

When we interpret what other people say, we sometimes understand more than we hear. For example, when I say to you *Wiesz, że cię kocham*, meaning *You know that I love you*, in Polish, you understand that the person who knows is you and the person who loves you is me, even though I have omitted the words *ty* and *ja* (*you* and *I*). I cannot do the same trick in English. If I say *Know that love you*, instead of *You know that I love you*, you will think that I don't know how the English grammar works. It turns out that some languages allow their users to omit words like *I* and *you* in certain grammatical contexts (like the subject position in the Polish sentence above) and others do not. This phenomenon, known in the linguistic literature as *pro-drop*, arose particular interest in the 1980s. The research conducted over the years has shown that it is possible to isolate at least four kinds of languages which make it possible for their users to omit at least some types of subjects:

- Consistent null subject languages: languages such as Polish or Italian, where it is possible to omit subjects freely and where the form of the verb helps us to understand who the subject is (e.g. *kocham* means *I love* and *kochasz* means *you love*).
- Partial null subject languages: languages such as Finnish or Russian, where subjects can sometimes be omitted, but not always.
- Semi-*pro-drop* languages: languages such as Icelandic or Faroese, where only subjects which do not refer to any particular person or thing, such as *it* in *It is raining*, can be omitted.
- Discourse *pro-drop* languages: languages such as Japanese or Korean, which make it possible for their users to omit words like *I* and *you* in different positions in sentences (e.g. in a sentence like *I love you* both *I* and *you* can be omitted, not only *I*, as in Polish).

Within this research project we are searching for explanations of the differences between human languages as far as omitting subjects is concerned. More specifically, treating language as a part of the human mind, we aim at constructing a theory of the representation of the subjects in sentences such as *Wiesz, że cię kocham*, as opposed to the subjects *you* and *I* in *You know that I love you*. What is more, we want to see what features of the grammar of a particular language influence whether the language makes it possible for us to omit subjects or not.

To achieve our theoretical research aims, we will gather and analyse sentences from Kashubian and Silesian, two linguistic systems used in Poland in addition to Polish. These two systems have very interesting properties related to omitting subjects. For example, even though, just like in Polish, verbs in Kashubian have forms which let us decide who the subject is, subjects are usually not omitted in this language. Our first task will thus be to see where within the language types enumerated above Kashubian and Silesian fit. If they are indeed not like Polish, are they similar to Finnish or maybe rather to Icelandic? In addition, both Kashubian and Silesian let us reverse the trick familiar from Polish: instead of omitting the subject, we can sometimes omit the part of the verb which is used to identify who the subject is. For example, where in Polish we say *robiłam* for *I did*, using the verb without the subject, in Kashubian we can say *jô robila*, where we have the subject *jô*, meaning *I*, but where the verb does not have the ending *-m*, which the Polish verb has and which lets us know that the subject is *I*.

Investigating these intriguing issues will ultimately help us understand what is possible in a human language as far as expressing and identifying subjects is concerned and what is not possible. This is a necessary step in the process of uncovering the limits of the differences between human languages and the mechanisms behind these differences at a more general level.