The non-directionality of language change: a case of pronouns and auxiliaries in Polish

This talk analyzes diachronic changes that affected two classes of functional elements in Polish: auxiliary verbs and pronominal clitics. It argues that that their diachronic developments are instances of opposite directions of language change in terms of prosodic and morphosyntactic strength. In this way, these developments challenge the idea of a fixed direction in language change, postulated in the 19th-century linguistic tradition, and also assumed in some current views on grammaticalization (e.g. Haspelmath 1999).

As shown in (1), in Modern Polish the auxiliaries may be clitics following clause-initial elements or affixes on the *l*-participle. The latter variant is a diachronic innovation (see 2). The two distributional variants have been studied extensively in the literature (Rittel 1975; Mikoś & Moravcsik 1986; Borsley & Rivero 1994; Rappaport 1988; Franks & Bański 1999). The **weakening** of the auxiliary has been attributed to a change in lexical stress in Polish, which became regular and established on the first syllable of a word in the 14th-15th c. but shifted to the penultimate syllable in the 18th c (Długosz-Kurczabowa & Dubisz 2001: 307-308). More commonly though, the change is argued to be a result of an increased usage of complex tense forms after the decline of aorist and imperfect in Old Polish (Kowalska 1976: 42), which led to the auxiliary weakening. In syntactic terms, the weakening resulted in the reanalysis of XP-movement of the *l*-participle as X^0 movement (Migdalski 2006).

Another diachronic change, which has received less attention in the literature, is the **strengthening** of pronominal forms, which used to be clitics and have been reanalyzed as weak pronouns in Modern Polish. Thus, in comparison to true pronominal clitics in South Slavic, weak pronouns in Modern Polish show a remarkable freedom of distribution across the clause (3a), permit both dat-acc and acc-dat orders (3b), and can be split from each other (see 3c; Rappaport 1988, Witkoś 1998, Cetnarowska 2003). Moreover, native speakers increasingly allow their clause-initial placement, especially for the combinations of the dative and the reflexive forms. Jung and Migdalski (2015) point out that corresponding pronominal strengthening is attested in Slovenian, in non-verbal predicates in Macedonian, and that diachronically it occurred in Russian. They also relate it to a shift from verb-adjacent to second position clitics in the history of Serbian and Slovenian, arguing that the process was contemporaneous with the weakening of tense morphology in the respective languages. If correct, these processes indicate that a single factor (the loss of tense morphology) may lead to both weakening and strengthening of different functional elements within a language.

(1) a. My-*śmy* znowu wczoraj poszli do parku
         we+$_{AUX.1PL}$ again yesterday go$_{PART.VIR.PL}$ to park
         "We went to the park yesterday again"
     b. My znowu wczoraj poszli-*śmy* do parku   (Pl, see Franks & Bański 1999)

(2)   A teraz-*eś* mi tę robotę náznaczył
         and now+$_{AUX.2SG}$ me$_{DAT}$ this work assign$_{PART.M.SG}$
         "And now you have assigned this work to me"   (Pl, 1645, Kowalska 1976: 43)

(3) a. Piotr (*go*) dziś (*go*) widział (*go*) w kinie
         Piotr him$_{ACC}$ today him$_{ACC}$ see$_{PART.M.SG}$ him$_{ACC}$ in cinema
         "Piotr saw him today in the cinema"
     b. Tak, w końcu *jej go*/ *go jej* pożyczyła
         yes, in end her$_{DAT}$ it$_{ACC}$ it$_{ACC}$ her$_{DAT}$ lend$_{PART.F.SG}$
         "Yes, she indeed eventually lent it to her"
     c. Jan *mu* wczoraj chciał *go* wynająć a nie sprzedać
         Jan him$_{DAT}$ yesterday want$_{PART.M.SG}$ it$_{ACC}$ rent$_{INF}$ but not sell$_{INF}$
         "Jan wanted to rent it to him rather than sell it yesterday."

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