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AFFIRMATION MODALITY IN BULGARIAN, MACEDONIAN AND SERBIAN

Abstract

In the case of affirmation modality the speakers transform their utterances by stressing or attributing a positive value as an additional component added to the semantic structure of a proposition. This type of affirmative polarization is triggered in opposition to negation or hypothetically negative contexts. The goal of the present paper is twofold: on the one hand to compare and contrast affirmative periphrastic constructions in Bulgarian, Macedonian and Serbian and, on the other hand, to ascertain what these constructions reveal regarding the organization of grammatical categories in general and the status of affirmation modality as a coherent and homogenous category with a linguistic validity.

Keywords: affirmation, modality, subjectivity, auxiliation, evidentiality.

1. Introduction

The present paper explores the hypothesis that affirmation is a type of modality and its expression involves both syntactic and lexical markers. Weak affirmation modality, and affirmation as a type of modality in general, has proved to be very resistant to linguistic identification and analysis for at least three reasons. These are: varying degree of formal marking, membership in more than one grammatical category, and close relatedness to other modal categories, especially assertion. For the descriptive linguist who wishes to document the occurrence of a linguistic phenomenon, the ideal case would be a situation where a category shows coherent semantic characteristics and can be identified with a single formal element which has specialized in performing only this function. Natural language, however, generally presents a much more complex picture. This is a case of problematic grammatical categories and affirmation modality is definitely one of them. The aim of the article is two present three different modes of syntactic representation of affirmation modality in three different, but at the same time related, language systems — Bulgarian, Macedonian and Serbian.

The notion of modality originates in classical logic and from there it has been transferred into linguistics. By modality, in the broadest sense, most researchers in the field mean the modification of a whole sentence or clause by specifying the attitude of the speaker with regard to the content of the sentence (Palmer, 2001, p. 4). There seems to be a general agreement among scholars that at the core of modality lie two key notions — potentiality and subjectivity. Modality has to do then with the subjective assessment of the actual facts or acts as well as their potential realizations. Narrog (2009, p. 8) believes that the definition of modality in terms of speaker's attitude, if taken seriously, leads to an "expansion of the category and potentially even to absorption of most other grammatical categories such as voice, aspect, tense, or illocutionary force, which also tend to be strongly associated with the attitude of the speaker." Givón (1995, 2001) sees modality as a category concerned with all kinds of factuality distinctions, including negation and presupposition. Thus, if modality is defined as speaker's assessment of, or attitude toward, the potentiality of a state of affairs, it must include affirmation as one of its possible realizations.

In the case of affirmation modality the speakers transform their utterances by stressing or attributing a positive value as an additional component to the semantic structure of a proposition. This type of affirmative polarization is triggered in opposition to negation or hypothetically negative contexts. Like other types of modality, affirmation may be lexically, syntactically or pragmatically represented, however, in most cases weak affirmation is a default, covert and formally unmarked category. As a result, negative sentences are morphologically or syntactically more complex than their affirmative counterparts and the status of negation as a type of modality seems to be more readily recognized. On the other hand, very little attention has been paid to relatively rare syntactic realizations of marked or emphatic affirmation — closely associated with tense and aspect, generally marked within the verbal complex and based on symmetric opposition to negation (Martins, 2006; Grygiel, 2011). The article's aim is to take a closer look at these issues.

2. The scalar nature of affirmation modality

Modality is traditionally classified as being either "deontic" or "epistemic". Deontic modality, in Jespersen's (1924, p. 320) classification, corresponds to the category described as "containing an element of will". According to Lyons (1977, p. 823), deontic modality is "concerned with the necessity or possibility of acts performed by morally responsible agents". In other words, a sentence containing deontic modality generally indicates some action that would change the state of affairs so that it becomes closer to the desired standard or ideal. Epistemic modality, on the other hand, is the category "containing no element of will" (Jespersen, 1924, p. 320) concerned with matters of knowledge and belief. Specifically, it is "the speaker's opinion or attitude towards the proposition that the sentence expresses or the situation that the proposition describes" (Lyons, 1977, p. 452).

Despite the fact that the two classes — deontic and epistemic — are very broad, many modal verbs cannot be divided neatly into either of them because their interpretation can be rather fluid and depends on the context in which they occur. It is, therefore, not surprising that modal verbs may display deontic/epistemic polysemy.

For example, Serbian *morati* 'must' and English *must* express deontic modality in the first example given below, and epistemic modality in the second sentence:

> *Mora da dođe.* 'He must come.'
> *Mora da je već došao.* 'He must have come yet.'

Apart from polysemy, affirmation modality shows other prototype effects such as gradience. The weakest form of affirmation modality is the affirmation by default represented both in English and Slavic by finite verb forms not accompanied by any kind of negator. This is the weakest form of affirmation marking because the same finite verb forms may be also used in the negative contexts (Eng. *we belong* vs. *we don't belong*, Srb. *pripadamo* 'we belong' vs. *ne pripadamo* 'we don't belong'). However, some finite verb forms are more closely associated with affirmative meaning and can be treated as better candidates for affirmation markers since their forms change in negative contexts, such as English 3rd person singular present and simple past forms (*he finished — he didn't finish*).

In Serbian, all the future analytical forms with the auxiliary *hteti* 'want/will' placed after the verb are used exclusively in affirmative contexts (Srb. *uradiću* 'I'll do' — *neću uraditi* 'I won't do'). Furthermore, auxiliary verbs in Serbian are capable of expressing affirmation in a stronger way than ordinary verbs as they have developed separate affirmative and negative forms. Still further up the scale of affirmation continuum, are special long forms of auxiliary verbs which do not have analogical negative counterparts and cannot be negated. Finally, toward the end of the gradation, affirmation modality may be strengthened by lexical intensifiers or a number of structural manipulations such as fronting of affirmation constructions, duplication of affirmative forms or introduction of conjunction which has a multiplying effect. For example, in the following context the long form of the verb Srb. *biti* 'to be' — *jesam* — has been both repeated several times and intensified with the conjunction *i* 'and' to mark a very strong modality type of affirmation. Note that this hyper-affirmative utterance was produced as a reaction to strong denial and in opposition to negation:

> Srb. — *Neću! Neću da budem pilot! Ja sam kosmonaut! — Nisi! Viču deca.*
> *— Nisi! — Jesam, i jesam, i jesam!*
> 'I don't! I don't want to be a pilot! I am an astronaut! — You aren't! The children are shouting. — You aren't! — I am, and I am, and I am!'

Not only is affirmation a gradable category, but also the opposition between affirmation and negation does not seem to be as stiff as it is traditionally assumed. This is evidenced by the existence of borderline cases such as examples of affirmative sentences expressed by means of negation and vice versa; negative contexts with no formal negators present. Moreover, there are some problematic examples which might be classified as being both negative and affirmative (e.g.: Srb. *nemoguće je* 'it's impossible', Srb. *neophodno je* 'it's necessary/indispensable', Srb. *nedostaje mi* 'I lack/miss', Srb. *Baš me briga* 'I don't care at all', Srb. *To me interesuje kao lanski sneg* '*lit.* It interests me like last year's snow, it doesn't interest me at all').

3. From evidential to affirmation modality

Like assertion, also evidentiality can be treated as a form of expressing strong affirmation or intensifying the affirmative function by referring to the domain of evidence. In this section, I will claim that the evidential mood, or one of its contrastive subtypes, has specialized in the expression of strong affirmation in two Slavic languages — Bulgarian and Macedonian. Despite being closely related, both Bulgarian and Macedonian use a different kind of formal contrast to express strong affirmation modality. In Bulgarian, strong affirmation is realized by the addition of BE element to the L-form, contrasted with weak affirmation realized by the L-form without the additional BE element, e.g. Blg. *e sledvala* 'certainly studied'/*sledvala* 'possibly studied'. In Macedonian, on the other hand, the simple past form is positively marked — it expresses strong affirmation modality, while the L-form is unmarked in this respect — it expresses weak affirmation modality.[1]

Broadly understood evidential modality is the indication, by means of linguistic resources, of the nature of evidence for a given statement. All languages have a series of lexical expressions specifying the source and credibility of information transmitted (Friedman, 1982). Grammatical evidentiality, on the other hand, may be expressed by means of modal verbs, auxiliaries, particles, clitics, affixes or a combination of these grammatical markers. If evidentiality is expressed through morphological markers, such as verbal suffixes, it is often referred to as evidential mood. This is a case of Bulgarian and Macedonian where a witness/non-witness evidential system is used (Popowa, 1972). A witness evidential indicates that the information source was obtained through direct observation by the speaker. Usually this is from visual observation (eyewitness), but some languages also mark information directly heard with information directly seen. A witness evidential is usually contrasted with a non-witness evidential which indicates that the information was not witnessed personally but was obtained through a secondhand source or was inferred by the speaker.

The term "evidential" was first used in the current linguistic sense by Roman Jakobson in 1957 with reference to Balkan Slavic (Jakobson, 1957, p. 134). Jakobson also was the first linguist to clearly separate evidentiality from grammatical mood. The use of the mood in Bulgarian is illustrated by Popowa (1972) with the following witness/non-witness mood contrasts:

> *Toj* **poznava** *dobre tvorčestvo na Galčinski, često* **prevežda** *negovi stihove i* **piše** *statii za nego.* (Popowa, 1972, p. 126)
> 'He knows well Gałczyński's literary output, he often translates his poems and writes articles about him.'
> *Toj* **poznaval** *dobre tvorčestvo na Galčinski, često* **preveždal** *negovi stihove i* **pišel** *statii za nego.*
> 'He (supposedly) knows well Gałczyński's literary output, he often translates his poems and writes articles about him.'

Non-witness mood — often referred to as imperceptivity, renarrative or inferential mood — is used in Bulgarian and Macedonian for the reporting of facts vouched

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[1]The L-form derives from Old Slavic perfect participle.

by someone other than the speaker or, in other words, to report a non-witnessed event without confirming it (Mushin, 2001).[2] Sussex and Cubberley (2006, p. 247) claim that it is a morphological category in the verb paradigms of Bulgarian and Macedonian, which has probably developed due to the influence of Turkish where inferential mood conveys information about events, not directly observed or only inferred by the speaker. Seen from this perspective, the development and spread of non-witness mood in Balkan languages (Turkish, Albanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian) can be treated as a semantic calque.

The non-witness mood in Bulgarian and Macedonian shows elaborate adaptation of existing morphological synthetic forms into more complex analytic paradigms. In all non-witness forms, with the exception of 3rd person, an adequate BE auxiliary variant is used (Piper, 2009, p. 111). The renarrated forms in Bulgarian and Macedonian are used not only to report events which the speaker did not witness or cannot vouch for, but also to express doubt, incredulity or unexpectedness (Sussex and Cubberley, 2006, p. 247). They are also the standard verb forms for fairy tales and legends as in the following example where all the renarrated forms are given in bold type:

> *Slănceto vednaž reklo na majka si, če iska da se oženi. Majka mu se **uplašila** i **počnala** da plače. „Zašto plačeš?" — **popitalo** Slănceto. Majkata **otgovorila**: „Šte se oženiš, šte se rodjat slănčica i šte izgorjat zamiata." Slănceto* **razbralo**, *če majka mu ima pravo i si **ostanalo** samo.* (Popowa, 1972, p. 130) 'The Sun once said to his mother that he wants to get married. His mother got frightened and started crying. "Why are you crying" — asked the Sun. Mother answered: "You'll get married, little suns will be born and they will burn the earth." The Sun understood that his mother was right and stayed alone.'

Evidential systems in many languages are often marked simultaneously with other linguistic categories. As a rule, they tend to grammaticalize as part of the TAM (Tense/Aspect/Modality) inflectional complex on the verb. That is why Givón believes that the phenomenon of evidentiality overlaps to a great extent with epistemic modality and Palmer treats both evidential modality and epistemic modality as subtypes of propositional modality. Although there is a great deal of substantial difference between evidential and epistemic systems — for instance, de Haan (1999, 2001, 2005) states that evidentiality "asserts" evidence while epistemic modality "evaluates" evidence — and in many languages the two systems remain clearly separated, under Givón's (2001) account, evidentiality may easily grammaticalize into epistemic modality resulting in the likelihood of evidential forms being used in the function of strong affirmation. This process is described by Givón (2001, p. 326) as a "mediated causal chain":

> "Rather than pertaining directly to subjective certainty, grammatcalized evidential systems code first and foremost the *source* of the evidence available to back up an assertion, and only then, implicitly, its *strength*. It is that implicit

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[2]In traditional Bulgarian grammar books, the non-witness mood is referred to as *preizkazno naklonenie* 'reported mood' (Koseska-Toszewa & Kostyba, 2007).

connection that, in turn, links evidentiality to subjective certainty. The relation between evidentiality and epistemic modality can be thus given as the mediated causal chain: evidential source > evidential strength > epistemic certainty"

Friedman (1982) analyzes a number of contexts in Bulgarian where the omission of the 3rd person BE auxiliary is not consistent with reportedness. In traditional Bulgarian grammar books all forms of the perfect tense — composed of the past participle/L-form and auxiliary BE present forms — coincide formally with aorist non-witness mood forms — with the exception of the 3rd person. Thus, the omission of the 3rd person BE auxiliaries — *e* and *sa* — should involve reporting a source of information. However, the examples given by Friedman (1982) clearly demonstrate the existence of unreported auxiliariless forms in Bulgarian. Even more striking seems the use of the 3rd person BE auxiliaries both in reported and unreported contexts:

*Ne săm čul vălk da **e izjal** teleto a njakoja krava, skoro otelena — kaza Erofim. Tuj ne săm čul, ala săm čuval, če smok **e smučel** mljakoto im.* (Friedman, 1982, p. 156)
'I haven't heard of a wolf's eating the calf of a cow that has recently calved, said Erofim. I haven't heard that, but I have heard that a snake sucked (sucks) their milk.'
*A kogato sinăt săobšti, če si **e nameril** kvartira i šte se pribira neštata, dojde i pripadăkăt.*
'And when the son announced that he had found himself an apartment and would collect his things, then the fit came.'

Friedman (1982) concludes that in the speech of educated native speakers of literary Bulgarian, the auxiliary can occur in reported contexts and be omitted in non-reported contexts without any apparent motivation. He suggests that the omission of the auxiliary in the 3rd person is a stylistic device or possibility used in free variation.

Koseska-Toszewa, Korykowska & Roszko (2007), on the other hand, seems to agree with Friedman's (1982) conclusion that the idea of reportedness constituting a grammatical category independent from the past indefinite is an artificial distinction created by normative grammarians, but in her account, the appearance or omission of the 3rd person BE auxiliary is far from being haphazard. Koseska-Toszewa generalizes that the occurrence of the 3rd person auxiliary in the perfect tense expresses certainty and its omission results in the formation of the perfect tense with imperceptive meaning of doubt and uncertainty (Koseska-Toszewa & Kotsyba, 2007) as in the following examples:

*Ivan kaza, če včera **bil** tam.* (Koseska-Toszewa & Kotsyba, 2007)
'Ivan said that he (supposedly) was there yesterday.'
*Toj **pročel** tazi kniga.* 'He has (supposedly) read that book'
*Ne săm sigurna! Tja **sledvala** v Sofija.* (Koseska-Toszewa, Korykowska & Roszko, 2007, p. 286)

'I'm not sure! She (possibly) studied in Sofia.'

Siguren săm, če toj **e pročel** *tazi kniga.* (Koseska-Toszewa & Kotsyba, 2007)
'I am sure that he has read that book.'
Toj sigurno **e pročel** *tazi kniga.*
'He has certainly read that book.'
Sigurna săm! Tja **e sledvala** *v Sofija* (Koseska-Toszewa, Korykowska & Roszko, 2007, p. 286)
'I'm sure! She (certainly) studied in Sofia.'

The sentences show that the 3rd person BE auxiliary, originally used to indicate non-reportedness, can be treated as a marker of strong affirmation modality in Bulgarian. It seems that this type of epistemic modality has developed out of evidentiality and, in this respect, as claimed by Givón (2001), it parallels a common grammaticalization pattern evidenced in many other languages. Notice that if the 3rd person BE auxiliary — *e* — is interpreted as a marker of strong affirmation, then its occurrence or absence in the text analyzed by Friedman (1982) seems to be consistent:

Razkazavala e za kolegite si — v săštnost za edin ot tjah — po văzrasten **bil** *— njakakăv star ergen săvsem — njakăde nad četirijset, četirijset i pet godini — če* **bil** *interesen kato čovek —* **bil** *v săštnost —* **e vladeel** *mnogo ot tehiničeskite pohvati na spektroskopija — i văobšte* **e bil** *v njena pomošt — toj* **bil** *kako tehnik dălgi godini tam pri tezi.* (Friedman, 1982, p. 158)
'She used to talk about her colleagues — about one of them actually — he was older — an old bachelor — somewhere around forty, forty-five — that he was interesting as a person — and he really was — he had a lot of technical skill in spectroscopy — and he was very helpful to her in general — he had been there as a technician with them for many years.'

The 3rd person BE auxiliary — *e* — is added to the past participle when the speaker stresses the veracity of a given fact or intensifies an action. Of course, the decision to employ strong modality is highly subjective and a matter of personal judgment. In the above given context, the speaker singles out the fact that her colleague had a lot of skill in spectroscopy and emphasizes his being very helpful to her — both of which are strengthened with additional lexical intensifiers. The fact that he was really interesting — *bil v săštnost* — is not stressed with the 3rd person BE auxiliary, but the same effect has been achieved by the duplication of the main verb — *bil.*

It seems that also other forms of BE — apart from the 3rd person singular present *e* and *sa* — can be used as markers of strong affirmation. Friedman (1999) quotes the following example:

— *Ti si star! — Bil săm star!* (Friedman, 1999, p. 527)
'— You are old! — I am indeed old'

Although in Macedonian, unlike in Bulgarian, the 3rd person BE auxiliary forms are no longer used with the simple past/L-forms, the semantics of the contrast between the two alternatives has been the subject of comparably heated debate and discussion in the linguistic literature. Thus, Lunt (1952, p. 91) describes the difference in terms of "distancing" where the simple past form always expresses an action viewed as "witnessed" or certain and L-form as "distanced in time or reality". Similarly, DeBray (1980) perceives the distinction between the simple past and L-form as encoding a witnessed/non-witnessed evidential contrast.

Friedman (1986) identifies two shortcomings of Lunt's (1952) analysis and claims that the alternation between the simple past and L-form represents a semantic contrast in speaker's attitude rather than evidence. Moreover, the semantic difference between the simple past and L-form does not involve a binary opposition of contrasting evidential values. Rather, the simple past is positively marked, while the L-form, which covers a broader range of meanings, is analyzed as unmarked. Under Friedman's (1986) analysis, simple past forms are used only in contexts where speakers are prepared to "confirm" or "vouch for" information, an implication being that if a speaker is able to vouch for information, then he/she must have had direct perceptual or experiential knowledge of it. Theoretically, speakers may use the simple past form even if they have not witnessed an event, if they want to stress their intention to "vouch for" the fact.

Consequently, Lunt's (1952) account and Friedman's (1986) analysis do not have to be necessarily incompatible, but may reflect a shift in modality that actually took place in Macedonian. The "witnessed" type of evidential modality, represented by the simple past form (see the first sentence below), specialized into strong affirmation modality and the "non-witnessed" type, represented by the L-from (the second sentence below), took over the contrastive function of expressing weak affirmation modality, apart from performing other semantic tasks. Mushin (2001, p. 104) provides the following meaning interpretations of the contrastive forms in Macedonian:

Taa go **mesi** *lebot.* 'She baked the bread (I saw her do it/I vouch for it).'
Taa go **mesila** *lebot.* 'She baked the bread (that's what she told me/supposedly /that's what I heard).'

Although the most common interpretation of the first sentence is that the speaker observed the process of baking the bread in person, it can also be interpreted as representing a context where the speaker did not witness the process, but is still able to vouch for the fact. Thus, the example shows how evidential modality may be extended and changed into the expression of strong affirmation. Mushin (2001) reports a number of experiments where speakers of Macedonian, while telling stories, resorted to simple past forms instead of the expected L-forms. Mushin (2001, p. 111) interprets this linguistic behavior as a "deliberate strategy to detract from the reportiveness of the narrative information and to present the story as vouched for". In doing so, the retellers were trying to convey "an aura of confidence and authority" based on the prior knowledge of events. Notice that these assertive interferences would not be possible in the context of negation. That is why it seems that this use of the simple past tense forms in Macedonian should

be interpreted as strong affirmation modality, expressed in the form of grammatical mood.

4. Strong affirmation modality in Serbian

By the term "strong affirmation modality" I refer to those formulations by which propositions, expressing a positive value, are construed by the authorial voice as correct, valid, undeniable or otherwise maximally warrantable. The construal can be achieved primarily by the use of verbal processes such as auxiliation (Kuteva, 2001). In Serbian, there are two basic auxiliary verbs capable of expressing strong affirmation modality — the present imperfective forms of *biti* 'be' and present forms of *hteti* 'want/will':

Table 1. Present imperfective BE (*biti*) forms in Serbian

	strong affirmative forms	weak affirmative forms	negative forms
1.SG	*jesam*	*sam*	*nisam*
2.SG	*jesi*	*si*	*nisi*
3.SG	*jeste*	*je*	*nije*
1.PL	*jesmo*	*smo*	*nismo*
2.PL	*jeste*	*ste*	*niste*
3.PL	*jesu*	*su*	*nisu*

Table 2. Present WANT/WILL (*hteti*) forms in Serbian

	strong affirmative forms	weak affirmative forms	negative forms
1.SG	*hoću*	*ću*	*neću*
2.SG	*hoćeš*	*ćeš*	*nećeš*
3.SG	*hoće*	*će*	*neće*
1.PL	*hoćemo*	*ćemo*	*nećemo*
2.PL	*hoćete*	*ćete*	*nećete*
3.PL	*hoće*	* će*	*neće*

Notice that long forms are always stressed and therefore sometimes referred to as "full forms" (Kostić, 1987, p. 194), while the short or "truncated" forms are unstressed and always used as clitics. The long forms cannot be negated in any way — **ne jesam/*ne hoću* — while the short forms are also affirmative as they do not form negative counterparts with the negator *ne* in the same way as other verbs in Serbian.

One of the characteristic features of modality is the fact that it is very closely related to the TAM (Tense/Aspect/Modality) complex. Hence, the appearance of

modality is conditioned by the existence of TAM grammatical markers, for example, in the form of auxiliary verbs. The extensive use of two auxiliary verbs — *biti/jesam* 'to be' and *hteti* 'will/to want' — makes Serbian more privileged, in this respect, than many other Slavic languages — especially East and West Slavic languages — which, to a greater degree, rely on synthetic rather than analytic markers (Grygiel, 2010b).[3]Topolińska (2008) stresses that the most prominent attribute of verbal systems developed by Balkan languages is multiplicity of grammatcalized distinctions in the sphere of modality. Serbian auxiliary verbs constitute a good illustration of this thesis.

Apart from frequent occurrence and multiple grammatical functions they perform, the two auxiliary verbs — *biti/jesam* and *hteti* — are unique because they come in two variants. The present tense conjugation of these verbs yields two parallel affirmative forms which makes it possible to distinguish strong from weak affirmation modality (Table 1 and 2).

The long forms of auxiliary verbs are definitely less frequent than their short counterparts. For example, in the contemporary part of the CSL *jeste* appears in only 104 sentences, while the word *je* is used 34560 times as a verb and 1882 times as a pronoun.[4] This shows that the use of short and long forms is asymmetric — the short forms are dominant and the long ones are used only sporadically. Most Serbian reference grammar books regard the formal criteria as decisive in the choice of either of the two variants and their distribution is believed to be ruled by purely syntactic factors such as the position of these verbs in the sentence. Thus, short forms are never stressed and therefore function as enclitics. The long forms, on the other hand, are claimed to be more restricted in their occurrence and generally only used in sentence initial position or on its own, for example in posing a question or in short affirmative responses (Stanojčić and Popović, 2000; Stevanović, 1980; Hammond, 2005).

The Internet-based research conducted by me shows that the formal solution to the problem of distribution of short and long forms is not fully satisfactory, because there are occurrences which seem to break the formal rules. For example, long forms can be used as auxiliary verbs in all situations where short verb forms are used, i.e. in the past tense — both perfect and past perfect, future tense, passive voice and present tense copular predicates. On the other hand, short forms can be used with personal pronouns in short affirmative responses and one short form — the 3rd person singular *je* form — can be stressed and used with all persons in sentence initial position as a question marker.

In the examples given below the use of long forms, instead of the more frequent short forms, is semantically motivated. Speakers opt for longer forms because they are capable of causing a change in the modality. Namely, an additional meaning emphasizing the positive value of the proposition is introduced in this way. Using

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[3]It is a very frequent claim in traditional Serbian grammar books that there are three auxiliary verbs in Serbian: *jesam*, *biti* and *hteti*. Thus, the present imperfective forms of BE — *jesam*, *jesi*, *jeste*, *jesmo*, *jesu* — are distinguished from present perfective BE forms — *budem*, *budeš*, *bude*, *budemo*, *budete*, *budu* — and treated as separate auxiliary verbs (Stanojčić and Popović 2000; Milošević 2003).

[4]*Corpus of Serbian Language* `http://www.serbian-corpus.edu.rs/indexns.htm`.

the Google search engine, which serves as a default means of access to the Web, I have collected a corpus consisting of sentences with the long 3$^{\mathrm{rd}}$ person singular BE form *jeste*. The search was narrowed down to a specific language — Serbian — and the interrogative particle *li* was excluded from the search in order to eliminate questions. The sentences have been grouped according to semantic functions they express and subtypes of affirmation modality in the following way:

4.1. Confirming, admitting and stressing that something is true or correct

In all of these examples the short and long forms may appear in paradigmatic variation. The use of *jeste* instead of *je* can be explained as a change in modality as the long forms mark strong affirmation modality, perceived as an additional semantic component in the structure of the proposition:

> Šminkanje jeste umetnost. 'Make-up is really art.'
> *Fotograf Iain Crawford nam je još jednom potvrdio, da šminkanje*
> ***jeste** umetnost.*
> 'The photograph Ian Crawford has once again confirmed to us that make-up is really art.'
> *Nekada ćutanje **jeste** zlata vredno.*
> 'Sometimes silence is really worth gold.'
> *Leni Kravic: Pesma sa Džeksonom **jeste** original.*
> 'Lenny Kravitz: The song with Jackson is really original.'
> *Verzija koja se pojavila nije montaža. To **jeste** ta pesma, rekao je Kravic.*
> 'The version which appeared isn't montage. It is really this song, said Kravitz.'
> *Rijaliti šou **jeste** realan život koji nam se dešava!*
> 'Reality show is real life which is happening to us!'

The replacement of the long *jeste* form with its shorter *je* variant brings about a change in modality in Serbian — from strong to weak affirmation modality. Weak affirmation modality expresses a relatively detached positive stance with a small degree of personal involvement on the part of the speaker. Strong affirmation modality, on the other hand, associates the proposition with an individual subjectivity, and primarily with the subjectivity of the authorial voice. And since individual subjectivities are always in alteration and in tension with other subjectivities, strong affirmation modality acts to construe a heteroglossic backdrop of potential alternative viewpoints for the proposition. However, simultaneously, strong affirmation modality functions to exclude any such alternatives and clearly aligns the interlocutor into the positive value position which is being advanced.

4.2. Confirming that something is true, but with reservations

In this group, the positive value of the proposition is stressed by the use of strong affirmation modality, but it is shown as a relatively exceptional situation restricted by a more general context:

*Najavili ste da ćete od Krajine napraviti kanton broj 1 u FBiH. Unsko-sanski kanton nominalno i **jeste** kanton 1 u federalnom ustrojstvu, ali je po ekonomskoj snazi i političkoj nestabilnosti među posljednjima.*
'You announced that you would make the Krajina canton no. 1 in FBiH. Unsko-Sana Canton nominally is really a canton no. 1 in the federal structure, but in the economic power and political instability it belongs to the last ones.'
*Vlasnik ovog džipa se baš prevario, **jeste** ovo 4×4 mašina, ali ne može da prođe baš svuda gde on to ima nameru da je protera.*
'The owner of this jeep has been mistaken, this is really a 4×4 machine, but it cannot go through all the places where he intends to take it.'
*Naš rastanak **jeste** bolan, ali zivot ide dalje.*
'Our parting is painful, but life goes on.'
*Tržište naftnim derivatima — **Jeste** skupo, nije najskuplje.*
'The market of petroleum products — is really expensive, it isn't the most expensive.'

These contexts suggest that strong affirmation modality diminishes and may contradict implications of a statement or description. Its primary function here is to express concession.

It describes a state of affairs that might have been expected to rule out what is described in the main clause but in fact does not. This seems to show that the use of affirmation modality is always triggered by the possibility of negation seen as an alternative counter-conceptualization. Obviously enough, negation does not need to be explicitly formulated.

4.3. Confirming that something is true despite counterarguments
In these Internet-extracted examples, the sentence about Ekrem Jevrić explicitly defines the meaning of the modal auxiliary *jeste*. It seems to show that the speaker can express the same meaning introducing additional lexical expressions (*potvrdio* 'confirmed').

*Zdravlje ipak **jeste** u čokoladi.*
'Health is really still in chocolate./It turns out that chocolate is healthy, in spite of earlier information.'
*Ekrem Jevrić ipak **jeste** Dolce&Gabbana maneken.*
'(It turns out that) Ekrem Jevrić is really Dolce & Gabbana's model.'
Pevac, Maneken, Youtube zvezda i još štošta, Ekrem Jevrić je potvrdio da je učestvovao u snimanju nove reklame za kolekciju jesen/zima Dolce & Gabana.
'Singer, model, Youtube star and still other things, Ekrem Jevrić has confirmed that he participated in the shooting of new ads for the autumn/winter Dolce & Gabbana collection.'

As shown by the examples above, this subtype of strong affirmation modality includes formulations which represent the current proposition as replacing or supplanting, and thereby "countering" a proposition which would have been expected in its place.

4.4. Explicit opposition to negation

Here the use of affirmation modality is determined by the introduction of the polarity opposition. The long form *jeste* seems to stress the positive value of the proposition and at the same time excludes negation. Notice that the long forms are affirmative par excellence — they cannot be negated in any way in Serbian:

> Sudija nije video, ali UEFA jeste.
> 'The judge did not see, but UEFA did.'
> ***Jeste*** *oprosteno, ali nije zaboravljeno!*
> 'It is forgiven, but not forgotten!'
> *Prikazaću svoj život kakav zaista jeste, a ne kakvim ga tabloidi prikazuju.*
> 'I will present my life as it really is, and not as it is shown by tabloids.'
> *Cene Majka mu***hoće** *da porastu, jer neće biti države da ih drži niskim, pa će otići gore i VIP i Telenor.*
> 'The prices will really go up, because there won't be any state policy to keep them down, and the VIP and Telenor (mobile phone companies) will go higher.'

The above examples seem to demonstrate that this subtype of strong affirmation modality serves as a resource for introducing an alternative positive position. Thus, it can be interpreted as a denial of negation. Denials such as those present the speaker as having greater expertise in some area than the interlocutor and have an epistemic character. In this subtype of affirmation modality, the speaker can be seen as acting to correct some misunderstanding or misconception on the interlocutor's part and trying to project some knowledge or a particular viewpoint onto them.

4.5. Complex sentences including cleft and pseudo-cleft clauses

Strong affirmation modality is frequently applied in parts of complex sentences where the speaker wants to emphasize a given piece of information. In this case, it is similar to focalization. Hence it is perfectly plausible to assume the existence of a connection between strong affirmation modality and the processes of focalization, the essential characteristic of which is to emphasize that a particular constituent needs to be understood as new or important information.

As shown by the pairs of sentences given below, the grammatical construction itself does not trigger automatically the use of the long form *jeste*, because sometimes the short form *je* can be used in the same formal environment. As a consequence, the rules of their distribution should be sought in the semantic criteria rather than be considered as a result of purely formal conditioning:

> *Ono što sam hteo da kažem* ***jeste*** *da anketno istraživanje pokazuje više opredeljenih za pojedine kandidate nego odlučnih da izađu na biralište.*
> 'What I wanted to say is that the survey shows the bigger number of those wanting to vote for particular candidates than those who have decided to go to the polls.'
> *Ono što sam hteo da kažem* ***je*** *da kratkih i jednostavnih domena ima, samo se treba potruditi naci ih.*

'What I wanted to say is that there are short and simple domains, you just have to make an effort to find them.'

Uloga portala **jeste** *da svoje posetioce zadovolji kvalitetnim i pouzdanim infor-macijama.*
'The role of the portal is to satisfy its visitors with quality and reliable information.'
Moja uloga **je** *da* pred kamerama ja budem — ja.
'My role is that in front of the camera I will be — I.'

Čar sporta **jeste** *da ne pobeđuju favorite.*
'The charm of sport is that the favorites do not win.'
Jesu one favoriti, ali baš čar sporta **je** *u tome da ne pobeduju uvek favorite.*
'They are really the favourites, but the charm of sport is that the favorites do not always win.'

4.6. The highest degree
Affirmation modality is opted for in cases where some piece of information is given prominence or considered to be the most important fact. Here the use of long forms is frequently accompanied by the co-occurrence of the superlative degree or the ordinal numeral *prvi* 'first':

Porodicno seksualno vaspitanje **jeste** *najvažnije.*
'Family sexual education is really the most important one.'
Najvažnija stvar koju muškarac može učiniti za svoju ljubav **jeste** *da je neguje.*
The most important thing a man can do for his love is to take care of it/her.'

Trčanje.rs **jeste** *najbolji sajt u kategoriji "sport".*
'Trčanje.rs (running) is the best site in the category atn"sport".'

Prva stvar koju treba da pokažemo **jeste** *da je Sveti Duh jedna od osoba Svetog Trojstva.*
'The first thing we have to show is that the Holy Spirit is one of the persons of the Trinity'
Grupa nam **jeste** *teška i ne znam da li je mogla biti teža.*
'Our group is really difficult and we do not know if it could have been more difficult.'

The above examples suggest that by choosing this subtype of strong affirmation modality the speaker construes the positive value of the proposition as situated at the upper-most end of the scale of intensification. In this way, a state of affairs may be presented as being of the highest importance or being maximally warrantable.

4.7. The co-occurrence of existential quantifiers
The verb *biti* 'to be' in its primary use is associated with the expression of EX-ISTENCE and this quality predisposes it for the function of affirmation marker.

Notice that one of the conceptual metaphors on which the semantics of affirmation is based may be phrased as AFFIRMATION IS EXISTENCE. By stressing that something exists, language users attach a positive value to it and contrast it with an opposite situation which may be metaphorically presented as NEGATION IS NONEXISTENCE. Here the meaning of EXISTENCE is further enhanced by the use of existential quantifiers such as *jedan* 'one' or *jedino* 'the only one':

> *Jedna od navodnih glavnih prednosti formata MS-OOXML **jeste** osobina da omogućava kompatibilnost sa prethodnim standardima.*
> 'One of the alleged main advantages of MS-MS-OOXML format is its ability to allows compatibility with former standards.'
> *Jedino čudo Isusa Hrista koje se opisuje u sva četiri Jevandelja **jeste** hranjenje mnoštva ljudi s pet hlebova i ribom.*
> 'The only miracle of Jesus Christ that is described in all four gospels is feeding many people with five loaves of bread and fish.'
> *Jedino što želim **jeste** da živim.*
> 'The only thing that I want is to live.'
> *Jedini način da žena bude verna **jeste**: da bude zaljubljena ili ružna.*
> 'The only way for a woman to be faithful is: to be in love or ugly.'
> *Jedna od čestih zabluda **jeste** da dečaci vole samo devojke nalik na filmske zvezde ili manekenke.*
> 'One of the common misconceptions is that boys like only those girls who are similar to movie stars or models.'

The use of the existential quantifier can be interpreted here as a means of intensification in which a given state of affairs is presented as maximally focused. Thus, the existential quantifier acts like a maximizer pointing to the highest value of the modal assessment. This value should be interpreted hyperbolically as a strong speaker investment in the proposition, rather than any literal sense of 'one entity'.

4.8. The co-occurrence of the universal quantifier

Quantification involves scaling with respect to amount. By reference to the universal quantifier, representing the biggest quantity, the speaker wants to intensify a proposition, expressing a strong positive commitment. Thus, statements formulated by means of this subtype of strong affirmation modality are perceived as more categorical. Thus, the universal quantifier *sve* 'all' can trigger the use of affirmation modality as it shows an action as being complete and at the same time expresses a strong affirmative meaning:

> *Sve što mu je ostalo **jeste** da svoju igru razvlači koliko god je to moguće.*
> 'All he's left with is to take his time and play as long as it is possible.'
> *Sve što treba **jeste** ljubav da potraje.*
> 'All we need is that love lasts.'
> *Kao i sve, ventili **hoće** da zakažu i procure — nema idealnog rešenja.*
> 'As with everything, the valves will fail and leak — there is no ideal solution.'

4.9. The co-occurrence of the conjunction *i* 'and'

Affirmation modality can be also motivated by the image-schema of ADDING/IN-CLUSION, realized linguistically in the form of conjunction. In grammar, a conjunction is a part of speech that connects lexical items, phrases, clauses or sentences together. In Slavic, the conjunction *i* combines non-contrasting items or ideas together, but in Serbian it is additionally employed as a marker of affirmation. For example, Partridge (1988, p. 120) notices that "in sentences which are not negative, emphasis or intensification of meaning may be given to any word by the use of the particle *i* immediately before it.":

> *I **jeste** mi najteže noću.*
> 'It really is the hardest for me at night'
> *Najteže mi **je** noću.*
> 'The hardest for me is at night.'
> *I internet preljuba **jeste** razlog za razvod.*
> 'The Internet infidelity is also a reason for divorce'
> *To što vidiš to i **jeste**.*
> 'What you see is what really is/exists.'

The examples show that strong affirmation modality in Serbian expresses categorical statements of facts and can be treated as a form of polarity emphasis which conveys a contrastive or absolute value. Strong affirmation modality relies on the use of long forms of auxiliaries, optionally intensified by other syntactic constructions such as quantifiers and superlatives, to achieve verum interpretations. Such sentences express emphatic affirmation and are either elliptic structures produced as replies to a yes/no question presupposing a negative answer or full declaratives which contradict a preceding negative statement. To sum up, the analysis seems to suggest that the syntactic, semantic and discursive properties of affirmation modality clearly diverge from those exhibited by the unmarked affirmation type.

5. Conclusion

I wish to have shown that affirmation is a mental process added by the users of language to a given proposition. As a consequence, it seems justified to see it as a type of modality. Affirmation modality is, therefore, a semantic content circumscribed by various forms of structural realization, ranging from very weak and abstract to strong and intensified. The lack of uniformity in the marking of affirmation modality is due to the fact that it arises diachronically, i.e. in the process of grammaticalization. In this respect, it resembles not only other types of modality, but grammatical categories in general.

Givón (1995, 2001, p. 301–303) distinguishes four epistemic modalities: presupposition where the proposition is taken for granted to be true, realis assertion where the proposition is strongly asserted to be true, irrealis assertion where the proposition is weakly asserted to be possible and negative assertion where the proposition is strongly asserted to be false. Irrealis assertions and negative assertions have various semantic connections and similarities and they can be regrouped together under the super-modality of non-fact against the super-modality of fact consisting

of presupposition and realis assertion (Miestamo, 2005, p. 196). Thus, affirmation modality has an obvious functional connection with the realis, fact or realized super-modality as opposed to irrealis, non-fact and non realized modality type. However, the category of affirmation modality is not based on logical and language-external truth-conditional criteria, but a real language objective distinction in the form of linguistic marking. It represents positive polarization and cannot be equated or confined to either assertion or realis assertion.

Affirmation modality is concerned with the interpersonal in language, with the subjective presence of speakers as they adopt stances toward both the proposition they present and those with whom they communicate. The repertoire of linguistic means for the expression of affirmation modality and their semantic prominence may vary, starting from very vague assertive signaling of positive meaning and going in the direction of strong affirmative judgments of veracity. The key to understanding affirmation modality, however, lies in discovering the very subtle and abstract meanings behind grammatical structures, which have more often than not been thought to be devoid of any kind of functionality other than formal. It is hoped that the reader may develop the viewpoint that affirmation modality is a core linguistic mega-category with a conceptual character and semantic content, by which many other types of grammatical characterization may be seen to be governed.

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