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## ON LANGUAGE UNIVERSALS: MODALITY

Flyuza G. Fatkullina (a)\*, Aygul F. Davletbaeva (b), Almira K. Suleimanova (c)

\*Corresponding author

(a) Bashkir State University, 32, Saki Validi Str., Ufa, 450076, Russia, fluzarus@rambler.ru

(b) Bashkir State University, 32, Saki Validi Str., Ufa, 450076, Russia, davletbaeva-1987@mail.ru

(c) Ufa State Petroleum Technological University, Cosmonauts Str., 1, Ufa, 450064, Russia, sgaziz@ufanet.ru

### Abstract

This paper is devoted to the study of modal verbs in the Russian language in terms of the typology of their modal meaning. The purpose of this study is to systematize and analyze the lexical units studied from the point of view of highlighting the shade meaning expressed in a given linguistic situation. The objective of this study is to develop a new classification model of modal verbs that meets the realities of modern Russian language. The author's model can be used in teaching Russian as a native language and Russian as a foreign language. We develop the classification of studied lexical units and analyze in detail the types of modal meanings. The given system reflects the understanding of modality as a semantic field. The developed model clearly illustrates the aspectual composition of modal verbs in the Russian language. We attempt to systematize and present the structural analysis of verb lexemes in terms of their modal meaning. We conclude that the studied lexical units represent a broad class of words, which may include both strongly grammaticalized words, such as can and want, expressing only modal meanings, and verb lexemes having dual nature.

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## 1. Introduction

Modality represents a complex and multidimensional category, which diverse forms can be found in the linguistic systems of the peoples of the world, including Russian language. Many domestic scientists (Davletbaeva, 2019; Vaulina, 2013) were studying this language category.

Thus, Kolshansky (1961) describes the category of modality as a category that is “usually interpreted as the relation of the content of a statement to reality, expressed by grammatical, intonational and lexical means” (p. 95).

Indeed, the studied linguistic universal can be expressed with a variety of lexical units, but in our view the most interesting are modal verbs. Modal verbs are regarded by many scholars as one of the prototypical means of presenting the category of modality (Lekant, 1976; Vinogradov, 1975).

## 2. Problem Statement

By analyzing the meaningful plan of modality, which is implemented through modal verbs, many domestic scientists attempted to classify these lexical units. The systematization of words that express modal meanings allows obtaining an extensional section of a given language category and an aggregate view of its aspectual composition.

Shmeleva (1984) writes: “The view of modality as a semantic category involves integration and differentiation of individual modal meanings from the content plane perspective” (p. 83). Accordingly, it is the identification of different types of modal meanings and their corresponding modal verbs that constitutes the basic methodological basis of the analytical approach to the studied language phenomenon (Fatkullina et al., 2018). Modal meanings mean special cases of meaning of objective and subjective modalities, and the grouping of modal verbs is done by types of modal meanings they express.

The first classification models of modal verbs in the Russian language were developed by such scientists as Vinogradov, Lekant and others. The wide range of phenomena understood by modality has imprinted the problem of establishing the types of modal meanings solved by each scientist within the framework of subjective view and understanding of what is the content-related core of a given language category.

The present study relies on the notion of modality as a system with pronounced field structure, i.e. as a set of microfields expressing specific modal meanings.

## 3. Research Questions

In our view, modality in Russian is represented by the following types of modal meanings and their shades realized by modal verbs, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that the central core of modality expressed by modal verbs is formed by lexical units with dual nature, i.e., words having both modal meaning and another lexical meaning. The exception is such strongly grammaticalized modal verbs of the Russian language as *can* and *want*, which express only modal meaning. The fundamental principle of word sampling is their modal semantics, i.e.,

the meaning they convey, so the class of modal verbs in the Russian language can be considered as a wide class of words with non-strongly defined conditions (Sakaeva et al., 2019).

**Table 1.** Modal verbs in Russian and typology of their expressed modal meanings

Types of modal meanings	Shades of expressed modal meanings	Modal verbs
Necessity to perform an action	Order	Have to, should, ought to, need.
	Logical necessity	Need.
	Inevitability	Must, stay, expect
Expression of will to commit an action	Order	Have to, ought to, need, be needed.
	Logical necessity	Need, be needed.
	Will	Want, wish, desire, hope, strive for, count on.
	Intention	Want, intent, think, plan, decide, be going, get ready.
	Readiness	Want, get ready, be going.
	Attempt	Try, seek, dare, risk.
	Internal permission	Agree, allow (to yourself).
Possibility to perform an action	Ability	Can, be able to.
	Internal permission	Can, allowed.
	Ability driven by favorable circumstances	Can, succeed, be lucky.
Assessment of regularity of an action	Ability driven by unfavorable circumstances	Can, manage, be able to, take after.
		Become accustomed, learn, adapt for, get the habit, fall in love.
Subjective-affective evaluation		Love, be afraid, beware, look out for

The first type of modal meaning expresses the necessity to perform an action. On the basis of the definition and analysis of semantic composition of modal verbs, which by many scientists are included in the group expressing necessity, we highlight the following shades in the Russian language within the framework of this modal meaning: 1) order, 2) logical necessity and 3) inevitability. From the point of view of the source expressing the necessity of an action, the order may be differentiated into two types: internal order (the source of expression of necessity coincides with the subject of speech) and external order (the source of expression of necessity is another person). One of the syntax markers of this kind of sentences is their impersonality. An internal order can be seen as the motivation of a person to act within his or her own goals and moral and ethical attitudes. An external order is often expressed in the form of a person being encouraged to follow the laws of ethics and morality established by the society. The shade of logical necessity characterizes those situations in which the actual necessity of the action is set out based on reasoning about its mindfulness or expediency. The shade of inevitability is present in situations where the need to perform an action comes into hidden conflict with the will of a subject or expresses a clear predetermination.

The second type of modal meaning in our typological system is presented as the expression of will to commit an action. The typological system presented in Table 1 uses the notion of the expression of will to action, since in our view the presence of the will component is the basis for integrating such shades of

modal meaning as desire, intention, readiness, attempt and internal permission. It is the presence of the aspect of will that is revealed in all modal verbs functioning within the above semantic group that underlies the proposed typological structure. Within the framework of the modal meaning of expression of will to perform an action, we highlight the following shade meanings: 1) desire, 2) intention, 3) readiness, 4) attempt, 5) internal permission. As we can see from the content-related plan of modal verbs grouped by these features, the core of the semantic category of will is the modal verb *want*. Due to neutrality of its own color it is this lexical unit that is present in the first three groups of shade meanings. Such words in linguistics acquire the status of polyfunctional, highly grammaticalized lexical units characterized by high degree of freedom due to the wide range of language situations in which they can function. An expression of will with a shade of desirability characterizes an individual's internal desire to do something. The expression of will with a shade of intention expresses the internal desire to commit an action, the determination to act. If we compare this subtype with the subtype of desirability, we can state that the will component in the studied category is stronger. This is no longer an abstract desire, but a quite specific intention to perform an action. The expression of will with a shade of readiness expresses the agreement to an action that has not yet been finalized in the form of a determination to act. In terms of the degree of expression of the will component, this subtype occupies an intermediate position between the shades of desire and intention. The expression of will with the shade of attempt expresses the desire to perform an action, and the subject of speech is not sure of the success of the intended act or the implementation of the intended act involves a certain risk (Fatkullina, 2019). The expression of will with a shade of internal permission expresses the possibility to perform any action, at the same time the will component is realized by the subject of speech, and its vector is directed to itself.

The third type of modal meaning expresses the possibility to perform an action. In our view, the modal importance of the possibility of performing an action is derived from the integration of such shade meanings as ability, external permission, ability caused by favorable circumstances and ability caused by unfavorable circumstances. The possibility with a shade of external permission is often realized in language situations, in which one person being the carrier of the will component allows, gives the right to perform an action to another person, at the same time the vector of the will component is directed to the other person. The possibility with a shade of ability expresses a modal meaning in which the skill or ability to perform an action is transmitted. The possibility of taking action in connection with favorable conditions of the outside world is realized by means of modal verb lexemes with positive semantics. The possibility of committing an action as a result of unfavorable circumstances has a positive meaning, which is realized with such verbs with modal meaning as *succeed, learn, manage*, etc. The above lexical units are based on the semantic components of agility, the luck of an actor by which it has been or will be implemented, although the original conditions and factors of the world around it have been or are not in favor of the subject of a speech. Table 1 shows that the lexical core of the microfield of ability is the modal verb *can*, which, like the modal verb *want*, can be used in situations with different shade meanings. This lexical unit also belongs to the category of polyfunctional modal verbs.

The following type of modal meaning expresses an assessment of regularity of an action, i.e. expresses a person's reaction to repeated, everyday actions.

Subjective-affective evaluation conveys the type of internal experiences of an actor and always bears a pronounced emotional color.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the modal verbs of the Russian language as one of the prototypical means of presenting the category of modality for further classification models of studied lexical units on the basis of expressed modal meanings.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The methodology of our study is based on the basic provisions of modality as a functional-semantic field formulated by Bondarko.

The paper uses such methods as the method of categorical analysis involving the study of the content of the category of modality in the Russian language; the descriptive method aimed at the detailed analysis of Russian modal verbs from the perspective of exploring the diversity of communicative situations and their features.

#### **6. Findings**

Thus, the modal verbs of the Russian language represent an extensive class of lexical units expressing certain modal meanings, such as the necessity to perform an action, the possibility to perform an action or the expression of will to perform an action, etc. Within the scope of the possibility and expression of will, there may be such polyfunctional lexical units as *can* and *want* accordingly, the main feature of which is the ability to express different shades of the above modal meanings. In addition to the above words, the expression of modality in the Russian language uses a variety of verb lexemes that express a whole spectrum of semantic meanings and their halftones.

#### **7. Conclusion**

The category of modality is a universal category that functions in the Russian language and can be expressed by such prototypical means as the modal verbs (Portner, 2009).

Modal verbs in the Russian language represent an extensive class of words with non-strongly defined conditions of this category. The predominant part of this kind of lexical units can be characterized as the lexical units with dual nature: as part of a complex verbal predicate together with an infinitive they exhibit the modal character, in other cases they can implement specific lexical meanings. The exception is two modal verbs of the Russian language – *can* and *want* representing strongly grammaticalized units and forming a transitional form between a word and a grammatical flexion. Their main feature is to convey the modal meaning. Modal verbs in the Russian language are distinguished on the basis of semantics.

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