This talk is concerned with the modal implications associated with non-veridical uses of expressions of temporal precedence. One well-known such expression is English "before" on its non-veridical uses, whose modal meaning is often paraphrased with counterfactual conditionals and analyzed in terms of "likely" but unrealized courses of events. On closer inspection, however, it turns out that the relevant notion of "likelihood" is not the same in 'before'-sentences and counterfactuals, and moreover, that neither one corresponds to the intuitive "plain vanilla" likelihood involved in predicting how the world will likely develop past its history up to a given time. The picture is even more interesting in light of cross-linguistic data. I discuss two Japanese expressions in some detail, 'mae' 'before' and '-nai uti' (lit. 'while not yet'), both corresponding to English 'before' in their temporal import, but different in their modal connotations. Following a discussion of the relevant data and intuitive generalizations, I suggest ways in which the subtle differences between the various notions of "likelihood" involved can be teased apart in a formal account.

Note: Some parts of this material are joint work with Cleo Condoravdi and/or Yukinori Takubo.