Control shift diachronically

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Control shift has been defined as a syntactic phenomenon whereby the controller of a clause-embedding predicate shifts from subject to object control or vice versa (cf. Růžička 1983, Comrie 1985, Sag & Pollard 1991, among many others). Usually, it is triggered by the presence of a passive structure or a modal verb in the embedded clause, as illustrated in the example given in [1] from Modern German:

[1] [Maria]$_i$ *verspricht*   [*Paul*]$_k$,   [$_{INF}$ PRO$_k$ *zur*   *Party   gehen   zu   dürfen*].
       Maria   promise.3SG   Paul.DAT   to:the   party   go.INF   to   may.INF
       'Mary promises Paul to be allowed to go to the party.' (Polinsky 2013: 583)

In [1], the matrix verb *versprechen* 'promise' is analyzed as a subject control verb. However, the presence of the modal verb *dürfen* 'may' triggers a control shift to object control, i.e. the matrix object is the person who is allowed to go to the party, and not the matrix subject.

Although new accounts have been proposed on how to analyze control shift (cf. Uegaki 2011), diachronic studies on this topic are still missing (but see Joseph 1992). Joseph (1992: 204) wonders whether the change in the syntax of control is a primary change that triggered a change in lexical semantics or whether it is a secondary change brought on by the change in the meaning of a clause-embedding predicate. The main aim of this talk is to fil this research gap, to examine control shift from a diachronic perspective, and, finally, to show that both scenarios put forth by Joseph (1992) can be observed in the history of Germanic and Slavic languages. Adopting the definition of inherent control proposed by Stiebels (2007), I focus both on subject and object control verbs that changed their control orientation in the course of time and account for where this control shift came from.

References

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