

Workshop proposal

Title: At the fringes of modality: new insights on its definitions, limits, and categories.

Convenors:

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Keywords: modal categories, illocution, (inter)subjectivity, (ir)realisness, evidentiality

Description:

In the past decades, the domain of modality has been explored from a variety of perspectives: philosophical, logical, formal, functional, and typological approaches have proposed different labels, criteria, and taxonomies to carve out its categories and describe their functions. However, both synchronic and diachronic investigations depend crucially not only on the notions that are assumed to form the core of modality but also on those placed at its margins. While there is a large consensus on the role of dynamic, deontic, and epistemic meanings, broader accounts of modality have instead given rise to a lively debate about the relevance and inclusion of further (bordering) categories and phenomena. Indeed, some scholars use the term *modality* in a narrow sense, limiting the analysis to those expressions that can be described by the concepts of possibility and necessity (van der Auwera & Plungian 1998, Kratzer 1991), yet others describe this domain as the grammatical encoding of modal (and related) meanings on the verb (Givón 1984, Palmer 1986), as encompassing basic sentence types (Bybee *et al.* 1994), as focusing on the qualification of states of affairs (Nuyts 2005), the factuality of events (Narrog 2005, 2012), or the speaker’s attitude (Le Querler 2022). As a result, the boundaries of this ‘supercategory’ (Nuyts 2006: 2) remain blurred and in a state of apparent expansion. This workshop aims to take a fresh look at the debate about the limits and definitions of modality by exploring its fringes and its interactions with diverse linguistic categories, semantic notions, and functional domains, such as:

- tense, aspect and mood;
- quasi-modal verbs and constructions;
- speech acts, illocution, and pragmatic phenomena;
- (ir)realisness and the realis-irrealis continuum;
- evidentials and evidentiality;
- desirability and evaluation;
- subjectivity and intersubjectivity;
- negation.

Starting from this (non-exhaustive) list, we would like to stimulate discussion on (i) the role of overlaps at the boundaries of the modal domain in both synchrony and diachrony; (ii) the contribution of typology and other approaches in identifying core and marginal concepts; and (iii) the specific terminological aspects and theoretical motivations underlying broader approaches to modality.

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