


MODAL WORDS IN THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

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In this article the author attempts to trace some features of presentation of modal words in the Russian language. Fixation of the ability of particles to make our speech more intense has served to the speaking area as the basis for actualization of this problem. The specified ability allows us considering the modal particles to be the shades of meaning.

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The mood is one of a set of distinctive verb forms that are used to express modality. There are three moods in Russian, the indicative, the subjunctive and the imperative. Modality is concerned with the status of the proposition that describes the event. "Modality differs from tense and aspect in that it does not refer directly to any characteristic of the event, but simply to the status of the proposition." (Palmer, 2001:25)

Modality is a special morphological means, for expressing various meanings and shades of modality. Mood forms of verbs, intonation and lexical items such as modal words and modal particles express modality in the Russian language. The relationship of the person speaking to the reality is represented by lexical, morphological and syntactic means in the Russian language. Syntactic means of expression of modality are mainly various words and constructions (sentences and phrases).

e.g.: полагаю, поверь, как видим, по правде говоря, уверяю вас, известное дело, без всякого сомнения, сколько помню, мы все глубоко убеждены, давно пора признать;

I think, trust me, as we see, honestly, I convince them clearly, without doubt, as far as I remember, all of us are deeply convinced that it is time to acknowledge.

Different meanings of modality are characteristic for declarative sentences, interrogative sentences, imperative sentences and exclamations.

Птицы летят к югу. *The birds fly south.*

С этим я не согласен. *I don't agree with this.*

Вон отсюда! *Get out!*

Кто это? *Who is that?*

Садитесь. *Sit down.*

Разве можно ему поверить? *Can I believe it?*

The modal words are not parts of the

main clause, and they are not connected grammatically with other words in the sentence. They are syntactically used as:

a) phrase-sentence and mostly in dialogic speech;

e.g.: Вы хотите купить эту книгу? - Безусловно. (Rosental/Golub/Telenkova, 2006:281)

Do you want to buy this book? - Yes, I do.

b) parenthetical words with the modal meaning.

e.g.: Вам до меня, конечно, нет никакого дела. (Ebd.281) *You don't care about me of course.*

The Russian researchers Valgina and Rosental are of the opinion that the modal words represent a particular part of speech or word combination, and that their expression is evaluated by the speaker as whole or only parts of the utterance in terms of the degree of likelihood.

e.g.: а) Это, верно, кости гложет краснотупый вурдалак (Valgina, 2006:282)

The red-lipped vurdalak gnaws maybe the bones.

b) Обстоятельства верно, вас разлучили? (Ebd.282)

They are no longer together by force of circumstances?

In both examples, *верно* is a modal word. It expresses the degree of probability of the utterance. The word *верно* in the first example refers to the entire set, in the second example only to the subject. Modal words are very close to adverbs and modal particles, so it is difficult to distinguish between them.

e.g.: а) Наши успехи действительно (modal particle) невелики. (Ebd.282)

Our successes aren't really big.

b) Я прислушался: действительно (modal word), это был голос. (Ebd.282)

I listened it was really the voice

According to the Russian researchers not only modal words but also other

parts of speech express different degree of possibility, as follows:

a) the words which express the attitude of the speaker to aspects of reality:

e.g.: к счастью, к удовольствию, к сожалению, к несчастью, к удивлению, к огорчению, к прискорбию, к досаде others (Rosental/Golub/Telenkova, 2006:282 f);

luckily / fortunately, enjoyable / pleasure, unfortunately / unfortunate unfortunately / unhappy / for evil, surprisingly / amazing / to astonishment, regrettably / sad, sadly / sad annoyingly / annoying

e.g.: Найденов, к изумлению Нагульнова, в одну секунду смахнул с плеч кожанку, присел к столу.

To Nagulnov's amazement, Naydenov has quickly taken off the leather jacket and sat down at the table.

b) the words that refer to statement, restriction or alienation.

e.g.: в частности, впрочем, including кстати in particular, by the way

Присмотритесь, выберите себе дело по вкусу, и я обещаю учесть ваши склонности.

Take a closer look, select the event to your liking, and I promise to consider your addiction.

Кстати, этих склонностей мы пока не знаем. *But we don't know these inclinations.*

c) the words that indicate the association of ideas and their order.

e.g.: во-первых, наконец, напротив, однако, итак, значит, следовательно, так сказать

first, last, on the contrary, but / however, but / so, therefore, consequently, so to speak

Дядя заменил мне собою отца, воспитывал меня на свой счет и, словом, сделал для меня то, что не всегда делает и родной отец.

The uncle has replaced my father and raised me as his own son; in a word, he has done everything for me that my own father hasn't.

Accordingly, the meaning of the modal words in the Russian language, can be divided into two groups:

e.g.: a) modal words which convey the logical assessment of the utterance. The speaker is in reality the message convinced: безусловно, верно, конечно, несомненно, действительно, разумеется others; *sure / safe, probably / likely course / of course, of course, really, certainly including*

e.g.: Дважды два безусловно, четыре. *Twice two is certainly four.*

This group also includes phraseological units such as:

e.g.: в самом деле, само собой разумеется others, *in reality, of course / understood the others by itself.*

b) Modal words expressing possibility and probability are:

e.g.: вероятно, возможно, видимо, по-видимому, кажется, наверное *including, probably, maybe, apparently including*

e.g.: Мне показалось, что он, вероятно, долго раздумывал у двери, перед тем как войти.

It seemed to me that he has probably long wondered at the door before you enter.

Some phrases can even be assigned to both groups, such as: может быть, должно быть, по всей вероятности etc. *it is possible, in all probability, in all likelihood.*

Modal words as a special lexical-grammatical part of speech are often found in conjunction with other types of words:

a) with nouns - правда, факт, право */ the truth, the fact that legal*

e.g.: Правда глаза колет. *Truth hurts the tongue.*

In this case, the word *правда* is translated as *really, really, truly.*

b) with adjectives and adverbs - очевидно, конечно, действительно, верно, *obviously, of course / course, really, probably / likely*

e.g.: Я видел счастливого человека, заветная мечта которого осуществилась так очевидно.

I saw a happy man whose dream was so obviously fulfilled.

Окна были закрыты жалюзи. Очевидно, в доме все еще спали.

The windows were closed with the blind. It is perhaps still asleep in the house.

c) with the impersonal predicative words - видно, including слышно

Хоть убей, следа не видно. *The life of me, I can't see a trace.*

Так видно, она замужем. *She is probably married.*

d) with different verb forms: кажется, разумеется, значит, пожалуй, including знать

it seems that, goes without saying, have significance / meaning etc.

e.g.: Как вам кажется письмо Чаадаева?

What do you think about Chaadaev's letter?

Я кажется, хозяйке мил. *It seems the mistress is in love with me.*

e) with pronoun: никак, само собой *in no way / not at all, (all) of itself*

e.g.: Воеводы не дремали, но никак не успевали. *The waywodes have left nothing out of sight, but have done nothing.*

Ты никак, Фишка плачешь? *Are you crying Fischka?*

Глаза закрылись сами собой. *The eyes have been closed by itself.*

- Когда же мы увидимся? *When will I meet you again?*

- Не раньше лета, должно быть. *Maybe in summer, certainly not earlier.*

- Зимой едва ли ... - *In winter, hardly ...*

Само собой, если случится что, то дайте знать - приеду.

But if something happens, let me know - I'm coming.

The correlation of the modal words with other parts of speech is only external. The transition to modal words is provided in fact by the change of whole lexical-grammatical structures. The modal words are only identical words in this case.

e.g.: Человек имеет право на образование, труд и отдых.

A person has the right to education, work and rest.

Да где же это мой зонтик? - Куда же он девался, право?

But where is my umbrella? - Where is it?

In the first example, the word *право* functions as a noun, in the second as a modal word, with the sense of *really, actually.*

Modal words are a diverse and ambiguous phenomenon like the Russian

“vvodnye slova”, which are considered as “potentially related words” (Hinrichs literature. In the research literature, the modal words can be under a different term 1983:2). Hinrichs said that the first mention of this term refers to the descriptive grammar of the Russian language (deskribere from the Latin “describe”).


It is difficult to link the *vvodnye slova* to a grammatical categorization. This interesting grammatical feature is directly linked to emotions of the speakers and their living language in context.

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