Francesca Dell'Oro

Latin queo *'I can' and Sanskrit* yā- *'to be possible':*
a parallel development?

ABSTRACT: This study challenges the alleged parallel between Latin *queo* 'I can' and Sanskrit *yā-* 'to be possible'. Though sharing some similarities (e.g., motion as a source domain, negative polarity contexts), they exhibit significant differences. *Queo* is personally constructed and typically conveys participant-related possibility, while *yā-* constructions are linked to agent demotion. The passive meaning of *yā-* in personal constructions and its possible connection to modality are also briefly addressed.

KEYWORDS: Modal Pathways, Motion Verbs, Syntax, Latin, Sanskrit.

1. Introduction

Addressing the origins of the Latin verbs *nequeo* 'I cannot' and *queo* 'I can' as derived from *eo* 'to go, to come', Osthoff (1898) posits a parallel in the semantic development of the Sanskrit verb *yā-* 'to go'. He also suggests translating Sanskrit *na yānti vaktum* (cf. example 9 below) with Latin *dici nequeunt* 'they cannot be expressed' (1898: 179). This alleged parallel is later mentioned by Schokker (1969-1970: 22), who investigates the origins of the New Indo-Aryan passive construction featuring *jānā* (from Sanskrit *yā-*). The aim of this paper is to reassess this parallel to determine the extent to which Latin *queo* and Sanskrit *yā-* exhibit a similar semantic development and a similar syntactic behaviour. While both verbs show a clear development of the modality of possibility from motion constructions, they are deeply different from the semantic and the syntactic points of view, as shown below. The following section presents recent advances in research on *queo* and *nequeo* (hereafter referred to as *(ne)queo*) and outlines their semantic and syntactic profile. Section 3 describes the semantic and syntactic profile of *yā-* and compares it with that of *(ne)queo*. The emergence of the passive meaning of *yā-* in personal constructions and its possible connection to modality are also briefly addressed. In the conclusion (4), further lines of investigation are proposed.

2. Semantic and syntactic profile of *(ne)queo*

With regard to the origin of the Latin verbs *queo* 'I can' and *nequeo* 'I cannot', the current etymological explanation posits that *nequeo* derives from the univerbation of the conjunction and adverb *neque* '(and) not' with the impersonal form *it/itur* 'it goes' from *eo* 'to go, to come'[1]. Subsequently, on the model of negative vs positive pairs (with and without the negative preverb *ne-*), such as *ne-scio* 'I don't know' : *scio* 'I know', *nequeo* was reinterpreted as the negated form (i.e., as *ne-queo*) of a positive form *queo* which was newly created[2]. In this form this explanation traces back to Brugmann (1904a: 668, fn. 1, 1904b: 64, fn. 2), who suggests starting with the meaning «es geht irgendwie nicht» 'somehow it does not go'[3]. Brugmann's view (*neque + eo*) corresponds to the etymology currently accepted and reported in reference etymological dictionaries of Latin: de Vaan (2008: s.vv. *queo* and *nequeo*), Ernout & Meillet (1959 [2001]: s.v. *queo*), Walde & Hofmann (1938-1956: s.v. *queo*).

The early history of Latin *(ne)queo* has been recently revised. Dell'Oro (2023) has challenged Brugmann's view that an impersonal construction is at the origin of *(ne)queo*. In fact, the impersonal construction is not reliably attested in the pre-classical period. In the passages where this construction might have occurred, the fragmentary condition of the text makes it impossible to determine definitively whether the usage is personal or impersonal. Consider, for instance, the following fragment from Caecilius Statius' comedy[4]:

(1) *si*   *non*   *sarciri*   *quitur*
      if   not   redeem.INF.PASS   can.3SG.PASS
'if it cannot be patched' (Caecilius Statius, *Palliatae* 279, transl. by E.H. Warmington[5])

On the basis of philological data and typological parallels, Dell'Oro (2023) suggests that *nequeo* did not develop from impersonal constructions, but from personal ones. Below, I outline the main points of her argument.

---

1. On the semantics of *eo*, cf. Nuti (2016).
2. According to Moussy (2001: 486), the direction of derivation between *queo* and *nequeo* remains a matter of debate. Interestingly, Moussy notes that Cicero considered *nequeo* to be derived from *queo*. This insight from Cicero highlights how ancient Latin speakers might have perceived the relationship between the two verbs from a synchronic standpoint. However, I harbour some reservations regarding the reliability of using this data to reconstruct the early history of *queo* and *nequeo*.
3. The core of this explanation was already suggested by Osthoff (1896). The form *nequeo* is thought to contain a negation (*ne*), an instrumental form or an indefinite adverb – on this point cf. already Bréal (1889: 128) who suggests *quī* 'how, by which' – and the verb *eo*. Notably, Brugmann's addition of «irgendwie» may echo the etymological suggestion made by Osthoff.
4. For a discussion of this and the other two ambiguous pre-classical passages, cf. Dell'Oro (2023: 188–189).
5. Unless otherwise specified, the editions of the Latin texts cited in this study are taken from the Classical Latin Texts database, accessible at https://latin.packhum.org. With regard to the linguistic glosses, I follow the Leipzig glossing rules. I have added the following abbreviations not present in the Leipzig system: GER = gerund and / = verse division.

An in-depth analysis of the Early Latin texts clearly shows that, where it is possible to verify whether there is a syntactic subject, *nequeo* and *queo* are always used personally. They convey almost exclusively dynamic modality, primarily participant-related possibility. 'Dynamic' refers to a type of modality characterising an event or state in terms of possibility or necessity[6]. Dynamic modality can refer to someone's abilities (participant-inherent dynamic modality, cf. 2), to their possibility of acting or being in a specific situation (participant-imposed dynamic modality, cf. 3) and to possibilities inherent to the situation (situational dynamic modality, cf. 4). The nomenclature and definitions are based on Nuyts (2016). It is important to stress that precisely distinguishing between these three sub-types can be difficult.

(2) *Optumus*   *sum*   *orator.*   *Ad*
     Excellent.NOM.SG   be.1SG   speaker.NOM.SG   To

     lacrumas   *coegi*   *hominem*   *castigando /*
     tear.ACC.PL   compel.PST.1SG   man.ACC.SG   scolding.ABL

     male=que   *dictis,*   *quae*   *quidem*
     badly=and   word.ABL.PL   which.ACC.PL   indeed

     quivi   *comminisci.*
     can.PST.1SG   think.up.INF

'I'm an excellent speaker. I brought the chap to tears with my scolding and my harsh words, such as I could think of.'
(Plautus, *Bacchides* 981-982a, edited and translated by W. de Melo[7])

Thinking up fitting words can be considered an ability of the speaking character, who identifies himself as an excellent speaker.

(3) *ceterum*   *placet*   *tibi*   *factum,*
     still   please.3SG   you.DAT   fact.NOM

     Micio?   *non,*   *si*   *queam /*   *mutare.*   *Nunc*
     Micio.VOC   no   if   can.SBJV.1SG   change.INF   Now

     quom   *non*   *queo,*   *animo*   *aequo*   *fero.*
     that.ACC   not   can.1SG   mind.ABL   patient.ABL   bear.1SG

'[De.] Even so, Micio, are you happy with the situation? [Mi.] No, not if I could change it. As it is, since I can't, I accept it with good grace.'
(Terentius Afer, *Adelphoe* 737-738, translated by J. Barsby)

---

6. As the concept of necessity is not relevant for this paper, it will not be addressed herein.

In this case, external circumstances do not allow Micio to change the situation. However, interpreting this as a participant-inherent possibility would also be acceptable.

(4) […] *alieno=n*   *prius* /   *quam*   *tuo*
       foreigner.DAT.SG=INT   earlier   than   yours.DAT.SG

     dabis   *orationem?*   *Ut*   *nequitur*   *comprimi.*
     give.FUT.2SG   speech.ACC.SG   how   can.3SG.PASS   press.INF.PASS

'[Gri.] Are you letting a stranger speak before your own slave? [Tra.] (to Daemones) How impossible it is to restrain him!'
(Plautus, *Rudens* 1064-1065)

The impossibility of restraining someone, here the slave Gripus, is presented as general. It is not related to a specific individual capable (or incapable) of affecting the state of affairs (henceforth SoA), nor is it contingent upon specific circumstances that enable or restrict the participant's actions.

While both participant-inherent and participant-imposed modality usually imply a volitional participant with an agentive or agent-like role, situational modality often involves no participant. If there is one, it is usually not relevant. In pre-classical Latin, 85.88% of the attestations of *(ne)queo* express participant-related dynamic modality. Note that the personal construction of *(ne)queo* aligns well with that of *eo* as a verb of self-motion. Importantly, the Latin data fit current typological knowledge about the development of participant-related possibility modality from verbs of motion in motion-cum-purpose constructions. In such constructions, the main participant who is voluntarily moving (in order to) accomplish something has developed into the main participant about whom possibility is predicated.

The use of *(ne)queo* in the passive form or associated with a passive infinitive is rare[8]. It is also worth noting that the distribution of negative and positive forms is as follows:

Nequeo	42.37%
Queo within the scope of any form of negation	44.63%
Queo	12.99%

---

7. All passages from Plautus' comedies are taken from the edition by W. de Melo. This will not be specified further.
8. *(Ne)queo* passive constructions usually express situational modality and, due to the absence of an agentive or agent-like participant, function similarly to impersonal constructions (cf. also below). However, this fact does not support the traditional hypothesis that *(ne)queo* originated from impersonal constructions, as *(ne)queo* constructions are personal.

This data shows that in absolute terms, *queo* is more frequent than *nequeo*. However, *queo* is typically used in contexts of negative polarity, making negated *queo* an alternative to *nequeo*. Contexts with positive polarity are comparatively rare[9].

The paper that provides the above-mentioned data and results concerning *(ne)queo* does not deal with the Sanskrit parallel suggested by Osthoff (1898). The primary aim in this paper is to address this issue. Additionally, the alleged Sanskrit parallel will enable a brief examination of the relation between motion, passive meaning, and the emergence of modality.

3. Sanskrit *yā-* 'to go', 'to be possible'

The Sanskrit motion verb *yā-* (< IE *$(H)i̯-eh_2$-) is an enlarged form of the verb *i-* (< *h_1i-, the zero-grade ablaut of *$h_1ei̯$-) 'to go' (cf., e.g., EWAia: s.v. *yā-*). It is important to stress that the modal meaning 'to be possible' is rarely attested.

Before dealing with the modal meaning of the verb *yā-* and its constructions, it is worth highlighting two points. Firstly, it is important to note the long-lasting – already Vedic – tendency for Sanskrit to employ motion verbs as semi-copular verbs in various constructions. Unlike the copula, a 'semi-copula' adds some elements of meaning, such as aspectual nuances, that the copula alone does not convey[10]. Sanskrit motion verbs such as *i-* 'to go, to walk, etc.' and *car-* 'to move one's self, to go, to walk, etc.' evolved into semi-copular verbs early on. When combined with non-finite forms such as present participles, these constructions may lose their original lexical meaning of motion and instead express aspectual meanings related to habituality and continuity (cf., e.g., Whitney 1896: 394-395, and more recently, Grieco 2023a, 2023b[11]). This point is strictly intertwined with the second one.

While some constructions with *yā-* do not convey modal meaning, they licence passive meaning. Cf. *vināśaṃ yāti* 'he goes to destruction, i.e., he is destroyed' (Monier-Williams 1899: s.v. *yā-*), where the construction features an abstract noun[12].

9. For a more detailed account of *nequeo* and *queo* in the pre-classical period, cf. Dell'Oro (2023).
10. Cf.: «The main difference between constructions containing a copula and those containing a semi-copula is that the semi-copula can never be left out without changing or affecting the meaning of the resulting construction. In other words, the semi-copula adds an element of meaning to the construction in which it occurs, whereas the copula does not» (Hengeveld 1992: 35). It is important to note that, though the literature on copulas is extensive and studies on copulas often touch upon the status of semi-copulas and that of auxiliaries (see Moro 2006, 2010[3], Pustet 2003, Creissels 2017, Arche et al. 2019, among others), the investigation of semi-copulas remains significantly less developed (cf., e.g., Schmitt 2005). In keeping with this trend, the specific relationship between semi-copular constructions and the emergence of modality and related domains is still inadequately explored (cf. Sansò, Giacalone Ramat 2016, and, e.g., Lauwers, Duée 2011, regarding the emergence of the closely related notion of evidentiality).
11. For *yā-*, cf. Grieco (2023: 236 with example 22).
12. Cf. Renou (1961: 495) about the aspectual value of motion constructions with abstract nouns, and Schokker (1969-1970: 4-6) for the diachronic development. Cf. also Grieco (2023a: 246 with example 44).

With reference to the examples collected by Schokker (1969-1970), *yā*- constructions that licence modal meaning also convey passive meaning. This could reflect a bias due to the main focus of Schokker (1969-1970), i.e., the emergence of passive voice. While this is not the aim of this study, a new corpus-based diachronic investigation of the available data could shed new light on this issue[13]. Surprisingly, Schokker (1969-1970) does not explicitly notice or comment on the association between passive voice and possibility. Yet, the connection is strong and relevant from the historical point of view. Typological studies have shown that modality can develop from motion constructions – as in the case of Latin *(ne)queo* (cf. Dell'Oro 2023: 9-10 with references) – as well as passive constructions ('potential passive' in the terms of Haspelmath 1990: 33-34). Furthermore, motion constructions can evolve into passive constructions, featuring or not modal meaning (cf. Kuteva *et al.* 2019: 95-96, 314-315, and, with reference to necessity, cf. also Bourdin 2014). Therefore, with respect to the pathway followed by Sanskrit *yā*-, the question arises whether the emergence of modality has been mediated by the passive meaning of the construction or the two meanings emerged independently. As will become apparent from the analysis of the passages, it is currently not possible to reach a definitive conclusion on this issue.

Though the details of the diachronic development are not entirely clear (Bubenik 1998: 134), it is interesting to note that modern Indo-Aryan languages use the construction 'go + past participle' to express passive meaning. The 'go'-verb in this construction is a reflex of Sanskrit *yā*-, as shown by Schokker (1969-1970), who provides a comprehensive overview of the attested constructions from Sanskrit to the modern Indo-Aryan languages. Cf., e.g., in Hindi the construction '*ja* + past participle'[14]:

(5) *prəsad*   *devī*   *ke*   *samne*
       offering.M   goddess   of.OBL   front

       rəkʰa   *jata*   *hɛ.*
       put.PERF.M.SG   PASS.IMPF.M.SG   3SG
'The offerings are placed in front of the goddess' (from Kachru 2006: 176[15]).

The modern *go*-constructions convey aspectual and modal meanings, including dynamic and deontic modality. Cf. (6) for dynamic modality:

(6) *reɲu*   *se*   *pətr*   *likʰa*   *jaega?*
       renu.F   by   letter.M   write.PERF.SG.M   go.FUT.3SG.M

---

13. Further investigation into an enlarged corpus is necessary to understand the emergence of both the passive and the modal constructions.
14. Cf. Montaut (1991: 130) and Kachru (2006: 176-178).
15. Linguistic glosses have been harmonised.

ʻWill the letter be written by Renu? i.e., Will Renu be able to write the letter?ʼ (from Kachru 2006: 176[16])

Sansó and Giacalone Ramat (2016: 14-18), drawing on Bourdin (2014), suggest that the modal meanings in the modern Indo-Aryan constructions ʻgo + past participleʼ arose from passive voice. With respect to the focus of this paper, i.e., Sanskrit, it is important to note that the most relevant constructions are those with the infinitive and those with the gerund[17], as will be apparent in a moment. Therefore, whatever the exact reconstruction of the grammaticalization pathway of the ʻgo + past participleʼ construction attested by the modern Indo-Aryan languages, it does not seem possible to draw a direct line of continuity. However, it seems undeniable that not only the modal and passive *yā*- constructions, but also the aspectual constructions featuring other motion verbs, such as *i*- and *car*-, paved the way to the emergence of the Modern Indo-Aryan analytic passive construction. This diachronic issue, which needs to be further investigated, is beyond the scope of this paper.

In Sanskrit, modal constructions featuring *yā*- are most commonly attested with an infinitive[18]. The construction with the gerund is also attested. With all due reservation, though the attestations are scanty and a comprehensive corpus-based investigation is still needed, it seems possible to formulate some generalisations. When the syntactic subject of *yā*- is an entity that can bring about the event described by the infinitive (or gerund) depending on *yā*-, the construction can licence both an active or a passive reading. Only the context can help disambiguate this (cf. 8). When the syntactic subject of *yā*- refers to an entity that contextually is not supposed to bring about the event described by the infinitive (or gerund) depending on *yā*-, the construction licences a passive reading. When the reading is passive, there is usually also a modal reading (cf., however, example 15 below), but not when the reading is active[19], as illustrated by the following example:

(7) *tathā*   *cārcayituṁ*   *jātu*
     thus   worship.INF   once

     yāto   *bhūteśvaraṁ*   *nṛpaḥ*
     go.PTCP.PFV.NOM   Bhūteśvara.ACC   king.NOM
ʻAnd thus, once upon a time, the king went to worship Bhūteśvaraʼ
(Kalhaṇa, *Rājataraṅgiṇi*, V, 48)[20]

---

16. Linguistic glosses have been harmonised.
17. The constructions with an action noun and with a present participle are not relevant here, as they do not convey possibility.
18. Most of the Sanskrit data used to prepare this paper comes from Schokker (1969-1970).
19. In some cases the interpretation is doubtful.
20. Unless specified otherwise, I have used the English translations of the cited reference editions, which are also usually those used by Schokker (1969-1970).

In this sentence, the lexical value of the verb *yā-* is retained.

(8) *Svecchopajātaviṣayo (sveccha-upajāta-viṣayo)*   *'pi*   *na*
     At_will-added-dominion.NOM   then   NEG

     yāti   *vaktuṁ*   *dehīti […]*   *īśvara-durvidagdhaḥ*
     go.3SG   speak-INF   give.IMP=so   king-wrong-headed.NOM
'Though his possessions come to him at his own pleasure (lit.: though he obtains dominion at will), a wrong-headed king cannot be told to give' (lit. 'a wrong-headed king cannot be said: give!')
(Bāṇa, *Harṣacarita* II, 13)

In principle, (8) might be interpreted as 'a wrong-headed king is not able to say'. However, since the king in question is the god of love, Kāma, it appears more appropriate to depict him as someone who cannot be persuaded to be generous rather than as someone unable to speak[21]. Nonetheless, the ambiguity persists.

With inanimate referents the passive reading is more straightforward:

(9) *ye*   *yoginām*   *api*   *na*   *yānti*
     which.NOM.PL   saints.GEN.PL   even   not   go.3PL

     guṇās   *taveśa (tava-īśa)*   *vaktuṁ*
     virtue.NOM.PL   you.GEN.SG-lord.VOC.SG   say.INF

     kathaṁ   *bhavati*   *teṣu*   *mama-avakāśaḥ*
     how   be.3SG   this.LOC.PL   I.GEN.SG.-opportunity

'Your virtues, o Lord, cannot even be discussed by saints, how then is there an opportunity for me in these matters?'[22]
(Siddhasenadivākara, *Kalyāṇamandirastotra*, 6).

It is worth noting that the Sanskrit infinitive lacks a passive voice. To express a passive meaning, the verb introducing the infinitive adopts passive endings. Compare (10) with (11):

(10) *Na*   *śakyante*   *nihantum*
     not   can.3PL.PASS   refrain.INF
'they cannot be stopped'
(from Renou 1978: 71)

---

21. Cf. Schokker (1969-1970: 3 fn. 16).
22. The translation is mine.

(11) *Na   śaknuvanti   (tān)   nihantum*
    not   can.3PL   (them)   refrain.INF
'they cannot stop (them)'
(from Renou 1978: 71)

This phenomenon does not occur with *yā-* (cf. example (16) below). The active or passive interpretation depends on the context and, in some instances, the intended meaning remains ambiguous.

As seen above, Latin *(ne)queo* predominantly exhibits personal active constructions. In the case of the rare construction of *yā-* combined with the infinitive which Osthoff (1898) suggests form a formal and semantic parallel, both impersonal and personal constructions are found[23]. Impersonal constructions are exemplified in sentences (12) and (13), while personal constructions are illustrated in sentences (14) – corresponding to example (8) –, and (15).

(12) *vaktuṁ   nāyāti (na-āyāti)   rājendra*
    speak-INF   NEG-go.3SG   supreme_king.VOC

    etayor   niyamasthayoḥ
    these.DU.LOC   observing_a_vow.DU.LOC
'O supreme sovereign, it is impossible for both of them to speak because they observe a vow'. (lit. 'As they both are observing a vow, it is not possible to speak.')
(*Mahābhārata*, interpolation 221 after II,19,30[24])

This is a case of participant-imposed modality expressed through a syntactically impersonal construction, i.e., without a referential subject.

(13) *vinā   rajñā   sthātuṃ   na   yāti*
    without   king.INSTR   stay.INF   NEG   go.3SG
'It is not possible to stay without a king' (lit. 'without king [it] doesn't go to stay')
(*Nārāyaṇa*, *Hitopadeśa* I 9 p. 41, 3 Peterson)

This passage can be interpreted as conveying situational modality, as no specific participant is involved. As previously mentioned, impersonal constructions with *(ne)queo* are not attested with any certainty in pre-classical Latin. Consequently, the Indian impersonal construction cannot be considered to constitute a parallel to the *(ne)queo* constructions. With regard to the personal constructions, instead, *(ne)queo*

23. For additional examples, cf. Schokker (1969: 2-3).
24. According to Schokker (1969: 3), this is the most ancient attestation of the Sanskrit construction.

and *yā-* shows a certain degree of similarity, as demonstrated by the following examples.

(14 = 8) *Svecchopajātaviṣayo (sveccha-upajāta-viṣayo)*   *'pi*   *na*
At_will-added-dominion.NOM   then   NEG

yāti   *vaktuṁ*   *dehīti [...]*   *īśvara-durvidagdhaḥ*
go.3SG   speak-INF   give.IMP=so   king-wrong-headed.NOM

'Although his possessions come to him at his own pleasure, a wrong-headed king cannot be told to give. (lit. 'though he obtains dominion at will, a wrong-headed king cannot be told, "give!"')
(Bāṇa, *Harṣacarita* II, 13)

(15) *virahaḥ*   *soḍhuṁ*   *kathaṁ*   *yāsyati*
separation.NOM.SG   bear.INF   how   go.FUT.3SG

'How will the separation be borne?'
(Somadeva, *Lalitavigraharājanāṭaka* in Kielhorn 1901: 9, 4)

The future tense in (15) seems to influence the modal reading. This may be because (1) both future and modalised events are not actual; and (2) the modal interpretation of the *yā-* construction arises from implicatures and has not yet been grammaticalized. If one accepts that (15) can be interpreted as modal, then both (14 = 8) and (15) can be considered examples of dynamic situational modality, as there is no prominent participant in the modalised SoA.

In Sanskrit, similar constructions are also found with the gerund, as shown by (16). However, it is important to note that these constructions can also convey aspectual readings, as illustrated by (17).

(16) *chittvā*   *ca*   *bhittvā*   *ca*   *hi*   *yānti*
divide.GER   and   break.GER   and   because   go.3PL

tāni   *sva-pauruṣāc*   *caiva (ca-eva)*
this.NOM.PL   own-strength.ABL.SG   and-so

sahṛd-balāc[25]   *ca*   *jñānāc*   *ca*
friend-strength.ABL.SG   and   knowledge.ABL.SG   and

raukṣyāc   *ca*   *vinā*
roughness.ABL.SG   and   without

vimoktuṁ   *na*   *śakyate*   *sneha-mayas*
unloose.INF   not   can.3SG.PASS   oiliness-consisting_of.NOM.SG

---

25. The edition by Johnston reads *suhṛd-*. I have adopted the reading cited in Schokker (1969-1970).

tu	*pāśaḥ*
but	snare.NOM.SG

‘For the former (bonds) can be cut or broken by one’s own might or the strength of friends, but the snare of love cannot be loosened except by true knowledge or hard-heartedness’.
(Aśvaghoṣa, *Saundarananda* VII, 15, ed. Johnston, 1936)

In this case, too, the passage conveys situational modality, as it lacks an agentive participant. It is worth noticing the parallel between the ‘gerund + *yā-*’ construction and the ‘infinitive + *śak-*’ construction.

(17)
yasmād	*yāti*	*ca*	*loko*	*‘yaṃ*
because	go.3SG	and	world.NOM.SG	this.NOM.SG

vipralabhya	*paraṃparam*	*mamatvaṃ*		*na*
separate.GER	afterwards	sense_of_ownership.NOM.SG		not

kṣamaṃ	*tasmāt*	*svapna-bhūte*	*samāgame*
adequate.NOM.SG	therefore	sleep-been.LOC.SG	coming_together.LOC.SG

‘And since this world is in a state of continuous separation (lit.: is being continuously separated), therefore the feeling ‘this is mine’ is improper with regard to a coming together that is transitory as a dream’
(Aśvaghoṣa, *Buddhacarita* VI, 48, ed. Johnston 1936)

If the formal differences with regard to the active/passive forms are set aside, these constructions closely resemble the *(ne)queo* constructions, when the active or passive forms of *(ne)queo* introduce a passive verb. Cf. examples (1) and (4) for passive *(ne)queo* and (18) for active *(ne)queo*.

(18)
postremo,	*si*	*dictis*	*nequis*	*perduci,*
finally	if	word.ABL.PL	cannot.2SG	lead.INF.PASS

ut	*vera*	*haec*	*credas /*	*mea*
that	true.ACC.PL	this.ACC.PL	believe.SBJV.2SG	my.ACC.PL

dicta,	*ex*	*factis*	*nosce*	*rem.*
word.ACC.PL	from	fact.ABL.PL	know.IMP.2SG	thing.ACC.SG

‘Finally, if you can’t be led to believe through words that these words of mine are true, learn reality from facts.’
(Plautus, *Mostellaria* 198-199)

However, as outlined above, *(ne)queo* shows a clear preference for the active form and for active infinitives. Moreover, the syntactic subject of *(ne)queo* usually refers to an entity with an agentive role. The construction typically expresses participant-related

modality. Judging from the scanty Sanskrit attestations, this does not hold for *yā-*. Also taking into account the previous discussion about the impersonal construction, it is therefore possible to conclude that, beyond some superficial similarity (i.e., the semantic evolution from motion to possibility), the two verbs seem deeply different in their syntactic and semantic profiles.

4. Conclusion and outlook on future research

The comparison of the Latin *(ne)queo* construction with the Sanskrit *yā-* construction has shown that the parallel suggested by Osthoff (1898) is misleading. Although it is possible to recognise a similar semantic development from motion to possibility, there are significant differences. The features of the relevant modal constructions are schematically presented in Table 2. The emerging picture indicates that Latin *(ne)queo* is a more grammaticalized form, while Sanskrit *yā-* also has lexical and aspectual non-modal values.

	Latin *(ne)queo*	Sanskrit *yā-*
Modality	Always modal	It depends on the construction and on the context
Usual modal meaning	Dynamic	Dynamic
Usual role of the participant in the modalised SoA	Agentive or agent-like	No agentive prominent participant
Personal / Impersonal construction	Personal	Usually personal
Active / Passive form	Usually active	Always active
Active / Passive form of the verb in the embedded sentence	Usually active	Not pertinent
Active / Passive meaning of the depending verb	Active (with active or deponent verbs) / Passive (with passive verbs)	Usually passive
Usual polarity	Negative	Negative
Date	Ancient constructions that likely predate the 3rd century BCE	With a gerund: more recent construction that likely predates the 1st century CE. With an infinitive: more recent construction that likely predates the 5th century CE

Table 2. Overview of the relevant features of *(ne)queo* and *yā-* modal constructions

The investigation of *(ne)queo* and *yā-* has revealed that there is not a singular trajectory from motion to modality, as there exist varied motion constructions and

modal meanings. As observed, *(ne)queo* evolved from personal constructions with an agentive or agent-like participant. The emergence of the modal meaning in *yā*-constructions presents a less clear picture. It is apparent that the semantic development of *yā*- from motion to modality is tied to the emergence of the semi-copular uses of this verb (and of other motion verbs), expressing aspectual and voice values. However, due to insufficient data, it remains unclear whether the modal *yā*- constructions evolved from passive constructions (x ‘goes’ not done → x cannot be done → it is not possible to do x) or from impersonal constructions (doing x does not go → doing x is not possible → x cannot be done). It is crucial to highlight that the development of modality from impersonal motion constructions is a neglected area of the diachrony of modality and deserves further research. More broadly, the investigated case also underscores the need to explore the interplay between agent demotion/promotion and personal/impersonal constructions to better understand the emergence of certain types of modality. As seen above, both the Sanskrit construction with *yā*- and the Latin construction with *(ne)queo* convey the notion of possibility. Yet, the Sanskrit construction and the Latin one also diverge. The Sanskrit modal constructions with *yā*- are impersonal or convey passive meaning, while *(ne)queo* constructions are personal and usually convey active meaning. Moreover, the construction seems to influence the modality types that it is possible to express. Specifically, the Sanskrit and the Latin constructions tend to convey a distinct type of possibility: in the Latin construction the participant in the modalised event is usually salient, while in the Sanskrit construction it is usually the modalised event that is highlighted. These findings call for confirmation through intralinguistic studies of modality within Sanskrit and Latin.

Bibliographical references

Arche, M. J., Fábregas, A., Marín, R. (eds.) 2019, *The grammar of copulas across languages*, Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press.

Bourdin, P. 2014, *When* come *and* go *go necessive*, in M. Devos, J. van der Wal (eds.), *‘Come’ and ‘go’ off the beaten grammaticalization path*, Berlin, De Gruyter: 103-164.

Bréal, M. 1889, *Étymologies*, «Mémoires de la Société de Linguistique de Paris» 6: 127-137.

Brugmann, K. 1904a, *Kurze vergleichende Grammatik der indogermanischen Sprachen*, Strassburg, K.J. Trübner.

Brugmann, K. 1904b, *Die Demonstrativpronomina der indogermanischen Sprachen: eine bedeutungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Leipzig, B.G. Teubner.

Creissels, D. 2017, *Copulas originating from the imperative of ‘see/look’ verbs in Mande languages*, in W. Bisang, A. Malchukov (eds.), *Unity and diversity in grammaticalization scenarios*, Berlin, Language Science Press: 45–66.

Dell’Oro, F. 2023, *From motion to possibility: Latin* (ne)queo *‘I can(not)’ in the light of philological and typological data*, «Indogermanische Forschungen» 128:

187–201. https://doi.org/10.1515/if-2023-0009.

de Vaan, M. 2008, *Etymological dictionary of Latin and the other Italic languages*, Leiden, Brill.

Ernout, A., Meillet, A. 1959 [2001], *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*, 4th ed., Paris, Klincksieck.

EWAia = M. Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen*, 3 vols., Heidelberg, Winter, 1992-2001.

Grieco, B. 2023a, *Periphrases with motion verbs in Vedic Sanskrit: (between) textual analysis and grammaticalization patterns*, «Transactions of the Philological Society» 121(2): 226-250.

Grieco, B. 2023b, *Forme e funzioni delle perifrasi continue in indiano antico*. Tesi di Dottorato, Università per Stranieri di Siena.

Haspelmath, M. 1990, *The grammaticization of passive morphology*, «Studies in Language» 14(1): 25-72.

Hengeveld, K. 1992, *Non-verbal predication: Theory, typology, diachrony,* Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter.

Kachru, Y. 2006, *Hindi*, Amsterdam, J. Benjamins.

Kielhorn, F. 1893, *A peculiar use of the verb* yā *in a verse of the* Harsacarita, in *Album Kern*, Leiden, Brill: 119-120.

Kuteva, T., Heine, B., Hong, B., Long, H., Narrog, H., Rhee, S. 2019, *World lexicon of grammaticalization*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Monier-Williams, M. 1899, *A Sanskrit-English dictionary*, Oxford, Clarendon Press. Online digitized version (2008): http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/ (accessed December 2022).

Lauwers, P., Duée, C. 2011, *From aspect to evidentiality: The subjectification path of the French semi-copula* se faire *and its Spanish cognate* hacerse, «Journal of Pragmatics» 43(4): 1042–1060. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2010.09.013.

Montaut, A. 1991, *Aspects, voix et diathèses en hindi moderne. Syntaxe, sémantique, énonciation*, Leuven, Peeters.

Moro, A. 2006, *Copular Sentences*, in M. Everaert, H. van Riemsdijk (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Syntax*, vol. I, Malden, MA, Blackwell Publishing: 1–23.

Moro, A. 2010³, *Breve storia del verbo essere: viaggio al centro della frase*, Milano, Adelphi.

Moussy, C. 2001, Nequeo, queo, non queo. *L'expression de la modalité*, in *Actes du Xième Colloque international de linguistique latine*, Paris-Sèvres, Peeters: 485-496.

Nuti, A. 2016, *A matter of perspective. Aspect, deixis, and textual exploitation in the prototype semantics of* eo *and* venio, in W.M. Short (ed.), *Embodiment in Latin semantics*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, J. Benjamins: 15-55.

Osthoff, H. 1896, *Griechische und lateinische Wortdeutungen. 12.* queo, «Indogermanische Forschungen» 6: 20-37.

Osthoff, H. 1898, *Nachträgliches über lat.* queo, «Indogermanische Forschungen» 9: 179-182.

Pustet, R. 2003, *Copulas: universals in the categorization of the lexicon*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Renou, L. 1961, *Grammaire sanskrite*, Paris, Maisonneuve.

Renou, L. 1978, *Grammaire sanskrite élémentaire*, Paris, Maisonneuve.

Sansò, A., Giacalone Ramat, A. 2016, *Deictic motion verbs as passive auxiliaries: the case of Italian* andare *'go' (and* venire *'come')*, «Transactions of the Philological Society» 114(1): 1-24.

Schmitt, C. 2005, *Semi-copulas*, in P. Kempchinsky, R. Slabakova (eds.), *Aspectual Inquiries*, Dordrecht, Springer: 121–145. https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-3033-9_6

Schokker, G.H. 1969-1970, *The* jānā-*passive in the NIA Languages*, «Indo-Iranian Journal» 12(1): 1-23.

Walde, A., Hofmann, J. B. 1938-1956, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch.* 3rd ed., 3 vols., Heidelberg, C. Winter.

Whitney, W.D. 1896, *A Sanskrit grammar*, Leipzig, Breitkopf & Härtel.

Texts

This list includes all non-Latin texts and the Latin editions not available in the database Latin Classical Texts.

Latin:

Plautus, edited and translated by Wolfgang de Melo, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University, 2011-2013.

Sanskrit:

Aśvaghoṣa, *Buddhacarita*, ed. and transl. by E. H. Johnston, Calcutta, Baptist Mission, 1936.

Aśvaghoṣa, *Saundarananda*, ed. E. H. Johnston, London, Milford, 1928.

Bāṇa*, Harṣacarita*, ed. K.P. Parab, Bombay, Nirṇayasāgaramudraṇayantrālaya, 1897.

Kalhaṇa, *Rājataraṅgiṇi*, V, 48, ed. M. A. Stein, Bombay, Education Society, 1892.

Nārāyaṇa, *Hitopadeśa*, ed. by P. Petersen, Bombay, Government Central Book Depot, 1887.

(The) Mahābhārata, ed. by Vishnu S. Sukthankar, Poona, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1943.

Somadeva, *Lalitavigraharājanāṭaka:* ed. Franz Kielhorn, *Bruchstücke Indischer Schauspiele in Inschriften zu Ajmere*, Berlin, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1901: 1-15.

Siddhasenadivākara, *Kalyāṇamandirastotra*, ed. and transl. by H. Jacobi, «Indische Studien» 14: 376-391.