

SELECTED ASPECTS OF DIRECTIVES IN POLISH

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ABSTRACT. *This paper aims to discuss selected aspects of two types of Polish directives, namely requests and orders. The majority of works devoted to speech acts present theories based solely on the analysis of the data from English. The research carried out in this work reveals some interesting differences between the realization patterns of the aforementioned speech acts in Polish and English. According to Wierzbicka (1998), the contrast can be ascribed to the cultural values shared by a given society. Certain linguistic devices used in Polish seem to reflect some characteristic socio-cultural attitudes, for instance, spontaneity, cordiality and courtesy.*

KEYWORDS. *Cognitive linguistics, cultural values, directives, orders, Polish, politeness, speech acts*

RESUMEN. *El objetivo de este trabajo es proponer un análisis de determinados aspectos relacionados con dos tipos de actos de habla directivos en polaco: las peticiones y las órdenes. La mayor parte de los estudios sobre actos de habla proponen teorías que están basadas únicamente en el análisis de datos procedentes de la lengua inglesa. La investigación que hemos llevado a cabo revela diferencias interesantes entre los patrones de realización de los actos de habla anteriormente mencionados en polaco e inglés. Según Wierzbicka (1998), dicho contraste puede ser atribuido a los valores culturales existentes en una sociedad. Algunos mecanismos lingüísticos del polaco reflejan actitudes socio-culturales características como, por ejemplo, la espontaneidad, la cordialidad y la cortesía.*

PALABRAS CLAVE. *lingüística cognitiva, valores culturales, habla directivos, órdenes, polaco, cortesía.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Speech acts have received a considerable interest in linguistic research in recent years. Most of the work in this field has been devoted to the analysis of English data and on this basis some general conclusions have been made concerning the nature of speech

acts (Pérez 2001; Panther and Thornburg 2003). This paper aims to present some properties of two types of speech acts in Polish, namely, requests and orders. On the basis of the analysis of Polish data (mostly from personal sources) we will provide evidence for the claim by Wierzbicka (2003) that realisation patterns of a given speech act are language specific and also culturally motivated. We have chosen the two subtypes of directives to be able to show how certain lexico-syntactic devices enforce either request or order interpretation.

2. REQUESTS

In this section we will discuss the realisational patterns for Polish requests and the cultural values motivating them. A crucial observation about requests in Polish is that their form depends greatly on the social distance holding between the speaker and the hearer. This generalisation is, of course, true for many languages, yet in Polish the contrast between formal and informal requests seems to be particularly prominent. This is probably very much connected with the fact that Polish language possesses the so called, T-V distinction, that is to say, there exist two distinct pronouns that can be used to address the hearer depending on his/her relationship with the speaker. Thus, in Polish we distinguish the second person pronoun *ty* 'you' which signals a considerable degree of intimacy between interlocutors and the third person honorific title *Pan* 'Sir/Mr' or *Pani* 'Madam/Ms', which marks some distance between the speaker and the hearer. Therefore, it seems justified to treat the two forms of address separately; this will be taken up in sections 2.1 and 2.2, respectively. The most important grammatical constructs found either in formal or informal requests which will be considered in the following sections are: diminutives, different forms of address and the performative verb *prosić* 'ask'.

According to Wierzbicka (2003), two principal cultural values held by Poles seem to motivate certain lexico-syntactic phenomena found in Polish requests, namely, cordiality and courtesy. Cordiality can be defined as the readiness of the members of some society to express their emotions openly and spontaneously as well as to favour close intimate contacts with certain individuals (e.g. family members) even to the extent of what might be seen as imposing one's will on others or invading their autonomy. Courtesy, on the other hand, is a tendency to pay respect to those members of society with whom we are less familiar in a somewhat ritualised way. Though, seemingly opposite in nature, cordiality and courtesy do not infrequently interplay as we shall see in section 2.2 devoted to the honorific style.

2.1. *Requests - second person singular*

As was claimed above, the mere choice of the second person singular form of the verb signals some degree of intimacy between the interlocutors. We might therefore expect that the requests formulated in such a context are fairly direct. It is indeed the case

–when we address somebody using the pronoun *ty* ‘you’– the most typical way of making a request is by means of the imperative mode as in the example in (1).

- (1) *Podaj mi sól, proszę.*
 pass me salt, [I] ask
 ‘Pass me the salt, please.’

An interrogative form of requests most frequently used, for example, by the speakers of English is fairly restricted in Polish and, apart from that, it is more characteristic of the honorific style (Wierzbicka 2003). Wierzbicka notes that it is often wrongly assumed that in all languages there exists a close correlation between the low degree of directness of requests and their high degree of politeness. In such an account the most conventional Polish requests would have to be interpreted as impolite, which is obviously far from being true. The fallacy of the above mentioned claim consists in drawing conclusions basing only on the data from English language and not taking into account cultural varieties. Wierzbicka explains that in Slavonic cultures (as well as Mediterranean ones) directness is perceived as a symptom of closeness and affiliation. Lack of directness, on the other hand, may be seen as a sign of hostility and alienation. If we are considerably familiar with somebody, which is signalled by employing the T-form, we know what this person would be willing to do for us (as we would probably be ready to do the same for him/her) and we can ask for this in a fairly unmitigated way. Questioning this readiness to cooperate on the part of the addressee would be the same as casting doubts on the whole relationship between the speaker and the hearer.

Additionally, the apparent brusqueness of Polish requests is very frequently ‘softened’ by the, so called, expressive derivation. We will mention here only one type of expressive derivation, namely, the use of diminutives. Polish possesses an extremely rich system of diminutives which can be attributed to the central role that warmth, affection and cordiality play in this culture. Not only nouns but also adjectives and adverbs can be diminutivized and, what is more, a given word can have even a few degrees of diminutivization. Diminutives are said to fulfil a variety of functions in a language (for more details see Wierzbicka 2003) – here we will concentrate on how they can influence the illocutionary force of requests. Consider the examples in (2) and (3):

- (2) *Nalej troszeczkę tu na ten stół.*
 pour a bit-DIM-DIM here on this table
 ‘Pour a tiny bit here on the table.’
- (3) *Chodź tu na chwileczkę.*
 come here for while-DIM-DIM
 ‘Come here for a while.’

Diminutives used in the above sentences may be said to fulfil two functions - they do not only make the cost of the requested action seemingly lower for the hearer but they also seem to play a role in tightening relations between the interlocutors.

This intimacy-creating function of diminutives is even more apparent when they are employed in various forms of address as illustrated by the examples in (4) and (5).

- (4) *Kasieńko, nakryj stół, proszę.*
 Kate-DIM-DIM, lay table, [I] ask
 ‘Kate, lay the table, please.’
- (5) *Myszeńko, nie przeszkadzaj mi teraz.*
 mouse-DIM-DIM, don’t disturb me now
 ‘Honey, don’t disturb me now, please.’

Both the double diminutive of the proper name in (4) and the diminutivized term of endearment in (5) point to the intimate relationship between the speaker and the hearer. This cordial way of addressing the hearer mitigates the directness of the request but, at the same time, through mentioning the hearer explicitly it can strengthen the illocutionary force of the speech act.

Another linguistic item which, similarly to diminutives, serves the function of mitigating directness of the imperative mode used in requests is the performative verb *prosić* ‘ask’ discussed in section 2.3 of the article.

2.2. Requests - honorific style

In most contexts, honorific style requires using both the third person form of the verb and the honorific title *Pan/Pani* ‘Sir/Madam’. The use of honorific titles in Polish is obligatory in most contexts of interaction between adult strangers or people who are not in an intimate relationship. Speakers choose this way of addressing each other irrespective of their social position as an indication of politeness and social distance. Using the second person form of address instead of the honorific title *Pan/Pani* between unfamiliar adult people would normally be considered impolite. Poles are unlikely to give it up even when they speak in anger. Consider the example in (6).

- (6) *Pan jest idiotą!*
 sir is idiot
 ‘You are an idiot, sir.’

The proposition expressed by (6) is offensive for the hearer, yet the speaker decided to address him *Pan* ‘Sir’ and use the third person form of the verb. This, of course, points to the strong cultural importance of the proper honorific title. *Pan/Pani* in Polish can be combined not only with surnames, but also first names and names of professions or posts held by people. This second option, i.e., using the honorific title followed by the first name, is used when there exists some familiarity between the speaker and the hearer, yet, they are not intimate enough to address each other by the second person form of the verb. An example of such a relationship of “intermediate

familiarity” could be the one existing between workmates in an office or a company. Interestingly, this can go even further and the first names used with *Pan/Pani* can be diminutivized as in the example in (7).

- (7) *Panie Jureczku, niech pan mi wysle tę fakturę.*
 mr George-DIM-DIM, *niech* sir me send this invoice
 ‘George, send me this invoice, please.’

The form of address in (7) is an interesting example of the coexistence of the two values predominant in the Polish culture, namely cordiality and courtesy, which were defined at the beginning of the article. On the one hand, the speaker wishes to signal his/her warm feelings towards the hearer but, on the other hand, he keeps the proper distance.

The possibility of using the honorific title together with the name of the hearer’s profession is also frequently exploited by Polish speakers. The professions mentioned in such a context are mostly prestigious and socially respected and thus we can have: ‘Mr. Professor’, ‘Mr. Engineer’, ‘Mr. Doctor’, ‘Mr. Director’, ‘Mr. M.A. holder’, ‘Mr. Prime Minister’ and many more.

All the forms of address mentioned so far are very prolific in Polish and they seem to play an important function in requests. They contribute considerably to the degree of politeness of this speech act by signalling either respect for the addressee or some warm feelings held by the speaker, or even, as we have seen above, both of these attitudes combined.

Now, let us proceed to a discussion of syntactic variability of requests in the honorific style in Polish. If the social distance between the speaker and the hearer is bigger and the latter is addressed with the title *Pan/Pani* ‘Mr./Mrs’ requests may take various forms. In such a case the most direct way of making a request would be using the particle *niech* as there is no distinct imperative form of the verb for third person singular, as exemplified by the example in (8).

- (8) *Niech Pani siada.*
niech Madame sit down
 ‘Won’t you sit down, madam?’

Dropping the particle *niech* as illustrated by the example under (9) is possible in less formal contexts and results in a much lowered degree of politeness.

- (9) *Pani da dwa misie.*
 ms give two teddy bears
 ‘Two teddy bears, please’

In spite of the tendency to issue considerably direct request in Polish there exists a group of requests with *pan/pani*, exemplified here from (10) to (12), which are also used with considerable frequency.

- (10) *Może pan laskawie otworzyć okno?*
 can Sir kindly to open window
 ‘Would you be so kind as to open the window, please?’
- (11) *Czy byłby pan tak uprzejmy podać mi popielniczkę?*
 would Sir be so kind to pass me ash-tray
 ‘Would you be so kind as to pass me the ash-tray?’
- (12) *Czy byłaby pani tak dobra pożyczyć mi chusteczkę?*
 would Madam be so good to lend me tissue
 ‘Would you be so kind as to lend me a tissue?’

On the surface, the requests cited above might seem similar to those conventionally used in English. They are much less direct because of their interrogative form, the use of modal verbs and conditionals. According to Wierzbicka (2003), however, this type of Polish requests differs from English ones in many respects. First, as it was mentioned, they are restricted to formal situations and, additionally, they are not perceived by the speakers of Polish as neutral but are elaborately polite. This is confirmed by the fact that using such forms of requests would be excluded if the speaker addressed the hearer in anger. What is more, such requests are felt to be tentative and lacking in confidence as if the speaker had real doubts if the hearer could perform the requested action. Wierzbicka attributes this tendency of using hyperpolite requests in formal encounters to courtesy, the cultural value mentioned at the beginning of the article. Poles are said to attach attention to showing respect for others (particularly women) in a ceremonious way. One of the ceremonies extremely frequent in the past and still practised by some male Poles is greeting women by kissing them on the hand. The formal requests in (10) through (12) would thus be examples of such verbal etiquette.

2.3. *Performative verb prosić*

The verb *prosić* ‘ask’ is highly frequent in Polish and apart from occurring in requests it fulfils a variety of different pragmatic functions. It is used, among others, to address strangers, to keep the hearer’s attention, to encourage somebody to start an activity or even to express surprise, irony or disdain (for a discussion on different functions of *prosić* see Maślowska 1992).

Expressing requests in Polish by means of the explicit performative *prosić* is extremely frequent. In Western Cultures the use of explicit performative verbs is perceived as impolite or at least awkward as this mode of issuing a request is excessively direct and imposing on the addressee (see, for example, Searle 1975). However, this is far from being true in the case of Polish where it seems that the chief function of the performative verb *prosić* is to increase the degree of politeness of this speech act. However, the degree of politeness expressed by the verb differs depending on the syntactic construction in which it occurs (Brehmer 2006). Instances of the most frequent

uses of the verb are given here from (13) to (16). Note that in all constructions the performative verb is used in the first person singular present tense indicative mode – other possible uses of the verb are disregarded in the present study.

- (13) *Proszę obudź mnie o siódmej.*
 [I] ask wake-up me at seven
 ‘Wake me up at seven, please.’
- (14) *Proszę, żebyś mi nie przeszkadzał.*
 [I] ask that [you] me not disturb
 ‘Don’t disturb me, please.’
- (15) *Proszę (o) sałatkę*
 [I] ask (for) salad
 ‘A salad, please.’
- (16) *Proszę poczekać przed drzwiami.*
 [I] ask to wait in front of door
 ‘Wait in front of the door, please’

As we can see the verb *prosić* combines well with the imperative (as in (13)), it can take a subordinate clause (as in (14)), direct object or prepositional phrase (as in (15)), and it can also occur together with the infinitive (as in (16)). The verb *prosić* used with the imperative mode constitutes probably the most typical way of issuing a request in Polish between fairly acquainted people. The examples from (14) to (16) are more formal ways of formulating requests and, at the same time, they are neutrally polite. In each case the explicit performative has the clear function of the politeness marker since omitting it (if possible at all) would render the utterances impolite and order-like. This mitigating function of *proszę* is especially well illustrated by the example in (16) where it accompanies the infinitival form of the verb. When used on its own, the infinitive constitutes a brusque command and when accompanied by the verb *prosić* it is a perfectly polite request frequently used in encounters with strangers.

It should be noted, however, that in spite of the indisputable politeness-increasing function described above, the performative verb *prosić*, used in the constructions presented in the examples (13)-(16) is so ubiquitous that it is to some extent semantically bleached. This, at least partial, grammaticalization of the performative verb can be confirmed by the variability of the syntactic positions in which it occurs. Apart from taking the initial position in a sentence (as in the examples (13)-(16)) the verb can also be used in some contexts in the middle of the sentence or at its end as illustrated by the examples below.

- (17) *Daj mi, proszę, trochę czasu.*
 give me, [I] ask, some time
 ‘Give me some time, please’

- (18) *Otwórz okno, proszę.*
 open window, [I] ask
 ‘Open the window, please’

However, in spite of the partial grammaticalisation of the verb, in some contexts it is possible to increase its illocutionary force by adding an adverb of manner or degree as in example (19) or by the overt mentioning the hearer as in (20) (see Ożóg 1992: 53).

- (19) *Bardzo proszę pożycz mi swoje notatki.*
 very [I] ask lend me your notes.
 ‘Be so kind as to lend me your notes.’
- (20) *Proszę cię, żebyś przyszedł punktualnie.*
 [I] ask you that [you] come punctually.
 ‘Come punctually, please.’

At this point, let us come back briefly to the widespread view mentioned above that performative verbs are not favoured as a means of issuing requests since they are excessively direct and the speaker using them might seem to impose his/her will on the hearer. In connection with this, we would like to put forward a tentative hypothesis concerning the Polish performative verb *prosić*. It is not unlikely that the meaning of the Polish verb *prosić* is not exactly equivalent to the English verb *ask* but that it possesses some meaning implications of the English *beg* or *entreat* (cf. Brygida Rudzka-Ostyn 1989) (It should be noted, however, that Polish has a separate performative verb ‘to beg’). It does not seem implausible when we consider the statements that Poles are often heard saying, as in (21) and (22).

- (21) *Ja nikogo o nic prosić nie będę.*
 I nobody for nothing to ask not will-be
 ‘I’m not going to ask anybody for anything.’
- (22) *Nie chcę się prosić.*
 [I] don’t want REFL to ask
 ‘I won’t beg’

Both statements seem to reflect the culture-bound attitude that asking somebody for something is potentially costly and face-threatening for the speaker who sometimes may have to put himself in a lower position when requesting something from somebody. The example given here in (22), though colloquial, is especially interesting because here the reflexive pronoun *się* seems to emphasise the negative attitude of the speaker to the action of asking.

We can thus conclude that the use of the performative verb *prosić* in Polish requests should not be interpreted so much as an explicit/unmitigated statement of the speakers’ wish to achieve something which makes it hard for the hearer to refuse, but

rather as an act which is costly for the speaker as well and by means of which the speech act achieves a higher degree of politeness.

Undoubtedly, the above claim is tentative as it is based only on the native speakers' intuition and that in order to confirm it further research would be necessary.

3. ORDERS

In this section we will focus on the way in which orders can be expressed in Polish. We have already emphasized the fact that the imperative mood may well be used in requests and we have discussed some mitigating devices occurring in this type of directives. Now, we will concentrate on the possible intensifiers that impose a command interpretation on the utterance (Pérez 2001). The devices we will analyse, whether grammatical or lexical, maximize the power of the speaker over the addressee and, at the same time, minimize the optionality of carrying out the requested action. Prototypical orders involve a cost for the addressee, whose wish or desire to perform the action is low, and a benefit for the speaker, whose will is typically high.

3.1. *Particles*

One of the common devices employed in imperatives in order to intensify the reading of the utterance as a command is the use of particles. The most frequent particles used in orders in Polish are: *niech*, *no*, *że*. They enrich the meaning of the utterance by adding some emotional overtones, e.g. impatience, irritation or insistence. This direct way of expressing one's emotions is reserved for a powerful speaker who is entitled to influence the addressee, consequently, the clause must be understood as an order. Consider the following examples below.

- (23) *Wydźże stąd!*
 get-out-*że* from here
 'Get out of here at once!'
- (24) *No pośpiesz się!*
no hurry-up REFL
 'Hurry up! [you are getting on my nerves!]
- (25) *A niechże pan przestanie!*
 oh *niechże* Sir stop
 'Oh, stop it, Sir!'

The utterances in (23) – (25) are strong and emphatic. Examples (23) and (24) could be used by a parent talking to a child, or some other person using a highly patronizing tone. On the other hand, in example (25) the hearer is addressed by a polite third person form '*pan*', yet, the emphatic particle is used. This sentence is typically uttered in a situation where the speaker wants to express his emotions to a person with

whom they do not have an intimate relationship. However, this kind of behaviour is perfectly acceptable, according to Goddard and Wierzbicka (1997), as expressing emotions and opinions openly, whether they are good or bad, is strongly favoured in Polish culture. Being honest and direct is highly appreciated and valued.

3.2. *The ethic dative*

The reading of an utterance as an order can be intensified by the speaker asserting his power over the addressee, which corresponds to one of the basic characteristics of this type of speech act. This specific role can be expressed in Polish by grammatical means, namely, the usage of the ethic dative as in example (26) below. The use of the dative pronoun is not required by the valency of the verb.

- (26) *Siedź **mi** spokojnie!*
 sit me: DAT calmly
 ‘Sit calmly [or else!]’

In infinitival or imperative clauses with the ethic dative, the addressee is subsumed into the speaker’s sphere of influence, which gives the speaker the right to direct his/her actions (Dąbrowska 1997: 58ff.). The dative pronoun explicitly codes the sphere of influence of the speaker and, thus, imposes the command interpretation of the imperative. The use of ethic dative is an open manifestation of the speaker’s power over the addressee and, consequently, renders the utterance less polite. Example (27) below can be used as some kind of advice (e.g. ‘Don’t touch this because it is dangerous!’), whereas (28) can only be interpreted as a command (‘Don’t you dare touch this!’). What is more, the utterance with the ethic dative could not be understood as a request or a piece of advice even if it were combined with the polite *proszę* ‘please’ as in example (29) below.

- (27) *Nie dotykaj tego!*
 not touch this
 ‘Don’t touch this!’
- (28) *Nie dotykaj **mi** tego!*
 not touch me: DAT this
 ‘Don’t touch this [or else!]’
- (29) *Nie dotykaj **mi** tego, proszę!*
 not touch me: DAT this please
 ‘Don’t touch this, please [or else!]’

As Dąbrowska (1997: 58ff.) points out, the use of the first person pronoun imposes a strong order interpretation of an utterance implying not only the power of the speaker over the addressee, but also some emotional impact, namely, annoyance, impatience and disrespect, or even an indirect threat. However, the ethic dative may also be used with

infinitives, as in example (30) below. The infinitival clause introduces a more impersonal interpretation of the order, thus, makes it more distanced and less polite.

- (30) *Nie wychylać mi się przez okna!*
 not to lean me: DAT REFL out of the windows
 ‘Don’t lean out of the windows [or else!’]

3.3. *Infinitives*

The use of infinitives even without the emphatic dative also influences the interpretation of imperatives in Polish. According to Wierzbicka (2003: 36ff.) the infinitival clause is a strong device encoding some of the prototypical characteristics of orders, namely, anger and imposition of authority. Moreover, the form is considered offensive and pejorative, which follows from the impersonal syntactic construction, in which the speaker does not mention any addressee. Such a strategy seems to exclude the addressee from the illocutionary act and implies no respect whatsoever for the interlocutor. Furthermore, the speaker acts as if there was no particular person he/she was addressing, thus, he/she does not expect any answer, let alone, a refusal to perform the action. This substantial power asymmetry is prototypical of orders. Thus, the infinitival clause in the imperative, impolite and devoid of any mitigation, seems to be appropriate for expressing commands. Examples (31) and (32) illustrate this situation.

- (31) *Nie chodzić tu w butach!*
 no to walk here in shoes
 ‘Don’t walk here in shoes [or else!’]
- (32) *Sprzątać tu, natychmiast!*
 to clean here at once
 ‘Clean the place at once [or else!’]

Interestingly, in the data corpus collected for this study many examples were found in which the infinitival clause is used together with the polite *proszę* ‘please’. The semantic impact of *proszę* has already been discussed in relation to requests. Now, let us consider the following examples of orders expressed by the infinitive below.

- (33) *Proszę się pośpieszyć!*
 please REFL to hurry-up
 ‘Hurry up, please!’
- (34) *Proszę stąd wyjść!*
 please from-here to go-out
 ‘Go out, please!’

Wierzbicka (2003: 36ff.) notes that such directives are a bit more polite but, still, they signal coldness and a lack of intimacy. It appears that in Polish culture utterances that are highly indirect and build distance may be considered hostile and alienating.

3.4. Aspect

Another means of intensifying the command interpretation of the imperative clause is the aspect of the verb, which is characteristic of Slavic languages, among others, Polish. The distinction between perfectives vs. imperfectives in imperatives is a result of a grammaticalized form of emphasis of negation. In positive imperatives the aspect of the verb coincides with that of the verb of a finite clause, i.e. imperfectives denote processes and perfectives denote completed actions. (cf. the use of the imperfective: *Idziesz do domu*. 'you go-IMPERF to home' and *Idź do domu!* 'go-IMPERF-IMPER to home' vs. the use of the perfective: *Przeczytać książkę*. 'read-PERF book' and *Przeczytaj książkę!* 'read-IMPERF-IMPER book'). Interestingly, it appears that in negated imperatives, the most common and natural form is the imperfective, while the perfective is considered quite unusual and its usage is highly restricted. This phenomenon is well exemplified in (35) - (37) below.

- (35) *Nie dawaj!*
not give IMPERF
'Don't give!'
- (36) **Nie daj!*
not give PERF
'Don't give!'
- (37) *Tylko nie daj mu twojego numeru telefonu !*
only not give PERF him your number phone
'Just don't give him your phone number!'

In (35) the imperfective is used to forbid an agentive, controlled action (Levinson 2005). In this situation, the perfective form is not possible, as in (36). However, the perfective in (37) exemplifies a special *preventive usage* which is used in warnings and reminders, often used with a particle, e.g. *tylko* 'only'. Levinson (2005: 3ff.) points out that the perfective aspect in negative imperatives serves the purpose of preventing an uncontrolled non-agentive action, while the imperfective aspect prohibits the intentional performing of the action by the hearer. Consequently, the perfective form in (38) has the interpretation of a warning, while in (39) the imperative refers to the prohibition of the intentional act of the hearer.

- (38) *Nie rozbij szkła!*
no break PERF glass
'Don't break the glass!'

- (39) *Nie rozbijaj szkła!*
 no break IMPERF glass
 'Don't break the glass!'

The difference between the two forms resides in the meaning of perfectives and imperfectives. According to Levinson (2005: 3ff.), the former denote a change of state from performing the activity to completing it, while the latter denote states and activities that are not necessarily completed. Thus, negative commands employing imperfectives are stronger as they prohibit engaging in the activity, not only completing it (as in the case of perfectives). This kind of emphatic negation in imperatives stresses the power of the speaker over the addressee, excludes any optionality and renders the utterance much less polite. Polish favours the use of imperfective verbs with negative commands and selects perfective verbs for warnings. Levinson (Levinson 2005 after Bogusławski 1985) attributes the preference of the imperfective form in negative orders in Polish to the grammaticalization of the more frequent emphatic alternative of negation.

3.5. *The verb wziąć*

The verb *wziąć* 'take', used in the imperative form, is a lexical intensifier of orders, though its use is restricted to colloquial everyday conversations. Due to the process of grammaticalization, its meaning in utterances such as (40) below has become less transparent and the function of *weź* is reduced to that of emphasising the emotions of the speaker and, thus, imposing an order interpretation of the clause. The speaker expresses impatience and irritation with the addressee's behaviour and orders him to change the present state of affairs. This meaning of the clause is intensified by the semantic import of the verb *wziąć*, which implies initiating an action. In this way the speaker stresses that the action specified by the main verb in the clause needs to be undertaken. In example (40) the speaker expresses disdain or/ and mockery ('You look terrible! Put on something else.'). whereas in (41) the command is less emphatic and less imposing.

- (40) *Weź się przebierz!*
 weź REFL change
 'Come on, go and change!'
- (41) *Przebierz się!*
 change REFL
 'Change!'

4. CONCLUSIONS

The devices in section 3 serve as modifiers of the imperative clause, and since in Polish the imperative mode can also be used in requests (see section 2), their function is that of intensifying the command interpretation of a given speech act. The intensification is achieved mainly by emphasising the asymmetry between the speaker and the hearer, where

the hearer is subsumed into the speaker's sphere of influence. This powerful and authorific position gives the speaker the right to direct the actions of the hearer and to express his/her emotions openly. Moreover, the command does not need to be mitigated in any way. On the contrary, it can be strengthened by adding elements diminishing optionality, e.g. words such as *tylko* 'only', *natychmiast* 'at once', or grammatical means such as the use of perfectives in negated imperatives to emphasise the prohibition of performing the activity (as opposed to prohibition of completing it as in the case of imperfectives).

Our analysis of requests and orders in Polish has confirmed the claim made by Wierzbicka (2003) that realisational patterns in speech acts vary from language to language and that, as one should in fact expect, the conclusions drawn upon the data from English only are by no means universally valid. However, we need to emphasise that our analysis is not exhaustive and requires a more thorough study including data from other types of speech acts.

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