

Apprehensionality emerging

The case of Kriol *bambai*

In this work, I propose a unified and diachronically-informed semantic treatment of the recruitment of temporal frame adverbial *bambai* in Australian Kriol to encode apprehensional meanings with implications for our understanding of this meaning change ‘pathway’ and the role of speaker meaning in adjudicating between possible readings of this single lexical item.

Australian Kriol is a contact language spoken across multiple communities in Northern Australia, a result of radical language contact between English-based pidgins and a number of Arnhem Land substrata in the early twentieth century. Recent work has shown the availability of *bambai* ‘< by-and-by’ (a lexical item present in many Pacific contact languages) as a marker of so-called APPREHENSIONAL modality (e.g. Angelo & Schultze-Berndt 2016.) **Apprehensionals** are a grammatical category widely represented in Australian languages. In the only published work dedicated to a treatment of these markers, Lichtenberk (1995) describes these markers as dually encoding (a) an assertion of the possibility of their prejacent obtaining (his “**epistemic downtoning**”) and (b) information about **negative speaker affect** vis-à-vis their prejacent. The sentence pair in (1) shows ambiguity between the possible temporal or modal contribution of *bambai*.

(1) **Context:** I’ve invited a friend around to join us for dinner. They reply:

- a. *yuwai! bambai ai gaman jeya!*
yes! *bambai* 1s come there
‘Yeah! I’ll be right there!’
- b. *najing, im rait! bambai ai gaan binijim main wek!*
no 3s okay *bambai* 1s NEG.MOD finish 1s work
‘No, that’s okay! (If I did,) I mightn’t (be able to) finish my work!’ (field elicitation)

In (a), *bambai* displaces the reference time of the prejacent slightly forward; the speaker has undertaken to join for dinner in the near-immediate future of speech time. In (b), however, the speaker asserts that, in the event that they join for dinner, they may fail to complete their work (a negative outcome).

A unified formal treatment. In order to capture and unify these two readings of *bambai*, I appeal to Kratzerian modal semantics (e.g. Kratzer 1981 *et seq.*), where a conversational background against which the prejacent of *bambai* is interpreted is provided by context. Whereas the temporal frame use is taken simply to encode a relation between an established reference time and the instantiation of some predicate, the apprehensional use is understood as an assertion of perceived possibility of a predicate obtaining in the future of a reference time under certain conditions that are provided by an antecedent retrieved from the discourse. Importantly, the availability of apprehensional readings appears to be restricted to sentences uttered in nonfactual moods; by deploying insights from the dynamic semantics and information structural literatures (e.g. Roberts 1989, 1998 *i.a.*), we can better understand how it is that Kriol speakers retrieve antecedents from foregoing context (linguistic or nonlinguistic) and consequently, how they adjudicate between these two salient readings of *bambai*.

Sel. References Angelo & Schultze-Berndt (2016). Beware *bambai* – lest it be apprehensive. In *Loss and Renewal*. MdG • Kratzer (2015 [1981 *et seq.*]). *Modals and Conditionals*. OUP • Lichtenberk (1995). Apprehensional Epistemics. In *Modality in Grammar and Discourse*. John Benjamins • Roberts (1989). Modal Subordination and Pronominal Anaphora in Discourse. *Linguistics & Philosophy*, 12(6), 683-721. • Roberts (1998). Focus, the flow of information and universal grammar. *Syntax & Semantics* 29, 109-160.