

On left-peripheral particle *TO* in Polish and Czech: A focus, a topic head, or neither?

Tajsner, Przemysław (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań)

There is an intriguing difference in the role played by the particle *to* in the clausal left periphery in Czech and Polish, noted by Simik (2009). By earlier analyses, in Czech it is a head of a FocP (Simik 2009), while in Polish a head of TopP (Tajsner and Cegłowski 2006). Such claims can be supported by the following complementary judgments:

- (1) Knihu o TUČŇÁČÍCH jsem si **to** objednal [, ne o tuleních]
book about penguins.FOC aux1.SG refl TO ordered.PST.M not about seals Czech
Simik (2009: 329)
- (2) Książkę o PINGWINACH (* **to**) zamówiłem [, nie o fokach]
book about penguins.FOC TO ordered.PST.1.SG.M not about seals Polish
'It was a book about penguins that I ordered [, not a book about seals].'
- (3) Petra (***to**) Marie na party nepozvala
Peter TO Marie on party not.invited.3.SG.F Czech
Simik (2009: 331)
- (4) Piotra **to** Maria na party nie zaprosiła.
Peter TO Marie on party not.invited.3.SG.F Polish
'As for Peter, Mary didn't invite him for the party'

So, while in both proposals the particle *to* is a head Y in (5) below, the XP in Czech must only be focus, while in Polish only topic.

(5) [_{YP} XP [_Y [_Y *to*] ...]]

Simik's proposal is based on the syntactic and semantic correlations between the occurrence of *to* in focus- and wh-fronting. Czech *to* follows both fronted foci and wh-phrases, and, semantically, is argued to function as a presupposition-trigger [F] and an answer space-restrictor [R]. Alongside, Simik (2009) argues for a determiner-like status of Czech *to* (of relevance for the parallelism of verbal and nominal structures). Tajsner and Cegłowski (2006), in turn, base their proposal for Polish on the "aboutness test" for topic, uniquely passed by a 'true-topic' in a pre-*to* position, and on the facts of the co-occurrence of a 'true topic' with c-commanded foci and wh-phrases.

In the present paper, I contest both these positions. *Inter alia*, I argue that Simik's interpretation of *to* in terms of [R] is too restrictive for focus, excluding instances in which the propositions in the contrastive set need not be *surprising*, such as Czech counterparts of English clefts, as in (6) below:

- (6) Petr VČERA rozbil vázu (, ne DNESKA.)
Peter yesterday.FOC break.PST.3SG.M vase not today
'It was yesterday that Peter broke a vase, not today.'
Ocelák (2016: 2)

Besides, examples like (6), lacking *to*, seem unaccountable in terms of left-peripheral FocP headed by *to*. On the other hand, should a pre-*to* position in Polish be Spec. TopP, it needs explaining why it excludes contrastive topics.

The alternative I propose is based on a few premises:

- Czech *to* is a special clitic in Czech, entering clitic clusters and filling a Wackernagel (P2) position.
- *To* is a functional head, neutral between topic and focus, triggering a layer of predication sensitive to information structure.
- This head (akin to E. Kiss's (2006) *Pred*⁰, Bowers' (1993) *Pre*⁰ or den Dikken's (2006) *Relator*) differs parametrically between Czech and Polish in feature composition, and seeks different forms of agreement with a focused phrase (as of Baker's (2008, 2013) *Direction of Agreement Parameter*)
- In Polish, [_{Pred} to] is a probe searching a focus goal in its c-commanding domain, while in Czech it is a head agreeing with a c-commanding focus phrase.
- The derivation proceeds along the lines of Chomsky (2013), resorting to Labelling Algorithm (LA) for determining labels.
- As follows from d., [_{Pred} to] can internally merge with Pred. P, allowing for probe-goal agreement in Polish counterparts of English clefts.
- Focus and topic do not project in the left periphery in either Czech or Polish.

References

- Baker, M. 2008. *The syntax of agreement and concord*. Cambridge University Press.,
- Baker, M. 2013. Agreement and Case. In den Dikken, M.(ed.). *The Cambridge Handbook of Generative Grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bowers, John. 1993. "The syntax of predication" *Linguistic Inquiry* 24.4: 591-656.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2013. "Problems of projection". *Lingua* 130. 33-49.
- Den Dikken, Marcel. 2006. *Relators and linkers*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Kiss, K, É. 2006. "Focusing as predication". In Molnár, V. and Winkler, S. (eds.). *The architecture of focus*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Ocelák, R.. 2014. "Topic-focus articulation, word order, and prosody in Czech: Sketch of an optimality-theoretic account". ISSN 2336-1816. Available at <http://postnito.cz/?p=5095>.
- Rizzi, L. 1997. "The fine structure of the left periphery". In Haegeman, Liliane. (ed.). *Elements of grammar*. Dordrecht: Kluwer. 281-337.
- Rizzi, L. 2006. "On the form of chains: Criterial positions and ECP effects". In Cheng, Lisa Lai-Shen & Corver, Norbert. (eds.). *Wh movement: Moving on*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 97-134.
- Simik, R. 2009. The syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of the focus particle *to* in Czech. In Zibatow, G., Lenertova, D., Junghanns, U. and Biskup, P. (eds). *Studies in Formal Slavic Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics and Information Structure*: 327–340. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Tajsner, P & Ceglowski, P. 2006. "Topicalization and object fronting in Polish: A view from a minimalist perspective". In Dziubalska-Kolaczyk, K. (ed.). *IFAtuation: A life in IFA*. 99-131. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM.