

**THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE
CATEGORY OF MODALITY IN WORLD LINGUISTICS**

Turakulova Dilafruz Mamatsoli qizi

tayanch doktorant.

O‘zbekiston Davlat Jahon Tillari Universiteti.

dilimturakulova1309@gmail.com +9989-98-578-44-44.

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The issue of the content of the category of modality as a fundamental linguistic category and the means of its formal expression in modern linguistics has not yet been fully resolved. The growing interest in the problem of linguistic modality is reflected in numerous studies devoted to its functional essence, semantic types, and the structure of modal means. At the current stage, the study of modality as a universal syntactic category requires considering the human factor in language, examining the behavior of individuals in the communication process (such as the communicative goals and emotional state of speech participants, conditions of speech interaction, and methods of influencing the listener). The speaker, as the main factor in language dynamics, creates a unique system of representing the world based on the general language system. As a result, language reflects, on the one hand, objective reality, and on the other hand, the speaker’s subjective world and their attitude toward the described objects.

In addition, under conditions of globalization, the expansion of the communicative capabilities of language in connection with the development of information and communication technologies, and the enhancement of its significance in modern processes, have become urgent scientific tasks.

In this part of our research, when considering the problem of studying the category of modality by world linguists, it should be emphasized that Aristotle’s analysis is of particular importance in elucidating the nature and expression of this category. In fact, the term “modality” originates from the Latin word *modus*, meaning “measure” or “manner.” This term was used by Aristotle in a logical sense to distinguish between different conceptual approaches based on various notions of modality. In Aristotle’s philosophy, the concept of modality is analyzed in two conceptual states:

1. “Actually existing”
2. “Potentially existing”

This classification relates to logical modality. According to it, possibility expresses a kind of virtual reality, representing the relationship between states of affairs that exist or do not exist in reality but may occur in the future. In Aristotle’s analysis, “existing” entities contain opposing qualities that ensure the constant change and development of the world. Based on this, the relationship between an object and other objects that exist in reality or may appear in the future is of great significance. In this approach, he employs the notions of “unilateral, unconditional” modality and “bilateral, conditional” modality, highlighting similarities and differences between existing and potential situations.

The concept of modality, from ancient philosophy onward, has been studied through various approaches and has developed as an important concept within logic, epistemology, and metaphysics.

Early philosophical reflections on modality date back to ancient Greek philosophers and were later widely discussed in Indian philosophy, medieval Western philosophy, and modern philosophical thought. In the 4th century BC, the Greek philosopher Diodorus Cronus studied modality in connection with the concept of time, defining the possible as an event that is true in the present or the future. This approach linked the notion of possibility with time and causality, considering only those events that must occur in the future as possible—a view that can be regarded as a deterministic interpretation of modality.

Ancient Indian philosophy developed complex approaches to modality, discussing it from the perspective of possibility, necessity, and impossibility. These discussions were often linked to metaphysical and logical inquiries. One of the philosophical schools that extensively analyzed modality was *Navya-Nyāya*, which emerged in the 13th century AD, though its principles date back to the 1st century BC. The scholars of this school created elaborate categorical frameworks to describe reality and examined possibility, necessity, and impossibility based on various philosophical and logical constraints.

In the Middle Ages, the concept of modality became even more complex and one of the central directions of philosophical and logical analysis. The Latin term *modus* was used in everyday speech, and although the concepts of modality and *modus* were widespread, their interpretations in philosophy and linguistics varied. Medieval scholars used *modus* in several senses, one of which corresponds to the modern understanding of modality. By the 11th century, determining whether a proposition was necessary or possible was interpreted as defining its *modus*.

One of the major philosophers to study modality was the German thinker Immanuel Kant, who regarded modality as a category defining the structure of the subject's thinking. He discussed modality within three main pairs:

- Possibility – Impossibility
- Existence – Nonexistence
- Necessity – Contingency

These categories reflect the limitations of human knowledge and are shaped by the capacities of the mind. Kant interpreted modality not merely in connection with objective reality but as a subjective category related to the process of cognition.

According to *Le Petit Robert* dictionary, the word *modalité* refers to the manner in which something exists or manifests, as well as the linguistic phenomenon indicating how an event is conceived. *Le Grand Dictionnaire Terminologique* defines modality as a linguistic grammatical category enabling the modification of assertion by possibility, necessity, obligation, and others, expressed primarily through modal verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. The German *Duden* dictionary also defines *Modalität* as a grammatical category that serves to express various degrees of probability, necessity, and possibility. In German, as in other languages, modality is expressed through modal verbs, modal words, adverbs, adjectives, and mood, helping convey the speaker's subjective attitude toward the proposition. The *Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language* defines modality as a grammatical category expressing the relationship of thought to reality.

In general, the formation of the theory of linguistic modality is associated with the works of academician V.V. Vinogradov, who laid the foundations for interpreting modality as a

linguistic universal. According to him, the category of modality belongs to the central and basic foundations of language, appearing in different forms in various language systems. From a communicative perspective, modal relations express the relationship of the utterance to reality.

Overall, the speaker may perceive what is reported as real, existing in the past or present, to be realized in the future, desired, required, unreal, and so forth. Vinogradov distinguished between objective modality (OM), expressing the relation to reality, and subjective modality (SM), expressing the speaker's personal attitude toward the content of thought.

Linguistic studies of modality can be divided into two main approaches:

1. A broad interpretation, supported by scholars such as Ch. Bally, É. Benveniste, V.V. Vinogradov, M.Z. Zakiev, and N.E. Petrov, which regards modality as a category expressing the speaker's emotional-expressive evaluation of reality, the content of speech, the interlocutor, and the environment.

2. A narrow interpretation, which regards modality as a category determining the degree to which a statement's content is precise or factual.

The broad approach to modality includes six main types:

1. Evaluation by the speaker of the truth or falsity of the statement's content.
2. Evaluation of the possibility, necessity, or desire of the situation presented, expressed through modal verbs and other modal words.
3. Evaluation of the degree of confidence in the reliability of the reported information.
4. Targeted evaluation concerning the communicative function of the utterance.
5. Expression of the existence or absence of objective relations, meanings about topics, properties, or events in the sentence.
6. Emotional and qualitative evaluation of the statement's content, expressed through lexical and prosodic means, including parenthetical words.
7. Evaluation based on the source of information or evidence used by the speaker (personal experience, scientific sources, or third-party testimony).

V.B. Kasevich, in his analysis, adds a communicative modality to the traditional objective and subjective modalities. According to him, internal modality is related to objective modality, while external modality is linked to subjective modality. This theory attempts to reflect the sequence of actions and semantic operations in the formation of thought. T.I. Desheriyeva, however, proposes a different view, arguing that given the infinite nature of human self-awareness, the reliability of acquired knowledge, and the unity of language means for expressing modality, the division into objective and subjective modality is unjustified.

One of the more recent researchers in Russian linguistics to extensively study modality is S.S. Vaulina, who emphasizes that modality is one of the key semantic categories that establishes the link between language and external reality and shapes the communicative potential of speech.

She identifies three principal aspects of modality:

1. It is one of the main language categories and manifests differently in various languages.
2. Its content and forms of expression change historically.
3. In European languages, it permeates the main fabric of speech.

Within this framework, two modality types are distinguished:

• **Real modality**, where the expressed information is evaluated as having occurred in the past, present, or future.

• **Non-real modality**, where the information is evaluated as possible, necessary, or required. Non-real modality may be expressed through possibility, necessity, desire, condition, assumption, irreality, or imperative meanings. Examples include:

- If it were Sunday today, I would not go to work. (Irreality)
- The director requested that all be present at the meeting. (Inducement)
- She might come. / Perhaps they will visit us. (Assumption)

The semantic scale ranges from strong doubt to absolute certainty, for example:

- Strong doubt: "I highly doubt it."
- Low probability: "It's unlikely that Solozzo will give up so easily."
- Possibility: "Maybe they're just testing us."
- Probability: "It's very likely that they've already made their move."
- Certainty: "Of course, revenge is expected in such a business."
- Strong certainty: "Without a doubt, he is the one behind this attack."

Conclusion

The conducted analysis demonstrates that modality, as one of the fundamental categories of language, possesses deep historical, philosophical, and linguistic roots, developing from the logical reflections of ancient philosophers to the multifaceted semantic-pragmatic interpretations of modern linguistics. From Aristotle's distinction between actuality and potentiality, through the deterministic views of Diodorus Cronus, the sophisticated categorizations of Indian Navya-Nyāya logic, the medieval scholastic debates, and Kant's epistemological framework, modality has consistently been associated with the ways human thought conceptualizes reality, possibility, necessity, and impossibility. In linguistic theory, especially in the works of V.V. Vinogradov, modality has been conceptualized as a universal category bridging objective reality and the subjective stance of the speaker. Subsequent interpretations by scholars such as Bally, Benveniste, Kasevich, Desheriyeva, and Vaulina have expanded the category to encompass communicative, emotional-expressive, evidential, and pragmatic dimensions, reflecting the dynamic interplay between language structure and human cognition.

The comparative perspectives drawn from philosophical traditions, linguistic typology, and lexicographic definitions (in French, German, and Uzbek sources) reveal that modality is not merely a grammatical phenomenon but a complex semantic and communicative resource. It serves as a tool for encoding truth evaluation, degrees of certainty, evidentiality, and the speaker's intention, shaped both by universal cognitive mechanisms and by the specific strategies of individual languages.

Thus, modality remains an essential research domain, not only for understanding the structural organization of language but also for uncovering the cognitive and cultural mechanisms by which humans perceive, categorize, and convey reality. Future investigations should integrate cross-linguistic analysis with cognitive and discourse-based approaches, enabling a fuller account of how modality operates within the interconnected domains of language, thought, and culture.

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