

# REVIEW ARTICLES

## *What tigers like best: grammar, situated meaning, and subtle interpersonal semantics*

*Magdalena Rybarczyk 2015: Demonstratives and Possessives with Attitude. An Intersubjectively-Oriented Empirical Study. [Human Cognitive Processing 51.] Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. pp. xxii, 226. Hb ISBN: 9789027246677. E-book ISBN: 9789027268822. EUR 95.00. DOI: 10.1075/hcp.51*

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Rybarczyk's study is an in-depth analysis of the semantics of the Polish proximal demonstrative (*ten/ta/to* 'this') and pronominal possessive pronouns (*mój* 'my', *twój* 'your', *nasz* 'our', etc.). The author specifically focuses on the role these structures may play as a means of conveying attitudinal and interpersonal meanings.

### 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In Chapter 1, the author sets the scene for the following analysis by discussing the main theoretical assumptions underlying her work. The framework of the study is Langacker's theory of Cognitive Grammar (cf. e.g. Langacker 1987, 1991), integrated with a social-interactional view on the nature of language. Rybarczyk starts with offering a brief overview of the approach to meaning advocated in Cognitive Grammar: the idea of the fundamentally symbolic nature of all linguistic resources, including the grammatical ones, the encyclopedic, conceptualist, and imagistic view of meaning, as well as the idea that meaning is context-situated and emergent. Two further theoretical

claims which are made in Cognitive Grammar and which are of fundamental importance to Rybarczyk's analysis are the usage-based view on language (cf. e.g. Langacker 2000), as well as the intersubjective perspective on language (cf. e.g. Langacker 2001; Tomasello 1999; Verhagen 2005; Zlatev et al. 2008). The former claim opens a way to the recognition of the fact that conventionalized meanings of linguistic structures may incorporate conceptualizations pertaining to recurrent aspects of context, including the interactive and the interpersonal circumstances of the speech event. The latter idea provides a proper perspective for understanding linguistic communication not only as a means for conveying information about states of affairs in the world, but also — and importantly — as a means for interacting with fellow human beings and for establishing, maintaining, and negotiating interpersonal relations with them.

In the remaining part of the chapter, Rybarczyk discusses a number of theoretical issues which are important for her considerations. The first is the phenomenon of *reference*, which is viewed in Rybarczyk's study as an act performed by the speaker<sup>1</sup> "with an audience in mind" — in Rybarczyk's words, "in a communicative act, the speaker invests with reference an expression that he believes will guide his addressee to mentally access its referent in a manner suggested by the speaker" (p. 14, see also references cited therein). This view of reference offers a proper perspective for an investigation of how speakers of a language may use different patterns of reference not only to single out the intended referent as the object of shared attention of their interlocutors, but also to convey their attitudes and manipulate their interpersonal relations with the interlocutors.

The second important theoretical issue under discussion is the phenomenon of *viewing arrangement* and *construal*. Alternate ways of accessing the profiled thing in acts of reference involve alternate viewing arrangements and alternate construals of the conceived scene pertaining, among other things, to how the profiled thing is related to the ground, that is, the speech event, its participants, and its immediate circumstances. Such alternate construals of the ground elements, as well as how the profiled entity relates to the ground may be put in the service of communicating to the hearer the speaker's attitude to the profiled entity or the speaker's attitude to the hearer, with the potential effect of manipulating in some way the speaker-hearer interpersonal relation.

This brings the discussion to the last theoretical issue of fundamental importance to an analysis of the semantics of demonstratives and pos-

1 Note that throughout the present text the generic pronominal reference to the speaker is made via the pronoun *she*, while the generic pronominal reference to the hearer is made via the pronoun *he*. The only exceptions to this practice are quotations from Rybarczyk, who uses the convention of referring generically to both the speaker and the hearer via the pronoun *he*.

possessives: the phenomenon of *deixis* and, in particular, that of *grounding*. Demonstratives and possessives belong to the set of structures which effect nominal grounding (cf. e.g. Langacker 2009: 85-86). An important property of grounding structures, which distinguishes them from other kinds of deictic elements, is the fact that although the relationship between the relevant conceived entity and the ground provides their essential conceptual content, grounding predications, nevertheless, profile the grounded entity, rather than the relationship it bears to the ground. As noted by Rybarczyk herself (p. 22), this property is highly relevant to her analysis, as it makes grounding predications, such as demonstratives or possessives, a particularly useful tool for “communicating certain attitudes without giving them prominence”, that is, for communicating them in an “offstage” manner. In turn, offstage communication of attitudes and offstage manipulation of the speaker-hearer interpersonal relation seems to be absolutely prevalent, as we want to communicate attitudes and manipulate interpersonal relations reliably, but we typically prefer not to put our attitudes and interpersonal manipulations in the spotlight of attention.

The final part of Chapter 1 is devoted to a general characterization of the grounding system in Polish, as compared to the grounding system in English. Unlike nominal grounding in English, which is mostly overt, nominal grounding in Polish is for the most part covert: it resides in patterns of using nominal expressions as either definite or indefinite, without the necessity of employing any explicit grounding structures. One consequence of this, in Rybarczyk’s view, is the fact that explicit grounding predications in Polish, such as demonstratives (e.g. *ten* ‘this’, *tamten* ‘that’, *te* ‘these’, *tamte* ‘those’) or possessives (e.g. *mój* ‘my’, *twój* ‘your’), have had the freedom to develop a whole range of uses in which they do not so much serve the purpose of singling out the profiled thing as the focus of the speaker’s and the hearer’s joint attention, but are, instead, employed as a means of conveying a particular construal of the speaker’s and/or the hearer’s relation to the profiled entity, as well as the speaker-hearer mutual relation, thereby working in the service of communicating a whole range of attitudinal and/or interpersonal meanings.

## 2. DEMONSTRATIVES

With the theoretical background in place, the author is free to proceed to her analysis. Chapter 2 is devoted to a detailed analysis of the semantics of Polish demonstratives and, in particular, the proximal demonstrative (*ten/ta/to* ‘this’), which — in contrast to the distal demonstrative (*tamten/tamta/tamto* ‘that’) — has acquired a wide range of attitudinal and interpersonal meanings. The discussion starts with a general characterization of the se-

mantics of demonstratives, with reference to the English demonstrative system. Rybarczyk first characterizes the basic and prototypical meanings of the demonstrative pronouns and then observes, following Janssen's analysis of the semantics of demonstratives (cf. 2002), that

in a natural process of subjectification, the objectively observed partitioning of the perceptual space encoded by demonstrative determiners gradually fades away and what remains is the speaker's subjective mental division of various conceptual spaces into the proximal and distal regions. (p. 36)

Rybarczyk's next step is a general characterization of the demonstrative system of Polish. Following the analysis by Miodunka (1974), the author offers the following characterization of the Polish proximal demonstrative: "proximal demonstratives in Polish mark the speaker's focal referential concern (which does not need to correspond to the actual physical distance)" (p. 40). According to Rybarczyk, the result of the process of grammaticalization of the Polish proximal demonstrative is that "the spatio-temporal base is attenuated to the point where all that remains is the relationship of access conceptualized in terms of mental pointing by C [that is, the conceptualizer — A.K.], who in his subjective evaluation perceives a referent as proximal" (p. 44). In consequence, the proximal demonstrative has developed a whole range of uses in which it is employed not so much with the purpose of singling out an entity as an object of the speaker-hearer joint attention, but rather with the purpose of expressing the speaker's attitude or judgement. It is used of this kind that are the main focus of Rybarczyk's analysis.

Rybarczyk's analysis of emphatic and attitudinal uses of the Polish proximal demonstrative starts with an account of its use in combination with proper names. Although reality frequently does not conform to the ICM for naming within a social group, in which each individual within such a group has a distinct name, proper names by default are inherently grounded and are typically fully sufficient to identify the intended referent. Hence, proper names in combinations with grounding predications such as demonstratives or possessives are highly likely to acquire a range of subjectified discourse-oriented, as well as emotive or affective meanings.

The first use of this type considered by Rybarczyk is what she calls the *intersubjectively-shared familiarity* use. This type of use is instantiated, for example, by *Widziałam dziś w kawiarni tego Wojewódzkiego* ('I saw [this] Wojewódzki in a café today'). The import of the demonstrative in uses of this kind may be paraphrased as 'I think you should know who I am talking about because of some discourse knowledge we share' (p. 57).

The second type of use of the proximal demonstrative is what Rybarczyk refers to as the *scope-shifting* use (p. 64). To elucidate what is at issue in this kind of use, the author makes reference to the specific case of recurrent

communicative exchanges between the speaker and her mother about two distinct third-person individuals. The referent individual is, in the first case, linked by close family ties with both the speaker and the hearer. In turn, in the second case, family ties hold only between the speaker and the referent, while the relationship between the hearer and the referent is the relation of mere familiarity. Both individuals in question are named *Dorota*. The important observation is that while in a series of communicative exchanges the former individual is consistently referred to just as *Dorota*, the reference to the latter is, equally consistently, made via the name preceded by the proximal demonstrative: *ta Dorota*.

To account for this, Rybarczyk invokes the idea of *personal sphere*, as characterized by Dąbrowska (1997: 18). She further introduces a distinction between the *core* personal sphere and a *transient* personal sphere. The core personal sphere is defined as “a set of intimate relationships that a person bears to other people, things, and concepts, which is fairly stable and which defines this person’s sociocultural identity” (Rybarczyk, p. 61). In turn, a transient personal sphere is understood as “a space which hosts a complex net of short-term connections and emotional reactions to specific entities on specific occasions of interacting with them” (ibid.).

As Rybarczyk (p.62) notes, although the naming ICM frequently does not fit very well the world at large, there are fairly good chances that it will fit the fragment of the world delimited to an individual’s personal sphere. A consequence of this is that when we refer to people who are emotionally or physically close to us, a person’s bare name is typically sufficient to single out the intended referent. In turn, a result of this is that the use of the proximal demonstrative with a person’s name, with the purpose of identification, signals the idea that the referent is not part of the core personal spheres of either the speaker (as recognized by the hearer) or the hearer (as recognized by the speaker), where it would be uniquely identifiable without the demonstrative. Instead, this individual is “known and identifiable to both interlocutors (within the transient personal sphere created for a specific communicative goal, in this case — identification)” (p. 64). Thus, in uses of this kind, the proximal demonstrative, despite its proximal semantics, conveys the construal of the profiled individual as distanced from the speech event participants, as a result of being conceptually placed outside their core personal spheres.

In Rybarczyk’s view (pp. 67-73), this distancing potential of the proximal demonstrative gives rise to a range of uses in which the demonstrative is employed specifically with the purpose of evoking the idea of distance. In uses of this kind, introducing the idea of distance is no longer connected with the issue of identification, but is instead supposed to have a rhetorical function. Hence, in the case of referents who are emotionally close to the speech event participants, the use of the referring expression consisting of

the proximal demonstrative plus the referent's name may serve the purpose of conveying the speaker's emotional attitude towards the referent — more precisely, according to Rybarczyk (p. 69), this needs to be some negative attitude or evaluation, as in *Już mnie ta Dorota denerwuje* (lit. 'Already me this Dorota annoys') 'Dorota is really getting on my nerves now'. In Rybarczyk's analysis, this meaning has to do with the fact that the proximal demonstrative situates the profiled individual outside the speaker's core personal sphere, identified in this case with the sphere of emotional closeness, and "at the same time signals affective proximity within the transient personal sphere" (p. 69).

However, the core personal sphere does not always have to be identified with the sphere of emotional closeness. In other contexts, it may be identified, for instance, with the speaker's sphere of control, as in *Nie wiem, co z tą Kasią będzie* (lit. 'Not I know what with this Kasia it will be') 'I don't know what's going to happen to Kasia'). In uses of this kind, the proximal demonstrative conveys the ideas of the speaker's concern with the referent and the referent's problems, emotional involvement, and solidarity. According to Rybarczyk, a variant of this meaning appears in the Polish *Ach ten X* 'Oh this X' construction, which can frequently be paraphrased as 'we can both see the way X is, but we don't know why and we can't change it' (p. 72).

A further use discussed by Rybarczyk (pp. 73-74) is the use in which the proximal demonstrative, combined with the name of a famous person, is employed to mark noteworthiness, as in *Czemu ta Kopacz tak kłamie?*<sup>2</sup> (lit. 'Why this Kopacz so lies?') 'Why does that Kopacz lie so much?' According to the author, this use might have evolved from the familiarity use discussed above, in which the demonstrative was interpreted as conveying the idea of the speaker-hearer intersubjective coordination. When the use of the proximal demonstrative with a name of a famous person is used in emotionally-loaded contexts, the effect of the speaker-hearer intersubjective coordination is that "[t]he speaker brings the referent into the interlocutor's transient personal sphere and thus presents his attitude towards the referent as shared" (p. 73).

Rybarczyk's analysis of attitudinal uses of the Polish proximal demonstrative includes also its import in combinations with country names and with body parts. In both cases, the demonstrative is typically not necessary for the purpose of referent identification. Hence, both kinds of combinations are likely to exhibit attitudinal meanings, as illustrated, respectively, by *Co z tą Polską?* (lit. 'What with this Poland?') 'What is going on with Poland?' and *Zdejmij te nogi ze stołu!* (lit. 'Take off these legs from table!') 'Take those feet off the table!'. According to Rybarczyk, in combinations with country names, "the Polish proximal demonstrative is used to highlight a certain referent

2 Ewa Kopacz was the Polish Minister of Health when this example was produced.

in an exaggerated manner in order to strengthen the emotional load of an utterance or a pragmatic context and impose the speaker's subjective attitude towards the referent" (p. 77). In a similar fashion, the demonstrative plus a nominal designating a body part construction is claimed to favour emotionally-loaded contexts. However, their specific attitudinal meanings seem to be interpretable only in specific contexts.

### 3. POSSESSIVES

The next step in Rybarczyk's study is an analysis of how Polish prenominal possessives may be used to convey attitudinal and interpersonal meanings. This part of the discussion starts with general considerations pertaining to the notion of possession and its linguistic realizations. Following Langacker (e.g. 1993) or Taylor (1996), Rybarczyk assumes that the schematic meaning of possessive constructions should be characterized in terms of the reference-point model (cf. Langacker 1993: 6): the possessor is a *reference point* via which the possessed, located within the *possessor's dominion*<sup>3</sup> is mentally located by the conceptualizer.

Rybarczyk (pp. 93-96) analyzes the prenominal possessive as a grounding element that grounds the possessed nominal. On this account, the prenominal possessive is claimed to profile the target entity, rather than the reference-point relation, which links this entity with the ground via the path of mental scanning leading from the ground, through the reference point (the possessor), to the target (the possessed). Importantly, in Rybarczyk's view, the prenominal possessive exhibits, as a result, a high "manipulative potential" — this is because

[b]oth the attention flow from the possessor to the possessed and the fact that the relation between the two is subjectively construed rather than spelled out make it a suitable device for implicated comments on the relations between the participants in the clause and in discourse. (p. 96)

The specific analytical focus of Rybarczyk's study of possessives is the prenominal possessive construction in which the possessive pronoun combines with a kinship term and involves as the possessor the speaker, the hearer, or both of them, as in *moja siostra* 'my sister', *twoja córka* 'your daughter', or *nasz syn* 'our son'. The conceptual configurations evoked by such constructions are characterized by two important properties. First, the invoked reference point is identified either with one of the co-conceptualizers in the usage event (the speaker or the hearer) or with both of them. As a result, either one of the co-conceptualizers or both of them are partially objectified,

3 The set of entities to which the reference point in question "affords direct access" (Langacker 1993: 6).

that is, conceptualized as the reference point in the unprofiled but conceptually salient reference-point relation that links the profiled individual with the ground. Moreover, the use of the first- or the second-person singular possessive pronoun (respectively, *mój* ‘my’ or *twój* ‘your’) as the grounding predication brings about a split between the two co-conceptualizers in the usage event with respect to the distance from which they observe the conceived scene: in the case of *mój* ‘my’, the profiled individual is mentally accessed from the speaker’s vantage point, while in the case of *twój* ‘your’ the assumed vantage point is that of the hearer. Thus, in Rybarczyk’s words (p. 102), “in a sense, the speaker and the hearer are no longer joined together as viewers on equal footing and their perspectives of the designated individual may differ”.

The second important property of the construction under consideration is that the possessed noun in this construction is a kinship term, that is, a noun which is relational in nature — the profiled individual is specifically conceptualized as a participant of a kinship relation linking this individual with some *ego* (cf. Langacker 1993: 9). Hence, when a kinship term is combined with a possessive pronoun in a prenominal possessive construction, the unprofiled reference-point individual and the unprofiled reference-point relation evoked by the possessive are identified, respectively, with the *ego* and the unprofiled kinship relation evoked by the kinship noun. As a consequence, the relation linking the profiled individual with the reference-point individual is no longer construed as merely an abstract reference-point relation, but is, instead, identified with a more specific kinship relation.

With the above preliminaries in place, Rybarczyk (pp. 111-123) moves on to an analysis of specific examples of how the construction combining a possessive pronoun (specifically, the first- or the second-person pronoun) and a kinship noun (or proper name) is employed in the context of conversations between family members to refer to other members of the same family. The author starts with an observation that there are certain conventionalized default patterns of reference in contexts of this kind. These patterns are patterns of default construals of the referent individual which are conventionally linked to particular types of the speaker-hearer interpersonal relation. The parameters of construal which seem to be relevant in this regard are the vantage point from which the referent is accessed and the degree of subjectivity/objectivity with which this referent is construed. To illustrate, if we consider the example of members of a three-generation family who talk with one another about family members from other generations, we may note that members of the youngest generation by default employ kinship terms that identify the relevant individual from their own vantage point: for instance, when a granddaughter refers to her father in a conversation with her grandfather, she will, by default, use the word *tata* ‘dad’. In turn, members

of the oldest generation tend to use kinship terms that identify the relevant individual from their interlocutor's vantage point, when they talk to their grandchildren. However, they use kinship terms identifying the referent from their own vantage point in conversations with their children, that is, with members of the generation in the middle of the hierarchy. Hence, a grandfather will tend to refer to his own son as *tata* ('dad') in a conversation with his granddaughter (and the referent's daughter), but at the same time, in a conversation with his son, he will refer to his son's daughter as *wnuczka* 'granddaughter', rather than *córka* 'daughter'. Finally, when family members from the middle generation talk about their children to their parents or about their parents to their children, they employ kinship terms identifying the profiled individual from their interlocutor's vantage point, regardless of whether the interlocutor belongs to the youngest or the oldest generation. Thus, a father will tend to refer to his daughter as *wnuczka* in a conversation with his own father (and the referent's grandfather), while in a conversation with the daughter he would refer to his father as *dziadek* 'granddad'.

A good example of a conventionalized pattern of reference accepted in a particular kind of interpersonal context and pertaining to the degree of subjectivity/objectivity in the construal of the referent may be a situation when a child refers to a sibling in a conversation with a parent — in a context of this kind, the default reference pattern seems to be the selection of the sibling's proper name (involving the maximally objective construal of the referent), rather than the use of the kinship term *moja siostra* 'my sister' or *siostra* 'sister' (involving a more subjective construal of the referent, that is, a construal in which the referent is specifically accessed from the speaker's vantage point).

Because of the existence of such conventionalized default patterns of reference, in many contexts it is typically sufficient to use a bare kinship term to identify the intended referent, provided that the kinship term is employed in accordance with the default pattern. In turn, any departure from the default requires the use of the possessive to specify explicitly whose vantage point is being adopted. Moreover, the selection of a non-default pattern is associated with particular kinds of attitudinal and interpersonal meanings. As an illustration, Rybarczyk considers a situation in which a daughter talks with her mother about the mother's other daughter, that is, her sister. Reference made to the sister via the sister's proper name is a default option, which is emotionally neutral. However, when the speaker decides to use the phrase *moja siostra* 'my sister' as the referring expression, the referent is specifically conceptualized as located within the speaker's dominion, identified with the speaker's personal sphere, and is mentally accessed via the speaker. In an appropriate context, the result may be that through this choice of the referring expression the speaker distances the hearer from both herself and

the profiled individual as not “belonging together” with them. In turn, the selection of *twoja córka* ‘your daughter’ construes the profiled individual as located within the hearer’s dominion/personal sphere, with the hearer, rather than the speaker, constituting the reference point via which the profiled target is reached. In context, this may result, for instance, in attributing to the hearer the responsibility for some unacceptable behaviour on the part of the profiled individual, as in *Twoja córka nie umie się zachować* ‘Your daughter does not know how to behave’.

#### 4. A CASE STUDY

Chapter 4 of Rybarczyk’s work is a case study offering an in-depth analysis of attitudinal and interpersonal uses of the proximal demonstrative and pronominal possessives in an extended sample of spoken discourse. The data under consideration come from two sources. The first source is the documentary *Solidarni 2010* (‘In solidarity 2010’; title translation by Rybarczyk). The documentary presents a series of interviews with Poles of different ages and social backgrounds who gathered in mourning outside the President’s Palace in Warsaw during the week following the plane crash in Smolensk, Russia, in which the Polish president, Lech Kaczyński, his wife, and a large group of leading Polish politicians were killed. The second data source are online comments that appeared on [youtube.pl](http://youtube.pl) in response to the documentary.<sup>4</sup>

In her analysis of the corpus extracted from the two data sources, Rybarczyk considers specifically referring expressions containing demonstratives and/or possessives and used in reference to Poland and President Kaczyński, with special focus on “their role in an emotionally emphatic discourse” (p. 139). Since, in the chosen contexts, both referents selected for investigation seem to be conceptually “extremely salient and maximally activated”, there are good reasons to assume that the employment of a demonstrative or a possessive as an overt grounding predication in a context of this kind frequently does not serve the purpose of referent identification, but rather the purpose of conveying the speaker’s personal stance, particularly in view of the fact that both data sources are highly likely to contain a multitude of emotionally loaded utterances.

With respect to the attitudinal uses of the proximal demonstrative, Rybarczyk notes that her corpus does not contain any combinations of the demonstrative with expressions referring to the president in which the demonstrative is a tool of expressing the speaker’s emotional attitude, rather than a tool of referent identification (p. 142). The uses of the proximal demonstrative with expressions referring to Poland, for instance with the word

4 [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulIkNG2v03I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulIkNG2v03I)

*kraj* ‘country’, also turn out to be rare. Moreover, a number of metalinguistic statements found on the internet indicate that at least some speakers of Polish seem to object against the attitudinal use of the combination *ten kraj* ‘this country’ in reference to their own motherland. In Rybarczyk’s view, this is a consequence of the potentially distancing import of the proximal demonstrative — it is not surprising that speakers may refrain from expressing this kind of meaning in connection with a recently deceased person or in connection with their own motherland at the time of national mourning.

In the remaining part of the chapter, Rybarczyk considers a range of corpus examples involving the use of possessive pronouns, in particular, the pronoun *mój* ‘my’ and the pronoun *nasz* ‘our’ with nouns intended to refer to Poland and the Polish nation, as well as to President Kaczyński. The examples considered in the course of the analysis demonstrate that, depending on the specific context, the pronoun *nasz* ‘our’ may be used to emphasize the solidarity of the Polish nation but also as a tool conveying the idea of a division between ‘us’ and ‘them’. In turn, the pronoun *mój* ‘my’ may be employed in contexts in which the speaker is primarily concerned with expressing her own individual emotions, with no necessary implication that these emotions stand in any contrast with the emotions of the hearer or other Polish people. However, just like in the context of verbal interactions between family members, *mój* ‘my’ has a strong excluding potential, via evoking the idea of the personal sphere which “excludes the hearer, but groups together the speaker and the referent” (p. 162).

Overall, the analysis of extended samples of colloquial Polish offered in this chapter convincingly demonstrates that both the proximal demonstrative and the possessive pronouns are important tools for conveying diverse sorts of context-bound attitudinal and interpersonal meanings. In this way, it offers strong empirical support to the ideas put forward in the preceding chapters of Rybarczyk’s study.

## 5. EXPERIMENTATION

Chapter 5 of Rybarczyk’s work offers a discussion of three experiments that the author conducted to test and further investigate the ideas developed at the earlier stages of her analysis of the attitudinal and interpersonal uses of the Polish proximal demonstrative and pronominal possessives. In the first experiment, two questionnaires were used to evaluate emotionality and rhetorical power of the presented linguistic material in terms of a seven-point scale. In the first questionnaire (what Rybarczyk calls the emotion-expressive survey), the subjects (76 native speakers of Polish) were asked to read 8 sentences and assess whether “in uttering the sentences the speaker was angry, resentful, or otherwise emotional” (p. 164). The assessment was to

be made in terms of the following scale: 7 — definitely yes, 6 — yes, 5 — I guess so, 4 — it's hard to say, 3 — I guess not, 2 — no, 1 — definitely not. In the second questionnaire (what Rybarczyk refers to as the emotion-inducing survey), 102 native speakers of Polish were presented with 13 sentences and asked to assess “whether and to what extent the sentences are positively or negatively charged” (p. 165). This time, the scale included the following possible responses/assessments of each sentence: ‘certainly negative’, ‘negative’, ‘rather negative’, ‘neutral’, ‘rather positive’, ‘positive’, ‘certainly positive’. The examples that the respondents were supposed to evaluate in both questionnaires were, first, four pairs of sentences in which a country name or a body part was used, either by itself or preceded by the proximal demonstrative, as in *Co z Polską?* vs. *Co z **ta** Polską?* ‘What about [this] Poland?’ or *Nie kręć głowę* vs. *Nie kręć **ta** głowę* ‘Don’t shake your/[this] head’. There were two versions of each questionnaire, each version containing only one member of each pair. Respondents were divided, in a random fashion, into two equal groups and each group dealt with only one version of a given questionnaire, to avoid a situation in which subjects could directly evaluate the *contrast* between the two structures, rather than the attitudinal import of a potential utterance with or without the proximal demonstrative, considered in its own terms (p. 169).

The general result of the emotion-expressive survey in the first experiment was that in the case of the sentence pairs contrasting with respect to the presence or absence of the proximal demonstrative, two pairs exhibited “a significant correlation between the use of emphatic *ten* and the subjects’ evaluation of an item as more emotionally laden” (p. 169). In the case of one pair, the member of the pair with the proximal demonstrative was also assessed as involving a higher degree of emotionality, but the difference was not statistically significant. Finally, contrary to the expectations, in the case of one pair it was actually the member of the pair without the demonstrative which was assessed as involving a higher degree of emotionality. In Rybarczyk’s view, the observed differences in the assessment of the examples “arise out of contextual clues, which prompt the subjects to construct a specific meaning” (p. 173). In turn, the general result of the emotion-inducing survey pertaining to examples with or without the proximal demonstrative was that for every sentence pair under consideration “the sentence with the demonstrative elicited fewer ‘neutral choices’ and more (but not significantly more) ‘extremely negative’ choices” (p. 173).

The emotion-expressive and the emotion-inducing surveys were also conducted to assess the rhetorical effect of the 2 sg. possessive pronoun *twój*, as compared to the 1 pl. possessive *nasz* used in contexts in which the referent of the NP is equally connected to both interlocutors. The relevant sentence pair was **Nasz** *syn ma problemy w szkole* ‘Our son has problems at school’ vs. **Twój** *syn ma problemy w szkole* ‘Your son has problems at school’. The general

result of the emotion-expressive survey was that, in the respondents' assessment, "the speaker was angrier or more nervous when the second-person singular pronoun *twój* was used instead of the first-person plural pronoun *nasz*" (p. 174). In the emotion-inducing survey, four respondents assessed the sentence *Nasz syn ma problemy w szkole* 'Our son has problems at school' as positive — one of these respondents explained in a follow-up interview that, in his view, it was a good thing that parents could unite in their concern about their children and could talk together about the children's problems. In turn, almost half of the subjects evaluated the sentence *Twój syn ma problemy w szkole* 'Your son has problems at school' as negative or certainly negative and no respondent assessed this sentence as positive. This seems to confirm the idea that in the relevant context, that is, in the context in which the intended referent of the NP is equally connected to both the speaker and the hearer, the 2 sg. possessive pronoun *twój* has "a certain excluding potential, which may produce strong interpersonal effects" (p. 174).

The second experiment discussed in Rybarczyk's study (pp. 177-183) was meant as an investigation of how the structuring of social and interpersonal relations imposed by the choice of the determiner influences respondents' thinking about relations in physical space. The experiment was based on two ideas. The first is that social and interpersonal relations are metaphorically conceptualized in terms of distance and in terms of being in/out of one another's personal sphere. The second has to do with the findings of recent experimental work on metaphor (p. 177 and the references cited therein) which suggest that metaphor involves bi-directional mappings between the source and the target domain, rather than a unidirectional mapping from the source onto the target. The expectation thus is that a determiner imposes a specific construal upon how the social and interpersonal relation between two people is conceptualized in terms of distance and in terms of being inside or outside one another's personal sphere. This, in turn, may influence the way subjects think about the relation between the relevant two people in physical space.

The specific focus of Rybarczyk's experiment was the contrast between two determiners, the proximal demonstrative *ten* and the 1 sg. possessive pronoun *mój*, combined with a proper name. As Rybarczyk herself notes (p. 179), "[a]t first sight, the proximal demonstrative and the first person possessive determiner do not seem to denote contrastive values with respect to distance." However, as she has argued in earlier parts of her study, the 1 sg. possessive pronoun construes the relevant referent as being specifically located within the speaker's dominion. In turn, at least in some of its uses, the proximal demonstrative combined with a proper name brings about the construal of the referent individual as being located outside the speaker's core personal sphere. Hence,

[i]t appears that along the dimension of interpersonal distance (i.e. with respect to the core personal sphere), the Polish proximal demonstrative and the first person possessive pronoun denote contrastive values, where the possessive construes the referent as proximal and the demonstrative as distant. (p. 179)

In the experiment, 68 native speakers of Polish were presented with a booklet containing brief stories and accompanying pictures. They were asked to read the stories, each of them involving two characters: the presumed speaker telling the story and another character, the referent of the NP with a particular kind of determiner. Then they were asked to mark the location of the referent individual in the appropriate picture. Half of the respondents read the story with the referring expression *moja* [proper name] and the other half — with the referring expression *ta* [proper name].

The first story involved a café scenario:

*Pilem kawę w kawiarence na drugim piętrze i nie wiem czemu poczułem się zaskoczony, gdy weszła moja/ta Ula. Wciąż nie mogę się przyzwyczaić, że ona tu teraz studiuje! Uśmiechnęła się do mnie, zamówiła kawę i usiadła.*

'I was having coffee in the café on the second floor and I don't know why but I felt surprised when [my/this] Ula showed up. I still can't get used to the fact that she's studying here! She smiled at me, ordered coffee, and sat down.'

The corresponding picture represented a café interior with seven tables and a counter. In the picture, a man, identified as the presumed speaker, was sitting at one of the tables. Other tables were unoccupied. The question for the story was: 'Where did Ula sit?' Each table in the picture was assigned a particular distance value: 0 if the referent was seated with the speaker, 1 if she was seated at a table next to the speaker's table, and 2 or 3 if the referent was placed even further away from the speaker. The result of this part of the experiment was that the use of the referring expression with *moja* 'my' brought about respondents placing the referent at shorter distances from the location of the speaker than the use of the referring expression with *ta* 'this'.

The second story in the experiment involved an office scenario:

*W biurze od rana czekaliśmy na te dokumenty. Akurat stanąłem przy biurku, żeby trochę rozprostować kości... Nagle wchodzi ta/moja Patrycja! Chwilę się rozgląda, po czym bez żadnych wyjaśnień siada i rozkłada przed sobą stertę papierów.*

'We'd been waiting for those documents since early morning. I just stood up to stretch my bones a little when... suddenly [my/this] Patrycja walks in! She looks around and... without a word of explanation, she sits down and spreads a bunch of papers in front of her.'

The picture that accompanied the story represented three desks: the speaker's desk, as well as two other desks placed at varying distances from the speaker's desk. The question for the story was 'Where are the documents?'. This time, when the referring expression *ta Patrycja* was used in the story, 71% of the respondents placed the referent at the desk closer to the speaker. In turn, in the case of *moja Patrycja*, "the choice between the proximal and the distal positions was at chance" (p. 183). As noted by Rybarczyk, this story, unlike the preceding one, might be taken as implying "that the speaker might have felt (slightly) irritated by the way the referent individual acted." Also, "a person can only feel irritated by an entity that is close enough to affect them" (p. 182). This may be a factor motivating the subjects' choices in the case of the proximal demonstrative, as — in Rybarczyk's analysis — the demonstrative conveys the idea of both interpersonal distance and affective proximity. The fact that the use of the 1 sg. possessive this time did not correlate with the respondents placing the referent individual in the speaker's proximity was contrary to the expectations. In Rybarczyk's view, the implication of the results under consideration seems to be that the conceptual structuring effected by the nominal determiners under consideration may be more intricate than might have been initially imagined, depending on diverse contextual factors.

In the third experiment, the subjects (100 native speakers of Polish) were asked to perform a matching task. They were presented with the test items, interspersed with control items, each of them coming in two variants: with a referring expression consisting of either a bare proper name or a name combined with the proximal demonstrative. In each case, the two variants of a test item were followed by two possible replies. The respondents were asked to match the replies with the variants of the test item in such a way that in each case the reply in question constituted amore appropriate reaction to the relevant variant of the test item. The experiment was aimed at offering empirical support for the idea that the Polish proximal demonstrative has the function of shifting the scope of the referential mass, as well as the function of highlighting intersubjectively shared familiarity (p. 184).

One pair of the test items in the first part of the experiment was *Była tu Karolina?* vs. *Była tu ta Karolina?* 'Was Karolina/[this] Karolina here?'. The possible replies were *Twoja Karolina?* 'Your Karolina?' or *Jakaś babka się kręciła* 'Some woman hung around'. The preferred matchings gave the following dialogues as a result: 'Was Karolina here?' — 'Your Karolina?' and 'Was this Karolina here?' — 'Some woman hung around?'. These matchings seem to provide support for the claim that the Polish proximal demonstrative has the function of shifting the scope of the referential mass. When a bare proper name was used, the respondents seemed to be "more willing to assume [the

referent's — A.K.] emotional proximity to the speaker (*Twoja Karolina?* 'Your Karolina?')" (p. 186). In turn, when the proper name was accompanied by the proximal demonstrative *ten*, the majority of the respondents selected responses suggesting that the referent of the relevant NP is "not quite recognizable at all ('some woman') to the speaker. The matchings obtained for the second pair of test items lead to similar conclusions.

The next two test items were supposed to provide an empirical test to the claim that the Polish proximal demonstrative in certain contexts conveys the idea of intersubjectively shared familiarity of the two interlocutors with the referent of the relevant NP. The expectation in this case was that "speakers of Polish would more readily inquire about the identity of the referent in the absence of the demonstrative, whereas in its presence they would be more likely to respond to its implicit suggestion that they should know who the referent is" (p. 186). One pair of the test items in this case was *Gdzie pracuje Tomek?* vs. *Gdzie pracuje ten Tomek?* 'Where does Tomek/[this] Tomek work?'. The possible replies for this pair were *Co za Tomek?* 'Who is Tomek?' and *Ten blondyn?* 'The blond guy?'. The majority of speakers constructed the following mini dialogues for the pair in question: 'Where does Tomek work?' — 'Who is Tomek?'; and 'Where does this Tomek work?' — 'The blonde guy?'. As Rybarczyk states (p. 186), the above results again seem to confirm the claim on the intersubjectively shared familiarity meaning of the Polish proximal demonstrative: on the one hand, the subjects who selected the response 'The blond guy?' in the case of the test item containing the proximal demonstrative "seem to acknowledge that the speaker expects the addressee to know a certain individual". In turn, the reply 'Who is Tomek?' selected by the majority of respondents in the case of the test item without the demonstrative seem to indicate the respondents' greater willingness "to admit their failure to single out a specific referent" (p. 187).

## 6. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS AND METHODOLOGY, WITH OUTLOOK FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The final chapter of Rybarczyk's work is devoted to a discussion of the relevance of her study to linguistic investigation at large. In particular, the author considers the issue of how the problems analyzed in her work should be placed within a broader perspective of understanding language as a social phenomenon, a sophisticated tool employed by speakers for achieving fine-grained intersubjective coordination with other communicating subjects.

A study of linguistic phenomena which focuses on the interpersonal dimension of language faces a number of methodological problems. In particular, collecting appropriate data may be a challenge, due to the fact that investigating subtle interpersonal meanings requires an in-depth analysis

of examples in their rich social and interpersonal context. As Rybarczyk convincingly argues (pp. 193-201), a study of this kind may profit from combining a number of different empirical approaches, such as in-depth case studies of individual hand-picked examples, in the case of which the analyst has rich information pertaining to the contextual details and intricacies of the social and interpersonal relations involved, a study of a large corpus of authentic spontaneous speech samples, and experimentation, which facilitates control over selected contextual factors and observation of the effects produced by manipulating these factors.

The final issue considered by Rybarczyk in the concluding part of her work are potential venues for future research. In addition to an analysis of further corpus examples, for instance examples involving diverse speaker-hearer social and interpersonal relations, and in addition to further empirical testing of the ideas put forward in her pilot experimental work, Rybarczyk mentions in this respect also the possibility of cross-linguistic comparative studies (cf. 202), as well as the possibility of comparing the semantic and pragmatic effects of different grammatical structures which evoke in their base the idea of an individual's personal sphere, but impose alternate construals on this base conception (pp. 203-204).

## 7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In my view, Rybarczyk's study is a highly important contribution to the cognitively-oriented research in a number of ways. First, it offers a detailed conceptual characterization of a subgroup of the nominal grounding predications in Polish, with special emphasis on their attitudinal and interpersonal meanings. As such, it has an obvious descriptive merit, as it deals with phenomena in the grammar of Polish that have not been thoroughly investigated so far. Although certain details of the proposed analysis may be open to debate,<sup>5</sup> this does not in any way diminish the value of the study, which addresses a theoretically important phenomenon, is based on a large body of authentic data, and lays down solid paths along which the problems at hand may be approached.

Moreover, the overall discussion is placed within a broader context of considerations pertaining to the phenomenon of grounding, intersubjective coordination, and interpersonal grammar at large. Hence, the study contributes not only to the understanding of the semantics and pragmatics of demonstratives or possessives in Polish, but also to the general understanding

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<sup>5</sup> For instance, I am not fully convinced that the uses of the proximal demonstrative, in which the demonstrative does not serve the purpose of referent identification, but is, instead, a tool of conveying the speaker's attitudes and emotions, should in all cases be analyzed in terms of the referent's removal from the speaker's core personal sphere and its placement in the transient personal sphere.

of grounding, intersubjectivity, and grammar as a means of negotiating the speaker-hearer interpersonal relations. Rybarczyk's work makes ample references to analyses of related phenomena in English, as well as to theoretical discussions pertaining to a wide range of related issues, thereby constituting an important contribution to the current linguistic discourse on issues of fundamental theoretical importance, such as the idea of intersubjectivity and the understanding of language as a social phenomenon.

Finally, Rybarczyk's work seems to be important also for methodological reasons. First, she offers an explicit discussion of potential methodological problems that pragmatically and intersubjectively-oriented research might face in data-collection. Secondly, she convincingly demonstrates how diverse empirical methods may be fruitfully combined to achieve a deeper understanding of the phenomena under consideration. Finally, she suggests specific ways in which problems of data collection may be overcome or in which the research questions at hand may be empirically tested via experimentation. Importantly, these specific methodological suggestions may easily be taken up, developed, and refined in future research.

All in all, in my view, Rybarczyk's work is an instance of semantic analysis that tigers like best. It deals with subtle semantics of selected grammatical structures which effect nominal grounding in Polish. The meanings under analysis are situated in rich social and interpersonal context. Finally, an extremely wide and explicitly discussed theoretical background of the overall analysis is combined with impressive methodological soundness.

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