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## On the gradualness and gradience of modal constructions and epistemic adverbial constructions

It is known from European languages that constructions consisting of a modal auxiliary and a lexical verb often encoded in a non-finite form (ModCxn) can develop into constructions which one may call adverbial constructions or – to be more precise – constructions with epistemic sentence adverbs (EpAdvCxn). Ramat and Ricca (1998) found four different types of epistemic adverbs derived from ModCxns: i) fused forms of the type ‘modal.3SG’ + ‘to be’ (e.g. Russian *možet byt’* ‘perhaps’), ii) fused forms ‘modal.3SG’ + ‘to happen’ (e.g. Swedish *kanske*, ‘perhaps’), iii) fused forms ‘modal.3SG + complementizer’ and iv) conversed modals (e.g. Polish *może* or Slovak *možno* ‘perhaps’). In the presentation we shall address two questions: First, we shall try to give an account of the main constructional features constituting ModCxns in comparison to EpAdvCxn. It will be argued that EpAdvCxn constitutes a homogeneous so-called macro-construction in contrast to ModCxns which resemble a set a meso-constructions. ModCxns can be divided into meso-constructions depending on the following five morpho-syntactic features:

- i) the syntactic encoding of the subject argument,
- ii) assignment of the subject agreement marking to the modal and/or the main verb,
- iii) TAM marking on the modal and/or the main verb,
- iv) presence or absence of an auxiliary or light verb,
- v) presence or absence of a complementizer. (Hansen & de Haan in prep.)

This cross-linguistic typology of ModCxns will reveal possible areas of gradience between ModCxns and AdvCxns from a synchronic point of view. Second, we shall explore the diachronic link between the two constructions by analyzing data from Russian and Serbian which differ considerably in their inventory of both Mod-Cxns and EpAdvCxns. We will try to show that the development from one construction into the other involves several minor shifts in morpho-syntax and semantics which accounts for the gradualness of change.

### References

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