Secondary predication inside verbal nouns in Polish
Małgorzata Szajbel-Keck, European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder)

(1) Czy według Greków stosowne było tańczenie na trzeźwo? (www)
  ‘According to Greeks, was dancing sober appropriate?’

(2) Stracił je właśnie za prowadzenie auta po pijanemu. (NKJP)
  ‘He lost it exactly because of driving drunk’

The appearance of secondary predicates attached to verbal nouns (VN) is yet another case, not discussed in the literature, proving that verbal nouns are not simple nouns morphologically derived from verbs, but that they have a complex internal structure containing elements of a verbal phrase. Polish secondary predicates not only attach inside a nominal domain of verbal nouns, but they are actually adjuncts to a lower VP, following the pattern of adjunction that they have in regular tensed clauses.

Verbal nouns in Polish are a special case of complex nominals which are double layered phrases containing a verbal projection embedded in a nominal one (for Polish e.g. Rappaport 2001, Rozwadowska 2005). Although it has been suggested for article-less languages that nouns are NP and not DPs (e.g. Bošković 2009), I keep the DP layer for verbal nominals. Apart from morphology, following syntactic arguments speak in favor of the layered analysis: retained distinctions in aspect and voice (imperfective pisanie vs perfective napisanie ‘writing’, or active mycie ‘washing’ vs passive bycie umytym ‘being washed’), regularly admitted negation (niejedzenie ‘not eating’), retention of the reflexive particle się (mycie się ‘washing oneself’), use of adverbial modifiers instead of attributive adjectives (jeżdżenie szybko ‘driving fast’). All of which will be discussed in the presentation. Further, according to Alexiadou et al. (2010) conclusions from the fact that Polish verbal nouns both retain verbal aspect and are able to receive plural marking, Polish verbal nouns are nominalizations of more than just VP, namely of AspP. This allows me to draw a parallel between the attachment position of secondary predicates both in tensed clauses and in verbal nouns.

In my analysis, drawing from the similarity of secondary predicates to manner adjuncts, I assume that secondary predicates are adjuncts either to V’ or a higher functional verbal projection (see e.g. Bowers (1993) on the position of manner adjuncts). Since verbal nouns contain both VP and a functional projection before they nominalize, they should be able to host secondary predication. (1) – (4) show that, in fact, secondary predicates attach to verbal nouns.

Secondary predicates inside the verbal noun can be controlled both by the object and the subject of the verbal noun (3). Since there is no agreement between the controller and the secondary predicate, the reference might be ambiguous, as in (4), where both the implicit subject ‘I’ and the object Piotr of the verbal noun are potentially co-referent with the secondary predicate na golo attached to that verbal noun, but not simultaneously. These facts can be explained by the availability of the already mentioned two attachment positions for secondary predication inside the verbal projection (Szajbel-Keck 2016).

(3) Rozebranie dziecka do naga na trzeźwo zajmuje jej tylko kilka minut.
  ‘Undressing the child naked (when) sober takes her only a few minutes.’ (ex. given by the anonymous reviewer)
(4) Zobaczenie Piotra na golo nie było dla mnie przyjemne

seeing.VN  Piotr.GEN  PR=na naked.PRED  NEG

‘Seeing Piotr naked was not pleasant for me’

Subject controller: I was naked when I saw him

Object controller: Piotr was naked when I saw him

*Simultaneous subject and object control: We both were naked

Another characteristic for Polish verbal nouns is that only non-inflecting secondary predicates are found here, either the prepositional ones (i.e. in form ‘preposition + adjectival or nominal form’) or adverbs. Replacing them with a bare inflecting secondary predicate (i.e. an adjective, since nouns do not function as secondary predicates in Polish anymore), agreeing with its controller, results in ungrammaticality (5), despite the fact that either one would be possible in a tensed clause (6). That the agreeing form is excluded is to be expected under the assumption that DP is a strong phase, as it has been independently argued for by Boeckx (2009), Chomsky (2007), and Svenonius (2004), not only for Slavic, but also other languages, and that a verbal noun is headed by a DP in Polish.

(5) Stracił je właśnie za prowadzenie auta *pijany

he.NOM.SG.M.lost it exactly for driving.VN  car  drunk.NOM.SG.M

‘He lost it exactly because of driving drunk’

(6) Stracił je właśnie za to, że prowadził auto pijany/po pijanemu/po pijaku

he.lost it exactly for DEM that he.drove  car  drunk/po-ADJ   /po-NOUN

‘He lost it exactly because he drove drunk’

Selected bibliography:


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