

## Step by step to meaning

Ewa Rudnicka (Kolegium Karkonoskie)

In this paper we propose a model of interpretation of Polish bare NPs (determiner-less noun phrases), which integrates the elements of lexical semantics, information structure as well as formal semantics and pragmatics. Bare NPs have long been a puzzle both to syntacticians and semanticists due to their presumably unlicensed appearance in argument positions, their huge semantic under-specification and their compatibility with very many different linguistic contexts. Our model is an attempt at finding a solution to this puzzle. Empirically, it is based on the extensive questionnaire and corpus based research into the semantics of Polish bare NPs. Theoretically, it builds on a type theory based, flexible interpretation approach (cf. Partee 1987, Chierchia 1998, Krifka 2004). We adopt its underlying assumptions, namely that two constituents match if their types agree to the extent that one of them can become the argument of the other (functional application) and that in the case of a type mismatch the derivation can be ‘saved’ by the application of a type shift. It is argued that type shifts are primary means of licensing Polish bare NPs in argument positions. However, contrary to Chierchia (1998), we demonstrate that the application of type shifts in Polish is not entirely free, but that they are crucially constrained by the interplay of factors such as lexical semantics of verbal predicates, number, tense, aspect, modality, word order, sentences stress, presuppositions of uniqueness and familiarity as well as specificity and scope distinctions. In our model of interpretation of Polish bare NPs the role of all these factors is accounted for in a hierarchically structured order.

Word count: 263

Selected references:

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