

Syntactic, Semantic, and Pragmatic Rationalization of Modal Auxiliary Verbs in Akan

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Abstract : The uniqueness of auxiliary verbs and their contribution to grammar as constituents, which act as preverbs to supply additional grammatical or functional meanings to clauses, are well established. Functionally, they relate clauses to tense, aspect, mood, voice, emphasis, and modality, along with the main verbs conveying the appropriate lexical content. There has been an issue in Akan grammar vis-à-vis the status of auxiliary verbs, in terms of whether Akan has auxiliaries or not and even which forms are to be regarded as auxiliaries. We investigate the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic components of expressions and claim that Akan has auxiliary verbs that contribute the functional or grammatical meaning of modality, tense/aspect, etc., to clauses they occur in. Essentially, we use a self-created corpus data to consider the affix bé- 'may', 'must', 'should'; the form tùmí 'can', 'be able to'; mà 'to let', 'to allow', 'to permit', 'to make', or 'to cause' someone to do something; the multi-word forms èsè sé 'must', 'should' or 'have to' and ètwà sé 'must', 'should' or 'have to', and assert that they are legitimate modal auxiliaries conveying epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modalities, as well as other meanings in the language.

Keywords : Akan, modality, modal auxiliaries, semantics

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