

Narrative modal MIEĆ in Polish

Evidentiality is a linguistic feature informing how a speaker obtained the evidence. In the most popular classification by Aikhenvald (2004), the main types are direct and indirect evidence. The first refers to sensory evidence (something seen, heard, touched, tasted), the other comes from reports, hearsay, inference, deduction etc. (examples 1-4).

In the narrow sense, evidentiality is expressed only by grammatical devices as in Bulgarian, Macedonian, Estonian, Persian or Turkish. If in a language such category does not exist, lexical means, mainly adverbs or particles convey the evidential function. In Polish, as in most of the European languages, evidentiality is indicated primarily by lexical units (example 2). Insightful studies by Rytel (1982), Holvoet (2011), and Wiemer and Socka (2016) discuss pragmatic and semantic characteristics of evidential adverbs and particles. The other, syntactic, possibility of expressing evidential function involves MIEĆ2 (modal) ‘have’ + infinitive. Topolińska (1968), Topolińska (2000), and Topolińska (2016) discerned epistemic from deontic MIEĆ2, pointing their similarity to non-confirmative in Balkan languages (cf. example 3), Holvoet (2012) mapped them as evidential, proposing a path of evolution from “standard” deontic functions. The common point for both analyses is that the source of the evidence is not essential — it can be hearsay as well as inferential. However, if we look at corpus data (Bilińska, Derwojedowa, and Kwiecień, 2018; Pawłowski, 2015; Przepiórkowski et al., 2012; Pęzik, 2020), we observe utterances such as 1-2 that grow in popularity in recent years, the renarrative. In these structures, the source of evidence is also different from the speaker, but it is typically known to both parties; the speaker reports the source’s words and intentionally suppress their own opinion. Such constructions are standard in reports on crimes or illegal actions. They are also common in gossip news (cf. example 4; Kaczmarek, Stefaniak, and Suszał 2011). We call this function renarrative.

The presentation aims are as follows. In the first part, we discuss the grammatical characteristics of renarrative MIEĆ2. Next, we analyse the morphological properties of renarrative MIEĆ2, such as tense, person, (im)personality. Then we will look at the aspect and subcategorisation of the subordinate infinitive. In the next part, we compare the narrative constructions with an evidential adverb as a constituent and without it. Finally, we examine other factors within the sentence, such as properties of the subject and object (e.g. being a personal substantive, being an element of a semantic field) that can influence renarrative interpretation.

Examples

- (1) Ryszard Ż. miał zastrzelić się ze służbowego
Ryszard Ż..PROP.N have.3.SG.PAST.M shoot.INF self.REFL.ACC from service.ADJ.M.G.SG
pistoletu. (NCP)
gun.SUBST.G.SG
‘Ryszard Ż. killed himself from his service weapon.’
- (2) Kobieta miała dźgnąć mężczyznę w okolice
woman.SUBST.F.N.SG have.V.3.SG.PAST stab.V.INF man.SUBST.M.A.SG in
serca. (MONCO)
area.SUBST.F.N.PL heart.SUBST.NEUT.G.SG
‘Reportedly, the woman stabbed the man near the heart.’
- (3) Car podobno prosił księcia Bismarką,
tsar.SUBST.N.SG allegedly ask.V.3.SG.PAST prince.SUBST.M.A.SG Bismarck.PROP.ACC
aby mu napisał jak ma rządzić (19c. Polish
that he.PPRON.M.D write.V.3.SG.PAST how have.V.3.SG.PRES govern.V.INF
Corpus)

‘Tsar reportedly asked Prince Bismarck to write him on how to govern.’

- (4) [Ostatecznie, jak podawał tygodnik „Party”,] mieli kupić
 [finally, as Party magazine reported,] have.V.3.PL.PAST buy.V.INF
 nieruchomość , której cena
 property.SUBST.FA.SG, which.ADJ.F.G.SG price.SUBST.F.N.SG amount.V.3.SG.PAST
 wyniosła milion złotych.
 million.NUM złoty.SUBST.M.G.PL
 ‘Eventually, as Party magazine reported, they bought a property worth one million zloty’.

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