Towards a more explicit taxonomy of root possibility

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to improve the description of root (or non-epistemic) possibility meanings. In previous accounts, the defining criteria are not applied systematically; there is a tendency towards definition by exemplification (especially when it comes to meanings that are 'not permission' and 'not ability') and certain categories (permission, for instance) tend to be defined in a circular way. We will argue that there are three criteria which are necessary and sufficient to distinguish five subclasses of root possibility meaning. The three criteria are: (a) the scope of the modal meaning, (b) the source of the modality and (c) the notion of potential barrier; the five meanings are: (a) ability, (b) opportunity, (c) permission, (d) general situation possibility (GSP) and (e) situation permissibility. The paper offers an in-depth analysis of the three defining criteria and the root possibility meanings that their systematic application gives rise to. This approach clearly brings out the similarities and the dissimilarities between the different subcategories of root possibility meaning in English and in this way it results in a more explicit taxonomy.

Mots-clés: possibilité, modalité, modalité non-épistémique

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ACCORD EXPLICITE POUR CE DÉPÔT
Since the monumental taxonomical work of Whitehead [10, 16, 18], progress on the taxonomy of African root-knot nematodes has been limited. Problematically, most descriptions are only based on a limited number of morphological features [5], causing problems in species diagnostics, since morphological identification of root-knot nematodes and indeed of nematodes in general is known to be greatly hampered by phenotypic plasticity [21, 22]. As a result of this, and limited local expertise, root-knot nematode infections on coffee in Africa are rarely identified up to species level [23]. However, to identify this species a taxonomic conundrum needed to be resolved, based on the limited available morphological and molecular information for African coffee root-knot nematodes. More specifically, I argue that two different constructions (i.e. form-meaning pairs) are involved in English: a (modal) verb and a more schematic MODAL construction (MCx) in which the verb occurs, each with its respective form and function. I will also explain the interaction between the two constructions, and show how the (modal) verb inherits part of its meaning from the MCx. In addition, building on the Relevance theoretic distinction between conceptual and procedural meaning, I argue that the (modal) verb encodes conceptual meaning whilst the MCx encodes procedural meaning. Towards a more explicit taxonomy of root possibility.

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