Are Polish nominals phases? A case study of honorific markers

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There is an ongoing debate whether extended nominal projections in Slavic are phasal DPs, akin to nominal projections in languages like English (most prominently, Bošković (2009) and following work). This paper investigates the Polish nominal *pan/pani* 'gentleman/lady' and its honorific uses. We argue that the sociolinguistically motivated range of uses of *pan/pani* supports the stronger hypothesis, i.e., that Polish extended nominal projections are phases and their syntactic behavior does not in any substantial way differ from languages with a morphologically realized DP structure, such as English or Italian.

HOW MANY *pan/pani* ARE THERE? The honorific marker *pan/pani*, i.e., the Polish equivalent of the English 'Mr/Sir/gentleman' and 'Ms/Madam/lady,' has a surprising syntactic distribution. While its inflectional properties point to *pan/pani* being a nominal (inflected for number, gender and case), the honorific marker can be used as a regular head noun, i.e., as the head of a nominal argument, (1), it can function as a low nominal modifier with nouns of profession, (2), or with proper names, (3), and it can be used as a vocative, (4). Strikingly, when the honorific nominal functions as the structural subject, then it triggers a variable agreement: a second person, (4-a), or a third person agreement on the predicate, (4-b). The pattern raises at least two questions: (a) are all instances of *pan/pani* based on the lexical item (root)?, (b) if they are, what kind of root allows the varied distribution, including the variable predicate agreement?

(1)   Nie znam tej pani$_i$, ale wiem, że ona$_i$ tu   nie pracuję
       not know this lady$_i$, but know that she$_i$ here not work.3.SG
       'I do not know this lady but I know she does not work here.'

(2)   ta   (*pani) nasza   (*pani) wspaniała   pani   dyrektorka
       this.F.SG Ms.F.SG our.F.SG Ms.F.SG wonderful.F.SG Ms.F.SG headmaster.F.SG
       'this wonderful headmaster of ours'

(3)   Pani Maria kichneła
       Ms. Maria sneezed
       'Ms. Maria sneezed.'

(4)   a. (Szanowny Panie$_i$),   masz   pan$_i$ papierosa?
           respected   Mr.VOCAT.M.SG have.2.M.SG Mr.NOM.M.SG cigarette.ACC

       b. (Szanowny Panie$_i$),   ma   pan$_i$ papierosa?
           respected   Mr.VOCAT.M.SG have.3.M.SG Mr.NOM.M.SG cigarette.ACC
           'Hey Mister, do you have a cigarette?'

We argue that despite the syntactic variability, the honorific marker *pan/pani* is syntactically identical to any other regular lexical noun in Polish, i.e., the socio-linguistic extension we observe in the proper honorific uses, i.e., the modifier and vocative uses, is strictly based on a regular nominal structure. Crucially, the pattern provides evidence that a Polish nominal extended projection contain a phase head, i.e., a head that triggers spell-out and requires licensing by the syntax-semantics interface (CI).

HOW TO VALUE A PERSON FEATURE: Let us first establish that *pan/pani* can function as a regular lexical noun phrase. The example in (1) demonstrates that *pan/pani* can be the head of an extended nominal projection. This projection functions as a nominal argument and can be referred to by an anaphoric pronoun. Furthermore, such a nominal phrase can be coordinated with proper names, (5).

(5)   [Ten Pan]   jak i   Jan kichneli
       this gentleman as and Jan sneezed
       'This gentleman and Jan sneezed.'

We argue that the phrase *ten pan* 'this gentleman' is derived as follows: ① The root $\sqrt{PAN}$ merges with n. For concreteness, we assume that n is a bundle of unvalued ϕ-features (gender and number), with gender being valued from an indexical gender information of the root (see, e.g., Acquaviva 2014 for a model that maps gender on an unvalued gender feature after the late insertion of a root, i.e., without gender being a syntactic feature on the root). ② A Number head, with a valued number feature, merges with n. By agree, as matching and valuation, number on n gets valued. ③ D gets merged as a bundle of unvalued ϕ-features

and an unvalued person feature (see, e.g., Ritter 1995 and Béjar and Rezac 2003 for arguments that person is introduced by D). D triggers agree with Num and n, and in turn the unvalued number and gender feature on D gets matched and valued by the valued features on Num and n. ④ The demonstrative gets merged as the specifier of D and its unvalued gender and number feature get matched and valued by valued gender and number features of D. ⑤ The complete DP is spelled-out: the complement of D is sent to the morphology interface and the DP label is processed by the syntax-semantics interface (CI; Chomsky 2013, 2015). The licensed DP label then represents the DP in the next course of the derivation and may become a goal of agree, for instance, of a T head (or another predicative head).

Crucially, when the phase is spelled-out, the person feature (on D and in the label) remains unvalued (see Béjar 2003 for an argument that syntactic features may be matched without being valued). How does a person feature gets its value? We follow Zubizarreta and Pancheva (2017) and Pancheva and Zubizarreta (2017) in that a person feature is a feature that anchors event participants, which in turn requires syntax-semantics interface licensing. For concreteness, we follow the technical implementation of a similar idea proposed in Kučerová (2018) for gender, i.e., that an unvalued ϕ-feature on a phase head (D) can obtain its value as part of labeling the phase by CI. The morphology module then either realizes the syntactically-unvalued feature as the corresponding morphological default (for person, 3rd person), or as the CI-informed value (1st, 2nd or 3rd person). With R-expression uses of *pan/pani* – or any other lexical noun phrase used to denote a non-participant – the CI value ($-$participant) and the morphological default converge on 3rd person. We thus derive the basic case, i.e., the argument use of *pan/pani* as in (1).

In contrast, when the corresponding person feature is valued as [+participant], we expect the same lexical NP to have the option to morpho-syntactically express 3rd person ($\sim$morphological default) or 1st or 2nd person (the CI value). We argue that this is precisely what happens in case of vocative honorific uses of *pan/pani*. When morphology realizes the unvalued syntactic person feature, then we obtain 3rd person agreement, (4-b). When morphology realizes the CI informed value, then we obtain 2nd person agreement, (4-a). (See Kučerová (2018) for a model of a morphological spell-out that predicts such a dual realization.) **Crucially, the proposed derivation requires D to be a phase head and to trigger spell-out. That is, for a person feature on a nominal to be valued, such a nominal must be a phase.**

PREDICTIONS: The proposal predicts that *pan/pani* can be valued as 2nd person irrespective of its position in the syntactic structure. This prediction is borne out as demonstrated by (6). The proposal thus differs from proposals that require a syntactic association with some form of a speaker/hearer head in the left periphery of a clause (e.g., Sigurðsson 2004).

(6) Szanowny Panie, chciałbym pana przedstawić mojemu znajomemu.
     respected Mr.VOCAT.M.SG like.1.M.SG gentleman introduce.ACC.2.M.SG my friend.DAT
     'Sir, I would like to introduce you to a friend of mine.'

The proposal further predicts that any DP should have the same freedom in person valuation. We argue that although this option is in principle always there, as demonstrated by the possibility of a vocative use of any lexical noun phrase (as in 'Hey, John, how are you?'), the CI valuation is highly marked and in most cases it is excluded by economy of derivation that prefers pronominal structures over full lexical noun phrases.

WHEN A NOUN-PHRASE IS NOT A PHASE: Not every root-n formation must form a DP. We argue that the modifier honorific uses, (2)–(3), are an instantiation of such a structure, namely an nP. This structure lacks its own D projection, i.e., the locus of person features. This lack forces the nominal to behave as a modifier rather than a fully fledged DP. Such modifier behavior manifests itself semantically in the modifier's lack of inherent referential features: *pani* in (2) cannot refer to anyone else but the headmistress. The nP structure of the nominal, i.e., the bundle of unvalued ϕ-features on n, manifests itself morphologically in that the modifier undergoes concord with the ϕ-features of the the head noun. Specifically, we argue that the nominal occupies a Spec-n position of the head noun ('headmistress' in (2)), positioning it uniquely adjacent to the head noun and, in essence, forming a syntactic compound. This claim is supported by the strict adjacency restriction imposed on the marker: it cannot be separated by any of the other nominal modifiers, (2).

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