

# Call for papers

## Workshop proposal

for the 44th Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea, 8-11 September 2011, at the Universidad de La Rioja, Logroño, Spain.

## Convenors:

Werner Abraham/Vienna & Munich - Elisabeth Leiss/Munich

## Covert patterns of modality

The main concern of this workshop is covert patterns of modality in a cross-linguistic perspective. We assume that covert, or silent, modality is far more frequent than its overt expression. In this respect, modal categories behave completely different compared with their aspectual and temporal counterparts. The main reasons for this behavior are the far more complex functions of modality and the strategies used to encode these functions in an economical way. Modality uses parasitically less complex categories as building blocks to encode the illocutive functions of a sentence. This might be the very reason why aspect seems, at first sight, to be the most frequent grammatical overt category in a cross-linguistic perspective followed by tense, whereas mood and modality are quite rare.

Patterns of modality may be hidden for two reasons: First, they are formed by intricate patterns yet undiscovered. Second, the functions of modality are not yet well enough defined, and they are additionally blurred by different terminologies due to different descriptive linguistic traditions. Thus, the functional equivalents of modal particles in languages without overtly expressed modal particles are yet to be discovered. Third, modality seems to be the most ubiquitous category of language. For this very reason, it is difficult to perceive and conceive its presence in discourse. The overarching reason for modal expressivity is the existence of, and the expressive reference to, a common ground of knowledge and assumptions shared, or not shared, between Speaker and Hearer. The strategy for the Speaker to fathom out such common knowledge ground on the Hearer's part is *Foreign Conscience Alignment/FCA* (Abraham to appear). *FCA* will be the leading methodological criterion uniting all approaches to the topic of modality as represented by an autonomous type of illocutive force.

We invite contributions to the following topics concerning the intricate patterns of modality:

1. Aspect and tense and their respective features as building blocks of modality.
2. Covert epistemicity in evidentials, and covert evidentiality in epistemic modals.
3. Sources of illocutive force in subordinate clauses.
4. Covert modality in pronouns and applicative datives.
5. Modality in non-finite contexts such as root infinitives and infinitival relatives.

Recent linguistic literature on modality discusses links with aspect, primarily in languages that have a scarcer representation of direct expressions of modality such as modal verbs and, in particular, their systematic epistemic readings (see Kotin 2008 and the volumes edited by W. Abraham & E. Leiss 2008, 2009). We expect a large amount of still undisclosed patterns of modality, where aspect is involved as a trigger of readings related to modality.

Aspectual selectional restrictions are also regularly at the core of studies on evidentials and epistemics. Far better attested are epistemic readings in evidentials, as well as evidential readings in epistemics. Here, the common function of both categories might be blurred by different descriptive traditions.

Another most intriguing phenomenon concerning modality is the fact that, counter to prior convictions, we find dependent clauses that react sensitively to the insertion of epistemic modal elements forcing the conclusion that they have the root property of independent clauses, i.e. an autonomous illocutive function. Subordinate clauses are conventionally taken to carry no illocutive power of their own (e.g., you cannot express imperativity or interrogativity through dependent clause status). But there are three types of dependent clauses that autonomously bear illocutive power: non-factive complement clauses, causal/adversative adverbial clauses, and non-restrictive relative clauses (Kayne 2005, Haegeman 2006, Coniglio 2009, Abraham (submitted), Introductions in Abraham&Leiss (eds.) 2008, 2009). We invite contributions which disclose the patterns of hidden modality in dependent clauses.

Quite a new field of study is the amount of illocutionary force transported by pronouns such as (*ein*) *gewisser* (*X*), which, in contrast to (*ein*) *bestimmer* (*X*), refers to the common knowledge ground of both speaker and hearer (Aloni in prep., Alonso-Ovalle & Menendez-Benito 2010, Port 2010, Van der Auwera & Van Alsenoy 2010). Phenomena of this kind give additional support to the hypothesis that modality might ubiquitously found in all sentences and even constituents we produce. Other candidates for covert modality are applicative dative objects in Polish as discussed by Rivero et al. (2010). As appears, Polish human datives are amenable to modal readings under specific contextual circumstances. One might argue that, on a similar line, the German(ic) ethical dative may be regarded as a modal particle leaving undecided, or, more precisely, making assessable to the hearer, the truth value of the proposition. There seem to be islands of modality in sentences yet to be undisclosed. We invite the investigation of such islands of modality.

A classical field of covert modality are embedded infinitives (with or without a preposition): There appears to be a general occurrence of covert modality in root infinitives and infinitival relatives (*this is to be done soon* / *this has to be so* / middle constructions such as *this field plays well* with the notion “can/may be played upon well”; see in detail and for examples Bhatt 2006 as well as others). The phenomenon appears to be a cross-linguistic one (shown to also hold for German, French, and Hindi-Urdu). Covert modality is not associated with any lexical item in the structure that is interpreted as above. The main question to solve is: Where does the modal flavor come from? What is its source: Is it syntactic, semantic, or unsystematically pragmatic?

## References

- Abraham, Werner (submitted): Fremdbewusstseinsabgleich in Syntax und Semantik. Paper presented at the workshop on modality, University of Hannover, June 2010.
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- Abraham, Werner & Leiss, Elisabeth (eds.) 2009. *Modalität*. [Studien zur deutschen Grammatik 77]. Tübingen: Stauffenburg
- Aloni, Maria (in prep.). Notes on indefinites in comparatives. Manuscript, University of Amsterdam.

- Alonso-Ovalle, Luis & Paula Menendez-Benito 2010. Plural epistemic indefinites. Presentation at the DGfS-Meeting Berlin February 2010.
- Auwers, Johan van der & Lauren Van Alsenoy 2010. Mapping the *any*'s of English, German, and Dutch. Presentation at the DGfS-Meeting Berlin February 2010.
- Bhatt, Rajesh 2006. *Covert modality in non-finite contexts*. [Interface Explorations 8]. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Coniglio, Marco 2009. Deutsche Modalpartikeln in Haupt- und Nebensätzen. In: Abraham, Werner & Leiss, Elisabeth (eds.) 2009.
- Haegeman, Liliane 2006. Conditionals, factives, and the left periphery. *Lingua* 116: 1651-1669.
- Kayne, Richard 2005. *Silent syntax*. Oxford: OUP.
- Kotin, Michail 2008. Zu den Affinitäten zwischen Modalität und Aspekt: Eine germanisch-slavisches Fallstudie. *Die Welt der Slaven* 53: 116-140.
- Port, Angelika 2010. Epistemic specificity and knowledge. Presentation at the DGfS-Meeting Berlin February 2010.
- Rivero, María Luisa; Ana Arregui & Ewelina Fraçkowiak 2010. Variation in circumstantial modality: Polish vs. St'át'imcets. *Squib Linguistic Inquiry* 41.4 .

Please send a short description of the topic of your intended presentation to [werner.abraham@lmu.de](mailto:werner.abraham@lmu.de) and to [elisabeth.leiss@lmu.de](mailto:elisabeth.leiss@lmu.de).

Full abstracts are to be submitted by 15 January 2011, once the workshop has been accepted. Notification will be given by March 31, 2011.

Presentations will be 20 minutes plus ten minutes question time.