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PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES

MODAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE TEXTS OF SCIENTIFIC TECHNICAL DISCOURSE

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The goals of corpus linguistics are determined not only by the collection of language data and formation of corpora of various national languages, for example, such as British National Corpus, which includes 100 million tokens; The Bank of English, consisting of 524 tokens and which continues to replenish with new data; The International Corpus of English (ICE), which reflects the use of words in various versions of the English language, etc., but also for some other linguistic purposes. According to scientists “... modern corpus linguistics is not limited only to the creation of corpora – it also involves large-scale language studies based on the corpus - corpus research of grammar and vocabulary”.

Therefore, the subject of this study is one of the phenomena of English grammar – modal verb constructions, and specifically, the ones with the modal verb may/might found in the texts of scientific communication.

We should note that the analysis of modality as well as specific modal verbs have been already considered in sufficient detail in the works of linguists. However, the description of constructions with the modal verb may/might functioning in the text corpora of scientific and technical discourse is completely a new task in theoretical linguistics.

The presented work is based on the text corpora of areas that are the part of scientific and technical discourse – “Heat Engineering”, “Electrical Engineering” and “Automotive Engineering”. The text corpora used have been taken from scientific articles in relevant fields of knowledge published in the journals of the United Kingdom and the USA: IEEE Transactions on Power Apparatus and Systems; Power Engineering Power Automotive News; Combustion Control and Optimization; Machine Design Machinery and Production Engineering; Automotive Engineer. The textual corpus of each specialty totals 100 thousand tokens, so the total volume amounted to 300 thousand tokens.

The studied constructions with the modal verb *may/might* are represented by 56 models which form 540 sentences with this verb, and the text corpus “Heat Engineering” turned out to be the most active with respect to these language units, in the texts of which 269 constructions function. This is 49.8% of all combinations with the verb *may/might*. The most frequent are the constructions with the first constituent *may/might* with the infinitive in Active Voice. The number of such units is 37, the total frequency of usage of these constructions is 382. The “*may* + infinitive in Active Voice” model turned out to be especially frequent – 202 units. The category of modality expressed by this formula appears in the mentioned text corpora only in one of all possible meanings – “ability to perform an action”, and functions in various production situations which are reflected in the meanings of the lexical components included in the constructions with the verb *may*, for example, *resonance may influence, overvoltages may exist, excitation may result, voltage may occur, etc.*

If to examine in detail all the shades of the meaning “ability to perform an action” and how they are reflected in the “*may* + infinitive in Active Voice” model we can observe the following: 1) the “ability” of an inanimate object to do something with another object (70% of all analyzed modal combinations of this type), for example, *may cause; may increase; may mix; may effect; may hit; may achieve, etc.* 2) the “ability” of a subject to do something with the object, for example, *may debate, may wonder, may write, may suggest, may use, may explain, etc.*

Thus the “*may/might* + infinitive in Active Voice” model expresses a single modal meaning, namely, “ability” to do something — and can be considered to be a basic meaning of constructions of this type within the scientific technical discourse. The frequency characteristics of these constructions demonstrate the implementation of the verb *may* meaning in part in the text corpora “Heat engineering”, “Electrical Engineering”, “Automotive Industry”.

The frequency of the constructions “*may/might* + infinitive in Passive Voice” modal has a slightly lower value in the text corpora – 180 units, and the stably reproduced most high-frequency construction is a combination of the “*may be* Ven” type (*may be* + participle II). It can be considered to be inherent to the texts of only two text corpora – “Heat Engineering” and “Electrical Engineering”, if we take into account the frequency indexes of the use of these constructions. That is in order to present the meanings of “possibility and probability”, “presumption of action on something” such constructions are preferably used in the text corpora “Heat Engineering” and “Electrical Engineering”.

As for the texts of the “Automotive Industry” corpus the combination “*may/might* + infinitive in the Passive Voice” is not typical for them (only 20 cases of usage in the texts with a length of 100 thousand tokens). This can be explained by the fact that the authors of texts do pay more attention to describing and explaining the operation of various components of already well-functioning systems and well-tuned mechanisms (engine, body, chassis, operational materials). For them the other language means are selected that are different from lexemes that express and reproduce modal meaning “probability” and “possibility”.

DIFFERENTIATION OF ARGOT IN THE PROCESS OF ITS EVOLUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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