



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

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# What is this talk about?



In Polish the stem *-cząć* (perfective)/*-czynać* (imperfective) can merge with the prefixes *za-*, *po-* and *roz+po-* giving rise to inceptive phase predicates:

[1] *Zaczynamy* [INF *tracić* *motywację*]  
begin.1PL.IMPF      lose.INF    motivation.GEN

‘We start losing our motivation’  
(NKJP, *Dziennik Zachodni*, 15/12/2010)

[2] *Ludzie* *poczynali* [INF *denerwować* *się*]  
people    begin.*l*-PTCP.PL.VIR      be.anxious.INF    REFL

‘People started being anxious’  
(NKJP, Jerzy Andrzejewski, 2001, *Noc i inne opowiadania*)

# What is this talk about?



The prefix *roz-* can only attach to the complex predicate *po-czynać*:

- [3] **Roz**pocz**ynamy** [<sub>INF</sub> *publikować oświadczenia majątkowe*]  
begin.1PL                      publish.INF statements.of.means  
'We begin to provide our statements of means'  
(NKJP, *Gazeta Krakowska*, 27/5/2003)

The prefix *roz-* can neither merge with the stem nor with the complex predicate *za-czynać*:

- [4] \***Roz****czynamy** [<sub>INF</sub> *publikować oświadczenia majątkowe*]  
[5] \***Roz**zac**ynamy** [<sub>INF</sub> *publikować oświadczenia majątkowe*]

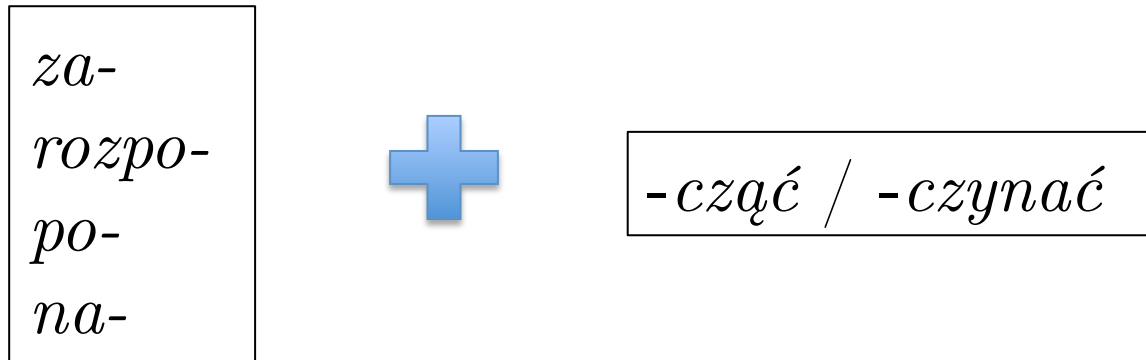
# What is this talk about?



In addition, in older stages of Polish the verbal stem could also merge with the prefix *na-*:

- [6] *naczęły* [INF *Boga* *prosić*] ...  
begin.*l*-PTCP.PL.N-VIR God.ACC ask.INF  
'[They] began to ask God ...'  
(KTS, *Blaz*, 1d: 18-19)

# Overview & leading questions



## Leading questions

- What are the differences among the inceptive phase predicates?
- What kind of complements do they embed?
- Are the Polish inceptives control or raising predicates?
- How did they develop?
- Did the Polish inceptives undergo a grammaticalization process?

# Roadmap



1. Introduction
2. Inceptive phase predicates
  - 2.1 Complements
  - 2.2. Infinitives
  - 2.3. Control vs. raising
3. Diachronic observations
4. Reanalysis: cyclical renewal
5. Concluding remarks

Primary sources

Secondary references

# Embedded complements: DPs



In Modern Polish *zaczynać* and *rozpocząć* embed DPs marked for the Accusative case:

[7] *Latem* ***zaczyna*** [<sub>DP</sub> *pracę*] *już* *o 5 rano*  
summer.INS begin.3SG work.ACC already at 5 morning

‘In the summer, [he] begins to work at 5 a.m.’  
(NKJP, *Dziennik Łódzki*, 26/8/2006)

[8] *Virginia Woolf* ***rozpoczyna*** [<sub>DP</sub> *pracę*] *nad nową książką*  
V. W. begin.3SG work.ACC on new book

‘Virginia Woolf starts working on a new book’  
(NKJP, *Dziennik Polski*, 3/4/2006)

# Embedded complements: DPs



In older stages of Polish *poczynąć* could also embed DPs:

- [9] *Wojewoda* ***poczynął*** [<sub>DP</sub> *list*] *w te słowa*  
voivode begin.∫-PTCP.M.3SG letter.ACC in these words  
‘The voivode started his litter with these words’  
(NKJP, Henryk Sienkiewicz [1884]: *Ogniem i Mieczem*)

I was not able to find any corpus examples, neither in Modern Polish nor in its older stages, in which *naczynąć* would select for a DP complement.



# Embedded complements: an overview



	<i>zacząć</i>	<i>rozpocząć</i>	<i>począć</i>	<i>nacząć</i>
Infinitives	+	+	+	+
DPs	+	+	+	-

Table 1: Inceptives and their complements in Polish

## Structural question:

Are embedded infinitives

- CPs,
- TPs or
- VPs?

# Embedded complements: infinitives



If Polish inceptives could license non-finite CPs, they are expected to allow a negation in the embedded clause, even if matrix predicates themselves occur under the scope of another negation operator. However, this is not the case:

[10] #*Nie **zaczynamy** [*<sub>INF</sub> *nie tracić motywacji]*  
NEG begin.1PL                      NEG lose.INF motivation.GEN

[11] #*Nie **rozpoczynamy** [*<sub>INF</sub> *nie publikować*  
NEG begin.1PL                      NEG publish.INF  
*oświadczeń majątkowych]*  
statements of means

# Embedded complements: infinitives



Infinitive complements cannot be TPs either, as they do not allow two independent temporal modifications (see also Bondaruk 2004: 165):

[12] # *Wczoraj zaczęliśmy* [INF *tracić dzisiaj motywację*]  
yesterday begin.*l*-PTCP.1PL lose.INF today motivation.ACC

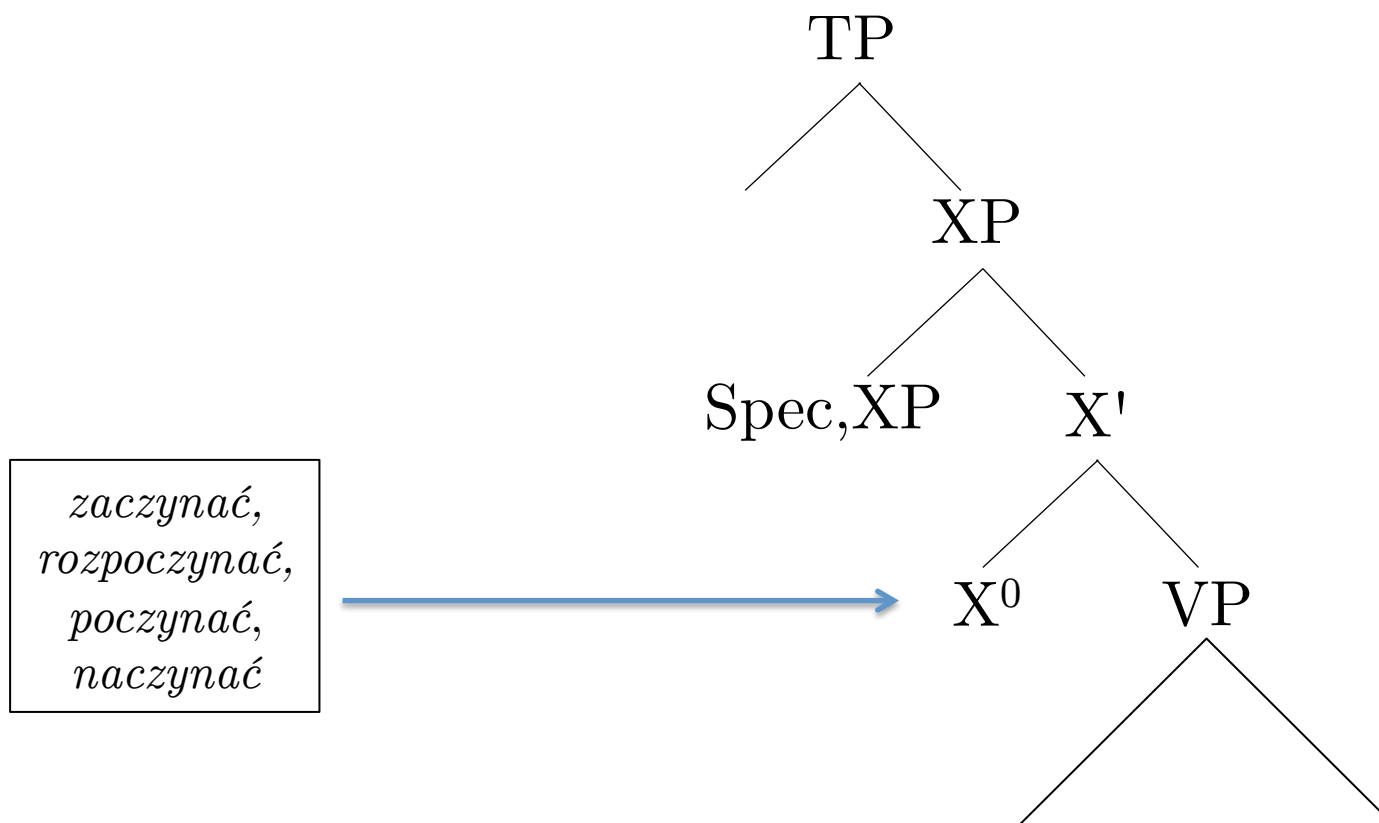
[13] # *Wczoraj rozpoczęliśmy* [INF *publikować*]  
yesterday begin.*l*-PTCP.1PL publish.INF

*dzisiaj oświadczenia majątkowe*

today statements of means

# Embedded complements: infinitives

Interim conclusion: *zaczynać*, *rozpoczynać*, *poczynać* and *naczynać* embed VP-infinitives.



# Infinitives: control versus raising



Are Polish inceptives subject control predicates or subject-to-subject raising verbs?

According to Bondaruk (2004: 144), aspectual verbs are subject-to-subject raising verbs, as they preserve the idiomatic meaning of idiom chunks and can co-occur with *weather* predicates:

- [14] *Szydło zaczęło wychodzić z worka*  
needle begin.*l*-PTCP.3SG.N come.INF from sack.GEN  
'The truth has begun to be revealed' (Bondaruk 2004: 144, ex 33a)
- [15] *Jutro zacznie padać*  
tomorrow begin.3SG rain.INF  
'Tomorrow it will start raining'  
(Bondaruk 2004: 145, ex 33b)

# Infinitives: control versus raising



Note, however, that not all inceptives allow the embedding of idiom chunks and/or *weather* predicates. *Rozpoczynać* breaks ranks:

[16] #*Szydło rozpoczęło wychodzić z worka*  
needle begin.-PTCP.3SG.N come.INF from sack.GEN

[17] #*Jutro rozpocznie padać*  
tomorrow begin.3SG rain.INF

*Rozpoczynać* seems to be compatible only with agentive predicates:

[3] *Rozpoczynamy [INF publikować oświadczenia majątkowe]*  
begin.1PL publish.INF statements.of.means

‘We begin to provide our statements of means’  
(NKJP, *Gazeta Krakowska*, 27/5/2003)

# Infinitives: control versus raising



*Poczynąć* is a subject-to-subject raising verb. It embeds *weather* predicates, too. Both imperfective and perfective forms are to be attested:

[18] *Deszcz* ***poczynął*** *padać*  
rain begin.↓-PTCP.3SG.M.IMPF fall.INF

‘It started raining’

(NKJP, W.S. Reymont, 1897, *Ziemia Obiecana*)

[19] *Deszcz* ***począł*** *padać*  
rain begin.↓-PTCP.3SG.M.PRF fall.INF

‘It started raining’

(NKJP, an internet forum, 10/6/2006)

# Infinitives: control versus raising



As far as *naczynać* is concerned, it seems to be the oldest inceptive phase predicate in the history of Polish. No examples could be attested in NKJP.

In KTS three examples are to be attested. In all of them *nacząć* merges with a [+human] subject and embeds an agentive infinitive (*mułwici* ‘say’, *prosici* ‘ask’, *lękać* ‘fear’):

[20] *naczęła* [INF *się* *lękać*]  
begin./-PTCP.3SG.F REFL fear.INF  
‘[She] began to fear’  
(KTS, *Rozm*, 20:3)

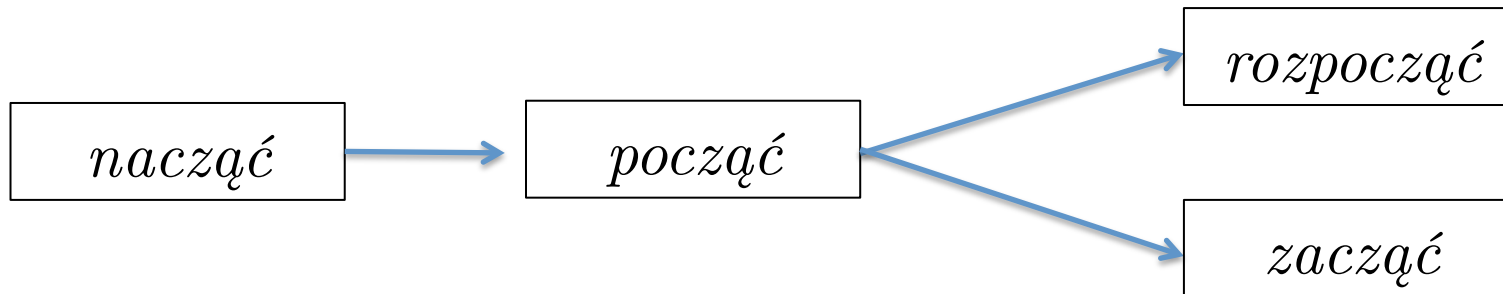


# Infinitives: control versus raising

	<i>zacząć</i>	<i>rozpocząć</i>	<i>począć</i>	<i>nacząć</i>
Control	-	+	-	+
Raising	+	-	+	?+

Table 2: Inceptives and their syntactic status in Polish

Diachronically, I propose the following scenario:



# How do subject raising verbs emerge?



Traugott (1997: 191):

“all raising verbs undergo incipient grammaticalization”

Traugott (2011: 36):

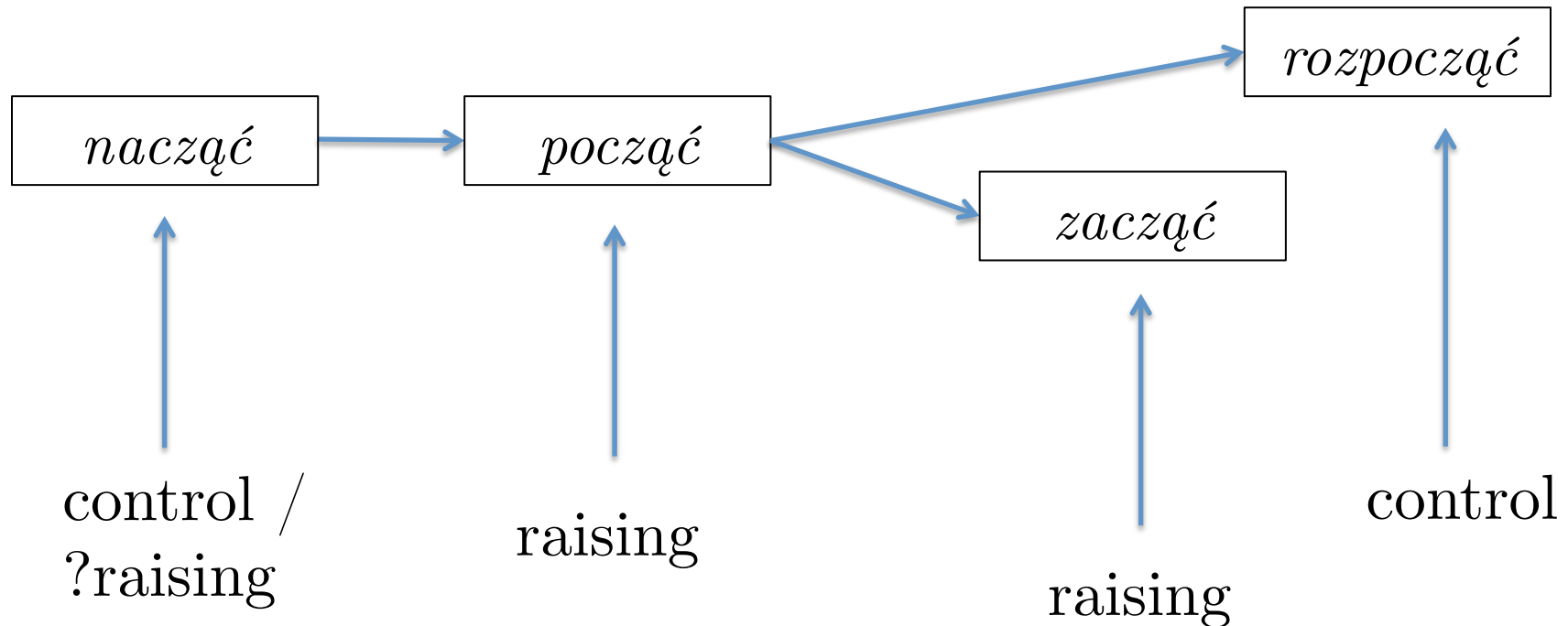
“raising constructions arise from non-raising ones”

De Haan (2007: 135):

“In fact, what is commonly known as Raising may encompass different grammaticalization phenomena. Subjectification is one, exemplified by such verbs as *promise* and (...) *seem*. What to do with verbs such as *begin*, *persist* and *finish* is less clear, however. They do not obviously involve subjectification (...).”

# Main diachronic claim

Control verbs emerge out of raising verbs



# Concluding remarks



The main objective of this talk has been to examine Polish inceptive embedding infinitive complements. Four predicates are to be attested: *zaczynać*, *rozpoczynać*, *poczynać* and *naczynać*.

Perlmutter 1970: 114:

*It has been the purpose of this paper to show that ‘begin’ occurs in two distinct kinds of deep structures. The question will be left open here as to whether we are dealing with two distinct verbs, a single verb with two distinct sets of contextual features, or a single verb whose occurrence in these two kinds of deep structures is predictable in some way.*

# Concluding remarks



As for Polish:

- only *rozpoczynać* can be analyzed as a subject control verb,
- empirically, there is no evidence showing that *naczynać* can be treated as a subject raising verbs,
- both *zaczynać* and *poczynać* are subject raising verbs having no control counterparts.

Polish inceptives are either subject control verbs or subject raising verbs (but not both).

It begins to be the end ...

Thank you for your attention!

# Abbreviations

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1/2/3	-	1st/2nd/3rd person
ACC	-	accusative
GEN	-	genitive
IMPF	-	imperfective
INF	-	infinitive
INS	-	instrumental
<i>l</i> -PTCP	-	<i>l</i> -participle (inflected for number and gender)
NEG	-	negation
N-VIR	-	non-virile
PL	-	plural
PRF	-	perfective
REFL	-	reflexive pronoun
SG	-	singular
VIR	-	virile

# Primary sources

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- KTS - *Korpus tekstów staropolskich do roku 1500*  
(‘Old Polish texts until 1500’)  
<https://www.ijp-pan.krakow.pl/en/publikacje-elektroniczne/korpus-tekstow-staropolskich>
- NKJP - *Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego*  
(‘National Corpus of Polish’)  
<http://nkjp.pl/>



# Secondary references

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