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PRONOMINAL EVIDENCE IN SLAVIC AND THE MEANING OF CASES

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Pronouns, in contrast to the other part-of-speech categories traditionally distinguished in the IE languages (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and even prepositions) are characterized by the absence of lexical content[1]. Therefore, they are the best representatives of purely grammatical meaning, and their different forms can be regarded as legitimate indicators of possible differences in that meaning.

In a footnote to his 1936 classic on case meaning *Beitrag zur allgemeinen Kasuslehre,* Jakobson suggests that the various morphemic oppositions observed in the forms of pronouns denote **semantic** differences. He mentions three such differences in Slavic signaled by the formal, morphemic oppositions in Slavic pronouns: a) the difference 'animate' versus 'inanimate' manifested through the opposition of *k* and *č* in the declension paradigm of the Russian pronouns *kto*-N.Sg 'who' and *čto*-N. Sg. 'what'; b) the difference in the grammatical category of person indicated through the opposition of the Russian *ja* 'I' versus *ty* 'you (sg)', and *on* 'he', etc., and c), most significant for the discussion to follow, the difference in the grammatical category of case with respect to the case's 'relatedness' to a preposition, manifested in the *j- /n'-* morphemic opposition in the third person Slavic pronouns (Jakobson 1936/1995:535, footnote 17, emphasis added):

(1)   'The pronouns, which, in contrast to the other parts of speech, express not real but formal meaning in their root morpheme, often denote by their root morpheme such semantic differences as are otherwise conveyed as morphological or syntactic oppositions: on the one hand, the categories of animacy and inanimacy (opposition of the root morphemes *k* and *č: kto* [N] [who] and *čto* [N] [what], *kogo* [G] [whose] and *čego* [G] [of what], etc.), of person (*ja* [I], *ty* [you (sg.)], *on* [he]) and, on the other hand, in highly unusual fashion **the opposition of relatedness versus unrelatedness to a prepositional construction, which is consistently expressed in third person pronouns by the distinction *n'* versus *j*:** *nego-jego, nemu-jemu* [he], *neë-jeë* [she], and so forth.'

1. PREPOSITIONLESS AND PREPOSITIONAL FORMS OF PRONOUNS. In case languages such as Polish or Russian, the grammatical category of case manifests itself in discourse (i.e. in actual usage) under two forms: a form without a preposition, in cognitivist case semantics referred to as *prepositionless case* (also known as 'morphological' or 'synthetic' case) and a form representing a combination of a preposition and a case-marked category, known as *prepositional case* (sometimes also referred to as 'analytical' case). In the

casual paradigm of both Polish and Russian, third person pronouns (*on, ona, ono, oni, one* in Polish) have two contrasting morphological forms, the *j*-form and the *n'*-form, which are in complementary distribution: the *j*-form is found in prepositionless uses of a given case (such as the prepositionless adnominal genitive in **jego**-G. *ojciec* 'his father'), and the *n'*-form occurs in preposition+case combinations, such as the prepositional genitive with *do* 'to' in *Idę **do niego**-G.* 'I am going to him'. The difference between the prepositionless *j*-forms and the prepositional *n'*-forms is illustrated by the uses of the Polish third person masculine pronoun *on* 'he' quoted in (2).

(2)   Prepositionless **j-forms**:   Prepositional **n'-forms**:
          G. **jego** 'his'   do/do/z ... + **niego** 'to/from/of...him'
          D. **jemu** 'him'   ku/wbrew... + **niemu** 'to/against...him'
          A. **jego** 'him'   przez/w/na..+ **niego** 'by/in/on.... him'

The complete declensional paradigm for the third person pronouns in Polish is reproduced in Table 1.

     As shown by the examples in (2) and the pronominal paradigm in Table 1, the distribution of the *j*- and *n'*- forms in the third person pronouns in Polish is very systematic, the two pronominal forms corresponding almost perfectly to the prepositionless and the prepositional uses of the Polish cases[2].

2. SEMANTIC DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PREPOSITIONLESS AND PREPOSITIONAL CASES. On the assumption that a difference in form indicates a difference in meaning (an assumption which underlies the research of both Jakobson and the contemporary cognitivist semanticists such as Langacker, Rudzka-Ostyn, and Janda), the systematic *j*-/*n'*- opposition in Slavic pronouns suggests that there is a semantic difference between the prepositionless and the prepositional forms of a given case. In terms of grammar, the difference between the two forms of case can be attributed to the formal (structural) opposition between two categories belonging to two different grammatical levels: the morphological category of a word, represented by prepositionless case, and the syntactic category of a phrase, represented by prepositional case. In terms of the semantics [i.e. the underlying mental representation] of the case-marked elements, the *j*-/*n'*- opposition in the pronominal paradigm indicates a distinction in meaning between a case-marked bare noun and the same case-marked noun used in a prepositional phrase. That means, to give a practical example, that the speaker's conceptualization (mental representation) of the accusative-marked lexical item *tydzień* 'a week' in (3)a is not identical to the conceptualization of the same, accusative-marked noun in (3)b:

(3) a. Pracował tam **tydzień**-Acc. (prepositionless accusative)
          He worked there **a week**.
     b. Pracował tam **przez tydzień**-Acc. (prepositional accusative)
          He worked there **for a week**.

		Masculine	Neuter	Feminine
Singular	N.	on	ono	ona
	G.	jego, go, niego		jej, niej
	D.	jemu, mu, niemu		jej, niej
	A.	jego, go, niego	je, nie	ją, nią
	I.	nim		nią
	L.	(o) nim		(o) niej
		Masculine	**Either**	**Non-masculine**
Plural	N.	oni		one
	G.		ich, nich	
	D.		im, nim	
	A.	ich, nich	d	je, nie
	I.		nimi	
	L.		(o) nich	

Table 1. Declensional paradigm of the third person pronouns in Polish (based on Doroszewski & Wieczorkiewicz 1972:91–92).

The difference between two conceptualizations of the same noun with the same case-marked nominal, which depends on whether it is used with or without a preposition, is very difficult to specify because the relationship between the event (the subject's working) and the temporal setting of the event (a week) indicated by the case-marker remains the same. Most grammarians agree that the presence of a preposition in the preposition + case combination makes more specific the relationship expressed by the case-marker. The *j-/n'-* pronominal contrast additionally suggests that the presence of a preposition also affects our mental representation (construal or conceptualization) of the case-marked lexical item, and even if the semantic difference between a case-marked nominal and the same case-marked nominal combined with a preposition is very small, its existence has to be acknowledged[3].

Case semanticists have tried to define the semantic difference between prepositionless and prepositional cases. Jakobson (1936/1995:339) stated it as follows: 'In a language which combines a system of prepositional constructions with an independent system of case, the meanings of the two systems are different in the sense that when prepositions are used, the relation itself is focused upon, while in constructions without prepositions the relation becomes a kind of property of the object denoted'. Langacker (1992) attempted to pinpoint the difference in terms of the Cognitive Linguistics framework by providing two image-schema models of the instrumental case. In my opinion, his (1992:301) explanation of the difference between the prepositionless (which he calls 'true') instrumental indicated by the instrumental case-marker

in typical case languages and the prepositional phrase with what he calls the 'instrumental preposition' in typical non-case languages, such as English, is essentially the same as Jakobson's.

In Langacker's image-schema of the prepositionless instrumental, the prepositionless form profiles the thing denoted by the case-marked nominal. 'The true case-marker profiles a schematically characterized thing and incorporates some specification of its role in the process' (Langacker 1992:301). Conversely, in the prepositional construction, the relationship between the event and the intermediary participant in the event, the instrument, is profiled by the instrumental preposition (ibid.). In other words, in the prepositionless use, the property of being an instrument is ascribed to the case-marked nominal, which then, at a higher level of organization, enters into a relationship with the process evoked by the clause, whereas in the prepositional use, the relational property of being affected via an instrument is part of the process evoked by the clause[4].

3. HISTORY OF THE N' PRONOUNS. The *j-/n'-* opposition in Slavic pronouns is, to my knowledge, the only piece of evidence in linguistic form for postulating a semantic difference between prepositionless and prepositional cases. In view of the fact that the difference in meaning between the two forms of case is not readily apparent (and can be conveyed to a non-linguist merely as a difference in focus), the question of the reliability of the pronominal *j-* versus *n'-* evidence can be raised. The issue of whether the *j-/n'-* opposition in Slavic constitutes satisfactory linguistic evidence becomes even more of a problem when the history of the *j-/n'-* opposition and the origin of the *n'-* pronouns is considered.

According to the historical grammars of Polish (e.g. Kuraszkiewicz 1972:130–31), the pronominal third person *n'-* forms replaced the original suppletive *j-*forms in the declensional paradigm of the pronouns *on, ona, ono* 'he, she, it'[5] when -*n*, the final consonant of the prototypical Slavic prepositions **vъn* (modern *w*) 'in' and **sъn* (modern *z*) 'with' shifted and mechanically attached itself to the locative and the instrumental *j-*forms of the following pronouns, respectively. The shift is illustrated by the examples in (4) taken from Doroszewski and Wieczorkiewicz (1972:92).

(4) **Forms before the shift   Forms after the shift**
     *vъn-jemь-LOC. 'in him'   *w **nim**-LOC.* 'in him'
     *sъn-jimъ-INST. 'with him'   *z **nim**-INST.* 'with him'

The initial *n'* of the prepositional pronominal forms in the locative and the instrumental after the prepositions *w* 'in' and *s/z* 'with' has, with time, generalized to the other prepositions used with these cases (such as *przy nim*-L 'next to him', *po nim*-L 'after him', etc.) and to the other prepositional cases: genitive, dative and accusative (*do niego*-G 'to him', *ku niemu*-D 'toward him', *przez niego*-A 'because of him').

A contemporary example confirming the historical *j-* to *n'-* shift in the morphemic structure of third person pronouns in Slavic can be found in the attested occurrence

of both the *j-* and the *n'-* forms in the prepositional phrase *dzięki niemu/ dzięki jemu-*D 'thanks to him' in modern Polish (Kuraszkiewicz 1972:131)[6].

The original preposition *vъn* 'in' attached to the accusative, as in *vъn -jь-*Acc. 'in him', has produced a contracted prepositional form of the masculine accusative of the pronoun *on* 'he', the form **weń** (as in *Wpatrywali się* **weń** *[w niego] z niepokojem* 'They were staring at him with apprehension' – see Dunaj 1996:629 for more examples), and later, analogical contracted forms of prepositional pronouns in the accusative and the genitive derived from combinations with other prepositions, for example: *doń (do niego)* 'to him', *zeń (z niego)* 'from him', *nań (na niego)* 'on him', *przezeń (przez niego)* 'because of him', etc. In modern Polish contracted *n'-* pronouns are considered a mark of very formal, literary style. A few examples of these uses taken from the 16th century Polish writer Mikołaj Rej (Kuraszkiewicz 1972:131) and from modern literary Polish (Dunaj 1996:629) are given in (5)a and b, and (5)c and d, respectively:

(5) a. Zgrzytali **nań (na niego**-A) zębami.
         They gnashed their teeth **at him** (= because of him)
     b. Trudno się **oń (o niego**-A) było pokusić.
         It was difficult to be tempted **about him** (= to have him).
                                            (Kuraszkiewicz 1972:131)
     c. Zwrócili się **doń (do niego**-G) z prośbą.
         They turned **to him** with a request.
     d. Gotowi byli **zań (za niego**-G) umrzeć.
         They were ready to die **for him**.
                                            (Dunaj 1996:629)

4. RELIABILITY OF THE *J-/N'* EVIDENCE. The shift of the nasal *n* from the final position in a preposition to the initial position in the following pronoun in Slavic can hardly be considered to have been motivated semantically. A parallel to the Slavic example under discussion is provided by the English words *newt* (a kind of lizard), which in fact stands for *an ewt* (from the original AS form *efeta* 'a lizard') or *a nickname*, which is an alternative form of the original *an eke-name* (with the two co-existing forms in ME: *a nekename = an ekename*). A converse shift of the consonant *n* in English from the initial word position onto the preceding indefinite article, observed in the history of the words *apron* (formerly *napron*, from OF *naperon < nape*), *adder* (originally *nadder*, from OE *naddere*) or *umpire* 'a non-pair' (a more recent version of *numpire*, from ME *nonpere,* from OF *nomper, nompair*) has been explained by some historical grammarians bluntly as the result of 'a speaker's mistake' (see Skeat 1980:5).

The *n'-*forms in Slavic pronouns have come into being as a result of a mechanical shift of a consonant in a previous stage of a language. Yet, the *j-/n'-* opposition in third person pronouns created through that mechanical operation has come to indicate a semantic difference between the two pronominal forms, and by extension, between the two (prepositionless and prepositional) forms of case.

In my opinion, the way in which a particular formal distinction arose diachronically is irrelevant to its synchronic semantic status. Grammatical systems of a language change just as do individual forms in that language. Thus, the history of a linguistic sign should have no necessary bearing on its significance in present-day systems.

5. HISTORY OF THE TWO POSSESSIVE PRONOUN FORMS IN ENGLISH. The history of the *j-/n'-* opposition in Slavic is similar to the history of the possessive pronouns in English. In the contemporary pronominal system, English possessives are used in discourse under two morphological forms: the short, 'adjectival' form, with the specific paradigmatic realizations: *my, your, his, her, its, our, your, their,* and the long form of the 'possessive pronouns': *mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, yours, theirs.* The two forms remain in complementary distribution, the adjectival form being restricted to the attributive position in a noun phrase (as in **my** *book*), the possessive pronoun occurring in the predicative position only (as in *This book is* **mine**). The 'adjectival' versus 'truly pronominal' formal opposition in the system of the English possessives indicates clearly (to my mind, at least) that the attributive and the predicative categories (specifically, the category of attributive and predicative adjectives) are not semantically identical, as an early Chomskyan Adjective Transformation would have it. In other words, possessive pronoun evidence from modern English, manifested through the short versus long form morphological opposition, can be considered to prove the existence of a semantic difference between the attributive and the predicative uses of a lexical category[7].

In the earlier stages of English, however, the distribution of the two forms of the possessive pronouns was quite different, and the short (*my*)/long (*mine*) formal opposition did not indicate a semantic difference between the attributive and the predicative systems. The original genitive-case long form of the pronoun was used in the attributive as well as in the predicative position in a sentence, and if the two forms were found in the prenominal position, the short form (which has lost the final *-n*) tended to occur before nouns beginning with a consonant while the full, long form appeared before nouns starting with a vowel (Pyles *& Algeo* 1993), as illustrated in (6).

(6)   **Possessive pronoun distribution in English**
       My egg/book. : This egg/book is **mine.**   (Modern English)
       Mi book / **min** eg/ey.   (Middle English)

6. CONCLUSION. The *my/mine* example from English shows that the origin of a form (such as a mechanical loss of the final *–n* from the ME *min*) has nothing to do with the form's grammatical distribution, and consequently, with the form's significance in the modern system. Although created through a mechanical shift, the short possessive forms in English, just as the *n'-* forms in Slavic, have eventually become indicators of meaningful oppositions between different grammatical categories. How the difference in meaning between these categories should be defined is a matter of the linguistic theory at our disposal. A systematic opposition of forms, however, always

indicates a difference in meaning, for two different forms in the same category never co-exist for long in the same semantic capacity.

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[1]   I would like to thank the two *LACUS Forum* reviewers of this paper for their careful and inspiring comments.

[2]   The nominative, as the prototypical form of the casual declension, never combines with a preposition; thus, it has no corresponding *n'*- form in the pronominal paradigm. The locative, which is always prepositional, predictably has no *j*-form in the pronominal declension. The Polish Instrumental, however, which can have both the prepositionless and the prepositional realizations (as in: *Szedł żołnierz* **lasem**-I. 'Was walking a soldier **through the forest**', with the prepositionless instrumental of place, and *Cyganka mieszka* **za lasem**-I. 'The Gypsy woman lives **beyond/ on the other side of the forest.**', with the preposition *za+Instrumental* combination (prepositional instrumental of place)), is rendered by the *n'*-form of the pronoun only. Kuraszkiewicz (1972: 131) explains this apparent inconsistency in the otherwise strikingly regular pattern of correspondence as an overgeneralization of the *n'*-form which has spread onto the prepositionless uses of the case. His illustrative examples are: *Idę* **z nim, z nią, z nimi** 'I am going **with him, with her, with them**' (prepositional instrumental) versus *Gardzę* **nim, nią, nimi** 'I despise **him, her, them**' (prepositionless instrumental).

[3]   It goes without saying that the specific meaning imported by a preposition has to be compatible with the meaning of the case the preposition combines with. In example (3)b the Polish preposition *przez* 'through, across' combines with no other case but the accusative, so the two senses are compatible almost by definition. However, when a preposition combines with more than one case (as does e.g. the Polish preposition *w* 'in', which 'governs' [(Janda 2000) uses the term 'motivates'] two cases: the accusative *w tydzień* 'in a week' and the locative *w tygodniu* 'during the week'), semantic compatibility of the two elements is much harder to establish.

[4]   For a discussion and an interpretation of Langacker's 1992 graphic schemas of *Instrumental Case Marker* versus *Instrumental Preposition*, see Bacz 2000:10–12. It should be noted that Langacker's explanation of the difference between the 'true' (prepositionless) instrumental and the instrumental preposition is necessarily cross-linguistic since it is based on examples taken from typologically different languages: the 'true instrumental' represents a morphological case in a typical case language while the 'instrumental preposition' is illustrated by the preposition *with* in English. The semantic import of preposition+case combinations, typical of Slavic, has to be taken into consideration when an explanation of a difference between morphological (prepositionless) and prepositional uses of a case is attempted.

[5]   Originally, the forms *on, ona, ono* denoted demonstrative pronouns – cf. the archaic Polish uses: *onego czasu*-G. '(at) that time' or *naonczas*-Adverbial 'in/at that moment', the original third person pronouns being: *ji, ja, je* (see Doroszewski & Wieczorkiewicz 1972:91)]

[6]   According to my native speaker intuition, the expression with the *j*- form (*dzięki jemu*) sounds less natural than the expression with the *n'*- form (*dzięki niemu*), a fact which suggests that *dzięki* 'thanks to' has clearly become grammaticalized as a preposition here.

[7]   There are other arguments proving that attributive adjectives are semantically different from predicative adjectives, e.g., in Russian and in Polish the so-called 'short adjectives' occur only in the predicative position – cf. **Zdrowy i wesoły** *chłopiec* 'a healthy and happy boy' versus *Chłopiec jest* **zdrów/ zdrowy i wesół/wesoły** 'The boy is healthy and happy'. In

my opinion, the possesive pronoun evidence found in modern English (yet not in Slavic or in Latin—cf. **Moja** *książka* 'my book' and *Ta książka jest* **moja** 'This book is mine' in Polish) is just one more indicator of a semantic difference between attributive and predicative categories.

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