Weak necessity modals and modal flavor:  
The view from Paciran Javanese

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Considering that modality concerns two dimensions, modal force and modal flavor, the question arises whether the distinction of force between strong and weak necessity is independent from the type of modal flavor. That is, would natural language allow for changes in modal flavor based on secondary priorities? We investigate this question based on data from primary fieldwork on Paciran Javanese (a Javanese dialect spoken in East Java, Indonesia), and propose that modal flavor remains invariant in the modal force change from strong to weak.

Weak necessity modals in Paciran Javanese are morphologically complex: They are transparently built by combining a necessity modal with the suffix -ne, as in (1). We suggest that -ne overtly realizes a context-dependent secondary ordering source, which refines the ranking of the possible worlds quantified over by the modal (Kratzer 1991), drawing on analyses proposed in von Fintel & Iatridou (2008) and Rubinstein (2012).

(1) Sampean kudu-ne ora mbengok-mbengok.  
2SG ROOT.NEC-ne NEG RED-AV.shout  
‘You should not shout!’

At Logical Form, -ne attach within the restrictor of the modal, modifying the set of worlds determined by the accessibility relation and the first ordering source. We therefore correctly predict that -ne may weaken the modal force but does not alter the modal flavor of the modal.

*References:*  