

## **A two-layer analysis of ability modality -- a case study of 'able to'**

Zhiguo Xie  
Cornell University

A successful semantic account of 'able to' has to handle (i) modal force, (ii) conversational backgrounds, (iii) agent effort, and (iv) 'able to' as an implicative verb in past episodic contexts. I argue that 'able to' has universal quantification force. Its semantics has two components: (i) ability as 'internal' property of the agent, and (ii) possible 'external' realization of ability. Conversational backgrounds are defined for each component. The agent's effort has to do with the second component. In past episodic contexts 'able to' has actuality implicature (not entailment). The semantics I define for 'able to' captures all four aspects.