

An old case reopened: German [*werden* + infinitive] as a category of tense, aspect or mood; with special reference to a putative infinitive of [*werden* + infinitive]

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Categories in
Grammar
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OUTLINE

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Help from canonicity**

1. Background: [*werden* + inf] generally

(1) constructed example

Er wird schlafen.

he AUX sleep_{INF}

‘He is in the pre-state of sleeping.’

‘He is likely to be sleeping (right now).’

‘He will sleep (in the future).’

2. Categories suggested for [*werden* + inf]

2.1 Aspect (Bartsch 1995:159)

- Other meanings can be compositionally derived
- Uniform treatment of all instances of *werden* (copular verb, passive)

➤ **2.1 continued**

Against an aspectual categorization
(textual criterion)

(2) constructed example

*Als er keuchend auf dem Bahnsteig ankommt,
wird der Zug abfahren. Da hat er Glück.*

‘When he is reaching the platform, panting, the
train [leave]. So he is lucky.’

2. Categories suggested for [werden + inf]

2.2 Mood (Vater 1975)

- *Werden* in [werden + inf] behaves like a modal.
- Temporal meaning does not differ from *praesens pro futuro*
- Temporal meaning can be derived

➤ **2.2 continued**

Against a modal categorization
(semantic criterion)

(3) constructed example

*Morgen werd' ich um 8h aufstehen, den Zug um
11h nehmen und um 17h ankommen.*

'Tomorrow, I'll get up at 8, take the train at 11,
and arrive at 5 p.m.'

= purely temporal use with subjective certainty

➤ **2.2 continued**

Against a modal categorization (Vater's 1st arg.)
(morphological criterion)

Modals in German have a preterite form (*konnte*,
musste,...) but *werden* in [*werden* + inf] doesn't:

(4) constructed example

**Er wurde schlafen.*

(Bogner 2009:107)

➤ **2.2 continued**

Against a modal categorization (Vater's 2nd arg.)
(pragmatic criterion)

The expression of posteriority by [*werden* + inf]
does fulfil the criterion of obligatoriness, if
reformulated:

The expression of a category is obligatory, if its
non-expression by any means entails its non-
existence in the speaker's pragmatic input.

2. Categories suggested for [*werden* + inf]

2.3 Tense (traditional view, ~Hacke 2009)

- Modal meaning can be derived
- Uniform treatment of [*werden* + inf]

2. Categories suggested for [*werden* + inf]

2.4 Combination (Leiss 1992:191ff)

- Lexical verb telic
 - Future reference guaranteed
 - [*werden* + inf]_{FUT} superfluous
 - If [*werden* + inf], then modal
- Lexical verb atelic
 - temporal meaning possible

➤ **2.4 continued**

Against a mixed categorization
(general criterion)

A redundant interpretation may be preferred
above a non-redundant one.

Interim conclusion:

Tense = strongest candidate

3. Support for tense: [*werden*_{inf} + inf]

(morphological criterion)

- Epistemic modals in German are always finite (Abraham 2001).
- But *werden* in [*werden* + inf] might be non-finite.

➤ **3 continued**

(5) Neue Kronen-Zeitung, March 4th, 2000

Dass ich in meinem Leben auch noch für den Opernball

sein

werden

müsse,

be.INF

AUX.INF

must.1SG.QUOT

hätte ich mir nicht gedacht.

'I wouldn't have thought that one day I **would** even **have to be** in favour of the *Opernball*.'

4. “But it’s not inflectional!”

Help from canonicity

Brown et al. 2012:233 –

„We argue that canonical periphrasis is exemplified in our theoretical space of possibilities whenever a cell in a (canonically morphological) inflectional paradigm (‘feature intersection’) is expressed by a multiword construction which respects the canonical properties of functional syntax.“

➤ **4 continued**

[*werden* + inf] as a not fully canonical periphrasis:

- Rest of the paradigm mostly analytical: only preterite inflectional (M)
- Only rarely obligatory (M)
- Non-finite variant not well-established yet (S)

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THANK YOU...

...for your attention 😊