SUMMARY

The Fact: A Semantic Study

The author focuses on answering the question of what, from a linguistic viewpoint, is the fact. The many philosophical works on this issue chiefly belong to ontology, metaphysics, and epistemology. Year after year, the philosophers' discussion on the nature of facts becomes increasingly animated and multithreaded. This state of affairs is reflected, among other things, in the rapid growth of the literature on the subject. This book deals with selected threads of philosophical polemics concerning the fact that are also relevant from a linguistic point of view.

Linguists are interested in facts from a perspective that is quite different from that of philosophers. Various intra- and extralinguistic factors prompt them to try to solve this problem.

First, lexical units containing the word *fact* are highly frequent in different contexts, which is true for Polish and other languages. This in itself is thought-provoking.

Second, the concept of *fact* is associated with several other cognitive categories representing keystones for philosophy and linguistics, especially existence, doing something, truth, and knowledge. The notion also brings to mind meanings of nouns such as *state* (*of affairs*), *situation*, *circumstance*, or *event*, and verbs or verbal phrases such as (*something*) *happened*, *took place*, *was going on*, *occurred*, etc. Philosophers contrast facts with theories and values and, from another perspective, with simple or complex objects. From a linguistic point of view, it is obvious that none of the abovementioned notions can be grasped and properly specified without perceiving their correlations with the others.

Thirdly, factuality is contrasted with phenomena like illusion, delusion, superstition, stereotype, myth, or fiction, on the one hand, and opinion, judgment, evaluation, or hypothesis, on the other. All of them point to vast research areas, forcing us to constantly confront the keystones of the real world that are facts and the knowledge about them.

Fourthly, there are expressions in the natural language that imply the occurrence of a state of affairs, e.g. *realize that _, notice that_,* and others that do not have this property, e.g. *presume that_, hope that_.* The former are called "factual", and the latter are "nonfactual". The literature also distinguishes the category of counterfactuals that imply the negation of the state of affairs, e.g. *fool oneself that_.* In Slavic languages, verbs are used in imperfective and perfective aspectual forms, which is directly connected with the issue of events and, consequently, also facts.

Fifthly, people need to rely on facts to speak about reality truthfully. Sticking to the facts, and being faithful to them is an attitude appreciated and desirable as, if not more, highly as values such as knowledge and truth. This is especially important, even urgent, in an era of post-truth created by the media, in a space where dominated by fake news, i.e. false or semi-true information sold as facts and then living its own fictional life.

Theses presented here are based on rich empirical material excerpted from the National Corpus of Polish or construed for diagnostic purposes. A thorough analysis of positive and negative examples, inconsistent with the code of modern Polish, leads to the reconstruction of concepts hidden behind the basic Polish units involving expressions containing *fact*, namely: *fakt* 'fact', [coś] *jest faktem* '[something] is a fact' and *jest faktem, że_* 'it is a fact that_'.

The workflow is as follows.

The first chapter presents, in a critical and sometimes polemical way, the views of selected philosophers and philosophically oriented linguists regarding the fact, especially in its connection with knowledge or opinion. The focus here is on the realist tradition, which treats facts as mind-independent components of the world and is associated primarily with the achievements of thinkers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and John L. Austin. The dispute between realists and philosophers who situate facts in language and identify them with true propositions is presented in general outlines. This chiefly concerns Peter Strawson and his successors, whose ideas may seem attractive to linguists but will be questioned here. A special place in the review of selected literature on the subject is given to a polemic with the Russian researcher Nina Arutiunowa, a response to Jerzy Szymura's position, as well as a discussion with the theses of a paper by Izabela Duraj-Nowosielska. In the final part of the chapter, the image of the fact emerging from the basic dictionaries of Polish is outlined.

The second chapter has a strictly linguistic character. Based on lexicons and electronic resources of the Polish language, especially on the material contained in the National Corpus of the Polish Language (NKJP), the author examines the collocations of *fakt* 'fact', to prepare a catalog of the most important contexts of its use and, as a result, isolate the key units in which the studied form occurs.

The third chapter concentrates on a few such units, namely: [coś] *jest faktem* '[something] is a fact', *jest faktem, że_* 'it is a fact that_' and their nominalization: *fakt* '[it's a] fact'. I am interested in their semantic properties, the analysis of which should lead to offering representations of meaning. In this part, I confront my observations and hypotheses with analogous proposals we encounter in selected dictionaries referred to in the first chapter. The content of the relevant units is confronted in this section with similar, albeit not identical, meanings of other expressions. The subject matter are primarily the verbal phrases *coś się* [komuś] *stało, zdarzyło, wydarzyło* 'something happened [to someone]', *coś miało / ma miejsce* 'something took / takes place', *coś zachodzi* 'something is going on', but also nouns such as *zdarzenie, wydarzenie* 'event, happening, occurrence', *incydent* 'incident', *stan rzeczy* 'state of affairs', *sytuacja* 'situation', *okoliczność* 'circumstance'. In this chapter, the main emphasis is, on the one hand, on showing differences between phrases *jest faktem, że_* 'it is a fact that_' and *jest prawdą, że_* 'it is true that_', and, on the other hand, on revealing properties common to the first of these expressions and the word *wiedzieć, że_* 'know that_'. It is important because eventually I shall eventually be reducing the notion of fact to the relevant portion of knowledge. The semantic representation of the expression *jest faktem, że_* 'it is a fact that_' has the following form: <'p' such that someone knows that p>.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the analysis of the syntax and semantics of units derived from the word *fakt* 'fact', namely the adjective *faktyczny* 'factual' and the adverbial *faktycznie* 'in fact' as well as the nouns *faktyczność* 'factuality', *faktor* 'factor', *faktografia* 'factography', and their further derivatives: *faktograficzny* 'factographic', *factograficznie* 'factographically'. This exploration captures the meanings of the analyzed words and confirms the main hypotheses regarding the essence of factuality. I assert that the units *faktyczny* 'factual' and notably *faktycznie* 'in fact' belong to the meta-level of the language. They share

certain properties with the expressions *fakt* '[it's a] fact', [coś] *jest faktem* 'something is a fact', *jest faktem, że_* 'it is a fact that_', but at the same time, due to the negation included in their meanings, reveal a discursive character. The word *faktyczny* 'factual' has been juxtaposed with adjectives having similar but not identical content, such as *prawdziwy* 'true', *rzeczywisty* 'actual, real' or *autentyczny* 'authentic, genuine'. As for the noun *faktor* 'factor', both in its historical, personal use, and contemporary, abstract meaning, it retains an actional significance since it refers to doing something by someone and with someone. From an etymological point of view, *fact* is a continuation of the Latin perfect passive participle *factum* with the meaning 'done', formed from the verb *facio*, *facere* 'to do'. On the other hand, *faktografia*, *faktograficzny*, *faktograficznie* make us realize that facts are one thing while talking about them and describing them is another.

The fifth chapter focuses on linguistic facts as they were captured in the writings of Ferdinand de Saussure. This part of the study presents facts about natural language compared to linguistic constructs and abstractions, i.e. artifacts. Natural language is an important component of reality, therefore distinguishing what is real in this human institution from what belongs to different artificial creations and abstractions related to it should be recognized as extremely important not only for linguists but also for all speakers. Linguistics, in turn, is one of the scientific disciplines. Therefore, in the introduction to this part of my work, I recall a more general discussion on the relationship between facts and scientific facts.

Chapter 6 provides an overview of turns of phrases used to convey speaking about facts in Polish. The main part of these expressions are verbs that collocate, among other elements, or in some cases primarily, with the noun *fact*. Linguistic data considered in this part of the study were divided into referring to a) the faithful reproduction of reality, b) the betrayal of facts, and c) different operations connected with the analysis of facts. Selected verbal phrases were provided with richer comments, others have only been mentioned. All remarks were aimed at offering additional arguments in favor of the thesis proclaiming the independence of facts from speaking of them.

The study ends with a short recapitulation including conclusions from the analyses presented earlier.