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Unqualifiable meta-predicative adverbials in Polish*

Abstract

The article aims to highlight specific features that enable the identification of a certain class of Polish adverbial expressions ending in *-o/-e*, which do not belong (unlike regular adverbs) to the object level of language, nor represent metatext in the manner that particles or sentential adverbs do. The paper thus discusses units such as *iście* [*królewski*] ‘truly royal’, *dosłownie* [*idiotyczny*] ‘literally idiotic’, *jawnie* [*wrogi*] ‘openly hostile’, etc. Although based on linguistic data from Polish, research hypotheses are more universal. The author introduces a set of tests to ensure precision in distinguishing unqualifiable meta-predicative adverbials from those units that are superficially similar. The following parameters are taken into account: (i) prosodic features, especially the relationship of a word and the sentence (non-contrasting) stress; (ii) position in the linear word order; (iii) possibility of being negated; (iv) capacity to combine with common adverbs in coordinate constructions; (v) capacity to combine with intensifiers, weakeners, or any other predicates in subordinate constructions; (vi) relationship to the grammatical category of the degree; (vii) range of syntactic and semantic combinability; (viii) ability to be used in a context with an ordinary adverb of the same shape. An important aim of this work is the examination of (a) relationships between the epistemic character of the expressions in question, (b) their belonging to the metalevel of language, and (c) their place in the theme-rheme structure of potential utterances where they may be functioning.

Keywords

semantics, adverbials, adverbs, metatext, meta-predicates

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I. Preliminary remarks

As is well known, the class of expressions commonly referred to as adverbs is remarkably heterogeneous. Despite advanced research in terms of general linguistic theory or in the framework of descriptions of individual languages (see e.g. Greenbaum 1969, Bartsch 1972, Thomason & Stalnaker 1973, Grzegorzczkowska 1975, Mørdrup 1976, Nølke 1990, 1990a, Molinier 1990, Cinque 1999, Apresjan 2003, adverbial entries, Nilsen 2004, McNally & Kennedy 2008, Morzycki 2008, Maienborn & Schäfer 2012, Boguslavskaya & Boguslavsky 2014), this class still hides some unexplored aspects.

It will be claimed that a special group of adverbial expressions should be distinguished from similar, but not identical, units. We shall refer to them by calling them “unqualifiable meta-predicative adverbials” (henceforth UMA). There is little doubt that one encounters a universal aspect of language here, although, in this article, we shall focus on the Polish data from the National Corpus of Polish¹.

The scope of the data to be investigated covers exclusively the adverbials ending in *e* or *o*, which are semantically related to the corresponding adjectives (in some cases merely by origin). There are at least three groups of expressions determined as above. One of these groups includes the most common adverbs like *szybko* ‘quickly’, *zręcznie* ‘defly’, or *wesoło* ‘cheerfully’. The other group is heterogeneous and it contains words such as *oczywiście* ‘of course’, *przeważnie* ‘mostly’, *właściwie* ‘actually’, *mianowicie* ‘namely’, or *wyłącznie* ‘exclusively’. They bear only a superficial similarity to what we take to be the most usual adverbs. In contemporary Polish, these words play different roles in utterances so, depending on the adopted research perspective, they are termed differently as “sentential adverbs” (Jackendoff 1972, Martin 1973, 1974, Bellert 1977, Lang 1979), “speaker-oriented adverbs” (Thomas 2009) “particles”, “modal operators”, “discourse words”, “metatextual comments” (Ducrot 1980: 37–39, Nølke 1990ab, Wajszczuk 1997, 2005), etc. Beyond these more or less salient subclasses of adverbials, some more special functional groups of expressions have to be isolated. Several such groups can be pointed out, e.g.:

- relativizing adverbs (domain adverbs) like *formalnie niedopracowany* ‘formally underdeveloped’, *teoretycznie poprawny* ‘theoretically correct’, *praktycznie nie do użycia* ‘practically not usable’ (Běličova-Křížková 1980, Danielewiczowa 2021, 2021a);

¹ See: <https://nkjp.pl/>.

- adverbs locating states of affairs in time and space, e.g. *następnie* ‘then’, *ostatecznie* ‘finally’, *później* ‘later’, *blisko* ‘close to’, *daleko od* ‘far from’;
- a microsystem of words which point to some contrast in sentences, e.g., *przeciwnie* ‘on the contrary’, *odwrotnie* ‘vice versa’, *inaczej* ‘differently’, *odpowiednio* ‘respectively’;
- adverbs that are a part of the speaker’s metatextual glosses about his/her main text, e.g.: *paradoksalnie* ‘paradoxically’, *ogólnie* ‘generally’, *krótko* <*mówiąc*> ‘briefly’, *konkretnie* ‘specifically’, and many others.

II. UMA as a special semantic-syntactic category. Introduction

None of the groups listed above will become the target object of our direct interest in this work. As there exists a special category of adverbials, we shall try to characterize them by contrasting this group of words with the adverbs indicated in our preliminary remarks. The group’s name “unqualifiable meta-predicative adverbials” reflects the two consecutive traits of the adverbials, meta-predicativity and unqualifiability.

To begin with, let us make some observations on a paradigmatic example with the contrast to be elucidated. This example is represented by a pair of sentences in which contrastive adverbial items are present. Each of them appears in the same diacritic form. The functional difference between the two occurrences is also readily visible due to the corresponding English translation. In this example, the UMA occurrence and the non-UMA occurrence are in the following order: the UMA occurrence is placed on the right-hand side of the notation, and the non-UMA occurrence is placed on the left-hand side of it.

- (1) *Zdobywcy z podbitą ludnością rozprawili się bezwzględnie. Vs Miałeś bezwzględnie rację.*

‘The conquerors suppressed the aborigines ruthlessly.’ Vs ‘You were absolutely right.’

Let us dwell on the paradigmatic example for a moment to show several traits of how our UMA operators function. Notice that *bezwzględnie* in the first sentence of example (1) can remain under the sentence stress, the second is inherently unstressed. We can put only a corrective or emphatic accent on it, but this

kind of accent may be placed, as is well known, on any part of the sentence, so it is irrelevant. Moreover, the first *bezwzględnie* in (1) can be negated: *nie bezwzględnie, lecz miłosiernie* ‘not ruthlessly, but mercifully’, while the second, as inherently unstressed, thus non-rhematic, cannot be denied:

- (2) * *Miałeś nie bezwzględnie rację.*
 ‘*You were not absolutely right.’

It is also worth noting that the unstressed *bezwzględnie*, unlike the stressed one, cannot take the last position in a sentence, usually reserved for rhematic words.

There is also another significant difference between stressed and unstressed *bezwzględnie*: the former combines with modifiers, e.g., *dość bezwzględnie* ‘quite ruthlessly’, *nie dość bezwzględnie* ‘not ruthlessly enough’, while the latter does not. It is unqualifiable, that is to say, it undergoes no further characterization; cf.

- (3) *Zdobywcy z podbitą ludnością rozprawili się raczej bezwzględnie.* Vs **Miałeś raczej bezwzględnie rację.*
 ‘The conquerors suppressed the aborigines rather ruthlessly.’ Vs ‘*You were rather absolutely right.’

It should be mentioned, moreover, that *bezwzględnie* in the first sentence from example (1) is gradable:

- (4) *Zdobywcy z podbitą ludnością rozprawiali się coraz bezwzględniej.*
 ‘The conquerors suppressed the aborigines more and more ruthlessly.’

The UMA *bezwzględnie* in the second sentence from example (1) cannot be graduated:

- (5) * *Miałeś bezwzględniej / najbezwzględniej rację.*
 ‘*You were more absolutely / the most absolutely right.’

Summarizing this part of our study, let us repeat that stressed *bezwzględnie* represents ordinary adverbs of manner, while the unstressed is an example of the UMA.

III. A survey of selected UMA operators

The analogical opposition between two different adverbials with a similar form can also be observed in many other Polish sentences. Consider the following examples in which the first sentence contains an adverb of manner, while the second, a corresponding UMA:

- (6) *Uczeń musi ubierać się czysto. Vs To są rozważania czysto teoretyczne.*
 ‘The student must dress cleanly.’ Vs ‘These are purely theoretical considerations.’
- (7) *Wypowiadałeś się zbyt dosłownie. Vs Kiedy przemawia publicznie, czuje się dosłownie jak ryba wyjęta z wody.*
 ‘You were speaking too literally.’ Vs ‘When speaking publicly, he literally feels like a fish out of water.’
- (8) *Twój syn zachowuje się bardzo dziwnie. Vs Odczuwanie dźwięku w tych dziwnie głuchych, wąskich i zamkniętych przestrzeniach nieuchronnie prowadzi do skojarzeń z klaustrofobiczną trumną.*
 ‘Your son behaves very strangely.’ Vs ‘The sensation of sound in these strangely deaf, narrow, and closed spaces leads inevitably to associations with a claustrophobic coffin.’
- (10) *Musimy działać bardziej zdecydowanie. Vs Niska aktywność uniwersytetów i centrów badawczych wpływa na zdecydowanie słabe efekty.*
 ‘We need to act more decisively / firmly.’ Vs ‘Low activity of universities and science-research centers decisively / undoubtedly is responsible for poor effects.’
- (11) *Ta aktorka była ubrana nie całkiem kompletnie. Vs Była za to kompletnie pijana.*
 ‘This actress was not fully dressed.’ Vs ‘But she was completely drunk.’
- (13) *Będziemy głosować jawnie, przez podniesienie ręki. Vs Kiedy te reakcje są szczególnie intensywne, pacjent może stać się przygnębiony, wycofany lub jawnie wyzywający.*
 ‘We shall vote openly, by a show of hands.’ Vs ‘When these reactions are particularly intense, the patient can become morose, withdrawn, or openly defiant.’

- (14) *Wycieczka zakończyła się szczęśliwie. Vs Uszkodzenie było szczęśliwie niewielkie.*
 ‘The trip ended happily.’ Vs ‘The damage was, luckily, slight.’
- (15) *Musisz ćwiczyć bardziej regularnie / regularniej. Vs On z nas regularnie zakpił.*
 ‘You need to exercise more regularly.’ Vs ‘He openly mocked us.’
- (16) *Dziecko spało spokojnie. Vs W pudełku zmieści się spokojnie dwadzieścia kredek.*
 ‘The child was sleeping calmly.’ Vs ‘Twenty crayons easily fit in the box.’
- (17) *Zachowywał się całkiem zwyczajnie. Vs Ten chłopak jest zwyczajnie nieodpowiedzialny.*
 ‘He behaved quite normally.’ Vs ‘This boy is just plain irresponsible.’

Questions arise about the linguistic status of expressions represented in the pairs of sentences above: a) are we dealing in this case with two applications of the same monosemic word?; b) are they different meanings of a polysemous word?; c) or are they rather two independent units of language? Everything indicates that the last of these questions should be answered positively. It is, namely, about separate linguistic entities, and not only about a change of context, associated with a change in the shade of meaning, which does not cause the loss of the identity of the expression in question. For the present moment, let us notice that in most of the examples above, two different English words are necessary to cover different meanings, while in Polish, different meanings are covered by very similar (though not identical, as we shall see later) forms.

IV. UMA operators in their contrast with other adverbials. A systematic account

In this section, the central topic of the paper will be elaborated on in detail. What makes it possible to clearly distinguish expressions such as those presented in the second sentence of each of the examples (1, 6–17) from the corresponding adverbs of manner is the fact of their divergent characteristics obtained by using the following criteria (i–viii):

- (i) prosodic features, especially the relationship of a word and the sentence (non-corrective) stress;
- (ii) position in the linear word order;
- (iii) possibility of being negated;
- (iv) compatibility with intensifiers, weakeners, or other predicates in subordinate constructions;
- (v) ability to be concatenated with common adverbs in coordinate constructions;
- (vi) relationship to the grammatical category of the degrees of comparison;
- (vii) range of syntactic and semantic combinability;
- (viii) ability to be used in a context with an ordinary adverb of the same shape.

The abovementioned criteria have already been partially applied to the example (1) analysis. They will be discussed more systematically, with an eye on other examples later in the article.

(i) Prosodic features: stressed vs inherently unstressed units

UMA operators are inherently unstressed, which means that the non-corrective stress cannot rest on them. On the contrary, ordinary adverbs are either currently stressed or unstressed. (They could be stressed or unstressed if only the components of the content of the utterance in which they are used were organized differently.) See the following example where stressed words are capitalized and an asterisk indicates an unacceptable accent:

- (18) *Zachowywał się całkiem ZWYCZAJNIE.* Vs *Ten chłopak jest zwyczajnie NIEODPOWIEDZIALNY.* Vs **Ten chłopak jest ZWYCZAJNIE nieodpowiedzialny.*
 ‘He behaved quite NORMALLY.’ Vs ‘This boy is plain IRRESPONSIBLE.’
 Vs ‘This boy is just PLAIN irresponsible.’

The situations when UMAs are isolated as independent utterances are not counterarguments because the phrasal stress accompanies them automatically:

- (19) – *Czy on jest odpowiedzialny za ten wypadek?* – *ZDECYDOWANIE.*
 (20) ‘– Is he responsible for this accident? – DEFINITELY.’

(ii) Different positions in the linear word order

The UMA usually precedes the word for which it opens a valency position; it is utterly impossible to move it to the final position in the sentence. This place is normally stressed when other prosodic factors do not undermine a given word order. In examples (21, 22), incorrect sentences have been marked with asterisks:

- (21) *Twój syn zachowuje się bardzo DZIWNIE.* Vs *Twój syn był dziwnie SPOKOJNY.*
Vs **Twój syn był spokojny DZIWNIE.*

‘Your son behaves very strangely.’ Vs ‘Your son was strangely calm.’ Vs ‘*Your son was calm strangely.’

- (22) *Będziemy głosować przez podniesienie ręki, to znaczy JAWNIE.* Vs *Była to propozycja jawnie KORUPCYJNA.* Vs **Była to propozycja korupcyjna JAWNIE.*

‘We will vote by a show of hands, in other words, openly.’ Vs ‘It was an openly corrupt proposal.’ Vs ‘*It was a proposal corrupt openly.’

In this regard, UMA operators differ, among others, from adverbial intensifiers, which in Polish can be moved to the last, stressed position:

- (24) *Zależy mu na tym BARDZO.*

‘He cares about it very much.’

- (25) *Mądra jesteś NIESŁYCHANIE.*

‘You are wise, extremely.’

(iii) Possibility vs impossibility of being negated

Since UMA operators do not take sentence stress, they cannot, unlike adverbs of manner, function as rhemes; accordingly, they cannot be negated; cf. e.g.:

- (26) *Piotr przegrał, bo działał niezdecydowanie.* Vs **Piotr był niezdecydowanie szybszy.*

‘Peter lost because he acted indecisively / irresolutely.’ Vs ‘*Peter was irresolutely faster.’

(27) *Dziecko spało niespokojnie.* Vs **W pudełku zmieści się niespokojnie dwadzieścia kredek.*

‘The child was sleeping uneasily.’ Vs ‘*Twenty crayons will fit uneasily in the box.’

It is noteworthy that the form *nieszczęśliwie*, which is a negative counterpart of the adverb *szczęśliwie*, also covers another UMA, lexically independent of the UMA *szczęśliwie*, e.g.:

(28) *Zakochał się szczęśliwie.* *Zakochał się nieszczęśliwie.*

‘He fell in love happily.’ ‘He fell in love unhappily.’

(29) *Szczęśliwie zakochał się w spokojnej dziewczynie.*

‘Luckily, he fell in love with a quiet girl.’

(30) *Nieszczęśliwie zakochał się w kłótlivej dziewczynie.*

‘Unluckily, he fell in love with a quarrelsome girl.’

(iv) Compatibility vs incompatibility with intensifiers, weakeners, or any other predicates in subordinate constructions

In contrast to adverbs of manner, UMA cannot subordinate intensifiers, weakeners, or any other predicates. Combinations such as *działać na wpół jawnie* ‘act semi-overt’ or *formułować zarzuty bardziej zdecydowanie* ‘make accusations more firmly’ are correct, while **na wpół jawnie korupcyjny* ‘*semi-overt corrupt’, **był bardziej zdecydowanie pierwszy* ‘*he was more firmly first’ are totally unacceptable. It is a very important, definitional feature of the UMA class.

(v) Ability vs disability to be concatenated with common adverbs in coordinate constructions

UMA cannot be combined with regular adverbs in coordinate constructions. Other words can be attached to them (something which is nevertheless a sporadic phenomenon), this is conditional on units belonging to the metalevel of the language; cf. *silnik pracuje spokojnie i czysto* ‘the engine runs quietly and cleanly’ vs **w pudełku ładnie i spokojnie mieści się dwadzieścia kredek* ‘twenty crayons fit nicely and easily into the box’ vs *w pudełku spokojnie, a nieoczekiwanie mieści się dwadzieścia kredek* ‘twenty crayons fit easily, though unexpectedly, into the box’.

(vi) Relationship to the grammatical category of the degrees of comparison: gradable vs ungradable units

UMA, unlike adverbs of manner, are not subject to graduation, cf. e.g.:

- (31) *Ten student zachowuje się dziwnie // dziwniej niż tamten // najdziwniej ze wszystkich.* Vs *Mama coś dziwnie się spóźnia* / **dziwniej* / **najdziwniej się spóźnia*.

‘This student behaves strangely // more strangely than that one // the strangest of all.’ Vs ‘Mom is strangely late.’ // ‘Mom, a strange thing, is late.’ Vs ‘Mom is *more strangely / *the most strangely late.’

Even if some UMA operators take the extreme values, they do not apply to an ordinary superlative. There is always another UMA or a product of an operational unit behind this lexicalized form (Danielewiczowa 2022); see also (Grochowski 2008). Insofar as just a *positive* or *superlative*, but not a *comparative* form, it cannot play the role of a grammatical degree of comparison; cf.

- (32) *A rajska jabłoń spokojnie / najspokojniej / *spokojniej grzała w słońcu swoje owoce.*

‘And the apple tree of paradise was calmly warming its fruits in the sun.’

See also the example (33) where a lexicalized comparative or superlative is used:

- (33) *Lepiej / najlepiej / *dobrze nic nie mów.*
‘Better say nothing.’

and (34) where a special Polish operation is applied (see Danielewiczowa 2022):

- (34) *Spotkamy się najpóźniej za rok.*
‘We’ll meet next year at the latest.’

(vii) Range of syntactic and semantic combinability

The range of syntactic and semantic combinability of UMA differs from common adverbs, which combine primarily with verbs, as the name suggests. The units belonging to UMA combine with verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and even nouns,

but place severe semantic constraints on the accompanying expressions. Each UMA has its selective restrictions; therefore, just signaling the problem, let alone exhausting it, would take hours. A detailed semantic analysis of the selected UMA was presented in Danielewiczowa (2012).

Now, let us say only that, for example, *dosłownie* ‘literally’ dislikes “literal” contexts, which is paradoxical. You cannot say in Polish:

- (35) **Wczoraj dosłownie umyliśmy nasz samochód.*
 ‘*Yesterday we literally washed our car.’

The word *dosłownie* chooses metaphorical or quotative phrases:

- (36) *Czuję się dosłownie zdruzgotany.*
 ‘I feel literally devastated.’

- (37) *On jest dosłownie mną!*
 ‘He is literally me!’

The UMA *jawnie* ‘openly’ first, negatively qualifies characteristics it precedes and, second, points to the accumulation of data as a factor enabling a given assertion; cf.

- (38) *Zachowywała się jawnie wrogo.* Vs **Zachowywała się jawnie przyjaźnie.*
 ‘She behaved in an openly hostile way.’ Vs ‘She behaved openly friendly.’

The UMA *spokojnie* ‘calmly’, in turn, juxtaposes two alternative states of affairs, each of which is accompanied by a certain amount of knowledge on the one hand and some amount of ignorance on the other. Knowledge in favor of the negative component of the alternative is outweighed by data in favor of the positive one; it is therefore not a question of assessing, as is the case with the meaning of *jawnie* ‘openly’, but of weighing the factors that make up a certain result at stake.

(viii) Ability to be used in a context with an ordinary adverb of the same shape

The necessity of separating UMA from ordinary adverbs is also confirmed by the possibility of realizing non-pleonastic utterances in which expressions belonging to both lexical classes are used. The following examples show that in

the same Polish sentence, one can correctly, and not tautologically, use a regular adverb and an UMA having a similar form:

- (39) *Zdecydowanie musimy działać bardziej zdecydowanie.* ‘We decisively have to act more firmly.’
- (40) *Nasze dzieci szczęśliwie ułożyły sobie życie dość szczęśliwie.* ‘Luckily, our children have made their own lives quite happy.’
- (42) *Ta organizacja jawnie działa tylko na wpół jawnie.* ‘This organization openly acts only semi-overtly.’

V. Outstanding problems

Now, we can return to the question about the status of the words in the pairs represented in examples (1, 6–17) and, respectively, (39–42). Are we dealing with polysemy, homonymy, or independent units differing simultaneously in form and meaning?

Even if the boundaries between polysemy and homonymy are difficult to determine, we can certainly say that both relationships require the identity of the forms (polysemous or homonymous words have the same forms and different meanings). This basic definitional condition is not met in the case of the word class under consideration. Since natural language is primarily realized in a spoken form, the expression plane of a given lexical unit includes both segmental and suprasegmental features (Danielewiczowa 2011). For this reason, on the one hand, the adverb *jawnie*₁, which takes sentential stress, and, on the other hand, the inherently unstressed UMA *jawnie*₂ are two different elements of the Polish lexicon, in their form as well as in meaning. We shall argue that such a relationship occurs between the adverbials in all the other pairs of sentences represented in the examples shown above.

It should be clarified what exactly the term *unqualifiable meta-predicative adverbial* means. Adverbs of manner refer to relations in the world, so they belong to the object level of language (Bogusławski 2005). This fact has its formal expression in the possibility of being stressed, i.e., taking on a rhematic non-corrective sentence accent. This also amounts to remaining within the reach of the actual negation. Adverbs of manner meet those requirements. Moreover, they can be characterized by other predicates, e.g.:

(43) *Odpowiedziałeś na pytania bardzo INTELIGENTNIE / bardzo NIEINTELIGENTNIE.*

‘You answered the questions very INTELLIGENTLY / very UNINTELLIGENTLY.’

Things are different with UMA. When uttered in Polish sentences, they cannot be further specified or modified by any expressions. Their peculiarity consists in introducing neither additional information, called „characteristics of manner”, nor metatextual comments related to the basic content of a given utterance (as a whole). They qualify a predicate (also in its nominalized form) to which they are immediately attached as valid in their current relation to the epistemic object being referred to (Grochowski 1986a, Bogusławski 2022). The qualification of the predicate consists of the speaker’s attention to certain features of the circumstances of the current application of this predicate. The meta qualification is always thematized. It is also worth emphasizing that from another point of view, UMA operators are, for the most part, words belonging to the broader class of epistemic units (Danielewiczowa 2002, Bogusławski 2007). They refer to epistemic circumstances that prompt the speaker to attribute the respective characteristics to states of affairs as objects in the discourse.

It should be noticed that in the field under consideration there are four- and not two-stage oppositions, based respectively on a) ordinary adverbs of manner, b) the expressions having the form *w taki a taki sposób* ‘in such and such a way’, c) UMA, and d) sentential adverbs or particles, e.g.:

- *wycieczka zakończyła się szczęśliwie* ‘the trip ended happily’ – *w szczęśliwy sposób udało mu się zapamiętać adres* ‘in a lucky way, he managed to memorize the address’ – *szczęśliwie nie zapomniał adresu* ‘he didn’t, luckily, forget the address’ – *na szczęście nie zapomniał adresu* ‘fortunately, he didn’t forget the address’;
- *zachowuje się trochę dziwnie* ‘he behaves quite strangely’ – *w dziwny sposób uniknął obrażeń* ‘in a strange way, he avoided injuries’ – *jestem o to dziwnie spokojny* ‘I am strangely calm about it’ – *o dziwo, zdał egzamin / ku memu zdziwieniu zdał egzamin* ‘Unexpectedly enough, he passed the exam’ / ‘to my surprise, he passed the exam’.

The following problems require further reflection: How is this four-scale opposition implemented in other Polish expressions? Which of its members are present and which are not? Do the language mechanisms present in Polish have their analogies in different language systems? How does the analytic expression *w _ sposób* ‘in a _ way’ differ from an adverb of manner, on the one hand, and an UMA, on the other?

At this point, it seems more important to explain the relationship between the class of UMA and what in the literature on the subject is referred to as sentential adverbs or particles. Most of the tests examined above give the same result for the UMA and the particles. Meanwhile, if it is impossible to show the difference between the two classes of words, the postulate of separating UMA from other linguistic facts may be threatened.

Wajszczuk's classification proposals (1997, 2000, 2005: 105–121) come in handy here. The author describes particles and conjunctions as operators ordering the thematic-rhematic structure of an utterance, rather than its syntactic structure. In addition to their formal and semantic liberal behavior, a characteristic property of these operators is that they never occupy the valency positions of other expressions: they do not impose any restrictions on the words they are linked to. They merely never co-occur with expressions of the same rank.

Unlike extremely liberal particles, unqualifiable meta-predicative adverbials are sensitive to grammatical and semantic context. This feature distinguishes them from words such as *mianowicie* 'namely', *rzeczywiście* 'actually', *oczywiście* 'obviously', *pozornie* 'seemingly', *przeważnie* 'mostly', *prawdopodobnie* 'presumably', *niewątpliwie* 'undoubtedly', which, being adverbs by origin, have evolved up to the point of becoming similar to the original particles or sentential adverbs. In contemporary Polish, they can co-occur with any kind of words (even proper names) that take a non-corrective stress and can play the role of rhematic expressions. This is not the case with UMA. Cf.:

- (44) *Antykościelne hasła wykrzykiwał przypuszczalnie Janek.* Vs *Antykościelne hasła wykrzykiwał iście / czysto / dosłownie Janek.*
 'Anti-church slogans were shouted, probably by Johnny.' Vs 'Anti-church slogans were shouted *truly / *purely / *literally by Johnny.'

Epistemic particles or sentential adverbs of adverbial origin, in contrast to UMA, can be prosodically, and thus with using punctuation, separated from the rest of the utterance, e.g.:

- (45) *Stefan, przypuszczalnie, skłamał.* Vs **Stefan, zwyczajnie, skłamał.*
 'Steven, probably, lied.' Vs 'Steven, normally, lied.'
- (46) *To był, istotnie, królewski obiad.* Vs **To był, iście, królewski obiad.*
 'It was, indeed, a royal dinner.' Vs. 'It was a truly royal dinner.'

The lack of such a possibility in the case of UMA favors the hypothesis that they are involved in syntactic relations rather than in the thematic-rhematic organization of utterances.

An important argument in favor of distinguishing UMA from particles on the one hand and sentential adverbs on the other is a kind of semantic subordination of the former by the latter. The point is that the UMA, together with the predicate whose characteristic it carries, remains within the range of influence of a possible particle, rather than vice versa, e.g.:

(47) *To była rzeczywiście czysto antypolska wypowiedź.*

‘It was actually a purely anti-Polish statement.’

(48) *Janek niewątpliwie bezwzględnie zasługuje na nagrodę.*

‘Undoubtedly, Johnny absolutely deserves the award.’

(49) *Tym razem na szczęście zdecydowanie mają rację.*

‘Fortunately, this time, they are definitely right.’

(50) *Chłopcy niestety dziwnie milczą o całej sprawie.*

‘Unfortunately, the boys are strangely silent about the whole thing.’

Conclusions

Unqualifiable meta-predicative adverbials cannot be reduced to standard adverbs of manner (cf. Grzegorzczkowska 1975), particles, or sentential adverbs (Grochowski 1986: 57, 1997: 25, Żabowska 2008). This group has to be assigned a special, prominent status. What makes this an urgent task is the phenomenon of a clear numerical expansion of the class. The first symptom of a word abandoning the domain of standard adverbs is an extension of its combinability with adjectives, intensifiers, prepositional phrases, or even nouns. The widening of this process is associated with a change in the stress pattern and the position provided for a given word in the linear organization of the utterance (the adverbial tends to be placed in an unstressed anteposition). The next stage of evolution is predictively complete freedom of combinability, which accompanies the passage of the word from syntax to the area of the thematic-rhematic structure. In this way, the word acquires the nature of a particle or sentential adverb.

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