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## Situational Modality as a Vital Element of Gender Constructed Speech

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**Abstract.** This paper introduces results of analysis of Anton Chekhov's short stories: gender constructed speeches will be described, paying special attention to realization of meanings of situational modality (obligation/ necessity, possibility and desirability). The semantic category of modality, have not been considered in relation to gender linguistics, although the modality is a sociocultural phenomenon as the gender is. Taking into account linguistic and extra-linguistic factors we clarify the frequency and nature of using modal explicators in social interaction. The study of semantic category of modality with gender is a vital issue, because the clarification of cognitive processes like our inner attitude towards the reality will make us closer to understanding and reflection of the origin of gender interaction.

**Keywords:** gender, modality, men's and women's language, sociocultural interaction, cognitive processes.

Research area: philology.

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## Ситуативная модальность как важный элемент гендерно конструированной речи

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**Аннотация.** В данной статье рассматривается связь языковой категории модальности и гендера как двух социокультурных феноменов. Представлен функционально-семантический анализ произведений Антона Чехова. Особое внимание уделено гендерной специфике реализации значений ситуативной модальности (желательности, долженствования/ необходимости и возможности). Семантическая категория модальности недостаточно хорошо изучалась в рамках гендерных исследований языка, хотя является важнейшим элементом речемыслительной деятельности как категория, которая выражает отношение говорящего к реальности. Изучение модальности в гендерной лингвистике откроет новые возможности в эффективном социокультурном взаимодействии.

**Ключевые слова:** гендер, модальность, мужской и женский языки, социокультурное взаимодействие, речемыслительная деятельность.

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### Introduction

The idea that a person's identity is reflected in the language he/she uses is taken seriously by many in the speaker-oriented paradigm of linguistic research (Tannen, 2005, 2009, 2010; Cameron, 2005, 2007, 2009; Lakoff, 1975; Vasilieva, 2007; Talbot, 1998; Ericsson, 2012; Coates, 2013). And accepting this idea, it is impossible to ignore the concepts of «masculinity» and «femininity» as the principle aspects of gender identity. Therefore a great deal of gender and language studies investigates the issues of constructing gender identity by focusing on linguistic elements: the nominative system, vocabulary, syntax, linguistic categories, including the one of modality.

### Statement of problem

The importance of modality in gender studies is hard to overstate. Modality is one of the key semantic categories, realizing the connection between language and extra-linguistic reality and determining the communicative potential of the utterance.

Until nowadays there is very scarce volume of research dealing with problem of the modality/gender connection. It turns out that semantic category of modality, have not been considered in relation to gender linguistics, although modality is a mean of social interaction, as a socio-cultural phenomenon as the gender is (Turayeva, 2012, 105).

Classical Russian writer Anton Chekhov lived in the late 19-th century the period of time when dramatic changes in social life were taking place in Russia. Those changes also concerned attitudes towards women and their status in Russian society. The noteworthy facts of this period of Russian history are works of scientist and writers (Skalkovskiy, 1886; Lombrozo, Ferrero, 1892).

For instance, satirical writer K. Skalkowski exclaimed that women were not able to manage with mental challenge because the size of their brain is smaller than male (Skalkovski, 1886). Chekhov who kept another point of view considered the absurdity of social changes, in his letters to his friend-publisher A. Suvorin

(Chekhov, 1888–1903). Thereby, employing modal attitude in character’s speech Chekhov ironically reflected relationships of the bossy independent new era women with masculine features or weak men who talking about the social rules and what women must do.

Minding the extra-linguistic factors, our goal is to show how meanings of modality have a strong influence on gender constructed speech.

**Methods**

The modality that reflects our attitude to utterance and attitude of utterance to the reality – is universal category. Many approaches of understanding modality have appeared because of it’s contradictory nature. All these points of view can be divided into logical and functional approaches as a whole. The representatives of the first approach, based on formal logic according to which modality divides into epistemic and deontic, but the biggest drawback of this approach is lack of full semantic diapason. The functional approach covers all language levels, all parts of speech and allows to find and analyse the very big diversity of meanings. According to the representatives of functional ap-

proach, modality can be divided into objective and subjective, also known as author modality. Objective modality in it’s turn has main body (including real/irreal meanings), and periphery – the so called situational modality, which includes such meanings as: desire, ability/possibility and necessity/ obligation (Bondarko, 1990, 42–43).

**Logic approache** of modality divides into epistemic and deontic (Fig. 1).

So **functional approache** creates more real picture (Fig. 2).

**Discussion**

The leading **research method** is functional-semantic analysis. In accord with scientific works of Russian and international scientists who researched modality (Vinogradov,1975; Bondarko,1990; Elliott, 2000; Portner, 2009; Palmer 1994; Kaufman, 2006) we analyzed 70 short stories written by Chekov. While we made our research, we mainly collected explicators of situational modality- part of speech and language units, which we define as explicators.

In this case **explicators** – are part of speech or words, by mean we show our attitude. There

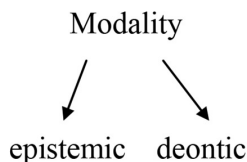


Fig. 1

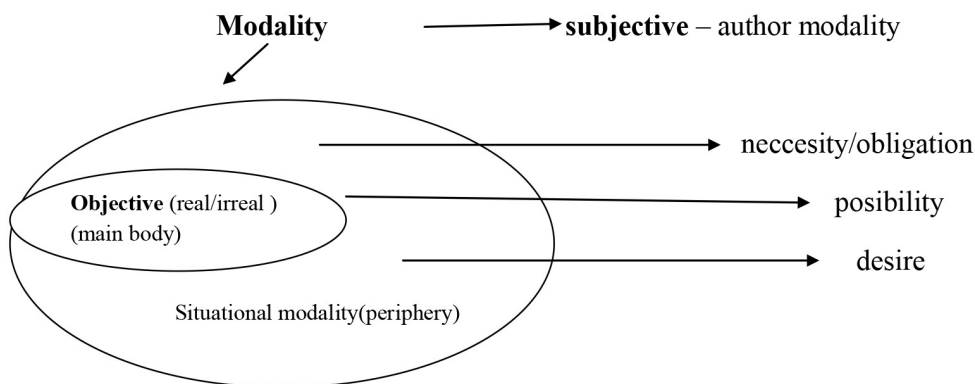


Fig. 2

are can be **explicit explicators** for example *ability* reflected by modal verb *can, could*, and **implicit explicators** that show the same meaning but by the other means for example **able, managed, reached etc.**

So let's have a look how women and men show their modality or in other simple words their attitude.

For example in «The Lady with a dog» the main hero Dmitri Gurov had been a fortnight in health resort in Yalta and met the heroine Anna Sergeyevna, so he thought «If she's here without her husband, and without any friends, *it wouldn't be* a bad idea to make her acquaintance.» So, *wouldn't* is epistemic modality, as explicator of judgment, inner attitude of man, that reflects his sexual desire. Then after love affairs, each of lovers returns to their family, they understood that they fell in love.

«Gurov began to feel an overwhelming *desire* to share his memories with someone. But he *could not speak* of his love at home, and outside his home...» So this is the clear example of the collision between desire for something and the possibility to reach it. (Checkov, 1974–1983, 291).

As for Anna Sergeyevna, she self-reproaches for adultery. She really loves Gurov, but the first is her duty of married woman, and responsibility. That's why she use modal verbs(must, should, ought) and other explicators of deontic modality or as we call it modality of obligation/necessity.

«*It's a good thing I'm going,*» she said to Gurov. «It's the intervention of fate.»; «I shall think of you. . . I shall think of you all the time,» she said. «God bless you! Think kindly of me. We are parting forever, *it must be* so, because we *ought* never to have met. Good-bye – God bless you.» (Checkov, 1974–1983, 293). Or after seeing him again: «How you frightened me!» she said, breathing heavily, still pale and half-stunned. «Oh, how you frightened me! I'm almost dead! *Why did you come? Oh, why?*» (here rethorical question means obligation «*you ought not come*»). «*You must go away,*» «D'you hear me, Dmitry Dmitrich? I'll come to you in Moscow. I have never been happy, I am unhappy now, and I shall never be happy – never! Do not make me suffer still more! I will come to you

in Moscow, I swear it! And now *we must* part! My dear one, my kind one, my darling, *we must part.*» (Checkov, 1974–1983, 293).

So we are able to observe that there are commonly explicators of modality of desire and modality of ability/possibility in male speech. This fact can be a triking demonstration of male ego – to *wish* for something and *ability* to reach it (as an index of his success). While in female speech we observe conflict between the desire and obligation. So, in this kind of situation we see male egoism and high moral principles that woman can have. Also we find out that there is the difference in the way of using of explicators. So, if women use the modality of obligation/necessity they don't only talk about their duty, but even about their wishes and desire while men use these explicators for duty (that they don't want to do) or as matter of fact as law of nature or social rule. We can observe this tendency in Arianne's story about frivolous light-minded young lady, she is image of a famous Russian drama actress Yavorskaya with whom Chekhov had close relations. So, Ariadne do nothing, she only wants to be reach, loved and happy of course. And she wants to attract the attention of the young man Shamokhin (Checkov's image) who is very shy and Ariadne wants him to behave another way using explicators of obligation to make her desire implicit: «You're really not a man, but a mush, God forgive me! A man *ought to be able* to be carried away by his feelings, he *ought to be able to be* mad, *to make* mistakes, to suffer! A woman will forgive you audacity and insolence, but she will never forgive your reasonableness!» (Checkov, 1974–1983, 74). Or using explicit explicators: «*I want you to be* here, you are so pure.» (Checkov, 1974–1983, 83). Also, using the modality of obligation to express hidden desire: «*They must not know* I'm without a chaperon.», meaning that she doesn't want they know about her loneliness»; or giving strong advice and also expressing desire «I will introduce you to a Russian family here, but please buy yourself another hat. *Abbazzia* is not the country, here *one must be comme il faut.*», meaning she wants him to change his image (Checkov, 1974–1983, 82).

While men use the same explicators for expressing the different meanings: Lubkov

Ariadne's first lover talking about the laws of nature used modality of obligation: «to my thinking, a woman's a woman and a man's a man. Ariadne Grigoryevna may be poetical and exalted, as you say, but it doesn't follow that she *must be superior to the laws of nature*. You see for yourself that *she has reached the age when she must have a husband or a lover*.» (Checkov, 1974–1983, 76). Also, talking about his duty that he didn't want to do: «Would you believe it, I have only eight francs left, yet *I must send my wife a hundred and my mother another. And we must live here too*. Ariadne's like a child; she won't enter into the position, and flings away money like a duchess. And, tell me, What object is there in our going on playing at being good children? Why, our hiding our relations from the servants and our friends costs us from ten to fifteen francs a day, as *I have to have a separate room*.» (Checkov, 1974–1983, 76). And the same tendency we are able to observe in Shamokhin's speech when he doesn't want to marry: «Of course, all attraction is over; there is no trace left of my old love, but, however that *may be, I am bound in honour to marry her*.» (Checkov, 1974–1983, 83).

Analyzing the speech of other male personages we found out, that many of them use explicators of modality of obligation talking about social rules. For instance, Belikov the teacher from «The man in the case» he is always teaching people how to live, what they have to do: «you *must be* very, very careful in your behaviour, and you are so careless – oh, so careless! You go about in an embroidered shirt, are constantly seen in the street carrying books,

and now the bicycle, too. The headmaster will learn that you and your sister ride the bicycle, and then it will reach the higher authorities. . . . Will that be a good thing?»; «If you speak to me in that tone I *cannot* continue,» he said. «And I beg you never to express yourself like that about our superiors in my presence; you *ought to be respectful* to the authorities.»; «*I ought only to warn* you: possibly someone *may have* overheard us, and that our conversation may not be misunderstood and harm come of it, *I shall be* compelled to inform our headmaster of our conversation. . . in its main features. *I am bound to do so*.» (Checkov, 1974–1983, 269).

Another clear example is Modest Petrovich – he old office employee who married to young girl named Ann, from «*Ann on the neck*»: «Every one *ought to have* his duties!» (Checkov, 1974–1983, 127).

### Conclusion

To sum up, semantic category of modality plays a vital role in gender constructed speech. Chekhov's short stories appeared to be such a rich material for research. The graph below shows the gender peculiarity of realization of situational modality (Fig. 3).

As we see, the quantity and the quality of using explicators of situational modality has gender predisposition, so their realization depends on gender origin of speaker.

Looking back to previous study we are able to see the influence of gender factors on language. Taking into account that the inner thoughts are primary and then we transfer our thoughts by mean of language into utterance, we have a number of questions without an-

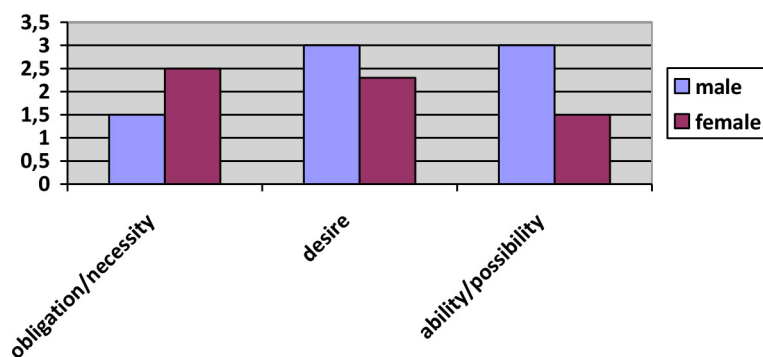


Fig. 3

swers: how do occur these psycho-linguistic processes in male and female mind? What the origin of these communicative strategies that include the modality and speaker's attitude of course? The gender study of our inner attitude will open to us the diversity of meanings. That

is why the study of semantic category of modality with gender is a vital issue. Because of the numerous linguistic and extra-linguistic factors, it is the new face of research that requires further scientific studies, reflection and understanding.

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