

## On epistemic modality and evidentiality in Portuguese through speech act verbs

### Abstract

Portuguese speech act verbs such as *prometer* (promise) and *ameaçar* (threaten) have undergone change from a purely lexical use to a more grammaticalized one, by which they may be said to have entered the realm of epistemic modality, as well as the possibility of signalling evidentiality. In my presentation the grammaticalization process of both verbs will be described, by developing on previous work (in the case of *ameaçar*, Pinto de Lima 2006) or by engaging in new (in the case of *prometer*). Accepting the distinction between epistemic modality and evidentiality to be categorical (De Haan, 1999, 2005; Aikhenvald, 2004) the statute of these verbs as epistemic (semi-)modals will be discussed and evaluated on the basis of criteria such as inclusion in a grammatical paradigm, obligatoriness, distribution and frequency. For this evaluation, a comparison will be undertaken with the verbs *poder*, *dever* and *ter de/ que* (can, must and have to), which have established epistemic modal senses. This will lead us to the presence of evidentiality in the use of these verbs: in order to ascertain its nature and depth of grammaticalization, the verb *parecer* (seem) will be called upon (Pinto de Lima, 2004) and the hypothesis will be tested of the emergence of a paradigm of evidentiality involving these verbs, as it has been suggested for their German correlates (Diewald/ Smirnova, submitted).

### References

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