

Title: The Genesis of the Morphosyntactic Category of 'Masculine Personal' in West Slavic: A Case Study in Relative Chronology

Author: Gilbert Rappaport, University of Texas at Austin

The category of *masculine personal* is a robust part of the morphosyntax of three historically contiguous West Slavic languages: Polish, Slovak, and Upper Sorbian. Details vary, but in Polish, for example, nouns 1) of masculine gender, 2) denoting human beings, 3) belonging to the appropriate ('masculine') declension class, and 4) standing in the plural number exhibit (among others) the following properties:

- a) In the Nominative case, a special allomorph is selected for the noun if it has a hard stem and for adjectival modifiers;
- b) In the Accusative case, the form of the Genitive is used for both the noun itself and for adjectival modifiers.

This paper investigates the historical development of this category and demonstrates that it arose as the result of the interrupted development of two seemingly unrelated changes, thus representing a striking example of relative chronology and diachronic grammaticalization.

The Common Slavic distinction between the Nominative and Accusative plural forms in certain declension classes (e.g. the historical o-stem *stol*": Nom.Pl *stoli*, Acc.Pl. *stoly*) was eroded in the North Slavic languages by replacing the Nominative form with the Accusative form (Polish *stoly*, Russian *stoly*). This change proceeded in conformity with what has been called the *Animacy Hierarchy*, simplified here as follows, from right to left:

Masculine personal <> Feminine personal <> Animal <> Inanimate

Stopping after encompassing inanimates gave the animate plural in Czech; stopping after feminine personals gave property (a) above in Polish; in East Slavic the process continued on to encompass all nouns.

At the same time, the replacement of the Accusative by the Genitive proceeded along the same hierarchy but in the opposite direction, earlier in the singular than in the plural. While in East Slavic this change in the plural encompassed all but inanimates, stopping before feminine personals, i.e., at the same point that the Acc->Nom change stopped, gave property (b) above in Polish. Investigation of the absolute chronology of these changes shows that only in the languages in question did the two changes meet the same point in the hierarchy at approximately the same time, establishing the new category.

A change proceeds along a hierarchy not as a well-defined point, but as a fuzzy band, so that when a language grammaticalizes a new category, there may be numerous forms in usage which violate the newly-defined category. Contemporary Polish in particular exhibits an extensive class of words (by one count, numbering over 650) with property (b) above, but not (a). These words would presumably be perceived as anomalies to the new system and eventually adopt property (a), but their lifetime is being extended because of their functional status: their marked form is associated with a marked connotative sense (typically pejorative).