On Polish *jakiś*

Simone Diana Zamarlik, University of Ottawa • Supervised by prof. Éric Mathieu, University of Ottawa

uOttawa

Introduction

Originally proposed by Abney (1987), the DP hypothesis states that, just as the verbal system is headed by its functional elements (T and C), the nominal system is headed by its own functional element – the determiner (D). Thus, this D takes NP as its complement and a DP is projected, even when it is not pronounced (i.e. is phonologically null).

While this hypothesis is meant to apply to the underlying syntactic structure of all languages – both those with articles (pronounced D) and without (null D) – there is a debate as to whether or not this is actually the case.

For instance, Bošković (2008, 2010) has made a number of generalizations that outline the fundamental differences between languages, defined by the presence (or not) of articles in them. These serve as the basis for his argument that there is a fundamental difference in the noun phrase structure of languages with articles and those without.

While Polish is a Slavic language known not to have articles, it does have epistemic indefinites, such as *jakiś*; and data on its semantics properties and functions can provide insight into the syntactic structure of the nominal system – namely evidence for the DP layer – in Polish.

Epistemic indefinites (EIs) are indefinites that signal ignorance on the part of the speaker, providing information about their epistemic state. Crosslinguistically, there is much variation as to their specific properties and functions (Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito 2015), which includes:
• level of ignorance (i.e. partial, total);
• kind of ignorance (i.e. type, token);
• interaction with modals;
• behaviour in negative contexts; and
• interaction with plurality.

Research Questions

The aim of this paper is to study the Polish noun phrase, specifically the syntax and semantics of the understudied indefinite *jakiś*, whose behaviour will provide insights into the DP hypothesis challenged by Bošković. Thus, my research questions are:
1. What are the functions of Polish *jakiś*?
2. What is the structure of the nominal phrase in Polish (i.e. is it an NP or a DP)?

Methodology

I answer my research questions in the following three steps:
• verify if Bošković's generalizations hold true for Polish;
• apply semantic tests to Polish *jakiś* in order to establish its functions as an EI; and
• confirm my intuitions and gain more insight through a grammaticality judgment survey of native Polish speakers.

Polish and Bošković's Generalizations

While most of his examples come from Serbo-Croatian, Bošković clearly states that these generalizations extend across all Slavic languages, except for Bulgarian and Macedonian.

Left Branch Extraction (LBE)

The left branch condition (LBC) is a constraint proposed by Ross (1967) that blocks the extraction of the leftmost element out of an NP, as in (1), however, most Slavic languages, as well as Latin, allow left branch extraction (LBE), as in (2), which is precisely the movement that the LBC does not permit (Bošković 2005).

(1) *It is **expensive**$_i$ that he bought [t$_i$ shoes].

(2) **Drogie**$_i$ kupił   [t$_i$ buty].
    expensive.ACC bought.3SG shoes.ACC
    'It is *expensive* shoes that he bought.'

Bošković claims this indicates that nominals in articleless languages are bare NPs and that it is the DP in languages with articles that acts as the barrier for LBE. While Polish does allow LBE, this does not necessarily suggest that it does not have a DP. For example, this phenomenon may not actually be an extraction but a case of copy-and-delete, like split wh-phrases in French and Russian (Pereltsvaig 2013), as in (3).

(3) [Drogie   ~~buty~~] kupił   [~~drogie~~ buty].
    expensive.ACC bought.3SG   shoes.ACC
    'It is *expensive* shoes that he bought.'

Superlatives

Bošković (2008) claims only languages with articles allow a majority superlative reading and articleless languages can allow only a plurality reading. However, as in (4), Polish allows for both readings.

(4) a. Najwięcej ludzi   pije   piwo.
       most   people drink beer
       'More people drink beer than any other drink.'
    b. Większość ludzi   pije   piwo.
       most   people drink beer
       'More than half of people drink beer.

Exhaustivity Presupposition

Based on the observations made by Partee (2006), Bošković (2010) also argues that possessors may induce an exhaustivity presupposition only in DP languages. This, again, is not true for Polish, as in (5) versus (6).

(5) John's three sweaters were ruined, (so he has none / #but he still has two).

(6) Jana   trzy swetry   zostały zniszczone, (więc
    John.POSS three sweaters got   ruined   (so
    nie ma   żadnego / #ale ma   jeszcze dwa).
    NEG have.3SG any   but have.3SG still   two)
    'John's three sweaters were ruined, (so he has none / #but he still has two).'

The Functions of *jakiś* as an Epistemic Indefinite

Kind of Ignorance

Like English *some*, German *irgendein* and Spanish *algún*, *jakiś* can express type-ignorance, as in (7).

(7) a. There's **some** plant growing through the wall.
    b. **Jakaś** roślina rośnie przez ścianę.

In contrast to *some*, *irgendein* and *algún*, *jakiś* is not the best choice to express token-ignorance, as in (8).

(8) a. The hackers implanted a virus into **some** file on this computer.
    b. ?Hakerzy zainfekowali wirusem **jakiś** plik na tym komputerze.

Interaction with Modals

Like *irgendein*, *algún* and Italian *un qualche*, *jakiś* can be used in non-modalized sentences, as in (9), and under epistemic modals, as in (10), to express only partial ignorance. So, if a speaker does not know what room of the house John is in, these EIs are felicitous, even if the speaker is positive that John in not, for example, in the bedroom.

(9) a. Hans ist in **irgendeinem** Zimmer im Haus.
    b. Jan jest w **jakimś** pokoju domu.
       'John is in a room of the house.'
(10) a. Hans muss in **irgendeinem** Zimmer im Haus sein.
     b. Jan musi być w **jakimś** pokoju domu.
        'John muse be in a room of the house.'

While not required, *jakiś* is compatible with total ignorance, too, like *irgendein* and *algún*.

Under deontic modals, *jakiś* maintains its ignorance inference (in contrast with *un qualche*), as in (11) and (12), only requires partial variation (like *algún*), and can also have a free-choice inference (like *irgendein*).

(11) a. Maria ha sposato **un qualche** dottore (#cioè Vito).
     b. Maria wyszła za **jakiegoś** lekarza (#konkretnie za Wita).
        'Maria married some doctor, (#namely Vitus.)'
(12) a. Maria deve sposare **un qualche** dottore.
        'There is some particular doctor that Maria must marry, but I do not know his name.'
     b. Maria musi wyjść za **jakiegoś** lekarza.
        As in (12a) or 'Maria has to marry a doctor, any doctor will do.'

Behaviour in Negative Contexts

Like many EIs, *jakiś* behaves as a positive polarity item; like all known EIs, it no longer retains its ignorance inference in downward entailing environments.
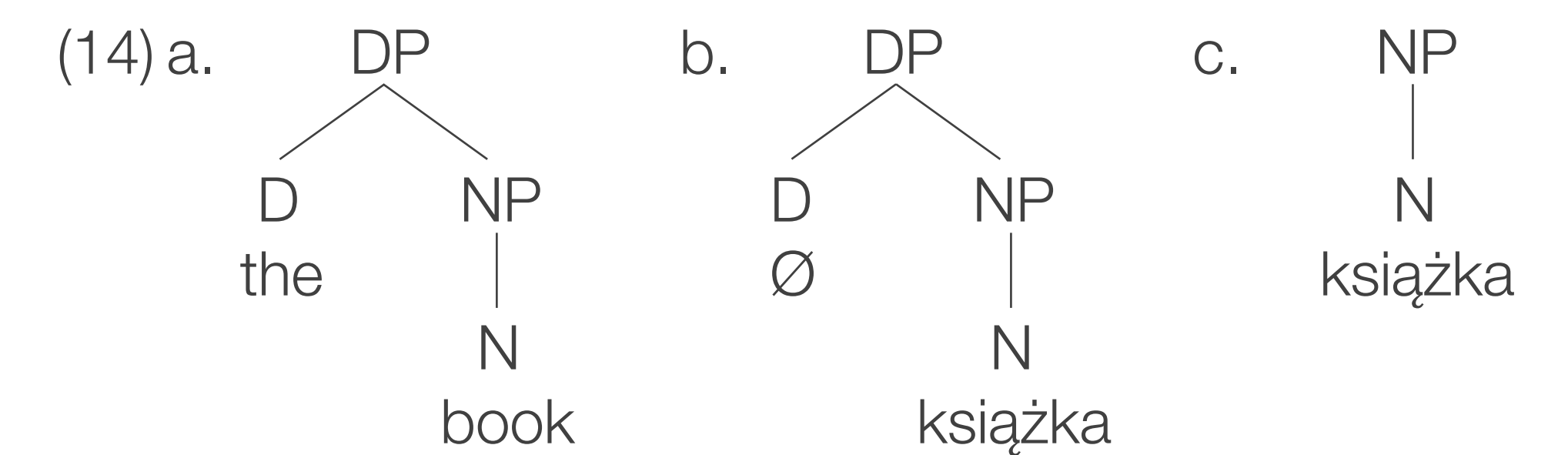
Interaction with Plurality

In contrast to *some* and *algún*, but like *irgendein*, *jakiś* does not lose its ignorance effect in plural form, as in (13).

(13) a. María vive con **algunos** estudiantes, en concreto con Pedro y con Juan.
     b. Maria mieszka z **jakimiś** studentami, #konkretnie z Piotrem i Janem.
        'Maria lives with some students, (#)namely with Peter and John.'

Conclusions and Future Directions

In summary, the analysis of *jakiś* as an EI provides more precise semantics for it than those established thus far (Haspelmath 1997). These properties and functions provide evidence for the DP layer in Polish, especially since, in my grammaticality judgement survey, native Polish speakers appeared to gravitate towards choosing sentences with *jakiś* to describe indefinite contexts (i.e. ones in which you would use indefinite article *a* in English) and the null determiner in definite contexts (i.e. ones in which you would use definite article *the* in English). Thus, a nominal phrase like *książka* ('the/a book') in Polish should have the same syntactic structure as the same phrase in English, as in (14a) and (14b), not (14c).

(14) a.   DP   b.   DP   c.   NP
        D   NP   D   NP   N
              | | |
        the   N   Ø   N   książka
              | |
             book   książka

The following table provides a quick overview of the EI functions of *jakiś* in relation to EIs in other languages.

	KIND OF IGNORANCE		IGNORANCE INFERENCE UNDER MODALS?		NEGATIVE CONTEXTS	IGNORANCE WHEN PLURAL?
	TYPE	TOKEN	EPISTEMIC	DEONTIC		
English *some*	yes	yes	yes	yes	no, PPI	no
German *irgendein*	yes	yes	yes, partial/total	yes, free-choice	no	yes
Italian *un qualche*			yes, partial	no	no	
Spanish *algún*	yes	yes	yes, partial/total	yes, partial	no, PPI	no
Polish *jakiś*	yes	no?	yes, partial/total	yes, partial/total/free-choice	no, PPI	yes

All non-Polish data about EIs in this project has been adapted from Aloni & Port (2015) and Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito (2015).

Next steps in my research include situating *jakiś* into a formal semantic theory, like those proposed for *irgendein* and *algún*.

References

Abney, Steven Paul. 1987. The English noun phrase in its sentential aspect. Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Aloni, Maria, and Angelika Port. 2015. Epistemic indefinites and methods of identification. In *Epistemic indefinites: Exploring modality beyond the verbal domain*, ed. Luis Alonso-Ovalle and Paula Menéndez-Benito, 117-140. New York: Oxford University Press.

Alonso-Ovalle, Luis, and Paula Menéndez-Benito. 2015. Epistemic Indefinites: an overview. In *Epistemic indefinites: Exploring modality beyond the verbal domain*, ed. Luis Alonso-Ovalle and Paula Menéndez-Benito, 1-27. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bošković, Željko. 2005. On the locality of left branch extraction and the structure of NP. *Studia Linguistica* 59: 1-45.

Bošković, Željko. 2008. What will you have, DP or NP? In *NELS 36: Proceedings of the thirty-seventh annual meeting of the North East Linguistic Society 2007*, ed. Emily Elfner and Martin Walkow, 101-114. Amherst: Graduate Linguistic Student Association.

Bošković, Željko. 2010. On NPs and clauses. In *Discourse and grammar: From sentence types to lexical categories*, ed. Günther Frewendorf and Thomas Ede Zimmermann, 179-242. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Haspelmath, Martin. 1997. *Indefinite Pronouns*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Partee, Barbara H. 2006. A note on Mandarin possessives, demonstratives, and definiteness. In *Drawing the boundaries of meaning: Neo-Gricean studies in pragmatics and semantics in honor of Laurence R. Horn*, ed. Betty J. Birner and Gregory Ward, 263-280. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Pereltsvaig, Asya. 2013. Noun phrase structure in article-less Slavic languages: DP or not DP? *Language and Linguistics Compass* 7(3): 201-219.

Ross, John Robert. 1967. Constraints on variables in syntax. Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.