

ON SOME REFERENTIAL EXPRESSIONS IN ENGLISH AND POLISH

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1. The inscrutability of reference has always attracted philosophers and linguists. An indispensable concept to most theories of meaning, reference still could not escape the danger of being rejected by, for example, Davidson's (1980) absolute theory of truth. Moreover, it has hardly ever been given a uniform definition.

The aim of the present paper is to elucidate the problem in question by examining the characteristics of what Thrane (1980) labelled referential expressions.¹ On the basis of some data from English and Polish it will be demonstrated that reference is not only an utterance-dependent notion (cf. Lyons 1977 : 180) but also it is conditioned by such variables as the speaker's attitude to the referent of the expression and the idiomatic vs. literal meanings of words. Finally, the data will reveal how the grammars of the two languages analysed handle the above-mentioned factors.

2. If reference is to be taken as an utterance-dependent notion, then it is the speaker who refers to an individual (i.e. the referent) by means of the referring expression.² However, as Lyons himself admits (1977:177):

"It is terminologically convenient to be able to say that an expression refers to its referent (when the expression is used on some particular occasion and satisfies the relevant conditions)"

¹ Thrane (1980:40) makes an important distinction between referential and referring expressions: "Although 'referring expression' has a certain standing as a technical term in (philosophical) treatments of reference, it usually carries the implication (—) that there is a referent for any referring expression (—)... an expression is a referential expression solely by virtue of its form".

² For the distinction of referential expression and referring expression, cf. ft. 1. The present analysis employs traditional terminology wherever it was used by relevant authors. For the purposes of our investigations, however, the term 'referential expression' will be adopted.

Although this approach sounds convincing, it is not clear what entities can be subsumed under the label of 'referring expression'. It is hardly surprising since the notion has been defined in terms of reference being a vague concept itself. Thus in the course of development of linguistic thought the term 'referring expression' ranged over different language elements and was subject to several subclassifications.

What Frege (1952) labelled a 'proper name' comprises linguistic items ranging from sign and sign combination to word and expression. These are of two-fold semantic structure, expressing their sense and simultaneously designating their reference which is presupposed (1952: 62). Russell (1905) distinguished two types of 'denoting phrases', i.e. the most primitive ones including indefinite pronouns and more complex expressions with the definite article *the*. Since denoting phrases never have any meaning, but every verbally expressed proposition containing them has a meaning, it is their primary vs. secondary occurrence that determines the truth value of the whole utterance (1905: 480).

Strawson (1970) clearly delineated the class of expressions which appear in the "uniquely referring use". These comprise: singular demonstrative pronouns, proper names, singular personal and impersonal pronouns and phrases with the definite article *the* (1970: 162). Having rejected Russell's approach, Strawson envisages the referring function of expressions as conditioned by the distinction between a sentence, a use of a sentence and an utterance of a sentence.

Though seemingly well-defined, the concept of a referring expression has been subject to controversies. Quine (1960: 180) advocated reparsing of singular terms as general terms which should apply to proper names traditionally treated on a par with singular pronouns and indefinite singular terms. As to the referential positions of singular terms, they were viewed pragmatically both by Quine and later by Katz (1977) who ascribed this property of expressions entirely to the context. For Searle (1970) it was the juxtaposition of describing vs. referring function of expressions that underlined the distinction between definite descriptions and proper names. Geach's (1962) definition of a referring phrase comprises proper names and general terms with the reservation that the latter must stand in a context where a proper name might have stood (1962: 48). Finally, Linsky (1970: 72) follows Strawson in claiming that it is the users of language who refer and not the expressions that they use in so doing. In his comment on Russell's, Strawson's and Linsky's accounts of definite descriptions Donnellan (1972) points out that they failed to make the distinction between two uses of such descriptions, i.e. the attributive and referential use. Whether or not an expression is employed in these functions is determined by speaker's intentions, which is what agrees with our hypothesis. Moreover, Donnellan adheres to another

point to be pursued here, i.e. the fact that definite descriptions can always be assigned the referential function in isolation from a particular occasion on which they are used (1971: 110; cf. also Thrane 1980: 40). Vendler's discussion of proper names (1971) casts even more light on the nature of singular terms. It turns out that proper names share some cooccurrence restrictions with mass nouns and personal pronouns. The definition of singular terms suggested by Vendler shows how they approximate the status of proper names. Finally, Kripke's (1972) influential analysis of the link between a proper name and its referent is based on the notion of rigid designation. Thus, a designating term is called rigid if it designates the same individual in every possible world. Since the content of the designating term could vary, Kripke's analysis amounts to the claim that proper names refer to individuals simpliciter, without necessarily attributing to them any specific content. As Coppieters (1982: 2) puts it:

"To consider proper names as rigid designators, then, is to assume that proper names refer not only in a non-descriptive way (—) but in a global fashion. No internal structure can be assigned to the individual referred to, since such an internal structure would automatically become the covered descriptive content of the proper-name".

Coppieters advocates an opposite view to the effect that individuals are themselves endowed with some internal structure; hence reference cannot be analysed independently from the way in which the individual referred to is conceptually understood, grasped, etc.

3. The idea of relativising reference and ontology to forms of human conceptualization seems to be particularly adequate to the analysis of referential expressions to be carried out below. My hypothesis is that the speaker's attitude and his literal vs. idiomatic use of language affect the ontological status of the individual referred to. Moreover, it can be conjectured that these factors receive distinct formal realizations in English and Polish.

As was pointed out above, the present study will be concerned with referential expressions, i.e. such that their form secures their possible referring function, cf. Thrane (1980: 30—40). Our pragmatic approach to reference will concentrate on the relation between proper names and definite descriptions on the one hand, and personal as well as deictic pronouns, on the other. It has been inspired by Coppieters' discussion of the attitudes which the speaker can take towards himself, i.e. the intrinsic vs. extrinsic attitude, as illustrated by 1. and 2., respectively:

1. I am scared stiff and running down the street as fast as I can when this guy comes ...
2. So there you have it: all in all, I am a real failure

According to Coppieters in 1. the speaker shows himself as a subject, whereas 2. is a case of split personality; *I* is then no longer an independent subject but

becomes a concept. As follows from further examples these two attitudes, one presenting the *I* as 'a being-as-subject', the other as 'a being-as-concept' extend to others as well, e.g. in

3. Nixon is sad and would like to go home

the speaker takes the role of an omniscient narrator and in 4. he passes his own judgement upon Nixon in the same way as was done in 2.:

4. Nixon was a pitiful president (1982:3—4)

The distinction of the two attitudes leads Coppieters to some important conclusions concerning the grammar of French. It is supposed to underlie the distribution of the third person pronoun *il* as opposed to the demonstrative pronoun *ce*. Thus the use of the former is governed by the intrinsic attitude, and the latter is a reflection of the extrinsic attitude.³ As clearly follows from the analysis, the grammatical phenomena in French do not have any equivalents in English.

It will be demonstrated below that Polish grammar is closer to French in this respect. Consequently, the restrictions on the occurrence of personal pronouns *on/ona* 'he/she' are parallel to those imposed on *il*, whereas the distribution of the demonstrative pronoun *to* 'this' is conditioned analogously to that of *ce*. The Polish examples will be contrasted with their English equivalents and although the distinction does not hold for this language if the meaning of words is taken literally, it seems to operate on the idiomatic level.

4. Before it is shown how the intrinsic vs. extrinsic attitude of the speaker triggers some grammatical phenomena, the characteristics of the two concepts are worth investigating. It can be assumed that both are clearly differentiated in English and Polish and this is indeed the case, cf.:

5. Margie is depressed and she doesn't want to see anyone

5'. Margie jest przygnębiona i nie chce nikogo widzieć

6. Ed Kennedy believes that Democrats will win the next election

6'. Ed Kennedy wierzy, że Demokraci wygrają następne wybory

These representatives of the intrinsic attitude contrast with 7—8 where the speaker imposes his judgements on the subjects, thus treats them as concepts:

7. Margie is an unbalanced character

7'. Margie jest osobą nie zrównoważoną

³ For details, cf. Coppieters (1982).

8. Ed Kennedy doesn't make a good candidate for the next election

8'. Ed Kennedy nie stanowi dobrej kandydatury na następne wybory

According to Coppieters (1982:5) the two attitudes are in a sense mutually exclusive so that their conjunctions would result in odd statements, like:

9. *Margie is depressed and she is an unbalanced character

9'. *Margie jest przygnębiona i jest osobą nie zrównoważoną

10. *Ed Kennedy believes that Democrats will win the next election and he doesn't make a good candidate

10'. *Ed Kennedy wierzy, że Demokraci wygrają następne wybory i nie stanowi dobrej kandydatury

However, as is the case with most speaker-relative notions, the problem is often tantamount to an appropriate paraphrase in the right context. Despite the fact that the conjunction *and* sounds 'too strong' in this case, a weak relation of implication would be appropriate (the intrinsic/extrinsic attitudes being subsumed under a kind of a deductive schema), cf.:

11. Margie is an unbalanced character, so she is often depressed

11'. Margie jest osobą nie zrównoważoną, więc jest często przygnębiona

12. Ed Kennedy doesn't make a good candidate for the next election because he believes that Democrats will win⁴

12'. Ed Kennedy nie stanowi dobrej kandydatury na następne wybory, ponieważ wierzy, że Demokraci wygrają

Since the intrinsic/extrinsic dichotomy seems psychologically real, it might be more closely examined in terms of its impact on the grammars of English and Polish.

4.1. The main line of our analysis is concerned with the distribution of some referential expressions, i.e. pronouns with proper names and definite NP's as their antecedents. According to our hypothesis personal pronouns *on/ona* 'he/she' should occur in sentences expressing a more subjective, i.e. intrinsic, attitude of the speaker, whereas a demonstrative 'to 'this' will reflect a more detached, i.e. extrinsic attitude. Doroszewski's remarks on the copula *być* 'to be' constitute some support of this standpoint. He claims that *być* is a marker of a subjective relation of the speaker to objective reality which is thus viewed in terms of the *me* vs. *not-me* dichotomy (1970:143). Moreover, the anaphoric nature of personal pronouns makes them far more subjective from demonstratives which are, in most cases, employed deictically. Compare Lyons' observations on the complexity of the relation between anaphora and

⁴ The sentence would get an appropriate reading provided that the speaker does not sympathize with Democrats.

deixis, to the effect that the latter is far more basic than the former (1977: 659—71).

These contentions are confirmed by the following examples:⁵

13. Boniek wierzył, że strzeli choć jednego gola dla Polski;
 a. [(on)] był przecież najlepszy [-m] gracz [-em] w drużynie
 b. [*to] [Ø] [Ø]
- 13'. Boniek believed that he'd score at least one point for Poland; [he] [*this]
 was after all the best player on the team
14. Boniek strzelił gola dla Polski; a. [?on] był najlepszy [-m] gracz
 b. [to] [Ø] [Ø]
 [-em] w drużynie; nikt tego nie negował
- 14'. Boniek had scored a point for Poland; [he] [*this] was the best player
 on the team; nobody denied it

The data presented support our hypothesis only with regard to Polish. Thus the intrinsic attitude of the speaker governs the use of personal/anaphoric pronouns *on/ona*, whereas the extrinsic one requires the occurrence of a demonstrative *to*. Note that the entities being the predicators in sentences with *on/ona* take Instrumental, and these following *to* take Nominative. At this point an objection could be raised as to the structures of sentences representing the two attitudes. Thus it could be argued that while the intrinsic attitude governs a structure of the type *X jest Y* (*X is Y*), the extrinsic attitude occurs only in sentences of a more complex structure: *X to jest Y* (*X this is Y*). This counter-argument is, however, quite easy to refute if we analyse the relevant sentences as employing two distinct pronominal subclasses with a reservation that they are coreferential with the antecedent NP. Thus, 13'a. and 13'b. would correspond to 13a. and 13b., respectively:

- 13'a. X ... (Pron_{Anaph.} jest Y_{Instr.}), where X is coreferential with Pron.
 13'b. X ... (Pron_{Demon.} jest Y_{Nomin.})

Moreover, the present distinction cuts across another one, i.e. the inherent vs. instantaneous characteristics of the pronominal antecedent, which results in an analogous syntactic contrast. Consequently, the intrinsic attitude is

⁵ It has been pointed out to me that 13. concerns not so much the speaker's but Boniek's subjective beliefs, which proves the point to be pursued here, i.e. the subject as taking the intrinsic attitude towards himself, cf. example 3. above. Note also the optionality of the personal pronoun 'he' which is normally deleted due to Pronominal Subject Deletion, cf. Fisiak, et al. 1978:22.

related to a subjective instantaneous view of the subject hence predicated of by a noun in Instrumental; the objective extrinsic attitude corresponds then to more constant characteristics predicated of the subject by a noun in Nominative (which is also true of introductions, cf. 24a. below). Compare 15., an example of the latter case, with 16. and 17. where, depending on the instantaneous vs. inherent characteristics ascribed to the subject either *on* or *to* can be used, respectively:

15. Poznaj Staśka. [To] jest nasza złota rączka
 [*On]
- 15'. Meet Stasiak. [*This] is our jack-of-all trades
 [He]
16. Ten mężczyzna jest lotnikiem, chociaż w zeszłym roku był on nawigatorem
- 16'. This man is a pilot, although he was a navigator last year
17. Ten mężczyzna jest odważny. To jest lotnik.⁶
- 17'. This man is brave. He is a pilot.

It follows from the discussion so far that the attitude of the speaker towards the subject of the utterance is of utmost importance to the Polish language as it affects its grammatical structure. This takes the form of a two-stage process:

- Step 1: Choose *on/ona* if referring to the subject approached intrinsically or *to* if referring to the subject approached extrinsically;
 Step 2: Attach proper inflectional endings to the predicator of the copula *być*, i.e. Instrumental and Nominative, respectively.

Moreover, the intrinsic attitude is related to instantaneous characteristics of the subject, whereas the extrinsic one to its inherent features. This double relation is reflected in the grammar of Polish, the former pair of notions requiring the predicator in Instrumental and the latter assigning Nominative to it.

The English equivalents of Polish sentences seem to suggest that the attitude of the speaker towards the subject finds no overt realization in the grammar of English. This is corroborated by Lyons' (1977:648—50) discussion

⁶ No agreement can be noticed on this point among Polish linguists. Jodłowski (1976:69) recognizes anaphoric *to* as referring not only to objects but also to human beings. In the latter case *to* requires in the predicative position a noun in Nominative, as opposed to nouns in Instrumental used with personal pronouns *on/ona*. According to Jodłowski the difference between the two cases is purely stylistic, Nominative being more colloquial. Doroszewski, on the other hand, represents an opinion analogous to our standpoint, cf. 1970:152.

on the lexicalization of anaphora and deixis in different languages. Thus, the only possible counterparts of Polish pronouns in the two uses would be personal anaphoric pronouns *he/she*. Although English allows for the occurrence of *that* doing service to both [\pm HUMAN] nouns in restrictive relative clauses, it does not hold for any other contexts. Thus, while we can say:

18. The guy that you met yesterday is our jack-of-all-trades
the equivalent of Polish sentence 15. can only be 15'a. but not b.:

15'. Meet Stasiak. a. He

b. *That is our jack-of-all-trades?

4.2. Consequently, the contrastive data have not offered much with respect to English apart from the fact that it seems to be much more restricted than Polish as regards the use of pronouns in the discussed contexts. Nevertheless, the matter can be pursued further so as to test the explanatory adequacy of our conclusions in other areas of language use. It turns out that the situation changes with idioms. At least some examples of the relevant structures can be found in both languages such that they will reflect the extrinsic and intrinsic attitudes of the speaker. The former will result in an idiomatic meaning of the entity predicating of the subject, thus it will take Nominative in Polish and will require a fixed structure in English. The latter, intrinsic attitude, amounts to the literal meaning of the predicator in Polish and it might result in ungrammatical structures in English, cf. a. and b. examples, respectively:⁸

19. a. [to] jest [gość] 'Kowalski is a guest'

b. Kowalski [Ø] jest [gościem]

19' a. [great guy]

b. Smith is a [*guy]

20. a. [to jeszcze dziecko]

b. Jej mąż [*jest jeszcze dzieckiem]

20' a. [such a child]

b. Her husband is (still) [*a child]

It must be noted that since the area of idiomatic use is extremely capricious, some counterexamples to this observation can be found, not to mention numerous dubious cases. Thus 21—22. might express both the literal and the

idiomatic meanings of the NP describing the subject (referent). This holds true for English and Polish:

21. Richard is an idiot

21'. Ryszard jest {idiota}

{idiota}

22. Mary is an angel

22'. Maria jest {anioł}

{aniołem}

Note that the only literal meaning of 22. could be the case of telling a story to a child and explaining that Mary is dead now (an analogous use would be found in Polish).

Finally, the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction comes up in both languages in introductions where Polish allows for the proper name to take both Nominative and Instrumental while their English equivalents are equally acceptable, however, under the condition that they occur in suitable contexts (neutral for the Nominative and its English counterpart, cf. 23a., and more elaborate for the Instrumental), cf.:⁹

23a. This is John Brown

b. This guy is John Brown

23'a. To jest John Brown

b. Ten facet jest Johnem Brownem

It has become evident that, apart from some idioms, the only possible use of *this* in sentences with referential expressions of the nominal kind (i.e. definite NP's, proper names) is in the introductions. As to the intrinsic attitude, it is possible only if the speaker imposes his own judgements on the subject, which requires some special contexts, otherwise b. sentences would sound unnatural.

5. To recapitulate, the attitude of the speaker towards the subject of the utterance is of utmost importance to the study of reference. Referential expressions such as definite NP's, proper names and pronouns have proved to be sensitive to the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction, though more so in Polish than in English. While in Polish the distinction resulted in grammatical consequences, in English only a few realizations of this phenomenon could be found.

⁸ Note that Instrumental in b. examples of 23.-23'. requires a special, instantaneous characteristics of the subject, e.g.: *Let's imagine we are performing a play. This guy, Bob Lee, is John Brown; this liquid can be called beer*, etc. This, again, proves my point that subjective, intrinsic attitude is expressed by the instrumental case, cf. the Polish version: *Wyobraźmy sobie, że gramy sztukę. Ten facet, Bob Lee, jest Johnem Brownem; ten płyn jest piwem*, etc.

⁷ As has been pointed out to me, *that* can be used in this context only jokingly or ironically.

⁸ The use of idioms is obviously related to colloquial language and this is what the distinction is about, i.e. the extrinsic (objective) attitude of the speaker makes use of formal language employing chiefly literal meanings of words. Conversely, the intrinsic (subjective) attitude is found in colloquial language and/or the conventionalized forms, i.e. idioms.

The present sketchy treatment of the issue has signalled a small point of a much vaster area. And it is the ontological and pragmatic perspectives that should be taken into account in further studies of semantic notions such as reference.

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