

Semantic Approach to the Modality Category in the English and Karakalpak Languages (On the Basis of Epistemic and Deontic Modality)

M. B. Bayimbetova

Assistant Teacher, Nukus State Pedagogical Institute, English Language and Literature Department

Abstract: This research work is dedicated to show the peculiarities of epistemic and deontic categories of modality in the English language. Furthermore, here is also given utmost importance to clarify the necessity and possibility meanings of the two – epistemic and deontic modality categories. In the second place, search and comparison are held in the Karakalpak language to distinguish similarities and differences of the necessity and possibility meanings of epistemic and deontic categories of modality. The contrasts and sameness are explained with examples.

Keywords: epistemic, deontic, necessity, possibility, must, can, may, category, auxiliary, modal word.

Introduction

All linguists agree that modality is a semantic, not a syntactic category because it is essentially subjective expressing the speaker's attitude towards what he says. Hence, modality can be defined as the position or the stance that a speaker takes up towards what he is talking about, i.e., the propositional content of the sentence.

Portner explains “modality is one of the important semantic categories. It refers to “language whose meaning depends on alternate possible worlds” [Portner, 2005, p.154]. It is also considered as a category of linguistic meaning having to do with the expression of possibility and necessity. Modality is closely related to the modal auxiliary verbs such as can, must, should, etc. to express probability, possibility, necessity, permissibility, and obligation, etc. In a word, modality deals with the possibility and necessity of the possible world.

The modal words in the Karakalpak language correspond to the English modal verbs. Baskakov N.A. in his work notes that “modals are those words that, while maintaining their relative lexical independence, express the speaker’s attitude to the expressed thought. They are not a member of a sentence, which makes them syntactically distinguished by punctuation marks in written language” [Baskakov H.A.:1952:477].

This article focuses on examining differences between the English and the Karakalpak languages in the use of modal auxiliaries as possibility and necessity expressions in their speeches.

Theoretical background. Scholars generally divide modality into two major types: epistemic modality and deontic modality. Palmer claims that “There is, perhaps, no area of English grammar that is both more important and more difficult than the system of the modals” [Palmer, F.R.:1979, Preface]. He defines modality based on the relations between modality and modals, and further remarks that modals and modality have the same relations as form and meaning have. Therefore, they are inseparable.

Moreover Palmer points out "modality in English is defined in terms of the modal auxiliaries, we *shall*, by including *will*, have to include within the system of modality both futurity, which seems to belong more to the system of tense, and volition, which has little in common with the more

obvious modal concepts of possibility and necessity, but belongs more with the verbs of wanting, hoping, etc. which are essentially lexical rather than grammatical in English" [Palmer, 1979, p. 2].

From this citation, we can see Palmer's perspectives on modality. He argues that modality deals with possibility and necessity. Modals belong to a lexical category and the meaning of modality has relations to this lexical category, viz., modal auxiliaries or modal verbs.

Modal verbs are distinguished by the fact that, unlike ordinary verbs, they do not mean an action, but only an abstract modal meaning of necessity, expediency, possibility, likelihood, desirability, etc. As K.N.Kachalova and E.E.Izailevich express "modal verbs denote the possibility, ability, probability, necessity of committing an action expressed by semantic verbs. The combination of modal verbs with the infinitive semantic verb performs in the sentence the function of a compound verb predicate" [Kachalova K.N., Izailevich E.E.:2001:91].

The question of modal words in Karakalpak was put forward by N.A. Baskakov [Баскаков Н.А.:1952:477], who for the first time established their grammatical nature. In Karakalpak linguistics, as in other languages, paid much attention to the grammatical category of modality. But the question that interests us became the subject of serious research relatively recently and the term "modal words" began to be used only in the late 1950s and beginning in the 1960s in school subjects.

In the Karakalpak language, modal words are a part of speech to define the speaker's attitude toward the object. Davletov M. notes about modal words as "the word group expresses speaker's objectivity to truth, accuracy, doubt, possibility, confess, conceal, necessity and obligation of the comment he is trying to make is called modal words. In morphology, modal words are considered 'not derivative part' which are not divided into morphemes or do not contain any affixes" [Davletov M.:1994:412].

At present, in the Karakalpak language modal words are understood as connectors or auxiliary functional words that were previously used in the helping verb. English modal verbs correspond to modal words in Karakalpak. This matching can be seen in modal verbs "must", "should", "ought to", "need", "can", "may" etc.

Epistemic and deontic modality. At the heart of many analyses is the distinction between epistemic modality, which refers to "judgments about the factual status of the proposition" [Palmer 2001: 8], and deontic modality, involving attitudes to "acts performed by morally responsible agents, e.g. obligation and permission" [Papafragou 2000: 3].

Epistemic Modality

"Epistemic interpretations have to do with knowledge and understanding" [Griffiths, 2006]. It concerns the necessity and possibility of a proposition when there is clear-cut evidence. Therefore, epistemic modality is derived from the fact that can be true from reality. It connotes how much certainty or evidence a speaker has for the proposition expressed by his or her utterance.

E.g.: There's no answer, Mary must have gone.

Epistemic modality is different from logical modality which always can be true in any case. Epistemic modality is further divided into two subcategories, viz. epistemic necessity and epistemic possibility. Epistemic necessity cannot always be true though it comes from real knowledge of the world. Epistemic possibility, on the contrary, isn't based on the knowledge of the real world. It only provides one of the possibilities according to the speaker's assumption.

a)Epistemic necessity

Values of necessity to perform an action convey the modal verbs **must, should, ought to, need** and also verbs that have modal meanings - **to have to, to be to**. Expressing the need to perform actions, these verbs differ in the shades of the transmitted or the meaning of their use.

Semantically, when the modal *must* serves as a device connecting the evidence and the content of the utterance or an inference from the context of the utterance about the occurrence of the event presented, it indicates a sense of epistemic necessity. As such, the major characteristic of epistemic *must* is to convey “the speaker’s confidence in the truth of what he is saying, based on a logical process of deduction from facts known to him” [Coates, 1983: 41], as analysed in the following excerpts:

- *You must* acknowledge that Vietnam’s large population is highly energetic and entrepreneurial, devoted to education and training, and very young.
- The dinosaurs *must have* died out suddenly. (Kearns, 2000)

In the Karakalpak language modal words are understood as connectors or auxiliary functional words. English modal verbs correspond to modal words in Karakalpak. The necessity and possibility meaning usages of modal words are also can be found in the sameness. This matching can be seen in modal verbs “must”, “should”, “ought to”, “need”, “to have to” as “kereĸ”, “darker”, “shárt”, and “zárur”.

For example: Ismail sultan olardıń bolashaĸın boljaĸan bolsa kerek (K. Mámбетov).- (*Ismail sultan must have predicted their future*).

In the Karakalpak language expressing the need to perform an action, the verb *must* be used only with a non-defective infinitive in the real or passive voice. The infinitive following the verb *must* is used without the particle *to*. The modal verb **must**, in the sense of having to perform an action, has the following shades of meaning. The inevitability of committing an action due to objective reasons - the action has not yet been performed, but it will be accomplished regardless of the speaker’s desire due to some conditions that may be indicated or not indicated in the sentence:

“*You must be awfully tired*” (Alex Martin and Robert Hill, Modern Short Stories. Practice International English Language teaching, :1996, p.108). - “*Sen júda qatti sharshaĸan bolsań kerek*”.

b) Epistemic possibility: May/might is related to possibility. However, *might* has lower strength than *may* in the degree of possibility. Both *may* and *might* are used as epistemic modality to show possibility. *Might* is often used to show either mere possibility of present situation or politeness. *Might* is generally weaker than *may* in the possibility [Jinghua Z.;2019: 882].

He may be home. (possibility)

He might be home. (mere possibility)

The verb **may**, in the form of the present tense, in the sense of the possibility of committing an action, is used with the nonperfect infinitive of the real or passive voice without the particle *to*. The verb *may*, in the sense of being able to perform an action, has the following shades of meaning: The possibility of making an action that will be realized in the present or future, but may not be realized:

E.g.: Miss R. was in high spirits, just that humour for talking nonsense, which we may observe in young girls at the end of an exciting day. - ... *gu’zetiwimiz mu’kin*.

The combination of the verb **may** in this meaning with the infinitive in the Karakalpak language corresponds to the present tense of the verb “qiliwi mu’kin” (“qiliwim múmkin, qiliwi múmkin,

qiliwimiz múmukin”, etc.) with the infinitive. The verb **may** is used in subordinate clauses of the goal.

E.g.: This may be necessary in order to apply the high-speed particles. – Bul qaǵiyda joqari tezliktegi bòlekshelerge ámel qiliniwi múmkin.

The possibility of committing an action due to permission, permit:

E.g.: You may give me one kiss, John. - Sen meni bir márte súyiwiń múmkin. “It was a fascinating little box today. May I have it?” – “you may little wasteful one,” said he. – Men oni alsam meylime? Meyli.

Deontic modality. Deontic modality is a modality that connotes the speaker’s degree of requirement, desire or commitment to the proposition. It relates to “constraints grounded in society: duty, morality, laws, rules etc.” and deontic proposition often concerns obligations or permissions, hope or requirements etc. [Griffiths, 2006].

Deontic modality chiefly depends on modal verbs such as, *can, must, have to, ought to, could have done* etc. to express the meanings. Deontic modality is also divided into deontic necessity and deontic possibility. Deontic necessity concerns obligations and regulations that must be followed by the people, whereas deontic possibility concerns permissible proposition.

a) Deontic obligation: Obligation is concerned with ‘what a person must do’, as in (5),

(5) a. I must phone him.

b. I have to phone him. c.

I need to phone him. d.

I ought to phone him. e.

I should phone him.

Must, have to, need to, ought to, and should in (5) are all obligation. Conversely, can, could, may, and might in (6) are all permission.

You must abide by the rules of the school.

In Karakalpak, this meaning of the verb *must* with the infinitive corresponds to the combination of the verbs “ma‘jbu‘rlik”, “tuwri keliw” and “shárt” or the form “kerek” with the infinitive.

E.g.: “You must come up to the net more, you will never play a good game until you do” - “Siz kóp kelip turiwińiz kerek, bolmasa heshqshan jaqsi oynay almaysiz”.

The verb *must* with the infinitive in this usage in the Karakalpak language corresponds to the combination of “zárúr”, “lazım” with the infinitive.

In this sense, the verb “must” must be used in the context of the past tense: “That’s he hell of a big club the guy must’ve used to hit door Patrick, one of them was saying”-

“Ol úlken klubtaǵı jigit Patriktiń qapisin urıp júrgen bolsa kerek” - dedi olardan biri

b) Deontic possibility and permission;

Deontic possibility conveys the lowest degree of obligation of a command so that it implies the sense of permission. It may also be expressed in several linguistic properties as follows.

E.g.: You may go home. a. You may bring your text books in the exam room.

Any question that you have can be found in the web.

Deontic permission theory deals with ‘someone’s authority to permit somebody else to do something’, as

- a. *You can have these postcards for free.*
- b. *You could have these postcards for free*
- c. *You may have these postcards for free.*
- d. *You might have these postcards for free.*

Can is characterised as conveying the sense of *possibility* when there is no authority or regulation indicated but the circumstance of the utterance makes it possible for the action to be performed. In the Karakalpak language, the verb **can** in this meaning with the infinitive corresponds to the combination of the verb “qıla alıw” in the present tense form (“qıla alaman”, “qıla aladı”, “qıla alamız”) with the infinitive semantic verb. In the negative sentence, the verb **can** expresses the impossibility of committing an action due to the absence of appropriate conditions:

1. *That’s all over. The old days can never come back. - ... hesh qashan qaytip kelmeydi.*
2. *... “whatever happened”, she said, “there can be no blame on you. You were not here.” - ... sizdi ayıplay almaydi.*

Conclusion. Epistemic modality and deontic modality are two types of modality which carry two different meanings. Epistemic modality refers to the use of modality which is based on the speaker's evaluation and judgment in relation to the degree of confidence of the knowledge on the proposition. As presented earlier explicit modality is the use of modality in a clause by using overt modal operators such as *must, can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, and ought to* and this is the unmarked type of modality. However, in terms of epistemic and deontic uses, most of them may carry relative and even ambiguous meanings. It functions to comment on and evaluate an interpretation of reality in carrying out speech functions; but, deontic modality indicates the degree of the proposition expressed by a command whether it is obligatory, advisable or permissible according to some normative background. However, in many cases the meanings of both types of modality are relative and complements to each other. The evidence of some extrinsic modalities such as *must, may, should, and can* indicates that they may fall under both types. Thus, it is a truism to say that they are like two sides of a coin which carry its value from the meanings conveyed by each side.

References

1. Porter, Paul H. (2005). *What is Meaning? Fundamentals of Formal Semantics*. UK: Blackwell Publishing.
2. Baskakov N.A. *Karakalpak language II (particles and modal words)*. Publishing house of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1952, 477-482.
3. Palmer, F.R. (1979). *Modality and the English Modals*. London: Longman.
4. Kachalova K.N., Izailevich E.E. *Prakticheskaya grammatika angliyskogo yazika*. Bishkek, 2001, - p.194
5. Dawletov M., Dawenov E., Bekbergenov A., Eshbaev J. *Házirgi qaraqalpaq ádebiy tiliniń grammatikasi*, Nókis. 1994.
6. Palmer, F.R. *Mood and modality*. Cambridge. Second ed. 2001, p.8.
7. Pafapragou, Anna. *Epistemic Modality and Truth Conditions*. In *Lingua 116*. 2006, 1688–1702. www.elsevier.com/locate/lingua. (August, 2011).

8. Griffiths, Patrick. (2006). *An Introduction to English Semantics and Pragmatics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.2006.
9. Coates, J. *The Semantics of Modal Auxiliaries*. London: Croom Helm.1983; p.41.
10. Jinghua Zhang. A semantic approach to the English modality. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, Vol. 10, No. 4, July 2019, pp. 879-885.
11. Jumino Suhadi “Epistemic and deontic modality: two sides of a coin”, *JULISA*, Volume 11 Number 2, October 2011, Pages 156 – 179.
12. Kunipa Akhatovna Ashinova, Bibigul Tursynovna Sydykova, Yuliya Nauryzbayevna Khozhalepessova, Maral Kazkenovna Murzagaliyevà, *Problems of Modality in Turkic and Kazakh Languages. Media Watch* 11 (4) 2020, 728-735,