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SUMMARY

“The Oxford Handbook of Modality and Mood”, edited by Jan Nuyts and Johan van der Auwera (2018), provides a state of the art overview of the linguistic domains of modality and mood across various research perspectives, including morphosyntax, semantics, pragmatics, typology, language variation and change, theoretical frameworks, and more. It is composed of 23 chapters by leading researchers in the field. The book aims to offer a structured and neutral approach to modality and mood out of a vast expanse of literature, which has sometimes displayed wide conceptual and terminological divergence.

The volume is presented in five main parts, following two introductory chapters: “The Semantics of Modality and Mood”, “The Expression of Modality and Mood”, “Sketches of Modality and Mood Systems”, “Wider Perspectives on Modality and Mood”, and “Theoretical Approaches”.

In chapter 1, “Surveying Modality and Mood: an Introduction”, Jan Nuyts unpacks the main objectives of the volume. In particular, he makes a series of terminological choices to be respected throughout the book for clarity and accessibility. He thus relates “modality” specifically to the semantic domains of “root (dynamic/deontic) modality” and “epistemic modality”, while “mood” refers to correspondences between sentence types and illocutionary functions, as well as the notions of indicative/subjunctive, and (ir)realis. He then summarises the individual parts and chapters of the book.

In chapter 2, “The History of Modality and Mood”, Johan van der Auwera and Alfonso Zamorano Aguilar offer a detailed diachrony of both notions in philosophy of grammar, from Ancient Greece to contemporary Western Europe. They focus on the figures of Quintilian, Dionysus Thrax, Protagoras, Apollonius Dyscolus, Priscian, Kant, Von Wright, and Palmer. The authors show that “mood” is a much older notion than “modality”, yet the latter was quick in becoming more prominent than the former, and in acquiring large pieces of its conceptual territory, thus justifying the choices made in chapter 1.

In chapter 3 (opening part I), “Analysis of the Modal Meanings”, Jan Nuyts highlights the main difficulties of precisely defining the intrinsic nature of “modality” in order to distinguish it from the associated domains of time and aspect. For instance, he shows the fuzzy boundaries in the traditional subcategories of dynamic, deontic, and epistemic modality, which have led to alternative classifications in the literature. Moreover, linguists do not agree on the shared semantic properties which should base the unification of several categories as “modal”, resulting in a variety of competing views.

In chapter 4, “Interactions between Modality and Other Semantic Categories”, Mario Squartini completes the previous chapter by studying the complex relation between modality and other central domains in the TAM(E) system (Tense-Aspect-Modality(-Evidentiality)). Futurity, the past, and even aspect to some extent, seem to be intertwined with modality through the notion of inactuality. Several issues of overlap between modality and evidentiality make the status of the latter uncertain as a category; negation remains independent but can be intricately linked to the domains of possibility and necessity. Again, much seems to depend on theoretical preferences.

In chapter 5, “Analyses of the Semantics of Mood”, Irina Nikolaeva provides a full synthesis of what “mood” comprises semantically and pragmatically, as defined in chapter 1. She dwells on each

subcategory and its central features discussed in the literature, thus going over the sentence types of declarative, interrogative, imperative, optative, and exclamative; she then moves on to the controversial notions of realis and irrealis, with close attention to the distinction between indicative and subjunctive. The chapter calls for further investigation on the interpretive effects brought about by the use of moods.

In chapter 6 (opening part II), “The Expression of Non-Epistemic Modal Categories”, Heiko Narrog describes the forms used cross-linguistically to express dynamic, deontic, and boulomaic modality. These expressions range from explicit to implicit; they can involve one-to-many and many-to-one mappings of meaning and form. Non-epistemic modality tends to appear in the scope of explicit tense marking and epistemic modality, while negation can equally appear inside and outside its scope. It seems incompatible with the imperative sentence type, and it rarely concords. Apart from commands and directions in a broad sense, non-epistemic modality can convey a variety of performative effects which require further research.

In chapter 7, “The Expression of Epistemic Modality”, Kasper Boye completes the input of chapter 6 with the cross-linguistic study of epistemic modal expressions. Epistemic modality is a “grammaticizable notion”; it can be conveyed through lexical expressions that may constitute modal systems, but also through grammatical expressions, typically modal auxiliaries, clitics, and affixes. Epistemic modal expressions can often concord, on the condition that they should at least semantically overlap. In terms of ordering, they tend to appear inside illocutionary expressions, and outside temporal, aspectual, and root modal expressions; there are diverging views on their ordering with evidential expressions. Their distribution seems governed by a truth-valued meaning constraint, especially in the cases of imperatives and non-propositional dependent clauses.

In chapter 8, “Sentence Types”, Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald describes the grammatical aspects of sentence types across languages, starting from the central distinction between statements, questions, and commands. They seem universally correlated with phonological, morphological, and syntactic differentiations. They also display remarkable flexibility in their ability to achieve open-ended sets of communicative acts, which are prototypically related but not limited to a given type, and which are furthermore determined by complex pragmatic and cultural variables. Exclamatives can be argued to constitute a minor sentence type, but their cross-linguistic status is problematic, since they often overlap with one or more of the other types.

In chapter 9, “The Linguistic Marking of (Ir)realis and Subjunctive”, Caterina Mauri and Andrea Sansò focus on the morphosyntax, distribution, and markedness of subjunctive and irrealis as forms. They lay stress on the difficulties in clearly distinguishing the two: the most widespread view is that subjunctives are verbal inflections which encode either all or a subset of the functions covered by irrealis, and the latter can be encoded by a variety of different forms. Usually but not always, subjunctives are more structurally complex, distributionally constrained, and inflectionally poor than indicatives, which gives them a marked status. Binary indicative/subjunctive dichotomies are not fully satisfactory cross-linguistically, because mood systems can be much more complex. Similar points are made with respect to the relation between irrealis and realis forms. Diachronic studies identifying the sources of subjunctives and irrealis forms may help explain their distributional differences across languages.

In chapter 10, “The Linguistic Interaction of Mood with Modality and Other Categories”, Andrej L. Malchukov and Viktor S. Xrakovskij describe some semantic constraints governing the co-occurrence of forms expressing mood with other central categories including modality, tense, aspect, negation, and person. These interactions appear to involve blocking effects where a “dominant” category can prohibit a “recessive” one, or induce its reinterpretation. The authors

focus on the case studies of the imperative and the subjunctive/irrealis to show phenomena ranging from free interaction to bias and incompatibility with specific subcategories within tense (such as past and future), aspect (such as perfective/imperfective), negation, and person. They argue that these phenomena are determined by local markedness, which subsumes functional compatibility and economy.

In chapter 11 (opening part III), “Modality and Mood in Iroquoian”, Marianne Mithun examines a family of polysynthetic languages spoken in northeastern North America and their means of expressing modality and mood. These languages show inflectional distinctions of both sentence types and realis/irrealis, while they express modality mainly through full verbal constructions and particles. They do not feature modal auxiliaries as in Germanic languages, but some of their forms do suggest processes of grammaticalization: first through prosodic reduction, then through segmental reduction and loss of inflection. The diachrony of some forms also supports a cross-linguistic general development of modal forms from dynamic to deontic and epistemic meanings.

In chapter 12, “Modality and Mood in Chadic”, Zygmunt Frajzyngier examines a particularly large and diverse group of Afroasiatic languages spoken in Northern and Central Nigeria, Northern Cameroon, Southern Chad, and Niger. These languages offer a wide range of expressions of mood and modality, including verb and subject pronoun inflections, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, particles, intonation patterns, complementizers, linear orders of subject pronoun–verb or clauses, and ideophones. The author describes the use and interaction of these forms in the expression of the assertive mood, hypothetical modality, mirative meanings, polar questions, tag questions, content questions, the imperative mood, the optative mood, permission, the prohibitive mood, and normative modality. Further research seems needed on the semantic categories of modality and mood in these languages, many of which remain insufficiently documented and even endangered.

In chapter 13, “Modality and Mood in Sinitic”, Hilary Chappell and Alain Peyraube examine three main varieties of Chinese: Standard Mandarin, Hong Kong Cantonese, and Taiwanese Southern Min. Sinitic languages do not mark mood inflectionally, while modality is primarily expressed by modal (auxiliary) verbs and particles. Diachronically, the modal verbs derive from lexical verbs, and they can be highly polysemous. Modal verbs can become infixes in the creation of “potential verb compounds”, out of initial “resultative” and “directional” verb compounds. Moreover, they can interact with negative adverbs to mark the sentence types of interrogative and imperative. Finally, Sinitic languages have at their disposal a series of clause-final modal particles expressing various subjective and intersubjective attitudes.

In chapter 14, “Modality and Mood in Oceanic”, Frantisek Lichtenberk examines a dense subgroup of Austronesian languages spoken in Papua New Guinea, (Island) Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. The expression of modality and mood in these languages includes verbal inflections, particles, and verbal expressions including auxiliaries and less-than-fully fledged verbs. The author dedicates specific sections to the Oceanic expression of epistemic, deontic, dynamic, desiderative, and timitive modality. Moreover, he shows that in spite of variation across individual languages, the Oceanic group regularly distinguishes between realis and irrealis, which suggests that the theoretical contrast should be maintained in future research.

In chapter 15, “Modality and Mood in Standard Average European”, Daniël van Olmen and Johan van der Auwera examine an areal rather than genetic group of languages which, based on the convergence of several general features, may constitute the category of “Standard Average European”; within this areal category, the authors attempt to locate likely candidates for distinctive features behind the realisation of modality and mood. Features that are prominently shared but not distinctive in these languages include the presence of only one non-indicative non-imperative mood

(the subjunctive/conditional), the presence of neither minimal nor maximal imperative paradigms, verbs in general as the prototypical marker of modality, and non-canonical word order in interrogatives. On the other hand, serious candidates for distinctive features include the compositionality of prohibitives, double modal multifunctionality of possibility and necessity markers, verbs as the central marker type of epistemic possibility, the preference for modal verbs with person inflection and nominative agents, and the grammaticalization of 'threaten' verbs.

In chapter 16 (opening Part IV), "The Diachrony of Modality and Mood", Debra Ziegeler describes recent and current issues in the historical study of modality and mood in English/Germanic and across languages. The diachronic evolution of English modal constructions seems to have been determined by semantically-motivated grammaticalization processes from dynamic to deontic and epistemic meanings, reflected by changes in subject-reference selection and aspect; however, such accounts are not uncontroversial, cross-linguistically in particular. Comparative approaches to the study of functionally connected markers suggesting grammaticalization in languages with little historical evidence are explored through the example of diachronic mood. Finally, the issue of subjectification in the development of epistemic modality might be better explained by the weakening of subject-selection restrictions than by purely pragmatic forces.

In chapter 17, "Areality in Modality and Mood", Björn Hansen and Umberto Ansaldo discuss how modals, mood, and some non-morphological sentence type markers might be borrowed in a linguistic area, through the case studies of Europe and mainland South East Asia. They specifically focus on phenomena pertaining to "contact-induced grammaticalization". In Europe, modals are particularly prone to material- and pattern-based borrowings alike, while borrowings of non-morphological sentence type markers, as well as mood as an inflectional category, are significantly rarer. Mainland Southeast Asia is far less documented in terms of its areal features of modality and mood; however, the material- and pattern-based replication of "acquire-type" modals from corresponding full verbs suggests similar processes to be explored in the future. Overall, these studies of areality require further insight on the external factors in the complex histories of contact, migration, and changes of the populations involved.

In chapter 18, "Modality and Mood in First Language Acquisition", Maya Hickmann and Dominique Bassano synthesise findings on the ways in which the expression of modality and mood is learned by children across languages. It appears that the first formal devices emerging to convey modality are modal auxiliaries, mental verbs, and modal verbal inflections; moreover, the acquisition sequence seems to be ordered from agent-oriented to epistemic modality, which may be explained by pragmatic and cognitive factors including the elaboration of a "theory of mind". Other factors include syntactic complexity, the primacy of self reference over others, as well as input and conversational influence. In the area of mood, declaratives, exclamations, and injunctions seem to be primitive types in contrast with interrogatives; early falling/rising intonation patterns seem to map onto a broad descriptive/pragmatic utterance distinction. Imperatives appear early in acquisition, verb moods such as conditional and subjunctive appear late. Overall, there are controversies on the relative roles of cognitive universals and input factors in explaining these tendencies.

In chapter 19, "Modality and Mood in American Sign Language", Barbara Shaffer and Terry Janzen explore seldom researched areas of signed languages and their American strand in particular (ASL). ASL expresses most modal notions by way of verbs and auxiliaries. Epistemic modals appear utterance-finally, while agent-oriented modals appear in pre-verbal and clause-final positions. They are expressed by manual (lexical) gestures which can be accompanied by facial gestures, head movements and body postures; their gradience is also a central feature to distinguish them.

Grammaticalization seems to have played an important role in their creation, through former stages of gestures being lexicalized, then grammaticalized. The authors provide an introduction to the expression of mood in ASL, which also involves complex combination of lexical material and other gestures, although it has received very little attention in the literature.

In chapter 20 (opening part V), “Modality and Mood in Formal Syntactic Approaches”, Katrin Axel-Tober and Remus Gergel discuss some central issues in the study of modality and mood in several frameworks of generative syntax. Modals are central categories in these studies, and make up specific syntactic constituents under the node of inflection (Infl) in the most traditional models (esp. Government and Binding). This insight is extended to modal elements in other languages, although not without controversies e.g. in German, where even the hypothesis of an epistemic subclass of modals does not seem to hold invariably. Much research has been involved with the syntactic/semantic height of epistemic modals, but the complex scoping issues of root modals deserve future attention too. The authors then review the debate regarding the relation between epistemic/root modals and verb raising/control; they also discuss the affinity between modals and coherent predicates through the case study of German, and unpack a few of the ways in which adverbials, including adverbs, have been used to explore the phrase-structural and scoping properties of modals. Finally, inflectional mood and sentence types are briefly discussed as a relatively marginal topic in formal syntax, possibly because of the difficulty in studying them without reference to the semantic module.

In chapter 21, “Modality and Mood in Functional Linguistic Approaches”, Karin Aijmer focuses on several specifically non-formal approaches to modality and mood. In Systemic Functional Grammar, mood and modality are considered to derive from the interpersonal macro-function, and make up a particularly complex system organised in paradigms. In Functional Grammar, mood and modality are usually analysed as quite distinct, although both are represented as a layered scopal hierarchy with differing versions in the literature. Role and Reference Grammar makes a similar choice, focusing on a grammatical or structural approach. The specificities of cognitive-functional approaches are also explored through the case study of modal adjectives and adverbs. Finally, recent functional approaches have laid stress on the role of interactional or discourse perspectives in the study of modality as “stance”.

In chapter 22, “Modality and Mood in Cognitive Linguistics and Construction Grammar”, Ronny Boogaart and Egbert Fortuin show how modality and mood were quickly related to the foundational assumptions of cognitive approaches to language, through the issue of the polysemy of modal verbs in particular. Modality has been prominently explored in the semantic framework of force dynamics, with varying accounts. Mood was also a foundational example in the theory of mental spaces. An extended description of mood and modality in Cognitive Grammar is provided, based on the specific notions of grounding and subjectivity. Finally, the lens of construction grammar allows for a view of modal constructions as “constraints on polysemy”, which is unpacked through the examples of complementation, modal verbs, and imperatives.

In chapter 23, “Modality and Mood in Formal Semantics”, Magdalena Kaufmann and Stefan Kaufmann synthesise a vast amount of literature in formal semantics that historically focused on modality before turning to mood. They describe the traditional notions of lexicalised modal forces and context-induced modal flavours, as well as how the latter might be explained by the interplay between modal base and ordering source. The authors break down formal semantic accounts of mood into the topics of sentential mood and verbal mood, showing an area of research subject to much debate; in particular, the analysis of modal subordination at a trans-sentential and discourse level is a crucial but challenging enterprise.

EVALUATION

The Oxford Handbook of Modality and Mood is a highly enriching book and a valuable addition to the literature, which should be added to the reading list of any student interested in investigating one or more of the vast areas concerned. It achieves the goal of providing a unified and complete introduction to modality and mood in general linguistics, and it builds up a rich, updated background for more specific topics and problems.

One of the most successful aspects of this volume is its coherence and structure. The terminological choices made in Chapter 1 are respected by all the authors throughout, and allow the reader to circulate between basic consensual information and particular points of contention, for instance in the delineation of semantic categories, which is a particularly thorny issue. Moreover, the outline of the sections is clear and progressive in its logic, making the chapters seamlessly tie into each other. There are a couple of passages which repeat basic information already indicated earlier, but this might be due to the palpable need for axioms on these subjects, therefore it is always welcome to come back to them.

Another strong advantage of the book is its typological diversity. There are constant references to very different languages, drawn from a repository that is far from limited to English-speaking and European areas; admittedly, the category of modal auxiliaries is still omnipresent as the most documented linguistic expression of modality, but this makes it useful as a benchmark to appraise phenomena occurring in other locations and language varieties. It is recommended to be familiar with the graphic conventions of transcribed utterances from the source language to the target language (English), because this is where most of the demonstrations in the individual chapters take place.

As a synthesis, the volume is also particularly successful in helping the reader make sense of the vast amount of previous research on modality and mood, renowned for its lack of terminological consensus and its widely diverging assumptions. The diachronic dimension of these studies is well rendered, and allows for a quick and easy selection of the sources needed for the reader's specific interests.

The range of topics covered in this book is impressive. It gives a most complete overview of the forms and meanings of modality and mood, as well as cross-linguistic perspectives on their synchrony and diachrony. It also offers a number of original angles such as areality, language acquisition, and sign languages. It is hardly fair to ask for more without going beyond the scope of a book. However, it might have been interesting and useful to have a specific look at modality and mood in language variation such as in dialects, or the sociolinguistic and discursive significance of modality and mood in general. The philosophical implications hinted at throughout the chapters are also evident and enticing: a specific chapter on modality in philosophy, and analytical philosophy in particular, would have been ideal, although the chapter on formal semantics does cover some converging aspects. Finally, the last section on theoretical approaches opens up numerous research perspectives, without claiming to be exhaustive; it is an excellent way to end the book on an exciting note for future enquiries.

Overall, the Oxford Handbook of Modality and Mood is a rewarding reading experience, and it will likely remain a highly relevant resource in the years to come.