# On temporal deixis and cognitive models in early Indo-European

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Crosslinguistic evidence suggest that there are two different (often coexistent) basic cognitive models for time, on the basis of which the world's languages express time in terms of conceptual metaphor from the source spatial domain to the target temporal domain: i) the Time-based (Time-Reference-Point) model, in which time is conceptualized in terms of sequentially arrayed objects moving in space, so that a temporal event is relative to another earlier or later temporal event; ii) the Ego-based (Ego-Reference-Point) model, which is considered to have a more complex structure in which times are conceptualized as objects relative to a canonical deictic observer (Ego) located at the *hic et nunc* time of speech. The world's languages generally share the same spatial metaphor which locates future events in front of Ego and past events behind Ego. However, this kind of metaphorical mapping turns out to be inverted in Aymara, an Amerindian language, whose speakers use a deictic Ego-RP model locating the future behind the Ego, whereas the past is in front of him/her (Núñez & Sweetser 2006). Such a conceptualization is considered as an exception that challenges the cross-cultural universals of metaphoric cognition. This unusual construal of time has been described as an Ego-RP mapping in which the universal metaphor KNOWLEDGE IS VISION conditions the origin of a static pattern, so that what is known and visible (the past) is in front, whereas what is unknown and invisible (the future) is in back of Ego.

If one takes a historical perspective, it can however be observed that the Aymara construal of time is not an exceptional case. By means of a textual analysis, I will argue that in ancient Indo-European languages, e.g. Hittite, Vedic Sanskrit, Latin, an Ego-RP model is used in which the future is located behind a deictic ego-observer. While it has been widely recognized that Indo-European languages construed earlier (and past) events as in front of later ones, as predicted in a Time-RP mapping, it is less clear how in the same languages the passage took place from an 'archaic' Time-RP model (Dunkel 1983), in which future events are behind, i.e. follow the past ones in a temporal sequence, to a 'post-archaic' Ego-RP model, in which the future is located in front of a deictic observer. Interestingly, data from Homeric Greek (*Iliad* I, 70), also supported by Old Avestan data (*Yasna* 31.14), show the traces of a metaphorical mapping of space onto time in which a non-deictic experiencer is inserted in a Time-RP model with an *in-tandem alignment*, according to a pattern which is attested also in non-Indo-European languages, like West African Hausa and Djerma (Hill, 1978: 528). In such a pattern (Complex Temporal Sequence) the observer imposes his/her orientation to entities in the scene (which otherwise lack an inherent front/back axis alignment), without coinciding yet with the 'here and now' deixis of the speech time (Evans 2003: 233). Later (future) events are thus conceptualized as being ahead/in front/before earlier (present) events of the same sequence.

**References**

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