

**RLMSEE-2020****The Russian Language in Modern Scientific and Educational Environment****GRAMMATICAL LACUNARITY MANIFESTATION IN  
MODALITY CATEGORY ASPECT**

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oksanaakay@gmail.com**Abstract**

The ideas of grammatical lacunarity were implicitly contained in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity more than 100 years ago. According to the strong version of this hypothesis, language, understood as a set of multilevel units, radically affects human consciousness and world perception. More often, however, the fact that the consciousness of an individual is formed and developed under the influence of extralinguistic and linguistic factors proper is also taken into account, therefore, the decisive role of language in this process is not discussed. Although the study of the language influence on consciousness and thinking is a subject of research in philosophy, biology, psychology, linguistics, as well as in cultural studies, however, over more than a century history of this comprehensive hypothesis existence the answers to the questions about what most of all affects human consciousness formation, why the representatives of different nations and cultures perceive the surrounding reality in different ways, have not been given. The linguistic approach to substantiating the determinism of language and thinking is based on the study of language as a system. The term “system” (Greek *systema* - consisting of parts) dates back to the time of Aristotle, when ancient philosophers started using it in the meaning of “many, union”. The systematic approach makes it possible to single out the universal and particular features in the system of a particular language.

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## 1. Introduction

Based on the general and particular manifestations linguistic units' study in different languages, the scientists concluded that not all languages have similar links in the system, which made it possible to single out special, unfilled links of the linguistic structure, which began to be called lacunas (from the French *lacune* - emptiness, gap) (Brusenskaya & Kulikova, 2018). Lacuna units are distinguished both within the framework of one language (for example, the absent form of the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular of the future tense of the verb *to win* (pobedit') in Russian), and when comparing the systems of different languages. In the latter case, we can talk about inter-lingual lacunarity (Dymarsky, 2009).

In modern conditions of the developed intercultural communication, the issue of correct understanding of the other nations and cultures' representatives, full-fledged communication and exchange of information and experience is especially acute (Khazagerov, 2018). Therefore, it is natural that scientists are trying to solve the problem of compensating the missing elements of the language system (Brusenskaya et al., 2018).

Traditionally, it was believed that lacunarity covers only the lexical system of the language (Shaklein & Mamontov, 2019). Indeed, if a language does not have a specific lexical unit, it means, that there is no concept corresponding to this unit in the semantic field of this language (Epshtejn, 2016). Thus, in the English semantic system, there is no meaning for 'a participant in a hara-kiri ritual who decapitates a samurai after he ripped open his stomach' (e.g. Japanese *kaishakunin*); moreover, in the English lexical phrasal fund there is no unit for expressing this meaning. Moreover, there is no semantic field describing this ritual. The reasons for the existence of lexical lacunarity often (as in the above-mentioned example) are obvious.

The situation is different with grammatical gaps. The grammatical system of a language is also replete with the examples of lacunarity, which definitely suggests the differences in the surrounding reality interpretation by the representatives of different nations and cultures (Makarov, 2003). If in the case of lexical lacunarity we can only speak about the absence of a conceptual semantic field in the language (which, in turn, is due to extralinguistic factors), then significant grammatical differences between the languages already indicate the differences in the perception and presentation of the worldview (Guinda, 2018). The reasons for the inter-lingual grammatical lacunarity are never obvious. What is the nature of the advanced temporal system in English? Is it possible that such a careful detailing of the tenses of the verb is due to the internal psychological need for a thorough description of the actions of its carriers?

## 2. Problem Statement

### **Grammatical inter-lingual lacunae and modus**

Grammatical interlanguage gaps (especially those associated with the grammatical categories that have a semantic rather than a structural dominant) often turn out to be emotive and stylistic at the same time, which should be taken in account if translation, linguistic didactics or inter-cultural communication are considered (Markovina & Sorokin, 2010).

Accordingly, such directions as: the consequences of incompleteness or redundancy of the linguistic cultural community experience; the phenomena that require explanation in contact with another culture; the way of existence of meanings traditionally functioning in a particular local culture; gaps and “dark spots” in communication, have been formed in the study of lacunae.

According to the speech sender’s intentions, some linguistic unique or frequent features can be expressed in different way, which in some cases may cause some meaning and interpretation deviations. These interpretation deviations can be considered as gaps or lacunae (Shalifova & Savickaya, 2015).

Lacunae have been considered by the linguistic theoreticians as lexical prerogative for a long time but with the development of deeper investigation of intercultural communication, theory of translation and undoubtable necessity for the psychological, culture and national aspects’ better understanding and explanations, cognitive studies, revealing the hidden grammatical meanings and senses, have started. Human ability of reflecting the objective reality by means of language is obvious. Differences in the perception of objective reality become obvious when comparing different language structures from the grammatical point of view (Locher & Larina, 2019). For example, the lack of evidence category in one language may mean that the native speakers of this language pay less attention to new information reliability, being less mentally critical to fake information. On the contrary, existing in the language paradigm, evidence category may show that the language native speakers filter new information in more detail, as there is a special stable grammatical form for evidencing the event actor or witnesses. E.g.,

*Onur arabayı satın almış. (Turkish – Past Simple - evidence category)*

*Onur arabayı satın aldı. (Turkish – Past Simple)*

*Onur has bought a car. (English – Past Simple)*

*Онур купил машину. (Russian - Past Simple)*

Different system of temporal categories gives an understanding of how the representatives of different language groups comprehend and share the time-action reality (Krongauz, 2008). Developed temporal category in a language can be a marker of more detailed attention to an action, its domination.

*I have been looking for you since morning. (English – Present Perfect Continuous)*

*Я ищу тебя с утра. (Russian – Present Simple)*

The languages with article category are able to express an idea of an object in a detailed compressed way, which can match the law of language means’ economy. The languages, lacking this category, need to attract more lexical means for transferring the same amount of information but in a more ponderous manner.

*Jack has spoken to **a** scientist.*

*Jack has spoken to **the** scientist.*

*Джек поговорил с ученым.*

The interpreter may face some difficulties in translating texts to the language with lacuna grammatical category. Gender category is an evidence of interpreters’ creativity in literature texts’ reconstruction. As it is known, there can be untranslatable words or phrases, but there are no untranslatable texts. So, the interpreter’ task is not only to give word-to-word description, but to transfer cultural or ethnic nuances, deviating the existing grammatical forms in such a manner, that the recipients not only fully comprehend the author’s idea, but truly appreciate it.

There are two important structural elements in the aspect of modality concept in modern linguistics: dictum and modus (lat. dictum – expression, modus – method) (Zhao, 2016). Modality being one of the most stable subjective categories in linguistics, shows the speech sender's attitude to objective reality. It expresses complicated relations between the speaker and his perception of objective reality from the point of view of real or unreal occurrence of this or that situation, its possibility or probability, necessity or duty.

The modality spectrum is even wider in different languages and needs various means for eliminating lacunae and filling the empty gaps of grammatical meaning.

Modality can reveal a great number of peculiarities, expressed in different languages in various ways, with calling in lexical means or limiting the means of grammar. Those are: possibility / non-possibility, affiliation division, hypothesis, intention, option, necessity, imperative, assessment, opinion, equality, etc. Grammatical categories, considered to be pure modus, are infinitives, declination, modality, mood.

Nevertheless, discussions concerning modus in modern linguistics are held in three direction:

1. The question of modality category expression in different languages and the ways to fill in the missing grammatical meanings.
2. The question of modality category composition in different languages.
3. The question concerning the grammatical category of mood, its modus interpretation and its' affiliation to this grammatical category.

All these questions fully coincide with the lacunae theory as the ways of expressing divers grammatical meanings are different in languages.

### **3. Research Questions**

Modality category is one of the grammatical categories that arouse interest among the researchers dealing with the problems of lacunarity, since the compensation of grammatical meaning (lacuna elimination) during translation is not always possible.

The meaning shades of this grammatical category, which differ in the Russian and English languages, indisputably indicate the cognitive reasons for the perception and information processing by the carriers of different languages and cultures.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this article is to consider the lacunarity manifestation in the grammatic categories' aspect on the example of modality category on the comparative linguistic material of Russian and English.

### **5. Research Methods**

The choice of methods is rather limited due to the fact, that grammatical categories on the comparative material can be observed by means of comparative methods. Nevertheless, the following

additional methods were applied in the research: method of private oppositions, method of compatibility, modeling method, hypothetical-deductive method.

## 6. Findings

One of the strongest areas of grammatical lacunarity is the modality sphere. Modality is a cognitive category that belongs to the category of linguistic universals (Gambier, 2019). The term "modality" (from the Latin *modus* - measure, method, sample) was first used by Aristotle, who introduced the category of modal syllogisms into the theory of deductive inference (syllogism), where the main role is played by such modal concepts as "possible", "necessary". From philosophical logic, the term passed into linguistics, where in the modern sense it defines the speaker's subjective attitude to the statement, the actual attitude to the situation or the object of reality, and also serves as an auxiliary means of achieving a special subjective communicative goal. It should be noted, that subjectivity, being a strong characteristic of the English language grammar system, cannot be attributed to the Russian grammar system.

In the Russian grammatical system, modality is expressed by:

- A) mood "I'm not sure if I would like to hear your answer"
- B) modal verbs "*to be able*", "*must*", etc.
- C) the introductory words "*possibly*", "*probably*", etc.
- D) special constructions like "*be you bride*", etc.
- E) particles "*hardly*", etc.

In English grammar, mood and modal verbs carry the main modality functionality. The lexical means of expressing the speaker's subjective attitude to the surrounding reality are represented by the introductory constructions "*maybe*", "*probably*", "*to be likely*", "*possibly*", etc.

The functional range of mood in English is wider than in Russian, because, first, mood is represented by 4 grammatical meanings: zero, real, unreal type 1 and unreal type 2, and second, unreal mood gives a possibility to convey the action time completeness meaning.

*"If you had hurried a little, you would have not missed the train".*

The Russian translation of this sentence can be interpreted not univocally: as advice to get together faster, or as a completed action, the outcome of which is already clear. There is no discrepancy in the English version (Sdobnikov, 2019). The only possible meaning is an imaginary situation that contradicts the facts of the past, hence the expression of regret or criticism.

This ambiguity of perception forms a conceptual lacuna in the Russian language, for the elimination of which it is necessary to use lexical means or to significantly change the intonation mode of the utterance (Cavaliere, 2018). For example:

*"If I had an opportunity, I would organize a much better party".*

*"If I had had an opportunity, I would have organized a much better party".*

The translation of these sentences into Russian "If I had an opportunity, I would organize a much better party" is not informative enough in terms of the expiration of the validity period. It is not clear whether the fact of "not having an opportunity" has already taken place or is only planned. This obviously means that for the Russian language native speaker' consciousness, the fact that the time for performing an action has elapsed or has not elapsed is not significant, the imaginary situation itself is important.

However, for full communication in the intercultural communication context, such gap should be eliminated in order to avoid distorting the meaning of the statement.

Modal verbs in English have more granularity of meaning than in Russian. The range of meanings is extremely wide: ability, opportunity, probability, logical inference, permission, necessity, advice, expression of a critical attitude, duty, request, proposal, indication, prohibition, duty. Moreover, the use of modal verbs can, could, may, might, will, should, ought to, must in the meaning, for example, of possibility, probability and logical inference determines the percentage probability of performing / not performing an action. There is no such ranking in the Russian language, which causes difficulties with the utterance formation and its perception. E.g.:

He can win the race. - He can win the race (90% chance of performing an action, in the speaker's opinion, he has good chance)

He is able to win the race. - He is (can) win the race. (he's in good shape)

He could win the race. - He can (could) win the race (50% of the likelihood of an action in the speaker's opinion, there is some doubt)

He may win the race. - He can win the race (maybe he will win the race). (50% of the likelihood of an action in the speaker's opinion)

He might win the race. - He can win the race. (maybe he will win the race). (40% likelihood of performing an action in the speaker's opinion)

As it is possible to see, the elimination of the grammatical gap requires additional use of lexical means - introductory words and constructions. Moreover, it is practically impossible to convey the difference in the probability of 50% and 40%.

They will be home soon. "They'll be home soon. (100% probability of performing an action, in the speaker's opinion, predicting an event)

They should be home soon. "They'll be home soon. (90% probability of performing an action in the speaker's opinion, confidence in the event)

They ought to be home soon. "They'll probably be home soon. (80% likelihood of performing an action in the speaker's opinion, doubt)

Such a percentage division of the action probability being performed is alien to the Russian consciousness, therefore, in this case, the detailing of an event is seen as problematic, as is the situation with predicting an action in the future. In the minds of the Russian language native speaker, there is only 100% probability of an event, expressed grammatically - temporally (simple future tense). All other shades of meaning (such as doubt and uncertainty) are formalized by the introduction of the appropriate lexical units - "possibly", "probably", "not sure, but", etc.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the modality category is one of the grammatical categories that arouse interest among the researchers who deal with the problems of lacunarity. It is obvious that the compensation of grammatical meaning (gap elimination) during translation is not always possible. Being a universal conceptual category, in specific languages (even within the framework of the Indo-European linguistic community), modality is embodied in grammatical forms of different semantic volume. The meaning shades modality

as a grammatical category, which are fixed in different languages, indisputably indicate the cognitive reasons for the perception and processing of information by the speakers of different languages and cultures, and can also be another argument in favor of the linguistic relativity hypothesis. Whatever the reasons for the noted differences in the Russian and English languages, they certainly influence the formation of the specifics and national picture of the world in a certain way.

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