity can then be construed as a time-saving device when staged against scenarios of exclusive individual self-effort as potentially depletive. If exhausted of personal resources, the individual will have to spend more time managing less capital to make it last longer, an unfavorable survival proposition.

But the basic temporal question of confrontational modes of interaction is one of expenditure: Do they save time or are they wasteful? The answer feeds into the constitutive question of communication-as-confrontation: Is confrontation a fundamental property of communication? The alternative is to posit cooperation as a more essential
communicative function. Rhetorical theory has shown itself to be exceptionally interested in the nature of confrontational discourse.

The term “agonism” was first popularized in rhetorical studies by Walter Ong in his *Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality, and Consciousness* (1981). The conceptualization of argument as conflict is deeply rooted, and pervades large scale metaphoric mappings. Verbal wars and argumentative broadsides are conventionalized ways of using language to refer to argumentation and debate of all types. As Stephen Yarbrough notes, “Rhetoric, as it has been traditionally understood, is a symbolic substitute for war (2006).” Yarbrough’s assessment is more or less neutral in its characterization. Much rhetorical theory, however, regards agonism in polemical terms.

Ong, for instance, linked agonism with the principle of masculinity, claiming that masculine consciousness was hardwired to configure existence – including educational processes – as a struggle for power and battle for survival. A feminist strain of rhetorical theory proceeded to argue for a course corrective of sorts. The infusion of “feminine consciousness” into the conventions of rhetoric, it was argued, would emphasize nurturing self-esteem building and collaborative problem-solving. Proponents of this feminine form of rhetoric include Deborah Tannen and Linda Flower.

On the face of it, confrontation would present itself as a time-saving strategy. Circling around a disputation would appear to be a serious drag on individual temporal resources. Total avoidance is, of course, time-effective as is non-intervention of all kinds. Non-interference only works if the individual has the power to exit the scene of confrontation. Silence, for its part, can be a powerful vehicle of meaning. The policy of
not-deigning-to-respond strikes an imperial note. As an executive privilege, it would only reside in decision-makers with the highest authority and the most minimal obligations of accountability. Avoidance can also be rationalized based on the appropriateness of confrontation. Power imbalances could compel the redirection of effort away from direct encounters that would, in principle, be more expedient means of accessing the truth of a given matter. Lack of preparedness could also motivate the individual to defer the moment of confrontation, although deferring as a tactic could work just as well alongside a confrontational climate of interaction.

But confrontation is arguably not inherently time-saving, even if one allows directness as a regulative constraint. The problem, long since recognized in rhetorical theory, is the addictive nature of disputation (Booth 2009: 11). Like any addictive behavior, what starts off as an expedient means (drugs or gambling, for example) toward a straightforward and conclusive end is ultimately sabotaged by obsessive attachment and enslavement to the instrument itself. Addictions are hugely time-consuming because they block out other needs and goals, even ones vital for survival.

The addictive quality of rhetoric is located in the desire to emerge victorious from a conflict. This drive to prevail in verbal struggle is not interchangeable with the notion of productive strife. The latter recognizes a moment of closure, a terminus ad quem. It also embraces a model of creative chaos. The fierceness of the confrontation is intended to maximize the ultimate yield of knowledge. But when the goal of vanquishing one’s opponent (philonikia, “love of victory” φιλόνικος φιλονεικία) reaches addictive levels it crowds out time-constraints along with productive rhetorical ends.
However, the root of agonism is agōnia (ἀγονία) meaning “a contest or competitive skill,” and could just as easily apply to any activity involving exertion such as wrestling. It could also refer to recreational exercise. But in Plato’s Gorgias (456d-457c) the fear is not that agonistic rhetoric will prove a source of inexhaustible obsession (Kennedy 1980). Instead, the anxiety revolves around its indiscriminate and imprudent use in terms of the object of its attention (and the related question of who is to blame for its serial abuse). The analogy is made between rhetoric and combat. A combat-trained individual who attacks his parents would be guilty of gross negligence for violating a social taboo. But endless distraction is also a temporal form of imprudent usage. And such is the point that Gorgias effectively makes: “Thus it is the man who does not use it aright who deserves to be hated (Kennedy 1980).”

The danger of extreme agonism was known as eristikos (ἐριστικὸς) meaning “eager for strife or battle (Lanham 1991).” Eristic rhetoric is the bitter wrangling of the marketplace or the political theater in which strife is prolonged for its own sake. It is contrasted with irenic rhetoric which seeks to achieve compromise and make peace. In fact, words that are cognate with or translate into “peace” from other languages generally possess connotations of temporal closure. The English word “peace” is cognate with “pacification” implying an ending to a process. The same holds true for Hebrew with the word for peace, “shalom,” being cognate with “shleima,” meaning completion. The goal of irenic rhetoric was its own nullification in due measure, unlike agonistic and eristic rhetoric that sought to be self-sustaining.
The suspicion that agonism was hardwired into rhetoric, and that the latter was irredeemably tainted by the former was held by John Locke. Locke was convinced that mutual respect was missing from the culture of argument in his day. It was impossible for disputants to effectively listen to each other: “Whether pertinent or impertinent, sense or nonsense, agreeing with or contrary to what he had said before, it matters not. For this in short is the way and perfection of logical disputes: that the opponent never take any answer, nor the respondent ever yield to any argument (Booth 2009: 50).”

Even though Locke is a model liberal thinker, champion of the Enlightenment, individual rights, and a key articulator of empirical reason his prognosis of people’s capacity to argue in a spirit of toleration and understanding was notably dim. In the modern theory of rhetoric, Wayne Booth was responsible for throwing light on Locke’s categorical dismissal of rhetoric as “that powerful instrument of Error and Deceit. (2009: 50).” Booth, for his part, was more circumspect and charitable in his definition of rhetoric, attempting to rehabilitate its non-agonistic aspects as sustaining “proper balance among [...] the available arguments about the subject itself, the interests and peculiarities of the audience, and the voice, the implied character, of the speaker (2009: 6).”

Approaching communication in its confrontational guise raises questions about its cultural instantiation: What selection process determines the adoption of an agonistic framework? Of course, there is the gendered explanation of male domination. But how are we to account for extreme forms of agonism such as dugri? Considering the progressive nature of women’s rights in Israel, including social duties such as mandatory military service, the role of gender seems less dispositive. The same might well be said
for linking agonism with ego-centric behavior. After all, the sabra movement that enshrined dugri was contemptuous of rivalrous self-interest, and even capitalism to a certain degree. Looking more deeply into dugri, the temporal dimension of language ought to be considered as a viable candidate for its election as a privileged and purer form of discourse.

Dugri is recognized as a symbolic tool for affirming a specific cultural identity. Even though the linguistic habitat of sabra identity is Modern Hebrew, “dugri” is a loanword from Turkish via Arabic (Katriel 2004). But this should not come as a surprise to anyone familiar with the modern revitalization of spoken Hebrew and its infusion of foreign words from many regions of lived Jewish experience. As is well known, the rebirth of Hebrew as a spoken language is a singular achievement. Hebrew is the traditional scriptural language of the Jewish people, used for the trafficking of rabbinic knowledge and for commercial activity linking disparate Jewish communities across vast swaths of the post-classical and pre-modern world.

For most Jews, the prestige and influence of Hebrew outstripped that of other regional Jewish languages regardless of volume of speakers. In 1939, for example, there were more Yiddish speakers in the world than Hebrew. At the time, the global population of Hebrew speakers stood at approximately 1 million out of a pre-Holocaust world Jewish population of 16 million (Stavans 2008). About half of these speakers of Hebrew lived in then Palestine, with several hundred thousand located in Eastern Europe. Poland, in particular, boasted a flourishing all-Hebrew school system. Nevertheless, many millions of Jews in non-Yiddish speaking communities around the world possessed some
degree of familiarity with Hebrew. Jewish communities in regions such as Germany, France, Belgium, Holland, Italy, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, North Africa, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq, Iran, Georgia, the Caucasus, Central Asia and India all shared knowledge of Hebrew.

Why use a piquant foreign term? Why not enform a pervasive and defining modality of interaction in a word with Biblical origins? Biblical Hebrew, in fact, does contain the necessary lexical resources. There are ancient Hebrew instances of direct and unapologetic interaction. But dugri is centrally concerned with social equals engaging in ritualized truth-telling. The blunt exchange of unadorned language regardless of collateral social damage is indexical of dugri. In the Biblical context, as we shall see, status markers are never very far removed. The rabbinic context, for its part, does exhibit some normalization of confrontational exchange. Due to the longstanding rabbinic policy of acquiescence and compromise to potential hostile external authorities, this can seem like a counter-intuitive claim.

A case in point in the modern Israeli context is the brand of Religious Zionism associated with the now moderate wing of the religious kibbutz movement (ha-kibbutz ha-dati) and its revered vision of mered ha-kadosh (sacred rebellion). Religious Zionism owes its identity to two broad streams of influences. The first is the Mizrachi/National Religious Party, with historic leanings toward the statist and moderate middle class. The second so-called Emuni (faithful) stream is more redemptive, driven by messianic interpretations sanctioned by the teachings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935), Chief Rabbi in the British Mandate of Palestine (Almog, Reinharz, and Shapira 2008).
The religious kibbutzim, however, were the ideological product of the Religious Workers Party, its companion movement. They, in turn, were inspired by a specific strain of Ashkenazi piety that stressed fiery moral pathos: Polish Hasidism and German neo-Orthodoxy. The first was incarnated in the ideologue Shmuel Haim Landau (died, 1928) known as "Shachal" (a Hebrew acronym meaning “young lion”), a descendant of the uncompromisingly introspective Menachem Mendel of Kotzk (died, 1859). The Kotzker Hasidim (i.e. the rabbi’s followers) were driven by a fierce intensity toward devotional authenticity quite unlike the joyfulness and mystical ecstasy practiced by their more popular Jewish pietistic counterparts. Landau’s notion of "sacred rebellion" was directed against bourgeois society and religion under the rubric of "Torah va-Avodah" (Religious Study and Service). Although the classic rabbinic emphasis on study went undisturbed, it was complemented by the new Zionist sacralization of productive labor (Kimmerling 2001)

Dugri is tied to Zionist idealism, the agricultural utopian aspects of which have faded since economic reforms started powering a dynamic post-industrial high tech economy. The generation of the first Israelis, born in the 1930s and 1940s, to grow up in the Zionist settlement in Palestine would find little common ground with their contemporary co-religionists of all stripes. The socialization of the Zionist labor movement and the communal ideals of the kibbutz and moshav that inspired the dreams of the pioneers (halutzim) of the new State of Israel are more or less vestigial in the current urban and individualistic moment. But then the sabras always made up a small minority of their society's population, although the cultural influence they wielded was
considerably disproportionate. In fact, although many manifestations of their idealism have more or less passed into irrelevance such as “their recreational culture of bonfires and singalongs” and “their adoption of Arab accessories” the slang and gruffness of straight-talking continues to at least register as a cultural stereotype marking the new Jew (Almog 2000). Dugri still draws on powerful social anchors such as the longstanding institution of the military which continues to function to varying degrees as a cultural melting pot and social leveler.

The best study of dugri remains Tamar Katriel’s seminal Talking Straight: Dugri Speech in Israeli Sabra Culture (1986/2004). The sociolinguistic and cultural-anthropological approach that she provides continues to strike the reader as eclectic, insightful, and relevant. Naturally, Katriel points out that dugri ritual “involves directness in the sense of unmediated communication and immediacy of contact” (Katriel 2004). She also addresses the issue of temporality, noting that dugri is “characterized by quickness or abruptness” (Katriel 2004). But aside from this perfunctory remark there is no attempt to rationalize the latter as a possible time-saving strategy.

Economizing on time as a communicative strategy implicates a set of assumptions concerning time, interaction, and, above all, language. Some of the core convictions of dugri are obvious and natural extensions of sabra ideology. Almog rightly locates the pragmatism of the sabra as a form of anti-intellectualism.

Was there a distinctly rabbinic approach to the relationship between language and time? The question of dugri as reactive (and hence a rejection of a pre-existing style of interaction) could then be weighed against the possibility of it evolving naturally out of a
previous tradition on which it is based. The rejectionist narrative is culturally entrenched, and sabra self-identify is indeed premised on the creation of the “new Jew” in the Jewish ancestral homeland.

Direct language, for its part, is not inherently confrontational, as the latter is a relational and subjective situational marker. The perception of what constitutes an offense against the self in interaction is a contested issue in politeness theory. But it stands to reason that for the contemporary species of time-constrained decision-maker, the rhetorical value of indirection may have limited utility. It could be argued that de-personalization as an aspect of digital culture may result in a flattening of anxiety concerning the causing of social offense. If the potential for time-consuming reparative labor is removed from the equation, then indirection becomes either vestigial or latches on to the possibility of the future unknown to preserve its meaningfulness. In an abstract scenario, the decision-maker who renders a negative judgment doesn’t need to fear a resulting confrontation from the petitioner. The interaction is bounded and based on a mutually understood transactional formula. So hypothetically the decision-maker could be unsparingly brutal in his act of rejection. With the negative verdict, the relationship reaches the end of its lifespan.

But the reality is that proposals are often internally generated. Employees who have their ideas rejected commonly continue working in the same environment, and it is not unusual for them to try again. So decorum in rejection is of a pragmatic nature, to prevent the degrading of workplace morale and to diminish negative perception of the corporate brand. “Let down easy” freshly terminated employees might be less inclined to
spread hostile reports and so cause less damage to workforce recruitment as their disgruntled counterparts. But atrophying concern over personal sensitivity as a result of electronic communication may eat away at what seems like a sensible self-preservation strategy.

Dugri was somewhat brought into digital culture, when a speech by current Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu received international attention and was reported widely on the internet. Netanyahu concluded his speech at the United Nations on September 25, 20011 by urging his Palestinian counterpart, Mahmoud Abbas, to engage in dugri: “And I suggest we talk openly and honestly. Let’s listen to one another. Let’s do as we say in the Middle East: Let’s talk dugri. That means straightforward. I’ll tell you my needs and concerns. You’ll tell me yours. And with God’s help, we’ll find the common ground of peace.” The invitation went unanswered because Abbas was not present for the speech. So it could be argued that the use of ceremonial rhetoric ipso facto violated dugri by the fact that it was not an unmediated face-to-face encounter. Still, the spirit of dugri pervaded the speech in that many times Netanyahu was blunt about stating what he perceived as uncomfortable truths to his not-terribly-sympathetic UN audience.14

The reception of Netanyahu’s call for dugri was predictable: His supporters saw it as a brave and honest attempt to overcome political impasse. Detractors, for their part, treated it as more cynical posturing from a completely unreliable political figure. In other words, as with much political discourse, acceptance of the message is contingent on

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14 Netanyahu, unlike Abbas, did avoid outright distortion (“the Israelis are digging next to Temple Mount in order to undermine its pillars.”)
perceived credibility of the messenger. One Israeli pundit claimed that Netanyahu was “genetically” incapable of dugri as his real intentions are those inherited from his father (now recently deceased), Benzion Netanyahu. Netanyahu senior was known for staunchly believing that the quest for Palestinian statehood was just another iteration of what he believed was a continuous Arab existential campaign against the State of Israel.

So what good is direct interaction as a negotiating tool in an interminable conflict? The direct mode does not seem to be a significant time-saving device in this context. The point here is not to suggest adopting “a plague on both their houses” mentality. Instead, the observation that needs to be made is that like any convention of interaction, even directness requires the existence of common ground. The problem is that while language is a tool that enables directness in interaction, it does not give participants a window into the real intentions of their interlocutors. This can be a good thing in that it compels speakers to invest effort into the task of convincing their audience that their utterances do indeed accurately reflect their intentions. On the other hand, language is just as versatile a tool for intention disguising.

Many cultures recognize a trade-off between direct and indirect messaging. The costs tend not to be assessed in terms of message intelligibility. Language is messy business, but one surprisingly successful in terms of doing the job of conveying informational content and meaning. People make their meanings known using varying levels of grammatical and lexical sophistication. Meaning transmission can be accomplished as successfully by the plain-speaker as by the skilled orator. Indeed, a
Burkean observation is that the skilled orator may be skilled in the art of plain-speaking! Because language is natural human inheritance gradations of skillfulness do not significantly impact communicative success in natural language encounters.

On the one hand, more emphasis on directness could mean that time is held at a greater premium. One recruits time-economizing strategies in interaction because time is more valuable and its allocation needs to be overseen judiciously like any other scarce resource. Directness, arguably, is the prime means of getting meaning conveyed fast. But defining direct language is not so straightforward. In a restricted grammatical sense, direct speech refers to unmodified quoted speech. Direct constructions are those that might have been uttered by the original speaker and are reported as such. For instance, “Patrick Henry said, ‘Give me liberty or give me death’” is direct speech, but without the inquit (Latin, “he says”) of the quotation marks and a pronominal switch to the third person singular the utterance would be categorized as reported speech or normal indirect speech.

In a less restricted but more helpful sense, direct language represents the ability to reference something with its own value instead of using another name, reference, or container to accomplish the same referencing goal. Unadorned language is a stylistic type of usage, but also embodies pragmatic concerns. For instance, direct language would do away with title inflation as much as possible. Direct language strives to keep processing costs very low for the addressee, although they may well be much higher for the speaker. The individual speaker must compress as meaning into the utterance as possible without
detracting from comprehensibility and coherence. By that metric, direct language abhors ambiguity and overlaps with clarity and simplicity. The latter stylistic criteria, it should be noted, do not necessarily entail commonness of expression or lack of conceptual complexity.

The case of metaphor is actually trickier because conventionalized metaphors can In the same vein, but on the level of pragmatics, direct language would strive coordinate what speaker is saying and speaker is meaning in utterance formation such that the two overlap as much as possible. Yet again, on a contextual level the situation may change. Indirect requests can actually be time-saving devices of the highest magnitude because they are effective at removing the option of direct refusal from the interactional equation.

In fact, identifying a solid definitional line partitioning direct and indirect language is probably a fruitless pursuit. Even the basic identification of indirection as a building block of politeness has been criticized. We will much more to say about the relationship between direct and confrontational language and the social categories of politeness and appropriate language.

As has been argued, time is increasingly seen in this light because of the attention economy and the technological revolution on which it is scaffolded. People have an ever-increasing number of options to choose from. The need to scan through these options is powerful because they are attractive and because letting them go untapped is perceived to be an immoral form of wastage. The scanning through of options is itself a time-
consuming process even as searching tools increase in their sophistication. They are increasingly more powerful, more customizable, and more fine-grained.

Language plays into the process of temporal resource allocation on a number of levels. On one level it is a resource that consumes time. Using language is simply not instantaneous information sharing. In interaction speaker interfacing creates shared attention and joint meaning. These actions require considerable coordination, and rules of engagement are cultural conventions. But that does not mean that understanding how people relate to time is simple. In fact, the ways in which people relate to commodities and behave generally in economic scenarios is quite complex.

The rational animal model that informs homo economicus needs to be enhanced by the research of behavioral economics (Kahneman 2011). Indeed, one of the great engines of cognitive bias is time constraint. People make less accurate decisions because they aspire to retain a level of effectiveness in situations where time is not a luxury. Language plays into this complex process of temporal resource allocation because it is not a form of instantaneous information sharing.

Direct language is conventionally associated with agonistic rhetoric in the sense that confrontation does not shy from direct encounters. That is not to say that confrontational interaction is inherently direct. Nor does it mean that collaborative rhetoric is predisposed to indirection and ambiguity. Dugri is seen as seeking to cut through artificial constraints in interaction such as disingenuousness, petty inhibitions,
ceremonial language, and sentimental handholding. It is premised on a model of hear-to-heart honesty that derives in part from the utopian vision of communal solidarity.

Direct communication entails a thrifty approach to time, even if the concern is an epiphenomenal one. The idea that time can be economized by more direct language – even to the point of confrontation, does not require a scaffolding of justification in which the explanatory factors of the attention economy and cognitive bias play starring roles.

For instance, directness as a guiding principle of interaction could turn on deep rooted suspicion of language as a source of evil and falsehood. To be sure, it is a necessary evil, but one that can be countered by a parsimonious use of words and a minimalist aesthetic. Potential “red zones” in which interactions could easily proceed down dangerous paths would be socially marked such relations between the sexes, gossip, business transactions, and political involvement. But the underlying concept is one of language as a net of entrapment and a web deceit. The negative evaluation of language comes from a parallel devaluation of worldliness that is not uncommon in theological systems that stress extreme piety.

In the popular domain, Dale Carnegie’s influential How to Win Friends and Influence People is regarded as a touchstone for popular self-help books insisting that career success be pursued through on workplace communication (1936). It owed its success to simple core ideas and unadorned prose. In the latest iteration “for the Digital Age” the simple and direct strategies framed in correspondingly accessible prose were overhauled. So advice in the form “Try leaving a friendly trail of little sparks of gratitude
on your daily trips…You will be surprised how they will set flames of friendship that will be rose beacons on your next visit” has instead been substituted with dense corporate language such as “transactional proficiency,” “tangible interface,” “relational longevity,” “continuum of opportunities,” and “interpersonal futility” (“Classic Advice: Please, Leave Well Enough Alone” 2011).

Grappling with time as a human universal and as a culturally plastic concept makes for a very interesting research program. The universality means we have default expectations about how other individuals relate to time and actualize their realizations in interaction. These general expectations are of the preconscious kind and are widely distributed across the plateau of cognitive achievement. The cultural plasticity of time means that these realizations end up varying to a great degree and can complicate interactions if participants do not share the same cultural programming or “scripts.”15 The way we think about time and function as language users in time (using strategic communication as a fundamentally time-constrained tool) is very much a product of our cultural and technological ecosystem. The manner in which we activate temporal thinking and acting can carry great significance in decision-making scenarios.

One of our most reliable windowing mechanisms into decision-making as a psychological process is language. At the same time, language can be an obfuscating device, throwing off systematic inquiry and elucidation of transparent principles (Everett 2012). Language does this because it is a human tool, and like any implement it can be

purposed and repurposed to various strategic ends depending on the motivations and goals of its users and the contexts of its use. Language allows us to partition reality into a rich and vast conceptual universe, create fine grained categories, and recruit symbolic meanings that can be linked together in complex semantic networks. The concept of time is one such partitioning instrument, and not in its capacity to measure sequences with minute chronological exactness. This is most certainly a cultural sensibility as any anthropologist would know, and one that seems idiosyncratically risible outside the Western empirical tradition of quantifiable absolutes.

But some decisions are more consequential and require greater amounts of cognitive load. The processing demands of major decisions are difficult to quantify. A general heuristic of great utility in human affairs is that intensifying time pressure invariably affects and, in many scenarios, detracts from precision in decision-making. Time is thus an environmental variable imposed from without on the rational decision-maker. But time is also a subjective reality within, with a changeable conceptual complexion. These inner sensibilities about time are felt in a decision-making style that is far more subject to cognitive bias or the invasiveness of subtle “cost-cutting” modes of reasoning that

In the former, we have regimes of social time with far-reaching implications for behavior. The social ontology of time obligates us to be punctual, check our schedules, and synchronize our watches to different time zones and schemes of daylight savings (Falk 2008). It is, of course, possible for the individual to opt out of these routines, but at
a stigmatizing cost. Most of us adapt to the system, internalize it, and manifest the internalization of the social clock in various expressive possibilities.

The early 20th century American labor movement organized under the banner of eight hours of work, eight hours of sleep, and eight hours “for what we will.” The empirical fact was that productivity suffered due to overwork and resulting fatigue. The most effective quality control measures that served ultimately to boost productivity were those improving the lot of the worker through enhancements in safety, health, and relaxation. A family life was encouraged with the forethought that sanctioned forms of leisure contributed to productivity, and was therefore a sensible investment. This ethos was most fully realized during the 1930s in WK Kellogg’s Battle Creek plant operating under the motto that hard work could replace long hours (C Davidson 2011). The post-war emphasis on growing wages in a consumer economy flush with prosperity saw the reversal of this policy to the extent that unions would eventually lobby for increased hours. European unions, however, continue to regard the shortening of the work week as a key negotiating demand.

On measure of the decline in American leisure time is the dwindling notion of acceptable time-off from work for bereavement. For instance, in 1927 Emily Post presumed that formal grieving for widows should last three years. By 1972 mourners were expected to return to work approximately a week after the funeral. The current consensus of the American Management Association is that 72 hours is an appropriate allotment for grief-related absence (Schor 2003). The feeling of constantly being rushed is becoming increasingly ubiquitous in American life. But the notion that day to day
living was quickening in pace and with it the experience of higher pressure was articulated as early as 1877 as a not uncommon complaint.

The Whorfian conception of the language-cognition-culture interface places a great premium on the last unit in the triad. Language is a cultural system in database form, and the notion of culture as the ground floor of the “house of consciousness” means that it should be studied with great vigor and thoroughness. In the formative era of linguistics, this was something of a novel insight. To study a particular language was seen as more of a lexicographical undertaking. Words were compiled and grammar systems pieced together aggregating into the semblance of the language being studied. The progenitor of the Whorfian line of thought, Edward Sapir, did not think this method created adequate representations of what a language was or modeled accurately what it actually did. Culture supplies language with its particular semantic resonance. It is through analysis of linguistic artifacts that we gain unique insight into the cultural matrix.

The convergence of these two forces opens up the possibility of cultural misunderstanding or, successfully managed, intercultural relationship-building. The managerial sensibility that we apply to temporal resources extends to language since, when it comes to persuasive appeals that typically power proposals of all genres and degrees of importance; words are items of value that insist on careful deployment. They help us maximize and conform to time-sensitive limitations on the human attention span that are increasingly conventionalized and regulated by technological apparatus.
The study of time, thought, language, and culture is one of cross-disciplinary vastness. There is no research domain that encompasses time as a discrete discipline in all its aspects and applications. Journals such as Time & Society are useful anchoring devices for a general line of inquiry that seems to be undergoing a scholarly resurgence. This renewed interest is felt across the science-humanities divide, and is part of the same mixing of perspectives that has proven so productive for cognitive science and by extension its linguistic program. Artificial boundaries of scholarship are not easily dispensed with, and so the research that I have embarked on in temporal cognition, interaction rituals, cognitive bias, conceptual blending, pragmatic theory and linguistic relativism still requires a disciplinary placeholder.

It therefore follows that temporal cognition or the way that we think about time is more than simply related to interaction rituals as time-constrained routines of behavior. The thinking implicates the doing, and there is much doing. Anyone invested in strategic communication on the global stage would do well to pause and consider their preconceptions about temporal cognition and interaction. The most salient development in how we conceptualize time in our current moment is clearly the internet-enabling rise of the so-called attention economy. Hofstede debunked the 1950s-1960s belief that management styles were universal (2005). He injected culture into the discussion, but his framework should be updated to comport with the cultural appraisal of technology.

Yet the sense that people seem more rushed and more deprived of leisure is relatively modern. Perhaps little more than a century old, the Western obsession with
punctuality came into its full flowering with the late 19th century railroad system and the massive amount of scheduling its timely functioning entailed. Exasperation at the rapid pace of steam engine society from contemporary observers strikes us now as distinctly quaint.

Much more recent, however, is the virtual network of the internet and the revolution in communications technology. Now our technological society is moving at much greater speeds in a cultural moment defined by wireless information sharing and instantaneous connectivity. The implications for new technology on communication are decidedly vast. We can study the ways our behaviors and habits are changing as well as how we continue to reshape our conceptualization of communication as technology continues its rapid evolution.

The question of why language is relevant to the discussion was answered by Gilles Fauconnier in his famous statement on methods. His summation of the Chomskyan view that dismisses the study of meaning is effective: “What is language for? The story here is that this question is not a priority for the scientist. We can worry later about function, communication, and meaning generally. And what is linguistics for? Well, there is the platonc reward of discovering structure for the sake of structure itself. And then there is biology: Since the universals are in the brain, they must also be in the genes; linguistics is theoretical biology; geneticists and neuroscientists will fill in the messy details of its implementation in our bodies” (Jansen and Redecker 1999).
Dell Hymes also noted the enthrallment of modern linguistics with “aspects of language as an abstract formal device” and not as a cultural tool (Hymes 1996). Hymes expressed the mandate that language should be “a part of life.” Time also needs to be understood in a culturally productive way. It would then aid with thinking through complex issues off how to allocate scarce temporal resources. All of this “time anxiety” is accentuated by the increasing speed of our technological society. The acceleration is experienced more in the virtual world of information sharing and instantaneous connectivity than in actual physical mobility. People may be traveling more extensively and often facilitating cultural exchanges of all kinds, but the real seismic shift in our time regime is on the level of networks. Of course, these networks require physical instantiation, and the revolution in hardware can hardly be overlooked. But the wireless revolution is what impacts our sense that the pace of life is quickening. Some people embrace this new pace and see it as liberating and perhaps even the next step in cultural evolution. Many others feel caught on an endless treadmill and overtaken by a deluge of information.

All revolutions in ideas depend on material conditions. So the proliferation of time-pieces that would come to characterize the early 20th century represents more than the prevalence of a symbolic token. To paraphrase the philosopher Raymond Tallis, the portability of the wristwatch compares favorably with that of the obelisk much less the pendulum clock. Insights into the nature of time have come through archaeologists, evolutionary biologists, geologists and astrophysicists. We know more about so-called
“deep time” or the temporal vista that extends deep into the primordial past. We are also coming to know considerably more about how humans perceive time.

Nevertheless, we are still “chronomyopic” in the sense of being greatly fixated on the sliver of time that constitutes the appearance of evolved human life on the world stage.

Thinking about time is something all people do with minimal effort and in a wide range of situations. Time enters the process of decision-making under many cultural variations and in an assortment of cognitive and environmental conditions. My special interest is that of temporal cognition and its relationship to strategic communication. Because I am interested in the instantiation of decision-making in language, and since language is fundamentally a social and cultural product, it can be said that my approach is interactional.

Time is important not just because it is a basic concept that we use to make sense of our surroundings and recruit to help form our judgments. Indeed, life must have been dramatically different for our pre-numerate ancestors. Part of being an organism means being governed to some extent by complex circadian rhythms, and creatures interacting with each other control and adjust the duration and frequency of these interactions (as much as they can relative to environmental constraints) based on patterns of approaching and withdrawing. The durative aspect entails reaction time whether in hunting, fleeing, or mating. The animal brain is therefore attuned to recognizing time constraints and
opportunities packaged into its instinct to survive. But much of the reactive potential of
the animal brain is predicated on immediacy. Biological time can take charge of “long
term” strategies, and it is very unclear as to how aware non-humans are regarding their
future goal-oriented “programming.” Still, at the very least it seems that primates engage
in limited cost-benefit analysis. But transcending the immediate

Humans have progressed to far greater levels of temporal granularity even though
they may rely on impoverished sensory input relative to other animals. We also possess a
unique dispensation to coordinate activities in time, especially those events of the-not-
yet-having-occurred-variety. The cognitive scaffolding for the mental activity of
scheduling is impressive. Many of our most prized cultural artifacts would be unheard of
without it. The relationship between language as a communicative tool and temporal
cognition is deeply entrenched in the human mind.

The cognitive capacity to not just order discrete events in sequential time, but to
project a series of possible events into a future time stream contingent on the existence of
certain factors and not others, as well as synchronizing them with other individuals
powered by their own set of motivations is second nature to us. But it represents a
pinnacle of our cognitive endowment and continues to energize our greatest cultural
achievements. As such, thinking about time and using language as a tool for measuring
time, expressing the condition of temporality, or musings on time as a supposed objective
reality is an extremely rich generator of meaning. We would expect no less from a
condition so very constitutive of our experience in the world.
I hypothesize that if time is increasingly construed in its commodity sense as a resource that needs to be farmed out with ever more deliberate care, then we should see the invasiveness of this construal in interaction rituals. The parallel condition of feeling rushed should infect our conversational sensibilities. The hypothesis relies on the commodity sense as being accentuated as a function of the attention economy. But its implications should be to some degree predictable in terms of how time is managed and mismanaged in strategic messaging.

If language is a cultural tool, it should not be surprising that it can be weaponized like any other implement. As such, language can be used to cause and perceive offense. It can be deployed as preemptive and reactionary measure. It can be an accelerant to social conflict, but also the glue of social bonding. It is an instrument of diplomatic doublespeak. In fact, ambiguity may be hardwired into language. Language is an immensely versatile and useful tool for conveying meaning and shared intention. But it is by no means a perfect one. Ambiguity can be seen as an imperfection or a strategic asset depending on situational context.

In sum, humans use language to injure perceived offenders and to defend against possible aggression. Whether preemptive or reactionary, language can be deployed in social conflict. At the same time, language is a much valued means of social bonding and de-escalating tensions. We use language to show human warmth and affection. Language
is the source of diplomatic double-speak, but also the means of negotiated settlements and conflict resolution.

The domains of civility and politeness have benefited from the scholarly attention of Erving Goffman. Goffman’s theory of interaction ritual and framing are bounded by temporality. This is so because individual identity is the fashioning of self-image through a process of memory-framing. Individual memories are strongly framed by time as an aspect of context. The formation of self is necessary for the individual generation of the psycho-social concept of face. Face, as Goffman defined it, was “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact’ where a ‘line’ is the interactants’ self and others’ evaluation.” (1967: 23) Goffman contended that all interaction is contingent on the principle of considerateness. Linguistic interaction is an aggregate of “traffic rules” for the proper functioning of society and the maintenance of civility. Participants who observe the precepts of civility, in turn, reinforce the institutions that ensure respectful communication. But any scheme of communication and its connection to the common good cannot ignore the role of language creativity.
Conclusion

The increasing importance of time in professional discourse can be linked to developments in technology, cultural-anthropological understanding, and the study of temporal cognition, particularly its linguistic dimension. The argument that I have been making is that style-selection and deployment of rhetoric will be ever more based on aligning strategies of persuasion with how decision-makers understand and relate to time. Rhetorical activity that exhibits greater sensitivity to aspects of temporality will be more successful and effective than that which operates with atemporal assumptions. The relevance of time as a factor in rhetoric has never been in dispute. The Greek concept of kairos emphasized the crucial nature of intervention at the opportune moment and in the appropriate measure (Baumlin and Sipiora 2002). Right-timing was part of the skill-set of an accomplished speaker. The broader phenomenon of time in which acts of kairos could be evaluated as to their effectiveness was known as chronos (Lanham 1991). But kairos underwent sustained neglect along with, ultimately, the practice of rhetoric as a vital constituent of the general cultivation of the intellect. The renewed interest in the role of temporality in strategic discourse accompanied modern approaches to rhetorical theory. Not only was kairos revived in the rhetorical lexicon, but it was linked to Llyod Bitzer’s influential concentration on the interplay of exigency and the situational aspects of rhetoric (1968). Since the so-called “rhetorical turn,” kairos, and by extension the presence of time as a factor in rhetoric, has never been far from the scholarly spotlight. The kairos-chronos temporal distinction has also been adapted for managerial theory, particularly in the work of Peter Drucker (1999: 44). So it might seem that there is not all
that much to write on the subject of temporality and strategic communication that has not already been written.

The situation appears to be quite different if we parse the two major research components that I elected to study, rhetoric and time. Rhetoric is ultimately concerned with using language to maximum persuasive effect. It is therefore fundamentally an exercise in decision-making. New scholarship in cognitive science, especially falling under the area of Behavioral Economics is largely focused on the mechanisms and underpinnings of this crucial activity. The central notion for us to consider is the interrelationship of rationality and environmental factors that impact its functionality. Temporal constraints comprise one of the more powerful variables that affect the exercise of so-called pure reason (Kahneman 1973). The related concept of bounded rationality or an understanding of reason that accommodates its limitations is more in synch with our discussion.

As for time, few subjects have received as much fresh scholarly attention. In fact, time is equally prominent in the domain of popular science. Theoretical physicist, Michio Kaku, hosted a recent multi-episode BBC documentary on aspects of time, ranging from phenomenology of time, and biological clocks to geological and cosmic time (“What is Time?” 2011). New frameworks for analyzing and making sense of time as a phenomenon represent some of the most innovative research coming out of cosmology and theoretical physics. Even more pertinent to my research are new theories of temporal perception, cognition, and experience issuing from neuroscience. For instance, one can
mention the work of David Eagelman “temporal binding,” the chronological counterpart to perceptual binding that tasks the brain with creating unified and coherent mental representations out of discrete, jumbling, and even contradictory sensory input (Brockman 2009). The neuroscientific claims about the operations and plasticity of “brain time” undergird the claims that I make concerning general aspects of temporality.

It is very interesting to reference this general set of mental phenomena against the more specific and variable cultural forms of how people understand and relate to time. From the bleeding edge perspective of research, it would appear that traditional rhetoric could be much enhanced by newer conceptions of decision-making, bounded-rationality, and temporal cognition. Language, of course, is interconnected with all three of these conceptions, as it is through the linguistic faculty that humans express their thoughts about time as well their utterances in time. Since, as I have argued, language is a cultural tool, cultural categories naturally invade temporal cognition just as thinking about and in time influences language production (Everett 2012).

So it must be asked, what does it mean to signal awareness of temporality in rhetorical interaction? And what makes the signaling distinct for our contemporary moment? The answer to these questions is what distinguishes my framework from previous treatments of time in persuasion. The contention that language is a primary signaling system is uncontroversional. Rhetorical activity does not require verbal instantiation, although much of it takes the form of words and is naturally linked to vocal and written expressivity. But temporal aspects of communication possess a decided non-
verbal component as Edward T. Hall noted. His designation of “chronemics” to this facet of communication never gained widespread currency perhaps because it covers so many different activity types that have rewarded specific and exclusive scholarly attention (1959). For instance, turn-taking in conversations (and the related behavior of conversationalists finishing off their partner’s utterances for them), assumptions about punctuality, queuing theory, task performance, and cultural variation in time perception can dramatically impact the interpretation of a given interaction.

I have therefore argued that new insights into the cognitive activities of decision-making and meaning-making, particularly as they are expressed through the cultural windowing mechanism of language, provide us with a profile of temporal cognition that was not accessible to the classical rhetorical tradition or its modern inheritors. But new frameworks with their attendant methodologies are only part of the story. The other factor that establishes temporality as a preeminent rhetorical concern is technology. The revolution in communication platforms, both mobile and wireless, has engendered a culture of instantaneous information-sharing. The radical impact of the digital moment has, as we have seen, altered the physical and temporal conditions of work. Sacred cultural artifacts such as the schedule are evolving with the new technology. New universalizing standards are being disseminated through the globalization of cloud-based products.

Just as importantly, the superabundance of information on the internet leads to a climate of proliferating options for the decision-maker. In the attention economy that
dominates online commerce, the categories of style and substance are blurred (Lanham 2006). Securing the attention of the consumer is more than a desideratum; it is a vital strategy for competing in a crowded and clickable marketplace. Style is linked to time in that it represents a repetition of certain forms conventionalized into a recognizable, identifiable, and relatable pattern (Lanham 2006: 54). In other words, style in visual design or in prose provides immediacy, can exert attractive force, and is therefore a time-economizer (it streamlines decision-making once we have a database of preferred tastes) and a temporal-magnet (it captivates consumer attention and makes them invest their time).

The economics of attention, as rhetorician Richard Lanham coins the new information processing and evaluative dynamic, is based on the metaphor of time as a quasi-monetary resource. Without this operative metaphoric network (most famously associated with Benjamin Franklin’s sober admonition on proper work ethic), style would still exert its attentional pull. Even early Iron Age cultures displayed astonishing stylistic sophistication. For instance, the Parzyryk mummies of the Altai Mountains were discovered with preserved stylized tattoos demonstrating that body art conferred social prestige (Mair 2012). Stylization was therefore present in indirect economic form, but not alongside the metaphoric commodification of time as pervasive in the sense that defines the contemporary attention economy.

As I mentioned, awareness of temporality is especially germane to rhetorical situations. Attempts at persuasion that recognize and validate temporal commitments,
investments, and constraints of the decision-maker will not by themselves guarantee success. The atemporal alternative will be progressively received as alienating. To ignore temporal valuations will evoke automatic rejection in the same way that any number of social violations that are deemed offensive function as effective deal-breakers. Wasting time is a sin in a social order that sacralizes the schedule and its goals of regularity, productivity, and smooth functionality. It would then be accurate to rank time wastage next to plagiarism as two of the gravest offenses of the knowledge worker in the internet age of information superabundance. More options are a product of searchability and an ever wider interweb. In turn, this demands a more evolved responsibility for locating and choosing whatever product or service is optimally compatible with individual preferences - no matter how esoteric. As a consequence, the failure to capitalize on the digital wealth at one’s fingertips represents a grievous mismanagement of time. In fact, even if one chooses sagely, the opportunity cost is still staggering because a proliferation of like options will go untapped as there is simply not enough time to keep pace with the near infinite possibilities of deploying our resources. This is the curse of leisure time in the information age (Perlow 2012). The difference in the rhetorical scenario is that wasted time is imposed from without. The decision-maker is compelled to endure his time being wasted, which is taking an already egregious condition and exacerbating it.

So why would anyone in their right mind resist temporalizing their professional and consequential interactions? I have argued that lack of temporal awareness is not simply a choice, or even the byproduct of an under-developed perspective. The claim that
the insights from cognition, culture and linguistic interaction can all be derived in rough form from everyday experience is one that I have endorsed (Goffman 1959). Indeed, many cultural stereotypes are grounded in stock generalizations of time management (Levine 1997). The trains run on time in some cultures, but expect delays in others. At the same time, strong folk intuitions impel us to conceive of time as monolithic and therefore commonly experienced (Libet 2004). If I impute my concept of temporal cognition to my audience based on the intuition that time is an absolute thing that everyone experiences in the same way, then I could easily rationalize ignoring temporality in strategic communication.

The absolutive understanding of time is a cosmological preoccupation. However, the transmission of the concept of “absolute time” to “homogeneous experience of time” falls under the cognitive mandate. It could even be argued that the second, no matter its artificiality as result of unconscious and automatic binding mechanisms, makes the first easier and more palatable to postulate in the abstract and as a dimension of reality. In any case, the point is that humans tend to think that other humans (schizophrenics being an exception) experience time in the same way. This imputation is part of the general theory of mind that enables intention recognition and powers human interaction (Levinson 2006: 90). But it is also somewhat accurate to the extent that most humans do indeed perceive time in the same way as uniform, universal, and uni-directional.

Just as importantly, I have shown that equally compelling intuitions about language and interaction contribute to an undervaluation of time in discourse. The three
concepts that are most complicit in atemporal rhetoric are truth, rationality, and cooperation (Thomas and Turner 1996; Grice 1975). Major theories of what constitute the most basic grounds of linguistic interaction and which rules are indispensable to conversational success as an inference-processing activity make use of these three principles. The assumption that rationality begets charity in interaction, and therefore we are more or less duty bound to invest in the intensive cognitive labor of decoding intentions in a cooperative drive toward arriving at truthfulness is part of the Gricean paradigm (Sperber and Wilson 1995). At the same time, Grice was not presenting a utopian program. He was certainly aware that effective normal communication conforms to the maxim of quantity and manner. As result, speakers do not veer into over-informativeness and verbiage unless they have a reason to do so. Still, the violation of maxims is not necessarily conducted skillfully.

My argument is that a monochromatic commitment to truthful exposition can easily contaminate time-constrained rhetorical scenarios. In situations in which decision-makers need to decide on endorsing or rejecting proposals, exhaustive fact-based treatments can prove counter-productive. This negative effect is not produced by exceeding presentation limits. The abuse of time is felt even within the agreed upon temporal parameters of the interaction. The cause for this sense of outrage can be discerned in confusion over who is entitled to effectively claim “ownership” over shared time. In a world in which decision-makers are more likely than not to be multi-tasking on a mobile platform, the noblesse oblige of granting the presenter the sense that their autonomy in selecting the rhetorical strategy of their choice and consuming allocated
presentation time in whatever way they see fit does not extend to being the ultimate arbiter of time. For the decision-maker, the presenter is obligated to use an economy of means to make his most salient point. Salience can be measured by the level of informativeness imparted such that the decision-maker can make an effective decision (Oakley: 126).

The decision-maker operates with the time-saving heuristic of applying principles that balance effective and efficient judgments (Kahneman, Krueger et al. 2006). He may also be employing any number of processing shortcuts known as cognitive biases on an unconscious level in order to optimize decision-making while, at least in his own self-assessment, not fatally jeopardizing accuracy (Kahneman 2011). From the heuristical perspective of economizing on time, the atemporal, empirical, and fact-based style that is the default norm in many technical domains is tone deaf to workplace realities.

While I first provided a comprehensive model of a generic time-constrained consequential rhetorical scenario, the next step was to import cultural variation into the discussion. I had three methodological goals in mind by focusing on cultural case studies. I wanted to demonstrate the determinative influence of language as codified in the hypothesis of linguistic relativism (otherwise known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis) (Casasanto 2008). I hoped to show that temporal concepts could differ widely across cultures even in the same broad language field, but that differences could still be detected in the lexicon (Levine 1997). Finally, I contended that interactional frameworks could reflect the same cultural variation, and entail temporal consequences. All three goals
were, I argued, linked to the technological phenomenon of globalization of communicative norms through access to cloud-based software and services. I also regarded the latter two chapters as correctives against the surprisingly entrenched assumption that temporal perception is reliably consistent and immune to enculturation.

The Whorfian thread of my argument is that languages encode culturally variable perceptual categories. I reviewed the growing body of work that identifies metaphoric spatialization of time across languages. Striking contrast in temporal construals can be glimpsed even on the level of the symbolic effect of the particular writing system. The verticality of Chinese, for instance, influences the perception of time for Chinese speakers as moving along an up-down directional axis (Boroditsky, Fuhrman et al. 2011). The neo-Whorfian research by a coterie of accomplished young scholars such as Lera Boroditsky is characterized by experimental ingenuity and confirmable results, backing up field observations that are decades old (Deutscher 2010). The same culture-based linguistic discrepancy can be found in languages privileging spatial metaphors of ego-based time perception or absolutive time. In the latter the subject can be pictured as jetsam carried along in a directional current (Evans 2006). The point is more than academic if we stipulate that metaphors consist of large networks of semantic associations. Such being the case, it could be reasonably assumed that obligating speakers of a given language toward a specific metaphoric structure would then activate a predictable inventory of related meanings. From a rhetorical standpoint, the ability to identify these activation chains would be advantageous. I then assessed a path-breaking working paper on neo-Whorfian Behavioral Economics that claimed language choice
biased decision-making in the field of future oriented and prudential thinking (Chen: 2012). Bias in decision-making was also reported in a recent paper on second language learning to the effect that speakers are more deliberate and careful in weighing options when they use their non-mother tongue (Keysar, Hayakawa, and Gyu 2012). The counterintuitive conclusion cuts against the notion that proficiency automatically implies competency. But the guiding assumption is that the greater processing recruited to speak the second language involves slower thinking which in turn engenders greater accuracy.

The cultural case studies I settled on possess a surface appearance of arbitrariness. The investigation into the singular Indian English verb, “to prepone” represents an entry-point into the workings of a global language with indigenous inflections that are arguably far reaching for the understanding of scheduling terms (Kachru, Kachru, and Sridhar 2008). The prediction that globalized English will uptake regionalisms that fill a semantic “need” in the lexicon (even one as rich in meaning as English) does not require seer-like abilities. In fact, the conditions for lexical enhancement would seem to be completely satisfied by prepone: The new lexeme should be natural, elegant, and economical. Of course, English is not policed by a governing body so no regulatory criteria actually exist (Ostler 2010). What makes a word compelling may well be overwhelmingly a matter of context. But prepone is undeniably natural in its Latinate antonymic structure. Its elegance and economy go without much pause if we consider the ambiguous alternatives in the form of clunky particle verbs such as “move forward.” So a cautious expectation that prepone will soon enter the standard global lexicon of scheduling terms does not
seem unwarranted.

In terms of temporal cognition, I noted that prepone might present us with a distinctly Indian construal of the ego-metaphor of time. It first needed to be noted that even though Indian English is still very a product of its stilted bureaucratic origins such that a collocation like prepone might plausibly issue from its semantic repository, the lexeme itself is not attested to in the Raj or in British English of the period (Kachru 1983). It is also not found in the Hobson-Jobson imaginary of words spoken by Anglos in the preceding era of East India Company rule (Sedlatschek 2009). The gist of my argument is that deploying the language of rescheduling invokes some complex conceptualizing. We mentally generate and visualize an event in a temporal field, the latter resembling for English speakers an arrow of time extending from the past into the future. The event that we mentally create is symbolically likened to an entity or created thing. the event Moving along the timeline is unproblematic if we are disambiguating it into the future. While the event is metaphorized as a created entity it obviously does not possess self-autonomy. The mind is the all-powerful Mover, and if an event needs postponing, we simply mentally pluck it from its current coordinates and set it down at some further point on the timeline representing futurity. But to retract a created event to before the moment of its creation on the virtual timeline as preponing implies presents the mind with a conceptual contradiction: An uncreated thing by definition does not exist!

Such a contradiction does not inhibit action, and we prepone meetings as naturally as we postpone them. In many Indian philosophical systems, however, the concept of a
previous stage of existence from the present one in the doctrines of karma and samsara (transmigration) is fairly second nature (Doniger 2009). So no cognitive dissonance would arise from placing (as the Latin root “ponere” actually means) an event prior to the original moment of its inception on the virtual timeline. Indeed, I argued that we need to be careful about dismissing indigenous neologisms as random regional errors and anomalies. The notion that a lexicon is a window into a culture’s conceptual universe is quite venerable (Everett 2012). Neither claim, however, is prohibitory regarding its uptake and dissemination in culturally foreign lexical soils. We often use dead metaphors and transplant new words into languages without taking the full measure of their conceptual richness. The case could be made that this type of borrowing, in English at least, is being sped up by the globalizing reach of the internet.

In the same way, I then went on to analyze the dynamics of interaction from a cultural-temporal perspective. The case of Israeli dugriyut recommended itself for analysis as it represents an exaggerated speech style of confrontational truth telling linked to a clearly defined social movement, the Israeli sabras and their kibbutzim (Katriel 2004). These utopian agrarian communes always comprised a minority of the citizenry well before the new drive toward urban high technology living escalated in the mid-1980s. But in the early years of the state, their social prestige was the highest and the halutzim or pioneers who farmed the land were Zionist heroes. Their modes of interaction were venerated and imitated (Kimmerling 2001). The emphasis on direct interaction and their eschewal of conventionalized politeness effects were not unique in the constellation of socialist experimentation at the time (Blum 2007). Still, dugri speech survives today in
more than vestigial fashion, although the ethos of the kibbutznik has atrophied. As I mentioned, the underlying question remains relevant: Does direct interaction measurably economize on time? If so, it might then be concluded that the dugri style might be more compatible with growing sensitivity to temporality that marks the emerging homogenization of communicative standards of professional communication in the globalized digital age. Further analysis proved a bit inconclusive in that politeness effects even when voided of sincerity are often deployed as “security measures” to avoid future cost-depletive intensive relational repair work (Brown and Levinson 1987). So even though indirection takes longer in the short term it functions as a long term investment, although not one that can be universally guaranteed.

Dugri, on the other hand, is very useful in the short term for cutting through false appearances, cynical ploys, and insincerity effects. It can also reduce the social burden of power discrepancies. But it implies deep relational commitment and long term interaction if a social outrage is indeed committed. I then speculated that in the social media age, such a model might actually be workable. Social media is designed for extended interactions, but without the immediacy or confrontational aspects (C. Davidson 2012). Much online interaction is quite immediate and devastatingly confrontational. Still, disputants can just as easily defer resolving their conflicts as well as ignore them. From a rhetorical point of view, dugri is animated by a principle of vital temporal importance. Namely, it is crucial for relational success to urgently communicate what matters most. In the case of temporally-informed strategic communication, we are not talking about the health of the relationship nor what matters most in the heart of the presenter. Instead, the
imperative is that of communicating what is optimally relevant to the decision-maker. Nevertheless, the contention that politeness is ultimately time-saving because it is face-saving is attractive (Goffman 1981). The cost comes in the form of insincerity, and the internet’s dubious metastasizing of this social epidemic is its own discussion (Sunstein 2011).

In conclusion, the anti-rhetorical posture that truth is its own best advocate can be strategically perilous if deployed without temporal awareness. Being sensitive to time in high stakes rhetoric hardly means conforming to mere presentation limits. It means understanding that decision-makers relate to time in very specific ways. They are conditioned to view temporal expenditures as they would monetary ones. Studies have confirmed that this represents a distinct form of cognitive entrainment. Rhetoric that cannot adjust to new developments in cognitive science, linguistic analysis, and cross-cultural analysis will find itself dispensable. Considering that rhetoric already was tossed from its high perch in the trivia once, it would be an avoidable tragedy were it to happen again. In this scenario, rhetoric would not be dismissed as mere posturing and as, in its more disreputable sophistic aspect, an obscurant of truth, but would instead be retired as irrelevant. There is nothing contrary to the cultivation of the intellect in learning a rhetoric that concentrates on how time is conceptualized and valued. In fact, if we concentrate on the style component of rhetoric we see that it is highly relevant to the contemporary conditions of consequential decision-making. As I mentioned, style is ultimately concerned with recognizable patterns. It is time-economization in visual or
audible form. Being skilled in adapting individual style to the temporal constraints and cultural contexts of one’s decision-maker is the future of rhetoric.
References


