On Prosody, Phonetics and Construction Grammar: The case of CAN I X, LEˀ ME X, and LEMME X

Elisabeth Reber (University of Würzburg, Germany)

The role of phonology for the modelling of constructions has been acknowledged by a variety of theories (e.g. Croft 2001). However, studies on the sound form of constructions which are grounded in the empirical analysis of spoken data and take a strictly inductive approach are still rare (cf. e.g. Berkenfield 2001, Bybee & Scheibman 1999 for exceptions).

In this paper, I am concerned with the formats CAN I X, LEˀ ME X, and LEMME X, which make visible the current speaker's planning of an emerging turn (cf. Caffi 2006: 82). Units of these kinds have been described as meta formulations for turn-taking (Szczepek-Reed 2018).

Taking an interactional, usage-based approach, I intend to investigate patterns of form and function in spoken realizations of CAN I X, LEˀ ME X, and LEMME X and discuss whether these can be analysed as constructions.

Based on a corpus of recent recordings of the Andrew Marr Show, I found that the data show recurrent patterns in terms of the phonetics and / or prosody, syntax, lexis, and metapragmatic functions and speaker role in CAN I X, LEˀ ME X, and LEMME X formats. This suggests that these represent semi-fixed constructions for which their respective sound shapes and full verb in the X-slots may be constitutive.

References

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