

## Modality's semantic map revisited

Semantic maps essentially account for the synchronic polyfunctionality of linguistic constructions. This polyfunctionality is taken to result from diachronic evolution. Maps may or may not represent claims about the directionality of the presupposed evolution. If they do, the lines that connect the contiguous meanings are arrows. Often, though not always, developments are strictly unidirectional. The issue that the paper will illustrate is this: what do we do when we have a map with a well argued directionality hypothesis that certain data appear to violate? Just like for data that appear to flout the contiguity requirement (meanings covered by a marker have to be contiguous or go back to a common ancestor), one can either give up part of the semantic map or look for a non-semantic motivation. One such non-semantic motivation appeals to language contact, the idea being that language contact may steer constructions in directions not allowed by the semantics of the map.

This general problem will be illustrated with the semantic map of modality, as proposed by van der Auwera & Plungian (1998). This map, as well as some of the work on which it is based (esp. Bybee et al 1994), describes a directionality from participant-internal possibility (also 'ability'), as in (1), to participant-external possibility (also 'circumstantial possibility') as in (2).

- (1) I *can* swim.
- (2) To reach the station you *can* take bus 66.

The recalcitrant data involve modals that derive from the lexical item 'get'; the resulting modals can be called 'acquisitive modals'. The two hotbeds of acquisitive modality are the Baltic area and Southeast Asia (on the latter see Enfield 2002). In both there is at least indirect evidence for a development from participant-external to participant-internal modality: languages in these areas may employ an acquisitive lexeme for only participant-external possibility, for both participant-internal and participant-external possibility, for neither of the two; but never for only participant-internal possibility. The relevant languages belong to different families, e.g. Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, Hmong in Southeast Asia or Swedish, Finnish, and Latvian in the Baltic. Both areas also testify strong contact inference, and there are claims in the literature that specifically point to the relevance of contact interference for the fate of acquisitive modals. Although we give due consideration to language contact, we will nevertheless show that there is enough direct diachronic evidence (from Chinese) and that there is a sufficiently plausible semantic scenario for the development of acquisitive modals for us to revise the relevant part of the original semantic map. It will also be shown that the revised idea about the relation between participant-internal and participant-external possibility carries over to necessity. The mistake of 8 years ago will be argued to stem from a Standard Average European bias.

Bybee, J., Perkins, R. and Pagliuca, W. 1994. *The evolution of grammar: Tense, aspect and modality in the languages of the world*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Enfield, N.J. 2002. *Linguistic Epidemiology: Semantics and Grammar of Language Contact in Mainland Southeast Asia* [Curzon Asiatic Linguistics]. London and New York: Routledge.

van der Auwera, J. and Plungian, V. 1998. "Modality's semantic map". *Linguistic Typology* 2:79-124.