

On the (diachronic) status of inceptive phase predicates in Polish

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In this talk, I will examine the status and the development of inceptive phase predicates in (the history of) Polish with the main focus on the stem *cząć* and its combination with the prefixes *po-*, *roz-* and *za-* (all: 'begin!'). The main objective is to show that the use of the particular prefix correlates with what kind of complements can be c-selected (infinitives versus DPs) and what the syntactic status of the embedding verb is ([s]ubject [c]ontrol [v]erb versus [s]ubject to [s]ubject [r]aising [v]erb).

Based on the empirical data extracted from: (i) Old Polish texts collected by the Polish Academy of Science, (ii) Polish Diachronic Online Corpus (PolDi), and (iii) National Corpus of Polish, I propose the following diachronic inceptive cycle (in the sense claimed by van Gelderen 2011):

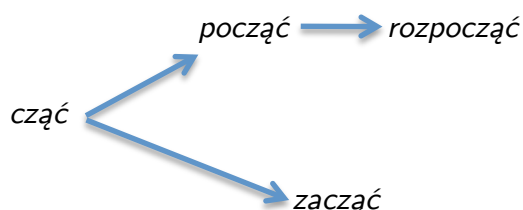


Figure 1: The inceptive cycle in the history of Polish

I will illustrate that, for example, the use of *rozpocząć* as a SCV instantiates a younger development in the history of Polish and, what appears to be more relevant diachronically, this use developed out of a raising structure. In other words, I provide solid empirical evidence underpinning the view that inceptive phase predicates can be employed both as SCVs and as SSRVs, the dichotomy discovered in the pioneering work by Perlmutter (1970). But contrary to the widespread diachronic assumption that SSRVs emerge out of SCVs (cf. Traugott 1997, 2010), I propose a reverse development path, mainly arguing that *rozpocząć* as a SCV developed out of a SSRV usage.

Selected references

Gelderen, Elly van (2011): *The Linguistic Cycle: Language Change and the Language Faculty*. Oxford: OUP.

Perlmutter, David (1970): The two verbs *begin*, in: *Readings in English Transformational Grammar* ed. by Roderick A. Jacobs & Peter S. Rosenbaum, 107-119. Waltham, MA: Ginn and Company.

Traugott, Elisabeth Closs (1997): Subjectification and the development of epistemic meaning: The case of *promise* and *threaten*, in: *Modality in Germanic Languages. Historical and Comparative Perspectives* ed. by Toril Swan & Olaf Jansen Westvik, 185-210. Berlin: de Gruyter.