

## PRONOMINAL OBJECT IN ENGLISH AND POLISH

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Contrastive analysis concerned with drawing implications of structural similarities and dissimilarities between two languages must involve both formal and semantic criteria. No relevant relationships between two systems can be established on the basis of semantic equivalence alone, although perfect formal-semantic or even formal correspondences are rare. Equivalence, which is the most crucial criterion of selecting particular constructions for comparison, should concern "meaning, shape and distribution" (Whitman 1970 : 193).

The notion of equivalence of grammatical structures such as "pronominal objects" in English and Polish presupposes the existence of basically corresponding forms, i.e. "pronouns" and "objects" in the two languages. The difficulties met in establishing such correspondences are obvious: no form has been more confusingly defined than the pronoun, both in English and Polish grammars<sup>1</sup>, since the definitions and classifications offered there are usually based on various admixtures of semantic and formal grounds. For the purpose of the present analysis<sup>2</sup> the pronouns will be treated as primarily a syntactic category, closed in membership and occurring in noun position (the so-called "substantive" or "nounal" pronouns) (see Long 1961 : 45; Klemensiewicz 1962 : 53). However, a few traditional subclassifications will be kept, since in both English and Polish grammars the corresponding pronouns can be

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<sup>1</sup> For detailed reviews of characteristic treatment of the pronoun see: R. Crymes, (1968) and K. Pisarkowa, (1969).

<sup>2</sup> The analysis to be produced is essentially neutral with respect to various theories concerning the "nature" of pronouns, alternative ways of presenting pronominalization in the generative grammar, etc.

found under the same labels, e.g. personal, indefinite, reflexive, demonstrative, relative, interrogative, etc.

The notion of object and its subcategorization based, again, on a variety of criteria involve a lot of problems in a contrastive study. Here attention will be drawn primarily to formal contrasts, although, occasionally, more traditional lines will be followed.

A contrastive analysis should proceed through four steps: description, selection, contrast and prediction (Whitman 1970: 191). First, separate parallel descriptions of the pronominal object constructions in English and Polish will be presented before they are juxtaposed in order to establish the basic correspondences and contrasts, with the aim of localizing possible sources of interference.

## 1. THE PRONOMINAL OBJECT IN ENGLISH

1.1. Both traditional and structural grammars have recognized and provided terms for several kinds of objects, the occurrences of which being dependent on the types of verbs they accompany. The well-established sentence patterns containing a single object or two objects expressible by pronouns are the following (see Jespersen 1969b: chapt. 11; Zandvoort 1969: 200-201; Francis 1958: 348-355; Roberts 1962: 37-39):

(a) Subject + verb + direct object

She saw John there.  
She saw me there.

(b) Subject + verb + indirect object + direct object<sup>3</sup>

We gave him money.  
We gave him something.

(c) Subject + verb + direct object + objective complement

They call him a fool.  
They call him that.

(d) Subject + verb + prepositional object

They looked at John.  
They looked at him.

<sup>3</sup> There is by no means a uniformity of solutions as to some double object sentences, as in:

They taught me Latin,  
where Jespersen (1969a: 141) suggests a combination of two direct objects.

It must be emphasized that Modern English makes no distinctions in form with respect to the various kinds of pronominal objects (as seen in the examples below).

cf. He called *her*. (direct object)  
He called *her* a taxi. (indirect object)  
He called on *her*. (prepositional object).

1.2. A single object to a transitive verb is known as direct object. It may be expressed by all kinds of "substantive" pronouns. The syntactic function of an object is usually signalled by its position, immediately following the verb (including composite predicates, as "have taken" etc.). It is worth noting that in the case of the so-called "separable" verbs (verb + adverbial particle), for which the nominal object may optionally intervene between the verb and the particle, a pronoun object obligatorily intervenes:

cf. Look the word up in the dictionary.  
Look up the word in the dictionary.  
Look it up!

1.3. The presence of two (pro)nominals after a verb is familiar under the names of *indirect object* and *direct object*. The slot *indirect object* is typically limited to pronouns denoting some sort of animate being, while *direct object* is typically limited to nouns or pronouns denoting some sort of inanimate object (that is, something expressible by *it*).

The rule which is almost universal is to place the indirect object before the direct object, this combination being obligatory when the indirect object is a pronoun and the direct object a noun:

The men can give you that information.  
They can give you that.

Exceptions to the general rule are only found in the case of weakly stressed pronominal direct objects, chiefly *it*, occasionally *them*, which can be placed before another pronoun (indirect object):

Mother told it us.

The English forms prefer the order of

Give it me,

whereas Americans

Give me it.

It is nearly always possible to substitute a group with the preposition *to*

for the indirect object<sup>4</sup>, the construction being a more emphatic expression of the relation otherwise indicated by the indirect object:

Give it to me.

Sometimes the *to*-phrase is preferable to the indirect object or even obligatory when the pronoun is shifted to the initial position<sup>5</sup>:

To him they showed everything, to me nothing.

1.4. In the case of *object+objective complement* construction it is usual, though not universal rule, that only the first of the forms can be expressed by a personal pronoun [Hill 1958 : 296/]:

I call John a fool.  
I call him a fool.

The only exceptions are the pronouns *this* and *that* which can occur as objective complements regardless the form of the direct object:

Don't call John that.  
Don't call him that.

1.5. A number of transitive verbs are used with *prepositional objects*. English makes a free use of substantive pronouns in this function, e.g.

He looked at her.  
I never thought of that.

etc.

1.6. Summing up, it should be stated that pronouns in English can occur as all the basic kinds of objects, sometimes as forms preferable to nouns (e.g. the indirect object) or, as will be shown later, even as grammatically imperative forms (the reflexive and reciprocal objects). The distinctions between the types of objects are not signalled by the case forms of the pronouns, but they are indicated by other significant structural signals: position, correlation of forms, type of substitutability.

1.7. Among the pronominal objects, some of them occurring exclusively in a pronominal form deserve special attention. When the object of a transitive verb has the same referent as the subject, strict constraints are placed on

<sup>4</sup> For exceptions see O. Jespersen (1969: 115).

<sup>5</sup> There are also a certain number of verbs and set phrases nearly always combined with *to* (e.g. "ascribe, attribute, dedicate, introduce, etc"), cf. O. Jespersen (1969b: 116).

the object form and the use of a reflexive pronoun in the object function is obligatory:

Direct object:	He defended himself.
Indirect object:	She made herself some tea.
Prepositional object <sup>6</sup> :	She looked at herself in the glass.

The reflexive forms in English are usually restricted to the literal meaning of the reflexive. There is a tendency, however, to dispense with these forms whenever no ambiguity seems likely:

I washed and dressed and went out.

Some reflexive objects cannot be left out:

The teacher introduced himself,

but frequently, reflexive pronouns are unexpressed after many verbs, otherwise transitive:

cf. Don't bother!

but Don't bother me (him, anybody, etc.)

Sometimes the occurrence of the reflexive is optional, but its presence adds the feeling of "effort or achievement or responsibility" (Long 1961: 352):

cf. She is starving to death.  
She is starving herself to death.

English has a number of verbs which are always used reflexively (the so-called *absolute reflexives*, e.g. absent, avail, perjure, bestir, pride, etc.). Their only possible objects are reflexive forms:

e.g. John absented himself from all classes.

1.8. The *reciprocal* object (expressed by the pronominal forms *each other* and *one another*) is related semantically to the reflexive object, but it occurs only when the subject and the object are in the plural, having the same reference, and there is a *crossing of relationships* between the *agents* and the *objects* of action:

e.g. They congratulated each other (= X congratulated Y and Y congratulated X).

<sup>6</sup> If the preposition has a purely local meaning the simple pronouns are used: He looked behind him to see if anyone was watching.

As in the case of reflexives the reciprocal is often implied rather than expressed:

They meet occasionally.  
They kissed.

1.9. The specific object function of the pronoun *it* should not escape attention. As other personal pronouns of the 3 pers. sg. and pl., *it* is used chiefly anaphorically (in the deictic function, given a strong stress, *it* must be substituted for by *that*). However, as an object, *it* can signal anticipatory reference as well, representing subordinate clauses and infinitival phrases, used as delayed appositions to *it* in constructions which permit postponement of these structures:

e.g. I know it for sure that she might be ill.  
I think it wrong to lie.

In this function *it* is called a "provisional object" (Zandvoort 1969: 135), or "preparatory it" (Jespersen 1969b: 154).

Sometimes *it* has no clear semantic content and yet formally functions as an object ["formal object" (Zandvoort 1969: 136) or "unspecified it" (Jespersen 1969b: 156)]:

Rough it!  
He likes to lord it over people.

## 2. THE PRONOMINAL OBJECT IN POLISH

2.1. Investigations in Polish descriptive grammar have usually been concentrated on studies of case systems with the objective of finding syntactic meanings for each case<sup>7</sup>. As regards objects, the definitions and classifications found in grammars are usually based on strictly semantic grounds, or on case distinctions. However the formal criterion of the possibility of passivization with respect to the verb has served as the basis for distinguishing between the direct and indirect objects (Szober 1962: 310 - 311; Klemensiewicz 1969: 41). The correspondences between these two types and the case distinctions can be presented as follows:

<sup>7</sup> A results of this approach is for instance, double and overlapping classification of objects, as that presented by Z. Klemensiewicz (1969: 40 - 48). Objects are classified primarily on the basis of their semantic relationships with the verb (e.g. "the receiver of the action", "the instrument" etc.). Parallel classification is based on case distinctions and an attempt is made to associate particular case functions with respective meanings of objects. In view of the very heterogeneous relations between verb and object this classification cannot serve as the basis for any contrastive analysis.

<i>Direct Object:</i>	<i>Indirect Object:</i>
Genitive O.	Genitive O.
Accusative O.	Dative O.
Instrumental O.	Accusative O.
	Instrumental O.
	Prepositional O. (prepositions + all dependent cases)

2.2. The direct object may be expressed by a variety of substantive pronouns, the personal, indefinite and demonstrative pronouns having the most frequent occurrence (Pisarkowa 1968: 188). The cases typical of the direct pronominal object are the accusative and genitive, the instrumental being less common.

Examples:

acc. D. O.	Znam ją (I know her).
gen. D. O.	Nienawidzę jej (I hate her).
instr. D. O.	Pogardzam nią (I despise her).

The lexical meanings expressed by verbs governing each particular case are so heterogeneous that it is hardly possible to classify these verbs into any semantic subcategories. However, it is worth noting that the genitive case has a tendency to combine with negated verbs, as well as verbs of *negative quality* with no phonological reflex of negation [e.g. zapomnieć (forget), odmawiać (refuse), etc.]; it also occurs in structures implying quantitative restrictions (the so-called *partitive genitive*<sup>8</sup>), and with many other verbs.

Examples:

Znam ją /acc./ (I know her),

but, if negated:

Nie znam jej /gen./ (I don't know her)

Partitive gen.: Próbowałem tego (I have tried that).

An exception to the general rule that the direct object following a negated verb must be in the genitive is met in the case of the indefinite pronoun *nic* (*nothing*). After a negated verb both *nic* (acc.) and *niczego* (gen.) occur<sup>9</sup>,

<sup>8</sup> The apparent contrast seen in Polish between accusative and genitive (partitive) direct objects, e.g.

Daj mi chleb (Give me the bread).

Daj mi chleba (Give me some bread).

is not a difference in the syntactic function of the object (pro)nominal relative to the verb, but is rather a difference which in English falls into that area of syntax that deals with the effect of the choice of article on the semantic content of the associated noun.

although the latter form usually requires some complementation (an accompanying adjective or adverb):

Nie widzę nic.  
 Nie widzę niczego tutaj.  
 Nie widzę nic godnego uwagi.  
 Nie widzę niczego godnego uwagi.

The instrumental is not affected by negation:

Interesuję się tym.  
 Nie interesuję się tym.

2.3. As can be shown the term *indirect object* in Polish refers to a much wider range of constructions than the corresponding term in English. It covers the grammatical meaning of the English *indirect object* together with some relationships which in the equivalent English constructions are expressed by direct or prepositional objects:

e.g.  
 (Ind. dat. O.) Przyniosłam mu książkę. = I brought him a book (Ind. O.)  
 (Ind. dat. O.) Pomogłam mu. = I helped him. (Dir. O.)  
 (Ind. instr. O.) Nie martw się tym. = Don't worry about this. (Prep. O.)  
 (Ind. prep. O.) Zaczekaj na niego. = Wait for him. (Prep. O.)

The dative pronominal object (partly corresponding to the English indirect object) is a very common structure in Polish (Pisarkowa 1968: 194). As a rule it is expressed by an *animate* personal pronoun and accompanied by another object, direct or indirect-prepositional. In the case of two pronominal objects the distinction *direct* — *indirect* is signalled by their case forms, the ordering of the two elements being nondistinctive and syntactically irrelevant. Some regularities observed in the placing of pronominal objects are largely dependent on the means of expressing emphasis, as will be shown below (see 2.5.).

In the prepositional object the pronoun may occur in all dependent cases. The case governed by the preposition is part of the basic information about it and must be learned along with its lexical meaning.

2.4. The reflexive expressed by a reflexive pronoun occurs when the subject and object have an identical referent. A reflexive pronoun functions both as the

\* There is no necessity of signalling the case oppositions, since the pronoun *nie* does not occur in a positive sentence.

direct and indirect objects, and can, consequently, assume all the dependent case forms (gen. *sobie/się*, dat. *sobie*, acc. *siebie/się*, instr. *sobą*, loc. *sobie*).

Examples:

Direct acc. O. Skaleczyłam się. (I cut myself).  
 Indirect dat. O. Zrobiła sobie herbaty. (She made herself some tea).  
 Indirect instr. O. Zachwycala się sobą. (She admired herself).  
 Indirect prep. O. Mówiła do siebie. (She talked to herself).

It is worth mentioning that the reflexive forms are identical for all persons, all gender and number distinction being lost:

cf. Skaleczyłam się (I cut myself)  
 On skaleczył się (He cut himself).

A distinction should be made between the occurrences of the reflexive pronouns in the accusative or genitive (*się*), functioning as the direct object, and the uses of the enclitic particle *się*, accompanying a number of intransitive verbs, e.g. *śmiać się* (laugh), *bawić się* (play), etc.

A formally reflexive construction is frequently used with inanimate subjects when no mention is given to the "performer" of the action:

Waza się stukła (The vase got broken).  
 Samochód się zatrzymał (The car stopped).

The reflexive particle *się* is also found in impersonal "subjectless" sentences indicating an action with no regard to the performer:

Tu mówi się po polsku (Polish is spoken here).

(Note that with the subject expressed the verb would not take the particle *się*).

The reflexive pronoun *siebie/się* may imply reflexive meaning or, sometimes, with the subject in the plural, a reciprocal meaning:

Oni oszukują się.  
 cf. English: 1) They cheat themselves.  
 2) They cheat each other.

2.5. Some of the personal pronouns occurring in the object functions have alternative forms in the dative and accusative, the so-called *longer* or *full* forms, and *shorter* or *enclitic* forms<sup>10</sup>:

Nominative:	Dative:	Accusative:
ja (I)	mnie/mi	mnie/mię
ty (you)	tobie/ci	ciebie/cię

<sup>10</sup> Actually there is also the third form in the 3rd person sg. and pl. (e.g. *niego, niej, niemu* etc.) used only and always after prepositions.

on (he)	jemu/mu	jego/go
ono (it)	jemu/mu	je
—	sobie	się/się

Generally speaking, with respect to the accusative case, the shorter forms are the common ones, with the exception of the 1st person sg. (Pisarkowa 1968: 188). The *full* pronominal forms are used in the initial position in a sentence, or after prepositions, or when given extra stress (Klemensiewicz 1962: 84 - 89):

- cf. Widzieliśmy go (We saw him).  
 Jego widzieliśmy na ulicy (We saw him in the street).  
 Widzieliśmy jego a nie ją (We saw him and not her).

In dative case objects the use of the *longer* and *shorter* forms is optional to some extent in positions other than the initial one. The longer forms are obligatory in initial positions and after prepositions governing the dative case:

- Jemu nikt nie może pomóc (Nobody can help him).  
 Walczyli przeciwko niemu (They fought against him).

### 3. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

In the following section an attempt will be made to bring out some correspondences and dissimilarities between the pronominal object structures in English and Polish, together with a few suggestions concerning the possibility of interference.

3.1. A detailed examination of the lexical equivalence of pronouns occurring in object positions in English and Polish falls outside the domain of the present study. It seems, however, that the choice of corresponding pronouns in each of the two languages offers little difficulty, since the uses of these pronouns appear to be fairly parallel.

An apparent contrast, however, occurs with respect to the selection of substitutes with relation to gender. *Gender* in English is mainly a matter of the choice of one of the three personal (or possessive) pronouns in the 3rd person sg., dependent on the type of reference: animate msc. — *he*, animate fem. — *she*, and inanimate — *it* (the principle sometimes being crossed by other considerations). In Polish, where gender is a grammatical category applying to a number of pronouns, the pronoun must show agreement in grammatical gender with its referent. For instance, the equivalence of 3rd person pronouns in the object forms is as follows:

Msc.	jemu/mu, jego/go, etc.	him, it
Neut.	jemu/mu, je, etc.	it
Fem.	jej, ją, etc.	her, it

3.2. As regards formal equivalence of the object constructions in the two languages it has been shown that the basic distinction between *direct* - *indirect* objects is recognized both in English and Polish grammars. It should be emphasized, however, that there is by no means a one to one correspondence between the respective types in the two languages. If passivization is employed as the basic test for identifying the direct object it can be observed, for instance, that the English direct object may follow a preposition, which does not hold true for Polish:

- cf. They sent for him. — Posłali po niego.  
 He was sent for. —

A number of English verbs, transitive and followed by a direct object, correspond to intransitive verbs in Polish:

- cf. She helped me (V+Dir. O.) = Ona mi pomogła (V+Ind. dat. O.)  
 I was helped by her. —

Some English prepositional objects correspond to Polish indirect non-prepositional instrumental objects (see 2.3.).

In view of such discrepancies as presented above, it may be assumed that a learner of each of the two languages is apt to have some difficulties with the identification of equivalent but formally different object constructions.

3.3. As has been pointed out, Polish, a highly inflectional language, distinguishes between objects also according to case, whereas English has no such distinctions. Theoretically, one object case form in English corresponds to five case forms in Polish:

English	Polish
• Object case form	gen. Object
	dat. Object
	acc. Object
	instr. Object
	prep. Locative Object

Since all substantive pronouns are declinable, an English learner of Polish may face immense difficulties in making a correct choice in regard to the case in which the pronoun object should appear.

3.4. The same concerns the prepositional object, since various prepositions govern all dependent case forms, some of them taking objects in more than one case with different meanings:

cf.	<i>English</i>	<i>Polish</i>
	on	od (do, z, dla) niego (gen)
	against	przeciwko niemu (dat)
	at	na (o) niego (acc)
	behind	za nim (instr)
	on	na (o, przy) nim (loc)

him

3.5. As is well known, English differentiates between various (pro)nominal sentence structures mainly by position, whereas Polish primarily by case distinctions. An important contrast, then, is the significance of word order in signalling the syntactic functions of the pronominal objects. English structures displaying rigid ordering patterns, Polish, on the other hand, showing greater freedom of disposing of the pronominal objects (cf. 1.3. and 2.3., respectively). In English the pronoun usually follows the verb, almost always directly. In Polish the position typical of the pronominal object appears to be also that after the verb, yet the possibility of extensive free variation is commonly recognized. For example, the pronominal direct object in Polish is quite likely to be shifted to the initial position:

cf. Powiem ci wszystko. (I will tell you everything)  
or Wszystko ci powiem.

In English such departure from the fundamental ordering is significant and requires a special phrase-separation by means of intonation, whereas in Polish it is not relevant syntactically.

It should be remembered that the positioning of the Polish pronouns, commonly enclitic in the object functions, is subject to stress requirements. Consequently, a pronoun may even intervene between the two parts of the composite predicate, which is impossible in English.

e.g.

Jutro będziesz to miał (You will have that tomorrow).

As regards the double object sentence types it can be noticed that the English constructions usually follow well-established ordering patterns, whereas Polish constructions reveal great flexibility in the disposing of pronominal objects (see 1.3. and 2.3.).

Considering all this, it seems that in English errors are likely to be made in word-ordering with respect to the positions of pronominal objects.

3.6. Attention should be drawn to the use of some dative pronominal object structures in Polish, which correspond to non-object constructions in English. The personal pronoun often occurs in the so-called "subjectless" sentences, where, formally, it performs the function of the dative object:

Żal mi go było	(I was sorry for him).
Było mu zimno	(He was cold).
Chce mi się spać	(I am sleepy).

etc.

As can be seen, this dative object finds a subject equivalent in English.

Another, extremely common type of the dative object is the so-called "dative of interest" (Klemensiewicz 1968: 42 - 43). With intransitive verbs this structure occurs only in Polish, being no longer found in Modern English. It usually corresponds to English possessive structures:

Umarła mu matka	(His mother died).
Zginął mi zegarek	(My watch has been lost).

With some verbs this construction is occasionally found also in English although the possessive form is more regular:

cf. Patrzył jej w oczy — He looked her in the eyes.  
but: The oculist looked in her eyes.

It seems that English learners of Polish might tend to extend the distribution of possessive pronouns to contexts usually employing the "dative of interest".

3.7. Some points should be raised with respect to the reflexive object and the use of reflexive forms in the two languages. In both languages the same constraints are placed upon the identity of the subject and object forms, requiring that the reflexive pronoun is used in the object function (cf. 1.7. and 2.4.). It must be observed, however, that in English the reflexive pronoun is frequently dispensed with, whereas in Polish its occurrence is obligatory:

cf. He washed and dressed.  
Umył się i ubrał.

In view of the fact that Polish makes an abundant use of the reflexive forms also with intransitive verbs, the Polish learner of English may tend to use the reflexive pronouns with a typical frequency, whereas the English learner of Polish may tend to omit the reflexive pronouns that are not paralleled in comparable English expressions.

It should also be noted that the two languages differ in the use of pronouns expressing the reciprocal relationships. English differentiates between the

reflexive and reciprocal formally (by means of different pronouns), whereas Polish uses one common pronominal form to denote both relationships (cf. 1.8. and 2.4.).

It is worth noting that the reflexive pronoun will occur in Polish also in the contexts where English uses a simple pronoun, namely, in prepositional phrases with an adverbial function:

cf.                   Patrzyła prosto przed siebie.  
                          She looked straight in front of her.

3.8. Summing up the results of the analysis it should be stated that the pronominal object constructions in English and Polish are basically comparable, frequently equivalent with respect to lexical meaning and formal similarities. The most essential contrasts brought out in the analysis concern the means of expressing various object relationships (case distinctions, positioning, correlation of forms), essentially different in the two languages. A few points have been raised with regard to pronominal object structures not paralleled formally in the corresponding structures of the other language. It seems, however that the formulation of a prediction of difficulty or error should be supported by some more direct applications of psycholinguistic theory.

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