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TEACHING POLISH WORD ORDER TO FOREIGNERS: FROM THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS TO PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

The paper concentrates on the very important and complex, yet still neglected problem of teaching word order in Polish. We present a short review of the existing teaching standards for teaching Polish as a Foreign Language, followed by reflections on the criteria which should be used for selecting word order problems to be taught at different learning stages. Adopting a contrastive approach, we present word order problems which we consider to be especially difficult for foreigners due to possible language interference. The paper ends with a few methodological suggestions concerning the teaching process itself.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is an attempt at defining the criteria and practical methods needed to choose and effectively teach the most important issues connected with word order in Polish language. In the analysis that follows, we 1) reflect on the existing national standards for teaching Polish as a Foreign Language (PFL) which are connected with word order problems, 2) propose enlarging these standards with our own list of difficulties which, until now, have not been sufficiently taken into consideration in teaching materials, and finally 3) make methodological suggestions as to the teaching process itself.

Speaking of *word order*, we refer to what is described in Polish linguistics as *szyk*, i.e. not merely the linear order of elements (traditionally called *uporządkowanie linearne*), but rather the linear relations concerned with elements of an utterance which are bound by inflectional, lexical, syntactic or semantic relations. We will consider *inflectional relations* in the case of so-called analytic (complex) forms, such as the complex future *będę utrudniał* in (1), the conditional *byłabym zapomniata* in (2), complex infinitive forms such as *być wolno* in (3) or comparative or superlative adjectival forms like *najbardziej popularny* in (4).

- (1) *Ja również nie będę mu utrudniał tej misji. NKJP¹*
I also not will (to) him make more difficult this mission.²
I will not make this mission more difficult to him either.
- (2) *Byłabym na śmierć zapomniata, że dziś przychodzi Adam.*
(I) Would have till death forgotten that today is coming Adam.
I would have completely forgotten that Adam is coming today.
- (3) *Radnemu musi być wolno więcej mówić niż innym. NKJP*
(To a) deputy (it) must be allowed (to) more say than (to the) others.
A deputy must be allowed to say more than the others.
- (4) *Był to najbardziej popularny pojazd mojego dzieciństwa. NKJP*
Was it (the) most popular vehicle (of) my childhood.
It was the most popular vehicle of my childhood.

The lexical relations apply mostly to multisegmental language units³ such as *być w siódmym niebie, puścić [kogoś] w skarpetkach, mieć [do kogoś] romans, wykopać topór wojenny, wschodząca gwiazda, stary kawaler, hamulec bezpieczeństwa, środki masowego przekazu, szkoła rodzenia, czysty jak łąa or telefony się urywają⁴, cf. (5)-(5b).*

- (5) *Telefony urywają się od samego rana. NKJP*
Telephones tear themselves down from (the) very morning.
The telephones keep ringing from the very morning.
- (5a) *W wodociągach urywają się telefony od mieszkańców.*
In Water and Sewerage Department tear themselves down telephones from inhabitants.
The inhabitants keep calling the Water and Sewerage Department.

¹ Examples marked as NKJP were taken from the National Corpus of Polish (Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego), described and available at <http://www.nkjp.pl/>.

² Each Polish utterance cited as an example in this paper is followed by a direct gloss and a more literal and correct translation. Glosses are approximate and are simply used to illustrate which elements of the sentence may be subject to linearization changes. Thus, grammar categories, such as tense, case value, etc. are not marked in the glosses, except for situations when they turn out to be relevant for the analysis, such as in the case of genitive forms or different types of *się* pronoun, cf. ex. (5) and (15).

³ For word order in phraseological expressions in Polish, cf. one of the chapters in I. Kosek (2008: 140-165).

⁴ The idiomatic expression *telefony się urywają*, lit. 'telephones tear themselves down', is used in Polish in reference to a situation when the telephone keeps ringing because many people are calling at the same time, making it somewhat difficult to answer all the calls. One of the difficulties results from the fact that the *się* pronoun in this case may hardly be interpreted as reflexive, as in the case of *myć się* ('to wash oneself'). It is simply a part of the verbal lexeme, as in the case of many other Polish verbs, such as *śmiać się, przyglądać się*, etc. Thus, the reflexive pronoun *themselves* used in the glosses is only an approximation, which is supposed to reflect the presence of the pronoun on the surface. Note that, regardless of their type, all *się* pronouns in Polish may be subject to complicated linearization operations, as in (5)-(5b), where *się* can appear before or after the verb, the latter preceding or following the subject *telefony*. The subject, on the other hand, may be separated from the verb by a number of other elements as in (5b).

- (5b) **Telefony od osób samotnych szukających pary wręcz się urywają.**
Telephone calls from persons lonely looking for (a) couple simply themselves tear down.
You simply can't get to answer all the phone calls from lonely people looking for a mate.

Finally, on the syntactic level, we are dealing with the word order of elements bound by both syntactic and semantic, or only semantic relations. It concerns mostly the order of elements of simple and complex syntactic groups, cf. (6) and (6a), the relationship between such groups within an utterance, cf. (7)-(7a) and the order of subordinate clauses forming an utterance, as in (8)-(8b).

- (6) **Został sam, patrząc w stronę młodego człowieka grającego w bilard.**
(He) Stayed alone, looking at (the) side (of a) young man playing in billiards.
- (6a) **Został sam, patrząc w stronę grającego w bilard młodego człowieka.**
(He) Stayed alone, looking at (the) side (of) playing in billiards young man.
He was alone, looking towards a young man playing billiards.
- (7) **Mężczyźni w czarnych kostiumach kąpielowych zajęli osobne kabiny.**
Men in black swimming suits occupied separate cabins.
- (7a) **Osobne kabiny zajęli mężczyźni w czarnych kostiumach kąpielowych.**
Separate cabins occupied men in black swimming suits.
Separate cabins were occupied by men in black swimming suits.
- (8) **Marek dostał nagrodę, ponieważ sam przygotował wystawę.**
Marek got (the) prize, because himself prepared (the) exhibition.
Marek got the prize because he had prepared the exhibition all by himself.
- (8a) **Marek, ponieważ sam przygotował wystawę, dostał nagrodę.**
Marek, because himself prepared (the) exhibition, got (the) prize.
Marek got the prize because he had prepared the exhibition all by himself.
- (8b) **Ponieważ sam przygotował wystawę, Marek dostał nagrodę.**
Because himself prepared (the) exhibition, Marek got (the) prize.
As he had prepared the exhibition all by himself, Marek got the prize.

The word order of utterances is, without doubt, one of the most important elements of linguistic knowledge. It is decisive not only for grammatical correctness, but also for the efficiency and felicity of speech acts. It would be impossible to familiarize foreigners with all of these difficult and complex questions, part of which are yet to be thoroughly described and analyzed by linguists. Presenting a homogenous and coherent set of rules illustrating the issue is surely a task going beyond the limits of a standard language course, even the most extensive one. These difficulties, however, should not discourage us from presenting some of these word order problems in teaching materials, even at beginner's level. Without the help of the teacher, and the explicit presence of these issues in teaching programs and schoolbooks, our foreign students are forced to go through a long

and ineffective process of guessing and make nothing but haphazard attempts at producing oral and written texts. Looking at the present state of affairs, we believe that word order problems are still not significantly enough represented in the national teaching standards and teaching materials for PFL.

WORD ORDER IN TEACHING MATERIALS FOR PFL

The list of grammatical skills published as part of the *Examination Requirement Standards for Relevant Language Proficiency Level*⁵ includes only two word order problems: the pre- and postposition of attributive adjectives and the order of elements in negative statements, including the double negation characteristic for Slavic languages, cf. (9)-(9a). Both of these are listed at the beginner's level.

- (9) *Ja się nie denerwuję!*
I myself⁶ don't get nervous!
I don't get nervous!

- (9a) *Ja się nigdy nie denerwuję!*
I myself never don't get nervous!
I never get nervous!

The newest teaching standards publication, i.e. *Teaching Curricula for Polish as a Foreign Language*⁷ cannot really be considered as innovative when it comes to this matter. Although word order issues are now present throughout A2-C2 levels, the explicitly enumerated problems still concern nothing but attributive adjectives and negation, cf. table 1 on page 401.

Analyzing the content of the PFL curricula, we could come to the conclusion that the linear order of adjectives and of the elements forming a negative utterance are in fact the key word order problems in Polish language. And yet, we believe that there exists a considerable number of other issues, equally crucial for building correct and felicitous utterances, which have until now been completely or partly neglected in teaching programs.

We should also point out to the fact that the authors of CURRICULA (2011) do not generally relate word order issues to other grammatical problems. It seems surprising, considering that rules concerning linear order could easily have been presented in chapters dealing with the syntax of complex

⁵ *Standardy wymagań dla poszczególnych certyfikowanych poziomów zaawansowania znajomości języka polskiego jako obcego*, hence referred to as STANDARDS (2003).

⁶ Once again, the *się* pronoun being part of the verb *denerwować się* can hardly be interpreted as reflexive in this case.

⁷ *Programy nauczania języka polskiego jako obcego*, hence CURRICULA (2011).

Table 1. Word order issues included in *Teaching Curricula for PFL* (CURRICULA 2011)

Levels of language proficiency	Word order-related issues
A1	Not included
A2	Word order in negative structures, including double negation, cf. <i>Beata się nie denerwuje. Anna nic nie robi.</i> (p. 50)
B1	Pre- and postposition of attributive adjectives, cf. <i>dobry film, film fabularny</i> (p. 82)
B2	Pre- and postposition of attributive adjectives, cf. <i>dobra aktorka, aktorka filmowa</i> (p. 115) Word order in negative structures, including multiple negation, cf. <i>On się nie przejmuję! On się nigdy niczym nie przejmuję!</i> (p. 116)
C1	Pre- and postposition of attributive adjectives, cf. <i>nowy konsultant, konsultant generalny</i> (p. 152) Word order in negative structures, including multiple negation, cf. <i>Ja się nigdy nie znęcam nad żadnymi zwierzętami!</i> (p. 152)
C2	Pre- and postposition of attributive adjectives, cf. <i>nowo założone konsorcjum, konsorcjum naftowe</i> (p. 188) Word order in negative structures, including multiple negation, cf. <i>Ja się nie opowiadam za karą śmierci!</i> (p. 188)

sentences, where different conjunctions and relative pronouns each have their own linear properties and requirements. And yet, regardless of those properties, each type of subordinate clause is illustrated in CURRICULA (2011), using the same linear scheme, i.e. the subordinate clause following the main clause.

At the same time, both STANDARDS (2003) and CURRICULA (2011) state explicitly that foreigners should learn the rules of forming simple and complex sentences in Polish. It seems clear that such statements imply learning word order rules as an important part of the language acquisition process. We believe, however, that word order issues should be directly present in teaching curricula and explicitly related to a number of well-defined inflectional, syntactic and stylistic issues. As we can see from current publications, only the explicit presence of a grammatical skill in a national standard-setting publication guarantees that the skill will be included in schoolbooks and grammar exercises. It is by no means an accident that the most recent teaching materials concentrate on no other word order problem but the linear order of attributive adjectives⁸, i.e. the issue explicitly enumerated in STANDARDS (2003).

⁸ Cf. for ex. W. Śliwiński (1984), Z. Kaleta (1995: 244-246), E. Lipińska, E.G. Dąmbska (1997: 86-92), E. Bajor, E. Madej (1999: 171-173), M. Małolepszy, A. Szymkiewicz (2006:18), L. Madelska, M. Warchoł-Schlottmann (2008: 109-110).

Therefore, we strongly believe that PFL teaching curricula should be completed with standards and requirements for sentence structure and word order. Selecting those issues and relating them to different teaching levels remains a difficult task that needs to be discussed among language specialists. We present our view on this issue, which may hopefully become a starting point for further discussion.

CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING WORD ORDER PROBLEMS

Selecting issues to be included in teaching curricula needs proper criteria. We could imagine a list of word order problems selected on the basis of their difficulty level, which would be reflected statistically by the number of mistakes made by foreigners in their oral and written texts. This, however, seems to be impossible at the present stage of research on teaching PFL, as no such large corpus of student mistakes has been published or made available to the public. We must rely on (or, rather, be inspired by) partial studies, both teaching-oriented (A. Dąbrowska, M. Pasieka 2004, A. Dąbrowska 2004, M.M. Nowakowska 2004) and more theoretical (R. Laskowski 2009).

As we know, a significant number of mistakes made by foreigners stems from language interference. Even the simplest utterances may be affected by structuring habits ‘translated’ directly from the students’ mother tongue, such as in (10a) (an incorrect variation of the standard (10)), where the reflexive pronoun *się* was placed incorrectly after the particle *nie*, which is an exact reflection of the typical French word order presented in (10b):

- (10) *Ona się nie myje.*
She herself doesn't wash.
She doesn't wash herself.

(10a)* *Ona nie się myje.*

(10b) *Elle ne se lave pas.*

Therefore, we believe that the choice of word order problems included in teaching curricula should also be based on the contrastive criteria.

Taking a closer look at word order from the comparative perspective, we may notice that stylistic factors (the opposition of casual vs. official language), prosody (sentence stress and melody) and pragmatics (the opposition of old vs. new information), which all turn out to be crucial for the linear structure of Polish utterances, may not be so relevant in languages with more rigid word order rules. This important difference is actually the source of numerous mistakes, as foreigners tend to forget that purely syntactic factors may not be sufficient while thinking of sentence structure in Polish. On the other hand, trying to ap-

ply to Polish utterances the rigid syntactic rules of other languages, cf. for ex. the ‘verb in the second position’ rule in Germanic languages, may also lead to interference-triggered mistakes.

Adopting the contrastive perspective, we can see, for example, that negation problems, already included in teaching curricula, are indeed one of the most difficult ones when it comes to teaching word order to foreigners. First of all, sentences like (11) cannot be translated into Germanic or Roman languages using double or multiple negation, cf. (11a)-(11b).

- (11) *Ja się nigdy nie znęcam nad żadnymi zwierzętami!*
I myself⁹ never don't torture over no animals!
I never torture any animals.

(11a) Eng. **I never don't torture no animals.*

(11b) Fr. **Je ne suis pas jamais cruel envers aucun animal.*

Besides, negative structures in these languages tend to have a different order of elements, cf. (12) and (12a)-(12b).

- (12) *Nigdy nikomu tego nie dałem.*
Never [to] nobody this [I] didn't give.

(12a) **Never to nobody I gave it.*

(12b) *I never gave it to anybody.*

Following the contrastive criteria, we instantly notice a considerable number of other problems, whose difficulty becomes even more apparent as soon as we decide to compare the prosodic, syntactic and semantic rules of Polish with those of other languages. Therefore, we propose to adopt the comparative approach as our starting point and complete the teaching curricula with other word order issues, which have so far been neglected or omitted at different teaching stages, starting from the beginner's level. We present some of them in the section that follows, and illustrate each problem with authentic examples of mistakes made by our students. Our analysis is by no means exhaustive. It is rather a list of emerging problems, which we would like to consider as a starting point for further discussion on the content of PFL teaching programs and examination requirements.

⁹ A non-reflexive *się*.

THE POSITION OF SIĘ PRONOUN IN VERBAL STRUCTURES¹⁰

(13) *?Myślę, że kiedy ta kobieta była mała, ona dobrze uczyła się.*¹¹

The position of *się* in Polish utterances is one of the most complex and difficult word order problems. This issue, practically non-existent in teaching curricula¹², turns out to be very important for any foreigner trying to learn Polish.

Adopting a contrastive perspective, we may observe that the equivalents of *się* in other languages (i.e., the reflexive pronouns such as *myself, yourself...* in English, *me, te, se...* in French or Spanish, etc.) are subject to other, often more simple and clear rules. In many languages, Roman, Germanic or Slavic, it is enough to take into consideration their position relative to the verb. In French, for example, the so-called reflexive pronoun always precedes the verb (or the auxiliary), usually being placed directly in front of it, regardless of any syntactic transformations, cf. *Je m'appelle Jean, comment tu t'appelles?, comment t'appelles-tu?, je ne m'appelle pas Jean*. In Spanish, the reflexive pronoun is part of the infinitive, cf. *vestirse*, while the personal verb form is always preceded by a detached pronoun, cf. *Me visto*, except for the imperative forms, such as *Vístete!* In Russian, the reflexive element is always part of the verb form, be it a personal one or an infinitive, cf. *учиться, учусь, учишься, учится*. All of these rules are purely syntactic, relatively simple and exhaustive and concern nothing but the pronoun and the verb, whereas in Polish we must take into consideration the entire sentence structure, as the position of *się* depends on a wide range of factors of different nature. For example, one of the most important rules states that *się* may never occur in the initial position and is not likely to appear as the final element of the sentence containing elements other than the verb, both in the main and in the subordinate clause. In the following section, dealing with the methodology of teaching word order, we formulate and hierarchize some of linearization rules concerning *się*, relating them to communication situations and appropriate learning stages.

¹⁰ The problem of the linear position of *się* is obviously part of a larger word order issue, i.e. the position of so-called clitics (prepositions, negation particles, etc.) in the Polish sentence. We consider, however, that merging these topics would not be suitable for teaching purposes.

¹¹ Sentences marked with a “?” sign may not always be considered as definitely incorrect by all native speakers, but their word order is clearly either not very natural, not adopted to the pragmatic context or, as in the example (13), not complying with some basic syntactic rules.

¹² The list of grammatical requirements for B2 level mentions nothing but the functions of the *się* pronoun, such as 1) the reflexive function, cf. *przebiegam się*, and 2) the impersonal, cf. *Mówi się, że będzie krach gospodarczy* (CURRICULA 2011: 116). Note that the non-reflexive, non-impersonal type of *się* is not enumerated, and verbs like *przyglądać się* are interpreted as containing a reflexive pronoun.

THE POSITION OF ORDINAL NUMERALS RELATIVE TO THE NOUN

The use of numerals presents a double difficulty in Polish. First of all, we must remember that the context in which an ordinal or a cardinal numeral is used may differ from what the students are used to in their own languages. Secondly, rules governing the linear position of numerals in the Polish sentence may vary, depending on the type of numeral. Thus, the speaker must first make the right choice between a cardinal and an ordinal number, and then apply appropriate syntactic, semantic and pragmatic rules in order to form a correct sentence. Let us examine example (14), where the cardinal numeral *pięć* was erroneously used instead of the ordinal *piąta*:

- (14) **Pięć* godzina. *Słucham radia.*
Five hour. (I am) listening (to the) radio.
Five o'clock. I am listening to the radio.

As we know, the context in which cardinal and ordinal numerals appear in a sentence may vary from one language to another, cf. Pol. (*godzina*) *piąta* vs. Eng. *five o'clock*, Fr. *cinq heures*, Norw. *klokka fem*; Pol. *Jan Paweł drugi* vs. Fr. *Jean-Paul deux*, etc., which is already the source of numerous mistakes. In addition, in Polish, the choice of an ordinal often implies the possibility (or necessity) of postposing the numeral, cf. *Jest godzina piąta* rather than *Jest piąta godzina*¹³, whereas in many languages the position of numerals tends to be more fixed regardless of their type. In English and French, for example, they typically precede the noun, cf. *five o'clock*, *fifth avenue*; *cinq heures*, *cinquième enfant*, and the less frequent cases where the numeral is postpositional do not always coincide with the Polish rules, cf. Am. Eng. *January the fifth* vs. Pol. *piąty stycznia* and Fr. *le cinq janvier*.

What is more, the position of numerals in Polish may depend on many pragmatic and stylistic factors, such as the difference between formal and informal language or the opposition of old vs. new information, cf. the two acceptable versions: *piętro pierwsze/pierwsze piętro*. As we stated previously, such factors may not always be relevant in languages having a more fixed word order, cf. the only possible structure in English (*first floor*). In some cases, certain language units have a fixed word order, which can be explained by nothing but linguistic customs or traditions. Those structures may (cf. Pol. *lata sześćdziesiąte* and Fr. *les années soixante*), but do not have to comply with the word order of numerals and nouns in other languages, cf. Russ. *шестидесятие годы*.

¹³ Some native speakers would probably not consider the latter as clearly incorrect, but it remains a very colloquial and "inelegant" form, not advisable for those who begin to learn Polish as a foreign language.

THE WORD ORDER OF NOMINAL PHRASES CONTAINING A GENITIVE FORM

- (15) **Ten mężczyzna jest jogi mistrzem.*
This man is (a) yoga [Gen.] master.
This man is a yoga master / a master of yoga.

Foreigners tend to have problems with utterances containing a genitive form of the noun, especially in the case of nominal phrases consisting of two nouns, such as *mistrz jogi*. Difficulties result partly from the fact that the English nouns ending with -'s, which are the equivalent of the genitive form in Polish, always precede the governing noun, cf. *Maria's house*, whereas the genitive form of Polish nouns are typically postpositional, cf. *dom Marii*. In English, a "possession relation" may also not be marked explicitly with an -'s ending, but the syntactic rule does not change: the governed noun always precedes the governing one, cf. *skin type* vs. *typ skóry*, *emergency exit* vs. *wyjście bezpieczeństwa*, etc. Note that, in Polish, changing the word order of such nominal groups would lead to creating clearly incorrect (**bezpieczeństwa wyjście*) or doubtful lexical units (*?skóry typ*), and often cause a shift from a neutral or formal language into a very colloquial or childish style (cf. *Marii dom jest bardzo duży* vs. the neutral utterance, *Dom Marii jest bardzo duży*). Obviously, the problem discussed here does not concern another English equivalent of the Polish genitive structure, i.e. the prepositional clauses where the governed noun follows the governing one, cf. *słowa mądrości* and *words of wisdom*, etc.

THE ORDER OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS AND HONORIFIC FORMS

In many languages, such as for example English, French or Norwegian, the position of the personal pronoun relative to the verb is relatively fixed. In affirmative sentences, the pronoun precedes the main verb, and inversion is usually typical for interrogation, cf. *You have got a car. Have you got a car?* The position of the pronoun may also be conditioned by purely syntactic factors, such as the 'verb in second position' rule in some Germanic languages, cf. Norw. *Vi har et problem. Nå har vi et problem*. Certain lexical units may trigger inversion, cf. the change of pronoun position after *aussi* and *peut-être* in French: *Aussi viendra-t-il ce soir; Peut-être aura-t-elle quelque chose à dire*. The change of the linear structure of the verb and the personal pronoun may sometimes lead to stylistic changes (cf. for ex. the more literary inversion-type question *Est-il rentré?* and its colloquial equivalent with standard subject-verb structure, *Il est rentré?*), but this phenomenon is not likely to affect affirmative sentences. In Polish, however, where inversion-type questions do not exist and the pronoun is normally placed in front of the verb regardless of sentence type and its lexical content, it

is the pragmatic and stylistic factors that may affect the position of the pronoun. If the personal pronoun plays an anaphoric function, replacing a nominal phrase mentioned in the previous text, it is typically placed after the verb. In fact, in such contexts, subject-verb inversion (so common in Polish and non-existent or less frequent in many other languages) becomes practically obligatory in written formal texts, cf.

- (16) *Mikołaj Kopernik był astronomem.*
Nicolas Copernicus was (an) astronomer.
W latach 1473-91 mieszkał on w Toruniu, na ulicy św. Anny.
During (the) years 1473-91 lived he in Toruń, on street (of) St Anne.
Nicolas Copernicus was an astronomer. In 1473-91, he lived in Toruń, on St. Anne street.

Ignoring this rule (which is often the case in foreign student essays) produces an awkward stylistic effect, cf.

- (16a) *?Mikołaj Kopernik był astronomem. W latach 1473-91 on mieszkał w Toruniu, na ul. św. Anny.*

Another difficulty concerning subject-verb structures is connected with the use of polite forms of address, such as *pan*, *pani*, *panowie*, *panie* and *państwo*. Their equivalents, in languages such as English, French, German or Russian, have the same form and mostly follow the same syntactic and stylistic rules as typical pronouns, cf. Fr. *vous*, Eng. *you*, Rus. *вы*, Ger. *Sie*. In Polish, subject nouns like *pan*, *pani*... are typically postpositional to the verb, unlike their nominal and pronominal correspondents, cf. *Czy Jola przyjdzie na zebranie? Czy ona przyjdzie na zebranie?* vs. *Czy przyjdzie pani na zebranie?* Foreigners tend to produce sentences like (17) which, although they cannot be qualified as clearly incorrect, are not particularly felicitous in context, as the lack of subject-verb inversion leads to putting pragmatic stress on the subject.

- (17) *Czy pan ma zegarek?*

In the example (17) above, instead of producing a simple question, the speaker is saying something like ‘do you (yes, you, mister, and not somebody else) have a watch?’, which is certainly not the effect desired in most standard communication situations.

RELATIVE CLAUSES INTRODUCED BY THE PRONOUN **KTÓRY**

In Polish, the relative pronoun *który* (‘which, who’) introducing a subordinate clause is subject to rigid linearization rules. It is always placed in front of the subordinate clause, cf. *chłopak, którego znasz*, and may never be omitted,

unlike the relative pronoun in other languages, cf. Eng. *the boy (whom) you know* or Norw. *gutten (som) du kjenner*. It may be preceded by a preposition, cf. *książka, o której opowiadasz* (lit. (the) book **about** which you are talking) which is never placed at the end, cf. the clearly incorrect Polish phrase **książka, której opowiadasz o*, and the perfectly natural structures typical for Germanic languages, cf. Eng. *the book you are talking about* or Norw. *boken du snakker om*. In Polish, rules governing the use of relative pronouns are hierarchized, and in this case, the most important one states that the preposition must always precede the nominal phrase. The rules we are describing turn out to be quite rigid even compared to other Slavic languages. In Russian, for example, it is possible to place the relative pronoun *który* after the **noun** governing its case¹⁴, cf. *инструмент, использование которого может изменить ситуацию* (lit. 'Instrument (the) use of which may change (the) situation'); *этап, к реализации которого мы приступили в этом учебном году* (lit. '(The) Stage to the **realization** of which we came in this academic year'). In Polish, such structures must follow the rule stating that the relative pronoun *który* precedes the governing noun, cf. *narzędzie, którego wykorzystanie może zmienić sytuację; etap, do którego praktycznej realizacji przystąpiliśmy w tym roku szkolnym*.

The linear order of relative clauses in Polish is a perfect example of hierarchized rules. Those on the lower hierarchy level may not be applicable if contradicted by a more important one. In the case of our relative phrase *etap, do którego realizacji przystąpiliśmy*, four hierarchized rules must be taken into consideration:

- 1) The relative clause (*którego realizacji przystąpiliśmy*) is placed after the nominal phrase it applies to (*etap*).
- 2) The preposition (*do*) must be placed in front of the nominal phrase it introduces.
- 3) The relative pronoun *który* is placed on top of the relative clause and may only be preceded by a preposition.
- 4) The noun in genitive is usually placed after the governing noun, cf. *realizacja etapu*. As we can see, only the first three rules influence the linear structure of the analyzed phrase. Rule no. 4) is not only the weakest one, but also contradicts rule 3) and therefore is not applicable here.

THE BASIC RULES OF TEACHING WORD ORDER TO FOREIGNERS

The list of word order related issues presented above is by no means exhaustive. Many problems have not been discussed here due to the limited size of this paper,

¹⁴ As we know, relative pronouns in Polish and Russian are subject to declension just like adjectives, varying in gender, number and case.

cf. for ex. the very complex problem of adjective position, the order of personal pronouns, or the well-known and still not sufficiently described problem of old vs. new information (traditionally called theme-rheme, topic-focus, etc.). Others are yet to be identified, described and analyzed in a contrastive way. What is certain, however, is that the existing teaching curricula need to be enlarged to include linearization rules, which have so far been omitted or neglected for most part.

As we know, implementing an effective and coherent teaching method turns out to be just as important as the right choice of teaching problems. Let us recall what we consider to be the basic rules for teaching word order in Polish:

- (1) Word order problems need to be enumerated explicitly in teaching curricula, becoming part of examination standards and student book chapters.
- (2) Linearization issues need to be related to communication situations, lexical fields and grammar rules presented at different levels.
- (3) As a result of (1) and (2), linearization exercises should appear explicitly at all learning stages, becoming as important part of the lesson as reading, writing, listening or speaking exercises.
- (4) Word order rules must be presented in a clear and coherent way, taking into consideration their hierarchized nature and the fact that rules placed lower in the hierarchy may be overwritten by those placed above.
- (5) If possible, the teacher should be aware of the differences between the students' mother tongue and the rules of Polish language, drawing their attention to problems resulting from language interference. Adopting a contrastive perspective may be of great help both to the students and the teachers trying to understand the source of their difficulties.
- (6) Word order issues should be introduced starting from the very early stages of education and then systematically repeated at higher levels, following the spiral method.

Let us illustrate those rules with a basic and practical example already mentioned above, i.e. the use of *się* pronoun. According to our proposal, word order issues should be presented starting from the beginner's level. While introducing themselves (*Nazywam się Jan Kowalski / My name is Jan Kowalski*) and talking about their daily routine (*Zwykle budzę się o 7.00 / I usually wake up at 7.00*), the students should already get acquainted with two rules: 1) the *się* pronoun may not be placed at the beginning of a sentence or a subordinate clause, 2) *się* does not usually appear at the end of a sentence or a subordinate clause. Rule no. 2 does not apply to cases where a sentence consists of only two elements, i.e. the verb and the *się* pronoun, cf. *Kąpię się (I'm taking a bath)*. The students also need to understand that those rules are hierarchized: the first one stating that *się* may never appear in front of a sentence or a clause is stronger than the second one¹⁵, which becomes evident in short sentences like *Nie przeszkadzaj, uczę się!*

¹⁵ At such early stages of education, we will obviously not mention the poetic experiments, such as Edward Stachura's "Się".

(*Don't disturb me, I am studying*) or *Co robisz? – Kąpię się* (*What are you doing? – Taking a bath*). Let us note that this approach allows us to explain the problem in a clear and simple way and dissipate the natural doubts concerning the position of *się* in the two phrases the students usually learn during the first lessons: *Jak się nazywasz?* (vs. **Jak nazywasz się?*) – *Nazywam się Jacek Kamiński* (vs. **Się nazywam Jacek Kamiński*). Word order issues are introduced explicitly during the lesson and related to some basic communication situations (making the first contact, describing your daily routine). Simple drill and intonation exercises ('put the *się* pronoun in the right place', 'listen and repeat the sentences you hear', etc.) could then follow, becoming part of the lesson. The two basic linearization rules should then be revised and recalled during further learning stages.

As we stated above, intonation patterns, sentence prosody and stylistic nuances turn out to be crucial for building correct and natural sentences in Polish. As some linearization rules are not purely grammatical, but rather phonetic, it is important to expose the students to a diversified sample of different linear orders possible (be it presented by the teacher or recorded), drawing their attention to the differences triggered by the change of word order and the fact that the stress may be put on different elements of the utterance. Unfortunately, teaching materials for learning phonetic clusters, sentence intonation and stress are still almost non-existent. On the other hand, theoretical analyses presented by structural linguists who reflect on all the different permutations possible, cf. Derwojedowa 2000, are of little use for teaching purposes.

The need for such materials becomes particularly evident at a more advanced level, where the students should get acquainted with structures where *się* precedes the verb, cf. (18)-(21). Such a preposition is always possible in sentences containing a modal verb *musieć*, *móc*, *chcieć*, *powinien* (resp. must/have to, can/be able to, want, should), as in the examples below:

- (18) *Muszę się spotkać z Krystyną.*
I must meet Krystyna.
- (19) *W tej kawiarni możesz się napić dobrej kawy.*
In this cafe, you can get good coffee.
- (20) *Chcę się tobą opiekować.*
I want to take care of you.
- (21) *Powinno się ich zaprosić na kolację.*
They should get invited for dinner.

In other contexts, however, placing the *się* pronoun directly in front of the verb may lead to creating grammatically and stylistically doubtful sentences, cf. (22):

- (22) *?Etymologia się zajmuje badaniem słów.*
Etymology deals with examining words.

In such cases, the position of *się* is not dependent on some clear syntactic rule, but rather on a number of prosodic and stylistic factors, still awaiting a thorough analysis.

FINAL REMARKS

As we have shown, word order rules are a very important, yet somehow neglected part of teaching Polish as a foreign language. The existing teaching curricula and examination requirements need to be extended to include issues concerning sentence structure and linearization rules. This, however, turns out to be a very difficult task, due to the lack of appropriate practical materials and theoretical background. The existing theoretical works are usually not applicable to teaching purposes, as the rules presented are often not hierarchized and not clear enough to be introduced during the lessons. Practical teaching materials, on the other hand, usually do not concentrate much on (or simply ignore) word order issues. This applies to grammar books for foreigners, student textbooks and other materials. The lack of teaching aids is even more evident when it comes to teaching stress, prosody and intonation patterns. The existing materials are a good basis for drill-type pronunciation exercises, but could hardly be used for presenting the different possible linear schemes of Polish utterances, each pronounced with a different intonation and/or stress. We hope that this paper may open the way for a further discussion among teaching specialists and linguists, with the aim of creating a coherent set of curricula content, examination requirements and, most importantly, appropriate teaching materials related to word order problems.

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