

ON THE SEMANTICS OF SOME ENGLISH AND POLISH VERBS

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0. Much of the more recent work in linguistics has been devoted to the semantics of verbs and predicate complement constructions. The result has been a different classification of verbs on the basis of their semantic properties. To what extent the semantic classes overlap with the syntactic classification still remains to be seen. Such parallels might be of great interest in contrastive analysis.

0.1. The term 'presupposition' has become almost indispensable for the analysis of complement sentences. Linguists tend to avoid a logical definition of presupposition in terms of truth values. Some linguists use the term to refer to a feature of sentences¹. Others use it to refer to an act or property of speakers².

At the moment, linguists agree upon the incorporation of context, as a set of logical forms that constitute the set of background assumptions, into the definition of presupposition: "A presupposes B relative to X_{def} if it is not acceptable to utter A in the context of X unless X entails B" (Karttunen 1973b:11).

0.1.2. This paper will deal more with problems of entailment than with presupposition itself. The basic assumption is that the set of implications derivable from a sentence by general rules of inference should be distinguished from the semantic representation of the sentence, which consists of a proposition and presuppositions (Karttunen 1970a: 337). In other words, Karttunen proposes some meaning postulates for the derivation of implied sen-

¹ Karttunen (1973:169): "Sentences are presupposed by sentences only, not by people".

² Stalnaker (1973): "It is persons rather than sentences, propositions, or speech acts that have or make presuppositions".

tences which are not included in the underlying representation of their antecedents.

Based on the above assumptions will be an attempt to compare the classes of implicative verbs, distinguished so far, in English and Polish. Such analysis may prove helpful for the solution of many problems connected with predicate complementation in the two languages.

1. Implicative verbs are similar to factives: in affirmative assertions they commit the speaker to the belief that the complement sentence is also true:

- 1) It is odd that Bill is alone — factive
- 2) John managed to kiss Mary — implicative

However, negating factive predicates does not affect the assumed truth of their complements, whereas the negation of an implicative predicate falsifies its complement:

- 1') It isn't odd that Bill is alone : Bill is alone
- 2') John didn't manage to kiss Mary : John didn't kiss Mary

Karttunen proposes that different implicative verbs be accounted for in terms of some necessary and/or sufficient conditions on whose fulfillment the truth of the complement sentence depends. Thus, two-way implicative verbs, such as *happen*, *bother*, *manage*, *remember*, presuppose some necessary and sufficient condition for the truth of their complements:

- $$\begin{array}{ll} \forall(S) \supset S & \text{'}\forall(S)\text{ is a sufficient condition for } S\text{' } \\ \sim \forall(S) \supset \sim S & \text{'}\forall(S)\text{ is a necessary condition for } S\text{' } \end{array}$$
- 3) Yesterday, John didn't $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{happen} \\ \text{manage} \\ \text{bother} \\ \text{remember} \end{array} \right\}$ to kiss Mary.

implies that some decisive condition was not fulfilled and hence:

\supset Yesterday, John didn't kiss Mary.

The distinction implicative/non-implicative shows also in Polish, and most probably in a great number of languages, especially those typologically similar. Using a comparison of Finnish and English Karttunen concludes that the inventory of implicative verbs is more language-specific than that of non-implicative verbs.

With the Polish equivalents of the above English implicatives a similar behaviour can be noticed:

- 4) Wczoraj Jan nie zdołał pocałować Marii
 $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{\{nie pokwapił się\}} \\ \text{\{nie pamiętał\}} \end{array} \right\}$, żeby pocałować Marię
 \supset Wczoraj Jan nie pocałował Marii.

1.1. It seems interesting that English and Polish implicatives should behave almost identically as far as the choice of a complement sentence is concerned. When we assume the following cursory equivalence in complement structures between English and Polish:

POSS-ing=NOM, ŻE-S, ŻEBY-S
 FOR-TO=INF, ŻEBY-INF, ŻEBY-S
 THAT-S=ŻE-S, ŻEBY-S

we can notice many similarities in a verb's choice of a complement. For example all tested English implicative verbs take infinitival complements, and so do their Polish equivalents, either in the form of an infinitive or ŻEBY+infinitive:

- 5) Pamiętałem, żeby zamknąć drzwi = I remembered to lock the door
- 6) Udało mu się otworzyć drzwi = He managed to open the door.

The implications carried out by the complement sentences seem to depend on the type of the complement:

7) I remember that I locked the door = Pamiętam, że zamknąłem drzwi
 imply

- 7') I locked the door and Zamknąłem drzwi.
- 8) I remember telling him implies I told him.

In the negative, however, the implication is not so immediate:

- 8') I didn't remember telling him = Nie pamiętałem, że bym mu to mówił.

1.1.1. It might be worth testing whether *that*-complements and *ing*-complements, as opposed to *to*-complements, can have the same semantic representation, since the former two seem to involve similar implications. It may be the fact, then, that the expected implications and presuppositions of some verbs are not carried out in all syntactic environment. Karttunen (1971b:60), for example, observed that in the indicative mood there is no difference between *that*-complements and *poss-ing* complements of factive verbs. In the subjunctive, however, *that*-complements require truth in the actual world, *poss-ing* complements may suggest some fictitiousness. Also *for-to* complements may be interpreted as fictitious whenever the main sentence is in the subjunctive mood.

1.1.2. Non-implicative verbs, by definition, do not carry any implication with their complements:

- 9) John hoped to solve the problem $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{and he did.} \\ \text{but he didn't.} \end{array} \right.$
 Jan miał nadzieję rozwiązać ten problem, $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{ale mu się nie udało.} \\ \text{i rozwiązał go.} \end{array} \right.$
- 10) John decided to leave England, but I don't know whether he did.
 Jan zdecydował się wyjechać z Anglii, ale nie wiem, czy wyjechał.

1.2. There are verbs whose implications are reverse, i.e., their affirmative assertion implies the negation of the complement, and a negative assertion carries a positive implication.

- 11) I forgot to lock the door = Zapomniałem zamknąć drzwi
 \Rightarrow I didn't lock the door = Nie zamknąłem drzwi.
- 11') I didn't forget to lock the door = Nie zapomniałem zamknąć drzwi
 \Rightarrow I locked the door = Zamknąłem drzwi.

Quite a number of those verbs in English do not have their equivalents in separate Polish verbs. English utterances with such negative-implicatives are often conveyed in Polish by means of their complements, that is by their implications:

- 12) I fail to understand = Nie rozumiem.
 13) He neglected to write to his mother = Nie napisał do matki.

Maybe this observation, properly validated, could be another argument in the discussion whether such 'negative' verbs should be accounted for by means of a separate pair of meaning postulates:

$$\begin{array}{l} v(S) \supset \sim S \\ \sim v(S) \supset S \end{array}$$

or whether they should be treated as negated 'positive' verbs in their underlying syntactic structure. This problem will recur with other groups of implicatives.

2. Some verbs are two-way implicative and some other predicates give rise to implicative relations such that the implication holds only in either a negative sentence or an affirmative one; there is an asymmetry between their negative and affirmative assertions.

2.1. Verbs, called by Karttunen *if*-verbs because they express a sufficient condition for the truth of the complement, are noncommittal with respect to the complement sentence in negative assertions. They yield the implication in an affirmative assertion:

- 14) John $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{forced} \\ \text{made} \\ \text{persuaded} \end{array} \right\}$ Mary (to) stay home
 \Rightarrow Mary stayed home.
- 15) Jan $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{zmusił Marię} \\ \text{skłonił Marię} \\ \text{wyperswadował Marii} \end{array} \right\}$, żeby została w domu
 \Rightarrow Maria została w domu.

The negative *if*-verbs imply the complement to be false in affirmative assertions:

- 16) John prevented Mary from leaving
 \Rightarrow Mary didn't leave.
- 17) Jan zapobiegł wyjazdowi Marii
 \Rightarrow Maria nie wyjechała.

whereas a negative assertion is noncommittal. Here again the problem appears of how such negative verbs should be accounted for. In his discussion of *persuade*—*dissuade* G. Lakoff (1971:247) suggests that *dissuade* be introduced from a structure containing the lexical item *persuade*, i.e., *persuade-NP-not*, not by a rule of lexical insertion. In Polish, however, the verb *wyperswadować* carries both positive and negative implications:

- 18) Wyperswadował jej, żeby została w domu
 \Rightarrow Została w domu.
 He persuaded her to stay home.
- 19) Wyperswadował jej pozostanie w domu
 \Rightarrow Nie została w domu
 \Rightarrow He dissuaded her from staying home.
 He dissuaded her from staying home.

The intuitions of Polish speakers are such that *wyperswadować* means more immediately *perswadować -not-S*.

2.2. Another group of one-way implicatives contains verbs that are noncommittal with respect to the complement in an affirmative assertion and imply the falsity of the complement in a negative assertion. These verbs may be accounted for by the meaning postulate $\sim v(S) \supset \sim S$ where ' $v(S)$ ' is a necessary condition for 'S':

- 20) John did not have the opportunity to leave England
 \Rightarrow John did not leave the country
- 21) Jan nie miał okazji wyjechać z Anglii
 \Rightarrow Jan nie wyjechał z Anglii.

These are called the *only-if* verbs.

The only known so far English negative *only-if* verb *hesitate* yields a positive implication in a negative assertion and is noncommittal in affirmative sentence:

- 22) Bill did not hesitate to call him a liar
 ⇒ Bill called him a liar.

Its Polish equivalent *wahać się* seems to behave similarly:

- 23) Nie zawahał się nazwać go kłamcą
 ⇒ Nazwał go kłamcą.

3. When dealing with the one-way implicative verbs, we come across the phenomenon of 'invited inferences' (or conversational implicatures), i.e., any assertion of the form $S_1 \supset S_2$ suggests that $\sim S_1 \supset \sim S_2$ is also true. One might expect that different languages would employ different surface devices in order to avoid invited inferences, context being a fairly universal means of disambiguation. Of two languages compared, if one developed better a certain grammatical category, it might employ this category to avoid conversational implicatures to a larger extent than the other language in which this category is deficient. This hypothesis will be tested on the category of aspect in English and Polish. We would like to find out whether the surface aspectual features of Polish verbs help to avoid invited inferences in contrast to English verbs, unmarked for aspect. The result of such a comparison will be presented in another paper.

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