

LINGUACULTURAL ASPECTS OF MODAL VERBS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract: There is no other lexico-grammatical category in the English language that the category of modality, it is a broad category that expresses the speaker's attitude to reality. It can be expressed primarily by mood forms, modal verbs and their equivalents and modal words. Modality plays a very important role in language. Modality is a grammatical category that reflects the speaker's attitude to the content of the utterance and the utterance itself to reality.

Key words: *modal verbs, politeness, linguacultural aspect, linguistic category.*

Modal verbs form the core of modality as a linguistic category (lat. Modus - measure, method) expressing different types of statement attitude to reality, as well as different types of “subjective qualifications of the communicated” (Yartseva, 1998, p. 112). On the one hand, it is one of the most well-established, and on the other hand, the most controversial concepts in modern linguistics (Zeleneckij & Novozhilova, 2003, p. 73). The category of modality is closely related to the human factor and “should be especially sensitive to the changes that occur in a person, in his historically changing consciousness” (Miloserdova, 1991, p. 35). In this regard, we are going to study modal verbs in terms of their linguocultural aspects. When we talk about modal

verbs in the English language, we immediately name the "classical" ones that make up the core of their group: *may, might, can, could, must, need, will* and etc.

From the point of view of cultural linguistics, language not only reflects reality, but interprets it, creating a special reality in which a person lives (Maslova, 2001, p. 5). Linguocultural aspects of modal verbs in English is present when they are used as markers of polite speech. The category of *politeness* is not only an important factor in the successful implementation of human communication but, as a linguo-social, cultural phenomenon, it forms the cultural characteristics of a nation, that is, it becomes a component of the cultural picture of the world of people speaking a particular language. The picture of the world usually means "the primary all-encompassing image of the world, which is at the center of the human worldview" (Serebrennikov, 1988, p. 21).

Politeness is called by some researchers a particular type of discourse: "Due to the fact that discourse is a communicative category, various communicative variables can be relevant for its classification. The linguistic-socio-cultural basis of the category of politeness is expressed in speech etiquette and communication stereotypes of members of society, transmitting various culturally determined manifestations of their polite and friendly attitude towards each other. Even though English, German, Austrian and Russian languages belong to the same language family, they have some peculiarities in terms of expressing politeness. For instance, in the business environment in Germany and Austria there is a clear observance of the status of communication between team members, but it is so veiled in language that a representative of another culture may not feel it. For example, even if the Austrian chief of a company makes an urgent request to his secretary, this request will sound very polite:

Könnten Sie bitte das kopieren? - Could you please copy this?

While in the Russian polite language appeal, only the word "please" will be indicating politeness, and the request itself is expressed as an imperative

Please make copies of these documents - Пожалуйста, сделайте копии этих документов.

Reukova (2005) cites in her research an example from the practice of intercultural corporate communication, when an Austrian manager, having made a request in this form to a Russian colleague, did not get the results of his assignment, since she simply did not understand the pragmatics of the statement (p. 50). As we can see, and probably someone already knows from their own experience, the cultural barrier can be much more dangerous and unpleasant than the language one. It is made of absolutely transparent glass and is imperceptible until you break your forehead against this invisible barrier (Ter-Minasova, 2000, p.34). Therefore, knowledge of the socio-cultural characteristics of polite behavior and mastery of the corresponding speech patterns are very important for foreign language communication.

English has certain linguistic structures in which modal verbs are used primarily to give a polite tone to speech. In this case, it is not their semantics that dominates, but their pragmatics, modal meanings fade into the background, which causes the isomorphism of these verbs. For example, as a rule, the seller turns to the buyer with an offer to help, which is framed as a question:

Could I help you?

Can I help you?

Do you need help?

Both phrases are interchangeable, since in this speech cliché the category of politeness comes to the fore, and the internal semantics of physical possibility in the modal verbs *can* and *could* very in their internal semantics which figures politeness. *Could* means *respect* and *politeness* more explicitly rather than *can*.

Summing up, we can say that in the semantics of each modal verb in the English language there is a central, immanent meaning that reflects a certain type of modality, and, depending on the situational, grammatical, lexical context, it is supplemented by the meanings of other types of modality. Differentiation of the meanings of modal verbs shows their close systemic connection when different verb forms convey the same semantic and pragmatic characteristics. When modal verbs are used as markers of polite speech, they tend to be in relatively stable speech constructions, and their semantics fade into the background, giving way to pragmatics.

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