The Verb: Mood and Modality

Lecture 7

The Category of Mood -

❑   the category of the verb expressing relations between the situation and reality as conceived by the speaker.

❑   the subjective appraisal of the situation reality-unreality by the speaker.

Controversial issues: Mood vs. Modality

Key problems with Mood:

❑ Mood is **confused with Modality**.

❑ The **semantic scope** of the category of Mood is not clearly defined.

❑ Linguists use **different criteria** in distinguishing moods.

❑ Difference of opinion on **analytical forms** of Mood.

❑ Present modal systems look very similar to those of **Latin, Greek and Old English**.

❑ Different views on **homonymy and polysemy** of verbal forms expressing modal meanings.

The category of Modality. Modality in Logic & Linguistics

- **Logic modality**:

  The relation of the proposition to objective reality on the basis of either its mode of existence, or whether it is true or false.

  e.g. *Novosibirsk is the capital of Russia* (unreal modality).

- **Linguistic modality**:

  A functional-semantic (notional) category, which expresses the relation of the utterance to reality-unreality as conceived by the speaker

  Fiction refers to linguistic reality, though the characters may have never existed in real life.

Linguistic Modality: Semantic scope

- **Modality of reality** characterizes situations as **facts of reality** from the point of view of the speaker:

  Today is Friday. Romeo and Juliet were in love (facts - modality of reality);

- **Modality of unreality** is a feature of situations interpreted by the speaker as **non-facts**:

  (I wish) *it were Sunday today. If it were Sunday, I wouldn't go to school.* (The dean requested) *that all be present at the conference. He might come. Perhaps he'll help us* (non-facts - modality of unreality).

The semantics of unreality

1) **non-factual modality** (модальность недействительности), e.g. *(I wish) it were Sunday today. If it were Sunday today, I wouldn't go to school*;

2) **modality of inducement** (побудительная модальность), e.g. *Go and fetch my things!* (The dean requested) *that all be present at the conference;*

3) **suppositional modality** (модальность предположения), e.g. *He might come. Perhaps he'll help us.*

With respect to **meaning**

- Linguistic modality is an **opposition of reality and unreality**.
- The meaning of **reality** is intensive.
- The meaning of **unreality** is extensive: it consists of **non**-**factuality**, **inducement** and **supposition.**

Linguistic Modality:
Means of Expression

With respect to **form** linguistic modality is expressed by:

1. **Morphological categories of mood**, *e.g. It **is** spring. *I wish I **were** you. **Stop** it!, as well as categories of **tense** and **phase**, e.g. *If I **lived** in London I would speak English every day.*

2. **Lexical-syntactic means** - combinations of **modal** verbs with the infinitive, *e.g. Don't wait up for me because I **might be** late. *If anything **should happen** I **can take** care of myself.*

3. Lexical means - modal words,

*e.g. **Perhaps** he has something on his conscience, and wants advice.*

*I don't talk through my hat like **maybe** you think* and other **words** of **modal semantics**, which introduce subordinate clauses and act as predicators, e.*g. ***It's time** we were moving. ***It's possible** there might be large changes around here. **The chances** are you have chilled the rooms upstairs*.

4. **<u>Syntactic types of sentences</u>** and subordinate clauses, e.g. *Take it easy! She really looks sometimes **as if** she isn't all there. *If we all looked our real selves the world would be uninhabitable.*

5. Different **<u>combinations</u>** of the above means (see examples above marked with *).

6. **<u>Intonation, prosody</u>**.

The category of Mood

- **is a set of opposed form classes, which express modality by grammatical (morphological) means**.

- **is a morphosyntactic** category, because it is characteristic of finite forms only.

The problem of Moog & Modality:

- a clear distinction between mood and modality has been made;

- the semantic scope of modality has been defined;

- a grammatical category is viewed as a unity of form and meaning;

- a combination of approaches could be consistently applied to all the members of the opposition;

- since combinations of modal verbs with the infinitive are not characterized by a discontinuous morpheme, they cannot be regarded as analytical mood forms;

- we study the present state of the mood system in English, which means that analogies with Latin, Greek and even Old English are not valid, unless they are substantiated with proper linguistic data;

- we proceed from the assumption that homonymy in the language system should be avoided.

Different approaches to the system of Moods in English

- **V. Plotkin**: the category of Mood in Modern English has died out.

- **B.I. Ilyish**: the way to cut the "Gordian knot' of problems posed by the analysis of modal meaning in the verb.

A.I. Smirnitsky: a system of 6 moods

1. **Indicative**: *He **came** there. The sun **rises** in the East;*
2. **Imperative**: ***Read** the letter! **Go** there!*
3. **Subjunctive** I: *(I suggest that he/you **go** there. If it **be** so;*
4. **Subjunctive** II: *I wish I **were** present. If I **knew**... If I **had known**...-,*
5. **Suppositional**: ***Should** you **meet** him, tell him to come. I suggest that he/you **should** go there;*
6. **Conditional**: *What **would** you answer if you were asked?*

Weak points of Smirnitsky's theory:

- its semantic basis is inconsistent (the meaning of condition is not modal);

- combinations of modal verbs having pronounced lexical meaning with the infinitive are referred to analytical forms;

- homonymous forms are introduced, which should be avoided (Imperative and Subjunctive I; Indicative and Subjunctive II; Suppositional and Conditional);

- forms *go* in ***Go*** *there!* and ***I*** *suggest that you* ***go*** *there,* as well as the so-called **analytical form** *should go* in *I suggest that you* ***should go*** *there* are treated as the forms of three different moods .

The system of three moods in traditional grammar

1. **Indicative -** Fact-Mood.
2. **Imperative -** Will-Mood.
3. **Subjunctive -** Thought-Mood.

In **Latin & Russian**:

1. **The Indicative mood** represents an action as **a fact**: *He is here – он здесь; He said so - Он так сказал.*

2. **The Imperative mood** expresses the speaker's inducement addressed to another person to do something: *Come here – иди сюда!; Wake up - Вставай.*

3. **The Subjunctive Mood** shows actions as **non-facts**, but the range of meanings proposed includes those which are **not modal** (unreal condition, wish, purpose and the like).

The Thought-Mood is subdivided:

1. Subjunctive *(be/were),*
2. Permissive *(may/might/let + infinitive),*
3. Tense-Mood *(lived, had lived),*
4. Conditional *(should/would + infinitive),*
5. Compulsive *(be + infinitive).*

The System of two Moods (M.Y. Bloch)

1. Actual (Indicative)
2. Imaginary (Subjunctive).

The Subjunctive mood:

1. **Spective** mood:

   a) **pure spective** *(be* and *imperative)* = ***Subjective*** *I*

   b) **modal spective** *(may, let, should + infinitive)* – ***Modal Spective***.

2. **Conditional** mood*:*

   a) **stipulative** *(were, knew)* = ***Subjective II***.

   b) *b)* **consective** *(had known)* = ***Subjective III***.

M.Y. Bloch's theory

- **The formal mark** of the opposition **Indicative - Subjunctive** in is the **tense-retrospect shift** (tense-phase shift in our terminology).

- The opposition of **perfect and non-perfect phases** turns into the opposition of **relative** substitutes for the **absolute past** and **present tenses** of the **indicative**. For example:

- I ***know*** it (present real) - *I wish I **knew** it* (present unreal);

- I ***knew*** it (past real) - *I wish I **had known** it* (past unreal).

Semantic approach.
The formal feature – tense-phase shift

- The only formal feature that distinguishes Indicative - Subjunctive is the **tense-phase shift**.

- **Tense and phase are Verbal categories other than mood.**

- The categories of **tense and phase** in certain contexts are used as the **means of expressing modality** (namely modality of unreality), **not mood**.

- **One grammatical category cannot be expressed by another -** a certain **confusion between mood and modality**.

L.S. Barchudarov's approach to the category of Mood as twofold system

1. **Imperative mood** (marked) – intensive, expresses inducement (command, request, etc.):
   - ***Come** here!*
   - *I suggest that you / he **come** here tomorrow.*

2. **Indicative mood** (unmarked) – extensive, realized in different contexts:
   - *He **is** President (reality).*
   - *He looks as if he **is** President (unreality-non-factuality).*
   - *Perhaps he **is** President. The chances are he **is** President (unreality-supposition).*

The Indicative and the Imperative Moods are opposed **within the time sphere of the non-past**

<u>**Past tense**</u> forms are used to express different modal meanings (modality) in different contexts (**not mood forms**, but tense forms):

- *He **knew** it* (past reality);
- *I wish he **knew** it* (present unreality-non-factuality)
- *Perhaps he **knew** it* (past unreality-supposition).

The tense shift is a **secondary meaning** of the categorial form of the past tense.

Barchudarov's theory of mood – more logical and free of controversies:

- it makes a clear distinction between mood and modality;

- it specifies the meanings expressed by mood forms, as well as tense and phase forms, and other means of expressing modality;

- it analyzes the present state of the language and is not oriented towards dead languages;

- it treats combinations with *Modal* verbs *as free lexical*-syntactic means of expressing modality;

- *it* avoids homonymy in language structure.

Verbal means of expressing unreality

- *(he)* **go/be** *(I insist that he* **come** *on time)*;
- **were** *for all persons (I* **wish I / he were** *ten years younger)*;
- **knew/went (I** *wish he* **knew** *it)*;
- **had known/had gone** *(He behaved* **as if he had known** *it)'*,
- **should/would + infinitive** *(If he could he* **would go at once)**,
- **should/would + perfect infinitive (If** *he* **had been there he would have gone** *at once)*,

- ***should + infinitive*** *for all persons* (*I insist that he* **should go now**);
- ***may/might + infinitive*** (*I brought the book so that you* **might read** *it*);
- ***would + infinitive*** (*I wish he* **would come**);
- ***can/could + infinitive*** (*He moved nearer so that we* **could hear** *each other*).

Detailed consideration of verbal means of expressing unreality

- **(he) be/go; (he) were**

✔ special forms of the Subjunctive mood.

✔ called the Present Subjunctive *(be/go)* and Past Subjunctive *(were).*

✔ Prof. Smirnitsky calls them Subjunctive I and II respectively.

✔ Prof. Barchudarov regards them as forms of the **Imperative mood.**

knew/went; had known/had gone

- the forms of the **past tense of the Indicative mood**;

- the unreality of the action is expressed not by a special mood form but by the past tense form with reference to the present;

- the extensive use of *was* instead of *were* in sentences as *I wish I **were** in London - I wish I **was** in London,* though formally this distinction still survives in the singular of the verb to be (I *were);*

- Professor Barchudarov treats these forms as **past tense forms**, which are **outside the category of mood;**

- In A.I.Smirnitsky's theory these forms **represent Subjunctive II** (present and past tense).

should/would + non-perfect/perfect infinitive

- are often referred to as the analytical forms of the **Conditional Mood**.

- The combination with the non-perfect infinitive is usually called the present conditional, the one with the perfect infinitive - the past conditional.

- A.I.Smirnitsky called it "dependent unreality" (обусловленная нереальность), used in the principal clause of a complex sentence with a clause of unreal condition, but they also occur in independent sentences where the unreal condition is implied.

- modern grammarians consider them as **free combinations** used to express unreality.

should + infinitive

1. *I insist that you **should go** there.*
2. *It is necessary that he **should go** there.*
3. *It is natural that he **should go** there.*

- In 1) and 2) the combination *should + **infinitive*** - interchangeable with the form *(you/he) go* (unreal action).

  A.I. Smirnitsky: an **analytical form of the Suppositional mood (**not clear if the action will take place or not.

  L.S.Barchudarov: a **free combination**.

- In 3) the form of the perfect infinitive may be used, in 2) it is impossible.

- The form *go* may be used in 2), which is impossible in 3).

- In 3) *should* is not devoid of its lexical meaning and together with the infinitive forms a **free combination.**

may/might + infinitive

- are sometimes treated as an **analytical form of** the **Subjunctive mood** on the assumption that *may and might* have developed into auxiliaries and lost their meaning;

- are **free combinations:** though the meaning of the modal verbs may be weakened it is never lost completely.

would + infinitive in conditional clauses

- is treated as a **free combination** because *would* in such cases always preserves its lexical meaning: *If you **would come** I should be very happy.*

- is an **analytical form** used to express a succeeding action (V.N. Zhigadlo).

can/could + infinitive

- is **never** treated as an **analytical** mood form.

_____

- **A wide variety** of the verbal means is used to express **unreality**.

- Some of them may be used to express **reality** as well (tense and phase forms);

- Others are used to express **unreality in specific contexts.**

- Question: what are the **contexts that precondition** the use of these means?

Free and dependent use of verbal means expressing unreality

- **The independent (or free) use** - the choice of means is **independent of the structure** of the sentence and is only determined by **meaning**, or by the **attitude** of the speaker toward the actions expressed in the sentence: *Come here!*

- **The dependent use** - the choice of the means **depends on the structure** of the sentence (on the **type of the subordinate clause**, in which this means occurs), and on **the lexical character of the center of predication in the principle clause**: *I suggest that he come here.*

- **The traditional use** - the use of the verbal means expressing unreality is a **matter of tradition** (set phrases): *God bless you! So be it!*

The Traditional Use
of verbal means expressing unreality

includes such expressions:

- *Success attend you!*
- *Be ours a happy meeting!*
- *Long live the King!*
- *Heaven forbid! Suffice to say...!*
- *As it were (как бы так сказать).*

These are survivals of the **old use** of the Subjunctive mood, and most of them express indirect **inducement**.

New sentences cannot be formed on this pattern.

The independent use
of forms expressing unreality

- **Imperative mood forms** in **simple** sentences used to express **inducement**: *Stand up! Sit down! Behave yourselves!* etc.

- **Combinations of modal verbs** with the infinitive used to express **supposition in simple sentences**: *She **might be ruining** his whole life! He **could be** one of my relatives.*

- **Combinations of modal words** with:

  (a) the Indicative mood forms: ***Maybe** we **are** both kidding ourselves?*

  (b) combinations of modal verbs with the infinitive: ***Perhaps** you **may be able to discuss** it with Or Pearson?* used to express **supposition**.

The dependent use
of verbal means expressing unreality

Non-factuality:

- The Subjunctive **were, past tense forms and combinations of modal verbs with the infinitive** in **object** subordinate clauses with **to wish**: *She wished that Mike were with her.*

- **Past tense forms** in **object** subordinate clauses with the expression **you would think** : ***Anyone would think** you'd **been brought up** on millions.*

- The extinct form **were** and forms of **the past tense** in **predicative** subordinate clauses and **adverbial clauses of comparison** with **as if/ as though**: *I feel **as if** I were on another planet.*

- The form **were** and **past tense forms** in subordinate clauses of **conditio*n: If* she **had been born** *in an African tribe she would have been a witch doctor*.

- Combinations of **modal verbs** *should/would* with the **infinitive** in **the principal clause** of a complex sentence with the **subordinate clause of unreal condition**.

Inducement:

- The form of the **Imperative mood** and combinations of 'should' **with the infinitive in object, appositive and predicative subordinate clauses** with **words of imperative semantics:**

   *The President's **instruction**, were that it **should not become** press sensation*.

- **Past tense forms in object** subordinate clauses with **'**would rather','' would sooner', 'it's time' in the principal clause:

   *If you came in to help **I'd rather** you **helped. I'd sooner** you **left.***

Supposition:

- **Mood, tense and phase** forms, combinations of modal verbs **with the infinitive in** subordinate clauses with words of suppositional **semantics as** centers of **predication:**

  *The **possibility** that she **was making** a dreadful mistake appalled her.*

  *It seemed **likely** that she **might** soon **have to search** for other employment.*

Conclusion

- The use of verbal means to express **inducement** and **supposition** may be both free and dependent.

- The use of verbal means expressing **non-factuality** is mainly **dependent** (induced by the structural means (complex sentence) and lexical means used as centers of predication in the principal clause).

- The meanings of the grammatical and lexical means are **compatible.**

- The dependent use may be explained by feet that **non-factuality** is farther from reality than inducement and supposition. It is implicit negation of reality and as such may be represented only in a bound form.