

On the changing grammatical status of the Polish proximal demonstrative *ten*

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Abstract

This article presents quantitative data regarding the frequency of use of the Polish proximal demonstrative *ten* 'this', which shows signs of becoming an article (Bartnik 2015). The Polish language does not have articles; however, it allows for structures in which the demonstrative occurs in the same contexts as the definite article of English in order to place emphasis on the following noun. The material analysed for the purposes of this paper includes 15 hours of live football commentaries and focuses on 7 patterns of use of the demonstrative. The study also attempts to determine whether or not the frequency of use of the function word is correlated with the level of education of the speaker. In order to achieve the goal, the patterns of use by professional sports journalists and former footballers are compared. The results suggest that, indeed, the demonstrative frequently occurs in contexts where it is unnecessary. The most frequent example involves the phrase *ta piłka* 'the ball', where the noun can be regarded as a unique referent in the context of a football game. Pragmatically speaking, from the perspective of the Polish language, if someone says *ta piłka* 'the ball' while commenting on a game, the demonstrative is redundant as only one ball can be used during a match. Importantly, a definite article must be present in such contexts in the English language, which has a strong influence on Polish. Given that the phenomenon described in the article appears to be a contact-induced change in progress, the

theoretical framework of Usage-Based Linguistics is used here to account for it.

Keywords

Polish, grammaticalisation, proximal demonstrative, definite article, language change

O zmieniającym się statusie gramatycznym polskiego zaimka wskazującego *ten*

Abstrakt

Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia dane ilościowe dotyczące częstotliwości użycia polskiego zaimka wskazującego *ten*, który wykazuje oznaki przekształcania się w rodzajnik (Bartnik 2015). Język polski nie ma rodzajników, jednak dopuszcza konstrukcje, w których zaimek wskazujący występuje w tych samych kontekstach, co przedimek określony w języku angielskim, kładąc nacisk na następujący po nim rzeczownik. Materiał przeanalizowany na potrzeby niniejszego artykułu obejmuje 15 godzin transmisji na żywo meczów piłki nożnej i koncentruje się na 7 wzorcach użycia zaimka wskazującego. W badaniu podjęto również próbę ustalenia, czy częstotliwość użycia tego wyrazu funkcyjnego jest skorelowana z poziomem wykształcenia osoby mówiącej. Aby osiągnąć ten cel, porównano wzorce użycia zaimka przez zawodowych dziennikarzy sportowych i byłych piłkarzy. Wyniki sugerują, że zaimek wskazujący rzeczywiście często występuje w kontekstach, w których jest niepotrzebny. Najczęstszym przykładem jest wyrażenie *ta piłka* (ang. *the ball*), gdzie rzeczownik *ten* można uznać za określony w kontekście meczu piłkarskiego. Z punktu widzenia pragmatyki, jeśli ktoś powie *ta piłka* komentując mecz, forma wskazująca jest zbędna, ponieważ podczas meczu można użyć tylko jednej piłki. Biorąc pod uwagę, że zmiany opisane w artykule wywołane są kontaktem z językiem angielskim, w pracy posłużono się teoretycznym modelem językoznawstwa opartego na użyciu (Usage-Based Linguistics), aby wyjaśnić przyczyny tego zjawiska.

Słowa kluczowe

język polski, gramatyzacja, proksymalny zaimek wskazujący, przedimek określony, zmiana językowa

1. Introduction*

Even though language change is generally imperceptible (Winter-Froemel 2014: 521), there are certain aspects of the phenomenon that hardly ever go unnoticed. For instance, speakers of numerous languages are well-aware of the ever-rising number of borrowings, mainly of English origin, which enrich the lexicon of their native language. Instances of syntactic and morphological change are also attested, particularly in the context of language contact. In such situations, a morpheme or syntactic structure found in one language may start being used in another. Needless to say, the likelihood of a morpheme or structure being borrowed is considerably greater if the token frequency of the borrowed item is high in the donor language (Bybee 2006).

As regards the contact involving Polish and English, it is worth noting that, in contemporary Polish, numerous expressions, such as *Mam to napisane* ‘I have it written’, which derive from the English phrase *to have something done*, are much more frequent now than they used to be.¹ Another recent development, which many conservative speakers disapprove of, is the excessive use of the proximal demonstrative *ten* ‘this’. In conversational Polish, the demonstrative is often found in contexts where it is either unnecessary or even incorrect. Interestingly, this particular feature of contemporary Polish is not uncommon in the speech of professionals, e.g. reporters and commentators,

* I would like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their comments on an earlier draft of the paper.

¹ Conservative speakers of Polish find such phrases awkward and ambiguous as they do not state explicitly who performed the action.

which probably indicates that the demonstrative might have started acquiring the functions of the definite article (see Heine and Kuteva 2006).²

The primary objective of this paper is to describe the changing patterns of use of the Polish proximal demonstrative *ten* in the speech of Polish football commentators. Not only does the study describe numerous contexts in which the demonstrative occurs in contemporary Polish, but it also presents the results of a quantitative analysis which is intended to show the frequency of use of each pattern. Since the frequency aspect is of the utmost importance while discussing the results of the study, the theoretical framework of Usage-Based Linguistics (Bybee 2006, 2011) is applied in this work to account for the changing patterns of use of the function word.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 1 describes the nominal category of definiteness as well as its functions. Section 2 is concerned with grammaticalisation of demonstratives and presents some of the cases attested in the world's languages. The second part of this section focuses on the ambiguous grammatical status of the Polish demonstrative. The following section describes the major tenets of Usage-Based Linguistics, which is the theoretical framework adopted in this work to interpret the results. Section 3 specifies the aims of the analysis, provides reason for choosing the speech material and describes the way the data were analysed. The final section presents the results and statistical analyses, interprets the results as well as identifies areas for further research.

2. Definiteness

In linguistics, the term definiteness is usually understood as a “category of morphosyntactic properties distinguishing noun phrases according to whether their reference in a given context

² The distal demonstrative *tamten* ‘that’ appears to be unaffected by the process.

is presumed to be uniquely identifiable” (Stump 2001: 22). Words that serve the function are referred to as determiners. In the English language, the syntactic category determiner includes five groups of words; namely, articles (*a, an, the*), demonstratives (*this, that, these, those*), possessives (e.g. *my, your, John’s*), question pronouns (e.g. *which, what, whose*) and quantifiers (e.g. *some, several, all*) (Trask & Stockwell 2007). In articleless languages, such as Polish, the word order of a sentence may also indicate the definite/indefinite status of a noun. For instance, in the two sentences presented in (1), the foregrounded noun *kobieta* ‘woman’ is perceived as definite in (1a) as it occupies the subject position. On the other hand, in (1b), when backgrounded, or shifted to post-verbal position, the noun automatically becomes indefinite.

- (1a) *Kobieta wyszła z domu.*
 Woman leave-past out-of house
 ‘The woman left the house.’
- (1b) *Z domu wyszła kobieta.*
 out-of house leave-past woman
 ‘A woman left the house.’

With respect to definiteness, it is the article that seems to be the most obvious realisation of the nominal category. “An article – regardless of its distribution across languages, varieties or dialects – is a member of the class of determiners that restricts or particularizes a noun indicating the type of reference made by it” (Catasso 2011: 12). However, demonstrative pronoun(s) serve the very same function, e.g. in several Slavic languages. Heine and Kuteva (2006) argue convincingly that the Slavic languages that have been in contact with either Germanic or Romance languages, have begun to develop definite articles. Importantly, in all the examples from Polish, Sorbian, Czech, Slovenian, Molise Croatian and Kashubian that the authors present and analyse, it is one of the demonstratives that is undergoing the process.³

³ Heine and Kuteva (2006) argue convincingly that Upper and Lower

Distinguishing demonstratives from articles may constitute a difficulty as they occur in similar syntactic slots. Himmelmann (2001: 833) enumerates four contexts; namely, (i) anaphoric use, (ii) situational use, (iii) discourse-deictic use and (iv) recognitional use, where either an article or a demonstrative can be used. An analysis of the English examples in (2)–(5) shows clearly that it is impossible to determine whether a given demonstrative performs a demonstrative or article function.

- (2) ... and a man comes along with a goat, and **this/the goat** obviously is interested in the pears
 (3) **This/the guy** behind you waits to get back to his seat
 (4) ... and that's the end of **that/the story**
 (5) hitting one of **those/the bounce-back things**, you know, the little thing that had elastic, and it has a ball

Example (2) is an instance of anaphoric use. Both the article and the proximal demonstrative can serve the function as they refer to an entity that has been mentioned earlier. In (3), both the demonstrative and the article indicate a person present in the physical context, making it clear which person is being talked about in a given situation. Discourse-deictic use is exemplified in (4) as the noun *story* clearly refers to a preceding stretch of discourse. Finally, in example (5), *the/those things* are recognised as an inherent element of the physical context. Either of the determiners can be used despite the fact that the things have not been mentioned earlier.

- (6) ... i przychodzi człowiek z kozą, a (**ta**) **koza** ewidentnie interesuje się gruszkami⁴

Sorbian, two Slavic languages spoken in Germany, have acquired not only the definite but also the indefinite article due to their long history of contact with German. Quite predictably, the indefinite article has evolved from the numeral *jedyn* 'one'.

⁴ Even though the utterance in (6) is grammatically correct, in conversational Polish, in order to avoid repeating the noun *koza* 'goat', it would normally be replaced with the pronoun *ona* 3 p. sg. fm. nom.

- (7) **(Ten) facet** za tobą czeka, żeby wrócić na swoje miejsce
- (8) ... i to jest koniec **(tej) historii**
- (9) ... uderzając w jedną z **(tych) odbijających się rzeczy**, wiesz, taką małą sprężystą rzecz ...

It is worth emphasising at this point, that the Polish translations of examples (2) – (5), presented in (6) – (9) in the same order, may, but do not have to, include demonstratives. Language purists would probably argue that, even though the structures are grammatically correct, the demonstratives placed in brackets spoil the style. In spite of that, speakers of Polish exhibit a very strong tendency to use the proximal demonstrative in such contexts in conversational Polish, much less so in written language. In other words, the use of the demonstratives is often considered in terms of style.

3. Grammaticalisation of demonstratives

Grammaticalisation can be defined as a process whereby “the linguistic item being affected undergoes loss in pragmatic significance, semantic complexity, syntactic freedom, morphological structure and phonetic substance” (Heine and Kuteva 2006: 332). It can also be defined as the creation of a new grammatical morpheme and a new construction out of a particular instance of an old construction or, alternatively, one that exists in another language commonly used (see Bybee 2006: 719; Winter-Froemel 2014, von Mengden and Simon 2014). The process is likely to result from intensive language contact, when speakers of the recipient language introduce a grammatical construction which exists in the donor language and start using it in similar contexts.

It is a well-established fact that determiners frequently evolve from demonstratives (Diesel 1999, Himmelmann 2001, Bybee 2006, Heine and Kuteva 2006, Catasso 2011, Bartnik 2015). Demonstratives can be defined as deitic expressions whose interpretation depends on a certain frame of reference

(Catasso 2011: 13). As for their primary function, they are used to select a referent, or a group of referents. Thus, demonstratives help the hearer to properly interpret what is being said by indicating what s/he should focus on. Due to belonging to the group of function words, demonstratives are very frequent items, which makes them particularly susceptible to change.

According to Diesel (1999), changes affecting demonstratives can be referred to as either functional or syntactic. The former take place when demonstratives are no longer used to draw the hearer's attention to a specific entity. In other words, they cease being deictically contrastive. With regard to the latter type of change, demonstratives evolve into items whose distribution is restricted to a specific syntactic context. In the course of time, they become grammatical units necessary to generate a well-formed structure.

It has been suggested that, in the case of the English language, the development of demonstratives into articles was necessitated by a massive loss of inflectional endings in the Middle English period, which must have given rise to a great deal of ambiguity. These were solved by changing the syntax of the language in which the four cases were no longer marked inflectionally, but were determined by the position of a noun within the sentence. To put it another way, inherent case was replaced with structural case (e.g. Lightfoot 1999). Naturally, such a change usually consists of several stages, each of which involves the loss of some features. Himmelmann (2001) argues that before a demonstrative pronoun acquires the grammatical status of an article, it goes through two intermediate stages, as shown in (10).

- (10) demonstrative pronoun – demonstrative determiner –
 weakly demonstrative definite determiner –
 definite article

As noted above, a similar change has already affected the Upper and Lower Sorbian demonstrative *ton* and the numeral *jedyn*

‘one’ which, under the influence of German, have acquired the function of the definite and indefinite article respectively (Heine and Kuteva 2006). When used as articles, the former loses its stress, while the latter is phonetically reduced to a monosyllabic form *jen*.

4. Selected patterns of use of the Polish demonstrative *ten*

Polish, being a synthetic and fusional language, is rich in inflectional morphology. As a consequence, nouns, verbs and adjectives have numerous forms, representing several grammatical categories. With respect to the proximal and distal demonstratives, they are inflected for gender, number and case. All the forms of the two demonstratives are presented in Table 1. It is worth mentioning that the accusative case of the feminine singular form of the proximal demonstrative *tę* is probably falling out of use as speakers normally replace it the instrumental form *tą*.

Table 1. Inflected forms of the Polish demonstrative *ten* in the singular and plural

Gender Case	Masculine sing / pl	Feminine sing / pl	Neuter sing / pl
Nominative	<i>ten / ci</i>	<i>ta / te</i>	<i>to / te</i>
Dative	<i>temu / tym</i>	<i>tej / tym</i>	<i>temu / tym</i>
Genitive	<i>tego / tych</i>	<i>tej / tych</i>	<i>tego / tych</i>
Accusative	<i>tego / tych</i>	<i>tę (tą) / te</i>	<i>to / te</i>
Locative	<i>tym / tych</i>	<i>tej / tych</i>	<i>tym / tych</i>
Instrumental	<i>tym / tymi</i>	<i>tą / tymi</i>	<i>tym / tymi</i>

With respect to the Polish demonstrative *ten*, the ambiguity of its grammatical status stems from the fact that this function word has become versatile and some of its contemporary uses correspond with those of the definite article of English. For instance, in conversational Polish, speakers from different social

backgrounds frequently place the proximal demonstrative before nouns where it appears to be unnecessary due to the fact that there is only one referent a given noun refers to. In Slavic languages which generally lack articles, except for Bulgarian, Macedonian and the two Sorbian languages (Heine and Kuteva 2006; Catasso 2011), such referents are not normally preceded by a demonstrative by virtue of being regarded as inherently definite (see example 11). Consequently, if used too frequently, the demonstrative not only stops serving its distinctive function, but it also seems to be bleached of its meaning.

- (11) Powinien był zagrać **ta** piłkę do obrońcy?
 should-3p-msc be-3p-msc-past pass this-acc-sg-fm
 ball-acc-fm-sg to defender-dat-sg
 'He should have passed the ball to the defender.'

In the sentence presented in (12), which exemplifies a very frequent use of the demonstrative in contemporary conversational Polish, the grammatical element is immediately followed by a proper noun. Even though one can imagine such a question in a situation when the speaker is either irritated or fed up by talking about someone's visit to France,⁵ there seems to be no justification for using the demonstrative when the speaker does not want to convey additional emotions. However, recently this pattern of use has become so common that one can hardly consider it as being emotionally charged.

- (12) Wróciła już z **tej** Francji?
 return-3p-sing-fm-past yet from this-sg-fem-gen France-gen
 'Has she returned from France yet?'

Example (13) differs from the previous ones in that the noun *ubezpieczenie* 'insurance' preceded by the demonstrative is abstract. Once again, in such cases, when used in the general

⁵ Bartnik (2015) refers to this pattern as 'emotional' use of the demonstrative.

sense, demonstratives are not necessary. However, the use of the appropriate form of the demonstrative would be justified, if the speaker wanted to point out to a specific type of insurance. If that is the case, the demonstrative is placed in attributive position and can be referred to as adjective demonstrative (Topolińska 1984; Bartnik 2015). The use of the demonstrative is sometimes optional and the opinion as to whether or not its occurrence is justified is somewhat arbitrary if one does not know the general context.

- (13) Wykupiłeś **to** ubezpieczenie?
 buy-2p-sg-msc-past this-sg-neut-acc insurance
 'Have you already bought the insurance?'

As noted above, in the Polish language, the demonstrative is unnecessary if a noun is regarded as definite in a given context. The sentence in (14), which corresponds with the situational use of the demonstrative in Himmelmann's (2001: 833) classification, is an instance of an emphatic structure. Not only is the definiteness of the noun *samochód* 'car' made clear by placing the demonstrative before it, but it is also further defined by the following subordinate clause. Even though structures of this type appear to be very frequent in both conversational and written Polish, one must remember that removing the demonstrative from the sentence changes neither its meaning nor its grammaticality. Therefore, emphasis seems to be the only reason for using the demonstrative.

- (14) To jest **ten** samochód, który kupił Piotr.
 it is this-sg-msc-nom car which buy-3p-sg-msc-past Peter
 'It is the car that Peter bought.'

The discourse-deictic use of the demonstrative is exemplified in (15), which comes from one of the recordings analysed for the purposes of the article, contains a demonstrative which occurs before the noun *turniej* 'tournament' that refers to one of the

previous World Cups and; therefore, the use of the demonstrative is fully justified, especially in an utterance, where the noun is used to replace the phrase *World Cup*.

- (15) ... ale nie przegrali **tego** turnieju
 ... but (they) not lost this-sg-gen tournament
 ‘... but they didn’t lose that tournament’

It must be emphasised that none of the patterns presented above is ungrammatical. The point is that some of them, e.g. placing the demonstrative before a noun that is inherently definite (see example 11), are becoming increasingly common in conversational and written Polish. The frequent occurrence of the demonstrative in contexts in which it is not absolutely necessary means that the grammatical word no longer serves its distinctive function. Since this phenomenon seems to be gaining ground, one might argue that the proximal demonstrative is gradually changing its grammatical status to that of a definite article.

5. Usage-based approach to language change

Many authors investigating language change emphasise the significance of the frequency of use of individual items or patterns (e.g. Heine and Kuteva 2006, Bartnik 2015, Bybee 2006, 2010, 2013), the implication being that frequently repeated items and structures are somehow better at fulfilling the communicative needs of speakers. For this reason, the theoretical framework of Usage-Based Linguistics (Bybee 2006) appears to be particularly well-suited as far as this study is concerned and, for this reason, it has been adopted to analyse the results and draw preliminary conclusions.

Usage-Based Linguistics rests on the assumption that language use has an impact on linguistic structure and the mental (cognitive) representation of language (Langacker 1984, Bybee 2006, 2010, Winter-Froemel 2014). It is assumed in the model

that, in the mind of the speaker, language units, i.e. speech sounds, syllables, morphemes, words, phrases, sentences, emerge as a consequence of exposure to numerous utterances. Each unit is subsequently categorised with respect to its meaning and phonetic shape (Langacker 1984, Bybee 2001, 2013, Bybee and Beckner 2010).

The most common realisation of each language unit is referred to as the prototype. Prototypes result from generalising over a large number of actual tokens produced by the speaker and/or encountered in the speech of other language users. The generalisation process operates throughout the speaker's life with each new token providing more information as to the range of possible realisations, modifying its cognitive representation to a lesser or greater extent. In this respect, Usage-Based Linguistics differs fundamentally from generative and structuralist theories in which language use was thought to have a rather limited impact on its structure (Bybee 2001).

Language units, including phrases and sentences, are also said to have a prototype structure, with some realisations being judged as better representatives of a given category than others (Langacker 1984, Bybee 2001). The concept of prototype can also be approached from a statistical perspective. For instance, Bybee (2001), defines prototype as the most frequent variant of a language unit by virtue of being better entrenched in the speaker's mind than other realisations (Bybee 2001, 2006, 2013; see also Langacker 1987).

In Usage-Based Linguistics, the high frequency of occurrence of a language unit is said to enhance fluency, which results from a greater degree of coarticulation in regularly pronounced strings – a phenomenon referred to as automation (Bybee 2006). “Automation is characterized by the smoothing of transitions and overlapping of movements constrained by the need to retain information value” (Bybee 2001: 15). Automation operates not only within words, but also across morpheme and word boundaries, blurring them. As a result, a high-frequency sequence made up of two or more words may be reanalysed as

a single processing unit, with the original constituents gradually losing their meaning. The English phrase *going to* is a case in point as its reduced form *gonna* has lost its motion sense and has become a future marker (Bybee 2001: 10). As a high-frequency function word, *gonna* is highly susceptible to phonetic reduction, especially in casual speech where it is often pronounced as [gɔ̃rə] (Bybee 2001: 11).

With regard to frequency, in Usage-Based Linguistics, token and type frequency are distinguished. The former is defined as “the number of times a particular string occurs in a text or corpus” (Bybee 2013: 59), while the latter can be thought of as the number of items that follow a certain pattern, e.g. a specific type of conjugation or declension (Bybee 2013: 51). There is a substantial body of evidence suggesting that irregular patterns that apply to a small number of words tend to be replaced with regular ones, particularly when their token frequency is also low. For instance, several English verbs of a relatively low frequency, e.g. *burn*, *spell*, already show signs of regularisation as they have two competing past and past participle forms, i.e. *burned* vs. *burnt* and *spelled* vs. *spelt*. In contrast, irregular high-frequency words, e.g. the verbs *go*, *see*, or the nouns *man*, *woman*, *child*, appear to be immune to regularisation by virtue of being well-entrenched in speakers’ minds, which is due to their high token frequency. Importantly, the frequency factor operates not only at the level of morphophonology, but it also affects syntactic structures (Bybee 2001, 2006, 2010, 2013, Jaworski 2021).

As far as the Polish demonstrative *ten* is concerned, it is probably undergoing a process of grammaticalisation resulting in “the creation of a new grammatical morpheme and a new construction out of a particular instance of an old construction” (Bybee 2006: 713). More specifically, the old constructions are the ones in which the demonstrative is used before a noun for emphasis or to express admiration or irritation (see Bartnik 2015). The increasingly frequent occurrence of the Polish demonstrative in contexts in which it is not necessary may soon become entrenched in speakers’ minds to the extent that they

will start considering it as an obligatory element. The process involves the creation of a new neuromotor routine in which noun phrases including the demonstratives may become the new norm. A similar idea is expressed by Bartnik (2015: 14) who claims that “one thing that suggests that *ten* might be on the way of becoming a definite article is its high frequency of occurrence in spoken Polish”.

6. The study

The primary objective of the study is to present quantitative data regarding the use of the Polish proximal demonstrative *ten* ‘this’ in the speech of Polish football commentators. As noted above, the demonstrative appears to be evolving into a definite article as it is frequently found in syntactic slots where it is not necessary, particularly in spontaneous speech. Some uses of the demonstrative are regarded by the language purist as stylistically awkward, or incorrect, yet the high frequency of occurrence of such forms may also be indicative of a change taking place. What is more, this strong tendency seems to be affecting not only the speech of ordinary people, but also that of well-educated speakers and professionals performing language-related jobs.

The recordings analysed for the purposes of this article include 15 hours of live football commentaries provided by several sports commentators, as well as invited experts, during the 17th edition of the UEFA European Championship, held in France from June 14 to July 14, 2024. Since experts employed by TV channels are usually former footballers, they may be regarded as ordinary speakers. As a consequence, their speech is more likely to have the feature the present article focuses on. On the other hand, commentators are usually professional sports journalists, whose command of language should constitute an example to follow for any speaker in terms of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. The data thus include speech samples

produced by speakers representing two social groups, which might reveal different patterns of use of the demonstrative.

With respect to data analysis, each instance of the demonstrative was analysed and classified according to the criteria presented in Bartnik (2015) and described above. It should be emphasised at this point that, for the sake of clarity, the examples presented in the previous section include only some of the most common grammatical forms of the demonstrative. The complete set of inflected forms of the proximal demonstrative of Polish is presented in Table 2. Obviously, all these forms were taken into consideration in this study. Once the data were collected, statistical analyses were performed with a view to determining whether or not the social background of the speaker is an important factor as far as the use of the demonstrative is concerned.

7. Results

The data presented in this section are based on the performance of five professional sports journalists and five experts, who worked as commentators during the 2024 Euro Cup. As a rule, the experts and journalists worked in pairs. Despite being listened to by millions of viewers, their speaking style can be described as semi-formal as numerous colloquialisms were used by all commentators. What made the commentaries sound very natural was the fact that the speakers seemed to be emotionally involved, regardless of which teams were playing, which may have influenced the number of phrases including the demonstrative *ten*. Since their turns were not equal in terms of duration, they differed with respect to the number of tokens they produced.

Apart from the use patterns described by Himmelmann (2001) and Bartnik (2015), the present analysis includes structures which are not mentioned by the two authors, but which seem to be becoming more and more common in conversational Polish; namely, (i) a demonstrative preceding a proper noun and

(ii) a demonstrative followed by an ordinal number. The former may be regarded as rather surprising due to the fact that proper nouns are inherently definite so placing a demonstrative before such a noun, in the vast majority of cases, should be regarded as a grammar error. As for the latter, one can argue that the structure has been borrowed from English, where the use of the definite article *the* is obligatory in such contexts. A complete list of patterns analysed in this work is found in Table 2.

Judging from the data in Table 2, placing the proximal demonstrative before a referent that is inherently definite constitutes by far the most common pattern. Predictably, it was the noun *piłka* ‘ball’ which appears to be the most frequent noun occurring in this structure in the analysed recordings (93 tokens). Other nouns frequently used in the same use pattern include *boisko* ‘football pitch’ (17 tokens), *mecz* ‘match’ (29 tokens), *strona* ‘flank’ (14 tokens) and *podanie* ‘pass’ (46 tokens). An example of this pattern is found in (16). From the point of view of Polish grammar, the use of the demonstrative is absolutely unnecessary due to the fact that there can only be one ball on the football pitch, yet the function word is present anyway. Clearly, the general context in which the utterance was produced did not justify the use of the demonstrative.

- (16) posłał **ta** piłkę do prawej strony⁶
 pass-past this-fm-acc ball-fem-acc to right flank
 ‘(he) passed the ball to the right flank’

From the perspective of this study, the situational and recognitional uses of the demonstrative are of particular interest as the grammatical word occurs in contexts where the definite English article *the* is found and, on the other hand, it is frequently unnecessary in Polish. This is not to say, however, that each token of the demonstrative in such contexts was not automatically classified as redundant if it seemed to be justified by the general

⁶ In (16), the correct form of the demonstrative is *tę* (sg fem acc). However, the speaker replaced it with *ta*, which is frequently heard in spoken Polish.

context.⁷ Four patterns of unnecessary use of the demonstrative, which exemplify numerous instances encountered in the corpus, are presented in (17)–(20).

- (17) I **ten** środek boiska
 and this-nom-msc centre pitch-sg-gen
 'And the centre of the pitch'

(17) is a classic example of placing the demonstrative before a referent that is known due to constituting an element of the immediate physical context. Thus, according to Himmelmann's (2001) classification, it represents a case of recognitional use of the demonstrative, which turned out to be particularly frequent in the analysed recordings (see Table 2). As the English translation shows, the demonstrative plays the role of the definite article *the*.

- (18) Połowa **tego** składu, (który grał w Katarze) jest teraz na boisku
 Half this squad-gen-sg which play-past in Qatar is now on pitch
 'Half of the squad that played in Qatar is on the pitch now'

Another common pattern found in the data includes two determiners; namely, the proximal demonstrative preceding a noun, which is in turn followed by a defining clause. It must be stressed that, in an articleless language, such as Polish, removing the proximal demonstrative from phrases such as the one in (18) would neither render the phrase incorrect, nor would it make it more difficult to interpret. Conversely, removing a defining clause (in brackets) is only possible if the squad has been mentioned/defined earlier. In other words, structures like that are well-formed only if the demonstrative serves the discourse-deictic function. Given the data in Table 2, structures of this type are frequent in the speech of both sports journalists and

⁷ As noted above, such decisions are rather arbitrary as the phrases containing the demonstrative cannot be regarded as grammatically incorrect.

experts, which implies they may represent a new pattern of use of the demonstrative.

- (19) Ale **ten** obrońca się zawahał
 but this-nom-msc-sg defender-nom-sg refl-pron hesitate-past
 'but the defender hesitated'

Since, in Polish, demonstratives are marked for number, gender and case, and they also show the proximity-distance opposition, they serve the function of modifying nouns. To refer to this particular function of the demonstrative, Topolińska (1984) uses the term *adjective demonstrative*. Predictably, the demonstrative can only function as an element modifying a noun if a given noun may refer to more than one entity. An example illustrating the adjective demonstrative use pattern of the Polish demonstrative is presented in (19). Clearly, in this context, the demonstrative allowed the speaker to distinguish the defender he was talking about from the other three footballers who constituted the defence line.

- (20) **Ta** pierwsza bramka
 This-fem nom first goal nom
 'The first goal'

The example presented in (20) is an interesting case as, in Polish, ordinal numbers are not normally preceded by the demonstrative. Therefore, this phrase could be regarded as a stylistic error as it referred to the first goal scored during the match being commented on. Needless to say, structures of this type appear to have been borrowed from English, where the use of the article *the* is obligatory in such cases.

- (21) *Zabrakło tej konsekwencji grania*
 Missing this-fm-gen consistency play-gen-sg
 'The consistency of play was missing'

As noted above, in the Polish language, abstract nouns can be preceded by a demonstrative only in those cases when the speaker needs to convey additional emotions, such as anger or admiration. Recently, however, more and more native Polish speakers tend to place a proximal demonstrative before abstract nouns, as in (21). *Konsekwencja*, 'consistency', is an abstract noun, one should not place the demonstrative before it. Given the semantics of the demonstrative, the phrase sounds awkward as it implies the existence of other types of consistency. It is worth emphasising that example (21), unlike the other phrases quoted above, is not modelled on English structures, where abstract nouns are not normally preceded by the article if used in the general sense.⁸ Therefore, the frequent use of such structures in Polish indicates an emerging pattern of use that, in all likelihood, stems from overgeneralising a rule applied in English, where concrete countable nouns are typically preceded by an article.

In order to determine whether or not professional sports journalists and ordinary speakers differ with respect to the frequency of use of the six patterns listed in Table 2 a statistical comparison of the individual distribution patterns was conducted by means of a contingency test (Howitt and Crammer 2005). In contingency tests, the equal frequencies model is employed. In terms of this study, the null hypothesis (H_0) predicts that, in all contexts, the frequency of occurrence of the demonstrative in all the examined contexts will be the same, irrespective of the background of the speaker.

⁸ In the English translation of example (19), the definite article occurs before the noun, yet it should be regarded as an element of the descriptive genitive.

Table 2. Token frequency of the Polish demonstrative *ten* in the speech of the commentators and experts

Patterns of use of the demonstrative	C1	E1	C2	E2	C3	E3
DEM + definite referent	39	45	25	42	22	39
Discourse-deictic use	4	12	1	7	6	13
Adjective demonstrative	5	14	7	12	3	17
Anaphoric use	7	11	10	12	9	12
Situational use	23	30	28	34	18	39
DEM + proper noun	10	8	9	22	6	11
DEM + ordinal number	0	7	2	8	1	3
Σ	88	127	82	137	65	134

Table 2 cont.

Patterns of use of the demonstrative	C4	E4	C5	E5	Σ
DEM + definite referent	41	35	34	42	364/227
Discourse-deictic use	7	9	3	11	73/11
Adjective demonstrative	8	13	7	15	101/38
Anaphoric use	4	9	8	10	92/23
Situational use	20	28	26	36	282/158
DEM + proper noun	4	12	5	8	95/82
DEM + ordinal number	3	7	4	0	35/29
Σ	87	113	87	122	1042/568

The analysed sports commentaries include 1042 tokens of the demonstrative *ten*. Each token was assigned to one of the six different patterns of use presented in Table 2, which includes numerical data regarding the performance of each journalist and expert. The Σ column contains the total number of tokens assigned to a given group and, after the slash, the number of tokens judged as unnecessary. A cursory look at the data is sufficient to draw the conclusion that the function word is particularly frequent before a definite referent as well as in the situational use pattern. Also, there is a noticeable discrepancy between the journalists and the experts, especially as far as phrases including an inherently definite referent are concerned.

Bearing in mind that judgements as to whether or not the use of a demonstrative in a given context is justified are bound to be arbitrary, the data presented below need to be verified by other authors. Still, as a linguist and native speaker of Polish, the present author claims that in 54% of the analysed cases, the demonstratives were judged to be redundant. Predictably, the redundancy rate is particularly high in those contexts where the resultant structure can be regarded not so much as awkward, but as incorrect. These include phrases where the proximal demonstrative occurs before a proper noun (86%) and an ordinal number (83%). With respect to phrases including a definite referent, 227 out of 364 tokens were judged to be unnecessary, which constitutes 62.3% of the total. The redundancy rate is also very high in the situational use pattern, where a noun preceded by a demonstrative is additionally followed by a defining clause (56%).

A general statistical comparison of the ten individual patterns of use, conducted in a contingency table, did not reach the threshold of statistical significance ($F = 64.6443$, $df = 54$, $p = 0.1522$). However, when the same test is applied to compare the distribution patterns produced by the journalists with those produced by the experts, it turned out that the differences are statistically significant at the 5% level ($F = 13.6027$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.0344$). As for the differences between the distribution patterns

within the groups of journalists and experts, they are insignificant with $p > .05$.

The results of the statistical tests confirm that the sports journalists do not use the demonstrative as frequently as the experts do. Thus, the study shows that the level of education of the speaker is reflected by the patterns of use of the demonstrative. Judging from the numbers presented in Table 2, the relationship is inversely proportional as the frequency of use of the demonstrative, especially as far as the use of the demonstrative before an inherently definite referent is concerned, e.g. in the phrase *ta piłka* 'this ball', is considerably higher among the experts.

7. Discussion

Despite the differences between the journalists and experts, the most interesting finding that emerges from the study is the fact that the frequency of use of the proximal demonstrative in both groups of speakers is much higher than one might expect. It does not mean that the demonstrative has already become an article. It has not fully grammaticised as speakers seem to use it randomly, without following any rules, especially as far as words such as *piłka* 'ball' or *boisko* 'pitch' are concerned. The lack of rules is particularly obvious when one analyses the way the demonstrative is used before proper nouns. Since proper nouns are inherently determined, articles and demonstrative can sometimes occur in such phrases.

Judging from the results, the Polish demonstrative *ten* is very often used in the same way as the definite article of English in two contexts; namely, where there is a unique referent, e.g. a ball on the football pitch or the goalkeeper or the coach of a team (see example 16), and where the referent is immediately followed by a defining clause, as in (18) above.⁹ In the former,

⁹ Another context that could be mentioned at this point includes phrases containing an ordinal number (see Table 2). Although this pattern is not as

the use of the demonstrative can be justified if the speaker is annoyed, but in some cases the use of the demonstrative is rather unjustified. The latter, on the other hand, is somewhat less unequivocal and more difficult to interpret as emphasis sometimes seems necessary, despite a noun being defined by a following clause. As a consequence, placing it before a noun does not make much of a difference. Thus, the demonstrative seems to have undergone functional change in that it no longer differentiates the entity being talked about from any other. Still, the syntactic change has not taken place yet, as the demonstrative is not necessary for such phrases to be regarded as grammatically correct (see Diesel 1999).

In these two above-mentioned contexts, the high frequency of occurrence of the demonstrative is definitely indicative of a strong tendency towards incorporating the unit as a necessary element of a noun phrase. This phenomenon can be accounted for by referring to the theoretical framework of *Usage-Based Linguistics* (see e.g. Bybee 2006, 2010, 2013; Bybee and Beckner 2013). Apparently, in such structures, the proximal demonstrative appears to be so deeply entrenched in some speakers' minds that it has already been bleached of its semantic content and is no longer used to serve its original function.

8. Conclusion

Even though the results presented in this paper do not allow for stating unequivocally that the Polish proximal demonstrative *ten* has already acquired the grammatical status of article, the evidence indicates that it is undergoing a change in that it occurs in contexts where it is unnecessary, as a result of which it loses its meaning. Although the patterns of use of the demonstrative are statistically different in the two groups of speakers, i.e. sports journalists and former footballers, the difference is

common as the ones mentioned above, this pattern's frequency is likely to rise due to its structure being exactly the same as in English.

significant only at the 5% level. This finding means that the level of education of the speaker is not strongly correlated with the frequency of use of the demonstrative in the investigated patterns.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from the data is that the change affecting the proximal demonstrative is mainly functional (Diesel 1999) as the function word is no longer used to fulfil its contrastive function. As a consequence, it may be argued that the demonstrative has bleached of its meaning, at least in some of the examples discussed above. On the other hand, it has not been grammaticalised yet due to the fact that it does not have to be present for a phrase to be well-formed. Another argument supporting the view is that speakers are not consistent in using the demonstrative in a given context. One might even argue that, in such cases, speakers consider the demonstrative as a lexically empty word that does not make a difference.

With respect to the results of the statistical analyses, they do not accurately reflect the differences between the journalists and former footballers due to the fact that their turns differed noticeably in terms of duration. Had their turns been equal, the statistical significance might have been higher. Importantly, the patterns of use within the group of journalists and within the group of former footballers do not differ significantly in terms of statistics. As a consequence, the frequency with which the demonstrative is used by speakers cannot be exclusively associated with a person's level of education.

Finally, the findings raise a number of questions that should probably be addressed in follow-up studies. For instance, a quantitative study involving different age groups would definitely throw more light on the phenomenon in that it might determine whether the age of speakers constitutes a significant factor with respect to the frequency of use of the patterns discussed above. If the young generation were found to use the demonstrative with a considerably higher frequency, it would point to the conclusion that the demonstrative is on the

way of becoming an article. Some differences might also be revealed if spoken and written texts of a similar genre were compared. If the demonstrative were used much more frequently in the former than in the latter, it would also be indicative of a change in progress. It would also be interesting to establish whether Polish speakers of English use the demonstrative more often than monolingual Polish speakers. If that is the case, it would indicate that contact with English has given rise to the phenomenon. Finally, one might prepare a questionnaire containing numerous examples of phrases with and without the demonstrative and ask respondents from different social backgrounds whether the demonstratives in them are necessary.

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