**Risking a new classification of possibility modals: The role of apprehensives**

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The communication of risks (e.g. *hot surface – contact may cause burn*) and of actions likely to avoid risks is of vital importance in human interaction. It is therefore not surprising that many languages possess apprehensives, i.e. modals which – just like the noun *risk* – co-lexicalise the concepts of possibility and undesirability. These have mostly been discussed for lesser studied languages (Lichtenberk 1995, Dobrushina 2006, Pakendorf & Schalley 2007, Angelo & Schultze-Berndt 2016, Vuillermet 2018, Faller et al. forthcoming) but are arguably present in more widely known languages where they have not always received widespread attention; examples are English *be liable to* as in (1)*,* andDutch *straks* (Boogaart 2009, 2020).

(1) *This conveyor* ***is liable to*** */* ***may*** */* ***can*** *start without warning.*

In this paper, I consider the relevance of apprehensive modals – and more generally, of strategies for expressing risk – for the categorisation of possibility modals. It is widely assumed, following Lichtenberk (1995), that apprehensives have an epistemic modal flavour, but relevant examples (akin to (1))have also been placed within the categories of dynamic or circumstantial modality, broadly defined (e.g. Portner 2009: 140, 214). However, various strands of evidence point to a distinctive place of at least a subset of "risk modals" in the typology of modality. Such evidence comes from the distributional properties of attested apprehensives with regard to their scope and temporal orientation, from their grammaticalisation sources, and from interdisciplinary studies of modal distinctions in risk communication (e.g. Ülkümen et al. 2016). The overarching distinctive property of non-epistemic apprehensives and their less specialised possibility modal counterparts appears to be the "timeless" nature of the possibilities they encode (Müller 2012): Unlike circumstantial possibilities in the narrow sense (Kratzer 1991: 664; Abusch 2012; Thomas 2014: 439), they are not contingent on the modal judge's perception of specific facts in the actual world at the time of evaluation, as in (2), but rather rely on their assessment of a possibility as based on a stereotypical course of events, as in (1). And unlike epistemic modals in the narrow sense, they cannot have past or present temporal orientation because they do not relate to an individual speaker's (or other modal judge's) knowledge about a specific situation at the time of utterance (which can be subject to revision, as in (3)), but again to knowledge of an unchanging, stereotypical course of events, considered to some extent established knowledge within a speech community.

(2) *All bags have been loaded, the conveyor* ***can*** *now start*.

(3) *My friends* ***may*** *have missed the train – no, they just messaged, they still caught it.*

Timeless modals have indeed been discussed in the literature under the various labels “general situational possibility” (Depraetere & Reed 2011), "objective epistemic modality" (e.g. von Fintel & Gillies 2011), "dispositional modality" (e.g. Menéndez-Benito 2013; Cohen 2018) and "alethic (stochastic/chance) modality" (e.g. Ülkümen et al 2016). The study of language-specific apprehensive modals promises to enable both a clearer definition of these debated concepts and the incorporation of "timeless" modals into mainstream categorisations of modality.

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