

Gilbert C. Rappaport (University of Texas, Austin)

## The Grammaticalization of the Category *Masculine Personal* in West Slavic: A Work in Progress

The grammatical category *Masculine Personal* (MP) is attested in several contemporary West Slavic languages to varying degrees, with the greatest degree of grammaticalization found in Polish. There are two manifestations of this category, expressed in the plural paradigm of a noun including among its referents one male human being and copied to syntactically agreeing words: a distinct morpheme for the Nominative case and the use of the Genitive case form for the Accusative. But Contemporary Standard Polish offers a puzzle: there is a substantial class of nouns, sometimes called ‘devirilized’, which exhibit only the latter property; e.g., *karzeł* ‘dwarf’: *te karły były* (\**ci karli/karłowie* *byli*) ‘these dwarves were’ versus *znam tych karłów* (\**znam te karły*) ‘I know these dwarves’. What is the gender of such nouns and how is MP to be defined such that the hybrid nature of devirilized nouns is recognized?

This paper reports the results of a historical and dialectal study of this category in West Slavic, focusing on Polish, but incorporating Slovak and Upper Sorbian data as well. MP in Polish is the result of two distinct pan-Slavic historical processes operating in parallel to restructure the nominal paradigm in the plural: the replacement of the historical Nominative inflection with the Accusative (eliminating the distinction between these two forms) and the replacement of the historical Accusative with the Genitive (ensuring a distinction between these same two forms). These changes proceed in **opposite directions** along the well-known *Animacy Hierarchy*, which may be roughly represented as follow:

Privileged male personal (e.g., proper name) > other male personal > other personal  
(i.e., female) > male animal > other animal (i.e., female) > inanimate).

The former change (Acc -> Nom) started at the bottom (right) of this hierarchy and moved upwards, while the latter (Gen -> Acc) started at the top (left) and moved

downwards.

These changes occurred at various rates in various Slavic languages, accounting for the observed variation in their consequences. Roughly, and schematically, MP became grammaticalized in those languages in which the changes 'met' at the point that the Acc-Nom had encompassed all but masculine personal nouns, while the Gen-Acc had encompassed only those same nouns. Of course these changes proceeded not as a discrete point along the Animacy Hierarchy, but across a segment of the hierarchy, so that the category 'leaks' on both sides of this idealized meeting point. De-virilized nouns are the result of the Acc-Nom overshooting before the category of MP had been grammaticalized, extending into the domain of words exhibiting the Gen-Acc. Once the language had established MP as a grammatical category reified by these two morphological phenomena, devirilized nouns represented MP nouns with deviant forms in the Nominative Plural. It would be natural to expect that such historical detritus would be eliminated by restoring the original Nominative ending in those forms, but these residual forms are currently preserved when they can be associated with a well-defined functional load, bearing pejorative connotations (a subjective, social construct, obviously). There is considerable individual variation in the membership of this class of words, further supporting the idea that their status is not one of a stable grammatical category (e.g., a separate gender), but rather MP forms maintained on the emotive margins of the category by means of lexical specification.

A formal morphological account is presented which not only encompasses the contemporary synchronic state of the grammar, in which MP is a grammatical category, but motivates the historical expansion of two allomorphic adjustments which, proceeding in parallel and yet in contradiction of one another, laid the groundwork for the grammaticalization of MP.