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Individualism – collectivism and the selection of the pronominal subject in yoga instructions in Polish and Russian

Indywidualizm – kolektywizm a wybór podmiotu w komendach w jodze w polskim i rosyjskim

Abstrakt

Celem analizy jest określenie czynników kulturowych mających wpływ na wybór podmiotu w komendach używanych w jodze w języku polskim i rosyjskim. Wybór ten okazuje się być zbieżny z indywidualistycznymi oraz kolektywistycznymi tendencjami istniejącymi w danym społeczeństwie. Ponadto koncentrujemy się na porządkowaniu konceptualnym (ang. *conceptual viewing arrangement*) leżącym u podstaw językowych form dyrektywnych aktów mowy, które są konwencjonalnie używane w badanym przez nas dyskursie. Analiza oparta jest na korpusie 300 poleceń jogi w każdym z badanych języków.

Słowa kluczowe: dyskurs jogi, akty dyrektywne, polski, rosyjski, indywidualizm – kolektywizm, językoznawstwo kognitywne

Abstract

The goal of the analysis is to specify the cultural bias in the selection of the pronominal subject in clausal yoga instructions in Polish and Russian, which is presumably parallel to the individualistic and collectivist tendencies existing in the respective societies. Additionally, the focus is placed on the conceptual viewing arrangement underlying linguistic forms of directives which are conventionally used in the examined discourse genre. The research is based on the corpus of 300 tokens for each language.

Keywords: yoga discourse, directives, Polish, Russian, individualism – collectivism, cognitive linguistics

1. Introduction

This research investigates the use of subject pronouns in clausal directives in the discourse of yoga in Polish and Russian. The incentive for the analysis has been an observation that the instructions given by the yoga teacher to their class, when she or he wants them to practice their *asanas*, are in Polish and Russian systematically encoded by means of contrasting morphosyntactic patterns, selected respectively by the speakers of these sister languages to convey identical or similar meanings in exactly the same situational contexts.

A full range of possible linguistic forms of the instructions attested in the yoga recordings that we have examined for both languages includes, among others, bare phrases (e.g. *w górę* [Pl]; *verch* [Ru] ‘upwards’) or elliptical structures (e.g. *dłonie na podłogę* [Pl]; *ruki na pol* [Ru] ‘palms on the floor’), yet our interest is solely in clausal directives. In the corpus compiled by us for the sake of the present analysis, the fully clausal forms are in the vast majority instances of three major constructions, i.e. the imperative and the indicative (non-past and past) patterns, as exemplified in (1–3) below.

- (1) *Rozciągnij wnętrza dłoni.* [Pl]
 Stretch-2SG-IMP inside hands
 ‘stretch your palms’
- (2) *My koncentrujemy się na etom potoke vozduha.* [Ru]
 We concentrate-1PL IND-NON-PAST on this flow air
 ‘we concentrate on this flow of air’
- (3) *Nogi položili na pol.* [Ru]
 Legs put-1,2PL IND-PAST on floor
 ‘we put our legs on the floor’

In this analysis, the focus is twofold. First, we intend to view the selection a referential subject in clausal yoga instructions – both overt and unexpressed – through the prism of the cultural bias in grammar. Specifically, our objective is to indicate the parallel tendencies in cultural values and the choice of the pronominal subject in yoga instructions in each language. Second, premised upon a cognitive linguistic approach to the relation between language and cognition (cf. Langacker 2013; Dancygier 2017), the analysis examines the viewing configuration between the speaker (the conceptualizer) and their conception encoded as a yoga instruction. More precisely, we use the methodology of Cognitive Linguistics in order to provide a description of pronominal subjects employed in clausal yoga instructions as linguistic expressions of conceptualizations whereby the speaker is themselves, to a varying degree, part of the conceptualized “scene”. In light of the above stated goals of the study, let us first enlarge upon the cultural

concepts of individualism and collectivism and, further, upon the notion of perspective, or, more specifically, the viewing arrangement between the viewer and “the scene” being viewed.

2. Theoretical background

The constructs of individualism and collectivism capture the multifaceted value and worldview systems both within and across (individualistic and collectivist) cultures (cf. Triandis & Gelfland 1998; Singelis *et al.* 1995; Hofstede 2001). Methodological differences aside, individualism has been defined in the research as a fine-tuned ensemble of values which make an individual see the self as fully autonomous, while collectivism of a given culture facilitates seeing the self as part of the collective (cf. Triandis and Gelfland 1998). In Hofstede’s (2001), study the above contrast is captured as a degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. Individualism is understood as people’s readiness to concentrate on themselves and their direct family only and their loyalty is defined within this narrow group. In collectivist cultures, on the other hand, a larger group of family and friends is extremely important in everyday life. The focus is on personal, authentic and trustful relationships within this broader community. To illustrate, the respondents in Hofstede’s research were asked whether they value an individual’s success more than the group’s, or whether being accepted by workgroup members is important to them. In other words, the criteria by means of which the scale was measured were not linguistic but socio-cultural in nature.

The social attitudes and orientations promoted or constrained by individualistic and collectivist cultures can be measured and captured as scales (cf. Triandis & Gelfland 1998; Singelis *et al.* 1995; Hofstede 2001). For the sake of the present research, we shall adopt the Hofstede model for an indication of the relative position of the two cultures, Polish and Russian, with respect to other individualistic and collectivist cultures. Specifically, the measure of individualism for the Polish society amounts to 60, while that for the Russian to 39. Thus, in the range of aspects studied in Hofstede’s model, the Polish society proves to be more individualistic than the Russian one. To compare, Guatemala has only 6 points on the individualism versus collectivism scale while the United States as many as 91 points (<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries>).

The culture-bound collectivism – individualism dimension has long proved to be a resourceful area of diverse experimental, theoretical and

methodological research in social and psychological sciences (cf. Triandis 1994, 1995, 1996, 2001; Heine 2008, Hofstede 2001; Schwartz 1990; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk & Wilson 2014; for an overview see Berry 1997). The focus of a number of publications has been on its effect on communication styles at both cultural community's and individual speakers' levels (cf. Gudykunst & Bond 1997). The grammar – culture interface, as viewed through the prism of this dimension, has not been neglected either (cf. Enfield 2004). The present contribution follows the interests in eliciting culture-bound grammatical contrasts by identifying and selecting for investigation typologically similar languages, the same discourse genre and the same grammatical issue: the distribution of pronominal subjects in clausal direct and indirect directives.

Let us very clearly state at this juncture that we do not mean to claim that most of the contrast between directives employed as yoga instructions in Polish and Russian boils down to the selection of a personal pronoun to encode the addressee of the directive in the imperative or the indicative (non-past and past). There is a vast body of relevant research documenting differences between Polish and Russian in the use of aspect in the imperative, for example (cf. Dickey 2000). There is also a notable distinction between the two languages in the use of the past tense in polite requests in the indicative. However, the distribution of the pronominal subject in clausal patterns does not seem to be constrained by any significant differences there might be between the two grammatical systems that have to do with tense, aspect and mood. Put differently, if the speaker of Russian chooses an instruction in the indicative to avoid the imperative in the perfective aspect, for example, the addressee of an indirect directive can be encoded as *ty*, *vy* or *my*, which can equally well be (unexpressed) pronominal subjects of direct directives.

Let us turn to the methodological assumptions of Cognitive Linguistics that are relevant to the present analysis. In light of a cognitive linguistic model of conceptual relations involved in an act of communication, set in the pragmatic and situational context of a yoga class and incremented into a larger stretch of discourse, a clausal yoga instruction evokes some conceptual content – an action performed by an entity/entities – and anchors this content within the mental universe of the interlocutors. Thus, the entities referred to in the conceptual content are identified, the action is located temporally and the status of the event vis-à-vis reality is decided. Inherent in such a conception is the ground, that is the speaker and the hearer, as well as the circumstances in which they communicate with each other, as the identification of entities involved in a given conception is only attainable relative to the cognizing interlocutors, a given occurrence can only exist in time relative to the here-and-now of the speech event and

its status in terms of ‘real vs. unreal’ can only be assessed within the mental universe of the speaker and the hearer (cf. Langacker 1990: 9). More specifically, in a cognitive linguistic view, a conceptualization evoked by any linguistic expression emerges and develops in discourse, shaped in active negotiations between the interlocutors, in “apprehension of the physical, linguistic, social and cultural context” Langacker (2013: 27–30). In the model, the interlocutors are thus a negotiating team, and an act of communication consists in connecting and tailoring the contents of ‘other minds’ with respect to each other (cf. Verhagen 2005: 4, 6, 7).

According to the model, the ground can function merely as a tacit conceptualizing presence, or can explicitly be revealed on “the scene” of the observed event. It all depends on the choice of perspective – negotiated between the speaker and the hearer – and specifically on the viewing arrangement obtaining between the object of conception and the cognizing self, entertaining the conception from a given viewpoint (cf. Langacker 1987: 139). Under the former construal, the asymmetry between the object and the subject of conception is the greatest. The speaker is so involved in their role that she or he “loses all self-awareness”, themselves remaining “offstage” under a maximally subjective construal (cf. Achard 1998: 62). Thus, the “onstage” region gets all attention and is maximally objectively construed even if “the subjective component is there all along, being immanent in the objective conception” (cf. Langacker 2008: 77, 2000: 298). This type of viewing arrangement is referred to as a case of the OVA (the optimal viewing arrangement) (cf. Achard 1998: 62). In linguistic encoding, it is manifested by the relative independence of the conveyed portrayal of the scene of the cognizing ground.

Under the alternative viewing arrangement, the speaker and the remaining part of the ground may themselves become the object of conception while still functioning as the cognizing self. In such a configuration, they are construed maximally objectively, like the remaining part of the “onstage” region, and their presence is explicit. This type of viewing arrangement is referred to as a case of the EVA (egocentric viewing arrangement) and we speak of the process of subjectification and its outcome, i.e. the subjectivity of the utterance’s meaning. In linguistic encoding, this is manifested by an explicit reference to the ground (subjectification type 1) or a more subtle hint to the presence of the cognizing ground on “the scene” (subjectification type 2). In the linguistic encoding relevant for the present analysis, such a viewing arrangement is manifested by the occurrence of personal pronouns (overt or unexpressed) in the subject position of a clause. The grounding category of a verb which is essential for this research is one of a person-number and

tense-mood, marked by an appropriate inflectional suffix in agreement with the (overt or unexpressed) subject (cf. Langacker 1991; Achard 1998: 68).

3. Hypotheses

Having briefly discussed some essential ideas related to the sociocultural dimension of individualism and collectivism as well as some of the relevant assumptions of Cognitive Grammar, we are now in the position to develop our hypotheses. On the basis of the research on individualism – collectivism overviewed above, we advance the hypothesis that the contrasting models of construing the self in the Polish and Russian cultures will make an impact on the grammatical choices made by the speakers of each language in some sensitive areas of social interactions, which potentially pose a threat to social equilibrium (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987; Wierzbicka 1991; Ogiermann 2012). Giving directives, undoubtedly, belongs to such an area of communication. We hypothesise that there will be more instances of the addressee construed as an autonomous individual (*ty/ ty* 2SG) and fewer instances of the addressee considered as part of the community of practitioners (*my/my* 1PL, *wy/vy* 2PL) in the Polish data than in the Russian data (Hypothesis 1).

Furthermore, we hypothesize that the speaker themselves will be encoded as part of the addressee's community in more instances in the Russian data – marked by the selection of the subject *my* 1PL – than in the Polish data (*my* 1PL) (Hypothesis 2).

Finally, based on the cognitive linguistic research on the viewing configuration in construing “the scene” (cf. Langacker 1990; Verhagen 2005), we hypothesize that Polish and Russian would show no significant differences in this respect (Hypothesis 3).

4. Data and method

The database for the present study comes from the video clips of yoga tutorials available on the Internet (see Internet sources in References). In the examined recordings the instructor faces the camera and presents *asanas*, giving instructions to an imagined yoga practitioner or a community of practitioners to perform the required poses and assume the required postures.

First, 30 recordings in each language were randomly selected, each with a different yoga instructor, female and male, in order to avoid individual speaker and gender bias (60 recordings in total). Out of each recording,

which was approximately 10–15 minutes long, 10 clausal instructions were collected, starting from three randomly chosen moments of the video clip. As a result, a corpus of 300 sentences in each language has been created (600 sentences in total).

We coded the data for the language [Ru], [Pl]; the tense [non-past], [past]; the grammatical category of the subject [pronoun], [noun phrase]; the person-number properties of the pronoun encoding the addressee [2SG], [1 PL], [2 PL]. As Polish is a pro-drop language and Russian exhibits partial pro-drop we have annotated pronominal subjects as [unexpressed] and [overt].

One of the problems that we encountered while annotating the data was the ambiguity of the Russian 2PL forms in the non-past and the past tense, which can have two interpretations: either the neutral plural or the respectful and formal V address, conventionally employed when addressing strangers and socially distant people (cf. Wade, 2011: 138). In this analysis, we are skeptical of the interpretation that they are very polite, respectful and (relatively) distant forms, based on two arguments. First, ambiguous forms were interpreted as neutral and not necessarily respectful forms of address by some native speakers of Russian (including a professional yoga instructor), to whom we turned for help. Second, due to the pragmatic context and its evaluation in terms of politeness and social distance, and particularly due to the interpersonal effects that the yoga instructor aims to attain (by ensuring comfortable, supportive and relaxed atmosphere), very polite and distant forms of address are unlikely to be used (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987; Holtgraves & Yang 1992, see also Section 3).

Another problem that we faced was that the Russian agreement markings on the verb are indistinguishable for 1 and 2 PL in the past tense (e.g. *Sagnuli kolieni* ‘bended their knees’). For reasons that are presented in Section 3, we assumed that all VPs_{PL PAST} with unexpressed pronominal subjects are instances of 1PL.

5. Result and discussion

In relation to Hypothesis 1, the between-language differences in the construal of the addressee as an autonomous individual *ty/ ty* 2 SG or as part of the community *wy/ vy* 2 PL and *my/ my* 1 PL are presented in Fig 1. The raw figures are given below (Table 1).

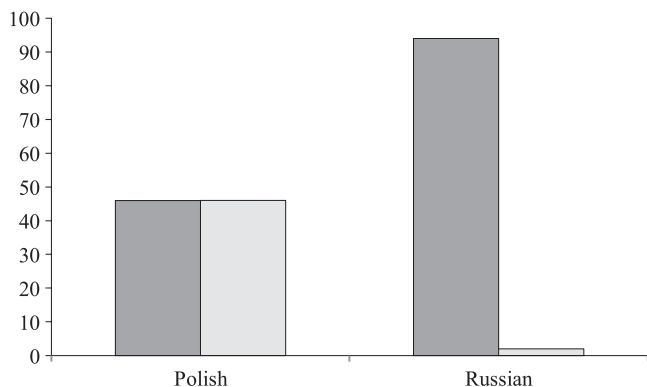


Fig. 1. The use of person/number of a pronominal subject in percentages. Black bar indicates the distribution of (overt and unexpressed) pronouns *wy/ wy* 2PL and *my/ my* 1PL and the white bar – the use of *ty/ ty* 2SG as subjects in Polish and Russian yoga instructions

The distributions of the plural and the singular pronominal subjects in clausal directives in Polish and Russian were statistically significantly different ($\chi^2=166,5$, $df=1$, $p<0,001$). The use of the plural and singular pronouns in Polish was fully balanced, while in Russian the plural forms significantly outnumbered the singular. The results strongly confirm Hypothesis 1 by showing that almost all pronominal subjects in the directives in Russian are in the plural.

Table 1. The distribution of 2SG and 1&2PL pronominal subjects in directives in Polish and Russian

Language	2SG subject pronoun		PL subject pronoun	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Polish	138	46%	2PL 21 (7%) + 1PL 119 (39%) = 140	46%
Russian	3	1%	2PL NON-PAST 44 (15%) + 1PL NON-PAST 180 (60%) & PAST 56 (19%) = 280	94%

In relation to Hypothesis 2 and 3, the relative frequency of instances with and without direct reference to the addressee is shown in Fig 2 (the raw figures are shown in Table 2 below). In terms of conceptualizing relations, the former are cases of the subjective construal of “the scene” of the event encoded as a directive under the egocentric viewing arrangement (the EVA). The latter reveal (relatively) objective construal of “the scene” (the OVA) (e.g. *Ręce idą do góry* ‘Hands go up’).

Relative to the speaker’s participation in the event described in the instruction, we divide the EVA cases into the speaker-exclusive and speaker-inclusive pronominal subjects in both languages. The speaker-exclusive

construal is lexically expressed as the 2SG and PL subject of the clausal directive (e.g. *Podnosisz ręce* '(you) raise your hands'). The speaker-inclusive construal is revealed in the 1PL subject (e.g. *Podnosimy ręce* '(we) raise our hands'). To recall, the results of the count are based on the assumption that the ambiguous past forms in Russian were all instances of the speaker-inclusive *my* 1PL (which may be regarded as the limitation of our study).

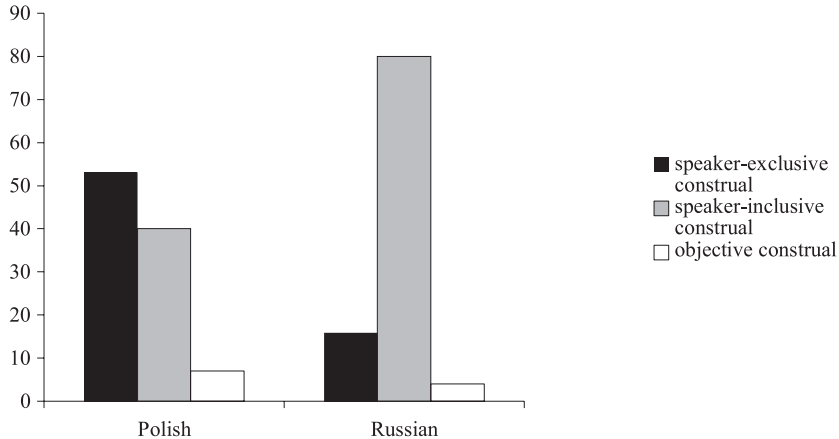


Fig. 2. The subjective and objective construal of the event coded as a yoga instruction in Polish and Russian in percentages

The results presented in Fig 2 were statistically significant ($\chi^2=68,6$, $df=2$, $p<0,001$). The data appear to support Hypothesis 2 that in the yoga instructions in Russian the speaker is far more frequently construed as part of the onstage region and part of the community than in the instructions in Polish. The speaker-exclusive construal is expressed far more often in Polish than in Russian. Finally, the numbers of the OVA cases in both languages are too small to sufficiently support Hypothesis 3.

Table 2. The distribution of the OVA and the EVA in yoga instructions

Language	OVA		EVA (speaker-exclusive)		EVA (speaker-inclusive)	
			<i>ty/ ty</i> 'you _{2SG} '; <i>wy/ wy</i> 'you _{2PL} '		<i>my/ my</i> 'we _{1PL} '	
Polish	21	7%	159	53%	119	40%
Russian	9	3%	47	16%	236	80%

5.1. Non-pronominal subjects in clausal yoga instructions

In a minor set of the data, there is no direct appeal either to the speaker or the addressee. A finite verb in the indicative mood – non-past and past – is marked in agreement with a nonhuman overt subject NP, very often a body part, as in (4–7):

- (4) *Dłonie zaplatają się.* [Pl]
 Hands interlace-3PL IND-NON-PAST themselves
 ‘hands interlace’
- (5) *Pośladki naciskają w dół.* [Pl]
 Buttocks press-3PL IND-NON-PAST in down
 ‘buttocks press down’
- (6) *Pravaja noga delaet šag nazad.* [Ru]
 right leg make-3SG IND-NON-PAST step back
 ‘right leg takes a step back’
- (7) *Ruki pošli verh.* [Ru]
 Hands go-3PL IND-PAST inside
 ‘hands went upwards’

In the examples, the speaker’s belief in, or attitude to, the content of the message or the circumstances of the speech event is expressed in a very subtle way. First, it will be observed that, in Polish and Russian alike, the grammatical system of reference which serves to relate nominals to the ground hinges basically on possessive determiners as both languages are article-less systems. It will be noted, however, that body parts grounded by possessive determiners are not so common in Polish and Russian as they are in English – this fact is fully confirmed in our data. In the whole corpus for Polish there is only one such instance (*nasze łopatki* ‘our shoulders’) and none in Russian. Very low frequency of that type of grounding and the prevalence of the unmarked grounding (*dłonie* ‘hands’, *pośladki* ‘buttocks’, *noga* ‘leg’, *ruki* ‘hands’) in yoga discourse may be driven also by the need to reduce redundancy, to be maximally informative, brief and clear in the dynamics of the yoga class.

Second, the selection of the indicative mood indicates the conceptualizer’s choice to evaluate the situation as ‘real’ in the face of the situational circumstances of the speech event. The indicative inflection on the verb is further specified for tense and person, thereby providing “an accurate and precise putative address” of the conceived event in the conceptualizer’s conception of reality (cf. Achard 1998: 225; Langacker 1991: 277). The inflectional suffix on the verb in Polish is for the non-past tense in all the collected data in this pattern, while in Russian, characteristically, it can be either for the non-past, as in (4–6), or the past, as in (7).

As all yoga instructions refer to highly probable immediate future events, the selection of the non-past tense to encode actions which are yet to be performed reveals the presence of the conceptualizer on the scene of the event. Likewise, seeking the motivation for the indicative past tense form *pošli* ‘they went’ in (7) in the ‘objective’ facets of the reality would yield an unlikely interpretation: it would mean that the speaker commits herself or himself to the proposition expressed by the clause, considers it part of her or his reality and the putative address of the event is not in the future or the current present reality, but prior to it. Such a conceptualization can hardly be regarded as reflecting the ‘objective’ reality in the here and now of the class of yoga. Furthermore, the selection of both the indicative past and non-past can be viewed as an act of persuasion on the part of the speaker/ yoga instructor, who underlyingly exerts mental force upon the hearer/ yoga practitioner. The above interpretations of the meanings of the mood and tense markings are independent of the type of the subject in clausal directives and they hold for the remaining patterns in our data.

5.2. Pronominal subjects: a fully subjective construal of the onstage region

The most frequent pattern by far involves the instructions with an explicit mention of the ground under the EVA arrangement of “the scene” expressed as a yoga instruction. The data are divided into two sets based on the speaking subject’s explicit absence (the speaker-exclusive 2 SG, PL) or presence on stage (the speaker-inclusive 1 PL).

5.2.1. Speaker-exclusive construal of the onstage region

The pattern in which the addressee is referred to as *ty/ ty, wy/ vy* 2 SG, PL accounts for a vast body of the data in Polish and is far less frequently employed in Russian. In Polish, it is fully conventional to construe the addressee as an autonomous individual (46%). By the same token, she or he is far less frequently framed as part of a group which does not include the speaker (21 instances, which is 7%). In Russian, *ty* 2SG and *vy* 2PL are attested in 3 (1%) and 44 (15%) instances, respectively. Thus, as predicted, there are more instances with the addressee encoded as an autonomous individual and fewer instances of the addressee considered as part of a community in the Polish than in the Russian data. The speaker-exclusive construal of the addressee tends to co-occur with both the imperative and the indicative non-past constructions, as exemplified below.

- (8) *Spleć* *place* *dłoni.* [Pl]
interlace-2SG-IMP your fingers
'interlace your fingers'
- (9) *Musicie* *mieć* *nogi* *szeroko* *rozstawione.* [Pl]
must-2 PL IND-NON-PAST have-INF legs wide spread
'You must keep your legs spread wide.'
- (10) *Zostajesz* *na* *wysokości,* *która* *jest* *dla* *ciebie* *wygodna.*
[Pl]
stay-2 SG IND-NON-PAST on height which is for you
comfortable
'You remain at the level which is comfortable for you'
- (11) *čuvstvuj* *rastjaženie* [Ru]
feel-2SG-IMP stretching
'feel the stretching'
- (12) *prodolžaj* *tjanut'sja* *rukami* [Ru]
continue-2SG-IMP pull-INF-REFL hands
'continue pulling yourself with your hands'

Inherent in the conceptualizations expressed as the patterns illustrated in (8–12) is the EVA configuration between the ground and the onstage region. A direct appeal to the addressee – construed either as an individual or a member of a community – is an explicit realignment of part of the ground to the “onstage” region and the speaker’s presence is also objectified to some degree.

5.2.2. Speaker-inclusive construal of the onstage region

The marking of the speaker as the 1SG subject is not attested in the data, either in Polish or in Russian. It is then fully conventional in both languages that if the speaker puts themselves on stage, it is only construed as part of the community, encoded as an inclusive 2PL. As shown in Fig 1, such a collectivist construal of the subject proves to be twice as common in Russian as in Polish (respectively, 80% and 40%). The speaker-inclusive construal of the addressee tends to co-occur with the indicative non-past and past constructions.

To recall, the indicative mood past tense inflection on the verb in Russian can potentially code both the speaker-inclusive and the speaker-exclusive construal. Being insufficiently retrievable from the inflected predicate, the dropped subject, either 1,2 or 3 Pl, is not identifiable in any other way than through the pragmatic and situational context. Put differently, the interpretation of the utterance depends on the interactive circumstances of the interlocutors and the interpersonal effects expected from a given directive, which are discourse-bound.

In an attempt to classify the instances in the indicative past attested in the corpus for Russian we have consulted a few native speakers. Specifically, they assessed the directive *Načali*. ‘*pro* VP_{1,2,3} P₁ began’, which was first presented to them out of the context of yoga, as yielding two interpretations. In reading₁, the illocutionary force of the utterance was evaluated as that of a forceful instruction. Apparently, the past tense morphological marking on the verb strengthens the volitional attitude on the part of the speaker and it produces the effect of the subject’s strong control over the situation which is about to happen in the immediate future. Three informants (native speakers of Russian) pointed to a typical pragmatic context of use such as, for example, the teacher – student or parent – child relation. The construction is then used to indicate relative imbalance in power between the speaker and the addressee. By extension, this interpretation is considered rude when such an uneven distribution of power is not culturally sanctioned. This reading can be paraphrased as *vy načali*.

In reading₂, the force of the instruction is milder and there is no meaning of strong imposition or the speaker’s greater power over the addressee. The reading can be paraphrased as *my načali*. It includes the speaker into the scene of the described event, whereby the speaker and the addressee are collectively put under an obligation to make a move.

In light of the above arguments, all instances in the past tense attested in the corpus for Russian have been classified as speaker-inclusive. In such light, let us see some examples:

- (13) *Znów odkręcamy nadgarstki*. [Pl]
 again turn-1PL IND-NON-PAST wrists
 ‘We turn the wrists again’
- (14) *Dyšim životom przez nos*. [Ru]
 breathe-1PL IND- NON-PAST belly through nose
 ‘we breathe into belly through nose’
- (15) *I pošli naklanjat’sja*. [Ru]
 and go-1PL IND-PAST bend-INF-REFL
 ‘and (we/ you) started bending’
- (16) *I ušli na pol*. [Ru]
 And go-1PL IND-PAST on floor
 ‘And (we/ you) went to the floor’

The conceptual relations underlying the above linguistic patterns represent the EVA configuration between the ground and the onstage region, whereby both the speaker and the hearer are explicitly present on the scene of the event. The ground is fully objectified and by the same token the speaker – hearer relation is fully subjectively construed.

6. Conclusions

We hope to have proved that the distributional patterns of pronominal subjects in direct and indirect directives employed as yoga instructions can convincingly be explained in terms of the (relative) individualistic or collectivist tendencies of the Polish and Russian cultures confirmed in the interdisciplinary research on the dimension of collectivism – individualism in culture.

It has been demonstrated that yoga practitioners are decidedly more often construed as individual selves in Polish than in Russian and more frequently as collectivist selves in Russian than in Polish. The yoga instructor is never explicitly mentioned in the instructions as an independent, individualist self in either of the languages. She or he is construed as part of the group, or an interdependent and collectivist self, in Russian more often than in Polish. As we have argued, the strategy in selecting the pronominal subject appears to be influenced by the collectivist readiness to view oneself as an interdependent self or an individualistic reluctance against it, which is culturally driven.

Generalizing from the results in Fig 1 and Fig 2, we can confirm not only a relative position of Polish and Russian along the individualism – collectivism axis parallel to the one indicated in the Hofstede model but also a strong collectivist bias of the Russian culture. The results confirm somewhat stronger individualistic tendencies in the Polish culture. It should be noted here that the relationship between cultural dimensions and language may be bidirectional¹.

Furthermore, we shall note that the discourse of yoga practices conforms to the general tendencies in the respective cultures that have been widely acknowledged in the research. This is not a trivial observation, as we can easily imagine a type of discourse, such as, for example, one in the pediatrician doctor – child patient setting, in which the individualistic tendencies of Polish could be overridden.

Finally, it would be interesting to consider longer stretches of context in order to observe effects of the preceding and following discourse on the selection of the pronominal subject, e.g. *Podnjali ruki, vudyhaem* ‘((They) raised their hands, (we) breathe out’) [1,2 Pl→ 1 Pl], or *Podnjali ruki, vydohnite* ‘((They) raised their hands, (you) breathe out’) [1,2 Pl→ 2 Pl]. Also, going beyond between-language differences and comparing the choice of the pronominal subject in yoga discourse cross-culturally could be a fascinating

¹ We are thankful here to one of the reviewers for the insightful comments.

area of research on the individualistic and collectivist cultures. Further, one can pursue to elicit properties of yoga instructions which are distinct from directives used in similar discourse genres, e.g. fitness or sport, or examine them vis-à-vis all available strategies of giving instructions in Polish and Russian.

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