

## **The big and the little: on the difference between domains and functions in creating semantic maps**

This paper argues for a rigorous distinction between functions and domains when it comes to the geometry of semantic maps. We define a domain as consisting of two or more functions that have to be primitive (i.e., that do not themselves consist of functions). It is argued that very often linguistic analyses take a top-down approach where a bottom-up approach would be more fruitful. A top-down approach starts with the domain (e.g., epistemic modality) and asks whether a given morpheme in language X is an instantiation of that domain. This can lead to serious problems if the domain is overly broad or if the domain is too poorly defined to yield reliable cross-linguistic results. An example of an overly broad domain is epistemic modality. While it would appear to be not hard to place a given morpheme in this domain, it is still too broad. It has been argued that English *must* and Swedish *lär* are both instances of epistemic modality, yet in actuality their interpretations do not show any overlap. Other examples of domains that are too broad are various temporal domains, such as past tense. An example of a domain that is too poorly defined to be of any real use in typological studies is that of reality status (realis / irrealis). The various sub-domains that make up this domain vary greatly from language to language (for instance, in some languages, Imperative and Prohibitive are part of realis, in others part of irrealis, in yet others one is part of realis, the other of irrealis). Hence, stating that morpheme X in language Y is an Irrealis morpheme is not very helpful, as they may have a vastly different semantic range.

In a bottom-up approach, we start by examining the semantic range of an individual morpheme and compare that with morphemes from other languages that have a similar range. That way, the emphasis is on functions and more precise comparisons can be made. Later on, one can decide on such issues as which functions comprise a given domain, or where a given domain ends. This approach is especially helpful in deciding on whether a given morpheme belongs to one domain or another. One such example is the current debate about the difference between the domains of epistemic modality and evidentiality which will be used as main example in the paper. It turns out that English *must* has a completely different range than Swedish *lär*, for instance while Dutch *moeten* overlaps with both *must* and *lär*. This only shows up if we consider their semantics on the function level, not on the domain level.

It will be shown that by taking a bottom-up approach we can get a clearer picture of the nature of both domains which in turn can help us to draw the boundary between both domains. Other domains that will benefit from a bottom-up approach are such areas as the perfect (is it a tense or an aspect?) and, to take a slightly different example, possession.