

## Space, size, and ‘you’: motivations for Polish pronouns of address

When people speak to one another, they often categorize their relationship linguistically. In many languages, this categorization is reflected by means of the pronominal system. For example, there are at least eighteen different ways to say “you were” in Polish<sup>1</sup>, with each construction (here, pronoun and past-tense verb) encoding factors concerning the addressee (such as gender, number, perceived status, and so on.) This fact is quite significant when one considers that in other Slavic languages there are generally considerably fewer options<sup>2</sup> that could be considered the equivalent of this one English phrase. In categorizing addressees, I propose that Poles use embodied knowledge of the world around them. I suggest that this complex system of address has developed in Polish due to the prominence of *space* and *size* in structuring pronoun use in the addressing function.

Human perceptions of space and spatial orientations are common sources for metaphorical language use<sup>3</sup>. Speakers of many languages commonly use space and spatial orientations to categorize interlocutors; according to Inchaurrealde (1997: 135), a “speaker identifies certain regions of space as his/her own, and he/she feels attached to or detached from them in different degrees. Regions of space can be attached to the hearer (second person) or to other people in the background (third person).” He further notes that “interpersonal reference can be considered as an extension of physical space reference. Each participant has been assigned a certain space, and personal spaces are referred to by means of personal pronouns” (Inchaurrealde 1997:140). In Polish, for example, *ja* ‘I’ is equated with the self-space; other-spaces are represented by the pronouns *ty* ‘you sg familiar’, *wy* ‘you pl familiar, you sg formal’, *pan* ‘sir’, *pani* ‘madam’, *państwo* ‘ladies and gentlemen’, and so on.

Relative size is also important; the spaces represented by pronouns and pronominal constructions are of varying sizes on a human scale. That is, because knowledge is embodied, speakers assign the self- (*ja* ‘I’-) space a human size; other-spaces can be relatively larger or smaller. Further, as humans, we have a tendency to want to increase our personal space; this “has as a consequence the fact that other entities may get into it, provided they are ‘small’ enough to do so” (Inchaurrealde 1997: 137). For example, *ty* ‘you sg familiar,’ traditionally regarded as the pronoun of “solidarity” (Brown and Gilman 1960), can be viewed as a single space small enough to be located near or even within the realm of the *ja*-space. Other pronouns represent different spaces of various sizes.

Thus, the physical realities of space and size can motivate pronoun use, which in turn reflects perceptions of the relationship with or feelings toward an addressee. The Polish system of address is complicated because of the prominent status of space, which has been specialized in order to categorize and describe various relationships with interlocutors.

The goals of this paper, then, are to address the following: How is the space that structures Polish pronoun use divided? What spaces and sizes motivate the various pronouns, both singular and plural? Does space division change if a group, as opposed to an individual, is being addressed? This paper will also briefly explore the way space and size motivate the relatively simple systems in Russian and Czech as compared to the extremely complicated pronominal system in Polish. Most of the data for my analysis will be culled from two modern Polish dramas and films<sup>4</sup>. This summer I will conduct a pilot study in which native speakers of Russian, Czech, and Polish will write original dialogs based on short film clips; I will use the data gathered in this study in my analysis as well.

## References

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- Inchaurrealde, Carlos. 1997. "Space, reference, and emotional involvement," *The language of emotions*, ed. by Susanne Niemeier and René Dirven. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
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<sup>1</sup> For instance, *ty byłeś, ty byłaś, ty byłeś, oni byli* (sg, dialectal), *wy byliście, wy byłyście, pan był, pani była, pani byłaś, panowie byli, panowie byliście, panie były, panie byłyście, państwo byli, państwo byliście, wujek był, wujek byłeś* can all simply be translated 'you were'.

<sup>2</sup> Russian *ty byl, ty byla, ty bylo, vy byli* 'you were', for instance.

<sup>3</sup>For example, English, Russian, Czech, and Polish all make use of orientational metaphors, which give a concept a spatial orientation (UP/DOWN, IN/OUT and so on) and include GOOD IS UP, DOWN IS BAD: in Russian the expression "*nastroenie podnjalos*" 'mood rose' can be used to indicate that one is in a *better* mood. In Czech the expression "*hluboko klesnout*" 'to sink very low' has similar metaphorical meaning to its English equivalent; it can be used to describe *bad* behavior. In Polish one might want to "*podnieść kogoś z ruiny*" 'lift/raise someone out of ruin'. Each of these expressions, in each of these languages, is coherent with the notion that GOOD IS UP and DOWN IS BAD. (See Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

<sup>4</sup> Sources of Polish data will include "Tango" by Sławomir Mrożek and "Kartoteka" by Tadeusz Różewicz, as well as the films "Człowiek z marmuru" and "Psy".

