

## Agent and experiencer implications in Polish impersonal middles with a dative

Ewa Willim, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland

The dative in Polish impersonal middles (IM(s)), i.e. structures with a verb in the non-agreeing (3<sup>rd</sup> singular neuter (3.SG.N)) form, the reflexive pronoun *się*, and an adverb like *łatwo* ‘easily’, as in (1), has been analyzed as an involuntary agent (Ackerman & Moore 2001), an agent without control over the (manner of the) eventuality denoted by the verb, acting while being in a state that is involuntary (Rivero *et al.* 2010), or as a benefactive argument of a high applicative head (Krzek 2013):

- (1) Jankowi            dobrze się        dziś        pracowało.  
John-DAT        well SE        today    worked-3.SG.N    ‘John enjoyed working today.’

Although IMs like (1) are often taken to have agentive implications, the dative being interpreted as (coreferential with) the understood agent of the *V-ing* event (Holvoet & Linde-Usiekniewicz 2015), they do not provide evidence for a structurally represented agent (see also Krzek 2013), whether intentional (see (3a)) or involuntary (see (3b)):

- (2) Janek            czytał tę            książkę        dobrowolnie/celowo/chętnie.  
John-NOM        read this-ACC    book-ACC    voluntarily/on.purpose/willingly  
‘John read this book voluntarily/on purpose/willingly.’

- (3) a. Jankowi        czytało        się        tę            książkę        dobrze/przyjemnie  
John-DAT        read-3.SG.N    SE        this-ACC    book-ACC    well/with.pleasure  
(\*dobrowolnie/celowo/chętnie).  
voluntarily/on.purpose/willingly.

‘This book read well/with pleasure for John (\*voluntarily/on purpose/willingly).’

- b. Jankowi        czytało        się        tę            książkę  
John-DAT        read-3.SG.N    SE        this-ACC    book-ACC  
dobrze/        przyjemnie    (\*niechcący/przypadkiem).  
well/        pleasantly/    involuntarily/by.accident-INSTR

‘The book read well/with.pleasure (\*involuntarily/by accident) for John.’

For Wierzbicka (1988: 219), Polish IMs also have experiencer implications in that “the agent experiences his own action as proceeding well (or not well) for reasons independent of him and unspecifiable.” Building on Wierzbicka (1988), I suggest here that Polish IMs consist of an experience event and a semantically intransitive dynamic event based on a verbal (manner) root modifying a verbalizing *v* head introducing a process, which may underlie an unergative or transitive activity verb, a verb of directed motion, or a progressive achievement verb (see (4)), i.e. a predicate with stages in the sense of Rothstein (2004):

- (4) Łatwo mi            się        zasypia            w moim        nowym        łóżku  
easily me-DAT        SE        fall.asleep-3.SG.N    in my        new        bed  
‘It’s easy for me to fall asleep in my new bed./I fall asleep easily in my new bed.’

The *V-ing* event is the cause of the experience event in which the affected experiencer evaluates *V-ing* as positive or negative. The experiencer must be sentient and aware in the situation, and must have a specific personal experience of *V-ing*, similarly to the experiencer of the mental attitude predicate *find* in (6) from McNally and Stojanovic (2017):

- (5) \*Dobrze        mi            się        prowadziło        samochód  
well            me-DAT        SE        drove-3.SG.N    car-ACC  
śpiąc                    na        tylnym            siedzeniu.  
sleeping-PART        on        back            seat  
‘\*It was nice for me to drive the car while sleeping in the backseat.’

- (6) I find lying bad/worse than stealing.

The middle adverb is (normally) obligatory in an Polish IM (see (7)), and it is experiencer-oriented, adverbs available in IMs belonging to the class of adverbs that can predicate over an experiencer argument (see (8) vs. (9)):

- (7) \*Jankowi się dziś biegało.  
John-DAT SE today ran-3.SG.N ‘\*It ran to/for John.’
- (8) Było (nam) przyjemnie leżeć na plaży  
was us-DAT pleasant-ADV lie-INF on beach  
‘It was pleasant (for us) to lie on the beach.’
- (9) a. (\*Jankowi) mądrze było pójść na spacer.  
John-DAT wise-ADV was go-INF on walk  
‘It was wise (for John) to go for a walk,’  
b. \*Jankowi mądrze chodzi się na spacer.  
John-DAT wise-ADV go-3.SG.N on walks ‘\*It walks wisely for John.’

Middle adverbs are evaluative and subjective. Building on McNally & Kennedy’s (2013) analysis of *well*, they are analyzed here as degree adverbs which map an event they apply to onto a degree on a scale they lexicalize, subject to approval by some judge. Assuming with Bylinina (2014: 60) that “[a] direct statement about someone’s internal state can be made only if the judge parameter is set to the same value as the experiencer of this internal state”, middle adverbs have the ‘experiencer=judge’ postulate in their meaning, which explains the interdependence between the dative and the middle adverb in IMs (see (7)). Syntactically, the dative (experiencer) patterns with the experiencer of a main clause adverbial predicate with respect to binding and control and not with a benefactive (contra Krzek 2013), which is unable to act as a binder and does not control into adjunct clauses in Polish (not shown here). Dative, bleeding Genitive of Negation, is inherent, not structural case in Polish IMs (contra Krzek 2013). In a negated IM, the middle adverb is in the scope of negation (see (10)), which also licenses the dative as an NPI, and thus also the dative cannot originate outside TP, contra Rivero *et al.* (2010). The example in (10) also shows that the experience event and the *V-ing* event need not necessarily have the same spatiotemporal location:

- (10) Nikomu nie spało się dziś dobrze.  
no.one-DAT not slept-3.SG.N SE today well ‘No one slept well today.’

To capture their intricate properties, Polish IMs are argued here to be built from a non-thematic Voice with expletive *się* in its specifier, a null syntactic head (Aff(ect)) introducing an experience event, with the experiencer bearing (inherent) dative case in its specifier, the middle adverb as adjunct, and a *V-ing* event as its complement, as shown schematically in (11) for (10), where the *V-ing* event is the cause of the (narrated) experiencer’s evaluation made on the basis on his/her specific personal experience of *V-ing*, and the adverb specifies the content of the evaluation/mental attitude:

- (11) [T [<sub>NegP</sub> nie [<sub>Voice</sub> się [<sub>Voice</sub> Voice<sub>Expl</sub> [<sub>AffP</sub> nikomu [<sub>Aff</sub> dobrze [<sub>Aff</sub> Aff [<sub>VP</sub> [<sub>VDOP</sub> spał-]]]]]]]]]]

The dative experiencer and the middle adverb contribute experiencer implications in tandem. The roots that appear in IM syntax may have encyclopedic agentivity and they combine with a dynamic verbalizer (<sub>VDOP</sub>) selected by the Aff head, which derives a process-denoting verb, but agentivity is not syntactically represented in Polish IMs. As accusative case may be assigned/valued in the absence of a syntactically represented agent (see (3)), Polish IMs offer evidence that the assignment of accusative case should be divorced from the assignment of the external theta role, contra the original formulation of Burzio’s Generalization.

**Funding information:** this research was funded by grant 2014/15/B/H2/00588 from National Science Centre, Poland.

**References:** Ackerman, F. & J. Moore. 2001. *Proto-properties and Grammatical Encoding. A Correspondence Theory of Argument Selection*. CSLI Publications. ♦ Bylinina, L. 2014. The grammar of standards: judge-dependence, purpose-relativity, and comparison classes in degree constructions. Utrecht University Ph. D. dissertation. ♦ Krzek, M. 2013. The syntax of impersonal constructions in Polish. Ph.D. dissertation. Newcastle University, UK. ♦ Rivero, M.-L. *et al.* 2010. Variation in circumstantial modality: Polish vs. St’át’imcets. *Linguistic Inquiry* 41(4):704-714. ♦ Wierzbicka, A. 1988. *The Semantics of Grammar*. John Benjamins. ♦ Wood, J. 2012. Icelandic morphosyntax and argument structure. New York University Ph.D. dissertation.