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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[1]

1. Introduction

In a series of publications collecting examples of "forgotten syntactic constructions", the following quotations can be found:

1) [...] *aż ksiądz Piekarski: „Stój – rzecze – **zła** nasza, panie bracie"* '[...] and Father Piekarski: "Stop – he said – we are **not well**, my comrade."' Pas 127. (Kałkowska et al. 1972, p. 20);

2) [...] *boć niebezpieczna wojennym classicum nie tak bardzo czującego na naszą zgubę pobudzać nieprzyjaciela.* '[...] as it is **dangerous** to instigate the enemy with a war trumpet to our undoing.' BystrzPol D2 (Kałkowska et al. 1973, p. 18);

3) *Jest to pewna, że byłbyś WPan bardziej nad wielu przewiniającym o zakopanie talentu, gdybyś był pozwolił próżniactwu wzięcia góry nad sobą.* 'It is **certain** that you would be more guilty than many others to bury the talent if you had let your idleness take over [your actions].' NarK 69 (Kałkowska et al. 1974, p. 17).

These examples provide evidence of constructions which were widespread in the Middle Polish and Early New Polish syntax, where the predicative function was performed by an adjective form in the nominative singular of the feminine gender. Despite their relatively huge popularity in the 17th and 18th centuries, the majority of these expressions have not survived into the present. They have been replaced by constructions with

neuter adjectives (*to pewne, że...* ʻit is certain that...ʼ) or adverbs (*niebezpiecznie jest...* ʻit is dangerous...ʼ). Only a few adjectives in the nominative, singular, feminine form perform predicative functions also in contemporary Polish. The forms *można* ʻit is possible' and *niepodobna* ʻit is impossible' are classified in grammatical descriptions as predicatives, defective verbs entailing only analytical conjugation,[2] whereas the form *niemożna* (in contemporary Polish *nie można*) is treated as a negative form of the predicative MOŻNA. Predicatives also include the form *podobna* ʻit is possible', yet its occurrences in contemporary texts are extremely rare, and, additionally, limited to a phraseologized, bookish expression *Czy podobna?* ʻIs it possible?ʼ.[3] The process which led to a change in the grammatical status of adjective forms can be called "verbization"; this term will be adopted in this article. Eventually, the process ended: the defective verb paradigm became stable, and now the only synthetic form (identical to the nominative, singular, feminine form of the adjective) is the present tense in the predicative mode, and the forms of other tenses and modes are formed by means of an auxiliary verb BYĆ ʻto be' (the subjunctive may also be expressed by the particle BY itself).

The starting point for the research presented in this article was the assumption that other adjectives in the nominative, singular, feminine form might have acquired the predicative status as well (cf. Bronikowska, 2017, p. 37–38). The process following this trend had stopped at some point, which is why it can be called an "unfinished verbization process". The research presented below, conducted on corpus data, was aimed at tracing the verbization process of several selected adjectives in the period of the greatest popularity of such predicative constructions. The changes in the frequency of their use, as well as the changes in the ratio of constructions containing only an adjectival form (*pewna, że...* ʻit is certain that...ʼ) to constructions where the predicative function was performed by a nominal group adjective + noun *rzecz* ʻthing' (*pewna rzecz, że ...* ʻit is a certain thing that ...ʼ), have been treated as important factors in this process.

2. Data

The research data was taken from the Electronic Corpus of 17th- and 18th-century Polish Texts (up to 1772), hereinafter referred to as KorBa[4] (Gruszczyński et al., 2021),

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[2] The term *predicative* was popularized in Poland by R. Laskowski (Laskowski 1978). Contemporary researchers use it with reference to a smaller number of constructions, but its original meaning has remained unchanged (cf. Bańko 2002, pp. 101–103; Saloni 2012, pp. 117–118).

[3] A few lexicized expressions are in use as well: *dobra nasza* ʻgood for us', *co gorsza* ʻwhat is worse'*, mniejsza z tym/ mniejsza o to* ʻnever mind', *oczywista* ʻobviously'. Traces of old predicative constructions can also be seen in the expressions with the structure: the feminine form of an adjective + noun *rzecz* ʻthing', which are used as particles, cf. units listed in the Great Dictionary of Polish (WSJP; https://wsjp.pl/): *dziwna rzecz* ʻstrangely enough', *inna rzecz* ʻanother thing is...', *wielka mi rzecz* ʻ(ironically) a big deal', and a series of synonyms *jasna rzecz/ rzecz jasna, rzecz oczywista, rzecz prosta* ʻof course'.

[4] The corpus was created as a result of the project financed under the National Programme for the Development of Humanities for 2013–2018 (NPRH no. 0036/NPRH2/H11/81/2012). It is referred to as the Baroque Corpus (KorBa for short) as it contains texts written mostly during the Baroque period in Polish literature. It is available for searching at https://korba.edu.pl/.

comprising approximately 13.5 million tokens. Thanks to morphosyntactic tagging all the adjectives in nominative, singular, feminine forms and other words with adjectival inflection can be automatically found in the corpus. However, since the predicative use of adjectives has not been marked in the annotation, the process of selecting appropriate contexts was carried out manually and not automatically. The final result of this work is a collection of 6,448 quotations containing predicative uses of 176 adjective lexemes saved in an XLS file. Apart from a relevant quotation from the corpus data, each record also contains information regarding its source of origin, as well as, most importantly, the date of publication or creation of the text.

An adjective identifier, i.e. kind of lemma for the predicative uses of a given adjective, was added to each record. It is a feminine, nominative, singular form of the positive adjective written in capital letters. One identifier covers the nominative, singular, feminine forms of the adjective in all phonetic variants and all degrees, e.g. the lemma LEKKA 'it is easy' has 14 forms (*lekka*, *letka*, *lżejsza*, *lekciejsza*, *leksza*, *letsza*, *najlżejsza*, *nalżejsza*, *najlekciejsza*, *nalekciejsza*, *najleksza*, *naleksza*, *najletsza*, *naletsza* 'easy', 'easier', 'the easiest' in different variants). The common identifier covers negative adjectives which differ from one another only by the notation of the negative prefix *nie*, e.g. the lemma NIEMOŻNA comprises the forms *niemożna* and *nie można*.[5] Expressions comprising the word *form* + a specific lemma (e.g. the form PEWNA) used further in this article refer to sets of forms covered by a common identifier.

Each example was also annotated to mark the syntactic context characteristic for the constructions analyzed, including the degree of a given adjective as well as the information whether it stands alone in a given construction or is accompanied by additional elements, e.g. the noun *rzecz* 'thing', the pronouns *to* 'this' or *co* 'what', or the auxiliary form *jest* 'is' in the present tense.[6]

The entire material was divided into four periods: the 1st half of the 17th century, the 2nd half of the 17th century, the 1st half of the 18th century and the 2nd half of the 18th century (up to 1772). It corresponds to the principle adopted during text selection for KorBa, i.e. to include those texts in the corpus whose date of creation can be traced with the accuracy of a half-century. It is important in the case of both works with an uncertain date of creation and text collections written in different periods of time. The division of two centuries into only four subperiods limits the precision of the research on linguistic changes, but it allows for the analysis of larger material.[7]

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[5] In the 17th and 18th centuries there was no standard way of writing the particle *nie* 'not' with words belonging to different parts of speech. KorBa follows the notation of the source materials.

[6] The annotations were made by Martyna Sabała-Bolek, to whom I would like to express my sincere gratitude.

[7] The version of KorBa currently available includes several texts whose dating goes beyond the boundaries of half-centuries. This mistake will be corrected in the new version of the corpus. However, for the time being, all the analyses do not regard the tokens found in these texts (they account for 4% of the corpus in total). The predicative uses of adjectives found in these works have not been included either (they constitute 3% of all the collected occurrences of predicative constructions).

The corpus of Polish texts from 1830 to 1918, hereinafter referred to as Corpus 1830–1918 (Bilińska et al. 2016),[8] served as a supplementary source for the observations concerning the material taken from the Electronic Corpus of 17th- and 18th-century Polish Texts (up to 1772). The corpus is much smaller than KorBa (includes 1.3 million tokens), so it is impossible to trace back how all the adjectives with the predicative function noted in KorBa evolved, but it gives the possibility to observe further trends in the development of the most popular forms. It is noteworthy that the forms *można* 'it is possible', *niepodobna* 'it is impossible' and *podobna* 'it is possible' used in Corpus 1830–1918 in predicative forms were marked as predicatives and the word *niemożna* 'it is impossible' was marked as two tokens, *nie* and *można*. It proves that the authors of the corpus assumed that these forms acquired the full status of defective verbs already in the 19th century.

3. Change in the popularity of predicative constructions with chosen adjectives in the 17th and 18th centuries

As one could expect, individual adjectives differed from one another in relation to the frequency of their occurrence in predicative constructions. Here is the list of ten adjectives which were most often used in the predicative function in the entire period of 1601–1772 (Table 1):

Identifier	Number of occurrences
NIEPODOBNA 'it is impossible'	836
WIELKA 'it is great'	573
MOŻNA 'it is possible'	541
PEWNA 'it is certain'	432
NIEMOŻNA 'it is impossible'	313
SŁUSZNA 'it is right'	274
INSZA 'it is different'	251
DZIWNA 'it is strange'	228
PODOBNA 'it is possible'	217
GODNA 'it is worth'	186

Table 1. Adjectives in predicative uses with the highest number of occurrences in the studied material

[8] The corpus created within the project "Automatic inflectional analysis of Polish texts from 1830 to 1918 comprising the changes in inflection and spelling" (http://www.f19.uw.edu.pl/) was originally made available for searching both offline and online by means of the Poliqarp search engine (https://szukajwslownikach. uw.edu.pl/f19/; Derwojedowa, 2020, p. 59). Then, after having been indexed by means of the MTAS search engine (Brouwer et al., 2017), the corpus was uploaded at http://korpus19.nlp.ipipan.waw.pl/. The data used in the research presented comes from this version of the corpus.

On the basis of the collected material, it is also possible to trace back the changes in the frequency of use of adjectives in predicative constructions in the 17th and 18th centuries. The research on such changes was conducted on the example of six most frequently used adjectives in this function (with the identifiers NIEPODOBNA, WIELKA, MOŻNA, PEWNA, NIEMOŻNA and SŁUSZNA) because of their sufficiently large number of occurrences in all four half-centuries. Fig. 1 shows the normalized number of occurrences of these adjectives in the predicative function in the four above-mentioned subperiods.[9]
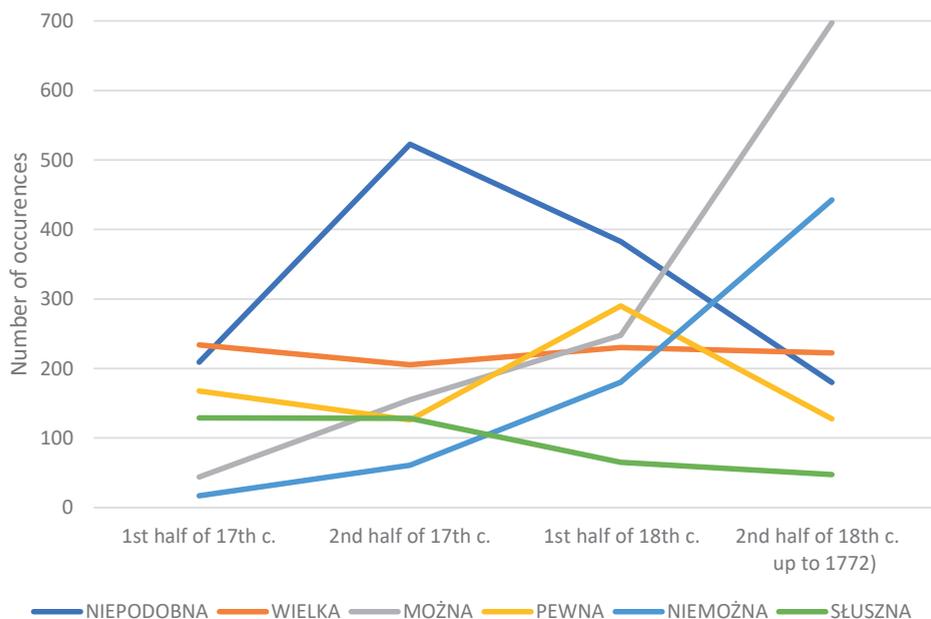

Fig. 1. Frequency of using predicative constructions with chosen adjectives in the 17th and 18th centuries

Figure 1 emphasizes most clearly the differences between the adjectives whose predicative forms acquired the status of predicatives in contemporary Polish and other adjectives. This especially applies to the forms MOŻNA 'it is possible' and NIEMOŻNA

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[9] Due to differences found in the texts coming from each half-century regarding the number of tokens, the results were normalized by multiplying their actual number in each half-century by an appropriate coefficient. The values of these coefficients were determined as follows: "1" was adopted as the value of the coefficient for the subperiod with the highest number of tokens (1st half of the 17th century), whereas the other values of coefficients were obtained by dividing the number of tokens from the 1st half of the 17th century by the number of tokens from each subsequent subperiod. The values are as follows: 1.3 for the 2nd half of the 17th century and 2.5 for both the 1st and the 2nd halves of the 18th century. Hence, e.g. if the actual number of occurrences of the given form is 10, so the normalized number of occurrences of this form for the subsequent half-centuries is 10, 13, 25 and 25 respectively.

'it is impossible', characterized by a quantitative increase of occurrences throughout the entire period taken under study and by a surge in the occurrences in the 2nd half of the 18th century. It is noteworthy that, at the same time, the number of occurrences of forms with a predicative function increased in comparison to the non-predicative uses of the adjectives MOŻNY and NIEMOŻNY. It is connected with the fact that their original meanings 'possible' and 'impossible' were falling into disuse. In the case of the adjective NIEMOŻNY, the increasing dominance of predicative uses might make users interpret the form NIEMOŻNA as the negative form of the predicative MOŻNA. The predicative uses of the form NIEPODOBNA 'it is impossible', whose popularity in the 17th century was much larger than that of the predicative uses of all the other adjectives, gradually decreased in the 18th century, but it still preserved its fairly high position. The decline in popularity of the predicative form NIEPODOBNA was probably related to the increase in the use of the synonymous form NIEMOŻNA.

The fluctuations in the frequency of predicative uses of other adjectives studied are much lower in the 17th and 18th centuries. The most considerable differences in this respect regard the form PEWNA 'it is certain'. Its popularity decreased slightly in the 17th century, only to increase significantly in the first half of the 18th century. However, in the second half of the 18th century, the number of occurrences of this form decreased to the level from the second half of the 17th century. The course of the curve illustrating the changes in frequency of using the form PEWNA may indicate its greater tendency towards verbization compared to other adjectives, which was most clearly visible in the first half of the 18th century.

Compared to other adjectives, the degree of spread of the form WIELKA 'it is great' remained almost unchanged throughout two centuries. Oscillating around 200 in each of the half-centuries studied, the normalized number of occurrences indicates a considerable popularity of predicative constructions with this adjective. Nevertheless, it does not present an upward trend. The answer to the question of why the process of verbization did not take place in this case lies in the specificity of uses of the form WIELKA, which mostly takes the form of the expression *co większa* 'what is more'.[10] It seems that the stabilization process of predicative forms in one syntactic construction limits their other uses, which makes it more difficult for an adjective form to be fully changed into a predicative.

The number of uses of the form SŁUSZNA 'it is right' in the entire period studied constantly decreased and eventually became stable at a similar low level in both halves of the 18th century. The decrease in the use of the form SŁUSZNA seems to prove that it did not show a tendency towards acquiring the status of a predicative throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.

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[10] In the first three half-centuries of the studied period, the uses of the expression *co większa* 'what is more' amount to ca. 70% of all the uses of the form WIELKA. In the 2nd half of the 18th century the proportion increases to almost 90%.

4. Change in the form of predicative constructions with chosen adjectives in the 17th and 18th centuries: ellipse of the noun *rzecz* 'thing'

Apart from the changes regarding the number of uses of particular adjectival forms throughout the entire period studied, the transformation of the predicative construction in the old texts towards contemporary sentences with a predicative is another sign of the progressing verbization process. It is worth noting that predicative constructions with an adjective of the feminine gender were present in some variants, cf.

4) ***Słuszna*** *by Stwórcy, Stworzenie słuchało*[11] '(It is) **right** that the Creation should obey its Creator' DrużZbiór 161.

5) ***Słuszna rzecz**, abyś słowu królewskiemu dosyć uczynił* '(It is) **the right thing** that you keep the king's word' SaadiOtwSGul 108.

6) *Izali **to słuszna** nic nie przedawać/ a przecię zapłatę brać*? '(Is) **it right** to sell nothing and be paid?' KunWOb K2v.

7) ***Słuszna jest**/ aby głośno sławił się dźwięk jego wojennej sławy* '(It) **is right** that the sound of his military deeds should be praised' PastRel C4v.

8) ***Słuszna mi się zda*** *mówić, że...* '**It seems right** to me to say that...' AquaPrax 374.

The sentence in example 4 contains an adjective of the feminine gender performing a predicative function and is built analogically to contemporary sentences with a predicative; the form *słuszna* 'it is right' standing here alone performs the function of a predicative, similarly to *można* 'it is possible' in the following sentence: *Z czasem można przyzwyczaić się do wszystkiego* 'It is possible to get used to anything over time', whereas examples 5–8 show the use of such elements in predicative constructions that do not occur with contemporary predicatives. They include: the noun *rzecz* 'thing', which, along with a denoting adjective, builds a nominal group, a pronoun *to* 'it', the form of the auxiliary verb *być* 'to be' in the present tense, as well as the defective verb *zdać się* 'seem'.[12] The increase in the percentage of examples of the first type in all the occurrences collected of predicative uses coming from the entire period studied can be treated as a sign of the progressing verbization process of adjectival forms.

At this point, the changes in the frequency ratio of occurrences between the constructions containing a nominal group adjective + noun *rzecz* 'thing' and the constructions with an adjective occurring alone will be analyzed. According to the hypotheses prevalent among researchers, the constructions of the first type were primary in the Polish language. Having no semantic value, the noun *rzecz* was removed over time from these constructions and the predicative function was taken over by the adjective itself.[13]

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[11] The following examples come from KorBa and are presented here in a transcribed form.

[12] I do not resolve here the issue whether the predicative function is performed by the adjectival form or by other mentioned forms in these examples.

[13] Such a mechanism of a functional shift applies to other parts of speech as well, e.g. it is a common way of the development of single-segment particles, cf. *właśnie mówiąc* 'literally speaking' → *właśnie* 'exactly', *mówię w prawdzie* 'I say verily' → *wprawdzie* 'admittedly' (quoted after: Kleszczowa, 2015, p. 32).

Subsequently, the constructions with adjectives of the feminine gender were replaced by the constructions with adjectives of the neuter gender or with adverbs (Kałkowska, 1973, p. 103). The hypothesis assumes that the above-mentioned changes took place one after another, i.e. first the construction of the type adjective + *rzecz* completely disappeared, and only then the feminine adjective was replaced by a neuter adjective or an adverb.

The material collected does not comprise predicative constructions with a neuter adjective or with an adverb, so it cannot be used to determine the period when the expansion of these forms began.[14] However, it provides an opportunity to check whether the assumption regarding the gradual disappearance of the constructions with a noun in favor of the constructions containing only a feminine adjective is true. The chart in Fig. 2 shows the percentage of occurrences of constructions with the adjective standing alone among all predicative constructions (i.e. those formed with the noun *rzecz* as well) for the six previously chosen adjectives over two centuries.
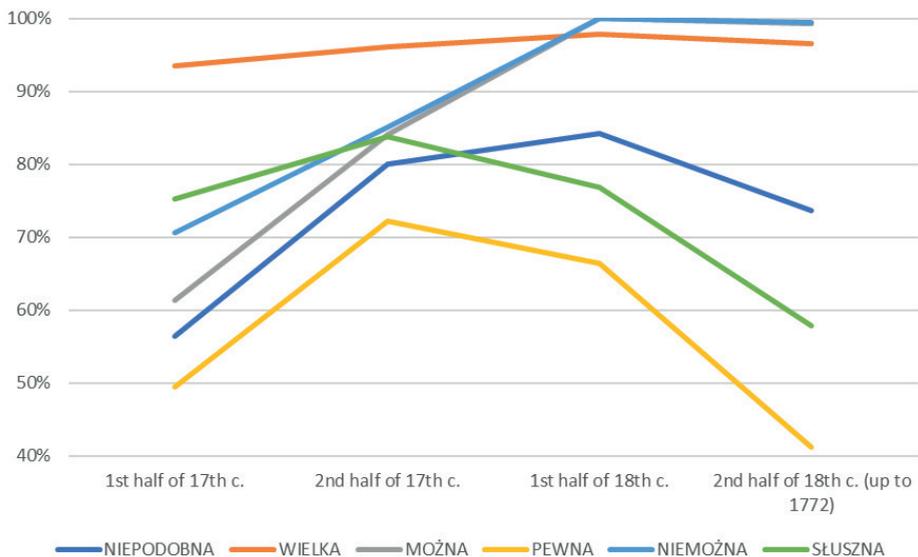

Fig. 2. Ratio of predicative constructions which do not contain the noun *rzecz* to all predicative constructions with an adjective of the feminine gender

[14] However, even a cursory glance at the old and modern predicative constructions shows that the relations between these types of predicates were more complicated. Some neuter forms in the predicative function occur already in the 16th-century (e.g. *możno* 'it is possible', *dziwno* 'it is strange'), or even Old Polish texts (e.g. *niepodobno* 'it is impossible'). Some of them underwent the process of adverbization and were used for some time in the predicative function interchangeably with feminine forms. Eventually, the feminine (e.g. *niepodobna* 'it is impossible') or, more frequently, the adverbial form (e.g. *miło* 'it is nice') prevailed, or both were superseded by another competitive form, e.g. in the 19th century, the constructions *dziwna, że...* and *dziwno, że...* 'it is strange that...' (in the feminine and adverbial form respectively) gave way to the construction *dziwne, że...* 'it is strange that...' (in the new neuter form). Tracking these processes requires separate research, where the time range should be extended to comprise both the 16th and 19th centuries.

On the basis of the data used, it can be concluded that the thesis about the gradual spread of the constructions with the removed noun is only partially true. The number of occurrences in relation to all six adjectives shows an increase between the first and the second halves of the 17th century. Since this percentage was already high at the very beginning of the period studied, it can be assumed that the increase was also taking place at the end of the 16th century. However, the paths of individual adjectives were beginning to diverge in the 18th century. The forms MOŻNA 'it is possible' and NIEMOŻNA 'it is impossible' were used almost exclusively on their own in this century.[15] The ratio of the constructions containing only the form WIELKA 'it is great' to all predicative constructions oscillated around the value of 97% from the 2nd half of the 17th century until the end of the period studied. The use of the independently-occurring form NIEPODOBNA 'it is impossible' increased in comparison to constructions with a noun already in the first half of the 18th century, and then they began to decline. A downward trend in popularity of the constructions with the independent forms SŁUSZNA 'it is right' and PEWNA 'it is certain' in comparison to their equivalents containing the noun began as early as the first half of the 18th century, and this trend intensified in the second half. The percentage of occurrences among both types of predicative constructions in this period dropped below the level from the first half of the 17th century.

It seems that a complete replacement of constructions containing nouns with the constructions containing only feminine adjectives occurred only in the forms MOŻNA 'it is possible' and NIEMOŻNA 'it is impossible'. In this case, the complete ellipse of the noun may be treated as a determinant of the end of the verbization process of these forms. The high number of independent uses of the form WIELKA 'it is great' was related to the above-mentioned stabilization of the construction *co większa* 'what is more' (where the uses without the noun amounted to almost 100% throughout the entire period). Since other types of predicative constructions of this adjective were falling into disuse, the data is too scarce to determine whether the constructions with the adjective alone would completely replace the constructions with the noun. As for the other adjectives studied, a reverse process can be observed in the 18th century, compared to the previous century. The increased number of constructions with the noun may indicate that the verbization process of the forms NIEPODOBNA 'it is impossible', PEWNA 'it is certain' and SŁUSZNA 'it is right' had stopped. Eventually, their fate was determined in the 19th century.

5. Supplementary data from Corpus 1830–1918

Corpus 1830–1918 provides evidence for the six adjectives described in this article. The number of their occurrences shows that the processes which began in the 17th and 18th centuries for the forms MOŻNA 'it is possible', NIEMOŻNA 'it is impossible', PEWNA 'it is certain' and SŁUSZNA 'it is right' continued in the 19th century, whereas the forms

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[15] In the chart the lines showing both forms follow the same course starting from the 1st half of the 18th century, as a result of which one of them overlaps the other.

NIEPODOBNA 'it is impossible' and WIELKA 'it is great' were subject to reverse processes.

The number of uses of the predicative MOŻNA 'it is possible' in the 19th century presents an unprecedented increase. If we compare two periods of a similar time range from both corpora, the number of occurrences of the predicative MOŻNA in the first 25 years in Corpus 1830–1918 is higher by more than four times than the one of the forms MOŻNA and NIEMOŻNA in the years 1751–1772.[16] At the same time, their distribution in the period covered by Corpus 1830–1918 is relatively stable (cf. Fig. 3). The forms PEWNA 'it is certain' and SŁUSZNA 'it is right' gradually fell into disuse in the 19th century: the number of their occurrences halved in comparison to the second half of the 18th century.
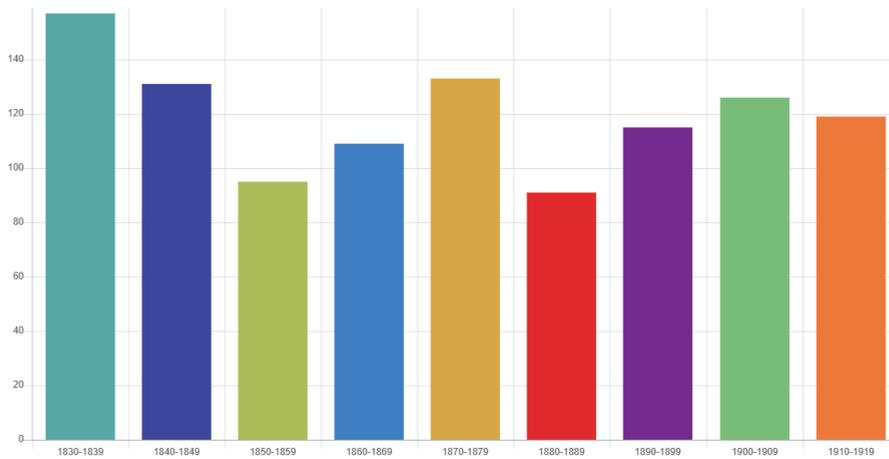

Fig. 3. Number of occurrences of the predicative MOŻNA in the subsequent decades covered by Corpus 1830–1918 (screenshot from http://korpus19.nlp.ipipan.waw.pl/)

It is surprising that the trend of further development of the forms WIELKA 'it is great' and NIEPODOBNA 'it is impossible' was reversed in the 19th century in comparison to the previous century. The expression *co większa* 'what is more', where the form WIELKA occurs most frequently, preserved its stable popularity throughout the entire period of the 17th and 18th centuries, but it fell into disuse in the subsequent century and was replaced by an expression with an adverb (*co więcej*). In Corpus 1830–1918 *co większa* occurs only six times, whereas *co więcej*, 28 times. Additionally, the last evidence of the expression with the adjectival form *większa* comes from 1859 and almost all the expressions with the adverbial form *więcej* date back to the second half of the

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[16] These are, by all means, normalized numbers. The coefficient calculated in the way described in footnote 9 amounts to 13.6 for the period of 1830–1854.

19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.[17] The number of occurrences of the form NIEPODOBNA 'it is impossible' fall sharply in the 18th century, only to increase and then stabilize at a relatively constant level throughout the entire 19th century. The decline in popularity of the form NIEPODOBNA is visible only at the beginning of the 20th century (cf. Fig. 4), but the data should be approached with caution owing to the fact that the corpus material is not extensive enough.
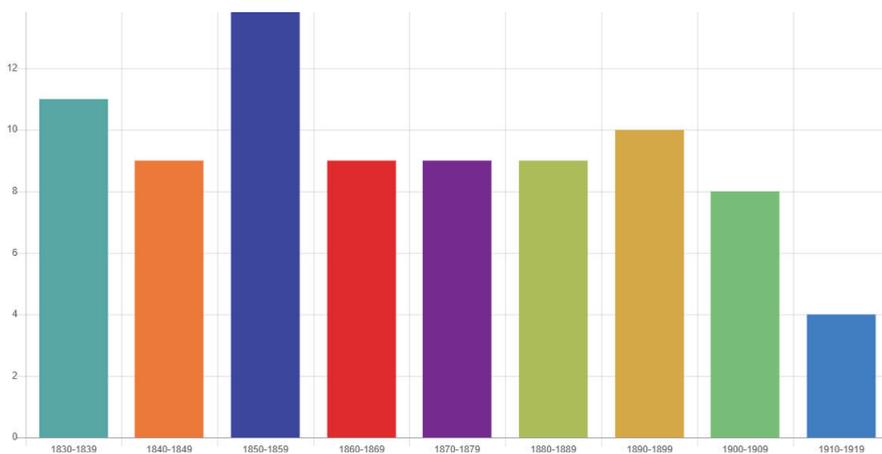

Fig. 4. Number of occurrences of the predicative NIEPODOBNA in subsequent decades covered by
Corpus 1830–1918 (screenshot from http://korpus19.nlp.ipipan.waw.pl/)

It is difficult to trace back the ratio of sentences with adjective + noun *rzecz* 'thing' constructions to sentences with only the adjective in nominative, singular, feminine forms as the number of occurrences of adjectives performing predicative functions is quite scarce in Corpus 1830–1918. Only in the case of predicative MOŻNA 'it is possible' can it be stated that the process where the primary adjectival form separated from the noun *rzecz* was fully completed (it was not used a single time with the noun *rzecz* among 1,078 occurrences of the predicative, including its negative form). As for the predicative NIEPODOBNA 'it is impossible', it can be assumed that the process was also completed in the 19th century. In Corpus 1830–1918, there is only one sentence with the noun *rzecz* in 81 occurrences of the form NIEPODOBNA and, additionally, its use may have resulted from the requirements of verse speech. The number of occurrences of other adjectives is too scarce to prove that the presence of the noun or its absence may provide evidence

[17] Due to the fact that the Corpus 1830–1918 material is scarce, these numbers do not provide obvious evidence that the expression *co większa* was completely out of use in the 1850s (e.g. it occurs in Kraszewski's texts from the 1870s found in the corpus of his 100 works at http://korpus19.nlp.ipipan.waw.pl/); however, it was undoubtedly giving way to the expression *co więcej* at that time. It is noteworthy that the history of another similar expression *co gorsza* 'what is worse' went in a different direction: it won the competition with the expression *co gorzej* containing an adverb and has been preserved to our times.

regarding the direction of the development of predicative constructions. However, it is worth noting that the expression *wielka rzecz* 'it is a great thing' began to be used with irony (*No, wielka rzecz, że sobie tam czasem parę partyjek...* 'Well, it is such a great thing that I sometimes play a few games...' (literal meaning)/ 'Well, it is not such a big deal that I sometimes play a few games...' (ironic meaning)] 1883_5.1), which has been preserved in the contemporary Polish language.

6. Summary and conclusions

The research presented in this article concerns the development of a Middle Polish syntactic construction where the predicative function was performed by the nominative, singular, feminine form of the adjective standing alone or being a part of a nominal group with the noun *rzecz*. On the basis of corpus data, the changes which took place throughout the 17th and 18th centuries were traced using the example of six adjective predicative forms most popular at that time. The factors which affected the verbization of these forms, i.e. the process of changing adjectival forms into defective verbs, were analysed. They included: an increase and a decline in popularity of these constructions as well as the changes where the noun *rzecz* was removed from the adjectival forms. The study comprised the following forms: MOŻNA 'it is possible', NIEMOŻNA 'it is impossible', NIEPODOBNA 'it is impossible', WIELKA 'it is great', PEWNA 'it is certain' and SŁUSZNA 'it is right', the first three of which now belong to the predicative class and the rest of which have fallen into complete disuse.

When it comes to the history of contemporary predicatives, research results show differences in the process of transforming adjectival forms into defective verbs. The form MOŻNA 'it is possible' became stable as a verb already in the 18th century, whereas the verbization process of the form NIEPODOBNA 'it is impossible', significantly advanced in the 17th century, slowed down in the 18th century and was completed in the subsequent century. It was then that the difference in the frequency of uses between both predicatives increased, which has persisted until today.

The other adjectival forms under study had little chance of gaining the status of predicatives. The strongest trends towards this direction were noticeable in the form PEWNA 'it is certain', which saw a significant increase in popularity in the first half of the 18th century. The verbization process of the form WIELKA 'it is great' was hindered by the progressive use of the expression *co większa* 'what is more'. Considering its stable position throughout the entire 17th and 18th centuries, it is surprising that it was no longer used in the 19th century.

The research presented here does not answer the question concerning the reason why the forms MOŻNA 'it is possible', NIEMOŻNA 'it is impossible' and NIEPODOBNA 'impossible' have completed the verbization process, whereas the other predicative forms of adjectives discussed here did not. The research on other changes in predicative constructions containing feminine adjectives, as well as analysis of parallel processes

occurring in synonymous constructions, especially those formed with neuter forms of adjectives, or with adverbial forms, will help to clarify the issue.[18]

Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations used in the article

AquaPrax – Andrzej Dell'Aqua. (1969). *Praxis ręczna działa*. Ed. T. Nowak. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich [Original work published s.l., 1624].

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[18] The research is currently conducted as part of the project "Expansion of the Electronic Corpus of 17th- and 18th-century Polish Texts and its Integration with the Electronic Dictionary of the 17th- and 18th-century Polish Language" (see footnote 1).

BystrzPol – Wojciech Bystrzonowski. (1732). *Polak sensat w liście, w komplemencie polityk, humanista w dyskursie, w mowach statysta, na przykład dany szkolnej młodzi*. [Lublin: w Drukarni Lubelskiego Collegium Societatis Jesu].

DrużZbiór – Elżbieta Drużbacka. (1752). *Zbiór rytmów*. Warszawa: w Drukarni [...] Collegii Scholarum Piarum.

KunWOb – Wacław Kunicki. (1615). *Obraz szlachcica polskiego*. Kraków.

NarK – Adam Naruszewicz. (1959). *Korespondencja 1762–1796*. Eds. J. Platt, T. Mikulski. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich.

Pas – Jan Chryzostom Pasek. (1955). *Pamiętniki (z lat 1656–1688)*. Ed. R. Pollak. Warszawa: PIW.

PastRel – Joachim Pastorius. (1650). *Relacja chwalebnej expedycjej* [...]. s.l.

SaadiOtwSGul – Saadi. (1879). *Giulistan to jest ogród różany*. Transl. S. Otwinowski. Ed. I. Janicki. Warszawa: w Drukarni M. Ziemkiewicza i W. Noakowskiego. [Original work published s.l. 1610].

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SUMMARY

Keywords: historical syntax, corpus research, adjectives, defective verbs

The article is devoted to the changes in the Middle Polish syntactic construction in which the predicative function was performed by the nominative, singular, feminine form of the adjective. The research carried out on the corpus data was aimed at tracing the process that led to the transformation of those adjectival forms into defective verbs (verbization). The analysis covers six predicative adjectival forms most popular in the 17th and 18th centuries: MOŻNA 'it is possible', NIEMOŻNA 'it is impossible', NIEPODOBNA 'it is impossible', WIELKA 'it is great', PEWNA 'it is certain' and SŁUSZNA 'it is right'. The first three of them changed their grammatical status, whereas for the rest the verbization process stopped. The 2nd half of the 18th century and the 1st half of the 19th century were decisive in this respect.

STRESZCZENIE

Niedokończona „werbizacja" – rozwój predykatywnych konstrukcji z przymiotnikiem w rodzaju żeńskim w XVII i XVIII w. w świetle danych korpusowych

Słowa kluczowe: składnia historyczna, badania korpusowe, przymiotniki, czasowniki niewłaściwe

Artykuł jest poświęcony zmianom średniopolskiej konstrukcji składniowej, w której forma M lp. r.ż. przymiotnika występowała w funkcji predykatywnej. Badania przeprowadzone na danych korpusowych miały na celu prześledzenie procesu, który prowadził do przekształcenia form przymiotników w czasowniki niewłaściwe (werbizacja). Analizą zostało objętych sześć najbardziej popularnych w XVII i XVIII wieku predykatywnych form przymiotnikowych: MOŻNA, NIEMOŻNA, NIEPODOBNA, WIELKA, PEWNA i SŁUSZNA. Podczas gdy pierwsze trzy z nich zmieniły swój gramatyczny status, w wypadku pozostałych proces werbizacji został zahamowany. Rozstrzygający pod tym względem był okres drugiej połowy XVIII i pierwszej połowy XIX wieku.