

## The relation between MCP, epistemic modality and illocutionary force

Vesselina Laskova  
University of Venice

In this work, I argue that, on the basis of morphological and semantic data from Bulgarian, it is possible to provide a clearer description of the properties which characterize the contexts which do and those which do not tolerate MCP. Bulgarian is a language in which topicalization, focalization, as well as other MCP identified for English, cannot be characterized as MCP. Tag questions, however, *are* present as a MCP. There is an invariant word, *nali*, which can appear in front of a root clause, as shown in (1).

- (1)     *Nali* Ivan e tuk?  
          *Nali* Ivan is here  
          “Ivan is here, isn’t he?”

As expected, the possibility to use a tag question divides adverbial clauses (henceforth ACs) in two groups, presented in (2a) and (2b).

- (2)     a.     *Štom nali* vsiĉko e nared, utre trăgvame.  
              Since *nali* everything is OK tomorrow we leave  
              “We are leaving tomorrow, since everything is OK, isn’t it?”  
          b.     *Štom (\*nali)*     Ivan     pristigne,             *šte* trăgvame.  
              As soon as *nali*     Ivan     arrivePERFECTIVE will (we) leave  
              “We are leaving as soon as Ivan arrives, doesn’t he?”

Tests offered in Haegeman (2002) and subsequent work can be applied to show that the distinction between the cases in which tag questions are allowed and those in which they are not corresponds to the distinction between central and peripheral ACs. Thus, Bulgarian data show a strong correlation between the two types of ACs and the presence vs. absence of MCP. (Notice also that Focalization, which is not a MCP in Bulgarian, *can* occur in central ACs).

In this work, I show that the morphological and semantic characteristics of these two types of ACs provide an explanation for the possibility to use tag questions, as a MCP in peripheral ACs and not in central ACs.

To this purpose, first, I analyze the distribution of a non-past perfective verbal form, as the one in (2b). The point is that, in main clauses, this form can appear only if accompanied by the “future” particle or by the subjunctive particle. In ACs, however, again, two possibilities exist. In contexts like (2a), which are compatible with tag questions, this form can only appear if accompanied by the future particle. Clauses of this type express a “premise” meaning. Only in central adverbial clauses, like (2b), the non-past perfective form can occur alone. In other words, in the latter case, we have a morphologically unambiguous form used only in central AC.

An important point is that the non-past perfective form exhibits morphological impoverishment that does not allow it to appear alone in root contexts. A semantic impoverishment is also present: when used in future oriented event conditionals (as in (2b)), this form *cannot* express *any* kind of intention, higher probability or doubt concerning the realization of the event expressed in the conditional clause. In other words, by using the perfective non-past verb form, the speaker cannot express *any* kind of attitude towards an event (by uttering (2b), the speaker does not know whether Ivan will arrive, while in (2a), the speaker knows that everything is OK). I argue that this kind of impoverishment regards epistemic modality.

Moreover, I claim that the phenomenon signaled in Bulgarian as a morphological and semantic deficiency is a universal characteristic of central ACs. As noted in Declerck and Reed

(2001), also cited in Haegeman (2002), event conditionals are incompatible with adverbs expressing epistemic modality. I argue, therefore, that the presence versus absence of epistemic impoverishment can account for the distinction between the central ACs and peripheral ACs.

Moreover, the present tense form (both in Bulgarian and in English), when used in conditional clauses, is ambiguous in a very significant way. Depending on the context, it can express either the above described meaning of the non-past perfective form or the *knowledge* of the speaker that the event *is going* to happen (or the *knowledge* about someone else's intention to do something). Importantly, the present form cannot simply convey the presupposition that the speaker knows there is a high probability that an event happens. We can conclude, therefore, that what the present tense form can and the perfective form cannot express is the *knowledge/awareness* of the speaker that the event described in the AC is realized/is going to be realized/is intended to be realized.

Corroborating evidence in favour of the distinction between the presence vs. absence of the speaker's knowledge in peripheral vs. central ACs, respectively, comes from the distribution of complementizers. While the English complementizer *if* can be used both in central and peripheral ACs, its Bulgarian correspondent *ako* sounds acceptable only in central ACs. In peripheral ACs, the complementizer *štom* (in its premise meaning) is used. Importantly, this complementizer explicitly signals the speaker's knowledge that the event will happen/has happened. Crucially, this form of the complementizer (in its premise interpretation) is *never* compatible with the dependent verb form.

As we have seen, the embedded contexts that do not allow for tag questions are impoverished in terms of epistemic modality, which is semantically realized as the lack of knowledge, on the part of the speaker, about whether the event is/will/is intended to be realized. This does not sound unnatural since tag questions are actually a request for a confirmation that the event expressed by a root clause has truly happened. It follows then that what a root clause has and a central AC lacks is the *knowledge/awareness* of the speaker that an event is/will be realized. I argue that this *knowledge* or *awareness* of the speaker, which is the source of epistemic modality, is the crucial element of the illocutionary force of a root clause.

#### *References:*

- Declerck, R and S. Reed (2001) Conditionals: a comprehensive empirical analysis. Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Haegeman, L. (2002) "Anchoring to the speaker, adverbial clauses and the structure of CP", *Georgetown University Working Papers in Linguistics*, 2, pp. 117-180
- Haegeman, L. (2010) "The internal syntax of adverbial clauses." *Lingua*, 120, pp. 628-648