

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
THE UNIVERSITY OF DANANG

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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO LINGUISTIC
FEATURES OF EXPRESSIONS DENOTING
EPISTEMIC MODALITY IN THE *OBSERVER*
NEWSPAPER ARTICLES**

Major: English Linguistics

Code: 60.22.02.01

**MASTER THESIS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES
AND HUMANITIES
(Summary)**

Danang, 2016

The thesis has been completed at
THE UNIVERSITY OF DANANG

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The thesis was orally defended at The Examining Committee.

Field: English Linguistics

Time: 27th August 2016

Venue: The University of Da Nang

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE

The world we live in is very fascinating. Our duty is to simply discover it and to marvel at its beauties. It is important to learn foreign languages to communicate with others around the world. And among popular foreign languages, English plays an essential role in the current process of globalization. As we can see most books, magazines, newspapers, novels and information on the internet are in English. As such, it can be claimed that English plays a key role and has generally been agreed to be predominantly a tool for international communication. Proficiency in English provides people opportunities to exchange their ideas and express their thoughts. Furthermore, it is really necessary to learn how the English language is used in real life conversations for people not only to express their ideas and thoughts but also to convey their attitude towards or opinions about the content of what they say.

To sum up, modality is a linguistic phenomenon, which allows one to make a judgment about situations that need not be real. To understand the phenomenon thoroughly, certain lexical words and syntactic structures which express modality meaning need studying so that modality can be expressed properly and effectively to achieve communicative purposes. Recognizing the importance of using modality in communication and the problems learners may face in using them, I decided to carry out *“An investigation into linguistic features of expressions denoting epistemic modality in the Observer newspaper articles”*.

This study is mainly dedicated to investigating epistemic

modality expressions used in The Observer 2007, a popular British newspaper. Epistemic modality expressions collected from two columns in The Observer newspaper, business articles and review articles are investigated in terms of syntactic structures and semantic categories. The study is also intended to find out the difference in the use of epistemic modality expressions in the two types of British newspaper articles.

1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.2.1. Aims

The thesis aims at providing learners with a better understanding of the syntactic structures and semantic features of modality and how to use modality expressions appropriately in order to achieve communicative purposes.

The thesis is also aimed at contributing to the practical knowledge of the usage of the modality expressions and providing interesting and useful insights into the issue of modality for English language learners.

1.2.2. Objectives

The study is intended to:

- describe and analyze syntactic structures and lexical items expressing modality meanings found in British newspaper articles as modality markers. Such markers are in terms of *modals* for modal auxiliaries and *modal forms* for other non-auxiliary patterns of modality meanings including modal lexical verbs (verbal modals), modal nouns (nominal modals), modal adjectives (adjectival modals) and modal adverbs (adverbial modals), syntactic structures of expressions denoting modality meaning found in British newspaper articles.

- classify and identify the semantic categories of modality

markers, and indicate some other aspects concerning with the use of modality markers in British newspaper articles.

- point out the similarities and differences in the use of modality markers between business articles and review articles

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What types of modality markers can be found in British newspaper articles?

2. What grammatical structures do these modality markers have?

3. What similarities and differences in terms of syntactic and semantic features can be identified from the comparative analysis of modality markers used in review articles and business articles?

1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

With the aim to make a study on the syntactic structures and semantic features of the use of modality markers in British newspaper articles, the desired outcomes of the thesis are to investigate two major issues. First, the thesis will unfold the syntactic structures of modality markers found from British review articles and business articles. Then the semantic aspects of modality markers are categorized on the basis of theories of modality. Finally, the analysis of modality markers will show the differences in frequencies of epistemic modality occurrence between review articles and business articles in *The Observer* 2007.

1.5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study will focus on grammatical structures and semantic categories of epistemic modality in selected British newspaper articles. The main focus of the theoretical part is on categories of epistemic modality. Besides, deontic and dynamic modality are also introduced. The theoretical background is based on Quirk (1985),

Leech (1983), Palmer (1986, 1990), Coates (1983), Biber (1999) and Huddleston (2002). The analysis of the theoretical background will lead to the framework for further analysis.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

A number of linguists have investigated modality in general and grouped MMs into 3 kinds: deontic modality, epistemic modality and dynamic modality.

In sum, Palmer's basic categories of modality can be considered as the standard reference framework which provides the basic meanings for the analysis of MMs. The only difficulty with Palmer's view is that although he proposes major notions in the discussion of modality throughout his book, there is no illustration of specific structures or markers associated with the major categories of modality which can provide an essential reference for L2 users of English with targeted ways of using this domain.

Therefore, in this research patterns and structures of MMs associated with semantic categories of modality will be analysed with illustrations of excerpts taken from business articles and review articles of *The Observer* 2007 as presented in Chapters 4 below.

In Vietnamese, a number of linguistic researchers have paid attention to study modality. Their diverse notions on modality can be seen in Do Huu Chau, Hoang Tue, Hoang Trong Phien, Le Dong, Pham Hung Viet, Nguyen Van Hiep and especially Cao Xuan Hao (1991) in which he classified modality into two different aspects:

modality of speech acts and modality of sentence. Modality of speech acts is concerned with pragmatic aspect while modality of sentence is concerned with semantic domain.

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1. The Basic Semantic Categories of Modality

Although there has been a range of notions related to dimensions of modality (i.e., Coates' (1983) *epistemic* and *root* (non-epistemic) modality; Hengeveld's (1988) division of *inherent*, *objective* and *epistemological* modality; Bybee et al.'s (1991, 1994) discussion on *epistemic*, *agent-oriented* and *speaker-oriented* modality; and several other authors' suggestions for the reorganisation of modal categories), these can actually be seen as alternative labels for the three basic categories in terms of *epistemic*, *deontic* and *dynamic* modality as presented below.

2.2.2. Epistemic Modality

Epistemic modality, derived from the Greek *episteme* for 'knowledge', is a type of modality that has to do with the possibility and necessity of the truth of propositions. This category of modality is, as Lyon (1977: 793) claims, "concerned with matters of knowledge and belief" of the writer. According to Coates (1983: 18) epistemic modality is not only "concerned with the speaker's assumptions or assessment of possibilities" but also "indicates the speaker's confidence (or lack of confidence) in the truth of the proposition expressed" as in the following examples:

It can be seen from the literature that epistemic modality is indicated as the writer's "knowledge of possible situations obtaining in S's conception of reality or of a hypothesized situation" (Hengeveld 1988: 234). The pragmatic aspect of epistemic modality can be realised through the expression of epistemic qualification,

which indicates the writer's commitment or degree of certainty to the proposition presented. This is in line with Lyons' (1977) discussion on the relation between modality and the proposition in terms of *qualification*. The strong epistemic qualification signals the writer's highest degree of certainty, i.e., *I know that, It's certain that, Undoubtedly*; the weak epistemic qualification signals the writer's low degree of certainty as probability or neutral possibility of the state of affairs, i.e., *It is possible that, Perhaps, Probably, I think, I believe*.

2.2.3. Deontic Modality

Deontic modality, derived from the Greek *deon* for 'duty', is "concerned with the necessity or possibility of acts performed by morally responsible agents" (Lyon 1977: 823). Unlike epistemic modality, deontic modality refers to the performance of the act presented rather than the proposition and is thus related to duties in terms of moral responsibility, such as permission and obligation. Deontic modality can be subdivided into: directives (deontic possibility and deontic necessity); commissives (promises, undertakings); and imperatives. The major point in the relation of these subcategories is that they are used to indicate the degree of moral desirability of the state of affairs

2.2.4. Dynamic Modality

Dynamic modality, which is derived from the Greek *dynamis* for 'strength or power', is considered as modality of ability, volition, intention and willingness. The distinction between dynamic and deontic modality, as claimed in Palmer (1990: 69), "is far less easy to establish". However, the major difference between these two categories of modality is that while deontic modality is "discourse oriented", dynamic modality is "subject-oriented" (see 2.4.2.3).

Deontic modality is “discourse oriented” since it involves both the writer and the reader in the performance of the act written. Dynamic modality is “subject-oriented” because it is used to express the ability of the grammatical subject of the sentence other than the writer. This is also in line with Perkins’ (1983) claim that dynamic modality is used to express the subject-participant’s ability in relation to circumstantial events.

2.3. OTHER SUBCATEGORIES OF MODALITY MEANING

2.3.1. Possibility and Necessity

Central to the discussion of modality are the notions of *possibility* and *necessity*. In epistemic modality (Palmer, 1990: 30-33) these subcategories can be paraphrased as *it is necessary/possible that* a particular state of affairs exists whereas in deontic modality, the interpretation is *it is necessary/possible for* an act to be performed as analyzed in the following excerpts:

- (i) Epistemic possibility and necessity:
- (ii) Deontic possibility and necessity:

2.3.2. Subjectivity and Factuality

Subjectivity can be considered as an indicator of the writer’s role in both epistemic and deontic modality. Epistemic modality is subjective in that it relates to an inference by the writer or shows that the writer actually makes a judgement about the possibility or certainty of the truth of the proposition presented. Deontic modality is subjective as the writer is the one who obliges, permits, declines or forbids. These may be the reasons why Searle (1983: 166) considers epistemic modals as signals of “assertives”, in which the writer tells readers truly or falsely how things are and deontic modals as signals of “directives”, in which the writer gets readers to do things. Palmer (1986: 17) also states that “only grammatical system in which a great

deal of subjectivity is involved can be considered modal – and that is a characteristic of the English modal verbs”.

2.3.3. Judgement and Evidentiality

These are normally expressed by patterns indicating that:

(1) s/he is speculating about it (e.g., *It is possible that... / I think that... / I believe that...*)

(2) s/he is presenting it as a deduction (e.g., *It is concluded that... / I conclude that...*)

(3) s/he is sure about it (e.g., *I am confident that... / I am sure that...*)

(4) s/he does not fully commit to it (e.g., *perhaps, maybe, probably...*)

(5) s/he has been told about it (e.g., *It is said that... / X said that...*)

(6) it is a matter only of appearance, based on the evidence of (possibly fallible) senses (e.g., *It appears that.../ It seems that.../ It is likely that...*)

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. SOURCE OF DATA

The data used for this study are collected from The Observer Newspapers in the two columns of Business and Review. 104 newspaper articles collected from the Observer newspaper published in the United Kingdom (the British Observer) in 2007 are used to compile the two research corpora for study. The research corpora are shown as in table 3.1 and 3.2 below.

Table 3.1. Data on the corpus of the Observer – Business (The OBC)

Articles	Date range	No. of words	% of words
B01	07/01/2007	26,522	2.073
B02	14/01/2007	26,881	2.101
B03	21/01/2007	20,499	1.602
B04	28/01/2007	21,760	1.701
B05	04/02/2007	23,581	1.843
B06	11/02/2007	23,989	1.860
B07	18/02/2007	22,370	1.748
B08	25/02/2007	22,480	1.757
B09	04/03/2007	25,760	2.013
B10	11/03/2007	26,028	2.034
B11	18/03/2007	26,095	2.039
B12	25/03/2007	25,094	1.962
B13	01/04/2007	21,636	1.691
B14	08/04/2007	21,163	1.654
B15	15/04/2007	19,094	1.492
B16	22/04/2007	25,597	1.985
B17	29/04/2007	23,836	1.863
B18	06/05/2007	27,026	2.112
B19	13/05/2007	22,689	1.773
B20	20/05/2007	24,044	1.879
B21	27/05/2007	24,031	1.878
B22	01/06/2007	2,127	0.166
B23	03/06/2007	23,998	1.876
B24	10/06/2007	24,157	1.888
B25	17/06/2007	25,403	1.985
B26	24/06/2007	25,805	2.017
B27	01/07/2007	26,419	2.065
B28	08/07/2007	26,581	2.077
B29	15/07/2007	25,833	2.019
B30	22/07/2007	26,544	2.075
B31	29/07/2007	25,339	1.981

Articles	Date range	No. of words	% of words
B32	05/08/2007	25,101	1.962
B33	12/08/2007	24,759	1.936
B34	19/08/2007	22,119	1.729
B35	26/08/2007	25,934	2.027
B36	02/09/2007	26,443	2.067
B37	09/09/2007	26,035	2.019
B38	16/09/2007	24,198	1.891
B39	23/09/2007	25,735	2.012
B40	30/09/2007	25,916	2.025
B41	07/10/2007	23,558	1.841
B42	14/10/2007	28,118	2.198
B43	21/10/2007	25,234	1.972
B44	28/10/2007	26,293	2.055
B45	04/11/2007	24,173	1.889
B46	11/11/2007	25,915	2.026
B47	18/11/2007	25,740	2.012
B48	25/11/2007	23,571	1.842
B49	02/12/2007	25,030	1.957
B50	09/12/2007	24,761	1.936
B51	16/12/2007	23,075	1.803
B52	23/12/2007	22,693	1.773
Total of running words		1,256,783	100%

Table 3.2. Data on the corpus of the Observer – Review (The ORC)

Articles	Date range	No. of words	% of words
R01	07/01/2007	50,262	1.976
R02	14/01/2007	48,904	1.923
R03	21/01/2007	39,799	1.565
R04	28/01/2007	48,429	1.904
R05	04/02/2007	49,065	1.929
R06	11/02/2007	49,217	1.935
R07	18/02/2007	48,665	1.913

Articles	Date range	No. of words	% of words
R08	25/02/2007	50,837	1.999
R09	04/03/2007	49,669	1.953
R10	11/03/2007	47,881	1.883
R11	18/03/2007	51,329	2.018
R12	25/03/2007	53,686	2.111
R13	01/04/2007	47,932	1.885
R14	08/04/2007	45,519	1.790
R15	15/04/2007	46,155	1.815
R16	22/04/2007	50,138	1.971
R17	29/04/2007	48,745	1.917
R18	06/05/2007	50,035	1.967
R19	13/05/2007	54,361	2.138
R20	20/05/2007	51,177	2.012
R21	27/05/2007	51,111	2.010
R22	03/06/2007	49,426	1.943
R23	10/06/2007	52,198	2.052
R24	17/06/2007	50,735	1.995
R25	24/06/2007	52,204	2.053
R26	01/07/2007	50,302	1.978
R27	08/07/2007	48,853	1.921
R28	15/07/2007	55,540	2.184
R29	22/07/2007	51,509	2.025
R30	29/07/2007	53,634	2.109
R31	05/08/2007	53,060	2.086
R32	12/08/2007	46,757	1.838
R33	19/08/2007	45,648	1.795
R34	26/08/2007	47,993	1.887
R35	02/09/2007	49,260	1.937
R36	09/09/2007	55,313	2.175
R37	16/09/2007	45,082	1.773
R38	23/09/2007	49,401	1.942
R39	30/09/2007	47,431	1.865
R40	07/10/2007	40,678	1.599

Articles	Date range	No. of words	% of words
R41	14/10/2007	57,086	2.245
R42	21/10/2007	45,581	1.792
R43	28/10/2007	52,985	2.083
R44	04/11/2007	49,525	1.947
R45	11/11/2007	48,479	1.906
R46	18/11/2007	42,059	1.654
R47	25/11/2007	45,739	1.798
R48	02/12/2007	47,284	1.859
R49	09/12/2007	46,474	1.827
R50	16/12/2007	48,786	1.918
R51	23/12/2007	41,536	1.633
R52	30/12/2007	39,129	1.538
Total of running words		2,542,603	100%

3.2. METHOD OF COLLECTING DATA

The aim of my thesis is to investigate the linguistic features of expressions denoting epistemic modality through data collected in *The Observer 2007*. After reviewing the data collection methods, I decided to collect samples of review and business articles to build the corpora for the current research and samples of *The Observer 2007* collected in each group were also examined carefully to identify encoded patterns of MMs for the process of data collection. The software package of Wordsmith 5.0 was used to confirm the data of MMs encoded and provided statistical information for a quantitative analysis. The key wordlist and concordance line tools in this software package helped to indicate the context in the corpora where particular MMs occur.

3.3. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The study is conducted by carefully reading of materials in relation to the aspect of modality in communication to identify the

subject matter for research. Then British newspapers articles are investigated to identify the issue of study, modality markers. Articles from the Observer business articles and review articles will be investigated to collect data of modality markers for study. A comparative analysis of the syntactic structures and semantic features of modality markers will be conducted so as to find out the differences in the use of modality between British review articles and business articles. Besides, some implications for English language teaching and learning are also suggested.

As such, the following procedures are carried out in the process of conducting this study:

- + Collecting expressions denoting epistemic modality meanings.
- + Categorizing data of epistemic modality markers collected from articles in the Observer newspaper, columns business and review.
- + Describing and analyzing the data in two corpora in terms of the syntactic structures and semantic features.
- + Making comparative analysis (qualitative and quantitative)
- + Discussing the results of this comparison and then make some implications for teaching and learning English.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

EXPRESSIONS DENOTING EPISTEMIC MODALITY MARKERS

This chapter analyzes the result based on the data collected from the English Observer 2007. The analysis mainly focuses on

solving research questions.

Types of epistemic MMs collected in the research corpora are not only modal auxiliaries but also other patterns including modal forms such as modal lexical verbs, modal nouns, modal adjectives and modal adverbs. These patterns of embedded modality are found in terms such as comment clauses, hedges, and harmonic phrases expressing epistemic modality meanings.

4.1. MODAL AUXILIARIES AS EPISTEMIC MODALITY MARKERS

4.1.1. Epistemic *must*

Semantically, when the modal *must* serves as a device connecting the evidence and the content of the sentence or an inference from the context of the sentence 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)

4.1.2. Epistemic *may*

The main characteristic of epistemic MMs is to convey the writer’s levels of confidence or commitment to the content of the sentence presented. As in 4.1.1, epistemic *must* indicates the writer’s confidence in the occurrence of the event presented in the sentence. The epistemic sense of *may* is different in that it indicates “the writer’s lack of confidence in the proposition expressed” (Coates, 1983: 131). With epistemic *may* the writer implies that he is not confident in the occurrence of the event or not responsible for the content of the sentence but there is a possibility for the event presented to occur

4.1.3. Epistemic *might*

In the research corpora, the modal *might* is found in its epistemic sense of possibility with two variables. One is its primary use as a marker of epistemic possibility and the other is the past tense form of epistemic *may*. Epistemic *might*, as Coates (1983: 147) claims, “is superseding *may* as the main exponent of epistemic possibility” which can be paraphrased as ‘*it is possible that...*’ or *perhaps*. Basically, the probability use of *might* is similar to that of *may* with the time reference of future orientation.

4.1.4. Epistemic *will*

Epistemic *will* is similar to epistemic *must* in expressing the writer’s confidence in the proposition uttered. The difference is in the levels of confidence expressed through these two epistemic modals. While epistemic *must* conveys the sense of confidence created from the process of logical inference, epistemic *will* indicates the writer’s prediction about the occurrence of the event presented. Therefore, epistemic *will* is analysed as an epistemic marker of prediction.

It can be explained that the writers may be more interested in expressing their prediction about the occurrence of the event presented in the sentence than using other dynamic meanings of *will* intention and willingness (These instances of *will* are not related to the research and have been taken out of the data set before analyzing.).

4.1.5. Epistemic *could*

Epistemic *could* is also used to show the writer’s weak commitment to the content of the event presented due to lack of confidence. This epistemic modal paraphrased as ‘*it is possible that...*’ conveys the sense of tentative possibility. *Could* is an element that gives a remote assessment of possibility but its epistemic sense is

not the past form of *can*. (Therefore, instances of *could* which are not related to the research have been taken out of the data set before analyzing.) Epistemic *would* is normally used to tentatively assert the possibility of an event at the moment of speaking.

4.1.6. Epistemic *should*

Epistemic *should* as compared with epistemic *could* is weaker in expressing the writer's commitment to the proposition presented. While epistemic *could* expresses the sense of tentative possibility (4.2.5), epistemic *should* is used to convey the sense of a tentative assumption. It is weaker than epistemic *could* in that despite the writer's understanding of the event presented he can only express the probability of the case. Therefore, if epistemic *could* is used to express the writer's assessment of possibility, epistemic *should* conveys that of probability.

4.1.7. Epistemic *would*

Instances of epistemic *would* collected from the research corpora show that this epistemic modal verb mainly conveys the sense of *hypothesis* and *tentativeness*. The former is identified when there is a conditional feature in the sentence, and consequently *would* is used in the conditional clause. The latter is actually a pragmatic variant of the former as Coates (1983: 216) claims "hypothetical *would* is also used pragmatically to express politeness or tentativeness rather than a genuine hypothesis".

Epistemic *would* in the sense of hypothesis is considered the most common among the four "secondary modals" *could*, *might*, *would* and *should* (see Perkins, 1983) since it is used when the context of the sentence indicates an unreal condition. The distinctive characteristic of hypothetical *would* is in its sense of a negative implication.

Table 4.1. Frequencies of epistemic modal auxiliaries occurring in the ORC and the OBC

Modal	The ORC	The OBC
May	252 (23.1%)	165 (27.1%)
Must	99 (9.1%)	48 (7.9%)
Might	133 (12.2%)	56 (9.2%)
Will	119 (18.2%)	102 (16.8%)
Could	298 (27.3%)	112 (18.4%)
Should	142 (13%)	97 (16%)
Would	48 (4.4%)	28 (4.6%)
Total	1.091 (100%)	608 (100%)

4.2. OTHER MODAL FORMS AS EPISTEMIC MODALITY MARKERS

4.2.1. Epistemic Modality Markers with Modal Lexical Verbs

Modal lexical verbs normally occur in the comment clause of an utterance to indicate the writer's commitment to the occurrence of the event presented in the complement clause of the sentence. These are in patterns with "parenthetical verbs" co-occurring with 1st person subjects to form comment clauses expressing the writer's "mental state or attitude" towards the proposition (see Perkins, 1983: 97). Different modal lexical verbs in patterns of comment clauses as MMs indicate different levels of the writer's commitment to the event presented in the proposition uttered.

Other modal lexical verbs combined with the *I* pronoun expressing the sense of strong commitment such as *believe*, *know*, *see*, *understand*, and *assure*. Modal lexical verbs in the sense of weak

commitment are *think, hope, expect, wish, and suggest*. These convey the writer's implication of lacking confidence in the proposition presented.

Table 4.2. Frequencies of modal lexical verbs used in patterns of MMs in the ORC and the OBC

Modal lexical verbs	The ORC	The OBC
I think	626 (74.8%)	120 (67.8%)
I believe	30 (3.58%)	23 (13%)
I hope	80 (9.55%)	16 (4.9%)
I wish	57 (6.8%)	8 (2.45%)
I suggest	31 (3.7%)	1 (0.3%)
I expect	13 (1.55%)	9 (2.76%)
Total	837 (100%)	177 (100%)

4.2.2. Epistemic Modality Markers with Modal Adjectives

Similar to the modal lexical verbs presented above modal adjectives are used in the comment clause as expressions of embedded modality showing the writer's levels of confidence in the occurrence of the event presented in the sentence. Observations of MMs with modal adjectives collected in the research corpora show that the sense of the writer's strong or weak confidence is not in the modal adjective itself but through patterns of embedded modality expressing subjective or objective meanings

Table 4.3. Frequencies of modal adjectives occurring in the ORC and the OBC.

Modal adjectives	The ORC	The OBC
Hopeful	3 (1.85%)	1 (0.91%)
Certain	12 (7.5%)	10 (9.2%)
Confident	7 (4.32%)	6 (5.5%)
Sure	74 (45.7%)	22 (21%)
Likely	20 (2.3%)	12 (11%)
Clear	52 (32.1%)	43 (39.4%)
Delighted	14 (8.64%)	2 (1.83%)
Total	162 (100%)	109 (100%)

It is also interesting to see in Table 4.3 that the raw counts of individual modal adjectives occurring in this pattern of strong committers are higher in the ORC than in the OBC. As such, it can be argued that review articles appear to prefer more expressions of personal emotion and commitment such as *I am sure that*, *I am confident that*, and *I am certain that* than business articles.

4.2.3. Epistemic Modality Markers with Modal Adverbs

Modal adverbs found in The Observer 2007 occur in two subcategories of MMs. One modifies the whole sentence and the other modifies a particular word within the sentence. The former, as expressed in Perkins (1983: 90) as a “sentence modifier”, is “peripheral in clause structure”. The latter occurs within the structure of the sentence and directly modifies the main verb as a “verb modifier”. Semantically, modal adverbs as sentence modifiers indicate the epistemic sense that the writer tentatively reveals his comment on the proposition presented. When it is used physically

close to the main verb of the sentence the modal adverb is realised as modifying the verbs.

Table 4.4. Frequencies of modal adverbs occurring in the ORC and the OBC

Modal adverbs	The ORC	The OBC
Perhaps	15 (3.8%)	3 (1.6%)
Possibly	67 (16.9%)	42 (22.3%)
Clearly	79 (19.9%)	61 (32.4%)
Strongly	5 (1.26%)	4 (2.1%)
Certainly	88 (22.2%)	22 (12%)
Obviously	67 (16.9%)	13 (6.9%)
Surely	76 (19.1%)	43 (22.9 %)
Total	397(100%)	188(100%)

4.2.4. Epistemic Modality Markers with Modal Nouns

As discussed in the foregoing sections the common factor that modal forms share as non-auxiliary markers of epistemic modality, is to convey the writer's degrees of certainty or commitment to the content of the sentence presented. Patterns of epistemic MMs with modal nouns are no different. Modal nouns are used in patterns of comment clauses showing the writer's degrees of certainty or attitude towards what is presented in the sentence. The common pattern of MMs with modal nouns found in the research corpora are: (1) [*There is* + determiner + N_{Mod}]; and (2) [*It is* + possessive Adj + N_{Mod}].

Table 4.5. Frequencies of modal nouns occurring in the ORC and the OBC

Modal nouns	The ORC	The OBC
Hope	5 (9.25%)	3 (7.5%)
Belief	5 (9.25%)	3 (7.5%)
Doubt	31 (57.4%)	28 (70%)
Pleasure	7 (12.96%)	2 (5%)
Honour	6 (11.11%)	4 (10%)
Total	54 (100%)	40 (100%)

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper is to make critical analysis on the use of modality markers in the two columns: business and review articles of The Observer 2007. It dealt particularly with modality denoting epistemic markers in terms of nominal modals, adjectival modals, adverbial modals, verbal modals and modal auxiliaries.

In the theoretical part of this paper, the categorization of these grammatical aspects introduced by various grammar books was mentioned, commented and compared.

This paper, following the above-mentioned grammar books, subdivided modality into categories of epistemic modality, dynamic and deontic modality. As regards other types of classifications and different conceptions, these were also mentioned and commented on in the theoretical part and the decision not to take them into account was commented on.

This implies that this paper described and compared several

conceptions and the most appropriate one, division of three basic categories in terms of epistemic, dynamic and deontic, was taken into account and used as theoretical background of the analysis.

The process of classifying meanings of the modality in this paper was based on the same principles. Thus, various conceptions were examined and the most appropriate and frequent were taken into account. After discussing the semantics of modality in terms of possibility meaning, the ability meaning, necessity, obligation and the permission meaning, this thesis focuses on categorizing MMs denoting epistemic meanings in detail.

As regard to particular kinds of epistemic modality and meanings of the MMs, the attention was given to characteristics and properties which define them. Theoretical background was considered very important as it was the basis for a correct analysis. In the practical part the frequency of occurrence of the examined epistemic modality was given in a table to compare the frequencies of occurrence of each modal.

The analysis of the selected articles in *The Observer* 2007 indicated that newspaper writers not only aimed at reporting and giving information on news events but also tried to provide the readers with their own judgments and comments through mainly epistemic modality. Epistemic modality was realized in the two columns of business and review articles through modal auxiliary verbs, modal adverbs and modal adjectives, modal lexical verbs and some modal noun expressions.

The research is mainly based on corpus methods to investigate and analyse the data of MMs as epistemic modality. Review and business articles have been collected and compiled into two small research corpora (see Chapter 3). These corpora which are

equal in size and synchronic in range of time are expected to be adequate for the analysis of MMs as expressions of epistemic modality. The mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative analyses have been adopted in this research. The two machine-readable text corpora of *The Observer 2007* are subjected to quantitative analysis. The qualitative analysis is used on the selected sentences extracted from articles to compare the difference between review articles and business articles in the use of MMs based on the software package of Wordsmith 5.0. The Wordsmith Tools of concordance help to locate MMs in the text corpora and the context of the sentence in which a specific MM occurs.

A comparison of the two papers in terms of employing epistemic modality suggested that both of the newspapers preferred mainly expressing the writer's commitment to, or confidence in, the propositional content of the sentence. But the higher number of frequencies of occurrence of epistemic modality in review articles than in business ones due to different categories of these two articles suggested the idea that in the business articles the writer uses language of business to confirm or to announce news in an exact statement while in review articles are the type of critical analysis, so the writer uses a large number of epistemic modality to express opinion, attitude or commitment. More frequent use of *I think, I hope, I wish or I am sure....* for expressing modality in both columns of the newspaper (see Tables 4.2, 4.3) revealed that the writers inclined to thematize modality possibly to increase its persuasive effect.

5.2. IMPLICATIONS

In this thesis, the findings and discussion are expected to provide language learners with grammatical, syntactic and semantic knowledge of comprehending and using expression denoting

epistemic modality effectively. Based on the findings from the research, language learners can understand the expressions containing modal markers denoting epistemic modality in use in English.

Specifically, it is possible to provide learners of English with the logic of the ideas and the organization and development of the arguments in the sentence. This would in turn transform learners into critical readers who are able to read between the lines of a newspaper article for the use of epistemic modality markers to express the writer's view.

5.3. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Although we have tried our best in finding materials and investing our efforts, there are still shortcomings in this thesis due to the limited time, knowledge and references. Furthermore, the similarities and differences between the use and the frequent occurrence of all semantic categories of modality should be presented. However, due to limitation in the scale of this thesis, only epistemic modality markers in review articles and business articles have been investigated. As such, from the findings of this research, it can be proposed that further studies can be developed to investigate expressions denoting particular modality meanings in specific genres of discourse, not only newspaper articles but also in other types of discourse such as political speeches or a comparative study between MMs used in film review and book review.