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Ivona Jelínková

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**THE COMPETITION OF MODAL AUXILIARY
CAN/COULD AND ITS PERIPHRASTIC FORM
TO BE ABLE TO ...**

Ivona Jelínková

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracoval/a samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

V Plzni dne 30. června 2014

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Ivona Jelínková

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the competition of the modal verb *can/could* and its periphrastic form *to be able to*. The aim is to carry out research of these modal verbs that express epistemic and deontic modality.

The work is divided into two parts: theoretical and practical. The theoretical part deals with modality and types of modality. Modal verbs *can, could* and *to be able to* are described according to the sense of modality and their individual meanings, possibility, ability and permission.

In the analysis all practical knowledge of occurrence of modal verbs *can, could* and *to be able to* were clarified according to their individual meanings possibility, ability and permission of 156 examples.

The last chapter summarizes all the results of the analysis, which concerned the occurrence of modal verbs *can/could* and *to be able to* in their individual meanings and types of modality and then the frequency of modal verbs, depending on the epistemic and deontic modality.

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INTRODUCTION

This bachelor thesis examines the competition of the modal verbs *can*, *could* and its periphrastic form *to be able to*. The aim is to carry out a research of modal verbs that express epistemic and deontic modality and answer two questions. The first question is which of the modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to* is used the most frequently in English. Another question is whether it is more used epistemic or deontic modality in English in the connection with modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to*.

This paper is divided into two parts, theoretical and practical. Theoretical part is focused on the study of three main parts of modality in English: epistemic, deontic and dynamic. However, this paper is aimed only on epistemic and deontic modality. The theoretical part further describes the competition of modal verbs *can*, *could* and its periphrastic form *to be able to* connected with their meanings: possibility, ability and permission and epistemic and deontic kinds of modality.

The findings from the theoretical part are later on applied in the analytical part. All findings are sorted according to their individual modality. The analytic part further analysis the modal verbs which convey three major meanings: possibility, ability and permission. Furthermore, considering deontic and epistemic modality, each modal verb *can*, *could* and *to be able to* is examined with regard to its category. A representative sample of 156 modal verbs, which were chosen randomly, is examined in detail for the occurrence of the modal verb *can*, *could* and its periphrastic form *to be able to*. According to the analysis, the modal verbs are sorted and the results determine their individual use with possibility, ability and permission meanings. Finally, the results are summed up into the chart according to frequency of modality and meaning of each modal verb. Examples of individual sentences are presented in Appendix.

THEORETICAL PART

Verbs

Verbs, after nouns, form the second largest word class. Verbs belong to the main word classes, verb phrases and sentence elements. According to Oxford Dictionary (2000), verb is “a word or group of words that expresses an action (such as *eat*), an event (such as *happen*) or a state (such as *exist*).” (p.1327) A verb is a part of a speech and it is the most important word in a sentence because it describes a particular action. In syntax a verb is described as an action. All grammatically complete sentences in English contain at least one verb. From the point of a syntactic function a verb is a predicate of a sentence. That is the only function of finite verbs. In this case a verb is a part of a clause or sentence. In other than predicate function a verb can appear only in a non-finite verb form. Finite and non-finite verb forms will be explained in the following subchapter. Verbs are inflected, which result in their modification in a tense, aspect, mood and voice. Verbs have three tenses: present, past and future. Present tense expresses an action which is being carried out in the particular moment, past tense expresses an action that is already finished and future tense expresses an action that will be done in the future. A verb may correspond with person, gender or number which must be in concord with its subject or object.

Verb classification

There are two main classes of verbs. The first main class is called full verbs or main verbs. This is the largest open class of lexical words. It means that new verbs can be added into this class. They have a central position in a clause, are not depended on other verbs and furthermore they are the most important elements of a clause. In the contrast to them, there is also a further small closed class of auxiliary verbs sometimes called helping verbs. These auxiliary verbs have two subtypes: primary auxiliaries and modal verbs which are sometimes called modal auxiliaries. Among the primary auxiliaries are verbs *to be*, *to have* and *to do*. These three verbs can function as lexical verbs as well. To the modal verbs belong: *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *ought (to)*, *shall*, *should*, *will* and *would*. These modal verbs have no function as lexical verbs and they are put together with full verbs. Primary auxiliaries help to express time and modal auxiliaries help to express certainty and doubt. Biber, Conrad, Leech (2002) describe three classes of verbs as “The word class of verbs can be grouped into three subgroups, depending on their ability to function as main verbs or auxiliary verbs.” (p.104) and modal verbs as “There are nine so-called central modal verbs: *can*, *could*, *shall*, *should*,

will, would, may, might, must. They typically indicate the mood or attitude of the speaker, expressing stance meanings related to possibility, necessity, obligation, and similar.” (174) This paper presents only two main classes of verbs, full verbs and auxiliary verbs, but Biber, Conrad and Leech hold the view that there are three main classes of verbs. In some grammar books there are stated ten auxiliary verbs, however Biber, Conrad and Leech mention only nine auxiliaries without the auxiliary *ought to*.

Finite verb forms and non-finite verb forms

Verb forms are divided into finite and non-finite forms. Only verbs can have a finite or non-finite form. Finite forms express grammatical agreement of a subject, person and number. Non-finite verb forms, as infinitive, gerund and participle, do not distinguish person and number. If we talk about finite verbs we distinguish four inflections at regular lexical verbs and five forms at irregular lexical verbs. Hurford (1994) is of the opinion that a finite form of verb is “a form of verb that shows agreement with a subject and it is marked for tense.” (74) Another linguistic Dwyer (2007) states that “verbs are form class words having distinctions for a stem, a third person singular and a past participle. They also have past tense and participle forms that may not be distinctive.” (54) Irregular verbs are marked with five inflections beyond their base form. Dwyer (2007) believes that “irregular verbs show differences in the past tense and past participle forms from regular verbs.” (58) In other forms such as the base form 3rd person singular and present participle have the same forms as regular verbs.

In Dwyer’s view (2007) “finite verbs express tense and are marked for person and number. Non-finite verbs express aspect and voice. The verb paradigm has three finite and two non-finite forms.” (58) Among the three finite forms are, for example, the base form *eat*, 3rd person singular *eats* and past tense *ate*. From this example it is evident that finite forms are for the base, 3rd person and past tense. Dwyer (2007) adds that it is due to the fact that “they can be contrasted for tense (present and past), and marked for person (1st, 2nd and 3rd person) and number (singular and plural).” (58)

The other two examples illustrate two non-finite forms: present participle with the form *eating* and past participle with *ate*. For Dwyer (2007) three finite forms of a verb paradigm “are independent in expressing their meaning.” (59) Two non-finite forms as the present and past participle form of verbs require an additional helping verb for expressing tense, person and number. Dwyer (2007) adds that “without the helping verbs the structures have no tenses, participles do not convey tense, person and number.” (59)

Auxiliaries verbs are distinguished into two groups: primary as *do, have, be* with full verbal paradigms and modal verbs, mentioned above, with no full verbal paradigms. It is needed to express finite and non-finite verb forms using auxiliaries and modal verbs as well. Dwyer (2007) explains the function of finite and non-finite verb forms for auxiliary verbs:

Auxiliaries are required with non-finite verbs. This is their role to mark non-finite verb forms for tense, aspect and voice, which non-finite verbs can not express. Finite verbs mark these features on their own. When an auxiliary verb occurs with a non-finite form of a verb, the auxiliary is always the finite verb. If more than one auxiliary occurs, the first auxiliary is always the finite verb.
(93)

In the following examples of primary auxiliaries giving by Dwyer, his theory is demonstrated which is given above. (2007) “*He is waiting for me there, you know. He had been playing softly when he came upon the boys. David, on the lowest step, was very evidently not hearing a word of what was being said.*” (p.93) Modals do not have full verb paradigms. They do not have third person singular -s, the -ing present participle and past participle. Moreover, modals do not have past tense form as well. It is believed that modals have only equivalent past forms. Modals always have the initial position in the verb phrase and become the finite verb and the tense marker. Modals are illustrated in the following examples: They *can* wait for me. They *could* play better. They *could* have better marks if they had spent more time with learning.

VERB CATEGORIES

This chapter gave general facts about verbs, verb classification and finite verb form and non-finite verb forms. The following chapter will concern and explain in detail verb categories, which are person, number, tense, aspect, voice and mood.

Person and number

Each verb has a person. In English there are distinguished three persons. The first person is determined as a speaker, the second person as an addressee and the third person as anyone else. The relationship between a subject and its verb shows whether the subject is speaking about itself. First person has the form of the verb used with the subject pronouns *I* and *we*. Second person has the form of the verb used with the subject pronoun *you*. Third person has the form of the verb used with the subject pronoun *he, she, it* and *they*. English verbs are almost completely uniform. Forms of verbs are identical for all persons and tenses except the third person singular with ending –s in present tense. It is only one form where it is seen grammatical contrast between singular and plural forms of verbs.

Tense

Tense is described as the relationship between the form of the verb and the time of the action or state. It means that the situation is relative to the moment of speaking. Declerck (2006) explains that “the term tense is a linguistic concept [...] refers to the role of specific verb forms in a given language to locate situations in time. That is, as a grammatical category, tense consists of combination of grammatical form and meaning.” (p. 94) There exists distinction between time and tense. Time is expressed as an extra linguistic category and tense is expressed as a linguistic concept. It denotes the form taken by the verb to locate the situation referred to in time. A finite verb in English shows agreement with a subject and it is marked for tense. Downing and Locke (2006) hold the view that English has only two tenses. In the following extract they explain what tense means and also the use of the two tenses.

Tense is the grammatical expression of location of events in time. Tense is a grammatical category that is realized in English morphologically on the verb. In accordance with this criterion, English has just two tenses, the Present and the Past as in *goes/went*, respectively. English has no verbal inflection to mark a future tense. The form *shall* and *will* are not verbal inflections but modal auxiliaries. *Shall* and *will* belong to a set of auxiliaries and can express

meanings other than reference to future time. In general past and present events are taken to have the status of real events, while references to the future are to potential that is unreal, events. All tenses have non-progressive and progressive forms. (p. 353)

Aspect

Aspect is a grammatical category and refers to an action, event or state signified by a verb, with the respect to time. There is a difference between tenses and forms of verbs. Aspect always includes time. Nevertheless, tense can occur without aspect. There are several forms of aspect which are the result of the combination of tense and aspect. It means that tenses interact with a grammatical aspect. In the following paragraphs they are summed up aspects with their examples.

One of the aspects is a progressive or sometimes called continuous aspect. *She is making breakfast at the moment.* It means that this action is not finished yet and she is still doing it.

Perfect aspect with its example *Jane has already written a book.* This action is completed and it was not probably her last book. She has just written the book and she may continue writing books. It indicates that an event occurred prior to the time of reference. In the following example is demonstrated simple or sometimes called zero aspect. *Jack lives in Oxford.* This statement does not relate to time. It is a factual statement.

Further we can mention other distinctions of aspect with their examples. Between perfective and imperfective aspects is basic distinction. Perfective aspect for example *I wrote an e-mail last night* refers to an event that is unitary. There is no reference to any time during the action and it refers to complete situation. Imperfective aspect, in example *I was living in Prague*, refers to a situation that exists continuously. Habitual aspect is used with some auxiliary verbs. Declerck (2006) explains that “when the verb takes on a special form (auxiliary) to describe the situation as characteristic of the referent of the subject over a certain period of time.[...] Can and could as auxiliaries can express something like habitual meaning as well but mostly they are used for different purposes.” (p. 34)

Voice

Voice shows whether a subject of the particular verb is doing the action or receiving the action. Verbs have two forms of voices: active and passive. When the subject performs an action expressed by the verb then the verb is in active voice. When the subject becomes the receiver of the act the verb is then in passive voice.

Voice indicates whether the subject is the doer of the act expressed by the verb or is the receiver of the action. Verbs in active voice may be either transitive or intransitive. Only transitive verbs have voice and can be changed from active to passive voice. Intransitive and linking verbs have no voice.

Passive verbs in either present or past tense have always two parts. Some forms of the verb *to be* as *am, is, are, was, were* and past participle are used with *have* when forming a perfect tense. With modals a passive form for present tense is made with the modal or infinitive form of the auxiliary verb *to be* and past participle form. Here is example of modals for active form: *She can write a letter.* Example of passive form: *A letter can be written by her.* The other forms for different tenses will be described in the analytic part.

Mood

Mood is one of the distinctive forms, which is a constituent of modality. It is a grammatical category that expresses the degree of reality referred to a sentence or general purpose of a speaker. Mood expresses proposition's believability, obligatoriness, desirability, or reality. Davidsen-Nielsen (1990) distinguishes synthetic mood (subjunctive and imperative) and analytic mood (modal verbs).

Some linguists use the term mood in the same sense as modality. Palmer (1986) explains the term mood by pointing out that mood is a formal verbal category while “modalities [...] have been treated primarily in terms of modal meanings” (p.29). English verbs have four moods: indicative, imperative, subjunctive and infinitive. Mood is the form of a verb that shows the mode or manner in which a thought is expressed. Indicative mood expresses an assertion, denial or question. Imperative mood expresses command, prohibition, entreaty or advice. Subjunctive mood expresses doubt or something contrary to fact. Infinitive mood expresses or state without reference to any subject. It does not indicate time.

As there were in detail described all verb categories such as person, number, tense, aspect, voice and mood and gave particular examples to demonstrate the verb categories. The following chapter will be concerned with modality which will be explained on particular examples.

MODALITY

Linguists describe the sphere of modality in different ways, but principally through modal verbs. Modality, in general sense, is the way of presentation of the content in utterance used by a speaker that is given with the attitude to the expressed reality. This term is used in the relationship to a reality or unreality, possibility or necessity of the realization of the certain process. Modality is used to refer to meanings expressed by lexical and grammatical means. Goossens (1985) points out that “modality in all its aspects is an important meaning component of language and modals are an important way of expressing various dimensions of it. English is a language, which extensively illustrate the use that languages are made of modal verbs.” (p.204)

Modality comprises of three basic traditional semantic categories: epistemic, deontic and dynamic. Epistemic modality comes from Greek *episteme* “knowledge”, deontic modality from Greek *deon* “duty” and dynamic modality from Greek *dynamis* “strength, power”. According to Palmer (1990), “epistemic modality deals with the speaker’s discernment about the truth of the proposition. Deontic modality is used to express what is obligatory, permitted, or forbidden. It affects to actions, states or events. Dynamic modality is connected with ability and disposition of a subject in a sentence.” (p.9) Epistemic modality means that a modal verb is used to express the speaker’s opinion about an utterance e.g. *It might be true*. Here it is expressed their approach about whether it is true or not, there is accepted a possibility, but it is not certain. Speech is realized grammatically through modal verbs e.g. may, might, must, the epistemic moods on verbs and non-grammatical through adverbials e.g. perhaps, possible. Deontic modality means that a modal verb is used to influence a situation by giving permission e.g. *You can go when you’ve finished*. Here it is given permission and deontic modality is used here to control the situation. *Dynamic modality sometimes also called facultative modality (Goossens, 1985) affects an ability and volition of the subject of a sentence. Dynamic modality is not used to express the speaker’s opinion and the speaker does not affect the situation either e.g. He can speak perfect Spanish*. Here it is described a factual situation.

Nevertheless three kinds of modalities were mentioned before, the aim of this paper will focus only on two of these: epistemic and deontic modality. Dynamic modality is not relevant to this paper.

English grammarians mention the most frequently two modalities as deontic and epistemic but some of them use different terminologies for them. Quirk (1972) uses the term intrinsic and extrinsic. In the following extract is explained these two kinds of terminology:

(a) Those such as ‘permission’, ‘obligation’, and ‘volition’ which involve some kind of intrinsic human control over events, and (b) Those such as ‘possibility’, ‘necessity’, and ‘prediction’, which do not primarily involve human control of events, but do typically involve human judgment of what is or is not likely to happen.

These two kinds, between which there is a gradient, may be termed INTRINSIC and EXTRINSIC modality respectively. (p.219)

The extrinsic term is identified as epistemic modality and the intrinsic term as deontic modality.

Coates (1983) distinguishes “epistemic” and “non-epistemic” modality and for deontic modality he uses the term “root” modality. (p.20)

Dušková (2006) classifies modal verb *can* and *could* to both epistemic and deontic modalities and the periphrastic form *to be able to* only to deontic modality.

This statement will be as the main point of this paper by examination the modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to* and their modalities which are connected with.

These both epistemic and deontic modalities will be explained and illustrated on examples.

Epistemic modality

This subchapter will deal with the epistemic modality and its use. As above mentioned introduction of epistemic modality which is used to express the speaker's opinion about a statement whether is true or not. This statement can be supported by some linguists' definitions, which are identical. Coates (1983) claims that “It is concerned with the speaker's assumption or assessment of possibilities and, in most cases, it indicates the speaker's confidence (or lack of confidence) in the truth of the proposition expressed.” (p. 18)

Quirk's definition about epistemic modality is mentioned in the previous chapter.

Furthermore, must be mentioned some more characteristics that are connected with epistemic modality in its negative form.

Coates (1983) explains the possibility to determinate the epistemic modality by the negative form. She claims that the modal verb *can* is represented with the negative form *cannot* (*can't*) when expresses negative certainty. Epistemic *cannot* is a counterpart of must.

This statement can be supported by Dušková (2006) with her identical meaning. To comprehend this statement, some examples are given: *Paul can't be in Liverpool.* (Coates, 1983, p.20) *He cannot know it.* (Dušková, 2006, p.187)

First example can be paraphrased as: *It's sure that Paul is not in Liverpool./It's not possible for him to be in Liverpool.* The second example can be paraphrased as: *It's sure that he doesn't know it / It's not possible for him to know it.* In these examples connected with negation the modality is not affected. As regards the epistemic modality the statement is affected.

How it was mentioned, most linguists declare that epistemic modality depends on the speaker's judgment whether a certain declaration is true or false in the context of possibility.

Epistemic modality is the modality of declaration, rather than of actions, states or events. On the contrary deontic modality is the modality that relates to the actions, states or events by the declaration.

Deontic modality

In this subchapter deontic modality will be explained and given examples by some linguists.

Palmer's definition about deontic modality is mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. In addition to him Leech (2004) points out that "deontic modality is the ordinary, more basic type of modality denoting constraint and lack of constraint in situations (typically situations involving human behavior) in our universe of experience." (p. 84)

Palmer (2001) claims that deontic modality is connected to the potential event indicated by the statement. Palmer gives examples which represent the deontic modality: *The may/can come in now. John must come in now.* (2001, p.10)

Here are some more examples to illustrate deontic modality: *He can speak English.* (Quirk, 1972, p. 97) *You can smoke in here.* (Leech, 1969, p. 203)

The linguistics' definitions about deontic modality are almost identical in the point of view that this modality is related to the control over an event. Deontic modality is linked with possibility, ability and permission meanings. Some meanings are restricted by the context. These facts connected with modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to* will be examined in analysis.

As this paper has already explained the modality of modal verbs, the following chapter will in detail be concerned with modal verbs and their classification. Moreover, criteria of modal verbs with specific examples of their use will be given.

MODAL VERBS

A modal verb is a type of auxiliary verb that is used to indicate modality. Modal verbs determine a mood of the main verb. They are used to form tenses, negative sentence meanings and questions. They differ from the main verbs and have certain grammatical properties.

Modal verbs and their classification

In English modal verbs occur in all the dimensions that are described in the previous chapter. All modals occur in epistemic modality, however, *can* and *cannot* are used to express subjective modality in positive sentences. In deontic modality are used all modals. In dynamic modality are used especially *can*, *could*, *will* and *would*. According to Palmer (1987), “Mood is only one type of grammatical sub-category within a wider grammatical category. Another such sub-category is what may be called modal system” (p. 25). Palmer places modals among the auxiliary verbs together with the primary auxiliaries *be* and *have*.

Modal verbs are frequently used to express such concepts as ability or potential (*can*, *could*), possibility and permission (*can*, *could*, *may* *might*), probability or expectation (*should*, *ought to*), inference and logical conclusion (*must*, *can't*, belief and conjecture (*will*, *would*), inherent capacity (*will*, *would*), volition (*shall*, *will*), advice and recommendation (*shall*, *should*, *ought to*, *had better*), obligation and necessity (*must*, *mustn't*, *have to*), absence of obligation or necessity (*needn't*, *not need to*, *not have to*), general characteristics (*can*, *could*), characteristic behavior (*will*, *would*). Attarde (2007) states that “modals are used to indicate the attitude towards what we are saying, i.e. obligation, ability, possibility, wishes, permission, certainty, assumption, likelihood, probability, duty, obligation, etc.” (p.198) Examples include the English modal verbs *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *will*, *would*, *shall*, *should*, *need*, *ought to* and *dare*. English modals can be divided as well into central modals: *can*, *may*, *will*, *shall*, *must*, *could*, *might*, *would*, *should* or semi-modals: *dare*, *need*, *ought*, *used to*. Some modals have paired forms: *can* – *could*, *may* – *might*, *shall* – *should*, *will* – *would*. Others have only single forms: *must*, *ought to*, *need*, *dare*. Therefore modals are called anomalous or defective verbs. *Need* and *dare* may have the patterns of either modals or regular verbs. The modal verbs are followed by the infinitive of a verb without *to* (except *ought*). They have no infinitive forms and no participle forms. They are also limited in their time reference. That is why there are a number of forms that can substitute (fully or partly), the modal verbs, such as *be able to* and *have to*.

Criteria of modal verbs

Will, shall, may, can, must and ought to fit all the criteria: inversion with the subject, negative form with n't, emphatic affirmation, no -s ending form in the 3rd person singular in the present tense (as in regular verbs), no non-finite forms, infinitives, past and present participles forms, no co-occurrence e.g. *He may will come.*, with the exception that *may* has no n't form in the present. *Must* and *ought to* differ from the others in having no past-tense forms, while *ought to* is the only one that requires to. Eastwood (1994) points out, that modal verbs “express meanings such as necessity and possibility. We can use modal verbs to tell or allow people to do things; or we can use them to say how certain or uncertain we are.” (p. 113).

This chapter explained in detail modal verbs, their classification and criteria of modal verbs with specific examples of its use. The following chapter will in great detail concentrate on auxiliary verbs: *can, could* and its periphrastic form *to be able to*. In addition, it will be concerned with the use of *to be able to* instead of *can* and *could*.

THE MODAL AUXILIARY CAN/COULD AND ITS PERIPHRASTIC FORM TO BE ABLE TO

Can, could and be able to

The auxiliary verb *can* is one of the most frequently used words in the English language. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1999), *Can* is used "to state that it is possible for somebody or something to do something, or for something to happen." (p.156) The auxiliary verb *could* is used as the past tense of *can* and *be able to/was able to* is a periphrastic form of *can* and *could*.

The auxiliary verb *can* has only two forms: *can* for present tense and *could* for past tense. *I can speak English. I could speak English when I was 12.* A negative sentence is formed with the addition of *not*. *My mum cannot/can't speak English.* The long form *could not* is used in formal speaking or writing. The shortened form *couldn't* is used in informal speaking and writing. A question is formed by inversion. *Can or could* stands in front of a subject. *Can you speak English? Could you do anything?* Short answers are commonly used after *yes/no* questions. *Yes I can. / No, I can't. Yes we could / No, we couldn't.*

In grammatical tenses, except past and present tense and infinitive, it is necessary to use periphrastic form *to be able to*, where the verb *to be* must be in the right form of the particular tense. Here is an example in the future tense. *I will be able to speak English if I learn hard.* In the present perfect tense. *I have been able to speak English since I moved to England.* The infinitive is in this example. *It's good to be able to speak English.* Periphrastic form *to be able to* is also possible to use in present tense but it is less usual. *I'm not able to speak English.* In the past tense it is used the form *was/were able to* in the meaning that somebody managed to do something in the concrete situation. *I couldn't speak English very well but I was able to pass the exam.* In the negative form it is possible to use *couldn't* with the meaning someone or something manage to do something. *I couldn't speak English very well so I couldn't /wasn't able to pass the exam.*

Exception to the general findings that were mentioned above are stated here. The modal verb *can* because *it* expresses ability, possibility and permission. *Could* is the past tense counterparts of *can* and has the same meanings as *can*. *Be able to* is the periphrastic form of *can* but not the modal counterpart of *can/could* in the sense of ability. *Be able to* is not considered to be a modal verb because *to be* inflects person and tense. *Can, could* and *be able to* are not identical in all cases, there are some differences in their use.

The use of can, could and be able for possibility, ability and permission

Can, could and *be able to* are used for expressing possibility, certainty, ability and permission. Apart from these all possibilities it is also possible to use them in different situations. The author of this paper will explain their use in all the meanings in which they appear as well as the use of them in particular situations for the analysis part in the following subchapters. However, the modal verbs *can, could* and its periphrastic form *to be able to* will be analyzed to find their possibility, ability and permission meanings.

Can and could for possibility

The first examined verbs will be *can* and *could*. According to Leech (2004) the modal verb *can* belongs among the most frequent meaning of the mentioned three meanings. *Can* is generally paraphrased *it is possible*, *could* is paraphrased *it was possible*. Leech adds that another characteristic of the possibility meaning of *can* is paraphrased by the use of the adverb *sometimes*. This statement is in the following example: *Lightening can be very dangerous*. (Leech, 2004, p. 74) This sentence is paraphrased as *Lightening is sometimes very dangerous*.

Another author Eastwood (1994) holds the view that we use *can* and *could* “to suggest possible future actions. *Can* is stronger than *could*, which expresses a more distant possibility. *You can/could go on the train, of course*.” (p. 123) As Eastwood (1994) presumes, only a possibility is expressed with *can* and *could*. “They do not mean that something is likely to happen. *We can/could have a party. Yes, why not?* (suggestion).” (p.123) Eastwood (1994) adds that “for something that is possibly true there is used *could*. *Tina could be working late tonight*.” (p. 123) “*Could* is used for an uncertain prediction about the future. In this case *can* is possible to use. *The motorway could be busy tomorrow*.” (Eastwood, 1994, p. 123) To state that something is generally possible there is a special use of *can*. “*Smoking can damage your health*.” (Eastwood, 1994, p. 123) To express possibility in the past the speaker or writer must use *could have* + perfect infinitive. Eastwood (1994) points out that “it refers to something in the past that is possibly true. *The letter could have got lost in the post*.” It means that it is possible that the letter has got lost in the post. (p. 124)

Furthermore, must be mentioned Leech’s statement that *can* with the possibility meaning occurs in the passive voice frequently. Coates’s (1983) and Biber’s (1999) mentions are identical about this statement. Coates (1983) states that it is “when the speaker cannot presuppose the willingness of the subject to carry out the proposition, that the passive is found, and the written texts in particular are marked by the association of passive voice with

can.”(p. 96) For better comprehension she gives an example: *The particle size **can** be varied by regulating the distribution.* (p. 96) The paraphrasing of this sentence is: *It is possible to vary the particle size by regulating the distribution.*

Another Leech’s claiming (2004) about the modal verb *can* is that it is related to an inanimate subject in declarative sentences when it is dealt with possibility meaning. Leech’s statement can be supported by Dušková’s (2006) meaning in this example: ***Can** that remark have offended her?* (p. 187)

One more characteristic of a possible meaning must be mentioned. According to Leech and Quirk possibility meaning is especially used in negatives structures. Therefore, *can* often occurs as *can’t* (cannot). Eastwood explains this statement and connects it with certainty. Eastwood (1994) points out that *can’t* is a negative form of *can* and it is used for stating “that something is certainly true or untrue. *This can’t be Roland’s textbook. He doesn’t do physics. Can’t* means that the speaker sees it as logically impossible for something to be true.” (p.120)

Dušková has the same meaning about negative form of the modal verb *can*. Her statement is supported by her example: *He can’t have forgotten.* To paraphrase is: He couldn’t forget it. It is sure that he did not forget it. Eastwood (1994) also mentions that if something seemed certain in the past then it is necessary to use *couldn’t*. “*Harold stared in amazement. It couldn’t be true!*” (p.120)

Linguists’ statements about possibility meaning and using the modal verb *can* and *could* are connected to animate or inanimate subject, active or passive voice, positive and negatives and mostly state verbs. All statements are connected to epistemic or deontic modality which are mentioned in the relevant chapters. The periphrastic form *to be able to* is not related to this meaning but only with ability meaning.

Can, could and be able to for ability

According to Leech (2004) the modal verb *can* and its forms *could* and *to be able to* is the second most used common meaning connected with ability.

Eastwood (1994) explains that *can* and *could* are used to state “that something is possible because someone has the ability to do it.” (p.124) *Can* is used for the present and *could* for the past. “*Nicola **can** play chess. Nicola **could** play chess when she was six.*” (Eastwood, 1994, p. 124) In the next example Eastwood (1994) states that if we speak about “physical or mental ability, we also use *can/could* for a chance, an opportunity to do

something. *We **can** sit in the garden when it's nice. When we lived in a flat, we **couldn't** keep a dog.*" (p. 124) There is a difference between the use of *can/could* and *be able to*. When it is referred to a general ability *can/could* and *be able to* are interchangeable. Here are examples from the book *Grammar for Teachers* by De Capua (2008) "*She **could/was able to** read at an early age.*" (p. 214) When it is referred to a single action or event we use only *be able to* as in this example according to De Capua (2008) "*She **was able to** get us tickets yesterday for the concert.*" (214) In the point of view of Eastwood (1994) "*be able to* in the present tense is a little more formal and less usual than *can*. *The pupils **can** already read/**are already able to** read.* (p.124)

For a future ability or opportunity it is used *will be able to*. "*One day people **will be able to** go on a package tour of the solar system.*" (Eastwood, 1994, p. 124) *Can* is normally used when we suggest a possible future action. "*We **can** discuss the details later.*" (Eastwood, 1994, p. 125) In the past, we use *could* and *was/were able to*. In this example Eastwood (1994) explains the use of the past tenses with modal verb. "Make a difference between a general ability and an ability which resulted in an action. For a general ability we use *could* or *was/were able to*. *Kevin **could** walk/**was able to** walk when he was only eleven months old.*" (p. 125). Next possibility to use *was/were able to* is described by Eastwood (1994). He suggests that in the case when someone had the ability to do something and did it, then it is talked about an action in a particular situation. "*The injured man **was able to** walk to a phone box.*" (p.125). In this situation we do not use *could*. Nevertheless, as stated in Eastwood's book (1994) and his examples "in negatives and questions we can use either *was/were able to* or *could* because we are not saying that the action really happened. *Detectives **weren't able to** identify/**couldn't** identify the murderer. **Were you able to/***Could you get tickets for the show?"* (p.125).*

Palmer (1974) speaks about the most familiar use of *can* when it expresses to perform the action. This statement is involved in the following example: *I **can** read Greek.* (p. 115) Coates (1983) has identical meaning with this viewpoint and states it as "the verb denotes action or activity." (p. 89) She adds that the subject is inherent, it means that the ability meaning often occurs with "animate subject" and has agentive function." Dušková has the same meaning about this statement. The following example represents inherent characteristic: *She **can** do over a hundred words in a minute.* (Dušková 2006, p. 188)

Furthermore, according to Leech (2004) the ability meaning of the modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to* is limited to active voice.

One more statement must be mentioned that ability meaning is connected with inanimate subject when it is represented with figurative language. According to Tarniková (1985) an inanimate subject is denoted by an animate subject. This grammar rule is illustrated in the following example: *It is wonderful what science can do.* (p. 24) It seems to be inanimate subject but the term science is represented by scientists who are animate.

According to Dušková (2006), the verbs of perception and feeling, express their ability by themselves. The following example supports this meaning: *I can't hear you, speak up.* (p. 188) The modal verb *can* expresses perception in actual progress. With verbs of perception and verbs of thinking it is normally used *could not was/were able to*. It is clear in Eastwood (1994) example: "*I could see smoke on the horizon.*" (p. 125). We use *could have done* in situations when someone had the ability or the chance to do something but didn't do it. Eastwood (1994) gives examples to explain this situation. "*I could have got tickets, but there were only very expensive ones left.*" (p.125).

The modal verbs *can*, *could* and especially *to be able to* are used with the ability meaning. The periphrastic form is used in all above mentioned situations but not with the verbs of perception. The overview of ability meaning is that it is connected to animate subject, agentive function of subject and with verbs they denote action or activity and always deontic modality. Connection with deontic modality is related to the subchapter about deontic modality.

Can and could for permission.

For giving permission is used *can* and *could* but never *to be able to*. There must be mentioned some more rules when these modal verbs are used. According to Coates (1983) the permission meaning is used with an animate subject, the verb is in position of agent and it is paraphrased with the forms *permitted* or *allowed to*.

Another author Quirk (1985) is identical with Coates's meaning in the paraphrase *to be allowed to*. Leech (1969) is identical with Coates in the meaning that the permission meaning is linked with the animate subject. The following example supports this rule: *Can I open the window?* (p. 203) In the previous example the question is illustrated and moreover the using 1st person singular. It can be also used 1st person plural and 3rd person singular or plural. Dušková (2006) uses the all these three characteristics in following examples: *You can come with us.* (Adams 128), *I could eat everything before I was ill.* *Can I use your phone?* (p. 188) Dušková states that *can* is more tactful in 2nd and 3rd person but less in 1st person.

In the following example *can* is used for giving permission. “*You **can** use my phone if you like. Anyone **can** join the club.*” (Eastwood, 1994, p.119) However, negative forms *cannot/can't* are used for refusing permission. “*I'm afraid you **can't** just walk in here.*” (Eastwood, 1994, p.119) It is also possible to use *can/could* to ask permission and afterwards get a relevant answer with the modal verbs. “***Can** I take your umbrella? ~ Of course you **can**. **Could** I borrow this calculator, please? ~ Well, I need it actually.* Here *could* means a more distant possibility than *can* and thus it is less direct and more tentative” (Eastwood, 1994, p.119) *Could* is also used for general permission. It appears in Eastwood's (1994) example. “*Years ago visitors to Stonehenge **could** go right up to the stones.*” (p. 120)

The overview of permission meaning is that it is related to an animate subject, agentive verb and in questions in which it is involved asking for permission.

In the paragraphs above are summed up all the possibilities of using *can*, *could* and its periphrastic form *be able to*. Nevertheless, there is also the auxiliary verb *may* which is often interchangeable with the auxiliary verb *can*. The following chapter is focused on both of these verbs *can* and *may* and their utilization in different and similar situations.

The chapter five concentrated on auxiliary verbs: *can*, *could* and its periphrastic form *be able to*. Furthermore it was clarified the use of *be able to* instead of *can* and *could*. As the modal verb *can* was already described, the following chapter is focused on the modal verb *may* and its specification in particular uses and its general findings. Afterwards the work will focus on these modal verbs *may* and *can* and their common and different use in English.

MAY/CAN AND THEIR DIFFERENT OR SIMILAR USE

May

The auxiliary verb *may* is used to state that something is possible. The modal verb *may* has only two forms, *may* for the present tense and *might* for the past tense. He *may* be ill. You *might* be more careful. We make the negative form of this auxiliary verb with adding *not*. That *may not* be true. That *might not* be true. The negative form *may not* is sometimes used in the form *mayn't* but not in modern English. *Mayn't* is very old-fashioned and standard English uses only *may not*. The past tense form of *may* is *might* and its negative form *might not* sometimes appears as *mightn't*. It has no infinitive, no –ing form, no –ed in past tense form, no –s ending in the third person singular and no making question with auxiliary verb. The general information mentioned above are almost identical for both modal verbs *can* and *may*.

The modal verb *may* is used when we want to state that something is possible. *They may/might be here right. He may be ill.* However, in the sense of possibility it is not possible to use *may not* in a negative sentence. To use the negative form is only possible when the idea of negation is mixed with a possibility. It may or may not be true. *May* does not have a specific form for the future and for the past it is referred by the past infinitive. For the future *may* is connected with the infinitive of telic verbs. “*He may come (tomorrow)* *May* refers to the present with atelic verbs. *He may know it.*” (Dušková, 2006, p. 189) Actual the present is expressed with continuous form. Dušková (2006) suggests an example for that “*He may be waiting.*” (p. 189). *May* and *might* have very often a similar meaning when the intention is to talk about possibility. The connection of possibility *may/might* is used if the speaker or writer wants to state that something is possibly true. This statement is also supported in Eastwood’s (1994) examples. “*That may not/might not be a bad idea.*” (p.122)

In the other case *may* is used is when someone’s intention is to ask for permission or give permission. “*May I open the window? You may if you want. You may use my phone.*” *May* is also used when we ask a question or make a comment in a polite way. “*May I ask why you did it?* It is also possible to use *may* for expressing wishes or hopes. *May he rest in peace? May the best man win!*”(p. 122)

Differences and similarities in the use of the modal verbs *can* and *may*.

Both *can* and *may* are commonly used interchangeably in respect to permission. *Can* means to have ability to do something, or to be able to do it. *May* means to have permission or to be allowed to do something.

According to Dušková (2006), the modal verb *can* “expresses ability, skill (non-epistemic modality), and possibility (epistemic modality).” (p.187). Dušková adds that (2006) “*May* expresses possibility and permission. In the meaning of possibility it is the epistemic modality, in the meaning of permission it is non-epistemic modality.” (p.190) Quirk (1972) uses “intrinsic (permission, obligation, and volition which involve some kind of intrinsic human control over events) and extrinsic (possibility, necessity, and predication, which do not primarily involve human control of events, but do typically involve human judgment of what is or not likely to happen).” (p. 219). Both these authors state that *may* are interchangeable with *can*. However, between these verbs is a slight difference in the degree of politeness and formal use. *May* is more polite in question with a first person. ***May I ask you for help?*** In the second and third person in declarative sentences it is on the contrary. Dušková (2006) explains that it is more polite and formal to use *may* in a question. In the following example it is more polite and formal to use *may* then *can*. ***May I come in?*** (p.187)

Can is more frequently used in everyday language. *May* is more used in administrative texts and formal speaking. Dušková (2006) mentions the fact that a difference between *can* and *may* is very distinct when disposal ability. “*The match can be won / The match may be won.*” The first sentence means that the players are able to win the match because they have the disposition for it. The second sentence means that it is possible that the match will be won. (p. 187) Semantic overlapping of the verbs *can* and *may* happen only in indicative positive sentences.

Dušková mentions that in questions *may* and *can* do not overlap each other because *may* is not used in the mean of possibility in interrogative sentences. (p. 190) It is necessary to use *can*. In these examples *can* is used to denote ability. (Dušková, 2006, p. 190) “***I can play golf.*** It means that I have the ability to play golf. ***Can he throw 50 meters?*** → Does he have the ability to throw 50 meters?”

May is always used for permission in a formal speaking or writing. “***May I leave the table?*** → *Am I permitted to leave the table?*” (Eastwood, 1994, p. 119 -120) It is also possible to use *might* to ask permission, but it is formal and tentative. *I was wondering if I might borrow your car for the afternoon.* We sometimes talk about permission when we are not giving it or asking for it. To do this, we can use *can* referring to the present or the future and *could* referring to the past. “***I can stay up as late as I like. My parents don't mind. These yellow lines mean that you can't park here. At one time anyone could go and live in the USA.*** (Eastwood 1994, p. 120) In the following examples we cannot use *may* because in these statements we do not give or ask permission. It is not possible to use: ***I may stay up late.***

According to Eastwood (1994), “*Might* can also express criticism that something is not done. *You might wash up occasionally. Someone might have thanked me for all my trouble.*” (p.122). In this case it is also possible to use *could*. The modal verb *may* for expressing possibility appears only in the declarative sentences. In questions it is used *can*, *could* or *might*. Dušková (2006) states examples to this statement. “*It may be true.*” (p.187). It means that it can be true. Can it be true?

In these examples *Can* and *could* are only used to express possibility. Eastwood (1994) states “They do not mean that something is likely to happen. *We can/could have a party. Yes, why not?*” (p. 123) In this statement we talk about suggestion. In the following statement we talk about uncertain intention. “*We may/might have a party. Oh, really?*” (Eastwood 1994, p. 123) In the following examples we use *could* for something that is possibly true. Here is not possible to use *can* but it is possible to use *may* or *might* as well. *You could have forgotten to post the letter.*” (Eastwood 1994, p. 123) Furthermore, we also use *could*, *may* or *might* but not *can* for an uncertain prediction about the future. It appears in Eastwood’s example (1994) “*The motorway could be busy tomorrow.* (p. 120).

ANALYSIS

Methods

The aim of the analytical part is to examine the use of the modal verbs *can*, *could* and its periphrastic form *to be able to*. Moreover, the following pages will analyze deontic and epistemic modality from the point of view of individual types of modality, which they can convey in three major meanings of auxiliary modal verbs: the possibility meaning, the ability meaning and the permission meaning. In the following paragraphs, particular attention will be given to certain meanings and quantitative aspects. Its aim is to comment on the frequency of the modal verbs *can*, *could*, *to be able to*, their individual meanings and kinds of modality. General grammar rules, which are dealt with in the theoretical part of this paper are applied to the individual meanings of the modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to* irrespective of the discourse. Some findings concern the use of the modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to*, mentioned in particular sentences.

A representative sample of 156 modal verbs was analyzed as for the occurrence of the modal verb *can*, *could* and its periphrastic form *to be able to*. Each individual occurrence was examined and classified with regards to grammar rules mentioned in the theoretical part. The occurrences of modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to* are dealt with in three different subchapters of this analytical part, particular possibility meaning, ability meaning and permission meaning. The individual meanings of these modal verbs are illustrated on examples. Each sentence with the modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to*, is labelled with a number 1-156 according to which it was selected. Individual modal verb is labeled in each example. All sentences are included in the Appendix. All sentences mentioned in the analytical part of this paper are marked with a particular number.

Paraphrases and various tools were used in order to demonstrate various meanings. It is possible to paraphrase an expression by different words. The analysis is also concentrated in this way in the purpose of identification of various meanings. Furthermore, concerning different meanings, some important properties of the modal verbs *can*, *could*, *to be able to*, were examined and applied. In relevant chapters will be mentioned all characteristics connected with individual meanings and illustrated with examples.

Finally, a table will be created to illustrate the findings representing the meanings and kinds of modality according to their frequency.

Modal verb *can*, *could* and *to be able to* in given excerpts

This chapter deals with the modal verbs *can*, *could* and its periphrastic form *to be able to* in given excerpts. As already mentioned, the excerpts are consisted of 156 examples involving the modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to*. *Can* occurs in 89 examples, *could* in 46 examples and *to be able to* in 21 examples. How it was mentioned in the theoretical part the periphrastic form *to be able to* is not a modal verb, but it only conveys the same type of meanings as the modal auxiliary verbs *can* and *could*. *To be able to* is only used when we talk about ability. Therefore the periphrastic form *to be able to* is analyzed in the subchapter connected with ability meaning, for possibility and permission meaning it is not relevant. Individual meanings of these excerpts were examined and kinds of modality, which are connected with individual occurrences, were analyzed.

At first, in the discussion of examples must be mentioned kinds of modality that concern the modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to*. The individual meanings which occurred in the analyzed sentences will be commented.

Considering deontic and epistemic modality, each modal verb *can*, *could* and *to be able to* was examined as regard to these two categories. Therefore, 89 modal verbs *can*, 46 *could* and 21 *to be able to* were analyzed from this point of view. 118 out of them were deontic and 38 were marked as epistemic.

The occurrence of epistemic modality is in the fewer number in comparison with the numerous occurrence of deontic modality. It is resulted from the fact that *can*, *could* and *to be able to* in their positive forms are deontic, never epistemic. On the contrary, epistemic modality occurred with these modal verbs in their negative forms that are used for missing negative form of must. The other cases that will be analyzed are occurred in epistemic modality as well. The examined modal verbs that were in their positive forms were mostly deontic.

The epistemic modality is connected with the modal verb *can* and *could* in their negative forms as in this example: *This can't be Jack's car. He doesn't have any.* (Appendix, example 1) The modal verbs *can* and *could* represent this kind of modality as involves speaker's judgment of what speaker says is certainly true or untrue. The example can be paraphrased as: *In this case it is not true that he has a car. / It is certain that he has no car.* It is represented by a negative meaning that is counterpart to the modal verb must, as its missed negative form.

On the contrary, deontic modality connects directly with the potential event signified by the statement, that deontic modality is more basic type of modality. Several examples were selected to illustrate deontic modality:

*He **could** swim when he was three years old.* (Appendix, example 85)

*She **can** sing.* (Appendix, example 98)

*The children of six **are able to** read.* (Appendix, example 58)

After summing up both modalities, the above mentioned findings indicate that deontic modality was used more frequently in the excerpts. However, epistemic modality was connected with 38 occurrences therefore it is considered to be less frequent and less ordinary kind of modality. Through this fact it is possible to note that the epistemic modal verbs *can* and *could* can only express the possibility meaning. The periphrastic form *to be able to* occurs only in the meaning of ability therefore it is never epistemic. The ability and the permission meanings are always deontic. Therefore, epistemic modality is limited to only one definite meaning. What is more, epistemic modality of *can* and *could* is limited to the negative form of a verb that could also be contributed to its low frequency. Nonetheless, deontic modality of these modal verbs is connected with all the possibilities, the ability and the permission meanings and furthermore they can be connected with both positive and negative forms of verbs.

In the following subchapters will be examined meanings of individual occurrences. Specific meanings and number of occurrences of these meanings were connected with characteristics, that are related to them and that will be commented on.

Possibility meaning of the modal verbs can, could

With respect to the possibility meaning of the modal verb *can* and *could*, *can* occurred in 31 cases and *could* in 23 cases out of 156. How it was mentioned in previous chapter the periphrastic form *to be able to* is not connected with this type of meaning therefore it is not relevant to be analyzed in this chapter.

In 16 out of 54 cases they were connected with deontic modality. The difference between these two kinds of modality connected with possibility meaning is illustrated in the following examples:

*You **can't** be at home.* (Appendix, example 2) *It is certain that it wasn't a true act.*

*You **can** be in bed.* (Appendix, example 3) *It is possible for one to be in bed.*

Particularly the first example represents epistemic modality and the second example represents deontic modality. It is apparent that epistemic modality concerns with the

statement as a whole. But deontic modality concerns with a part of the statement, particularly the verb. For better understanding of this grammar rule, both above sentences must be examined. In the first example, modality is concerned with the statement as a whole. Therefore, the modal verb can be separated from the statement and moved in front of the statement as a paraphrase: *It is necessarily the case that he wasn't at home.*

In the second example, the modal verb *can* is confirmed in the statement as an intentional modification expressed by infinitive of the following verb *to be*.

Moreover, epistemic modality is represented by a verb in its negative form and deontic modality is represented by positive forms of verbs. With regard to this grammar rule, epistemic possibility was represented by a negative form. 16 examples refer to the deontic possibility were represented by a positive form. 22 examples that were represented by epistemic possibility were connected with negative forms and 23 examples with inanimate subjects. This signifies that the epistemic possibility was represented by these two possibilities. Deontic possibility was represented with animate subjects, dynamic verbs and active voice.

Some more important characteristics that refer to analyzed modal verbs must be explained. They are clarified in the examples as follow.

In the theoretical part was mentioned the possibility meaning of the modal verbs *can* and *could* as they are often connected with an inanimate subject. This grammar rule is supported by the fact that their occurrences were represented in the analyzed sentences as the possibility meaning. Sentences which represent possibility meaning are connected with inanimate subject. These examples represent above mentioned findings:

That can be a problem. (Appendix, example 4) *It is possible for a situation to be a problem.*

It could be him over there. (Appendix, example 41) *It is possible that it is him over there.*

The inanimate subject is represented with that and it. Despite the fact that *can* and *could* express primarily deontic modality these both examples are connected with epistemic modality. It is due to the use of inanimate subjects. Inanimate subject in combination with passive voice was used in 9 cases.

On the other hand, the animate subject in possibility meaning is related to deontic modality. These types of sentences occurred in 16 examples.

Furthermore, the possibility meaning is also connected with a passive voice. Some of the analyzed modal verbs *can* and *could* in their possibility meaning were represented by state verbs mostly with *to be* and a passive voice. This example with using *to be* was used in several sentences (Appendix, example 46). The passive voice of modal verbs supports the

interpretation of possibility as well (Appendix, example 42). The analyzed modal verbs *can* and *could* which were connected with using passive voice are expressed as epistemic modality.

Furthermore, the negative form of the verbs *can* and *could* is also connected with the possibility meaning. However, negative forms are related to epistemic modality. These occurrences are in several examples to represent the negative forms (Appendix, example 28). In the analysis there are 22 examples in negative form. All examples are paraphrased as *It is not possible that something is true*.

Moreover, the positive form of the verbs *can* and *could* is also connected with the possibility meaning. In above mentioned examples in positive forms of *can* and *could* that were analyzed, were related to deontic modality. These occurrences are in 16 examples to represent the positive forms and are related to deontic modality. All examples are paraphrased as *It is possible that something is true*.

Furthermore, the examples with an animate or inanimate subject relate to the theoretical possibility as well. This type of possibility is illustrated in the following example: *It could be cold in the evening*. (Appendix, example 36) This sentence can be paraphrased as *It is possible that it is cold in the evening*. The example: *Old people can feel lonely* (Appendix, example 48) can be paraphrased as *It is possible for old people to feel lonely*. The first example is represented with an inanimate subject and the second example with an animate subject. Both sentences are connected with theoretical possibility. Theoretical possibility occurs in 30 cases.

Nevertheless, for possibility meaning it is not possible to use the periphrastic form *to be able to* when it is spoken about possibility.

The above mentioned findings indicate that the possibility meaning that occurred in 54 cases of analyzed modal verbs *can* and *could*, is connected with both animate and inanimate subjects, active and passive voices, negative and positive form. It is due to the fact that the possibility meaning is not limited by the context as e.g. ability meaning. This means that the possibility meaning can occur in many occasions. It can be used in nearly all contexts. The possibility meaning relates to both modalities. From above analyzed cases follow that epistemic modality is connected with an inanimate subject, passive voice and negative form. On the contrary, the deontic modality is connected with an animate subject, active voice and positive form.

Ability meaning of can, could and to be able to

This chapter deals with the ability meaning of the modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to*, its characteristics concerning to this meaning. The important characteristics connected with the sense of *can*, *could* and *to be able to*, are stated in order to illustrate the general rules mentioned in the theoretical part. The ability meaning occurred in 52 examples. The ability meaning concerns the deontic kind of modality in all occurrences in the particular sentences of analysis.

At first, it is needed to mention typical examples of the ability meaning.

*I **can** help you tomorrow.* (Appendix, example 100)

*My grandma **could** speak five languages.* (Appendix, example 105)

*I **am able to** stand on one leg.* (Appendix, example 70)

Each of all three examples are occurred with *can*, *could* and *to be able to*. We use *can*, *could* and *to be able to* in almost all situations connected with ability. We can generally paraphrase that someone or something has *ability* to do something or less or more synonymous with *capable of* and *to know how to*. In the present tense the using of *to be able to* is less formal and less usual than to use *can*. It can be seen in this example: *I **am able to** speak English.* (Appendix, example 66) *To be able to* and *can* are not identical in their using. It can be explained in the following examples: *I **was able to** read when I was 5 years old.* (Appendix, example 55) *He was able to save him when he got into trouble.* (Appendix, example 63) Both sentences express ability. The first one is related to general ability and it could be possible to use *could* as well but the second example is related to the single action or event and only *to be able to* must be used in this sentence. General ability occurs in 10 examples and specific events in 4 examples.

As we learnt from the theoretical part, the ability meaning is often limited to animate subject. In 52 cases of analyzed modal verbs are represented by animate subjects. The ability meaning can be used with an inanimate subject in the case when it is represented in figurative meaning. It means that the inanimate subject is represented with the animate subject. This finding is represented by following example:

*The GM factory **can** produce cars with low consummation.* (Appendix, example 94) *The GM factory is able to produce cars with low consummation.*

The above mentioned example is connected with ability, where the inanimate subject is used. In this case, the term *The GM factory* is represented by the animate subject as subgroup of people working in the factory. In the appendix there are 3 examples related to this statement.

The following examples illustrate the connection of the animate subject or human subject with the ability meaning:

*Jack thinks he **is able to** repair it. (Appendix, example 69) He thinks he is able to repair it.*

The next presentation of the ability meaning is the active voice how it was mentioned in the previous subchapter. It is illustrated in the following examples:

*Our son **can** count to ten. (Appendix, example 99) He is able to do it.*

As we learnt from the theoretical part when a subject performs an action that is expressed by the verb, then it is represented by the active voice. We say that the subject is the agent or doer of the action. When the subject is not the doer of the action then it is connected with a passive voice. The ability meaning is always connected with an active voice. The subject that is connected with the verb in the passive voice loses its possibility validity of ability. For this finding it is valid that the active voice is closely connected with the ability meaning. All examples connected with ability meaning are represented by this characteristic.

The meaning ability is sometimes related to skill as well. Skill means to do some activity well or to have a good knowledge of something. Skill is expressed in the following example: *My grandma **could** speak five languages. (Appendix, example 105)* This sentence can be paraphrased as *My grandma had the knowledge/skill of speaking five languages.* The meaning of skill is occurred in 12 more examples in Appendix. In this cases the skill or knowledge can be expressed by *can*, *could* and *to be able to* and always with animate subject.

How it was mentioned in the theoretical part *can* is used for present tense and *could* for past tense. *To be able to* is used in all grammatical tenses. Where it is not possible to use *can* or *could* we must use *to be able to*. There are 7 examples of these types in appendix.

The above mentioned findings indicate that the ability meaning that occurred in 52 cases of analyzed modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to* is connected with an animate subject, active voice and both negative and positive forms. It is due to that the ability meaning is often limited by the context. The ability meaning only relates to deontic modality.

Permission meaning of can, could

Permission meaning was represented by 50 out of 156 modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to*. Permission meaning is always connected with deontic modality and it occurs with active voice, both positive and negative forms and questions, when we ask for permission. In this chapter several examples will be analyzed and these individual characteristics will be mentioned and illustrated on examples.

At first, we mention one of the characteristic of this meaning. These attributes are inanimate subjects and they express restriction. It can be seen in the in following occurrences: *Cars can park here.* (Appendix, example 109) *Cars are allowed to park here.* The subject is the inanimate and this restriction can be paraphrased as *to permit* or *to allow to*. When we exam this sentence thoroughly we recognize that there is an authority marked in this sentence. The inanimate subject is represented by cars.

Another example illustrates an animate subject and restriction.

Can I drive your car tomorrow? (Appendix, example 153) *Do you give me permission to drive your car?*

The speaker asks somebody, a human authority, for permission. For identifying the authority it is needed a context. Moreover, permission meaning is represented by a question and the subject by the 1st person singular or plural which are important indicators of the permission meaning. For supporting these statements there are some more examples in Appendix.

To conclude, this meaning of *can* is least common. It is supported by the fact that the permission meaning is generally least common. The fact that the permission meaning is restricted to some contextual factors i.e. animate subjects may also contributes to its low occurrence.

The above mentioned findings indicate that the permission meaning that occurred in 50 cases of analyzed modal verbs *can*, *could*. There is no occurrence of the periphrastic form *to be able to*. It is due to the fact that for paraphrases of *can* and *could* are used *to be allowed to*. The permission meaning is connected with both inanimate and animate subjects, questions, restriction and sometimes it is limited by the context. The permission meaning only relates to deontic modality.

CONCLUSION

This research paper focused on the competition of the modal auxiliary verbs *can/could* and its periphrastic form *to be able to*. The main aim of this paper was to analyze the use of the modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to* in 156 excerpts. What is more, this thesis dealt with the meanings of the modal verbs and epistemic as well as deontic kinds of modality.

There are three main types of modality in English: epistemic, deontic and dynamic. Most linguists distinguish these three types of modality and some of them declare the term mood in the same sense as modality. Most modal verbs can express all of these types of modality. This paper described and compared some conceptions of modality and subdivided them into three main types: epistemic, deontic and dynamic. The basic characteristics of epistemic and deontic modality were compared, taken into account and used as theoretical background of the analysis. Furthermore, the modal verb *may* was commented on its specification and compared with the modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to*.

Now it is crucial to answer the questions which were carried out for the purpose of this paper. The first question was which of the modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to* is used the most frequently in English. The answer is that from the modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to* is the modal verb *can* used the most frequently. *Can* occurred in 89 examples from 156. The second most frequently used modal verb is *could*. *Could* occurred in 46 cases. The least used modal verb is the periphrastic form *to be able to*. The periphrastic form occurred in 21 cases. The second question was whether it is more used epistemic or deontic modality in English in the connection with modal verbs *can*, *could* and *to be able to*. This analysis has carried out that the modal verbs occurred as epistemic in 38 cases and as deontic in 118 cases. Thus, the deontic modality was used more frequently than the epistemic modality.

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SUMMARY IN CZECH

Tato bakalářská práce zkoumá konkurenci modálních sloves moci/mohl a jejich opisné formy být schopen. Cílem práce je provést výzkum těchto modálních sloves, které vyjadřují jistotní a dispoziční modalitu.

Práce je rozdělena na dvě části, teoretickou a praktickou. Teoretická část se zabývá studiem odborné literatury týkající se sloves a jejich gramatických kategorií. Největší část je věnována popisu modalit a jejich jednotlivých druhů. Modální slovesa *can*, *could* a *to be able to* jsou popsána podle druhů významů modalit a jejich jednotlivých významů, konkrétně možnosti (possibility), schopnosti (ability) a dovolení (permission). V jednotlivých kapitolách jsou tyto významy popsány a ilustrovány na jednotlivých příkladech. V závěru teoretické části práce popisuje rozdíly a podobnosti slovesa *can* a *may*, přestože se jejich významy mohou v některých situacích překrývat.

Vlastní analýza výskytu modálních sloves *can*, *could* a jeho opisných forem *to be able to* byla popsána na základě excerptů, které byly vybrány náhodně a metod, kterými byly zkoumány. V analýze byly objasněny všechny dostupné poznatky uvedených modálních sloves. Výskyt modálních sloves podle jejich individuálních významů možnosti, schopnosti a dovolení byly zkoumány na 156 příkladech. Výsledkem zkoumání sloves *can* a *could* se došlo k závěru, že se vyskytují ve všech třech významech a jsou obsaženy jak v modalitě jistotní, tak i dispoziční. Opisná forma *to be able to* se vyskytuje pouze s významem schopnosti a je spojena pouze s modalitou dispoziční.

V poslední části bakalářské práce byly shrnuty všechny výsledky analýzy, které se týkaly četnosti výskytu jednotlivých modálních sloves, v závislosti na jistotní a dispoziční modalitě. Modální slovesa *can*, *could* a opisná forma *to be able to* se vyskytuje v 38 příkladech v závislosti na jistotní modalitě a 118 příkladů je závislých na dispoziční modalitě. Závěry byly vyvozeny na základě prostudované odborné literatury a následovně provedené analýzy.

Appendix

Possibility:

1. This **can't** be Jack's car. He doesn't have any car.
2. You **can't** be in bed.
3. You **can** be in bed.
4. That **can** be a problem.
5. It **can** be done better.
6. You **can't** tell me the truth.
7. I **couldn't** come with her.
8. We **couldn't** get there by bus.
9. We **could** discuss it later.
10. I think it **could** be taken later.
11. I think she **could** go shopping.
12. It **can't** be Jane at the door. She's in Italy.
13. It **couldn't** be Jane at the door. She's in Italy.
14. You **can't** have dinner. It's too early.
15. I will bring my jacket, it **could** be very cold.
16. He **can** come tomorrow.
17. Nothing **can** happen.
18. He **can't** have been there.
19. You **can't** be at home.
20. You **can** go by bus.
21. That **can't** be true.
22. I'm afraid you **can't** just park here.
23. I **can't** come tonight.
24. You **can't** go there.
25. You **can't** talk to her like that.
26. He **can't** be at home now. He must be in hospital.
27. He **couldn't** believe what he heard.
28. It **couldn't** be true!
29. He **can't** have been at home then.
30. He **couldn't** be there.
31. I **can** drive you.

32. He **can** be there.
33. She **can** be arrogant.
34. Students **can** study for free.
35. It **can** be very hot next week.
36. It **could** be cold in the evening.
37. It **couldn't** have been better.
38. The future **could** be better.
39. He **could** write this letter.
40. He **could** have applied for this job.
41. It **could** be him over there.
42. When the car breaks, it **can** be taken to the service.
43. This **can** be used for this work.
44. This plane **could** be repaired by the end of this week.
45. She **can** pass an exam tomorrow.
46. **Can** it be true?
47. The weather **could** improve.
48. Old people **can** feel lonely.
49. That **could** be done soon.
50. This answer **can't** be written in this way.
51. He **could** have applied for this job if he had had a higher qualification.
52. He **could** stay with her.
53. If the weather was a nice, we **could** play tennis.
54. This letter **could** be sent tomorrow.

Ability: to be able to

55. I **was able to** read when I was 5 years old.
56. We were lucky **to be able to** spend our holiday in the country.
57. He **is able to** drive again after the accident.
58. The children of six **are able to** read.
59. You aren't going **to be able to** make it in time.
60. He **was able to** leave the hospital only two weeks after he had a car accident.
61. I won't **be able to** learn everything.
62. **Are you able to** write a formal letter?

63. He was **able to** save him when he got into trouble.
64. One day people will **be able to** fly to Mars.
65. Will people **be able to** simple count in the future?
66. I **am able to** speak English
67. I won't **be able to** learn everything.
68. They **were not able to** identify him.
69. Jack thinks he **is able to** repair it.
70. I **am able to** stand on one leg.
71. How long have you **been able to** speak English?
72. I think my computer is broken. I **am not able to** send my emails.
73. **Are you able to** come tonight?
74. The children **are able to** read at the age of six.
75. I **couldn't** speak English very well but I **was able to** ask about the way to the hotel.

Ability: can could:

76. Look, I **can** run fast
77. He **could** lift the box, but I **couldn't**.
78. He **couldn't** read when he was 5 years old.
79. I **can't** decide what car to buy.
80. I'm sure you **can't** do it.
81. I **could** get you a drink, if you want.
82. We **can't** afford to buy this telephone it costs a lot of money.
83. Even good students **can** make mistakes.
84. **Can** you draw a dog?
85. He **could** swim when he was three years old.
86. I **can** swim.
87. **Can** you speak Spanish?
88. I **could** make a better cake if I had original ingredients.
89. He **can** run.
90. We **cannot** play golf.
91. I **can't** find my documents.
92. I **can't** pick up this bag, it's too heavy.

93. I **can't** go tomorrow.
94. The GM factory **can** produce cars with low consumption.
95. We **can't** afford to pay for this car.
96. Perhaps we **can** meet next weekend.
97. I had some free time yesterday, so I **could** write a few letters.
98. She **can** sing.
99. Our son **can** count to ten.
100. I **can** help you tomorrow.
101. **Can** you usually remember your dreams?
102. Film companies **could** produce more interesting films for demanding viewers.
103. I **couldn't** swim when I was a child.
104. State schools **can** offer better education than private schools.
105. My grandma **could** speak five languages

Permission:

106. **Can** I come to your place to watch the game tonight?
107. **Can** I come home?
108. He **can** go now.
109. Cars **can** park here.
110. Bags **can** be put down here.
111. You **can** use my car if you want.
112. **Could** I sit next to you?
113. You **can't** bring food in here.
114. **Could** I help you?
115. I **could** give you a lift to the bus station.
116. **Could** I get you a drink?
117. You **can** take me home.
118. **Can** I stay?
119. **Can** you tell me the truth?
120. Who **can** tell me the right answer?
121. We **could** do what we wanted.
122. **Can** you open the window, please?

123. **Can** I have two apples, please?
124. **Could** you take a massage, please?
125. **Could** I have my bill please?
126. **Can** I borrow your dictionary?
127. **Can** you make a cup of tea, please?
128. **Can** you help me with washing the windows?
129. I'm 18 years old. I **can** drive a car now.
130. **Can** I ask a question, please?
131. **Can** I ask you something?
132. You **can** go home now if you like.
133. You **can** borrow my car if you like.
134. We **can** go out to have dinner whenever we want.
135. **Can** I take your umbrella? Of course you can.
136. **Could** I borrow this dictionary, please? Well, I need it actually.
137. **Can** you come this afternoon?
138. We **can** go to the cinema.
139. We **could** go to the theatre.
140. We **can** listen to the music in the evenings.
141. **Could** you pass me the salt, please?
142. Marry, **could** you come to my office, please?
143. You **can** wait here if you want.
144. Do you think you **could** lend me some money until next month?
145. You **can** bring a friend to the party if you want.
146. Students **can** choose from these topics.
147. **Can** I do it for you?
148. **I can** give you a lift to the bus station.
149. **I can** do that for you.
150. **Can** we leave now?
151. **Could** I use your mobile?
152. Children **can** play here.
153. **Can** I drive your car tomorrow?
154. **Can** we do it later?
155. You **can** leave if you are in a hurry.
156. You **can** go to sleep if you are tired.