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The Adjective as an Adjunctive Predicative Expression

A Semantic Analysis of Nominalised Propositional
Structures as Secondary Predicative Syntagmas

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PETER LANG
EDITION

For my Translator Teresa,
to whom I owe the English reincarnation of my book.

Table of Contents

Chapter I
Introduction: the concept of the description of the adjective as a predicative expression

Let's have do with assumptionless observation –
which is an absurdity psychologically and just a logical game. (L. Fleck)

I.1. The research paradigm: basic assumptions and the conceptual and terminological resources for a predicate-argument syntax model

The reasoning in this book will be deductive and inductive. In any scientific or scholarly undertaking we can hardly expect to rely purely on deduction, which, as many researchers (for example Bogusławski 1983a: 48; Stanosz 1992: 65; Bobrowski 1998: 25) stress, has no means available to formulate nomothetic explanations. On the other hand we cannot but agree with others, like the above-quoted Ludwik Fleck, who favour a relativistic concept of science [Fleck 1986: 123], since we must concede that "no research experience can exist without a paradigm" [Nowakowska-Kempna 1998: 28]. In other words we cannot go along with the naive inductivists, especially as induction based on a limited number of cases is fallacious [Quine 1977: 509][1]. Hence, assuming that the examination of a given statement is only one version of a particular ontology [Gellner 1984: 384], or to put it in the terms of Heidegger's and Gadamer's hermeneutics [Januszkiewicz 2004: 264-265] – that such an analysis is shaped by a "perceptual horizon" [Termińska 1995: 23; Jędrzejko 2000: 59], before I proceed to define the aim of this study and describe the scope of my subject, it will be appropriate to characterise the conceptual and methodological foundation I have chosen to accomplish my aim.

The groundwork for this study is semantic syntax, also known as predicate-argument syntax on account of its key concepts. The first Polish extensive and systematic publication on the theoretical model for this syntax and its application in the description of specific linguistic material appeared in 1984, in the part on syntax of *Gramatyka współczesna języka polskiego* by S. Karolak, M. Grochowski, and Z. Topolińska [*Składnia* 1984; see also Karolak 1977,

1993, 2001a, 2001b, 2002; Nowakowska-Kempna 1988b; Korytkowska 1992][2]. The presentation of the subject in this publication met with a great deal of interest among linguists, both in and beyond Poland [Bobrowski 1985:52; Nowakowska-Kempna 1988a: 144, 1988b:219][3]contributing cogent arguments to the discussion on the need for the semantic aspects affecting the combinatorics of form to be taken into account in the linguistic debate[4].

Currently, from the vantage-point afforded by the lapse of almost three decades since that study was published, we can say that the model proposed in it for the description of statements expressed in natural language has launched a research trend referred to as the Polish School of Semantic Syntax. In its capacity as an alternative theory, not only has semantic syntax "negated some of the solutions offered hitherto," as Nowakowska-Kempna observed in her review, but it has also provided a creative continuation to the endeavours of earlier scholars such as the distinguished Polish linguists J. Kuryłowicz and Z. Klemensiewicz, thereby bridging the gap between the old and new generations of linguistic researchers [Nowakowska-Kempna 1988a: 150]. Initially hailed as innovative, or perhaps even suspected of being too innovative, by now the principles of semantic syntax have already managed to shape the character of many new publications on Polish grammar, as their authors readily admit [Grzegorczykowa 1996a: 6; Nagórko 1998a: 9; Wróbel 2001: 12]. Not only is the model being successfully applied in a broad range of studies on the syntax of the Slavonic languages [Dalewska-Greń 1999][5], but it has also proved inspiring in work on semantics, especially semotactics, which sees the meaning of words as a hierarchical system of properties [Tokarski 1988] as well as in studies on word formation[6].

One of the fundamental principles of predicate-argument syntax is the complete separation and distinction in statements made in natural language of two levels – the semantic level and the formal level, the latter being the structural representation of the former. In other words predicate-argument syntax distinguishes between the combinatorics of meaning and the combinatorics of form. The units of the semantic level are concepts, which operate as predicates or arguments in complex conceptual structures known as predicate-argument structures or propositions. The correlates of predicates and arguments at the formal level are predicative expressions and argument expressions respectively. Nominal groups (noun phrases) are syntactic entities the basic function of which is to fill the argument position, in other words to act as argument expressions in the broad sense of the term [Topolińska 1999: 57/58]. Predicates are concepts which are constitutive for a given propositional structure and generate positions for implicated concepts, viz. arguments [Karolak 2001a: 30][7]. The basic semantic building block – the *dictum* – of a

statement is its predicate-argument structure together with its temporal modifier[8]. A statement (sentence) is created when a predicate-argument structure combines with a modal component, which is a higher-order predicate for which the combining predicate-argument structure acts as its propositional argument [Karolak 2002: 204]. The way in which this model is implemented formally is determined by the structural rules for a particular language; in other words the way the model works in practice is associated with idiomatic factors proper for the given language [Jędrzejko 1993a: 34]; while on the contrary, the level of meaning is regulated and determined by a "grammar of concepts" which is assumed to be universally applicable to all languages [Karolak 1990: 7, 2001a: 27]. Structural phenomena are not merely manifestations of formal rules, which are idiomatic by their very nature, but they are also a surface reflex of the rules of conceptual combinatorics [Jędrzejko 1998: 27]. However, due to the asymmetry typical of natural languages as regards expressive plan and content plan, there is no mutually unequivocal relation between the grammar of meaning and the grammar of form [Karolak 1999: 87].

I.2. The aim of the description

The decision to organise the observations in this study on this conceptual and methodological foundation was dictated by my aim to create an open description, as opposed to a closed description limited to the formal level. My open description is intended to be independent of the pressure of the idiomatic structure of any specific language (in my particular case, of course, it would be Polish), and hence is to be envisaged as prospectively useful as a point of departure for analyses of phenomena analogous from the communication point of view in other languages[8].The aim of this description is

- to examine the non-sentence-forming formalisation of the propositional structure within the scope of the explicitation of its components;
- to conduct a semantic and pragmatic analysis of the conditions determining the incorporation in a statement of propositions formalised in a non-sentence-forming expression[10];
- to determine the type of cohesive relations enabling the syntactic coexistence of propositions expressed in a non-sentence-forming complex with the state denoted by the fundamental proposition, that is the proposition formalised in the sentence-forming complex.

I.3. Reasons for the choice of subject

The descriptive part of this book focuses on the adjective as a textual unit that performs the function of an accessory (accessorial) constituent in a nominal group[11] with the semantic and syntactic status of a propositional structure. I decided to choose adjectives for the subject of this study because, as convenient landmarks on the linguistic surface facilitating the extraction of passages for analysis from the material under examination, adjectives not only satisfy "all the conditions for the ideal predicative expression" [Feleszko 1981: 100][12], but in addition, on account of their primary surface syntactic function as a "non-fundamental predicative expression" [*Składnia* 1984, passim, especially 213, 215; also Zakrzewska 1988], they are also predestined to act as exponents of non-sentence forming predication.

Another consideration was the fact that up to now the spotlights attracting most attention from linguists – determined on the one hand by a distinctly verbocentric approach to "syntactic deliberation" [Szupryczyńska 1980a: 1; also Tokarski 1987: 6; Bielanin 1989: 154; and Jędrzejko 1993a: 12], and by an undeniable interest in the noun on the other hand, both in componential syntax which has made this tandem its main resource for exemplification [Tokarski 1987: 50/51], as well as in cognitive studies [Nowakowska-Kempna 1993:117][13] – have left the adjective out on the unlit wayside, off the main thoroughfare for the exchange of new ideas in linguistics. For this reason, although adjectival lexemes have been putting in an appearance on this road for some time now, and have even built up a modicum of citeable literature (as evidenced by the fact that the authors of a number of publications on adjectives have been referring mostly to the same corpus of studies, more or less irrespectively of the aspect of their analysis, how individualised their approach, or how critical with respect to the work of predecessors)[14] – many questions are still awaiting an answer[15], while some of the solutions offered hitherto and adopted more on the strength of tradition rather than on their own merit, call for verification. Since several of the definitions of the adjective as a part of speech, which have been disseminated by recurrent usage, may be classed as belonging to this category[16], it will be necessary to demarcate and explain the scope of the term "adjective" which I propose to use in this study before I move on.

I.4. The adjective: theoretical preliminaries

I.4.1. "Adjectivity": dilemmas and resolutions

Although for obvious reasons we can hardly expect a class of lexemes identified on the grounds of morphological and/or syntactic criteria to be characterised by isosemy [*Gramatyka* 1998a: 44, 109; Grochowski 2000:2], nonetheless in the literature of the subject there is a lingering vestige of a certain habit to perceive the semantic image of the adjective as the structuralisation of the semantic category of property (quality), as evidenced by the practice of segregating off what's referred to as the group of "true adjectives", [Szupryczyńska 1980a:43/44, Karolak 2001a:42][17] said to be characterised by having "syntactic properties concordant with the morphological and **semantic** properties typical for this part of speech" [*Gramatyka* 1998b: 60 – my emphasis, D.S.], and contrasting them with adjectives allegedly "superficial or morphological," which are ascribed a lower rung on the ladder of "adjectivity" [Nagórko 1987:8]. However, even if we admit this habit as a necessary evil and in deference to the traditional description accept that an adjective evokes the concept of attribute (quality)[18], we shall still not arrive at the categorical and semantic homogeneity which appears to be required for this class of lexemes (judging by the power of the habit), even at such a high price to be paid in terms of inconsistency and superfluous divisions such as the above-mentioned "superficial adjectives".

This is due to the herding together of qualities which are the outcome of perceptual conceptualisation, such as dimensions, temperature, shape[19],colour, density, in other words essential, inherent[20] and indispensable properties [Nagórko 1987:77], with qualities that are the result of conceptual categorisation, viz. psychological qualities, predisposition for action, and states or conditions. Since particular perceptual qualities, that is qualities capable of evoking a sensual impression [Arystoteles 1990:50][21], which belong to the first-order category, that is qualities that describe phenomena in the outside world [Grzegorczykowa 1996b:22], also have the capacity to imply the second-order category, which entails phenomena like modality, evaluations and expressions (apart from quantity and time) [Grzegorczykowa loc. cit.] and may be converted into utilitarian qualities, or, as the cognitivists call them, interactive features [Lakoff 1987: 51, quoted after Kleiber 2003: 93; see also Witosz 1997:124-129], and evaluative qualities – there is only a limited possibility of a precise distinction between the "qualitative" and "evaluative" adjectives[22], graded in a triadic, reputable and at the same time notorious yet undeniably populous classification and contrasted with the "relative" (relational) adjectives [Sussex

1975; Szupryczyńska 1980a: 27, 1980b:2; Nagórko 1983: 144; Karolak 1984: 44-45; Markowski 1986: 72-73; *Teoria* 1996: 24].

In most cases the more elaborate divisions of adjectival lexemes according to meaning[23] reduce to classifications of properties in terms of the way they are conceptualised, quite often supplemented with a categorisation of objects belonging to the extra-linguistic reality to which these qualities may pertain. A good example is the suggestion put forward by A.N. Shramm, who makes a distinction between what he calls the sensory adjectives, which he further sub-divides into those denoting qualities perceived by the sense of sight, hearing, smell, touch, muscle tension [Shramm 1979: 24], and contrasting them with mental adjectives, further sub-divided into those which denote human qualities, animal qualities, and attributes pertaining to inanimate objects [Shramm 1979: 34]. Another classification differentiates between adjectival lexemes on the basis of the lexical and semantic fields to which they belong. This method has been applied to conduct a semantic analysis of adjectives which structuralise "cognitive domains" [Tabakowska 2001: 59][24] such as colour [e.g. Tokarski 1995a; Teodorowicz-Hellman 1999], emotions [e.g. Buttler 1997, 1978; Nowakowska-Kempna 1998; Szumska 2000b], dimensions [e.g. Grzegorczykowa 1996c; Linde-Usiekniewicz 1996; Nilsson 1997], psychological qualities [Puzynina 1991], assessments [e.g. Nagórko 1982; Jędrzejko 1993b; Kreisberg 1999], values, where the principal adjectives are *good* and *bad* [e.g. Vendler 1967; Termińska 1980; Puzynina 1992a: 50, 1992b: 51/52; Krzeszowski 1998], and time (the so-called temporal adjectives)[25] [e.g. Zviozdova and Karpińska 1996]. Such partial, sometimes precariously atomistic descriptions do not give a full semantic picture of the class of adjectives[26]. Hence, if we may rely on Peirce's pragmatic theory of truth, which says that the ultimate test of truth is the action it evokes or inspires, and agree that "in the case of adjectives no more or less generally applicable systemisation according to meaning has been worked out yet" [Śliwiński 1999: 48], we have to admit that effectively there is no clear stimulus to encourage us to apply the semantic criterion in the definition of adjectival lexemes (just as there is no incentive of this type for the definition of other parts of speech)[27]. Not surprisingly, the properties which have come to be used on a more regular basis in the definition of adjectives are their morphological[28] and/or syntactic features. But even here there are quite distinctly demarcated limits to the clarity with which adjectives can be characterised.

As regards morphology, the inflectional categories of case, number, and gender fall within these limits; while degree is still beyond them, even though well over half a century has passed since the publication of Edward Sapir's pioneering work [Sapir 1944; cf. Kiklewicz 1999: 6]. This category is at times considered as one of the word-forming categories in view of the rather

imprecisely drawn restrictions on the way the comparative is formed for particular adjectives and the nature of the semantic relationships between the forms of the higher degrees and the positive form [Szupryczyńska 1980a: 19; Nagórko 1983: 149; *Gramatyka* 1998b: 504-505; Szumska 2001a: 6]; at other times, often under pressure from custom as represented by lexicographical practice, it is regarded as an inflectional category [Saloni and Świdziński 1998: 100].

I.4.2. Surface-syntactic characteristics of adjectives: controversial and uncontroversial points

In the syntactic, or strictly speaking surface-syntactic characteristics, the "boundary" issue now being debated is the definition of the scope of the adjective's syntactic "obligations," in other words the ultimate determination of its defined syntagmatic positions. This is no easy task, in view of the fact that an adjectival lexeme may crop up at any and every level of a hierarchical sentence structure, as

- a modifier (Pol. przydawka), cf. (1) Yesterday I bought an **interesting** book;
- a supplementary modifier (Pol. przydawka dopowiadająca) [Zakrzewska 1988], otherwise referred to as an appositional modifier [Klemensiewicz 1969a: 65; Labocha 1996: 53], cf. (2) The weather, **unusual** for the season, encouraged them to take a walk;
- a predicative expression in a nominal predication (Pol. orzecznik w orzeczeniu imiennym), cf. (3) The film was **long** and **uninteresting**;
- a predicative determiner (Pol. określnik predykatywny), also known as an adverbial modifier (Pol. przydawka okolicznikowa)[Szober 1966: 316; Heinz 1988b: 115][29], cf. (4) Father arrived **tired** and **hungry**.

Some linguists say the list should be extended, and suggest the following additional functions:

- as an initial predicative determiner (Pol. inicjalne określenie predykatywne) [Czapiga 1996: 33], cf. (5) **Beautiful** and **sophisticated**, she aroused admiration;
- as a predicative determiner in the postposition with respect to the nominal and verbal components (Pol. określenie predykatywne w postpozycji do członu nominalnego i werbalnego) [Czapiga 1995: 39; see also Czapiga 1997], cf. (6) He saw the mountains, **awesome** and **majestic**;
- as an orzecznik znaczeniowy (no adequate English equivalent is extant) [Mirowicz 1947b: 129/130], that is a modifier which refers to a predicative which is "redundant as regards information content and is merely **a formal**

prop for these predicatives" (to quote Topolińska) [Składnia 1984: 332 – my emphasis, D.S.][30], – cf. (7) *Choroba jest przykrą rzeczą* ("Illness is an unpleasant thing"), communicatively the equivalent of Illness is **unpleasant** (example after Mirowicz, loc. cit.).

There is a snag preventing us from accepting these additional suggestions (examples 5-7) unconditionally: the distinction between the combinatorics of form and syntax of order, and the combinatorics of meaning is not made consistently enough in them. There is no reason to treat a potentially shifting position that a predicative expression may assume in the (Polish) sentence order as a surface reflex of semantic and syntactic difference, and construe such variation as betokening functional differentiation[31], just as it is not done for other parts of a sentence. Irrespectively of its position in a sentence, a "predicative modifier" is **necessarily** non-restrictive[32], rhematic[33] in character, unlike an "attributive modifier"[34], which may be restrictive or non-restrictive[35]. The occurrence of a predicative modifier in the initial position in a sentence, which is quite rare in Polish and Russian – according to Czapiga's data this was observed only in 1% of the cases she examined – is to be associated with causes which may be described as "circumstances which give rise to priority cases syntactically" [Czapiga 1996: 41]. One of these circumstances is the use of a pronoun for the subject, which makes it impossible for the subject to be integrated syntactically with the accessory component in the nominal syntagma of which it is part (example 8); another is the absence of an exponent for the subject (in Polish) due to the maximum amount of thematic compression which may be achieved in Polish (example 9)[36], cf.

(8)   *Wysoki, sztywny, chodził po salonie* ("Tall and reserved, he walked up and down the drawing-room" – example after Czapiga 1996: 33);

(9)   *Zdziwiony, wodził za nią wzrokiem* ("Surprised, [he] followed her with his eyes" – example after Czapiga 1996: 41[i]) ;

The suggestion to treat the *orzecznik znaczeniowy* as a distinct function calls for a more detailed commentary. The criticism levied against it is concerned more with the letter rather than the spirit of this practice. The point that undoubtedly merits closer attention is the demonstration of the relationship between a predicative expression as a component of a nominal group, and a modifier as an accessory component. The example presented shows that the surface-syntactic hierarchy need not reflect the semantic-syntactic hierarchy; moreover, the lexemic surface in an utterance may entail a structural surplus with respect to its semantic surface[37]. This is what the essential distinction of an *orzecznik*

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i   The pronoun "he" does not appear in the Polish example (translator's note).

znaczeniowy may be reduced to. However, this can only hold under certain conditions, or more precisely under certain corrective strictures[38]. First, the observation should be supported by examples that give a good illustration of the condition described, in other words sentences in which the presence or absence of a predicative expression has no effect on their interpretive paradigm, in other words sentences with a non-functional pleonasm [Grochowski 1999: 50] of the type

(10)   *Sukienka była **koloru** niebieskiego* ("The dress was blue **in colour**");

not sentences which only exemplify the impossibility of eliding the attribute with the predicative, for this in itself does not confirm that the predicative expression is redundant from the point of view of information content, as shown in Mirowicz's example[39].

I.4.3. Hierarchisation of the adjective's syntagmatic positions: a contribution to the discussion

The problem in selecting those of the adjective's "potential syntagmatic positions" which have the status of an "obligation" from the above list – assuming that we have arrived at a uniform surface-syntactical picture for adjectives – may be reduced to reconciling ourselves to the fact that the only function of the adjective which may be considered categorically relevant here is that of a modifier next to a noun. This is the only item from the list which in general is not bound by any semantic[40] or formal[41] constraints. Failure to acknowledge this as the true state of the matter[42], which is manifested in the opinion that the attributive position next to a noun is secondary with respect to the adjunctive position, and the application of the modifier-to-predicative transposition test, means the recognition of these constraints as valid criteria for the assessment of adjectivity for the purposes of surface-syntactic classification, and is tantamount to a reversion to the dichotomy we are familiar with from the semantic division segregating the adjectives of quality (those with no restrictions on the predicative position) from the relational adjectives (those which do not admit of the predicative position and which are invariably attributive, non-adjunctive, non-predicative – a class to which the overwhelming majority of denominal and deadverbial adjectives belong) [Szupryczyńska 1980a: 43/44; Tokarski 1987: 7].

If we follow Kuryłowicz and accept that "in languages which have a separate category of meaning and form for adjectives, the primary function of adjectives is attributive, and their secondary function is predicative" [Kuryłowicz 1969: 23], and hence that "an adjectival modifier is not a transformation of a predicative"

[Kuryłowicz, 1969: 23][43] is the only answer to the question of the primary function of adjectives in which theory and practice are at home with each other[44], – as the documentary data collected by linguists working on this problem show [Bolinger 1967: 3; Vol'f 1978:158; Topolińska 1984: 149; *Gramatyka* 1998a: 89] – we shall find that this hierarchy of syntactic functions translates into a hierarchy of distributive ranges[45] which reflects "the expansivity of the modifier category," as Mirowicz put it over sixty years ago [Mirowicz 1947b: 128].

I.4.4. Role of morphological and surface-syntactic criteria in the determination of the range of the adjectival lexeme class

The tendency to locate an adjective in the position of an accessory component of a nominal syntagma is warranted morphologically in view of the capacity of adjectives for full congruency in terms of gender, number and case. Hence, since in languages which have a highly developed inflectional system such as Polish combinatorial properties are encoded morphologically, it will make no essential difference to the scope of the adjectival lexeme class whether in our definition of the adjective we give priority to the morphological criteria (as Saloni and Świdziński recommend, following Porzeziński's postulate) [Saloni and Świdziński 1998: 95][46], or to the syntactic properties, concurring with the opinion that "the adjective's principal property is its syntactic dependence on the noun" [Kurkowska 1953: 6][47]. It is self-evident that to meet the syntactic criteria for adjectivity, which require the adjective to occur in accommodated combinations, to rule neither the superordinate of the sentence nor its own superordinate (usually a noun), and in turn to be ruled by nouns in respect of case, gender, and number [Wróbel 1996: 97, 2001: 79; Węgrzynek 1993: 84] is determined by the fact that this lexeme has a specific set of morphological properties. The application of syntactic and morphological criteria[48] in the definition of the adjective, along with the rejection of the semantic "prejudice" will extend the class of adjectives considerably[49], as one of the consequences of abandoning the *modi cognoscendi* for adjectives in favour of their *modi essendi* will be the incorporation in this functional class, alongside the standard representatives, also of the ordinal numbers and multiplicative numbers (Polish has three different types of them)[50], possessive pronouns, adjectival pronouns[51], and participles[52] [Wróbel 1996: 97, 2001: 79; Szupryczyńska 1980: 12, 145][53].

I.5. Empirical data

I.5.1. Semantic and syntactic constraints on the object described

As the adoption of such a broad scope for the class of adjectives, justified by the achievement of what seems to be the maximum level of homogeneity in its morphological and syntactical characteristics, but at the same time entails a considerable level of heterogeneity in the semantic picture of the lexemes in the class, to accomplish the aim of my study I shall have to impose semantic and syntactic constraints on the objects described. My description will embrace only adjectives which are or may be part of a "basic nominal (noun) phrase" (to use Topolińska's terminology and definition) [Topolińska 1972: 48][54], or "nuclear group" [*Składnia* 1984:331]; which means that adjectives that are exponents of a referential nature [*Składnia* 1984: 331], in other words of Topolińska's "which-relations" [Topolińska 1972: 51/52] and quantitative relations [*Składnia* 1984, loc. cit.], will fall outside the range of my analysis. I will also omit those adjectives making up part of a nuclear group which Topolińska writes "are labelled in a highly conventionalised manner by default," meaning relational attributes [*Składnia* 1984: 374]. Topolińska applies this label to exponents of modal predicates, or more precisely to exponents of intradictal modality[55] such as *probable, presumable, necessary* etc. [Lyons 1971: 341; Topolińska 1981: 161; Grzegorczykowa 1981a: 51, 1990: 138-152], possessive adjectives, ordinal and multiplicative numbers, and "adjectives which denote a relative position in time and space such as *tutejszy* (adjective, "of this place") and *dzisiejszy* (adjective, "of today, today's")" [*Składnia* 1984, loc. cit.]. The subject of my study will be restricted to adjectives which are modifiers – to use another of Topolińska's distinctions[56]. In contrast to the quantifiers which entail those adjectives classified in traditional studies of the parts of speech as adjectival pronouns and ordinal numbers, modifiers take an active part in the stochastic creation of a text "in the sense that they restrict the choice and thus increase the predictability of their chosen argument" [Topolińska 1984: 151].

To make the material for the analysis record the conditions in which adjectives are used to put non-sentence-forming predicatives into sentence structures, and to keep as close as possible to the practical use of language, I decided not to apply any additional constraints, such as immanent semantic constraints. No doubt such strictures would have made the empirical material more uniform, thereby facilitating the analysis; but on the other hand they would also have impoverished it in a manner unwarranted by the aim of my study[57].

1.6. Methodological investigation

The adoption of this strategy for the exploration of linguistic data will mean more than just "travel through semantic space," as Weinreich put it metaphorically [Weinreich 1958], but – to continue in the metaphorical convention – sailing into a Bermuda Triangle with peaks marked out by the components of Morris's triad (on condition that we treat the term "syntax" as tripartite, the combination of the sense, form, and syntax of word order). The aspect which encourages me to apply this metaphor is the intention to emphasise the difficulties piling up before the linguist who decides on this path of investigation – difficulties caused by the want of fully objective procedures for the demarcation of boundaries between the semantics, syntax, and pragmatics of the sign, as has been stressed so often[58]. Not only is this deficiency luring linguists into employing arbitrary solutions for the division itself and at the same time supplying a justification for this practice, but it has also grown a methodological dimension of its own in the difficulties that attend both the study of semantic phenomena, as well as the facts belonging to the surface level, which may be generally described as distinguishing between what is obligatory and what is facultative. In the semantic plan this issue boils down to marking out a boundary between designation and connotation[59] and – from the semantic and combinatorial aspect – determining the number of implied positions, in other words the places obligatorily opened up by the constitutive concept. In the executive plan it takes the form of attempts to make a distinction between obligatory and facultative connotation – an equally precarious procedure, which has often been described as such in the theory of syntactic connotation [Nagórko 1993b: 240][60].

I.6.1. Limited effectiveness of the surface analysis of organisation at the content level

In our endeavour to resolve these problems by no means should we succumb to a surge of distributionally oriented optimism giving rise to the illusory feeling that there is a direct, mutually unequivocal correspondence between a lexeme's surface-syntactic, and therefore also its categorically determined image, and the semantic and combinatorial properties of the unit at the level of meaning of which the given lexeme is the structuralised counterpart[61]. The distributive method can undoubtedly provide useful semantic hints to guide our intuition, as evidenced by the work of Apresjan [Apresjan 1967], however its scope is fragmentary, just as the scope of any other surface verification of the organisation at concept level. This may be observed (as shown by Apresjan)

even when the method is applied in the examination of the structure of meaning for verbs for which the connotative requirements are not always congruent with the implicative requirements of the predicate which they represent at the surface level, in spite of the fact that in their finite forms[62] they are categorically predisposed to act as the exponent of the constitutive concept that gives the fullest reflection of its combinatorial properties (in confrontation with the systemic tendency of nominal and adjectival correlates to zero out the argument position)[63]. For instance, the verb *to cut*: although its conceptual structure opens up positions for three arguments, implying an agent and an object as well as an instrumental component, it also allows for the non-contextual zeroing of this last position, as in *John cuts the bread with a knife (with a penknife etc.)* alongside *John cuts the bread*. This means that surface removability does not preclude semantic facultativity; hence a positive result in the reduction (elimination) test, which has its uses, as linguists quite rightly acknowledge [Nagórko 1993b: 239], is no proof that a component which occurs facultatively should be denied the status of an argument expression. Neither can we assume that the obligatory occurrence of a component at the formal level is always a sign of semantic and combinatorial dependence, although of course there is a certain diagnostic value in a negative result for the elimination test, applied in conjunction with other verifying procedures to rule out extra-semantic conditions on a component's non-removability. An example of this is provided by the obligatory pleonasm [Grochowski 1999: 50].

A similar comment comes to mind with respect to surface tests for immanent semantic properties and associative semes, viz. the negation test and the test of (non-)contradiction, which relies on the same assumptions. The negation test serves not so much to discover, but rather to select the properties relevant for the purposes of definition from the preliminary explication formula[64], which means that it works only in the area staked out by the researcher's semantic intuition, in other words the effectiveness of this method, as measured by the number of designative features it determines, in fact depends on the researcher's intuition enabling him to collect a particular set of features for verification[65]. The (non-)contradiction test, which is used to disclose facultative meanings, especially evaluative connotations [Nagórko 1988: 59][66], can show that the negation of a particular property does not lead to a contradiction, and therefore that the property is not the designative (invariant) property on the grounds of the assumptions for this test; however, it does not give sufficient proof of the property's connotative status, nor does it verify that status from the point of view of degree of conventionalisation, which differentiates between systemic and occasional connotations.