POSSESSION AND VOLITION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODAL MEANINGS: A CASE-STUDY FROM SICILIAN[*]

Luisa Brucale
University of Palermo
luisa.brucale@unipa.it

Egle Mocciaro
Slezská Univerzita v Opavě
egle.mocciaro@gmail.com

This article analyses two Sicilian modal constructions involving *vuliri* 'want' + infinitive and *aviri a* 'have to' + infinitive. They are used to express modal values, both non-epistemic and epistemic, and futurity. Based on Langacker's Cognitive Grammar assumptions, we describe the semantic network associated with each modal, as well as their semantic overlap. In addition, we describe how modal values interact with temporal-aspectual inflection. Our analysis shows that the epistemic values of *vuliri* are quite peripheral, while *aviri a* shows a high degree of polysemy, both in the non-epistemic and in the more abstract epistemic domain. The non-epistemic-to-epistemic shifts depend on the contextual coordinates: basically, on the actionality of the verb, and on the agentivity of the Trajector, therefore on the feature of Intentionality which has proved to be crucial in the processes here analysed. On the whole, *aviri a* exhibits a higher degree of grammaticalisation compared to *vuliri*: while the latter maintains its "verbiness", the former appears to be a stable means of modal expression interacting with the other contextual coordinates in a rather complex way.

Keywords: Sicilian modals, cognitive grammar, subjectification, modality, future

---

[*] The whole paper is the result of the close collaboration of both authors. However, for academic purposes, Luisa Brucale is responsible for §§ 1 and 3 and Egle Mocciaro for §§ 2 and 4. The final section represents a joint effort on the part of both authors. We use a strict alphabetical order which does not reflect any priority of contribution.

ПОСЕСИВНОСТА И ВОЛИТИВНОСТА ВО РАЗВОЈОТ НА МОДАЛНИТЕ ЗНАЧЕЊА: СТУДИЈА НА СЛУЧАЈ ОД СИЦИЛИЈАНСКИОТ ДИЈАЛЕКТ

Луиза Брукале
Универзитет во Палермо
luisa.brucale@unipa.it

Егле Мочаро
Шлезиски универзитет, Опава
egle.mocciaro@gmail.com

Во оваа статија ги анализираме двете модални конструкции во сицилијанскиот дијалект што се однесуваат на конструкциите *vuliri* (сака) + инфинитив и *aviri a* (мора) + инфинитив. Тие се користат за да се искажат неепистемски и епистемски модални вредности, како и идност. Врз основа на премисите на когнитивната граматика на Лангакер, ќе ја опишеме семантичката мрежа што е поврзана со секоја од овие модални конструкции, како и нивното семантичко совпаѓање. Покрај тоа, ги опишуваме начините на кои модалните вредности комуницираат со временско-аспектуалната инфлексија. Нашата анализа покажува дека епистемските вредности на *vuliri* се прилично периферни, додека *aviri a* покажува висок степен на полисемија, како во неепистемската така и во поапстрактната епистемска област. Поместувањата од неепистемското кон епистемското зависат од контекстуалните координати: во основа, од дејственоста на глаголот, од агентивноста на траекторот (субјектот фокус) и од интенционалноста, која се покажа како клучна во анализираните процеси. Во целина, *aviri a* изразува повисок степен на граматикализација во однос на *vuliri*: додека *vuliri* ја одржува својата „вербалност“, се чини дека *aviri a* е стабилно средство за модално изразување, заемодејствувајќи на покомплексен начин со другите контекстуални координати.

Клучни зборови: сицилијански модални глаголи, когнитивна граматика, субјектификација, модалност, идност

1 Introduction

The Sicilian, an Italo-Romance variety spoken in the extreme South of Italy, has an articulated analytic modal system involving different modals constructed with the infinitive form (INF) of a lexical verb. The attention will be here focused on two modal constructions, namely *aviri a* 'to have to' + INF and *vuliri* 'to want' + INF, which, beside modal values, are used to express futurity (Sicilian lacks a synthetic form of future). These constructions have already been described in the dialectological tradition (Leone 1995; Rohlfs 1969) and have also been individually analysed through diverse theoretical models (see Amenta 2004, 2010; Amenta and Mocciaro 2016, 2018; Bentley 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2000; Brucale and Mocciaro 2009). We will refer to these previous works during the discussion. However, a comprehensive account of the semantic networks of *aviri a* and *vuliri* + INF and their semantic overlap is still lacking, as is the description of their interaction with temporal-aspectual inflection.

Our corpus is built on data elicited from semi-guided interviews with speakers of different local varieties of Sicilian (Agrigento, Caltanissetta, Catania, Palermo, Siracusa). We have also compared these data with not yet published data from the *Linguistic Atlas of Sicily* (ALS) (cf. D'Agostino and Ruffino 2005; Ruffino 1995; Sottile 2019).[1] Data analysis is largely based on *Cognitive Grammar* (CG, Langacker 1991). While original at the theoretical level, this approach does not substantially deviate, however, from the traditional definition of modality (henceforth M) as a grammatical category expressing the speaker's attitude towards her utterance or towards the event contained in the proposition (Jespersen 1924; Lyons 1968; Palmer 2001).

The vagueness of this definition reflects the notional extent of the modal domain, which is in fact frequently analysed according to more specific parameters which further structure its internal space. In the reference literature, in fact, there is no agreement on number, types and limits of the features which define the modal domain. Notional pairs such as realis/irrealis, possibility/necessity, objective/subjective, volitionality/non-volitionality have been repeatedly included, rejected or redefined depending on the theoretical assumptions (Bybee et al. 1994; Givón 1990; Hengeveld 2004; Langacker 1991; Lyons 1977; Narrog 2005; Nuyts 2001; Traugott 1989; van der Auwera and Plungian 1998). Probably the most neutral labels are "epistemic/non-epistemic". Epistemic M refers to the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition, along a continuum including possibility, probability, inferred certainty (and/or evidentiality) and prediction. Non-epistemic M,

---

[1] *The Linguistic Atlas of Sicily* (ALS) is part of the research activity of the Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani (CSFLS). ALS contains the results of socio-variational surveys, conducted in over 50 points and micro-areas of Sicily, for a total of 1200 surveys and 3000 hours of recording. ALS speech data are not yet published as a freely searchable corpus. We therefore thank Giovanni Ruffino and Mari D'Agostino for making the already transcribed materials accessible to us.

in turn, is oriented on the participant, that is, it signals a condition on the participant (e.g. an agent) expressed as permission, obligation, necessity, ability and so forth.

Also in this case, however, the organisation and the internal relationships within the two sub-domains are anything but homogeneous, especially in the case of non-epistemic M (cf. Bybee et al. 1994; Hengeveld 2004; van der Auwera and Plungian 1998).

Starting from the observation that both modal sub-domains display not only an internal structure but also a high degree of interrelation and overlap, we will adopt a scalar approach as the basis of our reasoning. Modals, in fact, express different semantic nuances depending on their various interaction with different parameters and contextual coordinates (aspect, actionality, as well as transitivity features, such as agentivity).

The paper is organised as follows: in the next section we illustrate the theoretical framework within which the analysis is placed; in sections three and four we analyse the non-epistemic and epistemic uses of *aviri a* and *vuliri* and summarise the results in two modal maps; finally, in section five, we discuss the impact of the temporal-aspectual features on the modal meanings.

2 Theoretical assumptions

Langacker (1991: 548-49) defines M as a strategy of *Grounding* which locates the described event *vis-à-vis* the Ground, that is, "the speech event, its participants, and its immediate circumstances". The basic distinction between epistemic and non-epistemic is maintained, although reinterpreted on the basis of the assumptions of the cognitive framework. In the cognitive approaches (as well as in the functionalist ones referred to in 1), non-epistemic (participant-oriented or root or deontic) values are generally claimed to be more basic than epistemic ones. According to Talmy (1988), deontic M expresses a force-dynamic relationship between the speaker and the described event; in other words, since the speaker is portrayed as the *locus* of the potency directed towards the realisation of the event, the deontically modalised utterance (e.g. an order or a necessity) expresses a more concrete meaning than a judgement of truth. Following Talmy (1988), Sweetser (1990: 49-75) claims that the deontic → epistemic shifts depend on a metaphorical mapping from the concrete domain of socio-physical forces to the abstract domain of reasoning. This mapping accounts for the difference between deontic and epistemic meanings of the same modal, such as *You must go* (which can be analysed as: "An authority compels you to go") and *You must be tired* ("A direct evidence compels me to the conclusion that you are tired").

Nevertheless, while the metaphorical interpretation is undoubtedly useful to explain the notional link between the source and the target domains, the inherent discrete character of this notion fails to account for the scalarity of modal meanings. Other scholars, in fact, reinterpret the role of metaphor intertwining it with a metonymical interpretation which accounts for the gradual character of process. This process is context-dependent, that is, it originates within the linguistic context through metonymic and inferential operations. In particular, metonymical operations include:

(1) emphasizing a secondary or implicational feature of the modal meaning, or (2) defocusing a primary semantic meaning (cf. Heine 1993; Hopper and Traugott 2003; Bybee et al. 1994: 196 ff.; Goossens 1995).

2.1 Subjectification

Langacker (1991) analyses modal sub-domains as different results of subjectification.
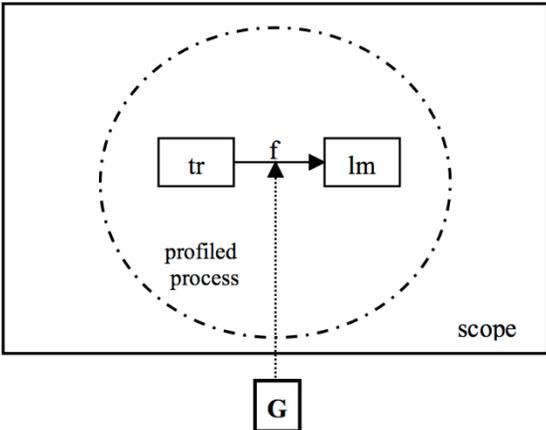
**Figure 1a**. Objectively-construed relation (Langacker 1991: 216, adapted)
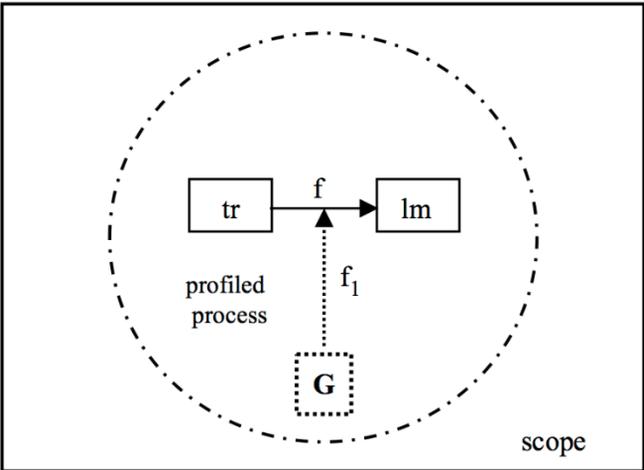
Figure 1b. Subjectively-construed relation (Langacker 1991: 216 adapted)

Subjectification consists in the realignment of (a facet of) the relationship between the entities involved in the event. In a non-modalised utterance (e.g. *Egle goes to Paris*), these are:

1. a Trajector (Tr), i.e. the salient, moveable and active entity – in this case the subject (S), *Egle*
2. the Landmark (Lm), i.e. the components of the event to be realised by the Tr (*goes to Paris*).

In a modalised utterance, the realignment concerns the potency (f in figure 1) directed towards the realisation of the Lm from the objective to the subjective axis. In other words, the locus of potency is no longer the Tr, but it is anchored to the speech act, that is, the Ground (G), which is now included in the scope of predication and "to some extent it is brought onstage as a profiled participant" (Langacker 1991: 216). The G can be focused or defocused from the representation of the event (i.e., the profile), becoming progressively less salient, along the following continuum: S (i.e., an objectively-construed participant) → the speaker → some other individual → an unspecified facet of the physical or social world → the logical structure of reality (see Langacker 1991: 272 ff.). Figure 2 schematically represents the G's different degrees of salience:
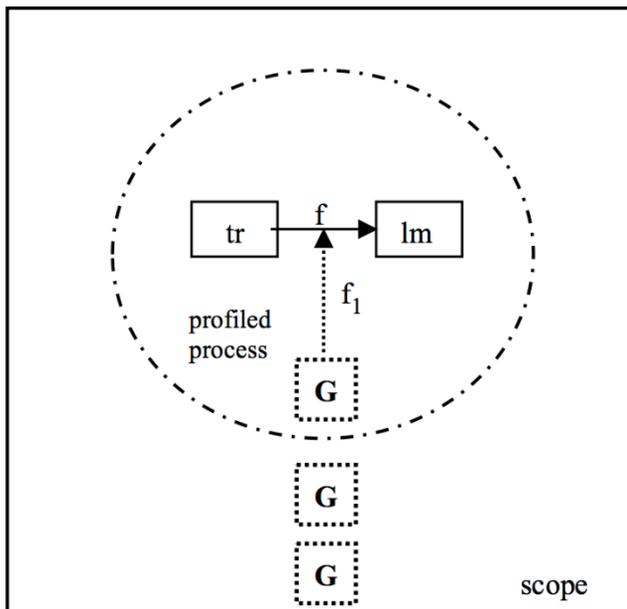

Figure 2. G's degrees of salience

This interpretation highlights the gradualness of modal shifts and, therefore, it is consistent with the historical development of modals (Traugott 1989)[2] and, in particular, with the metonymical or metaphorical-metonymical models of description (Heine et al. 1991; Heine 1993; Hopper and Traugott 2003; Goossens 1995).

3 *Aviri a* + INF

Our analysis has shown a great degree of polysemy for *aviri a* + INF, whose meanings range around two prototypical cores, a necessive and an epistemic one. In a crosslinguistic perspective, Bybee et al. (1994: 183 ff.) have shown that the *have to* + INF constructions are frequently associated to an obligational meaning which may derive both from the finite ('have to') and the infinitive forms of the verb (lexical verb). Indeed, 'have' indicates that an agent metaphorically possesses (*has*) an activity that, being expressed with an INF, lacks temporal grounding and may be conceived of as non yet actual and, in fact, as a projected one. Consequently, the periphrasis conveys both modal meaning and temporal information (i.e. a non-past and a non-present sense[3]). The presence of the preposition *a* "to" contributes to make explicit the directional / projective character of the construction.

We can represent the schematic import of the periphrasis as in figure 3:

$$X \xrightarrow{\textit{has}} Y$$
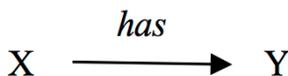
Figure 3. Schematic import of *aviri a*

---

[2] In her seminal 1989 paper on the rise of epistemicity in English, E.C. Traugott identifies one of the main general tendencies in semantic change in the increasing subjectification of meanings. More specifically, Traugott (1989: 31-43) analyses the development of epistemic modals from an initial stage in which they were main verbs; crossing the stage of "pre-modals" these verbs have gradually acquired a deontic, weakly subjective, modal meaning. The diachronic investigation on English shows that when epistemic meanings arise they concern weakly subjective meanings (such as the evidential uses of **sculan* "to owe" which do not require a strong involvement of the speaker) which, only later, develop a more strongly subjective epistemicity.

[3] This also explains why the "have to" constructions + INF are also linked with a future meaning. As Bybee et al. (1994: 258 ff.) pointed out, future can develop from the obligational meaning, or it can arise directly from the notion of "projection" which is implied in the infinitive form. They remark, however, that in Romance languages obligational constructions built on markers of possession always involve a prepositional marker. This can be a directional preposition, as in the case of Sicilian *a*, as well as French *à* and Italian *da* (all meaning "to"), or another marker of possession, such as Spanish and Portuguese *de* "of". It is worth noting that - at least in a few local varieties of Sicilian - the preposition *di* "of" coexists with *a* in the "have to" constructions. Although we didn't yet investigate their functional distribution, a cursory look at the phenomenon in question suggests that, while *a* is generally employed both in the deontic and in the epistemic domain, *di* is univocally linked with the former, as in *Aiu di fari 'na cosa* "I have something to do". This is, however, a less stable periphrasis if compared with *aviri a* + INF, in that the possessive value of *aviri* is still transparent, as the presence of the direct object clearly shows.

This explanation is consistent with the diachronic analysis proposed in Bentley (1998; 2000), who claimed that the primary chronological sense of *aviri a* is deontic. It is linked with the notion of necessity of an action to be performed by a morally responsible agent and, therefore, it contains an element of "will" (see also Heine 1995). In contemporary Sicilian *aviri a* + INF means compelling necessity imposed on an agent by a certain state of affairs or, in other contexts, obligation imposed by an authoritative speaker to the hearer. In other words, the construction expresses both a strictly modal (necessive) sense and a directive one[4]. The inherent features acting on these domains can be formalised as (external) Necessity (N) and Intentionality (I), which represent forces pushing the Tr towards the realisation of the Lm (cf. Brucale and Mocciaro 2009). These forces differ in the alignment. N is, in this case, an externally imposed force (that is, it lies in G), while I is internal to the participant who carries out the event expressed in the proposition[5]. N and I are both scalar and interacting values. The structure of the *locus of potency* ranks the meaning of the construction along the continuum from compelling necessity to obligation, interacting with the degree of I of the Tr:

(1)   *tu*   a'   (a) *ffari*   *comu*   *ti*
        you   have:PRES.2SG   (to) do:INF.PRS   as   you:DAT
        dicu   *iu*
        say:PRS.1SG   I
        'You must/have to do as I say.'

(2)   *t'*   *a*   *(a) mmaritari*   *'n chiesa*   *manzinnò*
        you:CLIT   have:PRS.2SG   (to) marry:INF.PRS   in church   otherwise
        ti   *nni*   *va*   *u*   *'mfernu*
        you:CLIT   from.here   go.PRS.2SG   to.the   hell
        'You must/have to get married in church otherwise you'll go to hell.'

(3)   *u pumaroru*   *bbonu*   *av'*   *a*   *stari*
        the tomato   good   have.PRS.3SG to   stay:INF.PRS
        o   *suli*
        to.the   sun
        'Good tomatoes must/need to stay in the sun.'

---

[4] In the context of the research on M, there are different interpretations of the relationship between M and directivity. In particular, Bybee et al. (1994: 178-179) interpret directivity as a specific type of M, that is a speaker-oriented M which is aimed at provoking a certain state of affairs. On the other hand, van der Auwera and Plungian (1998: 83) keep the two notions distinct.

[5] Bentley (1998: 128-29) lists among the deontic uses of *aviri a* also some illocutionary types such as *m'av'a ddiri paroli di me matri* ("(s)he just has to diss my mother"); this use, in fact, expressing an accusation or a complaint, can be classified as agent-oriented. Nevertheless, she points out that in the literature such uses - in which the *aviri a* construction has the role of clarifying the communicative purpose of the utterance - are not always numbered among the modal categories (cf. Van der Auwera and Plungian 1998; Narrog 2005: 680 inter al.).

In 1, an obligation is imposed by the speaker on an agentive hearer, thus the source of the modal value is the speaker and the obligation is bound to the specific speech act. In 2 and 3, the locus of potency lies in cultural or physical conditions. Since these conditions are neither speaker-dependent nor directly linked to the speech situation, 2 and 3 express a general and external necessity rather than directive obligation (i.e. an order). Moreover, in 3 the obligational reading is also blocked because the physical necessity acts on an inanimate and non-intentional S. Since inanimacy means a non-intentional S, Bentley (1998: 130) excludes the sentences with inanimate Ss from the deontic domain; rather, if an originally deontic or intentional structure occurs with an inanimate S, this fact represents the threshold beyond which the periphrasis can be understood as shifting towards a different level (namely, epistemic or future-like). While we fully agree with the non-obligational interpretation she proposes, our scalar approach allows us to range both agentive and non-agentive constructions within the same continuum. In particular, while the highest degree of I is found in constructions with animate Ss, this value is faded or only metaphorically expressed in constructions with inanimate Ss. On the other hand, N persists in constructions with inanimate Ss, as well as the forward-push dynamics.

Via a metonymical shift, the compelling necessity is translated into a logical-deductive dimension, which can be inferred from the context, as in 4, due to the presence of the verb *pinzari* "to think"; in this case, the force compelling the event is the logic of the reasoning ("I'm forced to think this because of the logical coherence of reasoning"), which produces an epistemic interpretation ("it is highly probable that…"):

(4)   *si*   *ddici*   *d'*   *accussì*   *aiu*
         if   say:PRS.2SG   of   so   have:PRS.1SG
         a   *pinzari*   *ca*   *sì*   *babbu*
         to   think:INF.PRS   that   be.PRS.2SG   stupid
         'If you say something like that, I have to think that you're stupid!'

It is likely that these uses have paved the way for a proper epistemic interpretation, as in 5 and 6, in which the speaker clearly expresses her opinion about the degree of probability and reliability of the proposition's content. This is a complex operation which consists in: 1) triggering a range of presuppositions depending on the extra-linguistic situation; 2) inferring from these presuppositions one or more virtual beliefs; 3) evaluating these beliefs and rejecting all the possible conclusions but one, which is then presented as the only valid conclusion at the moment of the speech act (cf. Dendale 1994: 28). Therefore, in this use *aviri a* expresses not only the epistemic quality of the information, but also an epistemic / inferential operation, which is evidential in nature according to Dendale (1994).

(5)   *annu*   *a*   *essiri*   *i*   *tri*
         have.PRS.3PL   to   be:INF.PRS   the.PL   three
         'It must be three (o'clock).'

(6)   *av'*   *a*   *manciari*   *quant'* *un porcu*
        have.PRS.3SG   to   eat:INF.PRS   like   a pig
        ppi   *iddu*   *essiri*   *accussì* *grossu*
        for   he   be:INF.PRS   so   fat
        'He must eat like a pig for him to be so fat.'

It is worth noting that the epistemic reading is strongly linked to the actional value of the verb (Langacker 1991: 275 ff.; Pietrandrea 2005): it is allowed only in atelic situations, i.e. with stative verbs, typically *essere* "to be", as in 5, and *avere* "to have", or activities, the latter adding a habitual interpretation, as *manciari* in 6.

A similar inference forces the periphrasis to signify a prediction, putting *aviri a* in a future-like domain. While the previous uses pertain to opinions about present situations "that are not yet part of the reality *known* by the speaker" (i.e. a "potential reality", cf. Langacker 1991: 275 ff.), in the prediction domain we are dealing with states of affairs which are not yet part of the *actual* reality, i.e. with a future and projected reality. Especially in the case of 1st person Ss, which are obviously co-referent with the speaker, prediction is a direct implication of I, rather than of the speaker's opinion. This is the case in 7 in which the statement of obligation strongly implies that the speaker *intends* to do something (cf. Bybee et al. 1994: 264). On the other hand, when a 3rd person S is involved, the statement of her intention im-plies a prediction which is based on N. In other words, 8 and 9 portray a reality which is expected by the speaker, in that a compelling logical necessity determines the certain and reliable realisation of a future event:[6]

(7)   *t'*   *aiu*   *a*   *rregalari*   *un*   *palluni*
        you.DAT   have:PRS.1SG   to   give:INF.PRS   a   ball
        'I have to give you a ball / I'm going to give you a ball.'

(8)   *st'*   *annu*   *u*   *mè*   *zzitu*   *m'*
        this   year   the   my   fiancé   I.DAT
        avi   *a*   *ffari*   *u*   *bberloccu*
        have:PRS.3SG   to   do.INF.PRS   the   diamond
        'This year my fiancé will give me a diamond ring.'

(9)   *c'*   *è*   *Pino ?*
        there.CLIT   be.PRS.3SG   Pino
        no,   *av'*   *a*   *bbeniri*
        no   have.PRS.3SG   to   come:INF.PRS
        'Is Pino there? No, he's going to come.'

---

[6] It is not surprising that 2nd person Ss are less suitable candidate to be involved in a construction expressing prediction, since they are naturally linked with the speech act context, hence with the ob-ligational reading.

It is worth noting that Sicilian, unlike Italian, lacks a synthetic future; consequently, the periphrasis is widely employed as a marker of future (beside the present tense). In all these cases, N interacts with I, due to the presence of an agentive Tr, who is realising a non-stative situation, typically a telic action (as in 7 to 9). On the other hand, 10 expresses a non-agentive activity, i.e. "to rain", which (together with the other natural events) represents the most typical instance of future-like value in Sicilian:

(10)   *av'*   *a*   *cchioviri*
         have.PRS.3SG   to   rain:INF.PRS
         'It's going to rain.'

Since a non-agentive activity is involved, here the feature of I is faded (or only metaphorically attributed to the event[7]), and the only modal feature at work is N, i.e. the logical necessity of the speaker's reasoning, as in the other non-agentive case exemplified in 3. In figure 4 we propose a synopsis of the modal values of *aviri a +* INF, which highlights the synchronic gradual shift from deontic to epistemic, as well as the focality of N and I both in the deontic and in the epistemic domains.
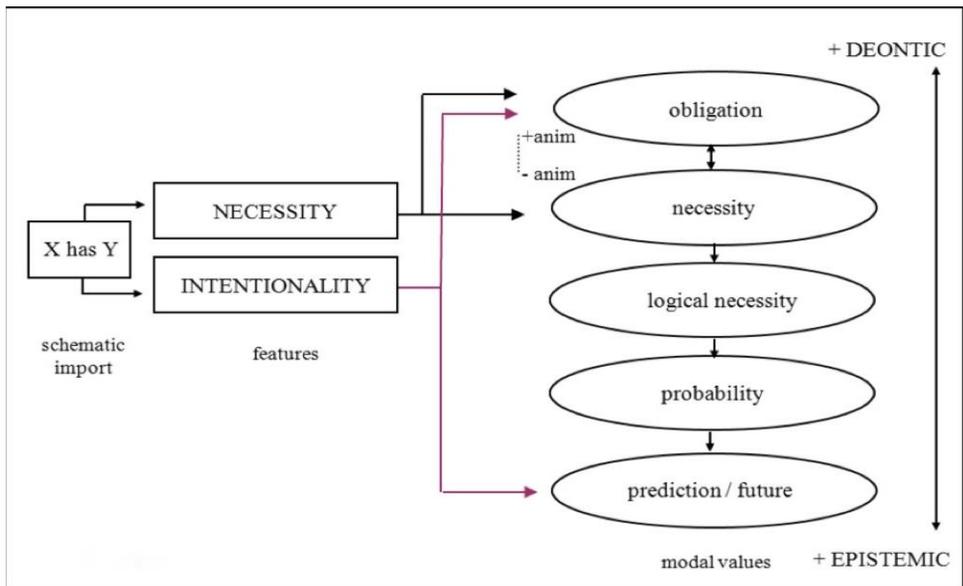
Figure 4. *Aviri a* semantic map

---

4 *Vuliri* + INF

The features I and N play a crucial role also in the modal values of *vuliri*. As a modal verb, it covers a range of meanings from necessity to prediction but, differently from *aviri a*, it maintains its original lexical value. Specifically, as a content verb, *vuliri* conveys a transitive volitional meaning, i.e. the desire (an internal condition) of an agent (Tr) towards an object, which constitutes its Lm. The schematic import of volition (cf. Heine 1993: 28 ff.) can be represented as in figure 5:

$$X \xrightarrow{\text{wants}} Y$$
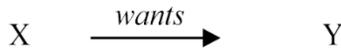
Figure 5. Schematic import of *vuliri*

This configuration can be easily transferred to an activity or an action, which will be a projected (non-actual) one, due to the directional nature of a transitive event (*Voli manciari* "he wants to eat"). This shift marks the transition towards the (non-epistemic) modal domain and is, in fact, crosslinguistically quite frequent (Bybee et al. 1994: 178). The schematic (i.e. basic and general) import of volition is broad enough to allow the selection of different implications or aspects of the overall meaning, depending on the context. Following Heine (1995), we claim that the most significant contextual coordinate which triggers the specific modal readings is agentivity, understood as a prototypical, hence, scalar category (cf. Hopper and Thompson 1980). Modal volition expresses an internal and self-oriented condition of an intentional and agentive participant. The subjectification of such meaning depends on the degree of agentivity of the Tr: a high degree of agentivity triggers intentional values, while a low degree triggers necessity values and fades intentional ones (cf. Brucale and Mocciaro 2009). Thus, in contrast with *aviri a*, I and N are mutually exclusive and give rise to different meanings.

This also explains the extension of the volitional meaning to inanimate Ss. This shift represents a metaphorical shift, namely a person to object one (cf. Heine and Claudi 1986), which also involves a metonymical constraint on the grammatical person - the 3rd, i.e. the non-person (cf. Benveniste 1966) - and the metonymical selection of an implication of the overall modal meaning, i.e. N.[8] It is worth noting that this extension is not exclusive of modal use, rather it also concerns transitive situations in which a 3rd person inanimate S is metaphorically endowed with will. Leaving aside a few contexts in which the S is a clear case of metonymy[9], we now focus on some instances in which a proper inanimate S is involved. In 11-12 the selection of an inanimate S determines a necessive interpretation even outside the proper modal construction, that is when *vuliri* is used as a mere transitive verb:

---

[8] The relationship between volition and necessity is anything but surprising and is well testified in the diachrony of different languages. Cf. Engl. *want*, which derives from an Old Norse verb meaning "to lack / miss", from which it developed the sense of "need" (cf. Bybee et al. 1994: 178).

[9] E.g. "The Law", "the Legend", etc. which embody shared human values or beliefs and, hence, do not change the overall conditions of agentivity, just pushing the interpretation towards an authoritative imposition/permission or cultural belief.

(11) *u   pumaroru   bbonu voli   assai   luci*
     the   tomato   good   want:PRS.3SG a.lot.of   light
     'A good tomato needs a lot of light.'

(12) *Com'   è   a   pasta?*
     how   be.PRS.3SG the   pasta
     Ancora   voli
     still   want:PRS.3SG
     'How's pasta (Is it ready)? It needs more time.'

This metaphorical-metonymical shift, thus, also gave rise to the deontic value of *vuliri* with inanimate Ss. Examples in 13 and 14 show that this deontic value crosses the domain of the deontic *aviri a*, specifically in the instances in which the inanimacy of the S reduces the room for an obligational reading (cf. ex. 3):

(13) *u   pumaroru   bbonu voli   stari   o   suli*
     the tomato   good   want:PRS.3SG stay:INF.PRS at.the sun
     'A good tomato needs to stay in the sun.'

(14) *a   pasta voli   cociri   (ppi   gghiessiri   bbona)*
     the pasta want:PRS.3SG cook:INF.PRS for   be.INF.PRS   good
     'The pasta needs to cook (a little more time to be ready).'

Also in these cases, in fact, I is faded and only metaphorically attributed to the S. Since both intentional and obligational values are barred, necessity is the *focal sense* of the modal use. The reoriented relation of potency is no longer internally agentive nor externally speaker-dependent, but originates from a compelling, yet generic and less prominent force (a physical, natural condition). In other words, the *locus of potency* is defocused by the "want"-metaphor and represented as a sort of inherent necessity of the S.[10]

Sometimes, *vuliri* + INF is used to diminish the force of an obligation: in this case the agentivity is implied, although defocused through an impersonal *si*-construction; in this case, agentivity lies, in fact, in the second speech act participant, when the speaker indirectly exhorts the hearer to perform an action, as in 15:

(15) *a   quarara   si   voli   inchiri*
     the pot   IMPS   want:PRS.3SG fill:INF.PRS
     (s'   a'   a   gghinchiri)
     IMPS have.PRS.3SG   to   fill:INF.PRS
     'The pot needs to / must be filled" (=you have to fill it up).'

---

[10] Note, in fact, that this interpretation is more easily accessible if a gnomic situation is represented, in which a general (non-individual) necessity is involved, as in 14.

In other words, even if compelling necessity is the probable reading when the S is inanimate, directive obligation and necessity are linked by a relation of continuity as they belong to different but contiguous domains. In 15, the sentence in brackets shows the overlap with *aviri a* also in this secondary obligational reading. Differently from *aviri a*, however, the presence of agentive Ss does not produce an unambiguous obligational reading, although it re-establishes the inherent intentional value.

Volition may shift to a mental aptitude, namely an ability, as in 16, which reports an internal enabling force acting on the S (Bybee et al. 1994: 177). This meaning, however, appears to be accessible in particular non-realis conditions, such as in negative sentences;[11] moreover, it is contextually motivated by the presence of a mental state predicate, while a proper volitional reading is selected with other predicates. On the other hand, the ability reading easily acquires an obligational nuance in another non-realis condition, i.e. in interrogative sentences. As in the case of *aviri a* (see, in particular, 1), the periphrasis here conveys an illocutionary, directive sense, so that the second speech act participant is normally encoded as the S, which *has to* intentionally realise a condition imposed by the speaker. This circumstance is exemplified in 17:

(16)   *n'*   *o*   *voli*   *capiri*
        not   it.ACC   want:PRS.3SG   understand:INF.PRS
        'He doesn't want to get it / he can't understand it.'

(17)   *ti*   *vo'*   *stari*   *mutu?*
        you.CLIT   want.PRS.2SG   stay:INF.PRS   silent
        'Would you be silent? (→Could you stay silent?).'

The interpretation may shift towards possibility (i.e. a general external force) if the S is inanimate and, hence, the Tr's I is defocused. In 18, indeed, the "want"-periphrasis expresses an only metaphorical resistance to a human will (emphasised by the presence of the empathic dative pronoun *mi* "to me"), in that the Tr does not intentionally acts:

(18)   *a*   *machina*   *non*   *mi*   *voli*   *partiri*
        the   car   not   me.DAT   want:PRS.3SG   start:INF.PRS
        'The car won't start (for me) / It's not starting.'

As for the epistemic domain, *vuliri* is not involved in the expression of a potential reality concerning the present, rather it is linked to the future-like domain, i.e. to the expression of the prediction or projected reality, both with animate and inanimate Ss. This value does not originate from a deontic-to-epistemic shift and rather derives from an extension of the feature of I; in other words, it represents a direct

---

[11] This constraint, however, is consistent with Heine's (1995) claim, according to which a deontic meaning is more easily understood if the modal occurs in a negative or interrogative sentence – i.e. in non-realis conditions.

implication of the schematic import of volition. This is due to the co-reference be-tween S and speaker in 19, while in 20, where we find a 3rd person S, the speaker's subjective evaluation is represented as an objective one, i.e. as the Tr's objective volition (cf. examples 8 and 9 for *aviri a*). In other words, in 20, the speaker ex-presses confidence about the next realisation of an event and, hence, the construc-tion also conveys an epistemic nuance about a future event. Differently from *aviri a* (see example 9), the predictive *vuliri* + INF does not seem to be sensitive to the telicity of the verb, as 19-20 show:

(19) *vogghiu*   *iri*   *a*   *ffari*   *a*   *spisa*   *rumani*
      want:PRS.1SG   go.INF.PRS   to   do.INF.PRS   the   shops   tomorrow
      'I'm going to the shops tomorrow.'

(20) *voli*   *iri*   *a*   *curriri*   *rumani*
      want:PRS.3SG   go.INF.PRS   to   run.INF.PRS   tomorrow
      'He is going to jog tomorrow.'

Vuliri is also widely employed with meteorological predicates, which - as we have already pointed out (see n. 6) - imply a less prototypical agentivity, i.e. natural forces. In this case, I is not completely faded, rather it behaves as a dynamic force, i.e. a sort of natural volition metaphorically attributed to the event and represented as an objective feature. This metaphorical volition acts as an external necessity, affecting the degree of certainty of the speaker. Thus, 21 unequivocally expresses a prediction, based on the speaker's awareness of external (physical, natural) con-ditions, and conveying a future-like value:

(21) *è*   *niuru,*   *voli*   *chioviri*
      be.INF.PRS   black   want:PRS.3SG   rain:INF.PRS
      'It's black outside: it's going to rain.'

In conclusion, differently from *aviri a*, the epistemic and future-like values are more strictly context-dependent and the modal *vuliri* is, on the whole, strongly rooted in the non-epistemic domain. Since the meanings associated to this domain are more basic and concrete than the epistemic ones, we claim that *vuliri* is less grammaticalised than *aviri a* and also shows, in fact, a higher degree of "verbiness" (Heine 1995), in that it maintains its lexical value. Finally, the semantic range of *vuliri* is represented in figure 6:
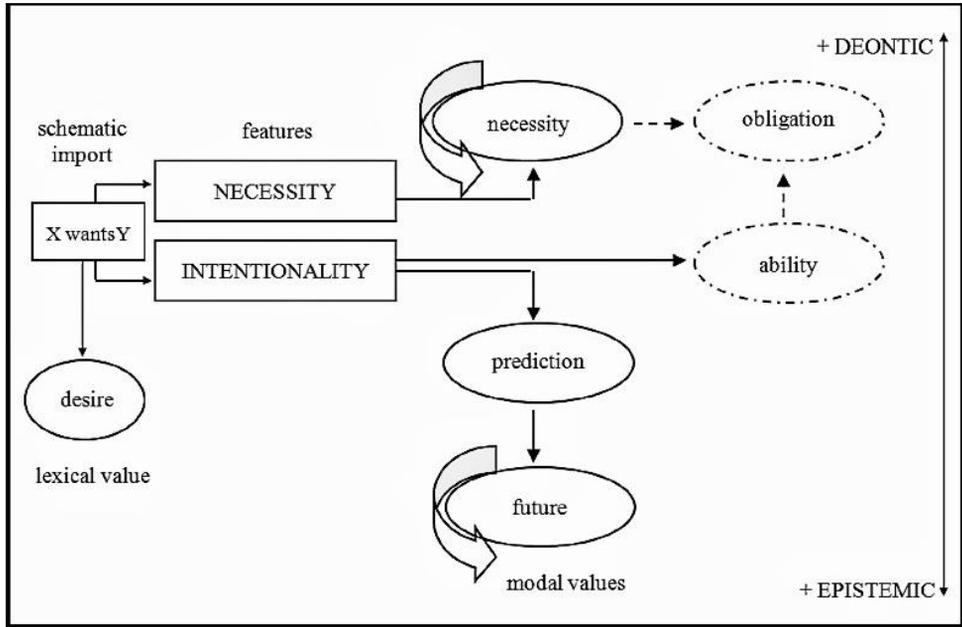
Figure 6. *Vuliri* semantic map

The map suggests the convergence of *vuliri* and *aviri a* in the expression of the semantic cores i.e. necessity and prediction / future. These semantic areas, however, are linked to non-identical features:

1. in *aviri a*, N and I are focal senses in both modal domains, while in *vuliri* they are mutually exclusive: N is active in the deontic area only, whereas the other semantic areas depend on I;
2. the non-necessive meanings arise from different paths: in *aviri a*, the value of prediction / future mainly originates from a deontic-to-epistemic shift, while in *vuliri*, from an extension of the basic feature of I. Moreover, *vuliri* lacks both a proper obligational value and the potential-epistemic one.

This analysis brings to the light a difference in the grammaticalisation status of the two modals:

a. *aviri a* + INF is a fully grammaticalised construction, which shows a high degree of versatility, both in the non-epistemic and in the more abstract epistemic domain. The deontic-to-epistemic readings depend on the contextual co-ordinates, namely on the actionality of the verb, and on the agentivity of the Tr, therefore on the feature of I. In other words, I variously interacts with the modal feature of N *within* both modal domains.

b. *vuliri* exhibits a different sensitivity to I. The basic "verbiness", that is, the lexical semantics remains untouched and only when I is faded (or metaphorically represented) *vuliri* conveys a non-volitional, namely deontic modal meaning, where the notion of N is in action. This feature does not develop other stable potential-epistemic meanings nor prediction ones, the latter representing a temporary inferential extension of I. Interestingly, also in the latter case, a proper modal (epistemic-like) meaning, involving the degree of certainty of the speaker, is elicited by a reduced degree of I.

5 Modal meanings and temporal-aspectual features

The different degree of grammaticalisation of *aviri a* and *vuliri* is further shown by the influence that temporal inflection wields over modal meanings. According to Langacker (1991), in the case of modals, past inflection pertains to the degree of likelihood rather than to a simple temporal location.
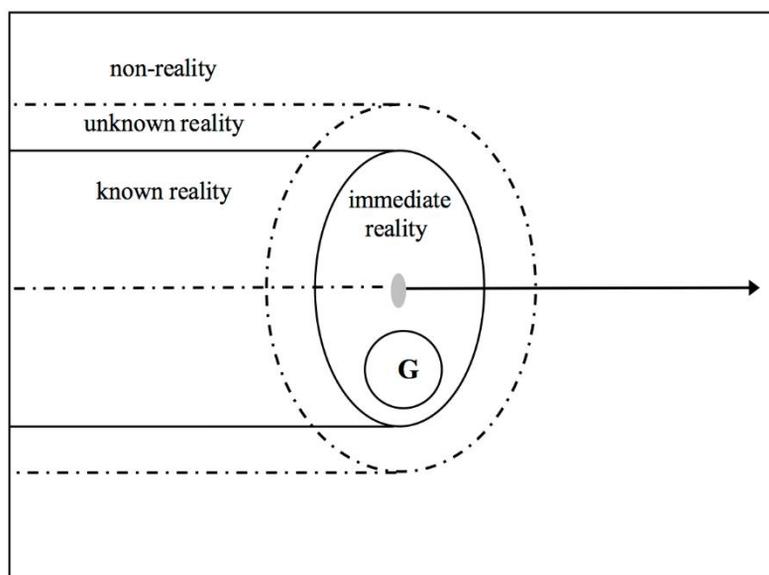

Figure 7. Epistemic model (Langacker 1991: 243-244, adapted)

As figure 7 shows, distal morphemes move away the event from the *locus* of the speech-act (G) and locate it in a non-immediate reality, both known (past meaning) and unknown (potential), or in the non-reality. As for Sicilian, however, this analysis needs further observations, concerning the aspectual features of the past tenses. The imperfective past correlates (Sicilian "imperfetto") of the examples thus far proposed for *aviri a* generally convey a counterfactual reading when the basic value of the sentence implies forward-push dynamics towards a not yet realised event, i.e. in the cases of deontic or prediction meanings:

(22) *t'*   *avi(ev)'*   *a*   *rregalari*   *un*   *palluni*
     you.DAT   have:IMPF.1SG   to   give:INF.PRS   a   ball
     'I should have given you a ball (but I didn't).'

(23) *a*   *pasta* *vuliva*   *cociri:*   *è*   *crura*
     the   pasta   want:IMPF.3SG   cook:INF.PRS   be.PRS.3SG   raw
     'The pasta needed (to take more time) to cook: it's still raw.'

Example 22 imply a "but I didn't" implication, thus expressing a non-realised possibility and maintaining a projective / future-like orientation (a future possibility in the past, cf. Condoravdi 2002; Bertinetto 1986, 1991). An analogous consideration arises from the analysis of the imperfective past inflection of *vuliri*, although in this case also a non-counterfactual reading is accessible both in the necessity and in the prediction domain, depending on the context, as in 23. The epistemic shifts conveyed by "imperfetto" depend on the aspectual nature of this tense, irrespective of the presence of a modal: "imperfetto" is indefinite with respect to the actual completion of the event, thus easily shifts towards *virtuality*, i. e. towards epistemic values (cf. Bertinetto 1986, 1991). On the other hand, the perfective past does not naturally convey a modal value and generally denotes the completeness of a past event. Only when the distal morphemes interact with a modal verb, the perfective past expresses modal non-immediacy, specifically an epistemic meaning concerning the degree of likelihood of the event. This circumstance is crucial in our analysis of the modal status of *aviri a* and *vuliri*, which manifest in fact a different behaviour in perfective past tenses:

(24) *t'*   *app'*   *a*   *rregalari*   *un*   *palluni*
     you.DAT   have:PRF.3SG   to   give:INF.PRS   a   ball
     'S(he) most likely gave you a ball/S(he) just had to give you a ball.'

(25) *Assai*   *vosi*   *cociri*   *a*   *pasta*
     very.much   want:PRF.3SG   cook:INF.PRS   the   pasta
     The pasta needed too long to cook.'

(26) *St'*   *annu*   *nun*   *vosi*   *chioviri*
     this   year   not   want:PRF.3SG   rain:INF.PRS
     mancu   *na*   *vota*
     not.even   one   time
     This year it didn't rain even once.'

In the simple perfective past (Sicilian "passato remoto"), *aviri a* sometimes receives the same deontic reading as in the present tense, but it more likely conveys an epistemic interpretation ('It's very likely that...'), as in 24. Moreover, the future-orientation reading is entirely barred, since the utterance is set in the dimension of completeness. On the other hand, perfective past inflection does not wield any epistemic

influence on the modal value of *vuliri*, neither in the necessity meaning, as in 25 (which maintains the same deontic value of the present, although set in the past), nor in the meanings based on I, as in 26 (which furthermore loses both the prediction value and the epistemic nuance involving the degree of certainty about a meteorological event). In a word, these examples convey a temporal meaning only.

To sum up, the effects produced by the temporal inflection validate our analysis in terms of different degrees of grammaticalisation. Apparently, the epistemic values of *vuliri* are not only peripheral but also less steady and strictly depending on the modal features of the imperfective inflection (both in the present and in the imperfective past). On the other hand, *aviri a* is a stable means of modal expression and the complex interaction of temporal, aspectual, actional and, finally, transitivity features does not alter but further elaborates the modal status of the construction, thus strongly suggesting the multi-factorial nature of the category of M.

References

Amenta, L. (2004). Modalità e modi nell'italiano regionale di Sicilia. Analisi di un corpus di parlato. *Bollettino del Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani*, 20: 359-383.

Amenta, L. (2010). The periphrasis *aviri a*/*da* + infinitive in contemporary Sicilian dialect. In R. D'Alessandro, A. Ledgeway and I. Roberts (eds.). *Syntactic Variation. The Dialects of Italy*, 171-185. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Amenta, L. and Mocciaro, E. (2016). *Vuliri* + PP nei dati dell'Atlante linguistico della Sicilia. In É. Buchi, J.-P. Chauveau and J.-M. Pierrel (eds.). *Actes du XVIIe Congrès international de linguistique et de philologie romanes* (Nancy, 15-20 juillet 2013), vol. I, 933-944. Strasbourg: ÉLiPhi.

Amenta, L. and Mocciaro, E. (2018). Il verbo *vuliri* in siciliano antico tra volizione e modalità. *Bollettino del Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani*, 29: 147-176.

Bentley, D. (1997). Modalità e futuro nel siciliano antico e moderno. In M. D'Agostino (ed.). *Aspetti della variabilità*, 49-66. Palermo: Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani.

Bentley, D. (1998a). Modalità perifrastica e sintetica in siciliano. Un caso di grammaticalizzazione? In P. Ramat and E. Roma (eds.). *Sintassi storica. Atti del XXX Congresso Internazionale della Società di Linguistica Italiana* (Pavia, 26-28 ottobre 1996), 369-383. Roma: Bulzoni.

Bentley, D. (1998b). Modalità e tempo in siciliano: un'analisi diacronica dell'espressione del futuro. *Vox Romanica*, 57: 117-137.

Bentley, D. (2000). Metonymy and metaphor in the evolution of modal verbs: evidence from Italo-Romance. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics*, 14: 1-22.

Benveniste, É. (1966) [1946]. Structure des relations de personne dans le verbe. Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique, 43 (1). In *Problèmes de linguistique générale, I,* 269-281. Paris: Gallimard.

Bertinetto, P. M. (1986). *Tempo, aspetto e azione nel verbo italiano:il sistema dell'indicativo*. Firenze: Accademia della Crusca.

Bertinetto, P. M. (1991). Il verbo. In L.Renzi and G.Salvi (eds.). *Grande grammatica italiana di consultazione, II: I sintagmi verbale, aggettivale, avverbiale. La subordinazione*, 13-161. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Brucale, L. and Mocciaro E. (2009). Polisemia e convergenze nel dominio dei modali siciliani: una lettura funzional-cognitivista di *vuliri* e *aviri a*'. In L. Amenta and G. Paternostro (a cura di). *I parlanti e le loro storie. Competenze linguistiche, strategie comunicative, livelli di analisi,* 195-206. Palermo: Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani.

Bybee, J., Perkins, R. D. and Pagliuca, W. (1994). *The Evolution of Grammar: Tense, Aspect and Modality in the Languages of the World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Condoravdi, C. (2002). Temporal Interpretation of Modals. In D. I. Beaver, L. D. Casillas Martínez, B. Z. Clark, and S. Kaufmann, (eds.). *The Construction of Meaning*, 59-88. Stanford: CSLI Publications.

D'Agostino, M. and Ruffino, G. (2005). *I rilievi socio-variazionali. Linee progettuali*. Palermo: Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani.

Dendale, P. (1994). Devoir épistémique, marqueur modal ou évidentiel? *Langue française*, 102: 24-40.

Givón, T. (1990). *Syntax: A Functional-Typological Introduction*, *II*. Amsterdam-Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Goossens, L. (1995). Metaphtonymy: the interaction of metaphor and metonymy in figurative expressions for linguistic action. In L. Goossens, P. Pauwels, B. Rudzka-Ostyn, A.-M. Vandenbergen and J. Vanparys (eds.). *By Word of Mouth: Metaphor, Metonymy and Linguistic Action in a Cognitive Context*, 159-174. Amsterdam-Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Heine, B. (1993). *Auxiliation: Cognitive Forces and Grammaticalization*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Heine, B. (1995). Agent-oriented vs. epistemic modality. Some observations on German modals. In J. Bybee and S. Fleischman (eds.). *Modality in grammar and discourse*, 17-53. Amsterdam-Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Heine, B. and Claudi, U. (1986). On the Metaphorical Base of Grammar. *Studies in Language*, 10 (2): 297-335.

Heine, B., Claudi, U. and Hünnemeyer, F. (1991). *Grammaticalization: A Conceptual Framework*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hengeveld, K. (2004). Illocution, mood, and modality. In G. Booij, C. Lehmann and J. Mugdan (eds.). *Morphology: A handbook on inflection and word formation*, 2 voll., 1190-1202. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Hopper, P. J. and Thompson, S. (1980). Transitivity in Grammar and Discourse. *Language*, 56: 251-299.

Hopper, P. J. and Traugott, E. G. (2003). *Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jespersen O. (1924). *The philosophy of grammar*. London: Allen and Unwin.

Lakoff, G. (1977). Linguistic Gestalt. *Chicago Linguistics Society,* 13: 236-287.

Langacker, R. (1991). *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar, II*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Leone, A. (1995). *Profilo di sintassi siciliana*. Palermo: Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani.

Lyons, J. (1968). *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Luraghi, S. (1995). Prototipicality and Agenthood in Indo-European. In H. Andersen (ed.). *Historical Linguistics 1993*, 259-268. Amsterdam-Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Narrog, H. (2005). Modality, mood, and change of modal meanings: A new perspective. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 16 (4): 677-731.

Nuyts, J. (2001). Modality: Overview and linguistic issue. In W. Frawley (ed.). *The Expression of Modality*, 1-26. Berlin-New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Palmer, F. R. (2001). *Mood and Modality* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pietrandrea, P. (2005). *Epistemic modality. Functional properties and the Italian system*. Amsterdam-Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Rohlfs, G. (1969). *Grammatica storica della lingua italiana e dei suoi dialetti, 3. Sintassi e formazione delle parole*. Torino: Einaudi.

Ruffino, G. (1995). L'ALS: storia del progetto, stato dei lavori, prospettive. In G. Ruffino (a cura di). *Percorsi di Geografia linguistica*, 11-103. Palermo: Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani.

Sweetser, E. (1990). *From Etymology to Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Talmy, L. (1988). Force Dynamics in Language and Cognition. *Cognitive Science*, 12: 49-100.

Traugott, E. C. (1989). On the rise of epistemic meanings in English: An example of subjectification in semantic change. *Language*, 65: 31-55.

Van der Auwera, J. and Plungian, V. (1998). On Modality's Semantic Map. *Linguistic Typology*, 2 (1): 79-124.

ALS = Atlante linguistico della Sicilia, Materiali e ricerche. Palermo: Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani. http://atlantelinguisticosicilia.it/cms/

Sottile, R. (2019). L'Atlante Linguistico della Sicilia (ALS). In T. Krefeld and R. Bauer (a cura di). *Lo spazio comunicativo dell'Italia e delle varietà italiane,* Korpus im Text. [Online] Available from: http://www.kit.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/?p=34845&v=1 [Accessed: December 4th, 2019]