snippets

Issue 48 - October 2025

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LED
Edizioni Universitarie di Lettere Economia Diritto

Mismatches in fragment answers: structural vs lexical [Case] in Polish

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DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7358/snip-2025-048-ruda

The matching of the remnant and the correlate in the value/exponence of [Case] in morphologically rich languages supports postulating complex syntactic structure in the ellipsis site, isomorphic (in some way) with the antecedent (Ross 1969; Merchant 2001). However, the acceptable [Case] mismatches (see van Craenenbroeck 2012; Vicente 2015; Martín-González 2016; Abels 2017; Elliott and Murphy 2019; Thoms 2019; Wood et al. 2019; Balabanian et al. 2020; Gribanova 2020, 2023; Nykiel et al. 2022; Ruda and Witkoś 2024 and references therein) create intriguing challenges for approaches to the nature of the isomorphism required, with two explicit proposals targetting [Case] (a.o.) being Abels's (2017, 13) *Fit Condition* (1) and Wood et al.'s (2019, 26) *Case-Mismatching Generalization* (2). In what follows, I show that neither of them excludes unacceptable [Case] mismatches in Polish fragment answers.

(1) *Fit Condition*
Modulo agreement in the antecedent and wh-movement, replacing the correlate by the remnant in the antecedent must lead to a syntactically well-formed structure with the right meaning or – for sprouting – adding the correlate into the antecedent and making no further changes must lead to a syntactically well-formed structure with the intended thematic interpretation. [Abels 2017, 13]

(2) *Case-Mismatching Generalization (revised)*
Case mismatching is possible when the verb in the antecedent clause may assign more than one case without any syntactic or semantic difference. [Wood et al. 2019, 26]

The challenge is presented by the subset of Polish verbs (normatively) assigning inherent genitive [Case] which can also be observed in natural language use with accusative objects. The relevant verbs include *potrzebować/szukać/użyć/spróbować przyprawy/przyprawę* 'need/look for/use/taste spice.GEN/ACC', among others. These verbs reveal a difference in the acceptability of [Case] mismatches in fragment answers determined by the [Case] type. In particular, when the correlate bears lexical [GEN], the remnant can be either [GEN] or [ACC] (3A). However, when the correlate bears structural [ACC], the remnant also needs to be [ACC] (4A). This restriction is not captured by either (1) or (2). (Both options are available in the non-elliptical versions of the answers, as in (3A') and (4A').)[1]

[1]The data below reflect my judgments and should ideally be tested in future larger-scale experiments comparing fragment answers with sluicing. While I focus on the former here as the construction which formed the basis for Wood et al.'s *Case-Mismatching Generalization*, in my observation Polish sluicing requires stricter isomorphism and does not allow even the restricted mismatch seen below in fragment answers, providing another challenge to (1) and (2).

(3) Q: **Której** **przyprawy** potrzebowałaś/ szukałaś/ użyłaś/ spróbowałaś?
which.GEN spice.GEN needed.2SG.F looked.for.2SG.F used.2SG.F tasted.2SG.F
'Which spice did you need/look for/use/taste?' **[GEN]**

A: **Kolendry**./ **Kolendrę**.
coriander.GEN coriander.ACC
'Coriander.' **OK [GEN], OK [ACC]**

A': Potrzebowałam/ szukałam/ użyłam/ spróbowałam **kolendry**/ **kolendrę**.
needed.1SG.F looked.for.1SG.F used.1SG.F tasted.1SG.F coriander.GEN coriander.ACC
'I needed/looked for/used/tasted coriander.' **OK [GEN], OK [ACC]**

(4) Q: **Którą** **przyprawę** potrzebowałaś/ szukałaś/ użyłaś/ spróbowałaś?
which.ACC spice.ACC needed.2SG.F looked.for.2SG.F used.2SG.F tasted.2SG.F
'Which spice did you need/look for/use/taste?' **[ACC]**

A: **Kolendrę**./ *__Kolendry__.
coriander.ACC coriander.GEN
'Coriander.' **OK [ACC], *[GEN]**

A': Potrzebowałam/ szukałam/ użyłam/ spróbowałam **kolendrę**/ **kolendry**.
needed.1SG.F looked.for.1SG.F used.1SG.F tasted.1SG.F coriander.ACC coriander.GEN
'I needed/looked for/used/tasted coriander.' **OK [ACC], OK [GEN]**

The key factor seems to be the distinction between structural and lexical [Case], as revealed by the acceptability of an [ACC–GEN] mismatch when [GEN] is structural, a configuration which arises with the Genitive of Negation (GoN). First, (5A) shows that in non-elliptical clauses in Polish only [GEN] is possible with sentential negation, which in turn is obligatory in this example because the object is a Negative Concord Item. Introducing GoN into the fragment answer makes available the [ACC–GEN] mismatch (5A'), suggesting that it's the lexical nature of [GEN] in examples like (4) above that blocks the mismatch rather than the [GEN] [Case] value/morphology as such.[2]

(5) Q: **Którą** **przyprawę** potrzebowałaś?
which.ACC spice.ACC needed.2SG.F
'Which spice did you need?' **[ACC]**

A: **Żadnej** **przyprawy**/ ***Żadną** **przyprawę** ***(nie)** potrzebowałam.
none.GEN spice.GEN none.ACC spice.ACC not needed.1SG.F
'I didn't need any spice.' **OK [GEN], *[ACC]**

A': **Żadnej**.
none.GEN
'None.' **OK [GEN]**

In sum, the data show that the *Fit Condition* and the *Case-Mismatching Generalization* are not the whole story cross-linguistically (similarly to Chung's 2006; 2013 constraints, already criticised in Martín-González 2016; Wood et al. 2019) and future work on isomorphism in ellipsis needs to incorporate the distinction between structural and lexical [Case]. Furthermore, the observed (mis)match patterns (see esp. (5A')) support approaches on which the remnant's [Case] reflects

[2] A(nother) striking feature of the GoN contexts is that case matching is available here as well (the [ACC] remnant *Żadną* 'none.ACC' is also possible in (5A′)), despite the unavailability of [ACC] in the non-elliptical version (see (5A)). This pattern is discussed in Ruda and Witkoś (2024) with reference to verbs invariably selecting [ACC] objects.

operations internal to the elliptical clause, rather than relying on an (ellipsis-specific) interclausal relation established between the remnant and the correlate or case assigner in the antecedent.

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