

**The interrogative mental state predicates *do you think*, *do you suppose* and *do you believe*  
A corpus-based synchronic study of grammaticalization**

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The study of mental state predicates (MSPs) such as *think* has largely been restricted to first person singular declarative uses (e.g. Urmson 1952; Thompson & Mulac 1991; Aijmer 1997; Thompson 2002). Urmson was the first to systematically describe the special properties of these “parenthetical verbs”, i.e. verbs which, “in the first person present, can be used (...) followed by ‘that’ and an indicative clause, or else can be inserted at the middle or end of the indicative sentence” (1952: 221). He shows that they have two readings, a parenthetical and a non-parenthetical one – which can be understood as a grammaticalized and a non-grammaticalized reading – and when used parenthetically, they do not describe psychological conditions but they modify the claim to truth made in the complement clause (1952: 223-224). Grammaticalized MSPs can be said to have undergone a shift from propositional to interpersonal (cf. Traugott 1982).

Unlike the vast majority of studies on MSPs, this paper concentrates on second person singular interrogative uses of *think*, *suppose* and *believe*. Seeing that *I think*, *I suppose* and *I believe* are used to express the speaker’s subjective attitude, comment or stance (e.g. Aijmer 1997; Scheibman 2002; Thompson 2002; Kärkkäinen 2003), this paper wishes to examine to what extent *do you think*, *do you suppose* and *do you believe* are the first person MSPs’ interactional correlates, inquiring about the interlocutor’s stance. It will be seen that this stance-inviting function is highly intersubjective (Traugott & Dasher 2002). The question will be asked whether it is legitimate to call the pairs *I think* – *do you think*, *I suppose* – *do you suppose* and *I believe* – *do you believe* expressions of subjective modality as defined by Verstraete (2001).

This study employs corpus data from the ICE-GB and the BNC to see whether the function of inviting the interlocutor’s stance is as grammaticalized as the more familiar function of expressing speaker stance and to identify any differences between the three MSPs regarding their respective degrees of grammaticalization. A qualitative as well as a quantitative approach will be adopted to deal with these issues. The qualitative analysis consists in a description of the different formal and functional types of interrogative MSP, taking into account parameters such as, amongst other things, polarity (*do you think* – *don’t you think*), position (*Do you think Frank will help us?* – *Will Frank help us, do you think?*), the use of the complementizer (*Do you suppose (that) all those books are Vivian’s?*) and the semantics of the host clause (factual, evaluative or deontic, cf. Simon-Vandenberg 2000). As regards the quantitative side of this study, the frequencies of the interrogative pattern as compared to that of the declarative one will receive due attention as will the proportion of grammaticalized as opposed to non-grammaticalized uses.

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