

Possession, Modality and Beyond: The Case of *Mec'* and *Mecca* in Belarusian

Lidia Federica Mazzitelli

0. Introduction

The topic of this paper are the constructions [*mec'*, 'have,' + Infinitive], and [*mecca*, 'have:REFL,' + Infinitive] in Belarusian. Their functions in contemporary Belarusian will be illustrated here (section 1.), as well as the functions they fulfilled in previous stages of the language (sections 2., 3. and 4.). Particular attention will be dedicated to the development path which lead to the grammaticalization of *mec'* and *mecca* as auxiliaries (5.). The texts analysed for this study are listed in the Appendix.

1. *Mec'* and *Mecca* in Contemporary Belarusian

Apart from their auxiliary functions, both *mec'* and *mecca* have a full lexical meaning. The primary function of *mec'* is to express possession (along with the locative construction *u*, 'at,' + Gen.). In this use it usually governs an NP:

1) *Ja maju mašynu*

I have a car.

The possessive use of *mec'* will be labelled as *mec'*-I.

Mecca – which is, literally, the reflexive form of *mec*¹– is used principally to express existence and availability:

2) *U biblijatecy majucca šmat knihaŭ ab movaznaŭstve*

In the library there are [i.e. are physically present and available] many books about linguistics.

This existential-locative use of *mecca* will be labelled as *mecca*-I. *Mecca* can also be used to express a physical or psychological state, as in *Jak maes' sja*, 'How do you do/How are you': This latter use will be labelled as *mecca*-II.

The constructions which are the topic of this study (*mec*' and *mecca* followed by an infinitive form) will instead be labelled as *mec*'-II and *mecca*-III.

1-1. Genaral Remarks

a. Frequency and Stylistic Collocation

Both *mec*'-II and *mecca*-III are not very frequent in contemporary Belarusian: Only 78 occurrences (0,05 per thousand words) for *mec*'-II and 28 (0,01 per thousand words) for *mecca*-III were found in the corpus of contemporary Belarusian used for this study (see Appendix): For comparison, forms of the verb *mjahčy*, 'can,' occur in the same corpus over 1,900 times. Most occurrences were found in press and popular science texts, whereas only a very small number of occurrences, mostly for *mecca*-III, was found in literary texts.

It must also be remembered that contemporary Belarusian has two main standards, the so-called *taraškevica* and *narkamaŭka*, which differ on the orthographical, lexical and morphosyntactic levels. The *taraškevica* – the name derives from the Belarusian linguist B. Taraškevic, who tried first to standardise Belarusian in 1918 – is more oriented on the Polish standard, or, at least, tries to differentiate Belarusian from the

1 Even if *mecca* derives, historically, from *mec*' + the reflexive suffix *-sja*, these two verbs form in contemporary Belarusian two completely separated lexical units.

Russian standard.² The *narkamaŭka* – the name derives from *Narodny Kamisaryjat*, ‘National Committee,’ the Ministry for Education in Soviet Belarus’ which took on the task of reforming and standardising Belarusian in 1933 – is more oriented on the Russian standard. *Mec*’-II is far more common in the *taraškevica* standard than in the *narkamaŭka* one. The example of the newspaper *Naša Niva* provides striking evidence of that: The newspaper was edited in *taraškevica* until 2008, when it switched to *narkamaŭka*. Before that date, the constructions with *mec*’-II are relatively very frequent (51 occurrences); After the switch, only two occurrences of *mec*’-II were found. Unlike *mec*’-II, *mecca*-III seems to have the same distribution in both standards: In the corpus 13 occurrences of *mecca*-III have been found in *taraškevica* texts, 15 in *narkamaŭka* ones.

b. Morphosyntactic Characteristics

It is remarkable that the overwhelming majority of the tokens analysed for this study are in the third person, both singular and plural. Only one token of *mec*’-II was in a person other than the third, whereas for *mecca*-III some more tokens other than third person have been found, mostly in the first person singular.

The two verbs seem to be almost complementary in tense distribution: *Mec*’-II appears mostly in the present tense (3) while *mecca*-III appears almost exclusively in the past tense (4).

- 3) 23 červenja ŭ Homeli ***mae adbycca*** *kancert* “*Za Belarus*” (Naša Niva, 2007)

The concert “*Za Belarus*” is to take place on 23rd June in Homel’

- 4) *Ja melasja stac’ povaram* (Teda Li, *Lipavy list*, 2005)

I should have become a cook

2 Taraškevic codified the language on the basis of the north-western dialects, which are directly contiguous with the Polish-speaking territory: This is one of the reasons why the *taraškevica* recalls in some aspects the Polish standard.

Neither in the corpus, nor in Google searches on the Internet, future tense forms of *mec*'-II and *mecca*-III were found. For *mec*'-II some participles, mostly used as adjectives, have been found. Conditionals occurred only for *mecca*-III.

Mec'-II and *mecca*-III select infinitive forms, without aspectual restrictions: Both perfective and imperfective verbs are allowed. Both *mec*'-II and *mecca*-III take over the argument structure of the main verb; They do not have any restrictions on the semantic properties of the first argument, either: Both human and non-human subjects are allowed.

1-2. *Mec*'-II: Semantics

Mec'-II is used to express different notions, on the edge between modality and temporality (future time reference).

The most frequent meaning *mec*'-II expressed in the corpus is 'scheduled future.' This term, taken from Bybee et al. 1994: 249,³ indicates an event which has been pre-arranged (scheduled) and is yet to occur:

5) *Sěleta 17 červenja va ũsich pravaslaŭnich chramach Horadni raspačnecca ũračystaja liturhija. A 12-j u kirunku Saboru mae rušyc' chrosny chod* (Naša Niva, 2007)

This year a solemn liturgy will begin on June, 17 in all Orthodox churches of Horadnja. At 12 o'clock the procession will start in the direction of the cathedral

If the scheduled event is situated in the past a counterfactual interpretation may arise:

6) *Impreza mela adbycca 13 ljutaha, ale administracyja admovila ũ jaho pravjadzen'ni* (Naša Niva, 2007)

3 J. Bybee, R. Perkins, W. Pagliuca, *The Evolution of Grammar: Tense, Aspect, and Modality in the Languages of the World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994). As here remarked (p. 251), the English construction *be to* can express scheduled future, sometimes with a predestination flavour: It seems thus to correspond well to the semantics of Belarusian *mec*'-II.

The party should have taken place on February 13, but the administration refused its permission

In 7, the event is presented not as having been scheduled by someone else, but by the speaker himself. Hence, it represents an intention⁴:

7) *Z' Belarus'sju my maem pracjahvac' budaŭnictva sajuznaj dzjaržavy* (website *svaboda.org*, 2007)

We intend to continue the construction of a common state with Belarus'

In other contexts, the event introduced by *mec*'-II is not presented as scheduled, but as inevitably bound to happen: If the event has already happened (8), this function can be called 'fatalistic future' (Hansen 2003⁵); If it is still to happen it represents a prediction (9):

8) *Kali b, adnak, jany vedali, što "Maryjan Haŭz" meŭ zastacca ŭlasnas'cju ajcoŭ- maryjanaŭ, ichnjaja reakcyja nja roz'nilasja b velmi ad reakcyj kardynala Tyserana* (A. Nadsan, in: Arche, 2004)

Nevertheless, if they knew that "Marian House" should have remained property of the Marian Fathers their reaction would not have been much different from Cardinal Tyseran's reaction

9) *Takija pes'ni zaŭždy buduc' aktual'nyja i zapatrabavanyja, a sam dysk mae vytrymac' ne adno peravydan'ne* (Naša Niva, 2007)

Such songs will always be current and popular, and the disc is destined to be republished more than once.

4 This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that the above quoted sentence is a translation from Russian. The original sentence was: *S Belarus'ju my namereny prodolžit' stroitel'stvo sojuznogo gosudarstva*, 'idem'. Russian *byt' namerenym* has the exact meaning of 'intend.'

5 B. Hansen, "The Grammaticalization (and Degrammaticalization?) of Modals in Slavonic," in Tilman Berger, Karl Gutschmidt, eds., *Funktionale Beschreibung slavischer Sprachen. Beiträge zum 13. Internationalen Slavistenkongress Ljubljana* (München: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2003), pp. 97–115.

The event expressed by *mec* '-II can also be presented as due to happen in the immediate future. In this meaning (which is also, according to the corpus data, the rarest one) the function of *mec* '-II is very near to a 'pure' future auxiliary: Nevertheless, it implies a certain obligation flavour, which prevents the classification of *mec* ' as a future auxiliary *tout court* (Lomtev 1956: 181⁶):

- 10) *A što b paraiŭ tym chlopcam, jakija služadac' cjaper ci majuc' pajsci ŭ vojska?* (Naša Niva, 2007)

And what would you suggest to those boys who are now doing their military service now or are about/have to join the army?

The obligation implication becomes stronger when *mec* '-II expresses the action the subject is supposed to accomplish in order to fulfil given conditions, laid down by an external, almost always quoted in the text, source, like a law or a regulation (11). An additional specification of this function is found in 12, where *mec* '-II expresses the purpose an item or an event is supposed to realize:

- 11) [*Pavodle dyrektyvy 2004/58/EC*] *hramadzjanin trecjaj krainy ŭ takim wypadku mae davesci, što mae dastatkovyja hrašovyja srodki* (Praŭnik, 2006)

[According to directive 2004/58/EC] the citizen of a third state is supposed to demonstrate that he has enough money [in order to receive a visa]

- 12) *Novaja mahistrala mae zastrachavac' ad ryzykaŭ belaruskaha tranzytu* (Naša Niva, 2007)

The new highway is supposed to offer protection from the risks of the transit through Belarus'

6 T. P. Lomtev, *Grammatika belorusskogo jazyka* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe učebno-pedagogičeskoe izdatel'stvo, 1956).

1-2-1. *Reported Speech and Lack of Commitment*

Hansen 2001⁷ (following Weiss (ms., quoted in Hansen 2001)) suggests that the principal semantic characteristic of Polish *mieć* is that of being used to report an utterance of willingness of an external source, which can be represented by the speaker himself or by another person, whose words the speaker reports. As a consequence of that, Polish *mieć* presupposes a certain lack of commitment on the part of the speaker, as Lempp 1986⁸ states: “The presence of this intermediate stage, the source, allows the speaker to keep a certain distance from what he says, because he only says what the source claims” (Lempp 1986:70). The same thing can be said of Belarusian *mec*’-II, which is frequently used to represent situations which presuppose reported speech (like, for instance, a press conference): The speaker does not take responsibility for the truth of his/her statement, and s/he leaves open the possibility that the action, which the subject of *mec*’-II is bound to perform, will not be fulfilled.

1-3. *Mecca-III: Semantics*

Mecca is primarily used to express the notion of scheduled future in the past, usually with counterfactual interpretation (13), and intention (14, 15). As mentioned above, *mecca* is almost never used in the present tense.

- 13) *Akcyja melasja adbycca na ploščy Banhalor. [...] Ale ūlady tradycyjna znajšli pryčyny admovic’ (Naša Niva, 2007)*

The protest should have taken place in Banhalor square [...] But the authorities have, as usual, found a reason to refuse [permission]

- 14) *Užo ū studenckija hađy razoŭ kol’ki ja meŭsja z”ezdźic’ da babi Prosi na mahilu, ale ūrešce tak i ne sabraŭsja (U. Arloŭ, Moj radavod da pjataha kalena, abo Sproba pazbehnuc’ vyhnannja, 1990)*

⁷ B. Hansen, *Das slavische Modalauxiliar – Semantik und Grammatikalisierung im Russischen, Polnischen, Serbischen/Kroatischen und Altkirchenslavischen* (München: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2001).

⁸ A. Lempp, *Miec: To Have in Modern Polish* (München: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1986).

Even when I was a student I often had the intention to visit Granny Prosja in the graveyard, but in the end I never went.

15) *Sp-r Uladzimer meŭsja zapytac' dazvolu na heta ŭ redaktara "Bjarozki."* Pačakaem. (blog site *dzetki.org*, 2010)

Mr. Uladzimer intended to ask the editor of "Bjarozka" for permission. Let us wait.

2. *Mec*'-II and *Mecca*-III in Old Belarusian (14th to 18th Century)

In order to draw the main lines of the grammaticalization of *mec*'-II and *mecca*-III it is useful to compare the modern meanings of these two verbs with their use in Old Belarusian. However, it should be taken into account that Old Belarusian syntax has been influenced extensively by Polish, and, indeed, the use of *mec*' + infinitive in Old Belarusian is often the same as the use of *mieć* + Infinitive in Old Polish⁹. This fact leads to the conclusion that language contact should be invoked to explain this convergence.¹⁰

2-1. *Meti* /*Imeti*

In Old Belarusian there are two verbs for 'have': *imeti* and *meti* (from which contemporary *mec*' derives). Both verbs derive from Proto-Slavic **jьměti*, *jьmatь*, 'have,' which, in turn, derives from Proto-Slavic **jьmQ*, (*j*)*ěti*, 'take.'¹¹ The *Historyčny Sloŭnik belaruskaj movy* (Historical dictionary of Belarusian language, henceforth: HSBM) defines *meti*

9 An exhaustive description of *mieć* and its development path in Polish can be found in Hansen 2001.

10 However, even if an influence of Polish on the usage of *mec*' + Inf. in Old Belarusian (and still in Early Modern Belarusian) is clearly recognizable, in Modern Belarusian the construction *mec*' + Inf. diverges from Polish *mieć* + Inf. in many aspects (see 5-1.); On the contrary, no Polish influence can be evoked for *mecca*, as Polish *mieć się* is never used governing an infinitive.

11 I. I. Lučyc'-Fedarec', H. A. Cychun, eds., *Etymalahičny sloŭnik belaruskaj movy*, vol. 7 (Minsk: Akademija Navuk Belarusi, 1991), p. 28.

as an auxiliary for the expression of future tense which can also express modality – obligation (16) and possibility (17)¹²:

16) *Za prostupokъ [...] maetъ byti karanъ* (Legal acts, 1388)

(He) must be punished [...] for (his) crime

17) *Na tom čase [...] malo čto by sja melъ ogurkami pochvaliti* (The Barkulabava chronicle, second half of 17th century – first half of 18th century)

At that time [...] only a few people could boast about their cucumbers

Although the HSBM also mentions the possibility for *meti* to be an auxiliary for the expression of future tense it quotes no examples of this function. For *imeti* the auxiliary function in the expression of future tense is the only one the HSBM reports; However, all the quoted examples express modality (obligation, as in 18):

18) *Kto imelъ na vojnu choditi i kto doma ostati* (Skaryna, *Biblija ruskaja*, 1516–19)

Who had to fight in the war and who had to stay at home

All functions mentioned in the HSBM have been found in the examined texts; Moreover, some other functions the HSBM does not mention have been identified. The obligation meaning is very well attested in the texts:

19) *Pisarъ zemski po rusku maetъ literami i slovy ruskimi vsi listy i pozvy pisaty a ne inymъ jazykomъ i slovy i takъ maetъ pisarъ prisjagati* (Lithuanian statute, 1588)

The clerk must write all the letters and summons in Russian alphabet and words and in no other language and words, and so must the clerk swear

12 A. I. Žuraŭski et al., *Historyčny sloŭnik belaruskaj movy*, vol. 18 (Minsk: Belaruskaja Navuka, 1999), p. 13.

- 20) *Ciepier i rady sabie dać ne mahu, szto **maju rabic**’?* (Comedy, from the collection compiled by Marašeŭski, 1787 (original orthography))

And now I cannot understand, what do I have to do?

As mentioned in the HSBM, *meti/ imeti* can also express futur tense. According to Hansen 2003, in East Common Slavic *imeti* expressed a ‘fatalistic future,’ that is a ‘notion oscillating between modality and future’ (*ibid.*:109). This interpretation also fits Belarusian *meti/ imeti*: For instance, in 21 and 22 the second Advent of Christ and Judgement Day are presented as two events which will unavoidably happen. *Meti/imeti* can also express future in the past, often with counterfactual interpretation (23):

- 21) *Za kotorogo ž Tivirja vsi reči i proročestva popolnivšy, po vstani z mertvych vstupil’ na nebo i šel’ na pravicy v Boga Otca, ot kole ž dnja sudnogo **maet’ pryjti** suditi žyvych’ i mertvych’* (The Raczynski chronicle, Second half of 17th century)

As at the time of Tiberius all prophecies were fulfilled, after the resurrection from the dead (Jesus) ascended into Heaven and sat at the right of God, hence he will come in the last day to judge the living and the dead

- 22) *A ljubo byli pogane, ednak’b znali, že **mel’ byti** den’ sudnyj* (Kronika litovska j žmojtis’ka, 18th century)

And although they were pagans, they nevertheless knew that Judgement Day shall come

- 23) *V tom čase **mel byti** emu dan pozov duchovnyj ot otca Nikifora, eksarcha, poslanogo na to ot Gavrilija, patriarchi Kostentynopol’skogo* (The Barkulabava chronicle, second half of 17th century–first half of 18th century)

At that time he was supposed to receive the sacred consecration from the esarch Nikifor, sent for this by Gavrilija, Patriarch of Constantinople

Moreover, *meti/ imeti* can be used to express reported speech in clauses depending on locutionary verbs, as in 24:

- 24) *A inye povedajutʹ [...] jako by melʹ uroditi trech synov* (The Raczyński chronicle, second half of 17th century)

And others say [...] that (he) sired three sons

Finally, *meti/ imeti* has developed into a marker of evidentiality (hearsay), as in 25–27:

- 25) *I knjaginja velikaja Vitovtovaja slyšala ot ljudej, što knjaz' Vitovt maetʹ dolgo sedeti s neju* (The Vilnius chronicle, end of the 15th century)

The Great Duchess Vitovtovaja heard people saying that the Duke Vitovt is to sit with her for a long time

- 26) *(Dmitr Ivanovič) listy po vsej Moskve rozoslal, povedajučy sebe byti carja Dmitra Ivanoviča moskovskogo, ktorogo ešče malogo jako by mel Godun stratiti* (The Barkulabava chronicle, second half of 17th century – first half of 18th century)

(Dmitr Ivanovič) sent letters to the whole of Moscow, claiming to be the czar Dmitr Ivanovič of Moscow, who was allegedly killed as a small child by Godun

- 27) *Rymjanovʹ povedajutʹ žeby mělo polečy dvakrotʹ što tysečei* (*Historyja ab Atyle*, around 1580, in: HSBM, vol. 18, p. 13)

Allegedly, twice as much as one hundred thousands Romans lay [on the battlefield]

2-2. *Metisja*

The HSBM reports for *metisja* (Old Belarusian for *mecca*) the function of expressing modality (necessity) and temporality (future), and quotes the following example:

28) *Ždan Bohdanovič povedil, iż byla u mene taja prijelka [...] pošla z domu moego [...] do pana burmistra i o tom ne vedal, esli by ee melise svatac' ljudi, abo ne* (Acts of the Tribunal in Mohilëu, 16th century)

Ždan Bohdanovič said I had this friend of mine [...] (and she) went from my house [...] to the mayor's house, and I did not know whether someone would/had to propose to her or not.

This sentence is quite difficult to interpret: It is not clear whether *metisja* has the function of indicating future in the past or obligation. Other examples of *metisja* used as temporal or modal auxiliary have not been found in the examined texts: thus it seems to have been quite a rare construction in Old Belarusian.

The verb *imetisja* was also present in Old Belarusian, but the HSBM does not register any auxiliary function for it, and no examples have been found in the texts, either.

3. *Mec'*-II and *Mecca*-II in Modern Belarusian: Second Half of 19th Century to 1925

3-1. *Mec'*

In the earliest texts written in modern Belarusian *mec'* can express a wide range of temporal notions, all of them related to future tense: scheduled future (29–32) and fatalistic future (33). *Mec'* is also used to express intentions (34):

29) *Mužyčkoŭ tam pryvodzjac' / i adnadvorcy prychozdzjac' / tam na službu majuc' bryc'* (V. Dunin-Marcinkevič, *Hapon*, 1855)

Peasants are taken there/and noblemen arrive/(they) are to shave (the peasants) during the service

30) *Bačyš, zaŭtra mae byc' trochi hascej z kirmašu* (Ja. Kupala, *Paŭlinka*, 1913)

Look, tomorrow some guests from the fair are to come

- 31) *Mo z pershaha razu ne zusim budze jasna, ab čym u hetym mesjačniku **mae isci** havorka, jakija sabe mety pastavila redakcyja* (B. Taraškevič, from journal “Sjabra” (1914))

Perhaps it will not be immediately evident what this journal is supposed to be about and what the aims of the editorial staff are.

- 32) *Išoŭ čyrvony bataliën z arkestram muzyki, pramčaušja aŭtamabil’ z dubovym vjankom, zaraz **meli pačac’** vynas* (M. Harecki, *Dzve dušy*, 1919)

A red battalion advanced with a marching band, a car with an oak garland swept by, now the procession was supposed to begin

- 33) *A njachaj sabe budze, što **mae byc’**, – ja svajho taki dab’ jusja abo zhinu, kab i sledu ne zastalosja* (Ja. Kupala, *Paŭlinka*, 1913)

And let it be what is to be – I will get what I want, or I will die, so that no trace shall remain

- 34) *Ėn na vajne zaslužyŭsja/ i achvicerstva dažyŭsja/ cjaper ža **mae prasic’/ šob ty [...]** svajamu dzicjaci dolju ščasnu daravala* (V. Dunin-Marcinkevič, *Hapon*, 1855)

He served in the war / and he got the rank of an officer / and now he wants to ask you to grant your child her happiness

The Old Belarusian meaning of obligation is still present, but in the only example found in the corpus of examined texts *mec’*-II expresses an action the subject must necessarily accomplish because of given conditions (35)¹³:

- 35) *Scjapan. Ne bojsja, kachanen’kaja, rodnen’kaja. Ja kabyļu zlaŭlju, ale I ty hljadzi, kab mne tako zjacja zlavila, ab jakim ja tabe sjahon-
nja havaryŭ*

13 Already in Old Belarusian *mec’* could be used in similar contexts: *chto potonučomu pomoči [...] chočet, maet mėti dužuju silu*, he who wants to help someone who is sinking must have much strength (HSBM, vol. 18, p. 13).

Paŭlinka. Što ěn kon' ci vol, kab ja jaho jašče mela lavic'? (Ja. Kupala, *Paŭlinka*, 1913)

Scjapan: Do not be afraid, my love, my sweetheart. I will catch a mare, but be sure that you catch me that son-in-law, whom I told you about today.

Paŭlinka. Is he maybe a horse, or an ox, that I have to catch him?

Finally, *mec'* can also be used as an evidentiality marker (hearsay), as in 36:

- 36) *Adam Hurynovič [...] zajmaŭsja paljapšennem paravozaŭ i ŭ hetym pytanni meŭ byc', jak kažuc', na daroze da važnych i cikavych vynachodnictvaŭ (navukovyja rukapisy zniščany perad adnym z vobyskaŭ)* (B. Taraškevič, from the journal *Belaruski zvon*, 1921)

Adam Hurynovič [...] worked on improving transportation and he, allegedly, was on the way to important and interesting discoveries (scientific papers were destroyed before one of the searches)

3-2. *Mecca*

In early Modern Belarusian *mecca* is generally used to express intention (37–39). The interpretation of 38 is, however, ambiguous: It can either be understood as ‘he did not say what he had planned to, he had intention to say’ (intention) or ‘what he was supposed to say’ (scheduled future, with reference to an external source).

Already at this stage of the language *mecca* is almost always used in the past tense, and it very often implies a counterfactual interpretation (a planned action which is either not accomplished, or not completed, as in both 38 and 39):

- 37) *Starasta Babinič meŭsja paslac' u školu da Labanoviča svaich dzjacej- syna i dačku* (Ja. Kolas, *U paleskaj hlušcy*, 1922)

Starasta Babinič wanted to send his children – a boy and a girl – to study with Labanovič

- 38) *Ėn čuū, što kaža zusim ne toe, što meŭsja kazac', što slovy rvucca bez paradki, bez jaho poŭnaj voli* (M. Harecki, *Dzve duszy*, 1919)

He felt that he wasn't saying at all what he wanted to/he was supposed to say, so that the words came out of his mouth in spite of his intentions...

- 39) *Iznoŭ pačalisja raspytavanni, chto, adkul', čym tajmaŭjsa, zavošta meŭsja zabic' archimandrita, ci meŭ pamahačyŭch u napadze?* (M. Harecki, *Dzve dušy*, 1919)

Again the questions started, who, from where, what he does, what he wanted to achieve by killing the archimandrite, did he have helpers in the attack?

Mecca can also express an action the subject was about to accomplish:

- 40) *Stoj!- kryknuŭ uzlavany Abdziralovič svajmu churmanu i schapiŭsja za vožki, meŭsja ŭžo behčy za chlapcom* (M. Harecki, *Dzve dušy*, 1919)

Abdziralovič, unnerved, shouted at his coachman: – Stop! –, and seized the reins, he already wanted to run after the boy.

4. *Mec'*-II and *Mecca*-III in the Soviet Period and in the Emigration

The construction *mec'* + Inf. seems, according to the results of the corpus enquiry, absent from the prose of the Soviet time: Not a single occurrence has been found in the texts. On the contrary, in the texts written by Belarusian emigrants in the 50s, 60s and 70s the occurrences of *mec'* + Inf. are indeed very common. An explication for this could be found in the intention of Soviet authorities to eliminate from Belarusian all those elements it did not share with Russian (in contemporary Russian *imet'*, 'have,' does not have any auxiliary functions).¹⁴ However, this

14 "Russian constructions with *imet'* + Infinitive with the meaning of 'certain future' are rare, obsolete and have a distinct clerical flavour [...] Constructions

hypothesis cannot explain why the same “purge” has not occurred with *mecca*-III (see 4-2.).

Of course, the possibility cannot be excluded that a study based on a larger number of texts could give different results: The present conclusions should thus be considered tentative.

4-1. *Mec'*

As mentioned above, occurrences of *mec'* + Inf. were only found in the texts of authors who lived and wrote in exile (mostly in the USA, Germany, Canada and Australia). The functions *mec'* fulfils in this period did not change with regard to the previous period. It also needs to be taken into account that the language of the emigrants was sensibly more similar to the language of the early period than the language used in Soviet Belarus'.

In 41 *mec'* marks weak obligation, depending on a previous utterance (in this case, an advice):

- 41) *Ėn staŭ mjane vučyc', jak ja maju padychodzie' da Nemcaŭ* (Ja. Malecki, *Pad znakam Pahoni. Uspaminy*, 1976 (published in Toronto, Canada))

He began to teach me how I am supposed to approach Germans

The meaning of hearsay is also still present:

- 42) *Kitajcy nam tumačyli ab nejkich “blagich ljudzjach,” jakija meli ŭ nas žyc'* (ibid.)

The Chinese told us about some “bad people,” who, allegedly, lived at us

4-2. *Mecca*

Contrarily to *mec'*-II, *mecca* is well attested in the texts written in Belarus' during the Soviet period. Its functions did not differ from

of this type are restricted to a few verbs only.” A. V. Isačenko, “On ‘Have’ and ‘Be’ Languages,” in: M. Flier, ed., *Slavic Forum: Essays in Linguistics and Literature* (The Hague-Paris: Mouton, 1974), p. 70.

those it fulfilled in the previous period, scheduled future in the past with counterfactual meaning (43) and intention (44, 45) Only examples of immediate action have not been found.

- 43) *My, zdaecca, melisja ves'ci havorku bol'sš pryncypovuju – pryplomniŭ ces'cju S'cjapan* (S. Janovič, *S'cjana*, 1977–1993)

As it seems, we should have based our conversation more on principles – Sc'japan remembered his father-in-law

- 44) *Toj tavaryš, z jakim Andrej meŭsja echac', nečakana zachvareŭ* (B. Sačanka, *Rodny kut*, 1987)

The companion, with whom Andrej should have gone, unexpectedly became ill

- 45) *Mech [...] baba Rocha pakinula ŭ nas, bo zaŭtra ŭranni Raman meusja echac' u Miltačy* (Ja. Bryl', *Zolak, ubačany zdaleku*, 1978)

Granny Rocha forgot the fur at our place because on the following day at dawn Raman had planned to go to Miltačy

5. The Development of *Mec*'-II and *Mecca*-III

5-1. The Development of *Mec*'

Mec'-II seems to have been grammaticalized as modal-temporal auxiliary already in East Common Slavic (Hansen 2003), where it had a function oscillating between modality (obligation) and temporality. In the following section the development of each of these functions will be exposed.

5-1-1. The Development of *Mec*' as Modal Auxiliary: The Obligation Meaning

In Old Belarusian *mec*'-II expressed a strong obligation, usually defined by a law (see examples 14, 15, 16, 17). In Early Modern Belarusian the obligation meaning is still present, though far less diffused than in Old Belarusian. It also seems that in this stage the obligation expressed by *mec*'-II has changed from a strong obligation to a weaker one: *Mec*'-II

expresses an action which has to be carried out given some conditions. Also in the prose of writers who are in exile from Soviet Belarus' the obligation meaning is a far weaker one than in Old Belarusian, and it usually depends on an uttered will of an external source. In contemporary Belarusian, *mec*'-II expresses weak obligation, which refers generally to the uttered will of an external source, or which depends on given conditions, generally expressed in a quoted source. *Mec*'-II can also be used to express the action the subject is supposed to accomplish in order to achieve a given aim.

The old strong obligation meaning survives in the quasi-lexicalised expression *jak mae byc* 'as it should be, as it is right and proper.'

5-1-2. The Development of *Mec*'-II as Temporal Auxiliary

In Old Belarusian *mec*' expressed future time reference with a flavour of 'fate' ('fatalistic future') and scheduled future in the past (often with counterfactual meaning). In Modern Belarusian these functions have survived unaltered. Nevertheless, an important semantic change has taken place: *mec*'-II has acquired the meaning of 'referring to a previous utterance.' While continuing to express fatalistic future (in the past) and prediction (in the present tense), in Modern Belarusian *mec*'-II usually expresses scheduled future with reference to a plan an external source has prepared and communicated to the speaker and intention (if the source of the plan is the subject of the *mec*'-clause itself).

5-1-3. The Development of the Mmarker of Reported Speech and Evidentiality Function

In Old Belarusian *mec*'-II was widely used in clauses depending on locutionary verbs and it could also express hearsay (maybe this usage has been calqued from Polish, where *mieć* has developed a function as evidentiality marker). In Modern Belarusian the evidential function is also attested in a later period (see 36, 42), even if it is not possible to exclude a direct Polish influence on it. In contemporary Belarusian neither the evidential function nor the grammatical function of marking reported speech in clauses depending on locutionary verbs are found, even if *mec*'-clauses do still nowadays often depend on verbs of speech:

However, they do not mark reported speech, but express either weak obligation or scheduled future, depending on the reported utterance.

Instead, the component “referring to a previous utterance” has been grammaticalized and incorporated in the semantic structure of the verb: Generally *mec*’-clauses, both when expressing weak obligation and scheduled future, refer to a previous utterance. However, ambiguity may arise, as in 46:

46) *Sidorski pavedamiŭ, što zaŭtra ěn mae vylecec’ u Maskvu*

Sidorski communicated that tomorrow he is due/is supposed/intends to fly to Moscow

Three interpretations are possible: Sidorski is due to fly because of the uttered will (or even order) of an external source, who wants him to fly to Moscow (→ weak obligation); He is supposed to fly tomorrow, because of the flight schedule (→ scheduled future); He intends to fly (the source of this will is Sidorski himself)(→ intention).

Old Belarusian

Modern Belarusian

Strong obligation (unconditioned)	→ Weak obligation, depending on the uttered will of an external source, or on given conditions laid down by a quoted source, or on a given aim the subject wants to achieve
Fatalistic future/ Scheduled future in the past	→ Fatalistic future (in the past) Prediction Scheduled future (with reference to an external source) Intention
Reported speech in clauses depending on locutionary verbs (grammatical function)	→ Reference to a previous utterance (no grammatical function, but a semantic component of the verb itself)
Hearsay	→ Hearsay (only Early Modern Belarusian, Emigrants’ Belarusian)

5-1-4. *The Use of Mec' in Persons Other Than the Third*

It has already been mentioned that in contemporary Belarusian *mec'*-II is, in contrast to *mecca*-III, almost always used in the third person (both singular and plural). The use of *mec'*-I in other persons was still frequent before the Soviet times, and it survived in the texts written by Belarusian authors in exile. Nowadays, when used in the first or second person, *mec'*-II generally expresses an intention (see example 7).

I reckon that this shift to a preponderance of the third-person use is caused by the 'lack of commitment' *mec'*-II usually implies (as it invokes an external source¹⁵). Another possible explanation could be the particular stylistic collocation of *mec'*: It is very often found either in newspaper texts, where reported speech is often implied (typically, the reporter uses *mec'*-II I to indicate a scheduled event which has been communicated to him, for instance in a press conference or an interview) or in legal texts, where *mec'*-II is used to indicate the actions a person is supposed to fulfil in order to accomplish given condition or to achieve a given aim.

5-2. *The Development of Mecca-III*

The path which lead to the grammaticalization of *mecca*-III is rather difficult to define. In Old Church Slavonic and in most old Slavic languages a form of reflexive 'have' is testified, but it has mostly the meaning of 'existing,' 'behaving' and 'feeling (good, bad).' In Old Polish and Old Belarusian it also has the meaning of 'strive for, going to,' which it still retains in early Modern Belarusian. An auxiliary function of *mecca*-III is attested only in East Slavonic languages: Belarusian, Ukrainian¹⁶ and Russian. In this latter *imět'sja* – which expressed a meaning of ob-

15 However, Polish *mieć* + Inf., which also has the semantic implication of 'lack of commitment' (Lempp 1986), is widely used in all persons: That could be a valid objection to the hypothesis that the lack of commitment has an influence on the third-person usage of Belarusian *mec'*.

16 The use of *matysja*, 'have. REFL' as auxiliary in Modern Ukrainian is rarer than in Belarusian, and it is not used with the same functions as in Belarusian. (Oleg Chinkarouk, p.c.)

ligation and scheduled future¹⁷ – is still attested in the 18th century, but it got successively lost, and it is no more used in contemporary Russian.

In Old Belarusian, according to the HSBM, *mecca*-III had the function of expressing modality (necessity) and future time reference. The modal interpretation has, however, got totally lost in Modern Belarusian, in which *mecca*-III is used exclusively for the expression of scheduled future and intention. It is also very interesting that the auxiliary functions of *mecca*-III, already in Old Belarusian and then thoroughly in successive stages of Belarusian, seem to be confined to the past tense. In particular, in contemporary Belarusian the meaning of ‘intention’ is expressed by *mecca*-III in the past, whereas in the present tense *mec*’-II is preferred.

Mecca-III appears to be grammaticalized as auxiliary already in Early Modern Belarusian, and it has undergone no significant changes in its use since then: Only the possibility to express an action the subject is about to accomplish, attested in early Modern Belarusian, was lost (in contemporary language this function is fulfilled by the verb *chacec*’, ‘want’).

Its grammaticalization path is however still unclear. It seems quite improbable that the intention and scheduled future meanings have developed from the meanings of “feeling (good, bad)” and existence. On the contrary, verbs of movement and of desire are attested as sources for future grams, as well as for periphrastic constructions expressing future (cfr. English *be going to*) (Bybee et al 1994:253ff). It is possible that the

17 The *Slovar’ russkogo jazyka XVIII veka* (Dictionary of the Russian language of 18th century) does not give the meaning of ‘scheduled future,’ but only of ‘being necessary’ and ‘being right and proper’: However, it quotes the following example from A. Kantemir, in which the function of *imět’sja* seems to be exactly ‘scheduled future’: *Obykovenno neprijatel’, ...izvėdav sostojanie vojska, protiv kotorago bit’sja imėtsja, nastupaet s toj storony, gdė znaet slabėjšim*, ‘Usually the enemy, ...having got to known the condition of the army against which he is to fight, attacks from the side he knows being the weakest.’ E. Brižakova, E. Konoplina, Z. Petrova, eds., *Slovar’ russkogo jazyka XVIII veka*, vol. 9 (Moskva: Nauka, 1997), p. 184. Moreover, the possibility that the use of *imět’sja* in Old Russian depends on a Polish influence through Belarusian/Ukrainian cannot be excluded. (Isačenko 1974)

function of expressing intention derives from this latter meaning, but, at this stage of the studies, this hypothesis cannot be proved.

Another solution could be suggested: In Old Belarusian *metisja* (but, according to the HSBM, not *imetisja*) began to be used with the auxiliary functions of *meti*, including the possibility of expressing necessity, but without the semantic component of ‘referring to the uttered will of an external source,’ so typical for *meti*. Successively *mecca* lost the possibility of expressing modality, and became specialised in the expression of scheduled future, mostly in the past tense and with counterfactual interpretation, and intention.

It can thus be suggested that *mecca* began to take on some auxiliary functions of *mec*’ just when this latter acquired the meaning of ‘referring to an external source, or to a previous utterance’: In this case *mecca* would occupy the place, left empty by *mec*’, of an auxiliary having the function of indicating scheduled future and intention without any reference to external sources. This hypothesis could also explain why *mecca* occurs more frequently than *mec*’ (typically for intention) in the first or second person in all periods of Belarusian up to today. *Mecca* can be still used as an alternative to *mec*’, as in 47, even if this use would be considered non-standard, dialectal:

47) *Pryechala mama, chvalilasja vopratkaj [...]: maŭljaŭ, dze ja za hetyja hrošy tut hetul’ki vopratki nabudu?! Ja nja meŭsja što adkazac’, tamu tol’ki agakaŭ, pahadžajučysja* (blog site livejournal.com.)

Mama has come, she boasted about her dresses [...]: Look, where might I find here such a dress for this price?! I had nothing to answer, thus I just said ‘ah ah’ in agreement

5-3. Conclusions

In the foregoing sections an attempt has been made to classify the notions *mec*’-II and *mecca*-III express in Belarusian, and to make out their possible development paths from Old Belarusian to the contemporary language has been presented. However, there is still much to do: Firstly, more texts for all periods of Belarusian should be analysed, and, secondly, an analysis on dialects and on the spoken language should be made too.

APPENDIX – The texts used for this study

i. Old Belarusian

Lithuanian statute, 1588; *The Vilnius chronicle*, end of the 15th century; *The Raczyński chronicle*, second half of 17th century; *The Barkulabava chronicle*, second half of 17th century–first half of 18th century; *Kronika litovska j žmojtis'ka*, 18th century; *Chlop, žyd i djabel*, a comedy taken from the collection compiled by Marašeŭski, 1787.

ii. Early Modern Belarusian

V. Dunin-Marcinkevič, *Hapon*, 1855; F. Bahuševič, *Traljalënačka*, 1892; U. Halubok, *Abmylka vučonaha*, 1912–1913; Ja. Kupala, *Paŭlinka*, 1913; B. Taraškevič, articles from the journals *Sjabra* and *Belaruski Zvon*, 1914–1921; M. Harecki, *Dzve dušy*, 1919, A. Babareža, *Jak krasnazorcy zjamli scuralisja*, 1922; Ja. Kolas, *Na paleskaj hluščy*, 1921–22.

iii. The Soviet Time and the Language of Emigration

a. Prose of Soviet Belarus'

I. Baraška, *Na beraze Volhi*, 1943; I. Hurski, *Perad bur'jaj*, 1947; Ja. Vasiliënak, *Sëmae akno*, 1952; I. Duboški, *Addadzena dzeczam*, 1960; A. Asipenka, *Mirnaja vajna*, 1963; V. Adamčyk, *Dzen' rannjaj voseni*, 1965; L. Arabej, *Pamjacc'*, 1965; U. Damaševič, *Sivy konik*, 1965; T. Chadkievič, *Nespakoj*, 1965; A. Aleška, *Krumčakou haj*, 1965; Ja. Bryl', *Zolak, ubačany zdalek*, 1978; S. Janovic, *S'cjana*, 1977–1993; B. Sačanka, *Rodny Kut*, 1987; V. Bykaŭ, *Kar'er*, 1987.

b. Prose of the Emigration

Ja. Malecki, *Pad znakam Pahoni. Uspaminy*, Ju. Vitan-Dubejkaŭskaja, *Mae ūspaminy*, 1953; Ja. Hermanovič, *Kitaj-Sibir-Maskva*, 1962.

iv. Contemporary Belarusian

For the purposes of this paper, contemporary usage is defined on the basis of a corpus of contemporary Belarusian texts created by the author in 2010. The corpus contains around 1,400,000 words taken from 247 texts of various genres: newspapers, literary works, popular science (for more details on the corpus, see Mazzitelli 2011¹⁸).

18 L. F. Mazzitelli (to appear in 2011), *Le costruzioni mec' + Inf. e mecca + Inf. in bielorusso*, mediAzioni, <http://mediazioni.sitlec.unibo.it>