

M.A.K. Halliday: An Introduction to Functional Grammar. London, Arnold 1994.2

10.4 Interpersonal metaphors

The grammar also accommodates metaphors of an interpersonal kind, in the expression of mood and modality. An example of metaphor in modality was given in Chapter 3 (see Figure 3-17): *I don't believe that pudding ever will be cooked*, where it was pointed out that *I don't believe* is functioning as an expression of modality, as can be shown by the tag, which would be *will it?*, not *do I?*. The example was brought in at that point in order to explain the thematic structure; let us now represent this same clause in a way that brings out the metaphoric element in its modal structure (Figure 10-10):

'probably'		'that pudding'		never		will		be cooked'					
Modality: probability		Subject		Modality: usually		Finite		Predicator					
Mood													
I		don't		believe		that pudding		ever		will		be cooked	
α \longleftrightarrow β													
Subject		Finite		Predicator		Subject		Modality		Finite		Predicator	
Mood				Residue		Mood				Residue			

Fig. 10-10 An interpersonal metaphor

10.4.1 Metaphors of modality

This is an example of a very common type of interpersonal metaphor, based on the semantic relationship of projection. In this type the speaker's opinion regarding the probability that his observation is valid is coded not as a modal element within the clause, which would be its congruent realization, but as a separate, projecting clause in a hypotactic clause complex. To the congruent form *it probably is* so corresponds the metaphorical variant *I think it is so*, with *I think* as the primary or 'alpha' clause.

The reason for regarding this as a metaphorical variant is that the proposition is not, in fact, 'I think'; the proposition is 'it is so'. This is shown clearly by the tag; if we tag the clause *I think it's going to rain* we get

I think it's going to rain, isn't it?

not *I think it's going to rain, don't I?*. In other words the clause is a variant of *it's probably going to rain (isn't it?)* and not a first-person equivalent of *John thinks it's going to rain*, which does represent the proposition 'John thinks' (tag *doesn't he?*).

There is in fact a wide range of variants for the expression of modality in the clause, and some of these take the form of a clause complex. If we limit ourselves first to the meaning of 'probability', the principal categories are as shown in Table 10(1):

Table 10(1) Expressions of probability

Category	Type of realization	Example
(1) Subjective		
(a) explicit	I think, I'm certain	I think Mary knows
(b) implicit	will, must	Mary'll know
(2) Objective		
(a) implicit	probably, certainly	Mary probably knows
(b) explicit	it's likely, it's certain	it's likely Mary knows

What happens is that, in order to state explicitly that the probability is subjective, or alternatively, at the other end, to claim explicitly that the probability is objective, the speaker constructs the proposition as a projection and encodes the subjectivity (*I think*), or the objectivity (*it is likely*), in a projecting clause. (There are other forms intermediate between the explicit and implicit: subjective *in my opinion*, objective *in all probability*, where the modality is expressed as a prepositional phrase, which is a kind of halfway house between clausal and non-clausal status.) Suppose now that Mary doesn't know, or at least we don't think she knows. There are now two possibilities in each of the 'explicit' forms:

(1) Subjective

I think Mary doesn't know/I don't think Mary knows

(2) Objective

it's likely Mary doesn't know/it isn't likely Mary knows

Here another metaphorical process has taken place: the transfer of the polarity feature into the primary clause (*I don't think, it isn't likely*). On the face of it, these are nonsensical: it is not the thinking that is being negated, nor can there be any such thing as a negative probability. But non-thought and negative probabilities cause no great problems in the semantics of natural language. Since the modality is being dressed up as a proposition, it is natural for it to take over the burden of yes or no.

Figure 10-11 gives the analysis of two of these examples.

10.4.2 A further account of modality

It is not always possible to say exactly what is and what is not a metaphorical representation of a modality. But speakers have indefinitely many ways of expressing their opinions — or rather, perhaps, of dissimulating the fact that they are expressing their opinions; for example

it is obvious that ...
everyone admits that ...
it stands to reason that ...
it would be foolish to deny that ...
the conclusion can hardly be avoided that ...
no sane person would pretend that ... not ...
commonsense determines that ...
all authorities on the subject are agreed that ...
you can't seriously doubt that ...

and a thousand and one others, all of which mean 'I believe'.