1. Introduction: Two Subsets among Polish Motion Verbs

Polish Motion verbs form a large group whose members are put together on the basis of the similarity in their meanings. Grochowski (1973), whose analyses focuses only on one argument Motion predicates, finds out 42 verbs, Bojar (1979) quotes 332 verbs with 124 semantic features necessary to describe them. But all these verbs, despite, their obvious semantic similarities, display different grammatical behavior, especially with respect to the Goal argument.

In this study, I will focus on two limited subsets of Polish motion verbs which are usually treated as aspactive doublets. But, I will try to convince you that, indeed, members of such aspactive pairs belong to two different classes (or subsets) of verbs. Certainly, from a semantic point of view, they share one important prototypical property, which is the Manner of motion that the event is realized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class I Verbs</th>
<th>Class II Verbs</th>
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<tr>
<td>iść</td>
<td>to walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jechać</td>
<td>to ride or to drive</td>
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<tr>
<td>biec</td>
<td>to run</td>
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<tr>
<td>lecieć</td>
<td>to fly</td>
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<td>płynąć</td>
<td>to swim or to sail</td>
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Let us observe that both classes, I and II, are labelled imperfective (for example in Mędrak, 1997). Pyzik (2003 – handbook for learning Polish Motion verbs) says that the main contrast between verbs that I have put in the class I and those in the class II lies on the opposition between directional or determinate motion for the former class, and non-directional, indeterminate motion for the latter. Some other scholars make distinction between unidirectional motion described by verbs of the class I and multidirectional motion described by those of the class II. But such explanations, though certainly true, are, in my opinion, not complete enough. Let us have a look on the example (1) and, later on example (2):

Example (1) shows that class II verbs can also be directional, more than that, they can be unidirectional:

(1) - Nie chodziła do kina? (chodzić, class II)  
- Prawdopodobnie chodziła. (chodzić, class II)


(1) – Didn’t she use to go to the movies?  
- She probably did [use to go to the movies]

In consequence, an explanation in terms of directionaly or non directionality does not hold, because it does not enable us to identify the problems that we have to deal with when using motion verbs from the class I and II. If chodzić can hardly be replaced by iść, such an exchange is highly possible in (2):

(2) - Wieczory spędzała pani samotnie...  
- Nikt mi nie zabraniał wychodzić...  
- Wiem... Czasem szła pani do kina... (iść, class I)


(2) – You used to spend evenings alone …

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1 (1) Original text : Maigret et l’indicateur : « — Elle n'allait pas au cinéma ?  
— Probablement que si. »

2 (2) Original text : « - Vous passiez toutes vos soirées seule...  
— Personne ne m'empêchait de sortir...  
— Je sais...Vous alliez parfois au cinéma... »
- Nobody forbid me to go out …
- I know… Sometimes you used to go to the movies.

It is really hard to explain, with the only help of the notions like directionality and determination, why iść and jechać are awkward in some situations, while they seem quite interchangeable when one looks at the examples (1) and (2).

2. **ON SOME GOOD THINGS TO FIND IN ERRORS**

But are the speaker really allowed to replaced a class I verb by the corresponding verb of the class II and vice versa? Students’s mistakes are really interesting from a linguistic point of view. Particularly, a cognitive linguist can probably find in such errors a rich source of information about some aspects of language. There are, of course, different kinds of errors. Sometimes, they are obvious, especially when they present a grammatical problem. The example (3) is particularly interesting because it cannot be considered as completely incorrect. It is even hard to call such occurrences « mistakes »; we should rather talk about awkwardness or inaccuracy of some uses in a given situation. Let us have a look on (3):

(3) a. – Co to znaczy « prywatna droga » ?
   b. - To znaczy, że droga należy do mieszkańców. Albo do jednego z mieszkańców.
   c. - To znaczy, że nie można po niej *iść \(^3\) ? […] (iść – class I)
   d. - A czy można po niej *jechać \(^4\)? (jechać – class I)

or :

(4) Zrobimy samochód miniaturowkę, ale który jedzie (jechać – class I)\(^5\)

The example (3) is not easy to deal with. A colleague said clearly: “I just don’t understand what are looking for. For me (3) is correct.” Some scholars would certainly agree with her point of view. Grochowski (1973) argues that iść and chodzić, jechać and jeździć are simply contextual variables. If one accepts such a claim, he or she accepts also the idea that a

\(^3\) * marks inappropriate use of the verb
\(^4\) (3) - What does « private way » mean ?
   - It means that the way belongs to inhabitants, or to one of them.
   - Does it mean that it is not allowed to walk on it ?
   - Is it allowed to drive on it ?
\(^5\) We will build a miniature car, but it will be able to ride.
language systematically possesses pairs of verbs and each member of such a pair serves to describe events conceptualized in exact same way

But, on the other hand, people often feel uncomfortable with cases like (3) or (4). So I launched a test among twenty five native Polish speakers. They had to tell how they feel about the two versions of the dialog (3). The version 1 remains the original one. In the second version, I replaced jechać and iść by the corresponding verbs of the class II:

Acceptability test:

Version 1:
A1 - Co to znaczy « prywatna droga » ?
B1 - Że droga należy do mieszkańców. Albo do jednego mieszkańca.
C1 - To znaczy, że nie można po niej iść ? A czy można po niej jechać samochodem ?

Version 2:
A1 - Co to znaczy « prywatna droga » ?
B1 - Że droga należy do mieszkańców. Albo do jednego mieszkańca.
C2 - To znaczy, że nie można po niej chodzić ? A czy można po niej jeździć samochodem ?

And then, I asked 2 questions
1. Is one of the two versions of the dialog 3 better than another ?
2. Is one of them incorrect ?
23 send me an answer and they all agreed that the version 2 was better.

Naturally, the next question to be asked is why. Why is the second version better than the first one ?

3. MOTION VERBS AND EVENT SEMANTICS

Rather than explain the difference between class I and class II verbs in terms of directionality, it will be clearer using conceptual tools provided by event semantics. Verbs describe events conceptualized in speaker’s mind in a particular way. If so, then class I and class II verbs refer to different kind of motion event. I suggest that the problem with the example (3) is a reference problem: the inaccuracy of our examples (3) and (4) is due to a confusion between the verbs belonging to two different classes. “… predicates of natural language impose a certain structure on the events they describe…” (Tenny, 1994 : 3). This
leads to the idea that when one replaces a class I predicate by another from the class II, he or she must encounter the risk of referring to an event incompatible with the context.

3.1 VERBS OF THE CLASS I

Let us start with verbs of the class I. They are simpler because their root denotes motion events conceptualized in only one way, regardless if they have or have not a Path argument. Class I verbs refer to the sequence of successive internal parts which form a particular motion event conceptualized as an individual act, like in (5):

(5) Kiedy leciałem do Rzymu, mieliśmy burzę.⁶ (lecieć, I)

I have tried to illustrate this way of conceptualization in the Figure 1: there is $e$ for event, an arrow for the Path component and $F$ for the Figure moving on the Path.

![Figure 1](image)

³(5) When I was flying to Rome, we had a thunderstorm
My thesis is that verbs belonging to the class II are cognitively richer and semantically more complex than those of the class I, because they are able to describe motion events conceptualized in very different ways.

3.2.1 Verbs of the Class II with Specified Path Component (Argument)

As Talmy (1987, 2000) remarked for *to float*, class II verbs are in fact lexical doublets, able to describe two types of events. As in the examples (6) and (7), they conflate Motion and Manner of Motion.

(6) Tomasz i Jan chodzą do szkoły\(^7\) (chodzić – class II)

(7) Tramwaj wodny pływa z Gdyni do Helu\(^8\) (pływać – class II)

In such a use, class II verbs take an argument specifying a portion of Path: Goal in (6), Source and Goal in (7). The presence of Path argument makes us consider the motion events described by *chodzić* (6), *pływać* (7) and other verbs II as more than one instantiation of events described by verbs I. With class II verbs, events are to be thought of as mutiplex (in the figure 2): formed by a series of particular countable events, in other terms: a series of events as the one in the figure 1. There is no longer any reference to the particular position or placement of Figure on the Path, but every event of the series is seen as a whole. I have tried to visualize that in the figure 2:

\(^7\) (6) Tomasz and Jan go to school
\(^8\) (7) Water tramway sails from Gdynia to Hel
This plurality is the reason for the iterative aspectual interpretation of the class II verbs. Then another consequence may arise: in some contexts, such a plurality (or multiplexity, if we use the terminology proposed by Talmy 2000) implies a generic reading of a sentence.

3.2.2 VERBS OF THE CLASS II WITHOUT REFERENCE TO PATH COMPONENT

Class II verbs may appear without any reference to the Path component. In such a case, they do not appeal Goal argument on the syntactic level. Let us have a look on the example (8):

(8) Lubię sport, więc dwa razy w tygodniu biegam i pływam. (biegać, pływać – class II)

I suggest that when the Path element is no longer referred to, class II verbs describe a different kind of event. We are describing less a motion, than a kind of dynamic «relation between an object and a medium ». The whole motion event is then conceptualized as an unbounded mass object, as figure 3 illustrates:

(8) I like sport, so twice a week I run and swim.
4. CONCLUSIONS

The first issue I would like to treat in conclusion concerns the notion of directinality. As I have tried to show, I believe that we don’t really need the notion of directionality or multidirectionality. First, because it is not a primitive, it is derived from the conceptual element of Path. Second, because I am, for the moment, unable to say if the directionality is really lexicalized in verbs or if it relies on our knowledge of the world. We are aware of the fact that moving entities have usually a front side and a back side and the prototypical motion has a front orientation. In that sense, class II verbs, as the one in the example (8) may also be directional. If so, then the directionality is not a distinctive property. And my third problem is that of multidirectinality: I am unable to imagine how a Figure could realize a multidirectional motion. It can, of course, change direction, but as long as I know, it can’t move multidirectionally.

Treating verbs in terms of event description enables us to understand why speakers mostly feel so uncomfortable with examples (3) and (4), the ones they all consider as
inaccurate though not totally incorrect on one hand, and why the examples (1) and (2) are generally accepted as correct.

Let us start with (3) and (4):

(3) a. – Co to znaczy « prywatna droga » ?
   b. - To znaczy, że droga należy do mieszkańców. Albo do jednego z mieszkańców.
   c. - To znaczy, że nie można po niej *iścić10? […] (iść – class I)
   d. - A czy można po niej *jechać?11 (jechać – class I)

(4) Zrobimy samochód miniaturkę, ale który jedzie (jechać – class I)12

Iść (3c) and jechać (3d), (4) refer to a motion event as the one illustrated in figure 1:

![Figure 1](image_url)

figure 1

10 * marks inappropriate use of the verb
11 (3) - What does « private way » mean?
   - It means that the way belongs to inhabitants, or to one of them.
   - Does it mean that it is not allowed to walk on it?
   - Is it allowed to drive on it?
12 We will build a miniature car, but it will be able to ride.
while the context requires the conceptualization shown in the figure 3 that only class II verbs, like *chodzić* and *jeździć*, are able to describe:

(3’) a. – Co to znaczy « prywatna droga » ?
   b. - To znaczy, że droga należy do mieszkańców. Albo do jednego z mieszkańców.
   c. - To znaczy, że nie można po niej chodzić ? […] (chodzić – class II)
   d. - A czy można po niej jeździć ? (jeździć – class II)

The possibility of describing a motion event with different properties, gives rise to different narrative strategies. In my examples (1) and (2), the translator makes an interesting use of conceptualizations offered by the two classes of verbs. In the example (1), she puts forward a habit, a multiplex event as the one we know from the figure 2:

(1) - Nie **chodzila** do kina ? (chodzić, class II)
   - Prawdopodobnie **chodzila**. (chodzić, class II)\(^\text{13}\)

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\(^{13}\) (1) – She didn’t use to go to the movies ?
   - She probably did [use to go to the movies]
On the contrary, in the example (2), the same author accounts for a particular motion event, a countable displacement, as it is lexicalized in class I verbs (figure 1):

(2) - Wieczory spędzała pani samotnie...
    - Nikt mi nie zabraniał wychodzić...
    - Wiem... Czasem szła pani do kina... (iść, class I)\(^{14}\)

\(^{14}\) (2) – You used to spend evenings alone …
   - Nobody did forbid me to go out …
   - I know… Sometimes you used to go to the movies.
Technically speaking, by the lexical choice she makes, she reinforces the contrast between the habit of spending evenings alone and an exception consisting of a particular case of going to the movies.

So I believe, that the event approach is fruitful not only in dealing with errors and inaccurate sentences, but also in research on effects produced by prefixes and other adjuncts, since we treat them as qualifiers operating on different kinds of event arguments; but this is a subject for another paper. Thank you for your attention, I am available for questions now.

References:


