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**TOPIC AND FOCUS PHENOMENA
IN POLISH**

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1. Aims

In this dissertation entitled *Topic and focus phenomena in Polish*, I analyze certain Polish syntactic phenomena in the generative framework. Analysis of the syntax of Slavic languages offers various possibilities for the generative grammar. Some relevant topics of the Polish syntax have been unexplored in this current theoretical framework until now, and the analysis of uninvestigated phenomena can provide important results for further researches concerning universal principles. This work demonstrates new linguistic results not examined earlier, making use of the analysis in Polish-Hungarian comparative perspective. As a result of consultations with Polish linguists in one hand and of profound study of the national and international specialized literature on the other hand, researches connected to the lexeme *to* specified the narrow domain of the dissertation which primarily enabled to analyze the Polish topic and focus. Each chapter of this work researches syntactic and semantic issues related to these two phenomena.

Thus, the main problems raised and examined in this work refer to the Polish information structure. Although the Polish topic and focus has been analyzed (Tajsner 2006) in the last decade, the dissertation demonstrates such statements and theses which cannot be found in previous works. I suggest that all these assertions can be analyzed with full-scale scientific investigation of a single lexeme.

After a brief presentation of the Slavic clause structure and information structure in the third chapter, and the introduction of the syntax and the semantics of the two different foci in the Polish language in the fourth chapter, the purpose of the further three chapters is to reveal the common starting point of those questions, which can be explained by applying apparently divergent syntactic structures on the one hand and to find the connection between those phenomena which have not yet been analyzed despite of the peculiarities of the Polish language on the other hand. Thus, the optional occurrence of the lexeme *to* is the key issue of the analysis of sentences containing contrastive topics, topic-markers and the so-called predicate cleft constructions.

Based on the critical summary of the previous literature and adopting relevant theories, the dissertation can be considered a work providing possible solutions for some unexplored fields of Polish linguistics.

2. The method of the research

In the dissertation two main methods were applied to collect data. In one hand, survey questionnaires were compiled on the bases of previous results and completed by Polish native speakers and on the other hand, a corpus-based analysis was applied. The latter was based on the analysis of the data of the Polish National Corpus which is an excellent collection of texts enabling efficient searching similar to the Hungarian online corpus. Users of the corpus can search expressions and words completed by their parts of speech and contexts, which is helpful for example in searching the lexeme *to*. The method of the analysis of the corpus was applied primarily by examining the topic-markers, on the other hand the analysis of most of the topics was preceded by mapping of the data of the corpus. As the corpus does not contain all well-formed Polish sentences and the so-called negative information which are the ill-formed sentences, the other applied method was the questionnaire survey, in the course of which native speakers had to make decisions on the well-formedness of certain Polish sentences. These researches could be completed in writing (for example examining the predicate cleft construction) or orally (for example testing the focus) depending on whether the stress played a role in the analysis of the given phenomenon. The peculiarities of the lexeme *to* were tested both orally and in writing. The questionnaires about certain topics were completed by different groups of native speakers; the number, the distribution by gender and the age of the members of these groups were divergent. The applied method is demonstrated in detail in the appendix of the dissertation.

3. The theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of the dissertation is the transformational generative grammar. The theories called Principles and Parameters and the Minimalism of generative linguistics established by Noam Chomsky in 1993 and 1995 were applied. My aim was to research certain universal regularities that can be observed analyzing particular Polish syntactic issues. In the suggested solutions of the presented problems, my aim is to propose structures by which all arising questions and data can be explained applying certain rules and transformations. Thus, I describe Polish sentences considered well-formed with its structures. The explanation of the applied concepts and abbreviation of terms of the chosen theoretical framework can be found in the list of abbreviations.

Besides using the terminology of generative grammar, I look out to the field of semantics and pragmatics in certain chapters in order to get a wider picture about particular

phenomena. The short digressions concerning language history, comparative and descriptive grammar also serve the completeness of the thesis.

One of the reasons of choosing this theoretical framework is the fact that the current generative approach has begun to spread in Polish linguistics only in the last decade but some phenomena need further analysis. The key issues of this dissertation have not yet been completely covered in the scientific discourse, they can be found only superficially in particular works.

4. The structure and the main theses of the dissertation

After the introduction presenting aims, methods and theses of the dissertation, I briefly describe the general characteristics of the Slavic sentence structure and information structure in the third chapter, with special regard to the Russian data. Putting the key issues of this work into a wider context can lead to the analysis of unexplored fields in the Polish language, such as the basic clause structure which is an unclarified topic in the Polish generative grammar; thereby, certain Slavic models can serve as a starting point in order to analyze particular questions.

Further chapters describe syntactic phenomena related to the Polish topic and focus.

The purpose of the fourth chapter is to introduce the Polish focus. The first main statement concerns the two different focus positions of the Polish language: similarly to Hungarian, the Polish language also contains an *in situ* information focus at the end of the sentence (1b), and a preverbal identificational focus with [contrastive] and [exhaustive] feature (É. Kiss 1998) in the left periphery (2a).

(1) a. **Kto** **napisał Potop?**¹
who-WH wrote Deluge-ACC
'Who wrote the Deluge?'

(1) b. **Potop** **napisał Sienkiewicz.**²
Deluge-ACC wrote Sienkiewicz-NOM
'Sienkiewicz wrote the Deluge.'

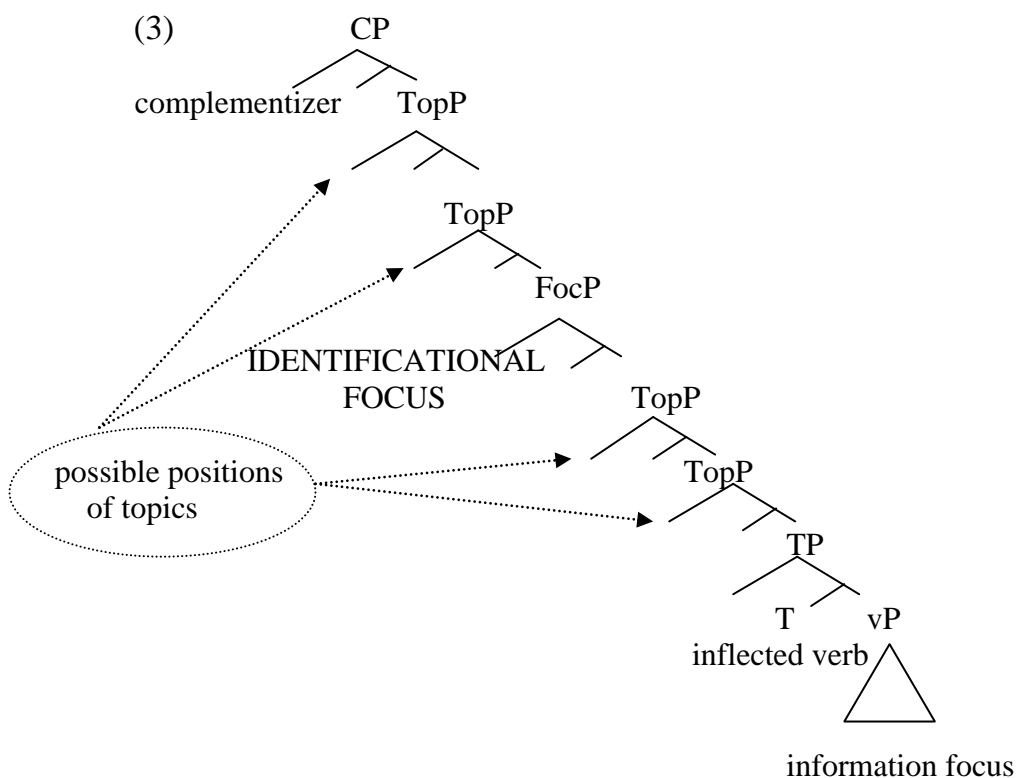
(2) a. **Którą** **książkę napisał Sienkiewicz?**
which-WH book-ACC wrote Sienkiewicz-NOM
Potop **czy Ziemię obiecaną?**
Deluge-ACC or The Promised Land-ACC
'Which book did Sienkiewicz write: the Deluge or The Promised Land?'

¹ Examples are taken from the corpus or the questionnaires, otherwise I list the sources.

² Information foci are marked by underlined constituents, small capitals mean identificational foci.

- (2) b. **POTOP napisal Sienkiewicz.**
 Deluge-ACC wrote Sienkiewicz-NOM
 'It was the DELUGE that Sienkiewicz wrote.'

Researches concerning Polish focus have not yet analyzed the syntactic and semantic features of focus located in the left periphery. In the fourth chapter, I suggest that it is possible to prove the [exhaustive] feature of the Polish preverbal focus applying the so-called exhaustivity tests proposed by Anna Szabolcsi in 1983. I demonstrate sentence structures having different word orders and containing focus and I analyze them in a syntactic and semantic perspective. I propose a structure which is appropriate to demonstrate all variations of word order, (for example identificational focus can appear in sentence-initial position, before or after a topic, and between topics, but a Polish clause can contain only one preverbal focus contrary to the recursive topic (3)). Assuming transformations, the same structure is appropriate to describe the different surface word orders of the information focus located in postverbal position.



Testing the focus in subject position, the following remark arise related to the Polish subject position: The subject NP is assumed not being located in Spec.TP, but either in Spec.FocP in case of a stressed subject or in Spec.TopP in case of an unstressed subject.

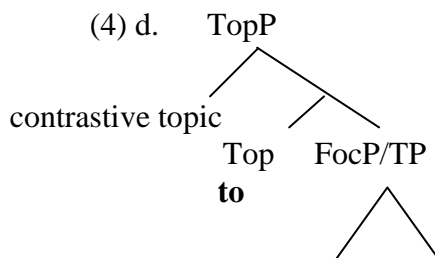
In the fifth chapter, the Polish lexeme *to* is analyzed in detail, as a contrastive relator (den Dikken 2006). Although it has several functions, here I focus on *to* appearing after a contrastive topic or before a contrastive focus. These characteristics are realized in the case of both *to*-s, as they can appear in a sentence-initial position (4a) and on the boundary of topic-comment parts (4b). My aim is to analyze these sentences with one and the same structure.

(4) a. **To JANA widziałam w kinie.**
 TO John-ACC I.saw in cinema
 ‘It was John whom I saw in the cinema.’

(4) b. √ **Jana to widziałam w kinie.**³
 John-ACC TO I.saw in cinema
 ‘As for John, I saw him in the cinema.’

The purpose of this chapter is to propose a structure which explains the identificational focus being located after the *to* in sentence-initial position (4a) and the contrastive topic before *to* found on the boundary of topic-comment parts (4b). First I propose that these *to*-s are the same, then researching the function of *to* I draw a parallel between this lexeme and other elements not having semantic contents (the so-called relators and linkers) described by den Dikken in 2006, which play an essential role in the establishment of predicational relation. *To*, as a special relator, is located in topic head. In the case of an overt topic, a contrastive topic occurs in the specifier position of *to*, and the category of its complement can be either a TP (4b) or a FocP (4c).

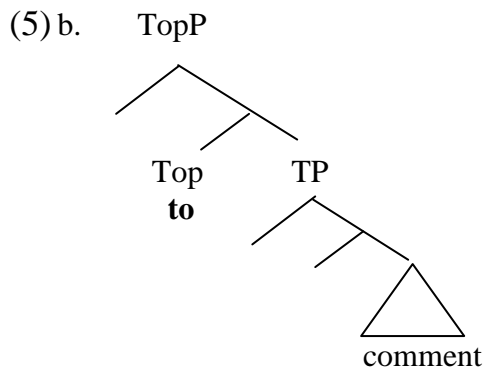
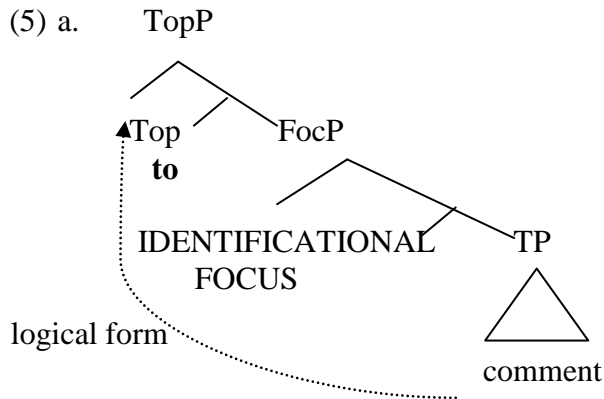
(4) c. √ **Jana to w KINIE widziałam.**
 John-ACC TO in cinema I.saw
 ‘As for John, it was the cinema, where I saw him.’



If the specifier of *to* is not filled by an overt topic, then I assume the covert raising of the background (the comment part without the focus) in order to establish the predicational relation. Then the category of the comment can be either a FocP (5a) or a TP (5b) in case of

³ The root sign (√) marks the contrastive topic referring to its special intonation pattern.

the so-calledthetic sentences. This explains the data presented in this chapter, for example the impossibility of occurrence of the verb directly after the lexeme *to* being located in sentence-initial position.



The most significant results of this analysis are the explanation of the contrastive interpretation of Polish sentences containing *to* and the obligatory occurrence of focus, the description of the different surface realizations of *to* with one and the same syntactic structure, and thus the unification of two functions of *to*, namely as a topic-marker and as a focus-marker.

In the further chapters, I analyze Polish structures where the relator *to* presented in the fifth chapter can appear. In the sixth chapter, I analyze Polish constructions introducing sentence-topics. Besides the generative analysis of *jeśli chodzi o [kogoś / coś]*, *co do [kogoś / czegoś]* and *co się tyczy [kogoś / czegoś]* (all having the approximate meaning of ‘as for’) I keep an eye on the pragmatic features of these expressions. My main claim is that topic-markers select a contrastive topic. Contrary to the earlier distinction concerning Hungarian topic-markers (a type containing a pronoun in the main clause which is coreferential with the topic of the dependent clause introduced by a topic-marker (6a), and a type being independent from the main clause, which does not contain an empty argument place (6b, 6c)), my

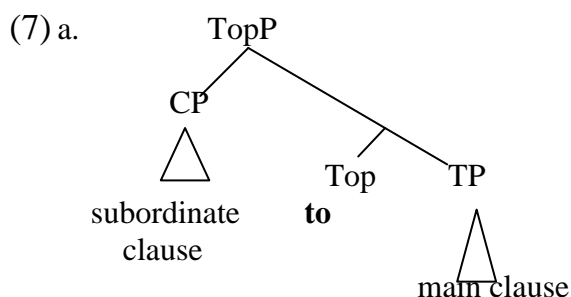
distinction sets out from the possible clause order. While in the first type the subordinate clause introduced by the topic-marker always precedes the main clause, in the type being independent from the main clause the clause order is reversible.

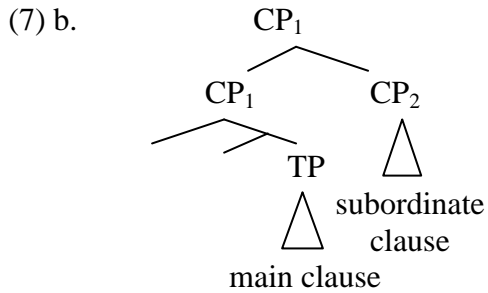
(6) a. **Co do kotów_i, to one_i nie są mądre.**
 what-WH to cats-GEN TO they-NOM NEG are clever
 ‘As for cats, they are not clever.’

(6) b. **Co się tyczy barwy głosu, to Elvis Presley nie miał sobie równych.**
 what-WH REFL.PRON relates colour-GEN sound-GEN TO
 Elvis Presley-NOM NEG had REFL.PRON similar
 ‘As for the tone, Elvis Presley had no equal.’
 (Sulich 2008: 65)

(6) c. **Adam Małysz był najlepszy, jeśli chodzi o polskich skoczków.**
 Adam Małysz-NOM was best
 if goes about Polish-ACC.PL ski-jumpers-ACC.PL
 ‘Adam Małysz was the best, as for the Polish ski-jumpers.’
 (Sulich 2008: 95)

Analyzing the Polish data, it can be observed that independently of the type, the lexeme *to* can appear in these constructions in case of subordinate clause > main clause order (6a, 6b), but not in the opposite clause order (6c). Based on these differences, I suggest divergent structures when analyzing subordinate clause > main clause and main clause > subordinate clause order. As for the former (7a), I propose a TopP with *to* that functions as a relator mediating between the logical subject in the specifier of TopP and its predicate in the complement of TopP. The main clause > subordinate clause order (7b), where *to* can never appear, is a case of independent subordination (Kenesei 1992) with the dependent clause right-adjoined to the main clause.



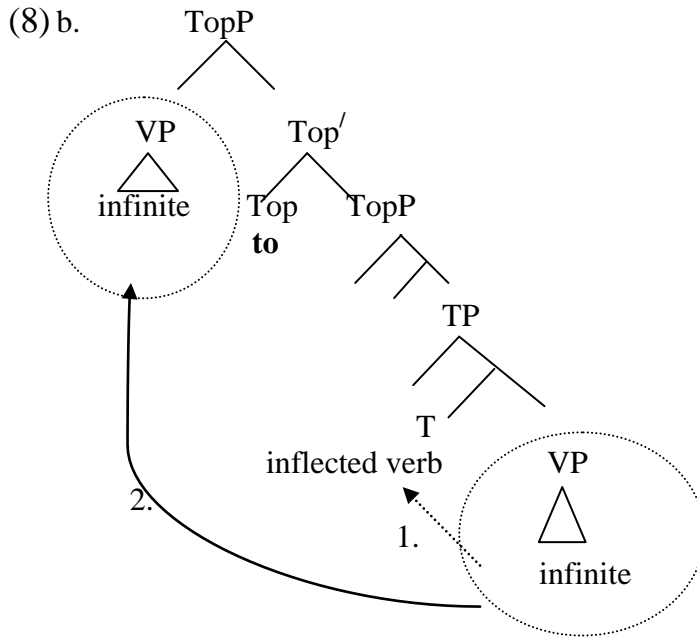


Taking into consideration these suggestions, we can explain the contrastive topic of sentences containing topic-markers, the role of the lexeme *to* and the possible occurrence of focus.

In the seventh chapter, I analyze the possibilities of topicalization of the predicative phrase where the clefted verbal predicate is realized as an infinitive both in Polish and in Hungarian and the same verb appears once again in the sentence in an inflected form (8a).

- (8) a. √ **Jeść to dużo jadł, ale napić się nie chciał.**
 eat-INF TO a lot he.ate but drink-INF REFL.PRON NEG he.wanted
 ‘√ As for eating, he ate a lot, but he did not want to drink.’

I present suggestions which are appropriate to analyze all sentence types containing topicalized predicate in both languages. According to the so-called *Copy Theory of Movement* proposed by Chomsky in 1995, in the position of the raised constituent appears a copy of the raised constituent and not a phonologically empty trace. Only one of the copies (usually the upper) is pronounced in most cases, however both copies are realized on the surface in case of predicate clefting. After presenting different theories concerning the possibilities of the topicalization of the predicate, I argue for remnant movement: the phrase (VP, AP, NP) is raised to the specifier position of the topic. Both copies need to be pronounced if the “*Base Line Sentence has only one exponent of both lexical content of the verb and tense information*” (Abels 2001: 9). I apply the distributive morphology (Halle-Marantz 1993) explaining the morphological difference of the two copies. Thus, I assume that the verbal phrase is copied up to Spec.TopP in case of the raising of a verbal predicate and it is pronounced because of its lexical content while the lower copy earlier raised to the head position of T is also realized as it bears the tense information. The [contrastive] feature of the topic in predicate clefting is also confirmed by the optionally appearing *to* which is interpreted as a relator.



I present in detail the divergent features of topicalizations of the predicative nominative and adjective and the dual tendency of the Polish Predicate Cleft (Bondaruk 2012a), which concerns the grammatical case of the clefted predicate and the impossibility of pronunciation of the lower copy (8c).

(8) c. $\sqrt{\text{Chora to Ewa}} \text{ była } (*\text{chora}).^4$
 ill-NOM TO Eve-NOM was ill
 'As for being ill, Eve was ill.'

The lower copy of the clefted predicative adjective or noun is impossible to be pronounced in Polish contrary to Hungarian. The other difference concerns the grammatical case of the raised predicate: the secondary predicate is expressed by dative in Hungarian, whereas in Polish nominative (in case of an AP) or instrumental (in case of an NP) case is assigned. I suggest a structure similar to the analysis of the verbal predicate clefting with the topicalization of AP or NP.

The third main issue of this chapter analyzes the features of the clefting of embedded verbs (8d). Contrary to the peculiarities of the predicate clefting presented earlier and according to the second feature of the dual tendency of the Polish PCC, the lower copy of the clefted predicate is not pronounced neither in Polish nor in Hungarian when an embedded verb occurs since another verb form is present which bears the tense information.

⁴ The star outside the parentheses $*()$ marks that the sentence is ungrammatical in case of omission of the words put into brackets. However, the star appearing inside the parentheses $(*)$ means that the sentence is ungrammatical if the words in the bracket are realized on the surface.

- (8) d. √ **Czytać to on będzie** (*czytać), **ale nie zrozumie.**
 read-INF TO he-NOM will read-INF but NEG he.will.understand
 ‘√ *As for reading, he will read, but he will not understand it.*’

The most significant theses of the dissertation can be summarized as follows:

1. Besides the information focus taking place in the right periphery, a Polish sentence can contain a preverbal focus bearing a heavy stress. This identificational focus has a [contrastive] and an [exhaustive] feature to assign.
2. In the Polish language, the lexeme *to* is a special relator (den Dikken 2006) located in topic head which is the manifestation of the [contrastive] feature of the contrastive topic taking place in the specifier position of *to*.
3. *To* appearing in sentence-initial position can be described with the same structure; as a relator, it selects identificational focus.
4. The topic selected by topic-markers has contrastive interpretation, the syntactic analysis of these constructions starts out of the optional appearance of lexeme *to* contrary to the analysis of other languages.
5. The infinite verb form occurring in sentence-initial position in case of the topicalization of the predicate has contrastive interpretation, and the above presented *to* also serves as a starting point for analyzing the clefting of verbal, non-verbal and embedded verb forms.

Besides formulating these theses, I analyze in the dissertation such linguistic concepts as word order and sentence stress. Based on relevant theories, I describe basic generative definitions such as contrastive topic, topicalization, left dislocation, identificational focus, tests of exhaustivity, relator and copy theory of movement, etc. I drew upon the theses of theorists of note (Chomsky 1995b, King 1995, Rizzi 1997, É. Kiss 1998, den Dikken 2006, Dyakonova 2009, Bailyn 2012) giving examples of many languages such as Polish, English, Hungarian, Russian, Czech, Spanish, etc.

The analysis of Polish linguistic phenomena enables us to summarize the relevant theories of Slavic linguistic literature critically. The approaches of particular syntactic issues not applied earlier can open new perspectives for language teaching as well.

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Conference talks:

1. 16-18th April 2009: XXIX. National Scientific Students' Associations Conference, Section of Humanities, Szeged. Third place in the session of cognitive and descriptive linguistics. The Presentation was preceded by a meeting organized by the Institute of Slavic Studies of PPKE-BTK.
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2. 16-17th October 2009: Dialogue of cultures in multilingual Europe VI. Pécs.
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3. 24th September 2010: PiNyek: Piliscsaba Linguistic Circle, Piliscsaba.
Title of the presentation: *Fókusz a lengyelben.* [Focus in Polish.]
4. 7th October, 2010: PhD Students on the Ways of Linguistics, Conference of the Doctoral School of Linguistics VI. Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities, Budapest.
Title of the presentation: *Fókusz a lengyel nyelvben.* [Focus in Polish.]
5. 30th November – 1st December 2010: LingDok 11, Szeged.
Title of the presentation: *A lengyel fókusz kimerítő jegye.* [The exhaustive feature of the Polish focus.]
6. 24th February 2012: PiNyek: Piliscsaba Linguistic Circle, Piliscsaba.
Title of the presentation: *A to kontrasztív relátor a lengyel mondatokban.* [To as a contrastive relator in the Polish sentences.]
7. 13th April, 2012: The First Cracovian Conference of Polish and Hungarian Studies. Cracow.
Title of the presentation: *Cechy topikalizacji frazy predykatywnej w języku polskim i węgierskim.* [Features of topicalisation of predicative phrase in Polish and Hungarian.]
8. 17 – 20th May 2012: Spring Wind Conference, Győr.
Title of the presentation: *Clefting of the Predicative Adjective Phrase in Polish.*
9. 31st May – 2nd June 2012: 14th Annual Conference of the English Department (ACED 14), Bucharest.
Title of the presentation: *To as a contrastive relator in Polish.*

10. 24 – 25th August 2012: CECIL's 2: Central European Conference in Linguistics for Graduate Students 2, Piliscsaba. Poster session.
Title of the poster: *Topic-markers in Polish.*

11. 11-12th October, 2012: PhD Students on the Ways of Linguistics, Conference of the Doctoral School of Linguistics VIII, Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities. Budapest.
Title of the presentation: „*Ami a lengyel topik-jelölőket illeti...*”. [As for the Polish topic-markers.]