

# **5 Verbal Paradigms and Mental Space Construction in Everyday Discourse**

## **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter contains a Mental Spaces theory analysis of the syntactic structures discussed in Chapter 4, including the use of independents, conjuncts, and the *é-* preverb in everyday discourse. By determining their basic function within mental space networks for everyday discourse, we can then compare their use in a more complex network that contains an embedded narrative (this is discussed in Chapter 7).

The structure of the chapter is as follows: Section 5.2 presents the case that independent verbs structure Space R, whereas conjunct verbs always structure a space embedded within Space R. Section 5.3 shows that main clause conjuncts are not problematic for this analysis, as they too occupy an embedded space, even in the absence of an overt space opener. Section 5.4 shows the use of the *é-* preverb is a marker of factivity of an embedded space.

## **5.2 The basic use of independents and conjuncts**

### **5.2.1 Independents**

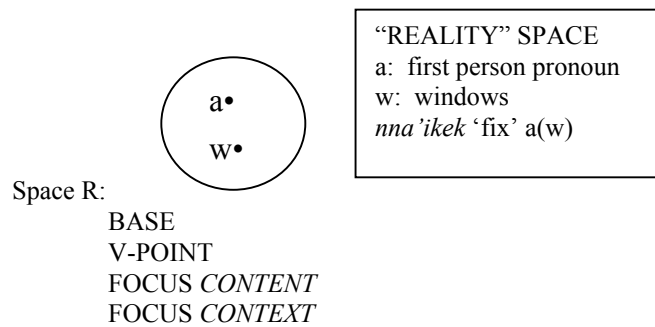
Independent verbs in the present tense structure Space R. Consider the following sentence:

- (1) Nde-nna'ikanen                      ni                      waséchgenen.  
 nEdE- nEna'ikan                      -En                      niw                      waséchEgEn -En  
 1-                      fix.s.t.\TI -05.I                      those.INAN                      window                      -PL

*I'm fixing the windows. (In response to the question 'What are you doing?')*  
 (JTB3.050.015)

This would be represented by a single space R, which houses the BASE, V-POINT, FOCUS CONTENT and FOCUS CONTEXT:

- (2) 'I'm fixing the windows.'<sup>1</sup>



Sometimes an independent verb will occur in a space subordinate to Space R, such as when the verb is marked with a past or future tense. In the following example, the space opener *wesnago* 'the day before yesterday' opens a past space:

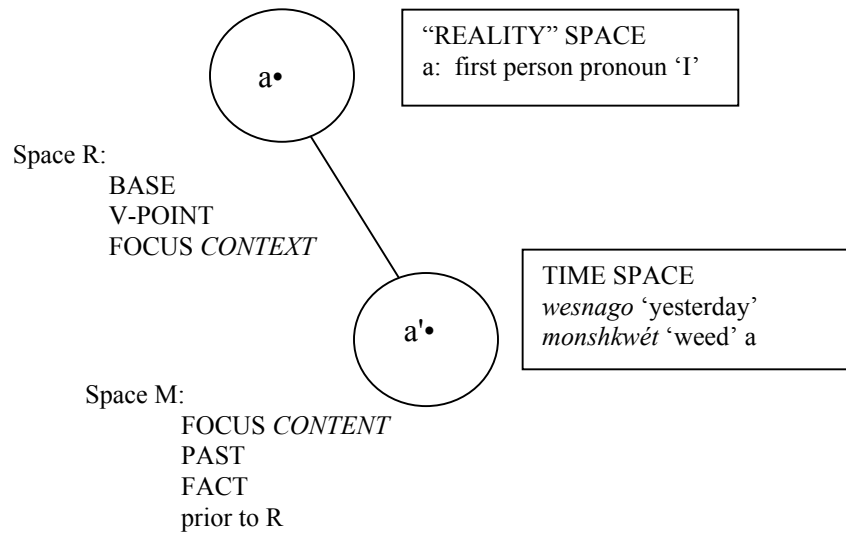
- (3) O, wesnago                      gé                      ni                      gbé-gizhek  
 o wEsnago                      gé                      nin                      gEbé-                      gizhEg  
 oh day.before.yesterday                      also I.EMPH                      through.all.of-                      day  
  
 ngi-monshkwé.  
 nE- gi-                      monshkwé  
 1-                      PST-                      weed\AI.I

*'Oh, the day before yesterday, I weeded [my garden] all day.'* (JTB3.036.009)

<sup>1</sup> Potawatomi verbs in mental space diagrams will be cited in the conjunct form.

This past Space P is subordinate to Space R. The use of the past tense morpheme *gi-* on the independent verb *ngi-monshkwé* ‘I weeded’ signals that focus has shifted to Space P:<sup>2</sup>

(4) ‘I weeded all day’



The use of the independent in the example above does not open the new space, rather it is the time adverbial that is the space opener. Neither do the independent inflections *per se* indicate that the new space is in focus; this is accomplished by the tense marking.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Connectors between counterparts are not drawn in the following diagrams in order to simplify the representations. The same letters used in different spaces represent counterparts.

<sup>3</sup> Fauconnier notes that “[t]enses and moods do not by themselves explicitly set up spaces, but they give important grammatical cues concerning the spaces relevant for the sentence being processed” (1985, p. 33).

### 5.2.2 Conjuncts

Conjunct verbs, unlike independents, are indicative of a subordinate, embedded space in the mental space network. I will illustrate this by discussing two kinds of subordinate clauses, complements and adverbials.

***Complement Clauses.*** The space-building properties of certain complement taking predicates have been examined in the Mental Spaces theory literature. Fauconnier discusses the space opening properties of the predicates *believe, hope, claim*, (1985) *want, wish, not believe*, and *doubt* (1997, p. 95). Also, Cutrer (1994) has a detailed discussion of utterance predicates such as *say*. There is good reason to think that sentential complement-taking predicates in general are space openers. The propositions expressed in complement clauses usually describe an alternate world. This might be an unrealized world, as in the case of desideratives (*want, wish, desire, hope*), or pretense predicates (*imagine, pretend, fool into thinking*). The proposition might also represent the mental world of particular experiencer, as with utterance predicates (*say, tell, promise*), propositional attitude predicates (*believe, think, assume, doubt*), or ‘factives’ (*regret, be sorry, discover, know, forget*). Some predicates combine the two; in the case of predicates of fearing (*fear, worry, be afraid that*) there is the description of a possible state of affairs, and the speaker’s mental attitude toward that state.<sup>4</sup>

Main clause verbs marked with the independent can be space openers if they are complement taking predicates. Example (5) illustrates the use of the complement taking predicate, ‘see’. The main clause verb *ngi-wabma* ‘I saw him/her’ takes the independent,

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<sup>4</sup> Categories and examples of sentential complement-taking predicates are from Noonan (1985).



builders. Rather, they provide additional cues to the structure of the network at any given point in the discourse.

**Adverbial Clauses.** Like complement clauses, adverbial clauses typically open new spaces. Standard examples include time spaces (*in 1929*), and domain spaces for works of art or literature (*in that painting, in War and Peace*), and hypothetical spaces (*if it rains tomorrow*).

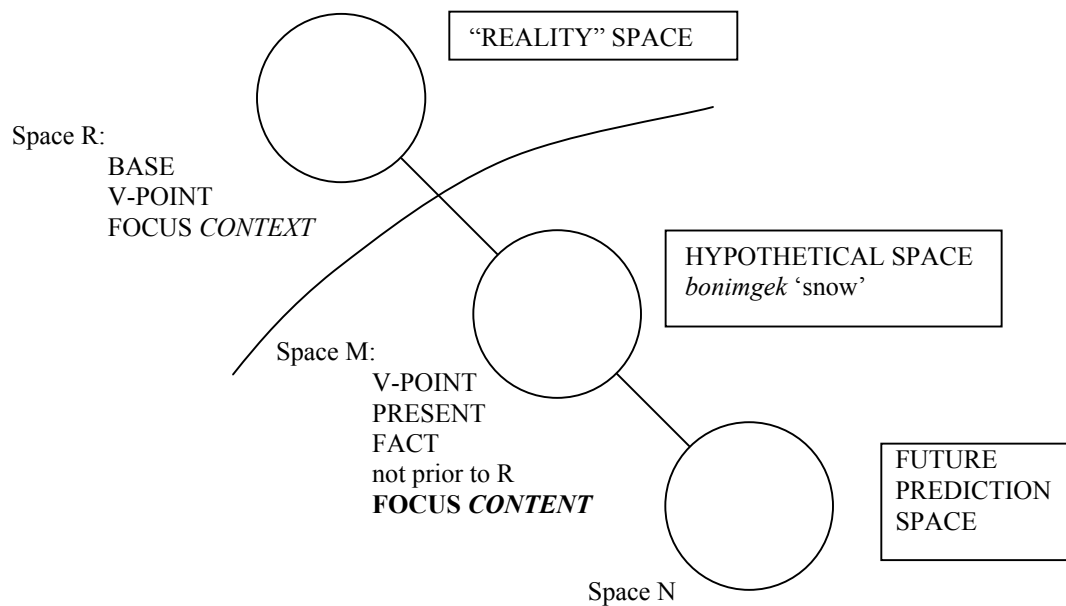
Example (7) contains an example of a conditional sentence. The protasis *gishpen bonimgek* ‘if it’s snowing’ contains a conjunct verb:

- (7) Gishpen bonimgek,                      nwi-we-zhoshk'o.  
 gishpEn boni        -mEgEg    nE- wi-    wE-        zhoshEk'o  
 if                snow\II -AUG.O.C 1-    FUT- go.and- go.sledding\AI.I

*If it's snowing, I'll go sledding.* (POEX00021)

The particle *gishpen* ‘if’ is a space builder, which opens a hypothetical Space M in a new domain subordinate to Space R, and a future prediction space N whose information is evaluated from the V-POINT of the hypothetical Space M. Space M houses the protasis *gishpen bonimgek* ‘if it is snowing’. The use of the conjunct verb form *bonimgek* signals that the hypothetical Space M is in FOCUS.

(8) ADVERBIAL CLAUSE: ‘If it is snowing...’



### 5.3 Conjunct verbs in main clauses

The fact that conjunct verbs can occur in main clauses would appear to be an exception to the generalization that conjunct verbs are indicative of a relationship of subordination. However, as argued in Section 4.3, the subordinate form of main clause conjuncts reflects a functional subordination to either an implied propositional attitude, or one that is expressed by a particle.

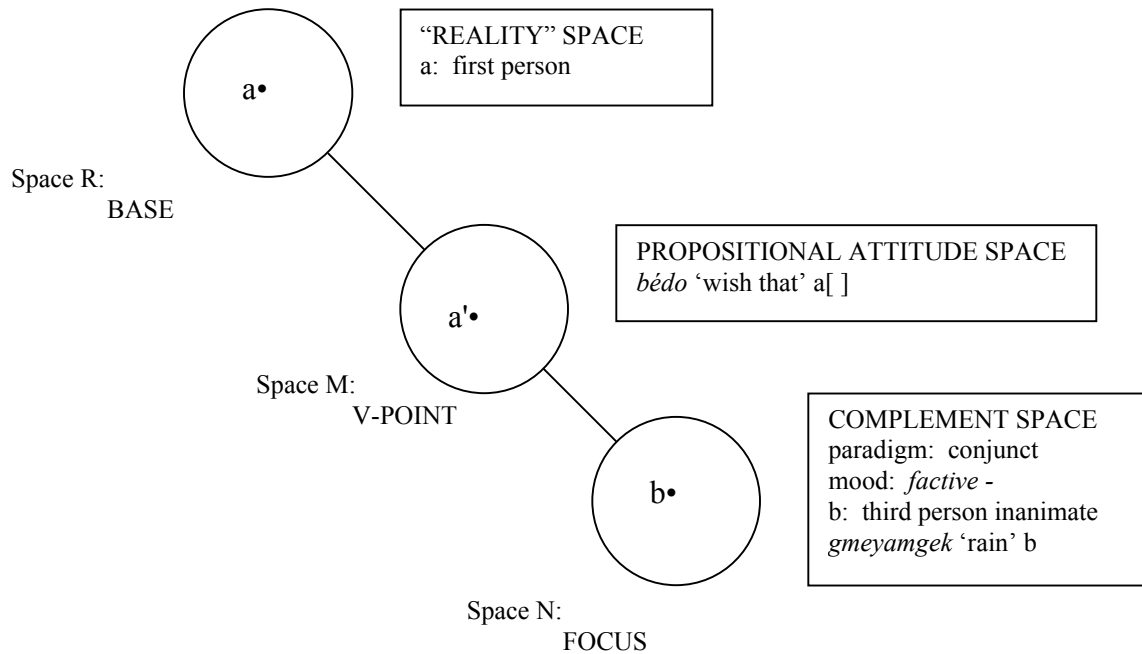
In Mental Spaces theory terms, this propositional attitude (expressed or implied) opens a new space. , which in turn takes a complement space. The complement space houses the propositional material being evaluated from the higher propositional attitude space. Because information is being evaluated from this space, it is the locus for

V-POINT. The use of the conjunct signals that the subordinate complement space is in FOCUS.

The function of a particle in opening a propositional attitude space is illustrated in (9) below. The propositional attitude space is a wish space, opened by the particle *bédo* ‘wish that’. It takes a complement space, which houses the content of the wish. This is expressed by the conjunct verb *gmeyamgek* ‘(if) it rains’:

- (9) Bédo (wi) na gmeyamgek.  
 bédo wi na gEmEya -mEgEg  
 wish.that EMPH EMPH rain\II -AUG.O.C

*I wish it would rain!* (POEX00262)

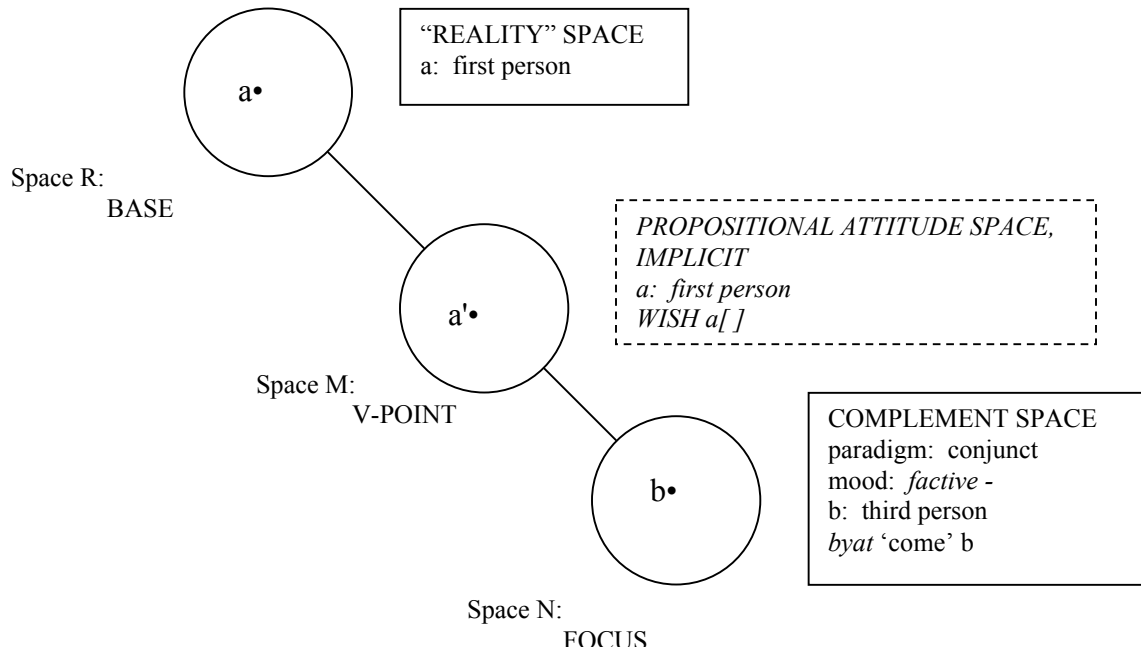


In (10) below, the propositional attitude is not overtly expressed. The only indication that the proposition is being evaluated in some way is the use of the conjunct verb form *byat* ‘(if) he comes’, which signals the addressee to look for an evaluation.

When an evaluation (or the indication of an evaluation) is available in the context of the utterance, but is not overtly expressed, it can nevertheless serve to open a propositional attitude space. I call this type of contextual cue an *implicit space opener* (indicated in the space diagram by the use of a dashed-line text box). Note this also means that particles, as well as grammatical predicates can serve as space openers.

(10) Byat!  
bya/é -d  
come\AI -3.C

*If he would only come!*

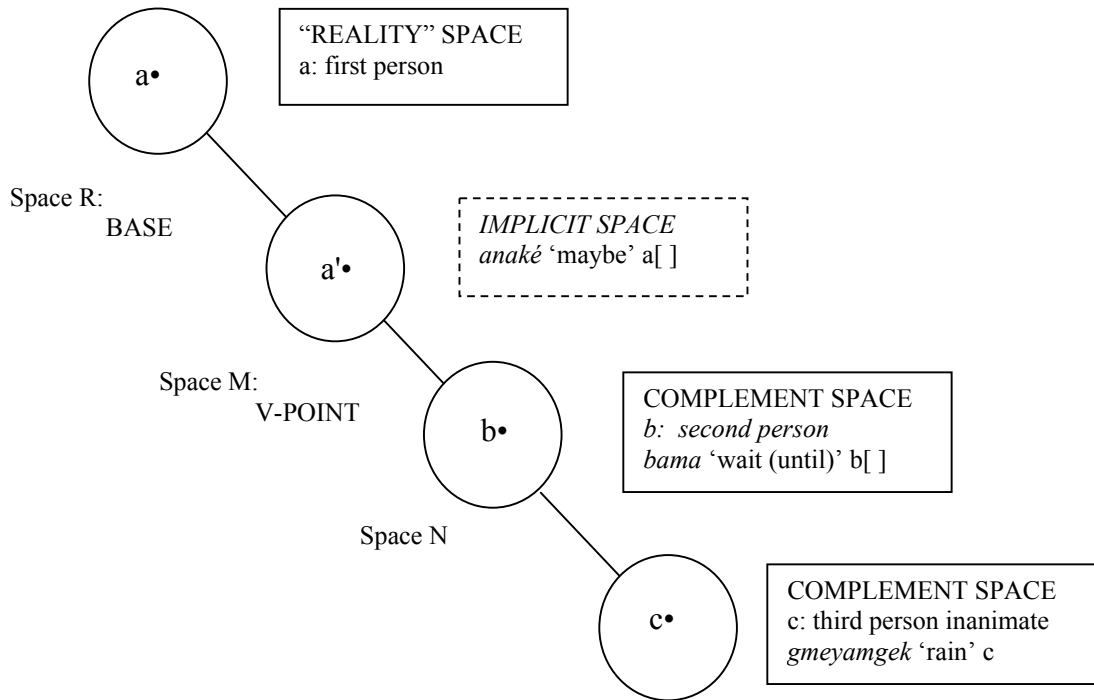


The mental space structures in (9) and (10) provide a model for sentences like (11) which contain particles that are not necessarily space openers. The particle *anaké* is polysemous; it is commonly used non-evaluatively as the disjunctive ‘or’, but can be used evaluatively, as illustrated in (11)—the alternatives are construed as what the addressee is doing, alongside what the speaker thinks he should do. The evaluation available in the

context ('I think you should wait until it rains') serves as an implicit space opener. This space is then occupied by the particle *anaké*, which is semantically compatible, and then becomes associated with the evaluative reading. Such structures likely serve as a means of grammaticalization for the use of the conjunct with such particles.

- (11) Gwi-gwdemojgé ne? Anaké (zhe) bama gmeyamgek.  
 gE- wi- gOdEmojEgé nE anaké zhE bama gEmEya -mEgEg  
 2- FUT- fish\AI.3.I Q or EMPH wait rain\II -AUG.O.C

*Are you going fishing? Maybe wait until it rains.* (POEX00258)



## 5.4 The preverb *é-*

Within subordinate clauses, Potawatomi has a mood distinction. Unlike languages that mark irrealis (for example, the use of the subjunctive in French), Potawatomi marks realis-type clauses by the use of a verbal prefix *é-*. I have glossed this prefix as ‘factive’ (FCT) as it has many properties of a marker of factivity, although to be

(12) [Ndenéndan    Mani é-wi-gishnenat  
1-think.thus.of.s.t\TI-OBJ-3/OI Mary FCT-FUT-buy.s.o\TA-DIR-3C  
  
niw                wdabyanen.]<sub>CC</sub>  
that.OBV car-OBV

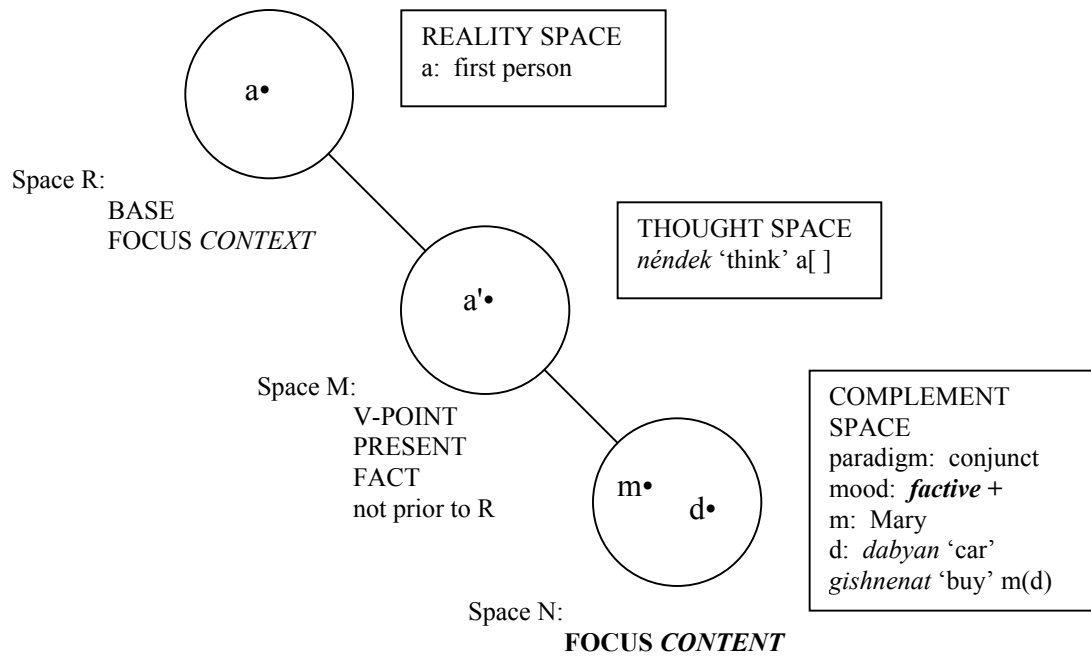
However, if proposition expressed in the complement clause is considered to be only probable, the verb takes the prefixes *da-je-* instead, glossed here as ‘modal’ (MOD).<sup>5</sup>

(13) [Ndenéndan Mani da-je-gishnenat  
1-think.thus.of.s.t\TI-OBJ-3/0I Mary MOD-MOD-buy.s.o\TA-DIR-3C  
niw wdabyanen.]<sub>CC</sub>  
that.OBV car-OBV

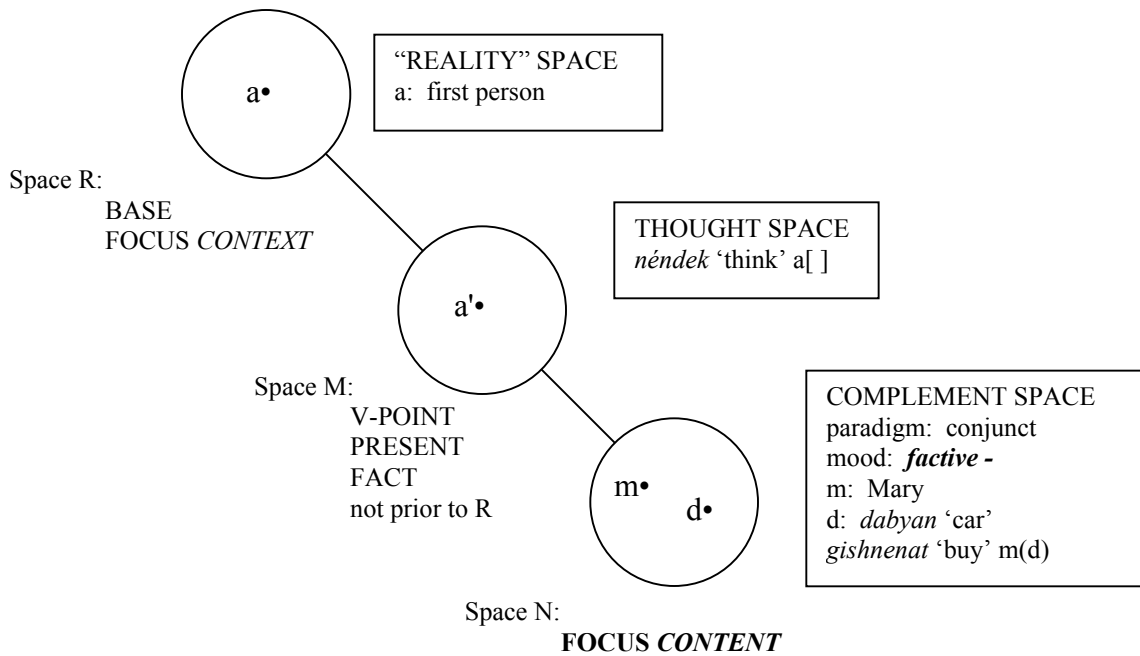
I represent this distinction in mental space diagrams by use of the feature Factive {+/-}, as shown by (14) (Factive +) and (15) (Factive -):

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(14) 'I think that Mary will buy the car.'



(15) 'I think that Mary might buy the car.'



## 5.5 Summary

The following, then, are the basic functions of verbal paradigmatic morphology with respect to Mental Space networks: In the absence of a space-builder or other linguistic cues which might indicate a special context, an independent verb will structure Space R. The use of the conjunct signals a shift to an embedded space. This space may be opened by a sentential complement-taking predicate, or may be opened by virtue of an adverbial clause. The preverb *é-* indicates the factivity of the embedded space in relationship to its parent space. In Chapter 7, these uses in everyday discourse will be compared with the structures they help build in narrative.

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