

## Explaining the „Bagel Problem”: the case of Polish *-kolwiek*-NPIs

**I.** One of the most intriguing features of negative polarity phenomena in Polish (and other Slavic languages as well) is the existence of two series of NPIs which are in complementary distribution. On the one hand, there are negative pronouns (*ni*-NPIs) which may occur in matrix negative clauses but are banned from other typical negative polarity contexts, cf. (1) and (2). On the other hand, there are morphologically non-negative pronouns (*kolwiek*-NPIs) which may occur in typical negative polarity contexts but are banned from matrix negative clauses, cf. (3) and (4). Since clausemate negation is a typical antimorphic context, *ni*-NPIs in Polish might be defined as strong NPIs, i.e., NPIs that are licensed only in antimorphic contexts representing the strongest form of negation (cf. Zwarts 1993, 1995, 1996, van der Wouden 1997). *-kolwiek*-NPIs would be what is called in the literature weak NPIs, i.e., NPIs that are licensed in weak negative contexts (monotone decreasing contexts). Assuming the hierarchy of negative strength according to which weak and strong polarity contexts are in superset-subset relationship (cf. Zwarts 1993, 1995 van der Wouden 1997, Giannakidou 1997), we would expect *-kolwiek*-NPIs to be licensed in antimorphic contexts as well. In other words, from the fact that antimorphic contexts constitute a proper subset of downward entailing contexts, it should follow that if an element is licensed in downward entailing contexts in general, it should also be licensed in antimorphic contexts. What this account precludes is, in fact, a complementary distribution of various classes of NPIs of the sort observed in Polish (or other Slavic languages). This problem has been called in the literature “the Bagel Problem” (Pereltsvaig 1998), cf. (5).

The goal of this talk is to propose a solution to the “Bagel Problem” which takes into account the specific semantics of *-kolwiek*-pronouns – unlike the analyses proposed so far, for instance, a purely syntactic account in terms of the Binding Principles (Progovac 1994), an account in terms of “bipolar elements” (van der Wouden 1997), or an account in terms of “morphological blocking” (Pereltsvaig 1998).

**II.** The proposed analysis will proceed in a few steps. First, I will show that *-kolwiek*-NPIs belong to what Rullmann (1996) calls *wh*-NPIs, which – unlike *even*-NPIs – are neither focus-sensitive nor scalar and, in addition, show free-choice uses. Etymologically, *wh*-NPIs are presumably derived from concessive conditional clauses (cf. Haspelmath 1993).

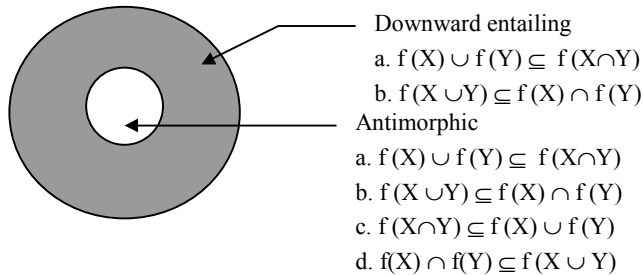
Next, I will take a closer look at the overall distribution of *-kolwiek*-pronouns involving their negative polarity and free-choice uses. Two puzzling facts will be of immediate relevance here. The first puzzle has to do with the non-occurrence of *-kolwiek*-NPIs in the context of clausemate negation. While *-kolwiek*-NPIs are normally excluded from the context of clausemate negation, see (4), they seem to be acceptable there, when they are used ‘attributively’, cf. (6). In the latter case *-kolwiek*-pronouns have a special meaning comparable to that of a strong/emphatic NPI *any* (cf. Krifka 1994, Kadmon & Landman 1993, Lee & Horn 1994, Rullmann 1996, Tovena 1998): a *-kolwiek*-pronoun creates a stronger (more emphatic) statement in comparison with a corresponding *ni*-NPI; the interpretation of (6) would be thus something like ‘He didn’t show any interest at all, not even the slightest interest one could expect.’ The second puzzle concerns the non-occurrence of *-kolwiek*-pronouns in quasi-universal statements. While *-kolwiek*-pronouns may occur in various sorts of free-choice (modal) contexts (cf. (7)), they are not acceptable in generic statements in which a given predicate holds true for every element denoted by the subject nominal phrase, as in (8). However, the acceptability of a *-kolwiek*-pronoun is restored as soon as a modal/conditional clause is used, cf. (9).

**III.** To solve these puzzles, I will propose that *-kolwiek*-pronouns are neither existential nor universal quantifiers (cf. Tovena 1998). They are non-specific indefinites whose semantics involve concession by arbitrary or disjunctive choice (cf. Lee 1996). This semantic property is satisfied in weak negative polarity contexts and free-choice (in particular modal) contexts. In contrast, it is not satisfied in generic, law-like statements corresponding logically to the conjunction AND (Horn 1989) for which universal determiners have to be used (cf. (8)). Nor is it satisfied in strong negative contexts (clausmate negation) because of the transparent entailment relation going from disjunction to conjunction. In other words, the satisfaction of arbitrary choice based on disjunction is in principle not available in strong negative contexts. This assumption leads to the prediction that *-kolwiek*-pronouns will be used meaningfully in negative sentences only in cases in which it is precisely the moment of the free/arbitrary choice rendered vacuous that has to be emphasized. This in turn will necessarily lend an emphatic weight to a given statement (cf. (6)). In such cases the ‘hearer’ is actually invited to freely select among (contextually given) possible alternatives if only to find out that the proposition does not hold even for such a (presumably least expected, most humble) alternative. It is plausible to assume that the attributive use of *-kolwiek*-pronouns makes somehow the construction of alternatives possible or more transparent so that the arbitrary choice can be easier satisfied here. What is chosen among in such cases are thus different properties of an element already determined (i.e., belonging to the set denoted by the common noun).

**IV.** The proposed analysis has an important advantage over the other proposals mentioned in **I**, namely, the exclusion of *-kolwiek*-pronouns from the context of clausemate negation is not absolute, rather it is semantically motivated. In other words, it is the meaning of *-kolwiek*-pronouns (which will also be etymologically proved) that is incompatible with strong negative contexts under normal circumstances.

- (1) ✓Ewa **nie** spotkała *nikogo*. vs. (3) \*Ewa **nie** spotkała *kogokolwiek*.  
 Eve NEG met no one Eve NEG met anyone  
 ‘Eve didn’t meet anyone.’
- (2) \*Jeśli *nikt* przyjdzie, daj mi znać. vs. (4) ✓Jeśli *ktokolwiek* przyjdzie, daj mi znać.  
 if nobody comes let me know if anybody comes let me know  
 ‘If anyone comes, let me know.’

(5) The “Bagel Problem”



- (6) On **nie** wykazał *jakiegokolwiek* zainteresowania.  
 he NEG showed any interest  
 ‘He didn’t show any interest.’
- (7) a. *Ktokolwiek* może rozwiązać ten problem.  
 anyone can solve-INF this problem  
 ‘Anyone can solve this problem.’  
 b. *Którykolwiek* fachowiec to potwierdzi.  
 any specialist this confirms  
 ‘Any specialist will confirm this.’
- (8) ??*Jakikokolwiek* kot łowi myszy. vs. ✓*Każdy* kot łowi myszy.  
 any cat hunts mice every cat hunts mice
- (9) *Jakiegokolwiek* by wziąć kota, to poluje on na myszy.  
 whichever COND take-INF cat then hunts he mice  
 ‘Whichever (any) cat you take hunts mice.’

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