

## EAVESDROPPING, PEEPING AND NOSING OUT, OR ON SOURCES OF EVIDENTIALITY IN OLD EAST SLAVIC AND MIDDLE RUSSIAN

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This pilot corpus-based study focuses on the diachronic evolution of the grammatical expression of evidentiality in Old East Slavic (X-XV c.) and Middle Russian (XV-XVIII c.), zooming in on the functional characteristics of three attitude verbs instantiating different sensory sources of knowledge (e.g., *věděti*, originally ‘to see’; *slyšati*, originally ‘to hear’; *čuti*, originally ‘to scent’), and the formal relationship they establish with their predicative adverbials [a.o. *vědomo* ‘it is known’, also in its more erudite variant *věsto*; *slyš(a)no* ‘it is heard’]. So far, the analysis of several linguistic strategies actively employed in Old East Slavic and Middle Russian discourse to convey various layers of participant-internal (KAPRĚ 2009; MIXAJLOVA 2015; VAULINA 2016 a.o.) and participant-external modality (e.g., ŠEPTUCHINA, GORBAN’ 2015) has been devoted a small body of literature. Even fewer studies have taken into account other linguistic parameters, such as the set of lexical and grammatical units used in modalized environments (cf. HANSEN 2001: 246–279 on Old Church Slavonic; HANSEN 2004), their syntactic properties and distribution (WIEMER 2019: 138–150), their semantic differences (PTENCOVA 2008) and their historical derivation in different Slavic languages (DRONOVA 2006). However, with the possible exception of KOPOTEV’s (2014) survey on Old East Slavic lexical and pragmatic markers of quotative (reportative) modality, evidentiality as a discrete linguistic category seems to have eluded both lines of research. Possible reasons underlying such shortcomings may include only the absence of a specific (grammatical) marker of evidentiality in Old East Slavic and Middle Russian—let alone a separate set of sensory evidentials—but also, in more general terms, the lack of consensus on a crosslinguistically consistent notion of ‘evidentiality’ (cf., a.o., KOSTA 2013 and WIEMER 2018: 56–93 for some differences between proper evidentiality and epistemic modality in Slavic languages). This study aims at addressing this gap by taking into account a representative sample of 300 examples from the historical subcorpora (i.e., Old East Slavic, birchbark letters, and Middle Russian) of the Russian National Corpus (NKRJa). Falling back on KRATZER’s (2012) formal framework for the treatment of epistemic modality, the analysis focuses on the syntactic and semantic distribution of present-tensed forms of *věděti*, *slyšati*, and *čuti* in egophoric utterances (i.e., with 1<sup>st</sup> person singular or plural subjects), as well as the predicatives *vědomo/věsto* and *slyš(a)no* in biclausal structures. Preliminary findings include the following: 1) in their discursively secondary evidential function, full-fledged verbs [e.g., (*se*) *slyšju*, *čuju/cuju*] have a wider syntactic distribution w.r.t.

their predicative adverbial, although the range of their evidential functions need not be; 2) olfactory evidentials frequently characterize non-written registers; 3) auditive and olfactory sources of knowledge convey a lesser degree of (contextually bound) evidential certainty than visual ones (cf. LAMPERT 2014 for a comparison with English).

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#### ELECTRONIC CORPORA

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  - Old Novgorodian (birchbark letters) section of NKRJa's Historical subcorpus: <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-birchbark.html> (last accessed: May 21<sup>st</sup> 2022);
  - Middle Russian section of NKRJa's Historical subcorpus: [https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-mid\\_rus.html](https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-mid_rus.html) (last accessed: May 21<sup>st</sup> 2022).