

VERUM, EPISTEMIC MODALITY AND ROOT CLAUSE COMPLEMENTIZERS IN THE
HISTORY OF SPANISH
(Abstract)

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In this talk I will investigate the diachronic development of a construction in Modern Spanish expressing epistemic modality and evidentiality. It consists of an epistemic or evidential modifier followed by the complementizer (hence Adv+C) which heads root clauses (*Seguro_{Adv} que_{Adv} viene*. 'Surely he/she will come.'). I demonstrate that the distributional, semantic and pragmatic properties support a monoclausal analysis for Modern Spanish Adv+C as well as its historical source construction, despite the presence of the complementizer (hence root clause complementation). I propose a cartographic analysis associating Adv+C as well as the source construction with a low position in Rizzi's split CP. Supported by corpus data I will show that a verum focus construction (Aff+C) qualifies as the origin of Adv+C. I claim that the loss of the verum and the strengthening of the epistemic interpretation triggers the reanalysis of the construction. This ultimately gives rise to its productive extension to other epistemic and evidential modifiers.

This construction and its historical dimension is interesting, on the one hand because it brings about new insights into the semantic categories expressed by the construction and suggests a possible historical link to the category of verum. On the other hand, the fact that it is a case of root complementation permits drawing conclusions and establishing relations to other root clause complementizer phenomena.