

## On the Semantics of “hope” -- From the Perspective of Modal Concord

**Background:** Attitude verbs, (*believe, hope, know, etc.*) are sub-sentential forms expressing modal meanings. Since Hintikka, these verbs are analyzed as quantification over possible worlds. Modal concord (MC) is the phenomenon that sentences with multiple modal expressions are interpreted as if there were only one modal operator in them. Modal concord may be established between an attitude verb and a modal expression in its complement:

(1) The general demands that the troops must leave. (From Zeijlstra 2008)

**Question:** What aspects of the meaning of “hope” can modal concord reveal? How does the concord reading arise?

**Data:** The interaction between the verb “hope” and modal expressions in Mandarin shows the following patterns:

**A.** When there are more than one modal in the scope of “hope”, the one closer to the verb does not function as a modal operator. Compare the root sentence (1a) with the complement of *hope* in (1b):

(2) a. *Lisi jintian neng xie de wan wenzhang.*

Lisi today may write de finish paper

‘It is compatible with my belief that Lisi is able to finish the paper today.’

b. *Zhangsan xiwang Lisi jintian neng xie de wan wenzhang.*

Zhangsan hope Lisi today may write de finish paper

‘Zhangsan hopes that Lisi is able to finish the paper today.’

# ‘Zhangsan hopes it is compatible with his belief that Lisi will be able to finish the paper today.’

# ‘Zhangsan hopes that Lisi will be able to be able to finish the paper today.’

In (2a) the modal base of the auxiliary *neng* is the belief of the speaker in the time of speaking, and the potential complement structure “*xie de wan*” expresses a modal relative to the circumstances of *Lisi*. However, in (2b), *neng* cannot be interpreted relative to either a doxastic or a circumstantial modal base.

**B.** In (2a) *neng* can be replaced by a necessity modal *yiding*, while the same operation for (2b) will cause ungrammaticality.

**C.** “*x xiwang neng p*” presupposes that the matrix subject has a weak belief on the possibility of *p*, while “*x xiwang p*” is neutral in terms of *x*’s belief on the possibility of *p*. Consider this scenario: Zhangsan believes that his performance in class is excellent, and thus believes that it is probable that he will get an A. Given this context, statement (3a) is acceptable, but (3b) is marginal.

(3) a. *Zhangsan xiwang Li jiaoshou gei ta A.*

Zhangsan hope Li professor give him A

‘Zhangsan hopes Professor Li will give him an A.’

b. # *Zhangsan xiwang Li jiaoshou neng gei ta A.*

**Explanation:** Hacquard (to appear) proposes that modals are relative to events rather than worlds. The types of events to which a modal can be relativized are: speech event ( $e_0$ ), attitude event ( $e_2$ ) and VP event ( $e_1$ ). I argue that pattern A holds because “hope” does not allow a modal in its scope to be relativized to the attitude event. At the same time, *neng* cannot share its event with another operator; and since the potential complement is relativized by  $e_1$ , *neng* is stranded.

(4)  $[_{CP1} \lambda e_0 T Asp_2 Att e_2 [_{CP2} [_{TP} neng T Asp_1 [_{VP} V e_1 de C ] ] ] ]$



Pattern B is related to fact C. Because *neng* indicates that according to the beliefs of matrix subject the the complement proposition is unlikely to be true, a necessity modal will not be appropriate.

**References:** Anand, Pranav and Hacquard, Valentine (2009): Epistemics with Attitude, in *Proceedings of SALT 18*. Geurts, B. and J. Huitink (2006): ‘Modal Concord’, in *Proceedings of the ESSLLI 2006 Workshop ‘Concord Phenomena at the Syntax Semantics Interface’*. Hacquard, Valentine, to appear ‘On the Event-Relativity of Modal Auxiliaries’, *Natural Language Semantics*. Zeijlstra, Hedde (2008): ‘Modal Concord is Syntactic Agreement’, in: M. Gibson and T. Friedman (eds.): *Proceedings of SALT XVII*. Ithaca: CLS Publications.