

Mood and modality in Oceanic languages

Kilu von Prince

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- 5 I will also point out some **open questions**.

Traditional approaches to modality

Example

Force Flavor

We *have to* dance.

She *must* be hungry.

We *can* dance.

She *may* have danced.

We *may* dance.

(compare [Kratzer, 1991](#))

Traditional approaches to modality

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deontic

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Traditional approaches

- Focus on the dimensions of force and flavor.

Traditional approaches

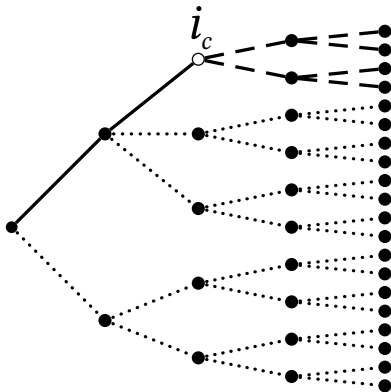
- Focus on the dimensions of force and flavor.
- Focus on auxiliaries as expressions of modality.

Modality in Oceanic languages

Oceanic modal expressions differ from Standard European in various ways:

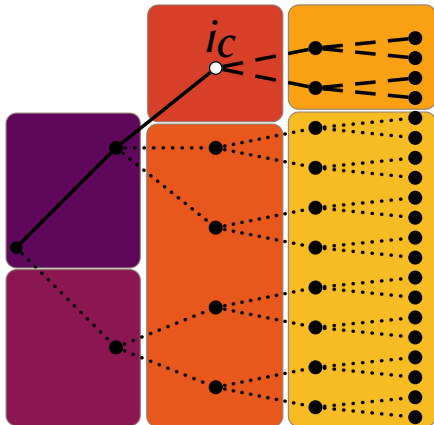
- A different set of semantic factors structures Oceanic TAM systems.
- Modal meanings are not typically expressed by auxiliaries.

Branching Time

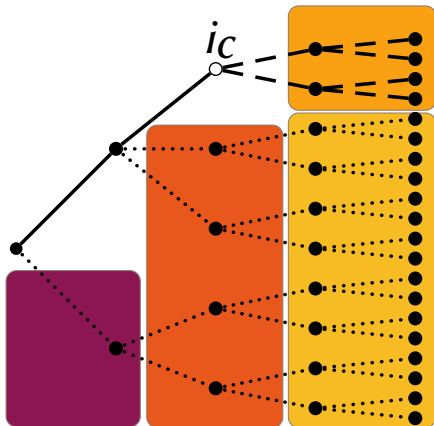


von Prince (2019)

Temporal-modal domains



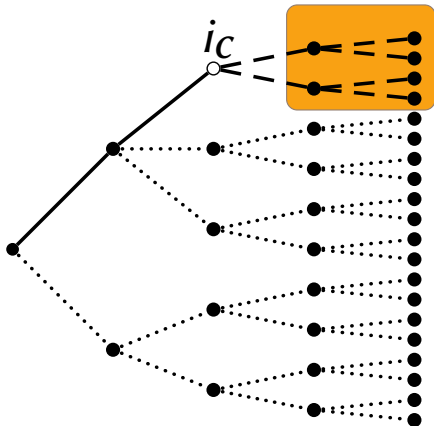
The irrealis domain



von Prince *et al.* (2022)

General

The possible future(s)



Methods

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- Two storyboards for possible future reference: The Fortune Teller (TFS Working Group, 2010), Festival (von Prince, 2018).

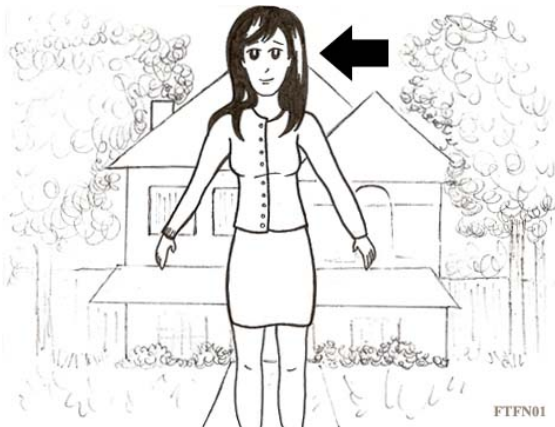
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- For storyboard methodology, see [Burton & Matthewson \(2015\)](#).

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- For application to Oceanic languages, see [von Prince *et al.* \(2018\)](#).

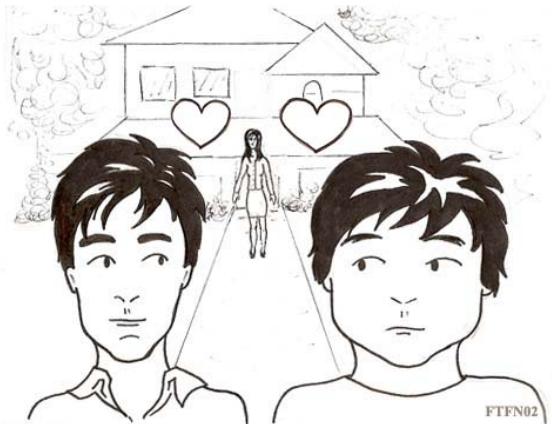
The Fortune Teller



TFS Working Group (2010)

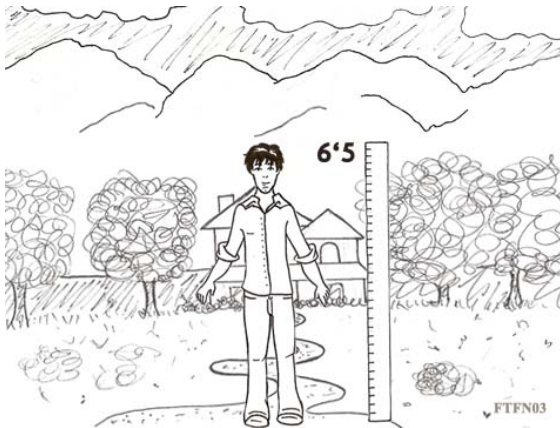
Fortune Teller

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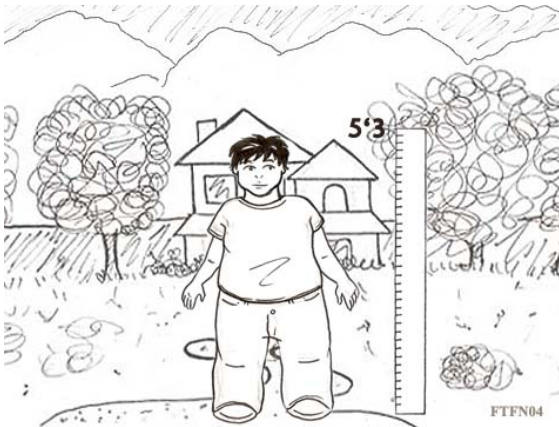
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TFS Working Group (2010)

The possible future(s): Elicitation



“What will happen if I marry him?”

The possible future(s): Elicitation



The possible future(s): Elicitation

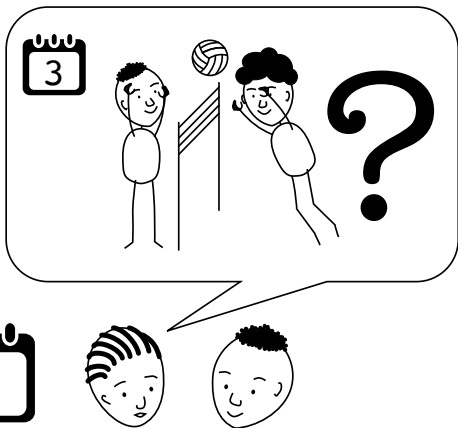


“If you marry him, you will have many children.”

Example expression: Daakaka

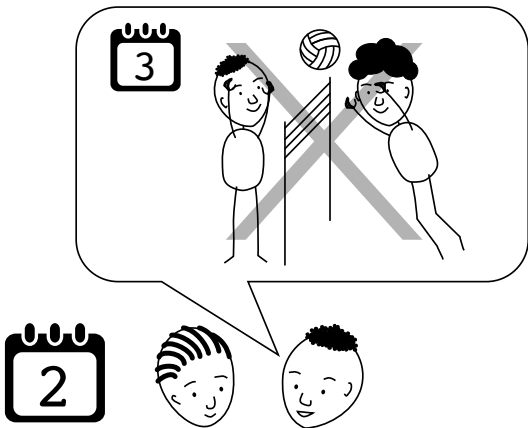
- (1) *Ko=t lene temeli man na ma waswas a veop,*
 2SG=DIST marry child male COMP REAL thin and long
te nat-omaa nye ka ye=p puo.
 then child.of-2DL.POSS PC ASR 3DL=POT many
 “If you marry the skinny and tall boy, you’ll have lots of
 children.” (FortuneTeller_AN18/19)

Negative Future



“Will you play volleyball tomorrow?”

Negative Future



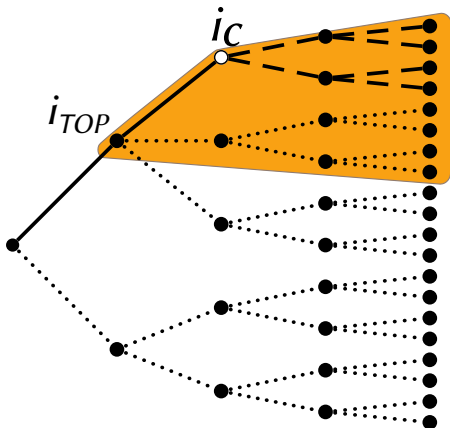
“No, I won’t play volleyball tomorrow.”

Example structure: Daakaka

(2) *ee, saka na=n ple*
no NEG.ASR 1SG=NEG.POT play
“no, I won’t play.”

Future tense and topic time

Expressions of future reference are often relative to the topic time, not the utterance time in Oceanic.



Future-oriented possibilities

Daakaka (von Prince & Margetts, 2019):

- (3) *temeli mwe yas mwe wese [ka we te vislee]*
 child REAL strong REAL enough COMP POT cut bow.and.arrow
 “the boy was strong enough to make a bow and arrows”

Future-oriented possibilities

Daakaka (von Prince & Margetts, 2019):

- (5) *temeli mwe yas mwe wese [ka we te vislee]*
 child REAL strong REAL enough COMP POT cut bow.and.arrow
 “the boy was strong enough to make a bow and arrows”
- (6) *...s-an pon-pon=an mwe goli na mwe*
 ...CL3-3SG.POSS REDUP-whistle=NMLZ REAL writhe COMP REAL
goli, ra to wese [ra=n ka]
 writhe 1PL.INCL NEG.REAL enough 1PL.INCL=NEG.POT say
 “its whistling is so convoluted, we can’t imitate it” (6118)

Apprehensives

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 - Complement clauses of verbs such as *fear* (*I'm afraid you might fall.*)
- Compare [Lichtenberk \(1995\)](#).

Apprehensives in Mangap-Mbula

- (7) *Go=bo soi!*
2SG.SBJ=APPR fall
“Careful, you might fall!” (Bugenhagen, 1989: 28)

Apprehensives: distribution

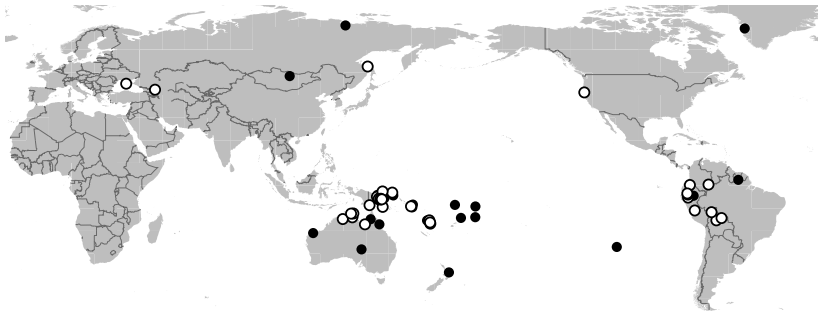


Figure: Distribution of apprehensive markers (based on a preliminary survey). White: termed *apprehensive* or *apprehensional*; black: different term applied.

Elicitation: Woodchopper



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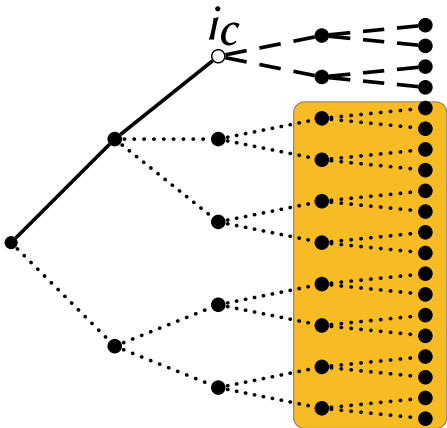


Structures

- (8) *Te to vu ne ka na=p tewilya te ka*
 then NEG.REAL good TRANS COMP 1SG=POT trip then COMP
na=p mur vyan yen wye.
 1SG=POT fall go in water
 “And it would not be good if I stumbled on it, and fell into
 the water.”

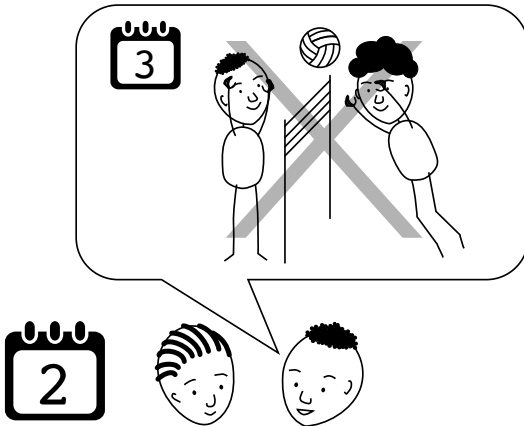
Counterfactual future(s)

Counterfactual future



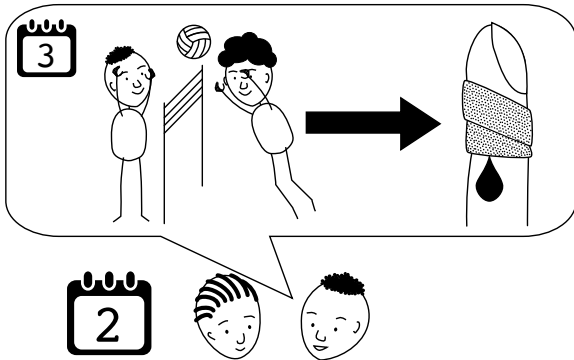
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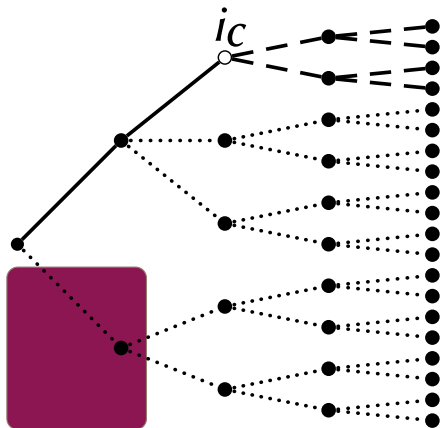
“If I were to play tomorrow, the cut on my finger would/might bleed again.”

Counterfactual future: Daakaka

- (9) *ka na=t ple volibol te volibol ka we me*
 COMP 1SG=DIST play volleyball then volleyball ASR POT come
syute vy-ok te myanok ente saka ne
 hit hand.of-1SG.POSS then wound this NEG.ASR NEG.POT
map.
 heal
 “If I played volleyball, the volleyball would hit my hand and
 then my wound wouldn’t heal” (von Prince *et al.*, 2018)

Counterfactual past/present

Counterfactual past



Counterfactual past/present

Fortune Teller



“If you had married the short guy, you two would have been rich.”

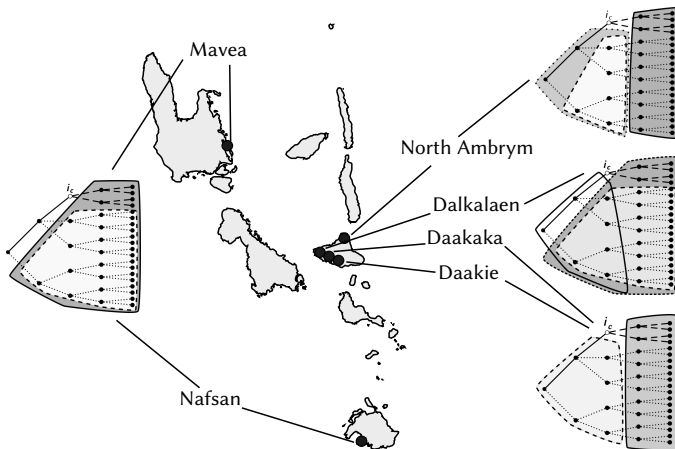
Counterfactual past/present

 Daakaka

- (10) *ka ko=p pwer tevyan yaapu ente, te bili ka*
 COMP 2SG=POT stay with man this then time ASR
s-amaa mani nyoo tu puo.
 CL3-3DL.POSS money PL DIST plentiful
 “If you had married this man, you two would have been
 rich.” (FortuneTeller_SB.038)

Counterfactual past/present

Systems



(von Prince *et al.*, 2018)

Necessity

- Not all languages appear to have systematic expressions of necessity.

(11) *kin-veni te bu-on ka we mas pwe ne*
 pinch-dead then smell.of-3SG ASR POT NEC stay TRANS
vy-am

hand.of-2sg

“if you pinch it dead, then its smell will absolutely stay on your hand.”

(12) *naana, nye na=m dimyane ka na mas vyan etes*
 mom 1SG 1SG -REAL want MOD 1SG NEC go at.the.sea
 “Mom, I absolutely want to go to the sea.”

Necessity

- Not all languages appear to have systematic expressions of necessity.
- Some Vanuatu languages use Bislama *mas* “must” for some expressions of necessity, but the use is different from English *must*.

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“if you pinch it dead, then its smell will absolutely stay on your hand.”

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- Others treat them as expressions of counterfactual necessity/possibility ([Van Linden & Verstraete, 2008](#)).
- Sometimes, expressions translated as *should* are simply described as expressing “deontic modality”.

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- I argue that English *should*, *could* and corresponding expressions in other languages denote counterfactual necessities/possibilities.
- We need to find out more about such expressions (as in *I should have come, but I got stuck at work*, or *we should finish this, but we probably won't*.)

Conclusions

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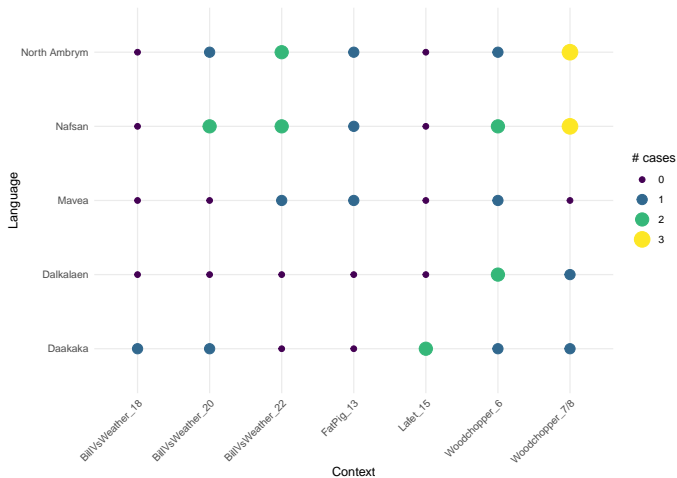
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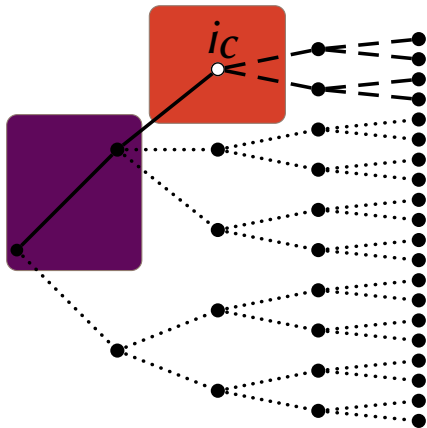
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- Oceanic languages often express modal notions with either
 - 1 markers in the predicate complex, or
 - 2 more complex, embedding structures
- There is already a good set of storyboards for eliciting specific modal notions.
- More materials and data is needed, for example on expressions of necessity, and on weak/counterfactual modal notions (*should/could*).

Thank you for listening!
Time for questions!

Apprehensive contexts in storyboards



The actual



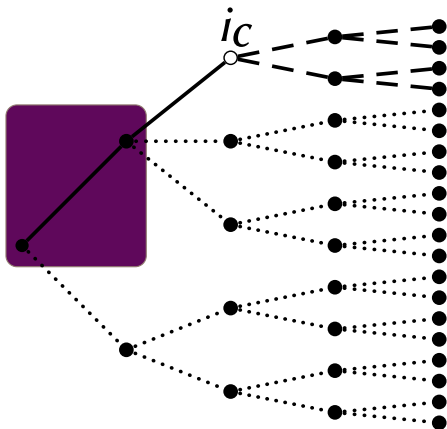
General

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- The questionnaire in [Dahl \(1985\)](#) is still a good resource for eliciting common tense and aspect categories in the actual domain (but not in the irrealis domain).

The actual past



The actual past

- Example: *Yesterday, I watched a football game.*



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- What to watch out for:

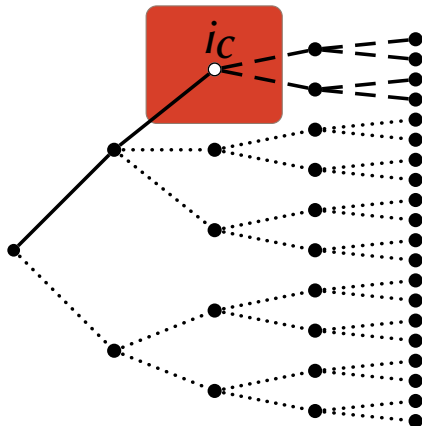
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We used to make our own clothes, today we buy them from the store.
 - Interaction with negation:
I didn't watch the football game yesterday.

The actual present





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References I

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