

# THE EXPRESSION OF MODALITY IN ENGLISH AND LAALI

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## Abstract

*This work is concerned with the comparison of the expression of modality in English and Laali, a Bantu language spoken in the South-west of Congo Brazzaville. Based on quantitative, primary and secondary data, this study reveals that English attests twelve modal verbs ; nine of which are primary and three marginal or secondary. Laali however, attests nineteen modal verbs. Additionally, the study proves that English modals, especially main modals do not show any marker of agreement with their DP subjects whilst Laali openly attests agreement markers on its modals. Finally, if English modals are followed by verbs in bare infinitive form, Laali modals are however followed by verbs either in infinitive or finite form. As a consequence, with regard to Chomsky's Universal Grammar, modality falls on parametric variations as its expression is language idiosyncratic.*

**Key-words :** *comparison, modality, English, Laali,*

## Résumé

*Ce travail s'intéresse à la comparaison de l'expression de la modalité en anglais et en Laali, une langue bantoue parlée dans le Sud-ouest du Congo Brazzaville. Basée sur des données quantitatives, primaires et secondaires, cette étude révèle que l'anglais atteste douze verbes modaux ; dont neuf primaires et trois marginaux ou secondaires. Le Laali par contre atteste dix-neuf verbes modaux. En outre, l'étude prouve que les modaux anglais, en*

*particulier les modèles principaux, ne montrent aucun marqueur d'accord les liant à leurs syntagmes nominaux sujets alors que le Laali atteste ouvertement des marqueurs d'accord sur ses modaux. Enfin, si les modaux anglais sont suivis de verbes à l'infinitif nu (sans to), les modaux Laali sont suivis par des verbes à l'infinitif ou à la forme finie. En conséquence, en référence à la Grammaire Universelle de Chomsky, l'on pourrait conclure que la modalité relève des variations paramétriques car son expression semble être spécifique à chaque langage.*

**Mots-clés** : comparaison, modalité, anglais, laali

## Introduction

This paper compares the expression of modality in English, an Indo-European language and Laali (B73), a Bantu language belonging to Téké group (M. Guthrie 1953), especially spoken in the South-west of Congo Brazzaville in the departments of Bouenza and Lekoumou. The analysis is led via Chomsky's Generative Grammar framework, with a specific emphasis on its last version namely Minimalist Program which seeks to reinforce Chomsky's hypothesis of Universal Grammar claiming that world languages attest both common properties known as principles and idiosyncratic issues referred to as parameters. Accordingly, by comparing the notion of modality in these two different languages spoken in two diametrically different geographical spaces one another, this work seeks to show how languages though different in terms of families may tend to show both variant as well as invariant properties. Indeed, according N. Smith (2002, p.1), "*there is really only one human language : that the immense complexity of the innumerable languages we hear around us must be variations on a single theme.*" Likewise N. Chomsky (1965, p. 5) argues that "*those things, that all languages have in common, or that are necessary to every language, are treated of in a science, which some have called Universal or Philosophical grammar*". Consequently, the diverse languages surrounding us are just realizations of the same mother language known as Universal Grammar, the tool

responsible for language acquisition all over the world. A. Carnie (2001, p. 26) refers to UG as “*the Human Language Capacity or i-Language. (...) and particular instances of the human Language like English, French or Swahili as e-languages*”. Therefore, this work tends to find out what is similar and dissimilar regarding the functioning of the notion of modality. Regarding modality, R. Bernander *et al.* (2022, p. 22) argues that it is “*a semantic space comprising different subcategories (or flavors) of possibility and necessity*”. Thereupon, modality refers to the speaker’s personal perception of the propositional utterance i.e. whether s/he views an event as true, compulsory, possible, allowed or not. This work seeks to answer the following questions : What denotes modality in both English and Laali? What are the different modal functions expressed by the two languages? What are similar and dissimilar features regarding the modal operation in the two languages? The work is structured as follows: Section 1 looks at the methodology via with data have been collected. Section 2 presents the review of the related literature. Section 3 sheds light on the two different conceptions of the term modality or mood. Section 4 describes modality in English. Finally, section 5 analyses modality in Laali.

## **1. Methodology**

This section looks at the methodology via which this work has been conducted. Actually, data used in this work have mainly been quantitative, primary and secondary. Primary because we wanted to collect a significant number of sentential structures from everyday occurring speeches of Laali speakers with the aim of having a good deal of sentences containing modal verbs and their different utilizations but also avoid to take everything for granted. Primary data refer to those pure data that we directly gathered form Laali informants thanks to data procedures including observation, participant-observation and interviewing.

Secondary data resulted from the documentary analysis that we went through by means of reading previous works related to the issue under scrutiny in order to outline the path to follow and not fall in a sort of plagiarism. Secondary data have mostly helped us to review a number of authors who dealt with the issue before us. Thus, thanks to the “*corpus-driven investigation*” (R. Bernander *et al.*, 2022, p.33) on earlier works on modality, we have noticed the disinterestedness of Bantu linguists regarding the notion of modality on Bantu languages.

As to the approach used, this work is carried out in the light of Chomsky’s Minimalist Program. In fact, according to Chomsky, in order to achieve his goal, the linguist should not be restricted himself to describing individual languages i.e. analyzing language in isolation. His analysis should take heed of the comparison of a number of languages so as to bring out similar and dissimilar aspects related to the linguistic issue under scrutiny, with the aim of reinforcing UG hypothesis. In this regard, based on L. Haegeman (1994), R. P. Mberi Ngakala (2017, p.5) opines the following :

The generativist will have to compare English with other languages to discover to what extent the properties he has identified are universal and to what extent they are language-specific choices determined by universal grammar. Even when his main concern is some aspect of the grammar of English, the linguist will have to go outside this one language and engage in contrastive work. (...) Work in generative linguistics is therefore by definition comparative. Generative linguists often do not focus on individual languages at all : they will use any human language to determine the general properties of UG and the choices it allows.

These lines supply us information according to which the major task of a generativist linguist is to compare languages in order to predict properties shared by all human languages and those that

are idiosyncratic to each of them. Following this view, this study tends to strengthen Chomsky's UG postulate by showing how further of nearer the two languages are regarding the expression of modality. In other words, it intends to demonstrate that the spatial gap between English and Laali do not prevents them from sharing common features as regards the modality notion.

The undertaking of this work is also motivated by the insignificant literature on modality in Bantu language in general and those spoken in Congo Brazzaville in particular. Actually, our documentary analysis has revealed that no work has ever been undertaken on modals on the four groups of languages (Téké, Kongo, Mbochi and Oubanguien) spoken in Congo Brazzaville. As a result, leading a work on an issue that has not yet been tackled proves the originality of this work on its own right. The rareness of studies on modality on Bantu languages is also noticed by F. Mberamihigo (2015, p. 122) who argues what follows :

La recherche sur l'expression de la modalité en kirundi a été motivée par la rareté des études dans ce domaine au sein des langues africaines en général et bantoues en particulier, qui contraste avec la richesse de cette catégorie. En effet, si l'intérêt porté à l'étude de la modalité est ancien dans les grandes langues du monde occidental, il n'en est pas de même pour les langues africaines.

In fact, most of Bantu linguists mainly focused on grammatical issues related to tense, aspect and grammatical mood. Few are those who got interested in the expression of modality, although F. Mberamihigo (2015, p. 123) enumerates the following as those who looked into the notion of modality in Bantu : Fleisch (2000) on Lucazi (K13), Kawasha (2003) on the Lunda (L52), and Botne (2006) on Lusaamiya (J32), Taljard & Louwrens (2003) on Northern Sotho (S32), Fourie (1989) on Zulu, Fourie (1991) on Ndonga (R22) and Devos (2008) on Shangaci, a variant of Makhuwa.

## 2. Literature review

This section looks at authors who tackled the issue of modality before the present work in both Bantu and Non-bantu languages. However, it is worth highlighting from the outset that the question of modality has little literature as R. Bernander *et al.* (2022, p. 22) opine : “*the notion of modality has traditionally been a neglected category within Bantu linguistics, which has tended to focus instead on the more grammatical (ized) categories of tense, aspect and to a lesser extent mood.*” It is noticeable through this assertion that research works on modality are very scarce in Bantu languages as less attention has been paid to it. Likewise, Labbé and Labbé (2013, p. 24) affirm that “*a notre connaissance, le phénomène n’a jamais été étudié de manière empirique sur de larges échantillons*”. This amounts to saying that the question of modality is still a virgin field that deserves to be explored. On this account, this work is timely because it addresses a question that is very little developed by Bantu linguists. All the same, we have found it interesting to review the following previous works.

R. Bernander *et al.* (2022) lead a research work on modal verb constructions on a number of Bantu languages spoken in Eastern Africa including Standard Swahili, Lusaamia, Luguru, Lugosa, Rundi, West Nyanza, Ruruuli-Lunyala, Runyankore, Haya, Nyambo, Lunyore, Lubukusu, Ikoma, Ngoreme, Swahili, Ruvu to names but a few. For the sake of economy, the following illustrations are limited to the use of modals in the first four mentioned languages.

### 1. Standard Swahili (G42d),

siku	y-o	y-ote	wa-wez-a	ku-wa-on-a	p-o	p-ote
9.day	9-of	9-all	SM2SG.PRS- able-FV	INF-OM2-see- FV	16-of	16-all

“Any day you can see them anywhere”

## 2. Luguru (G35)

mai	ko- <b>dah</b> -a	<b>ku</b> -kal-a	ghoya	na	i-wa-ana
mother	SM1.PRS- POSB-FV	INF- stay-FV	better	COM	AUG-2- child
ku-bit-a			Mwenda		
INF-surpass-FV			Mwenda		
‘The mother can cope better with children than Mwenda’					

## 3. Lusoga (JE16)

é-N-sáwó	yo	o- <b>sóból</b> -á	<b>ó</b> -kú-gi- <b>rek-á</b>
AUG9-9-bag	9.POSS2SG	SM2SG.PRS-POSB- IPFV	AUG15-INF-OM9- leave-FV
wa-nó	obá	o-kú-gy-á	ná-yo
16-DEM	or	AUG15-INF-go-FV	with-SBST9
‘Your bag, you can either leave it here or go with it’			

## 4. Shangaci (P312)

a-ń- <b>sákh</b> -a	o-fiy-á	á-tthú	e-énkeénye
2-PRS-POSB-FV	INF-arrive-FV	2-person	2-many
‘A lot of people might arrive’			

(Bernander *et al.*, 2022 : 23, 27, 28 29)

It comes out of this sample of examples that East African languages express modality by means of full modal verbs. Standard Swahili for instance denotes modality of possibility via the auxiliary **-wez-** ‘can’ as illustrated in (1). As regards Luguru, it is the modal **-dah-** which expresses possibility as presented in (2). However, Lusoga, expresses the possibility modality with the verb **-sobol-** as shown in (3). Finally, the denotation of the modality of possibility is done through the verb **-sákh-** in Shangaci as instantiated in (4). Of interest is that modal verbs in East African Languages tend to be followed by verbs in infinitive form introduced either by the infinitive prefix marker “ku-” or “o-” and terminating by the final vowel suffix “-a”. Yet, apart from possibility, East African languages also express other modalities linked to permission, obligation, certainty, uncertainty, necessity, volition, desire etc. (R. Bernander *et al.*, 2022, p. 37, 40, 28 29).

F. Mberamihigo (2015) focuses on the expression of modality markers of Kirundi. In this regard, he identifies twenty-two modal markers divided into three categories which include the affix **-oo-** which expresses the conditional or potential mode, usually placed between the subject and the root of the finite verb. According to him, the kirundi **-oo-** modal affix is the only marker capable of covering or expressing all the categories of the possibility as well as the necessity. Additionally, F. Mberamihigo (2015, p. 12) spots seven verbs responsible for the expression of possibility in Kirundi including *-shóbor-*, *-shóbok-*, *-báash-*, *-kúund-*, *-bón-*, *-rekuriw-* and *-émerew-*. Furthermore, seven further verbs are identified as those expressing the modality of necessity in Kirundi namely *-tégerezw-*, *-bwúrizw-*, *-kener-*, *-rind-*, *-kwúir-*, *-béer-* and *-goomb*. Finally, seven other epistemic adverbs have also been identified ; six of which are linked to the epistemic possibility notably *ngirango*, *umeengo/umeenga*, *kuumburé*, *nkeeka*, *kurúubu*, *ubóna* and one namely the adverb *kokó* which expresses the epistemic necessity referring to certainty.

A. Carnie (2001) mainly interprets modals with regard to the generative approach. Correspondingly, he opines that unlike the English main auxiliaries which are twofold i.e., functioning as both main and auxiliary verbs, modals are exclusively of category T (A. Carnie, 2001, p.225). He further adds that modals have a number of distributional properties. First, they always precede all other auxiliaries in sentential structures. Second, they must precede negation. Third, they can never take agreement inflection, like the third person suffix *-s* (A. Carnie, 2001, p.35-37). In fact, modal auxiliaries such as *may*, *can* and *must* are classified as belonging to the inflections and are obviously more closely related to verbs than nouns. As such, they are similar to other tense categories like main auxiliaries, verbal inflectional markers and the non-finite tense marker *to* (Carnie 2001: 53-54). M. Newson *et al* (2006) is of the same opinion as A. Carnie. According to them, modal auxiliaries are in complementary

distribution with one another as they cannot co-occur after one another within the same clausal structure. Unlike, they are not in complementary distribution with aspectual auxiliaries and the passive auxiliary *be*. This is because modals occupy a position different from the one occupied by aspectuals and the passive auxiliary *be*. It is worth specifying at this level that if the lexical verb within a VP predicate is preceded by a number of preverbal auxiliaries expressing different meanings including modality, perfect, progressive and passive, the first element of the VP will of course be the modal auxiliary and the structure will be realized via the schema namely **MOD+ PERF+ PROG+ PASS+ Lexical V** as in *It could have been being sent by Leshem*. Being the first element of the VP containing a number of auxiliaries, S. Greenbaum and N. Gerald (2002, p. 22-23) refer to it as the operator i.e. the first elements of the preverbal elements via which syntactic operations like questions and negations are realized. Accordingly, the interrogative will imply the subject modal (operator) inversion and the negative structure will entail the occurrence of the negative *not* after the operator (modal). Accordingly, M. Newson *et al* (2006, p.450) assert that this subject–auxiliary inversion in questions like *Can you dance?* brings about the I-to-C movement. In other words, the node C which is strong as it contains a +wh feature needs an appropriate element down its c-commanding domain that it can to attract for the derivation to be valued at PF.

M. Aronoff and F. Kirsten (2011) however, argue against A. Cranie and M. Newson *et al* and asserts that English has a syntactic rather than a morphological category of modals because modals in English appear in the form of full words. According to them, English modals freely precede main verbs to express some personal attitude from the speaker who uses the sentence. As a result, the one who says [*My son **might** come today*] is not ensuring about his son's coming but is instead expressing **uncertainty** about the coming of his son. So, the use of the modal *might* here expresses the modality of **uncertainty**

associated with the utterance. In fact, M. Aronoff and F. Kirsten (2011, p.198) reject the generativist view according to which modals are part of inflections in the same vein as verbal inflection markers **-s** and **-ed** linked to the verbal stem. According to them, since modals are not bound morphemes like the inflectional markers above mentioned, they would not be treated as inflections but rather as full independent verbs with their own autonomous entries in the English dictionary.

B. Aarts Bas *et al* (2004) affirm that like main auxiliaries, modals are relevant for the realization of the **NICE properties** that lexical verbs are unable to perform. Indeed, NICE properties is an acronym alluding to the four grammatical features fulfilled by the English auxiliary verbs including **Negation**, **Inversion**, **Code** and **Emphasis**. With regard to *negation*, it appears that the negative form *not* or its contracted congener *n't* can directly appear after the modal verb, e.g. *will not*, *won't*, *cannot*, *can't*. The **Inversion** process allows modals to occur before their subjects in interrogative structures, e.g. *Must I do it?* *Can we go early?* **Code** refers to the anaphoric use of auxiliaries to avoid the repetition of the verb phrase e.g. *I can do everything for the development of Africa*, and so *can any African*. Finally, **Emphasis** is about how modals can be used to stress facts, e.g. *I SHALL tell him it*, *Rich SHOULD help the poor*. (Aarts Bas *et al*, 2004 p. 266)

S. Yuliantini, W. Tri (2018) are concerned with the expression of modality in French. For them, French denotes modality by means of modal verbs like *devoir*, *pouvoir*, *vouloir*, *falloir*. However, they insist that each language has its own way of expressing modality. Some languages express it grammatically whereas others do it through full lexical verbs, the case of French (S. Yuliantini, W. Tri, 2018 p. 2). Consider the following examples :

- (5) a- Je *dois* lui donner pour avoir répondu à l'après-midi.
- b- Les enfants *peuvent* jouer aux ballons dehors.

Accordingly, *doit* expresses obligation whereas *peuvent* indicates capacity. Put otherwise, in the above examples, the speaker reinforces the message by adding modal functions to the events expressed by their main following verbs; the first one being linked to obligation and the last one to capacity.

C. Labbé and D. Labbé (2013) side with S. Yuliantini and W. Tri. According to them, the French modality is expressed by two main modal verbs namely *pouvoir* and *vouloir* usually followed by a verb in infinitive form such as “*pouvoir faire*” “*vouloir dire*”. Additionally, they assert that the modality expression in French is extended to other verbs like *aller*, *désirer*, *espérer*, *falloir*, *savoir* also followed by a verb in infinitive form as with “*savoir faire*”, “*désirer voir*”, “*aller dire*”, “*espérer réussir*” “*falloir montrer*”.

J. Suhadi (2011) describes modality in English. As such, he states that the English modality is realized by various linguistic units including the modal verbs *must*, *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *will*, *would*, *shall*, *should*, *ought to* and the semi modals *need* and *dare* expressing different meanings depending on their use as follows:

- (6) a- Students *must* abide by the regulations of the university.  
(**Obligation**)
  - b- At midnight he *must* have been sleeping soundly.  
(**Probability**)
  - c- It is raining now; the teacher *might* not come today.  
(**Probability**)
  - d- Nobody *can* lift such a heavy box. (**Ability**)
  - e- You *can* go with your mother to visit your grandma.  
(**Permission**)

(J. Suhadi, 2011, p.158)

Modality can also be expressed by modal adjuncts such as *certainly*, *definitely*, *probably*, *possibly*, *perhaps*, *maybe*, *surely*, *always*, *usually*, *obviously*, etc.

- (7) a- *Probably*, he comes to her house today.  
b- *Certainly*, the examination will be held next week.  
c- *Possibly*, the earthquake happens again today.  
(J. Suhadi, 2011, p. 159)

Modality may also be expressed by lexico-modal auxiliaries such as *be able to, be about to, be apt to, be bound to, be certain to, be due to, be going to, be liable to, be sure to, be to, be likely to, be meant to, be supposed to, have to, have got to, had better, would rather, would sooner*, etc.

- (8) a- Many small children nowadays are able to browse the internet.  
b- Websites are bound to abide by the law of the respective country.  
c- Web world is likely to arrive at an uncontrollable condition.  
(J. Suhadi, 2011, p.159)

Adjectives like *sure, certain, likely, possible, probable, willing*, are also used to express modality.

- (9) a- Budy is *certain* to pursue higher studies in UK.  
b- It is *certain* that Budy will pursue higher studies in UK.  
c- Palestine is *probable* to get its independence next year.  
d- It is *probable* that Palestine gets its independence next year.  
(J. Suhadi, 2011, p. 159)

Participles adjectives such as *allowed, determined, confirmed, obliged, required, supposed* also denote modality

- (10) a- Indonesia is required to be provided with more sophisticated warfare.  
b- It is required that Indonesia be provided with more sophisticated warfare.  
c- Foreign citizens are obliged to abide by the regulations of the country of residence.

d- It is obliged that foreign citizens abide by the regulations of the country of residence.

(J. Suhadi, 2011, P. 160)

Nouns such as *must*, *chance*, *certainty*, *likelihood*, *possibility*, *probability*, *determination*, are commonly used to express modality.

(11) a- It is a must that every Master's student conduct a field research.

b- It is an obligation that Muslims observe prayers five times a day.

c- There is a possibility that this earth be burned by the sun one day.

d- There is a certainty that this earth will perish one day.

(J. Suhadi, 2011, p.160)

### **3. Strip away the ambiguity on the term modality, mood or mood**

This section aims at stripping away the confusion around the term modality between both linguistic and logic conceptions. Also known as mode or mood (D. Crystal, 2008, p. 312), the term modality is usually prone to some confusions because in has been looked into it by researchers from different outlooks. F. Mberamihigo (2015, p.123) first establishes its ambiguity regarding its definition as follows:

La modalité elle-même est une catégorie dont la définition n'est pas aisée car elle est appréhendée selon une diversité de perceptions. Elle n'est pas de ces catégories dont l'évocation renvoie à une définition consacrée. La difficulté est notamment due au fait que c'est une notion qui appartient en même temps à la logique, à la philosophie et à la linguistique

Owing to the fact that the notion of modality has been developed

on the basis of different angles including logic, philosophy and linguistics, its definition is far from being unanimously clear-cut; what somewhat constitutes a difficult task to researchers when it comes to look at it for better understanding. However, F. Mberamihigo (2015, p. 123) all the same views it as a “*field covered by the expression of the point of view or the attitude of the speaker in relation to the reality of a stated fact*”. Viewed from this angle, modality is all about the additional information brought to the main verbs via modal verbs or expressions referring to notions like intention, certainty, uncertainty, permission, possibility, compulsion, duty etc. expressed by the sentence. This is a purely semantico-pragmatic or logical conception of the term modality. However, According to C. Labbé and D. Labbé (2013, p. 24), “*la notion de “modalité” peut renvoyer à deux acceptions. Au sens large elle sert à décrire l’aspect de la phrase (affirmative, assertive, interrogative, optative, etc). Dans un sens restrictif, elle désigne certains auxiliaires modaux*”. Accordingly, the difference is to be made between modal verbs and verbal mood/mode. The former refers to the expression of notions like certainty, uncertainty, obligation, duty, permission, willingness etc. whereas the latter alludes to the morphosyntactic features associated with the main verb expressing notion notions like indicative, subjunctive and imperative.

### **3.1. The theoretical conception of the term modality/mood**

This refers to the semantico-pragmatic or logic perception of modality. Accordingly, D. Crystal (2008, p.19) taxonomically categorizes three functions of theoretical modality namely *alethic modality, deontic modality and epistemic modality*. These functions of modality refer to how the speaker views a given situation. Put differently, it is concerned with the meaning that the speaker associates with what s/he says while uttering a given sentence, i.e., whether s/he expresses necessity, intention, determination, uncertainty, certainty, capacity, definiteness,

desire, possibility, obligation etc. The following lines highlight the different subcategories of theoretical modality including alethic, deontic and epistemic functions.

### 3.1.1. Alethic modality :

According to D. Crystal (2008, p. 19), alethic modality is concerned with the necessary or contingent truth of propositions. It has thus two dimensions. First, it looks at the event as being necessarily true based on the evidence and second, it looks at the eventual realization of the event i.e., whether it is true or not, possible or not. Consider the following structures

(12) a- Marien Ngouabi University **must** be located in Brazzaville.

b- That **must/will** be Lemo knocking, somebody has just talked to me about his arrival.

In (12a), the modal *must* expresses alethic function as it indicates that empirically, *Marien Ngouabi University is necessarily located in Brazzaville* or that “*It is impossible for Marien Ngouabi University not to be located in Brazzaville*”. Likewise, in (12b) the modal *must/will* accounts for the fact that the speaker is sure that the person knocking is necessarily Lemo; what can be true or not.

### 3.1.2. Deontic modality

Deontic modality is concerned the dimension of obligation, permission and prohibition (A. Cruse, 2006, p.1; D. Crystal, 2008 : p.139). According to M. Winiharti (2012, p. 534), it refers to the necessity of a person to do or not to do something in a certain way. In addition, M. Winiharti asserts that deontic modals may convey two kinds of social knowledge related to both *obligation* and *permission*. Obligation is concerned with “*what a person must do*”, whereas permission deals with “*someone’s authority to permit somebody else to do something*” as shown below :

(13) a- I *must* tell her it.

b- You *may* go home.

Consequently, *must* in (13a) requires the obligation from the speaker to tell something and *may* in (13b) refers to capacity of the speaker to allow his addressee to perform some deed. At this level, A. Cruse (2006, p.11) argues that in addition to modal verbs, deontic modality can also be lexically expressed by the use of expressions such as *be obliged to*, *have to*, *be free to* referring to the idea of obligation from the speaker's side.

### 3.1.3. Epistemic modality

Referring to C. W. Kreidler (1998), M. Winiharti (2012 : 534) defines epistemic modality as the modality dealing with the *possibility*, *probability* or *impossibility* of a certain proposition as instantiated through the following examples where (14a) and (14b) refer to possibility or probability and (14c) and (14c) to impossibility or improbability.

(14) a- She *may* be in her office. (*It is possible that she is in her office.*)

b- Ask father. He *might* know. (*It is possible that father knows.*)

c- You've only just had dinner. You *can't* be hungry already. (*It is impossible that you are hungry.*)

d- Is he serious? No, he *can't* be that serious. (*It is impossible that he is serious.*)

(M. Winiharti, 2012 : p. 534-135)

## 3.2. The descriptive conception of the term modality/mood

This alludes to the syntactic view of the notion of modality. It follows that modality is counted as a verbal category labeled as [+ function] (M. Newson *et al.*, 2006, p.11) in the same way as determiners, complementizers, tense, agreement and main auxiliaries. They are said to belong to the close class of linguistic units and are viewed as finite and fixed. On this account, they are contrasted with content words labelled as [-function] due to their belonging to the open class and their capacity to be hosts

for the creation of other words. Nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs belong to that group of words as they be created over and over again thanks to derivational processes. Syntactically then, mood/modality refers to how a verb used by a speaker expresses an event, whether it is a real or factual event (indicative mood), an unreal or uncertain event (subjunctive mood), or an order (imperative mood). According to J.D. Murphy (2007, p. 95), “*mood is a mode or a method by which a verb is used to express a particular action*”. Syntactic mood is broadly cleaved in two sets including *personal moods* i.e., mode expressed by finite verbs and *impersonal ones*, those whose verbs appear in non-finite form. This taxonomy is however language specific. English for example attests three personal moods including *indicative mood*, *subjunctive mood* whose main verbs are obligatorily preceded by overt subject occurring in either of the following persons : 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and *imperative mood* also known as semi-personal mood due to its lack of overt subject. French however, attests conditional mode in addition the above three mentioned ones. The impersonal mood is however expressed by nonfinite forms of verbs notably to-infinitive form, bare-infinitive form, participle infinitive form including *-ing* form or present participle or *en*-form also known as past participle (B. Arts, 2001).

However, this work is based on both the theoretical conception of modality which emphasizes the notions of volition, obligation, certainty, possibility etc. expressed by the speaker but also on descriptive view which considers modals as parts of inflectional morphemes appearing under the T node in the Minimalist Program literature. Accordingly, data interpretation follows the logic approach and their representation follows the generativist conception.

#### 4. English modality

This section looks at the modal operation in English.

Accordingly, S. Walker and E. Elsworth (2000, p. 86) assert that “*modals are the small verbs like **can, must, and might**, which give certain meanings to main verbs*”. In this regard, modals are subordinate verbs which provide additional and specific meaning to their following lexical verbs. In fact, in a structure wherein a main verb or a main auxiliary is preceded by a modal, all the syntactic information of that verb are expressed by the modal. The examples hereafter illustrate modals in English :

(15) a- I **can** swim in dip rivers.

b- It **must** not be very cold in Paris by now.

c- **Would** you be back in a while please?

d- Post graduate students **should** be familiar with intensive reading.

e- Parents **ought to** take care of their children.

f- Everybody **need** money.

g- How **dare** he speak so to his father!

The bold italicized are English modals. What is remarkable is that these modals are invariable. In fact, from a morphosyntactic point of view, English modals include the following characteristics. They do not inflect for any morpheme for tense, agreement and infinitive, they do not allow the *do-support* in their negatives and interrogatives. Finally, lexical verbs following them occur in their bare infinitive form or a to-less infinitive complement (A. Radford, 2004) :

S. Walker and E. Elsworth (Ibid.) distinguish twelve modals in English namely *can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, ought to, need (to) and dare*. Yet, This taxonomy can further be split up into two main subsets which include nine main modals videlicet *can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must* and three marginal modals which include *ought to, need* and *dare*. If the main modals accommodate themselves with the above mentioned morphosyntactic properties, marginal modals (except *ought to*) sometimes behave like main verbs as presented below :

- (16) a- They dare **to** *insult* their father.  
 b- He need not **to** *worry* because of his absence.  
 c- My sister *dares* say things anyhow.  
 d- My sister *dared* say things anyhow.  
 f- He *needs* to apply for this job.  
 g- He *needed* to apply for this job  
 h- People **did not dare** to face the president during the last polling.  
 i- **Do** you *dare* to face the president during the next polling?  
 j- She **did not need** to spend much money for shopping.  
 k- **Did** she *need* to spend much money for shopping?

As we can see, marginal modals totally violate the features required for modals. Actually, marginal modals can be followed by verbs with the infinitive marker *to* as in (16a) and (16b), they can host the third person singular present morpheme *-s* and the *-ed* past tense form as in (16c), (16d), (16f) and (16g), and finally, they can allow the *do-support* in their negative and interrogative constructions as attested in (16h), (16i), (16j) and (16k).

English modals can also be obtained through the merger of *be* or *have* and another element (mostly followed by the infinitive particle *to*). This is what A. Downing and P. Locke (2006, p. 380) refer to as lexical-modal auxiliaries. The expressions which meet this requirement include *to be able to*, *to be allowed to*, *to be bound to*, *to be likely to*, *to be supposed to*, *to be sure to*, *to be used to*, *to have to*, *to have got to*, *to look forward to*, *would rather*, *used to*, *had better*. For a semantic point of view, modals are said to express the relationship between the subject and the event described by the verb they precede (A. Bussmann, 1998, p. 752). In a nutshell, they express the ‘manner’ of the actions indicated by their following verbs. Accordingly, A. Downing and P. Locke (2006, p. 380-381) state what follows that “*modality is to be understood as a semantic category which covers such notions as possibility, probability, necessity,*

*volition, obligation and permission. These are the basic modalities. (...) These together with the lexical-modal auxiliaries are basic exponents of modality in English”.*

Thereupon, modality is concerned with expressing how possible or impossible the occurrence of an action is, how certain or uncertain we are about an event, how willing or unwilling we are to do something, or how eager or uneager we are about to do something for example. Concretely, when people utilize modal utterances, they do not assert the truth of the action as it is the case with declarative utterances; but they rather judge or assume the reality of that action thanks to their inference or to the possible evidence which expounds to them. In other words, modalized sentences are concerned with how speakers express such notions as suspicion, necessity, permission, possibility, offer, advice, etc. of the event described by the verb following the modal and not with how they assert that event. The following chart exhibits some of the utilizations of both main and marginal modals.

(17)

<b>Modal auxiliaries</b>	<b>Meaning expressed</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Can	Capacity	He <i>can</i> teach English to undergraduate students.
	Permission	You <i>can</i> utilize my computer if you want.
	Ability	Relfy <i>could</i> run fast when she was young.
	Suggestion	We <i>could</i> go to the new restaurant today.
	Suspicion	She <i>could</i> be sick. That <i>could</i> not be Claver.
May	Permission	Clients <i>may</i> not enter the shop with their own bags.
	Possibility	Hilary <i>may</i> become the next

		president of the USA.
	Wish	<i>May</i> God bless you! <i>May</i> my sister live long!
Might	Possibility	The president <i>might</i> appoint him rector of University
	Suggestion	You <i>might</i> need his address so that you can visit him.
	Reproach	You <i>might</i> spend the money with a little care.
	Suspicion	They <i>Might</i> be right.
Shall	Futurity(1 <sup>st</sup> sg & pl)	I <i>shall</i> marry Maryse. People <i>shall</i> see us together
	Offer	<i>Shall</i> I help you with the luggage?
	Command	People <i>shall</i> be silent in the library.
	Threat	He <i>shall</i> be punished for his misbehavior.
	Determination	I shall know the truth on that matter.
Should	Advice	You <i>should</i> go and see a doctor for that illness.
	Expectation	He <i>should</i> finish the exam by August.
	Duty	You <i>should</i> attend the classes regularly.
	Likelihood	I <i>should</i> be in office now.
Will	Futurity(2 <sup>nd</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> pers)	You <i>will</i> go home. Yovel <i>will</i> call me. They <i>will</i> sleep.
	Certainty	The train <i>will</i> come tomorrow.
	Willingness/Offer	I <i>will</i> drop you by bike.
	Probability	I suppose this child <i>will</i> be a great politician.
	Invitation	Will you drink a cup of tea please?
	Conditional	If I had got money, I <i>would</i> have bought that car.

Would	Permission	<i>Would</i> you mind if I asked you a question?
	Request	<i>Would</i> you pass me the salt please?
	Invitation	<i>Would</i> you like to come with me?
	Unreal situations	It <i>would</i> be nice for me to defend next February.
	Wish	I <i>would</i> like to express my gratitude to him.
	Intention	I wish I <i>would</i> be together with Maryse.
Must	Strong obligation	You <i>must</i> do whatever I tell you to do.
	Compulsion	Students <i>must</i> work hard to succeed.
	Certainty	There <i>must</i> be an enemy somewhere.
	Prohibition	Perrine <i>must</i> not join them.
	Duty	We <i>must</i> use our right to vote accurately.
	Determination	Mberi <i>must</i> become a good teacher.
Ought to	Advice	It is getting very cold, so you <i>ought to</i> put a coat on.
	Probability	Citizens <i>ought to</i> know the results of the polling soon.
	Past obligation	The president <i>ought to</i> have emphasized employment.
	Duty	We <i>ought to</i> love our parents.
	Moral obligation	We <i>ought to</i> be polite to old persons.
	Necessity	Maryse <i>ought to</i> work hard for her family to survive.
Need	No necessity	That is ok! You <i>need</i> not call him. They need not run.
	Request	<i>Need</i> I pay money?
	Necessity	You <i>need</i> to tell all the truth to the rabbi.

Dare	Challenge	He <i>dares</i> write a PhD within three years.
	Courage	How dare you speak to old persons like that!

(J.D. Murthy, 2007, p. 128 ; J. Eastwood, 1994, p.120-135).

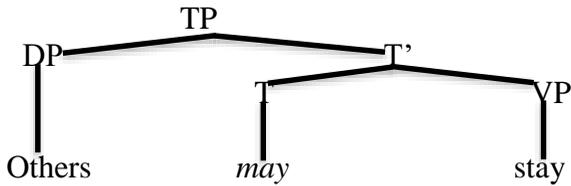
For A. Downing and P. Locke (2006, p. 379), all these modals express two main semantic meanings expressed in the following terms :

Modality is the semantic category by which speakers express two different kinds of attitudes towards the event. One attitude is that of assessing the truth of the proposition or the potential occurrence of the event in terms of modal certainty, probability, or possibility. This is **epistemic** (or extrinsic) modality as in *The key must be here somewhere, It may be in your pocket*. A different kind of attitude is expressed when the speakers intervene in the speech event by laying down obligations or giving permission. This is **deontic** (or intrinsic) modality as in *You must go now ; The others may stay*.

In A. Downing and P. Locke's opinion, modals deal with two different communicative functions. The first is concerned with commenting on and evaluating the occurrence of the event e.g. *It may rain today; They must be at home now*. Here the speaker is not part of the event. Also, the event may or may not happen. The second function however, is about the speaker's direct intervention in the speech event and his/her capacity to bring about changes in that event e.g. *I must call him now, I will teach them in April, Others may go back home*.

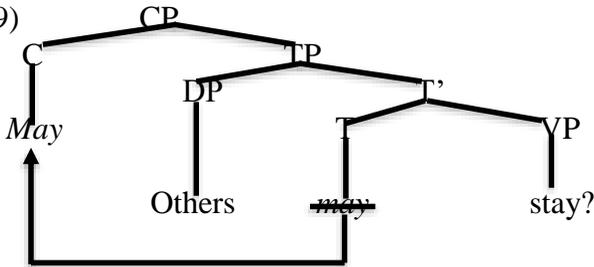
In Minimalist Program, modal auxiliaries are heads of TPs in affirmative sentences as shown in the tree below :

(18)



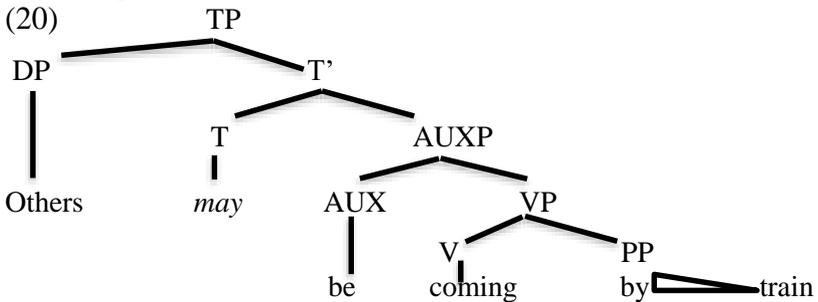
In interrogative sentences, they are rather heads of CPs as illustrated below:

(19)



Yet, in a structure wherein a modal verb is followed by a main auxiliary verb such as *be* or *have* which in turn is followed by a lexical verb as in *Others may be coming by train*, the modal verb will occupy the head of TP, the main auxiliary verb that of AUXP and the lexical verb that of VP as demonstrated in the following P-marker :

(20)



The upcoming subsection is concerned with modal auxiliaries in Laali

## 5. Laali modality

This section examines modal auxiliaries in Laali. These are illustrated in the following chart:

(21)

Modal auxiliaries	Meaning expressed	Examples
Bì	Advice	a- Yè <i>bì</i> ónyàà àkò. You mood to leave only. You should only leave
	Likelihood	b- Bò <i>bì</i> óyèné lólò. Them mood to go today. They should go today.
Kèné	Moral duty	c- Bààná <i>kèné</i> ówà bòdzitè kwà bàtèyè Children mood to give respect to parents. Children should owe respect to their parents.
	Conditional	d- Mbì yè wàwàyirè lólò, mè <i>nkèné</i> ótà yè mbilè. If you you-come today me I-mood call you call. If you had not come today I'd have called you.
Tòdònò	Strong obligation	e- Yè <i>tònò</i> ólèlè ndè yò lólò. You mood to tell him it today. You must tell him it today.
	Necessity	f- Mòyìì <i>tòdònò</i> ótààngà mu óbànjà. Learner mood to read for to succeed. The learner must read to succeed.
Tü	Necessity	g- Bààtà <i>tü</i> ósiime àkò ndè. People mood to-catch him. People should only catch him.

Sà	Immediate future	h- Bìsè <i>sà</i> dèyènè nà bò. Us mood we-go with him. We will go with them.
kamo	Near future	i- Mè <i>nkamo</i> lya. Me I-mood eat. I am about to.
kine	Recent intention	g- Mè <i>nkine</i> olya. Me I- mood eat . I was about to it.
Lènè	Usuality	h- Ndè <i>lènè</i> olya nyama. S/he mood eat meat. S/he usually eats meat.
Mbèrè	Remote future	i- Mè <i>mbèrè</i> néyènè Mputo. Me mood I-go Europe. I will go to Europe.
kètè	Hesitation	j- Mè <i>nakètè</i> okísísi kyo. Me I-mood accept it. I accepted it at least.
Mètè	Immediate future	k- Bò <i>mètè</i> bolya byo. Them mood they-eat it. They will eat it.
Tüme	Remote future	l- Mè <i>tüme</i> nsa kyo. Me mood do it. I will do it.
-yoho	Possibility	m- Mè <i>oyoho</i> oyene lolo. Me mood go today. I may go today.
-yaaba	Capacity	n- Yè wa- <i>yaaba</i> óyobo. You (sing) you mood swim. You can swim.
-futo	Pretention	o- Bààtà ba- <i>futo</i> ofa. People they-mood die. People pretended to be dead.
-yesune	Trial/attempt	p- Mè na- <i>yesune</i> osa kyo. Me mood try do it . I tried to do it.

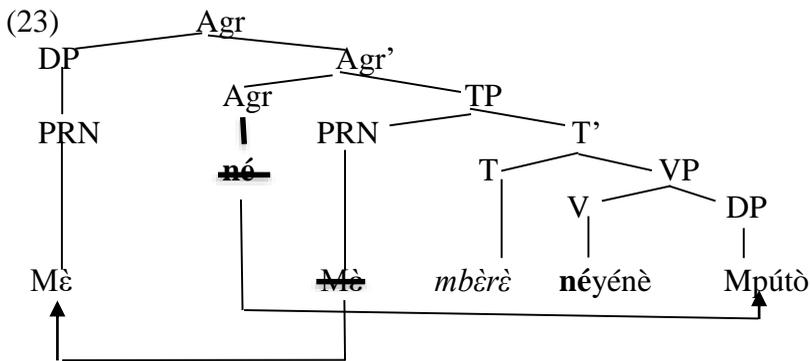
-bata	Fear	q- Yè wa- <b>bata</b> oyene àkó. You (sing) you mood go there. You were afraid to go.
-lihe	Prohibition	r- Mvùlò wa-lihe ye yo. Mvulo he- mood you it. Mvulu defeneded you to do it.
-twò	Capacity	s- Tààtà <b>ótuò</b> ótsàbà bwànyà. Father mood cross Bouenza River. Father can swim across Bouenza River.
	Ability	t- Mè <b>ótuò</b> ósà bòntèlè. Me to-can to do hunting. I can hunt.
	Possibility	u- Mvùlò <b>ótuò</b> ónòò lèkòlò li. Rain mood to rain evening this. It can rain tonight.
	Permission	v- Bò <b>ótuò</b> ólyà nsü mòndè. Them mood to eat fish that. They can eat that fish.

Based on this chart, the following are arguments or conclusions that can be drawn concerning Laali modality operation. To start with, Laali attests nineteen (19) modal verbs whose part is to provide additional information to their following main verbs. Some of these modals appear in monomorphemic words like *bí*, *kènè*, *tòònò*, *tü*, *kètè*, *lènè*, *kamo* whereas others appear with their infinitive markers represented by a hyphen (-) in the prefix position of the verb. This is the case of *-yoho*, *-bata*, *-futo*, *-yaaba*, *-yesune*, *-two* and *-lihe*. Also, Laali modals namely *bí*, *kènè*, *tòònò*, *tü*, *-two*, *kètè*, *lènè*, *kamo* are followed by the verb in the infinitive form. In other words, the verbs following these modals obligatorily appear with their prefix infinitive *o-*. In this context, if in English, “*modal verbs must be followed by a bare root form of the verb*” (V. Fromckin *et al.* 2000, p.100), Laali however, shows a counter reality as its modal verbs can be followed by verbs in infinitive forms. Another fact worth

mentioning is that Laali modals expressing futurity including *sà*, *mbèrè*, *tümè* and *mètè* are followed by the verb in finite form. In fact, the modals *sà*, *mbèrè* and *tümè* occurring between the determiner phrase subjects and the main verbs do not block the agreement process between them. Main verbs following *sà*, *mbèrè*, *tümè* and *mètè* rather agree in person and number with their initial DPs. In (21h) for example, *sà* is followed by the verb starting with the plural agreement marker *dè*. Likewise, *mbèrè* in (21i) is followed by the verb starting with the first singular tense agreement marker *né*. In (21j), the verb following *tümè* is inflected for the first person agreement marker *n-*. It is also relevant to highlight that some Laali modal verbs especially *kamo*, *kinè*, *lènè*, *kètè*, *-bata*, *-futo*, *-yaaba*, *-yesune*, and *-lihe* directly agree in phi-features with their preceding DP subjects. The last category of modals refers those that do not show any agreement with their preceding DP subjects. These include *twò* and *-yoho*. It should be pointed out that Laali modals can co-occur in a syntagmatic relationship. As such, they are not in complementary distribution with one another in the same clause as illustrated in the following example:

- (22) a- Tààtà    **tü**            **ótuò**        ótsàbà        bwànyà.  
 Father    mood        mood        cross        Bouenza River.  
 “Father should be able to cross Bouenza River.”
- b- Yè        **mbèrè**    **sà**            yènè        Mputo.  
 You        mood        mood        go        Europe  
 “You will go to Europe.”
- c- Bò        **mètè**    **sa**            ba-**kètè**        bo-lya        byo.  
 Them        mood        mood        they-mood    they-eat        it  
 “They will at least eat it.”

The (21i) can be represented as follows



## Conclusion

This work has focused on the contrastive analysis of the expression of modality in English and Laali. The analysis has revealed that English has twelve modal auxiliaries cleft in nine main modals viz *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *shall*, *should*, *will*, *would*, and *must* and three marginal modals namely *ought to*, *need* and *dare*. In addition these, lexical-modal auxiliaries such as *to be able to*, *to be allowed to*, *to be bound to*, *to be likely to*, *to be supposed to*, *to be sure to*, *to be used to*, *to have to*, *to have got to*, *to look forward to*, *would rather*, *used to*, *had better* are also used for the expression of modality. If main modal auxiliaries are free from any grammatical morpheme, marginal and lexical-modal auxiliaries are however, hosts of many grammatical morphemes. English modal auxiliaries express notions such as possibility, probability, necessity, volition, obligation, permission, promise, certainty, determination, duty, advice, wish, preference, fitness, challenge, courage, request, intention, conditional, offer, threat, suspicion, prohibition, predication, decision, likelihood etc.

However, Laali, attests nineteen (19) modals which include *bí*, *kènè*, *tòònò*, *tü*, *kètè*, *lènè*, *kamo*, *-yoho*, *-bata*, *-futo*, *-yaaba*, *-yesune*, *-two*, *-lihe*, *-twò*, *sà*, *mbèrè*, *tümè* and *mètè*. *Kènè*, *bì* and *tü* are much more similar to the English *should* or *ought to*. Yet,

*Kènè* expresses moral duty, and conditional, *tü* expresses necessity and *bì* likelihood and advice. *Tònò* is the equivalent of *must*. It expresses strong obligation and necessity. *-túò* which is analogous to *can* expresses capacity, ability, possibility and permission. *Sà*, *mètè*, *mbèrè* and *tümè* are however concerned with futurity, the first two being responsible for immediate future and the last two for the remote one.

However, some dissimilar points have been noticed between the two languages, especially those related to morphosyntactic aspects. It follows that, English modals (except marginal and lexical modals) are followed by verb in bar infinitive, whereas the Laali modals *bí*, *kènè*, *tònò*, *tü*, *-twò*, *kètè*, *lènè*, *kamo* are followed by the verb in infinitive form. Also, if English does not attest overt between the DP subject and elements from the VP, in Laali however, some constructions containing modals do not block the agreement process. Consequently, with the modals *sà*, *mbèrè*, *tümè* and *mètè*, the agreement occurs between DP subject and the main verb following these modals. However, with the modals *kamo*, *kinè*, *lènè*, *kètè*, *-bata*, *-futo*, *-yaaba*, *-yesune*, and *-lihe* the agreement marker occurs on these modals rather than on their following verbs. The Laali modals which function much more like the English modals are *twò* and *-yoho*. They do not show any agreement marker with their preceding DP. Finally, Laali modals can occur in syntagmatic relationship whereas the co-occurrence of modals in English results in a crashed structure because modals in that language are exclusive.

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