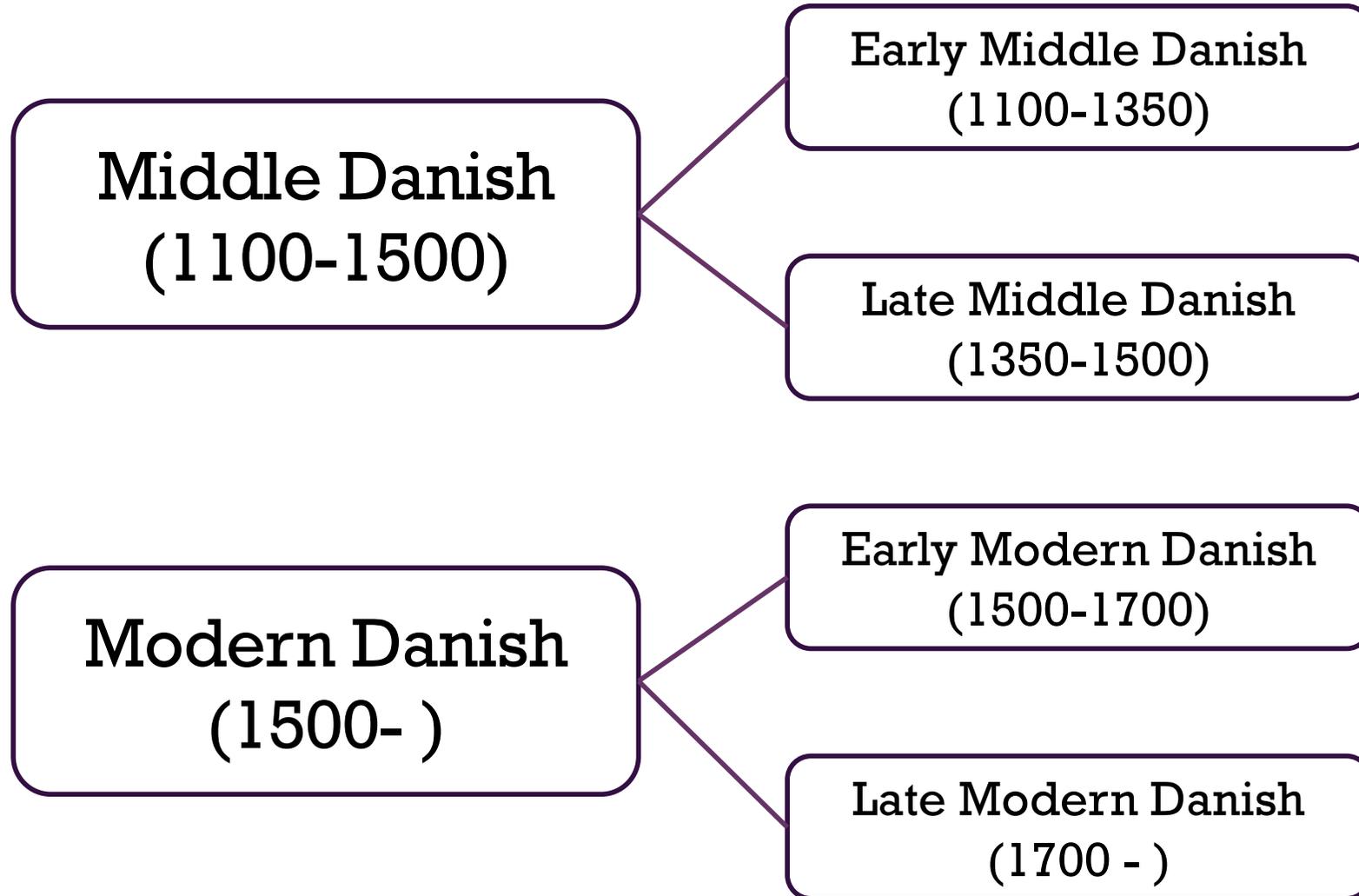


On the Semantic System of a Modal Verb,  
*skulu / skulle*, in Early Modern Danish

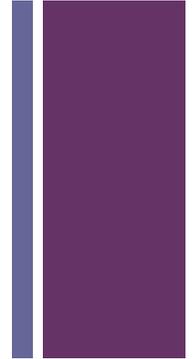
ICHL 24 Canberra, 5th july 2019

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# Danish



# + topics



- ❖ the semantic system of a modal verb *skulle* in the history of Danish Language
  - the semantic system of *skulle* in Middle Danish
  - the description of *skulle* in Holberg Dictionary (1700-1750)
- ❖ *skulle* is getting an epistemic/evidential meaning in Early Modern Danish?
- ❖ how *skulle* is used in my data

The semantic system of *skulle* in the history of the Danish language  
(cf. the semantic system of modal verbs in Modern Danish (Hansen & Heltoft 2011))

The semantic system of *skulle* in **Early Middle Danish** (Bjerrum:1966, 1967)

	non-deontic	deontic
necessity	<i>skulle</i> ( <i>necessity</i> )	<i>skulle</i> ( <i>duty</i> )

materials: three legal texts (1250-1300)

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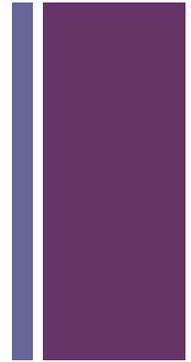
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The semantic system of *skulle* in **Late Middle Danish** (Obe:2013)

	non-deontic	deontic	
necessity	<i>skulle</i> ( <i>necessity</i> )	<i>skulle</i> ( <i>duty, intention</i> )	<i>skulle</i> ( <i>promise</i> )

materials: two religious texts and a narrative text  
*Lucidarius* (ca.1350), *Sjælens Trøst* (ca.1425), *Karl Magnus' Krønike* (1480)

# + non-deontic necessity



1

necessity, which is derived from an external situation

2

necessity, which the grammatical subject cannot control over

## + non-deontic necessity

1

necessity, which is derived from an external situation

Sodoma synd oc gomura the æra swa thunga oc stora at  
jordhin **skal** sivrka vndir thøm (Sjælens Trøst)

Sodom and Gomorrah's sin, they are so massive and  
significant, that the earth has to sink below them.

## + non-deontic necessity

2

necessity, which the grammatical subject cannot control over

forþy ath han reddes at flodhen **skullæ** ouergangæ  
verdhen i gen (Lucidarius)

because he became fearful that the Flood should attack  
the world again

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## + intention

en aff hertug Gerins men hett antune drab angulando  
hæst ath han **skulle** icke borth kommæ (Karl Magnus  
Krønike)

one of the Duke Gerin's men called Antoene, killed  
Angulands' horse so he would not run away

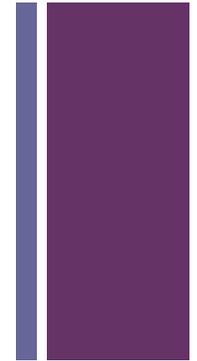
## + promise

Hwn swaret icke **skall** thet worde langht till worth  
brølloop om thw før meg hannum sagd ær (Karl Magnus  
Krønike)

She answered, “There should not be a long time before  
our wedding if you take him to me, as you said”.

necessity is derived from the speaker

+ The semantic system of *skulle* in the history of the Danish Language

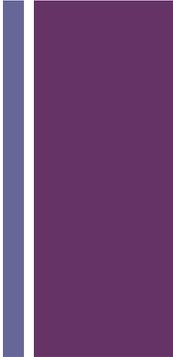


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necessity	<i>skulle</i> ( <i>necessity</i> )	<i>skulle</i> ( <i>duty, intention</i> )	<i>skulle</i> ( <i>promise</i> )
Lucidarius (1350)	29/126	97/126	0/126
Sjælens Trøst (1425)	19/417	375/417	23/417
Karl Magnus' Krønike (1480)	28/368	233/367	107/368



## The semantic system of *skulle* in the history of the Danish Language



The semantic system of *skulle* in Middle Danish (1100-1500) (Bjerrum:1966, Obe: 2013)

	non-deontic	deontic	
necessity	<i>skulle</i> ( <i>necessity</i> )	<i>skulle</i> ( <i>duty, intention</i> )	<i>skulle</i> ( <i>promise</i> )

- in most cases, *skulle* expresses "necessity", "duty" or "intention"
- in narrative texts, there are examples expressing "promise".
- **no example in epistemic/evidential use**

## + *skulle* in Holberg Dictionary (1700-1750)

	non-deontic	deontic	
necessity	<i>skulu</i> ( <i>necessity</i> )	<i>skulu</i> ( <i>duty, intention</i> )	<i>skulu</i> ( <i>promise</i> )



Ludvig Holberg

(1684 - 1754)

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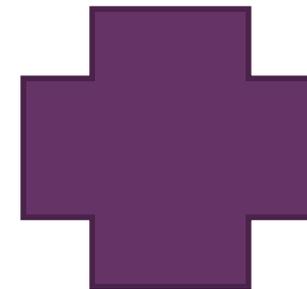
som udtryk for at det sagte indeholder et foregivende, en påstand eller **en usikker, andenhånds oplysning**, eller er præget af **den talendes usikkerhed**

”to express that an utterance includes a pretext, an allegation, or **uncertain, secondhand information**, or is characterized by **the speaker’s uncertainty/doubt**”

+ *skulle* in Holberg Dictionary (1700-1750)

	non-deontic	deontic	
necessity	<i>skulu</i> (necessity)	<i>skulu</i> (duty, intention)	<i>skulu</i> (promise)

What is happening to the semantic system of *skulle* in Early Modern Danish (1500-1700)?



hearsay

the speaker's uncertainty/doubt

## + my data

- ❖ *Jammers Minde (ca. 1674 – ca. 1696)*
  - a diary by Leonora Christina
  - was in solitary confinement for 20 years

the diary includes:

1. conversations between Leonora and servants, officials, priests, and other prisoners
2. monologues



+ The semantic system of *skulle* in Jammers Minde (1674-1696)

non-deontic	deontic		epistemic/evidential?	
<i>skulle</i> (necessity)	<i>skulle</i> (duty, intention)	<i>skulle</i> (promise)	<i>skulle</i> (the speaker's uncertainty/doubt)	<i>skulle</i> (hearsay)
57/448	285/448	47/448	35/448	3/448

+ 21 examples, I couldn't categorize

## *hearsay? (evidential use?)*

Hand (...) kom oc til døren oc fortælte iblant anded att hand haffde **hørt** att Princen (nu worris Konge) **skulle** gifftis (JM: 154)

He (...) came and went to the door and told among others, that he had heard, that the prince, now our king, should/is said to get married.

hwor om **taltist**, att Bruden om en Maanets tiid **skulle** komme ind (JM: 163)

where people talked about the bride in a month or so should/is said to come

## *hearsay? (evidential use?)*

Hand (...) kom oc til døren oc fortælte iblant anded att hand haffde **hørt** att Princen (nu worris Konge) **skulle** gifftis (JM: 154)

hwor om **taltist**, att Bruden om en Maanets tiid **skulle** komme ind (JM: 163)

hearsay

skulle

intention  
plan

## + conclusion 1

*skulle* is getting an epistemic/evidential meaning in Early Modern Danish?

1

It is not evident in my data. To find out how evidential use of *skulle* has been established, my research on *Jammers Minde* indicates it needs further research on the Danish texts in the later stages. Even though the *Holberg Dictionary* says *skulle* is used to express hearsay in 1700-1750, the examples should be checked more carefully.

## *the speaker's uncertainty/doubt?*

(swarte hun) (...) oc nu er i wree paa mig oc wil icke tale med mig; Ieg sagde, hwad **skal** ieg sige? (JM:96)

She answered “(...) and now you are angry with me and you don't want to talk with me.” I said: “What should I say?”

the speaker expresses his/hers uncertainty

the speaker asks about the addressee's intention

## *the speaker's uncertainty/doubt?*

ieg wed icke hwad ieg **skulle** skriffwe (JM:129)

I don't know what I should write.

Ieg laae oc tenkte mig om, hwad ieg **skulle** giøre (JM: 94)

I was thinking over what I should do.

the speaker's uncertainty/doubt about his/hers own intention

## *the speaker's uncertainty/doubt?*

Cathr. sagde, skulle ded oc wel were sandt? (JM:40)

Cathrina said, "Should it be true?"

the speaker expresses his/hers uncertainty/doubt about the existence of an appropriate reason(intention) for a proposition to be true.

## + conclusion 2

*skulle* is getting an epistemic/evidential meaning in Early Modern Danish?

2

Some examples show *skulle* expresses “the speaker’s uncertainty/doubt”, which is not about the truth of a proposition, but about the addressee’s intention, the speaker’s own intention, or the existence of an appropriate reason(intention) for a proposition to be true. Therefore, this type of *skulle* can still be regarded as a part of “intention”.

## + conclusion 2

*skulle* is getting an epistemic/evidential meaning in Early Modern Danish?

2

However, the examples also indicate *skulle* is in the process shifting its source of modality from the speaker (“the speaker’s promise” or “the speaker’s intention”) to other factors than the speaker (“the addressee’s intention” or “hearsay”).