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## **Modality in Georgian: Methods of Teaching and Strategies for Foreign Speakers**

(using the example of teaching Georgian as a second language and as a foreign language)

### **Abstract**

Modality is a semantic category which, in many languages, is rendered by polysemantic and polyfunctional forms. This means that one and the same modal form may express different modal meanings when used in different contexts and combined with different verb-forms. This is considered to be a significant, specific feature of the Georgian language due to the fact that different forms of one and the same verb, when used with the same modal form, reveal different meanings. Therefore, translating modal forms may become a challenge for the translator as this process requires taking all the semantic nuances into consideration. In order to achieve this, it is crucial to set up a subsystem based on a certain principle, to fully reflect various semantic nuances of the meaning expressed by modal forms. To set up such a subsystem is necessary for effective teaching of a foreign language and it should fully reflect this important feature of the Georgian language in the process of teaching and therefore, in textbooks.

This paper presents this subsystem together with the methods and strategies to be taken into consideration whilst teaching the Georgian language. More specifically, the paper will discuss the possibilities of employing this subsystem in the process of teaching Georgian as well as the typology of the exercises and relevant practice at class.

**Key words:** modality, modal meaning, semantic analysis of a sentence.

### **Introduction**

Modality plays a most important role in the language as it reveals permanent relations between the proposition and its semantics. According to the broad understanding of the topic, a sentence or discourse cannot

be devoid of modal meaning. There is always a certain attitude felt towards the meaning expressed by the sentence-cognitive, emotional or rational. The speaker always expresses such an attitude although the means employed in the process may be

different. Specifically, the attitude towards the proposition can be expressed by the mood of the verb-form and modal elements as well as by focus, word order, intonation, gestures and facial expressions.

The main means of expressing modality as a semantic category are language forms, which notwithstanding a context, reveal a definite modal semantics. Therefore the main elements of expressing modality are language forms or modal verbs and elements.

The Modal system is involved in every level of language learning and teaching. In addition, the level on which various forms and semantics of modals should be taught has also to be defined.

In Georgian there are two verbs which express Georgian modal system - **ndoma** (want) and **shedzleba** (can). It should be noted that these verbs are used as independent

verbs in Georgian and possess the system of conjugation as well as all three persons of singular and plural. As for the modal element, this is the singular form of the third person -**unda** (wants/ must) which is added, unchanged, to the verb paradigm. The construction renders several modal meanings. It should also be taken into consideration that the constructions are different. Specifically, the subject is in the dative case. However, in the second example the subject requires the construction of the main verb or, in other words, it appears in the case required by the main verb. This can be of either nominative or ergative construction: **ის უნდა წავიდეს** (is unda tsavides- he/she must go) - **მან უნდა გააკეთოს** (man unda gaaketos- He/she must do) :

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>უნდა Unda ( want ) as an independent verb - <i>changes according to the person and number</i></p> | <p>Unda (must) as a modal verb -<i>does not change according to person and number</i></p> |
| <p>მე მინდა გავაკეთო (me minda gavaketo-I want to do )</p>   | <p>მე უნდა გავაკეთო ( me unda gavaketo-I must do)</p>                                     |
| <p>შენ გინდა გააკეთო (shen ginda gaaketo-you (t) want to do)</p>                                     | <p>შენ უნდა გააკეთო (shen unda gaaketo-you must do)</p>                                   |
| <p>მას უნდა გააკეთოს (<u>mas unda</u> gaaketos- <u>he/she</u> wants to do)</p>                       | <p>მან უნდა გააკეთოს (<u>mas unda</u> gaaketos - <u>he</u> must do)</p>                   |

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| ჩვენ გვინდა გავაკეთოთ (chven gvinda gavaketot- we want to do)     | ჩვენ უნდა გავაკეთოთ (chven unda gavaketot- we must do)     |
| თქვენ გინდათ გააკეთოთ (tkven gindat gaaketot- you (V) want to do) | თქვენ უნდა გააკეთოთ (tkven (V) unda gaaketot- you must do) |
| მათ უნდათ გააკეთონ (mat undat gaaketon- they want to do)          | მათ უნდა გააკეთონ (mat unda gaaketon- they must do)        |

Thus, this feature usually presents a significant problem in the process of teaching and learning a language and it is crucial to take this into consideration.

As well as this, there are other modal elements which are added to the verb to give them modal semantics: ეგებ ( egeb), იქნებ ( ikneb), ლამის (lamis), თითქოს (titkos),

თითქმის (titkmis), კინაღამ (kinagham), მაინც ( maints). For the Georgian the combination of the mood and a modal element proves to be relevant. Specifically, in the system of the Georgian language modality makes up the following semantic groups:

| Semantics           | Modal form  | Example  |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Logical possibility | შევძლებ ( shevdzleb- I will be able/I can)<br>შესაძლოა (shesadzloa- perhaps)<br>შესაძლებელია (shesadzlebelia- it is possible) | შევძლებ წასვლას / გაკეთებას...(shevdzleb tsasvlas/gaketebas - I can/ I will be able to go/to do)<br>შესაძლოა მოვიდეს / გააკეთოს...(shesadzloa movides/gaaketos- perhaps she/ he is able come/do<br>შესაძლებელია მოვიდეს / გაკეთდეს... (Shsadzlebelia movides/gaketdes- It is possible for sb to come/ smth to be done) |
| Possibility         | ალბათ (perhaps)<br>იქნებ (may, probably/ maybe)   | ალბათ მოვა / იტყვის... (albat mova/itkvis) Perhaps he/she comes/says<br>იქნებ მოვიდეს / გააკეთოს...(ikneb movide/gaaketos- Maybe he will come/do)  |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Supposition</b>                        | ეგებ (egeb-possibly /maybe, may (have))  | <i>ეგებ მოვიდა / მოვიდეს...(egeb movida/movides-He may have come/he may come)</i>   |
| <b>Logical necessity</b>                  | უნდა (unda- must (have) /should (have))  | <i>უნდა იყოს / გაეკეთებინა / სსოვდეს...(unda ikos/gaeketebina/axsovdes- (it) should/must be/ (he/she) must have done/should remember</i>  |
| <b>Obligation, duty</b>                   | უნდა (unda) must/should  | <i>უნდა დაწერო / გააკეთო... ((you (t) unda datsero/gaaketo - you (t)should/must write/do)</i>   |
| <b>Prohibition</b>                        | ნუ (do not, should not)  | <i>ნუ აკეთებ / კითხულობ... (nu aketeb/kitxulob- (you) do not/should not do/read)</i>  |
| <b>Permission</b>                         | შეიძლება( sheidzleba -it is possible, may)<br>შეგიძლია (shegidzlia- you can/ may)<br>შეუძლია (sheudzlia- he can, may ) | <i>შეიძლება წავიდე / გავაკეთო?... (sheidzleba tsavide/gavaketo? May I go?/do? Is it possible for me to go?)<br/>შეგიძლია წახვიდე / გააკეთო...(shegidzlia tsaxvide/gaaketo-(you(t) can/may go/do)<br/>შეუძლია წავიდეს / გააკეთოს...(sheudzlia tsavides/gaaketos-(he/she ) can/may go/do)</i> |
| <b>Ability and capability</b>             | შემიძლია (shemidzlia- I can)<br>ვიცი (vitsi-I know/ I can)   | <i>შემიძლია ცურვა / კითხვა...(shemidzlia tsurva/kitxva-I can swim/read)<br/>ვიცი ცურვა / კითხვა...(vitsi tsurva/kitkhva-I know how to swim/I can swim)</i>  |
| <b>Negation of ability and capability</b> | ვერ (ver-I cannot/ be able to)   | <i>ვერ ვცურავ / ვკითხულობ... (ver vtsurav/vkitxulob (I cannot swim/read)<br/>ვერ გავაკეთებ / წავიკითხავ...(I cannot do/read - I will not be able to do/read)</i>  |
| <b>Desire (Volition)</b>                  | იქნებ( ikneb- perhaps)<br>ნეტავ (netav- if only)   | <i>იქნებ წავიდე / გავაკეთო...(ikneb tsavide/gavaketo -Perhaps I can go/do)</i>  |
| <b>Strong desire</b>                      | ნეტავ(netav-if only (I..) could)   | <i>ნეტავ წავიდე / გავაკეთო...(netav tsavide/gavaketo- If only I could go/do)</i>  |
| <b>Evaluation-approximation</b>           | ლამის(lamis-nearly)<br>თითქმის(titkmis-  | <i>ლამის ჩამოვარდა / გატყდა...(lamis chamovarda/gatkda-It nearly dropped/broke)</i>   |

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|  | almost)<br>კინაღამ(kinagham-<br>almost, nearly)   | თითქმის გააკეთა / დაწერა...(titkmis<br>gaaketa/dastera- he/she nearly did/wrote)   |
| <b>Evaluation-<br/>imagination</b>                   | თითქოს(titkos-as if)<br>ვითომ(vitom-as if)  | თითქოს მოვიდა / გააკეთა...(titkos<br>movida/gaaketa -as if he/she came/did )<br>ვითომ მოვიდა / ვითომ გააკეთა...(vitom<br>movida/gaaketa -as if he /she came/did)   |
| <b>Emotional evaluation<br/>(surprise-amazement)</b> | განა (Did he/she. re-<br>ally?)<br>ნუთუ (Has he/she<br>really --?)<br>აკი (I thought --- did<br>he ( she..) not)<br>ნეტავ(I wonder if )                   | განა გააკეთა / თქვა...(gana gaaketa/tkva -did<br>he really do /say that?)<br>ნუთუ დაასრულა / მოვიდა?..(nutu<br>daasrula/movida? -did he really finish/come?<br>აკი არ მინდაო?.. (aki ar mindao?-did he not<br>say he did not want it?)<br>ნეტავ რა უნდა?..ნეტავ იცის ეს<br>ამბავი?..(netav ra unda? netav itsis es ambavi?-<br>what does he want? I wonder if he knows about<br>this event?) |
| <b>Evaluation-decision</b>                           | ღირს*(ghirs- it is<br>worth)  | არ ღირს ამის გაკეთება... (arghirs amis<br>gaketeba-it is not worth doing that)<br>ღირს კი ამის გაკეთება?.. (ghirs ki amis<br>gaketeba?-is it worth doing that?)  |
| <b>Belief-opinion</b>                                | მაინც (still)   | მაინც არ გავაკეთებ / წავალ... (maints ar ga-<br>vaketeb-tsaval..still I will not do that/ go)  |
| <b>Mutual decision</b>                               | მოდო ( modi-let us)   | მოდო ერთად წავიდეთ / გავაკეთოთ.. (modi<br>ertad tsavidet/gavaketot-let us go/do together)  |
| <b>Individual decision<br/>(in oral speech)</b>      | ავდექი და...( avdeki<br>da -I stood up and - I<br>decided /made up my<br>mind)<br>ადექი და...(adeki<br>da... You made up<br>your mind and why<br>not ...) | ავდექი და წავედი / გავაკეთე / ვუთხარი...( I<br>stood up and went/did/said..I made up my mind<br>and went/did/said)<br>ადექი და წადი / გააკეთე / უთხარი...(you<br>stand up and go/do/say -now make up your<br>mind and go/do/say.. now you can take and<br>go/do/say)<br>ადგა და წავიდა / გააკეთა / უთხრა...(she/he   |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | ადგა და...(adga da..he made up his mind and ..) | <i>stood and went..He made up his mind and went/did/said</i> |
|--|---|--|

### The polysemantic and polyfunctional nature of modal forms

Generally, it is typical of modal forms to combine several meanings and taking this into consideration, the question about their different functions arises. This is attested in other languages as well. For instance, in English one modal form can express several meanings. Usage of various forms of modal verbs in various functions is also common.

For instance, **could** besides being the past form of the modal verb **can**, can also act as a polite marker.

Likewise, in Georgian, several modal forms express different meanings. The table below reveals the specific features of modal forms in this respect.

ეგებ (egeb), იქნებ ( ikneb), ლამის (lamis), თითქოს (titkos), თითქმის (titkmis), კინაღამ (kinagham), მაინც (maints):

| Modal form                | Modal semantics   |
|---------------------------|---|
| შეძლება (shedzleba - can) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logical possibility</li> <li>• Permission</li> <li>• Ability and capability</li> </ul>     |
| უნდა (unda- must)         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logical necessity</li> <li>• Obligation and duty</li> <li>• Objective necessity</li> </ul> |
| იქნებ (ikneb-perhaps)     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Probability</li> <li>• Desire, will</li> </ul>   |
| ეგებ (egeb-perhaps)       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supposition</li> <li>• Probability</li> </ul>  |
| ნეტავ (netav-if only)     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong desire, wish</li> <li>• Emotional assessment (surprise-amazement)</li> </ul>        |
| მაინც (maints-still)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belief-opinion</li> <li>• Decision</li> </ul>  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| ღირს (ghirs- it is worth)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent verb</li> <li>• Evaluation modality</li> </ul>     |
| ვიცი (vitsi- I know)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent verb</li> <li>• Ability and possibility</li> </ul> |
| მოდო (modi- let [us])   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent verb</li> <li>• Joint decision</li> </ul>          |
| ავდექი ( I stood up in the meaning of I decided/made up my mind ..) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent verb</li> <li>• Individual decision</li> </ul>     |

It is crucial to take these features into consideration while teaching the language and especially, while teaching grammar material in order to plan when and how to teach semantic issues of modal forms.

**Several meanings of one and the same modal form - must**

**Must** is a modal form which expresses logical necessity. However, this is not the only type of meaning expressed by this modal form. The verb-form (mood and screeve)

also plays an important role. The construction reveals different meanings depending on the type of combinations. In the table below several constructions are discussed and, as the fact that their meaning is defined by the verb-form, should be taken into consideration in the process of teaching the language. It should also be noted that the analysis of such semantic nuances is possible only on a higher level of the mastery of the language.

| Construction   | Semantic function   |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Unda</i><br/><i>(must)+Conditional</i><br/><i>II, I person, plural</i><br/><i>(უნდა ვთქვათ... unda vtkvat..we must/should say....)</i></p> | <p>Subjective approach of the speaker based on logical necessity, used in the meaning of objective truth.</p> |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Unda (must) + Conditional II</i><br/>(უნდა შეიცვალოს...unda sheitsvalos..it must/should change)</p>       | <p>The position of the speaker based on subjective perception and presented as a logically unavoidable truth. It expresses the action which will happen in the future combined with the meaning of advice and recommendation.</p> |
| <p><i>Unda (must) + Optative II</i><br/>(უნდა ჩამოსულიყო (unda chamosuliko...she/he should have arrived)</p>    | <p>Logical necessity and orientation on the result.</p>   |
| <p><i>Unda (must + Present Conditional )</i><br/>(უნდა ახსოვდეს...unda akhsovdes... he/she should remember)</p> | <p>Expresses indefinite action, logical necessity with the additional meaning of supposition or recommendation</p>  |

### The system of modal forms and its significance for the correct planning of textbooks and the teaching process

In order to plan textbooks and the teaching process correctly, it is necessary to present grammatical and language forms in a way which would facilitate teaching communicative aspects of the language, at the same time avoiding functional and semantic

ambiguity of language forms. Taking this into consideration, besides well-selected communication topics, effective planning of functional grammar issues is also very important.

It is important to teach the means of rendering desire from the very first language level. To teach this meaning, the student is taught the verb "to want", which expresses desire. (e.g me minda tskali (I want some water). It is also important to teach the forms of conditional mood as it implies the

choice between several linguistic means. The additional meanings of obligation or decision

will result in teaching four constructions on the first level.

|   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| (1) <i>მე მინდა პური. (me minda puri - I want bread)</i>                                  | Expresses desire                 |
| (2) <i>მე მინდა პურის ყიდვა (.me minda puris kidva -I want to buy bread)</i>              | Expresses a desirable action     |
| (3) <i>მე მინდა პური ვიყიდო. (me minsa puri vikido - I want to buy bread)</i>             | Expresses desire and decision    |
| (4) <i>მე პური უნდა ვიყიდო. (me puri unda vikido - I must /have to /should buy bread)</i> | Expresses decision or obligation |

The fact that all the meanings are connected with one verb- form makes the situation harder although the semantics differs alongside the difference in constructions. Thus, it is crucial not to teach different meanings either on one and the same level or simultaneously.

It should be noted that teaching of issues of functional grammar should be done only after they have been carefully pre-planned and thought over. In order to illustrate this, I will analyse one more form: "modi" (come) is an imperative form and de-

notes movement towards the speaker: *მოდი დავასთან* (modi dapastan- come to the blackboard); *მოდი ჩემთან* (modi chemtan- come to me). This construction and meaning can be taught on the first level of the language teaching. "modi" (come)' is also used as a modal form denoting mutual decisions. Based on this meaning, it builds a completely different construction. Obviously these forms should be taught on different levels in order to separate their functions and semantics. At the same time, the modal form should not be taught before the verb itself.

|                                      |   |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
|                                      | <b>Movement towards the speaker:</b>                        | <b>Mutual decision:</b>   |
| <b>მოდო (modi)<br/>come / let us</b> | <i>მოდო დაფასთან (modi dapastan-come to the blackboard)</i> | <i>მოდო, ერთად წავიდეთ (modi ertad tsavide- let us go together)</i>           |
|                                      | <i>მოდო მაგიდასთან (modi magidas-tan-come to the table)</i> | <i>მოდო, ერთად წავიკითხოთ.(modi ertad tsavikitxot-let's read it together)</i> |
|                                      | <i>მოდო ჩემთან (modi chemtan-come to me)</i>                | <i>მოდო, ერთად გავაკეთოთ (modi, ertad gavaketot- let's do it together)</i>    |

All of this reveals how important it is to correctly analyse grammatical forms and then arrange and teach them following a certain principle. This will solve the issue of functional, formal or semantic ambiguity and make the process of language acquisition much simpler.

**The system of modality and interrelationship of levels of language competence.**

Consistent planning and teaching of the modal system is an inseparable part of

language teaching. It is obvious that the author of a textbook and a teacher can set up a system based on a certain principles although it is of paramount importance to take a range of issues into consideration. First of all, this means setting up a subsystem which would reveal the interrelationship between teaching modal semantics and levels of language competence. Taking into consideration the above-discussed issue, this problem can be presented as follows:

| <b>Levels of language competence</b> | <b>Modal forms</b>  | <b>Semantics of modal forms</b>  |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>A 1</b>                           | (თუ) შეიძლება-(tu) sheidzleba -(If) It is possible<br>ვიცი (vitsi- I know)<br>უნდა (unda-must. have to)<br>ალბათ (albat -perhaps, probably) | Permission<br>Ability and capability<br>Obligation, duty<br>Possibility<br>Probability |
| <b>A 2</b>                           | ვერ (ver-unable to)   | Negation of ability and possibility  |

|     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
|     | ნუ (nu- do not+verb)<br>უნდა (unda- must)<br>შემიძლია (shemidzlia- I<br>can)<br>მოდი (modi-let us)<br>ნეტავ (netav-if only)   | Prohibition<br>Logical necessity<br>Ability and possibility<br>Mutual decision<br>Strong desire                             |
| B 1 | შევძლებ (shevdzleb- I will<br>be able to)<br>იქნებ (ikneb-perhaps)<br>განა (gana), ნუთუ (nutu),<br>აკი (aki), ნეტავ (netav)<br>მაინც (maints-still)   | Logical possibility/ ability<br>Probability<br>Emotional evaluation<br>Belief and opinion                                   |
| B 2 | შესაძლოა, შესაძლებელია...<br>(shesadzloa, shesadzebelia -it<br>is probable/ possible)<br>იქნებ (ikneb-perhaps)<br>ეგებ (egeb-perhaps)<br>ლამის(lamis-almost),<br>თითქმის (titkmis- almost/<br>nearly) კინაღამ( kinagham-<br>nearly)<br>თითქოს (titkos - as if)<br>ვითომ (vitom- as if)<br>ღირს (ghirs- it is worth) | Logical possibility<br>Desire<br>Supposition<br>Evaluation, approximation<br>Evaluation, imagination<br>Evaluation-decision |
| C 1 |   |   |
| C2  |   |   |

On advanced levels of language competence (C 1, C2) the learnt language forms are processed and their meanings are transposed and this process is based on texts and oral speech.

### Methods and strategies of acquisition of the semantics of modal forms, types of exercises

In the process of language teaching it is crucial to select methods and strategies correctly. The method based on writing is

deemed to be extremely productive when learning the issues related to grammar as it facilitates the acquisition of the material. In addition, the **method of visual props** also acquires special importance as it presents a good opportunity to teach models and constructions effectively. Constructions expressing certain meanings need special analysis as, together with the modal form, part of the construction may include an infinitive, conditional or a verb form in indicative mood. Therefore, a model, which will be presented to the learners during lessons or in the textbooks, should be set up for each of the meanings rendered. At the same time, as is known, the Georgian verb is not characterised by one and the same model of formation. Thus, it is important that the construction should include groups of verbs sharing the same model of formation. **Question and answer** method will also be very productive as it develops both writing and speaking skills equally.

On the initial state of language learning it is recommended to present not only models but, also, sentences in real-life situations. After the semantic analysis of sentences it is advisable to give students non-authentic texts or dialogues created for certain purposes and based on certain communicative situations. Special Emphasis on forms and constructions in such texts will facilitate the process of learning and memorising. Only after such vigorous analysis can the learner conduct reproduction and production stages effectively and make up constructions, sentences and texts independently. A variety of exercises applied will make this process easier. Each of these exercises should be oriented on acquiring the material and developing certain skills. From the point of expressing modality it is important to select constructions and semantics correctly which can be achieved by the learners doing practical exercises of various types.

| Types of exercises:                              | Purpose:   |
|--|--|
| Insertion of correct modal forms in the sentence | The student should select one of the several modal forms provided and insert it into the sentence. This exercise encourages and facilitates the selection of the modal form suitable to the meaning. |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Selection of the correct verb-form                  | The student is to select and match a correct verb-form to the modal form provided in the sentence. This exercise also facilitates making up of relevant modal constructions. |
| Connection/matching of parts of the sentence        | This exercise develops the skill of sentence comprehension and making up a correct construction  |
| Selecting a correct answer to the question          | This exercise develops the skill for selection of the correct semantics and construction   |
| Making up sentences containing a correct modal form | This exercise develops the skill for the usage of a modal form and its construction to express certain meanings.   |
| Making up questions                                 | This exercise facilitates precise semantic rendering of the communication situation.   |
| Transformation of the semantics of the sentence     | This exercise develops the knowledge of semantic nuances/hues of modal forms   |
| Making up sentences                                 | Develops production skills   |
| Making up a dialogue                                | Develops production skill  |
| Making up texts                                     | Develops production skills   |

The strategies and methodology discussed above can be equally employed whilst teaching Georgian as a second language as well as while teaching it as a foreign language. However, there are certain differences observed as well. Specifically, when teaching a second language, the linguistic environment the learner is exposed to acquires a significant importance as it plays a certain role in the process of communica-

tion. In order to understand a certain modal meaning it is also possible to employ such non-verbal means as gestures, facial expressions, intonation as well as other means of non-verbal communication. This is less probable for the process of teaching a foreign language when the learner is not exposed to authentic language environment which leads to the need for increasing the number of practical exercises.

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