MODALITY IN SPANISH AND COMBINATIONS OF MODAL MEANINGS

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

cond.	conditional
e	seme of evaluation
ind.	indicative
LE	lexical expression of evaluation
LP	lexical expression of potentiality
LR	lexical expression of reality
LV	lexical expression of will
m	choice of mood
MM	modal meaning
MME	modal meaning evaluative
MMI	modal meaning interrogative
MMP	modal meaning potential
MMR	modal meaning real
MMV	modal meaning volitive
p	seme of potentiality
P	potentiality of a whole utterance
pres.	present tense
prob.	probabilitive
R	reality of a whole utterance
subj.	subjunctive
v	seme of will

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A great deal of my current vision of the Spanish verbal system and my approach to it is based on theories of two great linguists, Bohumil Zavadil and Petr Čermák from the Faculty of Arts of Charles University. I consider myself privileged for having had the opportunity to attend their classes and learn from them. This book is based on the concept of modality created by Bohumil Zavadil and I hereby express my gratitude to him for personal consultations that have helped me to understand his way of seeing the modality.

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PREFACE

This work is dedicated to the analysis of Spanish modality, more concretely, of those areas where several types of modality (later we will use the term *modal meanings*) combine. These areas can be found at all levels of the Spanish modal system; however, they are usually not systematically analysed in works about modality. We aim to study concrete cases where two modal meanings appear at the same time (for example, expressions where personal evaluation combines with speaker's uncertainty or with his will) and situations where one modal meaning gradually changes into another (gradual expressions of reality / potentiality). Our goal is to prove that these areas form a natural part of the Spanish modal systems and are essential for its functioning. The analysis of ways in which several modal meanings combine should also present in a new light some crucial questions regarding the mood selection in Spanish (mainly the opposition indicative / subjunctive).

This work is based on the theoretic concept of Spanish modality formulated by Bohumil Zavadil. In this point, it differs from most works about modality, since we do not use universal terms such as *epistemic*, *deontic* or *root modality*. We do not intend to underestimate the role of universal concepts of modality, however, we believe that for a detailed analysis of concrete areas of Spanish modality, these concepts are not sufficient.

Bohumil Zavadil has presented some key aspects of his modality concept in four Spanish written articles (1968, 1975, 1979a, 1979b) and as a part of a Spanish written monograph about Spanish syntax (Zavadil – Čermák 2008). However, the most coherent presentations of his concept can be found in monographs written in Czech: a monograph about modality (Zavadil 1980) and as a part of a complex grammar of Spanish (Zavadil – Čermák 2010). Since Zavadil's most important contributions to the study of modality are only accessible to readers with good knowledge of the Czech language, the present monograph also aims to present Zavadil's theory to a wider public and point out the possibilities of its use when describing with detail the modality of a concrete language. For this reason, this book (even though it is mainly aimed for linguists interested in Spanish), does not require knowledge of Spanish or Czech from the reader, we provide English translation for all Spanish or Czech quotations (originals are given in footnotes) and translations of all the Spanish constructions that will be analysed.

1.
INTRODUCTION

1.1 MODALITY IN LANGUAGE

It is not easy to define clearly the area of modality, since different authors do not approach it in the same way. In our understanding, modality is a language category that is closely related to the psyche of a speaker and his subjectivity, we define it as **the way in which speaker's personal attitude regarding the content of his utterances is encoded in a concrete language**.

The great amount of works that, directly or marginally, analyse the problems related to modality offers a wide scale of opinions, inspiring insights and theoretical grounds, on the other hand it also leads to terminological and methodological instability.

1.1.1 MODALITY IN LOGIC AND FORMAL SEMANTICS

The category of modality has its roots in logic, however, the relationship between them can be understood in different ways. The original logical criteria are most strictly applied in the concepts formulated by formal semanticists (Lyons: 1986 [1977], Kratzer: 1991, Portner: 2009, Rubinstein: 2012). Angelika Kratzer (1991: 639) defines modality as an area that "has to do with necessity and possibility." Necessity and possibility are represented in English trough the modals *must* and *can*, between them, there are other modal words that are analysed through the semantics of possible worlds. In Romance modality, Kratzer's concept is used for example by Borgonovo – Cummins (2007) for the analysis of Spanish and French modal verbs.

We fully respect the importance and the contribution of formal approaches to modality, however, such a strong union between language and logic is not appropriate for the targets we wish to accomplish. In our understanding, language modality is directly related to the speaker's attitude and subjectivity, external conditions, including truth conditions that have their place in logically based approaches, do not play any role in our analysis.

When applying the logically based concepts to Spanish, we encounter also another problem: their strong connection to analytic resources for expressing modality. This can be observed for example with González Vázquez (2002) who applies a purely logical concept of modality to Spanish. Her study includes only modal verbs and adverbs

and it is, therefore, reduced to the analysis of concrete modalizers that overshadow other ways of expressing modality, especially the verbal moods. In our understanding of modality, the choice of mood is one of the pillars of the Spanish modal system that cannot be left aside.

The role of subjectivity inside a logically based concept is strengthened by Declerck (2001). The author uses the term *t-world* which is "a world which is anchored to a given time *t*" (23), but he differentiates between objective and subjective *t-worlds*:

> An *objective t*-world is the unique real world that holds at a given time and which is judged real by an (imaginary) ideal outside observer viewing the world as it is at that given time. A *subjective t*-world is an alternative world which is not judged real by such an ideal outside observer but which is conceived of as real by some consciousness at a certain time. Such a *t*-world consists of the tensed (=anchored in time by their finite verb form) propositions that are deemed true by the world-creating consciousness at the given time. Thus, the situation referred to by *Amsterdam lies in Belgium* (which is counterfactual in the objective S-world[1]) actualizes in the counterfactual S-world existing in the mind of a speaker who is convinced that this assertion is true at S (23–24).

We prefer Declerck's understanding of modality also because of the wide range of expressions that can work as "nonfactual-world creating device" (25). The author uses the term *modalizers*[2] that comprises not only the traditionally mentioned modal auxiliaries and modal adverbs, but also:

> an intensional verb like *believe, suppose, imagine*, an attitudinal verb like *intend, want, hope, wish*, the subjunctive mood, the imperative mood, a conditional clause creating a 'theoretical world' […], a tense auxiliary creating a future world (e.g. *will, be going to, be about to*) or expressing posteriority, an inserted comment clause with an intensional verb (e.g. *I think*), 'modal backshifting' […] or 'modal conditionalization' or a combination of the latter two (28).

Our understanding of modality corresponds do Declerck's in some respects. We also see modality as an area where different language tools play their respective roles and can mutually affect each other, however, the position of the speaker and his subjective way of presenting events is still less salient in Declerck's concept which translates also into using terms such as *factual world* that refer to the truth condition and that are not relevant in our approach.

1.1.2 MODALITY IN COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

In cognitive linguistics, modality has been treated in a rather different way. The focus was originally centred on the modals, gradually the problems regarding verbal moods have also become a topic.

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1   S designates the speech time, *S-world is:* "a world that is anchored to S" (Declerck: 2011, 23).
2   We use the term *modalizer* too, however, our definition is narrower, we use it only for lexical expressions of modality, we do not refer to verbal moods as to modalizers.

In cognitive linguistics, modals are approached as so-called *grounding expressions*. These expressions (together with others such as articles, demonstratives or tense markers) allow the speaker to be implicitly present in an utterance (*construal* in cognitive terms). The level of implicitness the speaker incorporates himself with into a construal (without being present explicitly, for example via the use of personal pronouns) translates into the level of *subjectification* (see Langacker 1991a, 1991b, 2003). The terms *subjectivity* and *objectivity* are, therefore, understood in a more specific way than generally.

While this book is not based on cognitive linguistics, we prefer the cognitive approach to the formal one, especially due to the emphasis on psychological (rather than logical) aspects of language and communication in general. Readers interested in purely cognitive approaches to modality can refer to Langacker (1991a, 1991b, 2003) or Traugott (2007, 2011) (for a rather different understanding of subjectification), a comprehensive Czech summary of their theories can be found in Kanasugi (2013). Cognitive approach to selected aspects of Spanish modality is represented by Maldonado (1995), Achard (2000), Vesterinen – Bylund (2013) or Vesterinen (2014). Didactic aspects of a cognitive approach to the Spanish subjunctive are analysed by Ruiz Campillo (2004, 2006, 2008).

1.1.3 MODALITY FROM A CROSS-LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE AND UNIVERSAL CONCEPTS

There cannot be much discussion regarding the most influential work that presents modality from the cross-linguistic point of view and concentrates on its manifestations in different languages. The monograph *Mood and Modality* by Frank Palmer (1986, second edition 2001) has been generally accepted as a fundamental work in this area that demonstrates how modality behaves in languages around the world.

In the original concept presented in the first edition (1986), Palmer distinguishes between two basic types of modality: *Epistemic* and *Deontic* that have their respective subtypes (*Declaratives*, *Judgments*, *Evidentials* and *Interrogatives* as parts of the Epistemic modality and *Directives*, *Commisives*, *Volitives* and *Evaluatives* as parts of the Deontic sphere). In the updated edition from 2001, Palmer changes somewhat the original schema and recognizes also the *Dynamic modality* which, together with the Deontic one, constitutes the basis of the *Event modality*.[3] The main difference between Dynamic and Deontic modality is resumed in the following way:

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3   In similar contexts, other authors (including Declerck 2001 whose work we mentioned above) prefer the term *Root modality* that has been gaining importance especially since the publication of *The Semantics of the Modal Auxiliaries* by Coates (1983) and is probably more extended nowadays than Event modality.

> In the simplest terms the difference between them is that with deontic modality the conditioning factors are external to the relevant individual, whereas with dynamic modality they are internal. Thus deontic modality relates to obligation and permission, emanating from an external source, whereas dynamic modality relates to ability or willingness, which comes from the individual concerned (Palmer 2001: 9).

Palmer's work presents a coherent concept of modality as a language category and the inventory of basic types of modality is presented as universal. Palmer's approach to modality is close to ours due to the wide range of its manifestations that the author recognizes. Nevertheless, for a complex and detailed description of subtle modal nuances that can be found in one concrete language, we consider the universal typology limiting and not sufficiently precise. For an extended discussion regarding the problems resulting from applying Palmer's concept to Spanish, Italian and Romanian, see Kratochvílová (2014).

An influential and coherent universal concept of modality was also presented by the American linguist Joan Bybee (compare, Bybee – Perkins – Pagliuca 1994). Even though her approach has not gained as much success as the Palmer's one, it has still been used by some linguists (recently, for example, by Nordström 2010). This concept does not use the terms deontic and dynamic modality, it complements the epistemic modality with the following types: *agent-oriented modality*, *speaker-oriented modality* and *subordinating modality*. While agent-oriented modality relates to an objectively apprehended obligation, necessity, ability or desire, the speaker-oriented modality relates to subjective will and it contains *imperatives*, *prohibitives*, *optatives*, *hortatives*, *admonitives* (i.e. warnings) and *persmissives*. Modality expressed in subordinate clauses is analysed in the framework of subordinating modality.

While Bybee's concept presents an interesting tool for general descriptions of modality in different languages, we must again consider it insufficient for a detailed analysis of Spanish modality. This approach that combines semantic and syntactic criteria is not ideal for a complex analysis of the modality in Romance languages that have a wide range of uses of the subjunctive, i.e. a mood appearing predominantly in the subordinate clauses.

1.2 ZAVADIL'S APPROACH TO MODALITY

For our purpose of analysing specific areas of the Spanish modality we decided to work with a concept that is based solely on the modality of Spanish. Such a concept enables us to describe in detail subtle modal differences that are, however, morphosyntactically encoded in the language and have their formal manifestations.

This concept has its origins in the seventies when the author presented some of its aspects in several Spanish written articles (Zavadil 1968, 1975, 1979a, 1979b). In its complexity, the theory was coherently presented in a monograph dedicated to the Spanish

modality written in Czech: *Kategorie modality ve španělštině* (*The Category of Modality in Spanish*, Zavadil 1980). This approach to modality also forms part of university text books *Současný španělský jazyk* (*Contemporary Spanish Language*, Zavadil 1995, published in Czech) and *Sintaxis del español actual* (Zavadil – Čermák 2008). An updated version of this approach was presented in *Mluvnice současné španělštiny* (*Grammar of Contemporary Spanish*, Zavadil – Čermák 2010, written in Czech). Recently, the author has adjusted his original concept so as to apply it to Catalan. The complex *Mluvnice katalánštiny* (*Grammar of Catalan*, in Czech) including a chapter dedicated to modality is due to be published in 2018.[4]

The key distinctive feature of Zavadil's concept is its profound anchoring in the Spanish verbal system. In this aspect, Zavadil's approach is similar to the theory of Veiga (1991) that is well known in Spanish linguistics. Unlike the universal approaches presented previously, this concept can be considered internal, i.e. formulated exclusively for Spanish and based on the specifics of its modal system. The author's theory does not refer to modal logic (not even on the terminological level), the concept can be defined as psychologically-linguistic and it is based on structural linguistics, especially on Charles Bally's theory (1965 [1932]).

This crucial aspect of Zavadil's theory can be seen both as the main advantage or disadvantage of the concept. Unlike with the external concepts provided by formal semantics, Palmer or Bybee, applying Zavadil's theory to languages other than Spanish requires great adjustments. As can be expected, the theory could be rather easily adapted for other Romance languages that display great structural similarities with Spanish (as has been, after all, proven by its recent application to Catalan). Since the basis of the theory is represented by morphosyntactic manifestations of speaker's attitude (especially the verbal moods), the basic concept could also be applied to languages with fusional verbal system, such as the Slavonic languages (the author was very well familiarized with Slavonic approaches to modality when formulating the first versions of his work). However, applying this theory to structurally different languages, including mostly analytic English or German, would be complicated and would require great changes in the very basis of the concept.

Nevertheless, the fact that the concept respects all structural features of Spanish enables us to create a very accurate description of modality in Spanish. It also provides a precise terminology that reflects even subtle modal nuances. This concept, thus, presents an ideal instrument for a profound analysis of Spanish modality. Since our main goal is to study precisely delimited areas within the Spanish modal system, we consider this concept the only possible tool for their exact description.

In summary, we believe that in present day research about modality, both external (or universal) and internal theories have their specific place. While an exhaustive analysis of the modality of one language should always be based on a concept that is suitable for the language and respects all its peculiarities, the universal concepts are

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4   In this work, we cite the manuscript that was kindly granted to us by the author.

ideal for less profound contrastive analyses or observations about the nature of modality in general.

1.2.1 DESCRIPTION OF ZAVADIL'S CONCEPT

Zavadil's terminology does not use the terms *types of modality* or *modal flavours*, instead, it works with the so-called *modal meanings* (*significados modales* in Spanish, *modální významy* in Czech). According to the most up-to-date concept presented in the *Grammar of Contemporary Spanish* (Zavadil – Čermák 2010), there are five basic modal meanings that comprise the whole area of Spanish modality:

1) **Modal meaning real (MMR)**
   Represents the content of an utterance as coincident with reality.

2) **Modal meaning interrogative (MMI)**
   Represents the content of an utterance as a subject of an invitation to confirm or complete a piece of information.

3) **Modal meaning potential (MMP)**
   Represents the content of an utterance as imaginary.
   Subtypes:
   – proper potential
   – conditional (the realization of the content is impeded by some real or imaginary obstacle)
   – probabilitive (the veracity of the content is presented as probable or inferred)
   – of possibility (expression of an open possibility).

4) **Modal meaning volitive (MMV)**
   Represents the content of an utterance as a subject of subjective (imperative, desire, intention) or objective (necessity) will.
   Subtypes:
   – imperative (will is conceived as appellative, i.e. directed to an addressee)
   – desiderative (will is conceived as non–appellative)
   – optative (expression of a petition or a desire)
   – intentional (expression of an intention to do something)
   – of necessity (the realization of a process is presented as necessary).

5) **Modal meaning evaluative (MME)**[5]
   Represents the content of an utterance as a subject of evaluation.

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5   Initially, the concept included also the *modal meaning declarative*, however this MM was later eliminated by the author and it belongs to the sphere of modal meaning real.

We shall now resume the crucial aspects in which Zavadil's concept differs from the universal concepts. As the author states, the ontological motivation for the modal meanings and for the category of modality in general can be found in the human psyche and its three main components: Intellect, Will and Emotions. The basic schema is the following one:

INTELLECT	....	MM real / MM potential
	....	MM interrogative
WILL	....	MM volitive
EMOTIONS	....	MM evaluative

Image 1: Zavadil's schema of modality, from Zavadil – Čermák (2010: 249), the English translation is ours

The range of expressions of MMs is relatively large, Zavadil includes into the sphere of modality suprasegmental elements, lexical expressions and morphological elements, especially verbal moods. This way, the concept includes two kinds of modality that are traditionally distinguished by the Spanish tradition: *modalidad del enunciado* and *modalidad de la enunciación*. The first type refers the modality of an utterance, the second one refers to modality related to the formulation of an utterance (we might translate it as *modality of the speech-act*) and distinguishes types such as: declarative modality (*declarativa*), interrogative modality (*interrogativa*), imperative modality (*imperativa*), exclamative modality (*exclamativa*) or appellative (*apelativa*).[6] In Zavadil's approach, these two types are analysed together, enabling, thus, a better comprehension of the relationships between them.

1.2.2 VERBAL MOODS ACCORDING TO ZAVADIL

According to Zavadil, the core of Spanish modality is represented by verbal moods. In this respect the concept differs notably from the universal approaches (especially those based on logic and formal semantics) that emphasize primarily the modal verbs. According to Zavadil's concept, the Spanish modals such as *poder*, *deber* and *tener que* should be approached rather as a specific group of lexical expressions of modality that is present in the Spanish modal system, yet it is not the most important part of it.

The spectrum of verbal moods that the author distinguishes in Spanish is wider than the traditional one. While RAE (2009) operates only with three verbal moods: indicative, subjunctive and imperative, Zavadil recognizes the following set:

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6   The set of types of *modalidad de enunciación* is not unanimous and varies according to the author, compare Otaola Olano (1988), Grande Alija (2002), RAE (2009).