

THE COGNITIVE ASPECT OF MODALITY IN ENGLISH TEXTS

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Abstract: *The article considers the cognitive, textual and linguistic status of the category of modality and is aimed at cognitive modeling of modality on the basis of information-content structure of the English fiction text. The research is topical since modality is represented as textual hyper frame, comprising language frames of referential and subjective modalities. Leading approach to the study of this problem is the descriptive method that has afforded revealing peculiarities of modalities. The referential modality embraces the scenes of subject, action/state, object, temporality and locality. The subjective modality is subdivided into subjective-personal (author-text) and subjective-interpersonal (author-recipient) modalities. The materials of the paper imply the practical significance for the university teachers of the philological specializations.*

Keywords: cognitive model, referential modality, subjective modality, frame, scene.

Considering the linguistic status of any category it is necessary to define what system of other categories it enters, what categories it interacts with. The category of modality in linguistics is referred to notional categories, i.e., to sense-content components of general character peculiar not to separate words and their form systems, but to numerous word classes expressed in a natural language by various means. As any notional category, it is logically and philosophically grounded and has manifested itself verbally in ancient times, thus, in Aristotle's works it implied the problem of statement truthfulness and falsehood. Modality (from Latin "modus" – measure, way, method) is defined as the way any object or phenomenon exists, occurs (ontological modality) or the way the statement about this object, phenomenon or event is understood (gnoseological/logical modality)¹.

In modern logic most linguists studying the problem of language modality subdivide it to objective and subjective modalities. Not infrequently

¹ L.F. Ilyichev, P.N. Fedoseyev, *Philosophical encyclopedic dictionary*, Soviet Encyclopedia, Moscow, 1983.

objective modal meanings are opposed by linguists to subjective meanings as obligatory to optional. The objective modality is treated as essential property of any statement, inseparable from the sentence as predicative unit, as the category which expresses the attitude of the uttered/said to reality (syntactic indicative: the present, the past, the future) and to irreality (syntactic unreal moods: subjunctive, conditional, suppositional, imperative, etc.).

The linguistic interpretation of subjective modality is the attitude of the speaker/writer to the uttered/said; the expression of these meanings is predetermined by the author's desire, intention or free will. The subjective modality is expressed by: a special lexical and grammatical class of words, word-combinations, phrases, sentences functioning as parenthetical units, special modal particles, interjections, special intonation patterns, word order, specific constructions – inversion, ellipsis, etc.

Yet, quite a number of linguists (L.M. Vasilyev, A.M. Peshkovsky) considers it wrong to single out objective and subjective modalities, pointing on the difficulty in drawing the line of demarcation between these modalities². This ambiguity of categorial borders of modality has resulted in the appearance of “broad” and “narrow” trends in interpretation of modality in linguistic literature. In case of a broader view on modality one should relate to this category different types of “emotional”, “expressive”, “evaluative” meanings, affirmation and negation (M.V. Zaynullin, V.V. Gurevich, V.G. Admoni, A.A. Shakhmatov), predicativity (V.V. Vinogradov), communicative purpose of the statement (E. Benvenist, V.V. Vinogradov, V.G. Admoni, M. Grepl)³. Those who adhere to the “narrow” approach consider the category of modality as purely linguistic, syntactic, semantic, category of thinking and consciousness, functional and semantic category⁴.

The main features of the category of modality

The mentioned approaches to interpreting modality and means of its realization do not provide a comprehensive overview of this category, the authors should certainly take into account cognitive and communicative characteristics of such a unit of language as text. In the sense-content plan the

² E. Sepir, *Language*, State Socio-Economic Publishing House, Moscow, 1934.

³ A.F. Losev, *On the types of grammatical sentences in connection with the history of thinking. Sign. Symbol. Myth*, Moscow University Press, Moscow, 1982.

⁴ E.I. Belyaeva, *The functional and semantic field of a modality in the English and Russian languages*, Voronezh State University, Voronezh, 1985; V.I. Bondarenko, *Denial as logical-grammatical category*, Progress, Moscow, 1977; A.V. Bondarko, *Functional grammar*, Nauka, Leningrad, 1986; E.M. Galkina-Fedoruk, *Judgment and offer*, Moscow University Press, Moscow, 1956; G.V. Kolshansky, *An objective picture of the world in knowledge and language*, Institute of Scientific Information of the Academy of Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 1990; N.E. Petrov, *About the content and volume of a language modality*, Nauka, Novosibirsk, 1982.

1) referential modality – the modality determined by the attitude of the cognitive component of the text to the outer world, the way the individual reveals his attitude through his intentions of text activity. Its main contents are the dialectic opposition “reality/irreality”; 2) subjective modality, which by the criterion of interactivity is subdivided into: personal; interpersonal. The subjective-personal modality is considered as a means of the text cognitive component modification and characterizes the author of text activity. The subjective-interpersonal modality is predetermined by the author’s intentions in communication and reflects his mental urge to describe the world (epistemic modality), to change the world (deontic modality) and to evaluate it (axiological modality). The unifying factor of all modalities is the category of evaluation. The cognitive interpretation of textual modality presupposes the interaction of all information complexes through scenes, scenarios, frames, resulting in the comprehensive cognitive model of modality. This net-like interaction becomes possible due to metaphoric and metonymic extensions of meaning.

Analysis of the procedure of cognitive modeling of modality in “the man with the scar”

Let us examine in detail the procedure of cognitive modeling of modality in the short story text by W.S. Maugham “The Man with the Scar”⁹. The analysis is based on the vertical model of information-content structure of the text (1):

S S — A/St — O — T — L
Q Q Q Q Q

where **S** – subject in the text, **A/St** – action or state, **O** – object of an action, **T** – temporality, **L** – locality, **Q** – qualifier.

It was on account of the scar that I first noticed him, for it ran, broad and red, in a great crescent from his temple to his chin. It must have been due to a formidable wound and I wondered whether this had been caused by a sabre or by a fragment of shell. It was unexpected on that round, fat, and good-humoured face. He had small and undistinguished features, and his expression was artless. His face went oddly with his corpulent body. He was a powerful man of more than common height. I never saw him in anything but a very shabby grey suit, a khaki shirt, and a battered sombrero. He was far from clean. He used to come into the Palace Hotel at Guatemala City every day at cocktail time and strolling leisurely round the bar offer lottery tickets for sale. If this was the way he made his living it must have been a poor one for I never saw anyone buy, but now and then I saw him offered a drink. He never refused it. He threaded his way among the tables with a sort of rolling walk as though he were accustomed to traverse long distances on foot, paused at each table,

⁹ W.S. Maugham, *The man with the scar and other stories*, Airis-Press, Moscow, 1999.

with a little smile mentioned the numbers he had for sale, and then, when no notice was taken of him, with the same smile passed on. I think he was for the most part a trifle the worse for liquor.

I was standing at the bar one evening, my foot on the rail, with an acquaintance – they make a very good dry Martini at the Palace Hotel in Guatemala City – when the man with the scar came up. I shook my head as for the twentieth time since my arrival he held out for my inspection his lottery tickets. But my companion nodded affably.

“Qué tal, general? How is life?”

“Not so bad. Business is none too good, but it might be worse”.

“What will you have, general?”

“A brandy”.

He tossed it down and put the glass back on the bar. He nodded to my acquaintance.

“Gracias. Hasta luego”.

Then he turned away and offered his tickets to the men who were standing next to us.

“Who is your friend?” I asked. “That’s a terrific scar on his face”.

“It doesn’t add to his beauty, does it? He’s an exile from Nicaragua. He’s a ruffian of course and a bandit, but not a bad fellow. I give him a few pesos now and then. He was a revolutionary general, and if his ammunition hadn’t given out he’d have upset the government and be Minister of War now instead of selling lottery tickets in Guatemala. They captured him, along with his staff, such as it was, and tried him by court martial. Such things are rather summary in these countries, you know, and he was sentenced to be shot at dawn. I guess he knew what was coming to him when he was caught. He spent the night in gaol and he and the others, there were five of them altogether, passed the time playing poker. They used matches for chips. He told me he’d never had such a run of bad luck in his life; they were playing with a shot pack; Jacks to open, but he never held a card; he never improved more than half a dozen times in the whole sitting and no sooner did he buy a new stack than he lost it. When day broke and the soldiers came into the cell to fetch them for execution he had lost more matches than a reasonable man could use in a lifetime.

“They were led into the patio of the gaol and placed against a wall, the five of them side by side, with the firing party facing them. There was a pause and our friend asked the officer in charge of them what the devil they were keeping him waiting for. The officer said that the general commanding the government troops wished to attend the execution and they awaited his arrival”.

“Then I have time to smoke another cigarette”, said our friend. “He was always unpunctual”.

“But he had barely lit it when the general – it was San Ignacio, by the way: I don’t know whether you ever met him” – followed by his A.D.C. came into the patio. The usual formalities were performed and San Ignacio asked the condemned men whether there was anything they wished before the execution took place. Four of the five shook their heads, but our friend spoke.

“Yes, I should like to say good-bye to my wife”.

“*Bueno*”, said the general, “I have no objection to that. Where is she?”

“She is waiting at the prison door”.

“Then it will not cause a delay of more than five minutes”.

“Hardly that, *Señor General*”, said our friend.

“Have him placed on one side”.

“Two soldiers advanced and between them the condemned rebel walked to the spot indicated. The officer in command of the firing squad on a nod from a general gave an order, there was a ragged report, and the four men fell. They fell strangely, not together, but one after the other, with movements that were almost grotesque, as though they were puppets in a toy theatre. The officer went up to them and into one who was still alive emptied two barrels of his revolver. Our friend finished his cigarette and threw away the stub”.

“There was a little stir at the gateway. A woman came into the patio, with quick steps, and then, her hand on her heart, stopped suddenly. She gave a cry and with outstretched arms ran forward”.

“*Caramba*”, said the General.

“She was in black, with a veil over her hair, and her face was dead white. She was hardly more than a girl, a slim creature, with little regular features and enormous eyes. But they were distraught with anguish. Her loveliness was such that as she ran, her mouth slightly open and the agony of her face beautiful, a gasp of surprise was wrung from those indifferent soldiers who looked at her”.

“The rebel advanced a step or two to meet her. She flung herself into his arms and with a hoarse cry of passion: *alma de mi corazón*, soul of my heart, he pressed his lips to hers. And at the same moment he drew a knife from his ragged shirt – I haven’t a notion how he managed to retain possession of it – and stabbed her in the neck. The blood spurted from the cut vein and dyed his shirt. Then he flung his arms round her and once more pressed his lips to hers.

“It happened so quickly that many did not know what had occurred, but from the others burst a cry of horror; they sprang forward and seized him. They loosened his grasp and the girl would have fallen if the A.D.C. had not caught her. She was unconscious. They laid her on the ground and with dismay on their faces stood round watching her. The rebel knew where he was striking and it was impossible to staunch the blood. In a moment the A.D.C. who had been kneeling by her side rose”.

“She’s dead”, he whispered.

“The rebel crossed himself”.

“Why did you do it?” asked the general.

“I loved her”.

“A sort of sigh passed through those men crowded together and they looked with strange faces at the murderer. The general stared at him for a while in silence”.

“It was a noble gesture”, he said at last. “I cannot execute this man. Take my car and have him led to the frontier. *Señor*, I offer you the homage which is due from one brave man to another”.

“A murmur of approbation broke from those who listened. The A.D.C. tapped the rebel on the shoulder, and between the two soldiers without a word he marched to the waiting car”.

My friend stopped and for a little I was silent. I must explain that he was a Guatemalan and spoke to me in Spanish. I have translated what he told me as well as I could, but I have made no attempt to tone down his rather high-flown language. To tell the truth I think it suits the story.

“But how then did he get the scar?” I asked at length.

“Oh, that was due to a bottle that burst when I was opening it. A bottle of ginger ale”.

“I never liked it”, said I.

The basic level of the text (referential modality frame) is represented by a number of interacting scenes. The scenario implied in the title of the short story comprises the information about the subject and its qualifier $S_1 - Q_1$. The title of the story is retrospective in the direction of unfolding the events since the reader has to reinterpret the initial information, coming to know more facts about the personages and events. The additional modal shades of meaning emerge on reading the whole text.

From the compositional point of view, the story is built up as text in text: the life of the main character, the General, underlies the basic plot of the story, the story is told in the 3-rd person singular by a Guatemalan, an acquaintance of the author. The author himself acts as a mere observer though verbalized by the personal pronoun “I”, he initializes the conversation and summarizes it in the end. Thus, the author notes that the story-teller, a Guatemalan, uses rather a high-flown language that, in his opinion, “suits the story”. Correspondingly, the expressive plan of the text is represented mostly by emotive and expressive lexical units. At the end of the story the reader experiences the “effect of the deceived expectation”, it happens rather suddenly, since he is tuned to perceive the heroic and pathetic version of the story, the main character being a former general with a scar on his face. Yet, the end of the story is rather frustrating, it is even ironic in its modality. It is no wonder, W.S. Maugham is unrivaled in creating the stylistic effect of irony and uses this stylistic device in most of his short stories. Verbally, here the authors

observe the intended collision of two contrastive styles of narrative: high-flown and lower-colloquial. Thus, the initially neutral modal semantics of the title, in which the lexeme “scar” infers certain heroic associations with warfare after reinterpreting obtains quite a different ironic-evaluative modality.

The analysis of referential modality frame in the text reveals certain scenes with leading Subject 1 and correlated Subjects 2-7 incorporated in the scenario of unfolding events. The scene of Subjects in the text: S1 - *the man, he, general, an exile, a ruffian, a bandit*; S2 - *I, you*; S3 - *an acquaintance, companion, I, friend, he*; The information about minor characters is revealed in the following scenes about correlated subjects: S4 ... S7 - *the others, the five of them, the general, he, San Ignacio, she, a woman, a girl*. The qualifying aspect of the scene of Subject S1Q is represented by lexical units adding the information about the personage’s looks, traits of his character, moral and spiritual values, social status: *a powerful (man) of more than common height, (the man) with the scar, not a bad (fellow), the condemned (rebel)*, etc. The other qualifying feature is “possessiveness”, S3Q - *my (companion), my (acquaintance), my (friend)*.

The scene of actions/state A1/St is activated by a whole series of verbs characterizing the mode of existence of the above-mentioned subjects and correlated objects: *used to come, made his living, refused, threaded his way, paused, passed on*, etc.; A2/St: *noticed, wondered, was standing, shook*, etc.; A3/St: *nodded, give, guess, was opening*, etc. The informative potential of some of these verbs implies the rise of dynamics in action and reveals the specific character of the actions unfolded (*threaded his way, shook, tossed down, turned away*); the state of mind of the mentioned subjects is described (*paused, knew, think, guess, liked*), the direction of action is verbalized (*came up, passed on, held out, tossed down, threw away*); the time of action is indicated (*I think he was ..., He’s an exile*). Some verbal units participate in activating a number of frames at a time: e.g. referential modality – temporality, subjective modality (*...whether there was anything they wished; I guess he knew what was coming to him*). Here the basic level concept “temporality” overlaps the optional subjectivized concepts “desire”, “supposition”, “knowledge”. The qualifiers of the scene of actions/state of the corresponding subjects A1/StQ-A3/StQ are the lexical units highlighting different aspects of the scene: manner of action, behaviour (*leisurely, without a word, affably*), tool (*with a short pack*), evaluation (*oddly, far from clean*), intensity (*with a hoarse cry of passion*), quantity (*more than half a dozen times, as for the twentieth time*), etc.

The scene of objects of the action O1: *features, body, lottery tickets, it, way, the numbers, a brand*, etc. O2: *him, this, anyone, head*, etc.; O3: *him, pesos, a bottle of ginger ale*, etc. Further on, the authors may disclose such aspects of the scene as animateness/inanimateness (*her, him, it, this*), looks (*features, the scar, head, lips*), tool (*a knife, the glass, a bottle of ginger ale*), abstract notions (*the truth, what he told me*), etc. OQ1-3: *small and undistinguished (features), corpulent (body), a very shabby grey (suit), a battered (sombbrero), his (way), my (head), his (tickets), a few (pesos)*. Qualifiers

highlight such aspects of the scene as “possessiveness”, “quantity”, “esthetic evaluation”, etc.

The scene of locality L1 is activated by lexical units in the text: *into the Palace Hotel at Guatemala City; round the bar, among the tables, from Nicaragua*; L2: *at the bar, on the rail, on his face, etc.* Here such aspects of the locality scene are revealed as: setting (*in Guatemala, in gaol*), direction and change of scene (*from Nicaragua, came up, marched to the waiting car*), the place of objects relatively to each other (*among the tables, against a wall, side by side, etc.*). Some phrasal verbs in the text manifest interaction of scenes of action, temporality and locality – *passed on, came up, tossed down*. LQ1-3: *at each table, in these countries, from his ragged shirt, from the cut vein, by her side*.

The scene of temporality is activated by the following language means: T1: *had, went, was, never, used to come, every day, at cocktail time, when no notice was taken of, now, etc.*; T2: *now and then, one evening, etc.*; T3: *nodded, What will you have, don't know, ever, stopped, etc.* The scene of temporality also comprises such parameters as reality/irreality. Thus, lexical units expressing reality mark out such aspects of temporality as: priority (*He told me he'd never had such a run of bad luck*); continuity (*I was opening it*), sequence (*He tossed it down and put the glass back on the table.*), parallel actions (*I was standing at the bar one evening, ..., when the man with the scar came up*), reiteration (*He used to come*), phase: the beginning – *The rebel advanced a step or two*; the continuity of action – *The rebel knew where he was striking*; the end – *The officer went up; Our friend finished his cigarette*.

The predominant language means activating the scene of temporality in the plan of reality are the morphological forms of verbs, lexical units are mainly involved here to specify the basic meaning. The scene of temporality in the plan of irreality is associated here with such language units as: *It must have been due to a formidable wound...* (supposition); *If this was the way he made his living it must have been a poor one* (condition and supposition); *Business is none too good, but it might be worse* (probability). *“I have translated what he told me as well as I could, ...”* (possibility).

Thus, the cognitive model of the referential modality frame correlated with Subjects 1-3 is as follows (2):

S1-S3	A1/St-A3/St	O1-O3	L1-L3	T1-T3
(Q)	(Q)	(Q)	(Q)	(Q)

The frame of subjective-personal modality in the analyzed text comprises such scenes as:

1) modality of emotive and psychic reaction: in the direct definite nomination – *They fell strangely; But they were distraught with anguish*, etc.; in the indirect nomination – *her face was dead white*;

2) sensor modality – *It was on account of the scar that I first noticed him; I never saw him in anything but a very shabby grey suit*;

3) mental modality of: supposition – *I think he was for the most part a trifle too worse for the liquor*; knowledge – *The rebel knew where he was striking*; non-

knowledge – *I don't know whether you ever met him*; confidence – *He's a ruffian of course and a bandit*; possibility/impossibility – ... *it was impossible to staunch the blood*;

4) evaluative modality: general evaluation – *not a bad fellow*; with intensifiers – *“Not so bad. Business is none too good, but it might be worse”*; aesthetic evaluation – *That's a terrific scar on his face; It doesn't add to his beauty, does it?*; with intensifiers – *Her loveliness was such that as she ran, her mouth slightly open and agony of her face beautiful...*; ethic evaluation – *“It was a noble gesture”*, *he said at last*; normative evaluation – *The usual formalities were performed*; utilitarian evaluation – *To tell the truth I think it suits the story*; intellectual evaluation – ... *he had lost more matches than a reasonable man could use in a lifetime*;

5) the indirect realization of subjective-modal meanings involves the cognitive procedure of metaphoric and metonymic extensions of meaning. Thus, the analysis of text has revealed the prevalent instances of mixed use of metaphors and metonymies – the so-called metaphonymies: *the scar ran broad and red; His face went oddly with his corpulent body; threaded his way among the tables; He tossed it down; day broke; into one who was still alive emptied two barrels of his revolver; soul of my heart; a gasp of surprise was wrung from those; flung herself into his arms; burst a cry of horror, they sprang forward; A murmur of approbation broke*;

6) compositional modality: pleonasm (the act of speech explication): *To tell the truth I think it suits the story*; conjunction as logical connection of parts of scenes: *And at the same moment he drew a knife from his ragged shirt...*; disjunction as logical connection of opposing parts of scene: *But my companion nodded affably*; the logical connection of sequence: *“Then I have time to smoke another cigarette”*, *etc.* Besides, the analysis of the text reveals such compositional-stylistic devices as: emphatic constructions ... *and no sooner did he buy a new stack than he lost it*; barbarisms – *“Qué tal, general?”*, *“Gracias”*, *etc.*

Summarizing, schematically the frame of subjective-personal modality can be represented in the following way (3):

Ms/p = M_{emot} + M_{sens} + M_{ment} + M_{eval} + M_{metaph/meton} + M_{comp}

The frame of subjective-interpersonal modality is activated by a wide range of language units: subjective-evaluative predicates, performative verbs, referential modality discourse markers as well as by the whole socio-cultural context¹⁰. The basic narrative form of the given text is description, therefore here are represented various language units activating the frame of referential modality. They all are intended to express the connection of inner textual reality with the outer world, the objective reality. The epistemic modality representing “the world as it is” reveals the factual-content informative block in the given text. Supporting this basic frame of referential modality with its

¹⁰ E.D. Polivanov, *Articles on general linguistics*, Nauka, Moscow, 1968; G.A. Shiganova, I. S. Karabulatova, A.V. Sviridova, L.P. Yuzdova, “The concept of “knowledge”. “Cognition” in Russian paremia: The experience of structural semantic representation”, in *ASTRA Salvensis*, 2018, p. 385-394.

epistemic settings, yet, fulfilling the optional functions of volition and assessment there are singled out the corresponding informative blocks of deontic and axiological modalities. As has been earlier mentioned, the deontic modality is prescriptive in its essence, it installs the picture of the world “as it should be”, whereas the intention conveyed by the axiological modality is to assess the world and change it to the better. Language means are also helpful in setting the direct relationship between the author of the text and the readers, here the use of vocatives, or of pronouns in the 2-nd person can be drawn as an example: *“Such things are rather summary in these countries, you know, and he was sentenced to be shot at dawn”*.

As for the modal information distribution in the text, the authors should note that it is the domain of epistemic modality with its objectivized informative block that makes up “the background” of the text, whereas subjectivized blocks of information characterizing and individualizing personages and events in the narrative build up the domain of deontic and axiological modalities, associated with “the figure” against the background of the text.

The frame of subjective-interpersonal modality in the given text, and in any other fiction text, comprises the informative blocks of epistemic, deontic and axiological modalities(4):

$$M_{s/i} = M(\text{epist}) + M(\text{axiol}) + M(\text{deont}) \quad (4)$$

The hierarchy of modal relations in the text may be represented at Figure 2.

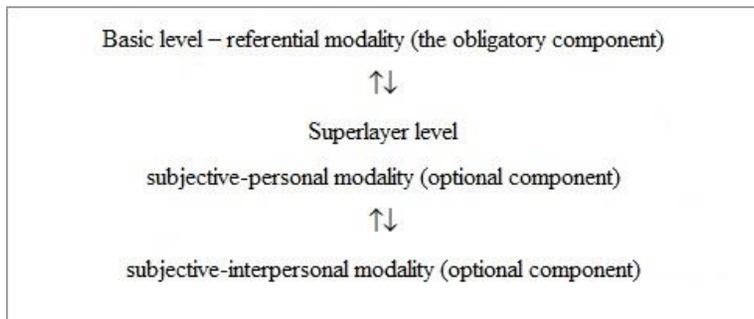


Figure 2: Hyperframe of textual modality

To sum it up, the cognitive model of modality of the whole text is at Figure 3.

