# Modality and Tense: A cognitive approach to the Russian *možno* 'be possible' construction.

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The future tense and its relation to mood and modality has been widely discussed in general and cognitive linguistics (Chung and Timberlake 1985, Bybee et al. 1994, Stojnova 2018). Russian modal constructions with the impersonal modal adverb *možno* 'can, be possible' express a situation that is possible in the past, present or future. To express future meaning a modal word like *možno* is expected to combine with a future form of the copula verb *byt′* 'be' as in (1) and (2):

(1) Korrektnye vyvody **možno** **budet** **sdelat'** na osnove itogov
                             can         be.FUT.3SG   make.INF.PFV
    Global'nogo raunda.
    'Correct conclusions can be drawn based on the results of the Global Round.'
    [A. Kosarev. Èsperanto meždunarodnyx sravnenij // "Èkspert". 2014]

(2) Prognozy **možno** **budet** **delat'** tol'ko bliže k vesne.
                        can         be.FUT.3SG   make.INF.IPFV
    'Forecasts **can** only **be made** closer to spring.'
    [S. Inkižinova. Razguljalis' // "Èkspert". 2013]

However, examples where *možno* is used without the future copula have a very similar meaning as in (3) and (4):

(3) Nu da… koe-čto ešče **možno** **sdelat'**. no, uvy, uže nemnogo…
                                 can      make.INF.PFV
    'Well, yes… something else **can be done**. but, alas, not much…'
    [Perepiska v icq meždu agd-ardin i Koljučij drug. 2008]

(4) S tekstom, daže esli vy ego uže vyvesili, **možno** **delat'** vsë
                                                  can      make.INF.IPFV
    čto ugodno: redaktirovat', perepisat' zanovo, uničtožit'.
    'Even if you have already posted the text, you **can do** whatever you want: edit, rewrite, destroy.'
    [Zapis' LiveJournal. 2004]

In this talk I aim to clarify the semantic contribution of the future copula in constructions with *možno* and explore the whole range of factors, such as aspect of the infinitive, word order, modal function of *možno* and presence of the temporal and conditional markers, hypothesizing that these contextual factors predict the choice of construction.

My study of 800 examples (200 per each type: *možno* + *budet* + INF.IPFV, *možno* + *budet* + INF.PFV, *možno* + INF.IPFV, *možno* + INF.PFV) from the Russian National Corpus (ruscorpora.ru) shows that constructions without the future copula are 34 times more frequent than the constructions with the copula. The constructions with the copula typically combine with various contextual clues, namely temporal, sequential, conditional and other markers that unambiguously locate the situation in the future. The addition of a temporal marker forces the interpretation whereby the event denoted by the infinitive takes place in the future, while the possibility denoted by *možno* may be in the present or the future. These findings are illustrated by means of schemas of the type used in Langacker (2008).

I will also discuss the role of iconicity (Smith 2002) within the constructions with *možno* and the future copula. I suggest that the presence of the future copula between the modal word and the verb reflects not only that the verb locates the event in the future but also reflects the temporal distance between the moment when the speaker can carry out an action and the moment when the speaker performs this action. The study demonstrates that a usage-based and non-modular approach couched in cognitive linguistics facilitates an insightful analysis of the complex relationship between tense and modality.

## References

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