

Call for papers: „Modality, Typology, and Universal Grammar“

Convenors: Werner Abraham (University of Vienna & University of Munich) and Elisabeth Leiss (University of Munich)

Date: 11-12th mai 2012 (University of Munich)

Deadline for abstracts: 31th december 2011

For more information: <http://www.lmu.de/modality2012>

We invite papers that are working on universal definitions of modality or „illocutionary force“. Cartographic approaches to modality are as welcome as functional and other approaches, as long as they are scientific in the sense that they are working on generalizations concerning modality as part of the faculty of human language, thus not being reduced to ad-hoc-claims concerning individual languages only. The contributions should provide generalizations on modality that are robust enough to account for cross-linguistic varieties of modality, but that are also precise enough to be potentially falsifiable. The conference is organized by the German project partners of a bi-national German-British research project on “Un-Cartesian Linguistics”. The central aim of this project is to design an alternative approach to Cartesian/rationalist models of Universal Grammar. Cartesian approaches to Universal Grammar are reduced to formal accounts of language, due to their rationalist axiomatics, that attributes content (and functions) to human specific thought alone, the formal side being attributed to language, which is meant to be devoid of content of its own. There is, however, a non-cartesian approach to Universal Grammar that has been designed in the late Middle Ages by the so-called Modistae. According to this approach, the function of language is to translate reality as perceived by individual human beings into a thought system that is formatted by language such that it allows for intersubjective communication of individual experience. The Un-Cartesian approach to UG is a functionalist approach to language insofar as it gives a clear demarcation line between grammar versus the lexicon (grammatical semantics versus lexical semantics). Within this functional account, there is no way to include irregular grammatical material in the lexicon. Thus, according to this approach, lexical and grammatical means of grammatical functions (functional categories) such as modality can never ever be considered to be equivalent.

The topics invited should cover at least one of the following domains:

- The syntax of modality
- The semantics of modality
- The pragmatics of modality
- Covert modality
- Lexical versus grammatical coding of modality
- Modality in matrix clauses versus dependent clauses
- Epistemicity and evidentiality
- Modal verbs
- Modal particles

- Islands of non-modality in sentences
- Modality in pronouns
- Modality in relation to other categories such as mood, tense, aspect, and person
- Modality and Theory of Mind /other's mind.

We are interested in lively and controverse discussions during the conference. Please highlight potential controversial points in your abstracts.