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Iga Monika Kościółek

Discourse Prominence
and Agent Prominence
in the Polish *-no/-to* Construction
Interpretation and Referentiality
of the Implicit Subject

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Thesis supervisor (I): Prof. Dr. Daniel Bunčić

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Abbreviations

The glosses conform to the Leipzig Glossing Rules as closely as possible.

1	first person	LOC	locative
2	second person	M	masculine
3	third person	N	neuter
ACC	accusative	NEG	negation
ADJ	adjective	NOM	nominative
ADV	adverbial	NVIR	non-masculine human and all non-human
AUX	auxiliary		
COND	conditional	OBJ	object
COMP	complementizer	PASS	passive
DEM	demonstrative	PFV	perfective
DAT	dative	PL	plural
F	feminine	PRF	perfect
FUT	future	PRS	present
GEN	genitive	PST	past, preterite
IMP	imperative	PTCP	participle
IMPRS	<i>-no/-to</i> construction	REFL	reflexive
INF	infinitive	SG	singular
INS	instrumental case	TR	transitive
INTR	intransitive	VIR	masculine human
IPFV	imperfective	PL	plural
ITER	iterative		

1 Introduction

1.1 Research Goals

The subject of this dissertation is the impersonal *-no/-to* construction in Polish. This construction is interesting due to its semantic complexity, which directly influences its syntactic properties as well as its *discourse* function, understood here as larger textual units. Therefore, the *main goal* of this dissertation is to present the relationships and connections at various linguistic levels that result from the interaction of the internal semantic features of the examined construction with its immediate surroundings, i.e., other linguistic entities participating in discourse. The main theoretical assumption of this dissertation is the hypothesis that such a relationship exists—specifically, that the basic semantic features of the construction have a direct impact on its functioning within a broader discourse context.

In the case of the *-no/-to* construction, we are dealing with an impersonal construction, which in its surface structure lacks an explicitly expressed grammatical subject (cf. Siewierska 2008a). It primarily consists of a specific, uninflected verbal form that expresses an action or event and, in contrast to other similar impersonal constructions, is restricted in reference to the past tense. Despite the fact that the *-no/-to* construction does not appear with an overt grammatical subject, it remains an active construction containing a strong implicit subject, which can be described as having the semantic feature [+human]. The indefinite human interpretation is a key and default property of the construction in question, which cannot be overridden, even in contexts suggesting a non-human agent (Kibort 2008: 267). Additionally, the active status of the *-no/-to* construction is clearly visible in the presence of an accusative object when formed with transitive verbs.

To illustrate the subject of the study, the following two examples present, respectively, a personal construction in (1), and the impersonal *-no/-to* construction derived from it in (2):

- (1) *Weronika czytała książkę.*
Weronika read.IPVF.PST.3SG.F book.F.ACC
'Weronika was reading a book.'
- (2) *Czytano książkę.*
read.IPVF.IMPRS book.F.ACC
'[They] were reading a book.'

The fundamental difference between the sentences above lies in the fact that in (1) we have a personal construction with an explicitly expressed grammatical subject, which is also the agent in the semantic sense—i.e., the performer of the action expressed by the lexical meaning of the verb. In (2), however, we are dealing with an impersonal construction. As seen in the example, the *-no/-to* construction does not include an overt grammatical subject, with the verb appearing first in the sentence structure. After transforming the active personal construction into the impersonal one, the sentence structure remains almost the same: it retains the accusative object

and the main verb, but it no longer contains the most significant element of the original sentence—the performer of the action. The absence of this main argument shifts the previously established focus of attention in the clause. Let us take a closer look at both sentence structures. *Weronika* in (1), as the grammatical subject expressed in the nominative case and the semantic agent of the sentence, is simultaneously the topic of the sentence, i.e., the linguistic entity about which the sentence is predicated. Therefore, she is the most prominent argument in the sentence, as she draws the entire focus of the interlocutor or reader. In (2), however, the *-no/-to* construction occupies the first position in the sentence, indicating that the act of reading was carried out by an unknown person or people. Since this action cannot be attributed to any overt subject or agent in the sentence, we may posit that the action itself becomes the center of attention of this proposition, for that it bears the main “presentational focus” (Kibort 2004: 32) of the clause. This raises the following question: To what extent does the observed change in sentence structure affect the meaning of the entire proposition, and does this change occur only at the sentence level, or does it also extend to larger semantic units, such as texts? This question is highly justified, as previous studies on this construction have mostly described it in isolation, i.e., its syntactic and semantic properties have been defined based on analyses of individual sentences (cf. Kibort 2004; Lavine 2005; Krzek 2010; Ruda 2014). While this is an important starting point in the linguistic description of the *-no/-to* construction, as it allows for a better understanding of its basic grammatical features, it is not sufficient to fully capture and describe the essence of this linguistic phenomenon.

Therefore, the *second main objective* of this dissertation is to investigate and determine the function of the *-no/-to* construction in larger discourse segments. In this regard, it is interesting to ask: If at the sentence level the primary function of the *-no/-to* construction seems to be placing emphasis on the event, as some Polish linguists have observed (cf. Kibort 2004; Rudnicka-Mosiądz 2002) does this construction serve the same function in larger textual units? More broadly, what discourse function might an impersonal event take on when it occurs within larger discourse contexts?

Another *key research question* focuses on the role of the implicit [+human] subject in establishing semantic relations with other linguistic entities within discourse, extending beyond the sentence level. Of particular interest is how the implicit subject forms connections with noun phrases or other linguistic expressions, and how the process of semantic identification leads to its interpretation. The referentiality of the *-no/-to* construction has so far been analyzed primarily through isolated sentences (cf. Siewierska 2008a; 2008b), with little attention given to its potential coreferentiality with other noun phrases in discourse. Consequently, in the literature this construction is classified as an “R-impersonal” according to Malchukov and Ogawa’s (2011: 44) terminology, as its subjects exhibit reduced referentiality compared to canonical subjects. Furthermore, it is classified as an “arb construction” (Cinque 1988; Malamud 2013), which refers to constructions with arbitrary interpretations.

Thus, this work aims to address the gap in existing research by exploring the extent of potential referentiality between the *-no/-to* construction and overtly expressed noun phrases in discourse. This question is significant, as the *-no/-to* con-

struction is semantically grounded in an implicit plural indefinite human pronoun, which could either facilitate or hinder its identification with plural noun phrases.

Another *central goal* of this thesis is to empirically identify and categorize the possible discourse referents of the investigated impersonal construction, thereby shedding light on the nature of the implicit agent and providing additional insights into how speakers interpret and infer agency in contexts where the performer of the action is entirely omitted.

The *final research goal* of this work is to determine whether the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction can influence the shaping of discourse structure and contribute to elevating the construction to a more prominent status. This question is closely linked to the primary objective of this dissertation, which is to analyze the semantics-pragmatics interface through the lens of the impersonal *-no/-to* construction and its behavior across different discourse contexts. The function of the *-no/-to* construction in discourse, the *ultimate goal* of this dissertation, is expected to be defined taking a holistic approach. This approach begins by identifying the core semantic features of the construction, then analyzes its syntactic properties, and finally traces their manifestations in larger coherent discourse structures.

1.2 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is structured according to the main research goals defined in Section 1.1 and is organized as follows:

Chapter 2 offers a comprehensive examination of the key linguistic properties of the *-no/-to* construction, set against the backdrop of other impersonal and passive constructions.

Section 2.1 specifically addresses the concept of impersonality from a semantic perspective, introducing the classification of impersonal constructions based on semantic criteria as defined by Siewierska (2008a; 2008b). Additionally, this section presents the morphological, syntactic, and semantic features of the *-no/-to* construction in comparison with other relevant Polish impersonal constructions, namely the third person plural impersonal construction and the reflexive impersonal. The key differences between these constructions in the investigated linguistic domains are summarized and illustrated in Table 1 at the end of Section 2.1.

Subsequently, Section 2.2 provides a detailed morphological description of the investigated construction, focusing particularly on the interpretation of the *-no/-to* suffix, which has varying interpretations in the literature—analyzed as either one or two morphemes. The *-no/-to* suffix will be compared to the morphological features of other impersonal constructions to highlight its incompatibility with the inflectional paradigm of modern Polish. Additionally, the functional similarity to the past tense *l*-participle will be emphasized.

Section 2.3 examines the lexicosemantic properties of the *-no/-to* construction, focusing mainly on its compatibility with different verb types, such as intransitive and transitive verbs. This section specifically examines the inherent meaning and characteristics of the implicit subject and how it interacts with the semantics of the verb forms from which the construction is derived. It takes into account not only the aspectual form of the verb but also the underlying agentive features.

Section 2.4 is dedicated to comparing the *-no/-to* construction with personal and impersonal formations of passive voice in Polish. It begins with a brief overview of the varying perspectives on the grammatical status of the *-no/-to* construction in the linguistic literature. This is followed by an introduction to two morphosyntactic operations—*agent demotion* and *agent suppression*—that are responsible for the formation of the respective passive and active impersonal constructions. Additionally, this section provides an overview of the main syntactic and functional differences between personal and impersonal passive forms in Polish, highlighting their potential discourse functions. Finally, it addresses the key morphosyntactic differences between both types of passive forms and the active *-no/-to* construction.

Chapter 3 explores the historical development of the *-no/-to* construction, detailing the multifactorial activation process of the former neuter singular passive participle. It particularly emphasizes the semantic factors that may have played a crucial role in the activation of the construction, focusing specifically on the long-established feature [+human]. Additionally, the chapter explains the semantic restriction of the *-no/-to* construction to the past tense. Based on the strong internal features of the *-no/-to* construction, including its default human interpretation and inherently encoded past tense reference, this chapter introduces the concept of *agentive narration* as the construction's function in discourse.

Chapter 4 presents the results of experimental and corpus studies examining the potential referentiality of the *-no/-to* construction and the interaction between the implicit agent and other entities within larger discourse units. It explores how the internal semantic features of the implicit agent influence its ability to establish co-referential relations beyond single-sentence contexts. The discussed corpus data illustrates how various forms of discourse referents associated with the construction in anaphoric contexts affect the interpretation of the implicit agent, shedding light on the role of the construction when backgrounded in discourse.

Chapter 5 develops the concept of *agentive narration* as the primary function of the *-no/-to* construction in discourse, contrasting it with the notion of *bare happening* as defined by Sansó (2006). It examines the correlation between the semantics-pragmatics interface and the *-no/-to* construction, emphasizing the role of the implicit agent in foregrounding impersonal events. In the topicalization of the implicit agent or the impersonal event in discourse, the narrative component of the construction, along with the suppression of the agent and the affectedness of the patients, plays a crucial role.

Finally, Chapter 6 presents a summary of the general conclusions derived from the research conducted throughout this dissertation.

2 Linguistic Description of the *-no/-to* Construction

2.1 Impersonality of the *-no/-to* Construction from the Semantic Perspective

The construction under investigation is an impersonal construction. According to Siewierska (2008b), the term *impersonal* might be interpreted in different ways depending on the adopted criteria. Thus, this phenomenon can be described from semantic, syntactic and morphological perspectives. Here should be stated that while the outlined perspectives are not mutually exclusive and can be combined with each other, they still focus on different aspects of impersonality. And while the syntactic analysis of impersonality revolves around the concept of subjecthood, the focus of morphological analyses lies on the main verb of the respective impersonal construction. Consequently, from a syntactic perspective, as noted by Siewierska (2008b) impersonal constructions are characterized by either a complete absence of a grammatical subject or the presence of a pleonastic (or an expletive) subject, which can be overt or potentially covert. On the other hand, regarding morphological descriptions, they concern the category of person, which may or may not be expressed by the main verb form. In the following, the *-no/-to* construction will primarily be described based on semantic criteria, specifically from an agent-centered perspective (cf. Siewierska 2008a), by contrasting it with other closely related Polish impersonal constructions in terms of function and semantics. The main syntactic and morphological differences between these constructions will be briefly discussed, focusing on comparative descriptions that highlight the features of alternative impersonal forms in relation to the *-no/-to* construction. The comparative description of the selected Polish impersonal constructions contained in this section is mainly based on the analysis and division of this type of formations, carried out by the aforementioned linguist, Anna Siewierska. In her works (2008b; 2008a; 2011) she presented characteristic features of impersonal constructions on various linguistic levels, extensively discussing the differences and similarities between them. The characteristics of the impersonal constructions were delineated by her within the context of a comprehensive comparative linguistic analysis, spanning beyond just European languages to include others from various global macro-areas. In the present study, the main characteristics provided by Siewierska's (2008b; 2008a) works concerning Polish constructions have been further elaborated by incorporating information that enables a more detailed interpretation and description of the semantic features of the *-no/-to* construction. This includes contributions from Kibort (2004), Krzek (2010; 2015), Ruda (2014), Rivero and Sheppard (2003) and Malamud (2013) supported by the analysis of my own linguistic examples.

The main objects of the comparative analysis will be the two other Polish impersonal constructions, namely the reflexive impersonal (*się* construction) and the impersonal third person plural construction. The comparison will involve studying and comparing the selected key features of each construction based on the relevant literature and does not claim to be exhaustive. In light of the fact that all of the relevant Polish impersonal constructions contain an implicit, unexpressed human

subject, their comparative description focuses mainly on their semantic features, i.e., the interpretation of each type of construction in relation to its possible referents. Before we start analyzing the chosen Polish formations, let us first provide a general overview of impersonal constructions based on semantic criteria.

Thus, as far as semantic criteria are concerned, Siewierska (2008b) names two central notions for impersonality, *lack of human agentivity* on the one hand and *referentiality*¹ on the other. Accordingly, impersonal constructions can be divided into two groups. The first group subsumes constructions which do not have a human agent in their conceptual structure, i.e., following Siewierska (2008b; 2008a), a broadly understood entity which either exhibits control over a situation or an event or is a causer of an event. Across languages, she identifies three types of constructions, which fall into this category and are also found in Polish. This category comprises: a) *weather verbs*, which denote weather phenomena, displayed in (3), b) *adversity impersonals*, i.e., verbs expressing emotions or physical sensations exemplified in (4), c) and verbs denoting *modality*, exemplified by the sentence in (5):

- (3) *Pada/Świta.* (Kibort 2004: 296)
rain.3SG/dawn.3SG
‘It is raining/dawning.’ (Kibort 2004: 316)
- (4) *Mdli/Dusi/Skręca/Ciągnie/Boli/Swędzi/Kłuje* *mnie.*
nauseate/choke/convulse/pull/ache/itch/stab.3SG me.ACC
‘[Something] makes me nauseous/choke/convulse/contract my muscles/painful/itch/gives me shooting pains.’
- (5) *Trzeba odejść.* (Siewierska 2008b: 323)
be-necessary leave.INF
‘It is necessary to leave.’

The second group of impersonal constructions singled out according to semantic criteria contains constructions which, following Siewierska (2008b), can be described as *non-specific agent impersonals*. In this case, as already mentioned above, the semantic interpretation of impersonality pertains to the notion of reference. The constructions identified as impersonal in this sense depict situations and events that could be carried out by a human agent, albeit one that is not specified. As noted by Siewierska (2008b), the non-specificity of this type of constructions opens up a field for diverse interpretations which can vary from no concrete person or group of people, a vaguely defined set of individuals, to anyone or everyone with the possible inclusion of speaker and addressee (cf. Siewierska 2008b: 4). Further, she divides this group into two subgroups: *pronominal impersonals* and *verbal impersonals*. According to her, the category of pronominal impersonals encompasses various constructions, in which the subject can be expressed by a generalized noun (e.g. *ludzie* ‘people’ in Polish, *man* in German), personal pronoun (e.g. *one* or *they* in English)

¹ *Referentiality* as a notion used by Siewierska (2008a, 2008b) does not refer to the definition of this term which is based on truth-conditional properties of sentences like this is the case in formal semantics. Instead it pertains rather to discourse-pragmatic encoding of possible range of referents of a given impersonal construction.

or by the personal inflection on the verb, like demonstrated in (6) with the Polish third person plural (3PL) impersonal construction. The group of verbal impersonals, on the other hand, consists of *agentless passives* such as the example in (7), *reflexive impersonals*, in (8), and *participle impersonals* such as the *-no/-to* construction displayed in sentences (9) and (10):

- (6) *Muszę kończyć niestety, bo czekają na mnie z obiadem*
 must.1SG finish.INF unfortunately, because wait.3PL.VIR on me with dinner
 ‘Unfortunately, I must end (our conversation) because they’re waiting for me
 at the dinner table.’ (Siewierska 2008b: 7)
- (7) *Dom został zburzony* (Frajzyngier 1982: 274)
 house.M.NOM.SG became.3SG.M destroy.PTCP.SG.M
 ‘A house was destroyed.’
- (8) *Co się robiło na przerwach?* (Siewierska 2008b: 19)
 what REFL did.3SG.N on breaks
 ‘What was one doing during the breaks?’
 (meaning: ‘What did you use to do during the breaks?’)
- (9) *Przynoszono pacjentom kwiaty.* (Ruda 2014: 204)
 brought.IMPRS patient.VIR.DAT flower.NVIR.ACC
 ‘[They] brought/kept bringing flowers to the patients.’ (Rothstein 1993: 713)
- (10) *Wypito całą butelkę wina.*
 drank.IMPRS whole bottle.F.ACC wine.N.GEN
 ‘[They] drank the whole bottle of wine.’

All the constructions mentioned above differ from each other not only syntactically and morphologically but also, most importantly, in terms of their referential properties. Let us examine them one by one, then. As evident from (6), the impersonal construction in the subordinate clause lacks a canonical subject in the nominative case on its surface. As noted by Siewierska (2008b), the impersonal reading of the third person plural construction in question hinges on the absence of the overt third person plural pronoun *oni* ‘they’. The subject is then indicated in this construction by a third person plural agreement marking on the verb. When used with the third person plural pronoun the construction in question receives a specific or definite interpretation. The third person plural construction when implemented without an overt pronoun can have two readings: either a definite one, when interpreted as a personal construction with a dropped pronoun, or an impersonal one, when used purposefully to avoid mentioning the performer of the action. In terms of structure Kibort (2004) remarks that being a case of a pro-drop phenomenon this construction entails both an agent and a syntactic subject, and its impersonal, that is unspecified- or generic-agent interpretation results from a dedicated use of verbal agreement. For this reason, Kibort (2004) calls this construction “the type of unspecified-agent clause using the conventional third person masculine plural agreement” (Kibort 2004: 173) and ascribes it to personal constructions. In this respect, namely in case of one grammatical form with two different meanings, this construc-

tion resembles the third person plural construction with an overt pronoun *they* in English, which also, depending on the context, can have a personal, definite interpretation or an impersonal reading, referring then to people in general. In the further course of the work, the Polish third person plural construction will be discussed exclusively in its impersonal reading. In general, as observed by Malamud (2013) for English and Russian, the constructions with arbitrary third person plural pronouns (called by her 3PL *arbs*) are expected to always exclude the speaker. However, following Malamud (2013), the exclusion of the speaker can be viewed as a matter of perspective rather than reference. She provides an example where an American might say to someone unfamiliar with the languages spoken in America using the English 3PL construction, replaced in the following example by the Polish equivalent:

- (11) *W Ameryce mówią po angielsku.*
 in America speak.3PL.VIR on English
 ‘They speak English in America.’ (adapted from Malamud 2013: 3)

In this case the same observation holds also for the Polish third person plural impersonal construction, where it exhibits a quasi-universal or generic reading. This quasi-universal reading, following Malamud (2013), can be paraphrased as ‘people in general’ and allows for generalized expressions that include the speaker. As can be inferred from the previous example, this type of reference is not readily available in everyday usage and requires a specific contextual setting. As remarked by Siewierska (2008b), due to their morphological setup, the third person plural impersonal constructions across languages in general exhibit the smallest referential range among other impersonal constructions for they are semantically confined to plural referents and typically exclude an individual interpretation. This holds also for Polish where the third person plural impersonal construction as opposed to the *-no/-to* construction seems to be infelicitous with singular referents. Siewierska (2008b: 22) illustrates this difference with the following example:

- (12) *Pocałowano go w czoło.*
 kissed.IMPRS him.ACC in forehead
 ‘He was kissed on the forehead.’

Siewierska (2008b) observes that the use of the third person plural construction (*pocałowali* ‘(they) kissed’) in this context would mean that there were more kisses than just one and the kissing itself was performed by a number of individuals, which is not implicated by the use of the *-no/-to* construction. The usage of the *-no/-to* construction in this context suggest that the activity described by the verb was performed by a single individual. The same difference can be observed in the following examples:

- (13) *Wczoraj na przyjęciu skakano na skakance.*
 yesterday on party jumped.IMPRS on rope
 ‘Yesterday at a party jump rope was played.’

- (14) *Wczoraj na przyjęciu skakali na skakance.*
 yesterday on party jumped.3PL.VIR on rope
 ‘They were jumping rope at the party yesterday.’

The sentence in (13) describes the activity itself, specifically that of jumping rope, which took place at a party. It allows for the identification of a single individual in response to the question: Who was jumping rope at the party? Conversely, the sentence in (14) suggests the involvement of multiple individuals in the activity, making it peculiar to specify a singular performer of the action. Even in a context where there is no apparent reason to assume the involvement of more than one individual, the use of the third person plural impersonal in Polish implies a collective representation of a perpetrator, as in the following example (15):

- (15) *Ukradli mi samochód!* (adapted from Siewierska 2008b: 16)
 stole.3PL.VIR me.DAT car.M.ACC.SG
 ‘My car was stolen.’
 (meaning: ‘The thieves have stolen my car.’)

Thus, a hypothetical continuation of the situation expressed by the impersonal clause in (15) containing a single individual as a possible causer, i.e., ‘a thief’, would be considered as semantically odd:

- (16) ? *Złodziej zdołał uciec.*
 thief.M.NOM.SG managed.3SG.M escape.INF
 ‘The thief managed to escape.’

That is not the case when used as a continuation after a sentence with the *-no/-to* construction, as illustrated in (17ab), respectively:

- (17) a. *Ukradziono mi samochód!*
 stole.IMPRS me.DAT car.M.ACC.SG
 ‘My car was stolen.’
 (meaning: ‘Somebody (a thief or a group of thieves) has stolen my car.’)
- b. *Złodziej zdołał uciec.*
 thief.M.NOM.SG managed.3SG.M escape.INF
 ‘The thief managed to escape.’

Due to the fact that both examined constructions, the third person plural impersonal and the *-no/-to* construction, are compatible with both agentive and less agentive verbs both of them can have non-specific and generic readings. Therefore, usually linguists assume and at the same time tend to overgeneralize, that the constructions in question can often be used interchangeably (cf. Siewierska 2008b). However, as evidenced by the examples from (12) to (17ab) there is an important difference pertaining to the cognitive representation of the possible referents between the two constructions. While the third person plural impersonal construction seems not to allow so readily a single referent interpretation, the *-no/-to* seems to be rather unproblematic in this regard. Additionally, it is important to highlight that the third person plural impersonal construction can be employed with verbs in all

tenses, unlike the *-no/-to* construction, which is restricted to the past. Furthermore, as pointed out by Siewierska (2008b: 22) in contrast to the *-no/-to* construction, the third person plural impersonal construction carries “a distinctly colloquial flavor” and is therefore predominantly used in spoken language. The *-no/-to* construction is described as a form which is often used in the press and scientific publications (cf. Skibicki 2007; Kuhnert 1998) and its usage in general is restricted to written texts (cf. Brajerski 1977). Getting back to the exclusion of individual interpretation by the Polish third person plural impersonal construction, it can be related to the fact that it can also be interpreted as a type of definite plural, as proposed by Malamud (2013) for the 3PL arbs in Russian and English. Malamud (2013) states for Russian and English constructions that they are not sensitive to quantificational variability, i.e., that the impersonal subjects of these constructions are not influenced by quantificational adverbs. She presents this for English with the following example (18) (Malamud 2013: 18). The Polish equivalent sentence is presented in (19):

(18) English:

In this department, they are usually proud of the dean.

(No Quantificational Variability Effect: the only reading is ‘Sometimes they are proud, sometimes they are not.’)

(19) Polish:

Na tym wydziale zwykle są dumni z dziekana.
 on this department usually are.3PL.VIR proud.VIR.NOM of dean.M.INS
 ‘In this department, they are usually proud of the dean.’

(No Quantificational Variability Effect: the only reading is ‘Sometimes they are proud, sometimes they are not.’)

The examples above show that adverbs of quantification do not change the interpretation of the implicit subjects in the third person plural impersonal constructions in English and Polish, but rather affect the main eventuality of the sentence, implying that there are situations where people from the department are sometimes proud of the dean and sometimes they are not. The use of temporal adverbs does not exert any quantificational variability effects on the implicit subject, specifying its components, as would be the case if the above sentences could be paraphrased with the help of the adverb *most*, meaning ‘the majority of people from the department’, like in the sentence *most people in this department are proud of the dean*. According to Ruda (2014), the interpretation of the implicit subject of the *-no/-to* construction can be influenced when used with different quantification adverbs, such as in the following two sentences (Ruda 2014: 217):

(20) a. *W X wieku często dożywano sześćdziesiątki.*
 in 10 century often lived.IMPRS 60
 ‘In the 10th century, [they] often lived to be 60.’

b. *W X wieku rzadko dożywano sześćdziesiątki.*
 in 10 century seldom lived.IMPRS 60
 ‘In the 10th century, [they] seldom lived to be 60.’

Thus, as observed by Ruda (2014) in the example (20a) the denotation of the implicit agent is influenced by the use of the adverb *często* ‘frequently’ which implies that ‘many people in the 10th century live to be 60’, whereas under the influence of *rzadko* ‘seldom’ the covert agent of the impersonal construction in (20b) can be understood as ‘few people in the 10th century lived to be 60’ (cf. Ruda 2014: 217). As pointed out by Ruda (2014), the sensitivity of the *-no/-to* construction to interpretational effects induced by quantificational adverbs bears resemblance to the behavior of indefinite nominal phrases, a proposition also made by Malamud (2013) regarding the German *man* construction. The similarity is justified also because, as noted by Ruda (2014), the *-no/-to* construction seems to contain solely the gender and number features, which, as she reasons, are also integral components of the structure constituting lexical NPs in Polish. For an illustration see the following examples (Ruda 2014: 214):

- (21) *Tu* *zawsze* *faworyzowano* *siebie* *samych/* **samego*.
 here always favoured.IMPRS self.ACC alone.ACC.VIR alone.INS.SG.M
 ‘Here [they] always favored themselves.’
- (22) *Nazywano* *siebie* *geniuszami/* **geniuszem*
 called.IMPRS self.ACC genius.PL.VIR.INS genius.M.INS.SG
 ‘They called themselves geniuses.’

Both the examples (21) and (22) show a plural marking on the adjectival element *sami* in accusative (*samych* ‘alone’) in (21) and the predicative noun *geniusze* ‘geniuses’ in instrumental *geniuszami* in (22). A singular marking on these elements would be ungrammatical and subsequently ruled out, which means that the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* predicates triggers only a (masculine) plural agreement (VIR).

The morphological form of both constructions can also have a share at influencing the interpretation of the implicit agent, as suggested by Siewierska (2008b). In the case of the Polish third person plural impersonal construction belonging to the pronominal group, the verb always appears in the third person plural, whereas the *-no/-to* construction carries a marking typical for the third person singular neuter in the past or a neuter singular noun (-o). Through its morphological form, exhibiting inflectional features characteristic of a plural subject, the *-no/-to* construction is more ambiguous, which may affect its varied usage and interpretation. Being overtly neutral with regard to number and person appears to be a significant factor in directing attention towards the event or activity described by the main verb.

With regard to agentless passives, as shown in example (7), repeated below:

- (23) *Dom* *został* *zburzony*
 house.M.NOM.SG became.3SG.M destroy.PTCP.SG.M
 ‘A house was destroyed.’

Siewierska (2008b) notes that compared to other types of verbal impersonals, they have the broadest range of reference. It arises from the distinction that, unlike other impersonal constructions in this category, they lack any implicit agent in their structure, and there is no morphological or syntactical specification indicating one. What follows is that these forms are also not restricted to any person or number and, as noted by Siewierska (2008b), when used in a non-specific manner, they can

refer to a broad range of individuals, encompassing anyone and everyone, indicating people in a general sense. This could include a loosely defined group that may or may not include the speaker, or even one or more unspecified individuals. Moreover, agentless passives are not limited to human interpretation and can also denote events or actions caused by natural forces or phenomena, inanimate objects or animals. A more thorough examination of the fundamental differences in morphosyntactic features between passive constructions and the *-no/-to* construction will be presented in Section 2.4.2 of this chapter.

According to Siewierska (1988), the Polish reflexive impersonal construction, such as the one in example (8), can be perceived as almost equivalent to German *man*, French *on* or English *one* sentences. The main difference between the Polish reflexive impersonal and the aforementioned German, French and English constructions is that the former has an implicit human agent which is inherent in their structure. The subject is in this case indicated by the reflexive marker *się* ‘oneself’. The construction in question comprises a verb and a reflexive pronoun. The verb has a default invariable form (without agreement) which is the third person singular in present and future and third person singular neuter in the past (with the suffix *-o*). Similarly to *man*-type constructions, as noted by Siewierska (1988) the covert human agent of the Polish reflexive construction can be interpreted as indeterminate (everyone or anyone), a vaguely specified collective or an individual determined by the context. The covert agent of the reflexive impersonal can thus receive a specific or definite interpretation provided by the context. Siewierska (2008b) points out that while the possible referents for third person plural impersonals typically involve third persons plural, active reflexive impersonals in Slavic languages often denote people in general, notably including the speaker and potentially the addressee. Similarly to the third person plural impersonal construction, the Polish reflexive impersonal can only denote actions and activities performed by humans. The default human interpretation is also applied to predicates that denote non-human actions, as demonstrated in the following example (24):

- (24) *Gniazda buduje się wysoko.* (Kibort 2004: 292)
 nests.ACC build.3SG REFL high-up
 ‘One builds nests high up.’

However, there are exceptional cases where, unlike the *-no/-to* construction, as demonstrated by Kibort (2004: 292), the default human interpretation of the covert agent in the reflexive impersonal can be reconsidered in the presence of an additional potential animate referent in the context:

- (25) *Gdy się jest bocianem, gniazdo buduje się wysoko*
 when REFL is stork.M.INS nest.N.ACC build.3SG REFL high-up
 ‘When one is a stork, one (usually) builds the nest high up.’

However, it is worth noting that the above example can be interpreted as attributing certain characteristics to the animal as a representative of its species by humans, thus resulting in its personification, which enables the usage of the reflexive impersonal construction in this case. The above example shows that the Polish reflexive

construction exhibits similar characteristics to the German *man* construction, as seen in the example sentence below (Malamud 2013: 22):

- (26) *Wenn man klug ist, ist man gewöhnlich stolz*
 ‘If a person is smart, he/she is usually proud.’

Based on the examples provided, it can be observed that similarly to the *man* construction in German, the implicit subject of the Polish reflexive construction in the following sentence is anaphoric and functions as a definite with respect to the implicit subject in the preceding sentence, which can be compared to an indefinite in this position. By analogy to the analysis presented in Malamud (2013) for German *man*, it can be assumed, that the conditional sentence in the Polish example (25) functions as a restrictor for the denotation of the generic implicit subject and it receives its identification from the content of the predicative noun. Although there is no overt adverb in the Polish sentence, the implicit subject can receive universal force and mean ‘every stork’. Following the proposal by Rivero and Sheppard (2003), conditional sentences incorporate a phonologically null quantification adverb that carries universal or generic meaning, similar to *zawsze*, which means ‘always’. Consequently, the implicit agents of the reflexive constructions in (25) are bound by the covert quantification adverb. In the German sentence, the pronoun *man* is bound in the antecedent and subsequent clauses simultaneously by the quantificational adverb *gewöhnlich*, which makes the coreferential reading possible, as suggested in Malamud (2013: 26) for this case. A similar observation can be made regarding the *-no/-to* construction, where both implicit agents are bound by the same covert adverb of quantification (‘usually’) and are also understood as belonging to the same group of people (‘teachers’). For these reasons, they are interpreted as coreferential:

- (27) *Gdy pracowano jako nauczyciele, uczono greki*
 when worked.IMPRS as teachers.VIR.NOM taught.IMPRS Greek.F.ACC
i łaciny.
 and Latin.F.ACC

‘When [they] worked as teachers, [they] (usually) taught Greek and Latin.’

Another distinction from the *-no/-to* construction, as illustrated by Kibort (2004), is that the reflexive impersonal, when associated with a particular agent or experiencer, can be applied in reference to the first person singular or plural. As evidenced by (28), it can exhibit any number and person markers in accordance with the implicit agent’s referent. Consider the following example (28) as opposed to (29) (Kibort 2004: 288):

- (28) *Było się kiedyś szczęśliwą/ szczęśliwym/ szczęśliwymi*
 was.3SG.N REFL once happy.INS.F/ happy.INS.M/ happy.INS.VIR
 ‘Once one (I) (we) was (were) happy.’

- (29) *Wyglądano na *zmęczoną/ *zmęczonego/ *zmęczone/ zmęczonych*
 looked.IMPRS to *tired.ACC.F/ *tired.ACC.M/ *happy.ACC.NVIR/ happy.ACC.VIR
 ‘[They] looked happy.’

As visible from the sentence in (29), expressions that are inflectionally other than masculine plural (generic gender) are incompatible with the *-no/-to* construction. For this reason, scholars argue (cf. Ruda 2014; Krzek 2010) that the implicit subject in the *-no/-to* construction lacks person specification but carries the features of number [+plural] and gender [+masculine]. Based on the different behavior of the constructions in combination with predicative complements, it can be observed, similarly to Krzek (2010), that unlike the covert subject of the *-no/-to* construction, which possesses [+plural] and [+masculine] phi-features, the reflexive construction lacks any because, as already stated above, its covert subject can adjust its inflectional features to any possible referent provided by the context.

According to Siewierska (2008b), reflexive impersonal constructions are rarely used to denote a single individual. However, when they do, she points out that the referred individual is necessarily the speaker in declarative sentences (30) and the addressee in questions (31), as illustrated in the following examples:

(30) *Proszę nie przerywać. Mówi się.* (Siewierska 2008b: 21)
 please not interrupt.INF speak.3SG REFL
 ‘Please don’t interrupt. One is (I am) speaking.’

(31) *Co się robiło na przerwach?* (Siewierska 2008b: 19)
 what REFL did.3SG.N on breaks?
 ‘What did you use to do during the break?’

A similar application of the *-no/-to* construction, referring to the speaker or addressee, is generally not feasible. However, there are certain contexts where the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* form can be identified with the speaker or the addressee, as illustrated below:

(32) *Mówiono o tym wyżej* (Siewierska 1988: 284)
 discussed.IMPRS about this above
 ‘[One] discussed this above.’
 (meaning: ‘As I said above.’) (Kibort 2004: 285)

(33) *Proszę pani, ja się nie awanturuję, tylko proszę, żeby mi
 please madam, I REFL NEG brawl.1SG only ask.1SG COMPL me.DAT
 wydano zaświadczenie.*
 issued.IMPRS certificate.N.ACC

‘Madam, I am not brawling but only asking that [one] would issue the certificate to me.’ (meaning: ‘... I am only asking you to issue the certificate to me’, said by a customer to an uncooperative clerk)

(34) *Zrozumiano?!* (Kibort 2004: 285)
 understood.IMPRS
 ‘Has [one] understood?!’
 (meaning: ‘Have you understood?!/Is it clear?!’)

The above examples illustrate situations related to a specific formality determined by social practices, such as the author’s comment in an academic dissertation in

(32), communication with authorities in an office (33), or contact between an angry superior or higher-ranking military officer and a subordinate employee or soldier (34). In all of these cases, the speaker either perceives themselves as belonging to a specific group and as its member shares certain characteristics inherent to it, as in example (32), or treats their interlocutor as a member of a specific organization, its representative. The use of the *-no/-to* construction thus allows, in such contexts, for the presentation of oneself as formally belonging to a larger group with characteristic, non-private properties, or for delivering messages from the perspective of fulfilling a specific role. The literature notes that using this form in reference to the first and second person is stylistically marked, often indicating secrecy, modesty, or an expressive tone (see in Jocz et al. 2022). In light of the information just presented, it should be noted that, as observed by Krzek (2015), the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction is not logophoric; it does not refer back to the reporting speaker or the perspectival center of an utterance, as shown in (35):

- (35) **Maria i Paweł powiedzieli, że oglądano*
 [Maria and Paweł]_i said.3PL.VIR that *pro*_{j/*i} watched.IMPRS
te filmy często
 these movies often
 ‘(Intended) Maria and Paweł said that they watched these movies often.’
 (glossing from Krzek 2015: 28)

The same sentence seems to be acceptable if the implicit agent of the reflexive construction appears as a logophoric pronoun, as is the case in the following example:

- (36) *Maria i Paweł powiedzieli, że oglądało się*
 [Maria and Paweł]_i said.3PL.VIR that *pro*_i watched.3SG.N REFL
te filmy często
 these movies often
 ‘(Intended) Maria and Paweł said that they watched these movies often.’

It seems that, similar to the Polish reflexive impersonal, the German pronoun *man* can also exhibit logophoric features when referring back to a larger group of people of which the reporting speaker is a part:

- (37) *Katharina war auf einer Klassenfahrt und sagte, dass man da*
 Katharina_i was on a class trip_i and said COMPL man_i there
viele Filme geguckt hat.
 many movies watched has
 ‘Katharina was on a class trip and said that they watched many movies there.’

As noted by Kibort (2004), both discussed Polish constructions, the reflexive impersonal and the *-no/-to* form, share many syntactical and morphological features as they are both active constructions and applicable with both unergative and unaccusative verbs. Similar to the *-no/-to* construction, the reflexive impersonal maintains the structural accusative in transitive predicates and does not allow for an overt

expression of a subject in nominative (38) or the addition of an agentive ‘by’-phrase (39) (Kibort 2004: 52):

(38) **Przyjemnie się uczniowie tańczyło.*
 pleasantly REFL pupils.VIR.NOM danced.3SG.N
 ‘(Intended) Pupils danced with pleasure.’

(39) **Przyjemnie się tańczyło przez uczniów.*
 pleasantly REFL danced.3SG.N by pupils
 ‘(Intended) The dancing was pleasant by pupils.’

However, contrary to the *-no/-to* construction the reflexive impersonal allows for an overt expression of the implicit agent but only as a nominal phrase marked with dative case, such as demonstrated in (40) and (41):

(40) *No i tak mi się pracowało.* (Kibort 2004: 289)
 well and so me.DAT REFL worked.3SG.N
 ‘And so one/I was working.’

(41) *Przyjemnie się uczniom tańczyło.* (Kibort 2004: 54)
 pleasantly REFL pupils.VIR.DAT danced.3SG.N
 ‘Pupils danced with pleasure.’

As noticed by Kibort (2004), the covert agent of the reflexive construction is resurfaced in the above examples (40) and (41) but as a bearer of a different semantic role, namely a beneficiary, which in Dowty terms (1991) is still an agent but a less agentive one. Kibort (2004) states that the dative in Polish is the canonical grammatical function of a non-derived beneficiary. As highlighted by Kibort (2004), the participant occupying this position in these constructions is perceived as the real causer of the event, regardless of whether it was initially more or less agentive. As Kibort (2004) notes, the participant mapped onto this position may at the same time be presented as an unintentional causer. She points out that “the original causer mapped onto the dative does not cease to possess its original properties (e.g. sentience), but it is simply portrayed from a different semantic perspective” (Kibort 2004: 55). According to Rivero and Sheppard (2003), the construction presented in (40) and (41) is known as *an involuntary agent construction* in Polish grammar. The nominal phrase marked with the dative case in these clauses is therefore regarded as an agent, albeit an involuntary one, who must still have performed the action described by the main verb.

Similarly to the *-no/-to* construction, the covert agent of the reflexive impersonal can be influenced by quantificational adverbs, as shown by Rivero and Sheppard (2003: 124):

(42) *Jeśli się gra źle, zawsze się przegrywa.*
 if REFL play.3SG badly, always REFL loose.3SG
 ‘If one plays poorly, one always loses.’
 (meaning: ‘Everybody who plays poorly loses.’)

- (43) *Jeśli się gra źle, zazwyczaj się przegrywa.*
 if REFL play.3SG badly, usually REFL loose.3SG
 ‘If one plays poorly, one usually loses.’
 (meaning: ‘Many people who play poorly lose.’)

As can be seen in the above examples, under the influence of the adverbs *zawsze* and *zazwyczaj* the implicit agents of the reflexive constructions receive the interpretation of ‘everybody’ and ‘many people’, respectively. Rivero and Sheppard (2003: 126) suggest that this correlation shares similarities with indefinite noun phrases in terms of semantics because “their quantificational force varies and seems to be determined by Q-adverbs that can be overt or null”, which also applies to the *-no/-to* construction in clauses (20)ab and (27). They notice, however, that in order to antecede itself, the reflexive marker of the reflexive construction should be treated as an indefinite pronoun rather than an indefinite noun phrase. Being an indefinite pronoun, as opposed to indefinite NP, following the argumentation by Rivero and Sheppard (2003), the reflexive *się* is not obliged to fulfill the novelty condition proposed by Heim (1988) and does not have to introduce new participants into discourse. Therefore, the two reflexive pronouns in (42) and (43) refer to the same group of people and are coreferential to each other. As far as inflectional properties of the implicit agent of the Polish reflexive impersonal construction are concerned, illustrated in (28), Rivero and Sheppard (2003) make an interesting observation. They point out that the lack of the phi-features of the covert subject in case of this construction imposes restrictions on its binding and antecedence relations, as it can’t serve as an antecedent for null subjects or overt NPs. “The indefinite lacks phi-features, so cannot antecede expressions with those features, including little pro and overt NPs that mean ‘people’” (Rivero and Sheppard 2003: 127). For the illustration they give the following example (ibid.):

- (44) **Jeśli się gra źle, (pro) przegrywa.*
 if REFL play.3SG badly, loose.3SG
 ‘If one plays poorly, one loses.’

The implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction, as presented in (29), is partially specified for phi-features, as it contains the features [+plural] and [+masculine]. How does this influence its binding relations? Let us consider the following two examples:

- (45) ?*Jeśli grano źle, (pro) przegrywali.*
 if played.IMPRS badly, lost.3PL.VIR
 ‘If [they] played poorly, (they) would lost.’

- (46) *Gdy uczono w szkole wieczorowej, nauczyciele*
 when taught.IMPRS in school nightly teachers.VIR.NOM
byli zmęczeni.
 were.3PL.VIR tired.VIR.NOM

‘When [they] taught at the evening school, teachers were tired.’

- (47) *Gdy się uczyło w szkole wieczorowej, nauczyciele*
 if REFL teach.3SG.N in school nightly teachers.VIR.NOM
byli zmęczeni.
 were.3PL.VIR tired.VIR.NOM

‘When one was studying at evening school, the teachers were tired.’

The implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction in (45) cannot serve as the antecedent for the null subject in the subsequent clause. Interpreting it this way would render the sentence semantically incorrect. However, the sentence is semantically accurate if it means ‘If [they] played poorly (e.g. referring to a sports team), they would lose’ meaning a group of people who placed a bet (put money on a certain team). The sentence in (46) can imply that the teachers were the ones doing the teaching in the evening school, and they were tired as a result. However, it could also mean that *nauczyciele* ‘teachers’ were not necessarily the ones conducting the teaching. Therefore, the teachers might have been tired due to some other reason, not necessarily from teaching and some other group of people might have conducted the teaching. The clause in (47) suggests a broader context where, while people or students were studying or learning in the evening school, the teachers were tired. Based on my native understanding, in this case, a coreferential interpretation between the covert subject in the first sentence and the plural noun *nauczyciele* in the subsequent clause is not applicable.

In summary, we can state that the *-no/-to* construction, similar to the Polish reflexive impersonal, can be identified as an indefinite pronoun. Its occurrences in antecedent and consequent clauses can be bound by adverbs of quantification and are not subject to the novelty condition. Although the *-no/-to* form possesses some phi-features such as [+number] and [+gender], its binding properties fail to establish a coreferential relation to entities with those features (such as plural NPs) within a single sentence. The fact that the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction can be influenced by adverbs of quantification suggests that the construction entails a variable which can be bound by external operators. Furthermore, the *-no/-to* construction denotes a human activity which can be ‘labeled’ on potential plural as well as singular cognitive referents. This is also enabled by its unusual, neutralized form, which does not have a dedicated morphology overtly resembling its implicit plural masculine subject. This property of the construction might imply that its verbal semantic component, the event, takes a central role in its interpretation.

The most important features (parameters) of the *-no/-to* construction in comparison to other relevant Polish impersonal constructions are summarized and listed in Table 1, located on the subsequent page.

Table 1: Features of the Polish Human Impersonals² in Comparison

Parameters	<i>-no/-to construction</i>	<i>3PL impersonal</i>	<i>reflexive impersonal</i>
Inclusion of the speaker and addressee	no; possible only pragmatically (both)	no; possible pragmatically (only the speaker)	yes; the speaker and the addressee
Single interpretation of the implicit agent	yes	rather not; semantically odd	only as a speaker or addressee
Only human interpretation of the implicit agent	yes	yes	yes
Allows QVE	yes	no	yes
Possession of phi-features	partially; gender [M], number [PL],	partially; gender [M], number [PL], and case [NOM] ³	no
Dedicated morphology to semantic meaning of the implicit agent	arbitrary no, it is an ambiguous form.	arbitrary yes; 3PL inflection on the verb	generic yes; reflexive pronoun <i>się</i>
Tense restriction	yes; past tense only	no	no
Logophoric	no	yes	partially
Allows overt expression of implicit agent	no	yes; in nominative	yes; only in dative
Spoken and written language	mostly in written texts	mostly in spoken language	both

The following two sections (2.2 and 2.3) provide a further description of the *-no/-to* construction in terms of its morphology and lexicosemantic properties. The morphological part focuses on interpreting the *-no/-to* suffix (compared to other relevant impersonal constructions), which misleadingly resembles the default 3SG.N agreement. The subsequent Section 2.3 specifically addresses the constraints on the formation of the construction under investigation, resulting from the interplay between the specific plurality of the implicit agent and the event described by the given form of the lexical verb.

² This notion refers to the term “human impersonal pronouns” proposed by Gast and van der Auwera (2003: 123).

³ As observed by Jocz et al. (2022: 103), the implicit agent of the third person plural impersonal agrees with predicative adjectives in nominative, and it is possible to insert an arbitrary overt pronoun in the sentence: *Mieszkałam przez 2 lata w Korei. Jak oni tam ciężko pracują!* ‘I lived in Korea for 2 years. How hard they work there!’.

2.2 Morphological Features of the *-no/-to* Construction

The investigated *-no/-to* construction is presented in the following two examples, formed from a perfective and an imperfective verb, respectively:

- (48) *Wybi-to* *szyb-ę* (Saloni 1976: 21)
break.PFV-PST.IMPRS window.F-ACC.SG
‘[They] broke the window.’
- (49) *Przynoszo-no* *pacjentom* *kwiat-y.* (Ruda 2014: 204)
bring.IPFV-PST.IMPRS patients.DAT.VIR flower-NVIR.ACC
‘[They] brought/kept bringing flowers to the patients.’

In both of the examples mentioned above, neither clause has an overtly expressed grammatical subject. The verb has an invariable, non-agreeing form and is followed by a direct object in accusative (48) and indirect object in dative (49), depending on the valency of the verb. The *-no/-to* form is composed of a verbal stem along with the *-no/-to* suffix and it always refers to the past tense. As far as morphological features of this construction are concerned, the linguistic analyses focused specifically on the *-no/-to* suffix, which, as will be shown shortly, when looked upon synchronically, defies a clear analysis and can be interpreted as indicating different morphological phenomena. In the course of this section, various interpretations of the *-no/-to* suffix will be presented based on the works of Polish linguists, particularly Siewierska (1988), Kibort (2004), Rudnicka-Mosiądz (2002), Ruda (2014), Jabłońska (2007), and Krzek (2014), each of whom offers different perspectives on this issue. Correspondingly, Rudnicka-Mosiądz (2002: 2) points out that the *-no/-to* suffix has been and can be analyzed as one (cf. Kibort 2004, Siewierska 1988, Lavine 2005, 2013, 2017) or two morphemes (cf. Ruda 2014): *-n/t-* and *-o*, respectively.

There is no clear statement with regard to the compositional characteristics of the *-no/-to* suffix in the investigated Polish grammar books. According to Bartnicka et al. (2004), the *-no/-to* construction is formed with the help of the derivational grammatical suffixes *-n/-t/-on-* and the neuter singular gender ending *-o*. Thus, it presupposes that the *-no/-to* suffix consists of two morphemes. Bartnicka et al. (2004) indicate that the formation of the construction in question is conducted similarly to the formation of the adjectival passive participle. According to her, the different suffixes (*-no*, *-to*, *-ono*) are attached to the stem (different base forms) of the adjectival passive participle and their occurrence in the construction depends on the phonetic structure of the infinitive stem of the given verb. Bartnicka et al. (2004: 371) describe the formation of the construction as follows:

- *-no* occurs with infinitive stems ending in *-a-* or *-e-*, such as *pisać* ‘to write’ → *pisano* ‘[they] wrote’ or *rozumieć* ‘to understand’ → *rozumiano* ‘[they] understood’.
- *-to* occurs with infinitive stems that end in a vowel followed by a nasal, such as *kryć* ‘to hide’ → *kryto* ‘[they] hid’ or *moknąć* ‘to get wet’ → *moknięto* ‘[they] got wet’.
- *-ono* occurs with closed infinitive stems, such as *rozpalić* ‘to light’ → *rozpalono* ‘[they] lighted’ or *wypiec* ‘to bake’ → *wypieczono* ‘[they] baked’.

In a similar vein, Skibicki (2007) states that the *-no/-to* forms are formed in the same way as the adjectival passive participle⁴; however, unlike the adjectival passive participle, they can also be formed from intransitive verbs and may retain the reflexive pronoun *się*. These formation properties of the *-no/-to* construction and the fact that it retains an overt object in accusative while containing the *-n/t-* morpheme clearly show that, as observed by Ruda (2014), the *-n/t-* stem does not impose a canonical passive interpretation and its occurrence is not restricted to transitive verbs. Correspondingly, Ruda (2014: 222) observes that the *-n/t-* stem occurs also in resultative and resultative-like adjectives derived from perfective intransitive verbs, such as for example: *zaginio-n-y_{n/t-SG.M}* ‘lost’ and *uśmiechnię-t-y_{n/t-SG.M}* ‘smiling’ which in their basal form are not passivized forms.

Since the *-n/t-* morpheme also appears in the past (passive) participle, Rudnicka-Mosiądz (2012), from a Construction Grammar perspective, associates the specific past time reference of the *-no/-to* construction with the presence of the *-n/t-* morpheme. She argues that this morpheme inherently includes a specific time reference in its specification. However, as observed by Kibort (2004), the participles formed with the *-n/t-* stem do not indicate past tense and therefore the name *past passive participle* is misleading in this case. She observes that the *-n/t-* suffix is part of deverbal adjectives which are used as attributive adjectives with resultative meaning, such as e.g. *ukradziony list* ‘a/the stolen letter’. The resultative adjectives with the *-n/t-* stem are then used in passive constructions as a part of the verb compound together with the auxiliary ‘to be’ and receive their past meaning in this setting depending on the time reference expressed by the main predicate. Moreover, Kibort (2004) points out that the *-n/t-* suffix has originated from the infinitival stem, as illustrated above with the description of the formation of the construction based on Bartnicka et al (2004).

Skibicki (2007) points out that the difference between the two forms—the *-no/-to* construction and the passive participles—is historically conditioned. The *-no/-to* forms used to be passive participles, and unlike today’s adjectival passive participles, which endings inflect for each gender, they contain the former substantival neuter ending *-o*, which does not inflect. In a similar vein, Siewierska (1988: 272) claims that the *-no/-to* form is the former singular nominal neuter passive participle which has been subsequently reanalyzed and became “fixed non-declinable form with a specialized impersonal function”. Kibort (2004) who also opts for an analysis of the *-no/-to* form as a one morpheme, claims that it cannot be considered to be a part of the inflectional paradigm of modern Polish. This standpoint is shared in the present work, where the *-no/-to* suffix is perceived as a fossilized formation used to

⁴ There are two types of adjectival participles in Polish: active and passive. Swan (2002: 299) states that the active adjectival participle is formed by adding *-c-* plus adjective endings to the third person plural present form of imperfective verbs, e.g. *czytający/-a/-e* ‘reading’. According to Skibicki (2007: 358), the adjectival passive participle is formed with the suffixes *-ny*, *-ony*, and *-ty*. Depending on the suffix, there are different base forms for the formation of participles, here is the abbreviated representation: the third person singular preterite masculine for the suffix *-ny* (*-na*, *-ne*; *-ni*, *-ne*), the third person plural present and second person singular present (depending on infinitive endings) for the suffix *-ony* (*-ona*, *-one*; *-eni*, *-one*), or the infinitive or third person singular preterite for the suffix *-ty* (*-ta*, *-te*; *-ci*, *-te*).

denote actions and events performed by an unspecified human agent in the past. Its specific past time reference is historically conditioned (cf. Brajerski 1977), being an inherited feature that has very old roots. A more detailed description of the historical development of the construction under investigation will be provided in the Chapter 3.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that there is an inconsistency and different treatments in the literature with regard to the status of the morpheme *-o*, as observed by Krzek (2015) and Rudnicka-Mosiądz (2002). Thus, there are accounts which describe it, for instance, as a nominal inflection marker (*biodr-o* ‘hip’, *koł-o* ‘wheel’) (Jabłońska 2007: 249) or, more commonly, as a default agreement marker (Rudnicka-Mosiądz 2002, Śpiewak 2000, Krzek 2014, Ruda 2014), as it seems to mark the third person singular neuter agreement. The nominal analysis of Jabłońska (2007), as she herself admits, encounters serious difficulties as the *-no/-to* construction shows clear signs of being rather a verbal category. Apart from the most crucial property, namely that the construction assigns the structural accusative to the direct object of the clause, Jabłońska (2007) points to two other features that testify to the verbal nature of the formation in question. As an exemplification she gives the following sentences (Jabłońska 2007: 264):

- (50) *Wiem, że lubiano Marka.*
 know.1SG COMP liked.IMPRS Marek.ACC
 ‘I know that Marek was liked.’
- (51) *Zrobiono by to gdyby umiano.*
 made.IMPRS COND this if knew_how.IMPRS
 ‘[They] would do it if [they] would know how.’

Regarding the sentence in (50) she points out that the complementizer requires a finite verb in the subordinated clause, and there is no other element that could fulfill this role besides the *-no/-to* construction. The other proof of verbality of the *-no/-to* construction can be derived from the subsequent example (51), where the *-no/-to* construction is followed by the conditional/subjunctive particle *by*. Jabłońska (2007) states that the mere occurrence of the particle *by* in the *-no/-to* construction is nothing special, as this particle also occurs with other parts of speech (such as adjectives). However, she emphasizes that the presence of the particle *by* in the sentence foreshadows that a verb will appear somewhere in the later part of the clause. In example (51), the anticipated verb form is the *-no/-to* construction, *umiano*.

The following briefly addresses the default 3SG.N agreement in Polish to show that this is a false interpretation of the *-o* morpheme in the *-no/-to* suffix. One case of the default third person singular neuter agreement is shown by Kibort (2004: 264) with the following example:

- (52) *Był-o planowane wyjechać.*
 was-3SG.N plan.PTCP.SG.N leave.INF
 ‘It has been planned to leave/there has been planning to leave.’

The default third person singular neuter agreement is employed as a strategy when there is either no surface subject in the structure of the sentence or when the sub-

ject's gender and number are unspecified. This is due to the fact that all nouns in Polish are marked for grammatical gender. Normally, in Polish there is an agreement between the syntactic subjects and verbs with regard to person, gender and number. In the case of the clause presented in (52) there is no possibility to establish a proper subject-verb agreement because of "inadequate morphosyntactic properties of the subject" (Kibort 2011: 2). The non-agreeing⁵ subject of the personal passive sentence is here the infinitive *wyjechać*, which does not have any person, number and gender features. In such cases the predicate takes on the default 3SG.N marking. The other categories of sentences which trigger the 3SG.N marking are clauses which do not have any syntactic subject in their sentence structure. Following Kibort (2004), these types of sentences are illustrated below with the examples of an impersonal passive and reflexive impersonal constructions, respectively:

(53) *Tutaj był-o tańczone.*
 here was-3SG.N dance.PTCP.SG.N
 'There was dancing here./The dancing was done here.'

(54) *Był-o się w Warszawie, to się wie jak się*
 was-3SG.N REFL in Warsaw so REFL know.3SG how REFL
takie sprawy załatwia.
 such.NVIR.ACC matter.NVIR.ACC sort.3SG
 'One has been to Warsaw, so one knows how to sort out such matters.'

The impersonal passive construction from the example (53) lacks a subject on the surface of its structure as it is a construction which in Polish is formed from intransitive verbs which do not have objects within their core arguments. Consequently, there is no entity which can be promoted to a subject and the semantic subject vs. the agent of the verb was demoted as a result of passivization. The lack of the surface subject triggers here the default 3SG.N agreement on the predicate. The impersonal reflexive construction from the example (54) is an active construction, as already discussed in the previous Section 2.1, and has an implicit subject in its structure which is active syntactically (it exerts binding and control, cf. Kibort 2004). Nevertheless, as shown in the previous section, the implicit subject of the reflexive impersonal does not contain any phi-features (person, gender, number, case), and as a consequence the (null) inflectional properties of the implicit subject cannot be recognized as such on the surface of the clause which leads to the establishment of the default agreement with the verb. Krzek (2014) proposes the same solution for the *-no/-to* construction, i.e., that it bears the default third person singular neuter agreement due to the absence of the representation of its phi-features ([+masculine], [+plural]) on the verb form. She further proposes that the *-o* morpheme of the *-no/-to* suffix could be analyzed as a part of the larger morpheme *-to* which is a third person singular neuter morph attached to verbs in the past tense. However, as she

⁵ According to Kibort (2004: 78), the 3SG.N agreement is also used in Polish with non-agreeing subjects such as certain quantifier phrases, clausal subjects, certain indeclinable subjects, acronyms and foreign place names, which will not be further discussed because it would exceed the thematic scope of this work.

points out, this would only be one part (-o) of the morph (-to) that would constitute the -no/-to form, since such combinations as *-nł(o) (due to the morphophonetic limitations) or -tło (which appears in Polish as a separate word meaning ‘background’ and would be plausible as a cluster) do not occur in the construction. In a similar vein, Ruda (2014) also sees the -o morpheme as the same morpheme which is part of the past tense *l*-participle. She bolsters her argument with the observation that the -no/-to construction and the *l*-participle occur in nearly identical contexts. The only exception is future time reference in the imperfective, where the use of the *l*-participle is optional, and the infinitive can be used instead. She substantiates her observation with the following examples (Ruda 2014: 224) assumes that -no/-to consists of two morphemes: -n/t- and -o, which is why the examples below have different glossing):

- (55) a. *Dawno temu pada-ł-o.*
 long ago rain-*l*-SG.N
 ‘A long time ago it rained.’
- b. *Teraz pada.*
 now rain.3SG
 ‘It is raining now.’
- c. *W przyszłości będzie pada-ł-o/padać.*
 in future be.FUT.3SG rain-*l*-SG.N/rain.INF
 ‘It will rain in the future.’
- (56) a. *Dawno temu używa-n-o pergaminu.*
 long ago use-*n/t*-SG.N parchment.GEN
 ‘A long time ago [they] used parchment.’
- b. * *Teraz używa-n-o pergaminu.*
 now use-*n/t*-SG.N parchment.GEN
 ‘Now [they] are using parchment.’
- c. * *W przyszłości (będzie) używa-n-o pergaminu.*
 in future be.FUT.3SG use-*n/t*-SG.N parchment.GEN
 ‘In the future [they] will use parchment.’

The examples in (55) exhibit declarative sentences with so-called weather constructions which according to Ruda (2014) are subjectless and as a result bear a default agreement on the verb. The -no/-to construction is restricted to the past and can be used only with past tense reference, rendering the present and future indicating clauses in (56bc) as ungrammatical. In addition to that, both the *l*-participle and the -no/-to construction occur in subjunctive (57)–(58) and conditional (59)–(60) moods, respectively (Ruda 2014: 225, original glossing):

- (57) *Babcia chcia-ła, żeby pada-ł-o.*
 grandma want-*l*.SG.F that.SUBJ rain-*l*-SG.N
 ‘(My) grandma wanted it to rain.’

- (58) *Babcia chcia-ł-a, żeby jej kupio-n-o motor.*
 grandma want-*l*-SG.F that.SUBJ her.DAT buy-*n/t*-SG.N motorcycle.ACC
 ‘(My) grandma wanted [them] to buy her a motorcycle.’
- (59) *Pada-ł-o by, gdyby wzros-ł-o ciśnienie.*
 rain-*l*-SG.N COND if.COND increase-*l*-SG.N pressure.N.NOM.SG
 ‘It would rain if the pressure increased.’
- (60) *Nie używa-n-o by dzisiaj papieru, gdyby nie uważa-n-o, że jest lepszy od pergaminu.*
 not use-*n/t*-SG.N COND today paper.GEN if.COND not
 consider-*n/t*-SG.N that is better than parchment.GEN
 ‘[They] wouldn’t use paper today, if [they] didn’t consider it better than parchment.’

As evident from the above examples, the *-no/-to* construction occurs in the same contexts, subjunctive and conditional, in the past as the verb forms with *l*-participle, which are marked with the singular neuter subject agreement. Given the functional and formal similarity (the *-o* morpheme), Ruda (2014) concludes that in the case of both constructions, they are essentially comprised of one and the same morpheme. She notes that in the *-no/-to* construction, it always appears as the default form, whereas on the *l*-participle, it can be either the default form (like on the weather verb *pada-ł-o* without the subject in (57)) or the agreeing singular neuter form (like between the verb *wzros-ł-o* and the singular neuter subject *ciśnieni-e* in (59)). However, this statement is inaccurate regarding the morphological structure of the weather constructions. Ruda (2014), describing these constructions, argues that they do not contain a subject and therefore describes their form as default verbal agreement. However, this conclusion is not valid, as will be presented below based on Kibort’s (2004) analysis, which also extends to the so-called adversity impersonals.

Siewierska (1988) has also observed that some impersonal constructions bear a superficial resemblance in terms of the form of their verbal structure to the *-no/-to* construction. It concerns the aforementioned weather verbs and adversity impersonals as shown in the following examples:

- (61) *Pad-a/ Świt-a.* (Kibort 2004: 296)
 rain-3SG/ dawn-3SG
 ‘It is raining/dawning.’
- (62) *Wyrzucił-o łódkę na brzeg.* (Kibort 2004: 305)
 threw-out.3SG.N boat.F.ACC.SG on shore
 ‘The boat was thrown out onto the shore.’

This kind of construction is used to describe situations which are caused either by natural or supernatural phenomena or they denote psychological or physical states. Therefore, they belong to the group of impersonal constructions, as established by Siewierska (2008b), which do not have any human agent in their conceptual struc-

ture. According to Slavic researchers, the above-mentioned constructions are perceived to possess a null or a covert subject (cf. Wierzbicka 1966, Siewierska 1988). However, as convincingly proposed by Kibort (2004), they should rather be regarded as cases of a pro-drop phenomenon, where the dropped subject is an indefinite pronoun *coś* ‘something’ which refers to non-humans. She underpins her claim by pointing out that the above-mentioned constructions allow the expression of the subject on the surface of their structure and argues that they are in fact personal constructions. She claims that the 3SG.N agreement on the verb is caused in this type of constructions by the agreement of the indefinite pronoun *coś* ‘something’ and the main predicate resulting in gender agreement which is not affected by the omission of the pronoun. She gives the following examples to illustrate her point of view (from Kibort 2004: 298):

- (63) *Padalo.* ~ *Deszcz* *padał.*
 rained.3SG.N rain.M.NOM.SG rained.3SG.M
- (64) *Świta.* ~ *Poranek* *świta.*
 dawn.3SG morning.M.NOM.SG dawn.3SG

With regard to the above given examples Kibort (2004) states that despite the fact that both nouns *deszcz* ‘rain’ and *poranek* ‘morning’ are of masculine gender it is generally not possible in Polish to replace non-human causers with personal pronouns because otherwise the natural phenomena would be personalized. Thus, the following sentence containing weather verb and a personal pronoun (adjusted to the masculine inanimate subject *deszcz* ‘rain’) is semantically excluded:

- (65) #*On* *padał.*
 he.3SG.NOM rained.3SG.M
 ‘It [he= the rain] was raining.’

Therefore, as she argues, it is more accurate to perceive the weather formations as resulting from the ellipsis of the indefinite pronoun *coś* ‘something’. She further supports her claim with a broader observation that phenomena of undefined origin typically occur more readily with subjects, as illustrated in the following examples (Kibort 2004: 298):

- (66) a. *Pali się!* / *Pali się w kominku.*
 burns REFL / burns REFL in fireplace
 ‘Fire! / It is burning in the fireplace.’
- b. *Coś się pali.*
 something.N.NOM REFL burns
 ‘Something is burning’
- c. *Ogień / Węgiel się pali.*
 fire / coal.M.NOM REFL burns.
 ‘The fire/coal is burning.’

Kibort (2004) also highlights that the verbs in the weather impersonal constructions are not necessarily limited to being used exclusively in the third person singular

form. She states, that there are no morphosyntactic restrictions on these verbs that would prohibit them from appearing in the plural, as illustrated in the following example:

- (67) *Często padają tu ulewne deszcze.*
 often rain.3PL here torrential.NVIR.NOM rains.NVIR.NOM
 ‘Torrential rains often rain here.’

With regard to the adversity impersonals, such as the clause in the example (62), repeated in (68), Kibort (2004) gives a similar explanation for the occurrence of the 3SG.N agreement as in the case of weather impersonals. She claims that these formations are in fact also personal constructions and as such they are instances of a pro-drop phenomenon of the indefinite pronoun which she calls *pro*_{OINDEF} subject. Her main arguments resemble those of already discussed weather impersonals. Firstly, similar to the weather constructions, the semantic subject of the sentence can overtly occur in the structure, as in the example (69). Secondly, the verbs appearing in these constructions cannot co-occur with personal pronouns bearing gender markers indicating a nominal inanimate agent, as shown in (70):

- (68) *Wyrzucił-o łódkę na brzeg.*
 threw_out-3SG.N boat.F.ACC.SG on shore
 ‘The boat was thrown out onto the shore.’

- (69) *Prąd wyrzucił łódkę na brzeg.*
 current.M.NOM.SG threw_out.3SG.M boat.F.ACC.SG on shore
 ‘The current threw the boat out onto the shore.’

- (70) *#On wyrzucił łódkę na brzeg.*
 he.3SG.NOM threw_out.3SG.M boat.F.ACC on shore
 ‘It [he=the current] threw the boat out onto the shore.’

The arguments presented by Kibort (2004) suggest that adversity impersonals, like weather constructions, exemplify the ellipsis of the indefinite non-human pronoun *coś*, with their verbal forms agreeing with it.

Due to the implicit subject of the *-no/-to* construction being syntactically active and possessing specific phi features, its verb form does not align with the descriptions provided for the related verb forms of the impersonal passive and reflexive impersonal constructions. Additionally, it differs from the verb forms encountered in weather constructions and adversity impersonals, as it cannot co-occur with an overtly expressed subject, and its semantic subject solely denotes events caused by an unidentified human agent.

Interestingly, the *-no/-to* construction occurs in similar environments to the *l*-participle, which forms past tense verbs in Polish. However, the two constructions do not share the same morpheme, as inferred from Kibort’s (2004) analysis of the other impersonal constructions discussed, and the fact that the *l*-participle appears in verb formations that are personal constructions.

Therefore, following Siewierska (1988) and Kibort (2004), it can be concluded that the *-no/-to* suffix is a linguistic relic that diverges from the patterns of agree-

ment relations between subjects and verbs in contemporary Polish. Furthermore, the *-no/-to* marker can be identified as an affix (see Section 2.4.2) that indicates actions and events involving unspecified human agents. Its restriction to the past tense suggests a specialized function, juxtaposed with personal past tense forms.

2.3 Lexicosemantic Features of the *-no/-to* Construction

The most characteristic feature of the construction in question is that it lacks an explicitly expressed subject and that it cannot be joined either with a subject phrase in nominative (71) or with any other overtly expressed entity that could be directly understood as the agent of the clause. Consequently, the *-no/-to* construction does not allow the agentive prepositional *przez* ('by') phrase, in (72):

(71) **Janek wybito szybę.*
 Janek.NOM broke.IMPRS window.F.ACC.SG
 (Intended: 'Janek broke the window.')

(72) **Wybito szybę przez Janka.*
 broke.IMPRS window.F.ACC.SG by Janek.ACC
 (Intended: 'The window pane was broken by Janek.')

Just like this is the case with active sentences, the direct object in the *-no/-to* construction, under the influence of negation, transforms from accusative into genitive case, which is, as pointed out by Brajerski (1977), a feature typical of active predicates, in (73):

(73) *Nie wybito szyby.*
 NEG broke.IMPRS window_pane.F.GEN.SG
 '[They] didn't break the window pane.'

The *-no/-to* construction can be formed from both perfective verbs (e.g. *zrobiono* from *zrobić* 'to make'), that is verbal formations denoting a completed action, as well as imperfectives (e.g. *robiono* from *robić* 'to make'), indicating actions that were ongoing or continuous in the past. When it comes to the types of verbs that can be included in the examined construction, the range of possible verb classes is practically unlimited. The scrutinized construction can be formed from true reflexive verbs (e.g. *myto się* from *myć się* 'to wash oneself') and active verbs with reflexive makers (*śmiano się* from *śmiać się* 'to laugh'), which does not apply to formations of passive voice as in Polish they do not cooccur with reflexive pronouns. As observed by various researchers (cf. Cetnarowska 2000, Kibort 2004, Krzek 2010, Ruda 2014, Lavine 2005, 2013, 2017, Bunčić 2019), the modern *-no/-to* forms can be formed from transitive and intransitive verbs. Furthermore, they can be derived from unaccusative and unergative verbs. Both of these cases are displayed in (74) and (75), respectively (after Ruda 2014: 207):

(74) *Jeden nieudany ruch i spadano w przepaść.*
 one careless move.M.NOM.SG and fell.IMPRS in precipice
 'One careless move and they fell into the precipice.'

- (75) *Tańczono do rana.*
 danced.IMPRS till morning
 '[They] danced till morning.'

Formation of the *-no/-to* construction from both types of intransitive verbs, as seen in the examples provided above, is indeed possible, but it is also subject to certain limitations. Interestingly, as pointed out by Cetnarowska (2000), the *-no/-to* construction seems to be sensitive to the semantic characteristics associated with unaccusativity. She argues that the construction's sensitivity to semantic correlates of unaccusativity is exemplified by its tendency to exclude verbs that are both non-agentive and telic, see the list of verbs in (76), a characteristic often associated with unaccusative predicates (cf. Dowty 1991). Cetnarowska (2000) argues that together with the resultative adjective test⁶ the *-no/-to* construction can be used as a diagnostic for the intransitivity split⁷ (diagnostic enabling differentiation between unaccusative and unergative verbs) in Polish. In that connection she puts forth a hypothesis that the *-no/-to* construction does not allow unaccusative verbs but licenses unergative (and transitive) predicates. In doing so she refers to Perlmutter's (1978) assertion that the impersonal passive construction⁸ in Dutch does not allow unaccusative verbs, unlike unergative ones. Hence, Cetnarowska (2000) presents a list of semantic verb classes, displayed in (76), consisting of diverse verbs, which, according to her, are infelicitous (or marginally possible) in *-no/-to* predicates and to some degree overlap with the classes of verbs that allow the transformation into resultative adjectives (i.e., telic verbs and verbs with the feature 'directed change'). Atelic verbs, as she observes, such as *padać* 'to fall repeatedly' or *biegać* 'to run about', do not form resultative adjectives ending with *-ły* (**pada-ły, *biega-ły*). She

⁶ Centarowska (2000) postulates for Polish that the differentiation between unergatives and unaccusatives manifests in the possibility to create resultative adjectives with the ending in *-ły*, like e.g. *przybyły* 'arrived' (from *przybyć* 'to arrive'); *upadły* 'fallen' (from *upaść* 'to fall'); *umarły* 'dead' (from *umrzeć* 'to die') (Centarowska 2000: 3). She argues that this type of adjectives is possible only with unaccusatives. The test as such is based on a similar diagnostics implemented for Dutch, German and English proposed by Hoekstra (1984) with past participles. This kind of diagnostic proves the possibility whether the given past participles/verbs can be used before nouns in the function of adjectives. For German, Dutch, English and Greek that is only possible with unaccusatives but not with unergatives.

⁷ According to the Unaccusative Hypothesis, initially proposed in 1978 by Perlmutter, seemingly intransitive verbs can be divided into two distinct groups: *unergatives*, such as *dance*, *talk*, and *shout* in English, and *unaccusatives/ergatives*, which include verbs like *remain*, *arrive*, *faint*, and *fall*. Subjects of unaccusative verbs assume semantic roles similar to objects of transitive verbs, indicating participants undergoing a change of state or location, whereas subjects of unergatives act as agents (after Cetnarowska 2000: 1).

⁸ Cetnarowska (2000) admits that the applicability of the same explanation to the Polish data in this case is not straightforward. She notes that the impersonal *-no/-to* construction in Polish has a diachronic passive origin. However, as she states, synchronically, it functions as an active construction. Unlike its passive counterpart in Dutch or German, she continues, it cannot be modified by the agentive adjunct phrase *przez kogoś* 'by someone'. Nonetheless, Cetnarowska (2000) believes that the impersonal non-passive *-no/-to* construction in Polish seems to share a similar capacity with the impersonal passive constructions in Dutch or German to distinguish between unergative and unaccusative verbs.

struction (this applies¹⁰ to all verbs presented in (76)). In a similar vein, in terms of formations from unaccusative verbs within the discussed construction, Krzek (2010) observes that such verbs in *-no/-to* predicates are restricted to iterative imperfectives. Examples like *umierano* ‘died’, from *umierać*, iterative reading), *upadano* ‘fell’ (from *upadać*, iterative reading), and *dojrzewano* ‘ripened’ (from *dojrzewać*, iterative reading) are deemed acceptable. Conversely, the same examples formed from perfective verbs, such as **umarto* ‘died’ (from *umrzeć* perfective), **upadnięto*¹¹ ‘fell’ (from *upaść* perfective), and **dojrzano* ‘ripened’ (from *dojrzeć* perfective), are considered ungrammatical. However, as observed by Kibort (2004) in modern Polish, non-iterative and non-habitual unaccusative perfective predicates can indeed be used to form impersonal *-no/-to* predicates. Here is an example from Kibort (2004: 259):

- (78) *Zadrżano* *na wieść o* *niechybnej wojnie*.
 shuddered.PFV.IMPRS on news about imminent war
 ‘[They] shuddered at hearing the news of imminent war.’

According to Ruda (2014), due to the limitations in interpreting the impersonal subject, certain verbs pose more challenges in the *-no/-to* construction than others. She suggests that the acceptability of a particular *-no/-to* construction could depend on how informative the relevant sentences are, with the subject being interpreted as non-specific. The preference for the imperfective aspect (with iterative interpretation) in the *-no/-to* construction is attributed by her to its compatibility with an unbounded interpretation of an argument that is undergoing change of state, as opposed to the interpretation imposed by the perfective aspect. Based on her reasoning, it might be challenging to find a context where a *-no/-to* construction is formed from an unaccusative verb in the perfective. This difficulty arises because predicating a change of state in an episodic context seems to be more informative when the subject is specific. This observation elucidates why e.g. **umarto* ‘died’ (perfective) is deemed unacceptable, as the perfective aspect triggers an episodic reading of dying “which cannot be informatively predicated of an unspecified undergoer” (Ruda 2014: 210). Hence, as Ruda (2014) states, it appears that some constraints on the usage of the *-no/-to* construction result from the interplay between aspect semantics and the interpretation of arguments in Polish. Similarly, Lavine (2005) suggests that the tendency for the *-no/-to* construction to be formed with imperfective verbs having an iterative interpretation is probably linked to the possibility of a generic interpretation of the implicit subject of the examined construction. He illustrates that with the following example (Lavine 2005: 22):

- (79) **Jan* *długo* *szukał* *tej* *książki*.
 Jan.NOM long searched this book.F.GEN

¹⁰ This observation is based on my own native knowledge supported by NKJP corpus search (National Corpus of Polish).

¹¹ However, as exemplified by Cetnarowska (2000), this verb would actually be possible in the *-no/-to* construction: *?Upadnięto na kolana przed cesarzem* ‘[They] fell to their knees before the emperor’.

i wreszcie ją znalezioneo.
 and finally it.ACC found.PFV.IMPRS

‘(Intended) Jan searched for this book for a long time and finally found it.’

In the above sentence the implicit subject of the investigated construction (*znaleziono*) is not coreferential with the grammatical subject of the sentence *Jan* and as such the whole sentence is rendered ungrammatical. In this context the *-no/-to* predicate implies that there might be another group of people who was looking for the book independently from *Jan* but due to the coordination of the two sentences it enforces a contradictory interpretation as these two different subjects clash with each other leading to confusion. Thus, *Jan* is the subject only of the first sentence but not of the second one. As visible, the *-no/-to* construction cannot establish an anaphoric semantic reference, the implicit subject of the *-no/-to* construction from the example (79) in this case is to be interpreted rather as arbitrary (meaning: existential), not as generic (meaning: people in general). In light of this dilemma, Kibort (2004) observes that the failure of the formation of the *-no/-to* construction often stems from the inability to interpret the implicit subject as generic and human. According to her, this seems to be a common factor in cases where the construction does not succeed, irrespective of whether it involves unaccusative or unergative verbs, and regardless of the verb’s iterativity. While the feature [+human] appears to be an essential semantic condition for the formation of the *-no/-to* construction, its implicit subject is not inherently generic. Before we turn to that issue, let us explore why it cannot be specific.

The unavailability of a specific interpretation in the example (79) is associated with another characteristic of the implicit subject of the construction in question, namely, its inflectional properties confined to the masculine plural form, as illustrated in the following two examples (80) and (81) from Ruda (2014: 214), repeated from (21) and (22):

(80) *Tu zawsze faworyzowano siebie samych/ *samego.*
 here always favored.IMPRS self alone.VIR.ACC/ *alone.ACC.SG.M
 ‘Here [they] always favored themselves.’

(81) *Nazywano siebie geniuszami/ *geniuszem.*
 called.IMPRS self genius.VIR.INS/ *genius.M.INS.SG
 ‘[They] called themselves geniuses.’

In both examples, the implicit subject triggers a plural marking on the semi-predicate (*sam*, ‘alone’), seen here as the masculine plural form *sami* in the accusative case (*samych*, ‘alone’) in (80) and the predicative noun *geniusze* ‘geniuses’ in the instrumental case in (81). A singular marking on these elements would be ungrammatical and subsequently ruled out, which means that the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* predicates triggers only a (masculine) plural agreement. As pointed out by Ruda (2014), the plural feature of the implicit subject of the *-no/-to* predicate aligns with its arbitrary interpretation, suggesting some group of people as a possible covert agent. Furthermore, the implicit subject of the *-no/-to* construction does not bear nominative case, which makes an establishment of the specific reference in cases

such as the one in (79) even harder. Consider the following examples (Jocz et al. 2022: 100):

- (82) *Zawsze wracano z pracy *trzeźwy/ *trzeźwi.*
 always returned.IMPERS from work sober.NOM.SG.M/*sober.NOM.VIR
 ‘[They] always returned from work sober.’

compare:

Ludzie zawsze wracali z pracy trzeźwi.
 people.VIR.NOM always returned.3PL.VIR from work sober.NOM.PL.VIR
 ‘People always returned from work sober.’

- (83) *Zawsze naprawiano sprzęty *sam/ *sami.*
 always repaired.IMPERS devices.NVIR.ACC *alone.NOM.SG.M/*alone.NOM.VIR

compare:

Ludzie zawsze naprawiali sprzęty sami.
 people.VIR.NOM always repaired.3PL.VIR devices alone.NOM.VIR
 ‘[They] always fixed the equipment themselves.’

As discussed in Jocz et al. (2022), the Polish sentences in the above examples show that neither an adjective in the predicate function nor the predicative element *sam* ‘alone’ can occur in the nominative case together with the *-no/-to* structure. In Polish, as observed by Witkoś (2010), such elements tend to agree in terms of the grammatical case feature value with the nominative subject (see the examples with the plural NP *ludzie* ‘people’. If that is not the case, i.e., in the absence of such a subject, the predicative complements take on a default case which is instrumental or dative. It seems very probable, that it is the semantic plurality of the implicit subject and its undefined or absent grammatical case feature (cf. Ruda 2014) that make the specific reference with overt singular NPs impossible. When it comes to interpreting the implicit subject, contrary to what Lavine (2005) and Kibort (2004) suggest, it is not generic per se. To verify this, it is enough to compare the meaning of the *-no/-to* construction with that of the impersonal reflexive construction in isolation:

- (84) *pito* vs. *pito się*
 drank.IPFV.IMPERS drank.IPFV.3SG.N REFL
 ‘[They] drank.’ ‘People/One was drinking.’

Without any additional semantic complementation the *-no/-to* construction has an arbitrary interpretation, which indicates an action performed by a some group of people or indefinite individuals from this group in the past. While the usage of the reflexive impersonal denotes an activity or action which either was performed on a regular basis or was carried out by people in general (meaning everybody). The reflexive pronoun *się* is a pronoun that has a fixed form with regard to every grammatical person and expresses generic interpretation of the implicit subject of this construction. The *-no/-to* construction can be interpreted as generic when it occurs together with some kind of a referential complement like, for example, with locative

expressions such as *w Grecji* ‘in Greece’, which can expand the interpretation of the implicit agent from arbitrary to generic, but it is not its inherent denotation.

- (85) *W Grecji pito wino.*
 in Greece drank.IPFV.IMPRS wine.ACC
 ‘People/One drank wine in Greece.’

The generic interpretation of the implicit subject does correlate with the imperfective aspect, otherwise it could not have universal but episodic reading. The plurality of the implicit subject of the *-no/-to* construction seems not to be a monadic concept, as already discussed in the Section 2.1 for it is open to a single interpretation of the implicit agent. Consider the following examples from Kibort (2004: 281):

- (86) #/* *W samotności opłakiwano brata.*
 in solitude mourned.IPFV.IMPRS brother.M.ACC.SG
 ‘In solitude [they/one] mourned [their/one’s] brother.’

- (87) *W samotności opłakiwano braci.*
 in solitude mourned.IPFV.IMPRS brothers.VIR.ACC
 ‘In solitude [they/one] mourned [their/one’s] brothers.’

According to Kibort (2004), the sentence in (86) is unacceptable because it implies a singular solitary action which is indicated by the singular number of the direct object. By contrast, the sentence in (87) is semantically fine due to the apparent exclusion of the singular interpretation of the implicit agent provided by the plural marking on the direct object. However, there is an inconsistency in this line of argumentation. Consider the following example from Kibort (2004: 280):

- (88) *W średniowieczu abdykowano z braku męskiego potomka.*
 in Middle_Ages abdicated.IPFV.IMPRS of lack male heir.M.ACC.SG
 ‘In the Middle Ages one would abdicate due to lack of a male heir.’

Kibort (2004) explains the correctness of the sentence in (88) in that it excludes the possibility of a singular solitary action of the singular subject due to the iterative meaning of the event. She notes that, in this way, the event is interpreted as conducted “by a plural agent made up of at least two separate singular agents” (Kibort 2004: 280). Nonetheless, an iterative meaning of the event does not exclude that at a certain point of time there was a singular agent who performed a singular solitary action. For this reason, the sentence in (86), repeated below as (89), seems to be fine:

- (89) ? *W samotności opłakiwano brata.*
 in solitude mourned.IPFV.IMPRS brother.M.SG.ACC
 ‘In solitude [they/one] mourned [their/one’s] brother.’

Thus, the sentence in (89) can be interpreted in such a way that there were several participants who took part in the mourning event and each one of them was mourning their brother in solitude, separately, not as a whole group, a gathering of people

that was isolated from the external world like this would be implied by the use of the third person plural impersonal construction:

- (90) ? *W samotności oplakiwali brata.*
 in solitude mourned.3PL.VIR brother.M.SG.ACC
 ‘(They) were mourning their brother in solitude.’

Kibort (2004: 281) states that “the inflectional properties of the subject of the *-no/-to* construction are reminiscent of the subject of the unspecified-agent construction which uses 3PL.VIR agreement” and these features render both constructions highly appropriate for use as generics. Nonetheless, it is important to note, that the inflectional properties of the *-no/-to* construction are implicit until the construction includes predicative elements, not like in the case of the third person impersonal construction which bears explicit plural marking on its verb form. For this reason the interpretation of the *-no/-to* construction could be rather compared to the impersonal *they* construction but on the basis of a “reversed mirror”. *They* in English is not overtly marked for gender and as a summative pronoun includes a singular interpretation of the referent so that an overt reference can be established. The *-no/-to* construction seems to resemble this behavior but implicitly, on a cognitive level, without an overt manifestation of singular referents.

Another important characteristic of the construction under scrutiny, in the context of discussing its compatibility with various types of verbs, is that it can denote only actions performed by human agents. Consider again the following example from Saloni (1976), repeated by Lavine (2005: 95):

- (91) *Wybito szybę.*
 broke.PFV.IMPRS window_pane.F.ACC
 a. ‘They broke the window pane.’
 b. *‘The wind/storm broke the window pane.’
 c. *‘The window pane broke (spontaneously).’

The example in (91) allows only an interpretation in which the window was broken by an unspecified human agent or a group of people. The discussed sentence cannot be understood in a way that it was broken due to the action of some natural force or that it spontaneously shattered. The *-no/-to* construction invariably prompts an interpretation where the agent responsible for performing the action denoted by the verb is [+human]. What is important to emphasize is that this is a property that manifests itself at the semantic level of the construction under investigation, as pointed out by Kibort (2004), since this construction can also be formed from verbs denoting activities proper to animals or inanimate objects. Nevertheless, such sentences are always interpreted as being performed by humans, and therefore can only be used metaphorically. See examples (92) and (93):

- (92) #*Toczono się po stole bilardowym.* (Cetnarowska 2000: 89)
 rolled.IMPRS REFL along table billiard
 ‘They [balls] rolled along the billiard table.’

- (93) #*Na podworzu szczekano.*
 in yard barked.IMPRS
 ‘There was barking in the yard.’ (Dyła 1983: 123)

Both examples mentioned above are marked as semantically incorrect, despite being perfectly valid morphosyntactically. Their incorrectness lies in the improper use of the *-no/-to* construction with the verbs *toczyć się* ‘to roll’ and *szczekać* ‘to bark’, as the former denotes actions related to inanimate objects (‘rolling’, ‘moving slowly’), as in (92) where the verb describes the movement of a billiard ball, while *szczekać* in (93) refers to the sound made by dogs. Sentences with such verbs will be interpreted by native Polish speakers as performed by humans, which in these cases can be understood as metaphorical or ironic, never as a possible situation in a real world.

Returning to the issue of formulating the *-no/-to* construction with various classes of verbs, based on the examples previously cited from the literature, it can be concluded that the main factor licensing a given type of verb is its compatibility with the implicit subject inherent in this construction. The preference for the formation of *-no/-to* constructions from iterative unaccusative verbs as opposed to their perfective forms is justified, as noted by Ruda (2014), by the arbitrary interpretation of the implicit subject, which does not lend itself so easily to a specific interpretation associated with the perfective aspect. However, this is not a sufficient or sole explanation, as there are cases, where the *-no/-to* construction is formed with perfective unaccusative verbs. Cetnarowska (2000) comments on such a case, illustrated in example (77b), repeated in (94), by stating that the *-no/-to* construction is influenced by the agentive qualities of the subjects which underlay the verbal predicates:

- (94) ? *Znieruchomiano, a potem znów rozpoczęto taniec.*
 became_motionless.PFV.IMPRS and then again began.PFV.IMPRS dance
 ‘[They] became motionless and then again [they] began the dance.’

In this regard she refers to Rozwadowska (1992), who articulates this restriction in relation to thematic roles, suggesting that the scrutinized construction favors predicates with sentient and volitional subjects. This observation is in alignment with findings reported by Bunčić (2018, 2019). Bunčić (2018, 2019) argues that the acceptability of the construction under investigation is not solely determined by the animacy of the implicit agent; rather, it varies depending on the verbs used, with some being more acceptable than others. According to Bunčić (2018, 2019), the key factor determining the higher or lower acceptability of the *-no/-to* construction is the perceived agentivity of the implicit subject, as defined by Dowty (1991), which can be increased or decreased in a given context (as observed in (94)). Defining agentivity, Dowty (1991) proposed a “preliminary list” where he outlined four key semantic entailments (sentience, volition, movement and causation) characterizing a prototypical agent (“proto-agent”). The previous traditional approaches treated the agent rather as an unified entity that was placed at the highest position within the hierarchy of semantic roles, as in the following ranking of thematic roles proposed by Bresnan (2001: 307; cited from Kibort 2004: 343):

- (95) agent > beneficiary > experiencer/goal > instrument > patient/theme > locative

Dowty's (1991) framework is more accessible with regard to the possible agents, enabling different degrees of agentivity what allows for the recognition of less typical agents exhibiting only some of the aforementioned agentive features broadening the previously fixed classification thereof. Bunčić (2018, 2019) referred¹² to the notion of agentivity proposed by Dowty (1991), and based on a conducted corpus study (Bunčić 2018) and acceptability judgment test with constructed sentences from intransitive verbs (Bunčić 2019), showed that there is a correlation between the agentivity of verbs, i.e., the number of agentivity features a verb assigns to the selected subject and the possibility of forming *-no/-to* constructions from them. The findings demonstrated in particular that verbs attributing more agentive features to the subject (e.g. verbs such as *pracować* 'work' with 3 semantic entailments: [+volition], [+movement], [+sentience]) are as a rule significantly preferred by test persons over verbs attributing fewer agentive features (e.g. *obawiać się* 'fear' with [+sentience]), while completely unagentive verbs (e.g. *błyszczec* 'glisten', no agentive features) are rated as poorly as ill-constructed *-no/-to* sentences with inanimate referents. The findings of the study suggest that the acceptability of the *-no/-to* construction shows a clear agentivity cline: The less agentive the verb is, the less acceptable the *-no/-to* construction becomes. There is, however, one result which underlines that one feature in particular is of great importance for the acceptability of the construction under investigation, namely [+sentience]. The experimental results showed that even verbs such as *pocić się* 'to sweat' with two agentive features ([+movement] [+sentience]) were rated by the participants as significantly less acceptable than items from a group composed of verbs such as *obawiać się* 'to fear' with only one feature ([+sentience]). Such results suggest that the *-no/-to* construction favors verbs that clearly specify the implicit subject as a [+human], which gains additional strength in this context through the presence of psychological or emotional states characteristic of verbs like 'to fear' (cf. Bunčić 2019).

In summary, it can be stated that the acceptability of the construction under investigation depends not only on the number of agentive features but also on the feature type. As already noted by Bunčić (2019), characteristics such as [+movement] seem to play hardly any role in acceptability studies, quite in contrast to [+sentience], which requires further specification or expansion. Therefore, in line with the literature (cf. Kibort 2004, Lavine 2005, 2013, 2017, Ruda 2014 etc.) it can be argued that the "humanness" of the *-no/-to* construction which on a feature level (proposed by Dowty 1991) is represented by [+sentience] is a necessary feature for its formation. The importance of this feature will be particularly emphasized in the next chapter (Chapter 3), as it may have played a decisive role in the activation process of the investigated construction (referred to as [+human]). As demonstrated in this section, other factors influencing the formation of the *-no/-to* construction include the interplay between the specific plurality of the implicit agent and the aspect of the verb. Apart from perfective agentive verbs used in episodic contexts, the *-no/-to* construction with an iterative reading allows for a singular interpretation of the implicit agent when the event expressed by the lexical verb can

¹² The issue discussed here emerged within the framework of the project Bo1 "Prominence phenomena in Slavic languages", conducted at the Collaborative Research Center 1252 "Prominence in Language" at Cologne University.

be divided into a series of the same type of events. This is often not possible with perfective unaccusative verbs.

2.4 The Grammatical Status of the *-no/-to* Construction

The historic development of the *-no/-to* construction and its incompatibility with an overt expression of the subject in the structure of the sentence has sparked a broad discussion in the literature as far as its grammatical status is concerned (cf. Siewierska 1988, Kibort 2004, Comrie 1977, Frajzyngier 1982, Blevins 2003, Lavine 2005). Namely, the fact that it historically derives from a nominal neuter passive participle (see Chapter 3) and its apparent subjectlessness have affected its perception as a syntactic variant of passive voice in some linguistic works (cf. Comrie 1977, for a detailed discussion see Kibort 2004). In general, the discussion about the grammatical status of the construction in question is related to a broader linguistic reflection concerned with the defining properties of the passive as opposed to the active voice. The legitimacy of the comparison between the two types of structures, active and passive, is connected, following Siewierska (1988), to their synonymy in terms of truth conditions. That means that both of the constructions consist of the same type of constituents but differ with each other with regard to the presentational mode thereof. Thus, according to Comrie (1977), as opposed to Perlmutter and Postal (1977, 1983a, b), the defining property of the passive, is demotion of the subject, and subjecthood, which as observed by Siewierska (1988), under a truth-conditional view, is a feature which can be assumed to occur in active sentences as well. The demotion of the subject is a derivational mechanism, that involves reduction or relocation of the active subject, an agent in semantic terms, of a transitive clause to an oblique agentive phrase. On the contrary, Perlmutter and Postal (1977, 1983a, b) claim that the properties, which constitute passive formations are both demotion of the active subject and promotion of an active constituent to the passive subject, which poses a theoretical problem when formations of impersonal passives are concerned. Perlmutter and Postal (1977, 1983a, b) state that in this type of passives, which, in contrast to personal passives, do not have an overt subject in nominative case, the promotion to the subject has taken place and the promoted entity should be regarded as a dummy subject, which also can be phonologically empty. However, as remarked by Siewierska (1988), this hypothesis does not take into account that the dummy subjects are not obligatory constituents of active clauses and as such does not sustain the relationship between active and passive, which is a precondition for the comparison of the constructions in question. She points out that, since a hypothetical constituent, as postulated by Perlmutter and Postal (1977, 1983a, b), may be promoted to a passive subject, “the relationship between the active and the passive is basically one of demotion of the active subject even in terms of Perlmutter and Postal’s analysis” (Siewierska 1988: 244). However, the demotional view of the passive, which indicates that all constructions which lack an overtly expressed subject are to be seen as passive formations, as noted by various linguists (Siewierska 1988, Frajzyngier 1982, Blevins 2003), should be treated with some caution when it comes to categorizing particular impersonal constructions. The impersonal *-no/-to* construction is one example of constructions, which in terms of their structure (absence of an overt subject) fit into the description of the passive voice

but with regard to their morphosyntactic properties should be treated as an active formation (see the Section 2.4.2).

In works by Polish scholars (cf. Szober 1923; Wierzbicka 1966; Siewierska 1988; Rozwadowska 1992; Brajerski 1977; Dziwirek 1994; Śpiewak 2000) who dealt with the question of categorial assignment of the *-no/-to* construction, there has been a wide consensus that the *-no/-to* form is an active construction with features that are distinctive from those of the impersonal and personal variants of the passive. For instance, Lavine (2005, 2013, 2017), after comparing and describing the semantic and syntactic properties of the Polish and Ukrainian *-no/-to* constructions, states that while the Ukrainian impersonal is not only passive in form but also in meaning, the Polish cognate construction shows traits of a passive formation only as far as its form is concerned. Based on the research of the morphosyntactic and semantic features of both constructions he even concludes that the Polish *-no/-to* form has been re-analyzed as a syntactically-independent auxiliary element, which he calls an *AUX-hypothesis* (Lavine 2005: 82). The position is not shared in this work, although Lavine's arguments (2005, 2013, 2017) attesting to the active status of the construction under investigation are entirely valid and will be discussed in the Section 2.4.2 in a greater detail. With regard to the status of the *-no/-to* form, Kibort (2004) states that contrary to passive-oriented approaches in interpreting the status of the impersonal construction "there has been a long-established Polish descriptive tradition which has treated the *-no/-to* construction as an *active indefinite* and grouped it together with other constructions which have an unspecified agent interpretation, such as the one using 3^{PL.VIR} morphology" (i.e., the impersonal third person plural construction) (Kibort 2004: 251). According to Siewierska (1988: 271), there has been a consensus among Polish linguists that the *-no/-to* forms in contemporary Polish are perceived "as active impersonal ... [with an] implied human subject [that] typically excludes the speaker". Kibort (2004) remarks that the *-no/-to* construction is not only morphosyntactically different from the Polish passive but is a product of a different operation from passive. The two different morphosyntactic operations in question are *agent demotion* and *agent suppression*. Blevins (2003), like Kibort (2004), also states that all of the major syntactic differences between the *-no/-to* construction and the personal and impersonal forms of the passive have their origin in the distinct morphosyntactic operations which lie behind their formation and concern different techniques of preventing the logical subject of predicate from being expressed as a syntactic subject (Blevins 2003: 507). According to Blevins (2003), passivization has an impact on the lexical valence of a predicate by deleting the logical (external) subject. Therefore, as he remarks, "passivization is intrinsically sensitive to the argument structure of its input and generally insensitive to human agency" (Blevins 2003: 507). He states further that as a result of this operation the subject is demoted, what means "that the thematic role with which it is associated can only be expressed syntactically if a language allows that role to be realized in form of an optional dependent" (Blevins 2003: 508). A passivized predicate may then be left without an overtly expressed subject, he continues, "if it contains no terms, or none that satisfy the conditions imposed on subjects at large" (Blevins 2003: 508). Kibort (2004), in line with the generative tradition, calls the process of passivization a "meaning-preserving" and "function-changing operation", "since the only change that occurs in the argument structure is an altered, non-default, map-

ping of the arguments onto surface syntactic functions” (Kibort 2004: 57). The lack of an expressed subject, according to Blevins (2003), is a contingent feature of the passive, meaning that the semantic subject vs. agent of the corresponding active clause can be entirely removed or preserved externally with the help of an additional prepositional phrase. He also asserts that the absence of an overtly expressed semantic subject in impersonal constructions is the defining property of these constructions. As he observes, due to the fact that there can be no promotion to subject in this type of constructions they can retain their structural objects. Blevins (2003) remarks further that since impersonal constructions can keep objects in their structure, usually in accusative (e.g. Polish) or partitive cases (e.g. Balto-Finnish), they show syntactical similarity to synthetic verb forms that incorporate a subject argument. The difference between both type of constructions lies, according to him, in the semantic interpretation of these forms, as the former, canonically¹³ receive the indefinite human interpretation which is, as he remarks, usually associated with impersonal forms of personal verbs. This property, as he notices, the indefinite human interpretation, also distinguishes “the impersonal constructions from weather verbs or other types of impersonals which lack, rather than suppress the logical subject” (Blevins 2003: 482). The combination of morphosyntactic subject suppression with an indefinite human interpretation is in his opinion the canonical feature of impersonal constructions. These constructions exhibit thus, as he states, “a sensitivity to human agency and an insensitivity to argument structure”, as they preserve the lexical valency of the predicate, whereas passivization reduces the lexical valence of a predicate by detransitivizing it, which results in deleting the logical (external) subject. The morphosyntactic differences between the *-no/-to* forms and forms of the passive voice are therefore a direct result of different morphosyntactic operations, suppression and demotion, and cannot therefore be considered as linguistic phenomena of the same typological class, since the semantic subject in the *-no/-to* construction is not eliminated but merely prevented from being overtly realized as a syntactic subject. The implicit or suppressed subject of the *-no/-to* construction exhibits morphosyntactic properties, which are characteristic of an active construction and therefore should, in alignment with the Polish descriptive tradition, be viewed as an active indefinite construction.

2.4.1 The Personal and Impersonal Forms of the Passive in Polish

There are two variants of passive voice in Polish language. Both of them are results of specific syntactic transformations of an underlying active clause. They are being used or implied to depict an event and its participants from another perspective than this is the case in a canonical active transitive sentence (cf. Sansò 2006) and consequently both of them serve slightly different discourse purposes. The two types of passive structures in question are personal and impersonal forms of the passive. Despite the syntactical and functional differences, both of them have one characteristic in common, namely the demotion of the subject of the active clause.

¹³ The indefinite human interpretation should be viewed rather as a tendency (cf. Kibort 2004) of subjectless forms of personal verbs than a default feature, as evidenced by the personal and impersonal passive forms without an agentive phrase, which in Polish can also have non-human and inanimate readings.

The first type of the passive structure in Polish is the so-called *canonical* or *periphrastic personal* passive which contains a passive subject in nominative, a finite form of an auxiliary *być* ‘to be’ or *zostać* ‘to get, become’ and an adjectival passive participle which is formed from transitive verbs. The auxiliary agrees with the passive subject with regard to person, number and gender and exhibits corresponding agreement marking on its verbal form. The passive participle matches the auxiliary in number and gender, and aligns with the passive subject in gender, number, and case. The personal passive formation in Polish is illustrated in example (97), whereas example (96) contains a corresponding pre-transformed active structure:

(96) *Weronika* *czyta* *książkę*.
 Weronika.NOM read.3SG.F book.F.ACC
 ‘Weronika reads (is reading) a book.’

(97) *Książka* *jest* *czytana* (*przez Weronikę*).
 book.F.NOM.SG AUX.PRS.3SG read.PTCP.SG.F by Weronika
 ‘The book is (is being read) being read by Weronika.’

The agent and grammatical subject of the active clause in (96), *Weronika*, occurs in the source sentence on its surface, in the initial position, and bears nominative case. The main focus of the clause rests on *Weronika* and on the transitive activity which is initiated and performed by her on the direct object of the sentence, the book, marked with accusative case. The same activity or event is presented by the passive sentence in (97) but from another perspective which is signaled by the reversed sentence structure. The grammatical subject of the active sentence *Weronika* is removed from the initial position of the sentence, the bearer of nominative case, and depending on the intention of the speaker, it can be either revealed and brought back with the help of a *przez* ‘by’ phrase or removed completely from the sentence structure and left unexpressed. The implemented syntactic mechanism, namely the use of an external adjunct phrase, shows that the former agent of the active clause plays functionally (discursive) rather a marginal role as it does not appear in the matrix clause anymore. The former direct object of the active clause raises to the first position of the sentence and becomes a passive subject bearing nominative case. The main activity or event is performed on this raised entity and its new syntactic position together with the absence of the former active subject make it the most prominent participant of the event, which is described by the main predicate. Thus, the passivization designates a new topic in the clause by reversing the former order of participants and removing the most important entity appointed by the verb, i.e., the active subject, performer of the action. The former finite simple predicate *czytać* ‘to read’ becomes part of an analytical structure taking form of a passive participle (bearer of the event) and occurring together with an appropriate form of an auxiliary that carries the time reference from the active sentence (expressed there by the verbal inflection on the main predicate). There are two types of personal passive, as remarked by Skibicki (2007), which express different meanings with regard to the interplay between the demoted (either entirely absent from the clause or present in the adjunct phrase) agent and the main event of the clause. The differences in meanings in the resulted passive structures are due to the presence of the aspect category in Polish which is a grammatical category and pertains to the morpholog-

ical from of the verb. Thus, a personal passive structure can be either actional (Ger. *Vorgangspassiv*) or stative (Ger. *Zustandspassiv*). Both types are presented below, the actional passive in (98) and (99) and the stative passive in (100):

(98) *Książka jest czytana przez Weronikę.*
 book.F.NOM.SG AUX.PST.3SG read.IPFV.PTCP.3SG.F by Weronika.ACC
 ‘The book was read (was being read) by Weronika.’

(99) *Książka została przeczytana przez Weronikę.*
 book.F.NOM.SG became.3SG read.PFV.PTCP.3SG.F by Weronika.ACC
 ‘The book was read by Weronika.’

(100) *Książka jest przeczytana przez Weronikę.*
 book.F.NOM.SG AUX.PST.3SG read.PFV.PTCP.3SG.F by Weronika.ACC
 ‘The book was (had been) read by Weronika.’

As noted by Skibicki (2007), both types of the passive are formed using finite forms of the auxiliary verbs *być* ‘to be’ or *zostać* ‘to get, become’, as well as passive participles of the main verbs. Following Skibicki (2007), standard grammar of Polish, the actional passive focuses on the process, the main focus of this type of sentences lies on the action of the verb that is carried out on the grammatical subject. The stative passive on the other hand does not express an action but rather a state which is a result of a previous action. The actional passive is formed in two ways, either with finite forms of the auxiliary *zostać* ‘to get, become’ and perfective passive participles, the example (99), or with finite forms of an auxiliary *być* ‘to be’ and imperfective passive participles, the example (98). Skibicki (2007) points out that in the case of the actional passive the event performed on the passive subject can be presented from different time points. Consequently, passive sentences with imperfective verbs express the course of the verb’s action, while those with perfective verbs indicate the result of an action. The stative passive is formed with finite forms of the auxiliary *być* ‘to be’ and perfective passive participles, like the sentence in the example (100), and that is why it denotes states that are resulting from previous actions. Skibicki (2007) remarks that for this reason, contrary to actional passive, the stative passive rarely, if ever, combines with agentive phrases. Additionally, as remarked by Swan (2002: 313), there is often a difference in meaning between the actional and stative passive formed with perfective verbs in the past tense:

(101) *Ten dom został pomalowany.*
 DEM house.M.NOM.SG became.3SG.M paint.PFV.PTCP.3SG.M
 ‘That house was painted; i.e. before it wasn’t, now it is.’ (actional passive)

(102) *Ten dom był pomalowany.*
 DEM house.M.NOM.SG AUX.3SG.M paint.PFV.PTCP.3SG.M
 ‘That house was painted; i.e. it was once painted, but now it needs repainting.’ (stative passive)

As visible from the examples provided above, the stative passive with the auxiliary ‘to be’ and perfective passive participles, as opposed to the actional *zostać* passive,

can express a “remote or disjoint in time meaning”, suggesting, such as in (102), that the house needs to be repainted (cf. Siewierska 1988: 250), whereas the clause in (101) does not carry such an indication.

As already stated in Section 2.1, a canonical passive sentence formed with transitive verbs but without an overt expression of the agent can indicate every possible type (inanimate, animate, human, non-human) of an agent as a performer or causer of the action. Consider the example (103), where possible instigators of the main event are named in the parentheses:

- (103) *Dom* *został* *zniszczony*
house.M.NOM.SG became.3SG.M destroy.PTCP.SG.M
(*przez burzę, czołg, stado słoń, podpalacza*)
(by storm, tank, herd of elephants, arsonist)

‘The house was destroyed by a storm, tank, herd of elephants, an arsonist.’

As demonstrated in the example above, a personal passive sentence without an agentive ‘by’-phrase leaves the door open for any potential agent, which can only be specified by adding an oblique phrase to the clause.

Things are slightly different with impersonal passive which in Polish is formed from intransitive verbs which are syntactically unergative (cf. Kibort 2004, 2010). This type of passive is not described in the standard Polish grammars (cf. Skibicki 2007, Swan 2002, Bartnicka et al. 2004), and some authors (Skibicki 2007, cf. Bartnicka et al. 2004) state clearly that the formation of passive voice in Polish is only possible with transitive verbs. Kibort (2011) addresses this issue and states that there are only a few publications dedicated to this phenomenon, as it is mainly used in spoken language (cf. Lewicki 1964). The impersonal variant of the passive is depicted in the examples below (Kibort 2004: 76):

- (104) *Wchodzisz i czujesz, że było palone.*
enter.2SG and feel.2SG COMP was.3SG.N smoke.PTCP.SG.N
‘You come in and you can smell that there has been smoking.’
- (105) *Będzie ci wybaczone, jeśli przeprosisz.*
be.FUT.3SG you.2SG.DAT forgive.PTCP.SG.N if apologize.FUT.2SG
‘It will be forgiven if you apologize.’

As can be seen from the above examples, the impersonal passive of intransitive verbs does not contain a passive subject, which is related to the argument structure of the main intransitive predicate (no direct object that can be promoted to the passive subject). According to Kibort (2004: 76), the impersonal variant of the periphrastic passive arises from applying the passive rule¹⁴ to an intransitive predicate, regardless of whether the predicate originally subcategorized for a single argument or whether it was an intransitive use of a potentially transitive predicate. Following the descrip-

¹⁴ By *passive rule*, Kibort (2004) refers to the syntactic operation responsible for the non-default realization of a predicate’s arguments. This process includes the demotion of the agent and the promotion of the former object to the subject position. In the case of impersonal passives, the promotion of the object to the subject position does not occur.

tion used by Skibicki (2007) for the personal passive, there is no direct object in the impersonal passive structure upon which the main event of the clause could be performed on, which means that the event itself becomes the main focused entity of the sentence. As convincingly noted by Kibort (2004), the fact that this type of passive is formed from unergatives, it would be counterintuitive to return a demoted agent to the transformed passive structure in form of an oblique phrase. Even when that is still possible in some cases she argues that it should rather be perceived as “an afterthought or addition to the main utterance” (Kibort 2004: 77), which she illustrates with the following example:

- (106) *Dzisiaj było sprzątane – przez sprzątaczkę.*
 today was.3SG.N clean.PTCP.SG.N by cleaners
 ‘The cleaning has already been done today—by cleaners.’

The fact that bringing back an agent as an oblique to the impersonal passive sentence is rare but still possible might also be related to the lack of the implicit human agent in the semantic structure of the clause whatsoever, as this is the case with personal passive sentences when used without an agent complement. As pointed out by Brajerski (1977), the impersonal passive in Polish denotes not only actions and results of actions or events caused by humans, but also by animals and inanimate natural forces, the causer of which can only be specified after adding an agentive phrase to the clause. In the following examples of impersonal passive of intransitives, the causer of the action in (107) are mice and a lightning in (108) (Brajerski 1977: 30):

- (107) *Patrz, jak tu wygryzione!*
 look.2SG.IMP how here bite.PTCP.SG.N
 ‘Look how gnawed it (is) here!’

(Myszy wygryzły dziurę w drewnianej podłodze.)
 ‘(Mice gnawed a hole in the wooden floor.)’

- (108) *Patrzcie, jak tu wypalone! (Piorun uderzył w drzewo.)*
 look.2PL.IMP how here burn.PTCP.SG.N
 ‘Look, how scorched it is here! (Lightning struck the tree.)’

The syntactical demotion of the subject is the main characteristics of the passivization process, which both types, the personal as well as impersonal passive structures, have in common. It would be than strange to assume that the impersonal variant of passive voice (of intransitive verbs) should lose the possibility to bring the demoted agent back to the sentence structure even more so because after removing the active subject it holds the mere event in the center of attention without any further specification. This conclusion becomes clearer when we compare the two variants of the passive with the impersonal *-no/-to* construction with regard to this condition. The agent of the *-no/-to* construction is suppressed only superficially for discourse-related reasons, as the construction remains syntactically active. The *-no/-to* construction still contains a subject in its syntactic structure, which becomes evident in its incompatibility with overt agentive expressions as well as in its binding and control properties observable in overt syntax. These facts bring us closer to the

conclusion that the *-no/-to* construction only superficially serves a similar function in discourse to both forms of the passive voice. In reality, it behaves more like an active construction with a syntactically active and semantically strong [+human] subject. Embedded within the semantics of the verb, it signifies and expresses a personified event, contributing to the narrative fabric of discourse. Before we delve into the function of the discussed construction in discourse (Chapters 4 and 5), let us discuss the main differences at the micro level, namely the syntactic distinctions between the *-no/-to* construction and both variants of the passive voice.

2.4.2 The Morphosyntactic Differences with Personal and Impersonal Forms of Passives

The goal of this section is to demonstrate the main morphosyntactic differences between the *-no/-to* formation and the two variants of passive voice in order to show that the *-no/-to* construction is an active construction and cannot be perceived as an impersonal variant of the passive. The comparison is also interesting because it illustrates how covert human subjects which are absent from the surface of the clause still operate from the deeper level of the sentence structure and exert influence on the other constituents similarly to overt subjects. This property of the covert subject of the construction under investigation, to act in a similar manner to overt subjects, as far as syntactic criteria are concerned, allows the discourse to unfold more fluently and keeps its narrative flow (discourse topic) intact. This is not the case with passive structures that change the syntactical and informational status quo by reversing the order of the core arguments in the sentence and demoting the active subject. So let us examine the most significant morphosyntactic disparities between the three linguistic structures.

First feature which is conspicuous and makes up an essential difference to the both passive structures is the fact that the *-no/-to* construction retains direct object in accusative case, which is possible only with an active predicate (Brajerski 1977: 6):

(109) *Podano herbatę.*
 served.IMPRS tee.F.ACC.SG
 '[They] served the tea'

As already discussed above, this is not possible either with the personal (due to the promotion of the active object to the passive subject) or with the impersonal passive (there is no such argument in the intransitive verbal structure). Furthermore, when the *-no/-to* construction gets negated, the former direct object in accusative turns into an indirect object in genitive, which, as noted by Brajerski (1977), is also only possible with active predicates, see the negated construction from (109) in (110) (Brajerski 1977: 6):

(110) *Nie podano herbaty.*
 NEG served.IMPRS tea.F.GEN.SG
 '[They] didn't serve the tea.'

Thus, in both cases, exemplified in (109) and (110) the *-no/-to* construction behaves like an active predicate and retains the structure of an active transitive sentence.

In addition, as it was already mentioned in the Section 2.3 the *-no/-to* construction can be formed from strictly reflexive verbs as opposed to passive constructions, which never occur with the reflexive pronoun *się*, see the examples of some reflexive *-no/-to* constructions below (Brajerski 1977: 6):

- (111) *myto* *się*, *ubierano* *się*
 washed.IMPRS REFL, dressed.IMPRS REFL
 ‘[They] washed themselves, [they] dressed themselves.’

Passive equivalents of the above examples are ungrammatical, because of the lack of the implicit subject in their syntactic structure, that could bind them (Brajerski 1977: 6):

- (112) **jest* *myty* *się*, **został* *się* *ubrany*
 AUX.PRS wash.PTCP.SG.M REFL became.3SG.M REFL dress.PTCP.SG.M

The next important difference to the passive structure is the incompatibility of the *-no/-to* form to co-occur with tense-marking auxiliary verbs as demonstrated in the following example (Lavine 2005: 82):

- (113) *Stefana* (**był/* **jest/* **będzie*) *wzięto* *do wojska.*
 Stefan.ACC AUX.PST AUX.PRS AUX.FUT brought.IMPRS to army
 ‘[They] drafted Stefan into the army.’

The example above was taken from Lavine (2005), who claims that the *-no/-to* construction is in complementary distribution with tense-marking auxiliaries and uses this argument, among others (see Lavine 2005 for more details), in his argumentation that the *-no/-to* form itself is a reanalyzed independent auxiliary element (so-called *AUX-hypothesis*) that occupies the Tense projection. In arguing so, Lavine (2005, 2013, 2017) tries to explain the unusual syntactical environment of the construction, namely the co-occurrence of the demoted surface subject and the presence of the direct object (i.e., no promotion of the object to the subject position after demotion of the subject) and its lexical properties (formation from unaccusatives which contain solely a non-passivable experiencer in their argument structure). So, in a nutshell, Lavine (2005) proposes an interesting solution: the *-no/-to* is selected from the lexicon as an affix that combines with the lexical stem of the verb post-syntactically (at the level of Spell-Out). As such, it is a functional element without any argument structure or inherent meaning, which explains the unaccusative *-no/-to* forms. Being a “functor”, it derives its meaning from the main predicate. Although this solution is very appealing and points rightly to the fact that the *-no/-to* part of the construction might be an affix, it cannot be upheld because active predicates in Polish do not combine with tense marking auxiliaries (that applies only to the passive participles and infinitives which accompany finite forms of the future auxiliary ‘to be’). The fact that in modern Polish the personal endings of verbs originate from clitics of auxiliaries, which in earlier stages of Polish were part of analytical tense forms, no longer reflects the contemporary usage of tensed verb forms.

Another constitutive feature of the *-no/-to* construction as compared to passive formations is its incompatibility with an agentive ‘by’-phrase, i.e., the Polish preposition *przez* (Dziwirek 1994: 185):

- (114) *Dziecko kochano (*przez matkę).*
 child.N.NOM.SG loved.IMPRS by mother_{ACC}
 (Intended: ‘The child was loved (by the mother)’)

The example above illustrates that the sentence with *-no/-to* construction does not need (and not allow) an agentive oblique phrase. The reason behind it is the indefinite human interpretation which is ingrained in its structure and is its default meaning. The next difference from passive structures is that the *-no/-to* construction can be formed from unergative verbs (not possible with the personal passive) and unaccusative predicates (not possible with either type of passive). This is demonstrated in the following examples:

- (115) *Umierano z wycieńczenia.* (Kibort 2004: 258)
 died.IMPRS from exhaustion
 ‘[They] died/used to die from exhaustion.’

- (116) *Tańczono do białego rana.* (Krzek 2010: 133)
 danced.IMPRS to white morning
 ‘[They] danced until dawn.’

The possibility of forming the *-no/-to* construction from unaccusative and unergative verbs, as well as from transitive predicates, demonstrates that semantically it can encompass a wide variety of agents, from highly agentive to less agentive ones like undergoers or experiencers, similar to active predicates. Syntactically, it behaves like an active structure because unaccusatives cannot form passive constructions. Moreover, the *-no/-to* construction can be passivized, as shown by Kibort (2004: 260):

- (117) *Dostawano różne kary i bywano bitymi.*
 gave.IMPRS various punishments.ACC and was.ITER.IMPRS beat.PTCP.PL.INS
 ‘[They] received various punishments and were (regularly) beaten.’

The example above shows that the *-no/-to* construction, presented in (117) as an impersonal auxiliary ‘to be’ in iterative form *bywano* (from *bywać*), must have an external (implicit) subject in its structure which can be demoted after application of passivization.

Further distinctive features of the *-no/-to* construction in comparison to passive formations concern its syntactical binding and control properties. For instance, the *-no/-to* construction can be formed from raising predicates, where the implicit subject of the matrix clause, which is the *-no/-to* construction, binds the subject of the infinitive phrase, as in the following example, so that both (implicit) subjects are coreferential, see (118):

- (118) *Zdawano się tego nie dostrzegać.* (Lavine 2005: 10)
 seemed.IMPRS REFL DEM.M.GEN NEG notice.INF
 ‘[They] seemed not to noticed this.’

The binding ability of the implicit subject of the *-no/-to* construction concerns also the cases where the construction appears with reflexive possessive pronouns and reflexive pronouns, in each case with the implicit subject as the binding element expanding its control over the pronoun.

The following examples illustrate the described property of the *-no/-to* construction: (119) showcases the binding of a reflexive possessive pronoun and (120) demonstrates the same phenomenon with regard to the reflexive pronoun:

- (119) *Przez kilka godzin przedstawiano swoje racje.*
 through several hours presented.IMPRS own arguments.ACC.NVIR
 ‘[They] have presented their arguments for a couple of hours.’

- (120) *Oglądano się/ siebie w lustrze.*
 looked.IMPRS REFL/self.ACC in mirror
 ‘[They] looked at themselves in the mirror.’

Due to the lack of an active syntactic subject both types of passive cannot be formed with raising verbs nor can they bind the reflexive and possessive pronouns because they cannot provide any binding constituent for the discussed linguistic elements and establish a coreferential relation with them. Consider the following examples:

- (121) *Było sprzątane (*swoimi) maszynami.* (Kibort 2004: 274)
 was.3SG.N clean.PTCP.SG.N own.INS machines.INS
 ‘It was cleaned here/This place has been cleaned with (one’s own) machines.’

- (122) *Zdawało się, że tutaj było sprzątane.* (Kibort 2004: 272)
 seemed.3SG.N REFL that here was.3SG.N clean.PTCP.SG.N
 ‘It seemed that it had been cleaned here.’

- (123) *Zdawało się tutaj być sprzątane.* (Kibort 2004: 272)
 seemed.3SG.N REFL here be.INF clean.PTCP.SG
 ‘It seemed to have been cleaned here.’

Example (121) shows that the occurrence of the reflexive possessive pronoun *swój* is rendered ungrammatical in the impersonal passive sentence. There is no subject which could bind it. The following two examples (122) and (123) show that, again, there is no such core argument in the impersonal passive structure which could rise to the subject position in the main sentence which as pointed out by Kibort (2004) is especially visible in (123) that contains no complementizer separating the impersonal passive construction from the raising predicate. The fact that there is no raised subject in (123) is evidenced by the default 3SG.N agreement on the main predicate which did not change its form after removal of the complementizer like it was the case in the example (118) where it transformed into the *-no/-to* construction.

The other linguistic setting where the *-no/-to* construction radically contrasts with forms of the passive are the cases where it appears with deverbal adverbials,

alias contemporaneous (ending with *-qc*) (124) and anterior participles (ending with *-wszy/-wszy*) (125), adjunct clauses which in the following sentences serve as adverbials of time:

(124) *Wracając do domu, śpiewano piosenki.*
 returning.PTCP.CONTEMP to home sung.IMPRS songs.NVIR.ACC
 '[They] sang songs while returning home.'

(125) *Zakończywszy posiłek, rozpoczęto dyskusję.*
 finish.PTCP.ANTERIOR meal.M.ACC began.IMPRS discussion.F.ACC
 'Having finished the meal, [they] began the discussion.'

As evidenced by the examples above, the implicit subjects of both participial sentences (124) and (125) are grammatical because they are controlled by the covert subject of the *-no/-to* construction, which in both cases is placed in the main clause.

For comparison, the examples below illustrate the inability of the impersonal passive, in (126) and (128), and of the personal passive, in (127) and (129), to form analogous structures (Kibort 2004: 267):

With contemporaneous participle:

(126) *Tutaj zostało wysprzątane (*przygotowując budynek do remontu).*
 here became.3SG.N clean.PTCP.SG.N (prepare.PTCP.CONTEMP building.M.ACC for renovation.M.GEN)
 'It was cleared here/This place has been cleared (while preparing the building for renovation).'

(127) *Salę zostały wysprzątane (*przygotowując budynek do remontu).*
 rooms.NVIR.NOM became.3PL.NVIR clean.PTCP.NVIR (prepare.PTCP.CONTEMP building.M.ACC for renovation.M.GEN)
 'The rooms were cleared (while preparing the building for renovation).'

With anterior participle:

(128) *Tutaj było sprzątane (*ukończywszy malowanie).*
 here was.3SG.N clean.PTCP.SG.N (finish.PTCP.ANTERIOR painting.N.ACC)
 'It was cleaned here/This place has been cleaned (having finished painting).'

(129) *Salę były sprzątane (*ukończywszy malowanie).*
 rooms.NVIR.NOM AUX.3PL.NVIR clean.PTCP.NVIR (finish.PTCP.ANTERIOR painting.N.ACC)
 'The rooms were cleaned (after having finished painting).'

All the above examples clearly show that neither the impersonal passive voice, in (126) and (128), nor the personal passive voice, in (127) and (129), can combine with the discussed participial structures. The impersonal passive formation cannot appear in such combinations due to the lack of a subject in its structure, which could control the subject of the participial clause. Similarly, the personal passive construction, despite containing an overt passive subject, cannot control and establish a co-referential relationship with the subject of the subordinated participial clause. The subject of the active predicate gets demoted after passivization, rendering it unavailable for syntactical operations like subject control.

Another example of control properties of the implicit subject of the *-no/-to* construction that is not possible with both forms of the passive are cases where the covert subject of the *-no/-to* construction in the matrix clause controls the subject (PRO) of the infinitive clause, such as in the example (130):

(130) *Próbowano* [PRO *tancyć walca*]. (Kibort 2004: 264)
 tried.IMPRS dance.INF waltz.M.ACC
 '[They] tried to dance waltz.'

This type of control mechanism is impossible with a personal passive structure, see the example below:

(131) * *Walc był próbowany tańczyć.* (Kibort 2004: 263)
 waltz.M.NOM AUX.3SG.M try.PTCP.SG.M dance.INF
 'Waltz was tried to dance.'

Nor can it be established with the impersonal passive (for they do not contain objects as arguments in their structure) as shown below:

(132) * *Było próbowane tańczyć (walca).*
 was.3SG.N try.PTCP.SG.N dance.INF waltz.M.ACC
 'It was tried to dance (waltz).'

All the examples given above clearly demonstrate that the *-no/-to* construction is an active formation that differs in many respects from the two types of passive voice. In that connection the most characteristic and defining properties of the construction under investigation is the occurrence of a direct object in accusative in its structure and the incompatibility of the impersonal construction with agentive adjunct phrases. The explanatory approaches in the relevant literature suggest that one possible cause for the morphosyntactic differences might be the two previously described morphosyntactic operations. These operations, as suggested by Blevins (2003) and Kibort (2004), are believed to have led to the creation of the constructions being compared: agent suppression in the case of the *-no/-to* formation, and agent demotion in the case of the passive voice forms. The morphosyntactic differences can be perceived as a direct result of these operations and as such related to the activity versus inactivity (absence) of the implicit subject in the syntactic structure of discussed constructions. Thus, compared to both forms of the passive voice, the *-no/-to* impersonal construction has a syntactically active 'covert' subject. This subject participates in syntactic control and raising, and it also binds reflexive pos-

sessive and reflexive pronouns. This behavior of the implicit subject of the *-no/-to* construction resembles the behavior of overt subjects of the active predicates. If the legitimacy of comparing the active and passive voice depends on the truth conditions of these two structures, then impersonal constructions with indefinite human interpretation should be seen as a separate category—*an impersonal voice* (cf. Blevins 2003)—which cannot be compared in a one-to-one ratio with either the passive or active voice. However, the syntactical activity and the presence of the direct object in the construction in question place it closer to formations of the active voice, with one major difference—the suppressed agent.

3 The Etymology of the *-no/-to* Construction

In order to better understand the contemporary function and usage of the *-no/-to* construction, it is worth tracing various stages of its historical development. This allows us to gain insight into several key questions: How did this construction come to acquire its impersonal reading, particularly the default human interpretation? Why does it always refer to the past tense? And what factors contributed to its reinterpretation as a result of which it changed from a passive into an active type of construction?

The aim of this chapter is not to provide a detailed analysis of the diachronic development of the construction, as that would go beyond the scope of this work. Rather, the goal is to outline the various stages of its evolution to enhance our understanding of the current function of the *-no/-to* construction in discourse, with particular emphasis on the semantic and syntactic differences in comparison to the passive voice.

Based on the literature, we can infer that the reinterpretation process of the originally passive forms ending in *-no/-to* into active predicates was influenced by several complex and long-lasting linguistic changes. Specifically, these include morpho-phonological, semantic, and syntactic processes. The interpretation of *-no/-to* forms as specifying actions performed exclusively by an unidentified human agent, as noted in the literature, is directly linked to their origin—the impersonal forms of the passive voice. Interestingly, as will be further discussed, the semantic features of impersonal passive formations have also contributed to the activation of the construction under investigation.

This chapter is structured as follows: First, fundamental information regarding the etymology of the investigated construction will be presented. In the second part, we will explore the morpho-phonological and semantic factors that contributed to the impersonalization (i.e., the acquisition of an impersonal interpretation) and the reinterpretation or reanalysis of the former passive *-no/-to* participles into active predicates. Subsequently, we will introduce the syntactic factors that facilitated and consolidated this process. The fourth part provides a summary of the chapter along with a discussion of the most important findings. The final section contains concluding remarks.

3.1 Basic Facts about the Etymology of the *-no/-to* Construction

As Kibort (2004: 256) rightly stresses, the *-no/-to* form “does not belong to the inflectional paradigm of contemporary Polish.” Historically, according to Siewierska (1988), the *-n/-t-* participle stems from the Proto-Indo-European nominalizing suffix **-to-*, the variations of which, as she points out, are implemented to form passive participles in many Indo-European language families such as, for example, in Indo-Iranian (Sanskrit, Vedic, Avestan, Old Persian), Celtic (Old Irish), Italic (Latin) and Anatolian (Hittite) (after Siewierska 1988: 270). Accordingly, as Bunčić (2019) remarks, the variation between the *-n-* and *-t-* is related to the same variation as, for example, in English (e.g. *woken* vs. *slept*) or German (*geschlafen* ‘slept’ vs. *erwacht*

‘woken’) (Bunčić 2019: 65). According to Leskien (1990), in Proto-Slavic the **-to-* suffix was added to verb stems ending in **i*, **r*, **m* and **n*, whereas the **-no-* suffix¹⁵ was attached to verb stems ending in **ě* and **a*. Siewierska (1988) states that the *-no/-to* participle usually occurred together with the auxiliary ‘to be’, but starting in the second half of the sixteenth century there was a noticeable reduction in the use of this auxiliary, until its complete disappearance in Modern Polish. She adds that the impersonal¹⁶ passives with the *-n/t-* participle were formed mostly but not exclusively from transitive verbs; however, over time the number of formations created from intransitive verbs increased so that today in Polish these forms occur as often as formations created from transitive verbs. The researcher reports that *-n/t-* participles were formed mostly from past tense verbs, and nowadays the *-no/-to* forms exclusively have a past meaning, which according to Blevins (2003: 490) “reflects their de-participial status.” Siewierska (1988) contends that in Modern Polish, sentences constructed with the *-no/-to* form are no longer considered passive. Instead, as discussed in the previous chapter, Polish linguists (cf. Brajerski 1977, Kibort 2004) unanimously recognize these forms as active impersonal constructions.

3.2 Morpho-phonological and Semantic Factors in the Reanalysis Process of the Passive *-no/-to* Participle

Let us consider the following examples from Lavine (2017: 178), where (133a) illustrates the passive construction with the passive *-no/-to* participle in Old Polish, (133b) demonstrates the active *-no/-to* construction in Modern Polish, and (133c) presents the contemporary passive formation with a neuter singular passive participle:

(133) Polish (hypothetical)

a. Old Polish (pre-14th c.): Canonical Passive

Okno *było* *zamknięt-o*.
 window.N.NOM.SG AUX.PST closed-PASS¹⁷-SG.N
 ‘The window was closed.’

b. Modern Polish (post-17th c.): Active Impersonal

Okno **było* *zamknięt-o*.
 window.N.ACC.SG AUX.PST closed-IMPRS
 ‘[They] closed the window.’

c. Contemporary Polish: Canonical Passive

Okno *było* *zamknięt-e*.
 window.N.NOM.SG AUX.PST closed-PASS-SG.N
 ‘The window was closed.’

¹⁵ There also was a suffix *-eno* that took other roots (cf. Leskien 1990: 136).

¹⁶ By the expression *impersonal passive* Siewierska (1988) means agentless passive, i.e., passive formations without an overt agent.

¹⁷ In this chapter, all passive participles will be glossed as PASS to emphasize the distinction from the active *-no/-to* construction.

Example (133a) illustrates a situation in which the *-no/-to* construction still existed in the passive paradigm as a neuter passive participle along with the tense marking auxiliary verb *być* 'to be'. The neuter passive participle ending in *-o* agrees with the neuter singular subject *okno* 'window' expressed in the nominative case in number and gender. By contrast, (133b) presents a scenario which corresponds to the contemporary use of the investigated construction, where the *-no/-to* predicate no longer co-occurs with the auxiliary verb. Moreover, such co-occurrence would be ungrammatical. Instead, it behaves like an active verb, remains transitive and combines with the direct object expressed in the accusative case. The example (133c) displays the modern neuter passive participle, which ends in *-e* and no longer in *-o*.

How did it happen that the *-no/-to* construction separated from the passive paradigm and became an independent verb form with accusative government (when formed from transitive verbs)? Let us start with morpho-phonological factors.

The crucial point for the morphological change of the construction under investigation is the fact, following Siewierska (1988), that passive participles (and adjectives) in Common Slavic¹⁸ entered into two distinct declensional systems¹⁹, a nominal one (a short form) and an adjectival²⁰/pronominal one (a long form). According to her, the *-no/-to* form was a nominal neuter passive participle, which was used in agreement with neuter passive subjects (as presented in (133) a). Siewierska (1988) points out that in the historical development of Polish the short nominal forms were subject to a gradual elimination, as a result of which only forms ending in *-no/-to* have been retained. According to Lavine (2005), the process of elimination of the nominal declension of adjectives in Polish was causally related to the contraction²¹ of the adjectives from pronominal declension. Thus, when the latter were reduced to monosyllabic forms, a few of them coincided with the short form endings of the nominal declension. Additionally, this process was strengthened by the fact that the reduced participles from the initial pronominal declension started to appear in predicative²² position, reserved so far mainly for the nominal forms, which contributed

¹⁸ According to Townsend and Janda (2002), Common Slavic serves as a Slavic prototype from which the modern Slavic languages have emerged. By examining Common Slavic, one can trace the common development of the Slavic languages with distinct manifestations. Common Slavic is preceded by an earlier phase of Slavic known as Proto-Slavic.

¹⁹ According to Lavine (2005), there were two distinct declensions in the Common Slavic: the pronominal (long) and the nominal (short) one. "(...) the initial distinction between the two declensions involved definiteness: the demonstrative pronoun in the pronominal declension functioned like a postponed definite article. Later, adjectives and participles of the short form declension were restricted in Polish and Ukrainian to predicative use, so that the distinction between the L(ong) F(orms) and S(hort) F(orms) came to be defined positionally, rather than semantically" (Lavine 2005: 101).

²⁰ According to Lavine (2005), "the pronominal declension was formed by adding the Common Slavic pronoun *-jъ* (where *ъ* is a reduced front vowel) to the nominal form" (Lavine 2005: 101).

²¹ As Lavine (2005) remarks, this was the case also in Ukrainian but not in Russian or Belarusian.

²² As indicated by Townsend and Janda (2002), an opposition between long attributive and short predicative adjectives emerged in Polish, Czech, and Russian. Nonetheless, Polish and Czech have largely lost most short adjective forms. In Polish, remnants of these forms

to further isolating the older nominal forms (Lavine 2005: 102). With many intermediate stages, as Lavine (2005) points out, the Common Slavic masculine nominal form underwent a change as the null suffix (e.g. LCS²³ *novъ* ‘new.NOM.SG.M’) was substituted with the pronominal ending *-y* (Pol. *nowy*), the nominal (e.g. LCS *nova* ‘new.NOM.SG.F’) and pronominal feminine forms lost their distinction, as the former pronominal form *-aja* (e.g. LCS *novaja*) was shortened to *-a* (Pol. *nowa*) and, most importantly for the sake of this work, the pronominal neuter singular form *-oje* (e.g. LCS *nowoje* ‘new.NOM.SG.N’) contracted to *-e* (Pol. *nowe*) in Polish and as a result the nominal neuter singular form *-o* (e.g. LCS *novo*) “became a member of an unproductive paradigm” (Lavine 2005: 102). Table 2, based²⁴ on the table presented by Lavine (2017), presents the paradigm of the nominal and pronominal declension of adjectives. As Lavine (2017) notes, reference Common Slavic forms are included, as the nominal declension in Polish²⁵, before being replaced by contracted pronominal forms, essentially mirrored those of Common Slavic.

Table 2: Paradigm of the nominal and pronominal declension of adjectives (nominative singular, ‘old’)

	Nominal			Pronominal		
	M	F	N	M	F	N
Late Common Slavic	*-ъ <i>*starъ</i>	*-a <i>*stara</i>	*-o <i>*staro</i>	*-ъjъ <i>*starъjъ</i>	*-aja <i>*staraja</i>	*-oje <i>*staroje</i>
Polish	—	—	—	-y <i>stary</i>	-a <i>stara</i>	-e <i>stare</i>
Russian	-∅ <i>star</i>	-a <i>stara</i>	-o <i>staro</i>	-yj <i>staryj</i>	-aja <i>staraja</i>	-oe <i>staroe</i>

Consequently, due to the outlined phonological process, the morpheme *-o*, formerly linked with denoting nominative singular neuter of the *-n/t-* participle, underwent morphological isolation and remained the only representative of the old participial nominal declension. This marked the initial and pivotal step in the process of active interpretation or reanalyzing (cf. Siewierska 1988, Lavine 2005, 2017) the *-no/-to* construction, which, according to Siewierska (1988), enabled it to receive a new impersonal meaning.

This observation with regard to the change of the interpretation of the *-no/-to* forms is backed up by Bielec (1998), who states that the unusual morphological shape of the *-no/-to* form seems to result from and serves to primarily express an indefinite human interpretation of the implicit agent: “If the agent of an action is irrelevant... the passive is often expressed with a past adjectival participle (passive)

persist, exemplified by forms like *gotów* ‘(he is) ready’ and *zdrów* ‘(he is) healthy’ (Townsend and Janda 2002: 140).

²³ The abbreviation stands for Late Common Slavic.

²⁴ The table presented by Lavine (2017: 177) includes examples of endings from Belarusian and Ukrainian, which have been omitted in this work. The table here has been supplemented with examples of the adjective ‘old’ in the three genders in the singular.

²⁵ As Lavine (2017) explains, Russian (and in his table also Belarusian) forms are provided for comparison to illustrate that the nominal forms were not replaced in those languages where the pronominal forms were not reduced.

but in a special²⁶ third person singular form ending in *-o*. This can be used with imperfective or perfective verbs, but only in the past tense” (cited in Blevins 2003: 491). Siewierska (1988: 270) points out that the impersonal meaning of the *-no/-to* forms “is attributed in part to the fact that the neuter gender is best predisposed to express abstract meanings²⁷.” She argues that this particular property of the neuter gender of the former passive participle together with the syntactical tendency²⁸ for omitting the passive agent were the main factors that contributed to the impersonal use of this form. She states that the phonological changes described above, which led to the loss of the other forms of the nominal passive participle, brought about the perception of the *-no/-to* form, which lost its neuter meaning in the process, as “a fixed non-declinable form with a specialized impersonal function” (Siewierska 1988: 272).

Another interesting suggestion was made by Blevins (2003), who observes that despite their formal affinity with the passive participles and their genetic assignment to the neuter singular forms the *-no/-to* forms might also have been perceived as conservative formations, which preserved voice-neutrality. In making this assertion, he refers to Szemerényi (1996), who states the following: “The suffix *-to-* is widespread in all I[ndo-]E[uropean] languages except Anatolian and Tocharian ... In the later history of the languages, there is a tendency to restrict the formation to passive use ... The original lack of voice differentiation is, however, quite clear ... in the Latin deponent the *-to-* formation regularly has active meaning, etc.” (cited in Blevins 2003: 490). Blevins (2003), however, also does not exclude that the impersonal character of the *-no/-to* forms can indeed be an innovative phenomenon in Slavic languages.²⁹

The impersonal use of the *-no/-to* forms is dated by most Slavic researchers, according to Doros (1975) and Brajerski (1977) (cited in Siewierska 1988: 270), to Common Slavic, and Siewierska (1988) assumes that the *-no/-to* participle could definitely have fulfilled such a function in Old Church Slavonic.³⁰

Concerning the factors leading to the active interpretation of the *-no/-to* construction, Siewierska (1988) additionally notes that the utilization of the adjectival type of passive participle in forming passive constructions facilitated the shift toward the active interpretation of the *-no/-to* impersonal forms.

²⁶ Building upon the frameworks presented by Siewierska (1988) and Lavine (2005, 2017), the morpheme *-no/-to* will be perceived in this work as a fossilized, non-declinable impersonal affix.

²⁷ According to Siewierska (1988: 275), all the Slavic languages use the third person singular neuter form of the verb with intransitive verbs “to express situations involving various natural or supernatural phenomena or to describe psychological or physical states. [...] In Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian and Polish, impersonal constructions with the 3rd person singular neuter verb can also be formed from transitive verbs”.

²⁸ Siewierska (1988) states that Slavic languages, like English, belong to the type of languages where agentless passives by far outnumber those with an overt agent (Siewierska 1988: 251).

²⁹ This is different from the cognate impersonal *-ma/-ta* forms in Lithuanian, which according to Blevins (2003) are conservative rather than innovative (Blevins 2003: 490).

³⁰ Old Church Slavonic (established between the 9th and 11th centuries) is the oldest individual Slavic language based on South Slavic.

The other, more crucial factor she suggests that might have contributed to the active interpretation of the investigated construction was the simultaneous rise in the derivation of the *-no/-to* forms from intransitive verbs. With the latter statement she refers to Frajzyngier (1982), who considers the impersonal passive³¹ of intransitive verbs as passive only in form and not in meaning. The reason for that is that he perceives the indefinite human interpretation as an intrinsic feature of impersonal passives. Hence, as he points out, the core function of impersonal passives is to indicate that a sentence has an indefinite human agent, which is also the semantic (logical) subject of the sentence, which in turn distinguishes the impersonal passives from the personal and impersonal passive of transitive verbs, “which do not indicate any kind of subject, animate or inanimate, human or non-human” (Frajzyngier 1982: 267). This is also in alignment with the findings of Blevins (2003: 480): “it is often observed that subjectless passives have an ‘indefinite’ or ‘human’ or ‘agentive’ interpretation.”

When exploring potential factors contributing to the reanalysis of the *-no/-to* forms, Siewierska (1988) references arguments put forth by Frajzyngier (1982). She posits that the increase of *-no/-to* participles of intransitive verbs with the inherent indefinite human subject could have influenced the reanalysis of passive transitive *-no/-to* forms. This reanalysis, she proposes, was driven by analogy with their intransitive counterparts, and she likens this process to a similar one she assumes has happened with the Polish (former passive) reflexive constructions³².

This hypothesis receives indirect support from Frajzyngier (1982: 274), who, in turn, makes reference to Brajerski (1977) and states that “the impersonal passives emerged prior to the emergence of the direct object in impersonal constructions and in Old Polish documents the impersonal passives are the passives of intransitive verbs.” This correlation is also backed up by Klemensiewicz (1961), who observes

³¹ Frajzyngier (1982) understands *impersonal passive* in the following way: “The term impersonal passive stands for passive forms of verbs in sentences for which one cannot postulate an underlying subject. These sentences, like any other impersonal sentences, may or may not have a surface structure subject, usually 3 p. sg. pronoun”. In his article he deals with two kinds of impersonal passive: “the passive form of intransitive verbs and passive forms of transitive verbs in languages in which the patient or direct object is marked in the same way in which it is marked in the active sentence” (Frajzyngier 1982: 267). With the latter he means, among other things, the Polish *-no/-to* construction, which, as he points out, is an active construction, but he mentions it in order to challenge Comrie’s (1977) hypothesis suggesting that subjects are removed in impersonal sentences, asserting that impersonal passives and other passive types derive from subject demotion. Comrie (1977) relies on Polish examples to support his theory of subject demotion as the primary mechanism in various passive constructions.

³² Siewierska (1988) notes that in the case of Polish impersonal reflexive constructions, the inherent implied human agent is not only the underlying subject but also the surface subject because it syntactically behaves like one, which allows for them to be interpreted as active indefinite rather than passive constructions. Since the inherent human subject is a characteristic of impersonal passives of intransitive verbs, but not transitive ones, as assumed by Frajzyngier (1982), she argues that “the reflexive passives of transitive verbs in the Slavic languages other than Russian may be regarded as having undergone or being in the process of undergoing a reanalysis on the basis of analogy with their intransitive equivalents” (Siewierska 1988: 266).

that the forms *mówiono*_{OIMPRS} ‘one spoke’, *robiono*_{OIMPRS} ‘one made’, etc. stem from the forms *mówiono*_{PASS.SG.N} *jest*_{AUX-PRS} ‘is spoken’, *robiono*_{PASS.SG.N} *jest*_{AUX-PRS} ‘is made’, etc., which have been further extended to include transitive verbs, e.g., *budowano*_{IMPRS} *domy*_{ACC} ‘houses were built’, *robiono*_{OIMPRS} *plany*_{ACC} ‘plans were made’ (cited in Frajzyngier 1982: 286). A similar opinion is held by Brajerski (1977), who, concurring with Łoś (1915), asserts that the transformation of subjectless passive *-no/-to* constructions into active ones resulted in the emergence of sentences with the direct object in the accusative case. Stating this, he disagrees with Miklosich (1883) and Oesterreicher (1926), who, based on an observation of related Greek and Latin constructions, argue that it was the direct object complement marked with the accusative in the Slavic passive clauses with *-no/-to* participles that was the catalyst for their reinterpretation as active verbs. Brajerski (1977) claims instead³³ that passive subjectless sentences can occasionally transform into active ones and that the predicates of the aforementioned Greek and Latin sentences have passive forms, but not the meaning. He stresses that the direct object complement cannot appear together with a passive predicate. Brajerski (1977: 26) observes further that “sources of the *-no/-to* forms are Proto-Indo-European subjectless sentences with a neuter passive participle in the third person singular, such as the following Latin sentences: *Dies noctesque estur*_{PASS.PRS.3SG.N}, *bibitur*_{PASS.PRS.3SG.N} (Plautus) [‘One eats and drinks day and night’; literally Pol. ‘jest jedzone, pite’ ‘it is eaten and drunk’] or *Sic itur*_{PASS.PRS.3SG.N} *ad astra* (Virgil) [‘This is how one goes to the stars’; literally: Pol. ‘jest idzione’ ‘is gone’]”. These subjectless predicates, he elaborates further, were mostly formed from intransitive verbs and denoted only actions and states of people. Their main communicative purpose was to demonstrate the action or state expressed by the predicate. He adds that the subject was most often retrieved from the context, and when it was for some reason necessary to include the agent into communication, it was expressed in the form of an instrumental or prepositional phrase.

In his research, Brajerski (1977) provides a detailed depiction of how the activation process of the former nominal singular neuter passive participle might have unfolded. He addresses the question of the linguistic circumstances and aims to determine the time of the emergence of active predicates ending in *-no/-to* and describes the various stages of this development, relying on the analysis of a substantial body of Old Polish text material. In his study, he aims to determine the grammatical voice exhibited by the predicates in question in the examined Old Polish texts. His findings reveal a complex picture with numerous mixed cases. According to his research, the Old Polish texts exhibit instances where verbs with the suffixes *-no* and *-to* unquestionably function as passive verbs, while in other cases, they ap-

³³ Brajerski (1977) refers to one example of a Church Slavonic (Russian) record *glasъ*_{VOICE.M-NOM/ACC} *truby*_{TROMPET.F.GEN} *uslyšano*_{PTCTP.SG.N} *budetъ*_{AUX-FUT}, which was used by Miklosich (1883) to support the idea that the direct object in the accusative case could occur with passive *-no/-to* predicates and its presence led to their activation. However, as Brajerski (1977: 26) observes, this phrase is a literal translation from Greek *σάλπιγγος*_{TROMPET.GEN} *φωνή*_{VOICE.NOM} *ἀκουστον*_{PTCP.SG.N} *ἔσται*_{AUX-FUT} ‘głos trąby będzie tym, co będzie słyszane’, ‘the voice of the trumpet will be that/something that will be audible’, where *σάλπιγγος*_{TROMPET.GEN} *φωνή*_{VOICE.NOM} ‘the voice of the trumpet’ is in the nominative case, not in the accusative case, which also applies to the Church Slavonic sentence, where *glasъ*_{VOICE.M.NOM} is marked with nominative and not with accusative case, as wrongly assumed by Miklosich (1883).

pear to be active. In many instances, these verbs can be considered both passive and active formations (cf. Brajerski 1977: 9). In general, he distinguishes three main types of sentences with predicates ending in *-no/-to*. These three main types also include several subtypes each, making a total of 12 types of sentences with the constructions under investigation. The groups can be briefly summarized as follows (after Brajerski 1977: 9):

- 1) Sentences formed with intransitive and transitive verbs without direct object complements in accusative case, i.e., sentences like *Tq_{DEM.F} drogq_{INST.F} wtedy_{THEN} nie_{NEG} jeżdżono_{IMPRS}* ‘At that time, [they] did not travel on this road.’ By the author’s reckoning, the predicates in this type of sentences, when used with overt copula verbs, expressed the subjectless passive voice in Old Polish. In the past tense and conditional mood, predicates often occurred without copula verbs and agent complements realized by prepositional phrases and are therefore to be seen as active clauses. Brajerski states further that this type of sentences is a direct continuation of the aforementioned Proto-Indo-European subjectless sentences, where impersonal actions and states were expressed by the forms consisting of a passive verb form in agreement with a covert third person singular argument cf., e.g.: Polish *jest_{AUX-PRS} skazano_{PASS.SG.N}* ‘It is ordered’ originates from Latin *est_{AUX-PRS} mandatum_{PASS.PST.SG.N}*, Polish *było_{AUX-PST} palono_{PASS.SG.N}* ‘It was burned’ originates from Latin *urebatur_{PASS.PST.3SG}* and Polish *będzie_{AUX-FUT} wam_{2PL.DAT} dano_{PASS.SG.N}* originates from Latin *dabitur_{PASS.FUT.3SG} vobis_{2PL.DAT}* ‘you will be given’.
- 2) A group of sentences with today’s accusative object complement in the form of various linguistic structures of the neuter gender, which might have formerly been subjects in agreement with the neuter singular passive participle (i.e., forms which are syncretic between nominative and accusative singular), such as sentences with a singular neuter noun (type *a*), e.g. *zaorano pole_{NOM/ACC.N.SG}* ‘a field was plowed’, or with a singular neuter pronoun (type *b*), e.g. *policzono to wszystko_{NOM/ACC.N.SG}* ‘all of this was counted’. This group contains seven subtypes in total.
- 3) Sentences with an object in accusative and genitive that could not occur in the past as a neuter subject in agreement with a singular neuter passive participle, such as: (type *a*) with an accusative object, e.g. *schwymano_{IMPRS} złoczyńcę_{M.ACC}* ‘[They] captured a villain’, (type *b*) with a genitive object followed by a negated predicate, e.g. *nie_{NEG} schwymano_{IMPRS} złoczyńcy_{M.GEN}* ‘[They] did not capture a villain.’ In this category, *-no/-to* predicates lacking copula verbs are the most commonly observed. This group comprises four distinct subtypes.

Based on the research conducted, Brajerski (1977) asserts that the process of activation of predicates with *-no* and *-to* started in the subjectless sentences of the first group, i.e., *Tq_{DEM.F} drogq_{F.INS} wtedy_{THEN} nie_{NEG} jeżdżono_{IMPRS}* ‘At that time, [they] did not travel on this road’ when used without the overt present copula *jest*. The predicates in such structures could be derived from both intransitive and transitive verbs. Transitive verbs might have included a direct object complement in their structures, and

in such cases, sentences of the third group, such as *Schwytano*_{IMPRS} *złoczyńcę*_{M.ACC} ‘[They] captured a villain’, were formed. In some cases, this process influenced the reinterpretation of nominative neuter subjects as direct object complements, giving rise to sentences of the second group, such as *Zaorano*_{IMPRS} *pole*_{N.ACC}. ‘[They] plowed a field’.

As for the time frame in which active *-no/-to* forms emerged, Brajerski (1977) provides the following explanation. Having analyzed all types of constructions in the above-listed groups, he concludes that the active meaning of the *-no/-to* forms can be seen most clearly in the sentences of the third group, where during his study he did not find any examples of passive forms, i.e., in the group of sentences with an unambiguous direct object in the accusative case. Brajerski (1977), referring to a similar conclusion drawn by Lewicki (1966), argues that predicates from the third group should be treated as active from the beginning of the history of the Polish language until today. Based on his observations he also concludes that they arose in the pre-historic period³⁴ (i.e., before the 14th century), otherwise, as he reasons, they would show signs of passivity in the Old Polish texts, which, as he found out, is not the case. Therefore, contrary to other researchers such as Szober (1923) and Klemensiewicz (1961), he claims that it was this type of predicate that was responsible for the activization of the sentences from the second group³⁵ and not the other way around.

Brajerski (1977) observes further that forms ending in *-no/-to* became subjectless active forms at a time when the participle with *-n-* and *-t-* still functioned as a passive participle in the past tense, preceding the time indicated by the personal forms of the verb *byti* ‘to be’. He draws this conclusion based on the observation that in the oldest Polish texts (14th–15th century), active forms with *-no/-to*, regardless of whether they were derived from imperfective or perfective verbs and whether they occurred with or without the present copula *jest*³⁶, consistently indicated past tense. By contrast³⁷, passive participles derived from imperfective verbs expressed present tense, while those derived from perfective verbs expressed past tense. Therefore,

³⁴ Brajerski (1977) dates the beginning of the activization process of the *-no/-to* forms to after the 5th century.

³⁵ According to Brajerski (1977), the sentences from the second group are recorded in historical records as both active and passive, which implies that the agreement of the passive neuter predicate with the neuter grammatical subject (patient) strongly supported the passivity of the predicate (Brajerski 1977: 26).

³⁶ Brajerski (1977) observes that when examining the oldest records, there are challenges in determining the grammatical voice of clauses with the copula verbs *jest* and *było* with the forms ending in *-no* and *-to*. This is because predicates with *-no/-to* and the present auxiliary *jest* could simultaneously indicate passive forms of the present tense and the analytical perfect tense (formed in Old Polish by combining the past active participle with the appropriate personal forms of the auxiliary ‘to be’ in the present tense). Similarly, with the past auxiliary *było*, these forms could indicate passive forms of the past tense and the analytical pluperfect tense.

³⁷ Brajerski (1977: 25) illustrates this with the following example: both active clauses *wzywano*_{IMPRS.IPFV} *go*_{ACC} *jest*_{AUX-PRS} and *wezvano*_{IMPRS.PFV} *go*_{ACC} *jest*_{AUX-PRS} ‘[They] summoned him’ indicate the past while the passive form *wzywany*_{PASS.IPFV.SG.M} *jest*_{AUX-PRS} ‘He is being summoned’ indicates the present and *wezwany*_{PASS.PFV.SG.M} *jest*_{AUX-PRS} ‘He was summoned’ indicates the past.

Brajerski (1977) suggests that if forms ending in *-no/-to* had undergone changes to become active during the historical period, predicates derived from imperfective verbs would express the present tense, and those derived from perfective verbs would express the past tense, which is not the case. Consequently, Brajerski (1977) contends that *-no/-to* forms were established during a period when they could historically be derived from both perfective and imperfective verbs, indicating a time when the aspectual category had not yet fully developed. In the 9th–10th century, Old Church Slavonic exhibited a well-defined aspectual system. During this period, passive past participles in *-n-* and *-t-* were exclusively formed from perfective verbs, while present participles in *-m-* were derived from imperfective verbal stems, as seen in examples like *rečen*_{PFV} ‘said’ as opposed to *vědom*_{IPFV} ‘aware’ (Brajerski 1977: 25). Considering these linguistic developments, Brajerski (1977) leans toward placing the establishment of *-no/-to* structures before the 9th century.

As noted by Brajerski (1977), there were two kinds of periphrastic passives in Proto-Slavic: one involved an analytical form comprising the tense marking **byti* ‘to be’ and a participle in **-n-* (*-ъ, -a, -o*), or in **-m-* (*-ъ, -a, -o*), for example, **rekom*_{PASS}._{IPFV.SG.N} *jest*_{AUX-PRS} ‘jest mówione’, ‘it is being said’ and *rečeno*_{PASS.PFV.SG.N} *jest*_{AUX-PRS} ‘jest powiedziane’, ‘it is said’; and ‘zostało powiedziane’, ‘it was said’; the other was a reflexive structure, as seen in phrases like **reče*_{PST,3SG} *sę*_{REFL} ‘it was said’ and **rod*_{PST,3SG} *sę*_{REFL} ‘one was born’. Knowing that in Proto-Slavic there were two types of analytical passive constructions, the question, as rightly noted by Brajerski (1977), remains: why did precisely the inflection type with a participle ending in *-n-* transform into active forms (in case of the *-no/-to* construction)? Brajerski (1977) offers the following solution. Assuming that there was no clear category of aspect in Proto-Slavic, he suggests that participles with *-n-* and *-t-* (*participium praeteriti*) expressed actions antecedent to the times indicated by the copula *byti* ‘to be’, while participles with *-m-* (*participium praesentis*) were used to convey contemporary actions. Thus, participles with *-m-* along with the copula *byti* expressed the actional passive, while participles with *-n-* and *-t-* conveyed the resultative-stative passive. Brajerski (1977) adds that only forms with the present copula *jest* likely expressed both types of passive, the present and the past one, e.g. **rečeno*_{PASS.SG.N} *jest*_{AUX-PRS} (with a dual meaning of: *praesens passivi* (resultative-stative): Pol. *jest*_{AUX-PRS} *powiedziane*_{PASS.PFV.SG.N}, ‘it is said’ and *praeteritum passivi* (actional): Pol. *zostało*_{3SG.N} *powiedziane*_{PASS.PFV.SG.N}, ‘it was said’). Therefore, continues Brajerski (1977, 1975), expressing past actions and states—those that leave traces of resultative-stative features on objects—the participles with *-no/-to* took on the character of adjectives. Illustrating this hypothesis, he draws attention to the fact that in certain cases, the former singular neuter adjectives with the ending *-o* (from the old nominal declension, cf. Table 2) transformed into adverbs³⁸, when used as predicatives. This primarily applies to sentences with subjects in the form of an infinitive or a subordinate clause, such as: *Brzydko*_{ADV} *jest*_{AUX-PRS} *klamać*_{INF}, which originally meant ‘Kłamanie jest brzydkie’, ‘Lying is ugly’, cf. Lat. *mentiri*_{INF} *turpe*_{ADJ} *est*_{AUX-PRS}; or *Pewno*_{ADV}, *że*_{COMP} *każdy*_{NOM.M.SG} *ma*_{PRS,3SG} *swój*_{REFL,ACC.SG} *rozum*_{M,ACC}, which originally meant ‘Jest pewne, że każdy ma

³⁸ In contemporary Polish, adverbial derivatives are formed from adjective stems using the suffixes *-e* and *-o*. For example: *dobr-y* ‘good’ → *dobrz-e*; *mił-y* ‘nice’ → *mił-e* and *mił-o*; *słodk-i* ‘sweet’ → *słodk-o*, etc. (Brajerski 1975: 116).

swój rozum’, ‘It is certain that everyone has their own mind’. Brajerski (1975) argues³⁹ that if former singular neuter adjectives in nominative, such as *brzydk-o* ‘ugly’, *pewn-o* ‘certain’, etc., used as predicatives over infinitival subjects and subordinate subject clauses had evolved into adverbs, then the adjectival participles could have taken on adverbial meanings as well, as for instance *podano* in the sentence *Podano_{IMPRS.PFV} pić_{INF} Aleksandrowi_{DAT}* (which originally meant: *Zostało_{became.3SG.N} podane_{PASS.SG.N} pić_{INF} Aleksandrowi_{DAT}* ‘It was given Aleksander to drink’). Brajerski (1977) stresses the semantic similarity between the *-no/-to* predicates and adverbs with the following contrastive example: *W_{IN} piecach_{M.LOC.PL} już napalono_{IMPRS}* ‘[They] have already lit the stoves’ vs. *W_{IN} pokoju_{M.LOC.SG} już ciepło_{ADV}* ‘It is already warm in the room’. Both of these sentences could be interpreted as ‘Ktoś powiedział, że ktoś napalił w piecu’ (‘Someone said that someone lit the stove’). Thus, Brajerski (1975, 1977) posits that the main factor leading to the detachment of the *-no/-to* forms from the declensional paradigm and their separation from participial adjectives was precisely the adverbialization of predicates with *-no* and *-to*, i.e., the possibility of these formations, in some cases, to take on an adverbial meaning. In this regard, as Brajerski (1975, 1977) argues, the formal (the singular neuter ending *-o*) and semantic proximity to adverbs contributed to the activation of participles with *-no/-to*. As a consequence, according to his reasoning, the participles with *-no/-to* lost the ability to convey passive voice and instead acquired an active meaning. In contrast to Siewierska (1988), who associated the development of new impersonal meanings in forms ending in *-no/-to* with the abstract nature of the neuter gender, Brajerski (1977) contends that the capability to convey completed actions and states served as the initial foundation for connecting these forms with an abstract and unspecified agent. His argumentation suggests that the capability of these forms to express completed actions and states, as well as their similarity to adverbs, contributed to assigning them the meaning of impersonal active predicates.

3.3 Syntactic process

Beyond the described morpho-phonological and semantic processes, a significant role in the activation or reanalysis of the former passive *-no/-to* participle was also played by a syntactic process.

As Siewierska (1988) points out, the activation process of the passive *-no/-to* participle was partly triggered by the gradual elimination of the passive auxiliary *byti*, which, as she reports, started from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards.

Similar to Siewierska’s observation, Brajerski (1977) contends that the omission of the auxiliary caused the participles to break ties with the passive voice paradigm, and then, like adjectives, they assumed adverbial meaning in some cases, which enhanced their reinterpretation. He stresses the important role of the disconnection with the auxiliary verb stating that “removing the auxiliary broke the link between

³⁹ As Brajerski (1977) notes, adverbs in subjectless sentences also originated from predicatives of adjectival origin, as in the example: *Jest_{AUX-PRS} ciepło_{ADV}* (which originally meant *Jest_{ADJ.SG.N} ciepłe_{ADJ.SG.N}*, similar to the German and English examples: *Es ist warm_{ADJ}*, *It’s warm_{ADJ}*).

the predicate and the passive forms. Verbs with *-no* and *-to* could only become active if they were deprived of the auxiliary” (Brajerski 1977: 28).

The following example from Doros (1975; cited in Siewierska 1988: 270) displays a passive formation in Old Polish with a *-no/-to* participle:

(134) Old Polish (Doros 1975: 89)

... *by* *thesz* *krolesthwo* *tho* *nakonyecz* *abo*
 COND also kingdom.N.NOM.SG this at_last either
skazano *od* *nyeprzyaczol*, *abo* *posyandyono* *od*
 corrupt.PASS.SG.N by enemies or possess.PASS.SG.N by
poganov *nye* *bylo*
 pagans not.NEG be.AUX.PST.3SG.N

‘... and also so that the kingdom will never be overrun by (its) enemies or possessed by pagans.’

In this example, we have a classic passive sentence where the (passive) subject of the sentence *krolesthwo* ‘kingdom’ appears in the nominative case, the passive auxiliary *bylo* agrees with it in person, number and gender, and the past participles *skazano* and *posyandyono* in number and gender. The underlying performer of the action was in Polish expressed by the preposition *od* ‘from’ or *przez* ‘through’ (as noted by Brajerski 1977). In sentence (134), the underlying subjects are expressed by a prepositional phrase with *od*: *od nyeprzyaczol* ‘by enemies’, *od poganov* ‘by pagans’. Considering clause (134) we can thus state that the *-no/-to* participle is firmly confined in the passive paradigm and allows only a passive interpretation as a marker of the neuter singular of participles. Lavine (2005) gives another example of the *-no/-to* form used in the environment of the passive voice, where an intermediate stage in the activation process of the construction in question can be observed:

(135) Old Polish (Lavine 2005: 102)

Nie *obleczesz* *się* *w* *rucho*, *jeżto*
 NEG you_will_dress REFL in garment.N.SG which.NOM/ACC.N.SG
z *welny* *a* *ze* *lnu* *tkano* *jest*.
 from wool and from linen woven.PASS.N.SG/IMPRS AUX-PRES

‘You shall not wear a garment that is woven of both wool and linen.’

Based on the above example, we can observe, following Lavine (2005), that the relative pronoun (*jeżto*) with the ending *-o* receives in the co-presence of the *-no/-to* form (*tkano*) and the present auxiliary (*jest*) a morphologically ambiguous interpretation between nominative and accusative. Thus, it could at the same time be perceived in a twofold way: either as a raised singular nominal phrase in nominative case in canonical agreement (in number and gender) with the passive participle *tkano* and the present auxiliary *jest* (in person, number and gender), or as a direct object complement of the non-agreeing impersonal *-no/-to* structure expressed in the accusative case. The agentive expression is lacking entirely in this structure. Consequently, the reading of the *-no/-to* morpheme in combination with an auxil-

iary and a neuter singular NP could be either passive or impersonal. Following Lavine (2017), this phase can be viewed as an intermediate step in the reinterpretation of the *-no/-to* form. It precedes the full isolation of the old neuter singular */-o/* and its subsequent reanalysis. During this transitional stage, when coupled with passive morphology, the form exhibited ambiguity, hovering between an agreeing canonical passive structure and the emerging impersonal expression. According to Lavine (2005), the two possible variants of interpretation of the nominal *-o* suffix were disambiguated both morphologically and syntactically towards the end of the 17th century, when due to the lack of the tense-marking auxiliary the direct object in accusative came to pattern exclusively with the reanalyzed non-agreement marker of the impersonal *-no/-to* structure. He illustrates this with the following example:

(136) Old Polish (Lavine 2005: 101)

...	<i>a</i>	<i>popędzono</i>	<i>sierce</i>	<i>ludskie</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>działaniu.</i>
	and	driven.IMPERS	heart.N.ACC	people's	toward	work.
	'... for the people's hearts were driven to work.'					

There is no auxiliary verb in the above sentence therefore the clause does not get a passive interpretation, and for that reason the neuter singular noun phrase *sierce* 'heart', which follows the *-no/-to* participle, can be unambiguously interpreted as a direct object in the accusative case. In this case Lavine (2005) remarks additionally that "Even in case of the NEUT.SG, which remains morphologically ambiguous between the NOM and ACC, the missing auxiliary indicates a new syntactic structure in the language that patterns with structural ACC" (Lavine 2005: 103).

On the basis of the above three examples, which are not presented in chronological order, it is possible to cursorily trace the successive stages of the complex syntactic process that led to the morphological independence of the former passive *-no/-to* participle, that is, to its becoming an active formation. The most important factors (cf. Siewierska 1988, Lavine 2005, 2017) that contributed to this change were the elimination of agent expressions (cf. Lavine 2017) like the ones displayed in (134), disappearance of the tense-marking auxiliary verb 'to be' from the sentence structure, which is still to be seen in (134) and (135), and, resulting from this, disambiguation of the case status of the noun phrase, which after the disappearance of the tense marking auxiliary came to exclusively express the accusative case, which is showed in (136). According to Lavine (2005, 2017), the morpho-phonological process described in the previous section triggered the reanalysis of the obsolete neuter singular form *-o*, as a result of which the *-no/-to* form became an innovative fixed Tense marker⁴⁰ [+past] (an affix) that patterns with a structural accusative. Following his argumentation, the reanalysis was completed by assigning the new syntactic function to the old passive morpheme.

⁴⁰ "The complementary distribution of */-no/-to/* with (overt tense-marking) auxiliaries, coupled with the past-tense interpretation of this innovative structure [...], suggests that */-no/-to/* in the modern language is itself an instantiation of Tense—the old passive morpheme has been reanalyzed as an auxiliary of sorts" (Lavine 2017: 186). As discussed in Chapter 2, the present work shares this standpoint up to the point where the *-no/-to* form is considered an affix, but not an auxiliary.

3.4 Discussion

From the analysis conducted by Brajerski (1977) it follows that today's *-no/-to* forms originate from Proto-Indo-European impersonal passive constructions. As Brajerski (1977) notes, these constructions were mainly formed from intransitive verbs like e.g. Lat. *itur, bibitur*. These forms could exclusively denote actions performed by human agents, without the possibility of any other interpretation. This semantic feature, the characteristic [+human] feature inherited from these original formations, proves to be so salient that even in the case of *-no/-to* forms derived from transitive verbs, unlike classical passive constructions, it does not allow for an interpretation of the agent other than a vaguely specified human. Interestingly, as suggested by Siewierska (1988), the semantic feature [+human], which is, as mentioned above, a characteristic feature of impersonal passive constructions formed from intransitive verbs (cf. Frajzyngier 1982), could also have contributed to the activation of originally passive *-no/-to* forms. Frajzyngier (1982), based on his research on impersonal passive formations, concludes that due to their properties and functions, these formations should be classified as a separate grammatical category. He argues that these formations are associated with passive voice formations created from transitive verbs solely due to their morphological structure. The fact that these formations only allow interpretations involving an unspecified human agent leads him to assess that these formations have an active meaning, unlike classical passive formations. Classical passives, according to him, can only precisely specify the agent of an action after adding an appropriate preposition. Therefore, he believes that the meaning and function, rather than the morphological structure, determine the grammatical classification of a given construction.

A similar view is suggested by Siewierska (1988), who proposes that the increased number of *-no/-to* constructions formed from intransitive verbs in a certain historical period of the Polish language was one of the factors that could lead to the activation of the Polish impersonal constructions under investigation. One of the crucial factors that fundamentally led to the reanalysis of *-no/-to* constructions, as presented in the previous section, was the gradual disappearance of prepositional phrases specifying the performer of a given action from their structure. As Frajzyngier (1982) demonstrates, passive impersonal⁴¹ constructions formed from intransitive verbs generally tend to exclude agentive phrases, as they are already expressed by their syntactic structure. Therefore, it can be assumed that the disappearance of agentive phrases characteristic of the classical passive is closely linked to the development of the *-no/-to* construction from the original impersonal passive constructions. This, in turn, supports the validity of Siewierska's (1988) argument and at the same time demonstrates that the active meaning of these externally passive formations could have led to syntactic transformations ultimately resulting in their

⁴¹ Frajzyngier (1982) remarks that because there is no exhaustive study of all languages it cannot be stated that the indication of an indefinite human subject is a universal property of impersonal passives. He proposes instead that this property might have caused the emergence of impersonal passives. As he states, "the data from Arabic, several Indo-European languages, and from Turkish support the hypothesis that the passive of intransitive verbs has the potential of realizing the function of an indefinite human subject" (Frajzyngier 1982: 288).

detachment from the paradigm of the passive voice. Moreover, as Frajzyngier (1982) observes, related Latin forms are translated by many researchers as active forms. For instance, Ernout and Thomas (1953) translate *itur* as French *on va* ‘one goes’ (German *man geht*), an indefinite form, guided by the meaning of this formally passive construction (i.e., indefinite subject interpretation). According to Hofmann and Szantyr (1997), this impersonal passive construction was later replaced in Latin by a compound construction with *homo* (> French *on*) and a verb in the active form (cited in Frajzyngier 1982: 277). This seems to imply that under the influence of the saliency of the implicit agent, this construction with time transformed into an active construction.

In the case of the *-no/-to* construction, we are dealing with a specific trigger that initiated the activization process, as described in the previous section, i.e., the morpho-phonological process. In addition to making passive participles of neuter gender from the nominal declension obsolete, thereby initiating the reanalysis process, this phenomenon also introduced a “sense of order” to sentences within the first and second groups identified by Brajerski (1977). As a result of these transformations, as Brajerski (1977) indicates, sentences from these two groups, passive and active, took on a new form and passive meaning. Ambivalent sentences from the second group returned to their original passive meaning, and sentences from the first group transformed into today’s constructions of the impersonal passive. Interestingly, as noted by Brajerski (1977: 30), along with the new form in (137), constructions from the first group also changed the scope of their meaning so that it no longer overlapped with the meaning of the *-no/-to* constructions in (138) and reflexive impersonal constructions in (139).

(137) *Tq drogą wtedy nie było jeżdżone.*
 this.DEM road.F.INS then NEG was.3SG.N traveled.PASS.SG.N
 ‘This road had not been traveled then.’

(138) *Tq drogą wtedy nie jeżdżono.*
 this.DEM road.F.INS then NEG traveled.IMPRS
 ‘[They] had not traveled this road then.’

(139) *Tq drogą się wtedy nie jeździło.*
 this.DEM road.F.INS REFL then NEG traveled.3SG.N
 ‘One had not traveled this road then.’

Currently, the impersonal passive constructions denote not only the actions and states of people but also the results of human and animal actions⁴² as well as natural forces. Sentences from the third group could not, as Brajerski (1977) points out, turn into passive verbs because in passive sentences, a direct object cannot appear. How-

⁴² Kibort (2004) notes that the inclusion of an overt agent expression in impersonal passives of intransitive verbs in Polish is syntactically permissible but deemed appropriate only when the agentive phrase is considered “an afterthought or addition to the main utterance” (Kibort 2004: 77). The possibility of an agentive expression occurring in the impersonal passive construction may be related to the process of meaning change in this constructions described by Brajerski (1977). Besides actions performed by a human subject, they can also denote actions of animals or natural phenomena.

ever, as observed by Brajerski (1977), in colloquial spoken language, they were replaced by passive constructions. In colloquial Polish (spoken variation of the standard language and dialects), according to this author, *-no/-to* constructions do not occur. Brajerski (1977) reports that today the *-no/-to* constructions appear only in literary language and have retained their old active meaning, denoting actions and states performed by humans, dating back to the 14th century.

Based on the literature on the subject, it can be further asserted that the inherited interpretation of an unspecified human subject from Proto-Indo-European constructions was reinforced by two subsequent factors.

Both factors are connected to the morphological structure and function of the former singular neuter passive participle. According to Brajerski (1977, 1975), it was the semantic specificity of participles ending in *-no* and *-to* in expressing completed actions and states that in the end led to the indefinite subject interpretation. Thanks to this property, following his argumentation, describing resultative-stative features, the *-no/-to* participles took on the character of adjectives, which, in their predicative function, acquired adverbial meanings. He hypothesizes that the omission of the verb ‘to be’ from the passive *-no/-to* structure, by analogy with the function of adjectives in some cases, led to the identification of these formations with adverbs. Brajerski (1975, 1977) further argues that the absence of a clearly defined grammatical voice (voice-neutrality) in adverbs contributed to attributing an active meaning to these formations and aligning them with an unspecified, unexpressed subject.

Another factor that could have contributed to obtaining the impersonal interpretation by the former passive participle is Siewierska’s argument (1988) that the new meaning in the case of the examined construction arises from the neuter gender’s ability to express abstract meanings. She argues that the *-no/-to* participle is superficially similar to Polish impersonal sentences⁴³ with a third person singular neuter verb, which can be formed from both intransitive and transitive verbs. These constructions include, for example, those denoting natural or supernatural phenomena (i.e., weather verbs such as e.g. *Padalo*_{3SG.N} ‘It was raining’), sentences where the agent is an unspecified non-human force or phenomenon (i.e., adversity impersonals such as e.g. *Las*_{M.ACC} *zasnuło*_{3SG.N} *mgłą*_{F.INS} ‘The forest got enveiled in the fog’), and sentences describing physical or psychological states (e.g. *Zaszumiło*_{3SG.N} *mu*_{DAT} *w uszach*_{LOC} ‘There was a buzzing in his ears’). Siewierska (1988) argues that the abstract meaning associated with the neuter gender in the verb forms described above could have contributed to the conceptual association of the *-no/-to* forms with an unspecified performer of the action. The constructions presented above are also active constructions, regardless of whether we assume that they contain a covert subject (cf. Siewierska 1988), which is in agreement with the main verb in the sentence,

⁴³ According to Kibort (2004) and as demonstrated in the previous chapter, these constructions are only superficially impersonal. They can be interpreted as involving the ellipsis of an indefinite non-human pronoun, ‘pro.INDEF-drop’, and can be transformed into personal sentences with an overt agent. The subject of these sentences is the omitted indefinite non-human pronoun, “which triggers appropriate agreement in the verb and carries the interpretation of an unspecified agent” (Kibort 2004: 312). According to her analysis, none of these verbs is inherently impersonal.

or whether they are examples of subject ellipsis (Kibort 2004). In either case, they contain a logical subject in their sentence structure.

Brajerski (1977), Siewierska (1988), and Lavine (2005, 2017) all agree that the disappearance of the auxiliary 'to be' from its structure played a crucial role in the activation process of the originally passive *-no/-to* construction. Thanks to this, neuter nominal forms occurring in this structure, showing syncretism between the nominative and accusative, could easily be interpreted as accusative forms, and the participle itself could become an independent verbal construction. The past tense, to which the discussed construction is semantically limited, is directly related to the semantics of the former passive participle, indicating only completed actions and states. The detachment of this form from the auxiliary verb and the inability to combine with a verb that could give it a present passive meaning (i.e., the present tense auxiliary *jest*) sealed its restriction to the past tense.

3.5 Conclusions

The current active voice of the *-no/-to* construction is closely tied to its active meaning, indicating an indefinite human subject. This meaning has been inherited by the *-no/-to* formations from the passive impersonal constructions of Proto-Indo-European described in the preceding sections of this chapter. The trigger for the activation process of the examined construction was the morpho-phonological process in which the remaining forms of nominal declension were removed from the Polish language, leaving only a singular form of neuter gender. This form became unproductive, was fossilized over time, turning into an impersonal affix, and through a syntactical reductive process it became restricted to the past tense. The indefinite human meaning already present in it was reinforced by its semantic and formal similarity to adverbial forms and the abstract meaning of the neuter gender. The activation process of the construction in question can thus be perceived as being caused by multiple factors, with the inherent [+human] feature considered to have provided the essential basis for the subsequent influence of other parameters. Since this construction was primarily assigned to the literary language (and to the written texts) at an early stage (approx. at the end of the 17th century) and differs in its structure and meaning from other impersonal forms in Polish, it can be argued that it is a form created to fulfill a specific function in discourse. In this work, the function of the construction will be defined as *agentive narration*, a specialized active impersonal form of the past tense (preterite) that denotes events performed by an unspecified human agent. It will be argued and demonstrated that the construction in question functions as a discourse anaphor (cf. Cornish 2010) and thus refers to various discourse topics in a broad sense. The features of agentive narration related to the backgrounding and foregrounding of impersonal events in discourse will be described in more detail in the following two chapters (4 and 5).

4 Defining the Function of the *-no/-to* Construction in Discourse.

Experimental Studies and Corpus Data

This chapter aims to define and provide a detailed description of the features and function of the *-no/-to* construction in discourse based on two conducted experiments and a corpus data analysis. Accordingly, the most important question, investigated in the two experiments conducted within the Bo1 Project, is the exploration of the hypothetical referentiality of the *-no/-to* construction and the existence of a potential interplay between agent prominence and discourse prominence. In Chapter 2, we have already observed that the *-no/-to* construction can be linked to a potential referent when used in a complex sentence, such as in the following example (repeated from (46)):

- (140) *Gdy uczone w szkole wieczorowej, nauczyciele*
when taught.IMPRS in school evening.ADJ teachers.VIR.NOM
byli zmęczeni.
were.3PL.VIR tired.VIR.NOM

‘When [they] taught at the evening school, teachers were (usually) tired.’

As stated in Chapter 2, Section 2, the interpretation of the *-no/-to* construction as referring to *nauczyciele* ‘teachers’ is not ruled out, but it could also refer to another unspecified agent not mentioned in the sentence. The implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction is partially specified for phi-features, marked as [+plural], [+human], and [+masculine]. However, it cannot directly antecede an overt NP with the same phi-features within the same complex sentence, as another interpretation of the implicit agent remains possible. Therefore, the identification process does not seem to rely on binding properties in the traditional syntactic sense. The *-no/-to* construction in this example appears within a conditional sentence, which can also influence its interpretation, making ‘teachers’ a possible overt realization of the implicit agent. This could be due to the conditional sentence containing a covert adverb of quantification (‘usually’), which binds the implicit agent and conceptually links the two clauses. This process may enable its identification with the NP in the main clause. Additionally, as discussed by Ruda (2014) and demonstrated in Chapter 2, the *-no/-to* construction can generally be bound by overt adverbs of quantification, i.e., the construction contains a variable (*x*) whose interpretation can vary depending on the quantificational adverb used. A key point of interest in this work is whether the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction can establish a coreferential relation (in cognitive rather than strict semantic terms) with a topical (prominent) NP beyond the sentence level (within a sentence this would be impossible due to the lack of logophoric features and overt phi-features, which prevent grammatical agreement with a noun). In other words, can the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction be bound by a previously mentioned topical NP? This question draws on the proposals of Frascarelli (2007) and Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl (2007), who in-

investigate how different types of topics, including null or silent ones, can bind arguments via the syntactic operation Agree. For instance, Frascarelli (2007) argues that a pro-drop argument (in languages like Italian) can establish coreference through Agree with the local Aboutness-shift Topic. According to Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl (2007) the Aboutness-shift topic introduces a new topic into the discourse and shifts at some point to something more specific or focal in discourse. In Frascarelli's analysis, even an indefinite DP can function as an Aboutness-shift Topic when referring to a specific indefinite. While impersonal constructions are not inherently referential, the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction can be bound by various operators. According to Frascarelli (2007), null subjects in pro-drop languages can be bound by silent Topics and function as resumptive pronouns that continue the overtly established Aboutness-shift Topic⁴⁴ in discourse. This interpretative mechanism could also apply to the *-no/-to* construction in discourse (cf. Krzek 2017), with the difference being that the matching relation between the topical (prominent) NP and the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction would be established through discourse-level interpretation, not by an Agree operation. The interpretation of the implicit agent would then be inferred from the phi-features and descriptive content of the sentence Topic expressed by a prominent NP. The question of interaction between the implicit agent and discourse-prominent entities arises from the dual levels of comparison: the internal structure and semantic compositionality of the *-no/-to* construction and the overt topical NPs. Previous research on the agentivity cline of the construction (Bunčić 2019) suggests that the more agentive features the construction has, the more acceptable it becomes. Thus, it is worth considering whether a negative interaction between an overt NP in the preceding sentence and the highly agentive *-no/-to* construction in the following sentence would result in the exclusion of either agent, making the dataset unacceptable. What would be the outcome of such a combination?

These issues are addressed in Sections 4.1 to 4.6, where the results of two acceptability judgment tests are presented. Both experiments reflect these questions about the interaction between the micro-structure of the *-no/-to* construction and its behavior in larger discourse units (macro-structure).

Additionally, the results of the first experiment provide insights into the preferred contexts for the occurrence of the *-no/-to* construction among Polish language users. This question relates to a broader discussion about the nature of anaphora, which is approached differently by discourse-functional frameworks compared to traditional semantic or syntactic approaches. In the present work, the discourse-functional approach is applied, where anaphors are seen as linguistic devices that help the listener or reader maintain focus on a particular entity previously highlighted in the discourse (cf. Ehlich 1982). Unlike other approaches, the discourse-functional perspective extends the inventory of anaphors, not limiting them to entities with a direct semantic antecedent but also including those referring to implicit antecedents, operating at the level of discourse-memory representation (cf. Cornish 2010). In light of these considerations, it will be intriguing to explore what native

⁴⁴ The experiments are not designed to investigate Aboutness-shift Topics and their influence on the interpretation of the *-no/-to* construction. Instead, the theory is introduced to propose an assumption about the interpretative mechanisms at work in the constructed discourse setting.

speakers prefer to focus on in the prior context of a multisentence experimental setup, where the *-no/-to* construction appears in the final sentence. To address these questions, data from two experiments conducted within the CRC 1252 Project B01 will be analyzed, alongside results from a corpus study (Section 4.8), which will offer additional insights into the role of the *-no/-to* construction in discourse, particularly in anaphoric settings based on accompanying antecedent elements, understood here as *referent triggers* (cf. *antecedent triggers* proposed by Cornish 2010).

This chapter is structured as follows: First, a brief overview of the first experiment, its initial hypothesis, test design, and results is provided. The second experiment and its findings are then presented. Following this, the results of the corpus study on the nature of linguistic expressions in relation to the *-no/-to* construction within anaphoric contexts will be discussed. These findings will be analyzed in light of Hopper and Thompson's (1980) transitivity theory to better understand the role of the *-no/-to* construction in discourse and the influence of different antecedent groups on its interpretation. Subsequently, in Section 4.9, a discourse-functional analysis of the role of the *-no/-to* construction will be presented. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the general conclusions drawn from the corpus and experimental studies.

4.1 First Experiment from Project B01

For the first experiment we addressed two research questions concerning the interplay between the agent and discourse prominence. We hypothesized that the interplay would be negative, meaning that test items with prominent NPs followed by a coreferential *-no/-to* construction would receive lower acceptability ratings. Therefore, the first research question, focusing on the discourse macro-structure, aimed to determine whether, and which, types of placement of the prominent NP might constrain the acceptability and use of the *-no/-to* construction: FAR (understood as the mere presence of the NP near the *-no/-to* construction), NEW (no prior mention of the NP), or RECENT (a more recent mention of the NP). The second research question addressed the previously observed (Bunčić 2019: 72-73) infrequency of direct co-occurrences between overtly expressed NPs and the *-no/-to* construction. It explored whether there is a specific interaction between discourse prominence and agent prominence that becomes evident when using the *-no/-to* construction. We hypothesized that the *-no/-to* construction is more acceptable when derived from highly agentive verbs, which carry more specific semantic entailments, and less acceptable when the surrounding discourse structure (i.e., preceding sentences with overt noun phrases) is more prominent. Therefore, we assumed that, unlike other impersonal constructions (e.g. German *man*), the *-no/-to* construction appears to *refer only to demoted referents and cannot demote a topic*. The underlying assumption for this phenomenon was that the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction might impede coreference with the NPs that could serve as its overt agents, which we believed would result in decreased acceptability in such cases.

For our first experiment, we created test sentences in which the referent of the *-no/-to* form is either clearly mentioned as the sentence topic and syntactic subject or not mentioned at all. Additionally, we assumed that a recent mention as the topical NP of the immediately preceding sentence might reduce acceptability more

than a mention much earlier in the text, with two sentences in between. We presumed the following: If both factors play a role, we would assume that a *-no/-to* construction referring to a referent explicitly mentioned much earlier in the text (FAR) would be less acceptable than if the referent has not been mentioned at all (NEW), but still more acceptable than if the referent was mentioned in the immediately preceding sentence (RECENT):

(141) NEW > FAR > RECENT

And subsequently: If only the previous mention is relevant and recency plays no role, we would expect no significant difference between the FAR and RECENT conditions, but still an advantage for the NEW condition:

(142) NEW > (FAR = RECENT)

And eventually: If only NPs of the immediately preceding sentence are relevant, and much earlier mentions have already been diluted enough to allow for the unimpeded use of a *-no/-to* construction implying the referent of the most distant NP as its agent, the NEW and FAR conditions should have the same acceptability rate:

(143) (NEW = FAR) > RECENT

4.2 Description of Test Items, Questionnaire Design and Participants

The experiment was designed as an acceptability judgment test following a 3×4 design, with twelve test items (four for each condition) and thirteen fillers. For test items we chose *-no/-to* forms that are formed from highly agentive, transitive, perfective verbs, as listed in (144):

(144) *zjeść* ‘eat’, *otworzyć* ‘open’, *przestawić* ‘rearrange’, *ściągnąć* ‘call’, *złożyć* ‘lay down’, *dodać* ‘add’, *zbudować* ‘build’, *odwrócić* ‘turn’, *zrobić* ‘do’, *rozwiązać* ‘untie’, *zabić* ‘kill’, *wziąć* ‘take’.

These twelve *-no/-to* forms were then placed into larger contexts, each consisting of four sentences in total. These contexts were designed to align with the three factors under investigation: NEW, FAR, and RECENT. Each context was structured differently to examine the relationship between the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction and its hypothetical referent, depending on the placement of the latter in the given test item. The *-no/-to* construction was always placed in the last of the four sentences, and the preceding three sentences followed this scheme: in the NEW context, there was no NP referring to an agent of the *-no/-to* construction; in the FAR context, a plural NP (in bold type in the Polish examples below) mentioning the same referent implied by the *-no/-to* construction appeared at the beginning of the first sentence; in the RECENT context, such an NP was in the sentence directly preceding the *-no/-to* construction. Examples of the test items are shown in (145)–(147):

(145) NEW: *Był to tragiczny początek roku. W mieście wybuchła epidemia i codziennie na nieznaną chorobę umierały setki osób. Wcześniej gwarne ulice miasta świeciły teraz pustkami. Ściągnięto dodatkową pomoc medyczną z pobliskich miejscowości.*

'It was a tragic start to the year. An epidemic broke out in the city, and every day, hundreds of people died from an unknown disease. The once bustling city streets now stood empty. [They] **brought in** additional medical aid from nearby towns.'

(146) FAR: ***Pracownicy sztabu kryzysowego** chcieli ratować mieszkańców. W mieście wybuchła epidemia i codziennie na nieznaną chorobę umierały setki osób. Wcześniej gwarne ulice miasta świeciły teraz pustkami. Ściągnięto dodatkową pomoc medyczną z pobliskich miejscowości.*

'**The crisis management workers** wanted to save the residents. An epidemic broke out in the city, and every day, hundreds of people died from an unknown disease. The once bustling city streets now stood empty. [They] **brought in** additional medical aid from nearby towns.'

(147) RECENT: *W mieście wybuchła epidemia i codziennie na nieznaną chorobę umierały setki osób. Wcześniej gwarne ulice miasta świeciły teraz pustkami. **Pracownicy sztabu kryzysowego** chcieli ratować mieszkańców. Ściągnięto dodatkową pomoc medyczną z pobliskich miejscowości.*

'An epidemic broke out in the city, and every day, hundreds of people died from an unknown disease. The once bustling city streets now stood empty. **The crisis management workers** wanted to save the residents. [They] **brought in** additional medical aid from nearby towns.'

In addition to the twelve test items for each questionnaire, we included thirteen fillers (seven positive and six negative control items). Each filler resembled the structure of the test items, consisting of four sentences but without any *-no/-to* form, and was presented to the participants. The content of the fillers was mainly sourced from various articles published on diverse Polish internet sites, such as the example in (148) (a positive control item):

(148) *Japońska filozofia wabi-sabi świetnie sprawdza się w psychoterapii. Kultura Zachodu nauczyła nas, że trzeba dążyć do ideału. Dążenie do perfekcji okupione jest stresem, rywalizacją, poczuciem niespełnienia. Filozofia wabi-sabi z kolei mówi, by nauczyć się kochać własną niedoskonałość.*

'Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi works excellently in psychotherapy. Western culture has taught us that we must strive for ideals. The pursuit of perfection comes with stress, competition, and a sense of unfulfillment. In contrast, the wabi-sabi philosophy encourages us to learn to love our own imperfections.'

(Jagna Kaczanowska, „Wabi-sabi w psychoterapii. Jak wyzbyć się perfekcjonizmu i zacząć lepiej żyć”, 2021, <https://twojstyl.pl/artukul/,-aid,1658>.)

The negative control items were composed of similar text excerpts from the internet, which were modified to include grammatical errors (concord errors) in part of

the last sentence (marked red in the Polish and English versions), as illustrated in (149):

- (149) *Znana warszawska malarka zorganizowała wystawę swoich najnowszych prac. Były to dzieła poświęcone tematyce marynistycznej. Okręty i statki interesowały ją już od wczesnego dzieciństwa. Wystawa odbyło się w Muzea Narodowym w Warszawie i cieszył się dużą popularnością.*
'A well-known Warsaw painter organized an exhibition of her latest works. These were pieces dedicated to maritime themes. Ships and vessels had fascinated her since early childhood. The exhibition **took place** [*odbyło*_{3SG.N}—should be *odbyła*_{3SG.F}] at the National **Museum** [*Muzea*_{NVIR.NOM}—should be *Muzeum*_{N.LOC.SG}] in Warsaw and **was** [*cieszył*_{3SG.M}—should be *cieszyła*_{3SG.F}] **very popular** [*popularności*—there is no such word, should be *popularnością*_{F.INS.SG}].'

The test items were divided among three different lists, each containing 12 test items (4 RECENT, 4 FAR, and 4 NEW) and 13 fillers (positive and negative control items), following a Latin Square Design. The lists were pseudorandomized to ensure that no two test items were immediately adjacent, and each list began and ended with a filler. For each of the three lists, a reverse-order copy was also created, resulting in a total of six lists. Participants were asked to rate the test items based on their naturalness on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from “– – –” (completely unacceptable) to “+ + +” (completely acceptable). The acceptability test was administered through an online questionnaire hosted by SoSciSurvey and distributed via Prolific.

A total of 81 test persons participated in the experiment, with 80 completing the questionnaire. All participants identified Polish as their native language; three additionally mentioned English, and one also mentioned German as native languages, which likely were mistakes, possibly indicating foreign languages they knew instead of additional native languages (as Prolific users, all had identified themselves as monolingual). All participants resided in Poland. The age range of participants was between 18 and 45 years, with 56% being male. A significant portion of the participants had higher education, with 36% currently enrolled in a university and 20% holding an academic degree, while 34% had secondary education. Additionally, 12% reported having elementary, secondary, and vocational education.

4.3 Results and Interim Discussion

Figure 1 presents the results, showing the average ratings for each context on a normalized scale ranging from –1 to 1 (i.e., “– – –” = –1.0, “– –” = –0.6, “–” = –0.2, “+” = 0.2, “+ +” = 0.6, and “+ + +” = 1.0). Positive numerical values indicate that the items were rated above the midpoint on average, while negative values indicate below the midpoint. The variable *n* represents the number of individual judgments that contributed to the average rating. Figure 1 reveals that the differences between the grammatical items are minimal. A one-way ANOVA indicates that neither the difference between the NEW and RECENT conditions ($p \approx 0.054$) nor between the NEW and FAR conditions ($p \approx 0.071$) is statistically significant, although both values are close to the 0.05 significance level. There is also no significant difference between the FAR

and RECENT conditions ($p \approx 0.89$). In the course of evaluating the results⁴⁵, we excluded five lists in which the negative fillers were rated, on average, more favorably than all other items ($\emptyset_{neg} > \emptyset_{rest}$).

Figure 1: Results of the Experiment 1



In addition to Figure 1, Table 3 shows the mean ratings for each condition, including positive and negative controls.

Table 3: Conditions and Mean Ratings

Condition	Mean Rating
Positive Control	0.62
NEW	0.60
FAR	0.54
RECENT	0.53
Negative Control	0.30

⁴⁵ We decided to remove one item from the NEW condition due to linguistic concerns related to the phrase *Loch pękał w szwach* ‘The dungeon was bursting at the seams’ placed at the very beginning of the NEW text sample. We believe that this phrase, which is used in an unconventional way, might have confused the participants and worsened the rating. The word *loch* denotes a dungeon, which is not a typical subject for the idiom *pękać w szwach*. Dungeons are usually dark, cold, and limited places. Implementing the idea of bursting at the seams to a dungeon is confusing because we do not usually associate dungeons being overcrowded to the point of bursting, like with rooms or bags. Placing the falsely applied idiom at the beginning of the whole data set could have impacted negatively the comprehension of the entire text set. The exclusion resulted in a slightly smaller sample size for the NEW condition ($n = 279$) as compared to the FAR and RECENT conditions ($n = 304$). The reasons for this decision were methodological considerations and it did not significantly influence the overall results, as confirmed by a one-way ANOVA.

We interpreted the obtained results as suggesting a potential correlation between the use of the *-no/-to* construction and the discourse factors examined, although we thought that this relationship might have been obscured by confounding factors. Recency, in particular, appears to have no effect. This can be summarized as follows:

(150) NEW \cong (FAR = RECENT)

However, the gained data did not provide definitive evidence, which necessitated further research to determine the relevance of the factors considered. We attributed the lack of clear evidence in part to the reduced accuracy and focus of the participants, which may have been affected by the length of the test items (four sentences each), potentially influencing their processing. Additionally, at that stage of research we assumed that if partial coreference between an explicit NP and the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* form hinders its use, native speakers might interpret such passages in a way that avoids identifying the two referents as the same. For instance, in (147) above, a reader might infer that the additional medical aid brought into the city was provided by people other than the crisis management workers mentioned in the preceding sentence. Another issue that we took into consideration was that the subtle semantic clash in the conditions with previously mentioned referents might have been overlooked, especially when compared to the clearly ungrammatical negative control items, which could have led to less noticeable differences. To address these confounding factors, we planned a new experiment.

4.4 Description of the Second Experiment

The goal of the second experiment was to gather more definitive data to either support or refute the initial hypothesis that the *-no/-to* construction cannot demote discourse prominent referents (NPs). To clarify the potential outcomes, we simplified the previous test design by reducing the number of sentences per test item from four to two and did the same for the fillers. This adjustment seemed feasible because the first experiment indicated that the distance between the NP and the *-no/-to* construction was not significant; therefore, testing only the NEW and RECENT conditions appeared to be sufficient.

To ensure that participants made the connection between the referent of the NP and the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction, we introduced an additional task. Participants were asked an open-ended question about the performer of the action indicated by the *-no/-to* form. These questions pertained to both the test items in the RECENT condition and the positive control items. We chose not to include the negative control items in this experiment. Additionally, while refining the test design, we aimed to create a more natural text structure for the test items by placing adverbials at the beginning of the sentence containing the *-no/-to* construction. Similar to the first experiment, we hypothesized that if previous mention of a topical NP constrains the use of the *-no/-to* construction, items should be rated as more acceptable in the NEW condition than in the RECENT condition. We expected the following result:

(151) NEW > RECENT

By reducing the number of sentences in each test item by half, we aimed to obtain clearer and more accurate data that would support our hypothesis.

4.5 Test Items, Questionnaire Design and Participants

The experiment included 12 newly created pairs of test items, each with additional open comprehension questions, and 18 positive fillers. The larger number of fillers allowed for a more randomized allocation of the test items. Among the fillers were 13 newly created ones with open comprehension questions and 5 fillers from the previous experiment (in a reduced form) without any additional questions. We used the same verbs to form the *-no/-to* construction as in the previous experiment (the coreferential NPs are in bold type). For examples, see (152)–(156):

(152) NEW: *W urzędzie trwały przygotowania do powitania nowego burmistrza. Na tę okoliczność otwarto świeżo wyremontowaną salę, która miała uświetnić to wydarzenie.*

‘Preparations took place at the office to welcome the new mayor. For this occasion, **[they] opened** the freshly renovated hall, which aimed to celebrate the event.’

(153) RECENT: *Pracownicy ratusza dołożyli wszelkich starań, aby uroczyście powitać nowego burmistrza. Na tę okoliczność otwarto świeżo wyremontowaną salę, która miała uświetnić to wydarzenie.*

‘**The city hall employees** made every effort to warmly welcome the new mayor. For this occasion, **[they] opened** the freshly renovated hall, which was meant to celebrate the event.’

(154) Comprehension question for (153):

Kto otworzył świeżo wyremontowaną salę w ratuszu?

‘Who opened the freshly renovated hall at the town hall?’

(155) Positive control item:

Kolarze wzięli udział w tegorocznym wieloetapowym wyścigu Tour de Pologne. Tym samym pokonali trasę o łącznej długości 1200 kilometrów.

‘The cyclists participated in this year’s multi-stage Tour de Pologne. In doing so, they covered a total distance of 1,200 kilometers.’

(156) Comprehension question for (155):

Kto pokonał trasę o łącznej długości 1200 kilometrów?

‘Who covered a total distance of 1,200 kilometres?’

Similar to the previous experiment, this one was conducted as an acceptability judgment test using an online questionnaire on SoSciSurvey, distributed through ProLific. Participants were asked to rate the test items based on their naturalness on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from “– – –” (completely unacceptable) to “+ + +” (completely acceptable). The items were arranged in a Latin Square Design across two lists, which were pseudorandomized and duplicated by reversing the order. Each list contained 12 test items and 18 positive fillers. Open comprehension ques-

tions about the performer of the action were displayed immediately after the test item from the RECENT condition appeared, as well as after a positive filler describing a situation with a clearly identified agent placed at the beginning of the sentence. Each list started and ended with a positive filler. Sixty-seven test persons participated in the experiment. The gender distribution was slightly skewed towards men, who comprised 55% of the participants. All participants reported Polish as their native language and Poland as their place of residence. One person also indicated being a native English speaker (likely an error, similar to Experiment 1), while the others identified as monolingual. The age range of the participants was from 18 to 67 years. Nearly half of the participants (46%) had higher education, either holding an academic degree or being enrolled as students. Another 46% had secondary education, and a small fraction (7.5%) reported having lower secondary and vocational education.

4.6 Results of the Second Experiment

Figure 2, placed below, presents the results of the second experiment. The *-no/-to* construction received slightly higher ratings in the RECENT condition compared to the NEW condition, suggesting that the prior mention of a topical NP does not significantly impact its use or restrict its occurrence in subsequent discourse. The difference between the NEW and RECENT contexts was not statistically significant ($p \approx 0.07$, single-factor ANOVA), and even the numerical values contradicted our hypothesis. In this experiment, the positive control items were rated significantly higher than both test item groups ($p < 0.001$). The results can be summarized as follows: NEW = RECENT. The graph illustrating the results is in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Results of the Experiment 2



Table 4: Conditions and Mean Ratings

Condition	Mean Rating
Positive Control	5.25
NEW	4.87
RECENT	5.03

Most of the responses to the open comprehension questions for the test items (307 out of 356, or 86%) clearly identified the group indicated by the plural NP in the preceding sentence as the agent of the *-no/-to* construction. Some participants used synonyms, hypernyms, or paraphrases in their answers. However, there were also responses indicating that the agent of the impersonal *-no/-to* construction was perceived as vague by some participants. These respondents expressed their uncertainty with statements like “it is not certain,” “I don’t know,” or by tentatively identifying the plural NP referents with phrases such as “by implication, the employees” or “the police officers?” Only a small number of answers were incorrect and unrelated to the semantic context or rephrasing, such as identifying “the professors” in reference to “the politicians.” There was no correlation between the correct or vague answers and the acceptability of the test item, as confirmed by a one-way ANOVA. A complete list of responses to the open comprehension questions is presented below (Table 5), with the targeted NPs highlighted in bold.

Table 5: Answers to the comprehension questions (Experiment 2)

Coreferent answers		Unclear and non-coreferent answers	
- studenci ‘the students’	29	- <i>chyba studenci</i> ‘I think the students’	1
		- <i>prawdopodobnie studenci, wynika to z kontekstu, ale nie jest oczywiste</i> ‘probably the students, it follows from the context but is not obvious’	1
		- <i>nie jest powiedziane</i> ‘this was not said’	1
- pracownicy ratusza ‘the employees of the town hall’	15	- <i>burmistrz?</i> ‘the mayor?’	1
- <i>pracownicy</i> ‘the employees’	5	- <i>w domyśle pracownicy ratusza</i> (‘otwarto’) ‘by implication the employees of the town hall (‘otwarto’)’	1
- <i>pracownicy miejskiego ratusza</i> ‘the employees of the municipal town hall’	1	- <i>nie wiadomo/pracownicy ratusza</i> ‘unknown/the employees of the town hall’	1
		- <i>radni</i> ‘council members’	1
		- <i>nie ma podane kto otworzył</i> ‘there is no indication of who opened it’	1
		- <i>nie wiadomo</i> ‘unknown’	1
		- <i>nie wiem</i> ‘I don’t know’	1
- policjanci ‘the police officers’	16	- <i>nie wiadomo</i> ‘unknown’	3
- <i>policja</i> ‘the police’	1	- <i>policjanci?</i> ‘the police officers?’	2
		- <i>policja?</i> ‘the police?’	1
		- <i>nie podano tej informacji</i> ‘this information was not provided’	1

Coreferent answers		Unclear and non-coreferent answers	
		- <i>nie jest to napisane w tekście</i> 'it is not written in the text'	1
		- <i>osoba, która zgłaszała wydarzenie</i> 'the person who reported the event'	1
		- <i>chyba policjanci, lecz nie zostało to dokładnie określone</i> 'probably the police officers, but it was not exactly specified'	1
		- <i>prawdopodobnie świadkowie zdarzenia</i> 'probably the witnesses of the incident'	1
- politycy 'the politicians'	22	- <i>studenci</i> 'the students'	3
- <i>członkowie komisji sejmowych</i> 'the members of the parliamentary committees'	1	- <i>profesorzy</i> 'the professors'	1
- <i>politycy w komisji</i> 'politicians on the committee'	1	- <i>nie wiadomo</i> 'unknown'	1
- <i>parlamentarzyści</i> 'the members of parliament'	1	- <i>pasożyty</i> 'vermin'	1
- pierwszoklasiści 'the first-graders'	25	- <i>studenci</i> 'the students'	1
- <i>pierwszaki</i> 'the first-years'	1		
- <i>dzieci</i> 'the children'	1		
- członkowie rady miejskiej 'the members of the town council'	21	- <i>nie wiem</i> 'I don't know'	2
- <i>członkowie rady</i> 'the council members'	3	- <i>prawdopodobnie członkowie rady miejskiej w obecności pozostałych uczestników wydarzenia</i> 'probably the members of the town council in the presence of other participants of the event'	1
- <i>rada miejska</i> 'the town council'	1	- <i>uczniowie</i> 'the pupils'	1
- <i>radni</i> 'the city fathers'	1		
- <i>władze</i> 'the authorities'	1		
- nauczyciele 'teachers'	22	- <i>nie wiadomo</i> 'unknown'	2
		- <i>nie jest to pewne</i> 'it is not certain'	1
		- <i>nauczyciele?</i> 'the teachers?'	1
		- <i>prawdopodobnie jeden z nauczycieli</i> 'probably one of the teachers'	1
		- <i>w domyśle nauczyciele/ktoś komu nakazali to zrobić</i> ('odwrócono') 'by implication the teachers/someone who was ordered to do it ('odwrócono)'	1
- politycy partii rządzącej 'politicians of the ruling party'	13	- <i>nie było tej informacji w tekście</i> 'this information was not in the text'	1
- <i>politycy</i> 'politicians'	5	- <i>politycy partii rządzącej, aczkolwiek nie było to dokładnie określone</i> 'politicians of the ruling party, although it was not exactly specified'	1
- <i>nowa władza</i> 'the new authority'	1	- <i>rządzący, brzmi prawdopodobnie bardzo</i> 'the ones in power, sounds very probably'	1

Coreferent answers		Unclear and non-coreferent answers	
- <i>rządzący</i> ‘the ones in power’	1	- <i>prawdopodobnie politycy partii rządzącej</i> ‘probably the politicians of the ruling party’	1
- <i>nowo wybrany rząd</i> ‘the newly elected government’	1		
- <i>politycy partii rządzącej zaraz po wyborach</i> ‘the politicians of the ruling party right after the election’	1		
- <i>partia rządząca</i> ‘the ruling party’	1		
- robotnicy ‘the workers’	28	- <i>możliwe, że demonterzy, ale napisane było „zabito”</i> ‘possibly the dismantlers, but there was written “zabito”	1
- <i>ekipa rozbiórkowa</i> ‘the demolition crew’	1	- <i>robotnicy?</i> ‘the workers?’	1
		- <i>osoby mające dokonać demontażu i remontu dworca</i> ‘the people who had to dismantle and renovate the station’	1
- psycholodzy ‘the psychologists’	19	- <i>psycholodzy (lub ich pomocnicy)</i> ‘the psychologists (or their assistants)’	1
- <i>psychologowie</i> ‘the psychologists’	5	- <i>nie wiadomo, być może psycholodzy</i> ‘unknown, perhaps the psychologists’	1
- <i>naukowcy</i> ‘the scientists’	1	- <i>skupiłem się na czymś innym XDD</i> ‘I focused on something else XDD’	1
- paparazzi ‘the paparazzi’	31		
- <i>dziennikarze</i> ‘the journalists’	1		
- pracownicy butiku z markową odzieżą ‘the employees of a boutique with designer clothes’	2	- <i>na środek</i> ‘to the middle’	1
- <i>pracownicy butiku</i> ‘the boutique employees’	20		
- <i>pracownicy</i> ‘the employees’	4		
- <i>pracownicy sklepu</i> ‘the shop employees’	4		

The responses to the comprehension questions in Experiment 2 reveal that while participants recognize that the impersonal *-no/-to* construction does not refer anaphorically, they consistently identify the NP referent from the immediately preceding sentence as the agent of the action described by the *-no/-to* form. Despite this, participants rated these test items as equally acceptable compared to those without any prior mention of the referent, with no statistically significant difference between the groups and the numerical differences varying in Experiments 1 and 2 (in favor of the RECENT context in the second experiment). Consequently, our initial hypothesis must be rejected.

The two experiments suggest that the Polish *-no/-to* form can be used effectively after a prominent NP that explicitly indicates the agent of the verb’s action. How-

ever, as confirmed by the subsequent corpus study, its use remains rare, with speakers often opting for personal constructions as the default for anaphoric references.

On the one hand, the above-mentioned preferences are connected to different semantic characteristics of the discussed constructions (personal vs. impersonal, referential vs. non-referential) and, on the other, to different discourse functions between these types of constructions. As will be argued in the next sections, the *-no/-to* construction is primarily employed to avoid or conceal the performer of an action, thereby emphasizing the event itself. Because this construction represents an impersonal event without an overt and volitional agent in its structure, its single occurrence cannot be prominent or establish prominent relations typical of noun phrases or proper names. Consequently, in texts, it predominantly functions as a tool to regulate text coherence (cf. the *patient-oriented process* of Sansò 2006: 238). It does this by maintaining the previously established animate or inanimate discourse topic or by referring back to an event or situation that is the main theme of the discourse segment or discourse unit. Before examining this discourse function, the different degrees of referentiality of the linguistic expressions that contextually precede the *-no/-to* construction will be discussed. The following section demonstrates examples of various antecedent elements (understood as textually coreferential expressions) in relation to the *-no/-to* construction based on an analysis of approximately 300 randomly selected examples from the National Corpus of Polish (NKJP). The results solely display the anaphoric relations of the construction under investigation.

4.7 Corpus Analysis

The following lists the types of antecedent elements found in the National Corpus of Polish. The search was conducted with the tag [tag="imps.*"], which focuses on impersonal *-no/-to* constructions. Using the Poliqarp search engine, a random sample was provided from the balanced subcorpus (300 million segments). Each search returned a different random selection, ensuring diversity in the dataset. For instance, one search displays 50 examples out of a total of 489,921 occurrences in the corpus. This method allowed for a thorough and representative analysis of the construction's usage patterns across various contexts. In a randomly generated sample of 300 examples from various text sources (mainly press releases, reports from parliamentary sessions, fragments of diverse fiction and non-fiction Polish literature), there are 147 *-no/-to* forms whose referent can be identified with a preceding linguistic expression, which, depending on their degree of referentiality (in decreasing order), can be organized in the following categories (with numbers of occurrences given for each category): singular NPs (3), plural NPs (20), quantified and multiple plural and singular NPs (11), collective sets (64), abstract nouns (5), locative expressions (39), and instrumental phrases (5). The results are presented in the following table:

Table 6: Antecedent elements of the *-no/-to* construction from the NKJP

Type of antecedent element	Examples (PL)	Examples (EN)
Singular NPs	Jaruzelski, ktoś dorosły ⁴⁶ , jego żona Stanisława	Jaruzelski, some adult, his wife Stanisława
Plural NPs	opowiadacze tej legendy, zwierzchnicy, mordercy, radni, kontrolerzy, hodowcy, działacze (2), chemicy, majstrowie, kupcy, kartuscy radni, twórcy e-zniu, kłusownicy, ciepłownicy, kultowi eksperci, poddani króla Francji, kobiety, strażacy, przedstawiciele czeskich firm.	the storytellers of this legend, superiors, murderers, councilors, inspectors, breeders, activists (2), chemists, foremen, merchants, Carthusian councilors, creators of the e-zine, poachers, heating specialists, cult experts, subjects of the King of France, women, firefighters, representatives of Czech companies.
Quantified and multiple plural and singular NPs	Kilku chrześcijan, 20 uczniów z chojnickich szkół podstawowych, 9 z gimnazjów oraz 2 osoby ze szkół średnich, 124 delegatów, Oficerowie z Sekcji Przystępstw Komputerowych PG KWP w Katowicach wspólnie z policjantami Sekcji PG KMP w Częstochowie, ok. 100 weselników, polemiści i przeciwnicy, Żabiński z grupą Wołczewa, uczennice i ich rodziny i nauczycielki, chirurg ze szpitala w Olkuszu Wojciech B. i stomatolog 63-letnia Elżbieta K, eksperci i wielcy guru, sportowcy oraz działacze sportowi.	Several Christians, 20 students from elementary schools in Chojnice, 9 from junior high schools, and 2 from high schools, 124 delegates, officers from the Computer Crime Section of the PG KWP in Katowice together with officers from the PG KMP Section in Częstochowa, about 100 wedding guests, polemicists and opponents, Żabiński with Wołczew's group, female students and their families and teachers, a surgeon from the hospital in Olkusz Wojciech B. and a 63-year-old dentist Elżbieta K., experts and great gurus.
Collective sets	Grupa naukowców z Düsseldorfu, zespół 522 konstruktorów, grupa kilkunastu mężczyzn, Niemcy, Grecy, krakowianie, całe jego otoczenie, Straż Miejska, Agencja Rynku Rolnego, szlachta, wojska Hulagu-chana, obie spółki, Sejm, biuro budowy, policja (4), władze grodu, Poznań, Senat, krakowianie, Kościół włoski, prawica, Rzymianie, milicja, Federalna Służba Migracyjna, oddział specjalny, władza, władze miasta, Miejski Ośrodek Sportu i Rekreacji, rząd Cri-	A group of scientists from Düsseldorf, a team of 522 designers, a group of several men, Germans, Greeks, Kraków residents, his entire surroundings, Municipal Guard, Agricultural Market Agency, nobility, Hulagu Khan's army, both companies, Parliament, construction office, police, authorities of the town, Poznań, Senate, Kraków residents, Italian Church, right-wing, Romans, militia, Federal Migration Service, special unit, authority, city authorities,

⁴⁶ This indefinite noun phrase (NP) was placed into this group based on its grammatical singularity. However, as a non-specific indefinite, it differs semantically from the other two NPs, which denote specific individuals.

Type of antecedent element	Examples (PL)	Examples (EN)
	<p>spiego, prasa, Pabianickie władze, Prokuratura Okręgowa w Tarnowie, gmina Pepin, Zarząd Dróg Powiatowych w Bytowie, NSZ, Państwo, mniejszość Komisji Praw Człowieka i Praworządności, polskie środki masowego przekazu, klasa szósta, Straż Graniczna, PiS, dowództwo, całe społeczeństwo, komenda w Zduńskiej Woli, prokuratura, samorząd miasta i gminy, gmina, Rada Sołecka, Koło Gospodyń Wiejskich oraz Biblioteka Publiczna, Jeziora, warszawska straż, program (telewizyjny), perfumeria, inkwizycja, Multimedia (telewizja cyfrowa), Ośrodek Pomocy Rodzinie w Piotrkowie, 1 i 2 armia Wojska Polskiego, w tym francuskie zgrupowanie 19 i 29, sąd pierwszej instancji, służba medyczna.</p>	<p>Municipal Sports and Recreation Center, Crispi's government, press, Pabianice authorities, District Prosecutor's Office in Tarnów, Pepin municipality, District Road Administration in Bytów, NSZ, State, minority of the Human Rights and Rule of Law Committee, Polish mass media, sixth grade, Border Guard, PiS, command, the entire society, command in Zduńska Wola, prosecutor's office, city and municipality self-government, municipality, Village Council, Women's Village Circle, and Public Library, Jeziora, Warsaw guard, program (television), perfumery, inquisition, Multimedia (digital television), Family Assistance Center in Piotrków, 1st and 2nd Armies of the Polish Armed Forces including French Groupings 19 and 29, court of first instance, medical service.</p>
Abstract nouns	<p>Kultura amerykańska, system propagandowy, budżet państwa (2), siły represji.</p>	<p>American culture, propaganda system, state budget, repressive forces.</p>
Locative expressions	<p>W lasach tarnowskich, w rozmaitych antologiach, w świadomości Polaków, w kulturze antycznej, na ostatnim posiedzeniu zarządu miasta i gminy, w Szczakowej, w części chilijskiej, w specjalistycznych stacjach demontażu, w Lasach Państwowych, kiedyś w jaskiniach, w Grecji, w art. 2 ust. 2 ustawy, w Wydawnictwie Dolnośląskim, w szpitalu (2), w tym podręczniku, w tradycji ludowej, w trakcie ostatniego etapu prac parlamentarnych, w Warszawie (2), w Moskwie, w Holandii, w Muzeum Historii Katowic, we wczesnym średniowieczu, dawno temu w dużych dworach, w katowickim szpitalu, w zielonogórskiej drukarni Lubpress, w średniowieczu, w gminie Maszewo, w toruńskim ko-</p>	<p>in the Tarnów forests, in various anthologies, in the consciousness of Poles, in ancient culture, at the last meeting of the city and municipal council, in Szczakowa, in the Chilean part, in specialist dismantling stations, in the State Forests, once in caves, in Greece, in Article 2, Paragraph 2 of the Act, in the Dolnośląskie Publishing House, in the hospital (2), in this textbook, in the folk tradition, during the last stage of parliamentary work, in Warsaw (2), in Moscow, in the Netherlands, in the Museum of the History of Katowice, in the early Middle Ages, long ago in large manors, in the Katowice hospital, in the Lubpress printing house in Zielona Góra, in the Middle Ages, in the Maszewo municipality, in</p>

Type of antecedent element	Examples (PL)	Examples (EN)
	ściele garnizonowym, na cmentarzu, w wielu serwisach, przez całe średniowiecze, w Persji, podczas licytacji, w Polsce, w czasach wzorowania się na starożytnych autorach, w pozwoleniu na wycinkę, na egzaminie.	the garrison church in Toruń, at the cemetery, in many services, throughout the Middle Ages, in Persia, during the auction, in Poland, in the times of emulating ancient authors, in the permit for tree felling, in the exam.
Instrumental phrases	rękami regularnego żołnierza Wojska Polskiego, pocztą kurierską, karetką reanimacyjną, na mocy dekretu Rady Państwa, wąskotorówką.	by the hands of a regular Polish Army soldier, by courier mail, by a resuscitation ambulance, by decree of the Council of State, by narrow-gauge railway.

To illustrate the occurrences of the *-no/-to* constructions with antecedent elements, examples from the National Corpus of Polish for each of the aforementioned groups are provided below. Three examples are analyzed for singular noun phrases (NPs), as only three examples were found. For all other groups, one example will be discussed each time.

4.7.1 Singular NPs

Within this category, only three examples were found that contain different antecedent elements. In (157), there is a proper noun, the last name *Jaruzelski* (the surname of the former general-in-chief in communist Poland). In (158), we find a long definite noun phrase *jego żona Stanisława* ‘his wife Stanisława’, and in (159), there is an indefinite noun phrase *ktoś dorosły* ‘some adult’. All of these examples clearly demonstrate that, although the given expressions are in an anaphoric relationships with the *-no/-to* forms (establishing an indirect reference), the impersonal construction emphasizes the event expressed by the lexical content of the verb and as such refers primarily to particular discourse topics rather than directly to these expressions. These topics either form the main storyline, as in discourse segment (157), or can be understood as side plots within the main story, as in (158) or (159). See the following examples (157)–(159):

(157)

PL
[...] (1) Polska jest głęboko podzielona w sprawie stanu wojennego. (2) Większość Polaków uważa, że Jaruzelski dobrze zrobił. (3) Postawią generałowi zarzut złamania konstytucji... (4) – Tak. Ale Jaruzelski może się bronić argumentem, że podejmował decyzje w stanie wyższej konieczności. (5) I nigdy nie uzyskamy jednoznacznej odpowiedzi, czy ten argument jest zasadny. (6) Bez trudu da się wykazać, że stan wojenny wprowadzono z pogwałceniem konstytucyjnej procedury. (7) A ja się pytam: czy gdyby Jaruzelski wprowadził ów stan z zachowaniem wszelkich procedur, czyli między sesjami Sejmu, to byłoby w porządku?
EN

[...] (1) Poland is deeply divided on the issue of martial law. (2) Most Poles believe that **Jaruzelski** did the right thing. (3) (They) will charge **the general** with violating the constitution... (4) “Yes. But **Jaruzelski** can defend himself with the argument that he was making decisions in a state of necessity. (5) And we will never get a clear answer as to whether this argument is valid. (6) It can easily be shown that [**they**] **imposed** martial law in violation of constitutional procedure. (7) And I ask: if **Jaruzelski** had imposed martial law following all procedures, that is, between sessions of the Sejm, would that have been acceptable?”

Although *Jaruzelski* is mentioned explicitly several times in (157) it is rather the specific situation of the evaluation of the correctness of imposition of the martial law by different parties (especially the authorities) which is the discourse topic of this discourse segment. In sentence 1 the imposition of the martial law is introduced as a discourse topic and in sentences 2 and 3 of different positions toward *Jaruzelski*'s decision, which refer to the society and the authorities being at power at the time of the article. The authorities are introduced in sentence 3 by a third person plural impersonal construction and can be inferred from the verb compound *postawią zarzut* ‘(they) will bring a charge’ in connection with the context (as a group opposed to the society). In sentence 2 the referent introduced by the proper name *Jaruzelski* occurs as an agent, but as part of the subordinated object clause and in 3 as an object in dative referred to with the help of a noun phrase describing his function, *generał* ‘general’. Thus, in these sentences the referent is presented as a patient, an entity whose former decision is subjected to different opinions and judgments. In the next, fourth, sentence *Jaruzelski* occurs as a subject and an agent of the sentence but due to the use of the modal verb ‘can’ (*może* ‘he/she/it can’) the clause expresses a hypothetical situation, which points to a possible defending line of argumentation employed by *Jaruzelski* in the future, maybe during an upcoming trial, and this potential argumentation becomes the topic of the following sentence 5. The clause containing the *-no/-to* construction, which appears in sentence 6, focuses on the circumstances under which the martial law was imposed (the event of imposition) and which would be subjected to legal proceedings in the future (initiated by the authorities). Therefore, the *-no/-to* construction refers to the main discourse topic of the discourse segment that is the evaluation of imposition of the martial law and not directly to *Jaruzelski*, who is brought back to the text in sentence 7 as a subject, topic and an agent of the clause directly responsible of the discussed event with the help of a personal construction.

(158)

PL
 [...] (1) Jan Jarczak, otrzymał stanowisko kierownika szkoły w Gaszynie w 1928 r. (2) Pracował tu do wybuchu II wojny światowej. (3) W nocy 7 marca 1942 r. został aresztowany. (4) Trafił do obozu koncentracyjnego w Oświęcimiu, gdzie wkrótce zmarł. (5) Po wojnie szkołę od postaw organizowała **jego żona Stanisława**. (6) Już kilka dni po wyzwoleniu rozpoczęły się lekcje w wynajętych, nieogrzewanych izbach, bez jakichkolwiek szkolnych pomocy. (7) Dzięki ofiarności społeczeństwa wkrótce **zakupiono** parę książek, znalazły się ławki. (8) W roku 1945/46 do 4-klasowej szkoły uczęszczało już 157 dzieci. (9) O tych faktach mo-

żemy dowiedzieć się z prowadzonych przez Stanisławę Jarczak kronik szkolnych, traktowanych tu z wielkim pietyzmem.
EN
[...] (1) Jan Jarczak received the position of principal of the school in Gaszyn in 1928. (2) He worked there until the outbreak of World War II. (3) On the night of March 7, 1942, he was arrested and (4) sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where he soon died. (5) After the war, the school was organized from scratch by his wife Stanisława . (6) Just a few days after liberation, lessons began in rented, unheated rooms without any school supplies. (7) Thanks to the generosity of the community, soon [they] purchased a few books and desks were found. (8) In the year 1945/46, 157 children were already attending the 4-grade school. (9) About these facts we can learn from the school chronicles maintained by Stanisława Jarczak , which are treated with great reverence here.

In the discourse segment (158) the continuous discourse topic of the first four sentences is *Jan Jarczak*, the former headmaster of the school in Gaszyn. In sentence 5 there is a new topic of the sentence, expressed by the long definite description *his wife Stanisława*, which, however, does not occur in a topical position in this clause. As visible from the following sentences, the wife Stanisława as an entity is not picked up in the following sentences 6 and 7 but the particular activities which led to the organization of the school in Gaszyn after the war. The *-no/-to* construction *zakupiono* ‘[they] purchased’ appears in the sentence 7 and refers to the process of organizing the school that was led by the Stanisława. The lexical content of the construction brings a further activity into the discourse which was part of the whole undertaking. It is very probable that Stanisława herself bought new books for the school thanks to the offerings from the community but it also might be that somebody else from the community did it. The person behind this action is less important in this case for that what matters most are the particular activities which make the functioning of the school possible. The importance of the particular events that led to the establishment of the school is emphasized in sentence 9 by the topical placement of the phrase ‘about these facts.’ In this context, the individual *Stanisława* is reintroduced into the discourse through a passive construction, specifically in the form of an agentive adjunct phrase, where she is referred to by her full proper name, *Stanisława Jarczak*.

(159)

PL
(1) À propos kin. (2) Najbliższe (gdzieś w okolicach Młynarskiej) nosiły egzotyczne dla mnie nazwy: “Italia” i “Wenecja”. (3) Nie zastanawiałem się, co te nazwy określają, co znaczą. (4) Nie przyszło mi do głowy, aby zapytać o to kogoś dorosłego . (5) Może przypuszczałem, że i tak nie otrzymam prawidłowej odpowiedzi . (6) Tak jak temat muzyki czy melodii. (7) Zapytałem kiedyś, skąd się biorą melodie, jak powstają. (8) Odpowiedziano mi, że w kraju, co się zwie Japonia, powstają wszystkie melodie. (9) Żart czy niewiedza? (10) Ale ta odpowiedź wystarczyła mi.
EN

(1) Regarding cinemas. (2) The nearest ones (somewhere around Młynarska) had exotic names for me: “Italia” and “Venezia.” (3) I didn’t think about what those names designated or meant. (4) It never occurred to me to ask **some adult** about it. (5) Maybe I assumed that I wouldn’t get a correct **answer** anyway. (6) Just like the topic of music or melodies. (7) Once, I asked where melodies come from, how they come into being. (8) **[They] answered** that all melodies originate in a country called Japan. (9) A joke or ignorance? (10) But that **answer** was enough for me.

The antecedent element associated with the *-no/-to* construction in text passage (159) is *ktoś dorosły* ‘some adult’, an indefinite noun phrase in sentence 4. Indefinite noun phrases typically introduce new entities into discourse (the novelty condition), which are generally continued in the subsequent text. However, this is not the case in the discussed discourse segment, as the author does not further identify or specify the adult person. Here, the indefinite NP serves as a mere referential background for the more significant issue from the author’s perspective, which is the different types of answers received as a child. In sentence 7, the author recalls asking once where all melodies come from. From the context, we can infer that he asked an adult person about this, as this sentence (like sentence 6) is integrated into the discourse in an elaboration relation, clarifying the reason for his skeptical attitude toward adults expressed lightly in sentence 5. The *-no/-to* construction *odpowiedzi-ano* ‘[they] answered’ in sentence 8 refers to the event described in sentence 7, where the author states that he once asked about the origin of all melodies (with the ellipsis of ‘some adult’ from sentence 4). The response he received—that all melodies come from Japan—is what matters, not the person who provided the answer, which is confirmed in the final sentence 10 where he states that this answer sufficed for him.

The indefinite noun phrase ‘an adult’ in sentence 4 serves as a globally located anchor (with three sentences intervening between the referent and the *-no/-to* construction) for interpreting the *-no/-to* construction.

4.7.2 Plural NPs

In the case of plural noun phrases the referential link between their referents and the *-no/-to* construction is stronger than in the case of the first group, which is also independently confirmed by the two experiments described in Sections 4.1–4.6 of the current chapter. This seems to be due to the fact that the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction is plural, as demonstrated in Section 2.1, and the indefinite plural pronoun, which is at the semantic core of the investigated construction, can be more easily identified with the lexical content of the plural NPs. Let us consider example (160).

(160)

PL
[...] (1) Od miesięcy życie tu przypomina koszmar. (2) – Codziennie pytam się siebie, co jeszcze się stanie. (3) Kłusownicy są bezwzględni. (4) W walce o swoje wpływy nie cofną się przed niczym – mówi Eugeniusz Wilczewski, komendant Posterunku Straży Leśnej w Nadleśnictwie Knyszyn. (5) Strzelanie do

kotów sąsiadów, przecinanie opon, opryskiwanie hektarów dopiero co obsianych pól. (6) Takimi metodami **wymuszono** milczenie wszystkich. (7) Dlatego tak trudno było złapać **klusowników** na gorącym uczynku. (8) A gdy to się tylko stało, momentalnie pokazali, kto nad Biebrzą rządzi. (9) Zatrzymali **łotrów**. (10) Pierwszym sukcesem było zatrzymanie przez Wilczewskiego dwóch chłopaków z nielegalnym sztucerem i ciepłym jeszcze mięsem łosia.

EN

[...] (1) For months, life here has been a nightmare. (2) “Every day I ask myself what will happen next. (3) **The poachers** are ruthless. (4) In their struggle for influence, they will stop at nothing,” says Eugeniusz Wilczewski, head of the Forest Guard Post in the Knyszyn Forest District. (5) Shooting neighbors’ cats, slashing tires, spraying newly sown fields. (6) Using these methods, [**they**] **have forced** everyone into silence. (7) That is why it has been so difficult to catch **the poachers** in the act. (8) And as soon as it happened, they immediately showed who rules over the Biebrza (9) They arrested **the villains**. (10) The first success was Wilczewski apprehending two boys with an illegal rifle and freshly killed moose meat.

In discourse segment (160) the referent is introduced in sentence 3 by the plural noun phrase *klusownicy* ‘the poachers’. The poachers are also the subject, topic and an agent of sentence 3. The poachers remain the topic of the following sentence 4, they are picked up by the null pronoun, but they are not in sentence-initial position anymore, instead their fight for influence is mentioned first. By analyzing the discourse structure up to sentence 7 the main discourse topic of this discourse segment (1-7) can be defined as the ruthlessness of the poachers. The poachers are depicted as a group of people with similar characteristics, without specifying the exact number or identities of the individuals within this group. In sentence 5, a list of disturbing activities conducted by the poachers is introduced. This list elaborates on the information provided in sentence 4, which initially states that the poachers are fighting for their influence. The clause containing the *-no/-to* construction in sentence 6 is introduced as a summary, summarizing the information from the previous discourse unit.

The fact that there are three sentences between the first mention of the referent (sentence 3) and the *-no/-to* construction (sentence 6) suggests that the referential link between the referent and the construction is secondary to the primary topic of the discourse segment—the poachers’ actions. The *-no/-to* construction maintains the topic by focusing on the activities of the poachers, as conveyed by the lexical content of the impersonal verb. Sentence 7 reintroduces the poachers into the discourse, referring to their intimidating behavior as the reason for difficulties in capturing them. As the discourse progresses, the group of poachers is gradually specified, with individuals involved being identified through subsequent arrests (sentence 10). Before this, the poachers were regarded as an unspecified group primarily characterized by their actions, which allowed the use of *the -no/-to* construction. This use would be less expected after sentence 9, where some poachers could have been identified due to the arrests.

4.7.3 Quantified and multiple plural and singular NPs:

(161)

PL
(1) Recytatorski konkurs przyrodniczy EKO-ART 2001 odbył się w minionym tygodniu w Zespole Szkół nr 2 w Chojnicach. (2) Wzięło w nim udział 20 uczniów z chojnickich szkół podstawowych, 9 z gimnazjów oraz 2 osoby ze szkół średnich . (3) – Ocenie jury podlegało pamięciowe opanowanie tekstu, rekwizyty, jakich użyto podczas recytacji, gestykulacja itp. – mówi Ewa Sobieraj, jedna z organizatorek konkursu.
EN
(1) The EKO-ART 2001 Nature Recital Competition took place last week at School Complex No. 2 in Chojnice. (2) It featured 20 students from Chojnice primary schools, 9 from middle schools, and 2 from high schools . (3) “The jury evaluated the memorization of the text, the props [they] used during the recital, gestures, etc.,” says Ewa Sobieraj, one of the organizers of the competition.

The topic of sentence 1 is the recital competition as it is its subject and it occurs also in the sentence initial position. The topic of the first sentence remains topic of the whole discourse segment, for all information which is contained in the following sentences thematically refers to this main entity. The subject of sentence 2 are the multiple plural quantified noun phrases which denote the participants who took part in the competition, but they are not mentioned at the beginning of the clause. In sentence 3 the different activities are named that were part of the recital competition, among them one denoted by the *-no/-to* construction, namely using the props during the competition. The referents of the *-no/-to* construction are mentioned in the preceding sentence but it is not necessarily the case that all of them were using props during their performance. Some of them surely have done it but due to the use of the impersonal *-no/-to* construction it is not certain that all of the participants were performing in the same manner. The *-no/-to* construction is used to list one of the activities that were part of the recital and can be identified with the superset of the quantified NPs representing the participants of the competition.

4.7.4 Collective sets

(162)

PL
[...] (1) W Polsce nie urządzono defilady zwycięstwa, ale marsz przez kraj powracających jednostek przekształcił się w niepowtarzalną, ogólnie narodową manifestację wdzięczności całego społeczeństwa dla armii wyzwolicieli. (2) Każde miasto, każda wieś wysyłała naprzeciw maszerującym pułkom delegacje z chlebem i solą, żołnierzy zapraszano w gościnę.
EN
[...] (1) In Poland, [they] did not organize a Victory Parade, but the march of returning units through the country transformed into a unique, nationwide manifestation of gratitude from the entire society to the liberating army. (2)

Every city, every village sent delegations with bread and salt and to meet the marching regiments, [they] invited soldiers to stay as guests.
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In discourse segment (162), the locative expression *in Poland* metonymically represents the communist government that was in power in Poland after World War II. This interpretation arises when the meaning of the locative expression combines with the lexical content of the verb from which the *-no/-to* construction is derived, *urządzać* ‘to organize’. The locative expression, along with the impersonal verb, implies that the Victory Parade should have been organized at the state level, i.e., by the authorities. The following discourse unit 2 elaborates on the nature of the nationwide expression of gratitude from society (as mentioned in sentence 1) toward the soldiers returning from the war, providing examples of this gratitude. The second *-no/-to* construction, *zapraszano* ‘[they] invited’, exemplifies another way this gratitude was expressed. This construction indicates that, in addition to sending delegations to greet the marching regiments, the soldiers were invited to stay as guests throughout the country. The implicit subject of the second *-no/-to* construction is bound by ‘the entire society’ mentioned in the preceding sentence. Although this society is not the topic of the clause, it provides the context for understanding the invitation. The topic and subject of the preceding clause is the march through the country by returning units, which transformed into a manifestation of gratitude.

4.7.5 Abstract nouns

(163)

PL

(1) Po chwili na ekranie ponownie pojawił się szeryf i wygłosił umoralniającą opowieść o tym, że nawet w tak zdziczałych moralnie czasach każdy powinien trzymać się wiary swoich przodków i szanować innych ludzi. (2) Ech, w filmach zawsze takie hasła brzmiały pięknie, ale skoro cała kultura amerykańska powstała na zgliszczach innych kultur, które zdeptano by zrobić miejsce dla siebie, to stawało to wszelkie tego typu slogany w zupełnie innym świetle. (3) Na szczęście to była już jedna z ostatnich scen.
--

EN

(1) After a moment, the sheriff appeared on the screen again and delivered a moralizing tale about how, even in such morally degenerate times, everyone should adhere to the faith of their ancestors and respect others. (2) Ah, these slogans always sounded beautiful in movies, but given that American culture was built on the ruins of other cultures that [they] trampled upon to make way for themselves, it cast such slogans in a completely different light. (3) Fortunately, this was one of the final scenes.

In this discourse segment, sentence 2, which contains the *-no/-to* construction, functions as a metatextual comment on the scene described in sentence 1. In sentence 1, the protagonist refers to a speech made by the sheriff in the movie about the importance of respecting other cultures. The protagonist indirectly criticizes this statement by using the abstract noun phrase *kultura amerykańska* ‘American culture’ as a metonymy for Americans (it implicitly refers to the people who shaped it) and the impersonal construction *zdeptano* ‘[they] trampled upon’ in the subordi-

nate clause. This construction conveys what has actually been done to other cultures in America.

The active, agentive nature of the destruction of other cultures is highlighted by the prepositional phrase *dla siebie* 'for itself', which is syntactically bound by the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction. The subordinate clause with the *-no/-to* construction is integrated into the discourse as an elaboration of the preceding sentence, clarifying the fate of the non-American cultures and further developing the initial statement about the formation of American culture. This elaboration, along with the agentivity of the *-no/-to* construction emphasized by the prepositional phrase containing the reflexive pronoun *siebie* 'itself', establishes a referential link to American culture as the entity responsible for the destruction of other cultures.

4.7.6 Locative expressions

(164)

PL
(1) Podręcznik jest przeznaczony dla studentów biologii, biologii środowiskowej i ekologii, a także osób zainteresowanych naukowymi podstawami ochrony środowiska przyrodniczego. (2) Podręcznik prezentuje aktualny stan wiedzy w ekologii roślin oraz rozwój teorii ekologicznej. (3) W ostatnim dwudziestoleciu w ekologii nastąpił znaczny postęp w poznaniu procesów ekologicznych oraz w obiektywizacji metod, dzięki zastosowaniu metod matematycznych. (4) Jednakże w tym podręczniku unikano omawiania skomplikowanych metod matematycznych stosowanych w ekologii.
EN
(1) The textbook is intended for students of biology, environmental biology, and ecology, as well as for those interested in the scientific foundations of environmental protection. (2) The textbook presents the current state of knowledge in plant ecology and the development of ecological theory. (3) In the last two decades, there has been significant progress in understanding ecological processes and in the objectification of methods, thanks to the application of mathematical techniques. (4) However, in this textbook, [they] avoided discussing the complex mathematical methods used in ecology.

The whole discourse segment (164) is devoted to the description of the content of a certain textbook, which as such is the main discourse topic. The textbook is introduced at the beginning of the first sentence as a subject and topic of the clause. In the third sentence there is a brief report what happened in ecological theory in the last two decades and the textbook reappears as the topic of the clause in discourse unit 4 as a locative expression headed by the demonstrative pronoun *ten*. The identification of the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction, which occurs in the last discourse unit, can be established from the combination of the locative expression with the lexical content of the impersonal verb form and interpreted as the author of the textbook. The use of the *-no/-to* construction makes it possible to express the attitude of the author of the textbook towards the description of the mathematical methods which can be deduced from the lexical meaning of the basic verb form *unikać* 'to avoid'. Additionally, the clause containing the *-no/-to* construction is integrated into the discourse through a contrastive coherence relation, introduced by

jednakże ‘however’ at the beginning of the sentence. This, combined with the lexical content of the verb, signals that the textbook deliberately avoids delving into the mathematical methods, which supports the interpretation of the implicit agent of the construction as the author of the textbook. This interpretation is further reinforced by the general knowledge that this style—using the impersonal *-no/-to* construction—is commonly employed by scholars in academic writing, as discussed in Chapter 2.

4.7.7 Instrumental phrases

(165)

PL
[...] (1) Każde miasto, każda wieś wysyłała naprzeciw maszerującym pułkom delegacje z chlebem i solą, żołnierzy zapraszano w gościnę. (2) Drogi były usłane kwiatami, kwiaty zdobiły żołnierskie rogatywki i naramienniki mundurów, czolgi, samochody i działa przypominały raczej triumfalne rydwany niż sprzęt wojskowy. (3) A później rękami regularnego żołnierza Wojska Polskiego umacniano władzę ludową, walczono z podziemiem i reakcyjnym podziemiem.
EN
[...] (1) Every city, every village sent delegations with bread and salt to meet the marching regiments, and [they] invited soldiers as guests. (2) The roads were strewn with flowers, which adorned the soldiers’ caps and epaulets, and the tanks, cars, and cannons resembled triumphal chariots rather than military equipment. (3) And later, with the hands of regular soldiers of the Polish Army, [they] strengthened people’s authority, and [they] fought against the underground and reactionary underground.

This discourse segment is repeated from (162) and extended by the following two discourse units 2 and 3, the last of which contains both the instrumental phrase *rękami regularnego żołnierza Wojska Polskiego* ‘with the hands of regular soldiers of the Polish Army’ and the two directly following *-no/-to* constructions *walczono* ‘[they] strengthened’ and *umacniano* ‘[they] fought’. Discourse unit 3 creates a contrast with the preceding sentences, where the once celebrated war heroes, welcomed by the whole society, become tools in the hands of the new governmental order to consolidate power and suppress opposition. The agent in these *-no/-to* constructions is therefore inferred to be a combination of the Polish Army, introduced by the instrumental phrase, acting under the direction of the new government, which is implied as the direct object of the first *-no/-to* construction. The actions described are part of a coordinated, collective effort by the state and military to establish and maintain control. Thus, the interpretation of the implicit agents draws from the instrumental phrase and the cultural and historical context provided by the discourse.

4.8 Influence of Antecedent Elements on the Interpretation of the Implicit Agent of the *-no/-to* Construction

The types and characteristics of linguistic expressions surrounding the *-no/-to* construction play a crucial role in shaping how the implicit agent is understood within a given context. This relationship is mediated here through certain aspects of Thompson and Hopper's (1980) transitivity theory, which in this case helps to explain how different degrees of referentiality influence the prominence and interpretation of the implicit agent. Transitivity, in this context, is a measure of how much a verb's action is carried over to an object. According to this theory, the transitivity is a gradient rather than a binary feature. High transitivity involves sentences with at least two participants (agent and patient), dynamic actions, definite endpoints, intentionality, and highly affected and individuated objects. By contrast, low transitivity involves fewer participants, states, indefinite endpoints, non-intentionality, and less affected and non-individuated objects. Hopper and Thompson's (1980) transitivity theory, which focuses on how events are conceptualized and distinguished based on the participants and their roles, helps thus to elucidate the use of the *-no/-to* construction in Polish. Important components of a high transitivity of a given sentence is the individuation of the object and the level of agency of the agent (high vs. low in potency). Since there is no overt agent in the structure of the investigated construction the question emerges how to measure the "potency" of the implicit agent. In this regard especially the individuation component of the transitivity theory appears to be a good indicator. Accordingly, objects with low individuation (understood as referents of nouns and thus applicable) are common nouns, inanimate, abstract, plural, mass and non-referential, whereas highly individuated objects bear the opposite features, being proper names, human and animate, concrete, singular, countable, and referential. Thus, the individuation component tells us how distinct the patient is from the agent and from its own background. Applying these features to the antecedent elements of the *-no/-to* construction found in the NKJP corpus, we can state that they are to be placed among the features characterized as pointing to low individuated entities. From Chapter 2 of this thesis we know as well that the *-no/-to* construction is not referential in the semantic sense but can be bound by external operators like, for instance, plural NPs that denote some group of people. The corpus study revealed that the majority of (discourse) referents are expressions that can be defined as collective sets or locative expressions, which are non-referential entities. The first category comprises unspecific animate members of a collective set, such as members of a particular institution or group, while the latter represents different places, cities, or material objects that evoke associations with a potential agent but do not directly refer to it, as they do not point to a unique entity in a given world. Even the plural NPs are not clear cases in terms of a direct coreference with the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction. They point to a generalized notion of a group of people which, through belonging to this collective, bear certain similar characteristics with each other. The *-no/-to* construction relates to such groups anaphorically and implies that certain events, expressed by the lexical content of the construction, have either been performed by some members of this group, so that the group as such can be identified with these actions, or the type of actions can be ascribed to a certain group of people without further specifying its

members. Otherwise, one would use a personal construction. Therefore, the discourse referents of the *-no/-to* construction set the stage for understanding who the implicit referent might be, but the construction's meaning is not solely dependent on these expressions because they are not direct, explicit referents. Instead, they activate or suggest a referent in the context of the construction, which can be more fluid and context-dependent. The "referential" expressions are also not that important in the surrounding of the *-no/-to* construction, as they have low individuation. Taking this into account and considering the fact that we are talking about anaphorical relations of the investigated construction, we can compare the discourse referents of the *-no/-to* construction to the *antecedent triggers* of Cornish (2010), who introduced this term to describe elements in discourse that prompt the identification of antecedents (previously mentioned entities) in various linguistic constructions. Similarly, in the case of the *-no/-to* construction in Polish, the linguistic expressions preceding the construction can act as triggers for the implicit referent, guiding the reader or listener towards a particular interpretation without directly establishing a clear and definite reference. Below there is a brief summary of the specified categories of the antecedent elements and their impact on the interpretation of the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction.

Groups Overview:

1. Singular NPs (3 examples)
2. Plural NPs (20 examples)
3. Quantified and Multiple Plural and Singular NPs (11 examples)
4. Collective Sets (64 examples)
5. Abstract Nouns (5 examples)
6. Locative Expressions (39 examples)
7. Instrumental Phrases (5 examples)

1. Singular NPs (3 examples)

- **Description:** These phrases denote specific, individual entities.
- **Influence:** The rare occurrence of singular NPs (3 but only 2 are referential as the one indefinite NP is non-referential) implies that the *-no/-to* construction is very rarely used to refer anaphorically to specific, and highly individuated entities. In the cases exemplified in the previous section, the *-no/-to* construction does not directly refer to the singular definite NPs but describes events which can be related to these entities. The rare occurrence of this type of phrases in preceding discourse results from the impersonal nature of the construction and points to its function of emphasizing actions without focusing on individual, specific participants.

2. Plural NPs (20 examples)

- **Description:** These phrases denote multiple entities acting collectively.
- **Influence:** The relatively high frequency of plural noun phrases suggests that the *-no/-to* construction is frequently used to generalize actions involving groups of people. This pattern illustrates that the construction abstracts away from specific individuals in order to express collective actions, whereby

the activity itself becomes more salient than the individual members of the group. When combined with the *-no/-to* construction, plural NPs function as a collective representation of a group of people: although some members of the group may be implicitly encompassed by the meaning of the construction, no direct referential link to specific individuals can be established.

3. Quantified and Multiple Plural and Singular NPs (11 examples)

- **Description:** These phrases specify quantities applied to entities acting collectively or involve multiple entities.
- **Influence:** The occurrence of quantified noun phrases indicates that the *-no/-to* construction is compatible with contexts that include numerical specification. While quantification adds a degree of semantic specificity to the noun phrase, a direct referential link to the entities denoted by these nominal expressions cannot be established. This is consistent with the impersonal nature of the construction: information about the number of participants may be provided, yet it remains unclear which and how many concrete referents of the given noun are involved. It can be thus stated that the usage of quantified NPs, as well as multiple plural and singular noun phrases in contextual combination with the *-no/-to* construction, serves to emphasize the activity itself, since the impersonal construction prevents the establishment of a direct referential link to these entities, unlike a personal verb form.

4. Collective Sets (64 examples)

- **Description:** This type of entity denotes collective groupings, such as institutions, social bodies or groups of people that act or are conceptualized as unified wholes.
- **Influence:** Similar to the previous mentioned group of discourse referents, the plural NPs, the high frequency of collective sets points to the construction's role in generalizing actions carried out by groups of people. These groups are defined in a loosely manner and are often represented by formal institutions, social groups or other group-denoting expressions. Taken together, such cases reinforce the interpretation of the *-no/-to* construction as a means of emphasizing events rather than the participants involved. The collective sets are the biggest group of discourse referents found in the corpus in this study and clearly show that the *-no/-to* construction tends to refer to linguistic entities which are only minimally individuated.

5. Abstract Nouns (5 examples)

- **Description:** These phrases denote intangible concepts or entities.
- **Influence:** The occurrence of abstract nouns demonstrates the range of contexts in which the *-no/-to* construction can be applied, namely situations in which actions or events are associated with non-concrete agents. Their presence indicates a very low degree of individuation: reference to a potential referent is established solely on the basis of context and world knowledge. Abstract entities cannot be linked to a specific individual but rather evoke a

group of people implied by the conceptual frame of the noun. Here again, it becomes apparent that the event expressed by the lexical verb of the construction receives greater emphasis than the agentive component.

6. Locative Expressions (39 examples)

- **Description:** These phrases denote locations, abstract concepts, or time frames.
- **Influence:** The frequent use of locative expressions indicates that the *-no/-to* construction often anchors events within specific places or contexts. This contributes to textual coherence by situating actions within established settings and underscores the role of context in interpreting the implicit agent of the construction. These expressions provide a locative or temporal dimension that delimits the reference of the implicit agent but merely vaguely. Rather than identifying a concrete entity, they provide a conceptual frame where the implicit agent is associated with a particular setting or time period.

7. Instrumental Phrases (5 examples)

- **Description:** These phrases denote the means or tools used to perform actions.
- **Influence:** Although less frequent, instrumental phrases highlight the means by which actions are carried out, adding another conceptual dimension to the *-no/-to* construction. They demonstrate the construction's ability to represent different layers of plurality associated with the implicit agent by incorporating the instruments involved in the action, which may in some cases include additional animate entities. This contributes to a more specific characterization of the event's execution without placing focus on individual referents, in line with the construction's impersonal nature.

The analysis of linguistic expressions in the context preceding the *-no/-to* construction reveals its predominant use in generalizing actions and events. The construction's high frequency of collective sets and locative expressions supports its impersonal nature, while the presence of plural noun phrases, quantified plural noun phrases, abstract nouns, and instrumental phrases additionally demonstrates its adaptability to different types of contexts. The observation that this construction emphasizes events and actions can be drawn from the fact that, in the majority of cases, the construction links events to broader, less individuated agents rather than to specific participants. The use of the *-no/-to* construction, as supported by Hopper and Thompson's (1980) transitivity theory, aligns with a preference for less individuated agents in preceding discourse, which in this context can be interpreted as contributing to maintaining narrative continuity. The potency of the implicit agent in these constructions is closely tied to the individuation of the referents. Less individuated referents, such as collective sets and plural noun phrases, typically denote a more generalized and less specific agent.

The interpretation of the implicit agent is thus a dynamic process, context-dependent and influenced by various linguistic expressions—such as locative expressions, multiple singular and plural NPs, quantified phrases, and abstract nouns—

along with the lexical semantics of the verb, contextual cues (coherence relations), and world knowledge. Together, these factors shape how the agent is conceptualized, indicating the construction's role in maintaining a cohesive and coherent narrative while implying the presence of an agent without individuating them.

Interestingly, the two specific singular noun phrases found in the corpus as antecedents for the *-no/-to* construction serve as good examples of how the event conveyed by the construction is emphasized. These referents are highly individuated and clearly defined, making them difficult to link directly with impersonal constructions in subsequent discourse, which would disrupt the mental representation of these entities and render the discourse incoherent. This connection typically only works in the opposite direction. In such cases, the construction introduces a new entity into the discourse rather than referring to an already established and active linguistic unit, which is characteristic of anaphoric relations. By emphasizing an event and action performed by a human agent, it can pragmatically refer to any possible human-denoting entity in the subsequent context. Consider the following example from the NKJP:

(166) *Ksiądz zakłatał w te drzwi, aż echo poszło po pustej ulicy. Kołatał raz i drugi, a nikt nie wychodził. Wreszcie postyszał kroki, odsunięto zasuwę i powoli otworzyły się małe drzwiczki wybite w obszernych wrotach. Alojz stał w cieniu i bez słowa patrzył na księdza.*

'The priest knocked on the door, and the sound echoed down the empty street. He knocked once, then again, but no one came out. Finally, he heard footsteps, [they] drew back the latch, and a small door set into the large gate slowly opened. Alojz stood in the shadows, silently watching the priest.'

4.9 Interpretation of the Results of Experiments 1 and 2

Based on the groups of antecedent elements found in the National Corpus of Polish (NKJP), we can assert that the corpus study results more accurately depict the usage of the *-no/-to* construction in discourse than those obtained from the experiments. The NKJP search revealed that, while it is possible for the *-no/-to* construction to have plural NPs as discourse antecedents, the majority of linguistic expressions found in the corpus are collective sets and locative expressions, which are non-referential. Furthermore, the plural NPs found in the corpus are rarely topical (only in 5 out of 21 cases) in the preceding discourse, and typically, additional subordinate clauses or one or two sentences occur between them and the placement of the *-no/-to* construction. These findings align more closely with the initial assumptions and design of the first experiment, which tested the acceptability of the *-no/-to* construction under three conditions: NEW, FAR, and RECENT. However, while the numerical means from the first experiment suggest that the NEW condition was rated slightly higher than FAR and RECENT, the differences were not statistically significant (NEW = FAR = RECENT). In light of the statistical analysis, the results do not support the initial hypothesis (NEW > FAR > RECENT). Nonetheless, the slight trend in the numerical data might indicate a subtle preference that mirrors the corpus findings. The settings used in the first experiment for the RECENT context, where the first sentence contains a topical plural NP and the *-no/-to* construction

appears at the beginning of the second clause, were not found in the corpus. This might be because these structures closely resemble referential settings typical of personal constructions. In the first experiment, the RECENT context was rated as the least acceptable (based on numerical values). In the second experiment, however, there was a reversed tendency, with the RECENT context being rated⁴⁷ slightly higher than the NEW context. This might be due to the test items being shortened from four to two sentences, making the test items with plural NPs more appealing for psychological reasons (people typically search for agents or perpetrators), as well as because of the many positive fillers containing sentences with topical noun phrases denoting agents in the first sentence, which were picked up by the null pronoun in the second clause (as in example (155)). Additionally, the adverbial phrases placed at the initial position in each sentence (before the *-no/-to* construction) might have strengthened the identification between the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction and the preceding prominent NP, enhancing the cohesion between the two clauses. The initial hypothesis of the two experiments was that partial coreference should impede the usage of the *-no/-to* construction in the following discourse. However, it turned out to be the basis for the identification between the two entities, as particularly evident in the second experiment, where the RECENT context, according to numerical values, was rated slightly better than the NEW context. Thus, the main question of both experiments, i.e., whether *-no/-to* can demote discourse-prominent referents, must be answered affirmatively due to the semantic compositionality of the investigated construction (as it contains a variable *x* that can be bound by external operators; see Chapter 2). In this case, the coreferential reading of the immediately preceding NP and the following *-no/-to* construction could be enhanced by the discourse prominence of the overt NP, which is placed in a topical position of the sentence and serves as the sentence topic. However, this is not the natural contextual setting for the construction in question, as evidenced by the analysis of the corpus data.

So, what exactly happened in the NEW context, and what does it tell us about the function of the investigated construction? Below are some examples (167)–(169) of the test items used for this condition in the first experiment.

(167) *Nadszedł dzień otwarcia nowej restauracji. W powietrzu unosił się przyjemny zapach duszonych warzyw. Na zewnątrz gromadziły się tłumy zaciekawionych ludzi. Otworzono drzwi dla klientów.*

‘The day of the new restaurant’s opening arrived. The pleasant aroma of sautéed vegetables filled the air. Outside, crowds of curious people gathered. [They] opened the doors for customers.’

(168) *W galerii wybuchł skandal. Obraz słynnego malarza, największa atrakcja ekspozycji, wisiał do góry nogami. Na otwarcie wystawy miało przybyć wielu wybitnych gości, w tym i sam twórca. Odwrócono obraz w pośpiechu.*

‘A scandal broke out in the gallery. The painting by a famous artist, the main attraction of the exhibition, was hanging upside down. Many distinguished

⁴⁷ Similar to the first experiment, there was no statistically significant difference between the results in the second experiment, with NEW = RECENT. When reporting the ratings, I refer to the subtle tendencies in participant preferences as reflected by the average means.

guests were expected to attend the opening, including the artist himself. **[They] turned** the painting quickly the right way up’.

(169) *Remont trwał bardzo długo. W mieszkaniu pełno było kurzu i porozrzucanych narzędzi. Zerwane tapety i kubły po farbie walały się po podłodze. Przeszawiono krzesła i stoły.*

‘The renovation took a very long time. The apartment was full of dust and scattered tools. Torn wallpaper and paint buckets were strewn across the floor. **[They] rearranged** the chairs and tables’.

In test item (167), the discourse topic is the opening day of a new restaurant. The sentences collectively depict the events and atmosphere associated with this particular day, following a temporal sequence. The final sentence, which contains the *-no/-to* construction, can be seen as the culmination of the ongoing preparations for the restaurant’s opening. This sentence emphasizes the event of opening the doors without focusing on who performed the action. The *-no/-to* construction here directly relates to the main event (the discourse topic) by introducing the final step of the opening day, marking it as the conclusion of the entire narrative. The discourse topic of the test item in (168) is a scandal at an art gallery. The second sentence explains what happened at the gallery, identifying the cause of the scandal. The third sentence underscores the significance of the situation by mentioning the anticipated arrival of important guests. The event conveyed by the *-no/-to* construction in the last sentence is closely related to the main topic, as it describes the immediate solution to the problem—an action that resolves the crisis and concludes the story. Again, the focus is on the action taken to resolve the crisis, not on who specifically performed it. The last test item (169) centers on the prolonged renovation of an apartment. The following two sentences describe the condition of the apartment by enumerating various objects, which evoke an overall impression of chaos and disorder. The final sentence, containing the *-no/-to* construction, contributes to the narrative by introducing another event that further illustrates the disorder caused by the ongoing renovation.

As evident in the examples above, the test items constructed for the NEW condition do not have a concrete antecedent (a specific noun phrase) in their structure. They are narratives composed of various events that together form a coherent story. The clauses with the *-no/-to* construction integrate new events into the discourse by relating, in different ways, to the main discourse topic. The impersonal sentences in these items emphasize the actions or events rather than the specific agents, ensuring that the main discourse topic (in these cases, the events) remains the central focus of the text.

Given that frequent occurrences of topical plural NPs in the context immediately preceding the *-no/-to* construction were not identified through corpus data analysis, and considering the potential flaws in the design of the second experiment—particularly the structure of the test items, which are more suited for studying pronominal reference—I believe that the design of the first experiment is more appropriate for testing the acceptability (or function) of the *-no/-to* construction in discourse. Although the results of the first experiment were not statistically significant, they display subtle tendencies that more accurately reflect both the manner of occurrence (in specific broader contexts such as NEW and FAR) and the function served

by the studied construction, as determined by its semantic properties. Both experiments demonstrated that the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction can be identified with NPs mentioned in preceding discourse units and that the construction serves as a discourse management tool in contexts lacking a clear nominal antecedent.

4.10 Conclusions

After studying and analyzing both the corpus and experimental data, several conclusions can be drawn. The anaphoric relations (or anaphoric predications) of the *-no/-to* construction are crucial for understanding its role in discourse. Through the expressions serving as antecedents, these relations reveal not only how activated or prominent certain linguistic units are in the mental representation of the speaker or author but also provide insights into the possible continuation of the discourse structure. These antecedents often refer to entities that are the focus of attention, typically determining the discourse topic. The very low individuation of the antecedent elements of the *-no/-to* construction, as observed in the corpus, pertains not only to the lexical descriptions of these entities but also to their syntactic positions within the sentence. This low individuation suggests that the function of the *-no/-to* construction is not to promote direct reference to NPs in subsequent discourse. Instead, the identification process between these antecedent triggers (cf. Cornish 2010) and the *-no/-to* construction is a dynamic, discourse-dependent process. This process sheds light on how the construction builds relationships with other entities within the discourse. This dynamic mechanism of establishing relations is also evident in contexts where there are no clear, canonical antecedents in the preceding discourse. In such cases, the *-no/-to* construction relates to events or situations that serve as the main discourse topics of the given segment, which can be perceived as implicit referents. Consequently, the *-no/-to* construction can be viewed as an anaphor in a broader sense, aligning with the discourse-functionalist approach to anaphora. This approach, as exemplified by Cornish (2010), characterizes anaphors as devices that maintain reference throughout the unfolding discourse, rather than resolving them directly through the lexical description of a canonical antecedent, as suggested by the formalist approach. Consequently, Cornish (2010: 11) notes that under the discourse-functionalist approach, anaphora operates primarily at the level of discourse-memory representations. This approach encompasses cases where there is no textual antecedent, and the anaphor can still be resolved through relevant inferences. When no antecedent is explicitly provided, the listener or reader may use inference based on world knowledge, context, or the logical structure of the discourse. This process enables the anaphor to be linked to an implicit referent understood from the broader context. Thus, the functionalist approach most accurately explains the behavior of the *-no/-to* construction in discourse and allows us to define it as a discourse management tool. The ability of the *-no/-to* construction to relate anaphorically (supported by discourse means) to human agents (presented mostly as collective concepts) and events stems from its dual semantic compositionality, which can be described as: [indefinite plural pronoun plus event].

So far, we have seen that the *-no/-to* construction, functioning as a discourse management tool, primarily operates in the background of discourse, relating ac-

tions or events to the main discourse topics. This discursive role aligns with its core function introduced in Chapter 3, where it is described as *agentive narration*—a specialized form of the past tense (preterite) that denotes events performed by an unknown human agent. The following Chapter 5 will explore the potential for the *-no/-to* construction to become the center of attention and the linguistic conditions necessary for this to occur. It will be argued that the construction gains prominence in discourse when its semantic components become visible at the discourse surface. For the construction to be foregrounded (prominent), the implicit agent must be particularly individuated (agentive), and the entire event must be clearly narrated.

5 Function of the *-no/-to* Construction in Discourse

This chapter is a continuation and expansion of the previous chapter's discussion on the function of the *-no/-to* construction in discourse, based on corpus studies. It also provides a detailed description and explanation of the discursive function introduced in Chapter 3, referred to here as *agentive narration*. Additionally, this chapter explores considerations related to the theory of prominence, specifically its potential application to the construction under study. The *-no/-to* construction, being an impersonal construction, does not establish relationships with other linguistic units in the same way as personal constructions, where the grammatical subject (and a semantic agent) of the entire sentence is usually clearly expressed in the sentence structure. This raises the question of whether the *-no/-to* construction, which expresses an impersonal event instead of a standard transitive event (containing at least two participants), can be prominent in discourse, and if so, under what circumstances this can be determined. These considerations, in addition to the aforementioned theory of prominence (cf. von Heusinger and Schumacher 2019), are based on the theory of transitivity by Hopper and Thompson (1980) and, more broadly, on concepts derived from discourse analysis (cf. Hopper 1979), cognitive linguistics (cf. Langacker 1987) and narratology (cf. Zeman 2018).

5.1 Why Agentive Narration?

The name of the overarching function of the *-no/-to* construction in discourse *agentive narration* was created in a way which is a direct reflection of its core semantic features. The semantic features in question were described in detail in the Chapter 2 and to some degree also in Chapter 3 of this work. The term *agentive narration* is in my understanding of the examined construction a more suitable description for its functioning in discourse than *bare happening*, a term proposed by Sansò (2006) who claims that the *-no/-to* forms almost entirely encode this particular situation⁴⁸ type. By ascribing the *-no/-to* construction to this situation type Sansò (2006) pointed out that the *-no/-to* forms express a low-elaborated event due to the low-individuation status (in the sense of Hopper and Thompson 1980) of its participants (the lack of an overt agent and as a rule a non-topical patient). The low elaboration of the event, as he argues, has a direct impact on the salience of the construction, which in his opinion, is to present an event represented by the lexical verb as a “naked fact at the lowest level of elaboration” (Sansò 2006: 240). He adds that denoting a low-salient event—in his terms, a bare happening—the construction is implemented to provide additional information to other discourse segments which contain the basic, nuclear information and can be removed without influencing the

⁴⁸ The focus of Sansò's (2006) article is on how different languages manage the defocusing of the agent through various grammatical constructions, such as passives and impersonals. Sansò categorizes situation types (modes of occurrences and functions) into three main groups: patient-oriented process, agentless generic event and bare happening.

main narrative of the text. The semantic marginality of events encoding bare happening, low-salient actions, is also, as he reports, characterized by their often occurrences in a summary fashion, where a series of events is more important than the single events it is comprised of (cf. Sansò 2006: 242).

The above description, suggesting that the *-no/-to* forms can be perceived as *satellites* (cf. Mann and Thompson 1988, cited in Sansò 2006), i.e., additional, less important events relative to the main narrative, is accurate for some instances of the construction in discourse. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, when viewed more broadly, it mostly serves as a discourse management tool which helps to establish a link to the main discourse topic (such as main events, Chapter 4). However, Sansò (2006) bases his argumentation exclusively on translated corpora, which are mediated texts, not original ones, and shows larger discourse units with only single occurrences of the *-no/-to* construction. He also does not discuss nor exemplify a series of events in case of the construction in question. *Bare happening* is an accurate term as it emphasizes the eventive aspect as the central component of the construction under investigation; however, the event itself is not bare. It carries a strong semantic feature [+human], which, under certain contextual circumstances, can help elevate the lexical event to a more central position in the discourse.

The two semantic features, the human implicit agent and the narrative component, which is the inherently encoded past tense, are shortly discussed in the subsequent sections.

5.1.1 The Implicit Agent

As presented in Chapter 3, the default human interpretation was inherited by the *-no/-to* construction from the Proto-Indo-European impersonal passive constructions, and most likely played a significant role (if not a decisive one) in its activation process. The “strength” of the [+human] feature, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, is evident in the incompatibility of the *-no/-to* construction with any agentive complements—whether with an overt subject, as exemplified in (170), or with an agentive adjunct phrase, as demonstrated in (171):

(170) **Janek wybito szybę.*
 Janek.NOM broke.IMPRS window.F.ACC.SG
 ‘Janek broke the window.’

(171) **Wybito szybę przez Janka.*
 broke.IMPRS window.F.ACC.SG by Janek.ACC
 ‘The window pane was broken by Janek.’

The construction can be only successfully applied to verbs denoting actions which can be performed by humans, otherwise it will still be interpreted as referring to humans, but then only metaphorically, as in (172).

(172) #*Na podworzu szczekano.*
 in yard barked.IMPRS
 ‘There was barking in the yard.’ (Dyła 1983: 123)

Furthermore, the implicit agent remains syntactically active, as it exhibits various binding and control properties, which were discussed in detail in the Section 2.4.2. The presence and the volitionality of the implicit agent can finally be confirmed by the occurrence of subject-oriented adverbials in the studied construction, as illustrated in the following example (Krzek 2014: 133):

- (173) *Budowano tutaj autostradę celowo.*
 built.IMPRS here motorway.F.ACC.SG on_purpose
 ‘[They] built a motorway here on purpose.’

Beyond that, the implicit agent is plural and arbitrary, and based on the antecedent elements found and analyzed in the previous chapter, we can state that it indirectly refers primarily to collective representations of human agents.

5.1.2 The Narrative Component

As discussed in previous chapters, the *-no/-to* construction can only occur in the past tense. This limitation stems from its historical development, as demonstrated by Brajerski (1977) and covered in Chapter 3, where it evolved from the passive *-n/t-* participle, which at one point in the earlier history of Polish denoted actions that occurred prior to the times indicated by auxiliaries. The semantic restriction to the past tense is a feature unique to the *-no/-to* construction, clearly distinguishing it from other impersonal constructions in Polish. As Ruda (2014) observes, the *-no/-to* forms occur in environments similar to those of the *l-* participle, which forms past tense verbs in Polish, but with the distinction that the *-no/-to* construction is mostly confined to written texts (cf. Brajerski 1977) and denotes exclusively impersonal events.

The inherent past tense property of the construction in question can thus be perceived as a specific *narrative* feature, enabling its use in many text genres that primarily report on events and accomplishments, leaving the performer(s) of the action in the background, such as for instance press or scientific publications. At the same time, it has to be noted that the concept of *narration* in linguistics is mostly related to the rhetorical relations, which constitute logical connections between different discourse units (propositions). Accordingly, the narrative coherence relation is established when two sentences depict an iconic succession of events, which means that they describe a sequence of events in chronological order. According to Asher and Lascarides (2003) the narrative relation can be as such either inferred from the depicted propositions by a listener or it can be implied by some specific linguistic devices (such as discourse particles). The temporal order of events is thus, as observed by Zeman (2018), the main prerequisite for defining a given discourse structure as a *narration* according to linguistic conceptions of this phenomenon. Although there might be some examples of texts (like reports from parliamentary or board sessions) which at some point consist of several *-no/-to* clauses which due to the usage of discourse particles would depict the natural order of events, the narrative component of the *-no/-to* construction is understood here as being triggered by its internal feature which is closely connected to its past tense reference. Let us consider the following example from NKJP:

(174)

PL

[...] (1) Tajniki produkcji cukru wykradli Persom Arabowie dopiero w VII wieku, Europa zaś poznała cukier trzcinowy około 1100 roku. [...] (2) W 1319 roku w Londynie kosztował dwa szylingi za funt, czyli w przeliczeniu na dzisiejsze ceny około 80 euro za kilogram. (3) W południowej Francji, a później już w całej Europie, ofiarowywali go sobie zakochani. (4) Przez całe średniowiecze cukier **po-dawano** jako środek uspokajający, w Persji zaś **rozpoczęto** produkcję cukierków. (5) W Polsce cukier trafiał wyłącznie na magnackie stoły, gdzie był takim samym cymesem jak daktyle, figi i migdały.

EN

[...] (1) The secrets of sugar production were stolen from the Persians by the Arabs only in the 7th century, and Europe became acquainted with cane sugar around the year 1100. [...] (2) In 1319, in London, it cost two shillings per pound, which is equivalent to about 80 euros per kilogram in today's prices. (3) In southern France, and later throughout all of Europe, lovers would offer it to each other. (4) Throughout the Middle Ages, **[they] served** sugar as a calming remedy, while in Persia **[they] started** to produce candies. (5) In Poland, only the noble households had sugar, where it was treated as a delicacy just like dates, figs, and almonds.

The discourse topic of the segment revolves around the history and cultural significance of sugar across different countries and time periods. The *-no/-to* constructions present in discourse unit 4 contribute to maintaining sugar as the central figure throughout the segment. These constructions do not establish a narrative coherence relation with the preceding or following sentences, as the depicted events are not presented in a chronological sequence. Instead, sentence 4 with the *-no/-to* constructions offers a contrastive exemplification of sugar's varied uses during the Middle Ages in different locations. Despite the lack of a coherent narrative connection between sentence 4 and its surrounding clauses (3 and 5), the sentence still retains a narrative touch (even though it is placed within a wider narrative context). This is because the past tense reference inherent in the *-no/-to* construction introduces an additional layer of representation of the presented event, evoking a sense of a narrative voice. As pointed out by Reichenbach (1947) the present and past tenses differ as to the placement of the reference times. In his framework, the present tense occurs when the time of speech (ts), the time of the event (te), and the time of reference (tr) all coincide. The preterite (simple past), on the other hand, is characterized by a separation between these times, where the time of reference (tr) and the time of the event (te) are distanced from the time of speech (ts), which can be described as follows: $(te = tr) < ts$ (cited in Zeman 2018: 15). This temporal displacement allows for the establishment of two reference points: the original one related to the time of utterance and a displaced one located at a distance to the time of utterance (cf. Zeman 2018). As Zeman (2018) observes, the temporal distance to the described events gives rise to emergence of different viewpoints, where the time of utterance reflects the speaker's perspective (narrator), and the displaced point aligns with an observer or evaluator (character level). She states that this dichotomy aligns with the narratological distinction proposed by Genette (1972) between the

narrator (the one who speaks) and the focalizer (the one who perceives). The narrator is thus associated with an external element to the discourse while the internal thoughts of the character (like in the example of Free Indirect Discourse, hence FID) or the described events are perceived as connected to the story level. Thus, Zeman (2018), based mostly on her analysis of FID, argues that the narration can be perceived as a complex mechanism where the usage of grammatical means triggers specific viewpoints effects on the macro-structure and can be at best described within an alignment between the micro- (linguistics) and macrostructural (narratology) accounts. In her definition the crucial characteristics of a narrative macro-structure is the double-layered structure of discourse where a narrator level is to be considered as a key parameter. As said above, the past tense allows for the establishment of the second layer of discourse which in turn is a prerequisite for context shifts. Even when the narrator is not coded linguistically the usage of the past tense indicates the existence of “abstract narratorship” (cf. Zeman 2018). So, whereas in FID, as noted by Zeman (2018) the relational structure of preterite correlates with the split between the speaker and character level (inner thoughts or beliefs) in case of the propositions expressed by the *-no/-to* construction we might assume a split between an abstract speaker and the narrated impersonal events. Contrary to the idea that the narrator is merely the speaker of the story, Zeman (2018), based on her analysis of FID, contends that the narrator should be understood as a displaced projection of the illocutionary force of the actual speaker. According to this theory, the double-layered structure of discourse is triggered by specific grammatical means that create a distance between the illocutionary subject (related to the speaker’s intent or the force behind the utterance) and the locutionary subject (related to the act of speaking itself or the proposition being stated). This, in turn, triggers a separate, additional layer of narrative force, which is a projection of the illocutionary force of the actual speaker. Devices that can trigger the splitting of discourse into two layers include specific narrative techniques such as Free Indirect Discourse and the Historical Present, as well as various epistemic markers like modal verbs, particles, and evidentials (cf. Zeman 2018).

The implementation of the impersonal *-no/-to* construction excludes the use of personal pronouns, unlike in Free Indirect Discourse, which presents the internal thoughts or speech of specific characters. As a result, the viewpoint shift is achieved differently. However, the underlying narrative mechanism appears to be similar. It could be described as follows: The past tense, inherently encoded in this construction, creates a distance between the locutionary level (the level of represented events or the proposition) and the illocutionary level (the intention behind the described events). This temporal distance or displacement triggers the projection of the illocutionary level of the represented events. At the story level, there is no mention of a specific agent (a character); instead, the focus is on the events or actions that have been performed (‘someone performed a particular action’). As a result, the narrative force retells these events in an anonymous, generalized manner, making the narrative seem more detached and neutral (‘who did it is unknown or unimportant; what matters is that the action took place’). Thus, the narrative aspect of the investigated construction is here understood as an inherent feature that, in a specific way, triggers additional effects on the linguistic macro-structure, in alignment with Zeman’s (2018) narratological approach.

Up to this point, we have observed that the construction in question primarily functions as a regulatory tool in discourse, helping to maintain text coherence and link events or actions to the main discourse topic. In these instances, the *-no/-to* construction presents backgrounded events, i.e., events that do not constitute the main storyline. As discussed in the previous chapter, these backgrounded events can refer back to general events, which serve as discourse topics within a given segment. To complete the picture and demonstrate the versatility of the construction in this regard, I will present all three possible types of discourse topics that the studied construction can refer back to. This will extend the information presented in the previous chapter with two new examples of discourse topics and pave the way for exploring whether this construction can be foregrounded and thus become prominent in discourse.

5.2 The *-no/-to* Construction in the Background

The previous chapter presented examples based on experimental items, where the events expressed by the *-no/-to* construction related to the main event or situation, which was the topic of the entire discourse segment. In the following, additional examples from the National Corpus of Polish (NKJP) will be presented, showing how the backgrounding of the construction allows other entities to be maintained as continuous and coherent discourse topics. One type of these examples fits the description of the situation type called as *patient-oriented process* introduced by Sansò (2006). This situation involves a patient, defined by Sansò as a person (human and animate entity), who serves as the main discourse topic. Various constructions, and as argued by Sansò mainly passive formations, sustain this patient entity as the central figure of the narrative, providing information about their experience or state. As a result, sentences containing information about this main entity can be linked together, forming topic chains where a single topic is maintained throughout the sequence, thereby creating coherence and continuity in the narrative. The *-no/-to* construction, as a discursive tool operating in the background, can also relate to animated discourse topics. Moreover, the *-no/-to* forms can also refer to inanimate topics, and as already demonstrated in the previous chapter – to the main events. For illustration, see the following three examples:

(175)

PL

(1) Antonio Gaudi zginął w wypadku w 1926 roku i natychmiast został zapomniany. (2) Przez pół wieku **widziano** w jego dziełach wybryki szaleńca, bluźnierstwa wobec zasad architektury racjonalnej, higienicznej. (3) Ale w ciągu ostatnich 20 lat na temat Gaudiego **wydano** całe biblioteki.

EN

(1) Antonio Gaudi died in an accident in 1926 and was immediately forgotten. (2) For half a century, [**they**] **saw** his works as the antics of a madman, blasphemies against the principles of rational, hygienic architecture. (3) But in the last 20 years, [**they**] **published** entire libraries about Gaudi.

Here, the discourse topic (the patient) is Antonio Gaudi, introduced as the subject in the first coordinated sentence. The entire narrative revolves around him, making him the central figure of the story. The first active sentence informs us about Gaudi's death, and the subsequent passive construction maintains the focus on him by stating that he was forgotten immediately afterwards. The following two sentences with *-no/-to* constructions continue to refer to Gaudi, but from the perspective of other people who are not explicitly mentioned. These people are implied through their actions, which concern Gaudi. Each sentence with the *-no/-to* construction provides further insight into the evaluation of Gaudi's artistry and the shifting perception of his work over time, thereby contributing to the coherence of the entire narrative.

(176)

PL
[...] (1) <u>Falochron</u> może być w postaci masywnej ściany betonowej, nasypu z gruzu lub kamieni albo rzędu drewnianych pali. (2) W czasie lądowania aliantów w Normandii, do konstrukcji falochronów w prowizorycznych portach użyto kilku starych statków i okrętów, które zatopiono w odpowiednich miejscach.
EN
[...] (1) <u>A breakwater</u> can be in the form of a solid concrete wall, an embankment of rubble or stones or a row of wooden piles. (2) During the Allied landings in Normandy, [they] used several old ships and vessels to construct breakwaters in makeshift harbours, which [they] sunk in suitable locations.

In this discourse unit, the topic of the entire segment is an inanimate entity—a breakwater. The first sentence defines what a breakwater is typically made of, describing its various forms and structures. The following complex sentence, containing two *-no/-to* constructions, provides a historical example of how breakwaters can be constructed under atypical circumstances, referring back to the different types of breakwaters mentioned in the first clause. Together, these discourse units form a coherent narrative where the breakwater remains the central topic.

(177)

PL
[...] (1) Jak wiem, z opowiadań mojej mamy, to był <u>niezwykle trudny czas</u> . (2) W domach przeraźliwie zimno, nie było czym palić. (3) Z trudem niektórym udało się zdobyć węgiel czy szczapy drewna. (4) No i łapanki na ulicach. (5) Te straszliwe budy, do których wrzucano przerażonych przypadkowych przechodniów.
EN
[...] (1) As I know from my mother's stories, it was <u>an extremely difficult time</u> . (2) The houses were terribly cold, and there was nothing to burn. (3) Some people managed, with great difficulty, to obtain coal or scraps of wood. (4) And then there were the roundups on the streets. (5) Those terrifying wagons, where [they] threw frightened, random passersby.

The discourse topic of this segment is the terrifying and difficult period of time. The second and third sentences describe the severe conditions people had to endure, illustrating their daily struggle for survival. The fourth sentence introduces the at-

mosphere of fear caused by the roundups on the streets. The *-no/-to* construction in the last sentence reveals what was done to the randomly captured people on the streets, which aligns with the overall tone of fear and hardship described in the earlier sentences.

The above examples demonstrate how the *-no/-to* forms can be applied in various narratives as a tool to support the development of the main discourse topic. In this role, the *-no/-to* construction is backgrounded, meaning it does not constitute the main storyline but serves as an additive device that helps to link discourse units referring to the central thematic figure. This raises the question of whether the *-no/-to* construction can function differently and itself become the central figure in a given discourse—in other words, whether an impersonal event can be foregrounded. This question will be addressed in the following sections. Before that, the general theory of prominence will be introduced, including the main assumptions about prominence in discourse, to explain the dynamic mechanisms involved in directing attention to specific entities through linguistic prominence-lending cues.

5.3 Prominence in Discourse

The theory of prominence was established by Himmelmann and Primus (2015) and assumes that prominence, alongside *linearization* and *hierarchical structure* is an additional organizational principle which is at work in all areas of grammar. According to this approach prominence is a universal structure-building principle which allows to single out one particular linguistic entity among other similar entities and make it the most important linguistic unit in a given grammatical setting. This approach establishes a link to cognitive sciences for it can be applied to discourse pragmatics as it explains for example the usage of particular referential expressions throughout the unfolding of discourse and what it means for a mental representation of a given linguistic entity (cf. von Heusinger and Schumacher 2019). In the area of discourse processing, prominence theory combines many approaches (e.g. Centering Theory by Grosz (Grosz et al. 1995, Grosz and Sidner 1986), givenness relations by Gundel (Gundel et al. 1993), accessibility hierarchy by Ariel (Ariel 1990)) and helps to navigate and observe how speakers are structuring particular parts of discourse (or conversations) by employing specific linguistic expressions, which are direct reflections of their mental representation of the verbalized concepts. Therefore, the prominence theory can be applied to larger text units and goes beyond the relations between entities in two-sentential settings. As far as the characteristic of the prominence theory is concerned Himmelmann and Primus (2015) give the following definition (cited from von Heusinger and Schumacher 2019: 118): (i) linguistic units of equal rank (e.g. syllables, co-arguments of a predicate) compete for the status of being in the center, (ii) their status may shift, (iii) prominent units act as structural attractors in their domain. The definition of prominence emphasizes three key attributes that indicate prominent linguistic entities: relationality, dynamism, and persistence throughout discourse. These features can be observed in structures like active versus passive voice. In a standard transitive sentence, the most prominent entity is typically the noun functioning as the agent (semantic role), the topic (information status), and the subject of the sentence (grammatical function). In Polish, this noun often appears in the initial position of the sentence (positional

information), further reinforcing its prominence. According to the prominence-lending cues mentioned, the subject of a transitive sentence is more prominent than the noun functioning as the object, which, in comparison, exhibits secondary prominence cues (being a patient, an object, and a non-initial entity). However, this relationship can be easily reversed through the morphosyntactic operation of passivization, where the entire sentence structure changes, and the former direct object becomes the new subject. In this scenario, the direct object of the former active sentence acts as a structural attractor. If it is maintained as a consistent topic throughout the discourse by being referred to with referential expressions, it remains a structural attractor and the main center of attention. This example illustrates that languages possess various mechanisms that allow speakers either to shift the prominence status of entities, establishing new prominent entities, or to maintain the prominence of a given entity through specific communicative strategies. One such strategy is the continuous use of referential expressions to sustain the prominence of an entity throughout the discourse.

The theory of discourse prominence posits that certain entities can significantly impact the discourse structure and maintain persistent prominence through various linguistic operations. The key question is whether the *-no/-to* construction, denoting an impersonal event, can achieve prominence in discourse and which factors contribute to this process.

5.4 Foregrounding Impersonal Events

The presentation of events is one of the central parameters to the discussion raised in the previous sections. What constitutes the foregrounding of events? According to Hopper (1979), foregrounding refers to events that form the core storyline, while backgrounded events serve as supportive material or commentary. In his framework of discourse analysis, the key concept associated with foregrounding is the sequencing of events within the narrative (it implies more than two propositions in a sequence). Events in a sequence must be temporally connected and appear in chronological order, with each event following directly from the preceding one. This sequential order helps distinguish the main narrative from secondary plots and reflects a real-world iconic order (cf. Hopper 1979). Events that constitute the main storyline—those that “belong to the skeletal structure of discourse”—are perceived as foregrounded (cf. Hopper 1979: 213) and are essential to the discourse. Consequently, foregrounded events are *narrated*, while backgrounded events provide support or commentary on the narration (cf. Hopper 1979). As Hopper (1979) points out, in narration, the author asserts the occurrence of events that drive the storyline, while backgrounded events remain dependent on and supportive of these main events. Hopper (1979) also notes that there is a connection between the grammatical form of a linguistic unit, its information status, and its role in the sequence, which influences its potential to shape the main storyline. Sequenced events often feature clearly identifiable subjects and firm topics, with new information typically introduced in the predicate. In contrast, backgrounded clauses are more likely to have topic changes, with new information appearing in the preverbal position as indefinite subjects. Foregrounded events are usually expressed with dynamic, punctual, and perfective verbs, as they denote the “discrete, measured events of the narrative”

(Hopper 1979: 215). This observation highlights that a foregrounded event depends on the completion of prior events. Thus, verbal forms must exhibit certain characteristics to create a sequence, often involving personal verbs that introduce clearly identifiable subjects, which tend to be central characters in the discourse.

Overgeneralizing, we might say that transitive events are more likely to be foregrounded, as they typically form sequences that contribute to the main storyline. What about impersonal events? How do they fit into the foregrounding of narrative events, given that they lack a clearly identifiable agent or subject? Just as narration, according to discourse analysis framework, relies on a sequential mechanism where certain linguistic properties drive the story forward, there should be another theoretical mechanism that accommodates the compositionality of impersonal events or special contexts in which impersonal events could be foregrounded similarly to transitive events. This consideration is purely a theoretical one, particularly excluding special text genres, such as various types of reports, that often feature impersonal constructions and are thus not the focus of this discussion. From the characteristics of foregrounding of events discussed above, we can infer that impersonal events may not fit well into a narrative sequence because they do not contain an overt subject that could be a central figure in the given discourse segment. The question that arises is whether this property excludes the *-no/-to* construction from forming a sequence of events, given that it is an active construction with an implicit subject. What, then, would be a suitable mode of occurrence for these expressions? To begin, let us examine the following example:

(178)

PL
[...] (1) W roku 1944 z Alaski na Kołymę przyleciał wiceprezydent USA Henry Wallace. (2) Naczelnik Dalstroju Iwan Nikiszow i Siergiej Golidze, naczelnik Zarządu NKWD na Chabarowski Kraj, wyreżyserowali dla prezydenta hollywoodzki spektakl. (3) Łagier o profilu rolniczym zmieniono w osiedle: rozebrano wieżyczki strażnicze, zbudowano drewniane chodniki, w barakach wstawiono łóżka z czystą pościelą, zbudowano sklep. (4) Z Moskwy sprowadzono luksusowe artykuły. (5) Więźniów częściowo wysiedlono , resztę przebrano w cywilne ubrania.
EN
[...] (1) In 1944, U.S. Vice President Henry Wallace flew from Alaska to Kolyma. (2) The head of Dalstroy, Ivan Nikishov, and Sergei Golidze, head of the NKVD Department for the Khabarovsk Territory, staged a Hollywood-style spectacle for the president. (3) The agricultural camp [they] transformed into a settlement: [they] dismantled the guard towers, [they] built wooden walkways, [they] placed beds with clean linens in the barracks, and [they] built a store. (4) From Moscow [they] brought luxury goods. (5) Some of the prisoners [they] relocated , and the rest [they] dressed in civilian clothes.

In the presented discourse segment, the discourse topic is the visit of U.S. Vice President Henry Wallace to Kolyma in 1944 and the organized transformation of the agricultural camp by the Soviets. This forms the main storyline—the narration in the sense of Hopper (1979). The multiple sentences with the *-no/-to* construction,

beginning from discourse unit 3, describe the actions taken to convert the former camp into a fake settlement. These *-no/-to* constructions do not constitute the main narrative; rather, they provide additional information and necessary context to the main discourse topic. However, when looking at this more narrowly, we can observe that in sentences 3 to 5, the impersonal actions take center stage, constituting the main information and depicting the collective effort that was put into the preparations. These *-no/-to* clauses refer to a collection of related actions that are not contingent upon one another in a chronological, sequential manner. Instead, they express different, multiple events that pertain to the main topic without representing a succession of events. They are presented in a series. Although the events denoted by the *-no/-to* forms do not constitute the main storyline, we can observe that this construction tends to occur multiple times, giving it the potential to be foregrounded. As we have seen from the discourse segment above, a series can play an important role in foregrounding impersonal events, but in the case of the discussed discourse unit, it is not sufficient to make the events prominent in the context of the whole narrative. For this reason, the assumption is that the lack of an overtly expressed agent must be compensated for in some way to add more dynamism to the event and present it as a more individuated entity, in the sense described by Hopper and Thompson (1980). Whether and how this works will be discussed in the subsequent section.

5.5 Can the *-no/-to* Construction Be Prominent in Discourse?

In the previous sections and the preceding chapter, we have seen that the *-no/-to* construction primarily serves as a discourse management tool, providing additional information that refers back to the main topic of discourse. As a supportive element within the narrative, the *-no/-to* forms present the events denoted by the verb as backgrounded, circulating around the central topic of the story. According to linguistic theories related to discourse analysis, such as those proposed by Hopper (1979), only narrated events can be foregrounded. This not only means that they must be placed in a sequence, but also that they typically need to fulfill certain characteristics, such as having a topical subject, to achieve foregrounding. Generally, based on my observations from the conducted corpus study, the *-no/-to* constructions are not typically used to depict a chronological order of events. However, this is not entirely ruled out, provided that they are accompanied by additional discourse markers, such as temporal conjunctions, or occur within a very clear discourse context. Would this then be enough to establish them as the main events of the given story?

Another structural characteristic of this construction, in addition to the absence of an overt agent, is that, when derived from transitive verbs, it typically includes a patient entity following the *-no/-to* form. According to the transitivity theory by Hopper and Thompson (1980), highly transitive events are characterized by an effective and intense transfer of power between the agent and patient. This transfer is most evident when both core entities are present in the clause structure and are maximally individuated (see Chapter 4). Therefore, transitivity is a property of the whole clause. An important role in contributing to the high transitivity of the entire event is also played by the verb, which should be telic, dynamic, and punctual, ide-

ally in the realis mode. These verbal features, also listed by Hopper (1979)—who uses perfective aspect instead of telicity—pertain to foregrounded events. Another key parameter measuring the intensity of the action is the affectedness of the patient, as observed by Hopper and Thompson (1980): “The degree to which an action is transferred to a patient is a function of how completely that patient is affected” (Hopper and Thompson 1980: 252). The high transitivity of a clause or event can be understood as the prominence of the entire clause, given that prominence is a relational and dynamic mechanism. This concept aligns with the main assumptions of transitivity theory, particularly regarding parameters or in other words “prominence-lending cues”. Thus, we could assume that for an event to be prominent, it must be highly individuated; in other words, the degree of individuation of its core arguments must be high. Since the *-no/-to* construction lacks an overt agent, the individuation of the implicit agent has to be expressed differently as in a standard case. Additionally, the impersonal event could have a specific mode of occurrence that aligns with Hopper’s (1979) concept of foregrounding, and could also be compared to a structural attractor in terms of discourse prominence (cf. von Heusinger and Schumacher 2019). What does this imply in more detail for an impersonal event?

The first assumption is that the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction must compensate for the lack of an overtly expressed agent. Since the agent of the *-no/-to* construction is covert, its “strength” can be measured by the degree of influence it exerts through the action defined by the lexical verb on the patient. This implies that the implicit agent of the *-no/-to* construction has to be volitional, the event denoted by the verb should be a dynamic action, preferably in perfective aspect, and the patient should be maximally affected. To ensure the construction’s discourse-structuring potential, the impersonal event should occur multiple times, in series or in a sequence.

Let us consider the following examples (179)–(183), presented in an order that gradually reveals the construction’s discourse-structuring potential and demonstrates an increasing influence of the implicit agent on the story line, along with its internal features such as *anonymity* and *collectiveness*.

(179) Source: “Rose Café i inne opowieści” (“Rose Café and Other Stories”), Janusz Głowacki, from NKJP.

PL

[...] (1) Po chwili, kiedy wzrok przyzwyczaił się już do półmroku, zobaczyłem w pokoju kilku mężczyzn, którzy już wcześniej zwrócili moją uwagę. (2) Byli to: mężczyzna o potężnym karku i twarzy przypominającej buldoga, mężczyzna szpakowaty, o nienagannych manierach konsula polskiego w Glasgow, oraz mężczyzna z brodą, mężczyzna z tikiem i mężczyzna bez jednego oka. (3) Ze znajomych zobaczyłem różowiutkiego, dalej mężczyznę z książką Berezy oraz długą, straszliwie wychudzoną postać, przypominającą Ibsenowskiego pastora, która przekazała nam przy barze zaszyfrowany komunikat. (4) **Kazano** mi przykleknąć, przysiąc, **pasowano** mnie i **przyjęto** do sprzysiężenia, po czym mężczyzna o wyglądzie konsula kontynuował przemówienie.

EN

[...] (1) After a while, when my eyes had adjusted to the dim light, I saw several men in the room who had caught my attention earlier. (2) They were: a man with a powerful neck and a face resembling that of a bulldog; a grizzled man with the impeccable manners of the Polish consul in Glasgow; and a man with a beard, a man with a tic, and a man with only one eye. (3) Among the familiar faces, I saw the rosy-faced one, the man with the book by Bereza, and a long, terribly emaciated figure resembling an Ibsen-like pastor, who had given us a coded message at the bar. (4) **[They] ordered** me to kneel, swear an oath, **[they] knighted** me, and **[they] admitted** me to the conspiracy, after which the man with the appearance of a consul continued his speech.

(180) Source: “Jesień w Brombergu” (“Autumn in Bromberg”), Dariusz Tomasz Lebi-oda, from NKJP

PL

[...] (1) Wychodząc z półmroku kościoła, Józia zmrużyła oczy, a kiedy jej wzrok przyzwyczaiał się do światła, otworzyła szeroko usta i przeraziła się. (2) Starcy, kobiety, mężczyźni i dzieci biegali we wszystkich kierunkach. (3) Od strony bramy i ulicy żołnierze Wehrmachtu pchali tłum kolbami karabinów w kierunku bocznego trawnika. (4) Tych, którzy próbowali przedostać się przez ten kordon **dźgano** lufami, uzbrojonymi w bagnety, **kopano**, **popychano** i z powrotem **ciskano** w tłum. (5) Z boku kościoła szedł ksiądz z ministrantami, a widząc żołnierzy zachodzących z boku, i starających się odciąć ludziom drogę powrotną do świątyni, schwycił pod lewe ramię Józię i popchnął ją, wolną ścieżką, ku plebani.

EN

[...] (1) As Józia stepped out of the dimly lit church, she squinted her eyes, and when her vision adjusted to the light, she opened her mouth wide in shock. (2) Old men, women, men, and children were running in all directions. (3) From the direction of the gate and the street, Wehrmacht soldiers were pushing the crowd with their rifle butts toward the side lawn. (4) Those who tried to break through this cordon, **[they] stabbed** with bayonet-fixed rifles, **[they] kicked**, **[they] shoved**, and **[they] threw** back into the crowd. (5) A priest, accompanied by altar boys, was walking alongside the church, and seeing the soldiers approaching from the side, trying to cut off the people’s way back to the church, he grabbed Józia under his left arm and pushed her along a clear path toward the rectory.

The two discourse units presented above share a similarity in how the stories are conveyed—both are told from the perspective of the main protagonists. In the first unit, the story is recounted from the first-person point of view, while in the second, it is narrated through the eyes of a young girl. In both cases, the protagonists describe what they see and experience at a given moment, selectively focusing their attention on specific elements or entities.

In the first discourse segment, the protagonist describes his encounter with several men in a room who appear to be participating in some sort of secret ceremony. In the first three sentences, he focuses on describing the men, making them the

main topic of sentences 2 and 3. However, in sentence 4, the protagonist shifts his attention from the men to their actions, particularly those performed on him. The emphasis in this passage is on the protagonist's experiences, especially the sequence of actions carried out on him—"Kazano mi przykłąknąć, przysiąc, pasowano mnie i przyjęto do sprzysiężenia ('[They] ordered me to kneel, swear an oath, [they] knighted me, and [they] admitted me to the conspiracy')". Here, these actions become the central focus of the narrative. The events are presented in sequential order, which we can infer from our world knowledge that aligns with the typical progression of actions in such an initiation ceremony. The use of the *-no/-to* constructions shifts the narrative's primary focus from describing the scene and characters to highlighting the protagonist's experience and advancing the plot as the events unfold. The actions of the men in the room, placed in a topical position, are prominent in sentence 4, though this prominence is not sustained, as the focus shifts back to one of the men by the end of the sentence. An internal feature of the implicit subject in the *-no/-to* constructions, particularly evident in this context, is anonymity, which underscores the ceremonial nature of the actions performed on the protagonist.

In the following discourse segment, we witness the unfolding events through the eyes of a young girl, *Józia*, who directs her attention to different aspects of the overall situation in each discourse unit. In sentence 2, she describes the chaotic scene of people running in various directions. Sentence 3 shifts focus to the Wehrmacht soldiers who are pushing the crowd, and in sentence 4, she recounts the series of violent actions inflicted by the soldiers upon the people. The *-no/-to* constructions used in this sentence convey the collective, anonymous brutality enacted upon the crowd, serving as the central focus of the sentence. These actions of the soldiers are presented in a sequential order, with each action logically building on the previous one, collectively depicting the brutal methods used to control the crowd in this micro-scene. Similar to the previous discourse segment, the *-no/-to* constructions are not persistently prominent, as the topic shifts in the last sentence to the priest and his protective action toward *Józia*. The internal feature of the implicit subject, particularly evident in this context, is the collective nature of the actions described.

(181) Source: "Zagłada Korościatyna" ("The Destruction of Korościatyn"), Ks. Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski (<https://www.lwow.com.pl/semper/korosciatyn.html>)

PL
[...] (1) Wykorzystując element zaskoczenia, opanowano najpierw stację kolejową, gdzie przecięto druty telegraficzne oraz wymordowano obsługę stacji i ludzi oczekujących na pociąg. (2) Następnie mordowano , rabowano i palono zagrodę po zagrodzie. (3) W grupie podpalającej domy brali udział nawet 12-14-letni chłopcy.
EN
[...] (1) Using the element of surprise, first [they] took over the train station, where [they] cut the telegraph wires, and [they] killed the station staff and people waiting for the train. (2) Then [they] murdered , [they] robbed , and [they] burned farmstead by farmstead. (3) Even 12- to 14-year-old boys participated in the group setting the houses on fire.

In the discourse segment presented above, the situation differs from the previous ones in that the events expressed by the *-no/-to* constructions are central to the narrative throughout most of the segment. These events are presented in a sequential order, as evidenced by the temporal markers such as *najpierw* ‘first’ in 1 and *następnie* ‘then’ in 2 and the logical progression of the unfolding actions. The story is narrated from the perspective of the actions inflicted upon people in various locations. The *-no/-to* constructions are at the forefront, depicting a violent and destructive sequence of events. These actions are the primary focus of the narrative and create a sense of massiveness due to the scale of the destruction and the impact on the victims. This impact is emphasized through collective nouns that describe locations, such as “the train station” and “farmstead by farmstead.” Attention shifts to another entity in the final sentence, focusing on the boys who were part of the group setting houses on fire.

(182) Source: “Poruszająca relacja Polaka z wywózki na Sybir. W takich warunkach Sowietci transportowali go do łagrów” (“Moving account of a Pole’s deportation to Siberia. Under such conditions, the Soviets transported him to the labor camps.”), Stanisław J. Kowalski, 2021 (<https://wielkahistoria.pl/poruszajaca-relacja-polaka-z-wywozki-na-sybir-w-takich-warunkach-sowieci-transportowali-go-do-lagrow/>)

PL
[...] (1) Na korytarzu zrobiono mi rewizję i zabrano wszystko, co tylko miałem w kieszeniach. (2) Obchodzono się przy tym ze mną bardzo brutalnie. (3) Po trzech tygodniach pobytu w tym areszcie wywieziono nas do więzienia (...) czortkowskiego. (4) Co pewien czas zabierano po kilku ludzi z celi. (5) Wiedzieliśmy wtedy, że zanoszą się na transport do Rosji. (6) 20 lutego 1941 roku wywołano mnie i wielu innych z celi z rzeczami. (7) W nocy zrobiono nam szczegółową rewizję i wpuszczono do innej sali. (8) Następnie kolejno wywoływano do transportu. (9) Przez całą noc wozy transportowały więźniów na stację do wagonów, ale nie zdołano przewieźć wszystkich.
EN
[...] (1) In the corridor, [they] searched me and [they] took everything I had in my pockets. (2) [They] treated me very brutally during this process. (3) After three weeks in this detention, [they] took us to the prison in Czortków. (4) From time to time, [they] took a few people from the cell. (5) We knew then that a transport to Russia was imminent. (6) On February 20, 1941, [they] called me and many others out of our cell with our belongings. (7) During the night, [they] conducted a thorough search on us and [they] moved us into another room. (8) Then [they] called us one by one for transport. (9) Throughout the night, wagons transported prisoners to the station and into the train cars, but [they] didn’t manage to move everyone.

This discourse segment is a personal survival testimony narrated by the main protagonist, who recounts his experiences from his own perspective using specific linguistic strategies. In this narrative, the *-no/-to* constructions are predominant, portraying actions carried out on the protagonist by anonymous representatives of the Soviet regime. The events are presented in a clear temporal sequence, which is sup-

ported by the logical structure of the discourse and the presence of temporal markers. This sequence constitutes the main storyline, moving from the initial search and mistreatment to the subsequent transport to labor camps. The detailed description of these actions underscores their impact on the narrator's perception and experience. Throughout the segment, the narrator focuses on what has happened to him and his companions, with the *-no/-to* constructions driving the story forward and shaping the overall narrative. These constructions are central to the plot and consistently prominent, reinforcing the narrative's focus on the events. In sentence 5, there is a shift in topic from the actions experienced to the protagonists ('we'). However, the narrative continues to be driven by the perspective of the events, with the collective implicit subject remaining central to the story. Overall, the events are foregrounded throughout the segment, constituting the main narrative focus. A similar observation can be made regarding the final discourse segment presented below.

(183) Source: "Scenariusz przedstawienia poświęconego rocznicy zbrodni katyńskiej. „Już wolno mówić...” ("Script for a performance dedicated to the anniversary of the Katyń massacre: 'It is Now Permissible to Speak...')", Katarzyna Lubiejewska, from NKJP.

PL

[...] Wnuczek: Dziadku, mów dalej, co się stało z tobą, gdy trafiłeś do niewoli? Dziadek: (1) Wieźli nas wiele kilometrów w bydlęcych wagonach. (2) Wcześniej nas **zrewidowano** i **zabrano** cenniejsze rzeczy. (3) Po długiej i męczącej podróży **ustawiono** nas w czwórki, **spisano** personalia, **kazano** rozebrać się i jeszcze raz **przeszukano** nasze ubrania. (4) Potem biegliśmy około 30 kilometrów. (5) Jeśli ktoś nie miał sił **zabijano** go bagnetem. (6) Wszystkich nas **wyzywano** i **bito** kolbami karabinów. (7) Później dowiedziałem się, że tak zginął kapitan Krzeptowski.

EN

[...] Grandson: Grandpa, please continue. What happened to you when you were taken prisoner? Grandpa: (1) (They) transported us many kilometers in cattle wagons. (2) Earlier, **[they] searched** us and **[they] took** our valuable items. (3) After a long and exhausting journey, **[they] lined** us up in fours, **[they] recorded** our personal details, **[they] ordered** us to undress, and **[they] searched** our clothes again. (4) Then we run about 30 kilometers. (5) If someone did not have the strength, **[they] killed** them with a bayonet. (6) **[They] insulted** and **[they] beat** all of us with rifle butts. (7) Later, I found out that this was how Captain Krzeptowski died.

The presented discourse segment is particularly interesting because it highlights an important semantic difference between two types of impersonal constructions, a feature already discussed in Chapter 2. Specifically, it contrasts the third person plural impersonal construction, seen in 1, with the *-no/-to* forms found in sentences 2 through 6. The third person plural impersonal construction can be perceived as relating more to an undefined group of people responsible for transporting the prisoners in cattle wagons, rather than to specific serial actions directed at the prisoners. These serial actions, denoted by the *-no/-to* forms, create individual experiences

among the group. The main protagonist, who is also the narrator of this story (as the whole narrative is a theatrical piece), shifts the focus from a general situation affecting all the protagonists collectively—such as being transported in wagons by a group of undefined Soviet soldiers—to the specific serial actions performed on them by individual agents who nonetheless collectively represent the broader, undefined group of Soviet soldiers. This shift underscores the difference between the collective experience and the individual, serial experiences triggered by the *-no/-to* constructions. Furthermore, similar to the previous discourse segment, the *-no/-to* constructions in sentences 2 and 3 are placed in a temporal and logical order, constituting a sequence of events that occur one after the other as part of the process the prisoners undergo. The temporal sequence of events is further emphasized by the temporal markers *wcześniej* ‘earlier’ and *po długiej podróży* ‘after a long journey’. There is a shift from the implicit agents to the protagonists in sentence 4, with the implicit agents returning as the topic in sentence 6. Although not all *-no/-to* constructions are foregrounded in the sense of creating sequential relationships between the sentences, they remain prominent throughout the entire discourse segment due to the continuous impact of the described events on the patients, with no other competing topic that could replace their significance, and the structural persistence of the *-no/-to* constructions occurring in almost the entire segment.

5.6 Conclusions

Based on the analysis conducted in this chapter, we can conclude the following: the function of the impersonal *-no/-to* construction in discourse can be understood as *agentive narration*, stemming from its internal semantic features and its expression at the text level. This construction can operate both in the background and the foreground of discourse. This dual role aligns with Langacker’s (1987) cognitive framework, which posits that linguistic conceptualization revolves around the conceptualizer, who forms mental images. The conceptualizer determines which aspects of a situation are highlighted (profiled) and which are backgrounded within the conceptual framework. Thus, authors and speakers decide which elements of a situation to emphasize. When the *-no/-to* construction is backgrounded, another entity—whether animate, inanimate, or situational—becomes the main topic. However, when foregrounded, the *-no/-to* constructions behave similarly to predicates with overt subjects, advancing the narrative and forming the main storyline. In this context, the events driven by implicit agents of these constructions become prominent, chosen over personal constructions with overt agents. These implicit agents are favored because they represent actions carried out by a generalized, collective perpetrator rather than specific individuals, allowing the events to be presented as individual actions within a series of identical occurrences. This allows for multiple occurrences of the *-no/-to* construction in a single segment without suggesting that the same agents are responsible for each event. By shifting the focus from overt agents to multiple impersonal events, the speaker opts to retell the story from the perspective of what happened. The implicit agent is merely suppressed, which maintains the construction’s activity and shifts the emphasis onto the event itself. When foregrounded, these constructions can truly be seen as agentive narration, referring to implicit volitional agents. The events are sequential, occur in imperfec-

tive and perfective aspect, are dynamic, and advance the plot in a manner consistent with Hopper's (1979) notion of narration. The absence of an overt subject is compensated for by the high degree of affectedness of the patient, which amplifies the agentivity of the implicit subject. The internal features of the implicit subject—such as anonymity or collectiveness—become overtly visible through the experiences or perception of the patient. The *-no/-to* constructions can occur in various forms—either in sequences or series—and through their frequent appearance within a single discourse segment, they can remain persistently prominent. The ease with which these constructions co-occur can be likened to a structural attractor, aligning with the theory of prominence (cf. von Heusinger and Schumacher 2019).

6 General conclusions

In this dissertation, I explored the function and role of the impersonal *-no/-to* construction within discourse. The central premise of this work was the hypothesis that the semantic features of the construction directly influence its behavior within a pragmatic context, primarily understood as its occurrence in larger textual units. Consequently, the goal of this research was to uncover and present the dependencies and interactions between the semantic and pragmatic levels, based on the impersonal *-no/-to* construction.

A key focus of this investigation was the implicit subject of the *-no/-to* construction and its behavior in discourse. Specifically, I explored the process by which the implicit subject establishes “coreferential” relationships with other linguistic entities in the text. This aspect of the research is especially important for understanding the construction’s broader functional role.

Additionally, drawing on the structural features of the *-no/-to* construction and supported by previous literature (Kibort 2004, Mosiądz 2012), I assumed that its primary function is to emphasize the event expressed by the lexical content of the verb. One of the primary goals of this research was to test whether this function holds in broader discourse contexts.

To answer the above questions, the *-no/-to* construction was examined at multiple linguistic levels in a comparative and relational framework, i.e., in comparison and relation to other closely related linguistic formations at the semantic and grammatical levels, as well as with respect to other linguistic units at the discourse level. This method allowed for the identification of the properties and characteristics specific to the *-no/-to* construction, distinguishing it from other grammatical constructions, and also provided insight into and allowed for the identification of its function in discourse. In the following, I provide an overview of the main insights from this research.

Regarding the distinctive characteristics of the analyzed construction compared to the other two impersonal constructions discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, namely the third person plural impersonal and the reflexive impersonal construction, both the morphological and syntactic features of the *-no/-to* construction indicate that, at the sentence level, the semantic element expressed by the lexical verb—the event—can be considered its central semantic unit. This conclusion is based on the fact that, unlike the other two impersonal constructions, the *-no/-to* construction does not have special morphology dedicated to expressing the semantic features of the implicit subject ([+plural] and [+masculine]), as it consists of an invariant, neutralized form. In contrast to the other two constructions, it does not allow for the expression of a grammatical subject in any semantic role (e.g., as a nominal agent in the nominative or an experiencer in the dative).

Moreover, based on the comparative analysis of these constructions, it can be stated that, unlike the other two Polish constructions from the *Human Impersonal* category, the *-no/-to* construction, due to its semantics and morphological form, serves a special function in discourse. Its referential limitation to past tense, reinforced by its invariant morphological form, marks it as a special affix used to describe actions or events performed by an indefinite human agent in the past. This is

consistent with the observation that the *-no/-to* construction appears in past tense contexts similar to those in which personal verbs formed with the past tense *l*-participle are used.

Comparing the syntactic features of the *-no/-to* construction with those of the personal passive and impersonal passive voice in Polish highlights key differences. These differences arise from the different morphosyntactic operations involved in their formation. While passive constructions involve *agent demotion*, the *-no/-to* construction is characterized by *agent suppression*. In passive constructions, the semantic subject (an agent) is syntactically demoted, whereas the *-no/-to* construction merely suppresses the implicit subject, preventing its overt expression in the clause. However, this limitation is largely superficial. Despite its invisibility at the sentence level, the implicit subject of the *-no/-to* construction remains syntactically active and behaves similarly to grammatical subjects in active constructions, particularly in terms of binding and control properties.

The historical development of the *-no/-to* construction (discussed in Chapter 3) sheds light on the probable cause of its later activization, which is closely linked to its primary semantic feature: [+human]. This feature was inherited from Proto-Indo-European impersonal passive constructions, which were typically formed from intransitive verbs and expressed actions performed by humans. Although these constructions had a passive morphological form, they conveyed an active meaning, which may have been a key factor in the eventual activization of the *-no/-to* construction. The [+human] feature, therefore, emerges as a particularly strong semantic characteristic of the construction. This conclusion is further supported by the syntactic behavior of the *-no/-to* construction, which precludes any overt expression of the subject or agent within a single sentence.

In response to the research question regarding the referentiality of the *-no/-to* construction (Chapter 4), the results of the two acceptability judgment experiments suggest that Polish speakers generally do not have difficulty identifying the implicit subject of *-no/-to* constructions with the agent expressed by a plural noun phrase in the preceding context. The identification of the agent does not depend on the distance between the *-no/-to* construction and its potential referent; in all cases, it is consistently associated with the implicit subject of the construction. This is possible because the *-no/-to* construction includes a semantic variable (*x*) that can be bound by external operators. This results from the observation that the implicit subject of the *-no/-to* form is sensitive to interpretative shifts under the influence of various adverbs of quantification (Chapter 2).

Based on data from both experiments, it can be concluded that the implicit subject of the *-no/-to* construction is bound by the Topic of the sentence, which in every condition was an overt plural NP. The process of identifying the implicit subject with the overt plural noun phrase is likely reinforced by the phi-features of the implicit subject, such as gender ([+masculine]) and number ([+plural]), as well as the [+human] feature.

The corpus analysis, aimed at identifying typical discourse referents in relation to the *-no/-to* construction, revealed that the implicit subject frequently appears with linguistic expressions like collective sets or locative expressions. The agent of the action expressed by the lexical base of the verb in the *-no/-to* construction is therefore identified in an associative, non-referential way. Rather than being strictly

referential in a semantic sense, the agent is associated with a loosely defined group, such as individuals belonging to a particular organization, profession, location, or a broadly defined historical period (e.g., a country or an era like the Middle Ages). These expressions are not strictly referential but can be considered *referent triggers*, evoking general associations related to the agent of the action.

In addition to providing insights into the nature of the implicit subject of the *-no/-to* construction and the interaction of its semantic features with overt plural noun phrases, both the experimental and corpus studies conducted in this dissertation also highlight the function of the *-no/-to* construction in larger textual units. The fact that this construction is rarely found in close proximity to noun phrases or personal pronouns in its natural textual environment suggests that it performs a different function in anaphoric relations compared to personal constructions. Although the weakly individuated referent triggers (i.e., discourse antecedents) may suggest that the action or event expressed by the lexical base of the *-no/-to* verb plays a more prominent role in the linguistic context, a broader view reveals that the construction usually functions as a discursive tool for maintaining textual coherence. As a specialized tool for coordinating and supporting textual coherence, the *-no/-to* construction typically remains in the *background* of the discourse, referring to the main discourse topic, which can be animate or inanimate, an event, or a situation. Based on the analysis of 300 textual examples, this seems to be the primary use of the construction in texts.

Corpus analysis further demonstrated that the *-no/-to* construction can serve yet another role in discourse, distinct from the one mentioned above. In specific contexts, it can be used to direct the reader's attention to the very events it describes (Chapter 5). In these cases, the *-no/-to* construction is *foregrounded*, occupying a central position in the discourse. This is linked to the particular emphasis placed on the role of the implicit subject in the described events. The implicit subject, by strongly affecting the patient of the action, shapes the reader's perception of the discourse or situation from the viewpoint of events impacting the patient or main protagonist. The narrative unfolds from the perspective of actions performed on patients by volitional, implicit agents, often representing a collective group. In such cases, impersonal events occur multiple times within a given discourse segment and are presented sequentially, forming the central storyline. The topicalization of impersonal events i.e., foregrounding of the multiple *-no/-to* constructions within a text, and the ability of these constructions to create sequences of actions are enabled by the morphosyntactic feature of the implicit subject, which is merely suppressed. Consequently, when foregrounded, *-no/-to* constructions create a dynamic chain of actions that resembles the formation of actions by personal constructions.

Whether a similar effect—namely, foregrounding an event performed by a volitional implicit agent—could be achieved in the passive voice remains an open question. This seems unlikely, as the passive voice typically shifts attention to the passive subject (the former patient of the active clause), which becomes the topic of the sentence. Additionally, unlike in the *-no/-to* construction, the agent in passive formations is demoted, not suppressed. However, this issue warrants further investigation in future research.

In this dissertation, I have described the function of the *-no/-to* construction as *agentive narration*. This is closely related to one of the main research goals, which

was to examine and demonstrate the relationship between the semantic and pragmatic levels based on the *-no/-to* construction. Specifically, I aimed to show how the construction's semantic features, primarily the [+human] feature that designates an implicit human agent and its specific reference to the past, determine its use in texts. Accordingly, the *-no/-to* construction can be used to maintain the *narrative coherence* of a text, functioning as an operational tool in the background, indicating actions performed by an implicit human *agent* that remain thematically connected to the main discourse topic without shifting it. Alternatively, the *agentivity* of the implicit subject may come to the forefront, influencing the shaping of the discourse or narrative. The narrative component in this case can be understood in two ways: first, as the ability of the construction to appear in a sequence of events, and second, as the narrativity of the past tense—its abstract function in including the narrator's voice.

In one of the discourse segments discussed in Chapter 5 (182), the main protagonist is also the actual author of the account, narrating events from his own perspective using deliberately chosen means of expression. This emphasizes the potential of the *-no/-to* construction to denote prominent agentive events.

In conclusion, this dissertation has examined the semantics-pragmatics interface of the *-no/-to* construction to better understand how its semantic features—primarily the [+human] feature—are realized and interpreted in various textual contexts.

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