

## MODAL SENTENCE ADVERBS OF CERTAINTY IN ENGLISH AND BULGARIAN

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The paper focuses on the epistemic use of modal sentence adverbs of certainty in English and Bulgarian. The analysis explores their grammatical and semantic characteristics through the cognitive theoretical frameworks of Jan Nuyts as well as Radden and Dirven. The analysis is further extended to establishing patterns of similarity and variation of usage via a corpus of examples excerpted from English and Bulgarian sources.

**Key words:** modal adverbs, certainty, epistemic, functional equivalence

Modal sentence adverbs of certainty both in English and Bulgarian are most often categorized as paradigmatic members of the semantic category of epistemic modality. Whereas there is no controversy among linguists as regards the adverbs *surely* and *certainly* in English, some grammarians consider adverbs such as *obviously*, *apparently*, *evidently* as linguistic markers of evidentiality, rather than as expression units of epistemic qualification, but nonetheless, they share common grammatical characteristics and usage, so I shall discuss them in a common frame under the head of *certainty* irrespective of the controversial classifications. As regards their semantics, I believe that modal adverbs of certainty in both English and Bulgarian, express the speaker's assessment and qualification of the potentiality of a particular present, past or future situation, locating it closest to the borderline of reality either on the grounds of logical assumptions or on the grounds of some evidence. Modal sentence adverbs have been discussed through various linguistic frameworks and have drawn the interest of a great number of grammarians working in the field. The theoretical background is based on the cognitive-pragmatic approaches developed by Jan Nuyts and by Radden and Dirven. The scope of the research is limited only to modal sentence adverbs of certainty in both languages, but the analysis is further extended to parallel corpora investigation in order to establish functional equivalence in translation.

### **Modal sentence adverbs of certainty in English**

Jan Nuyts categorizes the class of epistemic adverbs as closed, consisting of “a fairly stable and delimited set of forms” (Nuyts 2000: 55). He considers the class of epistemic modal sentence adverbs and the class of predicative epistemic modal adjectives as “the most precise and specific means available for marking the degree of likelihood of a state of affairs” (ibid.: 55). According to him, the degree of likelihood expressed by these linguistic markers reflects directly their distribution on the epistemic scale, in which *certain/certainly* is at its extreme positive scale, *probable/-probably* is more or less in the middle on the positive side of the scale, *possible/possibly* is near or at the neutral point, in the middle between the positive and the negative side of the scale (ibid. 55). As regards the syntactic properties of modal sentence adverbs, Nuyts clarifies the issue of their being “loose and floating elements” and points out that their position in the clause is not random, but guided by their exact scope over the information (ibid.: 57).

(1) *Certainly* it is a release from the burden of life, and, for the godly, a haven and a reward. (BNC)

(2) She had *certainly* never visited a sick young man alone. (BNC)

In addition to their relatively free position in the sentence, Nuyts points out that modal sentence adverbs cannot be questioned and lack negative forms. He discusses these features presenting the views of Bellert and Lang on the issue. Both linguists share the understanding that it is the nature of the epistemic evaluation expressed by the modal sentence adverbs which accounts for these grammatical constraints; namely, “modal sentence adverbs do not belong to the utterance and thus express the speaker’s attitude towards the proposition” (ibid.: 60). Nuyts concludes that such an explanation of the grammatical features of modal sentence adverbs is close to the explanations provided by Kiefer, Hengeveld, Perkins and Whatts, who have employed the concept of objective vs. subjective modality, but claims that the behavioral properties and differences between the epistemic expression units “cannot be accounted for in terms of just a single underlying cause” (ibid.: 61). Nuyts draws clear distinction between the performative usage of an epistemic marker, which he considers a “default use”, and the notions of subjectivity, objectivity and inter-subjectivity that are context-based (ibid.: 72). Modal sentence adverbs do not make an exception. The epistemic modal qualifications are illustrated in the examples below:

(3) She could hear a lot of noise in the background before a voice spoke. Jeff was *obviously* calling from a public place. (BNC)

(4) *Certainly* it is a release from the burden of life, and, for the godly, a haven and a reward. (BNC)

(5) The tendency to restrict the use of conventional weapons, while *apparently* leaving the use of nuclear weapons almost untouched, is also evident in the 1981 UN Convention on Specific Conventional Weapons. (BNC)

Performative usage and subjective evaluation are illustrated in examples (3) and (4), even if the copula verb in example (4) is in the past tense as it is a sample of a modal assessment in a first person narrative. Example (5) illustrates performative usage and inter-subjective assessment as the modal qualification is shared both by the speaker and other participants in the discourse.

Radden and Dirven draw a distinction among three types of modal assessment expressed by cognition verbs, modal adverbs, and modal verbs. All the markers are discussed from the perspective of mental spaces as grounding a situation locating it into the area of irreality; yet each of the markers is analyzed as denoting a particular kind of modal qualification. They consider the speaker's modal assessment through modal verbs as maximally subjective without precluding objectivity; through cognition verbs as subjective construed objectively; through modal adverbs as objective without precluding subjectivity. They claim that the degrees of subjectivity are reflected into the respective syntactic structures each marker participates in. They explain the nature of the modal assessment expressed by a modal adverb by its relatively free position in the utterance and the syntactic behavior in tag questions (Radden and Dirven 2007: 241). These arguments parallel the claims of Nyuts as far as the grammatical characteristics are concerned.

(6) But nasty rumours at the time said she could have been helped in. *Certainly* her being off the scene was handy for Steenie. (BNC)

The second sentence in example (6) illustrates a front position of the adverb *certainly*. The syntactic pattern allows for its repositioning as in example (7).

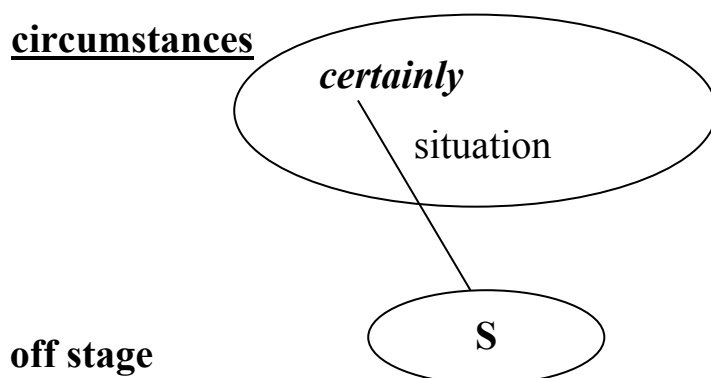
(7) Her being off the scene was *certainly* handy for Steenie.

Example (8) illustrates a tag question in which the modal assessment itself is hardly the object of questioning.

(8) *Certainly* her being off the scene was handy for Steenie, *wasn't it?*

According to Radden and Dirven it is rather unlikely that a hearer should be asked to confirm a speaker's more subjective assessment.

Figure 1 below illustrates the second sentence in example (6) from the perspective of mental space theory.



*Figure 1. A Model Based on Radden and Dirven*

The first sentence in example (6) introduces the narrator who sets up a mental space of a past-time reality and provides access to the next mental space of modal qualification. The modal adverb *certainly* is the space builder of that second mental space in the discourse – namely, the mental space of the epistemic modal meaning of certainty. The speaker is located off stage and the situation is grounded into the area of past irreality. Following Radden and Dirven, the speaker's assessment of the situation is objective without precluding subjectivity. Actually, this categorization is quite close to Nuys's understanding of the concept of performativity and the types of modal assessment. The speaker's evaluation is shared by the other participants in the discourse on the grounds of the evidence and assumptions stated in the first sentence and thus the performative usage couples with inter-subjective modal assessment. The latter is categorized by Radden and Dirven as objective without precluding subjectivity.

### **Modal sentence adverbs of certainty in Bulgarian**

Similarly to the academic research in English linguistics as regards the epistemic or evidential qualification expressed by the modal sentence adverbs of certainty, the categorizations vary.

In his study on Functional Semantics, *Граматика на българския език (Grammar of the Bulgarian Language)*, Professor Ivan Kutsarov considers modal sentence adverbs as peripheral lexical modal modifiers of epistemic meanings in the functional-semantic category of subjective

modality. He differentiates sub-classes on the basis of the degrees of likelihood implied. Among those that indicate certainty come *сигурно*, *наистина*, *явно*, *действително*, *очевидно* and among those that indicate predictability and probability, *вероятно*, *възможно*, *може би* (Kutsarov 1989: 104).

In *Съвременен български език (Contemporary Bulgarian Language)*, sentence adverbs are categorized into *modal* as regards the quality assigned, including adverbs such as *вероятно*, *наистина*, *може би*, *действително*, etc., and adverbs of logical assumption and modal attitudes such as *може би*, *наистина*, *сигурно*, *действително*, *очевидно*, etc. (Boyadzhiev, Kutsarov, Penchev 1999: 353).

In *Българска граматика – Морфология (Bulgarian Grammar – Morphology)*, Nitsolova draws a distinction between adverbs that she categorizes as modal, which express attitudes evaluating the events described in the utterance in relation to the potentiality of a particular event's occurrence, including the adverbs *сигурно* and *действително* among them, and adverbs which express cognitive attitudes related to the speaker's prior knowledge and assessment as regards the message in the proposition, including *очевидно* among them (Nitsolova 2008: 449).

For the needs of the contrastive study and the limits of the analysis that I have set in advance, I shall discuss the modal sentence adverbs of certainty in Bulgarian in the same way as in English – within one frame – that of *certainty*, disregarding the controversy between epistemic and evidential categorizations. The latter definitely deserves a more comprehensive study.

The grammatical characteristics and the syntactic properties of the modal sentence adverbs of certainty in Bulgarian are similar to those manifested by their English counterparts. They can also take relatively free positions in the sentence as illustrated by examples (9) and (10).

(9) *Сигурно* той за нищо на света не би пожелал да я срещне повторно. (D. Dimov)

(10) Глупавата сантименталност, в която бе изпаднал, се дължеше *сигурно* на бездействието му от забавянето на телеграмата. (D. Dimov)

Applying Nuyl's concept of performativity of usage, we can come to the conclusion that modal sentence adverbs of certainty in Bulgarian function in the same way – they either express the speaker's personal or shared opinion with the other participants in the discourse – hence, similarly to the English ones, they express subjective or inter-subjective

modal qualifications. Example (11) illustrates performative usage and subjective modal evaluation, whereas example (12) illustrates performative usage and inter-subjective evaluation.

(11) Фани доби впечатлението, че *сигурно* му изглеждаше на някоя Шарлота Корде, тъй като прочете в очите му неприязън и подозрение. (D. Dimov)

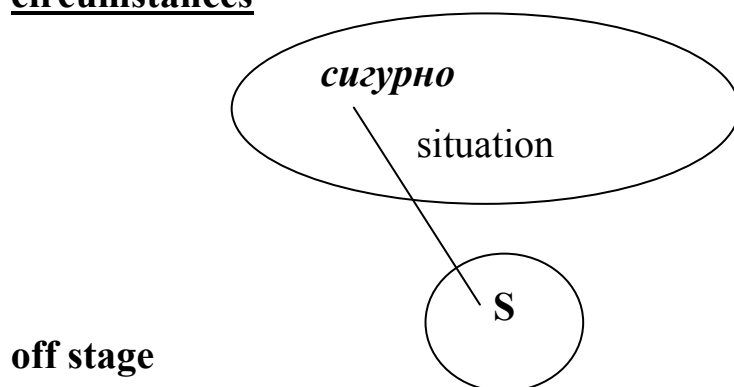
(12) *Очевидно* в квартала съществуваше контраразузнавателна служба, която познаваше агентите и предупреждаваше веднага Лила за присъствието им. (D. Dimov)

The mental space theory is also applicable to modal sentence adverbs in Bulgarian. They function in the same way as the English ones – as space-builders of the mental spaces of epistemic modal attitudes.

Example (13) is based on Radden and Dirven's schema.

(13) О, *сигурно* тя му се струваше непоносима със своята груба откровеност, със своето нахално преследване. (D. Dimov)

**circumstances**



**Figure 2.** Based on Radden and Dirven

The modal sentence adverb *сигурно* builds up the mental space of the epistemic evaluation, accessed by the narrator who is off stage of the potential situation judging its degree of likelihood.

To sum up, the paradigm of modal sentence adverbs of certainty in Bulgarian is comparable to the English paradigm and shares the same functional–semantic characteristics.

### Corpus Analysis

The corpus of modal sentence adverbs of certainty in the contrastive analysis is excerpted from three books of fiction, annotated in The Bulgarian National Corpus; namely, *Death in the Clouds*, Agatha Christie; *Angels and Demons*, Dan Brown; and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Douglas Adams. Actually, my choice has been motivated by an elective course that I have been teaching for a couple of years on *Epistemic Modality in English and Bulgarian*. The students are encouraged to conduct a contrastive research using works of fiction and non-fiction and the Bulgarian National Corpus is one of the electronic resources that we go through during the seminars. Although the Bulgarian National Corpus provides access to parallel corpora, the books mentioned above are annotated only in English, so for the Bulgarian translations the corpus is excerpted from the digitalized versions listed in the Reference Section. The list of adverbs under discussion is limited to *surely*, *certainly*, *obviously*, *apparently*, and their functional equivalents in the Bulgarian translations.

The corpus consists of 124 examples, out of which 8 examples with *surely*; 33 examples with *certainly*; 25 examples with *obviously*; and 58 examples with *apparently*. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of the modal adverbs of certainty in each book.

**Table 1.** *Distribution of the Modal Sentence Adverbs of Certainty*

Book Title	surely	certainly	obviously	apparently
<i>Angels and Demons</i>	5	24	17	48
<i>Death in the Clouds</i>	1	7	5	3
<i>The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy</i>	2	2	3	7

Modal sentence adverbs of certainty are used in 99 of the translated examples (79.83%) and present cases of linguistic symmetry and complete functional-semantic equivalence in the target language – Bulgarian. Examples from (14) to (19) illustrate these cases.

(14) He was an upper echelon Mason and *certainly* had ties to the Illuminati. (D. B)

Той бил високопоставен масон и *определено* имал връзки с илюминатите.

(15) *Certainly* they were deserted at this hour! (D. B)

*Сигурно* пустееха в този час.

(16) Mr. Gale was *obviously* head over ears in love with Miss Jane Grey. (A. Ch)

Мистър Гейл *очевидно* беше влюбен в мис Джейн Грей.

(17) “*Apparently* a lot of people think this group is still active.” (D. B)

– *Явно* много хора смятат, че тази организация все още съществува.

(18) *Surely* the camerlegno had gone mad. (D. B)

Шамбеланът *определено* беше полудял.

(19) “It is *certainly* very extraordinary, ” said Mr. Clancy, still full of blissful excitement. (A.Ch)

– *Наистина* е много странно – съгласи се мистър Кланси, все още изпълнен с блажено вълнение.

Mental state predicates are used only in the 2 examples (1.61 %) that are listed below. The examples illustrate cases of linguistic variation in the use of the markers in the target language; yet, functional-semantic equivalence is achieved.

(20) *Apparently* there were troubling new developments, which could not be shared on-air, but the camerlegno had decided to break tradition and enter conclave to address the cardinals. (D.B)

*Изглежда*, положението се бе променило, за което не можеха да разговарят в ефира, ала шамбеланът беше решил да наруши традицията и да влезе в конклава, за да се обърне към кардиналите.

(21) “But the second?” insisted Lunkwill. “Why do you keep saying the second? You’re *surely* not thinking of the Multicorticoïd Perspicutron Titan Muller, are you? (D.A)

– Но защо **ВТОРИЯТ**? – не се примиряваше Лънкуил. – Защо упорстваш, че си вторият? *Не вярвам* да мислиш, че онзи...

Няколко лампички замигаха високомерно по тялото на компютъра.

– Великият Хиперлобичен Всезнаен Неутронен Словоборец.

Modal noun phrases denoting certainty occur in 3 of the examples from the translation corpus (2.41 %). Just like the cases with the mental state predicates, these markers illustrate a case of linguistic variation and functional-semantic equivalence.

(22) *Certainly* he was hearing things. (D.B)

*Със сигурност* му се причуваше.



(23) The concussion of hitting the water had knocked the victim unconscious, and if it had not been for Jacobus and his crew standing out on the shore watching the spectacle in the sky, this falling soul would *surely* have gone unnoticed and drowned. (D.B)

Поради сътресението от падането във водата жертвата бе изгубила съзнание и ако Джакобус и екипът му не стояха на брега, за да наблюдават небесното зрелище, непознатият *със сигурност* щеше да остане незабелязан и да се удави.

(24) *Certainly* someone listening would realize the insanity of this plot and come forward. (D. B)

Някой *със сигурност* щеше да осъзнае безумието на този заговор и да се отзове.

One of the examples (0.8%) in the translation corpus makes use of the lexical conclusive modifier *трябва да* construction and is illustrated in example (25). Again, this is a case of linguistic variation in the translation and functional-semantic equivalence.

(25) “But... *certainly* someone else knows about this!” (D.B)

– Но... все някой *трябва да* знае за случая!

Another example from the translation corpus (0.8%) makes use of the modal particle in Bulgarian – *да* in *да не би* construction and semantically is quite close to the meanings of the modal sentence adverbs, although it is apparently a case of linguistic variation.

(26) Kohler’s face hardened. “Vittoria, *surely* you can’t be saying those canisters contain actual specimens?” (D. B)

– Витория, *да не би* да твърдиш, че тези кутии съдържат истински образци?

Three of the examples (2.41 %) from the translation corpus make use of alternative markers to modal sentence adverbs of certainty and are not regarded as core or peripheral members of the semantic field of certainty in Bulgarian. Yet, they reflect the translators’ attempts to preserve the intended meaning from the source texts. The noun phrase *на пръв поглед* used in examples (27) and (28) suggests some degree of certainty, though a bit weaker than the degree of certainty implied by the modal sentence adverb *apparently*. An intensifying adverb is used in example (29) representing a case of linguistic asymmetry on the one hand, but on the other manifesting a high degree of functional-semantic equivalence.

(27) *Apparently* he lost, not gained, by the death of Giselle. (A. Ch)

*На пръв поглед* той губеше, а не печелеше от смъртта на мадам Жизел.

(28) He is *apparently* chosen by the government, but the qualities he is required to display are not those of leadership but those of finely judged outrage.

*На пръв поглед* той се избира от правителството, но качествата, които трябва да притежава, не са тези на добър държавник, а на човек, способен да върши добре премислени безобразия.

(29) The stewards had neither gained nor lost by Madame Giselle's death, except that Mitchell was *obviously* suffering from shock. (A. Ch)

След това направих онази таблица с последствията за всеки от пътниците... двамата стюарди нито печелеха, нито губеха от смъртта на мадам Жизел, освен че Митчъл беше *доста* шокиран от смъртта ѝ.

Fifteen of the examples (12.9%) from the translation corpus lack a linguistic marker of certainty thus presenting the situation as real and factual. Examples (30) and (31) illustrate the case.

(30) What had caught Langdon's eye was that the work had *apparently* been placed in one of the five churches on his list. (D. B)

Вниманието на американеца беше привлякъл фактът, че творбата се намира в една от петте черкви от списъка му.

(31) With great strides the little author covered the ground, *apparently* oblivious of the two people on his track. (A. Ch)

Писателят правеше големи крачки, без да обръща внимание на преследвачите си.

Although the analysis is limited to only three books of fiction and a relatively small corpus of 124 examples, the data obtained provides some grounds for the conclusion that English modal sentence adverbs of certainty evoke primarily the use of the same markers in Bulgarian, thus leading to cases of linguistic symmetry and functional–semantic equivalence in the process of translation.

## Conclusion

The paradigms of modal sentence adverbs of certainty in English and Bulgarian share common grammatical and functional–semantic characteristics. In both languages they function as building elements of the semantic field of certainty and express the speaker's assessment of the degree of likelihood of occurrence of a particular past, present, or future situation. The paradigm in Bulgarian is completely comparable to the English one in terms of constituent members in comparison to the paradigms of modal verbs, for example, which have the same function. Therefore, even if we should consider the translator's preferences for a particular linguistic marker in a contrastive research and explore a much

more comprehensive corpus, I believe that the data obtained will give similar results; namely, a prevalence of the patterns of linguistic symmetry over the patterns of linguistic variation in the field of English – Bulgarian translation.

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