

On (the diachrony of) *jakoby*-clauses in Polish

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In this talk, I will examine the development and use of dependent clauses in Polish introduced by the complementizer *jakoby* (lit. ‘as if’) and show which factors in the lexical meaning of *jakoby* were responsible for the semantic change that it underwent.

In the Old Polish example given in (1), the dependent clause is introduced by the hypothetical comparative complementizer *jakoby* (‘as if’) and it is embedded under the matrix predicate *widzieć* (‘seem’), expressing indirect inferential evidence:

- (1) *ludziem na ziemi tako było widziało*
people.DAT on earth.LOC so be.l-PTCP.3SG.N seem.l-PTCP.3SG.N
jakoby się ono na nie obalić było chciało
jakoby REFL it on them slay.INF be.l-PTCP.3SG.N be.l-PTCP.3SG.N
‘the people on earth interpreted it as if it wanted to slay all of them’
(KG, *Kazanie I: Na Boże Narodzenie* 26-7)

In Old Polish, *jakoby*-clauses can be embedded only under verbs of seeming. In other words, the structure *seem as if p* is used instead of *seem that p* if what the available evidence suggests is somehow in conflict with what the speaker believes or used to believe. In Present-day Polish, in turn, as illustrated in (2), the *jakoby*-clause is embedded under the speech verb *zaprzeczać* (‘deny’):

- (2) *Firma zaprzeczala, jakoby były*
company deny.l-PTCP.3SG.N jakoby be.l-PTCP.PL.N-VIR
zgłoszenia o wadliwych kartach.
reports about faulty cards.LOC
‘The company denied that there supposedly were any reports about faulty prepaid cards.’
(NKJP, *Dziennik Zachodni*, 27/9/2006)

The complementizer *jakoby* is not interpreted as a hypothetical comparative conjunction *as if* any longer, but as a hearsay complementizer (\approx *that + allegedly*). Interestingly, neither Czech nor Slovak have experienced this change.

Based on Faller (2011) and Murray (2017), I will present account showing that the change of *jakoby* involved two main developments: First, the meaning of *jakoby* was broadened to allow for inferences from reportative information (compatible with, but not enforced by its *seem*-type embedding verbs). Second, the reportative flavor acquired by *jakoby* licensed its use in complements of speech verbs. Since these new contexts were no longer compatible with the original inferential meaning, they ultimately lead to the inability to use *jakoby* in its original contexts, cf. (3):

- (3) **Firmie wydaje się, jakoby ...*
company.DAT seem.3SG REFL jakoby
Intended meaning: ‘It seems to the company as if ...’

References

- Faller, Martina (2011): A possible worlds semantics for Cuzco Quechua evidentials, in: *Proceedings of SALT 20* ed. by Nan Li and David Lutz, eLanguage, 660-683.
Murray, Sarah E. (2017): *The Semantics of Evidentials*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.