

# МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНАЯ КОММУНИКАЦИЯ, ПРОБЛЕМЫ ПЕРЕВОДА (ВОСТОЧНОСЛАВЯНСКИЕ И ИНОСТРАННЫЕ ЯЗЫКИ)

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## SEMANTICS OF THE MODAL VERB *SHOULD* IN THE DIACHRONIC ASPECT

The article deals with the use of the modal verb *should* in its semantic meanings in the English language fiction literature of the end of the XIX century and the beginning of the XXI century (moral duty, advice, instruction, reproach, criticism, supposition implying uncertainty).

**Keywords:** modality, semantic meanings of the modal verb *should*

В статье рассматривается употребление модального глагола *should* в различных семантических значениях в англоязычной художественной литературе конца XIX века и начала XXI века (моральное должествование, совет, инструкция, упрек, критика, вероятность, предположение, подразумевающее уверенность).

**Ключевые слова:** модальность, семантические значения модального глагола *should*

Modality is a semantic category that reflects the connection of an utterance with reality from the speaker's point of view. The main grammatical ways of expressing modality in English are modal verbs. Modal verbs are verbs that do not denote either an action or a state, but only indicate the ability, probability or necessity of performing an action. This is one of the most difficult lexical and grammatical aspects of the English language due to the fact that each modal verb can convey a fairly wide range of semantic shades. The meaning of a modal verb largely depends on which sentence it is used in (in the affirmative, negative or interrogative), as well as with which form of the infinitive it is combined [1]. Modal verbs are an important part of teaching English [2; 3].

This article analyzes the meanings of the modal verb *should* by the example of English-language literary texts of the late XIX century: A.C.Doyle "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" [4] and O.Wilde "The Picture of Dorian Gray" [5] and the beginning of the XXI century: J. R. Ellis "The Railway Murders. A Yorkshire Murder Mystery" [6], J. Harris "Blueeyeboy" [7]. Applying a continuous sampling

method 179 cases of the use of modal verb *should* have been selected. The authors analyzed the cases where the verb *should* is used only as a purely modal verb. The cases in which the verb *should* is used as an auxiliary verb to form the Subjunctive Mood were not taken into consideration. Thus, it has been revealed that the modal verb *should* is used in the following meanings:

moral duty, obligation from a moral point of view. In this meaning the modal verb *should* is used to show that the speaker believes that it is obligatory from the moral point of view to carry out or not to carry out the action – *He treated my mother badly. But on the other hand he is my father I should give him a chance if he has reformed himself,*

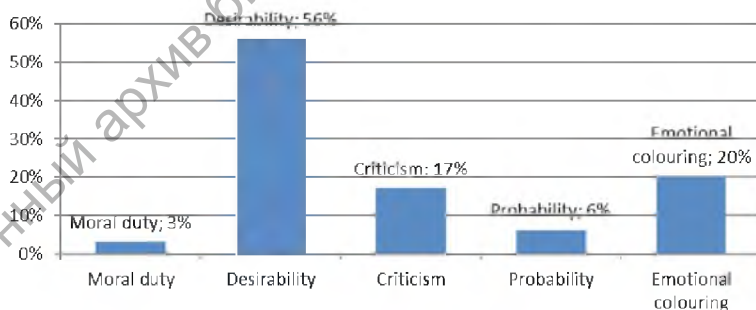
advice, instruction, desirability. In this case the speaker indicates a desire or gives advice/instruction that the action should or should be carried out – *An artist should create beautiful things, but should put nothing of his own life into them;*

criticism, disapproval, reproach. Using the modal verb in this meaning the speaker reveals that the instruction or the moral obligation was/wasn't carried out. – *Indeed, I should have thought a little more. Just a trifle more, I fancy, Watson. Your wife has been waiting this two days for you. You should be ashamed of yourself!*

probability, supposition implying assurance. The speaker applies this meaning in order to show their certainty about some action – *Why don't you catch up with North, Bob? He should be at the hotel. I am quite satisfied with my own name, and I am sure Mr Gray should be satisfied with his;*

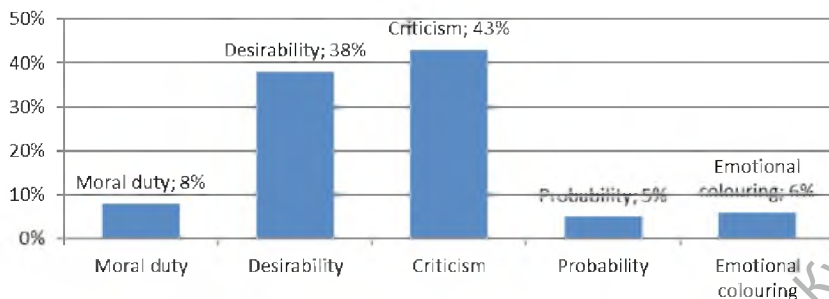
emotional colouring showing annoyance. Using the modal verb *should* in this meaning the speaker conveys irritation or annoyance – *Why should I slink away without having carried out my commission, and without the payment which was my due?* [8]

The quantitative ratio of cases of the use of the modal verb *should* in various semantic meanings in novels of the late nineteenth century is shown in Diagram 1:



**Diagram 1.** Semantic meanings of the modal verb *should* in novels of the late nineteenth century

The quantitative ratio of cases of the use of the modal verb *should* in various semantic meanings in novels of the twenty-first century is shown in Diagram 2:



**Diagram 2.** Semantic meanings of the modal verb *should* in novels of the late twenty-first century

As can be seen from diagram 1 and diagram 2, there have been some changes in the use of the modal verb *should* in some meanings in the English language fiction since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The number of cases in which the modal verb is used in the meaning of *criticism, disapproval, reproach* has increased from 17% up to 43%; while the number of cases in which the modal verb is used in the meaning of *emotional colouring showing irritation* has decreased from 20% down to 6%. The quantity of cases in which the modal verb is used in the other meanings has remained practically unchanged. The most common meaning in which the modal verb *should* is used in both cases is *desirability, advice, instruction* (38% – 56% respectively). The less common meanings in which the modal verb *should* is used are *moral duty, obligation from the moral point of view* (3% – 8% respectively) and *probability, supposition implying assurance* (6% – 5% respectively).

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