

## A Study of the Semantic Function of Modality\*

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The purpose of this paper is to make a sentence systemic within the category of structural grammar for the modality in which a speaker expresses his attitude. It is the priority of a language to communicate meaning. By eliminating the theoretical description of traditional grammar, this paper also aims to illustrate the concepts of nine modal verbs through a systemic network. The concept of modality includes both the epistemic and the deontic characteristics of modality. Epistemic modality is associated with either knowledge or belief on the part of a speaker who gives his own judgments about the state of affairs, events, or actions. However, deontic modality is related to either the possibility or the necessity of acts that a speaker performs to give permission or fulfill an obligation.

In conclusion, all the subsystems are described within the framework of the systemic network, with the intention of including all the potential options of the semantic functions available in a situation.

[modality/function/category]

### I. INTRODUCTION

By indicating some tasks and contents, a human being is able to describe a situation which has occurred and has been brought into existence in his own world, through the sentences of natural language. At a given moment, a speaker can express his situation by indicating the time when these things happened. This is called modality. There are limitations to understanding exactly the situation of the utterances imposed by both

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the abstract structure of the language used to describe the event in a formal sentence and the traditionally rule oriented grammar. That is why various interpretations can be made as a result of some external factors, such as the speakers, situations, or objects of an utterance, even though the human language has the same utterances. In describing his attitude, it is still difficult for a speaker to express his opinions within a structure oriented description and the interpretation of traditional aspects of grammar.

For that reason, the purpose of this study is to make a sentence systemic within the category of the structural grammar of Halliday (1994), in terms of the modality in which a speaker expresses his attitude, with priority given to communicating the meaning of the language. Free from the theoretical description of traditional grammar, which does not include a situation within a context, the purpose is to make the concepts of modal verbs with “may”, “might”, “can”, “could”, “will”, “would”, “shall”, “should”, and “must” functional in a systemic network.

## II . THE SPHERE OF MODALITY

We tend to think about the world around us idealistically, rather than realistically. It is true or realistic that even idealistic facts lie within a certain realm of possibility (Lewis, 1969). A speaker is able to make an idealistic decision on things by using a modal expression. The modal judgement is applied to either the occurrence of an event or the truth of a proposition (Lyons, 1977). For example, sentence (1) a. indicates that the utterance in (1) b. can occur within the realm of possibility.

(1) a. *James works today.*

b. James is able to work today.

Also, the proposition in (2) a. shows that the utterance in (2) b. can be proven to be a true conclusion in all possible situations.

(2) a. *James is at home.*

b. James must be at home.

## 1. Definition of Modality

Zandvoort and Van Ek (1975) have indicated that modality is described by grammatical means, based on the mental state of a speaker and its impact on the contents of the description. With respect to the descriptive contents given by a speaker, his mental attitude is a mental state pertaining to a certain degree of possibility, probability, certainty, or necessity.

There is still ambiguity between modality and mood in the use of each of these concepts. Palmer (1986) states that modality is the same as aspect, tense, number, gender, etc. in the grammatical category. Later, Palmer (1990) says that modality can be the same as aspect, tense, number, gender, etc. in a significant term. The recent discussion of the modal concept on modality and possibility, probability, or necessity comes from Aristotle and the ancient philosophers in Greece. These concepts are based on the idea that a human being might have a tendency to categorize both his attitude and experience about things in terms of an unrealistic point of view, rather than from realistic aspects. For example, when a speaker gives utterance to sentence (3) a. below, he is likely to express his opinion as if it were the truth, which is not appropriate within the context of the utterance. In contrast to sentence (3) a., the speaker asserts his opinion to be a fact when he gives utterance to sentence (3) b., which is not modal.

(3) a. *He may already have left.*

b. He has left.

A philosopher and a logician analyze and categorize the concepts of modality to show that insincere things can be described as the truth within the realm of possibility. Both, whether the world of possibility is as actual as the world of reality is or not, and whether an abstract substitute to the world of reality is or not, can be discussed in the field of philosophy and logic, rather than that of linguistics. Most people consider that there are several methods available for analyzing and categorizing the existence of things. For example, a speaker imagines that James has forgotten his appointment in another position of the world when he makes the utterances in sentences (4) a. and b. below.

(4) a. *James evidently must have forgotten the appointment.*

b. James might perhaps have forgotten the appointment.

Likewise, a speaker wishes the world to be as he wants it to be when he utters sentence (5) below. In other words, a speaker conceives a world in which James has not forgotten.

(5) *James really should have remembered the appointment.*

The fixation on the world of possibility in dealing with situations different from reality is helpful in explaining the concept of modality. The importance of the world of possibility is given both in contrast to the world of reality and in abstract relationships.

The type of classification of modality in the world of possibility varies according to scholars involved. The contexts of a sentence uttered by a speaker may be divided into twenty subcategories, according to the mental attitude of a speaker (Jespersen, 1924). They also may be divided into eight subcategories, according to a philosophical rather than a linguistic basis (Rescher, 1968). Among the eight subcategories, the epistemic modality associated with knowledge and belief and the deontic modality associated with obligation are regarded as the most important.

Perkins (1983) says that there are three types of modalities, such as an obligatory modality associated with an act of moral responsibility, a causal modality associated with a natural or psychological law, and an epistemic modality associated with the rational law of a speaker and his belief. Coates (1983) indicates that a root modality can be divided into both an epistemic modality and an unepistemic modality that relate to the assumption and assessment of a speaker regarding the truth of a proposition. Palmer (1986 & 1990) mentions that these can be classified into an epistemic modality, a deontic modality, and a dynamic modality, as proposed by Von Wright (1951).

## 2. Function of Modality

The concepts of modality are signified by both modal verbs such as “can”, “could”, “may”, “might”, “must”, “ought to”, “will”, “would”, “shall”, “should”, etc. and quasi-modal verbs such as “have to”, “need to”, “had better”, etc. In addition, Perkins (1983) says that a modality is signified as a factor of language: an adjective and a participle of modality such as “be going to” and “be going to”, (duplication here); modal adjective and adverb such as “necessary”/“necessarily”, “probable”/“probably”,

“certain”/“certainly”, “advisable”, “perhaps”, “maybe”, etc., and parenthetical remarks such as “I think” and “I’m sure”, etc.

First all, the expression of modality is examined in both modal verbs and quasi-modal verbs. Modal verbs are related to various psychological attitudes of a speaker, far from an action and a state expressed by the main verb. Fries (1940) says that modal verbs are the same as functional words. These can be divided according to their types and significance: (a) ability or power, such as “may”, “might”, “can”, and “could”; (b) possibility or doubt, such as “may”, “might”, “can”, and “could”; (c) permission, such as “may”, “might”, “can”, and “could”; (d) obligation, such as “should”, “ought”, and “must”; (e) habitual action, such as “would”, and “used to”; (f) appropriateness, such as “should” and “ought”; (g) future prediction, such as “should”, “must”, and “would”; and (h) wish and will, such as “may” and “would”.

According to Turnbull and Saxton (1997), both modal verbs and quasi-modal verbs are indicative of the probability of an event and a proposition for a problem. “Must”, “need to”, and “have (got) to” convey an inevitability of the state of things. These modal verbs have implications on an environment in relation to the state of affairs related to a question. On the other hand, “will”, “would”, “be going to”, “shall”, “should”, “ought to”, “had better”, etc. are considered to be somewhere in between a probability (and what?). Therefore, these modal verbs and quasi-modal verbs indicate a probability of things in relation to the state of affairs and can be induced to direct the truth. In particular, “can”, “could”, “be able to”, “may”, “might”, etc. indicate a possibility of things because they show the lowest degree of the truth and the occurrence of the state of affairs.

The expression of modality with a modal adjective and an adverb require the following considerations: Most often, a modal adjective and adverb have a meaning equivalent to that of the modal verb. For example, “necessary” and “necessarily” are equivalent to “must”. “Probable” and “probably” are also equivalent to “can” and “may” (Perkins, 1983). In addition, “advisable” has a meaning similar to “should”, which is used to mention the actions of performance. “Likely” has a meaning equivalent to “will”, which is used with reference to the probability of an occurrence. “Maybe” and “perhaps” are equivalent to “can” and “may”, which are used with reference to the truth and the possibility of a proposition. “Certain” and “certainly”, “sure”, and “surely” are equivalent to “must”, which is used with reference to the authenticity of a true proposition.

Finally, parenthetical remarks indicate concepts of modality to be examined. In the case where “I know”, “I’m certain”, “I’m sure”, “I think”, “I believe”, “I

guess”/”imagine”/”suppose”, etc. are used in parenthetical remarks, they have a modal meaning when they are separated from the remaining parts of a sentence (Lyons, 1977). “I know”, “I’m certain”, and “I’m sure” mean that a speaker believes in the inevitability, which definitely happens in a correlated situation due to rational law. “I think” and “I believe” mean that a speaker believes in the probability that things will happen, but which may not necessarily happen in all situations.

### 3. Deontic and Epistemic Modality

Deontic modality relates to the happening of events described in a proposition and epistemic modality relates to the truth of a proposition. The expressions of deontic modality are mainly used in the utterances of the judgement of a speaker with regard to obligation, ability, and will. On the other hand, the expressions of epistemic modality are generally used in situations in which a speaker expresses his knowledge, beliefs, or opinions. Obviously, the utterances in sentences (6) a. and b. differ in meaning from each other.

(6) a. *She may have a car.*

b. She must be very diligent.

The above sentences can be changed to (7) a. and (7) b. below.

(7) a. *Perhaps he has a car.*

b. I am confidently forced to conclude that he is quite diligent.

A comparison of the above sentences indicates the different degrees of faith and assurance of the speaker. Incidentally, sentences (6) a. and b. above can be changed to sentences (8) a. and (8) b. below, respectively.

(8) a. *She is permitted to have a car.*

b. She is required to be very diligent.

This is to say, that the permission of or command by a speaker is given through certain actions and obligations. Sentence (7) may be considered an example of epistemic modality and sentence (8) may be regarded as demonstrating deontic modality. Modal verbs can be used in both deontic and epistemic fields. It is not difficult to separate them from each other. An example of this is shown in sentence (9) below.

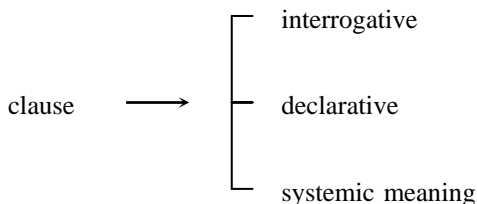
(9) *He must be finished.*

In the case of a conversation between a speaker and an official of a junior rank, the “must” in the sentence indicates a deontic interpretation. On the other hand, the “must” in the sentence is given an epistemic interpretation if it is said between friends. Consequently, the interpretations can be different, depending upon the situation, even if the same modal expressions are used.

Quasi-modal verbs such as “have (got) to” and “be going to” are not clear in terms of either deontic and epistemic modality. However, “need to” and “be able to” are described as being of deontic modality and the parenthetical remark “I think” can be explained simply as being of epistemic modality.

### III. SYSTEMIC ANALYSIS OF MODALITY

Modality is associated with the message of a speaker. It is related to the judgement of a speaker with respect to whether the speaker's message is true or not. Not every clause is included in the system of modality which is being discussed. In the modal system, it is possible for a clause to be either an indicative or a declarative sentence depending upon the mood desired. Clauses with questions can be selected in the system of modality, but such a domain of choice is not always equal to that of a declarative sentence. As modality is mentioned with priority given to a clause, it is classified as interrogative, declarative, or of systemic meaning. Clauses can be divided into interrogative and declarative sentences. Here the declarative and systemic meanings agree with the system of modality, but the interrogative meaning does not.



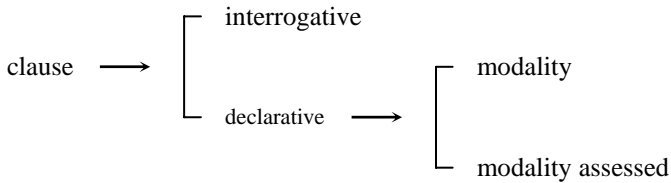
(10) *Is it snowing?* (interrogative)

(11) *It is snowing.* (declarative)

(12) *It must be snowing.* (systemic meaning)

A declarative sentence contrasts to a question, and the modal meaning can be changed according to the attitude of a speaker. Sentence (10) above is an interrogative sentence which asks if it is snowing, but sentence (11) shows confidence in the basic message. Sentence (12) is an extrinsic modality involving human judgement, even though it is not concretely expressed in the sentence.

To begin with, modality is sorted according to its various aspects of declarative meaning. Declarative sentences can be divided into those of neutral modality and those of assessed modality. As these options are given semantic features, they become both modality neutral and modality assessed. These options are available upon the assumption of a declarative meaning.



A declarative sentence can be either modality neutral or modality assessed.

## 1. Modality Neutral

(13) *It is snowing.*

(14) *That's David.*

(15) *He will come tomorrow morning.*

The clause which is modality neutral does not indicate confidence or a basic message. In this case, a listener assumes that the speaker is confident in his basic message.

## 2. Modality Assessed

(16) *It must be snowing.*

[almost certain]

(17) *That may be David.*

[possible]

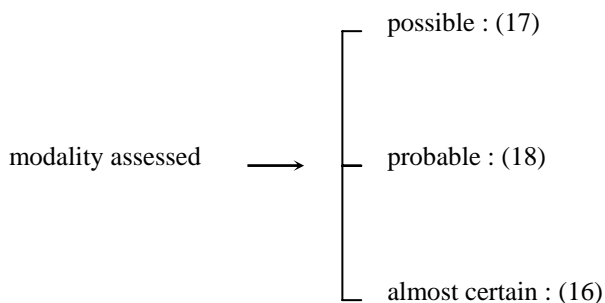
(18) *He will probably come tomorrow morning.*

[probable]



Modality assessed is illustrated in sentences (16) to (18). The clause which shows modality assessed indicates confidence and a basic message. When sentences (13) above and (19) below are compared with each other, it is possible to differentiate between modality neutral and modality assessed. That is, one recognizes that “It is snowing now.” from sentence (16). In addition, sentence (18) above shows that the speaker has confidence.

In the case of modality assessed, a speaker deals with the possibility, probability, or necessity of the truth of each message. According to the circumstances, a speaker can take one of these three options. Semantic features can be given to the options, according to the circumstances. They can be given expression in the form of possible, probable, or almost certain. They can also be described in the semantic system as follow:

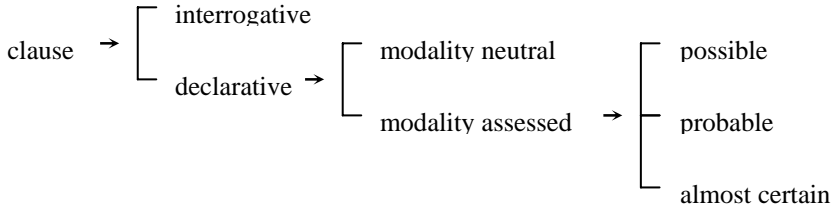


Each option has its own features in the following example of modality assessed. Namely, the sentences below from (19) to (21) are possible, the sentences from (22) to (24) are probable, and the sentences from (25) to (27) are almost certain.

- (19) *That may be David.*
- (20) *She may possibly be late.*
- (21) *Perhaps the bus has gone.*
- (22) *That's probably David.*
- (23) *He will probably be there by now*
- (24) *The bus has probably gone.*
- (25) *It must be snowing.*
- (26) *He must certainly be there by now.*
- (27) *The bus must have gone.*

If the above division illustrates each option, it can be described in terms of the potential meaning of each option. The systemic model is as follows:

### 3. Virtually Possible – “can”, “may”, “could”, “might”



Based on the premise of the clause of modality assessed in a declarative sentence, there are three possible classifications: virtually possible, theoretically possible, and contingently possible.

#### 1) Virtually Possible

Virtually possible involves that either the given proposition is true or there is a possibility of its being true.

(28) *That may be David.*

(29) *I may possibly be late.*

(30) *Perhaps the bus has gone.*

(31) *I think that actually may be his name.*

(32) *He may come back.*

(33) *You may be right.*

(34) *The roads may be improved.*

The above sentences from (28) to (34) are virtually possible. Both the “may” and “perhaps” selected here assume that the given proposition is true or there is a possibility of its being true.

#### 2) Theoretically Possible

Theoretically possible has a meaning of lesser possibility than virtually possible, in theory.

- (35) *The road can be blocked.*  
 (36) *Anybody can make mistakes.*  
 (37) *The road can be improved.*  
 (38) *Even expert drivers can make mistakes.*  
 (39) *If it's snowing tomorrow, the sports can take place indoors.*

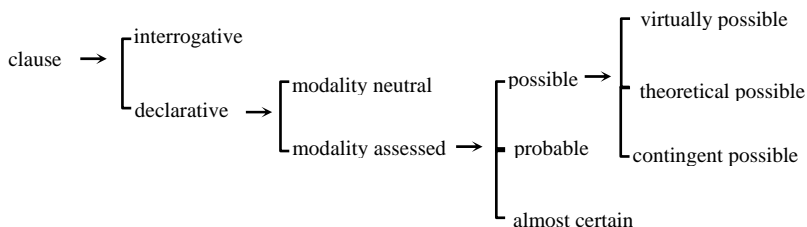
“Can”, theoretically possible, has a meaning of lesser possibility than “may”, which has the indication of being virtually possible. That is, sentences (34) and (38) above compare virtually possible with theoretically possible. Sentence (38), in theory, means that the road can be improved. However, sentence (34), in theory, means that there is a concrete plan to improve the road.

### 3) Contingently Possible – “could”, “might”

Both “could” and “might”, with assumptive meanings, are often contingently possible. Namely, they both mean that it is possible, but that there is something uncertain about them in the future.

- (40) *She could/might be telling lies.*  
 (41) *Could you have left your purse on the bus?*

So far, the three options with a possibility have been discussed in the above sentences. The systemic model is as follows:



### 4. Ability – “can”, “be able to”

The concept of ability can also be expressed by “can”, which is closely related to theoretically possible.

- (42) *She can drive a car.*

- (43) *She can speak English fluently.*  
 (44) *Will you be able to meet us in New York tomorrow?*  
 (45) *She is capable of keeping a secret when she wants to.*  
 (46) *Can you remember where they live?*  
 (47) *Tom could speak three languages by the age of seven.*  
 (48) *They say John can cook better than his wife.*

“Can” is used to express ability, but “can’t”, “be unable to”, or “incapable of” are used to express inability.

- (49) *She can't speak French well.*  
 (50) *She can speak English, but she can't write it.*

Usually “could” means “know how to”, which indicates both perpetual and habitual ability. “Be able to” often has a meaning of both ability and achievement.

- (51) *She could play the piano when she was six.*  
 (52) *Will you be able to meet us in New York tomorrow?*  
 (53) *By acting quickly, we were able to save her from drowning.*

## 5. Certainty or Logical Necessity – “must”, “have to”

”must” + root verb and “have to” + root verb convey the meaning of either a certainty or a logical necessity.

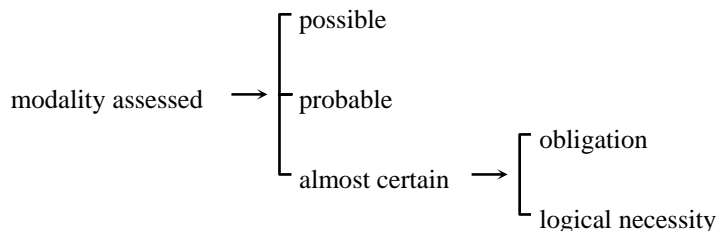
- (54) *There must be some mistake.*  
 (55) *You have to be joking.*  
 (56) *It must be snowing.*  
 (57) *She must certainly be here by now.*  
 (58) *The bus must have gone.*  
 (59) *You must be feeling tired.*  
 (60) *John must have a lot of money.*

The sentences from (54) and (60) above indicate varying levels of necessity. “Must”. a logical necessity, is equivalent to the possibility of “may”. That is because a speaker makes a judgement about a proposition which is either inevitably true or highly likely to be true, to say the least. In this sense, “must” means that a speaker already knows and he has made a decision based on the objects observed. In general, “must”, of a logical necessity, is not used in a question or a negative

sentence. “Can” is generally used instead of “must” in a question. Accordingly, a question corresponding to “He must be the one you mean.” has the same meaning as “Can he be the one you mean?”. The concept related to “must” is both a necessity and an obligation. The following sentences both denote an obligation and a coercion:

- (61) *You must study hard.*  
 (62) *You must be back by nine o'clock.*  
 (63) *Now we really must get down to business.*  
 (64) *We must all share our skills and knowledge.*  
 (65) *Productivity must be improved if the nation is to prosper.*

The above sentences convey the idea of an obligation. There is some difference of degree, but they all imply that a speaker supports a certain kind of behavior. “Must” typically indicates a speaker who enforces his authority. The feature of almost certain is classified as both an obligation and a logical necessity. These two options are shown as both an obligation and a logical necessity. The system of meaning they illustrate is as follows:



## 6. Probable – “ought to”, “should”

Auxiliaries of both “ought to” and “should” can express probability. They are almost equivalent to “must”. There are some examples in the following sentences:

- (66) *Our guests must be home by now. (I am certain.)*  
 (67) *Our guests ought to (should be) home by now.*  
*(They probably are, but I'm not certain.)*

The feature of probable is also given expression in “probable” and “likely”.

- (68) *It is quite probable/likely that he didn't receive the mail.*

- (69) *That's probably David.*  
 (70) *She will probably be here by now.*  
 (71) *The bus has probably gone.*  
 (72) *I think that that probably is her name.*  
 (73) *He probably has come back.*  
 (74) *You are probably right.*  
 (75) *The bus probably can or will be repaired.*

A speaker is not sure if he speaks the truth. He carefully concludes on the basis of all the knowledge he has until now. Both “ought to” and “should”, which indicate probability mean both an obligation and a necessity. They do not express the conviction of a speaker regarding the described events or the occurrences of the state of affairs, and are different from both “must” and “have to”.

## 7. A Systemic Meaning of a Modal Auxiliary

To make good use of a modal auxiliary, one should realize that it can be divided into both intrinsic modality and extrinsic modality according to the meaning of the modal auxiliary. These options can be shown to have both intrinsic modality and extrinsic modality which are meaningful features.

### 1) An intrinsic modality

Intrinsic modality relates to some internal control of human beings with respect to both things and contexts. It includes permission, obligation, and will.

- (76) *You may go out and play.* (permission)  
 (77) *You must study hard.* (obligation)  
 (78) *I'll see him tomorrow.* (will)

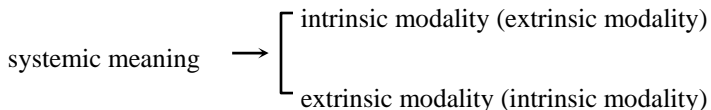
### 2) An extrinsic modality

Extrinsic modality is related to the judgement of human beings with respect to whether the events can possibly happen or not. It includes possibility, necessity, and prediction.

- (79) *That may be David.* (possibility)  
 (80) *I'll see him tomorrow.* (necessity)

(81) *David will have arrived by now.* (prediction)

Semantically, all modal auxiliaries are either of the intrinsic or extrinsic type. In some cases, they may be both types at the same time. They can also be used as a model option which conveys the meaning of other potential options. The meaning in the previous sentence is not clear. The systemic model is as follows:



For example, sentence (81) conveys both the meaning of will and prediction.

## 8. Permission – “may”, “can”

The modal verbs have the concept of modality such as possible, probable, and almost certain. They are used to express permission, obligation, and volition. The above three options can convey the meanings of permission, obligation, and volition. These three features are indicative of the assumption of an intrinsic modality.

(82) *Can/May I smoke here?*

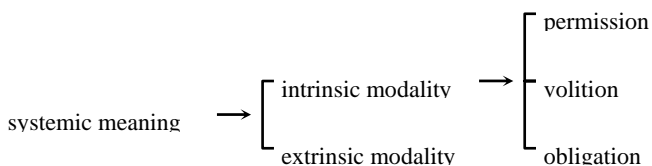
(83) *You may go out and play.*

(84) *You may borrow my motor cycle, if you wish.*

(85) *Visitors may reclaim their travel expenses up to a limit of \$70.*

(86) *Might I ask whether you are using the computer?*

The concept of “may” involves both a permission and a possibility. In the case where the meaning is a permission, “can” may be used instead of “may”. “May” is less frequently used as an auxiliary of a permission than “can” because “may” is a formal expression. The above features can be shown in the following systemic model:



## 9. Prediction – “will”, “must”, “shall”

(87) *You will feel better after taking this medicine.*

As mentioned above, it is a well-known fact that “will” is generally used to predict a future event. The prediction falls into three categories, namely specific prediction, habitual prediction, and timeless prediction.

(88) *That must be my husband. (I know that he is phoning now.)*

### 1) A specific prediction

“Will”, “must”, and “should” are generally used to predict future events.

(89) *You will feel better after taking this medicine.*

(90) *The game will be finished by now.*

(91) *This shop will be opened in five minutes.*

### 2) A habitual prediction

Even though it is not observed in practice, it is a prediction about the certainty of an event which one can be fairly certain of, based on evidence.

(92) *David will have arrived by now.*

(93) *David must have arrived by now.*

(94) *He will have had his dinner by now.*

(95) *That'll be a mailman. (after a bell was rung)*

“Will” is also used in either a prediction or when describing a characteristic behavior which habitually occurs.

(96) *Accidents will happen.*

(97) *A lion will only attack a human being when it is hungry.*

(98) *She'll talk for hours if you let her.*

(99) *He'll sit on the floor quietly all day. He'll just play with his toys, and you won't hear a murmur from him.*



## 3) A timeless prediction

A habitual meaning of prediction is often used, either in a conditional clause or when stating the possibility of a timeless prediction.

(100) *Oil will float on water.*

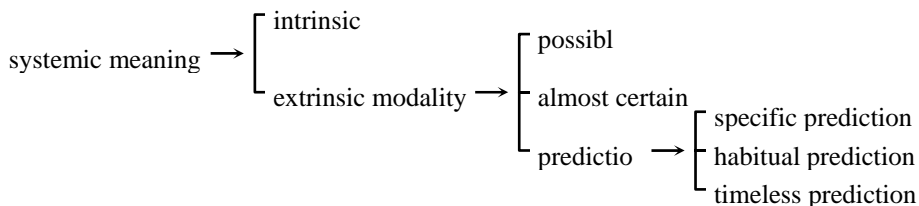
(101) *If litmus paper is dipped in acid, it will turn red.*

“Shall” is not often used in modern American English, but it is used to indicate a prediction or a volition. These are widely used and related to a subject of the first person. “Shall” can be used in a formal style to indicate a future event.

(102) *According to the opinion polls, he shall (will) win quite easily.*

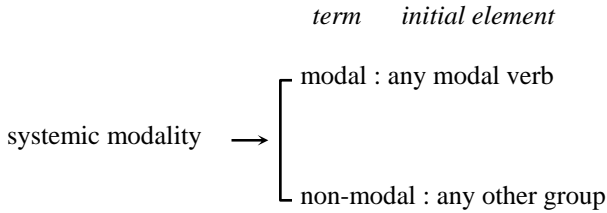
(103) *When shall (will) we know the results of the election?*

As a predictive characteristic is used with each option, it is described as a model option for all the other potential options. The three features are based on the assumption of an extrinsic modality.



## 10. The Syntactic Characteristic of a Modal Auxiliary

The modal verb is always finite because a group of finite verbs is necessary for modality. The finite verb is recognized as an initial element in a group structure. Therefore, the initial element exists if there is a modal verb. The choice within a category of modality is between markedness and unmarkedness. The reality of an element is in contrast to the absence of an element. That is why there is a difference between modality and unmodality.



Modal verbs do not have a variety of forms of inflection, in contrast to general verbs. Yoo (2000) indicates that modal auxiliaries have a finite verb which is similar to a present or past tense of a verb but without the addition of a particular tense morpheme. Modal auxiliaries always need to be supplemented by a different group of verbs. They are defined by a beginning phrase used as a sentence predicate, as follows:

(1) If a verb is in the present tense, the past tense, or is a modal verb, it is a finite verb.

Otherwise, it is an infinite verb. Accordingly, the phrase which begins with a verb is either a finite verb or an infinite verb.

(2) An auxiliary typically takes a verb expression as a complement. In itself, it has the function of showing a grammatical property, such as tense, voice, or modality.

(104) *She really does/did say a lot.*

(105) *She is/was seen regularly by the doctor.*

(106) *He will/would get upset.*

An auxiliary has the characteristic of lacking a verb property, as shown in the following examples:

a) It is not necessary to add -s in the third person singular.

(107) *He may come back.*

b) It begins the verb phrase of the sentence.

(108) *She must have finished her homework.*

c) It is not available to combine with other auxiliaries in a sentence.

(109) *He must/can work hard.*

→ *He must be able to work hard.*

Consequently, “be able to”, “have to”, etc. are used in an ersatz form when the meaning of an auxiliary is overlapped and the transition of a tense is required.

d) A contracted form of the negative “not” can be used.

(110) *David could not/couldn't come to the party.*

e) It is not available in the perfect tense.

(111) *They could have flown to Europe.*

f) It does not have an infinitive, a gerund, a present participle, or a past participle, etc. It is also used in an ersatz form, if necessary.

(112) *They have not done/would not do that.*

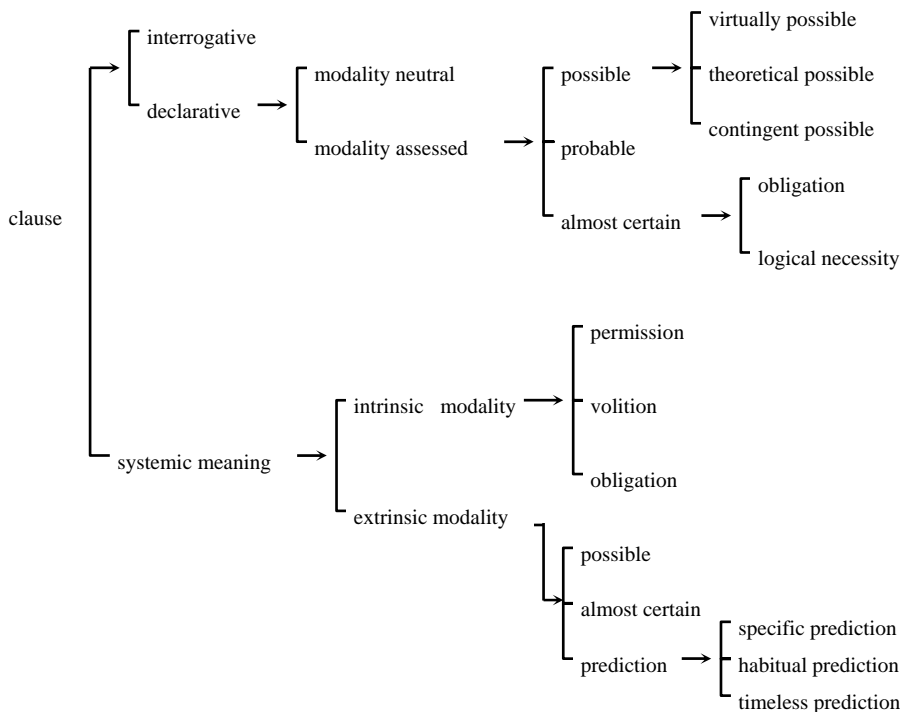
(113) *Has she gone/Must she go to the doctor?*

→*Has she had to go to the doctor?*

g) It has a past tense similar to “could”, “might”, “would”, “should”, etc. however, it is used either in indirect narration or in the subjunctive mood rather than the indicative mood.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This paper has been focusing on the nine uses of a modal auxiliary. It can be described in the semantic system as follows:



As a clause is systematized, it can be categorized as either imperative or indicative. If indicative is chosen from the two options, it can be further classified as either interrogative or declarative. If declarative is selected at this stage, either modality neutral or modality assessed can be chosen. If modality assessed is selected, one can then choose from among possible, probable, and almost certain. If possible is selected from among the three options, one can then choose from among virtually possible, theoretically possible, and contingently possible. If almost certain is selected at this point, one can choose either obligation or logical necessity. Also, a clause can be examined in terms of its systemic meaning. It can be seen as having either intrinsic modality or extrinsic modality. If intrinsic modality is selected from these two options, one can then choose from among permission, volition, and obligation. If extrinsic modality is selected, one can choose among possible, almost certain, and prediction. If prediction is selected at this time, one can choose from among specific prediction, habitual prediction, and timeless prediction. The options mentioned above and the features of their meanings are illustrated in the following examples:

(114) *It must be snowing.*

indicative, declarative, modality assessed, almost certain, logical necessity

(115) *That may be David.*

indicative, declarative, modality assessed, possible, virtually possible

(116) *He may go out and play.*

indicative, declarative, systemic meaning, intrinsic modality, permission

(117) *David will have arrived by now.*

indicative, declarative, systemic meaning, extrinsic modality, prediction, habitual prediction

In addition to the nine modal verbs mentioned above, there are some other expressions of modality. For example, there are modal phrases such as “had better”, “would rather”, and “would sooner”, etc. There are modal adjectives and adverbs such as “advisable”, “certain”, “certainly”, “definite”, “definitely”, “likely”, “maybe”, “necessary”, “necessarily”, “perhaps”, “possible”, “possibly”, “probable”, “probably”, “sure”, and “surely”, etc. There are modal nouns such as “possibility”, “likelihood”, and “certainty”. There are also modal verbs such as “doubt”, “reckon”, and “believe”, etc. In addition, both intonation and stress have a modal meaning in verbal expressions. The purpose of modality is to express a speaker’s mental attitude

toward the descriptive contents by means of grammar. It definitely requires thought to completely convey and understand what a speaker wants to communicate. For such a grammatical point of view, and from purely morphological aspects, modality has been broken down into various semantic features.

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### Examples in: English

Applicable Language: English

Applicable Levels: College

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