

MODALITY IN SYNTAX, SEMANTICS,
AND PRAGMATICS

Volume 165

What do we mean when we say things like *If only we knew what he was up to!?* Clearly, this is more than just a message, or a question to our addressee. We are expressing simultaneously that we don't know and also that we wish to know.

Several modes of encoding contribute to such modalities of expression: word order, subordinating conjunctions, sentences that are subordinated but nevertheless occur autonomously, and attitudinal discourse adverbs which, far beyond lexical adverbials of modality, allow the speaker and the listener to presuppose full agreement, partial agreement under presupposed conditions, or negotiation of common ground. This state-of-the-art survey proposes a new model of modality, drawing on data from a variety of Germanic and Slavic languages to find out what is cross-linguistically universal about modality, and to argue that it is a constitutive part of human cognition.

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MODALITY IN SYNTAX, SEMANTICS, AND PRAGMATICS

VOLUME 165

WERNER ABRAHAM

University of Groningen



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-107-60550-3 — Modality in Syntax, Semantics and Pragmatics
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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107605503
DOI: 10.1017/9781139108676

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First published 2020
First paperback edition 2023

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-02122-8 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-107-60550-3 Paperback

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To the memory of my wife, Gerda Abraham, 1941–2020

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Preface

What do we mean when we utter something like *If only we could know what he is up to!*? Clearly, we do not only send a message or ask an addressee a question. What is more relevant, we express our failure to know and, at the same time, the wish to get to know the propositional content *What is he up to?* Perhaps even more important for the hearer at site is that much depends on the speaker's knowledge of the propositional content of the direct question, i.e. the communicative common ground between speaker and hearer and what the implied strategy could be that both speaker and hearer pursue in order to understand each other. The conditional conjunction *if* and the connected irrealis *could* in our example signal not propositional but attitudinal conditions, i.e. wishful contingency. Several modes of encoding contribute to such modalities of expression: word order (particularly in languages with verb-second (V2) and verb-final (Vfinal) word order, such as German and Dutch), subordinating conjunctions, sentences which are subordinated in the first place but nevertheless occur autonomously (i.e. as main, independent clauses), and attitudinal discourse adverbs ('modal particles'), which, far beyond lexical adverbials of modality, allow the producing and, at least partially, the receiving communicative partner to presuppose full agreement, partial agreement under presupposed conditions, or negotiation of the common ground.

Grammatical modality is the functional category, which is acquired later than all other functional categories. Thus, it is necessarily dependent upon, and colored by, the language-specific architecture of the early acquired functional categories such as aspect, tense, and mood, whose semantics serve as elementary building blocks for the construction of the exceptionally complex functional category of modality. Beside pointing out the cross-linguistic diversity of modality, the main aim will be to provide a unified picture of modality that explains the driving force (or illocutionary force) creating different cross-linguistic patterns of modality. The very search for the deeper sources of modality reveals that the linguistic architecture of modality largely depends

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on the development of the category of person. The category of person is defined as a *shifter* (in the Jakobsonian sense). Its reference shifts with the origo of the speaker. At this point, pragmatics comes into the picture. It is of central importance to understand how shifters serve as building blocks for functional categories. Functional categories involve double displacement and the splitting up of the speaker into multiple personalities or viewpoints. As a consequence, one central aim will be to give evidence of, and theoretical support for, the hypothesis that the development of the Theory of Mind (ToM) in acquisition (and, presumably, also of evolution) depends largely on the development of functional categories, especially that of modality (as has been proposed and supported by Papafragou 2002 and Papafragou et al. 2007) – and not vice versa, i.e. that the cognition of complex modality arises out of the developing ToM (this being the majority position in the field). What is of central importance from a pragmatic point of view is that modality constitutes the highest linguistic achievement in the creation of different viewpoints (or perspectives, as we also say). The entirety of modality in itself, of course, comprises a range of different means to express illocutionary force, among which modal verbs, modal particles (common to all of Germanic – except for English – and Slavic), and modal adverbials. In order to understand, what is common to them, what separates them, and what lies behind them, the syntax of modality will finally be investigated thoroughly. The different layers of modality or illocutionary force are defined by the structural web of syntax which specifies the function (semantics and pragmatics) of different linguistic techniques of modality. An essential outcome of the syntax part will be that lexical modality is not on a par with grammatical modality. Another investigative aim will be to expand the syntactic operator of illocutionary force into suboperators and to specify and define them in syntactic terms. This pathway also implies that modality is excluded from syntactic domains where illocutionary force is inactive, such as in (a major subset of) dependent clauses, insofar as they do not allow for Force autonomy (partly truth assessment, partly felicity conditions). The module division, as sketched above, does not reflect the sequence of topics treated in the main chapters of the present book.

I have taken great pains to spell out the common structure of the four grammatical modules, aspect, tense, mood, and modality, and the perspective under which the common structure is achieved. The polyvalent semantics of aspect form the building block of modal functions. Aspect, tense, and mood cannot be listed as separate modules. They are linked in terms of stacked inclusion (part-whole, or mereological) relations. They are different categories of the same functional domain, the so-called ATM(M)-complex. The most

basic category is aspect, structured binarily between the features of inner and outer perspective [\pm perfective], tense between past and future, mood between [\pm realis], and modality between [\pm speaker's certainty]. The feature sets linking the four modules are the deictic categories of speaker distance. Aspect encodes spatial distance, tense encodes temporal distance, mood allows the speaker to view distant (possible) worlds as being encoded by irrealis and optative moods; and, finally, epistemic and evidential modality signal that the speaker distances him- or herself from the positive truth value of the proposition, which means that the speaker as a person does not take responsibility for the certainty of the information given. Here the grammatical category of person (\pm distant from the origo) comes into the picture. All in all, we can say that aspect, tense, mood, and modality are linked by processes of reinterpretation of the feature [\pm distance]. The path of reinterpretation correlates with the path of grammaticalization: aspect > tense > mood > modality, which is well documented in the literature.

Different degrees of distance lie between the four modules sketched – the remotest, and least overtly visible, distance lying between aspect and epistemic/evidential modality, while the closest separates aspect and tense (past vs. present ongoing). The external, distance motivated, relation between these sets is that modality includes the feature characteristics of the other three modules in a hierarchical setting: the features of modality contain those of mood, mood contains those of tense, tense those of aspect, and aspect is the most basic one. This new view on the hierarchy of categorial relations explains insights into the solid empirical evidence of links between the modalities of root and epistemics, on the one hand, and aspectual perfectivity and imperfectivity, on the other. This comes most clearly to the fore in languages that have to express modalities in forms of aspect. Russian is the model for this link in the book at hand. All of this motivates the general claim made in this book that the semantics, pragmatics, and syntax of modality converge, thus allowing for a universally valid explanation of modality as a constitutive part of human cognition and also human language.

I know from my own experience that books like this one will be read in parts. A look into the table of contents will help detect certain subtopics that interest the reader more than others. The individual chapters of the present book were written with that in mind. They can be read individually without getting lost by the absence of the horizons drawn in previous chapters. I have also taken great care to insert cross-references to other pertinent chapters for additional illustration and for exegesis. Needless to say, what may sometimes appear to be the duplication of information is planned to help the reader.

Acknowledgments

This book should have appeared under the co-authorship of Elisabeth Leiss. As comes to the fore clearly from her books (Leiss 2002, 2010b), she was my spiritus rector in many questions dealt with here. The pitiless loads of teaching and administration in German academia have kept her from actively writing her chapters and subchapters. Nevertheless, peers familiar with our doubly authored publications will be able to track down her fundamental ideas and give her the academic credit she deserves. Elisabeth Leiss' inspirational contribution to this book emanates from the entries in the bibliography of this book, in particular our co-authored publications.

It is no less than fair to mention that the contents of the present book arose from the attempts that were published as tryouts for the present comprehensive issue. I acknowledge gratefully the space offered for this long-term strategy by the following publishing houses: John Benjamins-Amsterdam, Walter de Gruyter-Berlin, Wiley-London, Cambridge Scholars-Newcastle upon Tyne, Helmut Buske-Hamburg.

Abbreviations and Special Symbols

Abbreviations (Used in the Running Text and the Glosses)

ABIL	ability
Acc	accusative case
ACI	accusativus cum infinitivo verbs (verba dicendi et sentiendi: <i>sehen, fühlen, hören, lassen</i> , etc.)
Addr	addressee
Adj.Poss	possessive adjective
AG	agent (theta role=semantic case)
AgrP	agreement phrase
AH	auxiliary hypothesis
AMH	aspect-modality hypothesis
Aor	aorist
AspP	aspect phrase
ASS	assertion, assertive
ATMM/E	aspect (A), tense (T), mood (M) and epistemic and evidential modality (M/E)
Aux	auxiliary
BG	Burzio's Generalization
C	context state
CA	contrastive accent
CDC	core dependent clause
CEM	classical extensional mereology
CF	contrastive focus
CG	common ground
CI	conventional implicature
CL	clitic

xxvi *List of Abbreviations and Special Symbols*

Comp	complementizer (V2 in German or embedding conjunction)
COMPL	completive
ConF	contrastive focus
Cop	copula
CoV	control verb
CP	complementizer phrase (entire autonomous clause)
CV	verbal complement
Dat	dative case
DD	double displacement
DECL	declarative
DEONT	deontic (modal of obligation)
decausV	decausative verb
def	definite
DefF	default focus
DirD	direct discourse
DM(s)	discourse marker(s)
DMV	deontic (root) reading of modal verb
DO	direct object
DP	determiner phrase
E-	epistemic (-reading)
eA	external argument (subject)
ec	empty category
ECM	exceptional case marking verbs (= ACI)
EIQ	embedded infinitival question
EMPH	emphasis
EMV	epistemic reading of modal verb
ENHG	Early New High German (1350–1550)
EpAdvP	epistemic adverbial phrase
EPM	emphatic polarity marker
Er	erotetic (echo) question
EUH	epistemic universal hypothesis
eV	unaccusative (ergative) verb
evAdv	evidential adverb
EvidV	evidential verb
EvidMV	evidential (reading of) modal verb
EvP	event passive
Ex/Excl	exclamative

List of Abbreviations and Special Symbols xxvii

EXPL	expletive (dummy element filling a syntactic position without structural status; cf. German <i>Es wird versucht zu lachen</i> ‘it. EXPL is attempted to smile’)
F	feminine gender
FCA	Foreign Consciousness Alignment (\approx Theory of Mind; Others’ Minds Alignment; reminiscent of Carnap’s <i>Fremdbewusstsein</i> ‘foreign/others’ consciousness’)
FID	free-indirect discourse
FIN	finality function (where predicative conjugational form of a main clause goes)
ForceP	Force phrase
FocP	focus particle (German also <i>Gradpartikel</i>)
Fut	Future (tense)
Gen	Genitive
HAB	habitual, habituality
iA	internal argument (direct object)
IllocP	illocutionary phrase
ILP	individual-level predicate
IMP	imperative
Imperf	imperfective aspect
Ind	indicative
indef	indefinite
INF	infinitive
Infl	inflection
Instr	Instrumental case
IO	indirect object
IOR	infinitival (object-)DP relative
IP	inflection phrase
IPP	Infinitivus pro participio (German <i>Ersatzinfinitiv</i> ‘substitute infinitive’)
iPRED	intransitive predicate
IS	information structure/structural
(I)S	(Inter)Subjectification
ITAP	Intersubjective truth assessment presupposition
iV	intransitive verb
KLP	Kimian state level predicate
leMF	left middle field (German clause topology)
LF	Logical Form
L-marking	lexical theta-marking

xxviii *List of Abbreviations and Special Symbols*

M	masculine gender
MF	middle field (German sentence topology) PreF (between TP and ν P) hosting midsentence topics and topic-about
MoepAdv	modal epistemic adverb
MP	modal particle
MPaP	modal particle in appositives (non-restrictives) parameter
MPD	MP-declarative
MPP	modal particle phrase
MV	modal verb
N	noun
n.a.	not applicable
NEC	necessary
NEG	negation
NegP	negation phrase
NEUT	neuter gender
NFGEH	non-finiteness gap for EMV hypothesis
Nom	nominative
NPI	negative polarity item
nrRC	non-restrictive relative clause
O	Obligatory, ethically necessary/obligatory
OCS	Old Church Slavonic
OV	object before verb (left-directional valence)
p , p	proposition (content of a sentence)
P	preposition
PAT	patient (theta role = semantic case)
PDC	peripheral dependent clause
PF	phonetic form
PreF	prefield (SpecCP)
Perf	perfective aspect
PG	prepositional gerund (German <i>zum</i> +infinitive)
PIC	Processing Instruction Condition
Pl	plural
PoF	postfield (of the German clause structure, below VP hosting topics in echoed function)
PolP	polarity phrase
Poss	possible
PP	prepositional phrase
PPA	perfect participle active
PPP	perfect participle passive

List of Abbreviations and Special Symbols xxix

PRED	predicate, predication
Pres Ptcp	present participle
Pret	preterit
Pro	invisible ('small') pronominal position
PRO	pronominal determiner phrase (DP) without phonological content
Pron	pronoun
PstPtcp	past participle
Ptcp	participle
Q	quantification
QE	quotative evidential
QUD	question under discussion
REQU	request
RES	resultative
RHMF	rhematic middle field (= right middle field in German sentence topology)
RI	root infinitive (<i>nicht stehen bleiben!</i> not-stop)
riMF	right middle field (German topology)
S	sentence
SA	speech act operator
SAH	speech act hypothesis
Sg	singular
SID	standard indirect discourse
SLP	stage level predicate
SMP	strong MP status
SMV	semi-modal verb
SoG	South German (Oberdeutsch)
Sp	speaker
SpDeix	speaker deixis
StP	state (adjectival) passive
SUBJ	subject
T	tense
THMF	thematic middle field (= left middle field in German sentence topology)
ToM	Theory of Mind (also Foreign Consciousness Alignment/FCA and Others' Minds Alignment)
TP	tense phrase
tPRED	transitive predicate
tV	transitive verb
V-final/VL	verb in sentence-final position

xxx *List of Abbreviations and Special Symbols*

VF	verum focus
VO	verb before object (right-directional valence)
WMP	weak MP status (MP in the narrow sense)
WP	Wackernagel position (for subject and object clitics as in <i>Wird= a=n treffen?</i> ‘will=he=him meet’ and <i>Er wird=s machen</i> ‘he will=(i)t do’)

Special Symbols

df= / df =	for ‘is defined as’
¬ or ~	for ‘propositional negation’
∨	for ‘either-or’
& or ∧	for ‘and’
→ or ⇒	for ‘follows from’, ‘implies’
□	for ‘necessary/obligatory’
P/◇	for possibility
∀u	for ‘valid for all instances of u’
∃v	for ‘there is at least one instance of v’
≤	for ‘smaller than or equal with’
∈	for ‘is part of’
#	for exceptional (marked) contexts
≡	semantically equivalent
Θ	theta (thematic) role

Abbreviations of Language Names

ENHG	Early New High German (‘Frühneuhochdeutsch’)
GOT	Gothic
MHG	Middle High German (1150–1350)
MStE	Modern Standard English
MStG	Modern Standard German
NL	Netherlands/Dutch
OCS	Old Church Slavonic
OE	Old English (750–1150)
OHG	Old High German (750–1150)
PO	Polish
RU	Russian
SC	Scandinavian
SG	South German (‘Oberdeutsch’)