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Modal Verbs CAN and MAY in Newspaper Discourse on Brexit

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## **ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE** (projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

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### **Zásady pro vypracování**

Cílem bakalářské práce je prostudovat užití modálních sloves CAN a MAY v mediálním diskurzu s tematikou brexitu. Studentka nejprve na základě relevantní odborné literatury vydefiniuje koncept modality a stručně uvede hlavní kategorie modality. Dále podrobně popíše modální slovesa CAN a MAY z hlediska morfo-syntaktického a sémantického, se zaměřením na vymezení faktorů, na jejichž základě lze různé významy těchto sloves odlišit. Následně představí a charakterizuje diskurz novinových zpráv, jeho funkce a typicky používané jazykové prostředky. Na základě analýzy korpusu vybraných článků bude zkoumaná modální slovesa interpretovat s ohledem na kontextové faktory. Na závěr objasní užití a interpretace sloves CAN a MAY v závislosti na funkcích mediálního diskurzu a zhodnotí míru možného vlivu modality na to, jak je brexit čtenářům prezentován.

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## **ANNOTATION**

The bachelor thesis deals with the topic of modal verbs CAN and MAY and their respective secondary forms COULD and MIGHT, specifically their usage in newspaper discourse on Brexit. In the first part of the thesis, information regarding modality, aforementioned modal verbs, newspaper discourse and the events of Brexit will be provided. In the analytical part, occurrences of mentioned modal verbs, as seen in The Guardian and The Times, will be analyzed. The purpose of this study is to evaluate how British newspapers reported on Brexit in a specific time frame, through the usage of modal verbs.

## **KEYWORDS**

modality, modal verbs, can, may, could, might, Brexit, newspaper discourse

## **NÁZEV**

Modální slovesa CAN a MAY v novinovém diskurzu o Brexitu

## **ANOTACE**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá tématem modálních sloves CAN a MAY a jejich sekundárních forem, COULD a MIGHT, specificky jejich použití v novinovém diskurzu týkajícím se Brexitu. V první části práce budou poskytnuty informace týkající se modality, zmíněných modálních sloves, novinového diskurzu a událostí Brexitu. V analytické části budou zkoumány instance použití těchto sloves v novinách The Guardian a The Times. Cílem práce je zhodnotit, jakým způsobem britské noviny The Guardian a The Times psaly o Brexitu, a to v konkrétním časovém rámci. Analýza bude provedena výběrem korpusu, který obsahuje zkoumaná modální slovesa.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

modalita, modální slovesa, can, may, could, might, Brexit, novinový diskurz

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## Introduction

The topic of this thesis is modality and its usage in British newspaper discourse on Brexit. The newspapers used for the analysis of modality and specific modal verbs are The Times and The Guardian, and were chosen within the time frame of the announcement of the referendum in February 2016 to its execution in June 2016.

First, the theoretical information on modality as such and modal verbs *can*, *may*, *might* and *could* will be assessed, this will be done to establish the ground for the analysis that will be carried out in the second part of the thesis. Additional information regarding Brexit, its historical nuances and the conditions leading to the referendum and the general political atmosphere, will be given. The thesis aims at giving complex information on how modality is used in British newspapers, how it might influence the readers, whether it is avoidable or potentially desirable, and how much space the mentioned newspapers give to their authors when it comes to expressing and voicing opinions.

The literature used in this thesis includes the most established studies such as *Mluvnice současné angličtiny na pozadí češtiny* (Dušková, 1988) and the works of other renowned linguists – Jennifer Coates, Randolph Quirk, Geoffrey Leech and others, as well as the articles themselves, published by journalists or external contributors to the newspapers. Finally, literature regarding Brexit itself was also used.

Currently, the general public's opinion on the impartiality of the newspapers is more or less set on their objectivity, nevertheless, the hypothesis is that there may be some partiality to the newspapers and their authors, given their political affiliation. The Guardian – more of a left-wing/liberal newspaper, might report on Brexit differently than The Times, centrist/right wing, just as the political parties in their respective positions within the political compass endorsed either the Leave or Remain decision.

The scope of this thesis therefore includes the research of modality, its types and results in objectivity or subjectivity, specific types of modal verbs and, finally, verbs *can*, *may*, *might* and *could*. The analytical part of the thesis aims at finding out how The Times and The Guardian report on Brexit and potentially influence their readers.



# 1. Modality

Considering the topic of this thesis, the terms mood and modality need to be examined first. The term mood will be examined, as it is frequently mentioned in regard to modality and the two are intertwined. Then, before addressing different kinds of modality individually, modality as a general concept will be defined.

## 1.1. Modality and Mood

As explained by Huddleston and Pullum, mood is a matter of grammar and its form, whilst modality is a matter of meaning (2002, 52). They also construct a simile between *mood and tense* and *time and modality* to illustrate this relation of grammatical form to meaning (2005, 53). This statement is in alignment with Collin's, the author affirms that mood is a grammatical realization of modality (2009, 11). Collins further states that this realization is mostly done through inflectional endings; nevertheless, because of the peripheral position of inflections in modern English, modality is nowadays mainly expressed through modal auxiliaries and quasi-modals. Moreover, he labels subjunctive mood as the "most distinctive" mood that includes the present subjunctive and the past subjunctive (2009, 11). Leech further elaborates on the terms present and past subjunctive and notes that present subjunctive expresses a non-factual theoretical meaning that conveys "a real supposition such as plans for the future", whereas the past subjunctive expresses a hypothetical meaning that conveys "an unreal supposition referring to an imaginary or hypothetical state of affairs." Additionally, he also comments on the position of the subjunctive in modern English that is, in his opinion, a mere "footnote in the description of the language." (2004, 114)

Palmer states that mood is one of the subcategories of modality, with the other being the modal system, and that mood is best illustrated by the contrast between the indicative and the subjunctive. He specifies the contrast between mood – that conventionally involves the binary system – and the modal system, that does not. Mood can either be indicative and non-modal or subjunctive and modal and this feature can be active or not. The modal system can have an unmarked realis form (*they are*) or a marked irrealis form (*they may/must/will*). Despite the presence of unmarked realis, there are always modals that form the modal system; this separates it from mood, where the modal feature is not always active (2003, 2).

According to Palmer, languages tend to have either mood or modality, and therefore it can be said that the subjunctive mood in English has disappeared and, instead, the modal system was developed (2003, 3). He declares that although other scholars have labeled certain utterances as subjunctive, they are in fact not, which further strengthens his claim about the absence of mood in English. He advocates for the claim by illustrating his argument on multiple utterances below:

(1) *Long live the queen!*

(2) *I propose they be excluded.*

In sample utterances (1) and (2), the base form of the verb is used; nevertheless, as this form is used also for the infinitive and imperative and therefore has different functions – unlike the subjunctive in other languages – Palmer does not deem this to be proof of the subjunctive mood.

(3) *May he rest in peace!*

(4) *I'm surprised that you should think that.*

Clauses (3) and (4) are typically labeled as subjunctive, however, a modal auxiliary is used, and therefore they should be viewed as examples of the modal system, not mood.

(5) *If I were you.*

In the utterance (5), *were* is acting like other past participles, and its form is not marked for person or number; in fact, it is the form *was* that is irregular. Therefore, it can be argued that such utterance is not deviating from the norm, on the contrary, as the standard use of *was* is the deviation. Thus, the use of *were* is not a sufficient reason for labeling this as a subjunctive mood. (Palmer 2003, 3–4)

Whether this approach of Palmer is an accurate one is not a subject matter of this thesis and will not be assessed. In any case, it seems to be a rather insignificant issue, as both Collins and Leech argue, as mentioned in the previous subchapter, that modality in modern English is primarily expressed through modal verbs and mood is peripheral. Finally, the topic of this research is modal verbs, thus, discussions regarding modality will be further related to modal auxiliaries.

As for the term modality, Quirk et al. provide this general definition of it:

“...modality may be defined as the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified so as to reflect the speaker's judgement of the likelihood of the proposition it expresses being true.” (1985, 219) In alignment with this definition is that of Huddleston and Pullum, according to whom modality is “...centrally concerned with the speaker’s attitude towards the factuality or actualisation of the situation expressed by the rest of the clause.” (2002, 173) Palmer further states that modality is tightly associated with tense and aspect, as all three are categories of a clause and are usually marked with the verbal complex (2001, 1).

Huddleston and Pullum exemplify modality in the following way:

(6) *He wrote it himself.*

(7) *He must have written it himself.*

Clause (6) is unmodalized and expresses the speaker’s commitment to what is being said without special emphasis. In contrast, clause (7) is modalized and the speaker expresses their commitment to the factuality of the utterance not as based on something factual and indisputable, but rather inferred (2002, 173).

Modality can be expressed through modal auxiliaries, lexical verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, as well as idioms, particles or mood, and prosody in speech, as mentioned in the Preface of *Modality in contemporary English* (2003). The focus of this paper is on modal auxiliaries as means of denoting modality and they will be further discussed in one of the following chapters.

## 1.2. Kinds of Modality

Although linguists generally agree on the definitions of the two main kinds of modality, the terminological differences are considerable and need to be addressed to avert possible misunderstandings.

The first kind of modality that relates to the assessment of likelihood (Biber et al. 1999, 485) is labeled as extrinsic modality, and it is done so by Biber et al. (1999) and Quirk et al. (1985). This type of modality is also referred to as epistemic modality in the works of Huddleston and Pullum (2002), Palmer (1990, 2001, 2003), Collins (2009), Leech (2004), and Coates (1983). Thus, the terminology is relatively consistent among linguists, and the

term epistemic modality will be adopted for the purpose of this thesis, as it is the most frequently used one.

The second kind of modality generally acknowledged by linguists refers to actions and events that are directly controlled by agents (Biber et al. 1999, 485). In consistency with the previously mentioned type of modality, Biber et al. (1999) and Quirk et al. (1985) refer to this modality as intrinsic. Leech (2004) and Coates (1983) label it as root modality, whilst Palmer (1990, 2001, 2003), Huddleston and Pullum (2002), and Collins (2009) refer to it as deontic modality. Moreover, Palmer (1990, 2001, 2003), Huddleston and Pullum (2002), and Collins (2009) also distinguish a third kind of modality called dynamic. This kind of modality relates to modal verbs *will* and *can* and since modal *can* is one of the subject matters of this thesis, this distinction between deontic and dynamic modality will be considered during the analysis.

In summary, there are two generally accepted categories that differ in terminology but are relatively consistent in their definitions, as will be illustrated in the upcoming subchapters. In this thesis, the terminology “epistemic” and “deontic” modality will be used, as it is the most widely used alternative and, additionally, the term dynamic modality is added to provide the most complex insight into the modal verb *can* and its various meanings.

### 1.3. Epistemic Modality

The word *epistemic* comes from the Greek word “episteme”, which is most often translated as “knowledge”. That signals that this kind of modality is concerned with the speaker’s knowledge (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 178). Huddleston and Pullum also state that: “Prototypically, epistemic modality concerns the speaker’s attitude to the factuality of past or present time situations” (2002, 178). This attitude of the speaker to the situations is affected by the speaker’s limited knowledge based on which they logically assess the factuality of said situations.

Biber et al.’s definition is in accordance with the definition provided by Huddleston and Pullum, as they define extrinsic, or, following the terminology used in this thesis, epistemic modality as the “logical status of events or states, usually relating to assessments of likelihood: possibility, necessity, or prediction” (1999, 485) (see also Quirk et al. (1985). Biber et al. also state that sentences denoting epistemic modality tend to have a non-human subject and the main verb is usually stative (1999, 485).

Epistemic modality is defined by Coates in a similar manner. The author adds that this type of modality usually also indicates whether the speaker is confident about their assumption of the truthfulness of the expressed proposition or not (Coates 1983, 18). Therefore, the utterance is subjective, as the judgement of the likeliness of an instance taking place or not is always closely tied to the speaker.

Epistemic modality can be illustrated on the following example provided by Coates:

(8) *Paul must be in Liverpool by now.*

She suggests that it might be interpreted as “I assume, taking into account what time he left home, the time now, and the state of public transport, that Paul is now in Liverpool.” (1983, 18) The utterance (8) exemplifies that epistemic modality is concerned with the speaker’s assumptions about the likelihood of a situation that is deduced from evidence or facts that might not be mentioned, or might not be factual at all.

Palmer provides a more detailed distinction of epistemic modality. He labels it as a subcategory of propositional modality that is “concerned with the speaker's attitude to the truth-value or factual status of the proposition”. He also adds evidential modality under the heading of propositional modality. (2001, 8) He specifies that the difference between epistemic and evidential modality lies in the fact that while with epistemic modality the speaker merely expresses their judgement about the factual status of a proposition, with evidential modality they indicate the evidence for this factual status (2001, 8). Moreover, Palmer comments that there are three types of judgement that are subcategories of epistemic modality – speculative, deductive, and assumptive. Utterance (9) indicates uncertainty and is therefore speculative, utterance (10) makes judgement based on evidence such as turned-on lights in the office and is therefore deductive, and utterance (11) is based on an assumption about John’s usual schedule and is therefore assumptive (2001, 24). Evidential modality has subcategories called *visual* and *auditory* that relate to senses that act as proof of the factual status of a proposition, *reported*, where the information that the speaker is basing their opinion on is provided by someone/something else, and *deductive* and *assumptive* categories that can be seen as both evidential and judgements (2001, 29). Thus, according to Palmer, epistemic modality – namely its deductive and assumptive subcategories – are merged with evidential modality and can therefore be considered based on evidence and facts, as defined by Coates in the previous paragraph.

(9) *John may be in his office.* (speculative)



(10) *John must be in his office.* (deductive)

(11) *John'll be in his office.* (assumptive)

This detailed classification presented by Palmer will not be used and the different types of evidence on which the judgement about likelihood might be based will all be classified as utterances expressing epistemic modality on the premise of no other publication used for this thesis distinguishing between judgements and tangible proof when assessing epistemic modality.

In conclusion, the definition of epistemic modality does not vary greatly among scholars. To summarize, epistemic modality conveys the speaker's assessment of a situation based on their judgement that either stems from their knowledge or subjective assumptions based on possible evidence. The only inconsistency, as illustrated in the previous subchapter, is the difference in terminology.

#### 1.4. Deontic Modality

The word *deontic* comes from the Greek expression for “binding”, which expresses the imposing obligation, prohibiting and granting permissions that deontic modality is expressing. (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 178) Huddleston and Pullum claim that generally, deontic modality is concerned with “the speaker's attitude to the actualisation of future situations.” (2002, 178) The reason for this is that one can only enforce obligation and grant permission for an event in the future, not in the past. However, there is an exception where deontic modality can be expressed in present or past situations, and that is when the use concerns general requirements and conditions, as in the sentence (12) listed below (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 184).

(12) *Candidates must have completed at least two years of undergraduate study*

(Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 184)

In Leech's view, deontic modality possesses the following qualities. It is:

the ordinary, more basic type of modality denoting constraint and lack of constraint in situations (typically situations involving human behaviour) in our universe of experience: it includes ‘permission’, ‘obligation’, ‘theoretical possibility’ and ‘requirement.’ (2004, 84)

Quirk et al., although differing in terminology, also present permission and obligation as meanings conveyed by deontic modality and add volition. Furthermore, they suggest that deontic modality is involved with intrinsic human control over the events (1985, 219).

Palmer states that deontic modality relates to obligation and permission that emanate from an external source (2001, 9). He does not include volition in deontic modality like Quirk et al. do; in fact, he associates it with dynamic modality (Palmer 2001, 10). The speaker, authority, or convention from which obligation or permission stems is called a deontic source (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 178). However, Palmer specifies that “although deontic modality stems from some kind of external authority such as rules or the law, typically and frequently the authority is the actual speaker, who gives permission to, or lays an obligation on, the addressee.” (2001, 10) In other words, deontic modality is, according to Palmer, concerned with internal control, which is correspondingly mentioned also by Quirk et al., as it is the speaker who produces the utterance, and it is therefore to a certain degree also subjective. This can be illustrated on the sentence below:

(13) *You may come in.*

The utterance (13) exemplifies an instance in which the speaker permits the recipient to enter. It might be that the recipient could not enter the room before because it was at the maximum capacity that is set by regulations, and now when somebody has left, technically it is the rules that allow the recipient to enter; however, it is the speaker who actively permits the recipient through producing the utterance, and is therefore in control.

There are two typical structural features of modal auxiliaries expressing deontic modality. The first is that the subject has an agentive role and is typically a human being. The second that the main verb is typically dynamic “describing an activity or event that can be controlled.” (Biber et al. 1999, 485)

To conclude, deontic modality is according to the majority of definitions mentioned concerned with permission, obligation, and prohibition that come from the speaker producing the utterance. The theoretical possibility that is belonging to deontic modality according to Leech (2004, 84) will not be considered as a meaning denoted by deontic modality, but rather as belonging to dynamic modality; the reasoning for this will be further addressed in the subchapter regarding the modal verb *can*.

## 1.5. Dynamic Modality

According to Huddleston and Pullum, the clearest case of dynamic modality is concerned with “properties and dispositions of persons”, meaning ability, and it is “referred to in the clause, especially by the subject NP” (2002, 178). Palmer adds to this case of modality the meaning associated with ability, volition (Palmer 2001, 76). Lastly, the possibility meaning is mentioned by Huddleston and Pullum (2002), Palmer (1987, 1990) and Collins (2007) in regard to dynamic modality.

Dynamic modality can be often ambiguous, as illustrated in utterance (14) that can be interpreted as both dynamic and deontic modality. This utterance, although ambiguous, would be, according to Huddleston and Pullum, labeled as dynamic modality on the premise of missing deontic source and possible paraphrasing “‘the most it is permissible to expect’, but not ‘the most we have permission to expect’”:

*(14) The most we can expect is a slight cut in the sales-tax*

(Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 179)

Palmer includes dynamic modality alongside deontic modality as subcategories of the event modality and both refer to “events that are not actualized, events that have not taken place but are merely potential.” (2001, 8) He further states that with dynamic modality, conditioning factors are typically internal to the subject, elaborating that sometimes, dynamic modality might be interpreted in terms of enabling circumstances, as in example, (15) rather than actual ability (16) of the subject (2001, 70).

*(15) He can escape (there is nothing to stop him)*

*(16) He can run a mile in under four minutes.*

(Palmer 2001, 77)

Dynamic modality can be used in the past tense to refer to a situation in the past, as illustrated in clause (17), however, it is not possible to use it to refer to an achievement that is a result of the ability or willingness, as shown in example (18):

*(17) When I was younger I could run much faster*

*(18) \*I ran fast and could catch the bus*

(Palmer 2001, 79)

Palmer states that dynamic modality is subject-oriented, as it focuses on the ability or volition of the subject. Therefore, according to the author, it can be argued that dynamic modality is not modality, as modality is essentially subjective (2001, 36). Huddleston and Pullum claim that dynamic modality “is less central to modality than deontic permission in that it does not involve the speaker’s attitude to the factuality or actualisation of the situation.” (2002, 179) However, despite these counterarguments to the modal nature of dynamic meanings, both linguists employ the concept of dynamic modality in their works, and the term dynamic modality will therefore be used in the analysis.

## 2. Modal Verbs

The subject of this chapter is modal verbs, primarily central modal verbs. Firstly, morpho-syntactical properties of modal verbs will be addressed, and secondly, individual modals chosen for this thesis will be introduced and examined.

There are nine central modal verbs (or auxiliaries, as they are sometimes called) in English and those are: *can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, and must* and four marginal auxiliaries *need (to), ought (to), dare (to), and used (to)* (Biber et al. 1999, 483-484) (see also Quirk et al. 1985, 137). Palmer contradicts this classification and lists *ought to* as a central modal, otherwise his classification does not differ. (1990, 3) There’s also a large group of semi-modals, also termed quasi-modals, including *have to, be about to, be able to, be bound to, be going to, be obliged to, be supposed to, be willing to* and more. (Quirk et al. 1985, 137)

Leech divides central modals into two forms; the first is referred to as the present or primary form and includes modals *can, may, must, will, and shall*, the other one is labeled as the past or secondary form and includes *could, might, would, and should*. (2004, 73) The secondary form is also termed *preterite* by Huddleston and Pullum (2002), Collins (2009), and Dušková et al. (1988). However, Leech notes that using the terms referring to time is not accurate, as primary forms are used not only for present time references, but also for future ones, thus, the term *non-past* would be more suitable. (2004, 73) With that being said, the secondary form *could* is not used exclusively for past references, it is used also to refer to the present and future time (Dušková et al. 1988, 181). Leech’s stance is also supported by Quirk et al. (1985, 219), who claim that the terms *present* and *past* are an

“imperfect match”. Therefore, the terms primary and secondary form will be used in this thesis as they are terminologically more precise.

Modal verbs have several morpho-syntactical criteria, as defined by Quirk et al. (1985, 121–128), criteria *a, b, c, d, i,* and *j* were also mentioned by Palmer (1990, 4). Palmer (1990, 4) further adds criteria *l* and *m*, however, regarding the criterion *m*, he later states that co-occurrence is possible in a number of dialects (2001, 100). According to Nagle, the co-occurrence of modals – such as *might could* – is present in northern England’s, northern Ireland’s, Scotland’s and southern United States’ dialects. (2003, 349)

- a) In negative sentences the modal precedes the particle *not*.

She *can't* do it. She *cannot* do it.

- b) The negative particle *not* is usually contracted and attached to the modal.

He *can't* come. (Palmer 1990, 4)

- c) There is an inversion between the operator and the subject in interrogative structures.

*Will* she come?

- d) Modals emphasize positive meaning.

Yes, I *will* try again.

- e) Modals function as an operator in reduced clauses.

No, I *can't*.

- f) Adverbs follow modals that function as operators.

She would *never* believe that story.

- g) Quantifier may be placed after the modal functioning as an operator.

The boys will *all* be there.

- h) Modals are followed by bare infinitives.

You *will* be asked questions. They *might* have stolen it.



- i) Modals are always finite; they never function as infinitives or past and present participles, therefore are always in the initial position within a verb phrase.

\*to may    \*(is) maying    \*(has) mayed

- j) Modals do not have the inflected form of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular of the present tense.

\*mays    \*cans    (Palmer 1990, 4)

- k) The time reference of a modal is not tied to its label.

I think he *might* retire next May. (= not a past time reference)

(Quirk et al. 1985, 121–128)

- l) Modals “code”, meaning they can replace a previously used verb phrase after being inverted with the subject, as the meaning of a lexical verb is anaphorically retrievable.

He *will come* and so *will* she.

- m) Modals cannot co-occur.

\*He *may will* come.

(Palmer 1990, 4)

In conclusion, the modal verbs chosen for this thesis are classified as central modal verbs and they possess various morpho-syntactical properties which were briefly presented. The aim of the following subchapters is to examine characteristics of the individual modals.

## 2.1. Modal Verbs CAN and COULD

Modal verb *can* is a primary form of a central modal, as was defined in the previous subchapter, whereas *could* is a secondary form. *Can* commonly expresses permission, ability and logical possibility (Biber et al. 1999, 492). *Could* functions in all meanings typical for *can* either as a past form or as a hypothetical form (Leech 2004, 132). To illustrate a few uses of *could*, examples expressing past time possibility (19) and hypothetical possibility (20) were chosen. Quirk et al. (1985, 232) illustrate the hypothetical unreal sense mentioned by Leech in utterance (21), where *could* conveys the speaker’s expectation that United would not win the game. Moreover, they state that in order to convey the past hypothetical meaning, perfective aspect must be added, as seen in example

(22) (see also Leech 2004, 130). Coates (1983) also mentions the past and hypothetical meanings and perfective aspect, as Leech and Quirk et al. do. She further states that *could* occasionally expresses epistemic possibility and is then considered a synonym for epistemic may and might. (Coates 1983, 107). As stated previously, various meanings conveyed by the auxiliary *can* are also conveyed by *could*, therefore they will be discussed and exemplified in this subchapter together to avoid unnecessary repetition.

(19) *Nothing could be done to stop the water flooding into the house.*

(20) *The house is one of the most beautiful that could be imagined.*

(Leech 2004, 132).

(21) *If United could win this game, they might become league champions.*

(22) *If United could have won that game, they might have become league champions.*

(Quirk et al. 1985, 232)

*Can* and *could* express various meanings, however, there are not always clear-cut boundaries between the meanings, as illustrated on sentence (23) that can be paraphrased as *It isn't possible for anyone to see us here* and therefore denote theoretical possibility or it can be paraphrased as *No one is able to see us here*, thus, denote ability meaning. (Leech 2004, 73) Coates is in agreement with Leech's statement about the ambiguity of meanings and states that the meanings that precisely represent the core of the meaning, the textbook-like examples of ability, possibility and permission, and its properties are statistically infrequent, and that most meanings are peripheral, deviating to a certain extent and are therefore more difficult to assign (1983, 13). For this reason, she proposes the usage of gradients when it comes to interpreting these undetermined cases. The cases where permission and possibility are not distinguishable are represented by the *gradient of restriction*, and undetermined cases of ability and possibility are represented by the *gradient of inherency*, as in utterance (23) (Coates 1983, 86).

(23) *No one can see us here. (= It isn't possible for anyone to see us here.)*

(= *No one is able to see us here.*)

### 2.1.1 Theoretical Possibility

The first analyzed meaning is possibility, which is according to Leech the most common meaning denoted by the auxiliary *can* (2004, 74). It is also the most common meaning denoted by *could* (Coates 1983, 109), as it functions as a past time equivalent. Biber et al. also note that the use of *could* expresses “a greater degree of uncertainty or tentativeness” (1999, 493). Typical examples of *could* expressing theoretical possibility are in reported speech, as in example (24), and it is frequently found in negative contexts, as seen in (25) (Coates 1983, 113–114).

(24) *The taxi driver said that he would deposit them with the Department of English if he could, but he felt though probably he's have to deposit them....*

(25) *I couldn't get back last night.*

(Coates 1983, 113–114)

However, before approaching the analysis itself, terminological and classification differences need to be addressed first. According to Palmer, (1987, 1990, 2001) *can* expresses *dynamic possibility* as well as *deontic possibility*. In his view, deontic possibility refers to granting permission (1987, 109), thus, it will be covered in the subchapter 2.1.1.4. Dynamic possibility is further divided into *neutral possibility* and *subject-oriented possibility* that is labeled by other authors as ability (1990, 83) that will be covered in subchapter 2.1.1.3. Palmer also uses the label *circumstantial possibility* for *neutral possibility* to suggest something is possible without the relation to someone's abilities and that it is the circumstances that made something possible (1987, 112–113). Despite labeling this neutral possibility as dynamic modality, Palmer also claims that it “does not emanate from the speaker and so is not strictly deontic (yet is not epistemic or dynamic either)” (1987, 102), therefore, the categorization is not evident. This results in discrepancy regarding its categorization. For instance, Leech (2004), who uses the term *theoretical possibility*, classifies it as meaning conveyed by deontic modality. Similarly, Collins (2007) also uses the term *theoretical possibility*, however, unlike Leech, he does not categorize it as deontic modality, rather he adopts the approach of Palmer and views it as dynamic modality. Biber et al. (1999) use the term *logical possibility* rather than *neutral* or *theoretical*. In this thesis, a combination of Palmer's and Collin's classifications will be used, thus, this type of possibility will be regarded as dynamic modality and will be labeled as theoretical possibility.

As was already mentioned, Palmer labels theoretical possibility also as circumstantial possibility, thus, indicating that the possibility of action occurring is enabled by external circumstances as in example (26) (1987, 84). Vice versa, there might also be disabling circumstances that prevent the action from occurring as in example (27), according to Coates (1983, 96).

(26) *You can only get the job if you don't want it.*

(Palmer 1987, 84)

(27) *You can't see him because he's having lunch with a publisher.*

(Coates 1983, 96)

According to Palmer (1987, 84) and Leech (2004, 82), theoretical possibility is paraphrased by the phrase *It is possible for* followed by noun phrase + to + infinitive construction as in utterance (28). Leech also mentions that *can* might have a habitual meaning that uses adverb *sometimes* in a paraphrase, as in (29) (Leech 2004, 74).

(28) *The road can be blocked. = It is possible for the road to be blocked.*

Leech (2004, 82)

(29) *Lightning can be very dangerous. = Lightning is sometimes very dangerous.*

(Leech 2004, 74)

Palmer states that theoretical possibility is easily distinguishable when the impersonal subject *you* is used (30) or when it occurs in passive constructions (31). Another common feature of theoretical possibility is the co-occurrence with adjectives and adverbs in comparative or superlative forms that “represent judgements about the degree or extent that an action is possible”, as illustrated in sentence (32) (Palmer 1990, 84). Leech states that possibility, unlike permission or ability, does not require an animate subject. He further notes that *can* expressing theoretical possibility is often found in negative contexts. (2004, 74–75).

(30) *You can get quite lost in that, I think, you see.*

(31) *Well, I'll see what can be done and give you a ring.*

(32) *I mean, you can travel from Belgium to France with much less palaver than you can travel from the North to the South of Ireland.*

(Palmer 1990, 84)

Coates notes that *can* is frequently used in passive voice in written texts, especially of bureaucratic and academic nature, when the speaker “cannot presuppose the willingness of the subject to carry out the proposition” (1983, 96) as shown in example (33). Similarly, Biber et al. state that modal verb *can* denoting theoretical possibility is commonly used with passive voice and that both types, short agentless passive (34) and long passive “with a nominalized process given in the by-phrase” (35), are plausible. Both types then avoid “overt identification of the human agent of the main verb”, which results in utterance understood as logically possible. (1999, 499)

(33) *We believe that solutions can be found which will prove satisfactory.*

(Coates 1983, 96)

(34) *Each interpretation can be seen generally to flow through the abbreviated text as a whole.*

(35) *Its answer can be illustrated by considering again the action of a polarizer.*

(Biber et al. 1999, 499)

### 2.1.2 Epistemic Possibility

Although *can* typically does not denote epistemic modality, when used in non-affirmative contexts, it does (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 180). Coates claims that it is because the negative forms, *can't* and *cannot*, are providing a missing form for the negative epistemic *must* and are therefore epistemic. She supports her view by listing properties typical for the epistemic *must* (perfective and progressive aspect and existential subject) that are not compatible with deontic or dynamic usage of *can't* and *cannot*. (1983, 101)

Leech states that *can* merges with epistemic meaning in questions regarding epistemic possibility that is in declarative sentences expressed by *may* but cannot be expressed by *may* in interrogative structures, as illustrated in example (36). However, *could* is more likely to be used compared to *can*. (2004, 92) Therefore, the border between epistemic and theoretical possibility becomes blurred in interrogative clauses.

(36) *They may be asleep. = \*May they be asleep?*

= Can they be asleep?



(Leech 2004, 92)

When used hypothetically, modal *could* also expresses epistemic possibility when it substitutes for modal *may*. When *could* is used in such cases, it signals that the expression of possibility is more tentative, as shown in utterance (37) (Leech 2004, 130).

(37) *There could be trouble at the World Cup match tomorrow.*

(Leech 2004, 130).

### 2.1.3 Ability

Ability is defined as “a matter of internal properties on the part of the subject-referent” by Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 185). With ability meaning, *can* may be paraphrased by *be able to*, *be capable of*, and *know how to* (Quirk et al. 1985, 222). However, Leech points out that the paraphrase using a verbal construction *be able to* is not associated only with ability meaning, but also with possibility and permission and, thus, using only paraphrase is not an accurate indicator of ability meaning (2004, 75).

According to Leech, other indicators are human or at least an animate subject and active clause (2004, 75). Collins likewise states that ability requires an animate subject with an agentive function (38), however in his view even inanimate subjects are expressing ability meaning, as in example (39) (2009, 103). Coates also lists an animate agentive subject as a typical characteristic of ability meaning and then notes that inanimate subjects are also occurring with this meaning, as it refers to inherent properties of the subject that were mentioned by Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 185). Moreover, she states that these properties might be learnt as in example (40). Additionally, she specifies that the verb denotes physical action or activity. (1983, 89–90) Lastly, ability meaning does not occur with perfective or progressive aspects (Leech 2004, 99).

(38) *And he can play chess and I can't.*

(39) *Modern launch vehicles have more efficient engines and can launch a heavier payload: typically as much as two per cent of their launch weight.*

Collins (2009, 103)

(40) *I can only type very slowly as I am quite a beginner.*

Coates (1983, 89)

Additionally, when *can* is used with verbs of inert perception (*feel, hear, see, smell, taste*) and inert cognition (*believe, forget, guess, think, imagine, know, suppose, understand*) the difference between *being able to do something* and *actually doing something* is minimal, thus, *can* tends to lose some of its modal meaning (Leech 2004, X). Moreover, with verbs of inert perception not only that the modal meaning is lost but *can* also has a function of “denoting a state rather than an event” and thus *can* refers to an ability to perceive (*I can see*), a state denoted by the verb, rather than an event (*I see*) (Leech 2004, X).

*Could* expressing ability has the same set of characteristics as defined by Coates and mentioned in the previous paragraph. The use of *could* in ability meanings is illustrated by utterance (41). Negation is common for *could* with ability meaning (42) and when no negative form is used adverbs such as *just, only* or *hardly* are common (43). (Coates 1983, 111)

(41) *Larsen’s “luck” lay in his inherited ability to find the roving fish shoals when others could not.*

(42) *I just cannot remember a time when I couldn’t swim.*

(43) *As Esmond put me down, I lifted my arm. I could just touch the roof.*

(Coates 1983, 111)

As has already been mentioned, distinguishing ability meaning from theoretical possibility meaning is sometimes impossible, which is why Coates proposes to use the gradient of inherency. The gradient of inherency is a scale where on one side there are inherent properties of the subject clearly denoting the ability core meaning, whereas on the other side is the possibility of action occurring determined by external factors, as illustrated by utterance (23) (Coates 1983, 15).

#### 2.1.4 Permission

Coates provides three sentences to illustrate the properties of permission. Typically, the subject is animate, the verb is agentive, and the utterance can be paraphrased using the words *permitted* or *allowed*. The source of the authority that grants permission is varied. In utterance (44), it is the speaker, in (45), it is the university, and in example (46), it is the society, laws. (Coates 1983, 87) *Could* expressing permission similarly to *can* typically occurs with an animate subject and agentive verb and the permission granting authority is

also varied, as represented by (47), where the authority is the society, and by (48), where the authority is the parents. (Coates 1983, 110)

(44) *You can go into the bathroom and fix your mouth.*

(45) *There are various types of tests they give them; they give them a sentence and there are three answers they can give.*

(46) *Poppy now can look at her little car which she can't drive because she hasn't got any insurance on it.*

(Coates 1983, 87)

(47) *Duchesses and courtesans could insist on the 'lit de parade' as a right based on riches, social position, or physical attraction.*

(48) *Because we always told them that they could have anybody they liked.*

(Coates 1983, 110)

According to Coates, it is possible to express permission by using the modal *can*, however, it is not freely interchangeable with *may*, as *can* is an informal variation and might be considered inappropriate in certain settings (1980, 219). Research carried out by Coates and Leech showed the discrepancy between American English, where *can* is less commonly used for expressing permission, and British English, where *can* is not used as infrequently as in American English, despite otherwise being considered marked for informality (1980, 33). Therefore, as the broadsheet newspapers from which the analyzed modal verbs are taken, are written in British English, examples of *can* and *could* with permission meaning might occur. However, as permission meaning is more frequently used in spoken discourse rather than written one (Coates and Leech 1980, 27), it can be presupposed that any occurrences of permission will be rather limited in this thesis. Lastly, even in spoken discourse, permission meaning is the less common meaning of *can*, according to Leech (2004, 75).

Permission is not used with a perfect or progressive aspect (Leech 2004, 99). According to Quirk et al., permission meaning is compatible with a future time adverbial, as illustrated by utterance (49), and this feature separates it from ability (1985, 223).

(49) *You can borrow my typewriter tomorrow.*

Since determining whether an utterance denotes permission or theoretical possibility is not always possible, Coates established the gradient of restriction. This gradient is relevant to both *can* and *could*. The gradient of restriction is a scale where on one end is the core meaning, the most restricted world that is under human control or law (permission), and on the other side is the periphery, the least restricted world where everything is permitted (possible), apart from things contradicting “natural laws” (Coates 1983, 88).

## 2.2. Modal Verbs MAY and MIGHT

*May* is the main modal auxiliary of epistemic modality (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 180) and is labeled as a middle-frequency modal by Leech (2004, 76). It expresses epistemic possibility, theoretical possibility and permission meanings (Coates 1983, 131).

### 2.2.1 Epistemic Possibility

Epistemic *may* is subjective, as it expresses the speaker’s “lack of knowledge as to whether or not the proposition is true, and assessment of it as merely a possibility”, and it is the most frequent meaning conveyed by *may* (Collins 2007, 4). It can be paraphrased by *it is possible* + *that-clause* or by *it may be that* or by adverb *perhaps* or *possibly*, as illustrated by utterance (50) (Quirk et al. 1985, 223).

(50) *You may be right. (=It is possible that you are right.)*

*(=It may be that you are right.)*

*(=Perhaps/possibly you are right.)*

(Quirk et al. 1985, 223)

Palmer states that epistemic possibility is used to refer to states in the present or the future, additionally, it can refer to action in progress that is set in the present or the future, as in (51). Moreover, he asserts that “the progressive form is used for future time reference, even if no duration is involved”, as in utterance (52). (Palmer 1990, 51–52) That is presumably because of the potential ambiguity that may occur when using the simple form, as the utterance may be interpreted either as epistemic possibility or as granting permission, thus, denoting deontic modality (Palmer 1987, 107). Palmer further notes that *may* cannot refer to “single non-progressive present action”, as reporting and commenting on the possibility of a single action in the present time is pointless, since the action can be observed and, therefore, epistemic judgement concerning possibility is redundant. (Palmer 1990, 52).

(51) *So we may be seeing some changes in British industry from these students.*

(52) *So she may be telephoning you.*

(Palmer 1990, 52)

With epistemic possibility, the scope of negation is within the scope of the modal verb and the predication is negated, unlike with theoretical possibility, where the negation has a scope over the modal verb, thus, the modal is negated. These two types of negation are labeled as internal and external respectively. (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 175). Therefore, with external negation, negating the modal *can't* or *cannot* is used, as illustrated by utterance (53). With internal negation, negating the main verb proposition *may not* is used, as in (54). Each negation is paraphrased differently, as illustrated below. (Palmer 1987, 108) According to Leech, *may* expressing epistemic possibility occurs only in declarative and negative sentences, but not in interrogative sentences. (2004, 76) The reason for this is that the interrogation is always regarding modality, and similarly to negative sentences, *can* is therefore preferred, as stated by Palmer. However, he further states that the use of *may* in interrogative structures is possible, although is significantly less frequent and usually *might* is preferred. (1987, 108–109)

(53) *John can't go to London. (=It is not possible that John went to London.)*

(54) *John may not go to London. (=It is possible that John didn't go to London.)*

(Palmer 1987, 108)

To make judgement in the present about an event set in the past, epistemic *may* is combined with *have + past*, as in utterance (55). It is not possible to use the secondary form *might* to indicate past judgement by the speaker, as only the proposition but not the modality can be set in the past, as illustrated by (56) (Palmer 2001, 33).

(55) *Mary may have arrived by now.*

(56) *\*Yesterday Mary might arrive.*

(Palmer 2001, 33)

Coates lists typical features of epistemic *may*. They are the perfective and progressive aspect, the existential subject *there*, co-occurrence with a quasi-modal, the use of stative verb, and negation (1983, 137). Facchinetti further states that the progressive aspect mostly occurs with 3<sup>rd</sup> person subjects (2003, 317). Leech claims that epistemic possibility is also expressed

by *might* without any or with only a minor shift in meaning (2004, 76). Quirk et al. specify that there is a difference in tentativeness and *might* is the more tentative of the two modals (1985, 223).

According to Palmer, another usage of *may*, called concessive (50), should be treated as if it were a part of epistemic modality (1990, 52). By using the concessive clause, the speaker “does not indicate doubt about the proposition, but rather accepts it as true, in order to contrast one state of affairs with another”. Moreover, *may* is used in a sense of “although”, as in utterance (51). (Palmer 2001, 31) In this meaning, *may* frequently occurs with *whatever* or it follows *but*. (Palmer 1987, 108). *Might* occurs in this concessive use only rarely (Coates 1983, 153).

(50) *However difficult it might be...*

(Palmer 1990, 52)

(51) *He may be rich, but he's not very lucky. (=Although he's rich, he's not very lucky.)*

(Palmer 2001, 31)

### 2.2.2 Theoretical Possibility

Quirk et al. state that in formal English, both *may* and *might* are used to express theoretical possibility (51), however they state that this use is generally not as common as the use of *can*. (1985, 223) Coates (1980, 217) states that *may* is used in formal contexts, as it is marked for formality, unlike *can*, which is in agreement with the statements of Coates and Leech (1980), Collins (2007, 2009) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002). According to the findings of Biber et al., *may* and *might* are frequently used in academic prose to express theoretical possibility (1999, 491), presumably because of the formality of language used in academic prose. Coates notes that *may* is understood as denoting theoretical possibility when no human authority is identified from the context, but it is the external circumstance that makes the event that is reported by the utterance possible. (1983, 139)

(51) *During the autumn, many rare birds may be observed on the rocky northern coasts of the island.*

(Quirk et al. 1985, 223)

### 2.2.3 Permission

Deontic *may* (52) is marked for formality and is used less frequently than *can* that can substitute it in most cases except for fixed phrases (Quirk et al. 1985, 223). This substitution however influences the formality of the utterance and is therefore not always appropriate. As research (Coates 1980, 1983) showed, *may* in this sense is usually used in formal contexts, namely in bureaucratic and administrative writing that sets rules and regulations, (Collins 2007, 9) and in a school setting in conversations between teachers and students (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 493). As was already mentioned, another instance in which *may* cannot be substituted by *can* is in fixed phrases, which make up a large portion of this use of *may*, according to Coates, and are often introduced by the subordinator *if*, as in utterance (53) (1983, 141).

(52) *Visitors may reclaim necessary travel expenses up to a limit of £50.*

(Quirk et al. 1985, 223)

(53) *... but I will wander along to your loo if I may.*

(Coates 1983, 141)

The difference between the use of *may* and *can* is not only the formality, it is also argued by Quirk et al. that the use of *may* is more subjective than the use of *can*. Whereas *may* expresses permission given by the speaker (54), *can* is often viewed as more neutral and impersonal (55), however, they state that this distinction is not fully acknowledged by the speakers. (1985, 224) Huddleston and Pullum share a similar viewpoint and also further specify that the choice is more often a matter of style, thus, the formality distinction is deployed (2002, 183). Collins, too, uses the terms objective and subjective, however, he uses them to describe an utterance based on the deontic source. When the deontic source is the speaker or addressee, it is subjective (56), when the deontic source is a rule or regulation, he describes such permission as objective (57) (2009, 95).

(54) *You may leave when you like = I permit you...*

(55) *You can leave when you like = You are permitted...*

(Quirk et al. 1985, 224)

(56) *You may use my desk.*

(57) *Any problems that arise may be referred to the Vocational Training Board.*

(Collins 2009, 95)

Permission most frequently co-occurs with the first-person subject, a second person subject is also typical, as shown in (58), and although not common, third person subjects are possible, as in example (59). Interrogative structures are, however, restricted to first person subjects only (60). (Coates 1983, 140)

(58) *If you want to recall the doctor you may do so.*

(59) *a court within its discretion may impose a judicial beating for a second offence...*

(60) *May I read your message?*

(Coates 1983, 140)

*May* is frequently used in questions where its function is not asking for permission, but rather hedging the utterance, as in (61) (Coates 1983, 140). According to Collins, there are two subtypes of permission *may* – the idiom *may as well* (62), “which literally expresses a comparison of equality but is typically used with mitigated directive force (representing a type of subjective deontic modality)”, and optative *may*, used in formal and mock-formal styles to express hopes and wishes (63). (Collins 2007, 10)

(61) *May I ask Lord Boothby whether he himself takes Sir Thomas Beecham’s pills or not?*

(Coates 1983, 140)

(62) *We don’t have to watch all of that but we may as well watch a bit just to tell him that we did.*

(63) *Yes, dear friend, and may the blue bird of happiness shit all over you too!*

(Collins 2007, 10)

With permission, both modality and proposition cannot be marked for a past time, as the modal is performative and gives permission for present or future actions, however, by default it cannot give permission for actions in the past (Palmer 1987, 100). Thus, *might* cannot be used for indicating a past time and it functions as a more tentative and polite



counterpart to *may* (Palmer 2001, 74). Quirk et al. agree with Palmer about the function of *might* and they further state that this usage is rare (1985, 224). Palmer notes one additional usage of *might* and that is making suggestion, as in (64) (2001, 74).

(64) *You might try nagging the Abbey National.*

(Palmer 2001, 74)

### 3. Newspaper Discourse

As data for the analytical part of this thesis are sourced from newspaper discourse, it is necessary to define newspaper discourse and its characteristics first. Afterwards, a brief context for Brexit is provided, as it is the topic of all the analyzed articles and the aim of the thesis is to show how modal auxiliaries were used in media reporting concerning Brexit.

Reah distinguishes three types of newspapers – broadsheet newspapers, with newspapers analyzed in this thesis among them – *The Times* and *The Guardian* – middle-range tabloids like *Daily Mail*, and tabloids like *The Sun* (2002, 2). Each of this kind of newspaper has its own specific purpose, audience and language. Broadsheet newspapers and middle-range tabloids are consumed mainly by the upper-middle, middle, and lower-middle classes, whereas tabloids cater to working classes (Bell 1991, 109). The writers are aware of whom their audience is, and they adjust their writing accordingly.

According to Reah, the main function of newspapers is to report about recent events that are interesting for a sufficiently large group of people (2002, 4). Fowler likewise states that events are not naturally newsworthy, but that a selection of topics is a characteristic attribute of newspaper discourse, thus, only a limited view of the world is presented (1991, 11). Therefore, newspapers have immense power in providing the public with information and influencing their point of view. It is presumable that *The Times* with their center-right affiliation does report differently than *The Guardian*, known for endorsing left-wing politics. Moreover, a relatively small number of large corporations are owners of media outlets (Thompson 1990, 193). This may shift the focus of the newspapers or generate biased reporting concerning the areas of interests of the corporations that additionally often have their own ties and affiliations with political parties. Furthermore, Crystal and Davy claim that the danger of bias is always present in any kind of writing, as the attitudes of the

writer are reflected in the text, be it consciously or not (2013, 191). Fowler addresses the issue of newspaper objectivity as follows:

... because the institutions of news reporting and presentation are socially, economically and politically situated, all news is always reported from some particular angle. The structure of the medium encodes significances which derive from the respective positions within society of the publishing or broadcasting organizations.

(Fowler 1991, 10)

Therefore, it can be argued that journalistic objectivity is not attainable due to the personal viewpoints of the writers or media owners. Another major role is played by language, since it, according to Fowler, cannot be neutral: “values are in the language already, independent of the journalist and of the reader” (1991, 10). Beard has taken a similar stance and wrote “there is no such thing as an unbiased report, no such thing as ‘neutral’ language” (2000, 18).

However, despite this quality of language, it is generally accepted that writers of broadsheet newspapers largely aim at reporting factual information without bias. Some of the typical features of language used in newspaper discourse are concise language, such as nominalized structures, as they convey information compactly, and single words rather than multi-word expressions. Slang, jargon, and words of French and Latin origin tend to be avoided and journalists use dynamic and action verbs and active voice rather than passive, unless the performer of the action is unknown or irrelevant. (2014, 96–102) Another significant feature of language used in newspaper discourse is reported speech, both direct speech and indirect (Busa 2014, 116–117). The use of reported speech provides the writer with a possibility to present not only facts, but most importantly opinions and speculations without inserting themselves and disclosing their stance, thus, maintaining objectivity. Lastly, modality is used, as it provides authors with “means of presenting affiliations and disaffections in the way they tell the events in their stories.” (Busa 2014, 122).

In conclusion, while broadsheet newspapers generally aim at the middle classes, that consume broadsheet newspapers for supposed trustworthiness and objectiveness, they do not always, contrary to popular belief, provide objective information. Considering the view of broadsheet newspapers as objective, it is especially compelling to analyze the usage of modal verbs in this type of newspaper. The aim of the analysis is focused mainly on determining meanings of modal verbs, since, in accordance with objectiveness of the newspapers, the most frequent meaning should be theoretical possibility, and in opposition

epistemic modality should be rather marginal meaning. Subsequently, based on the type of modality and meaning used, conclusions on the level of linguistic objectivity and manipulation can be made.

### 3.1. Brexit and the Media

Newspaper articles chosen as a representation of newspaper discourse in this thesis and from which all the analyzed modal verbs were taken are regarding Brexit. It is, therefore, important to briefly define what the term Brexit means, and the events leading up to it.

“Brexit”, coined in 2012 and a blend of ‘British’ and ‘Exit’, refers to a referendum in which the future UK’s membership in the EU was put to vote. The referendum was announced by David Cameron, prime minister at the time, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2016, and was held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2016. However, this was not the UK’s first and only attempt at separating itself from Europe.

It is important to note that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland had always cultivated a specific sense of individualism. This was parallel to the post-war unfoldment of the British perception of itself, as opposed to that of continental Europe. As described by Schweiger, although Britain was always – up until the referendum – naturally considered an important part of Europe, its history and overall socioeconomic existence, Britain did not share this sentiment towards the rest of Europe (Schweiger 2007, 14). It is also important to note the discrepancy and a sense of alienation, to some extent, between the respective fractions of the country, most prominently between England and Scotland, that has been in debate of splitting from the rest of the UK.

The reasons for the split – the result of the 2016 United Kingdom European Union membership referendum, in which 51.9 % of the UK citizens voted in favor of leaving the EU and 48.1 % voted in favor of remaining in the EU – were forming immediately after World War II. With the events taking place post WWII, Britain made it evident that it did not view itself as another European country, as noted by Schweiger, but somewhat above the rest in the hierarchy. The UK has always been especially insular and individualist in its nature not only towards the rest of the world and Europe,

but in a similar way has England been individualist in its relation towards Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, which may explain the discrepancy in the number of votes for Brexit.

According to Clarke, Goodwin and Whitley, other attempts at separating itself from Europe include the 1975 referendum, the first British referendum on this topic ever, concerned with whether to remain a part of the European Community (a predecessor of the EU) or not (2017, 7). The authors also write of this tendency to leave combined with the role newspapers had in the process. Politicians, political speeches, debates on “economic prosperity, controlled immigration, national and personal security, value for money” and others may influence the public decision on national autonomy, but newspaper discourse also majorly shapes the public opinion (2017, 7). The authors observe the level of Euroscepticism in various newspapers – stating that the British Eurosceptic newspapers played a key role in “mobilizing support for Leave,” (2017, 25).

The media had two major roles during the campaign leading to the referendum, according to Berry. First, also mentioned by Clarke, Goodwin and Whitley, was the coverage of certain topics and politicians with predominant representation of Leave arguments. Second, it was a platform for both sides to present their stances and persuade voters, with the Leave campaigners having short, simple and striking messages opposed to Remain campaigners, who were not able to straightforwardly oppose the Leave message and establish arguments which would resonate on the same level. (Berry 2016, 14)

Overall, considering the research done by the scholars presented in this chapter, it is possible to say that the decision to leave the EU had been forming for decades, and the role of media and specifically newspaper discourse should not be omitted.

## 4. Analysis

The analysis conducted in the analytical part of this thesis concerns modal verbs *can*, *could*, *may*, and *might* and their respective meanings – theoretical possibility, ability, permission, and epistemic possibility. The occurrences will be analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The analysis centers meanings denoted by the modals and the interpretation

will be based on their typical features, as defined in the theoretical part of this thesis. Moreover, their function in newspaper discourse will be considered.

The analysis is based on a small-scale corpus, which was created using articles from two broadsheet newspapers – *The Guardian* and *The Times*. According to David A.L. Levy, Billur Aslan, and Diego Bironzo, in *The Guardian* articles, the Remain opinion prevailed, whereas in *The Times*, articles supporting Leave were more frequent. However, neither of the newspapers disregarded opinions from the opposite perspective and published articles in favor of the otherwise opposing perspective, as well. (2016, 16) Thus, these two broadsheet newspapers were chosen to represent all newspaper discourse on the Remain-Leave spectrum. The criteria for the selection of used articles was the source material, i.e., the two aforementioned newspapers. Then, the topic of the articles, which had to relate to Brexit. Lastly, a time frame – all the articles had to be written between 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2016, when prime minister David Cameron announced the Brexit referendum date, and 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2016, which was the date of the referendum. The time span was chosen to see what articles possibly affected the readers during their decision-making process and – arguably – their vote in the referendum. The selection itself was done through a search engine Google, where the results are sorted according to their relevancy.

The corpus consists of 100 modals taken from *The Guardian* and 100 modals taken from *The Times*. The corpus is divided into headings according to the modal verb present in the utterance. All the occurrences are numbered and marked with a corresponding letter, referring to the source article from which they are taken, as indicated in chapter 8, that contains a list of the quoted articles.

It should be kept in mind that the categorization of the occurrences is not definitive, because, despite the meaning being assessed based on the typical characteristics and context, the meanings are sometimes ambiguous. For that reason, the interpretation might vary, as the occurrences that represent the core of the meaning are not as frequent. Therefore, correctly assigning the more peripheral, less clear meanings, is rather challenging, as has been already stated in the theoretical part of this thesis.

The aim of the analysis is to firstly determine what types of modalities and meanings are used in newspaper discourse; this is to illustrate for what purpose modal verbs are employed in newspaper discourse. Secondly, the analytical part is aiming at the confirmation or denial that broadsheet newspapers are as objective as possible, and it is reflected in the language used. The hypothesis is that objectivity, represented mainly by dynamic theoretical possibility, will prevail over subjectivity denoted by epistemic

modality, that should be, judging by the supposed properties of newspaper discourse, less frequent. However, as defined in the subchapter regarding newspaper discourse and used language, it was stated that language naturally contains subjective elements and objective writing is, therefore, not fully possible. Additionally, the media do not exist in a vacuum, and are influenced by politics, business, and other variables. For this reason, epistemic occurrences are anticipated. Nevertheless, the meaning is anticipated to be subsidiary.

#### 4.1. Quantitative Analysis

In the first part of the analysis, the findings will be analyzed from a quantitative perspective, to provide overviews of modality used in the analyzed articles. The most frequently used modal verb in the created corpus is, as illustrated by Table 1, the modal verb *could*. It appeared 80 times out of the 200 tokens, which represents 40 % of all the tokens. The second most frequent modal is the primary form of a modal *could* – *can*, which is used in 66 occurrences, equating to 33 % of tokens. The modal verb *may* occurs in 22 instances, thus, creates only 11 % of the corpus, and is therefore the least frequent of the analyzed modal verbs. Its secondary form *might* is slightly more frequent, as it was detected 32 times, which equals 16 % of the analyzed corpus.

**Table 1**

Frequency of modal verbs	CAN	COULD	MAY	MIGHT
Frequency	66	80	22	32
Percentage	33 %	40 %	11 %	16 %

Based on the findings, the distribution of modals between the two broadsheet newspapers is relatively similar, as illustrated by Table 2. Modal *can* is present 26 times in *The Guardian* and 40 times in *The Times*. On the other hand, *could* is present in 45 occurrences in *The Guardian* and in 35 occurrences in *The Times*. Thus, when primary and secondary forms of *can* are combined based on their shared meanings, the quantitative result is nearly identical in both of the newspapers. The ratio with *may* and *might* is similarly close. There are 13 occurrences of *may* in *The Guardian* and 9 occurrences in *The Times*, and 18 occurrences of *might* in *The Guardian* compared to 14 in *The Times*. From the point

of view of an analysis focused on the meaning of the modals, both newspapers, again, deploy and distribute modals surprisingly similarly. With a corpus of this size, the differences are so insignificant that further in the analysis occurrences from both newspapers will be linked into one unit of occurrences representing broadsheet newspapers in general.

**Table 2**

Frequency of modal verbs	CAN	COULD	MAY	MIGHT
The Guardian	26	45	13	18
The Times	40	35	9	14

As for the individual meanings denoted by modal verbs, the most frequent meaning, as illustrated by Table 3, is the predicted theoretical possibility, constituting 59,5 % of the corpus. This meaning is expressed mainly by the modal verbs *could* and *can*. Modal verbs *may* and *might* express theoretical possibility in only 1 % of the occurrences. The reason for this underrepresentation in the corpus of this thesis will be further elaborated on in a subchapter of the analytical part regarding theoretical possibility. On the contrary, the second most denoted meaning, epistemic possibility, representing 26,5 % of corpus, is expressed almost exclusively by the modals *may* and *might*. Ability meaning is represented by 5,5 % of the corpus and it is expressed by both *can* and *could*, however *can* dominates. The gradient of inherency is represented by 5 % of tokens in total, permission represents only 2 % of the corpus and the gradient of restriction was detected only in 1,5 % of the occurrences, thus, it is the least frequent of meanings.

**Table 3**

Meanings of verbs	Theoretical possibility	Epistemic possibility	Ability	Permission	Gradient of Inherency	Gradient of Restriction
CAN	43	0	10	4	6	3
COULD	74	1	1	0	4	0

MAY	1	21	0	0	0	0
MIGHT	1	31	0	0	0	0
Total	<b>119</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
Percentage	<b>59,5 %</b>	<b>26,5%</b>	<b>5,5 %</b>	<b>2 %</b>	<b>5 %</b>	<b>1,5 %</b>

Consequently, as the most frequently used modals are *can* and *could*, dynamic modality presents the predominant type of modality, as shown in Table 4. Specifically, it constitutes 70 % of cases, whilst epistemic modality occurs in 26,5 % of cases. Deontic modality constitutes only 2 % of the corpus and the category labeled Indetermined modality represents 1,5 % of the corpus. This heading represents the gradient of restriction that is a borderline case between dynamic (theoretical possibility) and deontic modality (permission). Meaning of the gradient of inherency is included in the dynamic modality, as both borderline meanings (theoretical possibility and ability) belong into dynamic modality, thus, making it possible to classify the type of modality even without being able to specify the meaning.

**Table 4**

Kinds of modality	Dynamic modality	Epistemic modality	Deontic modality	Indetermined modality
Frequency	140	53	4	3
Percentage	70 %	26,5 %	2 %	1,5 %

Next, the individual meanings of modal verbs selected for this thesis will be analyzed. The theoretical background presented in the first part of this thesis will be used as a foundation for the analysis. The analysis will be focused on the characteristics of meanings with the aim to verify the intersection between what was established in the theoretical part and what was discovered when analyzing the corpus. Furthermore, commentaries and conclusions based on the discourse in which the modal verbs have been used will be drawn, as the aim of the analysis is to observe the usage of modal verbs in newspaper discourse on Brexit.

#### 4.2. Theoretical Possibility

The first analyzed meaning is theoretical possibility, of which 118 occurrences were found in the analyzed material, meaning 59 % of the corpus expresses theoretical possibility.



Theoretical possibility is, therefore, the more frequent out of the two dynamic meanings, possibility and ability. This supports Leech's statement about the frequency of modal meanings, in which he labeled theoretical possibility as the most common meaning expressed by the modal auxiliary *can* (2004, 74). Likewise, as indicated by Table 3, it is also the most frequent meaning of *could*, as stated by Coates (1983, 109).

As described in the theoretical part, the primary features typical for theoretical possibility are an inanimate and the general subject, and passive voice. Despite passive voice being one of the most typical features of theoretical possibility presented in the literature, it was found in only 20,3 % of the occurrences presented in the corpus, meaning 79,7 % of the tokens denoting theoretical possibility has an active voice. For a typical feature the number of occurrences of passive voice is not high. That is presumably because of the type of discourse in the analyzed corpus. The main purpose of the passive is to focus on a person or object that experiences the action denoted by the lexical verb, instead of focusing on the agent of the action. It is, therefore, presumable that the passive in combination with theoretical possibility would be extremely frequent in utterances in which the agent is not important; for example, in academic writing, where the author often uses the passive voice to shift the focus of the sentence. However, in newspaper discourse, omitting the agent of an action is not desirable nearly as often. As stated in the theoretical part, the writer usually opts for passive when the agent is unknown or of course, when the agent is not significant. However, the number of instances when the agent of the action is not important is considerably lower in newspaper discourse than it might be in academic writing, for instance. Hence, the reason for a relatively low occurrence of the otherwise typical feature, is the newspaper discourse and its function. Consequently, it can be said that the analysis has shown that in newspaper discourse, the passive voice is not a prototypical feature.

Out of the 24 passives, only 3 occurrences contained an animate subject, the other 21 cases comprised of inanimate subjects. Thus, the analysis has shown that the co-occurrence of the passive voice and an inanimate subject is 87,5 %. Active voice is in 60,6 % of the cases accompanied by an inanimate subject and in 28,7 %, it occurs with the general subject. Animate subjects combined with the active voice appeared in the corpus in only 10,6 % cases, which is in percentage less than the co-occurrence of passive voice and an animate subject, which is 12,5 %. Therefore, based on the analysis, theoretical possibility is most frequently associated with an inanimate subject and that is regardless of the distinction

between the active and passive voice. Another typical characteristic, proven to be frequent, is the general subject. Due to the prevalence of active voice over passive in this corpus, the passive voice cannot be viewed as a main attribute of theoretical possibility in newspaper discourse.

As for the type of the subject used, the analyzed corpus contains 78 occurrences (66,1 %) of an inanimate subject, 27 occurrences (22,9 %) of the general subject, and 13 occurrences (11 %) of an animate subject. Therefore, the presupposed frequency of subjects is confirmed – the most widely used one is an inanimate subject, followed by the general subject. The most frequent general subject in the corpus is *you* (14), followed by *we* (8), *no one* (2), *they* (2), and *us* (1). Despite the general subject being considered an indicator of theoretical possibility, meaning cannot be assigned based on this feature only, as in the corpus all the other meanings are also co-occurring with the general subject, although less frequently. An animate subject was confirmed to not be a characteristic subject for theoretical possibility, as it appears only in 11 % of cases, however, it shows that theoretical possibility is not restricted in terms of the subject.

Although the type of verb with regard to theoretical possibility was not mentioned in any of the studied books, the corpus of this thesis clearly shows that the preferred type of verb for theoretical possibility is a dynamic verb, occurring in 86,4 % of the occurrences, whereas a stative verb only in 13,6 %. Similarly, to the type of the subject, even with the type of verb, theoretical possibility might be more likely to occur in one context, however, it is not restricted to it.

Another, however, less frequent feature, is the co-occurrence with adjective and adverbs in both comparative and superlative forms that “represent judgements about the degree or extent that an action is possible” (Palmer 1990, 84). There are 18 tokens out of 118 that contain either an adjective or an adverb, and there are 20 occurrences of this feature in total. The two were labeled as gradients of inherency. Therefore, the presence of adjectives and adverbs is a clear indicator of theoretical possibility meaning. As theoretical possibility is non-restricted by the subject, verb, and voice, assessing occurrences often had to be based on other context and presence of adjectives and adverbs was one of the contextual clues. These typical features can be seen in occurrence (1) that also contains the general subject *you* and adjective *lower* in a comparative form and in occurrence (2) that contains adjective *better* in a comparative form alongside the passive voice.

(1) *Cooper, the Labour MP for Pontefract and Castleford, who has campaigned on behalf of refugees, said: “Just when you thought leave campaigners **couldn’t** stoop any **lower**, they are now exploiting the misery of the Syrian refugee crisis in the most dishonest and immoral way.” 33D*

(2) *Every week we send £350 million to Brussels — that’s money that **could be better invested** in helping patients who rely on our NHS.” 41a*

As mentioned in the theoretical part, theoretical possibility is sometimes distinguishable from other meanings by occurring with enabling or disabling circumstances that denote whether it is possible for an action to occur or not. An example of such enabling circumstance can be seen in example (3), a disabling circumstance is shown by the occurrence (4) where the circumstances are underlined.

(3) *David Davis, the former Europe minister, said David Cameron **could** remain as prime minister after a vote to leave the EU but would have to hand the breakup negotiations with Brussels to a minister who had supported exit. 67B*

(4) *“The problem is, you **can’t** get any proper information — the “remain” campaign comes out with scaremongering and then the “leave” people come out with the opposite scaremongering.” 50U*

The key modal verb for denoting theoretical possibility is *can* and its secondary form *could*, they occurred in 36,4 % and 61,9 % of occurrences respectively. Modal verbs *may* and *might* are both used only once in the corpus, meaning they both represent 0,8 % of the theoretical possibility meaning. The reason for such a low frequency of usage of these modals is presumably caused by them being marked for formality. Although formality is a feature of newspaper discourse, the degree of formality used in newspapers is less formal than the language used in academic writing, for example, where modal verbs *may* and *might* are used almost exclusively to express theoretical possibility meaning (Biber et al. 1999, 491). That is because epistemic modality, thus, the modality for which *may* and *might* are typical, does not typically appear in academic writing, as it is highly subjective, which is not desirable.

### 4.3. Epistemic possibility

Epistemic possibility is the second most frequent meaning, with 53 occurrences out of 200 tokens. It represents 26,5 % of all the meanings. The meaning is prototypically denoted by a modal verb *may* and its secondary form *might*. *Can* and *could* express epistemic modality only in non-affirmative sentences, i.e. negative sentences and questions. All occurrences with negated *can* were paraphrased to determine their scope of negation to assess meaning as illustrated on the example (5) and (6), where both occurrences have external negation, which negates the modal verb, not the proposition, and it is a scope of negation connected with dynamic modality.

(5) “You **can’t** say on the one hand that the US-UK special relationship is as strong as ever and always will be, and in the next breath say take my advice or you go to the back of the queue,” he said. **13E** (= It is not possible to say on the one hand...)

(6) *The more checks and balances politicians have, the better for the rest of us. You **can’t** have too many wise heads and different opinions.* **35Q** (= It is not possible to have too many wise heads and different opinions.)

While there was no occurrence of epistemic *can’t*, there is one occurrence of epistemic *couldn’t* as shown in example (6). The epistemic reading is supported not only by paraphrasing and establishing the scope of negation that is internal and negates the predicate, as opposed to negating the modal meaning. This reading is further supported by the co-occurrence of progressive aspect, which is the main differentiator of epistemic modality, as neither dynamic nor deontic meanings can occur with progressive aspect, as defined previously in the theoretical part.

(6) *In 1975, when the last vote on whether to stay in the EU (then the European economic community) was held, the rightwing Conservative MP Enoch Powell, unhappy about what he considered a loss of national sovereignty, argued that the result was merely provisional as it **could** not be legally binding on parliament.* **97I** (= the result was merely provisional as it possibly was not legally binding on parliament.)

As was already mentioned, the main characteristic of epistemic possibility is the possible co-occurrence with perfective and progressive aspect. In the corpus, there are 6 cases of the progressive aspect and 4 cases of the perfective aspect, which equals 11,3 % and 7,5 % respectively. There are no cases of progressive or perfective aspect being used with any other meaning besides epistemic modality, therefore, Coates claims (1983, 101) the compatibility of progressive and perfective aspect only with epistemic possibility is proven to be accurate. Therefore, any occurrence with any of these two aspects can automatically be labeled as epistemic possibility.

To comment on the syntactical findings, epistemic possibility is typically connected to a stative verb, however, in the corpus of this thesis, dynamic verbs prevailed over the stative ones. There are 33 occurrences of dynamic verbs (i.e. 62,3 %) and only 20 of stative verbs (i.e. 37,7 %). The typical stative verb is relatively frequent, although less than the dynamic verb. The reason for this is the nature of newspaper discourse. Journalist purposefully use dynamic and action verbs, as they are trying to capture the reader's attention and create a sense of immediacy. For this reason, the occurrence of stative verbs is lower in this thesis' corpus. Nonetheless, a stative verb is proven to be a significant feature of epistemic possibility.

Another feature of epistemic possibility is the existential subject *there*, that did not appear frequently, in fact, it was used in only 3 instances (i.e. 5,7 %), but all the uses are with epistemic possibility; thus, despite this feature not being very frequent, it is restricted in usage for epistemic possibility only, unlike other subjects, and it is therefore characteristic. The most frequently co-occurring subject is an inanimate subject, present in 35 occurrences (i.e. 66 %), followed by an animate subject, having appeared 9 times (i.e. 17 %) and lastly by the general subject that was used with epistemic possibility in 6 cases (i.e. 11,3 %).

The concessive sentence is a special use of a modal verb *may* and *might* to express the epistemic modality. Rather than presenting their stance at the proposition expressed, the speaker accepts this proposition as truthful in order to contrast it with another proposition. The concessive *may* appeared in 7 occurrences and *might*, despite reportedly only rare in use, appeared in 5 occurrences. All 12 occurrences followed *but*, as illustrated by (7) and (8) below:

(7) Red tape may be annoying, but it is also there to protect your and my family from being lied to, poisoned and cheated. 160Q (= Although red tape is annoying, it is also there to protect you and your family from being lied to, poisoned and cheated.)

(8) Just look at the figures. Switzerland and Israel might perform well in relative terms, but the UK ranks alongside Germany as one of the dominant nations on the European scene. 169C (=Although Switzerland and Israel perform well in relative terms, the UK ranks alongside Germany as one of the dominant nations on the European scene.)

Lastly, the distribution of epistemic possibility among direct, reported and descriptive speech will be addressed. As epistemic possibility is a subjective expression of an opinion and assessment of truthfulness and likelihood, it is in contradiction with the presupposed objectivity of newspaper discourse. Thus, in alignment with the attempt at objectivity, journalists themselves should avoid using epistemic possibility in their writing, unless they are quoting other authors. There are 9 instances of epistemic possibility being used in reported speech and 17 instances of it being used in direct speech. Thus, 26 occurrences of epistemic possibility were not used by the authors themselves, and do not have any effect on maintaining objectivity in newspaper discourse. However, there are 27 occurrences of epistemic possibility in descriptive parts of the articles, where the form and language used is the author's choice. Therefore, it seems that despite choosing broadsheet newspapers that are known for their high-quality journalism and posing as objective, journalists in fact do not avoid using highly subjective epistemic possibility in their writing. It can be concluded that as was presupposed, despite general perception regarding journalist objectivity, even respectable newspapers do not adhere to maintaining objectivity, and certain elements of subjectivity are present in newspaper discourse.

#### 4.4. Permission

There are only 4 occurrences of permission, and all are expressed by the modal verb *can*. The reason why there is no permission expressed by the modal verb *may* might be due to its high formality that is not suitable for newspaper discourse. Furthermore, permission expressed by *can* is often viewed as more neutral and impersonal, (Quirk et al. 1985, 224), which might also be a reason why it prevails.

Permission represents all subjects – example (14) is an animate subject, example (15) is an inanimate subject, example (16) is a general subject and example (17) is an inanimate subject. In 3 of the occurrences the verb is dynamic, only in occurrence, specifically in example (14), the verb is stative. This shows that permission is not restricted in terms of subject or verb. Lastly, the source of authority in all the utterances is also varied. In example (14) it is the supreme court, in example (15) it is the Commonwealth, in example (16) it is the European courts and in example (17) it is ECJ (Court of Justice of the European Union).

(14) *“We now intend to take the legal battle to the supreme court, the highest court in the country, so that all British citizens living elsewhere in the EU **can** be part of the democratic process to vote in this referendum which will have a very real impact on their lives,” Stein said.*

**21K**

(15) *Then New Zealand will sacrifice a thousand lambs, Ghana will ask if it **can** go back to being called the Gold Coast and Britain will resume hand-making Land Rovers and top hats and Sheffield plate teapots. **30Q***

(16) *Gove said: “It is dangerous for the European courts to have a say over our intelligence services and to rule on what data we **can** share with our allies like the US and Australia.”*

**56Y**

(17) *He accused the ECJ of overriding parliament’s sovereignty, saying that its rulings had had the effect of declaring “that data sharing arrangements that we had passed in parliament were wrong, and therefore we have to wait for the judgment of the ECJ to decide how our data and our information and our intelligence **can** be shared with our American allies.” **57Y***

#### 4.5. Gradient of Inherency

There are 12 occurrences of gradient of inherency, that is an occurrence that is borderline between the theoretical possibility meaning and ability meaning. As was mentioned in the theoretical part, not always is it possible to distinguish between the two meanings, due to

their merging. Therefore, even when deploying previously defined information about the typical features, it is not possible to sort all meanings into their own categories, because of this part of this analysis is also this gradient. The gradient of inherency co-occurs with 4 animate subjects, 3 general subjects and 4 inanimate subjects. There are 7 occurrences of gradient of inherency that contain a dynamic verb and 4 stative verbs. However, as both theoretical possibility and ability prefer dynamic verbs, it is not possible to decide based on the verb. Similarly non-restrictive are both meanings also with subjects. When paraphrasing is deployed, it is still not clear what the meaning of an utterance is, as in example (18) Other factors that might be used for assessing, however, are not straightforward either. In example (18), it is not clear whether the meaning intended by the speaker was “*An absence of market liquidity implies that it will be possible for us to see sharp moves in prices and heightened volatility in the hours following the announcement,*” thus denoting theoretical possibility or “*An absence of market liquidity implies that we will be able to see sharp moves in prices and heightened volatility in the hours following the announcement,*” which expresses ability whose modal meaning is, however, due to combination with verb of perception, lowered. Similarly in example (19), which could mean that Britain would be able to follow the model of Canada due to the inherent properties that the two country share or whether it is only a possibility of an event occurring.

(18) “*An absence of market liquidity implies that we **could** see sharp moves in prices and heightened volatility in the hours following the announcement,*” said analysts at Jefferies. **93H**

(19) *Boris Johnson has claimed Britain **could** follow the model of Canada in a vision of a brighter future outside the EU that was swiftly dismissed by David Cameron as “too good to be true”.* **105M**

Furthermore, other characteristics that usually signal belonging to a certain meaning are sometimes present, however, clear assessment is still not possible. For instance, example (20) contains adverb *precisely* and the co-occurrence of adverbs is connected with theoretical possibility. However, occurrence also contains a stative verb, specifically a verb of inert cognition – *know*, which would signal ability meaning. In example (21), it is possible the speaker is saying he does not have an ability to make



serious assessment, or it can be a theoretical possibility with disabling circumstances in a form of a lack of facts.

(20) *And while no one **can** know precisely the impact of leaving the EU, it would be likely to have huge repercussions on many other aspects of UK life.* **14F**

(21) *He is cagey, therefore, when invited to comment on a fellow retail mogul in a spot of bother and won't be drawn on Sir Philip Green and the collapse of BHS because he "**can't** make a serious assessment without the facts".* **51V**

#### 4.6. Gradient of Restriction

Another hard-to-decide category is the gradient of restriction, which is a category for borderline cases between theoretical possibility and permission. There are 3 cases of gradient of restriction present in the corpus. Example (22) has an animate subject and dynamic verb, which is possible for both meanings. Furthermore, it is not possible to determine whether it is a case of permission, and the student is permitted to apply based on their country's membership in EU or whether it is only stating what is theoretically possible. With example (23), the writer might be sort of granting a permission through a figure of speech, although not literally, or it might be only theoretically possible. As for the example (24) it is not obvious from the context whether, if there is an increase in interest rates some further, no specified rules and requirements would affect the number of people allowed to borrow money for a house or whether it is only supposed to express a possibility based on circumstance.

5. (22) *Similarly, every eligible EU student pays the same tuition fees and **can** apply for the same tuition fee support as nationals of the hosting EU country.* **15E**
6. (23) *"You **can** dislike the European Union, but it's not comparable to Hitler invading the UK."* **26N**
7. (24) *"It might also mean that the Monetary Policy Committee has to increase interest rates to support the currency; that too would affect mortgage rates and the amount people **can** borrow to buy homes."* **66BB**

## 8. Conclusion

Judging by the quantitative analysis of both *The Guardian* and *The Times* corpora, it appears that the distribution of modal verbs, the meanings they represent and consequently also the kinds of modalities are extremely similar. It is not possible to determine the extent of discrepancies that would appear in the case of using a large scale corpus. However, based on the corpora created for this thesis, it seems that there is a pattern in the use of modality that is assumably caused by the purpose of news articles written about Brexit.

Since the most used meaning is theoretical possibility, relating to the possibility of an action occurring as enabled or disabled by external circumstances, it can be said that the writers usually use modality to express hypothetical presupposition. Secondly, modality is used to express epistemic modality, thus, the speaker's personal assessment of the possibility based not on the external circumstances, but rather their perception of these circumstances that they more or less consider in their assessing process, from which the judgement about a likelihood of a proposition emerges.

This use of modality is highly subjective and in theory should not appear very frequently in newspaper discourse, as newspaper discourse should by its definition aim to be as objective and impartial as possible. Nevertheless, as was mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis, it is not entirely possible to refrain from projecting one's own personal views and opinions into a piece of writing. In news reporting, this feature of newspaper discourse is suppressed to its almost full potential, however, there are genres of journalism and newspaper writing whose function is not to merely report about an event, but rather influence the reader; this is done either by presenting pure facts or, more frequently, by combining facts and anticipated objectivity with personal opinions.

Opinion pieces were a part of the sample of articles used in the corpora. Not refraining from using such opinion pieces, instead of only using news reporting, was to mimic the influence media might have had on the readers in the crucial decision-making period before the Brexit referendum. The aim was to find out how two broadsheet newspaper *The Guardian* and *The Times* used modality in not further specified newspaper discourse. It was assumed there might be a tendency to affect the readers' opinions and the aim was to analyze which of the two newspapers is more prone to giving space to writers who are using subjective epistemic possibility rather than swaying opinions of readers by a more objective theoretical possibility that is presumably more factual. However, despite there being

differences in the political alignment of said newspapers, there is little to no difference in the way writers of *The Guardian* and *The Times* use modality in their writing.

Thus, based on the findings in this thesis, (that are, of course, not fully applicable, as the examined sample was rather too small to make definite conclusions) it is possible to say that subjective modality, having the potential to influence the readers by opinions, not necessarily facts, is not very limited in the discourse that is presented as mainly objective. However, the use of subjective epistemic modality seemingly does not differ based on the political alignment of the newspapers. Moreover, it is important to note that personal opinions of writers are never fully separable from the text; this is because of the language's natural quality of being subjective, as mentioned in the theoretical part. Thus, using epistemic modality is not necessarily a sign of violation of the ethical codex of journalism concerned, among other things, with objectivity. Lastly, the objective use of modality, such as theoretical possibility, still prevails, nonetheless.

## 9. Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá výskytem modálních sloves *can*, *may*, *might* a *could* v diskurzu britských novin *The Guardian* a *The Times*, který se týkal ukončení členství Spojeného království v Evropské unii. Práce byla koncipována analyticky i teoreticky, a k výzkumu obou částí byla použita primární i sekundární literatura; tu tvoří zejména články, které vyšly ve zmíněných periodikách. Noviny, ve kterých se tyto texty, lišící se novinové útvary, tedy v některých případech typické reporty, v jiných takzvané opinion pieces, byly vybrány zejména pro svoji popularitu ve Spojeném království, a také pozitivní konotace, pro které jsou oba deníky i ve světě proslulé; ačkoliv nesou punc objektivity, později se ukazuje, že tomu tak není, nicméně to vypovídá spíše o povaze jazyka obecně, jak bude dále nastíněno.

V analytické části byl proveden kvantitativní výzkum, a to skrz korpus, který obsahuje texty redaktorů a externích přispěvatelů jak *The Times*, tak *The Guardian*, a to ve stejném množství. Korpus byl sestaven prací s vyhledavačem Google, časový rámec výsledků byl nastaven na dobu mezi vyhlášením referenda, tedy 22. února 2016, do jeho konání, tedy 23. června téhož roku.

Teoretická část nejprve poskytuje informace týkající se modality, druhů modality – dynamické, epistemické a deontické, a následně také bližší informace týkající se

jednotlivých modálních sloves, na které je tato práce soustředěna. Je zde zkoumán také novinový diskurz a jeho aspekty, jejich uvedení poskytuje základ pro analytickou část práce, která se jim dále věnuje. Práce například zjišťuje, že pro novinový diskurz jsou typické reported speech, stručný jazyk a činný rod, naopak se vyhýbá žargonu a slangu.

Vzhledem k tomu, že jde o korpus sestavený v malém měřítku, rozsah distribuce modálních sloves, jejich význam a typ modality je u obou deníků srovnatelný. Nejčastější význam představuje teoretická možnost, autoři většinou pracují s modalitou jako prostředkem k vyjádření hypotézy, předpokladu, aniž by do svého textu promítali své subjektivní vnímání. Dále se v novinovém diskurzu vyskytuje epistemická modalita, zde do předpokládané objektivity vstupuje osobní zhodnocení daného autora, které vychází z vlastních přesvědčení o dané situaci. Protože je použití epistemické modality zásadně subjektivní, očekává čtenář, že by se nemělo v novinovém diskurzu objevovat, nebo pouze zřídka; vzhledem k povaze textů se však nelze stoprocentně oprostit od vlastních názorů. Důvodem, proč byly do korpusu zahrnuty i takzvané opinion pieces, tedy texty, které už ze samé podstaty neusilují o objektivitu, spíše o projevení názoru nebo přímo ovlivnění čtenáře, byla ukázka vlivu, který media mohou na své konzumenty mít, pokud jde o rozhodnutí v politických otázkách. V kapitole Brexit and the Media je nastíněno, jakým způsobem euroskeptické deníky ovlivňovaly před referendem své čtenáře, dá se tedy předpokládat, že o objektivitu se v novinovém diskurzu neusiluje vždy. Vzhledem k této inherentní vlastnosti tohoto typu diskurzu tedy lze formulovat cíl práce jako analýzu prostoru, které deníky *The Guardian* a *The Times* poskytují svým přispěvatelům a redaktorům, přičemž jde o prostor věnovaný opinion pieces, které se vyznačují použitím epistemické modality a subjektivity. Analýze tedy nebyla podrobena otázka, zda dochází ke ztrátě objektivity – to bylo potvrzeno – ale spíše míra poškození objektivity. Dá se také diskutovat o tom, do jaké míry je objektivita v novinovém diskurzu žádoucí, vzhledem k roli médií ve společnosti, to nicméně není předmětem této práce.

Na formulovanou otázku, která byla předmětem výzkumu, lze odpovědět následovně; ačkoliv oba deníky mají určitou příslušnost k politickému spektru – tato příslušnost je neoddiskutovatelná a potvrzuje ji množství autorů – jejich snaha o ovlivnění čtenářů je přítomna ve srovnatelné míře. Liberální *The Guardian* směřuje spíše nalevo a v teorii podporuje strany jako Labour Party a The Green Party, které se buď vůči Brexitu vymezily (The Green Party) nebo podporují nové referendum (Labour Party), nicméně výzkum neprokázal větší množství prostoru, který by měl poskytovat svým autorům, a tedy usilovat o ovlivnění názorů čtenářů opinion pieces. *The Times*, ve své politické příslušnosti spíše

pravicové nebo vyskytující se na politickém středu, rovněž neposkytují svým redaktorům nebo dopisovatelům větší prostor pro vyjádření své afiliace, není zde tedy riziko ovlivnění čtenářů. Modalita je používána v obou denících podobným způsobem. Výzkum tedy prvotní hypotézu – politická příslušnost jednotlivých deníků bude hrát roli v tom, jakým způsobem reportují o Brexitu a kolik prostoru dostávají tzv. opinion pieces – nepotvrdil. Zároveň analytická část a její korpus přináší zjištění, že ačkoliv je novinový diskurz obecně spojen s představou objektivitu, není tomu tak; epistemická modalita nebyla ve zkoumaných textech nijak omezována. Je však nutné podotknout, že ne vždy je použití epistemické modality spojeno s uvědomělou snahou o ovlivnění svobodné volby čtenáře; pokud k ní dochází, jde o jev nevyhnutelný, protože jazyk je ze své podstaty subjektivní, a autor se nikdy plně nemůže vyhnout projevení svého názoru skrz psaný projev. Použití epistemické modality v novinovém diskurzu tedy není nutně nemorální, jakkoli je obecná představa novinářské práce ustálena spíše na představě, že by měla být co nejvíce objektivní.

Práce se mimo jiné zabývá i teoretickými informacemi o Brexitu a o událostech jej provázejícími. Je zde nastíněna mentalita Britů, pokud jde o vlastní nahlížení sebe sama jakožto Evropanů, zároveň jsou i poskytnuty různé důvody pro vývoj této mentality. Autoři potvrzují, že Spojené království si vyvíjelo svůj specifický náhled své autonomie, příslušnosti k Evropě a zároveň i svých dílčích příslušností. V kapitole Brexit and the Media je částečně zkoumán i vztah minoritních britských národností – Walesanů, Skotů a Irů – vůči Angličanům, a jejich role v referendu z roku 2016. Mimo jiné jsou zmíněny i další milníky, které v podstatě vedly právě k tomuto referendu, a už dopředu daly tušit jeho výsledku.

Práce pojímá jak teoretické poznatky o modalitě, modálních slovesech *can*, *may*, *might* a *could* a jejich inherentní subjektivitu či objektivitu, a prezentuje poznatky potvrzující právě jejich různici se úroveň objektivitu v závislosti na použitém slovesu a typu modality. Zároveň se věnuje novinovému diskurzu, který zde konkrétně reprezentují deníky *The Times* a *The Guardian*, záměrně vybrané pro svou lišící se politickou afiliaci. V závěru rozebírá i historické okolnosti a předpoklady, které později daly vzniknout proběhlému referendu. Analytická část se zaměřuje na konkrétní texty a autory, stejně jako prostor, který dostávají od svých domovských novin pro vyjádření svých názorů. Výsledkem analýzy je zanedbatelný rozdíl mezi jednotlivými periodiky, pokud jde o snahu ovlivnit čtenáře, a práce nabízí také důvody, proč objektivita není dosažitelná, i když jde o novinový diskurz.

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## 12. Appendixes

### 8.1. Appendix 1: Corpus

**1B** Davis said: "If we vote for Brexit then it is clear that David Cameron **can't** lead that bit of his government's activities, the renegotiations." **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**2C** Unfortunately, they're both quite long, though each has a summary or overview and you **can** get a taste of their differences just by reading the opening remarks. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**3C** On the basis of such figures Jamie Martin, one of Science for Britain's core activists, claims with "100% certainty" that associated nations **can** extract the same benefits as EU members. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**4C** Detailed comparisons are complicated because the big picture is made up of various schemes to fund research, infrastructure, and capacity building, but a useful sense of the numbers **can** be gleaned from the Royal Society's analysis. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech, passive**

**5C** And of course the impact on UK research **cannot** – and should not – be isolated from other weighty matters in the referendum debate such as sovereignty, democratic accountability, regulation, and differing perceptions of the long-term goals of the EU. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech, passive**

**6C** The best that any of us **can** do is attempt a reasonable assessment while keeping our biases in mind. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**7C** But I **cannot** discern a convincing case that abandoning the added value of membership in favour of associate status will improve our research base. **Dynamic modality, gradient of inherency, animate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**8D** "But, frankly, as you **can** see from this picture, most of the people coming are young males and, yes, they may be coming from countries that are not in a very happy state, they may be coming from places that are poorer than us, but the EU has made a fundamental error that risks the security of everybody." **Dynamic modality, ability, general subject, stative verb, direct speech**

**9D** Neil Carmichael, the Conservative MP for Stroud, said: "It's disappointing to see Ukip jumping on the refugee crisis to further their own political aims. Britain **can** only deal with the issue of immigration by working together with European countries that face the same challenges." **Dynamic modality, , inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**10E** “I **can’t** remember whether they were eight or 10 but they were decidedly shorter than we were and they whooped us,” he said, to laughs from reporters. **Dynamic modality, ability, animate subject, stative verb, direct speech**

**11E** “I agree – that is why it is safer to take back control so that we **can** stop terror suspects from Europe coming into the UK.” **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**12E** “We want more international cooperation after we vote leave, but the EU is not fit for purpose, and **cannot** cope with the multiple crises we face like terrorism, Syria and mass migration.” **Dynamic modality, ability, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**13E** “You **can’t** say on the one hand that the US-UK special relationship is as strong as ever and always will be, and in the next breath say take my advice or you go to the back of the queue,” he said. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**14F** And while no one **can** know precisely the impact of leaving the EU, it would be likely to have huge repercussions on many other aspects of UK life. **Dynamic modality, gradient of inherency, general subject, stative verb, descriptive speech**

**15E** Similarly, every eligible EU student pays the same tuition fees and **can** apply for the same tuition fee support as nationals of the hosting EU country. **Indeterminate modality, gradient of restriction, animate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**16E** “But the EU as the embodiment of an idea, of collective action to achieve common goals more effectively than any one nation **can** do on its own, remains a powerful force.” **Dynamic modality, ability, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**17E** The EU emissions trading scheme sets a decreasing cap for emissions from energy intensive sectors, and allocates or auctions emissions allowances, which **can** be traded on the open market. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech, passive**

**18G** Asked by the German news magazine Der Spiegel whether other countries might leave the EU after a Brexit vote, Wolfgang Schäuble said: “You **can’t** rule it out ... How would the Netherlands, which has traditionally been very closely allied with Britain, react, for example?” **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**19J** “The leader of Vote Leave is Michael Gove – that awful little leaker who put it about that the Queen wanted out. They **can’t** stand him.” *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech*

**20J** “The feeling is that we **can’t** leave it to him. Look what happened at the last referendum we had, on Scotland.” *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, direct speech*

**21K** “We now intend to take the legal battle to the supreme court, the highest court in the country, so that all British citizens living elsewhere in the EU **can** be part of the democratic process to vote in this referendum which will have a very real impact on their lives,” Stein said. *Deontic modality, permission, animate subject, stative verb, direct speech*

**22L** The report added: “No firm prediction **can** be made as to how long the negotiations on withdrawal and a new relationship would take if the UK were to vote to leave the EU.” *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech, passive*

**23L** The requirement for unanimity with the EU, however, means that such agreement **cannot** be guaranteed. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech, passive*

**24M** “I think we **can** strike a deal as the Canadians have done based on trade and getting rid of tariffs. It’s a very, very bright future I see,” he said. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, direct speech*

**25N** “I think [Brexit] would be a bad thing because it gives a signal to other countries that [the EU] **cannot** handle a difficult period.” *Dynamic modality, ability, inanimate, dynamic verb, direct speech*

**26N** “You **can** dislike the European Union, but it’s not comparable to Hitler invading the UK.” *Indetermined modality, gradient of restriction, general subject, stative verb, direct speech*

**27P** On Thursday, you **can’t** claim to be a Eurosceptical, reluctant or nose-holding remainer. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, stative verb, descriptive speech*

**28Q** It’s the knowledge that the best of us have been and gone, that nothing we **can** build will be as lovely as a National Trust Georgian country house, no art will be as good as a Turner, no poem as wonderful as If, no writer a touch on Shakespeare or Dickens, nothing will grow as lovely as a cottage garden, no hero greater than Nelson, no politician better than Churchill, no

view more throat-catching than the White Cliffs and that we will never manufacture anything as great as a Rolls-Royce or Flying Scotsman again. **Dynamic modality, ability, general subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**29Q** In the Brexit fantasy, the best we **can** hope for is to kick out all the work-all-hours foreigners and become caretakers to our own past in this self-congratulatory island of moaning and pomposity. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**30Q** Then New Zealand will sacrifice a thousand lambs, Ghana will ask if it **can** go back to being called the Gold Coast and Britain will resume hand-making Land Rovers and top hats and Sheffield plate teapots. **Deontic modality, permission, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**31Q** We listen to the Brexit lot talk about the trade deals they're going to make with Europe after we leave, and the blithe insouciance that what they're offering instead of EU membership is a divorce where you **can** still have sex with your ex. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, stative verb, descriptive speech**

**32Q** They reckon they **can** get out of the marriage, keep the house, not pay alimony, take the kids out of school, stop the in-laws going to the doctor, get strict with the visiting rights, but, you know, still get a shag at the weekend and, obviously, see other people on the side. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**33Q** "Possibly not Merkel, but the bosses of Mercedes and those French vintners and cheesemakers, they **can't** get enough of old John Bull..." **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**34Q** Personally, I see nothing about our legislators in the UK that makes me feel I **can** confidently give them more power. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**35Q** The more checks and balances politicians have, the better for the rest of us. You **can't** have too many wise heads and different opinions. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, stative verb, descriptive speech**

**36Q** I am part of this culture, this European civilisation. I **can** walk into any gallery on our continent and completely understand the images and the stories on the walls. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**37Q** I **can** read books on subjects from Ancient Greece to Dark Ages Scandinavia, from Renaissance Italy to 19th-century France, and I don't need the context or the landscape explained to me. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**38Q** Culture works and grows through the constant warp and weft of creators, producers, consumers, intellectuals and instinctive lovers. You **can't** dictate or legislate for it, you can just make a place that encourages it and you can truncate it. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

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**41Q** You **can** make it harder and more grudging, you can put up barriers and you can build walls, but why on earth would you? **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

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**44S** "But stand-up was the first thing I done where I thought, 'Let me try and do that as well as I **can**, actually.'" **Dynamic modality, ability, animate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**45S** However surprising it is for a German marketing executive to have found his niche making English people laugh, this is now his home and he will do what he **can** to stay. **Dynamic modality, gradient of inherency, animate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**



**46T** One of Britain’s leading businessmen has told his 6,000 employees in the UK that there is “very little to fear” from leaving the European Union and he is confident that the country **can** “stand on its own two feet”. **Dynamic modality, ability, animate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**47T** “The UK is a trading nation and the fifth largest economy in the world. I am confident we **can** stand on our own two feet.” **Dynamic modality, ability, general subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**48T** “I believe JCB and the UK **can** prosper just as much outside the EU, so there is very little to fear if we do choose to leave.” **Dynamic modality, ability, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**49U** “However, as a historian, having witnessed the appalling fallout of mistrust, bigotry and hatred in Europe, I **cannot** concede that the way to improve lives is to fracture and isolate.” **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**50U** “The problem is, you **can’t** get any proper information — the “remain” campaign comes out with scaremongering and then the “leave” people come out with the opposite scaremongering.” **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**51V** He is cagey, therefore, when invited to comment on a fellow retail mogul in a spot of bother and won’t be drawn on Sir Philip Green and the collapse of BHS because he “**can’t** make a serious assessment without the facts”. **Dynamic modality, gradient of inherency, animate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**52V** “I **can’t** see Angela Merkel saying we don’t want to trade with the UK, we are going to lose £16 billion of car sales and make how many people redundant in Germany. It is rubbish.” **Dynamic modality, gradient of inherency, animate subject, stative verb, direct speech**

**53V** “For people putting in £500, they **can** see a good pitch go up, it’s all very easy, but then the company doesn’t deliver.” **Dynamic modality, gradient of inherency, general subject, stative verb, direct speech**

**54W** “Any deal **cannot** be made too attractive for the British,” a senior European diplomat said. “That’s not being punitive as such; the EU will want to demonstrate to others who are not the British that there are severe downside risks to leaving.” **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech, passive**

**55X** But the people of Europe, if not their politicians, know in their heart of hearts that the EU **can** never be an effective military power. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, descriptive speech**

**56Y** Gove said: “It is dangerous for the European courts to have a say over our intelligence services and to rule on what data we **can** share with our allies like the US and Australia.” **Deontic modality, permission, general subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**57Y** He accused the ECJ of overriding parliament’s sovereignty, saying that its rulings had had the effect of declaring “that data sharing arrangements that we had passed in parliament were wrong, and therefore we have to wait for the judgment of the ECJ to decide how our data and our information and our intelligence **can** be shared with our American allies.” **Deontic modality, permission, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech, passive**

**58Z** “No one **can** seriously deny that European integration has ended centuries of conflict.” **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**59Z** “**Can** we be so sure that peace and stability on our continent are assured beyond any shadow of doubt?” **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, stative verb, direct speech**

**60Z** Moreover, we **can** be thankful that today we can be pledged to the continent without having to make the choice that bedevilled British foreign policy in Salisbury’s day: France or Germany? **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, stative verb, descriptive speech**

**61Z** Moreover, we can be thankful that today we **can** be pledged to the continent without having to make the choice that bedevilled British foreign policy in Salisbury’s day: France or Germany? **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**62Z** No one **can** seriously deny that the process of European integration has brought an end to centuries of Franco-German conflict and has settled the German question for good. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**63AA** Checkpoints and border posts may be a thing of the past but, as an outsider on their first ever visit to the Northern Ireland, you **can’t** help noticing all sorts of small things that indicate you are travelling between nations as you move along the border... **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, stative verb, descriptive speech**

**64AA** And we end up in the Chic Beauty Salon in Bessbrook just because the long line of customers having their hair done **cannot** run away from questions. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech*

**65BB** Charles Curran, a market-data analyst for Maskells, the estate agency, believes this might be an indicator of what **can** be expected should we vote to leave the EU. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech, passive*

**66BB** “It might also mean that the Monetary Policy Committee has to increase interest rates to support the currency; that too would affect mortgage rates and the amount people **can** borrow to buy homes.” *Indetermined modality, gradient of restriction, animate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech*

## **COULD**

**67B** David Davis, the former Europe minister, said David Cameron **could** remain as prime minister after a vote to leave the EU but would have to hand the breakup negotiations with Brussels to a minister who had supported exit. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech*

**68C** It would help if much of the opinionated noise **could** be filtered out of the discourse, but that’s not likely. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech, passive*

**69C** The case made by Scientists for EU is measured in tone and, though it **could** be clearer on some points, is supported by extensive citation of primary sources of information. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, descriptive speech*

**70C** As far as I understand it the case made by Scientists for Britain is that the UK **could** achieve all the scientific benefits of EU membership from outside the organisation. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech*

**71C** Science for Britain contends that quitting the EU would release a dividend that **could** easily be used to boost UK spending levels. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech, passive*

**72C** This **could** further harden government policy on immigration and may make it difficult to win political support in the UK for the freedom of movement terms required to secure associate

status for access to EU research networks. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**73D** Cooper, the Labour MP for Pontefract and Castleford, who has campaigned on behalf of refugees, said: “Just when you thought leave campaigners **couldn’t** stoop any lower, they are now exploiting the misery of the Syrian refugee crisis in the most dishonest and immoral way.” **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**74F** “The rules that govern compensation in the case of flight delays and cancellation are part of an EU regulation,” he said. “Therefore, it follows that UK passengers **could** no longer be covered by these compensation guarantees.” **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech, passive**

**75F** As David Lidington, the Europe minister, says in the *Observer* today, the government would then have to enter difficult negotiations with other EU nations to see what deals it **could** strike on behalf of its expats. **Dynamic modality, gradient of inherency, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**76F** Food prices for the consumer **could** go either way. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**77F** An economist from the Environmental Services Association said an EU exit “would leave a huge void for the industry as it would be unclear to what degree we would retain any elements of the European path towards higher levels of environmental sustainability” and “billions of pounds of fresh investment in green jobs and growth [**could** dry] up overnight”. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**78G** With Euroscepticism rising, a leave vote **could** prompt some member states to renegotiate their relationship with Brussels. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**79G** As the German finance minister has underlined, a British exit from the EU **could** trigger a knock-on effect in several of the bloc’s Eurosceptic member states. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**80G** A Brexit vote would be likely to lead to more forceful and frequent calls for referendums on the EU in Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands - and depending on next year’s presidential elections, in France – that **could** prove increasingly difficult for weaker governments to ignore. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**81G** Much more likely would be a demand to renegotiate terms and repatriate powers, which **could** make it harder for the EU to function and might perhaps lead, in the longer term, to a union of more “variable geometry”, with a deeply integrated inner core and an association of looser, satellite members. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**82G** Geert Wilders of the Dutch anti-Muslim and anti-European Freedom party – whose best-ever polling results in January suggested it **could** win as many as 42 of parliament’s 150 seats in elections next year – has said Brexit would make it easier for other countries to make the same decision. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**83G** In Scandinavia, the Sweden Democrats party, which holds the balance of power in Stockholm, are formally in favour of remaining in the EU, but have said that today’s bloc “is not the one that Swedes voted for” and that it would do all it **could** to limit the EU’s influence. **Dynamic modality, ability, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**84H** Some City sources are warning that trading **could** “gap down” – or open sharply lower – in the event of a vote for Brexit. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**85H** Others, though, think the result **could** have a calming influence after a period of uncertainty. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, animate subject, stative verb, reported speech**

**86H** There are suggestions sterling **could** slide from its current levels of around \$1.42 to \$1.20 and reach parity with the euro, from around €1.27 now. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**87H** “Foreign exchange rates **could** also witness fluctuations and this has the potential to impact overseas trades placed during this time,” Charles Stanley said, warning that order sizes may be reduced and it could take longer to answer phones. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**88H** Foreign exchange rates could also witness fluctuations and this has the potential to impact overseas trades placed during this time,” Charles Stanley said, warning that order sizes may be reduced and it **could** take longer to answer phones. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**89H** Some economists, argue interest rates **could** be cut, possibly to zero from their record low of 0.5% where they have been stuck since the financial crisis. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech, passive**

**90H** Analysts at JP Morgan said rates **could** be cut by a quarter of a percentage point as soon as next month's meeting of the rate-setting monetary policy committee. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech, passive**

**91H** Another quarter point cut **could** take place in August. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**92H** Many investors are expected to go into the vote without any large trading positions which **could** expose them to losses once the result comes in, reducing volumes and exacerbating any price movements once the outcome is known. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**93H** "An absence of market liquidity implies that we **could** see sharp moves in prices and heightened volatility in the hours following the announcement," said analysts at Jefferies. **Dynamic modality, gradient of inherency, general subject, stative verb, direct speech**

**94H** "Beyond providing liquidity, both the BoE and ECB **could** cut interest rates," the Jefferies analysts said. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**95H** Analysts at Bernstein have predicted Barclays would be hardest hit, with its shares falling 40% over 18 months after a Brexit vote while the two bailed-out banks – Lloyds Banking Group and Royal Bank of Scotland – **could** take a hit of 35% and 25% respectively. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**96I** In theory, in the event of a vote to leave the EU, David Cameron, who opposes Brexit, **could** decide to ignore the will of the people and put the question to MPs banking on a majority deciding to remain. This is because parliament is sovereign and referendums are generally not binding in the UK. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**97I** In 1975, when the last vote on whether to stay in the EU (then the European economic community) was held, the rightwing Conservative MP Enoch Powell, unhappy about what he considered a loss of national sovereignty, argued that the result was merely provisional as it

**could** not be legally binding on parliament. Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech

**98I** Some advocates of Brexit argue that discussions with other member states **could** start informally, without article 50 having to be invoked. Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech

**99I** There has even been the argument, made by some in the Brexit camp, that the mere threat of departure following a vote to leave **could** smooth the way to a better deal for Britain which could then be put to voters in a second referendum on EU membership. Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech

**100I** There has even been the argument, made by some in the Brexit camp, that the mere threat of departure following a vote to leave could smooth the way to a better deal for Britain which **could** then be put to voters in a second referendum on EU membership. Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech, passive

**101I** The wrangling reflects the fact that there is no binding legal process to force Cameron to invoke article 50. In theory, he **could** ignore the public and disregard a Brexit vote. Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech

**102J** “Nicola Sturgeon **could** be sat in that castle now – we know she had her eye on it – it was a damn close-run thing.” Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech, passive

**103K** “In our view, parliament **could** legitimately take the view that electors who satisfy the test of closeness of connection set by the 15 rule form an appropriate group to vote on the question whether the UK should remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union.” Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech

**104L** Negotiations might have to be prolonged beyond the two years allowed for, although the European parliament and individual member states **could** jeopardise any extension of the process, according to the House of Lords European Union committee. Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech

**105M** Boris Johnson has claimed Britain **could** follow the model of Canada in a vision of a brighter future outside the EU that was swiftly dismissed by David Cameron as “too good to be



true”. **Dynamic modality, gradient of inherency, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**106M** Johnson named the North American country after David Cameron made several speeches dismissing the idea that the UK **could** be like Norway or Switzerland, which are outside the EU but have to pay in and accept free movement. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, reported speech**

**107M** Cameron later tweeted directly challenging the mayor of London’s comparison, saying: “Leaving the EU and doing a deal similar to Canada **could** mean seven or more years of uncertainty - with key businesses badly damaged.” **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, direct speech**

**108M** Johnson himself conceded in his Telegraph column last month that new trade deals **could** take “several years in a fiddly process of negotiating new arrangements” and divert energy away from more pressing domestic problems. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**109N** If Britain votes to leave the European Union, it **could** be cast out of Europe in one very literal way. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech, passive**

**110N** If Britain votes to leave, the British models – including the Houses of Parliament, Anne Hathaway’s cottage and a 1970s vintage British Rail intercity train – **could** be banished from the theme park. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech, passive**

**111N** “[Britain] **could** not stay in the park and that would be a real problem,” said Thierry Meeùs, Mini-Europe’s owner and director. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**112O** Brexit campaigners claim that the cost of NHS services to those families **could** be more than £1.33 billion. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, reported speech**

**113O** “Every week we send £350 million to Brussels — that’s money that **could** be better invested in helping patients who rely on our NHS.” **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech, passive**



**114P** The idea that we **could** not return to that open, confident, generous-spirited relationship with the rest of the planet simply because we no longer want 60% of our laws made in Brussels is ludicrous. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**115R** Tony Blair and Sir John Major are set to appear on a platform together in Northern Ireland today to warn that leaving the EU **could** “jeopardise” the unity of the UK. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**116R** Scotland **could** force a second attempt at seceding from the UK, they will argue, while the Northern Ireland peace process could be undermined if Britain votes to quit Brussels. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**117R** Scotland could force a second attempt at seceding from the UK, they will argue, while the Northern Ireland peace process **could** be undermined if Britain votes to quit Brussels. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech, passive**

**118R** Mr Blair, a key architect of the Northern Irish peace process, will also warn that Brexit **could** stir up political instability in the province. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**119T** The former prime ministers Tony Blair and Sir John Major warned that a vote to leave the EU **could** “jeopardise the unity” of the UK, forcing a second independence referendum in Scotland and undermining the Northern Ireland peace process. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**120T** William Hague, the former Tory leader, urged voters to look beyond “parochial concerns” and consider the damage that leaving the EU **could** do to world stability. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**121T** The Brexit campaign was also boosted when Mohamed El-Erian, chief economic adviser at the insurer Allianz, said that Britain’s departure from the EU **could** solve the bloc’s “basic inconsistencies” over the long term. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**122U** “Not really, no. I think the EU is an idea that is past its sell-by date. I wish we **could** just get on with our lives.” **Dynamic modality, gradient of inherency, general subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**123W** Mr Osborne, speaking during a meeting of finance ministers in Sendai, Japan, that finance ministers from the other G7 countries — Japan, the US, France, Germany, Italy and Canada — had told him that Brexit would harm the UK economically, while his French and German counterparts had made clear that the UK **could** expect to get a worse deal on trade than was available to EU members. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech*

**124W** About 500,000 jobs **could** be created by opening up the single market further, Mr Brown will tell the Fabian summer conference. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech, passive*

**125W** Lord Hill of Oareford, the EU commissioner for financial stability, financial services and capital markets union, insisted it was “quite simply wrong” to state that Britain **could** have a more advantageous relationship with the rest of the European market if it voted to leave. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, reported speech*

**126Y** The former heads of MI5 and MI6 have warned that leaving the EU **could** undermine “our ability to protect ourselves” from terrorists. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech*

**127Y** Baron Evans of Weardale, the former director-general of MI5, and Sir John Sawers, the former head of MI6, say Brexit **could** also lead to “instability on the Continent”, compounding the current “economic difficulties, the migration crisis and a resurgent Russia”. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech*

**128Y** In an article for The Sunday Times, the former spy chiefs warn that a vote to leave **could** damage intelligence sharing because the EU would restrict surveillance powers if the UK were not in the union. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech*

**129Y** They conclude: “An agreement reached without us would probably be too restrictive for our needs . . . this **could** undermine our ability to protect ourselves.” *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech*

**130Y** The intervention by Evans and Sawers contradicts Sir Richard Dearlove, another former chief of MI6, who said in March that Britain’s safety **could** be improved if it abandoned the EU by making it easier to deport terrorists and control Britain’s borders. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech, passive*

**131Y** The draft bill will also ban the EU from overruling British tax laws. European court rulings **could** cost taxpayers £50bn if Britain loses cases now under consideration. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech*

**132AA** They argue that the passport-free Common Travel Area has existed since 1923 and will continue after Brexit and that it is “scaremongering” to suggest, as Remain politicians have, that Brexit **could** lead to the British Army being sent to the border, a new referendum on the unification of Ireland and even compromise the Northern Ireland peace process. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech*

**133BB** “A big concern if we leave the EU is bank funding — less trade with Europe and a drop in the value of bank loan-books **could** increase the cost of funding. Will that put up mortgage interest rates? Most likely,” Maskell says. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech*

**134BB** “That **could** cause problems with mortgage funding for lenders, pushing up the cost of mortgages for buyers.” *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech*

**135BB** “People have spent a long time coming to terms with it. In the past they **could** move from London to the Cotswolds and back again if it didn’t work out, or to another house if the house wasn’t quite right.” *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech*

**136BB** “Yes there is a sense that there are deals to be done in some areas of the market at the moment, but that might not be the case — it might be more that you are going to pay a fair price rather than a significant premium for a property. This rebalancing **could** be a good thing.” *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, direct speech*

**137CC** Yet Coyle is not convinced. “Brexit **could** be detrimental for Irish companies or it could be the best thing that ever happened,” he said. *Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, direct speech*

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**139CC** “Brexit **could** strengthen our relations with Britain, assuming we could reach a special deal on trade,” he said. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

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**141CC** The UK is an insignificant market for Irish whiskey, while the powerful Scotch lobby has warned that exports of more than £1bn (€1.3bn) a year to the EU **could** be in jeopardy from Brexit. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, reported speech**

**142CC** A weak pound **could** damage Ryanair’s traffic because Britons would find it more expensive to holiday abroad. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**143CC** One statistic quoted by all opponents of Brexit is an estimate by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) that it **could** result in a drop of 20% or more in trade, although it is often overlooked that this is a worst-case scenario. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**144CC** Other Eurosceptic countries **could** be emboldened to follow its lead if the UK were allowed to retain the benefits of EU membership after leaving the club but without the obligations. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech, passive**

**145CC** A messy break-up **could** result in higher tariffs. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**146CC** Some sectors **could** be hit harder than others. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech, passive**

## **MAY**

**147A** In March, Trump said he suspected Britain **may** leave the EU because “they’re having a lot of problems” but stressed he did not want to intervene. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**148A** “I don’t want to make a comment about the UK leaving but I think they **may** leave based on – I’m there a lot, I have a lot of investments in the UK, and I will tell you that I think they

may leave based on everything I'm hearing," he said at the time. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

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**150C** We have to recognise the fact that this is an emotional matter, calling on beliefs and allegiances that are informed from our earliest days. However hard the head **may** try, the heart will have its sway. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**151C** Naturally, that colours my analysis and yours **may** very well differ – but none of us is free from bias. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, descriptive speech**

**152C** This could further harden government policy on immigration and **may** make it difficult to win political support in the UK for the freedom of movement terms required to secure associate status for access to EU research networks. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**153C** After the Swiss voted narrowly to limit mass migration in 2014, it was reduced partial associate status, and **may** be relegated to 'third country status' in 2017 unless efforts to ratify the Croatia protocol on freedom of movement are successful. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive part, passive**

**154D** "But, frankly, as you can see from this picture, most of the people coming are young males and, yes, they **may** be coming from countries that are not in a very happy state, they may be coming from places that are poorer than us, but the EU has made a fundamental error that risks the security of everybody." **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**155D** "But, frankly, as you can see from this picture, most of the people coming are young males and, yes, they may be coming from countries that are not in a very happy state, they **may** be coming from places that are poorer than us, but the EU has made a fundamental error that risks the security of everybody." **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**156G** Standing up to Brussels **may** bolster their populist appeal, but EU membership brings too many advantages for them to seriously pursue an exit. *Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech*

**157H** Stockbroker Charles Stanley has told clients: “Whatever the results, we anticipate that we **may** experience higher volumes and more market volatility than usual on the 23 June and in the days following the vote.” *Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, direct speech*

**158H** Foreign exchange rates could also witness fluctuations and this has the potential to impact overseas trades placed during this time,” Charles Stanley said, warning that order sizes **may** be reduced and it could take longer to answer phones. *Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech, passive*

**159I** In practice he has repeatedly promised that the result will stick – and there **may** be no going back on that line now. *Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, existential subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech*

**160Q** Red tape **may** be annoying, but it is also there to protect your and my family from being lied to, poisoned and cheated. *Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech*

**161Q** What we eat, the ingredients, the recipes, **may** come from around the world, but it is the collective to and fro of European interests, expertise and imagination that has made it all so very appetising and exciting. *Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech*

**162X** In the event of Brexit, Brussels **may** pursue a “global security strategy”, perhaps including an EU army, without a UK veto. *Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech*

**163X** Yes, it must be prepared for a bumpy ride, but this vote **may** be the only opportunity to call a halt to the onward march of the centralising European project. *Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, descriptive speech*

**164X** By its example, Britain **may** force Europe to think again about its own destination. *Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech*

**165AA** Checkpoints and border posts **may** be a thing of the past but, as an outsider on their first ever visit to the Northern Ireland, you can't help noticing all sorts of small things that indicate you are travelling between nations as you move along the border... **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, descriptive speech**

**166BB** Camilla Dell, the managing partner at Black Brick, the buying agency, says: "Should we vote to leave, this will create uncertainty as the UK seeks to agree a way forward with the EU. Sterling **may** weaken, making London property attractive to foreign buyers." **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, verb dynamic, direct speech**

**167BB** Fionnuala Earley, the residential research director at Hamptons International, says: "Existing owners of UK property would see the value of their investment fall in their local currency — and **may** wish to sell." **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech**

**168BB** Weaker economic conditions ahead **may** make lenders more cautious, but the UK is one of the fastest-growing economies and its labour market has continued to be a big support. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

## **MIGHT**

**169C** Just look at the figures. Switzerland and Israel **might** perform well in relative terms, but the UK ranks alongside Germany as one of the dominant nations on the European scene. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**170E** "They are voicing an opinion about what the United States is going to do, I figured you **might** want to hear from the president of the United States what I think the United States is going to do." **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, animate subject, stative verb, direct speech**

**171E** "And on that matter, for example, I think it's fair to say that maybe some point down the line there **might** be a UK-US trade agreement, but it's not going to happen any time soon because our focus is in negotiating with a big bloc, the European Union, to get a trade agreement done". **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, animate subject, stative verb, direct speech**

**172E** Labour confirmed that the president would meet the party leader Jeremy Corbyn on Saturday in London, putting to rest suggestions during that week that the Labour leader **might**



be snubbed. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech, passive**

**173F** It **might** not be necessary to back away from Horizon 2020, but the government would have to accept “associate” membership from 2020 onwards. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, descriptive speech**

**174F** What does seem likely is that air passengers **might** find it much harder to hold airlines to account when flights were cancelled or delayed. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, animate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**175F** The British farming industry **might** be able to exploit its competitiveness unshackled from the EU, offering potential for food prices in the UK to come down. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, descriptive speech**

**176F** The UK **might** well continue to back its actions as a third-party state, wishing to avoid more costly Nato interventions. **Dynamic modality, theoretical possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**177G** Much more likely would be a demand to renegotiate terms and repatriate powers, which could make it harder for the EU to function and **might** perhaps lead, in the longer term, to a union of more “variable geometry”, with a deeply integrated inner core and an association of looser, satellite members. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**178H** In response to criticism by Vote Leave, which accuses economists of scare-mongering, Pissarides said that forecasting was difficult, and economists **might** disagree or get it wrong, but in this case they were overwhelmingly in favour of remaining. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, animate subject, stative verb, reported speech**

**179H** Brokers are also warning that higher than expected volumes **might** mean they are not able to complete all their trades as quickly as usual. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, reported speech**

**180I** The prime minister has said he would have to trigger it immediately after a vote, although this **might** have been a way of emphasising that there would be no going back, to people thinking of voting leave. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, descriptive speech**



**181K** The government, the judges said, was entitled to adopt a cut-off period “at which extended residence abroad **might** indicate a weakening of ties with the United Kingdom”.

Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech

**182L** Negotiations **might** have to be prolonged beyond the two years allowed for, although the European parliament and individual member states could jeopardise any extension of the process, according to the House of Lords European Union committee. Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech

**183N** “We are kind of a family and we should stick together and support each other. We **might** not have as much power as America and Russia.” Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, general subject, stative verb, direct speech

**184N** One Belgian official, a keen observer of the British political scene, said it was hard to understand how it had reached the point where the UK **might** leave. Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech

**185P** British historical exceptionalism **might** have come about largely because we decapitated our monarch 140 years before the French did theirs, but it existed then and still does today, and our consciousness ought to propel a majority of Britons to vote to leave the EU on Thursday. Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech

**186P** There **might** be a price to pay to Brussels for having the temerity to leave their grand project, for being the first rat to leave the sinking ship. Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, existential subject, stative verb, descriptive speech

**187Q** The dream of Brexit isn’t that we **might** be able to make a brighter, new, energetic tomorrow, it’s a desire to shuffle back to a regret-curdled inward-looking yesterday. Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech

**188S** **Might** that, I venture, have something to do with being asked by a German comedian? “There is obviously that but I think it’s still a fairly diverse mix of society,” he says curtly. Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech

**189U** “I’ve read enough from people I respect to be concerned about what **might** happen if we were to leave.” Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, direct speech

**190V** “It **might** be that stay is the right answer, but I’m not going to vote stay if every time someone tries to talk to me they are giving me bulls\*\*t.” **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, direct speech**

**191V** He’s hoping that the same **might** apply to his own knack for making a success out of humdrum, ailing retail brands. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**192V** On Dragons’ Den, Theo Paphitis would often berate hapless would-be tycoons for presenting ideas that **might** waste his “children’s inheritance”. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, reported speech**

**193X** Uncertain leadership has obliged it to make a choice that better diplomacy **might** have rendered unnecessary. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**194Z** One **might** have thought the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea two years ago would have served as a sufficient reminder of that, to say nothing of the arrival in Europe last year of more than 1m refugees and migrants, or the evidence that Isis is recruiting in our country as actively as on the other side of the Channel. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, general subject, dynamic verb, descriptive speech**

**195AA** Elsewhere in Britain such a remark **might** be seen a symptom of increasingly bitter campaign. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, descriptive speech, passive**

**196BB** Charles Curran, a market-data analyst for Maskells, the estate agency, believes this **might** be an indicator of what can be expected should we vote to leave the EU. **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, reported speech**

**197BB** “It **might** also mean that the Monetary Policy Committee has to increase interest rates to support the currency; that too would affect mortgage rates and the amount people can borrow to buy homes.” **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, direct speech**

**198BB** “Yes there is a sense that there are deals to be done in some areas of the market at the moment, but that **might** not be the case — it might be more that you are going to pay a fair price rather than a significant premium for a property.” **Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, direct speech**

**199BB** “Yes there is a sense that there are deals to be done in some areas of the market at the moment, but that might not be the case — it **might** be more that you are going to pay a fair price rather than a significant premium for a property.” *Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, inanimate subject, stative verb, direct speech*

**200CC** “We share a common language and, although we **might** not care to admit it, a common culture and heritage.” *Epistemic modality, epistemic possibility, general subject, stative verb, direct speech*

## 8.2. Appendix 2: Tables

**Table 1**

Frequency of modal verbs	CAN	COULD	MAY	MIGHT
Frequency	66	80	22	32
Percentage	33 %	40 %	11 %	16 %

**Table 2**

Frequency of modal verbs	CAN	COULD	MAY	MIGHT
The Guardian	26	45	13	18
The Times	40	35	9	14

**Table 3**

Meanings of verbs	Theoretical possibility	Epistemic possibility	Ability	Permission		

					Gradient of Inherency	Gradient of Restriction
CAN	43	0	10	4	6	3
COULD	74	1	1	0	4	0
MAY	1	21	0	0	0	0
MIGHT	1	31	0	0	0	0
Total	<b>119</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
Percentage	<b>59,5 %</b>	<b>26,5%</b>	<b>5,5 %</b>	<b>2 %</b>	<b>5 %</b>	<b>1,5 %</b>

**Table 4**

Kinds of modality	Dynamic modality	Epistemic modality	Deontic modality	Indetermined modality
Frequency	140	53	4	3
Percentage	70 %	26,5 %	2 %	1,5 %