Middle Polish adverb-like predicates ending in *-a* compared to other adverbial and adjectival predicates – corpus-based approach

In Polish, the characteristic form of the predicate in sentences with an infinitival or clausal subject is the form of an adverb or an adjective in a neuter gender (e.g. *Niebezpiecznie było tam iść.* 'It was dangerous [ADV] to go there'; *To dziwne, że wrócił.* 'It's strange [ADJ.N] that he came back'). In the Middle Polish language (16th-18th centuries) this image was more complicated. Firstly, there was a large set of adverbial derivatives with two variants: ending in *-o* and in *-e* (e.g. *niebezpieczno – niebezpiecznie* 'dangerously', *dziwno – dziwnie* 'strangely'). Originally, in the predicative function there were adverbs ending in *-o*, but adverbs ending in *-e* were also used by analogy.

Secondly, in constructions of this type, the feminine form of the adjective was also used as a predicate (e.g. *niebezpieczna* 'dangerous', *dziwna* 'strange'). This resulted from the simplification of the nominal group containing a feminine noun *rzecz* 'thing' and an adjective in the feminine form demanded by a noun. After eliminating the semantically empty noun, the adjectival forms took over the function of the predicate (*Niebezpieczna rzecz tam iść.* 'It's a dangerous thing to go there.' → *Niebezpieczna tam iść.* 'It's dangerous [ADJ.F] to go there.'). They also began to undergo a process of adverbialization, which, however, did not fully occur (hereinafter I refer to them as "adverb-like predicates ending in *-a*").

The study whose results will be presented aims to show the functioning of adverb-like predicates ending in *-a* among other adverbial and adjectival predicates. The data for the analysis come from the Electronic Corpus of 17th- and 18th-century Polish Texts, a 25M corpus annotated morphosyntactically, collecting texts of various themes, genres and styles (https://korba.edu.pl). For the purposes of the study, a dozen or so predicates ending in *-a* with a high frequency in the corpus, belonging to various semantic groups and having different syntactic requirements (connecting with an infinitival or clausal subject) were selected. Each of these predicates has been juxtaposed with synonymous adverbial predicates in *-o* and in *-e*, and with a predicate in the form of a neuter adjective (e.g. *dziwna* [ADJ.F] – *dziwno* [ADV] – *dziwnie* [ADV] – *dziwne* [ADJ.N]).

The study is both quantitative (shows the frequency of using predicates ending in *-a* in texts in comparison to other types of predicates) and qualitative (captures the differences in meaning between particular types of constructions). Although constructions containing particular types of predicates seem to be fully synonymous, it can be assumed that there were some factors determining the choice of one of them, e.g. the style of the text in which the given construction was used.

The large time range of the corpus makes it possible to trace the changes that the relations between the particular types of the discussed construction have undergone over the course of two centuries. The data obtained from the corpus also allow us to speculate on the reasons for the displacement of constructions with adverb-like forms ending in *-a* by other types of predicates.

Keywords: historical syntax, corpus research, adjectives, adverbs

References

Bronikowska R., 2021. Unfinished "verbization" process – the development of predicative constructions with an adjective of the feminine gender in the 17th and 18th centuries in the light of corpus data, "Polonica", 41(1), pp. 97-110. https://doi.org/10.17651/POLON.41.7

Cyran W., 1967. Przysłówki polskie. Budowa słowotwórcza [Polish adverbs. Word formation structure], Łódź: Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe.

Gruszczyński W., Adamiec D., Bronikowska R., Kieraś W., Modrzejewski E., Wieczorek A., Woliński M., 2022.The Electronic Corpus of 17th- and 18th-century Polish Texts, "Language Resources and Evaluation", 56, pp. 309–332. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10579-021-09549-1

Kałkowska A., 1973. Składniowe właściwości przymiotników kwalifikujących [Syntactic properties of qualifying adjectives], "Język Polski", 2, pp. 95-104.

Przepiórkowski A., Patejuk, A., 2020. Predicative Adverbs and Adjectives with Infinitival Subjects: A Corpus Investigation, "Studies in Polish Linguistics", 15(3), pp. 129-150. https://doi.org/10.4467/23005920SPL.20.006.12978

Przepiórkowski A., Patejuk A., 2021. Predicative Adverbs: Evidence from Polish, "Linguistic Inquiry", 52(4), pp. 835–851. https://doi.org/10.1162/ling_a_00394

Przepiórkowski A., Patejuk, A., 2018. Predicative Constructions with Infinitival and Clausal Subjects in Polish. In: Miriam Butt and Tracy Holloway King (eds.), The Proceedings of the LFG'18 Conference, Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, pp. 304–324. https://web.stanford.edu/group/cslipublications/cslipublications/LFG/LFG-2018/lfg2018-patejuk-przepiorkowski.pdf

Sobotka P., 2018. Powstawanie słowiańskich przysłówków w świetle danych etymologicznych i historycznoskładniowych (interpretacja funkcjonalna) [Formation of Slavic adverbs in the light of etymological and historical syntactic data (functional interpretation)], "Z Polskich Studiów Slawistycznych", 13(2), pp. 315-324.

Sobotka P., 2019. Zmiany zależności składniowych północnosłowiańskich przymiotników odmiany prostej [The dependency changes of the North-Slavic simple declension adjectives], "Prace Filologiczne" LXXII, pp. 333–344.

Szober S., 1931. Skąd powstała przysłówkowa forma orzecznika w zdaniach z bezokolicznikiem w podmiocie? [Where did the adverbial form of the predicate come from in sentences with the infinitive in the subject?], "Język Polski" XVI(3), pp. 85-87.

Śmiech W., 1957. O polskich przysłówkach odprzymiotnikowych na -o, -e [About Polish adjective adverbs in -o, -e], "Rozprawy Komisji Językowej Łódzkiego Towarzystwa Naukowego" V, pp. 61-76.