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Germanic and Polish influences on expressions of modality in Wymysorys

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The paper takes the synchronic perspective and seeks to discuss the dynamic, deontic and epistemic modality systems in Wymysorys - a West Germanic language used by about 50-60 speakers in Wilamowice, a small town of about 3,000 people near Bielsko-Biała in Southern Poland (Wicherkiewicz 2013). The proposed preliminary analysis is based on the data elicited from the recordings of dialogues and monologues taken from the online database of endangered language varieties "Poland's Linguistic Heritage".

The author's general intention is to compare the morph-syntactic features of modal expressions observed in Wymysorys with their counterparts observed in Polish and Germanic languages. Wicherkiewicz (2003: 15) notes that "[m]ost linguists share the same opinion about German character and the origin of the ethnolect of Wilamowice." Still, the vast number of speakers of the language, as pointed out in the aforementioned publication, believe in their Flemish, Dutch and Frisian origins. That is why the presentation will primarily focus on contrasting Wymysorys modal expressions with modality present in Germanic languages (e.g. German, Dutch and Frisian). The author of the paper attempts to investigate both the behaviour of expressions of modality and their susceptibility to loss, change and innovation. Special focus is also to be put on the thorough evaluation of the Germanic / Polish influence on the expression of modality in Wymysorys. The quantitative and qualitative analysis will compare and contrast the modality systems featuring in the data taken from a corpus of naturalistic data (spontaneous narratives and conversation) with the modality systems documented in the older sources published or containing material gathered before 1945 (Kleczkowski 1920, 1921).

The analysis will, hopefully, show the "behaviour" of expressions of modality and their susceptibility to change and innovation, which, in turn, may shed some light on the origin and development of the language. The results of the research may help to assess whether the identified tendencies can be explained as interference from Polish / Germanic language or as an autogenetic process.

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