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## Attention in Polish constructions coding motion by means of prefix *po-*

### Uwaga w polskich konstrukcjach kodujących ruch za pomocą prefiksu *po-*

The paper discusses two patterns of distribution of attention in Polish verb constructions which code movement by means of the verb *iść* ‘to go’, ‘to walk’ prefixed by *po-*. In Motion events coded by means of verbs prefixed by *po-* the conceptualizer’s attention may be focused on various parts of the complex SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. In the paper I argue that constructions with verbs of movement prefixed by *po-* fall into two categories which to a large extent resemble the distribution of attention in two perspectival modes described by Talmy (2000a: 68–76).

**Słowa kluczowe:** wydarzenie ruchu, perspektywa synoptyczna i sekwencyjna, przedrostek *po-*, polski

**Key words:** Motion event, synoptic and sequential perspectives, attentional focus, prefix *po-*, Polish

## 1. Introduction

The paper presents two patterns of distribution of attention in Polish verb constructions which code movement by means of the manner-of-motion verb *iść* ‘to go on foot’, ‘to walk’ prefixed by *po-*. Depending on the context, descriptions of motion events by means of motion verbs prefixed by *po-* fall into two distinct categories. One of them codes movement of the figure which leaves the region of interactive focus (Lindner 1983) and the other the figure’s movement within this region. The aim of the present article is twofold: i. to present the two kinds of descriptions of spatial situations by means of the prefix *po-*, ii. to show that the two kinds of descriptions entail different types of the conceptualizer’s attention, which correspond to synoptic and sequential perspectives.

Having introduced the spatial senses of the prefix *po-*, I will present the theory of synoptic and sequential perspectives according to Talmy (2000a). In the last section I will point to correspondences between the two perspectival modes and two basic senses of the prefix *po-*.

## 2. The prefix *po-*

According to Śmiech (1986:18), the prefix *po-* in its spatial sense denotes translational motion away from an established point. In Polish, verbs of movement prefixed by *po-* are mainly intransitive, the most frequent of which include, for example: *pójść* ‘to start walking’, *pobiec* ‘to start running’, *pojechać* ‘to start going by a vehicle’, *polecieć* ‘to start flying’, or *popłynąć* ‘to start swimming’. The verb *iść* ‘to go on foot’, ‘to walk’ denotes the most typical and natural way of locomotion of animate entities.

When we take into consideration translational motion, Polish motion verbs prefixed by *po-* typically profile the source of movement. The focus on the source of movement becomes apparent when we contrast the verb *iść* prefixed by *po-* (as in 1a) with the same verb prefixed by *przy-* (which typically codes movement towards the speaker) (as in 1b).

- (1) a. *Poszedł do domu około północy.*  
 ‘He went home around midnight’  
 b. *Przyszedł do domu około północy.*  
 ‘He came home around midnight’

Analogously to the English sentences analysed by Fillmore (1971: 52f), both sentences profile the same movement of the Figure to a specified Goal. However, in the sentence with the prefix *po-*, the focus is on the source of movement and consequently the time reference concerns the departure from the presupposed source, while in 1b. the focus is on the goal of movement and midnight refers to the arrival time. Thus, the Polish constructions with *po-* inherently profile the source of movement. Whenever the motion verb is prefixed by *po-*, it always presupposes the location from which the movement began. However, the conceptualizer’s attention may focus on different parts of the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. The prefix *po-*, similarly to the majority of Polish prefixes, has a perfectivizing function (Bacz 2005; Dąbrowska 1996). However, what is crucial for the present analysis are its spatial senses.

The prefix *po-* in its spatial prototypical sense codes motion away from the deictic centre (i.e., ablative motion). The prefix when used for coding spatial relations displays peculiar semantic features which distinguish this lexical item from other prefixes. *Po-* codes a range of various spatial situations,

which makes it similar to other deictic elements. As Croft and Cruse (2004: 60) notice “deictic elements often display two levels of conceptualization: one relative to the situatedness of the speech act participants, and another construal that displaces the actual situatedness of the interlocutors to another time and place”. My claim is that the Polish prefix *po-* codes at least three different kinds of the Figure’s motion away from the deictic centre, which is exemplified by Sentences in (2) coming from NCPL.

- (2) a. [...] *zostawił mnie w spokoju i poszedł w swoją stronę.* (Czwarte niebo)  
 ‘[...] he left me alone and went his own way.’
- b. [...] *wszystkiego wysłuchał i potem sobie poszedł, i nie widzieliśmy go chyba ze dwa tygodnie.* (Czarne okna)  
 ‘[...] he listened and then went away, and we did not see him for about two weeks.’
- c. *Natychmiast zerwał się z łóżka, rozprostował kości i poszedł do łazienki. Zanim umył zęby, długo spoglądał w lustro [...]* (Czwarte niebo)  
 ‘He immediately jumped out of bed, stretched his bones and went to the bathroom. Before he brushed his teeth, he looked in the mirror for a long time [...].’

Let us first discuss Sentences (2a) and (2b). Both of them code the Figure’s motion from the deictic centre. The perspective point stays immobile at the source of movement. The difference between the two situations is connected with Lindner’s region of interactive focus (1983), which means the region where the moving Figure is accessible, visible or manageable to the conceptualizer. Conversely, when it leaves the region, it is inaccessible, unavailable to the public, and imperceptible. Thus, the Figure in (2a) may still be in a short distance from the source where the viewpoint is placed. The distance is short enough to make the Figure, in one of the mentioned ways, available to the conceptualizer. In Sentence (2b), however, the Figure left the Source a long time ago and has probably already reached the Goal<sup>1</sup>.

Let us now proceed to the third situation exemplified in Sentence (2c). Motion coded in this sentence differs from the two previous ones in that the construal involves the shift of the deictic centre. The viewpoint does not stay at the source of movement but follows the moving Figure. These important differences between the three spatial situations coded by the spatial prefix *po-* entail different type of attention focused on the Figure. Talmy (2000a) assigns the type of attention to various types of perspectival modes, which will be discussed in the next section.

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of comparison, let me note that Russian makes a systematic distinction between these two construals of the Figure’s motion away from the deictic centre. In Russian, the spatial situations in which the Figure becomes inaccessible to the conceptualizer are lexicalized by means of the prefix *u-*. In the case when the Figure is available to the public, existing and visible typically the prefix *po-* is used.

### 3. Perspectival modes

In Cognitive Linguistics different ways of structuring a given situation are referred to as ‘construal’ (Langacker 1987). The meaning of constructions with verbs prefixed by *po-* will be analysed by means of construal processes identified by Talmy (2000a: 68–76), in whose terminology the processes of construing the viewed scene are called perspectival modes<sup>2</sup>. According to Talmy (2000a: 68) perspectival modes form a schematic system that “establishes a conceptual perspective point from which the entity is cognitively regarded”.

Talmy (2000a: 68–76) distinguishes two perspectival modes, which differ in perspectival location and distance, scope of attention and, most importantly as far as the present study is concerned, in perspectival motility. The two modes are called the synoptic perspectival mode and the sequential perspectival mode. Dewell (2011: 31) clearly explains the perspectival modes by saying that they determine where you stand when you look at something, which direction you are looking in, and whether you are holding still or moving. Let us analyse the perspectival modes in more detail.

First, the two modes differ in the location of the perspective point occupied within the referent scene from which the scene is viewed. The Figure’s Path with respect to some Ground object may additionally be characterized as moving away from the speaker’s viewpoint, and the prefix *po-* in this context has deictic meaning. However, as Talmy (2000a: 68) notices, the notion of a ‘deictic centre’ may cover any location within a referent scene to which an addressee is directed to project his imaginal perspective.

The notion of perspectival motility, which boils down to the question whether the perspective point is stationary or moving, is of particular importance in the present analysis. Talmy (2000a: 70) notices that the stationary perspective point aligns with the distal perspective and the moving one with the proximal. In other words, the distal perspective denotes further distance of the perspective point from the viewed entity, and the proximal perspective indicates a shorter one.

These conceptual alignments are linked to the scope of attention. Logically, a distal perspective correlates with a larger scope of attention, which leads to the apparently reduced size of entities, coarser structuring, and less detail, while a proximal perspective correlates with smaller scope of attention, which involves apparently bigger size, finer structuring, and greater detail of the viewed entity (Talmy 2000a: 70).

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<sup>2</sup>The terminology adopted here is Talmy’s (2000a, 2000b), however the notion of a “view-point” developed by Langacker (1987), involving vantage point and orientation that the conceptualizer assumes with respect to the objective scene is similar to Talmy’s perceptual modes.

Having introduced the basic conceptual phenomena constituting perspectival modes, let us recapitulate the main points concerning them. Thus, the synoptic perspectival mode consists in “the adoption of a stationary distal perspective point with global scope of attention”. On the other hand, the sequential perspectival mode consists in “the adoption of a moving proximal perspective point with local scope of attention” (Talmy 2000a: 70). Talmy exemplifies the two modes with the following sentences:

(3) *There are some houses in the valley.*

(4) *There is a house every now and then through the valley.* (2000a: 71)

Both sentences construe an objectively static situation in two different ways. In Sentence (3), which is an example of the synoptic perspectival mode, a static scene is construed from the stationary perspective. The synoptic mode is invoked by such surface elements as the plural noun or the static preposition *in*. On the other hand, in (4), which is an instance of the sequential mode, there are such grammatical forms as, for example, singular number or the motion preposition *through*. The perspective point is movable.

Talmy (2000a: 72) notices that the sequential perspectival mode has an additional application “within the temporal domain to a succession of events or to the continuation of a single event” and exemplifies it with such sentences as (5), which portray the sequentiality of events.

(5) *I shopped at the store, and then I went home.* (after Talmy 2000a: 74)

By the same token, situations where the viewpoint is static and the conceptualizer does not follow the moving Figure are treated in the present analysis as instances of synoptic perspectival mode. In such sentences there is no sequence of motion verbs which would describe the phases of the Figure’s motion. Let us analyse two pairs of Polish sentences which call for the synoptic mode.

(6) a. *I poszedł sobie. Nawet nie zapytał, czy umiem sama podnieść się na nogi...*  
(Wolna Trybuna)

‘And he went away. He had not even asked if I could stand on my feet.’

b. [...] *zostawił mnie w spokoju i poszedł w swoją stronę.* (Wolna Trybuna)<sup>3</sup>  
[...] he left me alone and went away his own way’

In Sentences (6a) and (6b) the motion of the Figures’ moving away from the sources is construed synoptically from a stationary perspective. The perspective point, which does not change its location, is situated at the source and from this point the whole scene is viewed. The conceptualizer’s

<sup>3</sup> All analysed sentences come from the National Corpus of the Polish Language (*www.nkjp.uni.lodz.pl*)

attention is focused only on the source of the path and its initial part until the moment the Figure is out of the region of interactive focus. As mentioned above, the synoptic perspectival mode is connected with a larger scope of attention. Consequently, this leads to a less detailed knowledge about the moving Figure and its future actions. In both sentences (6a) and (6b), the conceptualizer's attention stays at the source of movement and focuses on the situation there. The following narratives are devoid of any further descriptions of the Figure.

Motion events expressed by sentences (7a) and (7b) are different in this respect.

- (7) a. *Poszedł do kuchenki i jadł chleb, pił mleko. Potem odkrył w kieszeni pudełko papierosów i wyrzucił je do śmieci. (Początek)*  
 'He went to the kitchen, ate bread and drank milk. Later he found a packet of cigarettes in his pocket and threw it away'
- b. *Natychmiast zerwał się z łóżka, rozprostował kości i poszedł do łazienki. Zanim umył zęby, długo spoglądał w lustro... (Czwarte niebo)*  
 'He immediately sprang up to his feet, stretched and went to the bathroom. He brushed his teeth and gazed in the mirror for a long time..'

In the case of Sentences (7a) and (7b) the conceptualizer moves his/ her attention along a horizontal path in order to focus on the moving Figure. Thus, the conceptualizer's attention is concentrated on the consecutive locations on the Path, in particular on the source and goal. These parts of the Path are profiled and elaborated on in a greater detail than in the sentences which call for synoptic mode. Moreover, the descriptions of the Figure's further actions are provided. Thus, in (7a), we find out that in the kitchen there was a dustbin and that the man ate bread and drank milk while from Sentence (7b) we may learn that in the bathroom there was a mirror and that the man brushed his teeth etc. In other words, the conceptualizer assumes "a moving proximal perspective point with local scope of attention on elements of the schema taken in sequence" (Talmy 2000a: 269). Let us see what lexical items accompany the two perspectival modes.

#### 4. Lexical items accompanying the perspectival modes

Let us recall that Talmy (2000a) points at specific lexical elements which typically appear with the two perspectival modes. The use of specific lexical items used with sentences calling for respective perspectival modes is strictly connected with the kind of perspectival point assumed by the conceptualizer in each of these modes and in consequence, with the kind of attention focused on the moving Figure. Let us start with the synoptic mode, where

the perspectival point is stationary. The most characteristic words which signal the fact that the conceptualizer's attention does not follow the moving Figure are *sobie* 'oneself', *gdzieś* 'somewhere', *w swoją stronę* 'in one's own direction', which is illustrated in (8). Words like *sobie* 'oneself' and *gdzieś* 'somewhere' do not specify the goal of motion. While the goal of motion is usually of interest to the listener due to the general human tendency to pay attention to the goal of motion (called a goal bias), not specifying it indicates that the conceptualizer's attention no longer follows the Figure.

- (8)a. *Gdy Mormul poszedł sobie nareszcie, Szczęsny odprowadził go wzrokiem daleko za pierwsze opłotki przy drodze i wziął się zamiast Madzi do gotowania.* (Pamiętka z Celulozy)  
 'When Mormul finally went away (himself), Szczęsny saw him off with his sight far behind the fence along the road and started cooking instead of Madzia.'
- b. [...] *szybko odłączyła się ode mnie, poszła gdzieś.*  
 '[...] she quickly separated from me and went somewhere.'
- c. [...] *kiedy zobaczył, że krwawię i mam rozcięte wargi, zostawił mnie w spokoju i poszedł w swoją stronę.* (Wolna Trybuna)  
 '[...] when he saw me bleeding from the cut lips, he left me alone and went his own way'

In sentences which call for the sequential perspectival mode, on the other hand, the goal of motion tends to be clearly specified mainly by means of prepositional phrases. To illustrate, in Sentence (9) the goal of motion is clearly delineated in each clause.

- (9) *Najpierw poszedł do jednego muzeum, potem do drugiego muzeum, potem do trzeciego muzeum, potem postać chwilę przed wejściem do czwartego muzeum, ale nie wszedł do środka, bo miał już dosyć muzeów.* (Ferdynand Wspaniały)  
 'First, he went to a museum, then to a second museum, then to the third museum, then stood for a moment before entering the fourth museum, but he did not enter it because he was fed up with museums.'

## 5. Conclusions

The analysis has shown the existence of two basic patterns of the distribution of attention in verb constructions prefixed by *po-* corresponding to two senses of the prefix. Each of the patterns of the sentences differ in the perspective assumed by the conceptualizer. Different perspectives taken on a single Motion event either concentrate on one particular part of the Path, namely the source, and the events taking place there or the perspective point follows the movement of the Figure and traces events in which it engages in the source, middle of the Path or goal of motion.

The different points of the perspective as well as its stationary or moving character correspond to the scope of attention. As mentioned before, the scope

of attention is connected with coarser or more fine-grained structuring, and less or more detail concerning the moving Figure. Moreover, there are other lexical elements, such as *sobie* ‘oneself’ or *gdzieś* ‘somewhere’, which also determine to a large extent the distribution of attention along the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. The word *sobie* ‘oneself’, which in *the Dictionary of the Polish Language* (PWN) is described as a word usually accompanying motion verbs of departure, such as *odjechać*, ‘od – go by a vehicle’ or *pójść* ‘po – go, walk’. The use of this word implies the lack of interest in the direction or purpose of the movement of the moving entity. Thus, sentences coding Motion events in which this particular word is used usually call for the synoptic sequential mode.

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### Summary

In the paper I argue that constructions with verbs of movement prefixed by *po-* fall into two categories which to a large extent resemble the distribution of attention in two perspectival modes described by Talmy (2000a: 68–76). One type of the patterns of distribution of attention shows resemblance to the synoptic perspectival mode and the other to the sequential one. Perspectival modes form a schematic system that “establishes a conceptual perspective point from which the entity is cognitively regarded” (Talmy 2000a: 68). The two discussed patterns of the distribution of attention differ in perspectival location and distance, scope of attention and, most importantly, in perspectival motility.

### Streszczenie

Artykuł opisuje dwa sposoby koncentrowania uwagi na poruszającym się obiekcie w konstrukcjach zawierających czasownik ruchu iść z przedrostkiem *po-*. Owe sposoby koncentrowania uwagi odpowiadają rozmieszczeniu uwagi w perspektywach synoptycznej oraz sekwencyjnej opisanych przez Talmiego (2000a: 68–76). Perspektywy te różnią się m.in. ułożeniem punktu perspektywy, odległością tego punktu od poruszającego się obiektu, zakresem uwagi, i – co najważniejsze – ruchomością tego punktu.