



6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Intercultural Pragmatics and  
Communication

University of Malta Valletta Campus, 30 May – 1 June 2014



Plenary talk abstract

**TOMORROW IT'LL RAIN (OR NOT): NOTES ON ASSERTION, PREDICTION AND TRUTH**

KEPA KORTA, ILCLI & UNIVERSITY OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY (UPV-EHU)

*"Prediction is very difficult, especially about the future."*

Niels Bohr (1885 - 1962)

John MacFarlane, in his celebrated 'Future contingents and relative truth' (2003), revisited Aristotle's discussion about future contingents, truth, time and propositional content to argue for doubly relativized propositions, i.e. propositions whose truth is relative to their context of utterance as well as to their context of assessment. Without discussing other merits of MacFarlane's relativism, I will show, first, how his argument about future contingents loses much of its appeal when it is assessed via the speech act-theoretic notions of propositional content and direction of fit. And second, I will sketch an account of predictions (utterances of declarative sentences about future contingents) that makes justice to the two sorts of intuitions that motivated MacFarlane's discussion:

- (a) the determinacy intuition, according to which a prediction has a definite truth-value, as it may share its propositional content with assertions about the present or the past;
- (b) the indeterminacy intuition, according to which a prediction does not have a definite truth-value, given that the future is indeterminate or open.

Unlike MacFarlane's, my account does not require to give up truth-conditionally complete (non-relative) propositional contents, but it will tell assertions and predictions apart as speech acts with different direction of fit and, hence, different propositional content conditions. It turns out that, at the time of utterance, predictions lack *referential* truth-conditions and only have what I call *utterance-bound* truth-conditions. To conclude, I will discuss the impossibility of expressing singular thoughts about future (contingent) entities.