

In linguistics, uncertainty is described through a concept called “epistemic modality.” This comparative study of English and Swedish will focus on indicating low levels of certainty and having weak evidence for a proposition.

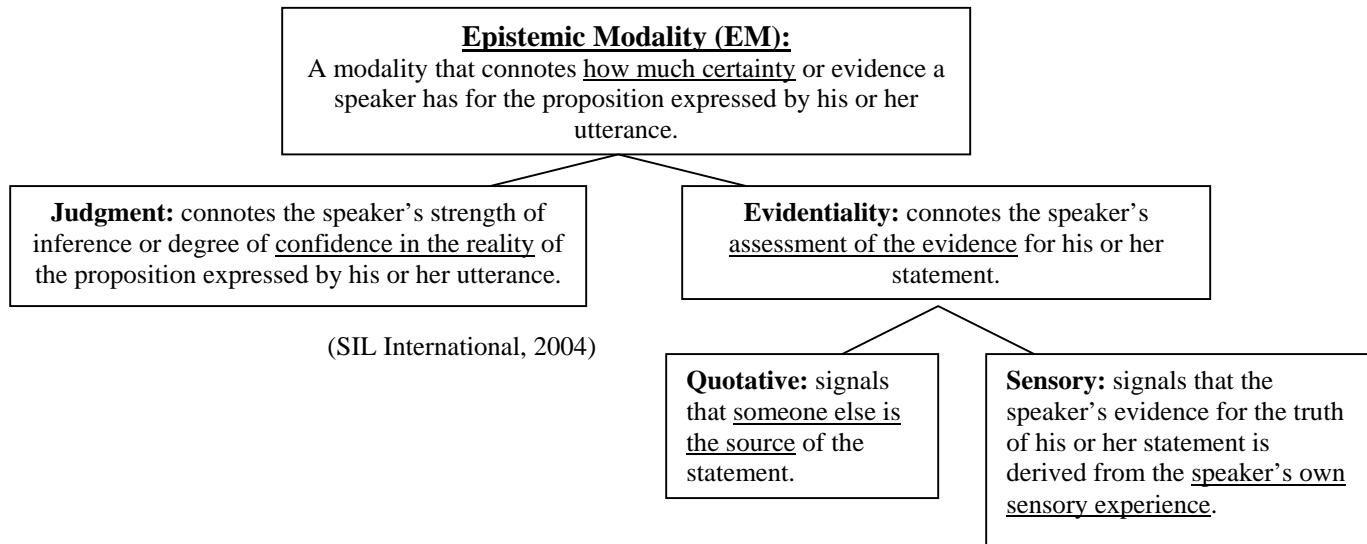


Figure 1. The scalar organization of English epistemic modals (Wärnsby, 2006)

CONFIDENT INFERENCE	REASONABLE INFERENCE	TENTATIVE INFERENCE	POSSIBLE CONCLUSION
<i>must</i>	<i>will</i>	<i>should</i>	<i>may might can could</i>

Figure 2. The scalar organization of Swedish epistemic modals (Wärnsby, 2006)

CONFIDENT INFERENCE	REASONABLE INFERENCE	TENTATIVE INFERENCE	POSSIBLE CONCLUSION	HEARSAY	SHARED BELIEF
<i>måste</i>	<i>bör</i> <i>lä</i>	<i>bör borde må</i> <i>torde måtte</i>	<i>kan kunde</i>	<i>lä</i> <i>ska</i>	<i>torde</i>

Dialogue 1: Lotta and Tommy in the restaurant with the waiter (servitören)

- Servitören:* Jaha. Vill ni beställa, **eller** ...?
'Yeah. Want you(pl.) to-order, **or**...?'
- Lotta:* **Nja**, vi väntar **nog** lite.
'No+Yes, we are-waiting **MOD** [a] little'
- Servitören:* Javisst. **Kanske** ni önskar något att dricka före maten?
'Of course. **Maybe** you(pl.) wish [for] something to drink before the-food?'
- Lotta:* Vill du ha nåt, Tommy?
'Want you have something, Tommy?'
- Tommy:* Ska vi ta en drink, **tycker du**?
'Shall we have a drink, [do] you think?'
- Lotta:* Nej, jag tror det är bra för min del. **Förresten**. Ett glas vitt vin, **kanske**. Det vore gott. Ja, det tar jag.
'No, I think it is good on my part.' **Incidentally**. One glass white wine, **maybe**. It was good. Yeah, I'll take it.'
No, I'm fine. **Well**... A glass of white wine, **maybe**. It was good (previously). Yeah, I'll take it.'

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