



## THE SCHOLARS' APPROACHES FOR THE NOTION OF MODALITY IN ENGLISH

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### Abstract

The article indicates some views and assumptions by the linguistics who paid attention to 'Modality' in English, its types and 'Means of Expressing Modality' in different period of time. Their theories and views on the concept of Modality have been applied to this field in order to clarify the meaning of modality .

**Key words:** Propositional Modality, Event Modality, Epistemic modality, Evidential modality, Deontic and Dynamic modality

### Annotatsiya

Maqolada turli davrlarda ingliz tilidagi 'Modal tushunchasi' va uning turlari 'Modallikni ifodalash vositalari' ga e'tibor qaratgan tilshunoslarning ayrim qarashlari va taxminlari keltirilgan. Ularning Modal tushunchasiga oid nazariyalari va qarashlari, modallik ma'nolarini aniqroq tushunishga va uni kengroq yoritib berish uchun bu sohaga tadbiiq qilingan.

**Kalit so'zlar:** Taklif bildiruvchi modallik, Hodisa bildiruvchi modallik, epistemic modallik, dadil bildiruvchi modallik, Deontik va dinatik modallik

### Аннотация

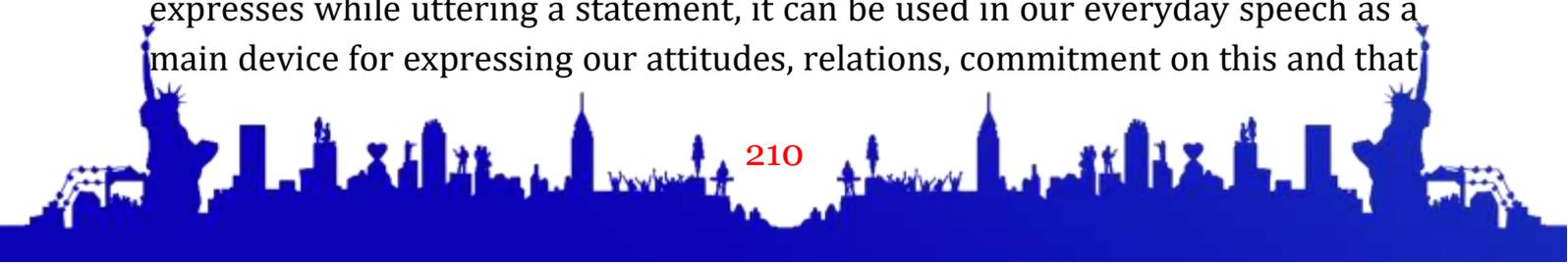
В статье приводятся некоторые взгляды и предположения лингвистов, обращавших внимание на «модальность» в английском языке, ее виды и «средства выражения модальности» в разное время. Их теории и взгляды на концепцию модальности были применены к этой области, чтобы прояснить значение модальности.

### Ключевые слова:

Пропозициональная модальность, Событийная модальность, Эпистемическая модальность, Эвиденциальная модальность, Деонтическая и динамическая модальность

### Introduction

The concept of modality in Linguistics is one of the main component of the language. Its definitions are vary. Modality can reveal many relations that speaker expresses while uttering a statement, it can be used in our everyday speech as a main device for expressing our attitudes, relations, commitment on this and that





subject when we express ourselves. It comprises the most significant elements of human language and consists of people's perceptions of everyday items, affairs and notions.

Investigating this field becomes one of the intensively discussed topics among linguistics. To express the term of modality, many linguistics studied on this sphere and suggested their assumptions. In this paper, the classification of modality and particular, its means made by scholars are discussed.

In the theoretical books, the term of modality is considered as variety meanings. The term of 'Modality' derived from postclassical Latin word 'modalitas' however, less utilized at that time. In fact, it was borrowed from French 'modalite'. In some facts belong to Middle English scientists' works, it is considered the word as 'modus' meaning 'measure', 'method', 'shape' in various senses. Moreover, the word in other languages is connected with the mood such as Germanic and Romance. Whereas, the term in English is viewed as a equivalent with the modal auxiliaries since they tend to be most grammaticalized ways of expressing modality in English, thus, the complex system where a variety of modal meanings are in contact with each other through complex links is more formulated by the help of modal auxiliaries.

Modality denotes key elements related to human tongue and consists of perception which is about daily items, circumstances and notions.

According to Ivanova's view, modal words convey the speaker's subjective attitude to the statement. She assumes that for the first time, modal words were distinguished in Russian linguistics; previously, they were usually classified as adverbs. Actually, G. Sweet and E. Craising distinguished adverbs that refer to the entire sentence and convey the speaker's attitude to the stated fact. Thus, this type was also noted in foreign linguistics, but was not singled out as a special category.<sup>1</sup>

Modal words can express confidence or presumption, as well as subjective judgment. So, the modal words such as *certainly, of course, surely, really, indeed* express confidence, *perhaps, maybe, probably, possibly* - uncertainty, presumption; *fortunately, un-fortunately, luckily, unluckily* convey the speaker's view of the desirability or undesirability of a particular action.

The Field which studies modality is called Tropology. The problem of modality was studied by many researchers for example, Sh. Ballie, M. A. Blokh, F.R. Palmer, E. V. Gordon, I. B. Morozova , Lewis Jespersen and even Aristotle , Uzbek linguists-

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<sup>1</sup> И.П.Иванова, В.В.Бурлакова, Г.Г.Почепцов ' Теоретическая грамматика Современного английского языка' Москва, 1981. Высшая школа





J. Buronov, U Hashimov, H. Ismatullaev and others. Some of them paid attention to the peculiarities and functions of the modality, others focused on the expression of it.

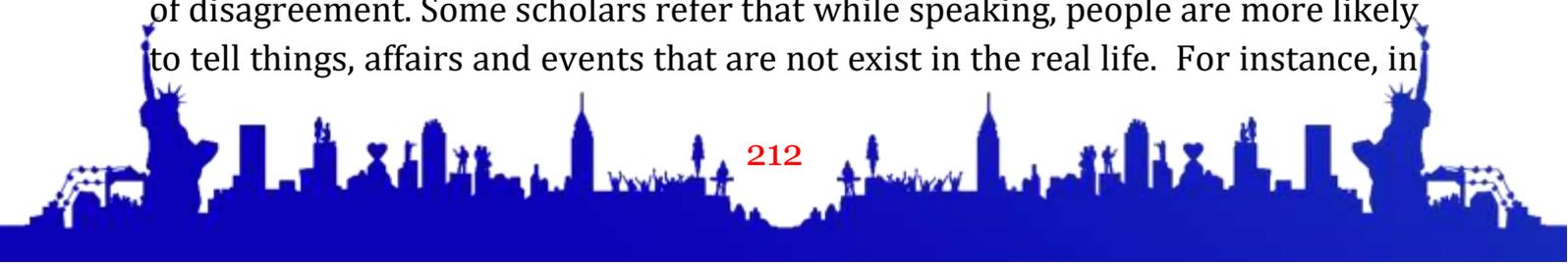
In 20 th century most scholars studied on the syntactic construction of modality and expression of verbal mood , for instance, linguists Mathew, Erhart, Durovic and F. Palmer. Erhart and Palmer defined modality as a category and they refer the grammatical categories of modality is similar to tense, aspect, number, gender. To express the whole meaning of modality, scholars had a variety of views because the interpretation of modality in modern linguistics is unusual. In the Linguistic Encyclopaedic Dictionary modality is defined as a functional –semantic category which express a variety types of relations between the utterance and reality, also different types of subjective evaluation of the information contained in the utterance.

Another scholar Lyon says the modality is a category of meaning which means ‘status of proposition’ , he argued that semantically, modality is presented with the help of modal verbs, moreover, it may be divided into factuality and non –factuality. Palmer describes modality as a grounded grammatical category that along with tense and aspect, it is concerned with the event and situation which is transferred through connection. According to semantic information , modality concerns with speaker’s opinions, attitude and judgement about the event. In common, modality is considered as it concerns entire statement and it is the domain in whole expression at a truth –functional level. In Grammar, it seems as associated with the sentence more than its constituents and aspect.

In some academic literature the term modality is classified in a various meanings. The concept of modality is defined as many viewpoints. It is much closer to the mood categories, to express grammatical meaning, mood is pointed as key element of modality.

While investigating the nature of modality, it is likely to face its types such as *broad* and *narrow* one. In narrow, mostly modality express the grammatical categories of mood, in broad one, it focuses on the syntactic constructions and lexical items: imperatives, interrogatives, negation, modal adjectives, adverb, modal words. Thus, Intonation is a very important segment in modality since it can be expressed interpersonal content and it is active to formulate modality of the utterance.

Negation is also considered as a part of modality and it denotes syntactic means of disagreement. Some scholars refer that while speaking, people are more likely to tell things, affairs and events that are not exist in the real life. For instance, in





fairy tales some characters are presented as a product of human's imagination, even they are not present in real life. Therefore, Negation is viewed as a category of non reality that belongs to the modality.

Modality constitutes speaker's, writer's attitude to the event or the things they are referring, it can be mode of reassurance, permission, obligation, volition, prediction, necessity, possibility, willingness. With the help of modal words, speaker expresses her /his opinion to the statement and presents his /her level of truth. Mostly, modal words in English are given with the modal verbs *must, may, might, need, will, shall, should, can, could*, and their function reflects to speakers' judgment. Moreover, there are other investigations done by Uzbek scholars to differ the types of modality. According to scholars J. Buronov, U. Hashimov, H. Ismatullaev morphological classification of modal words are subdivided as following: modal adverbs (*surely, definitely, clearly, necessarily, obviously, supposedly, assuredly, happily, really, actually, fortunately and so on*), modal adjectives (*possible, probable, certain, necessary, compulsory, sure, likely*), and nouns, verbs expressions (*be able to, be allowed to, be permitted to, to bound to.*), compound modal words like *maybe*, complicated one like *; no doubt, of course* and etc. These scholars investigated semantic classification of modality and divided into three groups too. 1) those which denote various shades of certainty such as *assuredly, actually, certainly, evidently, indeed, naturally, no doubt, obviously, of course, really, surely, undoubtedly*. 2) those denote probability *perhaps, maybe possible, probably, apparently, supposedly* 3) those denote speaker's subjective evaluation to an affair *happily, unhappily, luckily, unluckily, fortunately, unfortunately*.<sup>2</sup>

The modal words that confirm the reality of idea.

*Assuredly, actually, certainly, evidently, indeed, naturally, no doubt, obviously, of course, really, surely, undoubtedly.*

Modal words which mean assumption, doubt, suspicion.

*Maybe, perhaps, possible probably, apparently, supposedly.*

Modal words denoting the speaker's subjective assessment of an event. There are oppositions of these words meaning antonyms. For example, *happily- unhappily, luckily- unlikely, fortunately- unfortunately*

Apart from these viewpoints, there are some investigations provided by scholars B. S Haymovich, B.I Rogovskaya who distinguished the modality into three features.

#### A) Lexical and grammatical meaning

<sup>2</sup> English Grammar (morphology and syntax) J. Buronov, U. Hashimov, H. Ismatullaev  
O'qituvchi nashriyoti 'Tashkent', 1974





B) Negative combinability

C) The function of parenthetical elements and sentence- word

To express the term ' modality ' and its meaning, these scholars indicate modal verbs as lexical modality , as for grammatical ones, they refer that it is mostly related to the subjunctive, imperative , and indicative mood. They argue that modality is active when speaker is sure whether that contents of his utterance correspond to reality, or he doubts it, or he regards as it something possible, probable, desirable, etc. Furthermore , they classified the modality into the following groups:

Those which have a variety shades of *certainty* such as certainty, surely, of course, no doubt, assuredly, undoubtedly, indeed, really etc.

Those which have a variety degree of *probability* such as maybe , probably, perhaps, possibly .

Those which denote various shades of *desirability*, (*undesirability*) happily, luckily fortunately , unhappily etc.

The scholars investigate the negative combinability of modality and its usage in various ways.

Another scholar Palmer emphasised the types of modality which was divided into two: **Propositional Modality** and **Event Modality**. There are subdivisions of those Modality: For instance, **Propositional modality** denotes speaker's attitude to the content of the statement, it has several types such as *Epistemic modality* which means speaker's judgements to the facts and affairs and *Evidential modality* which denotes speaker's evidence to the facts.

*Epistemic modality* is investigated into three types. Speculative modality that indicates expression of uncertainty, Deductive modality expresses judgments based on the speaker's sources of information, as well as Assumptive modality in which speaker's assumptions taken from his/her general knowledge.

Within *Evidential modality* there are two main types which may be identified as *Sensory* which is relevant to Visual, non-Visual, Auditory, thus *Reported* which distinct the Propositional modality.

Another type of modality studied by Palmer is **Event modality** which exists two subdivisions like Deontic and Dynamic modality.

Palmer refers that Deontic modality mostly concerns external factors related to individual, whereas Dynamic one is the reverse (internal). Furthermore, Deontic modality relates to obligation, emanating from an external source, but dynamic





modality is close to ability and willingness which comes from the individual concerned. In order to prove these views Palmer provided some examples.

For instance: *The assistant must come right now* (obligation)

*The students can/may come in now* (permission)

*My nephew can speak English and Russian* (ability)

*His father will buy the food for Jack.* (willingness)

Modal verb **can** in these two types of modality is able to express much more meaning. In deontic modality *Can* is interpreted as a permission, while dynamic one denotes also possibility in more general sense.

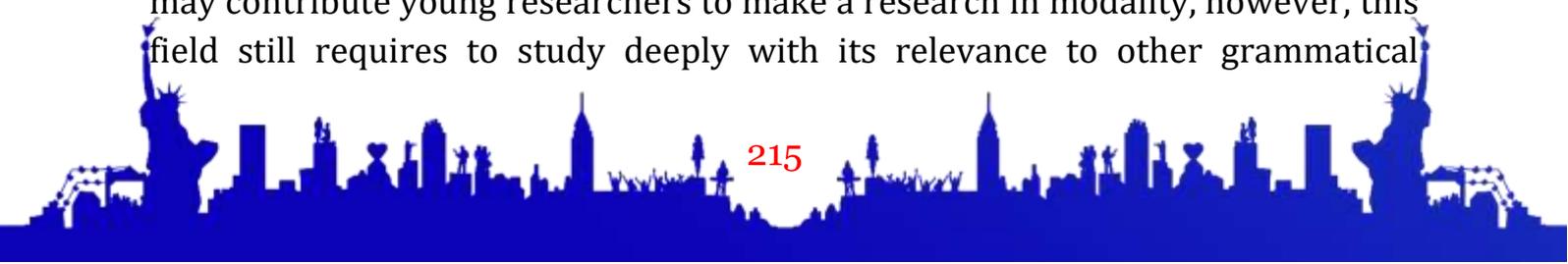
For instance, *He can leave now* (deontic: I permit)

*He can climb the huge trees immediately* (dynamic: he has an ability)

*He can escape from here* (Dynamic: The door is not locked)

Also, these assumptions were viewed by Coates, one of the scholars who investigated modality. Coates represents Epistemic and Root types of modality and argues Root modality includes deontic and dynamic modality. According to his views, Epistemic modality is subjective, it includes speaker's judgment and denotes the speaker's reservation about the truth of the proposition. This type of modality are not generally influenced by aspect and negation thus, it does not exist the past tense form too. Coates first classifies modality into two forms – Epistemic(must, should, ought may, might, will, could, and be going to) and Root(must, may, should, ought, can, could, will, would, shall and be going to) thus, his assumptions are focused on differentiating modal usage between spoken and written languages and indicates large-scale, corpus-based studies of the English modals. Coates refers that Epistemic modality is more common in informal speech and Root modality is more active in formal written language and formal spoken language. Modal words happen in informal speech more than written language . Prediction is the most recurring modal meaning while permission is the least. Will and Can are example to this point because they are the most recurring modals in oral speech.

**In Conclusion**, the concept of modality have been studied by many linguistics and scholars to express the meaning. These scholars being mentioned in the article suggest their assumptions and views to express the means of modality by separating into types or classifying categories and provided their own examples, although the assumptions and views taken by those scholars mentioned above may contribute young researchers to make a research in modality, however, this field still requires to study deeply with its relevance to other grammatical





categories because modality or modal words can be used in all spheres, they are useful to express our feelings and thoughts in a correct way. Therefore, studying on this field becomes one of the vital investigations.

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