
Uninflectedness of modifiers in composite noun-noun units in Polish

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This paper discusses the occurrence of uninflected constituents of Polish composite lexemes. Noun-noun multiword units, commonly referred to as juxtapositions (e.g. Szymanek 2010), generally require both of their constituents to be inflected (for case and number) in Polish, as in (1).

- (1) *ps-a przewodnik-a* (dog-GEN.SG guide-GEN.SG) ‘(of a) guide dog’
The right-hand (modifier) components in the juxtapositions in (2-3) are borrowings functioning as uninflectable nouns in Polish.
- (2) *pożar-ami zombie* (fire-INS.PL zombie) ‘(with) zombie fires’
- (3) *ps-a dingo* (dog-GEN.SG dingo) ‘(of a) dingo’

In contrast, the uninflectedness of the right-hand constituents of the composite units in (4-5) can be treated as a case of constructional uninflectability (Spencer 2020). Note that the lexemes *cud* ‘miracle’ and *widmo* ‘ghost’ are inflected in (6).

- (4) *odżywk-i cud* (conditioner-NOM.PL miracle.NOM.SG) ‘miracle conditioners’
- (5) *autor-em widm-o* (author-INS.SG ghost-NOM.SG) ‘(with a) ghost writer’
- (6) a. *niezwykl-e cud-a* (extraordinary-NOM.PL miracle-NOM.PL) ‘extraordinary miracles’
b. *przerażając-ym widm-em* (frightening-INS.SG ghost-INS.SG) ‘(with a) frightening ghost’

A minor construction schema (cf. Booij 2010) can be proposed to account for the occurrence of the default form (NOM.SG) of selected nouns in the modifier position of Polish juxtapositions. Such a schema would represent the obligatory pattern for left-headed structures with the modifier *cud* ‘miracle’ and an optional pattern for composite units with the modifier *widmo* ‘ghost’ (see 7).

- (7) *miast-a widm-o* (town-NOM.PL ghost-NOM.SG), or
miast-a widm-a (town-NOM.PL ghost-NOM.PL) ‘ghost towns’

Thus, Polish juxtapositions discussed above show some resemblance to Italian attributive-appositive compound nouns, in which the non-head constituent allows for variability in form (Radimský 2015).

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