

The semantics and pragmatics of apprehensive markers in a cross-linguistic perspective

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Presumably speakers of all languages have strategies at their disposal to communicate warnings, as in (1) – i.e. to alert the addressee to a potential, but undesirable event which can be avoided by appropriate action, amounting to a directive illocutionary act with the aim to bring about this action (Carstens 2002; Dominicy and Franken 2002; Searle 1969: 67).

(1) (Get down from up there!) *You might fall!*

However, languages differ in whether or not they possess grammatical markers which are specialised for just this communicative task. For example, the English modal auxiliary *might* with a non-past main verb has a general meaning of future possibility; the undesirability of the consequence (e.g. that falling can lead to injury) is merely implied.

In contrast, many languages possess dedicated grammatical morphemes to encode a future possibility that is undesirable, such as the particle *ngaja* in Ngarinyman (Ngumpin-Yapa, Australia) in (2). As one would expect, warnings are a typical pragmatic context for markers of this type.

(2) *ngaja=nggu* *bayalany* *dawujbany-du=ma!*
APPR=2SG.OBJ bite:PRS perch-ERG=TOP

(A: 'I will bathe here') – B: '(watch out), a perch (fish sp.) might bite you!'

(fieldwork Schultze-Berndt)

Grammatical elements of this kind have been labelled “apprehensive”, “admonitive”, “evitative” or “timitive”, among other terms. The syntactic status of apprehensive clauses is an interesting issue: the apprehensive marker can either function as a subordinator comparable to (archaic) English *lest*, or have the status of a main clause modal or particles, e.g. in (2). Even in the latter case, clauses with apprehensive markers are generally pragmatically dependent in that they are employed as justifications for a directive or an expression of (non-)intention on the part of the speaker, as pointed out in many language-specific descriptions, e.g. François (2003: 304–310). For example, the implicit directive associated with the utterance in (2) is ‘Don’t bathe there’ or ‘Be careful when bathing’. Main clause apprehensive markers are therefore semantically and functionally – and sometimes possibly diachronically, e.g. by way of insubordination – related to subordinate clause markers.

Although apprehensive markers figure in numerous language-specific descriptions – for example of languages from the Australian, Papuan, South Pacific, and Amazonian areas –

there exist very few works that address the phenomenon from a cross-linguistic perspective (Dobrushina 2006; Lichtenberk 1995; Pakendorf and Schalley 2007; Vuillermet to appear). Apprehensive markers only receive passing mention – if at all – in works on modality or speech acts from a typological-functional perspective (Bybee et al. 1994: 211; König and Siemund 2007; Palmer 2001 [1994]: 22) and have been largely ignored in the formal semantic literature on modality.

Multifunctional apprehensives have often escaped the attention of researchers; an example are markers originating from deictic or anaphoric temporal connectives ('afterwards', 'soon') which have taken on an apprehensive function in a number of languages including German (3), Dutch (Boogaart 2009), and the English-based Kriol of Northern Australia (Angelo and Schultze-Berndt 2016).

(3)	<i>Nachher</i>	<i>gewinne</i>	<i>ich</i>	<i>noch</i>
	Later/APPR	win:PRS	I	PARTICLE
	<i>und kann das CL Finale</i>	<i>nicht</i>	<i>zu</i>	<i>Hause schauen.</i>
	and can DEFCL final	NEG	at	home watch

'(I think I'd rather not participate in this lottery). I might win [a trip] and would not be able to watch the Champions League final at home.' (www)

The connective *nachher* in German (when unstressed) is unambiguously apprehensive, i.e. it cannot be employed to describe a potential outcome that is judged as positive or desirable by the speaker. For example, a corpus search together with the lexical item for 'win' exclusively returned examples like (3), where the possibility of winning is presented as undesirable. Judging from a survey of reference and teaching grammars of German, this secondary function of the temporal connective has gone largely unnoticed, possibly due to the lack of awareness of the cross-linguistic category.

The aim of this workshop is to bring together scholars from different subfields of linguistics and working within a variety of theoretical frameworks, to shed light on the elusive category of apprehensives and apprehensive strategies. We invite contributions that address one or more of the following questions:

- a) What is the semantic characterisation and pragmatic function of grammaticalised apprehensive markers in the individual language(s) considered? Are there several markers in a single language, e.g. in precautionary and preventive function (Lichtenberk 1995; Vuillermet to appear)? If yes, what are the semantic contrasts involved? Does the apprehensive marker contribute to the at-issue meaning?
- b) What is the paradigmatic status of the apprehensive markers/strategies? E.g. are they part of the TAM system, or the complementiser system? Are there constraints in the co-occurrence with temporal or modal markers, with voice, or with person?
- c) What is the syntactic status of the apprehensive clause?

What is the status of apprehensive utterances in speech act theories and in discussions of the relationship between modality/mood and speech acts? What

are the pragmatic conditions that give rise to apprehensive constructions; in particular, what is their relation to directives (cf. Pakendorf & Schalley 2007), and to complements of 'fear' (and similar) predicates (cf. Lichtenberk 1995)?

d) What are the diachronic origins of grammaticalised apprehensive markers? What light do apprehensive strategies (weakly grammaticalised or multifunctional markers) shed on the semantics of the apprehensive category? What is the role of negation in the rise of apprehensive constructions?

e) Are there areal patterns of particular strategies of apprehensive marking?

Abstracts should be submitted via the SLE2018 Easychair page

(<https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=sle2018>) by 15th of January 2018.

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