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Patrick Caudal

► **To cite this version:**

Patrick Caudal. Australian apprehensive grams as discursive, complex modals. 15ème Colloque Syntaxe et Sémantique à Paris (CSSP 2023), Dec 2023, Paris, France. hal-04339214

HAL Id: hal-04339214

<https://hal.science/hal-04339214>

Submitted on 12 Dec 2023

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Thet min, bambai yu finish-im taka fo MAI femili.
 that mean APPR 2SG finish-TR food for my family
 ‘That means, you might finish the food (that was) for MY family.’ (staged conversation)
 (Schultze-Berndt & D’Angelo 2016)

Morphologically, apprehensivity is thus often encoded in the sample by means of dedicated verbal inflectional morphology (1), including periphrastic apprehensive inflections involving a dedicated apprehensive particle (e.g. *ankgad* in (4), *bambay* in (5)) alongside a more or less restricted array of inflectional marking (thus in (4), optative (OPT) marking is mandatory for apprehensive-predictive, consequent clauses). It can also appear as nominal case marking (so-called ‘evitative’ case (Heath 1984: 346)) (6), and even involve agreement patterns between verbal inflection and nominal case marking (e.g. a dedicated modal case, or some other case then receiving modal uses). Finally, apprehensivity was also found to be encoded by clitics (cf. =*maka* in (5)) – an obvious source for apprehensive inflectional morphs.

- (4) *Kudn-uka-∅ ngartung mana angkad birta*
 1SG > 2PL. RMOD-peep-RMOD OBL.1SG maybe APPR otherwise
nganba-ya-njing. (Iwaidja)
 3PL > 1SG.OPT-see-OPT
 ‘Keep a lookout for me, otherwise they might see me.’ (Iwaidja dictionary)
- (5) *baymbay nyinka ra-yii-j, kamarr-ii-wa-th*
 APPR 2SG.NOM spear-M-ACT stone-VALL-PST
 ‘You might get stung by a stonefish.’ (Evans 1995: 388)
- (6) *Ya-nku = rna yalu-rlamarra, ngarda wangka-nyanku.*
 go-POT = 1SG.S that-EVIT HYP speak-IPFV.POT
 ‘I am going to go on account of that one, she might talk.’ (Ennever 2021: 686)
- (7) *yama! mema malharra kami-ngka + lharra-∅ = maka*
 (Anindilyakwa)
 watch.out VEG.this VEG.stone IRR.VEG-fall-USP = APPR
 ‘Watch out! This stone might fall!’ (Bednall 2020:97)

I will here focus on verbal morphology, leaving an account of ‘evitative’ case to future work. Syntactically, two main types of apprehensive clause structures were found in the sample:

1. Simple matrix clause uses, with a single clause *P*:
 - a. *P*-predictive uses (‘(careful/beware) might/will $P_{\text{undesirable}}$ ’)
 - b. *P*-prohibitive uses (‘don’t you (dare) do $P_{\text{undesirable}}$ ’)
2. Complex, biclausal uses, by far the most common, associating two clauses *P* and *Q*:
 - a. *P*-directive + *Q*-predictive (‘you (must/should) *P*, or else might/will_{undesirable} *Q*’)
 - b. *P*-prohibitive + *Q*-predictive (‘don’t $P_{\text{undesirable}}$, or else might/will_{undesirable} *Q*’)
 - c. *P*-hypothetical + *Q*-Predictive structures (‘if_{undesirable} *P*, then will_{undesirable} *Q*’)

Both symmetric (identical) morphological marking on the main verb underlying *P* and *Q*, and asymmetric marking were found in the sample. In some languages, the same inflection (‘optative’ in Iwaidja can mark all of , or the ‘future irrealis’/apprehensive (-*nukun*) in Murrinh-Patha) can mark both *P* and *Q* (thus (4) could have symmetric OPT inflectional marking on both *P* and *Q*); in others, a dedicated apprehensive inflection or clitic can only mark *Q*, not *P* (unless *P* has a hypothetical meaning, as in type 2c). This morpho-syntactic situation is reminiscent of the formal marking of conditional structures (cf. e.g. (Molencik 2000)), and shouldn’t come as a surprise as we will see that biclausal types are, in fact, conditional structures (or at least a related type of structure).

2.1 Monoclausal apprehensives

As indicated above, two main monoclausal types were identified: predictive (8) vs. prohibitive (negative imperative/deontic) uses (9). Apprehensive forms capable of the latter uses seem to require an overt negation to occur, i.e. apprehensive inflections cannot mark positive monoclausal imperative clauses (Nordlinger & Caudal 2012: 108–109). Most importantly, *bona fide* monoclausal apprehensives receive implicated meanings: an implicit directive is almost systematic for the predictive type, while an implicit prediction (warning/threat) seems mandatory for the directive type. In the sample, markers only used as apprehensive strategies (such as general present irrealis, as in Worrora, (10)) do not easily give rise to such implicit content. Whether conversational vs. lexical vs. conventional implicatures are here involved is a delicate matter to settle, and very possibly one that is specific to each apprehensive form.

- (8) *k-ini-majpungku-n,* *marnti kurruni-wu-n.* (Mawng)
 PR-3MA/3MA-lift.up-NP APPR 3MA/2PL-kill-NP
 ‘The sea is rough and it might kill you.’ (Singer 2006: 171)
 (> **Implicit instruction: ‘you shouldn’t canoe’**)
- (9) *mere na-ngi-mathputh-nukun = thurru* (Murrinh-Patha)
 NEG 2SGS.hands(8).FUTIRR-1SGO-interrupt-APPR = 2SGS.go(6)[keep.on].FUTIRR
 ‘Don’t you continually interrupt me.’ (Nordlinger & Caudal 2012:104)
 (> **Implicit prediction, i.e. warning/threat: ‘or else I’ll punish you’**)
- (10) *Maangurru bungunyeyeerri,* *maa-ngurru ba-ngun = ya-yeerri* (Worrora)
 3mREF-away CFT-2 = go-PROG
 ‘Don’t go over there’ (Clendon 2014: 206)

2.2 Biclausal apprehensives

Biclausal apprehensives come in various syntactic and semantic guises. The most common pattern found combines a directive and a predictive clause (type 2a); cf. (1) and (4) (with (2) possibly belonging to this type, if one takes *yama* to correspond to a reduced imperative clause). Its prohibitive counterpart (type 2b) involves a negative directive clause. Note that in both patterns, the directive, antecedent clause can express either a straightforward (positive or negative) imperative (11), or some weaker jussive modal meaning (12). It is now widely accepted that modal forms (including verbal inflections) exhibiting deontic/imperative readings in Australian languages tend not to lexicalize modal force, as their force is contextually determined (cf. e.g. (Bednall 2020: 291)); this is so-called ‘variable modal force’.

- (11) *Nyingka ngudi-na wangalk,* (Kayardild)
 You.NOM throw-NEG.IMP boomerang.NOM
ngada ngumban-ju burldi-nyarr.
 1SG.NOM you-MPROP hit.by.throwing-APPR
 ‘Don’t you throw the boomerang, or I’ll throw (one) at you.’ (Evans 1995:3)
- (12) *Yini thangguthikanga thannganiyi, karna thulayitji?* (Yandruwandha)
 2sg:NOM stand-return-FUT 3PL:GEN-LOC person stranger-LOC-EMPH
Parndriyila yina, kurnutji thawa-rlayi.
 hit-POT-EMPH 2SG:ACC one-EMPH go-SIM
 ‘Are you going to visit those strangers? You shouldn’t go alone, they might kill you.’
 (Breen 2004: 208)

Importantly, when used in biclausal constructions, a number of modal markers become unambiguously apprehensive. This is for instance the case in Ngardi with its *-ngarda* modal

inflection (13), which has an epistemic uncertainty meaning in simple clauses, vs. an apprehensive (APPR) reading when it marks the consequent clause of some biclausal structure, cf. (Ennever 2021: 684–685)). This is also the case in Iwaidja with the OPTative inflection, which can only have an apprehensive reading in a similar syntactic context.

- (13) *Wakurra = n ya-nku ngarda = ngku = lu pi-ngi.* (Ngardi)
 NEG = 2SG.S go-POT APPR = 2SG.O = 3PL.S hit-IRR
 ‘You shouldn’t go lest they hit you.’ (Ennever 2021: 685)

Last, but not least, apprehensive markers can also appear in hypothetical constructions, conveying either conditional warnings or threats, (14).

- (14) *ɲinda ɲaygu bulgugu wadilɲaju* (Dyirbal)
 you-SA I-GEN wife-DAT swive-ŋAY-REL-NOM
ɲada ɲinuna maɲa gunbalbila
 I-SA you-O ear-NOM cut-APPR
 ‘If you swive my wife, I’ll cut off your ears.’ (Dixon 1972: 362)

3 Analysis and theoretical proposal

Given the above observations in §2.2, it seems that implicit propositional contents associated with monoclausal apprehensives correspond to either that of an antecedent clause (with a directive or prohibitive content for type 1a) or that of a consequent clause (with a predictive content for type 1b) in biclausal apprehensive structures (types 2a-c). I will take this to suggest that apprehensives possess the very kind of two-tiered semantic structural features commonly associated with run-of-the-mill conditionals and modals in Kratzerian accounts, such that e.g., a contextual restrictor can be ascribed to an isolated, matrix clause modal (such a restrictor being equivalent to an implicit, ‘silent’ antecedent *if*-clause).

3.1 Apprehensives as *negative* scalar modals

In existing works dedicated to apprehensives, it has been repeatedly argued that they involve some kind of negative, detrimental potentiality (Laughren 2015; Angelo & Schultze-Berndt 2016; Tahar 2021). I will here hypothesize that apprehensive modals are the polar opposites of preference/priority modals *à la* (Condoravdi & Lauer 2012; Portner 2018), and consist in an undesirable proposition being predicted to occur in some possible world; see (Tahar 2021)’s notion of ‘dispreference modal’. Furthermore, following (Anand & Hacquard 2013) as well as (Tahar 2021), I will take apprehensive forms (both grammatical and lexical) to denote *scalar* doxastic modals. Tahar thus proposes representation (15) for French lexical apprehensive *craindre que A ne p-SUBJUNCTIVE* (‘for fear that A should p’) – where (dispreferred) proposition *p* has a limited desirability degree for agent *a* (‘not greater than *d*’), whereas (more desirable) alternatives *q* in comparison class *C* are more desirable than said degree *d*:

- (15) $\llbracket \text{craindre} \rrbracket = \lambda a. \lambda p. \lambda w.$
 Doxastic meaning: $\exists w' \in \text{Dox}_a(w): p(w')$
 Undesirability meaning: $\forall w' \text{Dox}_a(w): \forall q \in C \rightarrow q \neq p:$
 $\exists d[\text{Desirability}(\text{Sim}'_w(q)) \geq d \wedge \neg \text{Desirability}(\text{Sim}'_w(p) \geq d)]$

But I will argue that the above kind of representation treating apprehensives as the negation of a scalar doxastic modal ($\neg \text{Desirability}(\text{Sim}'_w(p) \geq d)$) is empirically inadequate for grammatical apprehensives as found in Australian languages. The main reason for this is that, especially when strong modal force is involved (and it very often is), *q* alternatives are not merely ‘more’ desirable than some dispreferred *p* potentiality – plainly, no comparison class *C* is involved; while *craindre que* is fundamentally a ‘hedging’ expression, Australian

apprehensives aren't. The above data suggest undesirable, predicted potentialities p are not merely less desirable, they are plainly *un-desirable*; in particular, they must involve a polar *opposition*. This contrary semantics, I believe, is reflected by the fact that (putting aside hypothetical apprehensive structures such as (14)), all of the above datapoints involve a 'do P /don't P , otherwise Q ' pattern. This corresponds to so-called 'pseudo-imperatives', i.e. a special negative type of conditionals, whose semantics is equivalent to that of an exclusive disjunction (Starr 2020) ($DO P, OR ELSE Q \leftrightarrow IF YOU DON'T DO P, THEN Q$). In other words, most of the biclausal apprehensives listed above convey an exclusive disjunction between some directive modal statement $DIR(p)$ (which can be either a positive or a negative directive/deontic modal), and some predictive modal statement $DOX_a(q)$, such that (i) $DIR(p)$ and $DOX_a(q)$ are mutually exclusive, (ii) q is negatively desirable (i.e., absolutely undesirable; although its degree of undesirability can vary contextually, it is always negative), and therefore, (iii) addressee is urged to realize p so as to prevent q from materializing. I will suggest that this two-tier $DIR(p) / DOX_a(q)$ analysis can apply to most of the above datapoints, except for purely hypothetical biclausal apprehensives (plus whenever no directive meaning can be contextually associated with a monoclausal predictive apprehensive; we are then left with a 'bare' doxastic modal, possessing a simple contextual restrictor). In order to model my analysis, I will resort to a polar opposition the logical form between positive vs. negative scales *à la* (Kennedy 2001). I will tentatively assume that predictive apprehensives doxastic modals are endowed with *negative* scales of apprehension S_{APPR} (see condition $NEG(S_{APPR})$) on which their contextual degree d of undesirability is situated, cf. (16).

$$(16) \quad \llbracket APPR_{predict} \rrbracket = \lambda a. \lambda p. \lambda w. \exists w' \in Dox_a(w) [Desirability(Sim'_w(p)) \geq d \wedge d \in S_{APPR} \wedge NEG(S_{APPR})]$$

3.2 Apprehensives, pragmatics, semantics and language change

Finally, I will argue that from this core 'negative predictive' meaning (such as in (3), (5) or (8), or in the consequent clauses of all other examples), over time, apprehensive grams sometimes developed lexicalized prohibitive (negative imperative/deontic meanings), as in the case of the Murrinh-Patha apprehensive *-nukun* (9). This clearly stems from monoclausal, predictive examples (e.g., (5) or (8)) being associated with an implicated deontic/directive content: in time, such implicit content became semanticized as *bona fide* deontic meaning. I am assuming a typical evolution path starting with some conversational or lexical defeasible implicature, then involving a conventional implicature (i.e. a two-dimensional semantics) as a 'switch' semantics (Heine 2002) between their initial predictive meaning, and the novel, homonymous deontic meaning they ended up acquiring: *defeasible implicit directive > conventional implicature of directive > at-issue directive meaning*. Such a development path explains the apparent polyfunctionality of markers such as *-nukun* in Murrinh-Patha, which I take to have become homonymous; we have two *-nukun*. The conventionalized nature of such evolutions is apparent, given the fact that (i) apprehensive readings can be restricted to subordinate contexts (see §2.2, and (13)), and (ii) directive and predictive clauses have a rigid syntactic ordering in biclausal structures: directive clauses must be antecedent clauses.

4.1 References

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