Modality in Spanish and Combinations of Modal Meanings

Dana Kratochvílová

The original manuscript was reviewed by Miroslava Aurová, Ph.D. (University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice), and Dr. Tomás Jiménez Juliá (Universidad de Santiago de Compostela).

This work was supported by the European Regional Development Fund-Project “Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World” (No. CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000734). This book was supported by the Charles University project Progres Q10, Language in the shiftings of time, space, and culture.

Published by Charles University, Karolinum Press
Edited by Alena Jirsová
Layout by Jan Šerych
Set in the Czech Republic by Karolinum Press
First edition

© Karolinum Press, 2018
© Dana Kratochvilová, 2018

ISBN 978-80-246-3869-0
# CONTENTS

List of abbreviations - 9  
Acknowledgments - 10  
Preface - 12  

1. INTRODUCTION - 13  
1.1 Modality in language - 14  
  1.1.1 Modality in logic and formal semantics - 14  
  1.1.2 Modality in cognitive linguistics - 15  
  1.1.3 Modality from a cross-linguistic perspective and universal concepts - 16  
1.2 Zavadil's approach to modality - 17  
  1.2.1 Description of Zavadil's concept - 19  
  1.2.2 Verbal moods according to Zavadil - 20  
  1.2.3 Syntactic levels at which modality can be expressed - 22  
  1.2.4 Summary of Zavadil's approach to Spanish modality - 25  
1.3 Expressions of modality - 27  
  1.3.1 Suprasegmental features - 27  
  1.3.2 Morphological (morphosyntactic) features - 28  
  1.3.3 Lexical features - 28  
  1.3.4 Hypersyntactic and pragmatic features - 29  
1.4 Our approach to modality - 29  
  1.4.1 Theoretical basis - 29  
  1.4.2 Syntactic levels - 29  
  1.4.3 Expressions of modality - 30  
  1.4.4 Methodology - 30  

2. MODAL MEANING REAL → MODAL MEANING POTENTIAL - 33  
2.1 Scale of potentiality - 36  
2.2 Criteria to find the position of an utterance on the axis - 36  
  2.2.1 Determination of $R$ - the selection of lexical expression of reality - 37  
  2.2.2 Determination of $p$ - the selection of lexical expression of potentiality - 38  
  2.2.3 Determination of $m$ - mood selection after a lexical expression of MMP - 39
2.3 Determination of p – analysis of concrete LPs

2.3.1 Adverbs expressing potentiality and non-personal expressions parece que, puede ser que, es posible que, es probable que

2.3.1.1 Corpus analysis

2.3.1.1.1 Quizá(s), tal vez, probablemente, posiblemente, acaso, seguramente, a lo mejor, parece que, puede ser que

2.3.1.2 Ser posible que, ser probable que

2.3.2 Verbs expressing potentiality

2.3.2.1 LPs that allow the subjunctive in their affirmative form

2.3.2.1.1 Corpus analysis

2.3.2.2 LPs that allow the subjunctive in their negative form

2.3.2.2.1 Corpus analysis

2.4 Representations of utterances with the MMR and the MMP on the axis

2.5 Conclusion

3. MODAL MEANING POTENTIAL → MODAL MEANING EVALUATIVE

3.1 Esperar

3.1.1 Corpus analysis

3.2 Temer(se)

3.2.1 Corpus analysis

3.3 Conclusion

4. MODAL MEANING EVALUATIVE → MODAL MEANING VOLITIVE

4.1 LVs according to the level of e

4.2 Conclusion

5. MODAL MEANING VOLITIVE → MODAL MEANING INTERROGATIVE

5.1 Questions introduced by poder

5.1.1 Corpus analysis

5.1.2 Corpus analysis n. 2

5.2 Conclusion

6. MODAL MEANING INTERROGATIVE → MODAL MEANING POTENTIAL

6.1 Interrogative constructions with the probabilitive

6.1.1 Corpus analysis

6.2 Conclusion

7. MODAL MEANING POTENTIAL → MODAL MEANING VOLITIVE

7.1 Spanish modal verbs
7.2 Relationship between will and potentiality ---- 143
7.3 Conclusion ---- 145

8. CONCLUSION ---- 147
8.1 Combinations of MMs ---- 148
  8.1.1 Scalar realization ---- 148
  8.1.2 Confluence of MMs ---- 149
  8.1.3 Blending of MMs in their basis ---- 150
8.2 Summary ---- 150

Bibliography ---- 152
Appendix 1 ---- 156
Appendix 2 ---- 159
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
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is a result of several years of study of the Spanish modal system. Its creation was a long process and I couldn’t have finished it without the help and support of my professors and colleagues who have shared with me their understanding of the Spanish modal system and, more importantly, their interest in how Spanish works.

I would like to thank Zuzana Nejedlá, my first professor of Spanish, who introduced me to the magical universe of Romance languages and stimulated my interest in their future study.

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.

I am proud to have been a student of Petr Čermák, my professor of Spanish phonetics, morphology and syntax, tutor of both my diploma and Ph.D. thesis, my colleague at the Department of Romance Studies at the Faculty of Arts and, most importantly, my friend. I thank him for countless interesting classes, advice, his support and patience, making me feel welcome at the Department of Romance Studies and for creating a pleasant working environment that helped me finish this work.

Special thanks belong to the reviewers of this monograph, Miroslava Aurová and Tomás Jiménez Juliá. Miroslava Aurová from the University of South Bohemia was also one of the reviewers and one of the first readers of my Ph.D. dissertation that this monograph is largely based on. Her insights and observations have helped me prepare this “version 2.0” and helped me rethink and formulate better some of my original ideas. Tomás Jiménez Juliá from the University of Santiago de Compostela was the first foreign reader of this book and his commentaries helped me appreciate some important aspects of how Spanish native speakers understand the modality of their native language. I cannot thank both reviewers enough for their advice and for all the time and attention they dedicated to my book.
Finally, I express my personal thanks to my family. To Graeme Sheard, who kindly revised the whole manuscript from the point of view of an English native speaker, to my aunt and to my mom who have always supported me unconditionally. Without their help I could never have finished my study, dedicate myself to Spanish linguistics and become who I am.

November 2017, Prague
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 through 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) 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 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.

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 \textit{grounding expressions}. These expressions (together with others such as articles, demonstratives or tense markers) allow the speaker to be implicitly present in an utterance (\textit{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 \textit{subjectification} (see Langacker 1991a, 1991b, 2003). The terms \textit{subjectivity} and \textit{objectivity} are, therefore, understood in a more specific way than generally.


\subsection*{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 \textit{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: \textit{Epistemic} and \textit{Deontic} that have their respective subtypes (\textit{Declaratives, Judgments, Evidentials} and \textit{Interrogatives} as parts of the Epistemic modality and \textit{Directives, Commisives, Volitives} and \textit{Evaluatives} as parts of the Deontic sphere). In the updated edition from 2001, Palmer changes somewhat the original schema and recognizes also the \textit{Dynamic modality} which, together with the Deontic one, constitutes the basis of the \textit{Event modality}.\footnote{In similar contexts, other authors (including Declerck 2001 whose work we mentioned above) prefer the term \textit{Root modality} that has been gaining importance especially since the publication of \textit{The Semantics of the Modal Auxiliaries} by Coates (1983) and is probably more extended nowadays than Event modality.} The main difference between Dynamic and Deontic modality is resumed in the following way:
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 permisives. 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 španělské (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 španělské (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

---

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)**
   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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTELLECT</th>
<th>MM real / MM potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WILL</td>
<td>MM interrogative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMOTIONS</td>
<td>MM volitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MM evaluative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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). 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:

---

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).