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Mapping irreality: Modal and temporal dimensions

Oceanic languages have been known to center their systems of tense and mood marking around the distinction between realis and irrealis. At the same time, most tense/mood systems are much more complex than this binary divide would suggest. In this talk, I will present data from fieldwork on six Oceanic languages of Vanuatu to show that there is considerable variation in how these languages carve up the modal-temporal space. By focussing on counterfactual futures and whether they pattern with the counterfactual past or the possible future in each language, we will show that even in relatively mood-prominent languages, tense can be prioritised over mood in parts of the system.