

SOME FURTHER EVIDENCE AGAINST AN IMPERSONAL
PASSIVE ANALYSIS OF POLISH IMPERSONAL CONSTRUCTIONS¹

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In his unpublished paper, Neubauer (1979) argues that sentences like²

1. Tu się pracuje.
here REFL works
"There is work going on here."
2. Tej książki nigdy nie opublikowano.
this book/GEN never NEG published/IMPERS
"This book has never been published".

¹ In this paper, I assume the reader's familiarity with basic tenets of Relational Grammar as advocated by Perlmutter and Postal (1974, 1977), Postal (1976, 1977), and Perlmutter (1978, to appear). No definition of grammatical relations like "Subject of", "Direct Object of", etc., will be offered here, since it is assumed in RG that grammatical relations are primitive notions of the theory. This, of course, does not mean that intuitions about Subjecthood, Direct Objecthood, etc., are not verifiable. For this purpose, a number of syntactic tests can be used, which are, in fact, syntactic rules whose applicability is restricted to Subject NP's.

² I claim here that sentences like (1-2) are not subjectless at the initial stratum. To be more specific, their initial Subjects are unspecified nominals referring to humans. That this is indeed the case follows from the ungrammaticality of sentences like (i) vis-à-vis the well-formedness of sentences like (ii).

- i.a. * Na podwórzu szczeka się.
in yard/LOC barks REFL
"There is some barking in the yard."
- b. *Na podwórzu szczekano.
in yard/LOC barked/IMPERS
"There was some barking in the yard."
- ii.a. Tu się pracuje.
here REFL works
"There is work going on here".

which Comire (1977) considers to be instances of Impersonal Passive in Polish, cannot be considered Passives in any sort of Relational Grammar (RG) treatment, since they involve neither promotion nor demotion of any of their nominal dependents. Although generally correct, the arguments cited by Neubauer are not particularly compelling because Quantifier Floating, which he uses as a test for final termhood, shows only that sentences like the above ones involve no demotion of Direct Object. In this paper, I will attempt to provide more evidence for Neubauer's claim by showing that such sentences involve no demotion of subject either. More precisely, I will argue here that the initial Subject of sentences like (1—2) is also their final Subject.³ To achieve this end, I will demonstrate that the initial Subject of sentences like (1—2) behaves exactly in the same way as other final Subjects with respect to the ability to control Equi into participial clauses which function as adverbials of time or adverbials of reason.⁴

Consider the following pairs of sentences:

- 3.a. Poszedł pieszo, ponieważ nie mógł doczekać się
he-went on-foot because NEG he-could to wait REFL
taksówki.
taxi-cab/GEN
"He went on foot because he couldn't wait to see a taxi cab."
b. Poszedł pieszo nie mogąc doczekać się taksówki.
he-went on-foot NEG being-able to wait REFL taxi-cab/GEN
- 4.a. Kiedy wracał do domu został pogryziony
when he-was-returning to home/LOC he-got bitten
przez psa.
by dog/ACC

- b. Tu pracowano.
here worked/IMPERS
"There was work going on here."

Although superficially subjectless, sentences like (1—2) are assumed here to have Subjects at the final stratum, a level of representation which corresponds to that of shallow structure in transformational grammar. The lack of surface Subjects in such sentences is then said to be due to an uncontrolled deletion rule which final Subjects marked {+unspecified/+human} obligatorily undergo.

³ This class of participial clauses in question does not include any of those in the following examples:

- i. Ulotki zostały rozesłane pocztą, wzywając naród do walki.
ii. Powracając do samego meczu, to trwał on zaledwie 45 minut.
iii. Nie dochodząc do regu ulicy jest herbaciarnia.

This follows from the fact that in none of the above examples does the participial clause function either as an adverbial of time or as an adverbial of reason.

⁴ For a discussion of Inversion constructions in Polish, cf. Dyla (1981).

- "When he was returning home, he was bitten by a dog."
b. Wracając do domu został pogryziony przez psa.
returning to home/LOC he-got bitten by dog/ACC
- 5.a. Kiedy wracał do domu pogryzł go pies.
when he-was-returning to home/LOC bit him/ACC dog/NOM
"When he was returning home, a dog bit him."
b. *Wracając do domu pogryzł go pies.
returning to home/LOC bit him/ACC dog/NOM
- 6.a. Powiedział mi o tym ponieważ wydawałem się
he-told me/DAT about it/LOC because I-seemed REFL
by godny zaufania.
to be trustworthy
"He told me about it because I seemed to be trustworthy".
b. *Powiedział mi o tym wydając się być
he-told me/DAT about it/LOC seeming REFL to be
godnym zaufania.
trustworthy

The ungrammaticality of the (b)-forms of (5—6) vis-à-vis the well-formedness of the (b)-forms of (3—4) shows that Equi into participial clauses functioning as adverbials of time or adverbials of reason can be controlled by final Subjects but not by final Direct Objects and final Indirect Objects.

Note, however, that for some speakers of Polish this variety of Equi can also be controlled by Inversion nominals, i.e. final Indirect Objects which are Subjects at the immediately preceding stratum.⁵ Such speakers can get sentences like

7. Usłyszawszy, że na przyjęciu była Małgorzata,
having-heard that at party/LOC was NOM
zrobiło mu się żal, że nie zdecydował
made/IMPERS him/DAT REFL sorry that NEG he-decided
się pójść.
REFL to go
"Having heard that Małgorzata had been at the party,
he felt sorry that he hadn't decided to attend it."

as well as perfectly well-formed sentences like

8. Kiedy usłyszał, że na przyjęciu była Małgorzata,
when he-heard that at party/LOC was NOM

⁵ This argument also works for the minority dialect. What must only be done is show that sentences like (1—2) do not involve Inversion. This possibility can be rejected on semantic grounds, as Inversion clauses are always stative and Inversion nominals are semantically Experiencers, Cognizers, etc., but never Agents, as it is the case in sentences like (1—2).

zrobiło mu się żal, że nie zdecydował
made/IMPERS him/DAT REFL sorry that NEG he-decided
się pójść.

REFL to go

"When he heard that Małgorzata had been at the party,
he felt sorry that he hadn't decided to attend it."

Given the above data, one can formulate the condition on controllers of Equi into participial clauses functioning as adverbials of time or adverbials of reason. For those speakers who accept sentences like (7), the condition reads as follows:

9. Equi into participial clauses functioning as adverbials of time or adverbials of reason can be controlled by final Subjects and final Indirect Objects which are former Subjects.

For those who reject sentences like (7), and who, nota bene, constitute a definite majority, the condition seems to be as such:

10. Equi into participial clauses functioning as adverbials of time or adverbials of reason can only be controlled by final Subjects.

In what follows, the condition on controllers of this variety of Equi stated in (9) will be simply ignored.

Turning to the point, consider the following pairs of sentences where each of them involves as a main clause an impersonal clause of the type under consideration:

- 11.a. Kiedy analizowano szczegółowo zdjęcia satelitarne
when analyzed/IMPERS in-detail pictures/ACC satellite-taken
odkryto małą wyspę położoną
discovered/IMPERS small island/ACC located
czteryście kilometrów od Bieguna Północnego.
four-hundred kilometers off pole/LOC northern
"When satellite-taken pictures were analyzed in detail,
a small island was discovered four hundred kilometers off the North Pole."

- b. Analizując szczegółowo zdjęcia satelitarne
analyzing in-detail pictures/ACC satellite-taken
odkryto małą wyspę położoną czteryście
discovered/IMPERS small island/ACC located four-hundred
kilometrów od Bieguna Północnego.
kilometers off pole/LOC northern
"While analyzing in detail satellite-taken pictures, a small island was discovered four hundred kilometers off the North Pole".

- 12.a. Ponieważ uwzględniono konieczność szybkiego
because took-into-account/IMPERS necessity/ACC rapid
opanowania mowy potocznej, wybrano teksty
mastery/GEN speech/GEN colloquial selected/IMPERS texts/ACC
na tematy codzienne i polityczne.
on topics everyday and political
"Since the necessity of rapid mastery of colloquial speech was taken
into account, texts on everyday and political topics have been selected".
- b. Uwzględniając konieczność szybkiego opanowania
taking-into-account necessity/ACC rapid mastery/GEN
mowy potocznej, wybrano teksty
speech/GEN colloquial selected/IMPERS texts/ACC
na tematy codzienne i polityczne.
on topics every and political
"Taking into account the necessity of rapid mastery of colloquial
speech, texts on everyday and political topics have been selected."

The perfect well-formedness of the (b)-versions of (11—12), taken together with the condition on controllers of Equi into participial clauses stated in (10), very strongly suggests that sentences like (1—2) are not subjectless at the final stratum.

Now, consider the following sentence:

13. Gwizdano.
whistled/IMPERS
"Someone whistled".

At the initial stratum, the Subject of this sentence is a nominal referring to an unspecified human being.

Comrie's (1977) Impersonal Passive analysis assumes that the initial Subject is put en chomage. Were Comrie's analysis of sentences like (13) correct, a sentence like (14) should be ill-formed, as there is no candidate for the final Subjecthood other than the initial Subject.

14. Gwizdano nie zgadzając się z decyzją
whistled/IMPERS NEG agreeing REFL with decision/INSTR
sędziego.
referee/GEN
"People whistled disagreeing with the referee's decision."

But (14) is perfectly well-formed, which indicates that the Impersonal Passive analysis makes false predictions, and simply does not work. It follows from the above that the initial Subject of sentences like (1—2) is also their final Subject. Q.E.D.

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