

## NOUN OBJECTS IN POLISH AND IN ENGLISH

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As a syntactic item in Polish and in English, the object is of sufficient importance to merit separate attention. Therefore, a comparison of objects in the two languages may prove useful for both pragmatic and theoretical purposes. This brings forth the question of identifying the object in the languages under consideration. English differentiates the object from other sentence elements by position. A noun phrase that occupies the place immediately after a transitive verb is considered an object (Thomas 1967: 34, 121; Zandvoort 1962: 199 and Scheurweghs 1961: 11). In Polish it is not position that assigns noun phrases to the category of object but case. Noun phrases that appear as objects complementing verbs assume the oblique cases whose choice is determined by a given verb. Contrary to English, a Polish verb that can be complemented by an object can be intransitive as well. Polish and English also differ in the kinds of objects they recognize. While the former distinguishes only two objects — the direct and indirect object, the latter, besides recognizing these two, also distinguishes the prepositional object and the objective complement. This fact makes it obvious that there cannot be a one-to-one correspondence between the languages in question with respect to the object. The present paper will be concerned with a discussion of the kinds of objects in both languages and the relationship between them. As, however, noun phrases in either language that serve as objects comprise various parts of speech, each having its syntactic peculiarities, this paper has been confined to signalling certain problems pertinent to noun objects only.

The relationship between the predicate and its noun object cannot be presented adequately by one formula for the two languages. In English this relationship may be rendered as follows:

## VERB+noun object in the common case

Polish requires a different formula, namely

VERB+noun object in the genitive

VERB+noun object in the dative

VERB+noun object in the accusative

VERB+noun object in the instrumental

because, as has been said earlier, Polish verbs determine the case of objects that complement them. It should be added that the verb-object order of the formula for Polish does not exclude other positions that the object can occupy. The present arrangement of the formula has been adopted because the predicate-object order is the neutral order in Polish. The English learner of Polish is then not likely to have serious difficulties with the position of noun objects in his target language. A greater problem will arise when it comes to cases. To make the correct choice of the case, the learner of Polish must learn which cases are assumed by noun objects with individual verbs. This problem does not confront the Polish learner of English as such inflection is absent from the structure of English. Still, he may be prone to other mistakes: instead of placing the object in an English sentence immediately after the verb, he will insert it into other positions permitted by the Polish word order (e.g. after the adverbial modifier or before the predicate).

What has been said so far has been of a general nature. Problems pertaining to particular kinds of objects in Polish and English will accordingly be dealt with under the headings of direct object, indirect object, prepositional object, and objective complement.

**DIRECT OBJECT.** Both Polish and English recognize this type of object. To identify it, English employs the positional criterion. A noun (or a noun-headed construction) that appears immediately after the verb is considered a direct object when the noun is by itself, as only the direct object can occur alone in English (Reszkiewicz 1966: 31). The position immediately after the verb is also occupied by the direct object when it appears with a verb that requires an objective complement. Of two nouns complementing such a verb, the first is the direct object, (Francis 1958: 349) the other is the objective complement. When two nouns complement other verbs, the second will be the direct object (Kufner 1969: 43; Scheurweghs 1961: 16; see also Jespersen 1965: 257; Francis 1958: 351 and Reszkiewicz 1966: 33), the first being the indirect object. Needless to say, only transitive verbs are being considered here. Another criterion that serves to identify the direct object is what may be called a 'subject-convertibility' test, whereby only that object which becomes the subject of a given sentence once it has been changed into the passive is counted as the direct object. The application of the test to English is limited because the indi-

rect object, as will be seen later, reacts positively to this test in a number of sentences.

If the subject-convertibility test is of secondary importance in English, in Polish it is considered the major criterion which serves to indicate the direct object (Szober 1969: 310; Doroszewski 1964: 194 and see Wierzbowski 1962: 121). This implies that direct objects can complement only transitive verbs in Polish as well. Since Polish verbs require their objects in the oblique cases, those serve as another criterion of identification. The direct noun object in Polish may take one of the following three cases, depending on a given verb: the accusative, the genitive, and the instrumental.

The direct object in the accusative is by far the most common with verbs. An exhaustive list of these verbs, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

The genitive is assumed by the direct object when the object is used (Doroszewski 1964: 194 - 5):

- a) partitively or quasi-partitively as in *kupiłem mięsa* (genitive), *pożycz mi gumki* (genitive).
- b) with a verb in the negative  
*nie mam zastrzeżeń* (genitive)  
*Hania nie napisała wypracowania* (genitive)
- c) with verbs of negative meaning such as *przeczyć, zakazywać, zabraniać, zapominać, chybiać, unikać, potrzebować* etc.  
*zakazałem uczniom palenia* (genitive)  
*Piotr zapomniał pieniędzy* (genitive)
- d) with impersonal verbs such as *przybywać, ubywać, brakować, wystarczyć*.  
*ludzi* (genitive) *na świecie przybywa*
- e) with verbs denoting feelings e.g.: *żałować, nienawidzić, bać się*.  
*boję się niedźwiedzi* (genitive)
- f) with perfective verbs beginning with prefixes *do-* and *na-* as in *najeść się, nasypać, doczekać się*.  
*najadłem się strachu* (genitive)
- g) with some other verbs: *chcieć, pragnąć, żądać, bronić, chronić, pilnować, strzec*, etc.  
*bronimy ojczyzny* (genitive)  
*żądamy praw* (genitive)

The direct object in the instrumental appears with such verbs as *rządzić, kierować, władać, dowodzić, powodować, pogardzać, lekceważyć, poniewierać, ruszać, trząść, obracać* and the like (Doroszewski 1964: 195).

*rządzą moim królestwem* (instrumental)

*chłopiec rusza nogą* (instrumental).

Such intricacies as shown above are absent from English where noun objects have only one case. However, the English direct object may enter constructions that do not seem to have an exact counterpart in Polish.



The direct object in an English sentence *she smiled her joy* will hardly ever appear as one in Polish. *She smiled her joy* is tantamount to *she expressed her joy by smiling*. The English verb here assumes the meaning of "expressing by ...-ing" (Jespersen 1965 : 234) as for example:

Mary *laughed* her thanks  
 he *beamed* enormous satisfaction  
 I *breathed* my astonishment

In Polish the presence of the direct object in such constructions will depend on the verb in the Polish rendering: *she sang her joy* can be rendered as *wyspiewała swą radość* but *she laughed her joy* cannot be translated as *wysmiała swą radość* (since it would mean *she laughed at her joy*). A separate study covering the types, possibly a list, of verbs that admit the direct object in such a construction as well as other ways of rendering the construction into Polish would be useful for learners of English and Polish.

Sometimes the object repeats the meaning, often the form, of the verb it complements e.g. *he lived a double life*. This is termed 'cognate object' and can be found in Polish and in English but the two languages differ in this respect. All cognate objects in English belong to the direct object and complement transitive verbs. A number of corresponding verbs in Polish, though, are intransitive and either incapable of entering the cognate-object construction e.g. the verb in *to fight a fight* cannot be rendered into Polish with the intransitive verb *walczyć* (to fight) but another verb must be used, thereby reducing the noun in the Polish rendering to the status of an ordinary direct object: *to fight a fight* will be *toczyć walkę* (the cognation being absent); or if an intransitive verb in Polish appears with a cognate form, the latter is treated as an adverbial of manner e.g. *umrzeć gwałtowną śmiercią* (to die a violent death), *żyć podwójnym życiem*. Certainly, some transitive verbs in Polish admit cognate objects which are then regarded as direct objects e.g.: *tańczyć jakiś taniec* (to dance a dance), *pisać pismo* (to write a writ) (Heinz 1961 : 40 - 41).

A direct-object construction that is lacking in Polish is represented by a combination of *to have* + a direct object as in *to have a smoke*, *to have a drink*, *to have a swim* etc. The combination denotes a single performance of the action expressed by the noun (Scheurweghs 1961 : 13; Zandvoort 1962 : 201). The construction will be rendered into Polish by a perfective verb, *to have a ride* — *przejechać się*, *to have a smoke* — *zapalić*.

In certain sentences such as *to ask John a question* it is necessary to admit a construction with two direct objects on the grounds that either of the objects that complement a given verb can be considered a direct object when it occurs alone with the same verb (Jespersen 1965 : 295 - 6).

strike a boy (dir. obj.) \*a heavy blow (dir. obj.)  
 strike a boy (dir. obj.)  
 strike a heavy blow (dir. obj.)  
 ask John (dir. obj.) a question (dir. obj.)  
 ask John (dir. obj.)  
 ask a question (dir. obj.)

\*see index of abbreviations

In Polish, pairs like *to ask John* and *ask a question* cannot always be rendered with the same verb. *To ask John* is *pytać Janka* but *to ask a question* will be *zadać pytanie*. *To ask John a question* must be translated as *zadać Jankowi pytanie*, which will be looked upon as a mere sequence of an indirect (*Jankowi* — dat.) and a direct object (*pytanie* — acc.) because Polish nouns in the dative are not considered direct objects. The form *Jankowi* may only function as an indirect object as will be seen below.

It might be of interest to find to what extent the interference of English operates here, that is, whether the English learner of Polish will tend to produce Polish sentences like \**Pytać pytanie* or \**Pytać Janka pytanie* as the renderings of English sentences of the type *to ask a question* or *to ask John a question*.

INDIRECT OBJECT. The category of indirect object is present in the structures of Polish and English. However, there is a significant difference between the two languages. For one thing, only two objects are usually distinguished in Polish, the direct object and the indirect object (Szober 1969 : 310; Doroszewski 1964 : 193 and Wierzbowski 1962 : 121). The latter cannot be made the subject of a passive sentence, though it may assume the same cases as the direct object. This does not lead to confusion because when the indirect object appears in one of the direct-object cases, it complements an intransitive verb which cannot take a direct object or it is accompanied by a preposition, of which the direct object is incapable. For that matter, the indirect object in Polish can assume all cases except the nominative and be accompanied by prepositions.

The indirect object in English appears only in company with the direct object which it always precedes (Jespersen 1965 : 287; Kufner 1969 : 43 and see Scheurweghs 1961 : 16; Francis 1958 : 351 and Reszkiewicz 1966 : 33). In this case the English indirect noun object corresponds to the Polish indirect noun object in the dative e.g.:

1. he sent *the boy* (indir. obj.) *a book* (dir. obj.)  
 posłał *chłopcu* (dative, indir. obj.) *książkę* (dir. obj.)
2. the committee gave *the writer* (indir. obj.) *a reward* (dir. obj.)  
 komitet dał *pisarzowi* (dative, indir. obj.)  *nagrodę* (dir. obj.)



Example 2 shows that the dative indirect object in Polish does not need to precede the direct object. Unless the learner of Polish realizes that the case determines the function of the noun and masters the dative-case endings, he may face some difficulties in determining which object stands for the indirect object as the interference of his native language will prompt him to apply the positional criterion.

The Polish learner of English may also be affected by the interference of his own language. He may be prone to disregard either the rigidity of the indirect — direct object sequence in English or fail to use the *to*-phrase for the indirect object, which is obligatory after some English verbs (Grzebieńowski 1964 : 53; Scheurweghs 1961 : 17).

The Polish indirect object in the dative does not serve only as a rendering of the indirect object in English but also appears in the possessive function (Klemensiewicz 1963 : 42 - 3). Sentences such as *koledze (dat.) umarł ojciec* or *wziąłem bratu (dat.) z rąk rewolwer* can just as well have the form *umarł ojciec kolegi (gen.)* (my friend's father died) and *wziąłem z rąk brata (gen.) rewolwer* (I took a gun from my brother's hands). Nouns in the dative in such sentences can be rendered into English only by means of the Saxon Genitive or *of*-adjunct.

Some Polish verbs that indicate the physical state or condition not determined by the will of the speaker also require the indirect object in the dative, for example: *rodzicom (dat.) brakuje pieniędzy* (my parents lack money), *dzieciom chce się spać (dat.)* (children want to sleep). As such construction is lacking in English, English learners of Polish may find it difficult to master.

A difference between Polish and English that will strike learners of either language is that the indirect object in English can be converted into the subject of a sentence in the passive. This property is absent from Polish.

- 1a. *the best student* has been granted *a reward*  
 subject retained dir. obj.  
 2a. *a soldier* was given *a slave-girl*  
 subject retained dir. obj.

This can be rendered into Polish only with the retention of the indirect object in the dative:

- 1b. *najlepszemu studentowi* została przyznana *nagroda*  
 dat., indir. obj. subject  
 1c. *najlepszemu studentowi* < przyznano *nagrodę*  
 dat., indir. obj. — przyznali acc., dir. obj.  
 2b. *żołnierzowi* została dana *niewolnica*  
 dat., indir. obj. subject  
 2c. *żołnierzowi* < dano *niewolnicę*  
 dat., indir. obj. — dali acc., dir. obj.

It should be noted, though, that sentences 1b and 2b may equally be the renderings of English sentences *a reward has been granted to the best student* and *a slave-girl was given to a soldier*. The direct object in Polish can be retained if a verb is used in the active voice: 1c. *przyznali* or *przyznano*, 2c. *dali* or *dano*, the indirect objects in the dative being kept as well because the grammatical subject is either contained in the verbal form (*dali, przyznali*) or absent altogether if the impersonal form of a given verb is used (*dano, przyznano*). If the English learner of Polish attempted to transfer into his target language the property of the English indirect object whereby it can appear as the subject in the passive, the sentences he would produce e.g. *\*żołnierz został dany niewolnicę* or *najlepszy student został przyznany nagrodę* would be ungrammatical.

As has been stated earlier, the indirect noun object in Polish can also assume cases other than the dative and be accompanied by prepositions. The cases are determined by prepositions which in turn are required by verbs. Thus the Polish indirect object partially falls outside the domain of the indirect object in English and corresponds either to the English prepositional object or to the prepositional phrase.

PREPOSITIONAL OBJECT. The prepositional object can be spoken of when a verb followed by a preposition and a noun is equivalent to a single transitive verb with its direct object. The prepositional object is then treated as a kind of direct object (Thomas 1967 : 125 - 7; Scheurweghs 1961 : 18 - 19 and Zandvoort 1962 : 201), capable of being changed into the subject in the passive.

- He applied for a licence.*  
*A licence was applied for by him.*  
*We sent for a doctor.*  
*A doctor was sent for by us.*  
*She turned on the light.*  
*The light was turned on by her.*

English prepositional objects will correspond to Polish indirect objects with prepositions which determine the case of the object, sometimes to direct objects if the corresponding verb in Polish is a single transitive verb, e.g.:

- the lake *abounds* in fish — jezioro obfituje w ryby (acc.)  
 prep. obj. prep. + indir. obj.  
 they *approved* of the idea — zaaprobowali pomysł (acc.)  
 prep. obj. dir. obj.

Combinations of a preposition with a noun that do not comply with the definition of the prepositional object are regarded as prepositional phrases in English (Thomas 1967 : 127; Scheurweghs 1961 : 14, 19 and Zandvoort 1962 : 204). These include phrases as in *I came with John* or *he was followed*



by the police. Corresponding Polish phrases (*przyszędem z Jankiem, był ścigany przez policję*) are included into the category of indirect object.

**OBJECTIVE COMPLEMENT.** Certain transitive verbs in Polish and English such as *nazywać, mianować, ogłaszać, uznać, wybrać, zastać*, and *to consider, to feel, to find, to make, to appoint, to elect* can be complemented by both a direct object and another object which shares the same structural referent with the direct object. In English the other object is called the objective complement (Zandvoort 1962 : 203; Scheurweghs 1961 : 27) and occupies the position after the direct object (Reszkiewicz 1966 : 37 and Francis 1958 : 353). Nouns that are used as objective complements can appear either without a preposition or may be introduced by *as*.

We consider Mr. Brown a good doctor.

They elected his brother president.

He appointed the teacher secretary.

We chose Dick as our leader.

What is represented by the objective complement in English, is regarded in Polish as belonging to the indirect object (Szober 1969 : 310; Doroszewski 1964 : 193) or as a separate object (Klemensiewicz 1963 : 47 where the term 'dopelnienie orzeczające' or predicative object is used). M. Pisarkowa contends that the Polish counterpart of the English objective complement should be considered a subtype of what she calls 'określenie predykatywne' or predicative modifier (Pisarkowa 1965 : 21, 26 - 7). Nouns that are considered predicative modifiers assume the instrumental case without a preposition or are introduced by the prepositions *jako, za, na, w* after which they assume the accusative. This can be represented by the following formula (Pisarkowa 1965 : 102 - 3):

predicate + accusative direct object + predicative modifier

predicate = transitive verb

predicative modifier = a) noun in the instrumental

b) *jako* + noun in the accusative

c) *za* + noun in the accusative

d) *na* + noun in the accusative

e) *w* + noun in the accusative

dyrektor mianował Kowalskiego *swoim zastępcą* (instr.)

pred. modifier

*na komendanta* (prep. + acc.) *wybraliśmy* Janka

pred. modifier

*cenie Cézanne'a jako artystę* (prep. + acc.)

pred. modifier

koledzy uważali Piotra *za maniaka* (prep. + acc.)

pred. modifier

The predicative modifier should not present any difficulties to learners of Polish. Once they have mastered the cases assumed by nouns in this construction and the prepositions introducing the nouns, they will recognize a predicative modifier, no matter what its position in a sentence may be, as seen in the above examples.

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The present discussion, which was meant to signal rather than exhaust some problems pertaining to noun objects in Polish and in English, has shown that there is no one-to-one correspondence between the languages under consideration with respect to the noun object, which has been summed up in the figure below.

Polish	pred. modifier	direct object	indirect object		
English	pred. modifier	direct object	prep. object	indirect object	prepositional phrase

#### INDEX OF ABBREVIATIONS

acc. = accusative; dat. = dative; dir. = direct

gen. = genitive; indir. = indirect; instr. = instrumental

obj. = object; pred. = predicative;

prep. = preposition, prepositional.

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