

A COMMENTARY ON ADJECTIVE-PHRASE COMPLEMENTATION IN ENGLISH AND POLISH

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In both English and Polish, adjective phrases used predicatively can be complemented by finite or non-finite clauses, or other constructions.

The aim of this paper is to discuss adjective phrases postmodified by non-finite clauses, that is phrases occurring in sentences which would be henceforth referred to as adjectival sentences, i.e. sentences of the structure

NP + BE + Adj + Adj Complement,

where Adj Complement = to-Inf (to-V) or Gerund (V-ing).

V-ing can, but does not have to, be preceded by a preposition (Prep). The symbol V-ing will be used to denote English gerunds, such as *leaving*, *pleasing*, and Polish nominal derivatives: both forms such as *wyjeżdżanie*, *przebywanie*, and forms such as *wyjazd*, *dotyk*.

Several superficially similar but basically different constructions can be distinguished among such phrases.

Sentences of the structure discussed above appear in both English and Polish, but the distribution of patterns is different in each language. Since the variety of syntactically identical but semantically different sentences of the structure discussed is larger in English than in Polish, the English forms will be considered the starting point for this discussion.

All these superficially similar constructions are best accounted for in terms of sets of transformationally related structures. Many structures may be found in more than one set, but it is the whole sets of related structures which allow us to distinguish among the various constructions, since each construction type has its own characteristic set.

Thus, for example, the construction type 3 can be characterized by the following set of structures:

- 1) NP+BE+Adj+to-V
- 2) NP+BE+Adj+Prep+V-ing
- 3) NP+BE+Adj+to-Λ

as illustrated by 1) *The soup is ready to eat*; 2) *The soup is ready for eating*
3) *The soup is ready to be eaten*.

Since many — but not all — adjectives fit only one set of structures, a detailed examination of the various sets may lead to the establishment of various adjective classes. Classifications of this kind can be found in Lees (1960a), Vendler (1968), Hutchins (1971), Hudson (1971) or Quirk's recent grammar (1972). Vendler's analysis appears to be the most exhaustive semantically, whereas Quirk and others analyse those constructions mainly in syntactic terms. For Polish, no classification of adjectives in terms of adjective phrase complements has been attempted.

The classification of adjective phrases presented here does not claim to be complete, but the number of transformationally related sets of structures which characterize different constructions discussed in this paper is larger than in other studies.

The structures in question are analysed in terms of internal relations among their components, that is NP, Adj and V, as revealed by the configurations of transforms attached to each construction type.

It is a well-known fact, and here one may quote Lyons (1968: 327), that "the majority of 'adjectives' in English modify both nouns and verbs in deep structure". This short survey of adjectival sentences only supplies additional evidence for that statement, supporting the theory that adjectives modify not only nouns and verbs, understood as ACTIONS (for instance, *She is a beautiful dancer* in the sense *She dances beautifully*), but also whole clauses, e.g., *John, stupidly, took the job*.

Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that equivalent sentences in Polish often contain other — semantically equivalent — parts of speech, such as adverbs, nouns (e.g. *certain* — *pewny*, *pewność*) or verbs (e.g. *be willing* — *chcieć*) as well as adjectives. Nevertheless, although Polish structures are distributed differently than their English equivalents, separate sets of structures could be established for each construction type, corresponding to a different English construction type.

9 different construction types can be distinguished in English among adjective phrases with non-finite complementation. In Polish only 7 different construction types can be distinguished among adjective phrases with non-finite clause postmodification; in two cases Polish sentences corresponding directly to English sentences with non-finite clauses contain adjective phrases with finite-clause postmodification.

However, since at least 9 different sets of structures can be established for both English and Polish, 9 different syntactic functions have to be ascribed

to postmodified adjective phrases in sentences of the structure discussed. The structures — or patterns — are as follows:

1. NP+BE+Adj+to-V	Eng, Pol
2. NP+BE+Adj+(to-V)	Eng, —
3. NP ₂ +BE+Adj+to-V+(for NP ₁)	Eng, —
4. NP+BE+Adj+Prep+V-ing	Eng, Pol
5. NP+BE+Adj+(Prep+V-ing)	Eng, Pol
6. NP+BE+Adj+to-Λ	Eng, —
7. NP+BE+Adj+that-clause	Eng, Pol
8. NP's+V-ing+BE+Adj	Eng, Pol
9. V-ing+NP ₂ +BE+Adj+(for NP ₁)	Eng, Pol
10. To-V+NP ₂ +BE+Adj+(for NP ₁)	Eng, —
11. It+BE+Adj+(for NP ₁)+to-V+NP ₂	Eng, —
12. That-clause+BE+Adj	Eng, —
13. It+BE+Adj+that-clause	Eng, Pol
14. To-V+BE+Adj+(of NP)	Eng, —
15. It+BE+Adj+(of NP)+to-V	Eng, —
16. NP ₂ +BE+Adj+Prep+V-ing+(dla NP ₁)	—, Pol
Adv ₁ NP+V+Adv	Eng, Pol
Adv ₂ To-V+NP ₂ +BE+Adv+(NP _{1Dat})	—, Pol
Verb NP+NADAWAĆ SIE+Prep+V-ing	—, Pol

The total number of sentence patterns — with postmodified adjective phrases — is 15 for English and 8 for Polish. Of the 8 Polish sentence patterns, 7 appear in English and one is restricted to Polish only: NP₂+BE+Adj+Prep+V-ing+(dla NP₁) (Sentence Pattern 16), e.g. *Zadanie jest dla nas trudne do rozwiązania*.

Apart from these sentence patterns with adjective phrases, clauses with adverbs directly corresponding to the adjectives have in some cases to be introduced in order to account for differences among various construction types. In one case (Type 3) sentences with the V only, and no adjective, have to be used to differentiate this type from another.

One final remark must be made before any further discussion follows: all NPs marked as NP₂ are equal to the NP acting as the object of the V. All NPs marked as NP₁ are equal to the NP acting as the subject of the V; their presence in most transforms is optional.

Of the 9 sentence types, 3 must be grouped together as sentences in which the subject of the finite copula is the object of the V in the infinitival clause. In sentences of the remaining 6 types, the subject of the finite copula is at the same time the subject of the V in the clause.

Group I Subject of the finite copula=Object of the V

Note: In all sentences of Group I all Vs are transitive but cannot take any additional direct object, e.g. **He is easy to please Mary*. That restriction does not hold for sentences of Group II, where Vs can also be intransitive or take direct objects.

Type 1

Subtype (A)

- English: (3) The girl is easy (for us) to please
 (9) Pleasing the girl is easy (for us)
 (10) To please the girl is easy (for us)
 (11) It is easy (for us) to please the girl
- Polish: (16) Pracownik ten był (dla nas) niełatwy do zdobycia
 (9) Niełatwe było (dla nas) (samo) zdobycie tego pracownika
 Adv₂ Niełatwo było (nam) zdobyć tego pracownika

The English and Polish sentences of Patterns 3 and 6 respectively are examples of object-fronting; others are variants of Pattern 9 and they lend support to the theory that in such sentences Adjs modify Vs, and NPs are modified indirectly, qua objects of the action performed. (Cf. *an easy-to-please girl*, not **an easy girl*, unless the adjective is used in a different sense).

In English adjectives found in such sentences are *easy*, *difficult*, *pleasant*, and *unpleasant*; in Polish — *łatwy*, *trudny*. The number of adjectives appearing in sentences of Type 1 is limited in both languages.

In a semantic sense, such sentences communicate our evaluation of the quality of the action expressed by the V and can be paraphrased as: *We please the girl — the ACTION is easy*.

All Vs in such sentences are transitive verbs which cannot appear as verb-predicates of intransitive sentences (cf. Lyons (1968 : 352): *John moved the stone — The stone moved but We please him — *He pleases*).

Subtype (B)

- English: (3) The dress is easy (for us) to wash
 (9) Washing the dress is easy (for us)
 (10) To wash the dress is easy (for us)
 (11) It is easy (for us) to wash the dress
 Adv₁ The dress washes easily
- Polish: (16) Zadanie jest (dla nas) łatwe do rozwiązania
 (9) Rozwiązanie tego zadania jest (dla nas) łatwe
 Adv₂ Łatwo jest (nam) rozwiązać zadanie
 Adv₁ Zadanie łatwo się rozwiązuje

Only the presence of transform Adv₁ in English and in Polish differentiates Subtype (B) from Subtype (A). It is also semantically justified, since Vs of sentences of Subtype (B) can also appear as verb-predicates of intransitive sentences.

Again, such sentences can be paraphrased as: *We wash the dress — the ACTION is easy*.

Type 2

- English: (2) Her skin is smooth (to touch)
 Polish: (5) Jej skóra jest gładka (w dotyku)

Whenever equivalent verbs of the senses are available, these sentences correspond directly to sentences of the *Soup tastes bitter* type (Pol. *Zupa jest gorzka (w smaku)*) which can always be paraphrased as *Someone tastes the soup : it is bitter* (Cf. Ostaszewska 1974). Therefore, in such sentences, adjectives should be considered adjectives referring to NPs, not Vs. This is also supported by the fact that the infinitival clause can be omitted in most cases:

- Eng. Her skin is smooth
 Pol. Zupa jest gorzka (Cf. also Quirk et al. 1972 : 827).

Type 3

- English: (2) The soup is ready (to eat)
 (5) The soup is ready (for eating)
 (6) The soup is ready to be eaten
- Polish: (5) Zupa jest gotowa (do jedzenia)
 Verb Zupa nadaje się do jedzenia

The passivized form is not possible as a transform of infinitival clauses of Type 2. Perhaps such sentences could be best accounted for in terms of modality and paraphrased as: *We can eat the soup*.

Adjectives found to appear in sentences of Type 3 are Eng. *ready*, *suitable*, *good*, and *fit*, Pol. *odpowiedni*, *właściwy*, *gotowy* (all these adjectives are in a way semantic equivalents). They do not modify Vs, but act as Vs themselves. Group II Subject of the finite clause = Subject of the V.

Type 4

In English, adjectives in sentences of Type 4 enter either Pattern 1 or Pattern 4; in Polish, some enter both patterns, and some only one. Sentences with adjectives which enter both patterns do not have transforms with adverbs. As the differences seem superficial — all these adjectives function in a similar way — such sentences are discussed together as Type 4.

- English: 1. (1) He is eager to go
 2. (4) He is capable of going
- Polish: 1. (1) On jest skłonny pójść
 (4) On jest skłonny do pójścia
 2. (4) On jest chętny do pomocy
 Adv₁ On chętnie pomoże

Vendler (1968 : 103) and Hutchins (1971 : 47) consider adjectives in such sentences as variants of verbal forms such as *want*, *wish*, *be ready*, *be eager*, etc.

Equally interesting is the optional presence of Future Tense forms of the V in sentences with adverbs.

Adjectives in the sentences under discussion appear to reflect the Agent's attitude (as expressed by NP₁) towards the action he is going to or may perform. Therefore, they do not differ from verbs expressing modality.

In some sentences which do not have transforms with adverbs, e.g., Eng. *He is capable of going* or Pol. *On jest zdolny do zamordowania (własnego ojca)/morderstwa*, the adjectives seem to reflect the ability rather than the attitude of the Agent: *He is capable of going* = *He can go*; *On jest zdolny do morderstwa* = *On może zamordować*.

Type 5

- English: (1) He is stupid to leave
 (8) His leaving is stupid
 (14) To leave is stupid (of him)
 (15) It is stupid of him to leave
 (12) That he leaves is stupid

- Polish: (7) On jest nierozsądny, że wyjeżdża
 (8) Jego wyjazd jest nierozsądny
 (13) To, że wyjeżdża, jest nierozsądne

In English, structures 8, 14, 15, 12 are variants of the same sentence with the infinitival clause acting as the subject. The presence of the prepositional phrase (of NP₁) is optional. In Polish, structures 8 and 13 are variants of the same sentence; the possessive pronouns are optional.

In such sentences the adjectives modify both NPs and Vs at the same time. The NPs act as Agents of the Vs and those sentences might be paraphrased as sentences with adverbial complements, e.g., Eng. *He is stupid because he leaves*. *He is stupid if he leaves*: *He acts/will act stupidly, leaving*; Pol. *Jest niemądry, ponieważ wyjeżdża*: *Wyjeżdżając, postępuje niemądrze*. Therefore, in sentences of Type 5 the NP is modified by the Adj qua ACTION.

These adverbial derivatives act as sentence, not verb-adverbs (cf. Vendler 1968: 104):

John, stupidly, took the job at once
 but

John walks slowly.

Since adjectives appearing in such sentences modify neither Vs nor NPs but whole sentences, they in a way evaluate EVENTS from the speaker's point of view. Therefore, sentences of Type 5 can also be paraphrased as, for instance: *He leaves and it is stupid*.

Type 6

- English: (1) He is certain to go
 (8) His going is certain
 (12) That he will go is certain

- (13) It is certain that he will go
 Adv₁ He will certainly go there
 Polish: (13) (To) jest pewne, że on tam pójdzie
 (8) Jego pójście tam jest pewne
 Adv₁ On pójdzie tam na pewno/z pewnością

In such sentences adjectives again modify whole sentences. Their function is the same as of adverbial derivatives acting as sentence-adverbs.

Since sentences of Type 6 refer to future, the infinitival clause in its non-finite transforms must include Future Tense forms of the V.

From the syntactic point of view, it is the least homogeneous class of adjectives. Only *certain* enters all the transforms. *Probably* refuses (1): **He is probable to go*. *Likely* refuses Adv₁; *true* and *false* enter only (1) (cf. Vendler 1968: 105). The same is true for the opposites.

In Polish, we find *pewne*, *prawdopodobne*, *możliwe* (no Adv₁), *niewykluczone* (no Adv₁), etc. The only Polish sentences equivalent to English sentences with *true* and *false* are those with *prawda* and *nieprawda*: *Prawdą jest, że...*

Contrary to the sentences of Type 5 in which adjectives also function as sentence-adverbs, sentences of Type 6 cannot be paraphrased as "because" sentences. They express the speaker's evaluation of the degree of probability as concerns the fact that ACTION takes/will take place. Therefore, they can be paraphrased as *I think he may go*.

Type 7

- English: (1) He is proud to leave
 (4) He is proud of leaving (Paris)
 (7) He is proud that he is leaving (Paris)
 Polish: (4) Jest dumny z przebywania w jego towarzystwie
 (7) Jest dumny, że przebywa w jego towarzystwie

Although sentences of this type might also be paraphrased as *He is proud because he is leaving*, *Jest dumny, ponieważ wyjeżdża*, the adjectives do not modify Vs:

Eng. **His leaving is proud*

Pol. **Jego przebywanie jest dumno*

Although in some cases sentences with adverbial derivatives do exist, e.g. *He left proudly*, *Wyjeżdżał dumnie*, it seems that they are not exactly equivalent to adjectival sentences since they contain typical manner adverbials modifying only Vs regardless of the agentive NPs. We can even say:

Eng. He was proud to leave humbly

Pol. Był dumny (z siebie), że wyjeżdżał pokornie

Therefore, adjectives in such sentences modify NPs.

Type 8

- English: (1) He is slow to react
 Adv₁ He reacts slowly

Polish: (4) On jest powolny w reakcjach

Adv₁ On reaguje powoli/wolno

Most Pattern (1) sentences have transforms with adverbial derivatives but often the "adverbial" sentences have different meanings, e.g. *He is slow to kiss the girl* — *He slowly kisses the girl*. The "adverbial" sentences are usually ambiguous; the adverb can often be perceived as modifying only the action.

Adjectives of this type might be considered as functioning as time-and-manner adverbials. Their adverbial equivalents do not refer to the manner in which the actual performance is carried out but to the way in which the Agent is setting about performing the action expressed by the V. Therefore, they act like adverbs, although they do not modify the V action.

Sentences of Type 8 can be paraphrased as *It takes him a long/short time to react* or, for instance, *He (usually) reacts after a long/short time*.

Adjectives found in sentences of Type 8 appear to be the "speed" adjectives: Eng. *slow, fast, quick*; Pol. *szybki, powolny*.

Type 9

English: (4) He is good at skiing

(8) His skiing is good

Adv₁ He skis well

Polish: (4) On jest doskonały w jeździe na nartach

(8) Jego jazda na nartach jest doskonała

Adv₁ On doskonale jeździ na nartach

Adjectives in such sentences are basically adverbs which modify the V. Therefore, the NP is modified by the Adj qua ACTION. The adjectives should be treated as manner adverbials and such sentences can be paraphrased as, for instance, *He skis and the ACTION is good*.

Furthermore, it can be added that although the number of patterns in Polish is quite large, the number of adjectives used in constructions discussed here is definitely smaller, the reason being that Polish often makes use of other parts of speech. Therefore, in most cases equivalent sentences in Polish would be rendered as sentences with verbs, prepositional phrases or — obviously — adverbs, all being semantically equivalent to adjectives appearing in English sentences, for instance:

Eng. He is impatient to go

Pol. Niecierpliwi się, by pójść tam wreszcie

Eng. He is certain to come

Pol. On z pewnością przyjdzie

Eng. He is likely to go

Pol. On prawdopodobnie pójdzie,

although the pattern itself (i.e. NP+BE+Adj+to-V) does exist in Polish, for instance:

Pol. On jest skłonny pójść.

This short survey of types of adjective-phrase complementation in English and Polish does not claim to be exhaustive. However, it would appear that if all the possible types and subtypes of phrases were examined, the emerging set of patterns might help classify all adjectives according to their semantic functions, which are obviously connected with their syntactic functions. Many adjectives would enter more than one type of transformationally related structure set, but nevertheless some clearly defined adjective classes can be predicted.

The fact that both in English and in Polish semantically similar adjectives enter separate sets of structures allows the hope that a general framework based on sets of semantically identical constructions can be used in analysing more than one language.

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