

## **Using sociolinguistic data to resolve morphosyntactic debate: the case of Person/Number markers in Polish.**

This paper looks at the feature of Polish that has long been a hotly debated topic in theoretical syntax literature, namely the Person/Number (PN) marking in Polish. Using both production and evaluation data from two speech communities in Poland – one urban, the other rural – I show that PN markers have been effectively reanalyzed by speakers of Polish as ‘mobile inflections’, and that the data support the kind of non-lexicalist treatment laid out by Embick (1995).

Polish PN markers exhibit ‘schizophrenic’ (Franks & Banski 1999) behavior that – when coached in a lexicalist framework – is partly syntactic and partly morphological (inflectional). They are syntactic historically (P/N marking comes from a reduced auxiliary (Andersen 1987)) and because of their mobility (Franks 1998). Examples (1a) & (2a) show PN marking appearing in its canonical position on a verb, while examples (b) – (c) illustrate that PN marking can also move to virtually any preverbal constituent. Further, Franks (1998) claims PN marking can be omitted in certain coordination constructions, see (3), which also indicates their syntactic status. On the other hand, inflectional properties of PN marking have been observed: several word-level phonology processes (u-raising, yer lowering) are sensitive to the presence of PN markers (Booij & Rubach 1987). According to this approach, stress variation in plural forms which has been used to highlight the difference between singular (penultimate = visible to stress assignment = inflectional) and plural (ante- or penultimate = invisible to stress rules = sometimes syntactic) forms is treated as a register effect. Three types of analyses have been put forward in the theoretical literature: (i) PN markers are clitics, but with a twist: it is an immobile perfect auxiliary that the verb incorporates into, and any observed mobility is a result of cliticization at PF (Borsley & Rivero 1994); (ii) syntactic and inflectional aspects of PN marking cannot be reconciled in one analysis; instead, there are two synchronically competing analyses, one inflectional, the other syntactic (Franks 1998); (iii) PN markers are always mobile inflections on the auxiliary stem, and their syntactic status is an illusion that appears when they are on a phonologically null stem (Embick 1995).

The data presented here come from extended sociolinguistic interviews in speech communities and from a large evaluation survey consisting of a matched-guise test (controlled variables: stress placement, PN mobility) and a large number of single-sentence and pairwise grammaticality judgments. Methodological shortcomings of such a survey notwithstanding, the data support Embick’s analysis. In particular, the stress alternation shows robust class/register and stylistic effects (in both production and evaluation) and operates well above the level of consciousness. Further, coordination structures on which syntactic analysis of PN marking relies are missing from the data and evaluated as ungrammatical by the majority of subjects. Finally, PN mobility is essentially residual in the data, and restricted to a few positions.

I argued that of the many competing analyses of Polish PN marking one fares much better when tested against carefully collected sociolinguistic data. Also, this paper makes a point that sociolinguists can contribute to a better understanding of complex linguistic phenomena dealt with by syntacticians.

### Examples and (selected) references

- (1a) Kiedy to kupili-**ście**?  
when this-ACC buy.PST.MASC.2PL  
'When did you buy this?'
- (1b) Kiedy-**ście** to kupili-Ø?
- (1c) Kiedy to-**ście** kupili-Ø?
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- (2a) My byli-**śmy** zmęczeni.  
we be-PST.MASC.1PL tired  
'We were tired'
- (2b) My-**śmy** byli-Ø zmęczeni.
- (2c) Zmęczeni-**śmy** byli-Ø.
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- (3) W kawiarni jedliśmy lody i pili- Ø kawę.  
In cafe eat-PST.MASC.1PL ice-cream and drink-PST.MASC.1PL coffee

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