

**THEORETICAL JUSTIFICATION OF THE GRAMMATICAL CATEGORY
REALIS/IRREALIS AUTONOMY**

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Abstract:

The article analyzes theoretical justification of the phenomenon realis/irrealis and its reflection on the language, as well the importance to distinguish irrealis from modality terms in the literature.

Key words: realis/irrealis, encode, direct perception, domain of modality, complex conceptual concept, grammes, grammatical constructions

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Although the difference between modality and irrealis is clear, it is important to distinguish irrealis from modality terms in the literature. This is reflected even in scientific works dedicated to the theoretical justification of realist autonomy. They refer to the types of discourse attitudes (imagination, knowledge, etc.), i.e., the domain of modality, to clarify what irrealis encodes. For example, considering the definitions of the state of reality given by M.Mithun² and J.Elliott³, we can observe differences between them. For example, M.Mithun states: “Realis describes situations as known, happened or happening through direct perception. Irrealis, on the other hand, describes situations that can only be understood through imagination⁴.”

According to J.Elliott, the realis, as a prototype, expresses whether the event or situation is active or real. A prototypically unrealistic proposition presupposes that an event is imaginary or hypothetical, and is therefore defined as an event that is potential or possible but not considered real⁵. Refusal of the reduction of irrealis to modality can be established by grounding the sentence in conceptually non-modal situations, that is, the speaker’s attitude to the proposition representing this sentence. Means that reveal the meaning of the sentence means that it is not based on realis. This can be done for three completely different semantic purposes:

1) Expression of irrealis in the structure of the sentence is described as not occurring or not happening in reality. For example, negative sentences may “counterfactually” conform to this view of irrealis;

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² Mithun M. The relativity of irrealis. In Joan Bybee and Suzanne Fleischmann (eds.) // Modality in grammar and discourse. Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 1995. – P. 367-387.

³ Elliott J. Realis and irrealis: forms of grammaticalisation of reality. Linguistic Typology 5. 2000. – P. 55-90.

⁴ Mithun M. The relativity of irrealis. In Joan Bybee and Suzanne Fleischmann (eds.), 1995. – P. 367-387. Modality in grammar and discourse. Philadelphia: John Benjamins. – P. 173.

⁵ Elliott J. Realis and irrealis: forms of grammaticalisation of reality // Linguistic Typology 5. 2000. – P. 55-90; 66-67.

2) The content of the sentence is considered as one of many mutually exclusive alternatives. It should not be excluded from the list of other alternatives that the speech can be about realis. This view of the irrealis can be equated with “not excluding the realis”;

3) The speech is related to reality without spatio-temporal indicators. The content of the sentence can be temporarily general or typical. This view of the unreal can be called “referentiality”.

Thus, from a conceptual point of view, realis/irrealis signs of reality are multifaceted levels. In determining the contrast between the [+realistic] and [-real] meaning of Irrealis, one should not take the one-sided meaning of the realist category. In this regard, J.Bybee¹ offers the following opinion: “... it is absolutely inappropriate to deny the existence of linguistically important irrealis. In fact, irrealis should be considered a “supercategory” (a term sometimes used to denote modality) that includes multiple domains related to the content of the sentence, the description of reality.

From this point of view, irrealis is considered a complex conceptual concept like the category of modality, and the need to distinguish between them has not lost its relevance.

Grammatical constructions are studied for two main reasons. One of them is a diachronic cause, which serves the grammatical meaning of the entire construction. Thus, when examining the relationship between original meaning and resulting meaning, the whole construction must be taken into account². The second reason is synchronicity. In this case, since any morpheme affects only part of the meaning of the grammaticalized construction, it is impossible for one type of etymological elements to have similar or even close meanings in different constructions. Thus, it is incorrect to interpret the constructions of the verb have with the meaning of completion and obligation as similar. Nevertheless, it is precisely such attempts that have led especially less educated language analysts to the idea that the existence of different functions of grammes in different languages and the development of vague terminology can cover wide areas of the semantic field. A number of studies focus on the use of the term “irrealis” to denote etymologically related elements in various constructions that are sometimes not synchronistically connected.

Until now, in the linguistic literature published in the West, the concepts of “realis” and “irrealis” have been interpreted, in most cases, depending on the categories of mood and modality. On the other hand, although they are used in linguistics (in different or the same meanings) as a universal phenomenon, there are views that they do not justify themselves in terms of content and meaning³. The problem is that the grammatical and lexical means reflecting realis/irrealis are considered to belong to different categories, and the terms used for them, in most cases, give the impression that they are far from accurate in content. Therefore, the selection of terms and theoretically alternative units that correspond to the meanings of this modality and mood can be the impetus for the emergence of a universal grammatical category. A discussion of the terms mood and modality cannot fully capture the meanings of these states and situations. However, the analysis of the issue within the framework of realis/irrealis terms is essentially a more complete solution.

¹ Bybee J. “Irrealis” as a grammatical category. *Anthropological Linguistics* 40. 1998. – P. 257-271.

² Bybee J. L., Revere D. P., William P. *The Evolution of Grammar: Tense, Aspect and Modality in the Languages of the World*. - Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

³ Cristofaro S. Descriptive notions vs. grammatical categories: unrealized states of affairs and ‘irrealis’ // *Language Sciences* 34. 2012. – P. 131-46.

For this reason, we think that, first of all, it is appropriate to discuss the meaning of these terms. Of course, the use of the terms *realis/irrealis* within the framework of these directions of linguistics can also be a proof of our above opinion. The terms *realis* and *irrealis* were first used by the linguist J. Bybee. The scientist first conducted research on the application of these terms to the categories of inclination and modality¹. Then the cases of use of the *realis/irrealis* category in other languages were analyzed and these categories were studied comparatively. In the Uzbek language, although verbs have been widely studied in terms of mood and modality, their morphosyntax has not been considered. The individual cases that our collected data are summarized within the meaning of *realis/irrealis* show the importance of studying *realis/irrealis* in the Uzbek language as proof of this category.

Regarding the theoretical issues of the *realis/irrealis* category, as S. Cristoforo pointed out, it is important to understand the difference between the semantic (or conceptual) meaning of the category in question and the grammatical category that represents the same meaning². That is why it is important to be more careful when using the terms *modality* and *inclination*, the author adds. It can be seen from the mentioned opinions and considerations that in the analysis of the meaning of *realis/irrealis*, the difference between the semantic and grammatical categories is supposed to have a fundamental basis.

P. Palmer defines *modality* as “related to the status of a sentence expressing a situation³.” This corresponds to the quality of meaning described above. Because it is unclear what state it is related to, and what state the sentence status is related to. The definition given by P. Portner is more accurate. According to him, “*modality* is a linguistic phenomenon by means of which, or based on, grammar allows people to talk about certain events, which are not necessarily *real*⁴.” The author notes that it is not immediately clear how to interpret the term “*real*”. This explanation, contrary to P. Palmer’s statement, seems to be more effective in practice.

Other differences can be determined by the method used by many researchers, that is, by dividing the semantic content of the *modality* into divisions. For example, T. Givon evaluates *realis/irrealis* as a pragmatic phenomenon. He makes a preliminary classification between *presupposition* and *assertion*, then *assertions* are divided into *realis* and *irrealis*, and *realis* *assertions*, in turn, are divided into *participle* and *nonparticiple* forms⁵. P. Palmer, using a more traditional method, divides *propositional modality* into *epistemic* and *evidential* types. He also explains the differences between *modality* into types such as *deontic* and *dynamic*⁶. It seems that *realis/irrealis* categories are more widely activated as semantic categories than as grammatical categories. These categories, in turn, are close to categories such as *modality* based on the agent of the verb, *modality* based on the speaker, *epistemic* and *subjunctive*

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² Cristoforo S. Descriptive notions vs. grammatical categories: unrealized states of affairs and ‘*irrealis*’. *Language Sciences* 34. 2012. – P. 131-46.

³ Palmer F.R. *Mood and modality*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

⁴ Portner P. ‘*Verbal Mood*’; in C. Maienborn, K. von Stechow, and P. Portner (eds.) // *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning*, vol. 2. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2011. – P. 1262-1291.

⁵ Givon T. *Irrealis and the Subjunctive* // *Studies in Language* 18. 1994. – P. 265-337.

⁶ Palmer F. R. *Modality in English: Theoretical, Descriptive and Typological Issues*; in Roberta Facchinetti, Manfred Krug, and Frank B. Palmer (eds.) // *Modality in Contemporary English*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003. – P. 1-17.

modalities. The mentioned modality divisions are actually four independent semantic fields, and the relationship between them is not synchronic, but diachronic.

Overall, V. Plungian had a different approach to the issue of realis/irrealis. He proposes to limit the use of the term modality to the categories that are described as related to the concept of probability and need according to its function, and is in favor of completely removing categories such as desire and desire from the care of modality¹. The semantic properties of realis/irrealis categories are, in some cases, probabilistic, and may not be specific deictic indicators of irrealis in particular.

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¹ Plungian V. A. *Irrealis and Modality in Russian and in Typological Perspective; in Bjorn Hansen and Petr Karlik (eds.) // Modality in Slavonic Languages: New Perspectives*. Munchen: Sagner Verlag, 2005. – P. 135-146.