
Evidentiality and modality in Old Catalan. A diachronic cognitive approach to the semantics of modal verbs

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Résumé

State of affairs. Traditionally, the reading derived from deontic modality was considered to be epistemic modality (i.e. the speaker's commitment) in the case of romance modal verbs (Bybee *et al.* 1994). However, currently different studies have doubted the modal nature of these verbs, which have been described as evidentials (Squartini 2008, Cornillie 2009). In Romance Languages the relation between epistemic modality and evidentiality is an unresolved issue.

Hypothesis. We will show that the innovative readings of the modal verbs *deure* ('must'), *haver de* and *tenir de* ('have to') are evidential values that indicate access to the state of affairs indirectly, through a speaker's inference. In any case, if these periphrases allow an epistemic reading, we understand that it is a pragmatic contextual value, but not related to the meaning encoded by the periphrases (Cornillie 2009). Moreover, this analysis allows us to establish inferential types more accurately: specific inference (less subjective) and generic inference (more subjective) (Squartini 2008). On the other side, we hypothesize modal verb *poder* ('can/may') encodes epistemic values.

Data, method, approach. We query a corpus of Old Catalan (CICA). The data show the semantic evolutions of these modal verbs from Latin to Old Catalan (11th - 16th centuries). These data have allowed us to present a more refined chain of semantic change.

Within the framework of Langacker's Cognitive Grammar (1987, 1991, 1999, 2006) and Pelyvás' contributions (2006), this work describes the semantic change in terms of fading force and progressive subjectification.

Expected results. From an onomasiological perspective, we expect to draw a detailed semantic map on modality and evidentiality in order to clarify the relationship between both domains in Old Catalan (in the case of modal verbs *deure*, *haver de*, *tenir de*, *poder*). Likewise, we expect to extend our results to Modern Catalan and other Romance languages.

Mots-Clés: cognitive linguistics, evidentiality, epistemic modality, modal verbs, subjectification, semantic change, Old Catalan, diachronic perspective

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