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Prepositional phrases used instead of morphologically marked Genitive or Dative (on the basis of the north-eastern dialects of Polish, colloquial German and English)

Wyrażenia przyimkowe używane zamiast morfologicznie wyrażanego dopełniacza i celownika (na podstawie północno-wschodnich gwar języka polskiego, potocznego języka niemieckiego i angielskiego)

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Summary

The article discusses selected examples of the interplay between prepositional phrases and morphologically marked cases (Genitive and Dative). Section One briefly introduces the concept of prepositions on the basis of data from Polish and English. Prepositions in the two languages show similarities and differences. Because Polish prepositions assign cases, further analogies are drawn between Polish and German (which, similarly to English, is a Germanic language). Section Two focuses on the replacement of Dative with the preposition *dla* 'for' governing Genitive, which phenomenon is characteristic of the north-eastern dialects of Polish in Podlasie (especially in the area of Białystok and Suwałki) and in the Eastern Borderlands. In the same local dialects of Polish, the reverse tendency has been observed. It results in the replacement of *dla* + Genitive with the Dative case (due to hypercorrectness). The interplay between the two cases is also observable in colloquial German, in which morphologically signalled Genitive is replaced with the preposition *von* 'from' + Dative. The phenomenon is illustrated in Section Three. Finally, Section Four discusses the overlap between Genitive, Dative, and prepositional phrases in other structures in German and English.

Streszczenie

Artykuł omawia wybrane przykłady wzajemnych współzależności między wyrażeniami przyimkowymi i przypadkami (dopełniacz i celownik), które są wyrażane morfologicznie. Sekcja Pierwsza zwięźle zaznacza Czytelnika z koncepcją przyimków na podstawie danych z polskiego i angielskiego. Przyimki w obu językach wykazują podobieństwa i różnice. Ponieważ w języku polskim, przyimki rządzą przypadkami, dalsze analogie dotyczą języka polskiego i niemieckiego (który podobnie do angielskiego jest językiem germańskim). Sekcja Druga skupia się na zastępowaniu celownika wyrażeniem z przyimkiem *dla*, który rządzi dopełniaczem. Zjawisko to jest charakterystyczne dla północno-wschodnich gwar języka polskiego na Podlasiu (szczególnie w okolicach Białegostoku i Suwałk) i Kresach Wschodnich. W tych samych gwarach języka polskiego zaobserwowano odwrotną tendencję. Przejawia się ona tym, że konstrukcja *dla* + dopełniacz jest zastępowana morfologicznie wyrażanym celownikiem (z powodu hiperpoprawności). Wzajemne oddziaływanie obu przypadków jest także dostrzegalne w potocznym niemieckim, w którym morfologicznie wyrażany dopełniacz jest zastępowany wyrażeniem przyimkowym z *von* 'od, z' + celownik. Zjawisko to jest omówione w Sekcji Trze-

ciej. W Sekcji Czwartej przytoczone zostały dalsze przykłady wzajemnych podobieństw i różnic między wyrażeniami z dopełniaczem, celownikiem i przyimkami w niemieckim i angielskim.

Key words:

prepositions, Genitive, Dative, north-eastern dialects of Polish, colloquial German, English, Podlasie

Słowa kluczowe:

przyimki, dopełniacz, celownik, północno-wschodnie gwary języka polskiego, potoczny język niemiecki, angielski, Podlasie

1. Introduction

Prepositions have several different functions, of which the main is to show the relationship between other elements in the phrase. One of the difficulties they pose is that the same relationships can be conveyed by means of different prepositions, e.g. *in the morning*, *on Monday morning*, *at night* (Swan 2005, 425). In the context of language variation, another difficulty is that some instances of such uses are language- or dialect-specific. Consequently, not always there is a one-to-one correspondence between languages, or language variants. To compare, consider the following examples from English and their Polish translations:

Eng. *in the morning* - Pol. *rano*, *rankiem*, *nad ranem*, *nad rankiem*, *z ran(k)a*, *o poranku*,
 Eng. *on Monday morning* - Pol. *poniedziałkowym (po)rankiem*, *w poniedziałkowy (po)ranek*,
 Eng. *at night* - Pol. *nocą*, *w nocy*.

While the English examples are all prepositional phrases, some of the Polish equivalents are nominal phrases¹, e.g. *rano*, *rankiem*, *poniedziałkowym porankiem*, *nocą*. What is noteworthy is that such nominal phrases

in Polish are always in an oblique case. Similarly, all prepositions in Polish govern oblique cases (Bąk 1979, 165). In other words, Polish prepositions govern neither Nominative nor Vocative². Another issue is that the Polish preposition *w* (e.g. *w poniedziałkowy ranek*, *w poniedziałkowy poranek*, *w nocy*), which is typically rendered as 'in' has other equivalents in the given English examples, that is *on* and *at* (e.g. *on Monday morning*, *at night*).

Customarily, it is assumed that when a given language allows a variation between synonymous expressions without prepositions (e.g. *rano*, *rankiem*) and with prepositions (e.g. *nad ranem*, *z rana*), the latter convey the message more precisely. In some cases, the use of prepositions is inevitable and there is no alternative construction without them:

iść wzdłuż drogi 'to go **along** the road', *rosnąć wzdłuż drogi* 'to grow **along** the road',
iść przy drodze 'to go **by** the road', *rosnąć przy drodze* 'to grow **by** the road(side)',
iść drogą X 'to take / go the road X' but not **rosnąć drogą*³ (the asterisk is used to show that the phrase is incorrect).

The similarity between English and Polish prepositions is that they: (a) are typically short (they are one- or two-syllables long)⁴, (b) have one form (they are indeclinable), (c) cannot be used independently⁵ (they are always a part of a phrase; however, they link words that can stand on their own). Further examples, which are: *a dog with long ears*, *wait for me*, *go for a walk*, *green with envy*, *more than an hour*, illustrate that the elements linked by a preposition may be different parts of speech / belong to different syntactic units. This is what distinguishes them from conjunctions, which join elements belonging to the same category (one word- or multi-word phrases, or clauses)⁶.

The difference between English and Polish prepositions is their syntactic position. In Polish, the preposition always precedes the element it governs and always ta-

1 In some cases, the reverse is true about the two languages. For example, prepositions are not used before common English expressions of time beginning with *next*, *last*, *this*, *that*, *one*, *every*, *each*, *some*, *all*, etc. (Swan 2005, 432). However, the Polish equivalents of *next / last* and *this / that* + time expression invariably contain a preposition. Compare the following examples: *See you next Monday* 'Do zobaczenia w przyszły poniedziałek', *The meeting is this Tuesday* 'Spotkanie jest w ten wtorek'.

2 The generalisation is also true for German, in which the prepositions never take Nominative (Stocker 2012, 93).

3 The examples show also that variants with and without prepositions are restricted by the verb choice. In other words, some verbs, for instance, very common and general verbs of movement such as *go*, *come*, *return*, may be used without prepositions in certain expressions, e.g.: *Let's go home* 'Chodźmy do domu', *He could not return home* 'Nie mógł wrócić do domu'. In fact, *home* in such cases is analysed as an adverb (OALD, *home adverb*). However, the same contexts with the noun *school* involve the use of the preposition *to*: *Let's go to school* 'Chodźmy do szkoły', *He could not return to school* 'Nie mógł wrócić do szkoły' (see Swan 2005, 433).

4 Another classification of prepositions in Polish divides them into primary prepositions such as *dla*, *ku*, *na*, *w*, and secondary prepositions, which are combinations of primary prepositions, such as *zza*, *poprzez*, *sponad*, *naokoło* (Bąk 1979, 165).

5 One of the reasons is that prepositions overlap cross-linguistically with adverbs. For example, *dookoła* is a preposition in *Bral udział w wyścigu dookoła Polski*, but an adverb in *Dzieci otoczyły go dookoła* (Sinielnikoff 1964, 135). Similarly, *before* is a preposition in *before lunch* (OALD, *before preposition*), but an adverb in *We've met before* (OALD, *before adverb*); *around* is a preposition in *He put his arms around her* (OALD, *around preposition*), but can be analysed as an adverb in *She arrived around five o'clock* (OALD, *around adverb*). The latter example is similar to (*at*) + *about* + *time expression*, which can be used with or without the preposition *at*. The latter possibility is restricted to an informal style (Swan 2005, 433).

6 What is interesting is that, similarly to prepositions and adverbs, the former overlap with conjunctions. For example, *after* is a preposition in *after lunch*, but a conjunction in *after I have eaten lunch*. Similarly, *before*, *until*, *since*.

kes the first position within the phrase⁷ (in terms of linear order). In English, the preposition can come at the end of certain structures, especially in an informal style⁸.

Many nouns, verbs and adjectives are used with particular prepositions. Because such collocations are language specific, they cannot be guessed but need to be learnt as a whole. There are, however, some peculiar overlaps between different languages. For instance, in both Polish and German, the Accusative case is used after some verbs indicating (completed or non-continuous) movement forward or toward something, whereas other cases are used with verbs indicating either continuity of the action, or state verbs⁹:

Pol. *Helikopter przyleciał / wznosił się nad miasto.* (*nad* + Accusative), but
 Pol. *Helikopter przeleciał / wznosił się / znajdował się / był nad miastem.* (*nad* + Instrumental),
 Ger. *Der Hubschrauber flog über die Stadt.* ‘The helicopter flew over the town (...on its way to somewhere else)’ (*über* + Accusative),
 Ger. *Der Hubschrauber flog über der Stadt.* ‘The helicopter was flying above the town (...hovering or searching)’ (*über* + Dative). (The German examples are taken from Stocker 2012, 103).

In contexts which do not refer to movement forward or toward something, the Instrumental case is sometimes replaced with Locative¹⁰ in Polish, whereas in German the prepositions that indicate where something is or where something is happening take the Dative case.

In regard to cases in both languages, it is interesting to note that two opposite tendencies can be detected in the distribution of Genitive and Dative. In the north-eastern dialects of Polish, morphologically marked Dative is replaced with the preposition *dla* ‘for’ + Genitive, whereas in colloquial German, morphologically marked Genitive is replaced with the preposition *von* ‘from’ + Dative. Both phenomena can be analysed in terms of case syncretism, which is a common linguistic development in the daughter languages of Proto-Indo-European. The term denotes that cases which were originally separate from each other and distinguishable by their endings were subsumed into a single ending. The result of merging cases is that “within one and the same paradigm, not all cases are formally different from each other in all numbers” (Meier-Brügger 2003, 264). What is also interesting in both phenomena is that morphological case-marking is replaced with periphrastic (i.e. syntactic) constructions with prepositions. The nouns following, respectively, *dla* and *von* take the cases typically assigned by the two prepositions.

2. *dla* ‘for’ + Genitive in the north-eastern dialects of Polish

The most characteristic syntactic feature of the local dialects of Polish in Podlasie (especially in the area of Białystok and Suwałki) and in the Eastern Borderlands (the so called *Kresy Wschodnie*) is the use of *dla* ‘for’ with the Genitive case. Some typical examples include prepositional phrases presented in Table 1 and the sentences below Table 1. The periphrastic construction replaces Dative in contexts of various

Polish dialects in Podlasie	general Polish	translation
<i>mówilim dla babci,</i> <i>mówił dla ojca,</i> <i>mówił dla żony</i> <i>podziękuj dla taty,</i> <i>podziękował dla niej</i> <i>powiedz dla pani ‘dzień dobry’</i> <i>życzę dla was</i> <i>dla nas by to odpowiadało</i>	<i>mówiliśmy babci</i> <i>mówił ojcu,</i> <i>mówił żonie</i> <i>podziękuj tacie,</i> <i>podziękował jej</i> <i>powiedz pani ‘dzień dobry’</i> <i>życzę wam</i> <i>nam by to odpowiadało</i>	(we) told (our) grandma (he) told (his) father (he) told (his) wife thank (your) father, (he) thanked her say ‘good morning’ to the lady (I) wish you (pl.) it would suit us
Table 1. Prepositional phrases containing <i>dla</i> + Genitive and their general Polish equivalents. Based on Karaś (2019a, 2019b), translations added.		

7 In other words, in Polish, prepositions (a) are followed by elements that decline (nouns, pronouns, also adjectives, participles and numerals used as nouns) and (b) assign case to such elements. In fact, the Polish equivalent to the term *preposition*, which is *przyimek* (*przy* + *imię*), encodes the mentioned characteristic: prepositions in Polish always precede their complements, and the complements belong to the category *imię* (which, in a broad sense, denotes any word that declines; SJP, *imię*).

8 In English, a more standard variant of preposition placement is next to its complement (which is called pied-piping), e.g. *About what are you thinking?* However, a preposition can be placed apart from the noun phrase it belongs to, usually after it (which is called preposition stranding), e.g. *What are you thinking about?* (Hejná and Walkden 2022, 145-146). The preposition may stay at the end of the clause not only in *wh*-questions, but also relative structures: *Joe’s the person that I’m angry with*, passives: *She likes to be looked at*, and infinitive structures: *The village is pleasant to live in* (Swan 2005, 452). In German there are a few postpositions that are usually placed after the phrase they belong to: *Der Straße entlang stand eine Reihe parkender Autos* (DWDS, *entlang*) ‘There was a row of parked cars along the road’ (lit. ‘A row of parked cars stood along the road’).

9 German has only four cases: Nominative, Genitive, Dative and Accusative. Polish has seven cases: Nominative, Genitive, Dative, Accusative, Instrumental, Locative and Vocative, of which the latter is recessive. The present-day differences between various daughter languages of Proto-Indo-European are explainable against a broader historical perspective. In Latin, Instrumental and Locative merged together with Ablative and are known as Ablative. In Greek, the Proto-Indo-European Instrumental and Locative cases merged to form the Dative, whereas the Ablative was subsumed in the Genitive (Meier-Brügger 2003, 264).

10 Cf., *Pierścionek wkłada się na palec* (*na* + Accusative), but *Pierścionek jest na palcu* (*na* + Locative), see Bąk (1979, 165).

meanings, for example, after verbs which in general Polish take Dative (Karaś 2019b). In the majority of such examples, the Dative case indicates the object of the verb.

Dla mnie to tak prawie wszystko podobało się. ‘In my opinion almost everything was ok. / I liked almost everything.’

Jak to dla was wytłumaczyć? ‘How can I explain it to you?’

Dla siostry powodzi się. ‘(My) sister is successful.’

Pomożcie dla mnie z wody wyciągnąć ten kosz. ‘Help me take the basket out of the water.’

Przyglądała się dla mnie. ‘(She) looked at me.’

Zaufał dla Adama. ‘(He) trusted Adam.’

Opowiedział dla nas zebranych o swojej pracy. ‘(He) told all of us who gathered about his work.’

Dziękuję dla was wszystkich. ‘(I) thank you all.’

(Examples from Karaś 2019b, translations added)

Karaś (2019b) explains that the construction is characteristic of not only the north-eastern local dialects of Polish, but also the language of the intelligentsia in Białystok. In other words, the construction is analysed as a clear example of one of the regionalisms in Białystok. Karaś (2019b) provides two hypotheses about the spread of *dla* + Genitive. One is that the construction is a result of linguistic divergence¹¹ (the tendency of daughter languages to become dissimilar). The other is due to case syncretism. The Dative case is avoided in the area, because its two endings, *-u* and *-owi*, are no longer unambiguous, cf. *temu człowieku*, *daj to Adamu*, as opposed to *temu człowiekowi*, *daj to Adamowi* in general Polish.

Moreover, Karaś (2019b) notes that the reverse tendency leads to hypercorrectness and results in the replacement of *dla* + Genitive with morphologically marked Dative, even in constructions in which Dative is neither native nor common (in general Polish). Sometimes the replacement is motivated by syntactic calques from Slavic languages of the East group (Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian). The examples are presented in Table 2.

3. *von* ‘from’ + Dative in colloquial German

According to Stocker (2012, 6-8), the morphologically marked Genitive case is recessive in colloquial German where it is replaced with Dative (often preceded by *von*). In general, Genitive indicates possession and is used to answer the question *whose?*: *Das ist das Büro meines Vaters* ‘That’s my father’s office’, and after certain prepositions, for example: *trotz des Wetters* ‘despite the weather’. Even in such stronghold contexts¹², “[c]olloquial German often prefers the dative (often after *von*) both to indicate possession and after prepositions: *das Büro von meinem Vater*[,] *trotz dem Wetter*” (Stocker 2012, 7). Moreover, there are contexts in which Genitive does not occur even in formal German. For example, it is not possible with personal pronouns, hence *ein Freund von mir* ‘a friend of mine’. In fact, personal pronouns do not have Genitive forms, and in the synonymous phrase *mein Freund* ‘my friend’, the form *mein* is a possessive determiner / possessive pronoun. Further, Genitive cannot be used if the noun is not accompanied by a determiner to mark the case, especially when the attribute is plural. Since **der Verkauf Häuser* is not clear, the relationship between *der Verkauf* and *Häuser* is rendered by *der Verkauf von Häusern* ‘the sale of houses’. Last but not least, Genitive is not used twice in the consecutive genitive noun phrases. For example, the first Genitive in *Sie streiten sich wegen des neuen Spielzeugs von ihrem Bruder* ‘They’re arguing about her brother’s new toy’ is marked morphologically (*des neuen Spielzeugs*), the other Genitive is marked by means of periphrasis (*von ihrem Bruder*).

Sentence beginnings	Polish dialects in Podlasie	general Polish
<i>Sprawa zrozumiała...</i> ‘The case clear...’	<i>czytelniku/ czytelnikowi</i>	<i>dla czytelnika</i> ‘to the reader’
<i>Książka jest przeznaczona...</i> ‘The book is intended...’	<i>bratu</i>	<i>dla brata</i> ‘for (my) brother’
<i>Te listy były ważne...</i> ‘The letters were important...’	<i>pisarce</i>	<i>dla pisarki</i> ‘for the writer’
<i>Wykonanie tej pracy jest możliwe...</i> ‘Completing the work is possible...’	<i>niektórym ludziom</i>	<i>dla niektórych ludzi</i> ‘for some people’
<i>Jaką książkę mogłaby pani poradzić jako prezent...</i> ‘What book can you recommend as a present...’	<i>ośmioletniemu dziecku?</i>	<i>dla ośmioletniego dziecka?</i> ‘for an eight-year child?’

Table 2. Hypercorrect use of morphologically marked Dative in Podlasie and the equivalents with *dla* + Genitive in general Polish. Based on Karaś (2019b), translations added.

11 Linguistic divergence is the process through which a common parent language splits into two or more local dialects, as a result of either geographical, social, political or historical reasons. Here, the term is used as the opposite of linguistic convergence. Language convergence is a linguistic change in which languages or dialects come to resemble one another structurally, either as a result of language contact or mutual interference, even if they do not share the same ancestor.

12 Cf. Polish equivalents: *To jest biuro mojego ojca* (Genitive), and *mimo pogody* (Genitive).

The German equivalent to *at* + noun in Genitive is the preposition *bei*²⁴ ‘with’ + Dative (but *zu* ‘to’ + Dative in the case of verbs of movement):

Er wohnt bei seinen Großeltern. ‘He lives with his grandparents’
Essen wir bei dir? ‘Shall we eat at your house?’
Gehen wir zu dir? ‘Shall we go to your house?’
 (Stocker 2012, 98).

5. Summary and conclusions

Structurally, some prepositions may overlap with adverbs and conjunctions, e.g. *before* and *after*. Unlike adverbs, prepositions cannot function independently. Because they always occur within a phrase, their main role is to show the relationship between other elements in the phrase. Unlike conjunctions, they may link elements belonging to different syntactic units, e.g. *go for a walk*. Sometimes the same relationship is conveyed by means of different prepositions, or even without them - by means of nominal phrases in an oblique case. In languages such as Polish or German, prepositions assign cases. For example, Polish *dla* ‘for’ governs Genitive. German *von* ‘from’ governs Dative. What is of interest in the two languages is that their variants show a tendency to replace the morphologically marked cases with periphrastic (i.e. syntactic) constructions with prepositions. Hence, *dla* + Genitive replaces Dative in local dialects in Podlasie, whereas *von* + Dative replaces Genitive in colloquial German. It seems that both phenomena are driven by case syncretism. In Podlasie, the use of the prepositional phrase with *dla* is less ambiguous than the use of morphologically marked Dative, which can be signalled by means of two endings. In German, the use of the preposition *von* is in some cases the only available option to indicate possession, and hence the periphrasis systematically spreads and replaces morphologically marked Genitive in its other domains.

The two linguistic phenomena are further similar because the prepositions (governing particular cases) used in phrases do not seem to be coincidental. In general, among the most common prepositions, the ones governing Genitive in Polish outnumber those taking Dative (with the ratio 11:3; own calculations based on the list of prepositions in Bąk 1979, 164-165). In German, the opposite is true - prepositions governing Dative outnumber the ones taking Genitive (with the ratio 9:4; own calculations based on the list of prepositions in Stocker 2012, 97, 108). Since German has only three oblique cases, it is not surprising that among them, Accusative and Dative are most common after prepositions (Stocker 2012, 93). It is even more so, because both cases can be governed by the same prepositions: the choice between Accusative or Dative depends on the type of the

verb, which either indicates movement forward or toward something, or not.

Another interesting linguistic development presented in the article is the tendency to “correct” or “undo” the changes that have taken place in the local dialects in Podlasie. It results in replacing *dla* + Genitive with morphologically marked Dative. The reversal, however, does not affect the new structures that have emerged, but the old ones in which the Dative case in general Polish is neither native nor common. It has been suggested that in some cases, the change is motivated by language convergence.

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14 Cf. Polish *u*, French *chez*, Danish / Swedish / Norwegian *hos* (Swan 2005, 225).