

Permission and obligation intertwined: the twofold modal meaning of the Finnish jussive mood

The aim of this paper is to investigate the permissive modal meaning through the uses of the Finnish jussive mood, also considered as the third person of the imperative. The study focuses on the polarity between permission and obligation, i. e. the modal possibility and necessity, as well as on the connection between permission and agency.

The data analyzed come from The Finnish Text Collection, including newspaper texts and representing thus standard Finnish, as well as from the Digital Morphology Archives and the Syntax Archives, including dialect data.

The analysis shows that, in non-standard variants of Finnish, the meanings of permission and obligation coexist in the uses of the jussive mood, allowing more than one point of view on the event to be expressed simultaneously. This is illustrated in example (1) by the two possible English translations of the jussive clause: one highlighting the unfavorable nature of the state of affairs to the referent of the subject, the other taking into account the non-intervention of the other participants. In this extract, the speaker describes the old ways of celebrating Christmas.

- (1) kell- ol' viinaa se joi viinaa ja mitäs siinä ol'i kell- ei ollu ni sitte **olkoo juomatta**. (LaX, Sortavalan mlk.)

'he who had liquor he drank liquor and that's it he who didn't have it well then **he had to stay without drinking / he was left without**'

The permissive meaning of a jussive clause can be interpreted as an active authorization ('making possible') or as a passive non-opposing ('not preventing'), depending on the degree of speaker agency, as well as on the presence of other agents (cf. von Wright 1951, Lyons 1977, Leino 2003).

The modal meaning where possibility and necessity appear as inseparable has also been observed in studies involving modal verbs in other languages of Northern Europe, namely in Inari Sámi (Laitinen 1988) and in Swedish (Viberg 2012). While examining the Swedish modal verb *få* ('get'), Viberg (*ibid.*) has noted that the modal reading where permission and obligation coexist is not tolerated in legal documents, *få* being reserved to permissive use in these texts.

The same type of difference between language registers is displayed in the uses of the Finnish jussive, as well. In standard language, the jussive mainly occurs in conventional contexts, such as concessive clauses and certain constructions coding affect or rhetorical moves. In these uses, the binary modal meaning of jussive tends to fade, one of the modal poles, permission or obligation, being foregrounded.

In dialects, the two aspects of the jussive modal meaning bring to light the interests and the intentions of two or more participants simultaneously, and reveal thus the dialogic nature of permission: in order to permit, there has to be first a necessity.

Data

- Ftc* *Finnish Text Collection*. An electronic document collection of the Finnish language. Gatherers: Research Institute for the Languages of Finland, Department of General Linguistics at the University of Helsinki, Foreign Languages Department at the University of Joensuu, CSC – Scientific Computing Ltd. Available through CSC, <http://www.csc.fi/>.
- DMA* *Digital Morphology Archives*. Department of Finnish, Finno-Ugrian and Scandinavian Studies at the University of Helsinki and CSC - IT Center for Science. Available through CSC, <http://www.csc.fi/>.
- LaX* *Lauseopin X-arkisto*. Syntax archives. Research Institute for the Languages of Finland, School of Languages and Translation Studies at the University of Turku.

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