

Talmy's "greater modal system":
Fitting in verbo-nominal constructions with
chance(s)

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1. Introduction

- Focus on *chance(s)*: “semiotic noun” (Halliday 1985), “shell noun” (Schmid 2000)

OEDonline on *chance* (< Old French; attested from ME onwards)

- “The falling out or happening of events; the way in which things fall out; **fortune**; case.”
- “An **opportunity** that comes in any one's way. Often const. *of*. ”
- “A **possibility** or **probability** of anything happening: as distinct from a certainty: often in plural, with a number expressed.”
- In “phrases”: “To stand a (fair, good) chance”; “Is there any chance of....?”; “To be in with a chance”

1. Introduction

- *Chance(s)* in **verbo-nominal patterns** in which it takes a complement (clause) (constructional templates)

EXIST	N	complement
HAVE	N	complement
N	COP	complement

Formal realizations of complement:

- *that*-clause
- *to*-infinitive
- *of*-PP → *of* + V-ing; *of* + action NP
- *for*-PP → *for* + action NP

There BE DET ADJ *chance(s)* **of/to/(that)**

*You have got the midterm election coming up here. My sense is that there's a very good **chance** the Republicans are going to take back the Senate (WBO)*

Have DET ADJ *chance(s)* **of/to/(that)**

*Terry claims that he is being fitted up by a corrupt policeman and thinks he has no **chance** of proving his innocence in court (WBO)*

DET *chances* **are (that)**

*if you 're really interested in the course then **chances** are you'll go out and buy the books (WBO)*

- cf. *doubt/question/way/wonder/need/fear* + complement clause/relative clause: Kjellmer 1998; Van linden, Davidse & Brems 2011; Davidse, De Wolf & Van linden 2015; Saad et al. 2011; Brems 2015; Gentens et al. 2016; Van linden et al. 2016

1. Introduction

We **aim** to show that verbo-nominal patterns with *chance(s)* exceed the functional reach of modal auxiliaries, as they exhibit **3 types of uses**:

1) They are functionally equivalent to modal aux: → possible worlds

- **Grammatical uses** expressing different types of modality (dynamic, deontic and epistemic)

*Since he was quite unable to run he had no **chance** of outstripping his pursuer , so he resigned himself to imminent recapture . (WBO UKwrit)*

2) They exceed the functional reach of modal aux:

- **Lexical uses**

*Many also devote inside pages to the policies and characters of the three contenders, and assess their **chances** of winning (WBO UKspok)*

- **Third category**: 'caused modality'

*While executing their children 's killers would not bring back their loved ones, it would at least act as a catharsis, giving all concerned a better **chance** to move on with their lives (WBO UKwrit)*

Outline for today

1. Introduction
2. Data and methods
3. Grammatical uses
 - 3.1 Dynamic modality
 - 3.2 Deontic modality
 - 3.3 Epistemic modality
4. Beyond modal auxiliaries: lexical uses
5. Beyond Modal auxiliaries: 'caused modality'
6. Conclusions

2. Data and methods

- Queries run on **WordBanks Online** subcorpora (57 million word synchronic corpus)
- British English subcorpora:
 - **Spoken:** Brspok
 - **Written:** Brbooks, Brmags, Brnews, Brephem, Times, Sunnow
- Queries targeted the lemma *chance*

query	Absolute frequency [subcorpora]
<i>chance</i> in Query box	59,467 [6 written UK subcorpora]
<i>chance</i> in Query box	5,060 [brspok]

- Analysis of 250 random examples with complements for written and spoken each (500 hits)
 - Syntactic variables: complement type, subject complement, number of N, determiner, modifier, voice, polarity
 - Semantic variables: overall meaning

3. Grammatical uses

3.1 Dynamic modality

- traditionally: ability or capacity of subject participant (von Wright 1951b)
- generally (Palmer 1979: 3–4, 1990: ch. 5–6; Nuyts 2005, 2006):
 - abilities/possibilities, or needs/necessities
 - inherent in participants of actions, or in situations
 - no attitudinal assessment (i.e., no speaker attitude)

(1) *It **is essential** to keep emptying the bladder if you are to flush out the germs.* (CB)

(2) *Will I ever **be able to** have a baby?* (WB)

(3) *Karen **had to** swerve to avoid something on the road.* (WB)

3. Grammatical uses

3.1 Dynamic modality

- 4) He [i.e. Saddam Hussein] has caused a superpower [i.e., the USA] to hesitate to use force against him. And he now has a **chance** to present himself as the only Arab leader who can compel the world to take the Palestine problem seriously. (brspok)
[participant-imposed possibility: he can now present himself as ...]
- 5) with er the monkeys [...] they'd got **chances** to swing to the trees and that sort of thing (brspok)
[participant-imposed possibility: they could swing to the trees]
- 6) It's such a fab feeling having a make-over with everyone fussing over you. I love everything about this outfit but what makes it more special is that I'd never get the **chance** to wear something like this back home on a night out. (sunnow)
[participant-imposed impossibility: I would never be able to wear ...]

3. Grammatical uses

3.2 Deontic modality

- traditionally: permission and obligation
(von Wright 1951a, 1951b; Lyons 1977: 823–841)
- more recently (Nuyts et al. 2010; Van linden 2012): distinction between
 - obligation, permission, advice (directive meaning) (1)
 - desirability (attitudinal meaning) (2)-(3)

(1) *Mistress Philippa and Geoffrey **had best** stay together.* (BNC)

(2) *We **must** not under-estimate the phenomenal and accelerating pace at which the world is changing.* (WB)

(3) *we feel it **is** more **appropriate** to give the task of pulling the threads together to one person.* (CB)

3. Grammatical uses

3.2 Deontic modality

- 4) But Shearer did not rule out the possibility of making the pairing work. He added: "Myself and Patrick should be able to form a good partnership -- if we get the **chance** to play together."
(sunnow)
[permission: if we are allowed to play together (by the coach)]
- 5) What about erm do you think while you were at school there was anything that you were n't allowed to do because you were a girl? -- Mm . <tc text="pause"/> E as well we had the **chance** to play football (brspok)
[permission: we were allowed to play football at school]
- 6) It would have given access to the institutions' expertise who would have been able to advise President Gorbachov on his programme to convert the Soviet Union from a centrally planned economy to a market orientated one. But there would have been no **chance** of loans from the institutions -- they are restricted to full members. (brspok)
[absence of permission: The Sovjet Union would not be allowed to get loans from the World Bank]

3. Grammatical uses

3.3 Epistemic modality

- speaker's (or someone else's) assessment of an SoA in terms of likelihood (to what extent the SoA applies in the world or not)
(Palmer 1979: ch. 3, 2001: 24–35; Van der Auwera and Plungian 1998: 81; Nuyts 2006: 6)

(1) *We most **probably** drank more two years ago than we have this season.* (WB)

(2) ***There's no doubt**, Peter Mandelson is a disaster.* (WB)

(3) *"I was a consummate fool," Wolfe said. "I made every possible mistake, but Milos appeared from somewhere with a rifle and a pistol. He **must have killed** three of them." Five, he said, when he told me the story later.* (CB, ukbooks)

3. Grammatical uses

3.3 Epistemic modality

- 4) Q. How does it seem this particular issue may be resolved ? GREEN : There is a good **chance** that someone in Parliament may yet call for a vote of no confidence in Mr Sacher. (brspok)
[epistemic probability: someone may well yet call for a vote]
- 5) I mean fair enough if you're really interested in the course then **chances** are you'll go out and buy the books (brspok)
[epistemic probability: it is likely you go out and buy the books]
- 6) With between 13 and 14 per cent of the vote they [the Communists] are the second biggest political group nationwide. They know they stand no **chance** of being included in the future coalition government. That will most likely be a matter between the Civic Forum and the Christian Democrats. (brspok)
[epistemic impossibility: they know they won't be included]

3. Grammatical uses

- Conceptual framework of **FORCE DYNAMICS** (Talmy 1988, 2000) applied to modal auxiliaries: entities interact with respect to forces and barriers

ROOT meanings:

- **e.g. *cannot***: a typically sentient subject (the Agonist) is inclined towards the action expressed by the infinitive, but some opposing factor (force) blocks the realisation of the event
- **e.g. *pouvoir*** in its ability sense: “The force stored in the locus of potency [=subject participant] allows the latter to overcome the resistance (or force) coming from the activity profiled in the landmark, and therefore perform an occurrence of that process” (Achard 1998: 143).

EPISTEMIC meanings: sociophysical forces and barriers are metaphorically mapped onto premises in the world of reasoning

- e.g. ***must*** is taken as indicating an *epistemic force* applied by some *body of premises* (the only thing that can apply epistemic force), which compels the *speaker* (or people in general) to reach the *conclusion* embodied in the sentence. (Sweetser 1990: 64)

grammatical uses of VNPs with *chance(s)* can also be described in force-dynamic terms

4. Beyond modal auxiliaries: lexical uses

- Core modals in English have lost their original lexical use
e.g. *Can* < *cunnon* 'to know' *I can a noble tale* (c1386 Chaucer OEDonline)
- Verbo-nominal patterns with *chance(s)* can still be used lexically:
 - 1) *Many also devote inside pages to the policies and characters of the three contenders, and assess their **chances** of winning* (WBOspok)
 - 2) *Let us say that team A is playing team B on a neutral ground and that team A has a 70 per cent **chance** of victory and team B has 30 per cent .* (WBOwrit)
 - 3) *From Cairo, Jeffery Phillips reports : producers in Cairo and the ending of the hostile media campaigns. However, the **chances** of this plan getting beyond the discussion stage seemed dashed today when the official Baghdad press launched a strong personal attack upon the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah.* (WBOspok)
 - 4) *The gold medalists from the Delhi Games now stand no **chance** of a medal this time round.* (WBOspok)

5. Beyond modal auxiliaries: ‘caused modality’

- Verbo-nominal patterns with *chance(s)* can express ‘caused modality’ in augmented event structures (adding a (positive/negative) causative operator to the basic modal meaning)
- Cf. “greater modal system” (Talmy 1988: 81): includes modal auxiliaries, e.g. (2)
- as well as (lexical) **causative** verbs (e.g. *make, let, have, help*), e.g. (1):
 - **syntactically** similar to the core modals: take a bare infinitival complement
 - **semantically** similar: have force-dynamic reference
 - different in **verb argument structure**: code the Antagonist as subject, while modals code the Agonist as subject

(1) I **made** him **push** the car to the garage.

(2) He **must** push the car to the garage.

5. Beyond modal auxiliaries: 'caused modality'

Modal type	Basic pattern	Augmented pattern: extra argument (Causer)
Epistemic	<p><i>It has declared that it'll take account of legitimate Soviet security worries. And there's every chance the NATO summit will unveil a revised military strategy for the Alliance (WBO)</i></p> <p><i>But erm then if you use er flux correction at the surface erm <M01/> Mm. <M02/> chances are you'll still have a thermohaline circulation and things like that (WBO)</i></p>	<p><i>chairman John Yorkston has admitted Richard Gough's plan to draft in Archie Knox as his right-hand man has boosted his chances of being Pars gaffer. (WBO) (increase likelihood: make more likely)</i></p> <p><i>Just seven days earlier, the White Feather had blown the chance of a draw for his relegation-racked side at Newcastle by having a penalty brilliantly saved by Shay Given. (WBO) (decrease likelihood: make less likely)</i></p>
Dynamic	<p><i>Since he was quite unable to run he had no chance of outstripping his pursuer, so he resigned himself to imminent recapture. (WBO)</i></p> <p><i>they'd got chances to swing to the trees and that sort of thing (WBO, brspok)</i></p>	<p><i>but fears a dispute over a transfer fee might scupper any chance he has of making the move permanent. (WBO) (preclude: make impossible)</i></p> <p><i>While executing their children's killers would not bring back their loved ones, it would at least act as a catharsis, giving all concerned a better chance to move on with their lives (WBO) (enable: make possible)</i></p>
Deontic	<p><i>However, the paper says, in an historic move, the Soviet Union will be given the chance to join the International Monetary Fund (WBO)</i></p> <p><i>It is BBC policy that all parties to a contentious matter have a fair chance to make their points within the confines of programme format (WBO)</i></p>	<p><i>Vinogradov 's difficult task was to restore the Kirov 's morale by providing new choreography alongside the 'classics' and by giving impatient young dancers a chance to prove themselves. (WBO) (allow)</i></p> <p><i>The North Korean premier said he would give the South one more chance to sit round the negotiating table. (WBO, brspok). (allow once more)</i></p>

6. Conclusions

- Verbo-nominal patterns with *chance(s)* ‘enrich’ the “greater modal system”
 - Onomasiologically: new patterns that are functionally equivalent to basic modal auxiliaries
 - ‘Functionally’: display ‘caused modal’ meanings
 - Show layering (Hopper 1991) of lexical, grammatical and ‘caused’ modal uses
- Support for Talmy’s “greater modal system”: VNPs evidence conceptual connection between basic modal and caused modal meanings that is at the basis of this greater system
- Importance of negation, voice, animacy of subject, modifiers, determiners in these patterns
 - Not lack of decategorialization (Hopper 1991) affecting their modal grammatical status (cf. Keizer 2016 on *(the) fact is (that)*)
 - ADJ N // ADV Mod AUX *Have a good chance/ May well be*

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