

From times to worlds: *ehler* across multiple domains – a case study
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In this work in progress I will examine the meaning of sentences with German *ehler* 'sooner'/'rather' which exhibits temporal and modal meanings, in light of Gergel's 2010/2016 discussion of English *rather*, taking into account the historical development of the particle. I will develop an analysis for German *ehler* that has at its core the notion of a scale, an ordered set of degrees. Temporal and modal readings of *ehler* have in common that they consist of a gradable property which combines with a comparative morpheme. They are, however, distinguished in terms of the scale they operate on, leading to different LF attachment sites for the temporal vs. the modal reading. By assigning a similar semantic status to three objects in the "ontological zoo" - degrees, times, and worlds, - the degree approach simplifies the formal account of how *ehler* came to be used in temporal as well as modal domains, suggesting an explanation for a widely observed asymmetric meaning change from concrete to more abstract domains in an exemplary fashion.