

EPISTEMIC MODALITY MARKERS AT THE LEXEMIC LEVEL: THE ADVERB *PROBABLY*

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Epistemic modality refers to one routine way of conveying the speaker's perspective, and it thereby becomes part of the overall social dimension of the utterance (Kärkkäinen 2003: 22). This includes how sure the speaker is about or believes in the content of his or her utterance, but, in some cases, it can also encompass the speaker's process of reasoning. In spoken language, linguistic categories representing epistemic modalities include modal auxiliary verbs, modal adverbs, modal lexical verbs, parenthetical phrases, and, to a lesser extent, modal adjectives and nouns.

Epistemic modality markers, from this perspective, define to what extent one can rely on the information which is being conveyed by the proposition. In this article we deal with the adverb *probably* as an epistemic modality marker at the lexemic level.

Using six British and American lexicographic sources (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Webster Dictionary, Longman Dictionary, Newbury Dictionary of American English, Wordsmyth Dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary) we aim at singling out the semantic components of the epistemic adverb *probably* and the basic meanings of these components. On the basis of synonymic sets of these components, we will single out certain semantic fields. The componential analysis of the lexeme *probably* proved that its semantic structure is based on five components: "likely", "true", "believably", "factual" and "expected". The component "likely" has two meanings: "probably" and "expected". The meaning "probably" is the basic one for this component, being established in all the used dictionaries. The meaning "expected" can only be found in the Cambridge Dictionary. The component "true" has four meanings: "real", "straight", "correctly" and "proven". The meaning "real" can be considered basic for this component, as it is found in all the used dictionaries, except for the Cambridge Dictionary and Newbury Dictionary of American English (while, on the contrary, the meanings "correctly" and "proven" can only be found in the Newbury Dictionary of American English). The meaning "straight" is fixed in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary and the Cambridge Dictionary. The component "believably" has four meanings: "possible", "probably", "real" and "true". The meaning "possible" is basic for this component, only missing from the Newbury Dictionary of American English. The meaning "probably" is included only in the Webster, Longman and Wordsmyth Dictionaries. Other meanings are only found

in two dictionaries (the meaning “real” only in the Webster and Longman Dictionaries and the meaning “true” in the Webster Dictionary and the Newbury Dictionary of American English). The component “factual” has two meanings: “accurate” and “real”. The meaning “accurate” is fixed in all the used dictionaries and the meaning “real” can only be found in the Newbury Dictionary of American English. The component “expected” has four meanings: “normal”, “likely”, “reasonable” and “necessary”. The meaning “likely” is basic for this component, only missing from the Newbury Dictionary of American English. The meaning “normal” is fixed in three dictionaries: Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary and Longman Dictionaries. The meanings “reasonable” and “necessary” are only seen in the Webster Wordsmyth Dictionaries.

Analysing the synonymic sets of the components of the semantic structure of “probably”, we can single out the core meaning (“possibly”, “likely”), the first periphery (“real”, “true”), the second periphery (“accurate”, “exact”, “correct”), the third periphery (“veritable”) and the fourth periphery (“predictable”, “awaited”).

As material for the investigation the translation of the epistemic adverb *probably* from English into Ukrainian, we used Dan Brown’s book *The Da Vinci Code* and its translation, done by Victor Shovkun.

The epistemic adverb *probably* appears 35 times in the source text. The examination of how these occurrences were rendered in Ukrainian enables us to single out the algorithm of translation. In ten cases (28.57%), the epistemic adverb *probably* is omitted in the process of translation: *Something told him it was probably a lousy idea* (Brown: 9). *Але щось підказувало йому, що ідея ця ні на що не годиться* (75; 19). This is due to the fact that its absence in the target text does not play an important part and doesn’t interfere with the rendering of meaning from one language into the other. In ten cases (28.57%), the epistemic adverb *probably* is translated into Ukrainian as *можливо*: *That hiding place had probably not changed to this day* (Brown: 152). *Можливо, вона перебувала там і донині* (75; 161). In seven cases (20%), the translator used *напевно* as an equivalent for the epistemic adverb *probably*: *Tonight’s lecture – a slide show about pagan symbolism hidden in the stones of Chartres Cathedral – had probably ruffled some conservative feathers in the audience* (Brown: 16). *Вечірня лекція супроводжувалася демонстрацією слайдів: язичницький символізм, що знайшов відображення в кам’яній кладці собору в Шартрі, – і консервативній професурі вона напевно не припала до смаку* (Браун: 25). In three cases (8.57%), the epistemic adverb *probably* was translated as *очевидно*: *That truck, only moments ago, had probably been stopped at a red light directly beneath the rest room window* (Brown: 82). *Очевидно, вантажівка усього лише кілька хвилин назад зупинилася внизу, просто під вікном, на червоне світло, і цей негідник вистрибнув* (Браун: 91). Other variants are comparatively scarce. In two cases (5.71%), *probably* is translated as *мабуть*: *In this case, the precaution was probably excessive; even if this librarian saw the entire poem, identified the knight’s tomb, and knew what orb was missing, the information was useless without*

the cryptex (Brown: 332). Втім, у цьому випадку ці запобіжні заходи були, мабуть, зайвими. Навіть якби бібліотекарка й побачила вірш цілком, довідалася, де знаходиться могила лицаря й що за куля на ній відсутня, без криптекса ця інформація однаково була б марна (Браун: 3751). In one case, probably is translated as може (The cell phone in Sophie's sweater pocket suddenly began ringing. Fache probably (Brown: 80). Рантом у кишені светра Софі задзвонив мобільний телефон. Може, Фаши (Браун: 89)), просто (The director said she never once mentioned Saunière to him, and he assumed it was because she probably didn't want preferential treatment for having a famous grandfather (Brown: 82). Директор сказав, вона жодного разу не згадувала про те, що вони родичі. І вирішив, що Невьо вчинила так зі скромності. Просто не хотіла, щоб до неї виявляли поблажливість лише тому, що вона доводиться онукою такій знаменитій людині (Браун: 91)) or як видно (And you'd better tell the guard Agent Neveu is probably in there with him. І ще скажіть охороні, що агент Невьо, як видно, десть із ним).

The examination of the occurrences of the epistemic adverb *probably* in literature enabled us to scrutinize the properties of epistemic modality and epistemic modality markers. For our research, we selected 674 examples using *Digital Library: English and American Literature from Shakespeare to Mark Twain* by means of representative sample from the works of the British and American authors: Jane Austen, Edward Bellamy, Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce, James Boswell, Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte, Samuel Butler, George Noel Gordon Byron, Lewis Carroll, John Cleland, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Congreve and Joseph Conrad. All the definitions used for the research are taken from Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary.

As was already mentioned above, epistemic modality has subjective and objective aspects. They become obvious when looking at the following examples. In the first case, we notice that each of the speakers bases the judgments on his/her opinions rather than facts. For one person the raillery was "perfectly indifferent" and for the other "at first incomprehensible". In the second example, the speakers' ideas are not influenced by personal feelings or opinions. Only facts are considered, as the author speaks about a definite place looking the same during a specific season of year.

To the former her raillery was probably, as far as it regarded only himself, perfectly indifferent; but to the latter it was at first incomprehensible; and when its object was understood, she hardly knew whether most to laugh at its absurdity, or censure its impertinence, for she considered it as an unfeeling reflection on the colonel's advanced years, and on his forlorn condition as an old bachelor (Austen 2002 a: 36-37).

"Dear, dear Norland", said Elinor, "probably looks much as it always does at this time of the year" (Austen 2002 a: 87).

As for the subjective aspect of epistemic modality, we cannot but mention that the speaker often supports his/her judgment by providing grounds, explanation

for it. This can be well illustrated by the following example: *You have probably entirely forgotten a conversation – (it is not to be supposed that it could make any impression on you) – a conversation between us one evening at Barton Park – it was the evening of a dance – in which I alluded to a lady I had once known, as resembling, in some measure, your sister Marianne* (Austen 2002 a: 205).

The speaker makes the judgment *You have probably entirely forgotten a conversation* and gives the reason for it: *it is not to be supposed that it could make any impression on you*.

In many cases, epistemic modality is expressed by several markers. *Probably*, as a lexical epistemic modality marker, can be combined with another adverb. To see the difference in how *probably* and *perhaps* express epistemic modality, it is reasonable to compare their definitions. *Probably* is defined as *expected to happen or prove true; likely* and *perhaps* as *it may be; possibly*. We see that both *probably* and *perhaps* express possibility. But *probably* bears an additional shade of expectation which *perhaps* lacks. This can also be represented schematically. The difference between the markers is quite obvious. *Perhaps Fanny thought for a moment that her mother had been quite rude enough, – for, colouring a little, she immediately said, “They are very pretty, ma’am – aren’t they?”. But then again, the dread of having been too civil, too encouraging herself, probably came over her, for she presently added, “Do you not think they are something in Miss Morton’s style of painting, ma’am? – She does paint most delightfully! – How beautifully her last landscape is done!” Beautifully indeed! But she does everything well* (Austen 2002 a: 235).

She has a right to be felt for, because she evidently feels for herself. I heard enough of what she said to you last night, to understand her unwillingness to be acting with a stranger; and as she probably engaged in the part with different expectations – perhaps, without considering the subject enough to know what was likely to be, it would be ungenerous, it would be really wrong to expose her to it (Austen 2002 b: 36-37). *It was a pity, perhaps, that he had not come last night; for, though the child seemed well now, very well considering, it would probably have been better if Perry had seen it* (Austen 2002 c: 479).

Another lexical epistemic modality marker to be compared with *probably* is the adverb *certainly*. The meanings of *certainly* (*undoubtedly; by all means*) and *probably* (*expected to happen or prove true*) are contrasted with each other. While *probably* expresses possibility, *certainly* bears the shade of assuredness. *She is the natural daughter of nobody knows whom, with probably no settled provision at all, and certainly no respectable relations* (Austen 2002 c: 61).

When speaking about adverbs as epistemic modality markers, we mentioned that they can function both as markers and as degree modifiers. In the theoretical overview we spoke about *really* and here we are going to deal with *hardly*. In the following example *“That is hardly likely”*, was the reply. *“You will find she is some young lady who has had a misunderstanding with her friends and has probably injudiciously left them”* (Brontë 2002 c: 61), *hardly* serves as the

intensifier for the epistemic adverb *likely*, strengthening its meaning. Comparing two epistemic modality markers at the lexemic level (the adverbs *probably* and *likely*) we cannot but see that the meaning of *likely* (*very probably*) is wider than that of *probably* (*expected to happen or prove true*). Both adverbs express possibility, but, in the case of *likely*, the degree of the possibility is higher. This conclusion can be drawn from the use of the intensifier *very* in the definition of *likely* (*very probably*).

Now let us regard the case when *hardly* functions as an independent epistemic modality marker and compare it with *probably*. The meanings of *hardly* (*scarcely; only just; only with difficulty; surely not*) and *probably* (*expected to happen or prove true*) are contrasted with each other. While *probably* expresses possibility, *hardly* expresses doubt. Their combination within adjacent sentences creates the shade of speaker's certainty about one of the ideas expressed.

It would hardly be early in November, there were generally delays, a bad passage or something; that favouring something which everybody who shuts their eyes while they look, or their understandings while they reason, feels the comfort of. It would probably be the middle of November at least; the middle of November was three months off. Three months comprised thirteen weeks. Much might happen in thirteen weeks (Austen 2002 b: 107).

Probably can also function as an intensifier, which is a property of epistemic adverbs. In the following example, *probably* is used to strengthen the meaning of the modal verb. A certain stylistic effect is created, and both markers expressing possibility are used in succession. Both markers express certainty, but *probably* bears an additional shade of expectation. *The distress of her sister too, particularly a favourite, was before her; – and as for their mother, when Mrs. Jennings considered that Marianne might probably be to her what Charlotte was to herself, her sympathy in her sufferings was very sincere* (Austen 2002 a: 313).

Sometimes, three markers of epistemic modality are used within adjacent sentences. In the following sentence, two adverbs (*perhaps* and *probably*) and the modal verbs *may/might* are used. The markers in question have already been compared above. *You are not aware, perhaps, that I have had a visitor this morning. – I had not been long in my own room, after breakfast, when Mr. Crawford was shown in. – His errand you may probably conjecture. It was, perhaps, no small disappointment to Johnson that this respectable application had not the desired effect; yet how much reason has there been, both for himself and his country, to rejoice that it did not succeed, as he might probably have wasted in obscurity those hours in which he afterwards produced his incomparable works* (Boswell 2002: 96-97).

Ought is used along with the epistemic adverb *probably* as well. *Ought* is used to say what has probably happened or is true. *Probably* bears an additional shade of expectation, as it has already been mentioned. *These words cut me: yet what could I do or say? I ought probably to have done or said nothing: but I was*

so tortured by a sense of remorse at thus hurting his feelings, I could not control the wish to drop balm where I had wounded (Brontë 2002 c: 84).

In the following examples, three epistemic adverbs (*perhaps*, *probably* and *certainly*) are used in adjacent sentences. While *probably* and *perhaps* both express possibility, *certainly* expresses assuredness and is thus contrasted with them. *My greatest danger, perhaps, in housekeeping, may be quite the other way, in doing too much, and being too careless of expense. Maple Grove will probably be my model more than it ought to be – for we do not at all affect to equal my brother, Mr. Suckling, in income. – However, my resolution is taken as to noticing Jane Fairfax. – I shall certainly have her very often at my house, shall introduce her wherever I can, shall have musical parties to draw out her talents, and shall be constantly on the watch for an eligible situation* (Austen 2002 c: 283-284).

It is often the case that the epistemic adverb *probably* is used to make a supposition about the time when something is going to happen. This is a stylistic device used by authors to keep the readers in suspense or to convey the atmosphere of old times. *“Ordained!” said Miss Crawford; “what, are you to be a clergyman?” “Yes, I shall take orders soon after my father’s return – probably at Christmas”* (Austen 2002 b: 89). *Many years ago – probably in 1890 – Dr. Gustav Adolf Danziger brought to me in San Francisco what he said was a translation by himself of a German story by that brilliant writer, Herr Richard Voss, of Heidelberg* (Bierce 2002: 662). *At a subsequent period (probably after the work was finished) he added, “In all, taken of provided materials, 30”* (Boswell 2002: 145). *It might be two hours later, probably near eleven, when I – not having been able to fall asleep, and deeming, from the perfect silence of the dormitory, that my companions were all wrapt in profound repose – rose softly, put on my frock over my night- dress, and, without shoes, crept from the apartment, and set off in quest of Miss Temple’s room* (Brontë 2002 c: 99). *I shall leave the place probably in the course of a twelvemonth: but while I do stay, I will exert myself to the utmost for its improvement* (Brontë 2002 c: 153).

Epistemic adverbs in general and *probably* in particular are often used parenthetically. On the one hand, such a use reveals the phatic function of language, that is serving as a channel of communication, and, on the other hand, bears a definite semantic load. *You think only of yourself; and because you do not feel for Mr. Crawford exactly what a young, heated fancy imagines to be necessary for happiness, you resolve to refuse him at once, without wishing even for a little time to consider of it – a little more time for cool consideration, and for really examining your own inclinations – and are, in a wild fit of folly, throwing away from you such an opportunity of being settled in life, eligibly, honourably, nobly settled, as will, probably, never occur to you again* (Austen 2002 b: 318-319). *Had the same behaviour continued, Miss Smith might have been led into a misconception of your views; not being aware, probably, any more than myself, of the very great inequality which you are so sensible of* (Austen 2002 c: 132). *Of the lady, individually, Emma thought very little. She was good enough for Mr. Elton,*

no doubt; accomplished enough for Highbury – handsome enough – to look plain, probably, by Harriet's side (Austen 2002 c: 183). Offended, probably, by the little encouragement which her proposals of intimacy met with, she drew back in her turn and gradually became much more cold and distant; and though the effect was agreeable, the ill-will which produced it was necessarily increasing Emma's dislike (Austen 2002 c: 281). Probably, if I had lately left a good home and kind parents, this would have been the hour when I should most keenly have regretted the separation: that wind would then have saddened my heart; this obscure chaos would have disturbed my peace: as it was I derived from both a strange excitement, and reckless and feverish, I wished the wind to howl more wildly, the gloom to deepen to darkness, and the confusion to rise to clamour (Brontë 2002 c: 66).

Speaking about graphic expressive means, we cannot but mention that they are manifold. In the following example, the author first used the epistemic adverb *probably*, then changed his mind and replaced it by *certainly*. *This fact is of special interest as the meanings of the adverbs in question, which have already been discussed and compared above, are clearly contrasted with each other. It is [probably] certainly the noblest version of poetry which the world has ever seen* (Boswell 2002: 103).

We cannot but notice that the combination between the epistemic adverb *probably* and non-assertive contexts is manifold and creates the effect of relieve or ambiguity. *What is spoken about often seems to be represented as trifle (nothing, probably, of consequence) or as something what will be found out in future (I, probably, never shall again). My charge would be much more concise than hers, and probably not much in the same spirit; all that I have to recommend being comprised in, do not spoil them, and do not physic them* (Austen 2002 c: 31). *That would probably not affect the duration and result of the war, but it is the business of a soldier to kill. It is also his habit if he is a good soldier. Searing cocked his rifle and set the trigger* (Bierce 2002: 32). *I was: – I know that; and you hinted a while ago at something which had happened in my absence: – nothing, probably, of consequence; but, in short, it has disturbed you* (Brontë 2002 c: 52). *You have everybody dearest to you always at hand, I, probably, never shall again; and therefore till I have outlived all my affections, a post-office, I think, must always have power to draw me out, in worse weather than today* (Austen 2002 c: 294).

Upon examining the occurrences of the epistemic adverb *probably* in literature we have identified the properties of epistemic modality and epistemic modality markers. They are as follows: there are some subjective and objective aspects of epistemic modality, which are clearly distinguished from each other; the adverb *probably* has the highest frequency of use among epistemic modality markers at the lexemic level; the expression of epistemic modality is versatile and has numerous shades and nuances; the epistemic adverb *probably* is often used parenthetically, on the one hand, revealing the phatic function of language and, on the other hand, bearing a definite semantic load; the combination between the epistemic adverb *probably* and non-assertive contexts is manifold.

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with epistemic modality markers at the lexemic level, namely the adverb *probably*. The research has clearly revealed that it has the highest frequency of use among epistemic modality markers at the lexemic level. This adverb is often used parenthetically, on the one hand revealing the phatic function of language and, on the other hand, bearing a definite semantic load. The combination between the epistemic adverb *probably* and non-assertive contexts is manifold.

Key words: epistemic modality, marker, epistemic adverb

REZUMAT

Articolul de față analizează problema marcatorilor modalității epistemice la nivel lexematic, mai precis, situația adverbului *probably*. Cercetările au arătat în mod clar că acesta este cel mai utilizat dintre marcatorii modalității epistemice la nivel lexematic. Deseori, acest adverb este utilizat în poziție parentetică, pe de o parte evidențiind funcția fatică a limbajului și, pe de altă parte, purtând o încărcătură semantică bine definită. Posibilitățile de combinare a adverbului epistemic *probably* cu contexte non-asertive sunt multiple.

Cuvinte-cheie: modalitate epistemică, marcator, adverb epistemic