Abstract

Linell, Per, per.linell@liu.se, Professor, Dept. of Culture and Communication, Linköping University, Sweden; Norén, Kerstin, kerstin.noren@kau.se, Professor, Rector, Karlstad University, Sweden: “Duplicated initial finite auxiliaries – a responsive construction in Swedish”. Språk och stil 19, 2009, pp. 72–104.

In this article we analyse a peculiar Swedish construction that we name $x_{aux}x_{aux}$, or duplicated initial finite auxiliaries, which does not seem to occur in any related language. $X_{aux}x_{aux}$ is reactive in the sense that it can only occur in a second position, that is, as a response to a prior utterance in which the same auxiliary has been used (by another or the same speaker). One example is:

A: kan man bada här?
»can you swim here?«
B: kan kan man väl men vill vill man väl inte
»I suppose you can, but you wouldn’t really want to«

Here we explore a corpus of more than 100 examples from the Internet. We have investigated the syntax, sequential positions, semantics and pragmatics of the construction, using an interactional (dialogical) variant of construction grammar. $X_{aux}x_{aux}$ occurs with modal auxiliaries, pseudoauxiliaries (e.g. våga ‘dare’), and a few other verbs. The analysis shows that the construction is used when the author, on the one hand, concedes that a certain modality is adequately deployed in the situation (in the example above, ability or possibility: kan ‘can’), but on the other hand, downplays it in favour of a situationally more relevant one (above, willingness: vill ‘wants’). In sum, it is a question of grading and adjusting several different kinds of modalities.

The article also contains a comparison with other reactive constructions in Swedish, in particular, aux+göra (the pro-verb ‘do’) and $x$-och-$x$.

Keywords: dialogical grammar, interactive language, responsive grammatical construction, auxiliaries, modality, syntactic reduplication, Swedish.