

SOME REMARKS ON GENERIC RELATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN ENGLISH AND POLISH

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In the following discussion we are going to employ the term "generic" in a sense slightly different from that generally employed. The usual meaning of the term can be found, for instance, in *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1965 : 784): "applied to a large group or class of objects". Rather, we will follow Jespersen (1928 : 62), with whom "generic" also means "applied to a group or class of objects" (not necessarily large) with the modification that it also carries the additional meaning: "indifference of choice". We do that because Jespersen uses the term with reference to a class of relative clauses in English.

We will concentrate on relative clauses which, after Polański (1967 : 76), we shall call substitutional. These will be relative clauses which can stand for one of the pronominalizable parts of speech: noun, adjective and adverb. Substitutional relative clauses can be introduced by independent relative pronouns (those that lack an antecedent), such as the English *what* or by anaphoric relative pronouns (those that can have an antecedent), such as the English *he who* or the Polish *ten, kto*.

The following constructions will be regarded as generic:

A.

E. If so, please order whatever is appropriate. I am indifferent to these things(AW-ASA). Don't you regard Stokesay at all. You break your ankle whenever you come to a country-house party(AW-ASA). ... whoever of us survives the other should commit the story to paper(AW-ASA).

P. Cokolwiek mają, niosą na wymianę (SS-DB). Ktokolwiek wspomni

o tym, dostanie porządnie po głowie (SS-DB). Gdziekolwiek nocny krzyk świadczy o cierpieniu, wnet zjawia się ... doktor Kościuszko (SS-DB).

B.

E. It's your birthday. You choose what you like(AW-ASA).

P. Rób, co (tylko) chcesz. Możesz iść, gdzie ci się (żywnie) podoba.

C.

E. I'm past all that or superior to it or whatever you like(AW-ASA).

P. Możesz tańczyć, z kimkolwiek chcesz.

The above examples show that generic meaning can be achieved in one of the three ways:

a) by attaching to a relative pronoun the adverb *ever* in English and the particle *-kolwiek* in Polish. The respective rules for the derivation of such compound relative pronouns will be as follows:

E.

(1) X + Y + (R + Z)

(2) R → what, who, when, where...

(3) R → ever — — — whatever, whoever, whenever, wherever...

P.

(1) X + Y + (R + Z)

(2) R → co, kto, kiedy, gdzie...

(3) R → *kolwiek* → *ktokolwiek*, *cokolwiek*, *kiedykolwiek*...

A few remarks should be added at this point. The rules are mechanical because they do not specify under which conditions the attachment of the generic morphemes is possible. We are not going, however, to elaborate on this point since the problem needs an extensive treatment.

The rules will not yield a formation such as **as ever* in English and **jakkolwiek* in Polish although their simple counterparts *as* and *jak* respectively are used as relative pronouns in substitutional relative clauses. The first (i.e. **as ever*) will be rejected on the grounds that only combinations like *as ever* are acceptable, e.g. *The wind was as strong as ever* in which *ever* expresses time relation only, or *ever* can be used as an intensifier of a verb as in *Work as hard as ever you can*.

We reject the Polish **jakkolwiek* for the reason that it is not used as a relative pronoun. Thus the sentence **Zrób to, jakkolwiek chcesz* is unacceptable at least in my idiolect. One of the acceptable constructions which *Jakkolwiek* can enter would be *nie lubię go, jakkolwiek nigdy mu tego nie powiedziałem* (I do not like him although I have never told him that). *Jakkolwiek* functions here as a conjunction introducing a concessive clause which acts as a modifier of the preceding clause.

The rule yielding compound relatives in English is obligatory for the relative pronoun *who*, which is now regarded archaic. It is still preserved only in petrified constructions like proverbs and sayings:

Who breaks pays (prov.).

Whom God will destroy, he first makes mad (prov.).

b) by the introduction of special verbs into relative clauses.

They are:

E. like, choose, please, prefer...

P. *chcieć*, *woleć*, *podobać się*...

Relative clauses in Polish containing one of the verbs named contain special optional adverbs like: *tylko* or *żywnie*. *Tylko* can appear with all the verbs enumerated. *Żywnie* seems to appear with *podobać się* only.

c) by combining (a) and (b) together.

The need for setting up the category of generic relative clauses will become obvious when we trace their distinctive features. First, although the verbs occurring in generic constructions are: the E. *like* and the P. *podobać się* we cannot speak in this case about personal feelings of the person concerned. The English sentence

(a) E. Take what you like.

P. Weź, co (tylko) chcesz.

shows no reference to the feelings of the person concerned. We can prove that by negativizing the relative clause

(b) E. Take what you do not like.

P. Weź, czego nie lubisz.

Negativization provides here a completely different meaning. While (a) means *I allow you to take anything; I don't care what*, (b) means that *I advise you to take those things only which you do not like*. We may conclude that (b) is not the negative version of (a) on semantic grounds. Non-equivalence of (a) and (b) is evidenced in the respective Polish translations. In (b) the Polish equivalent sentence contains the verb "lubić" which does express personal feelings in this case, but it also has specific reference.

Another piece of evidence for a different character of generic relative clauses will be adduced from the domain of syntax. We will consider the behaviour of independent and anaphoric relative pronouns. Thus

E. You may dance with whom you like (allowing for the archaic character of the construction).

P. Możesz tańczyć, z kim (tylko) chcesz.

would be different in meaning from the respective constructions containing anaphoric relative pronouns

E. You may dance with the one who(m) you like.

P. Możesz tańczyć z tym, którego lubisz.

The first pair of sentences implies that the person concerned may dance with anybody. The second pair implies that the person concerned may dance only with the person he/she likes. The difference is clearly marked in Polish, where the verb in the relative clause of the second group is *lubić* and not *chcieć* and the relative pronoun is *który*, which is usually specific in reference in its singular form while *kto* is usually non-specific; hence the choice. The difference is also indicated by the impossibility of introducing *tylko* or *zwykle* into the relative clause.

The general structure of generic relative clauses can be as follows

$$N_1 + V_1 + \left[R \begin{pmatrix} \text{E. ever} \\ \text{P. -kolwiek} \end{pmatrix} + N_2 + V + (V_2 \text{ inf.}) \right]$$

$$\text{Condition: } N_1 = N_2 \quad \text{and} \quad V_1 = V_2$$

As such generic relative clauses are a subset of those substitutional relative clauses in which the main clause verb is reproduced in the infinitival form in the relative clause as in

E. I said what I meant (to say)

P. Powiedziałem, co zamierzałem (powiedzieć).

Generic relative clauses differ from other relative clauses semantically.

The main clause verb is very often in the imperative

E. Take what you like.

P. Weź, co (tylko) zechcesz.

The imperative construction is synonymous to constructions in which permission is expressed. Thus E. Take what you like (Weź, co (tylko) chcesz) is synonymous to E. You may take what you like (Możesz wziąć, co (tylko) chcesz). We could postulate on the basis of these facts that the two sentences given have a common semantic structure marked (+permission). It is beyond the scope of this paper to attempt a formalism of this hypothesis or to adduce more evidence in its support. We may only state that we are concerned in this case with semantic neutralization between the imperative and the infinitive of a verb. Neutralization of this type exists in Polish in sentences expressing command, e.g. *Opuścić statek* (*Abandon ship*).

Although the main clause verb is most usually in the imperative, this is not a condition sine qua non. In the following construction the pronoun *you* in the main clause does not refer to a *second person*.

E. "Give me the telephone", I said. "It's quicker and you can say what you like" (JC-HM).

In fact the sentence is synonymous to

One can say what one likes.

In both cases the equivalent Polish sentences would be impersonal constructions

Można powiedzieć, co się (tylko) chce.

The last example shows that generic constructions do not impose restrictions on the class of possible verbs in the main clause. Actually, generic constructions help to disambiguate certain ambiguous verbs. These verbs are

E. say, tell, know...

P. powiedzieć, opowiedzieć, wiedzieć...

These verbs are ambiguous because they allow embedding of either interrogative or relative clauses though in the majority of cases it is interrogative clauses which are embedded after them. In the sentence

E. He told me what had happened.

P. Powiedział mi, co się wydarzyło.

the subordinate clauses *what had happened* and *co się wydarzyło* respectively are ambiguous unless we set them against a wider context; though it is probably true that they would be interpreted as interrogative by most native speakers of the respective languages. Still, the relative interpretation is possible.

If a verb from the class already exemplified enters a generic construction, it becomes disambiguated and the subordinate clause is interpreted as relative.

E. Say what you like; he's proud (WG-S). I said ask what you like (WG-S).

P. Mów, co chcesz. To pyszałek (WG-W). Powiedziałem, że możecie pytać, o co chcecie (WG-W).

Disambiguation of these verbs can be explained on the basis of double co-referentiality: that of the noun and that of the verb from the main clause. For *ask what you like* has to be interpreted as the elided form of

You ask what you like to ask.

The conclusion would therefore be that certain verbs require the condition of being reproduced if the clause embedded after them is to be interpreted as relative. Such would be the case with the English *tell, say, know* and the Polish *opowiedzieć, powiedzieć, wiedzieć*... Other verbs do not need this condition. In the sentence

E. He took what she gave him.

P. Brał (to), co mu dawała.

the only co-referential element is this fragment of reality which is referred to by *what* and *(to), co* respectively.

Generic constructions can function as concessive adverbial modifiers:

E. Say what you like, women are a sex by themselves (JC-HM).

P. Mów co chcesz, kobiety to odrębna płeć (transl. is mine).

E. And say what you like, the epic is bigger than the lyric (JC-HM).

P. I możesz mówić, co chcesz ale epika jest czymś większym niż liryka (transl. is mine).

E. ... it was a difficult thing, do what he could, to keep the discourse free from obscurity (Jespersen 1928: 60).

P. ... było rzeczą trudną, chociaż robił, co mógł, utrzymać rozmowę wolną od niejasności (transl. is mine).

It is difficult to decide whether the generic construction functions here as a paratactic or a hypotactic modifier. The fact that it may stand alone or be left out without any syntactic or semantic restrictions would put it in the category of paratactic modifiers. Its position, on the other hand, would be in support of the view that it is hypotactic. Yet there are more reasons for treating it as a paratactic construction.

The respective Polish translations show that we are concerned here with modifiers which are concessive in meaning. The last Polish translation shows this best.

Another example of generic constructions functioning as concessive modifiers is provided by the sentences of the structure: come what Modal in which the main clause verb is in the subjunctive.

E. Come what might he would never leave John (AW-ASA).

P. Niech się dzieje, co chce, on nigdy nie opuści John'a (transl. is mine).

E. Come what may, I must raise the money.

P. Niech się dzieje, co chce, muszę zdobyć te pieniądze (transl. is mine)

The subjunctive mood in Polish is indicated by the particle *niech*.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A. List of authors and books cited.

I. English.

1. JC-HM: Joyce Cary — *The Horse's Mouth*.
2. WG-S: William Golding — *The Spire*.
3. WG-W: William Golding — *Wieża* (a Polish translation).
4. AW-ASA: Angus Wilson — *Anglo — Saxon Attitudes*.

II. Polish

1. SS-DB: Seweryna Szmaglewska — *Dymy nad Birkenau*.

B. List of grammatical abbreviations and symbols.

inf. — infinitive

N — noun

R — relative pronoun

V — verb

X, Y, Z — free strings

+ — does not imply internal order

~ — implies internal order

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