# Modal Case and Alleged Modal Case in Kayardild

Robbert van Sluijs

0508764

1 July 2009

**Index**

**1. Introduction**

Kayardild is an aboriginal language that used to be spoken in Northern Australia. The data I use and base myself on are all provided by Evans (1995), collected either by him in the 1980's, by Stephen Wurm with Alison Dundaman in 1960 or by Norman Tindale in 1962. Already in 1995 (but probably applying to the situation in the 1980's) Evans reported that there were virtually no people under 50 left who could speak Kayardild fluently. Younger people use English or a variety which has been heavily influenced by English and which no longer shows the grammatical and morphological complexity of the language described in Evans (1995). The language described by Evans is the language as it should be (according to the Kaiadilt, the Kayardild speaking people) which was already more than two decades ago only spoken by the oldest of the Kaiadilt. Because it is the uncommon and remarkable morphological and syntactical system of Kayardild I am interested in, I will use the old language of Kayardild, as described by Evans for my analysis.

One of the remarkable phenomena in Kayardild is the system of modal case, as it is dubbed by Evans. Some verb inflections select a specific case on their complement. These verb inflections mark the verb for tense, modality and other semantic features, which I explain and exemplify below. Most verb inflections always mark their complement with one specific case. Some verb inflections allow for variation in case marking the complement. Consider the following sentences (all sentences, glosses and translations of Kayardild sentences in this thesis are taken from Evans (1995)).

(1)     Ngada          kurri-nangku          mala-wu
        1sgNOM        see-NEG.POT          sea-MPROP
        'I won't (be able to) see the sea.'

(2)     Ngada          kurri-nangku          mala-y
        1sgNOM        see-NEG.POT          sea-MLOC
        'I could not see the sea.'

In (1) and (2) we see the negative form of the POTential verb inflection. The POTential expresses an ability or a future tense. The Modal PROPrietive is the case the POTential normally selects to mark its complement. The PROPrietive case has a number of functions. The primary function is to denote possession, but possession in a broad sense, as (3) shows.

(3)   Niya        karrngi-ja    dun-kuru-ya        maku-y
      3sgNOM     keep-ACT     husband-PROP-LOC woman-LOC
      'He is living with a married woman (with a woman having a husband).'

As we see in (3), the possession is marked with the PROPrietive.

       In (2) the object is marked with the LOCative case. The basic function of the LOCative is to mark location, exemplified in (4).

(4)   Ngaaka       dangka-a      waa-ja       ngambirr-iy
      whoNOM      person-NOM  sing-ACT     humpy-LOC
      'Who is singing in the humpy?'

The LOCative case is normally selected by the ACTual verb inflection, which marks the verb for factuality: this means that the proposition has been realized. We see an example of this in (3), where the whole object (*dun-kuru-ya maku-y* 'woman having a husband') is marked by the LOC, expressing that the event is factual: The *he* from (3) is actually living with a married woman at the moment. The appearance of the LOC, normally in cooccurence with the ACT expressing factuality, on the complement of the verb marked with the POTential, expressing ability, as in (2), shows us that a modal case is not an element completely doubling the semantics expressed by the verb inflection, but an element that contributes to the semantics of the clause independently. The LOC must independently of the ACT verb inflection express the meaning of factuality in (2).

       In this thesis I determine the semantics of the modal cases, the verb inflections, and their interactions, and I give an account of the distribution of the modal cases across the verb inflectional paradigm according to the notions of tense and modality. Firstly, I discuss the case system of Kayardild in section 2. In section 3 I discuss the TAM-features (Tense, Aspect and Mood/Modality) and other semantics expressed by the verb inflections and their modal cases. In that section I also establish a direct link between the semantics of the case and its semantics when used modally. Finally, in section 4 I try to explain the modal case alternations and to answer the related question: Why are the modal cases used as they are and why not differently?

## 2. The case system of Kayardild

Kayardild has a rich case system with no less than twelve cases. Kayardild does not make use of adpositions. All kinds of meanings that in a language like English can be expressed by prepositions, are expressed by means of case in Kayardild. This results in such a complex case system, that it is not feasible to give a short overview of all cases and their diverse meanings. I will introduce and explain the relevant cases when they come up for discussion. Not only is there a substantial number of cases, the cases may also be used on different syntactic levels, having different meanings and different functions. One case suffix may thus be used in different domains, but in a certain domain only some of all case suffixes may be used. Evans (1995) distinguishes five functional domains, of which I will briefly discuss four. The typical use of case, as Evans explains: "*[...] to mark a syntactic or semantic relation between a nominal argument and either the verb or the clause as a whole*" is dubbed *relational case* to avoid confusion with the other domains (Evans, 1995, p.103). Another functional domain is the one where a noun phrase modifies another, in an attributive relationship. Cases that function as such are dubbed *adnominal case* by Evans . Bound to certain conditions, finite subordinate clauses may bear a special case marking on every word of the subordinate clause. This is called *complementizing case*. Fourthly, we have the phenomenon of the so-called *modal case*, already mentioned in section 1.

First it may be best to focus on what exactly case is in order to have a better understanding of how case works in Kayardild compared to how it is used in other languages of the world. Butt (2006) gives a broad definition of case: "[...] case is a handy tool for marking semantic relationships between nouns and verbs, or, more generally between dependents and a head (Butt, 2006, p.4)." Note that case as defined by Butt does not need to be a morphological marker, but in Kayardild it is. Haspelmath (2006) prefers to reserve the term *case* for the morphological markers of semantic relations only (as in Kayardild), and to use the term *semantic roles* for the semantic relations themselves. In this thesis I will use the term *case* according to Haspelmath's description. Often a distinction is made between grammatical case, which expresses core syntactic relations such as subject and object, and concrete case, expressing various specific semantic roles, and in particular spatial relationships (Haspelmath, 2006, p.3). Evans (1995) used different distinctions for his analysis of the Kayardild case system. Evans sorts the cases according to the syntactic level they occur at (e.g. adnominal case bound at the DP-level versus relational case bound at the VP-level). This makes sense because Kayardild has cases that seem to convey another

meaning depending on whether they are used relationally or complementizingly, as (5) and (6) show.

(5)      dulk-iya     barji-ja     wangalk
          ground-LOC  fall-ACT     boomerangNOM
          'The boomerang fell to the ground.'

(6)      jina-a        bijarb      nga-ku-l-da    bakiin-ki    kurulu-tharra-y
          where-NOM  dugongNOM 1-INC-pl-NOM all-CLOC   kill-PST-CLOC
          'Where is the dugong, which we all killed?'

In (5) the LOC is used relationally and modally (seen the ACT verb inflection) conveying a locational meaning ('to the ground') and giving a factual reading of the event respectively. In (6) the LOC is used to mark the subordinate clause (with the exception of the pronominal subject of the subordinate clause *ngakulda* ('we (inclusive)'), which is never marked by a complementizing LOC, but instead bears nominative case). There is no semantic link between the occurrence of the LOC in (5) and in (6).

      Kayardild does not have one case to mark objects. Instead, the modal cases, mentioned in section 1, mark the object. However, not only objects may be marked by modal case, but "roughly, all NPs except subjects and those associated with subjects" (Evans, 1995, p.398). Concerning structural case, it is safe to conclude from this that Kayardild makes a distinction between subject, marked (or unmarked) by the nominative on the one hand, and all other relational phrases, whether it be objects, locational or temporal adjuncts on the other hand. This seems true at least for all consituents marked by modal case. Not all relational phrases are modal case marked and not all adjuncts are marked, but look at the following sentences to see that in general time nominals or locational adjuncts are treated in the same way as objects.

(7)      niya         bukawa-thu mungkiji-wu    dulk-u
          3sgNOM      die-POT    own-MPROP    country-MPROP
          'He will die in his own country.'

In (7) the locational adjunct *mungkijiwu dulku* ('in his own country') has been marked by modal case (the PROP) only, not by a case marking the locational semantics, which would have been the LOC.

(8)  ngada        kurri-nangku        mala-wu        balmbi-wu
     1gNOM        see-NEG.POT         sea-MPROP      morrow-MPROP
     'I won't see the sea tomorrow.'

In (8) both the object *malawu* ('sea') and the temporal adjunct *balmbiwu* ('tomorrow') are marked by modal case. It may be important to note that modal case is not obligatory, as (9) shows.

(9)  Jardaka       kamburi-j      kurirr-wu      dangka-wu
     crowNOM       speak-ACT      dead-PROP      man-PROP
     'The crow speaks of dead men.'

Because the verb *kamburij* ('speak') is marked by the ACT, we would expect the LOC to appear on *kurirrwu dangkawu* ('dead man'), but this is not the case. Whether or not an occurrence of the PROP as in (9) is an instantiation of modal case too, is a question that needs more investigation, and is beyond the scope of the present thesis.

Before discussing the modal case system in the next section, I explain what exactly is understood by the notions of tense, aspect and mood (often abbreviated to TAM), which are all involved in the modal case system. Of these, tense is the easiest to grasp: tense marks the placement in time of the event the verb refers to. Possible distinctions are past, present and future tense. Aspect and mood/modality are much more complex and controversial. Ziegeler (2006) gives an overview of the definitions that people have attributed to the terms of mood and modality, and what exactly the difference is between the two. Palmer (1986) for example notes that modality is a semantic domain, while mood is the grammatical realization of modality, in the same way as tense is the grammatical realization of time. There have been other proposals as to the definitions of mood versus modality (see Bybee et. al, 1994; Lyons, 1995). Dahl (2006) notes that "[i]n actual grammars, the categories [tense, aspect, mood etc.] tend to shade into each other: grammatical forms tend to combine elements from more than one of them, or to fall in between the definitions." This is exactly the case for Kayardild. The verb inflections and the *modal* cases often express both tense and modality, sometimes modality and aspect, sometimes only tense. In sections 3 and 4 I discuss to what extent the verb inflections and the cases contribute to these meanings. Since it is the semantic notion of the categories that is relevant for this discussion, a precise definition of mood versus modality

is not of any concern for this study. We do need a precise definition of modality, however. Narrog (2005) gives the following definition of modality:

> "Modality is a linguistic category referring to the factual status of a state of affairs. The expression of a state of affairs is modalized if it is marked for being undetermined with respect to its factual status, i.e. is neither positively nor negatively factual." (Narrog, 2005, p.184)

Narrog thus defines modality purely in terms of factuality.

### 3. The semantics of the verb inflections and the modal cases

Below I give an overview of all verb inflections and their unmarked choice for modal case. This table is a reduced version of the one that can be found in Evans (1995, p.402).

| Verb Inflection | Unmarked choice for modal case |
|---|---|
| ACTual | LOCative |
| IMMEDiate | " " |
| POTential | PROPrietive |
| PaST | ABLative |
| ALMOST | " " |
| PRECONdition | " " |
| DESiderative | OBLique |
| HORTative | " " |
| APPRehensive | " ' |
| DIRECted | ALLative |

Table 1. Kayardild verb inflections selecting modal case.

The ACTual verb inflection has already been mentioned and is the unmarked choice in narratives. The ACT stresses that the action described has been *instantiated* (Hale, 1976), instead of it being marked for tense. The IMMEDiate verb inflection marks events that are "[...] taking place at the same time and place of the speech act [...]" (Evans, 1995, p.402). The IMMED has in common with the ACT that they both mark the action they describe as

positively factual. Both verb inflections select the LOC as their modal case, and there is no alternative modal case allowed.

(10)  ngaakarran-ji   kunawuna-ya   nyingka      bala-thi?
       Whose-MLOC   child-MLOC   2sgNOM      hit-IMMED
       'Whose child are you hitting?'

In (10) we see an example of the IMMED on *balathi* ('hit') with its meaning similar to the progressive aspect in English. Some verb inflections can be analysed as existing of a verb thematic plus the modal case that they also select on their complement or adjunct. This is true for the IMMED and the LOC, although the phonological realization of these suffixes is influenced by so many phonological factors that in a given sentence this direct relation is mostly obscured, as is the case in (10). The fact that the verb inflection and their modal case often concern one and the same morpheme cannot explain all relations between a verb inflection and its modal case. For this we need a semantic motivation. For the IMMED it is only an obvious and logical conclusion that when X is happening at the same time as when it is uttered, that the happening of X is asserted to be true, thus having a positive factuality. Having a positive factuality can also be written as [+FACT]. For the same reason, when a person or object X is said to be at a location at a given moment, then at that moment, beside X, the location must be assumed to be factual within the event. Evans (1995, p.409) remarks that "[t]he choice of the LOCative, which primarily expresses the *coincidence* of two entities, is obvious enough with present events [...]." Tense, however, is not expressed by the ACT. If something was factual in the past, then still the ACT with the LOC is used, and thus, the LOC is also appropriate to be used for events that took place in the past, for the pastness is decided by the context, not expressed by the LOC nor the ACT. Now we have established a semantic link that validates the occurrence of the LOC, signaling a positive factuality, with the IMMED and the ACT, both marking an action for its positive factuality. Note that the ACT can occur in present or past events only, for future tense is inherently modal: what has not happened yet, can not be assumed to be factual.

The POTential verb inflection consists of the PROPrietive case, which is also its unmarked modal case. The POT can be used mainly in four distinct meanings, which all share the feature of modality. One of these meanings is the notion of futurity/expectation. In this meaning the POT is purely a future tense marking.

(11)  niya         bukawa-thu mungkiji-wu     dulk-u
      3sgNOM       die-POT     own-MPROP      country-MPROP
      'He will die in his own country.'

An example of the futurity use can be found in (11). As already mentioned, future tense is inherently modal, and thus [±FACT]. Another use of the POT is that of prescription.

(12)  (...)    wambaj-u     wuu-ju         ngalawan-ju
      (…)     calm-MPROP give-POT        1pl-MPROP
      '(...), you must give us calm weather.'

In (12) the POT does not express futurity explicitly, but it has a prescriptive reading. Prescription too has the aspect of futurity, for the element prescripted has yet to occur. Thirdly, the POT can express a desire, which translates in English with the modal verb *to want*. In this meaning any tense reading is possible, depending on the context.

(13)  kunyawunya kunawuna     rar-umban-ju       kang-ku         kamburi-ju.
      smallNOM    childNOM    south-ORIG-MPROP language-MPROP     talk-POT
      'The little children want to speak Kayardild.'

In (13) we see the POT expressing desire. Again, the POT marks the verb modally, as is the case with a fourth possible meaning of the POT, the one expressing ability.

(14)  (...)    nyingka       kujiji-wu          kala-thu
      (...)    2sgNOM        spearhead-MPROP    cut-POT
      '(...) you will be able to carve spearheads.'

In (14) the POT is used to express ability (and futurity in addition). Ability in itself involves modality, so it is [±FACT]. From this it is clear that in all instances of the POT it marks the verb modally, thus for [±FACT]. The connection between the POT and the PROP is clear morphologically, again meaning that the POT verb inflection has derived from a verb thematic (the th-consonant one can see in (14)) plus the PROPrietive case.

The PaST verb inflection primarily expresses a past tense: it marks an event that is *"[...] asserted to have taken place some time before the speech act [...]"* (Evans, 1995, p.402).

(15)    ngada        yakuri-na     jungarrba-na  raa-jarr
        1sgNOM      fish-MABL    big-MABL    spear-PST
        'I speared a big fish.'

(16)    nga-l-da      kala-tharra    rawalan-ku
        1-pl-NOM      cut-PST       baler.shell-PROP
        'We used to cut (things) with baler shells.'

In (15) and (16) we see examples of the PST expressing past tense. (16) is an example of where the PST denotes that the action is no longer performed. The PST is also used to express a non-future irrealis.

(17)    ngada     kurri-jarra bukaji-na      [...]       ngada        raa-ju
        1sgNOM  see-PST   seahawk-MABL  [...]     1sgNOM       spear-POT
        'If I had seen a sea-hawk [...], I'd have speared it.'

In (17) the PST expresses a counterfactual, which is typically [-FACT], for it is clear that the event did not happen. In subordinate clauses, the ACT cannot be used, so any past event must be marked by the PST verb inflection.

Other verb inflections that take the ablative as modal case, are the ALMOST and the PRECONdition. The PRECONdition marks an event that is asserted to have taken place *"[...] before the time of the main clause [...]"* (Evans, 1995, p.402). The ALMOST verb inflection marks events that were expected to take place (in the past), but did not.

(18)    bulkurdudu     ngijin-jina          baa-nangarra    kurthurr-ina
        crocodileNOM 1sgPOSS-MABL     bite-ALMOST  shin-MABL
        "A crocodile almost bit me on the leg."

(19)    jatha-a       dangka-a      ngakan-kinaba      wungi-jarrb,
        other-NOM    man-NOM     sandbank-MABL      steal-PRECON
        dul-marra    dangka-a      jul-iya           barrki-j
        country-UTIL man-NOM    bone-MLOC         chop-ACT

"If another man stole (one's) sandbank, the boss of that country would chop some bones."

In the examples (18) and (19) the objects of the verbs marked by the ALMOST and PRECON are marked by the ablative case. The UTILitive in (19) in the phrase *dulmarra dangkaa* can be explained by a literal translation *person used for (maintaining/guarding) country*. This particular phrase is idiomatic, meaning *custodian of sacred site*. The ALMOST, as the English word *almost*, is inherently negatively marked for factuality, so [-FACT]. Unlike the English word *almost*, the Kayardild verb inflection ALMOST is positively marked for past tense, for the ALMOST always concerns actions in the past. The PRECON cannot be labeled for past tense, because it can also concern events in the future.

(20)  nyingka      jungarra      kunawuna      wirdi-jarrb,
      2sgNOM       bigNOM        childNOM      become-PRECON
      nyingka      kujiji-wu                   kala-thu
      2sgNOM       spearhead-MPROP    cut-POT
      'When you are a big boy you will be able to carve spearheads.'

In (20) the subordinate clause has a future tense reading, just like the main clause. What the PRECON is marked for, is that it is prior to the main clause. It is marked for relative past tense. This can be coded as [PRECON>MAIN.CL], which means that the clause with the verb marked by the PRECON is placed in a time frame which is before the time frame where the main clause is placed in. The modal case selected by the PST, the ALMOST, and the PRECON is the ABL. Originally the ABL is the case to mark the source of motion or provenance (Evans (1995) mentions that at the time of his writing only the oldest people still used the ablative in this meaning). Evans (1995, p.410) aptly describes the semantic relation between the ABL and the past/prior meaning as follows: "the world including this speech act can be thought of as *coming from a world where* [Main clause]" and "the world where [Main clause] can be thought of as coming from a world where [Subordinate clause]."

As to the relation between the past tense meaning and modality of the ABL and the verb inflections that select the ABL, it is safe to state that in principal the ABL marks the event positively for factuality, but in the past. Let us look back at (15) and (16). Their events were factual once, but not necessarily still, as (16) shows, which was specifically only true in the past. This is a fundamental difference with the LOC, which is not entangled with tense at

all, but only with factuality. The ALMOST verb inflection contains an inherent negation, therefore the event is [-FACT]. The case of the PRECON is more complicated. It may seem implausible for the ABL to be a past tense factuality marker, for it can also be used to mark non-future irreales, and combined with the PRECON it also marks hypothetical events. One thing in favour of the ABL expressing a past tense factuality is the appearance of the factual ACT and LOC in (19), which are just as little likely to occur in a hypothetical construction. Note however that in Kayardild a hypothetical construction like (17) contains no complementizers, but only two clauses which have an identical sentence structure, as if they are in fact a sequence of two main clauses. The hypothetical context needs to be inferred. The hypothetical construction is therefore deducted from a conjunction of two declarative sentences, by themselves marked for (past) factuality. The PRECON accompanied by the ABL as modal case, as in (19), does appear solely in hypothetical subclauses, but we have seen that there is no specific marker needed to identify a hypothetical subclause. Therefore, the PRECON can also be interpreted as expressing primarily that the subclause is prior in time to the main clause, which does not interfere with a past factual reading of the ABL. The hypothetical reading is inferred in the same way as is in clauses without a PRECON marker, like (17).

The DESiderative selects the OBLique case as modal case. The DES expresses the meaning "it would be (generally) a good idea to/that". It is in that regard different from the desire meaning of the POT, because it doesn't translate as *X wants*, but rather as *X should*. The DES can also be used for hypothetical future events (regardless of whether they are generally desirable). It is definitely a modal verb inflection.

(21)  dan-inja      nga-l-da      jalji-nja      wirdi-d
      here-MOBL    1-pl-NOM     shade-MOBL   stay-DES
      'We should stay here in the shade.'

(22)  nga-ku-lu-wan-inja              jungarra-ntha  ngimi-nja     dali-d,[1]
      1-INC-pl-POSS-MOBL            big-MOBL      night-MOBL   come-DES
      nga-ku-lu-wan-inja              bakiin-inja    raa-d
      1-INC-pl-POSS-MOBL            all-MOBL      spear-DES
      'If he comes upon us in the dead of night he will spear us all.'

---

[1]      Evans (1995, p.263) glossed 'dali-d' as 'come-MOBL', though evidently this verb marker is a DES, certainly not a case marker.

In (21) and (22) the DES marks the verb modally, and the objects and locations are all marked by the modal OBL. Similar to the DES is the HORTative. It also selects the MOBL and expresses a desire that someone should cause something to occur. It can also be a substitute for an imperative.

(23)  wakatha        nguku-ntha    yalawu-jinj
      sisterNOM      water-MOBL    fetch-HORT
      'Sister should fetch some water.'

Clearly, the HORT also marks the verb modally. The third verb inflection that selects the OBL as its modal case is the APPRehensive, which expresses the undesirability of an event. It usually implies that the hearer should be careful, which turns the utterance into a warning.

(24)  warkurr-inja          daman-da      dara-a-nyarr
      dugong hide-MOBL  tooth-NOM     break-M-APPR
      '(Careful, you) might crack your teeth on the dugong hide.'

The verb in (24) is besides the APPR marked by a middle suffix (glossed as 'M'), which morphologically turns the sentence into a kind of passive. Therefore the patient *tooth* is in the NOMinative. The OBL in *warkurrinja* ('dugong hide') is the modal case selected by the APPR. The OBLique case probably originates from a DATive (Evans, 1995, p.148). Its use is very limited, but shows some meanings that would be typical for a DAT, like purpose in (25).

(25)  nying-ka        wanjii-ja      kuru-nth!
      2sg-NOM        go up-IMP    egg-OBL
      'You climb up for eggs!'

In (25) the purpose of the action is marked with the OBL. Evans (1995, p.411) notes that the old DAT would have included a purpose meaning, and that it is used for situations of which it is the purpose for the speaker to bring them about, although, he adds, this "historical link between the purposive-like semantics of the modal oblique and the purposive relational use of its proto Tangkic [the reconstructed ancestor of Kayardild and its related languages] reflex [...] probably has no validity synchronically."

The DIRected is another verb inflection that selects a modal case, which is the ALLative. Both suffixes are formally related, and the meanings both have are strongly related too. The DIR "indicates that an action is, broadly speaking, "directed towards" the speaker. This may involve direction of motion [...], more frequently, there is the added implication that the action is just beginning [...] or just entering the speaker's awareness [...]" (Evans, 1995, p.265).

(26)  dathin-a      dangka-a      jirrka-an-da        warra-jir.
      That-NOM      man-NOM       north-FROM-NOM      go-DIR
      diya-jir       wuran-kir
      eat-DIR        food-MALL
      'That man came (to the camp) from the north and started eating.'

In (26) we see that the first DIR-marked verb exhibits the direction of motion meaning, while the second verb has the implication that the action is just beginning. The ALL expresses the first meaning too.

(27)  kurrka-tha     nga-ku-l-da           natha-r        nga-ku-lu-wan-jir
      take-IMP       1-INC-pl-NOM          camp-ALL       1-INC-pl-POSS-ALL
      'Let's take (it) to our camp!'

The word *nathar* in (27) is marked for the ALL, which has a directional meaning. A second use of both the DIR and the ALL is the use of marking a place "through which something is scattered [...] or across which it passes [...] or lies.

(28)  mutha-a       dangka-a      dathin          walmunkarra-r        dulk-ir
      many-NOM      man-NOM       thereNOM        on top-ALL           place-ALL
      'There are lots of men all over the top of that hill.'
(29)  bilirr-a       dathin-a      walbu-ri        wirdi-jir
      paddle-NOM     there-NOM     raft-MALL       stay-DIR
      'The paddle is lying there on the raft.'

From (28) and (29) it becomes clear that the semantic relation between the DIR and the ALL is very close. The meaning expressed in the last two examples is locational. The DIR seems

not marked for tense, nor does it mark the verb modally. Like the ACT and its LOC, it seems to be marked positively for factuality, only used for expressing factual events. For comparison, Evans (1995, p.150) states that for younger speakers of Kayardild the locational uses of the ALL, of which (28) was an example, have been lost completely, and that these younger speakers use the "less specific" LOC instead. Similarly, younger speakers do not use the DIR verb inflection. A sentence as (29) would probably be uttered by younger speakers with the verb marked by the ACT and *walbu-* ('raft') marked by the LOC. Still, there is a difference between the ACT and the DIR, in that the factuality is not stressed in the latter (while it is in the former), plus that the DIR has a distinct directional meaning.

Evans (1995, p.411) notes that the essential difference between relational case and modal case is, that the former links one nominal to the verbal action, while the latter relates the world of the clause to the world of the speech act. For the ABL such a characterization has already been given. For the ALL this could be characterized as "the world including this speech act can be thought of as moving towards a world where [main clause]" (Evans, 1995, p. 410). For the LOC Evans says that "the world including this speech act [...] can be thought of as *in a world where* [Main clause].

## 4. The distribution of modal case

Now the semantic relations between the modal cases, their relational use and the verb inflections that select them have been established, it is time to look at the respective contributions of the modal cases and the verb inflections to the semantics of the utterance, in order to be able to explain the independent use of modal case, and the whole system of assignment of modal case in Kayardild. In one respect the previous section has been incomplete, in that only one modal case per verb inflection has been regarded. For most verb inflections (the ACT, the PST, the ALMOST, the PRECON, the DES, the HORT, and the DIR) this is the whole story. For two, the POT and the APPR, it is not. In one specific meaning, that of ability, the POT may select the LOC as its modal case, when the factuality of the event is stressed. This leads to a semantic conflict, for ability, being modally marked as [±FACT] cannot at the same time be marked for a positive factuality. This type of conflict is called an "infelicitous combination" in Malchukov (to appear). Kayardild uses two morphemes (the verb inflection and the case) to express the two conflicting meanings. One of the possible outcomes of such a conflict that Malchukov mentions, is that the infelicitous combination involves a change of meaning of one of the grammemes. It is this resolution that Kayardild has taken. The combination of the POT and the LOC results in the LOC marking

past tense of the ability expressed by the POT. The POT in combination with the PROP expresses an ability in present or future. The LOC wants to express the positive factuality, but is forced to express something else. The LOC (in combination with the ACT) can be associated too with present and past tense, for an ACT-marked verb can have both tense readings. Since the past tense cannot be expressed by the PROP, being future oriented, this is the perfect alternative for the LOC to express.

(30)    Ngada          kurri-nangku        mala-wu      (balmbi-wu)
        1sgNOM      see-NEG.POT        sea-MPROP   morrow-MPROP
        'I won't (be able to) see the sea (tomorrow).'

(31)    Ngada          kurri-nangku        mala-y       (barruntha-y)
        1sgNOM      see-NEG.POT        sea-MLOC    yesterday-MLOC
        'I could not see the sea (yesterday).'

Actually (30) and (31) seem infelicitous examples, because the verb inflections are used in their negative form, which may make the situation regarding factuality very complex, since a negation marks the verb negatively for factuality. However, negation does not seem to have an effect on how the modal case system works in Kayardild, for all verb inflections in their negative form behave exactly the same regarding the attribution of modal cases as their positive counterparts, as (32) shows.

(32)    niya          baa-jarri          wadu-y
        3sgNOM      bite-NEG.ACT        smoke-MLOC
        'He isn't smoking.'

Even though (32) is negatively marked for factuality due to the negation, the LOC is used, which is typical for positively marking factuality. The LOC is used, just as the ACT, because the sentence marks a factual event, be it one that is negated. Unlogical as this may sound, that this is the way to interpret the influence of negation in Kayardild is backed up by the appearance of the LOC in counterfactual constructions with the particle *maraka* (which is glossed by Evans as ('CounTeR-FaCTual') . Consider the following examples.

(33)    maraka          ngumal-iya    kurrka-tha      karrngi-j

|        | CTRFCT | single-MLOC take-ACT | grasp-ACT |
|--------|--------|------|------|

'(He) went off with (a married woman), as if she was single.'

(34) maraka        yuuma-thu     barruntha-y

        CTRFACT    drown-POT   yesterday-MLOC

        'He could have drowned yesterday (but didn't).'

In (33) the LOC is used, of all things, to mark a non-factual element, the woman in question not being single. In (34) the LOC in combination with the POT expresses that the "event could have happened but didn't" (Evans, 1995, p.378). As Evans mentions there too, "this corresponds directly to the non-counterfactual use", where the POT and the LOC mark an ability in the past. The counterfactual particle *maraka* is a type of negation too, and clearly it doesn't interfere with the way the modal case system works. If we recall that the cases used in the modal case system express either a factual event or an event that is neither marked for being factual nor for being non-factual, it is not surprising that no different modal case is used in negations, for there simply is no case which expresses non-factuality. Having shown that negation has no influence on the choice of modal cases, I will ignore the negation in (30) and (31) and discuss the POT as if it is used in its positive form. In these two examples we clearly see the tense differentiation: The PROP gives the sentence a future tense reading, while the LOC gives the sentence a past tense reading. Why the ABL was not chosen to express the past tense meaning, is most certainly because it is not past tense that is deliberately expressed in (31), but more a result of the modality clash described above. Essentially the LOC expresses that we are not dealing with an expectation or potentially factual event (as in (30)), but with a factual event that is modally marked for ability. Evans (1995, p.404) describes this situation regarding (31) as: "there was a real occasion, yesterday, when the speaker was unable to see the sea." Whatever the effect of the LOC modally is, it is clear that the LOC gives the ability a past tense reading.

The APPR verb inflection allows for even more modal case alternation. Recall that the unmarked modal case selected by the APPR is the OBL. The APPR marks the verb for its undesirability.

(35) nying-ka      ngudi-na            wangalk,

       2sg-NOM    throw-NEG.IMP   boomerang.NOM

       ngada        ngumban-inja     burldi-nyarr

       1sgNOM     2sg-MOBL       throw-APPR

'Don't you throw the boomerang, or I'll throw one at you.'

(36)  nying-ka      ngudi-na            wangalk,
      2sg-NOM       throw-NEG.IMP       boomerang.NOM
      ngada         ngumban-ju          burldi-nyarr
      1sgNOM        2sg-MPROP           throw-APPR
      'Don't you throw the boomerang, or I'll throw one at you.'

(37)  Thararra      kali-nyarra   wambal-iya,   naa-nyarr
      ember.NOM   jump-APPR   bush-MLOC   burn-APPR
      '(Look out), the embers are jumping into the bush, it might burn.'

In (35) and (36) the meaning difference is not noticeable in the English translation. The OBL in (35) stresses the undesirability of the event, expressed by the APPR. The PROP in (36) stresses the "certainty of the speaker of being able to effect an unpleasant retaliation" (Evans, 1995, p.405). The undesirability expressed by the APPR is enforced by the PROP, which expresses the ability of the speaker himself to act out the undesired action, or that there will certainly be an undesired result to the event. In (37) the LOC is used as modal case with the APPR. The LOC expresses that the undesired event is taking place, thus marking the event for positive factuality. Since we are dealing with a difference in stress of the specific meanings regarding the modal case alternation, the following is not self-evident, but since the LOC is necessary to stress the factuality of the undesired event, the factuality of the event marked by the APPR is not evident by itself (thus when marked by the OBL). This alone is reason enough to suspect that the APPR plus OBL is marked neither positively nor negatively for factuality, which would also be in concordance with the fact that the APPR expresses a warning that an event has an undesired, unpleasant result, and that it should be averted (Evans, 1995, p.264). If an event can still be averted, than it is not factual yet. This suspicion is backed up by the data. In (35) no boomerang is thrown yet. In (37) the contrast is very clear: The jumping of embers into the bush, marked by the LOC is already happening, the burning of the bush, marked by the APPR only has not happened yet.

Some conclusions to be drawn, though not new, are that the OBL and the PROP are the two real modal cases. The PROP is used only when a modal meaning is expressed, be it an expectation/futurity, a prescription, a desire or an ability. The same counts for the OBL, being used when an action is considered desired, for hypothetical future and hypothetical undesired

events, and for orders, imperative-like constructions. In contrast, the LOC and the ALL mark the verb positively for factuality, which excludes any modal readings. For the LOC expressing factuality is its main meaning, while for the ALL it is only secondary. The ABL expresses factuality essentially combined with past tense, both absolute (with the PST and ALMOST) and relative with the PRECON. Since the TAM features of all the different modal cases are rather divergent, for a clearer understanding of their occurrences it is necessary to discuss the way in which the different verb inflections are marked for tense.

What is striking is that not all possible tense differences are expressed (or marked) distinctly. The prescriptive use of the POT is not inherently incompatible with past or future tense, but yet it does not occur with those tense readings (as far as can be concluded from the data provided by Evans). The same counts for the desirableness use of the DES and for the HORT, while for the APPR there are no occurences of a past tense. These are the only tense uses, which are logically possible, but not attested. For all four there is one reasoning which can explain them all. There is not much sense in uttering a warning in the past tense, because nothing could be done any more to avoid or prevent it. Therefore the APPR expresses emotional content that is of direct importance for the hearer, not only for the speaker. It is of direct importance for the hearer (or occasionally a third person, which is sometimes an indirect way of addressing the hearer) that some action be taken. For the imperative-like HORT, the DES expressing desirableness, which is a kind of proposal or suggestion, intending to provoke a reaction, and the prescriptive POT the importance for the hearer is even more direct: they are only relevant and only occur in present tense. If we compare the prescriptive use of the POT with its ability and its volitional modality, which are rather reportive than demanding a reaction, we see that these two do occur in all three tenses, for all tenses can be relevant depending on the content of the event. For all other verb inflections, all logically possible tense occurrences can be attested too. Note that in what tense a verb inflection may occur, depends on the modality. The non-modal, factual ACT and the DIR only occur in past or present tense, the only tenses in which factuality can be verified. The IMMED occurs only in present tense, for it reports an event taking place at the time of report. The verb inflections selecting the ABL as modal case (the PaST, the ALMOST, and the PRECON) are exceptional in that they primarily express past tense, in contrast to all other verb inflections selecting a modal case that expresses tense, if at all, only secondarily. Still, the ABL is coherent with the modal case system, for it expresses the non-modal factuality as well, though necessarily combined with past tense.

## 5. Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to look at the distribution of the modal cases across a verb inflection paradigm in Kayardild, and to determine the semantic factors influencing the way modal cases occur. Why a certain modal case occurs with a certain verb inflection is mostly determined on formal grounds, meaning that they share a common origin, though a semantic link between the two can often be established as well. In some cases, a case alternation is possible for a verb inflection, proving that the modal case has meaning independent of the verb inflection. I found that in the whole of the modal case system it is essentially modality which is being expressed. Tense is merely a function of modality, modality dictating the possibilities of tense. Of all five 'modal' cases the PROP and the OBL are the only ones actually expressing modality (or occurring in modal contexts), the LOC and the ALL however express factuality, which is not modality, but can be placed in a paradigm of modality as being negatively modal. The ABL is partly an exception, because it expresses past tense, though linked with factuality. The way modality interacts with tense can be demonstrated well with a recapitulation of all the possible meanings of the POT verb inflection. The POT in its meaning of expectation/future modality has a future tense meaning entailed. The prescriptive modal use is of direct importance to the hearer, trying to evoke a reaction, and therefore only occurs in present tense, because the other tenses are not relevant. The volitional modal use of the POT has no limitations concerning tense, and accordingly all three tense readings are possible, even though there is no tense marking. For the ability modality of the POT there is a case alternation possible between the PROP and the LOC, the latter expressing a past tense, the former having a present or future tense reading. Here too, tense is a result of modality. The LOC actually expresses a non-modality (factuality) which is incompatible with the modal ability being neither factual nor unfactual, and so the LOC is forced to express tense instead.

## 6. References

Butt, M. (2006). Theories of case. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bybee, J., Pagliuca, W. & Perkins, R.D. (1994). The evolution of grammar : Tense, aspect and modality in the languages of the world. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dahl, Ö. (2006). *Tense, mood, aspect: Overview*. Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics. http://www.sciencedirect.com.proxy.ubn.ru.nl:8080/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi= &_xRefDocId=pii%23b0080448542002479&_fmt=high&_orig=na&_cdi=27028&_re

fWorkId=326&view=c&_acct=C000036278&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=6
68715&md5=38c64110a8e0e771a4fb4793085beac7 16 march 2006.

Evans, N.D. (1995). A grammar of Kayardild. Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Haspelmath, M. (2006). Terminology of case. In A. Malchukov & A. Spencer (eds.),
*Handbook of case*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lyons, J. (1995). Linguistic semantics. An introduction. Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press.

Malchukov, A. (to appear). Incompatible categories: resolving the "present perfective
paradox". In L. Hogeweg, H. De Hoop & A. Malchukov (eds.), *Crosslinguistic
Studies of Tense, Aspect, and Modality*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Narrog, H. (2005). On defining modality again. *Language Sciences 27*, 165-192.

Palmer, F.R. (1986). Mood and modality. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ziegeler, D.P. (2006). *Mood and modality in grammar*. Encyclopedia of Language and
Linguistics.
http://www.sciencedirect.com.proxy.ubn.ru.nl:8080/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=
B7T84-4M3C3K0-
374&_rdoc=30&_hierId=1129000199&_refWorkId=326&_explode=1129000195,112
9000199&_fmt=high&_orig=na&_docanchor=&_idxType=SC&view=c&_ct=47&_ac
ct=C000036278&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=668715&md5=0b5c9117ae50
45bdce10047c28a9c95d 16 march 2006.