

A Corpus-Based Investigation of the Distribution and Use of Nominal Conjunction and Comitative Constructions

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Many languages (such as Bulgarian, Catalan, Spanish, Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Russian and many others) offer (at least) two possibilities for expressing nominal conjunction: the conjunction *and* and the comitative preposition *with*. Expressions consisting of two NPs connected with a comitative preposition are usually referred to as comitative constructions (CCs). (1)-(3) illustrate these possibilities for Polish, where (1) involves an ordinary conjunction, (2) a conjunctive CC, and (3) an inclusive CC (note that (2) and (3) allow of alternative readings).

(1) ja i (mój) brat
I and my brother.NOM
'my brother and I'

(2) ja z (moim) bratem
I with my brother.INSTR
'my brother and I'

(2) my z (moim) bratem
we with my brother.INSTR
'my brother and I'

Miller (1971), Comacho (1994, 2000), Urtz (1994), McNally (1993) and Kopcińska (1995) argue that there is a slight difference between an ordinary conjunction as in (1) and CCs as in (2) and (3). They suggest that in contrast to individuals in the denotation of ordinary conjunction, individuals in the denotation of CCs are related to each other in some relevant sense. Instances of such relatedness include family relationships such as that between husband and wife, between mother and child, or between brother and sister, or professional relationships such as the relationship between doctor and patient, or between teacher and student, as well as many other relationships. The goal of this paper is to verify this hypothesis by examining the distribution of a number of nominal conjunctions involving expressions referring to family relationships and the corresponding CCs in Polish texts of different registers. For our investigations, we use data from the current version of the National Corpus of Polish (URL: <http://nkjp.pl>; Przepiórkowski et al. (2008), Przepiórkowski et al. (2009)), which contains both written and spoken registers. We analyze the frequency of expressions like (1)-(3) in various text types, such as classic literature, daily newspapers, specialist periodicals and journals, transcripts of conversations, and a variety of internet texts. The results of our initial observations suggest that the hypothesis of relatedness is correct, and, therefore, it seems to be worthy of further empirical exploration.

WORDS: 340

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