

## Diachronic evidence for a unified semantics of the German modal verb *sollen*

Stefan Hinterwimmer (University of Wuppertal)

It is well known that the German modal verb *sollen* has both a bouletic anti-performative interpretation on which it is in complementary distribution with the imperative (Bech 1951, Glas 1984, Diewald 1999, Hinterwimmer, Matthewson & Truckenbrodt 2019) and an evidential interpretation on which it indicates that there is hearsay evidence for the truth of the proposition denoted by the embedded clause (Schenner 2008). In this talk, I argue on the basis of diachronic evidence from Old, Middle and Early New High German (cf. Lühr Maché 2019) for a unified account of *sollen* along the lines of Hinterwimmer (2013) which assumes an underspecified core meaning that can be described as follows: The proposition denoted by the sentence containing *sollen* presupposes the existence of an intentional act whose author is not the (individual denoted by) subject of the sentence and is true if in all epistemically accessible worlds where the intended result of that act obtains, the proposition denoted by the embedded clause *p* is true. While the hearsay-evidence reading comes about if the prior intentional act is one or several acts of asserting a proposition entailing *p*, the anti-performative bouletic reading comes about if the prior intentional act is either a command/advice/request or a purely mental act of having an intention to bring about the respective state of affairs.

### References

- Bech, Gunnar (1951). *Grundzüge der semantischen Entwicklungsgeschichte der hochdeutschen Modalverba*. København: Munsgaard.
- Diewald, Gabriele (1999). *Die Modalverben im Deutschen. Grammatikalisierung und Polyfunktionalität*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Glas, Reinhold (1984). *'sollen' im heutigen Deutsch. Bedeutung und Gebrauch in der Schriftsprache*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag.
- Hinterwimmer, Stefan (2013). The Semantics of German *sollen*. Session 6, Semantics- Pragmatics-Interfaces, International Congress of Linguistics, University of Geneva.
- Hinterwimmer, Stefan, Lisa Matthewson & Hubert Truckenbrodt (2019). [Competition between the German root modal \*sollen\* and the imperative](#). In M. T. Espinal, E. Castroviejo, M. Leonetti & L. McNally (eds.), *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung* (SuB) 23, 507-524.
- Lühr, Rosemarie. 1997. Zur Semantik der althochdeutschen Modalverben. In G. Fritz & Thomas Gloning (eds.), *Untersuchungen zur semantischen Entwicklungsgeschichte der Modalverben im Deutschen* (Germanistische Linguistik 187), 159–176. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer.
- Maché, Jacob (2019). *How Epistemic Modifiers Emerge*. Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter.
- Schenner, Mathias (2019). Double Face Evidentials in German: Reportative 'sollen' and 'wollen' in Embedded Contexts. In A. Grønn ed.), *Proceedings of Sinn Und Bedeutung* (SuB) 12, 552-566.