

Actualization of Situations with Modus Predicates

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes modus predicates as a special type of commentary predicates capable of forming complex semantic structures. The focus is on the mechanism of actualizing modal situations, which include the primary denotative situation and the modal (mental or verbal) activity of the subject. Two types of denotative situation representation - projected and constructed - and their connection with the category of factivity are identified and characterized. It is established that the method of actualization depends on the semantic characteristics of the predicate: gerundial constructions are characteristic of verbs with projected representation (factive), while infinitive constructions are typical for verbs with constructed representation (non-factive). Cases of neutralization of this opposition are also noted. The work is based on theoretical studies by domestic and foreign linguists, including the research of V. V. Bogdanov, I. B. Dolinina, O. N. Seliverstova, and P. and C. Kiparsky.

Keywords: Modus predicates; commentary constructions; projected representation; constructed representation; factivity; infinitive; gerund; denotative situation; syntactic structure; two-predicate complex.

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of predicate semantics as a central element of utterances occupies one of the leading directions in modern linguistics. In particular, increasing attention is being paid to the study of complex semantic structures formed through the interaction of several predicates within a single utterance. One such phenomenon is the modus situation - a special type of complex situation that includes a predicate of mental or verbal activity in combination with a denotative situation, which is understood or reflected within it.

The term modus predicate is used to denote verbs that not only describe an event or state but also reflect the subject's attitude towards a certain state of affairs. Predicates such as think, know, believe, feel, hear, see, and others form a complex utterance structure in which cognitive, modal, and communicative components are intertwined. Their analysis requires going beyond a simple structural-syntactic description and involves a comprehensive study of semantics, pragmatics, and syntactic realization.

The relevance of this research is determined by several factors. Firstly, modus structures are widely represented in everyday speech and in texts of various functional styles - from colloquial to scientific. Secondly, they represent an area of increased difficulty in foreign language teaching, particularly in interpreting the meaning of utterances and syntactic transformations. Thirdly, there is an evident gap in the systematic description of the semantic organization of modus situations in comparison with their syntactic representation.

The scientific novelty of the research lies in the attempt to examine in detail the invariant structure of the modus situation, to identify its mandatory semantic components, and to reveal the relationship between the semantics of the modus predicate and the form of actualization of the denotative situation. Within the framework of the article, it is proposed to consider the modus situation as a special type of dual-predicate structure, in which the interaction between the subject's cognitive activity and the perception or modeling of the objective situation is realized.

The aim of the research is to establish the semantic-syntactic patterns of modus situation actualization in the English language, based on verbs with speech-cognitive and perceptual semantics.

1. To achieve this aim, the following tasks were set:
2. Determine the composition and structural features of the modus situation.
3. Classify modus predicates according to the type of representation of the denotative situation: projected and constructed.
4. Clarify the role of factivity in the realization of the modus situation.
5. Analyze the methods of syntactic representation of modus structures in the English language.
6. Establish the correlation between the semantic features of the modus predicate and the syntactic form of expression of the embedded situation.

The object of the research is modus structures in the English language – two-predicate constructions that include predicates of mental, speech, or perceptual activity.

The subject of the research is the semantic and syntactic characteristics of modus predicates and the mechanisms of their actualization in the context of typical speech situations.

The methodological foundation of the research comprises works on the theory of predicativity (Bogdanov, Dolinina), lexico-grammatical types of predicates (Seliverstova), the theory of factivity (P. and O. Kiparsky), as well as cognitive and functional linguistics. Methods of componential analysis, distributional analysis, contextual analysis, and a comparative approach were employed.

Thus, the study of modus situations allows us to identify a complex system of relationships between the meaning of the predicate, the type of depicted situation, and the forms of syntactic representation, which opens up prospects for both linguistic theory and practical application in language teaching and automatic text processing.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is based on a qualitative analysis of linguistic material, including:

- Fragments from fictional prose (for example, works by Kurt Vonnegut, Joyce Cary, etc.);
- Sentences illustrating the interaction of modal and denotative predicates;
- Examples from corpus databases and educational linguistic literature.

The theoretical foundation comprises works by:

- V. V. Bogdanov (1977) – on the semantic-syntactic structure of sentences;
- I. B. Dolinina (1988) – on the classification of commentary predicates;
- O. N. Seliverstova (2001) – on the typology of predicates and semantic representation strategies;
- P. and K. Kiparsky (1970) – on the theory of verb factivity.

3. METHODS

- **Semantic analysis:** identification and description of invariant components in modal situations;
- **Syntactic analysis:** determining structural sentence types in which modal situations are realized;
- **Comparative method:** comparing the realization of factive and non-factive verbs in the context of projected and constructed representation;
- **Distributional analysis:** studying formal characteristics of components in modal situations.

4. RESULTS

4.1. *Structure of the modus situation*

A typical modus situation represents a two-predicate complex, including:

- a. Subject (S) and predicate (P) of the modus verb (speech-thinking activity);
- b. Subject (S1) and predicate (P1) of the primary denotative situation (reflected event).

Examples:

Hazel (S) saw (P) him (S1) win (P1).
I (S) think (P) the whole country (S1) is changing (P1).

Such structures demonstrate the presence of two independent propositional zones, each with its own actant frame, however, they are united by a single meaning and grammatical realization within the utterance.

4.2. Typology of representation: projected and constructed

The semantic specificity of modus situations manifests in two fundamentally different ways of correlating the subject's speech-thinking act with the denotative situation. This opposition is defined as:

Projected representation

In this case, the subject perceives, realizes, interprets an already existing, objectively given situation. This leads to the main semantic characteristic of projected representation - perception of fact.

- Examples of verbs: see, hear, notice, realize, understand, figure out, discern, observe, etc.
- Example: He saw her (S1) crying (P1). - The subject "He" perceives the event of "her crying."

Constructed representation

Here, the subject forms, imagines, or assumes a certain situation that may not have a factual connection to objective reality. This is an act of cognitive construction, not simple perception.

- Examples of verbs: think, believe, suppose, imagine, assume, fancy, guess, have a theory, etc.

- Example: I believe him (S1) to be guilty (P1). - The subject "I" constructs a hypothesis about guilt.

Сопоставление

Характеристика	Проецируемое	Конструируемое
Тип действия	Восприятие	Создание гипотезы
Основание ситуации	Объективная реальность	Субъективная интерпретация
Частотность фактивности	Преимущественно фактивные	Преимущественно нефактивные
Форма актуализации (типичная)	Герундиальная конструкция	Инфинитивная конструкция

4.3. *Factivity as a semantic marker of modus representation*

The category of factivity, proposed in the works of Kiparsky (Kiparsky & Kiparsky 1970), plays a key role in distinguishing types of modus representations.

- **Factive verbs:** Imply that the denoted situation actually took place.

Structure: Often uses a gerund phrase.

Examples: I regret [leaving him].

She remembered [locking the door].

- **Non-factive verbs:** Do not presuppose the necessary truth of the situation.

Structure: Often uses an infinitive phrase.

Examples: I hope [to win].

They expect [him to arrive].

Consequently, the following relationship is established between the type of representation and factivity:

Type of representation

Predominant factivity

Type of construction

Projected
Factive
Gerund

Constructed
Non-factive
Infinitive

4.4. *Actualization through syntactic constructions*

Gerundial structures

These structures indicate an event that has already occurred.

Example: He admitted [being wrong].

Here, the predicate "admitted" implies the acknowledgment of a fact that has already taken place.

In a modal situation:

Haven't you figured out [Ned's being jealous]? - an indication of an already established, perceived event.

Infinitival structures

Reflect intention, possibility, mental construction.

Example: I believe [her to be honest].

This expresses an opinion that is not necessarily based on fact.

4.5. *Examples with neutralization of opposition*

In some cases, the distinction between projected and constructed representation is neutralized. This is possible when using:

- complex sentences;
- nominalized structures;
- eventive nouns.

Example:

She thought that he was lying.
The idea of him lying upset her.

Here, the form does not directly indicate fact/non-fact - it is contextually determined.

5. DISCUSSION

The research results allow us to state that:

Modus predicates function not only as communicative units but also as operators reflecting reality, mediated by the subject's psyche.

The connection between the type of representation and the factivity of predicates proves to be not only semantic but also syntactically marked.

Gerundial and infinitive constructions can be viewed as means of actualizing a cognitive strategy: either fixing a fact or constructing an opinion.

The language demonstrates a high degree of flexibility in the syntactic realization of modus structures, especially in literary and colloquial styles, which warrants separate study.

The conducted research has revealed a complex relationship between the semantics of modus predicates and the syntactic methods of their actualization. The obtained results allow us to make several theoretically significant generalizations.

First and foremost, it has been established that the modal situation is fundamentally bipartite. It combines the predicate of mental or speech-thought activity with the predicate of the primary denotative situation, in relation to which reflection, perception, or interpretation occurs.

This combination creates a unique type of semantic construction that reflects both objective and subjective aspects of reality comprehension. Such a situation can be expressed in speech through various syntactic structures, primarily:

- complex subordinate clauses;
- simple sentences with infinitive or gerund phrases;
- nominalized constructions (using verbal nouns).

Of particular interest is the identified correlation between the type of representation and the category of factivity. The projected representation typically correlates with factive verbs, while the constructed one correlates with non-factive verbs. This aligns with the assertion that factive predicates presuppose the existence of a denotative situation in reality, whereas non-factive predicates allow for its hypothetical or subjective interpretation.

However, this opposition is not absolute. In some cases, predicates can exhibit neutralizing behavior, where despite formal markers of factivity, the verb allows an infinitive construction (for example, know, remember), or conversely, a non-factive verb allows a gerund form (imagine her crying).

Thus, it is necessary to consider that the type of representation in the modus situation is determined not only by the formal category of the verb but also by contextual, pragmatic, and stylistic factors. This necessitates expanding the existing classification of modus predicates and developing a more flexible typology of modus situations, including:

1. Semantic feature: projected/constructed representation.
2. Factivity / non-factivity of the predicate.
3. Type of syntactic structure: gerund / infinitive / complex sentence / nominalization.
4. Pragmatic purpose: communication, interpretation, assumption, persuasion, etc.
5. Contextual marking: presence of doubt, irony, epistemic modality, etc..

Cases where the modus predicate simultaneously performs multiple functions - cognitive, modal, and causative - deserve special attention. In such instances, we observe an overlap of the modal situation with other complex semantic structures, such as causative or epistemic ones, which increases the degree of semantic load in the utterance.

For example:

I made him believe she was lying.

Here, a triple structure is observed:

causativity (made);
modality (believe);
and primary situation (she was lying).

Thus, the modal situation can become an element of a more complex predicative ensemble, including up to three or more levels of embedding.

6. CONCLUSION

Within the framework of this study, an attempt was made to systematically analyze modus situations from the perspective of their semantic and syntactic organization. The following main points have been identified:

Modal situations represent two-predicate structures, including the predicate of speech-thought activity and the predicate of the primary denotative situation.

In such structures, an important role is played by the type of representation, which is divided into:

- Projected representation, associated with actual perception or awareness;
- Constructed representation, associated with cognitive modeling or hypothetical imagination.
- There is a stable correlation between the type of representation and the factivity of the modal predicate:
- Projected representation is realized primarily through factive verbs and gerundial constructions;
- Constructed representation - through non-factive verbs and infinitive phrases.

In some cases, neutralization of this opposition is observed, which indicates the importance of contextual factors in the interpretation of modal situations. The obtained results can be used in:

- Linguistic theory (within the framework of semantic and syntactic typology);

- Teaching a foreign language (in sections concerning modal, causative, and commentative structures);
- Automatic text processing (in tasks of syntactic parsing, extraction of events and logical structures).

Thus, the modal situation represents a universal cognitive-linguistic model that reflects the process of comprehending reality and its verbalization within the framework of natural language. Further research can be directed at describing the pragmatic and discursive parameters of modal structures in various genres and speech registers.

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