

# Modal Expressive Means in Pragmatic Discourse

**Shulga M.V.**

Moscow State University

## Abstract

Modal expressive means in Russian media discourse deliver a hidden pragmatic meaning to the utterance. A pragmatic discourse is overloaded with indirect assessments that focus on the implementation of the sender's intentions. It is modality substitution that could be recognized as a special method of oblique speech interference.

**Key Words: modality, modality substitution, linguistic pragmatics, oblique speech, journalese text**



1. This article is a fragment of an extended research-work. We undertook some attempts to Mass-Media discourse analysis - identification and characteristics of modal expressive means of oblique speech in the intentional text. The main function of the journalese style (a newspaper publicistic style) is the informative function. However, alongside with the informative function, journalese texts perform an implication function that forms either a positive or a negative attitude of a reader towards the statement. In this case, we mean the implementation of the author's intentions in the text, his expectations to manage addressee's attitude to a presented event.

The intention is often expressed through the evaluation of the information - positive or negative. This kind of evaluation might be expressed by means of direct and indirect (hidden) speech patterns. We limited our research by the oblique speech elements. We tried to work out a complete classification of indirect evaluation means in the text; we move from the text as an object of investigation but not from particular language means. At the same very time, researchers encounter some lack of scientific apparatus of available "forms of linguistics existence". It involves overrunning out of familiar boundaries of the language and the language categories.

This approach fulfills a wide variety of practical needs of modern linguistics, including educational and didactic. It can teach how to comprehend the text, or rather, the context, hidden intentions of a speech

agent. This aspect is relevant for teaching Russian as a foreign-language [1]. This is all the more important because indirect means of evaluation are not depicted in dictionaries and grammar books of the Russian language and are not described adequately in linguistic research works.

2. We take into account language means somehow associated with modality.

Modality - is the universal category. It expresses relationships between a statement and the reality; it qualifies and estimates the attitude of a speech agent.

According to V. Vinogradov, modality "covers the entire texture of speech." It is definitely expressed in Verbal Moods (Subjunctive, Imperative, Indicative), types of goals of communication (statement - question of order), the use of modal verbs (*want, should, might, can - хочет, должен, может*). That kind of modality specified by the language system is called as an objective modality.

Objective modality opposes Subjective modality, which is an optional part of the statement and expresses an attitude of the speaker to a statement. Values that make up the content of a subjective category of modality are heterogeneous; they are not described properly well and are implemented in the most diverse means of expression and are often not directly related to Grammar [1].

3. The journalese text presents all the varieties of modal means. But of a particular interest is not modality itself but a subordination of modality to the author's intentions - a special method of indirect



speech effects, which we call figuratively as a substitution of modality.

A substitution of the communicative statement is a good example of such technique expressed in the following title “*Do we need social reforms?*” (“*Нужны ли нам социальные реформы?*”) The author uses an interrogative construction in the situation with positive intentions. The essence of this method is to provoke the recipient to actively participate in the dialogue, to present the author's attitude to the problem as if it is an attitude of the recipient, to prevent a resentment attitude of the recipient. This is a very common technique realized in a number of specific patterns. This technique relies on a regular and compulsory means of expressing modality – an alternative choice between narrative and interrogative forms.

We will pay attention to a less obvious phenomenon – forms of expressing modality, which have not received any clearly defined status in linguistics.

4. It is obvious that the correlation between a language statement and the reality is expressed by the choice of Mood forms – the Indicative Mood and the Imperative Mood. In this case, forms of the Indicative Mood characterize an action as a real one. However, the references to the text reveal a modal potential in the forms of the Indicative Mood. An agent of the speech replaces Future tense forms by means of the Present tense in order to present a hypothetical event as a real one. For example, they talk about a planned and contentious project: “*In Moscow, nowadays*

*they are constructing a large technical center*” («*В Москве таким образом создается крупный технический центр*»). In this case, a replacement of the Present tense forms by the Future tense (“*will be constructed*” - “*будет создан*”) will refer to an unreal action.

5. Forms of expressing Subjective modality are diverse and of various kinds. Thus, the word-combination “*the so-called-phrase*” (“*так называемый*”: “*the so-called democrats*”) adds up the meaning “not Democrats at all”. Quotation marks used in a printed text add to the compromising modality. A talk about such a small thing as quotation marks becomes a principle matter: “... *I would like to remove the quotation marks from the phrase democratic movement “used in yesterday’s newspaper issue by one of the “leading newspapers.” That’s right, democratic movements. That’s right, moving to the market.*” («...*Мне хотелось бы словосочетания «демократические движения» снять кавычки, которые поставлены во вчерашнем номере «одной центральной газеты». Да, демократические движения. Да, идут к рынку*».) That is what the newspaper “*Komsomolskaya Pravda*” («*Комсомольская правда*») published in respond to the critics of the newspaper “*Pravda*” (газета «*Правда*»). And this is an example how St. Petersburg newspaper “*Rush Hour*” (газета «*Час пик*») subtly travestied and fended away the same very technique. It published an interview with a well-known representative of the



nationalist movement. This man calls himself a happy man: *“I came from the province and could have joined the Democrats (do not forget to put the quotation marks), but have joined the Patriots (without quotes).”* (*«Я приехал с периферии и мог примкнуть к демократам (не забудьте поставить кавычки), а примкнул к патриотам (без кавычек).»*) The newspaper took into account the author’s desire a bit straightforward. But that’s the point. Modal quotation marks which the interviewee would like to use to inspire the reader with his negative attitude to the Democrats are not a method of direct assessment but an indirect way to accompany hidden intentions. However, when the technique is over and the intentions are exposed, the desired effect cannot occur, and even a boomerang effect might take place. That is what the newspaper referred to.

6. Special modal particles *“would-be, something like, say”* (*“якобы, мол, -де”*) express the meaning of the information-corruption: *Say, he did not know.* (*“Он-де не знал.”*) However, these particles have additional shades of meaning: an agent of the speech somewhat disassociates himself from the source of information. These particles are widely represented in pragmatic function. But of particular interest are synonymous and less standard ways of implementation of the same modal elements. Hence, it seems to us that the oblique speech patterns can perform the same function in the structure of the intentional text. An oblique speech

reproduced literally, in every detail, (a citation itself) is intentionally charged, as a rule. It is supposed to confirm the validity of the information. In this case, a speech agent is hiding behind the authority; the latter could be authority of the President, a popular actor or a professional in his field. As a rule, the text authority confirms a position of the speech agent. That is why the subjective position of the author is presented as an objective one.

An oblique speech could be reproduced in order to discredit other people’s opinion. In this case, the text generally contains a signal synonymous to particles *“would-be, something like”* (*мол, -де*). For example: *“The Venezuelan president on the way toward “the socialism of the 21st century”, as he puts it, is ready to move mountains.”* (*«Венесуэльский президент на пути к «социализму 21 века», как он сам выражается, готов свернуть горы.»*) In this context, the words *“as he puts it”* (*“как он сам выражается”*) express the modal signal of unreliable nomination and a distance between the author and the alien speech.

The signal might obtain quite subtle forms. For example, publishing a hostile letter, the newspaper shows not quite pure delicacy and let the reader notice it: *“The letter keeps all the individual features of the author’s spelling and punctuation”* (*«В письме сохранено все, вплоть до индивидуальной авторской орфографии и пунктуации»*); here it means that *“the author is ignorant”*. Another example: *“The editorial board publishes the letter*



*unchanged; only spelling errors are corrected.*" («Редакция печатает письмо без изменений, исправив только орфографические ошибки».)

7. Logical qualifications of the statement also carry a modal meaning - intellectual and rational assessments. A pragmatic text needs methods of attracting attention of an indirect estimation by means of using an artificial form of causality; or the opposite – a destruction of natural causality. Thus, a newspaper reports on the debates in the Parliament (“Дума”) around the decree “*On urgent measures to stop the promotion of pornography, violence and cruelty.*” («О неотложных мерах по пресечению пропаганды порнографии, кукла насилия и жестокости».) The title indicates the relationship of cause and effect: “*The Spring; the Parliament is seriously engaged in love.*” («Весна. Парламент всерьез занялся любовью.») Another newspaper connected the decree not to the spring but to the fall of public morality; it depends on the hidden causal relationship intentions - either to raise doubts or to support the work of the Parliament.

8. The opposition of statements on the basis of “approval - denial” refers to the scope of the Objective modality. The technique of substitution of negation by the indirect oblique approval is quite popular. For example, Mass-Media debates the construction of the trails for racing “Formula 1”. Many authorities and experts are against it. The newspaper publishes the information under the intentional heading

“*A track for racing: Moscow or Moscow County?*” («Трасса для автогонок: Москва или Подмосковье?») In this title the alternative “to build or not to build” is expressed by the question mark only. In reality, the false alternative “Moscow or Moscow County” gets rid of the negation because it is replaced it by the alternative “the location construction”.

9. Indirect estimation is widely expressed by the modal words “*wants, can, should, must*” (*хочет, может, должен*). The intentional text contains a wide range of such words ranked according to the nature of their estimation. For example, a title of the interview with the daughter of a famous film director “*Nadezhda Mikhalkova: My Dad forced me enter the MGIMO*” (Moscow State University of Foreign Affairs) («Надежда Михалкова: В МГИМО меня заставил поступить папа»). However, the context of the interview contains a word “*persuaded*” rather than “*forced*”. (“*уговорил*”, а не “*заставил*”) This word choice reveals negative connotations of the title.

A presentation of an alien to the speaker position is preceded by the constructions that warn the addressee: “*they try to convince us*”, “*he feels in the right to announce*”, “*he was forced to admit*”. (*настаивают убедить в том..., он считает себя вправе заявлять..., он был вынужден признать*) On the contrary, the opposite, positive attitude is expressed by the phrases like “*he believes, he thinks, he hopes, it seems*” (*он убежден, он полагает, он надеется, ему кажется*).



Using such means of modality an agent of the speech adjusts a reader's attitude to the information.

10. The study of intentional texts reveals irregular, optional, and unpredictable character of modal meanings. The experiment has shown that an addressee interprets the meaning of the following modal patterns in a different way: "the media reported" and "the media spread the message" ("СМИ сообщили - СМИ распространили сообщение"). But what language factors generate a negative assessment of the information integrity of the second pattern? It is possible that in the phrase "spread the message" (распространили сообщение) an intentional action is deducted, similar to that one presented in the fragment "they are trying to convince us" (нас пытаются убедить). One more example: "It turned out, that the Moscow police acted impeccably" ("Московская милиция, оказывается, действовала безупречно"). We deduce lack of trust to the main modal qualification expressed by the verb 'to act' and the adverb "impeccably". However, the addressee cannot recognize a negative modal evaluation in the following pattern similar to the previous one: "Moscow police, as it turned out, operated impeccably"; "It seems, that Moscow police, acted impeccably. (Московская милиция, как оказалось, действовала безупречно; Московская милиция, оказалось, действовала безупречно) It is possible to continue this series of irregularities. In our

opinion, this phenomenon deserves special attention of researchers.

The approach to the text as an object of investigation made us to reveal some pragmatic meanings related to various ways of expression of a statement to the reality, i.e. a functional-semantic category of modality, primarily in its subjective subtype. We focused our attention only on some irregular means of expressing modality and just identified the problem; we do not pretend to have solved it. "Semantic capacity of the subjective modality is wider than the semantic capacity of the objective modality." [1: 303] A variety of implementations of modality in pragmatics increases understanding of the ways of its expression. [3: 201]

It is significant that means subjective modality function as modifiers of the objective modality qualification. They cover the objective language modal features and form the most significant stage in the modality hierarchy. The ability of various means of expressing modality makes it possible to trace influential function on the addressee by means of indirect (oblique, hidden) techniques in the newspaper style.

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