


Semantic Study of Modal Verbs in Gilaki (of Siahkali)

Narjes Banou Sabouri^{1*} 

Shahla Sharifi² 

Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to study the semantic side of modal verbs in Siahkali variety of Gilaki. This research has been conducted via descriptive-analytical method in Palmer (1997) and Nauze (2008) frameworks. Based upon this research, the modal verb “**va**” features all three epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modes in terms of semantics while “**vast**” and “**vasti**” and the present tense of modal verb “**tonəstan**” are used to express deontic and dynamic modes. The modal verb “**šay**” is used to express the epistemic and dynamic aspect while “**šast**”, the past tense “**tonəstan**” and both the present and past forms of the verb “**xastən**” and “**rəse:n**” are used to express the dynamic aspect in Gilaki. The modal verb “**bo:n**” expresses the epistemic and deontic modality while “**bəbu**” indicates the deontic modality. “**va**” and its past tenses show the degree of necessity and other modal verbs infer the degree of possibility. The semantic mapping of modal verbs is shown on the conceptual context of modality. So, the same universal saying that the modality elements are different only on one of the axes is also true in Gilaki.

Keywords: Modality, Semantic features, Semantic mapping, Gilaki Siahkali.

Extended abstract

1. Introduction

Modality generally expresses the speaker's view of the proposition contained in the sentence. Semantically, modality is divided into two types in a general category, which are the epistemic and root modes. The epistemic mode involves the speaker's assessment of the probability or predictability of the action. It also includes the necessity or possibility of a proposition based on the judgment, evidence, or knowledge of the speaker. Switzer (1982) argues that concepts that imply necessity, probability, or possibility are considered epistemic. The root

* 1. Associate Professor, Linguistics Department, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran.

(Corresponding Author: n.sabouri@pnu.ac.ir)

2. Associate Professor, Linguistics Department, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran.
(Sh-sharifi@um.ac.ir)

mode is used to express concepts such as coercion, permission, and ability, and consists of two deontic and dynamic subgroups. In deontic modality, external circumstances and power often require the actor or third person to perform an action or allow him/her to do something. In dynamic modality, the internal force or current conditions provide the necessity or possibility for the action to take place.

2. Theoretical Framework

Palmer (1997) introduced three types of epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modalities, and two main degrees or levels of modality as possibility and necessity; the epistemic modality is the simplest of all in his view. This type of modality is a judgment that is made about the realization of a situation or event. He considers this modality as discourse-oriented and believes that it includes both the speaker and the audience. Palmer states that by using this modality, the speaker is actually allowing, forcing, promising, and threatening. The dynamic modality is related to the ability and desire of the subject and has two subsets of neutral and subject-oriented. Neutral usage indicates the possibility of an event. Another type of dynamic possibility indicates the ability of the subject to perform the action. Dynamic possibility can also be used to express an implicit meaning to make suggestion for instance. In this paper, the semantic mapping of modal verbs of Gilaki is presented upon Nauze framework (2008). Nauze shows the conceptual space of modality, which includes all the modal elements in world languages, in one form, with vertical and horizontal axes. The vertical axis indicates the dimension of possibility or necessity of the modal verb, and based on the horizontal axes, it is determined whether the verb has semantic diversity in terms of meaning or not.

3. Methodology

This research is a qualitative research and has been carried out via descriptive-analytical methods. The semantic part of this research is based on Palmer (1997) and its semantic mapping is based on the Nauze (2008) framework.

The Gilaki data of this research, consisted of 42 sentences, has been collected from the everyday speech of the speakers. In addition, some syntactic behaviors of modal verbs and related topics such as grammatical tense, complement of modal verbs, position of modal verbs in a sentence, negation and their use as lexical verbs have been studied.

4. Results & Discussion

In Gilaki, to express the form of coercion or obligation, the prepositional verb **va** "should" is used for the present and future grammatical tenses, and **vast** and **vasti** "must" for the past grammatical tense. The modal verb **va** features all three epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modes. The complement of this verb in personal constructions is a temporal verb that appears in the sentence in the form of present

or past participles and is conjugated in terms of person and number in accordance with the subject of the sentence. The unmarked position “**va**” and its past two forms precede its complement. The modal verb of **šay** "can, become" refers to the present and future grammatical tenses and **šast** "become" to the past grammatical tense. “**šay**” is used to express the epistemic and dynamic modes and “**šast**” is used to express the dynamic mode in Gilaki. Since “**šay**” and “**šast**” in Gilaki are used only in impersonal constructions and the subject or actor is not present in these sentences, the complement of these two modal verbs is used only as an infinitive after them.

The modal verb **bo:n** "become" refers to the present grammatical tense and **bəbu** "became" refers to the past grammatical tense. “**bo:n**” is used to express the epistemic and deontic modes and “**bəbu**” is used to express the deontic mode. The complement of these two modal verbs is the temporal verb (present or past participles) which is used according to the subject of the sentence. The unmarked position of these two verbs is at the beginning of the sentence.

The three modal verbs **tonəstən** "to be able", **xastən** "to want" and **rəse:n** "to arrive" in Gilaki have common syntactic features. The present tense of the modal verb **tonəstən** "to be able" has a reading of the deontic and dynamic modes, and its past tense has a dynamic mode. Both the present and past tenses of the modal verbs **xastən** "want" and **rəse:n** "to arrive" have dynamic modes. The complement of these verbs is conjugated in the form of a tense verb, which is always present participle, in accordance with the subject of the sentence.

Examining the semantic mapping of Gilaki's modal verbs showed that among the Gilaki's modal verbs, **va** "should", along with its two past forms, indicates the necessity aspect on the vertical axis and has a variety of meanings on the horizontal axis; while, other Gilaki's modal verbs are placed on the vertical axis of possibility aspect and indicate polysemy or semantic differences.

5. Conclusions & Suggestions

The modal verb “**va**” has all three epistemic, deontic and dynamic modes, and “**vast**” and “**vasti**” are used to express the deontic and dynamic modes. The modal verb “**šay**” is used to express the epistemic and dynamic modes and “**šast**” is used to express the dynamic mode in Gilaki. The verb “**bo:n**” is used to express the epistemic and deontic modes and “**bəbu**” is used to express the deontic mode. The present tense of the modal verb “**tonəstən**” has deontic and dynamic modes and its past tense has a dynamic mode. Both the present and past tenses of the modal verbs “**xastən**” and “**rəse:n**” have dynamic mode. Also, except for “**va**” and its past forms, which indicate the degree of necessity, the other modal verbs of Siahkali indicate the degree of possibility.

Studying the semantic mapping of Gilaki's modal verbs showed that what has been generally said about the fact that the modal elements are different on one of the axes of the conceptual space and not on both axes is also true about this dialect. “**va**” and its past forms on the vertical axis show the necessity and have

various meanings only on the horizontal axis. Other verbs are placed on the vertical axis of possibility and have polysemy or semantic differences on this axis.

Select Bibliography

- Bybee, J., Perkins, R. & Pagliuca, W. 1994. *The Evolution of Grammar, Tense, Aspect and Modality in the Languages of the World*. Chicago: University Chicago Press.
- Kratzer, A. 1977. "What "Must" and "Can" Must and Can Mean". *Linguistics and Philosophy* 3(1): 337-355.
- Lyons, J. 1977. *Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Narrog, H. 2005. "On Defining Modality Again". *Language Sciences*, 2(27): 165-192.
- Nauze, F.D. 2008. *Modality in Typological Perspective*. Institute for Logic, Language and Computation: Enschede.
- Nuyts, J. 2006. Modality: Overview and Linguistic Issue. *The Expression of Modality*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1-26.
- Palmer, F. R. 1997. *Modality and the English Modals*. New York: Routledge.
- Portner, P. 2009. *Modality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sweetser, E. E. 1982. "Root and Epistemic Modals: Causality in Two World". In *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*: 484-507.

How to cite:

Sabouri, N.B., & Sharifi, Sh. 2021. "Semantic Study of Modal Verbs in Gilaki (of Siahkali)". *Zaban Farsi va Guyeshhay Irani*, 2(12): 81-107. DOI:10.22124/plid.2022.20678.1562

Copyright:

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to *Zaban Farsi va Guyeshhay Irani (Persian Language and Iranian Dialects)*. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided that the original work is properly cited.

