



## Ways of Expressing Probability in English in Thriller and Psychological Genres

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### Abstract

This article focuses on how probability is expressed in the English psychological thriller genre. Specifically, it exposes the core and periphery of the functional-semantic field of probability in English, drawing on the work "Cari Mora" by Harris (2019). There are three levels to the functionality of a text: epistemic, deontonic, and dynamic. One of the primary modalities that determines this functionality is the modality of probability. It is argued that lexico-semantic, lexico-grammatical, syntactic, stylistic, and graphic means, with a preference for stylistic means, represent the core and the periphery of the functional-semantic field of probability at the explicit and implicit levels. The authors of the article examine the aforementioned levels of modality in relation to the lexical and stylistic characteristics of the English psychological thriller genre. The study's findings show that this fiction genre's language employs probability/improbability semantics on various levels to more accurately portray the protagonists' rational thoughts, emotions, and desires in addition to drawing the reader into a tense situation.

**Keywords:** English Language; Psychological Thriller.

### 1. Introduction

It is impossible to study the paradigm of modern linguistics solely through the lenses of structural, cognitive, or cultural approaches. Seldom can one find studies that are restricted to the examination of language form or semantics. The application of the language units system in speech is frequently given more weight at this point in the formation of language science. We believe that there is much to learn about the representation of semantic categories in speech. The discursive approach and functional grammar are increasingly seen as components of a single chain. The most logical and well-rounded method for studying language is the categorical approach, which enables us to track linguistic changes within a specific category. The categorical approach is closely linked to the field's theory, known as the functional-semantic field (FSF), which is a unit that makes it possible to trace a particular semantic category reflection at several linguistic levels, including lexis, phraseology, morphology, and syntax. The FSF of modality reflects the category of modality. Numerous foreign and native linguists have studied modality as an FSF and as a category, including Leech (1987) and Arutyunova (1988). Although the study of modality and FSF of possibility/impossibility is related to FSF of probability, we do not believe that it can be considered an analogue of FSF of probability.

Tarasova and Tarasov (2018) discuss the modality of probability or FSF of probability in their works. A small number of linguists, including Khasanova (2012) and others, have investigated the pragmatic and communicative aspects of probability as a modality. The relevance of this study is demonstrated by the fact that the FSF of probability in the English psychological thriller genre—specifically, among Harris's (2019) works—has not yet been investigated. This article's goal is to pinpoint the explicit and implicit representations of the FSF of probability's center and periphery in Harris's novel "Cari Mora" (Harris, 2019). The attempt to trace the relationship between the psychological thriller genre and the linguistic means chosen to convey the modality of probability, which is frequently presented in the genre, can explain the choice of this genre. The novel's contemporary English language, the well-known author, the writer's concise

and uncomplicated writing style, and the English thriller genre—which is full of suspenseful, psychologically charged moments—were additional draws for us. We believe that these variables will provide us with the most objective understanding of how language is used in contemporary English to characterize the FSF of probability.

## 2. Literature Review

Previous studies on suspense and tension have mostly concentrated on particular genres, including film (Greifenstein and Lehmann, 2013), music (Madsen and Fredrick, 1993), literature (Fill, 2003; Jacobs, 2011), and sports (Peterson and Raney, 2008). While offering insightful explanations, domain-specific accounts of tension and suspense have the risk of exaggerating the significance of details unique to the particular field of study, hiding broad mechanisms in the process<sup>2</sup>. In order to get around this restriction, the current work concentrates on domain-independent elements of tension experiences, contending that the ostensibly disparate tension and suspense sensations found in music, movies, literature, and daily life actually stem from the same fundamental psychological processes.

It seems appropriate to say a few words about the relationship between tension and arousal before delving deeper into tension phenomena. Despite the apparent close relationship between tension and arousal, we classify tension phenomena as a subset of arousal-related states: While high arousal is not always correlated with high tension, a psychological state of high arousal does not always equate to a state of high suspense or tension (for instance, surprise is linked to high arousal but not always to high tension; see also the comparison of tension and surprise in the Section “Expectation, Prediction, Anticipation”) (Friston, 2010; Lehne and Koelsch, 2015).

## 3. Methodology

In Russian linguistics, modality is defined by Valesio (1974) as a single semantic-syntactic category that reflects the speaker's assessment of the statement's content and attitude toward reality. Based on the text "Cari Mora" by (Harris, 2019), this study aims to uncover the peculiarities of the FSF of probability in English by analyzing the modality of a psychological thriller text. In this study, we used explicit and implicit modalities of expression in the writing of (Harris, 2019), as well as methods of linguistic observation and description and structural-semantic analysis, which highlighted the FSF of probability's core and periphery in the psychological thriller genre.

## 4. Results

Along with the other modalities, probability is one of the primary categories. The manifestation of modality in a text is particularly vivid to observe. Many Russian linguists, including Ivanova (2017), have expressed the idea that modality has a text-forming function in their writings. The modality of probability in the text of a psychological thriller has not received enough attention, despite a sizable body of work on the subject. "The functional-semantic field" (FSF), according to Bondarko (1999), is an assembly of multilevel means of a given language that interact based on how similar their semantic functions are and express different forms of a given semantic category. Stated differently, FSF can be viewed as a system of linguistic formal means that serve a specific communicative function in speech, are connected by a shared meaning, and have a common semantic meaning. Bondarko (1999) investigated a wide range of FSF, including temporality. The growing interest in speech-meaningful acts does not make the FSF investigation any less relevant. Speech production is a conscious process that is intrinsically linked to FSF. Put another way, a speaker uses a variety of linguistic devices, ranging from phonetic and lexical to syntactic, to convey a semantic category (like the category of probability or desire) in speech. The FSF is portrayed as a categorical scenario in speech. According to Bondarko (1999), aspectual, temporal, and other comparable situations are generic notions in relation to the categorical situation, which is a generic notion in itself.

Studies on literary works that are limited by a particular genre—like the psychological thriller—make this particularly clear. Ivanova (2017) claims that the linguistic situation can be adequately described by utilizing the field approach within the framework of communicative-pragmatic linguistics. Let's examine the nature of probability FSF in both foreign and Russian literary works. There have always been two categories for modality: possibility and necessity. The degree of the speaker's confidence in the probability determines how strong or weak the probability is. Subjectivity and objectivity are two types of modalities that rely on the speaker's internal emotions and external circumstances, respectively. The Stanford Dictionary of Philosophy states that one purpose of language is to transmit knowledge about the outside world. Modal statements may be accurate for a variety of reasons. Therefore, empirical data and reasoning

(logic) can be the source of epistemic modality. Bybee (1994) used a similar approach in his earlier works on English grammar. Palmer (2001) proposed the modality classification scheme, in which probability is classified as evidential (which is further divided into deontological (belief in probability according to rules and laws, resolutions) and dynamic (dependence of probability on desire and other internal motives) and epistemic (the speaker's belief in the truth of probability, which can be speculative, deductive, and presumptive). According to Besga (1995), there are two types of probability modality: evaluative, in which the speaker assesses probability as desirable or necessary, and epistemic, which deals with the truth of probability.

Palmer (2001) has led us to categorize the modality of probability in our research as epistemic (conviction based on personal conviction and logical laws), deontological (conviction based on permissions), and dynamic (conviction based on desire) (DynP). Let's examine the structure of the probability FSF. A field of the predicate-nucleus type represents the FSF of probability. In the middle of this field is the category of mood, which takes advantage of various forms of expression. The modal verbs "can," "may/might," "will/would," "to be to," "have to," predicative structures like "it looks like," "he seems to like her," and adjectives acting as nominal predicates, such as "it is possible," "it is probable," are just a few examples of the many predicates that can be expressed in the English predicative center. On the boundary between the core and the periphery, the adverbial component of the field—represented by adverbs and modal words like "highly likely," "possibly," "probably," and "maybe"—has a significant role. At the edge of the field are negative constructions, emphatic constructions, inversion syntactic constructions, and word-formation means such as periphery negative prefixes and suffixes of possibility, e.g., "approachable," "unpredictable," etc. Intonational means, such as an ascending scale for probability and a razor scale for the unlikelihood of an event or circumstance, occupy a relatively peripheral position. Let's examine the explicit and implicit FSF of probability in the

## **5. Discussion**

We therefore draw the conclusion that the English horror genre is able to actualize probability / unprobability semantics not only through the use of grammatical categories and nominative units, such as modal verbs and words, but also through the use of other lexical and semantic tools, such as phraseological units, sentence structures, syntactic tools, like negation, infinitive structures, and nominative sentences, and stylistic tools, like polysyndeton, epithets, and repetitions. Furthermore, the implicit level of probability is more frequently conveyed through gradation, phonetic imagery, graphic devices, and details. In 50% of cases, the implicit means—phonetic images, graphic means, abrupt changes in the action scene, repetitions, and gradation—as well as the category of mood, modal verbs "will/would," "have to," "can/be able to," lexemes indicating hope, and infinitive predicative constructions—are in the center of the probability FSF. In the English thriller genre, there are modal words like "maybe," adverbial means, the verb "may/might" in the sense of supposition, prepositional constructions, phraseology, graphic means, and an implicit switch to a foreign language on the edge of the probability FSF. In Harris's "Cari Mora" text (2019), the epistemic (70%) and dynamic (27%) modes of probability are most prevalent. This is likely due to the fact that, in tense situations, probability is contingent upon the characters' expressed feelings, desires, and logical deductions.

## **6. Conclusion**

In summary, the following can be said about the previous discussion. We are interested in the modality of probability in psychological thrillers, where emotions and experiences, along with situations, play a major role. Since probability can take on various forms, it is impossible to discuss probability solely in terms of positive or negative implications. Subjective feelings suggest that the subjective and objective factors that influence probability, such as ethical norms, are not the primary determinants of probability in the English thriller genre, although they do matter. The degree of probability is definitely determined by the laws of physics and nature. Along with the FSF of necessity, FSF of desire, and other similar FSFs, we think the FSF of probability deserves a special place. The semantic categories of necessity, negation, attitude toward the future, and desire are all related to the study of probability. These categories all fall under the category of essential emotional concepts that a person needs in daily life, necessitating further research. We can regard the category of probability as one of the central FSFs of modality in English because illustrations demonstrate that it occupies a distinct space from other categories of modality.

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