

Do antipassive constructions exist in Polish?

Antipassive, considered as a derived intransitive construction in which the patient-like argument loses his status of a nuclear argument, constitutes a main topic in the syntactic description of ergative languages (Comrie (1978), Dixon (1979), Foley and Van Valin (1984) Givón (1984, 2001)). The purpose of this paper is to question a traditional claim based on Silverstein assumption (1976), according to which the antipassive phenomenon is strictly reserved for languages of ergative alignment and is not found in the accusative ones. The present study investigates Polish, an accusative language. So far, the question of antipassive in Polish has not been investigated much, apart from a few attempts (Kański 1984, Kubiński 1987, Geniusiene 1987). To show that the antipassive is indeed attested in Polish, I, first, analyse the morphosyntactic properties of the antipassive construction, and, then, determine the semantic and pragmatic conditions which the predicate and its nuclear arguments must fulfil to occur in antipassive.

In this talk, I will present the preliminary corpus-based results concerning clauses with finite verbs and 3rd person arguments. The example in (1b) illustrates an intransitive construction derived from the corresponding transitive one in (1a), which is claimed here to represent the antipassive in Polish:

- (1) a. Chłopiec pcha dzieci. (Pl)
Boy.NOM push.3p.s children.ACC.3p.pl
'The boy pushes the children'
- b. Chłopiec pcha się.
Boy.NOM push.3p.s RM¹
Lit. 'The boy pushes himself'
'The boy pushes the children'

The study of the data provides evidence that Polish possesses a construction with the same valence reduction as the antipassive of ergative languages. All examined constructions present strong homogeneity in terms of their syntactic and semantic behaviour. A patient-like argument is suppressed but still semantically present, whereas the agent-like argument keeps all the syntactic and semantic properties it has in the transitive construction. Furthermore, all derived verbs in antipassive constructions are morphologically marked by the grammatical element *się*. It is also significant that all Polish antipassive constructions impose semantic restrictions on the nuclear arguments involved in the transitive constructions. Both, the implied patient-like argument, which is always of minimal semantic specificity as well as the agent-like argument, must be human.

The possibility to use verbs in the antipassive constructions depends on their semantic type. On the basis of the lexical aspectual classification proposed by Vendler (1957), we observe that mostly telic verbs like *pchać* 'push', *bić* 'bite', *kopać* 'kick' intervene in antipassive constructions.

¹ *RM* stands for reflexive marker

REFERENCES

- COMRIE, B. 1978. "Ergativity". In LEHMANN Winferd. P. (ed.) *Syntax Typology*. Austin: University of Texas Press. p. 137-172.
- DIXON, R. M. W. 1979. "Ergativity". *Language* 55: 59-138.
- FOLEY, W. A. and R. D. VAN VALIN. 1984. *Functional syntax and universal grammar*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- GENIUŠIENĖ, E. 1987. *The Typology of Reflexives*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- GIVON, T. 1979. *On Understanding Grammar*. New York: Academic Press.
- GIVON, T. 2001. *Syntax*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- HOPPER, P. and S. A. THOMPSON. 1980. "Transitivity in grammar and discourse". *Language* 56:251-299.
- KANSKI, Z. 1984. Arbitrary reference and reflexivity: a generative study of the Polish pronoun się and its English equivalents. Katowice: University of Silesia dissertation.
- KUBIŃSKI, W. 1982. Polish się Constructions and Their English Counterparts. *Papers and Studies in Contrastive Linguistics*. Volume 15, p. 55-65.
- KUBIŃSKI, W. 1987. Reflexivisation in English and Polish : an Arc Pair Grammar Analysis. *Linguistische Arbeiten*, Volume 179. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- LAZARD, G. "Transitivity and markedness: the antipassive in accusative languages". In TOMIC Olga Mišeska (ed.) *Markedness in synchrony and typology*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. p. 309-331.
- LEVIN, B. and M. RAPPAPORT HOVAV. 2005. *Argument Realisation*, Research Surveys in Linguistics Series. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- SHIBATANI, M. 1988. *Passive and Voice*, TSL 16. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- SIEWIERSKA, A. 1988. The passive in Slavic. In SHIBATANI Masayoshi. (ed.) *Passive and Voice*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. p. 243-290.
- SILVERSTEIN, M. 1976. "Hierarchy of features and ergativity". In DIXON Robert. M. W. (ed.) *Grammatical Categories in Australian Languages*. New Jersey: Humanities Press. p. 112-171.
- VENDLER, Z. 1957. "Verbs and Times". *Philosophical Review* 56: 143-160.