From possibility to preference
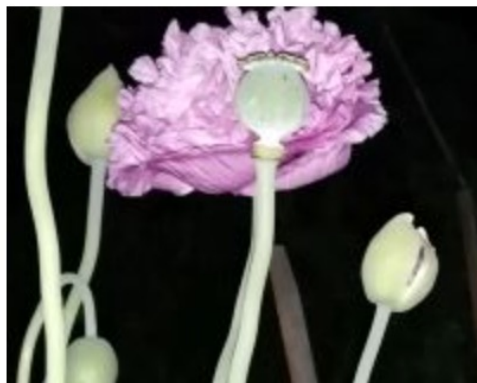
The history of Danish *gide* 'be able to, feel like'

Sune Gregersen
University of Copenhagen/Kiel

Expressions of modality in Germanic
Humboldt University, 15 Sept 2022

UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

Postmodality and the life cycles of modal expressions

2-3 Jun 2022 Caen (France)

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Postmodality and the life cycles of modal expressions

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* * * * *

This conference focusses on the late stages in the evolution of modal items, namely the transition from modal to postmodal domain, demodalization, the internal structure of the postmodal category and the possible remodalization cycles.
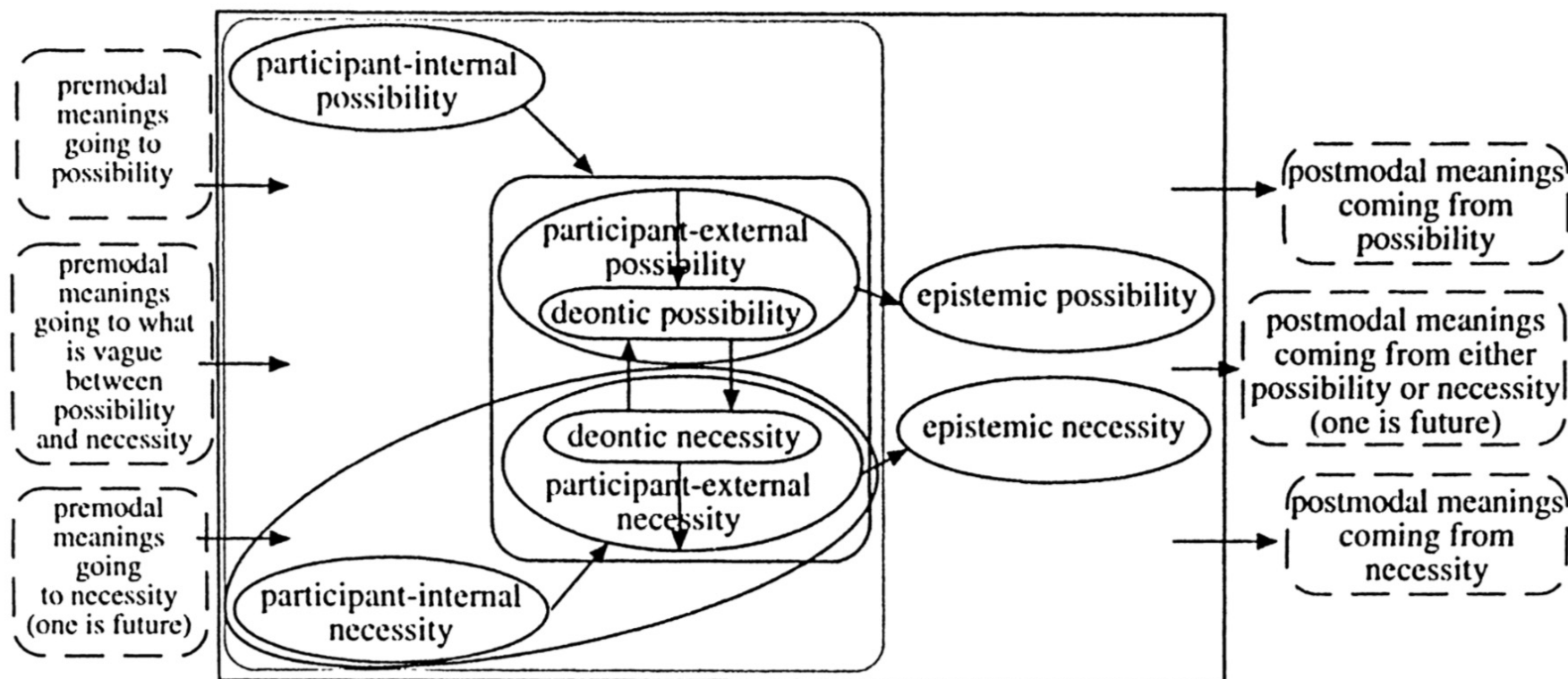
Modality's semantic map   111

Figure 19.   Modality's semantic map

van der Auwera & Plungian (1998)

Outline

1. Background on *gide*

2. Corpus and analytical categories

3. Discussion of findings

4. Conclusions

1. Background on *gide*

Present-day Danish *gide*

- Present-day Danish *gide* [ˈkiːɤ] + INF expresses the preference or inclination of the subject referent ('feel like', 'bother to'):

(1) *Jeg **gider** ikke læse lingvistik i_dag.*
I GIDE.PRS not read.INF linguistics today
'I don't feel like studying linguistics today.' (Brandt 1999: 48)

Present-day Danish *gide*

- Present-day Danish *gide* [ˈkiːɤ] + INF expresses the preference or inclination of the subject referent ('feel like', 'bother to'):

(2)   *Egentlig er det da   også beundringsværdigt, at   nogen*
      in_fact   is   it   after_all also   admirable   COMP someone

      gider   *prøve at skabe   lidt   harmoni i   verden*
      GIDE.PRS try.INF to create.INF a_little harmony in   world.DEF

      'In fact it is also quite admirable that someone bothers to try to create a little harmony in the world.' (KorpusDK 1991)

Meaning of *gide*

- The meaning of *gide* has been described in different ways.

- As modal:
  - Brandt (1999): "inclination", a subtype of dynamic modality
  - Boye (2002): "agonist-internal force" modality
  - Westergaard (2020): "volitive" modality

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- As non-modal:
  - van der Auwera et al. (2009: 288): "non-modal – and postmodal – participant-internal" meaning
  - Vikner & Thráinsson (1995: 54): non-modal because no epistemic uses
  - Hansen & Heltoft (2011: 765, 780, 1426–27): auxiliary, but not a modal

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- Of course dependent on definition of 'modality'
  - Compare e.g. van der Auwera & Plungian (1998) and Narrog (2012)

gide 'feel like' ≠ *ville* 'want to'

- Note that the meaning of *gide* is distinct from that of *ville* 'want to':

(3)   *Jeg* **ville**   *gerne være præst, men jeg* **gad**   *ikke*
      I   want.PST gladly be.INF pastor but   I   GIDE.PST   not

      tage   den   uddannelse.
      take.INF that   education

      'I would like to be a pastor, but I couldn't be bothered to take that education [i.e. theology].' (BT.dk, article from 2002)

Early history of *gide*

- Earliest (inferred) meaning 'get'
    - Found in Old Icelandic cognate *geta* (ONP, s.v. [2]*geta* vb.)
    - Preserved in English loanword *get* (OED, s.v. *get* v.)

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  - Preserved in English loanword *get* (OED, s.v. *get* v.)

- Middle Danish sources: *getæ/gitæ* + PTCP 'be able to':

(4) *Thæt dugh(ær) oc   thæm th(ær) æi **gitæ**   souæt*
     that   benefits   also them   REL   not GIDE.PRS.PL sleep.PTCP
     'This [i.e. poppy seeds] also benefits people who cannot sleep.'
     (tekstnet.dk, HarpS. 39ᵛ, c. 1300)

Gide as an acquisitive modal

- According to van der Auwera et al. (2009), *gide* changed from 'get' to participant-internal possibility ('be able to') to inclination ('feel like')

  - "the extant literature […] strongly suggests that its early possibility use was participant-internal. Here then it was a 'get' verb that never developed a participant-external possibility sense and later even dropped the participant-internal possibility sense, leaving only the non-modal – and postmodal – participant-internal sense" (van der Auwera et al. 2009: 288)

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- However, this is more a hypothesis than a conclusion, and as the authors note, "we need detailed historical work to answer the question about the direction of the development" (ibid.)

- Main question: **How did the present-day meaning of *gide* develop out of its earlier possibility meaning?**

Development of *gide* (initial hypothesis)

'feel like, bother to'
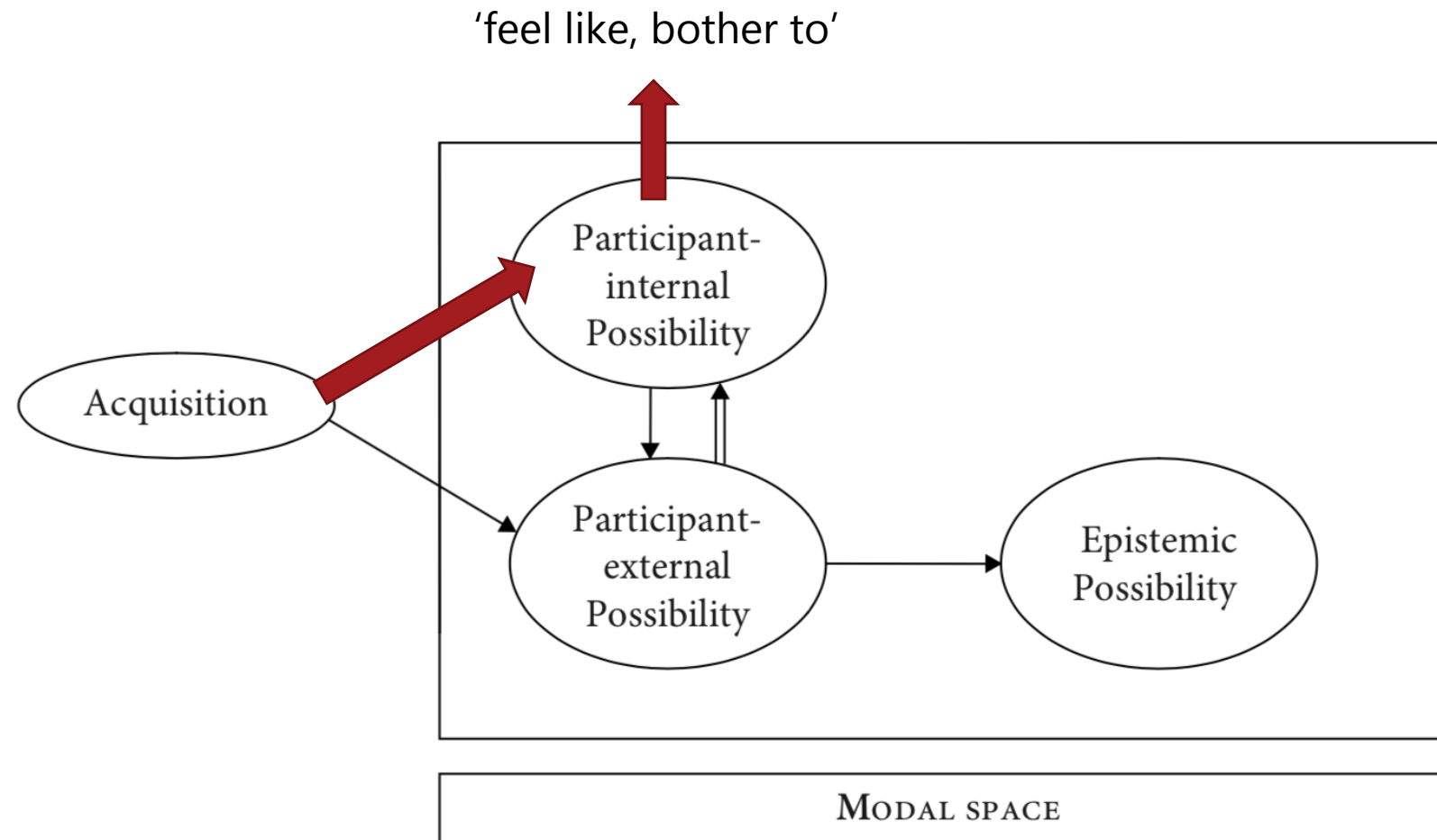
Based on Map 10 in van der Auwera et al. (2009: 293)

2. Corpus and analytical categories

Corpus and analysis

- Custom-made corpus from different sources, covering c. 1300–2000.
  - Major sources tekstnet.dk (c. 1300–1515), renæssancesprog.dk (c. 1515–1700), *Archive of Danish Literature* (ADL, c. 1700–), KorpusDK (c. 2000)
- Searched for possible spelling variants of *gide* and exported concordances to spreadsheets.

Corpus and analysis

- Caveat: *gide* is not a high-frequency item, so relatively few examples analyzed per period.
  - But enough to identify possible bridging contexts in the relevant period.

Time period	Years	Wordcount (appr.)	Examples
Early Middle Danish	c. 1300–1400	100,000	32
Late Middle Danish	c. 1400–1525	355,000	66
Early Modern Danish	c. 1525–1700	500,000 (+ Bible, 900,000 w.)	69
Late Modern Danish	c. 1700–1850	689,000	59
Recent Danish	c. 1850–2000	732,000 (+ KorpusDK)	56
			282

Annotation

- Annotated for various features, including clause type, tense, subject, negation, form and meaning of complement, meaning of *gide*, etc.

- Most important here:
  - MEANING OF *GIDE:* possibility (internal/external), preference, or ambiguous
  - FORM OF COMPLEMENT: infinitive, participle, or other (e.g. elliptical)

3	, strakte sig, med Skove og Marker, længer, end hun kunde øine. Der var saa meget hun	gad vide, men Søstrene vidste ikke at give Svar paa Alt, derfor spurgte hun den gamle Bedstemoder	andersen-eventyr	gad	PST	vide	INF	KNOW	SUB-REL	hun	–	–	PREF
4	egen Pose og arbeidede med de tomme Væve, og det til langt ud paa Natten. »Nu	gad jeg dog nok vide, hvor vidt de ere med Tøiet!« tænkte Keiseren, men han var ordenligt	andersen-eventyr	gad	PST	vide	INF	KNOW	DECL	jeg	–	dog nok	PREF
5	ud med Sproget. Hvad mon vel i det næste Aar vil skee? Hvad mærkeligt? Ja, jeg	gad gjerne see Min egen Skjæbne, Kunstens, Land og Riges, Men Bedstemoder vil, sligt skal ei siges.	andersen-eventyr	gad	PST	see	INF	SEE	DECL	jeg	–	gjerne	PREF

3. Discussion of findings

Semantic development

Time period	Years	POSS	AMBIG	PREF	TOTAL
Early Middle Danish	c. 1300–1400	32	–	–	32
Late Middle Danish	c. 1400–1525	66	–	–	66
Early Modern Danish	c. 1525–1700	42	12	15	69
Late Modern Danish	c. 1700–1850	2	3	54	59
Recent Danish	c. 1850–2000	–	–	56	56

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Recent Danish	c. 1850–2000	–	–	56	56

Change in 17th century

- Switch from possibility to preference in the period c. 1600–1700 (at least in Copenhagen)

(5) **Gider** *hand icke gaaet allene …*
GIDE.PRS he not walk.PTCP alone

'If he [the sick man] is not able to walk on his own …' (tekstnet.dk, *Henrick Smids Lægebog*, 1577)

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(6)   *Ieg* **gad**   *icke holdt   samtale   med hender*
       I   GIDE.PST not   hold.PTCP conversation with her

        'I couldn't be bothered to converse with her' (renæssancesprog.dk, *Jammers Minde*, 1674)

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Observation 1: context of change

- Context of change: participant-internal possibility (ability) due to current constitution or condition (e.g. stamina or appetite)

(7) *da   satte   det   aff   med   sin   appetit   oc*
      then set.PST it   off   with   REFL.POSS appetite   and

  gad   *icke fortæret   synderligt*
  GIDE.PST not   consume.PTCP   significant.N

  '… then it [a sick child] lost its appetite and could not [would not?] eat much' (Vonsild Parish Register, 1689)

Observation 2: 'contingent' ability

- Apparently *gide* never expressed 'general' participant-internal possibility – always ability CONTINGENT on some other factor (health, stamina, appetite…)

(8) *Øynene tyngis   saa at   hun nøye **gider**   oplat   dem*
   eyes.DEF weigh.PASS so COMP she hardly GIDE.PRS open.PTCP them

   'The eyes become so heavy that she is hardly able to open them'
   (tekstnet.dk, *Henrick Smids Lægebog*, 1577)

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eyes.DEF weigh.PASS so   COMP she hardly GIDE.PRS open.PTCP them

'The eyes become so heavy that she is hardly able to open them'
(tekstnet.dk, *Henrick Smids Lægebog*, 1577)

(9)   *... saa ilde   tillpaß,   at   de   **gide**   iche siunget*
so   poorly constituted COMP they GIDE.PRS.PL not   sing.PTCP

'[Parishioners who are] so poorly constituted that they cannot sing'
(tekstnet.dk, *Palladius' Visitatsbog*, 1543)

Icelandic *geta*

- Parallel in Icelandic cognate *geta* in (10), described as 'temporary' by Thráinsson & Vikner (1995: 85)?
  - But what about (11) from Thráinsson (2019: 629)?

(10) *Jón* **kann** *að synda   en   hann* **getur**   *ekki synt   núna.*
     J.   can   to swim.INF but he   GETA.3SG not   swim.PTCP now

     'John knows how to swim but cannot swim now.'

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      'John knows how to swim but cannot swim now.'

(11) *Hún* **getur**   *ekki   talað   dönsku.*
      she   GETA.3SG   not   speak.PTCP Danish

      'She cannot speak Danish' [= does not know how to]

Observation 3: participant-**external** possibility

- Note: in the Early Middle Danish texts (c. 1300–1400), almost all examples are participant-external (*pace* van der Auwera et al. 2009)
  - Does this meaning develop before contingent participant-internal possibility, or are the high figures c. 1300–1400 due to genre effects? More research needed.

(12) *brytær   man skip þa   ma   hans kost   aldrih uare*
     wreck.PRS man ship then may his   goods never be.INF

     *urak   e   mæþæn han **gitær**   sialfær burhit*
     wreckage ever while   he GIDE.PRS self   salvage.PTCP

     'If someone is shipwrecked, his possessions may not be [considered] wreckage as long as he himself is able to salvage [them]' (tekstnet.dk, Scanian Law, c. 1300)

Types of possibility, 1300–1700

Time period	Years	INTERNAL	AMBIG	EXTERNAL
Early Middle Danish	c. 1300–1400	4	1	27
Late Middle Danish	c. 1400–1525	57	14	5
Early Modern Danish	c. 1525–1700	38	4	–

Diachronic change from participant-external
to contingent participant-internal possibility?
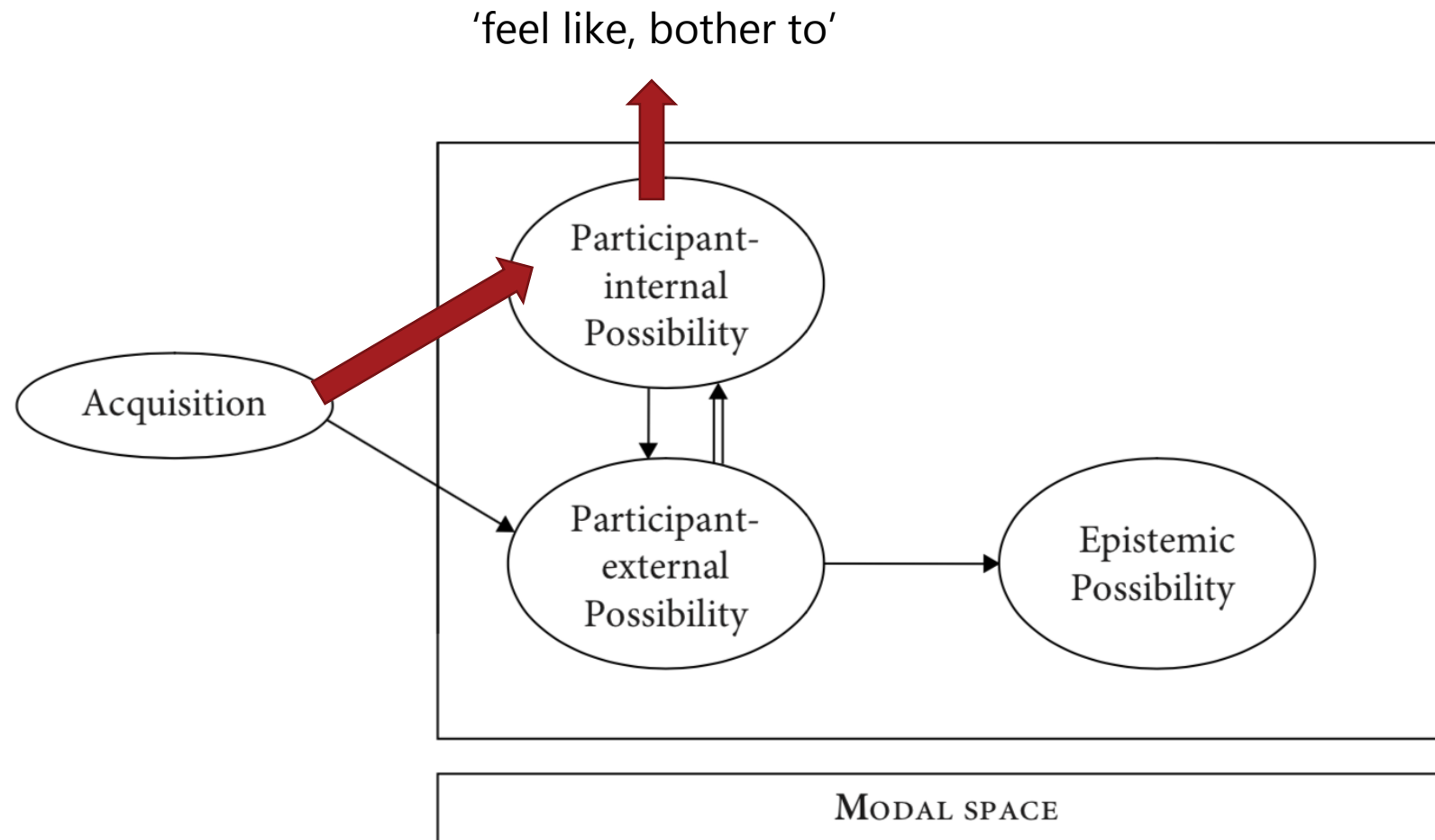
Types of possibility, 1300–1700

Should be checked in a bigger corpus, also including Swedish material!

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Diachronic change from participant-external to contingent participant-internal possibility?

Development of *gide* (initial hypothesis)

'feel like, bother to'

Based on Map 10 in van der Auwera et al. (2009: 293)

Development of *gide* (revised hypothesis)

'feel like, bother to'

CONTINGENT participant-internal possibility

Based on Map 10 in van der Auwera et al. (2009: 293)

Possibility modals c. 1500

	ikke-intentional modalfaktor	intentional modalfaktor
mulighed	mughu / kunna (*mulighed*)	mughu (*tilladelse*)
nødvendig-hed	skulu / mughu (*nødvendighed*)	skulu (*pligt*)

Figur 8: Modalverbernes semantiske system i KMK (1480)

Obe (2011: 261)

Possibility modals c. 1500

+ *gide*

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Obe (2011: 261)

Development in complement types

Time period	Years	PTCP	INF	OTHER	TOTAL
Early Middle Danish	c. 1300–1400	32	–	–	32
Late Middle Danish	c. 1400–1525	56	2	8	66
Early Modern Danish	c. 1525–1700	56	6	7	69
Late Modern Danish	c. 1700–1850	29	26	4	59
Recent Danish	c. 1850–2000	6	47	3	56

Only with *vide* 'know' in the fixed expression *(jeg) gad vidst* 'I wish I knew …'

Development in complement types

- Change from PTCP to INF complement in Late Modern Danish (1700–1850), apparently standard from c. 1800
  - Høysgaard (1747: § 280): *gide* <u>can only</u> take a participle
    - "det Verbum gider tager al-eneste Supinum til sig, saas: Jeg gider hørt &c."
  - Baden (1785: 215): *gide* <u>ought to</u> be used with a participle – infinitive "incorrect"
    - "Det Verbum gider tager Perfect. Partic. Passiv. til sig, i Stedet for Præsens Infin. Act.; f.Ex.: jeg gider ikke giort det; jeg gider ikke tænkt derpaa (giøre det, tænke derpaa, er urigtigt).

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  - Hans Christian Andersen, *Eventyr* (1835) only uses INF complements
- Constructional analogy with modal verbs, but only after change from possibility to preference (*pace* Falk & Torp 1900: 219–220)
  - What are the conditioning factors?

4. Conclusions

Conclusions

- The Present-day Danish (postmodal/marginal modal) meaning 'feel like' develops in 17th c. out of CONTINGENT PARTICIPANT-INTERNAL POSSIBILITY
  - Context of change: situations where ability/inclination is contingent on current constitution, esp. stamina or appetite

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  - Source of participant-internal meaning, or distribution due to genre? More research needed!

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  - Context of change: situations where ability/inclination is contingent on current constitution, esp. stamina or appetite
- Early Middle Danish texts (14th c.): *gide* almost exclusively used for participant-external possibility
  - Source of participant-internal meaning, or distribution due to genre? More research needed!
- Analogical change from PTCP to INF complement, but only after change from possibility to preference
  - Clearly analogical association with modal verbs even if 'preference' ('inclination') is not considered a 'core' modal meaning

Topics for future work

- Development in Early Middle Danish – from participant-external to participant-internal possibility?

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- Elaboration on recent descriptions of Late Middle and Early Modern Danish modals (e.g. Obe 2011, 2013; Westergaard 2020; Gregersen 2020: 293–305)

  - *gide* had its own functional niche, distinct from *kunne* and *måtte/mughe*

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Was the modern meaning a Swedish innovation which spread westwards?

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Mange tak! Vielen Dank!