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Prace Językoznawcze 12, 89-104

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2010

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Iwona Góralczyk  
Olsztyn

## „*Weź, pokochaj smoka.*” The *wziąć* construction in Polish: a Construction Grammar analysis

### „*Weź pokochaj smoka.*” O pewnej konstrukcji z czasownikiem „*wziąć*” w języku polskim – analiza w świetle gramatyki konstrukcji

The analysis developed in this paper focuses on the seemingly inexplicable use of the verb *wziąć* in Polish with the indicative verb complement. The linguistic facts considered lead us to posit the status of a construction to this verb-verb combination. As a particularly striking property of this construction we have noted the fact that the idea of an action of taking is altogether missing from the semantics of the studied structures. We thus postulate that the *wziąć* construction encodes a single event and that we are dealing with one process type co-lexicalized by two verbs. Under such an arrangement the meaning of the verb *wziąć* has been bleached in the process of grammaticalization.

**Słowa kluczowe:** gramatyka konstrukcji, gramatyka kognitywna, gramatykalizacja, podejścia funkcjonalno-typologiczne, konstrukcja, leksykalizacja

**Key words:** Construction Grammar, Cognitive Grammar, Functional-typological approaches, co-lexicalization, construction, grammaticalization

### 1. The data

Given that the dictionary entry for the Polish verb *wziąć/take* points to the verb's transitivity (cf. *Słownik Współczesnego Języka Polskiego*, *Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN*), an inquisitive user of Polish will not let the peculiarity of the following linguistic facts go unnoticed:

- (1) *Weź, przestań.* (the title of a 2006 drama by Jan Klata, a famous Polish theatre director)  
„Stop it!” Lit. „Take, stop!”
- (2) **Weź, pokochaj smoka.** *Rzecz o umieraniu dzieci.* (the title of the book by Andrzej Wilowski, a Polish writer, about oncologically-sick children in hospices)  
„Love the dragon” Lit. „Take, love the dragon! About the dying of children.”

- (3) *Weźcie, sprawdźcie to.* (from the lyrics of *Chwile ulotne* by Paktofonika, one of the leading Polish hip-hop bands)  
 „Go check it” Lit. „Take! check it!”
- (4) *No i weź, szukaj tam teraz demokratycznych reguł i transparentności, że o zwykłej uczciwości nie wspomnę* (in an essay by Stanisław Tym, a famous Polish satirist in *Polityka* weekly)  
 „Now, go look for democratic regulations or transparency, not to mention ordinary honesty.”

The uses of *wziąć* in (1–4), when **it subcategorizes for a verb**, exemplify a variety of pragmatic contexts. The sample of the PWN corpus of Polish lists such senses of *wziąć* as well, yet it will be noticed that the indicative form *wziął/wzięła* only scores... 1 entry which qualifies as a case in point out of the first 21 uses listed.<sup>1</sup> When googled, the examined structure appears to be much more productive, very popular indeed in slang, with vulgarisms that I shall not dare to quote.

## 2. Some syntactic and semantic properties of the *wziąć* structures: preliminary remarks

As a transitive verb, *wziąć* typically collocates with noun phrases. Dictionary definitions of such sense, which we shall refer to as *wziąć*<sub>1</sub>, point to its perfective aspect and a non-iterative character and contrast it with the otherwise synonymous *brać*. Consider (5):

- (5) *wziąć/brać to/ udział/ łapówkę/ odpowiedzialność*  
 Lit. perf-take/ imperf- take it/ part/ a bribe/responsibility

In contrast, note the humorous effects, or the irony of the following exchange between Mum and Dad in a cartoon for children (naturally, much more evident in its full context):

- (6) a) *Weź i spójrz, kochanie, jak latam.*  
 Lit. Take and look, darling, at me flying./ take a look at me flying  
 b) *?Już biorę i patrzę.*  
 Lit. I am taking and looking / I am looking

<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, structures such as *weź, przestań* cannot actually be found unless you know them and you type in the whole phrase. This is a classic weakness of lexicographical resources with respect to constructional meaning. The construction that is postulated in the present paper seems to escape the attention of lexicographers of Polish.

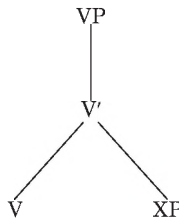
It becomes clear that *wziąć* in (1–4) and (6) above, to which we shall refer as *wziąć*<sub>2</sub>, and *brać* are not interchangeable. Likewise, note that we are dealing with the separate senses of the verb in (7) and (8) below:

- (7) *wziąć się i coś zrobić*  
To focus and do sth / Lit. take oneself and do sth
- (8) *Weź, coś zrób!*  
Just do sth! / Lit. take, do sth

Pending the analysis proper in the sections to follow, we shall propose two distinct subcategorization frames for sense<sub>1</sub> with an NP, and sense<sub>2</sub> with the verbal complement type.

Within the X-bar syntactic mode the suggested canonical structure for both senses is illustrated in Fig.1, and the contrast between sense<sub>1</sub> and sense<sub>2</sub> lies in the NP realization of the complement XP with *wziąć*<sub>1</sub> and the VP value of XP with *wziąć*<sub>2</sub>.<sup>2</sup>

Fig. 1



Furthermore, note that the verbs that co-occur with *wziąć*<sub>2</sub> are all perfective and non-iterative verbs. Consider the unacceptability of (9), in contrast to (10):

- (9) \**Wzięła i pisała ten list.*  
Lit. She took and was writing this letter.
- (10) *Wzięła i napisała ten list.*  
Lit. She took and wrote this letter.

Apart from the choice of a finite verbal complement, *wziąć*<sub>2</sub> in the structure under the consideration exhibits equally intriguing semantic properties. It appears that not only is the literal sense of the verb but also its metaphorical meaning **bleached**, or neutralized. There is no concept, or action of taking, as particularly clearly shows in (11a,b) below:

<sup>2</sup> We are not, however, making any serious pretences about the generative character of the suggested structures. X-bar framework incremented into the Government and Binding model is favored for the purpose of this paper over some more advanced Minimalist modifications, like VP-shells, for example.

- (11) a) *Wziął i umarł./napisał/wyjechał.*  
 Lit. He took and died. / he died.  
 b) *Weź się zamknij!*  
 Lit. Take and shut up/ Oh, shut up.

Arguably, the use of the verb is inexplicable in the examined structures.

### 3. The thesis and some methodological assumptions

In light of the above it will be argued in the present article that *wziąć*<sub>2</sub> and its complement verb phrase constitute a **construction** in its own right, with its meaning not wholly attributable to its component parts. It will further be claimed that the marked syntactic behavior of the construction is **motivated** by its meaning. Lastly, the meaning of the construction will be studied through the prism of **grammaticalisation** mechanisms and argued to display interesting parameters relative to the principle of **iconicity**. Our final claims, then, will be that these two phenomena go a long way towards explaining both the syntax and semantics of the *wziąć*<sub>2</sub> construction.

The methodology adopted for the present analysis is in its main aspect that of Construction Grammar (cf. Fillmore 1988, Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor 1988, Goldberg 1995). We shall however repeatedly resort to some machinery and concepts of Cognitive Grammar as well (cf. Langacker 1987, 1990, 1991). Likewise, grammaticalization and iconicity will here be tackled with the analytical tools following some functional-typological analyses (cf. Givón 1980, 1993, Hopper and Traugott 1993, Lehmann 1995). Such an eclectic methodology can in fact be justified on the grounds that the three approaches are often taken to represent complementary rather than contrasting stands on the issues crucial for the present analysis (cf. Kardela in Stalmaszczyk 2006, Kalisz 2001, Dirven and Radden 2007).<sup>3</sup> Let us enlarge on one such issue, i.e. construction, before the analysis proper of the *wziąć*<sub>2</sub> construction can be developed.

#### 3.1. Constructionism

The notion of construction is premised upon the approach conveniently coached as **constructionism**, contrasted with the stand that can be referred to as **lexicalism**.

<sup>3</sup> Compare, however, Szymañska and Śpiewak in Stalmaszczyk 2006.

To begin with the latter, it stems from the thesis that syntactic configurations that lexical items occur in are a direct outcome of the contribution made by **individual lexical** items in the interaction with **general principles**. Such a view informs mainstream generative grammar, even in its current version (cf. Radford 2004)

This entirely ‘bottom-up’ approach fails to account for a full range of English data, it is claimed in Construction Grammar. Constructionism, then, advocates the need to posit constructions as separate, full-fledged entities that need to be recognized in addition to, and independent of, lexical items and general principles. Constructions, defined to exist if „something about their form or meaning is not strictly predictable from the properties of their component parts or from other constructions” (cf. Goldberg 1995: 4), are in this way basic units of language.

This tenet is shared by Cognitive Grammar. The relevant elucidations go as follows: „a grammatical construction consists in the bipolar integration of two or more component structures to form a composite expression [...] a specific composite expression qualifies as a grammatical construction. Such expressions are included in the grammar of a language to the extent that they achieve the status of conventional units.” (Langacker 1987: 409) and, elsewhere, „Semantics is not fully compositional. When first assembled, an expression’s composite structure may invoke a domain or incorporate specifications... that are not predictable from the component structures or other conventional units.” (Langacker 1990: 25).

### 3.2. The notion of construction – Goldberg’s approach vs. Langacker’s

Let us compare and contrast Langacker’s and Goldberg’s models with respect to constructional meaning in somewhat greater detail (cf. Góralczyk 2009).

As has been stated, both models take constructions to be basic units of language, which coexist and coalesce with lexical items. No divide is drawn between the lexicon and the rest of the grammar.

Both approaches view constructions as displaying prototype structures, forming networks of associations.<sup>4</sup> In Langacker’s understanding, these networks consist of both specific and schematic structures at various levels of abstraction.

Both Langacker and Goldberg assume that semantic structures coded by constructions are **experientially grounded gestalts** – dynamic scenes basic to human experience. For example, someone causing something to move or change state is associated in Goldberg’s analysis with the English caused-motion construction, as in (12):

(12) *He sneezed the napkin off the table.*

<sup>4</sup> See the polysemy inheritance link between the more basic means sense and, extended from it, manner sense of the *way* construction in English (Goldberg 1995: 210).

By way of contrast, it should be noted that Langacker's understanding of the notion seems somewhat broader: a n y bipolar integration of two or more component structures to form a composite expression qualifies as a grammatical construction. In such broad understanding, structures like *beside me* and complement clauses, for example, are equally valid constructions. Lack of full compositionality appears to be an additional and not a qualifying characteristic. For Goldberg phrasal patterns are considered constructions only if their meanings or forms are not strictly predictable from the properties of the component parts.

Further, in Langacker's view grammar is non-generative and non-constructive. On a Construction Grammar approach, grammar is derivational in the sense that the semantics of the verb and the semantics of the construction are integrated in both top-down and bottom-up fashion to yield the semantics of the particular expression.<sup>5</sup>

The approach advocated in the present study follows essentially that of Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995) and is compatible, in the above sense, with the views defended by Langacker (1991).

### 3.3. The *way* construction

A brief presentation is in need of a classic Construction Grammar analysis, such as that of the *way* construction. Goldberg (1995: 198–215) finds that the idea of movement present in (13) but not in (14) below cannot in actual fact be attributed to the noun *way* and is led to believe that it is contributed by the whole structure, which fulfils the definitional conditions of a construction:

(13) *Frank dug his way out of the prison.*

(14) *Frank dug his escape route out of prison.*

On Goldberg's analysis, the semantics of the construction requires that the movement (literal) is (or cannot be) effected in the face of some **external difficulty** for such class of verbs as *make, dig, fight, shoot*, as in (15):

(15) a) *She made her way into the ballroom.*

b) *In some cases, passengers tried to fight their way through smoke – choked hallways to get back to their cabins to get their safety jackets.*

c) *For hours, troops have been shooting their way through angry, unarmed mobs.*

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<sup>5</sup> It amounts to the claim that not only lexical items instantiating the construction but the construction itself is capable of contributing arguments to its structure.

*Make* is here given priority by Goldberg on both synchronic and diachronic grounds – it is **prototypical** of the construction.

For the verbs *thread*, *wend*, *weave*, *worm*, etc. it is not external difficulty but indirect motion that is implied by the construction. Here are some instantiations of this **indirect** motion class, none of them pointed out as more or less central in Goldberg’s analysis.

- (16) a) *This time, with no need to thread his way out, he simply left by the side door for a three-day.*  
 b) *A couple in fashionable spandex warm-up suits jogs by, headphones jauntily in place, weaving their way.*  
 c) *He wormed his way out of trouble.*

Finally, metaphorical movement can be prevented by social obstacles. Examples of this **social obstacles class** – include *bribe*, *bluff*, *buy*, *crapshoot*, *wheelde*, *talk*, *trick*, *con*, *nose*, *sneak*, *weasel*, etc., as in:

- (17) *Joe bought his way into the exclusive country club.*

In the sections to follow we shall turn our attention to the *wziąć* construction itself, following the spirit of Goldberg’s analysis of the *way* construction related in this section. In particular, we shall focus on the construction’s semantics and then we shall link its conceptual plane to the syntactic realization of *wziąć* structures.

#### 4. The meaning of the *wziąć* construction

The meaning of the *wziąć* construction appears in actual fact to be somewhat elusive: my informants all point to the difficulty in contrasting sets *a* and *b* in (18) and (19) below:

- (18) a) *Wzięła i napisała ten list/ pojechała/ umarła/ się powiesiła.*  
 Lit. She took and wrote this letter/ went away/ died/ hanged herself.  
 b) *Napisała list/ pojechała/ umarła/ powiesiła się.*  
 She wrote a letter/ went away/ died/ hanged herself.
- (19) a) *Weź, przestań/I teraz weź i szukaj wiatru w polu. Weź, zobacz...*  
 Lit. Take, stop!/ Stop it./ lit. and now now take and (...)/ Gone with the wind!  
 b) *Przestań/I teraz szukaj wiatru w polu/Zobacz!*  
 Stop it!/ Gone with the wind!/ Have a look.



The responses to the question concerning the meaning of (18) varied between: the unexpectedness of the action encoded as the complement verb, the action's easy accomplishment, a sudden inspiration or planting the idea of the action in the agent's head. Accordingly, we shall capture the meaning of the construction as: **lack of premeditation/immediacy** and **simplicity/ effortlessness** of the action taken.

The responses elicited to (19) emphasize the evaluation of the message as impolite, direct, invading personal space, informal. All such characteristics, however, will be here treated as pragmatic effects that can be imputed to the imperative mood of the address and not to the meaning of the construction.

None of the characteristics stipulated for the construction can be attributed to the meaning of the verb *wziąć* and it appears that its use in the construction is inexplicable. Simplifying, we are dealing with an empty, so to speak, meaning of the verb *wziąć*<sub>2</sub>. It will then be claimed in the present analysis that the **lexical content** to the processual profile of the clause is **imported by the complement verb**.

The semantics of the construction discussed in this section and its syntactic specificity described in Section 1 and 2 are not a matter of a coincidence. It will be maintained that the syntactic encoding of the scene of the event conveyed by means of the *wziąć*<sub>2</sub> construction is motivated by the conceptual arrangement on the conceptualized scene and is hence directly linked to the construction's meaning.

#### 4.1. The meaning of „*Weź, pokochaj smoka*”

Some explications are required concerning the realization of the construction which lends the title to this paper. Within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics the concept of DRAGON is taken to open a **frame** with actors and props from a fairy tale reality, common in our culture. Without going into much theoretical and technical detail of Fillmore's conception of frame, let us only say that it is furnished with domains of WAR, ILLNESS, TREATMENT and MEDICINE linked into TREATING ILLNESS IS WAR metaphor, underlying such metaphorical expressions as *invasion, battle, attack, infiltration, enemy, siege, bullet, to beat, to wipe out* all used in the context of an illness (cf. Master Metaphor List).

Not to belabor the point, given the pragmatic context of (2), referred to in the opening paragraph of this paper, the correspondences between the source and the target domains are obvious. The choice of the *wziąć*<sub>2</sub> construction for a linguistic encoding of such a conceptual situation, with its 'frivolity' inherent in

immediacy and simplicity of an action, in the face of the grave situation, typically conceptualized by means of the WINNING THE WAR IS BEING CURED OF THE DISEASE and BEING DEFEATED IS DYING entailments adds considerably to the dramatic effect and the message of the book title.

### 5. The conceptual plane of the construction

The main tenet defended in the present paper is that rather than with two separate events we are in actual fact dealing with one event on the conceptual plane of the situation encoded as our construction. The process in this event is **co-lexicalized** by two verbs, in parallel to such structures in English as:

(20) *She let go of my hand.*

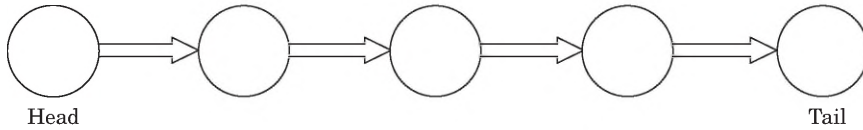
(21) *Go get it!*

We are now in need of, if only the most sketchy, presentation of Langackerian framework which will be adopted for the analysis of an **event structure** and the conception of a **process**.

Let us first deal with just one of an array of folk models relative to which the human conception of events is structured, i.e. the **billiard-ball model**. Emphatically, the model is **archetypal** and **pre-linguistic** in nature. The particular syntactic realization of a clause conveying the events belongs to a separate mode – it is an effect of the conceptualizer’s choice of how to structure the conceptual base provided by the models.

In particular, the billiard-ball model reflects fundamental distinctions in the cognitive organization of the world. It captures the folk model of the world conceived of as constituted by four elements, namely: space, time, material substance and energy. Discrete physical objects populate the world, some carrying internally generated energy loads which drive their motion, others devoid of them and motionless. When they come forcefully into contact with one another, energy transfer is effected, followed, in turn, by another transmission of energy when the object with the newly assumed energy load, set in motion or continuing to move, makes another contact in this **action chain** until the energy is exhausted. This participation in such an interaction can be diagrammed as below, where the circles mark the objects and the double arrows stand for the energy transfers (Langacker 1991: 283).

Fig. 2



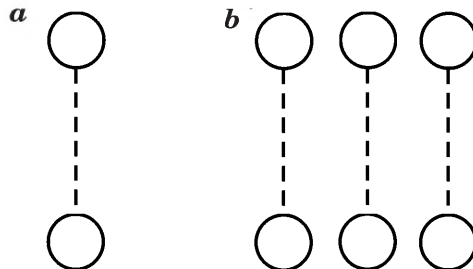
Conceptually, objects and their interactions are maximally opposed. Objects reside in space and are **autonomous** in the sense that their existence is independent of the existence of any other object or of their participation in any interactions. Interactions are characterized as change, so they reside in time rather than space. Also, they are **conceptually dependent**, in that they cannot exist if there are no participants in them.

The billiard-ball model provides the basis for the semantic characterization of the very fundamental grammatical constructs of the **noun** and **verb**: discrete physical objects are prototypical for the class of nouns and their energetic interactions for the class of verbs (Langacker 1991: 283). Further, the model provides a conceptual basis for clausal organization, in that in its semantic layering a clause reflects the **minimal action chain**.

Relating the above to the present analysis we shall claim that the *wziąć<sub>2</sub>* construction encodes a minimal action chain, and is hence **more a simple clause** rather than a complex one. To recall, within the cognitive grammatical framework clausehood is a gradable phenomenon and the above claim posits no problems. In order to clarify how a rather more controversial claim about the presence of two finite verb forms in one clause actually fits this picture we need to enlarge on Langacker's concept of a relation.

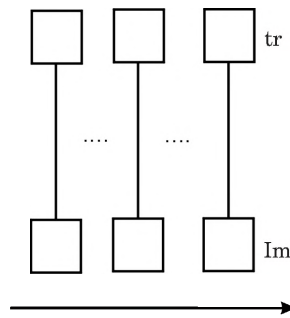
A **relational predication** is defined to entail a set of entities and it profiles the interconnections between them. A **simple relation** involves one configuration (Fig. 3a). If the conceptualization involves processing many distinct configurations, the predication is referred to as a **complex relation** (Fig. 3b, cf. Langacker 1990: 23).

Fig. 3



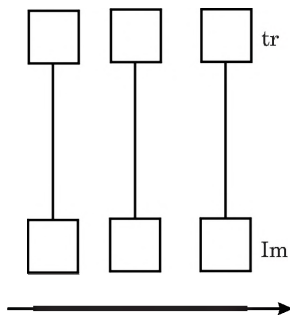
Of the two interrelated entities one assumes the role of a **trajector** (tr), the other that of a **landmark** (lm). So a **simple relation** involves one configuration of the trajector relative to the landmark, while a **complex relation** profiles a set of distinct configurations, with the trajector successively changing its position vis-à-vis the landmark, so that a path is created leading to the final state, mark the dotted correspondence lines in Fig.4 below. Note that a complex relation involves temporal processing, hence the portion of the time arrow. Importantly, however, if time features in the characterization of complex relations, the component configurations designated by a complex relation are **summarily**, and not **sequentially** scanned. They are analyzed in **conceived time**, i.e. all facets of the scene are co-activated and simultaneously available. Consequently, time is not in profile in a complex atemporal relation sketched in Fig. 4 (cf. Langacker 1987: 247):

Fig. 4



Alternatively, the temporal processing of multiple configurations can involve **sequential** scanning, unfolding through conceived time, when the configurations in a series are profiled individually, see Fig.5 below (cf. Langacker 1990: 23). Note the heavy-line time arrow, conventionally representing the temporal aspect in this type of complex relations. When the conceived event is processed in this mode, it will be referred to as a **process**. A processual predicate corresponds to a verb in the traditional taxonomy.

Fig. 5



We are now in the position to spell out precisely what is suggested for the *wziąć<sub>2</sub>* construction. As stated before, the structure encodes a single event. Its processual profile, always a perfective verb, involves multiple configurations unfolding in time, sequentially scanned, with **a full process** – both endpoints included – within the scope of the conceptualized scene. It will be claimed that the process can be viewed in temporal terms as consisting of **temporal segments: onset, nucleus and coda**. What will be here suggested is that *wziąć<sub>2</sub>* acts as an **aspectualizer**, taken to act as a **referential**. It refers to one segment of the event, i.e. to its **onset**, while the verbal complement lexicalizes its **coda**. Precisely this **function** of *wziąć<sub>2</sub>* motivates the subcategorization requirements of the verb.

It is essentially such an arrangement of the conceptual scene and the process itself that produces the semantic effect of the construction, **lack of premeditation /instantaneity** and **simplicity/ effortlessness** of the action taken. It is as if the accomplishment of the action were guaranteed.

## 6. Iconicity in the co-lexicalization of verbs in the construction

It appears a controversial claim indeed to posit two indicative verb forms to encode a single event structure. Not so much, however, in the light of the following definition of the process of **co-lexicalization**: “the presence or degree-of-presence of predicate-raising of the complement clause verb onto the main verb; i.e. the degree to which the complement verb is lexicalized as one word with the main verb.” Givón (1980: 338). The underlying premise of such an approach is that not only clausehood but **verbhood** as well is a gradable category. Thus, within such a methodology, we can safely entertain the idea of a more verby complement verb and a less verby verb *wziąć<sub>2</sub>*.

Apparently some confirmation for the claims that we attempt to defend here comes from facts concerning the physical separation of the two verbs in the construction. Note that the verbs are typically adjacent, as in (1–4) and (19), or separated only by the conjunction *il/and*, as in (6), (10), (11a), (18), or a nominal, which is **not** an object of *wziąć<sub>2</sub>*, as in (8), (11b). Googled forms of the construction display the same characteristics, perhaps with an exception of a variety of swearwords and vulgarisms often found intervening. They do not belong to the argument structure, though. This **iconic proximity** in form is a vital principle in Cognitive Grammar, as it directly reflects conceptual affinity. An impressionistic assessment of the **intonation contour** observed in the construction can plausibly be treated as yet another argument in favour of the posited co-lexicalization exhibited in the construction.

Following this thesis, one cannot let it pass unnoticed that if the conceptual function of *wziąć*<sub>2</sub> is to encode the onset of the complement process, its own lexical meaning must have been pre-empted, so to speak.<sup>6</sup> We shall put it to the constructional meaning, i.e. it is the construction that forces its own arrangements, overriding the lexical meaning of the verb instantiating it. The process, for convenience referred to as pre-empting is in fact a case of grammaticalization. What specifically is claimed about the grammaticalization in *wziąć*<sub>2</sub> will be spelled out in the next section.

## 7. Grammaticalization of *wziąć*<sub>2</sub>

Grammaticalization can be most generally defined as the process whereby words from such major (lexical) categories as verbs, nouns, or adjectives assume in certain contexts a more grammatical function and become minor (grammatical) categories: prepositions, adverbs and auxiliaries, and, if the process continues, the grammaticalizing expressions as a result take on an even more grammatical meaning and increased grammatical function, for example, that of a complementizer or an affix (cf. Hopper and Traugott 1993, Lehmann 1995). Givón (1975) terms the change **semantic bleaching**, as a lexical item moves from encoding a specific semantic content, appropriate to a restricted range of contexts, to encoding a very generalized, reduced semantic content.

This presentation cannot do justice to all important issues pertaining to the nature of grammaticalization, such as: which existing lexical items qualify as candidates, why they are recruited to perform a new, grammatical function and how the change proceeds. Investigations uncover, though, that lexical items likely to be affected must meet the condition of semantic generality and frequency (cf. Traugott and Heine 1991: 9). Thus, it is *get* rather than *obtain* or *acquire* that becomes grammaticalized as in *have got* (cf. Gronmeyer 1999: 15).

No simple answer can be provided to the question of what feeds the process. Positions held in the literature differ widely: from those maintaining that the change is semantically driven and only the semantic change drives formal changes (cf. Givón 1991) to those that state grammaticalization is not a semantically led development and it is rather independent formal changes that pave the way for the semantic change or even that meaning change is a by-product of the syntactic re-categorization (cf. Lightfoot 1991: 148).

Finally, how the change proceeds is generally reduced to the issue of whether it is semantically gradual or instantaneous. Again, though it is widely accep-

<sup>6</sup> We are assuming here a generative approach, in the sense of Goldberg 1995.

ted that grammaticalization is a gradual process, viewed as a continuum or a chain of stages, Givón (1991) suggests that ‘the supposedly gradual nature of grammaticalization is in fact the result of the gradual nature of the formal structural adjustments which follow [...] original, instantaneous developments at the functional level’.

In light of the above general information *wziąć*<sub>2</sub> seems to be a very likely candidate for a case of grammaticalization mechanisms in operation. In particular, it will be suggested that the segment of the process referred to by *wziąć*<sub>2</sub> is not fully processual. In other words, the onset of the process is conceptualized more like an atemporal relation, with sequential scanning freeze-framed, so to speak. This would explain the fact that the semantic load corresponding to the action TAKE is conspicuously missing from sense<sub>2</sub> of the verb. This would explain the intriguing unpredictability of the semantics of the construction and its lack of full compositionality. Finally, this would explain the peculiar subcategorization requirements of *wziąć*<sub>2</sub>.

## 8. Summary and conclusions

To summarize, the analysis developed in this paper focuses on the seemingly inexplicable use of the verb *wziąć* in Polish with the indicative verb complement. The linguistic facts considered lead us to posit the status of construction to this verb-verb combination. Under the Construction Grammar approach the meaning of construction is not wholly compositional and such is the meaning of the *wziąć* construction. Schematically, we have coached this meaning as indicating **lack of premeditation /instantaneity** and **simplicity/ effortlessness** of the action taken. Importantly, this meaning cannot be attributed to the component meanings. As a particularly striking property of the construction we have noted the fact that the idea of an action of taking is altogether missing from the semantics of the studied structures. We have thus postulated that the *wziąć* construction encodes a single event and that we are dealing with one process type co-lexicalized by two verbs. The function of *wziąć* is to refer to the onset of the process, while the complement verb encodes the coda. The postulated arrangement of the conceptual scene underlying the construction can thus directly be linked to the semantics (an easy accomplishment) and the syntax of the construction. Accompanying such conceptual processing is the mechanism of grammaticalization of the lexical meaning of *wziąć*<sub>2</sub>. We have captured it as a suspension of sequential scanning, as a result of which the onset of the encoded process becomes less verby, heading towards an atemporal relation.



The analysis developed in the paper allows for three important implications to be drawn. First, placing the construction in the broad, possibly universal context of such mechanisms as co-lexicalization, or grammaticalization demonstrates it to be a matter of the regular and typical and not epiphenomenal.

Then, the essence of the construction's semantics lies outside its pragmatic effects of directness, informality and potential impoliteness. It will have to be noted, however, that when confronted with the imperative mood meaning, the meaning of the *wziąć* construction becomes overshadowed, so to speak, compare the informants' commentaries to (19) in Section 4.

Finally, unless the analysis that we have here developed is seriously flawed, the conceptual arrangement in the verb-verb combination carries implications of the unjustifiable use of a comma separating *wziąć* and its complement. Conceptually intertwined, they should iconically reflect that fact, they shouldn't be separated also in their physical form. The mechanical rules of punctuation, requiring that indicative mood verb forms are separated in Polish in a multiclausal constructions are in the case of the *wziąć* construction obscuring and not clarifying structural interdependencies

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### Streszczenie

Przedmiotem zainteresowania niniejszego artykułu jest polski czasownik *wziąć* i jego subkategoryzacja z czasownikiem w formie osobowej, tak jak w wyrażeniach typu: *wziął i umarł*; *weź, przestań*. Analiza przeprowadzona w świetle *Gramatyki konstrukcji* (Goldberg 1995) prowadzi do wniosku, iż zasadne jest postulowanie statusu konstrukcji dla badanych wyrażen, w których intrygująca forma składniowa motywowana jest semantycznie. Analizowane przykłady wskazują, że składająca się z dwóch czasowników konstrukcja koduje pojedyncze wydarzenie, a element znaczeniowy, który powinien być wniesiony przez *wziąć* jest w istocie nieobecny, „wypłukany” w procesie gramatyzacji. Zaproponowana w analizie rola *wziąć* w badanej konstrukcji ogranicza się do wyrażenia zaledwie początkowej z całej serii skanowanych sekwencyjnie konfiguracji kodujących jedno wydarzenie (Langacker 1997). Tak konceptualizowana sytuacja prowadzi do specyficznej realizacji składniowej i odpowiada za charakterystyczne znaczenie konstrukcji.