

# From imperative to mood-indication

## Slovene *naj* as an instance of pragmaticalisation?

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The Slovene marker *naj* (coarsely: 'let') is usually analysed as a mood marker supplementing the imperative paradigm for the 3rd person, (1), as a modal particle signalling non-factivity and evidential meanings, in particular conjecture and doubt, (2), as an adverbial conjunction, (3), and as a clausal complementizer, (4), (cf. Roeder and Hansen 2006; Topolińska 2003).

- (1) Jedilnik *naj* vam služi-PRS.3SG za orientacijo (gigafida.net)  
'The menue *shall* serve you as orientation.'
- (2) kalašnikov AK47, ki *naj* bi si ga [...] prisvojil neki ameriški vojak (Greenberg 2006, p. 133)  
'A Kalashnikov AK47, which was (*supposedly*) acquired by some American soldier.'
- (3) starega vina primešamo, [...] *naj* bodo možilost dobile (nl.ijs.si/imp; 1831)  
'We add some old wine, *such that* they gain virility.'
- (4) Prosila sem jo, *naj* vstane. (gigafida.net)  
'I have asked her *to* get up.' (lit.: she *should* get up)

These analyses are problematic since *naj*:

- is not restricted to the 3rd person and differs from the imperative in that source and addressee need not be part of the same communicative situation, (5),
  - combines with the morphological conditional and only then conveys readings of conjecture or hearsay, (6)
  - appears with the complementizer *da*, (7)
- (5) Mi, kmetje, pa *naj* bomo-PRS.1PL lepo tiho in *naj* delamo-PRS.1PL (gigafida.net)  
'We, farmers, *shall* better be quiet and shall work.'
  - (6) [...] kakor *meni Gregor Holec* [...]. Inflacija *naj* bi letos *upadla*-COND pod deset odstotkov (gigafida.net)  
'[...] *as G.H. reckons*. The inflation *should* fall below 10 percent this year [according to him]'
  - (7) preden jim je reko *da*-COMP *naj*-COMP(?) hitro pridejo (GOS Corpus of spoken Slovene)  
'before I have told them *that* they *should* come'

In the present paper it will be suggested to analyse *naj* as a 'mood indicating modal' in the sense of Portner (1997), and hence an exponent of pragmatic mood. Differently from morphological mood and modal auxiliaries, *naj* does not carry modal force on its own. Instead, it contributes to the conversational force of a clause and constrains the attitudes towards what this clause expresses, whereby it also establishes an attitude holder. Along these lines, *naj* can be described as introducing (1) a feature of [+ non-assertion], which (2) is related to an attitude-holder and (3) scopes over complements of various syntactic kinds. This analysis is supported by the historical development of *naj*. It derives from the imperative of *nehati* 'let' (lit. 'not refrain from'), as can be seen from (rare) instances of *naj*-IMP with a clausal (*da*), infinitival or asyndetically linked complement, (8) and (9) (see also the examples cited in Pleteršnik 2010).

- (8) *najta*-IMP.2DU mene vama za očeta biti (nl.ijs.si/imp; 1847)  
'[you two] let me be a father for the two of you'
- (9) *najte*-IMP.2PL, de le v' nebefa gledam (nl.ijs.si/imp; 1837)  
'[you] let me just look into heaven'

From its former imperative morphology, uninflected *naj* has inherited the feature of [+ non-assertion]. Interacting with the syntactic and semantic context, this feature underlies the various interpretations of *naj* illustrated in (1)-(7). The morphological restriction and semantic narrowing has been accompanied by an extension in structural scope and the acquisition of a discourse linking potential. In this respect, the development of *naj* resembles that of adverbial modifiers towards complementizer heads along the 'complementizer cycle' as described by Gelderen (2009) for engl. *how* or *whether*.

The development of *naj* from the imperative form of a lexical verb to a notional mood indicator raises the question as to whether this process can be described as pramaticalisation, or whether it is better regarded as grammaticalisation or lexicalisation – the more so as features characteristic of all of these processes (see Diewald 2011) seem to play a role:

- semantic feature [+ non-assertion]: *lexicalisation*
- loss of morphosyntactic distinctions, structural scope extension: *grammaticalisation*
- anchoring with an attitude holder: *pragmaticalisation*

Obviously, thus, in the case of *naj*, the three processes interact in affecting different aspects of the linguistic sign. *Naj* as a mood indicating modal results from the re-adjustment of the respective contribution of lexical meaning (semantics), indexical-relational potential (grammar) and anchoring to an attitude holder including the potential of discourse linking (pragmatics).

## References

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