An Analysis of the Emphasis of Modal Auxiliaries in English Communication

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Abstract: With the aggravation of globalization, all countries and regions in the world not only communicate more frequently in economy and culture, but also in thought and language. As an international language, mastering English has become a trend. This paper mainly discusses when and how modal auxiliary words are stressed in general affirmative sentences, introduces the relationship between meaning and stress of sentences, and the stress of basic auxiliary words in negative sentences and interrogative sentences.

1. Introduction

Palmer defines modality as the grammaticalization of the speaker's attitudes and opinions, and regards subjectivity as a fundamental criterion to measure modality. The principle of increasing subjectivity is embodied by dividing modality into dynamic modality, obligation modality and cognitive modality[1]. The degree of subjectivity shows the semantic (usage) differences of the three modalities, and also determines the syntactic expression of modal auxiliary words. But subjectivity is actually the linguistic purpose of the speaker, not the cognitive basis of modal auxiliary words. The cognitive basis for determining modality expression is interpersonal power relations and expectations of participants in speech situations[2]. As the main means of expressing modality in language, the semantics of modal auxiliary is mainly determined by the power structure among the participants in the discourse. Another determinant of the compulsory modality is the expectation of the participants'attitudes towards the relevant acts; the cognitive usage of modal verbs is the pragmatic reinforcement of their compulsory usage, not the metaphorical projection[3]. In order to better express and understand each other's thoughts and feelings in foreign conversation, English learners are increasingly aware of the importance of spoken language and related intonation, rhythm, stress, facial expressions and body language. However, this paper mainly analyses and discusses the stress of modal auxiliary words and basic auxiliary words in spoken English.

2. The Theory of English Emotional Auxiliaries

The study of modality shows that modality auxiliaries convey at least two related meanings: understanding modality meaning and obligation modality meaning; the former expresses the speaker's recognition of the authenticity of propositions[4]; the latter expresses the necessity or possibility of the actors'actions, such as obligations and permission. Palmer clearly distinguishes the third modal usage, i.e. dynamic modality, which expresses the ability, desire or will of the agent. In addition, from the perspective of subject orientation, some researchers can only distinguish between agent-oriented modality and speaker-oriented modality[5]. The former is called root modality, which includes the obligation modality and dynamic modality in the foregoing classification, and the latter refers to cognitive modality. It is worth mentioning that the fundamental and cognitive uses of modal meanings are expressed by the same kind of modal words in all languages of the world[6].

In traditional linguistic studies, language studies focus on language itself, semantics and syntax, pragmatics and extralinguistic phenomena are separated from each other, ignoring the study of the cognitive basis of language[7]. Cognitive linguistics based on experiential philosophy holds that meaning is based on experience, meaning is conceptualization, and emphasizes the relationship between language and human psychological representation. Language has three functional levels:

pragmatic level, semantic level and syntactic level[8]. These three functional levels are interrelated, have different degrees of structural stability, and are a process of constant standardization. The syntactic level has the highest degree of structural stability and regularity, followed by the semantic level, while the pragmatic level has the lowest degree of structural stability and regularity. Generally speaking, semantic conventions are based on pragmatic conventions, while syntactic conventions are based on semantic conventions[9].

3. Emphasis of Modal Auxiliaries in English Communication

3.1. Rights relations and language expressions

Language is not a self-contained system, but a tool used in social context. The social context is partly determined by the power relationship between the participants in the discourse. We believe that this kind of social power relationship is mainly expressed by modal terms in language, and the subject of modal terms is modal auxiliary words[10]. In cognitive semantics, image schema is used to describe the semantics of modal words. We think that the semantics of modal words can be described by power relations and expectations. Firstly, we find out the cognitive representation of typical speech situations and generate typical language expressions.

Modality auxiliaries have two distinct usages: obligatory usage and cognitive usage. As for the relationship between them, Sweetser and Talmy both hold that the cognitive usage of modal auxiliary is a metaphorical extension of its obligatory usage. Traugott believes that the cognitive usage of modal auxiliaries is a pragmatic reinforcement of conversational meaning. We believe that conversational implicature can also be regarded as an expectation for three reasons: first, both are not explicit; second, both can be used as the premise of reasoning; third, the validity of both can be eliminated by explicit or stronger expectations.

The fact can not be the speaker or the hearer, so it can only play the role of the third person. Unlike people as agents, evidence itself does not have an attitude, but only a strong or weak difference, that is, the amount of information that supports a conclusion or opinion. The strength of evidence determines its power. In compulsory usage, since the expressive goal of modal auxiliary is an act, discourse itself is a speech act. On the contrary, epistemic usage expresses the state of events, so the function of discourse containing epistemic usage of modal auxiliaries is to convey, so epistemic usage does not involve the power relationship between the speaker and the listener and the corresponding commands or requirements. It is precisely because the function of cognitive usage is to reproduce, the discourse containing modal auxiliary mainly indicates the third person or non-personal, and the obligatory usage of modal auxiliary in speech acts is only related to the first person or the second person.

3.2. Common sentences of modal auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries can reflect the speaker's judgment on whether or not the expression is true and possible. For example, can and could are used to express ability, such as Can you finish this work tonight?

Theoretical possibilities, but not necessarily immediately. "Sometimes" Man cannot live without air. Can I go now?Yes,can.could can also be used to express requests, with euphemistic tone, mainly used in questions,

Can is an attitude of surprise, doubt and disbelief. It is a kind of speculation (mainly used in negative sentences, interrogative sentences or exclamatory sentences). "Can + have done" used in negative sentences and interrogative sentences to express doubts or uncertainties about past actions. "Can + have done" can be used in various sentence patterns.

May and Might are used 1. to indicate permission. When expressing a request or permission, Might is more euphemistic than May's tone. When answering a negative question, mustn't should be used to express "no", "prohibit" and "stop". For example: You May Drive The car.

3.3. The emphasis of modal auxiliaries in English communication

As we all know, modal auxiliary words in English are mainly can, may, must, will, shall, etc. (including their past forms). These words are usually not stressed in sentences, but there are three situations in general affirmative sentences. Look at the following sentences with music and will in Table1:

Table 1 The following sentences with music and will

sentence	sentence
Sentence1	You must sign on the dotted line.
Sentence2	.You must sign or I will kill you.
Sentence3	You must be crazy to do it like that !
Sentence4	He will be there in about ten minutes.
Sentence5	We will finish the task on time despite the enormous difficulties.
Sentence6	The dog will do such awful things just when its master is trying to eat his dinner !

Modal verbs used in example sentences 1 and 1A are usually pronounced [M st] and [wil], not stressed. In such cases, modal auxiliaries are generally not stressed. The will pronunciation in 1a, like other modal verbs, is often continuous with the previous pronoun. In fact, this is also one of the basic situations of non-stressed auxiliary words.

In the sentences of example 2, 3 and 3a, modal auxiliaries encounter special situations, and their meanings have changed. If the meaning of music is related to obligation, it is obvious that Example 3 does not express this meaning.

Likewise, will is most often used to express some kind of prediction about the future. But will in Example 3a is used to express dissatisfaction with the dog's past behavior. In these two sentences, modal auxiliaries must be re-read, which seems to be one of the ways that native speakers use modal auxiliaries to express themselves naturally in the second sense rather than in the first sense. There is a close relationship between stress and meaning in sentences containing modal auxiliary words. The summary is as follows:

Normal meaning +normal situation =probably unstressed

Normal meaning +emphatic situation =probably unstressed

Special meaning =almost inevitably stressed

All the examples discussed above are affirmative sentences, but what about the pronunciation of auxiliary words in negative sentences and interrogative sentences? The auxiliary words analyzed and discussed here include modal auxiliaries and primary auxiliaries "be" and "have" together with pronouns (dummy operator"do).

Negative utterances:There are many ways to construct negative sentences in English. One of them is to add negative words into sentences, such as "never", "seldom", "rarely", etc. These words have little influence on the pronunciation of auxiliary words, but the most commonly used word "not" in negative sentences has a great influence, especially when the auxiliary words and their abbreviations are stressed without exception. Read the following examples and test the stress of the auxiliary words to understand the meaning of the sentence.

I must get up earlier to catch the early train.

I mustn't get up earlier.

The first "must" two possible pronunciation forms [M st] or [mst] depend on whether "must" needs to be emphasized and on the speaker's will. The second has no choice." Mustn't"[musnt]

Interrogative utterances.There are many forms of interrogative sentences in English, but here we mainly discuss the general interrogative sentences. Other kinds of interrogative sentences seem to have no obvious influence on the stress of auxiliary words. In general interrogative sentences, people can selectively stress auxiliary words without affecting the meaning of the sentence. Compare the following examples:

They have finished reading those books.

Have you finished reading the book ?

In the first sentence, there is no special emphasis on the sound of [h v] without any choice, and

there is no emphasis on it. In the second sentence, "have" has two pronunciations [H v] or [HV], but this does not have any effect on the actual meaning of the question, but it may occur due to different people, different groups and regions.

Generally speaking, the classroom design of oral English teaching is the key to improve students'oral English level. According to MacIntyre's model of L2 willingness to communicate, L2 willingness to communicate is the most direct factor that decides whether learners can participate in L2 communication eventually. Therefore, the goal of L2 acquisition should be to enhance their willingness to communicate. Any L2 teaching that fails to produce students'willingness to communicate is a failure. Therefore, teachers should design effective oral classroom teaching programs and organize students to actively participate in communicative activities. The application of cooperative learning in oral English teaching can change the situation of students'passive acceptance of language knowledge in the past, and cultivate students' thinking ability, self-esteem, self-confidence, social ability and so on. Common cooperative learning methods include group discussion, group activities, classroom debates and role-playing. These methods are helpful for learners to complete second learning and self-improvement, that is, learners'self-recognition and mastery of the teaching target language - communicating with other learners in the group - learning from other learners. -- Referring to other people's opinions, self-learning is being revised to achieve the ultimate understanding of teaching objectives. In addition, the task that students need to complete in oral communication interaction can be completed not only in class, but also in extra-curricular time or in the second classroom.

4. Conclusion

The core semantics of modal auxiliaries are determined by the social power structure in speech situations. The expectations of different discourse participants towards each other and the social power structure determine the usage of modal auxiliaries as well as their semantics. Nowadays, there are more and more oral communication in English. Therefore, in the process of English teaching and learning, it is not enough to teach and acquire the rules of pronunciation only in theory. The learners should concentrate on learning and practical communication, and train more to understand the real rich content spoken by the speaker, so as to achieve the goal of learning and using English purpose.

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