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**Epistemic and Root Possibility Meanings of CAN and MAY
in Written English**

Anglický jazyk

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Abbreviations used in the study

ACAD	academic scientific style
ADMIN	administrative style
FICT	fiction
FTA	face threatening act
NAT	popular scientific style (natural sciences)
NEWS	newspaper reporting

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1. Introduction

The study is concerned with the English modal auxiliaries CAN and MAY and their morphologically past tense forms COULD and MIGHT.¹ It is essentially a small-scale corpus-based investigation into possibility meanings of these modal auxiliaries in contemporary written British English, taking account of stylistic variation. The investigation focuses on assigning appropriate readings to contextualized occurrences of modal auxiliaries and is thus primarily based on discussions of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects.

The study attempts to present a general account of possibility senses of CAN/COULD and MAY/MIGHT and reviews the issues relating to their use and distribution on the basis of a semantic and quantitative analysis. However, frequency of occurrence is meant to provide merely a supplementary view of the qualitative analysis, focusing on the role of context in interpreting modal meanings. Among the modal-specific questions that the treatise addresses are those concerning modal semantics, syntactic co-occurrence patterns, stylistic variation, and pragmatic inferencing. It is important to note that the study does not attempt to provide an exhaustive and systematic semantic description of CAN/COULD and MAY/MIGHT. Based on interpreting particular contextualized occurrences, it primarily investigates relevant contextual factors and patterns in order to reveal their significance in terms of the root-epistemic distinction.

Secondly, the study examines the values of CAN/COULD and MAY/MIGHT from the viewpoint of supposedly competing forms and questions their alleged quasi-equivalence. Stated differently, the analysis attempts to prove that, however close the interpretations may be, some contextual features determining the reading and choice of a particular modal verb can generally be pinpointed. Thirdly, the paper discusses the factors governing the distribution of CAN/COULD and MAY/MIGHT across different registers and text-types. The final goal of the present study is to integrate the possibility modal senses into an

¹ Capitals are used in this study in all contexts to indicate lexical items while italics are used for forms. For instance, CAN is used to refer to the modal with its forms *can*, *cannot*, *can't*. The morphologically past tense forms are treated as independent lexical items (i.e. MIGHT, COULD) for the reasons explained in section 2.5.4.

overall framework of hedging and to identify those modal possibility uses that are commonly employed as hedging devices. Furthermore, the study attempts to disprove the general belief that it is only epistemic possibility meanings that commonly function as hedges.

The subject is discussed from different perspectives, both theoretical and corpus-based. The first two chapters deal exclusively with theoretical issues and the concepts outlined there are investigated in more detail in the subsequent empirical sections. The empirical chapters, accompanied with relevant theoretical framework, focus primarily on the discussion of findings resulting from the analysis of the actual data.

The opening chapter, dealing with terminological issues, briefly introduces widely recognized definitions, concepts and frameworks of modality. Its goal is not to cover systematically any available models in depth, for it goes beyond the framework of this paper. The categories of modality are referred to mainly for purposes of contrast and clarification. Being the central issue to the study, the concept of modal possibility is thoroughly investigated and subsequently expanded in the empirical sections with the aim of establishing factors that help distinguish epistemic and root possibility. Section 1.5 reviews the essential features of the English modal auxiliaries with focus on their idiosyncratic characteristics and a considerable range of uses. Emphasis is put on discussing their nature in terms of polysemy and monosemy, gradience and indeterminacy. Finally, the concept of hedging is defined and its relation to modal possibility explained.

Each of the first four empirical chapters (5 - 8) deals thoroughly with one modal verb in turn (i.e. CAN, COULD, MAY and MIGHT). Various senses of these modal verbs are illustrated with the examples drawn from the corpus. Special attention is paid to examining the relation between the modals and other domains of grammar, above all, aspect, negation, time reference, interrogative structure or hypothetical marking, which seemingly help disambiguate the intended reading. These chapters also focus on demonstrating the wide semantic range covered by the four auxiliaries and thus imply their potential

overlap in usage, i.e. CAN and MAY in their root possibility sense, MIGHT and COULD in their root possibility, epistemic possibility and hypothetical sense.

Consequently, chapters 9 and 10 attempt to clarify to what extent the senses involved are synonymous and in what way they are distinct. Since the analysis focuses on mapping the distribution and use of CAN/COULD and MAY/MIGHT with regard to stylistic stratification and degree of formality, the relative importance of these verbs and their meanings in the examined registers is summarized in chapter 11. Chapter 12 tries to illustrate and explain which of the modal possibility senses are typically exploited as hedging devices. The study concludes with a summary of the major findings.

It is necessary to emphasize that the results of the analysis and the validity of the suggested conclusions are limited by the extent of the sample, which is not sufficient to draw any firm general conclusions. The investigation of more diverse material would be required and it should be definitely supplemented by an analysis of spoken material due to considerable differences between modal usage in written and spoken English. Nevertheless, the study draws some provisional and preliminary conclusions that are, owing to the consistency of the findings, considered to be of some importance to further studies.

2. Modality

This chapter attempts to present the necessary theoretical framework for my research. It is concerned with a review of modality and a discussion of the major issues relating to the concept of modal possibility. Being aware of the subject's complexity, I merely outline some of the recognized approaches to modality and its classification, and focus on more specific issues concerning the English modal verbs.

Firstly, distinctive features between the categories of root and epistemic possibility are discussed, with the main emphasis on the theories of Coates (1983, 1995), Leech and Coates (1980), Leech (2004), Tárnayiková (1979), Palmer (1990) and Papafragou (2000). Secondly, the major idiosyncratic features of the English modal verbs are described, in particular negation and past tense verb forms. Finally, issues relating to semantic indeterminacy involved in the uses of modal verbs are dealt with.

Since linguistic studies of modality often differ in the definition and classification of modality, approaching the subject from many different angles, it is important to begin by introducing the relevant terminology, revisiting and defining the key notions, and explaining the concepts that will be used throughout the paper. Special attention will be paid to the issues concerning the concept of epistemic and root possibility, being crucial to the qualification of the occurrences of MAY/MIGHT and CAN/COULD in the examined corpus.

Van der Auwera and Plungian's (1998:80) stance regarding definitional issues, cited in Krug (2000:41), will be followed:

“Modality and its types can be defined and named in various ways. There is no one correct way. The only requirement is that one makes clear how one uses one's terms.”

2.1 Modality and mood

The term 'mood' often appears alongside the term 'modality' because, as Palmer (2001) remarks, it denotes one of the two sub-categories of modality,

the other one being modal system. Huddleston and Pullum (2002:172) see mood as the grammaticalisation of modality, i.e. a category of meaning within the verbal system, and the distinction between mood and modality as analogous to that between tense and time. (see also Palmer 2001 or Huddleston 1993) The majority of linguists agree that mood² relates especially to the contrast between indicative and subjunctive and that a modal system can be best illustrated by the uses of modal verbs.

Drawing on Palmer (2003:2), mood prototypically involves a binary system, i.e. the non-modal indicative and the modal subjunctive. By contrast, in a modal system, an unmarked realis non-modal form (*They are in the office*) is primarily distinguished from a set of irrealis modal forms (*They may/should/must be in the office*). Huddleston (1993:164) explains that while the non-modal form simply states what the speaker believes is a fact, the item in the modal system indicates the speaker's judgement and modal verb phrases can be thus subdivided into more specific mood categories, depending on which modal auxiliary they contain.

Palmer (2003) concludes that mood and modality seem to be mutually exclusive concepts in that languages normally have one or the other, or, at least one is much more salient than the other. This is the case with English, where the subjunctive has died out and the modal system has developed.

2.2 Definition of modality

The previous chapter suggests that modality is a semantic category which reflects the relation or attitude of the speaker to the content of the message. At its most general, modality is defined by Quirk *et al.* (1985) as:

“...the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified so as to reflect the speaker's judgment of the likelihood of the proposition it expresses being true.” (1985:219)

² The category of mood is sometimes considered to be redundant because the use of the subjunctive/irrealis is wholly determined by the grammar. (Palmer 2003)

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) emphasize:

“...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)

They explain that the declarative sentence like *He wrote it himself* is unmodalized and the speaker is committed to the factuality of the proposition expressed. On the other hand, in the modalized sentence *He must have written it himself* the commitment is qualified because the truth of the proposition is inferred. (2002:173) Similarly, for Downing and Locke (1992:382), non-modal utterances treat the process as reality, whereas modal utterances express a relation with reality, i.e. their content is affected by personal attitude or intervention.

Palmer (2001:1) sees modality as related to tense and aspect. Tense is associated with the time of the event/situation and aspect with its nature. Modality is associated with the status of the proposition, which means that its essential feature is that of assertion vs. non-assertion.

The definitions of modality usually operate with the term ‘attitude’, more specifically the speaker’s attitude to the reality, and therefore Halliday (1970) considers modality to be an integral part of interpersonal language function. Urbanová (2003:27) regards the speaker’s attitude to be inseparable from the notion of modality. Conversely, Huddleston and Pullum (2002:173) demonstrate that the modality can relate to the attitude of persons referred to in the sentence, as in *Kim thinks it must be true*, and can extend to more objective cases, for example, *If x is a prime number between 90 and 100 it must be 97*, which expresses objective, mathematical necessity.

The semantic domain of modality can be expressed in language in a variety of ways which are not mutually exclusive, for example, morphological, syntactic, lexical or via intonation. Tárnayiková (1978) views modality as a system of hierarchically ordered levels or subsystems:

“Modality (proper)³ is a category with speaker/writer-oriented dimension reflecting his attitude towards the potential realisation or reality of what is

³ Tárnayiková (1978:8-9) distinguishes between ‘communicative modality’ and ‘modality proper’. The former represents the obligatory part of an utterance and correlates with the category of

being communicated in the utterance, or his attitude to objective reality - expressed by suprasegmental, lexical and grammatical devices.” (1978:9)

However, the majority of linguists focus on morphosyntactic language devices (Biber *et al.* 1999, Huddleston 1993, Palmer 1990, Quirk *et al.* 1985 or Coates 1983). They deal, above all, with modal auxiliaries, to a lesser extent with lexical verbs (*require, allow*) and marginally with adjectives (*possible, certain, sure*), adverbs (*possibly, perhaps*) and nominal expressions (*necessity, possibility*) All these devices are termed ‘modal modifiers’. (Tárnyiková 1985:13)

In agreement with most definitions, the term ‘modality’ is understood and applied in this study as the expression of speaker’s attitude towards the proposition, i.e. as a semantic notion covering meanings like certainty, possibility, obligation, necessity or permission (cf. Downing and Locke 1992). As has been mentioned, these meanings can be conveyed by various linguistic devices; however, this study aims solely at conveying modal meanings by means of modal verbs.

2.3 Classification of modality

According to Palmer (2003), all kinds of modality involve non-assertion and are concerned with the proposition. Huddleston and Pullum (2002) point out that since modality is not sharply delimited or subdivided, one has to allow for indeterminacy at the boundaries of the categories. (2002:172) Consequently, a core-meaning approach to dealing with the meaning of modals is often proposed in theoretical models. (Coates 1980, Papafragou 2000, Perkins 1983, Tárnyiková 1979) As this issue is rather complex, it will be discussed in particular detail (in 2.6) after clarifying the essential terminology and introducing the traditional classification of modality.

mood (indicative, imperative, subjunctive), the latter concerns the use of modal modifiers, i.e. modal verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc.

The accounts of the English modal verbs are numerous and since they apply different approaches and perspectives, they seem to present conflicting models of the modal meanings. As a result, the terminology related to the modal concepts is inconsistent and largely depends on the usage of individual authors.

Recent research in the domain of modality has focused, as Bybee and Fleischman (1995) note, on the nature of the basic distinction between deontic (objective) and epistemic (subjective) modality. This implies that linguists generally agree on the basic division into two crucial subtypes of modality (Biber *et al.* 1999, Coates 1983, Huddleston and Pullum 2002, Leech 2004, Quirk *et al.* 1985). The contrasting factors of the modal meanings are usually divided into those involving some kind of intrinsic human control over events (permission, obligation, volition) and those involving human judgment of what is or is not likely to happen (possibility, necessity, prediction). (Quirk *et al.* 1985 Biber 1999) On the other hand, for Halliday (1970:328), a modality is associated with 'the speaker's assessment of the probability of what he is saying, or the extent to which he regards it as self-evident', which implies that he does not consider permission, volition, or obligation to be modalities.

When classifying modality, the terms 'deontic' and 'epistemic' seem to be the most widely credited and recognized in the linguistic literature, following the tradition in modal logic, where they were first used by von Wright (1951:1-2). Lyons (1977) uses these terms together with 'subjective' and 'objective' in reference to both of them. In order to characterize the categories of modality in the English modal system, Palmer (2001), drawing on von Wright (*ibid.*), posits apart from epistemic and deontic modality also dynamic modality. Huddleston and Pullum (2002) advocate identical categories, illustrating that deontic modality typically concerns obligation, permission or prohibition (*She must leave early*), epistemic modality qualifies the speaker's commitment to the truth of the modalized proposition (*They may be hungry*) and dynamic modality concerns the properties and dispositions of subject referents (*She can speak German*). (2002:52) Downing and Locke (1992:383) add that the basic categories of modality enable speakers to carry important communicative functions, i.e. to

comment on and evaluate an interpretation of reality (epistemic modality) or to intervene in, and bring about changes in events (non-epistemic modality).

Related in perspective is Biber *et al.*'s (1999) approach based on two broad categories, intrinsic and extrinsic, which are applicable to each modal:

“Intrinsic modality refers to actions and events that humans (or other agents) directly control: meanings relating to permission, obligation, or volition (or intention). Extrinsic modality refers to the logical status of events or states, usually relating to assessments of likelihood: possibility, necessity or prediction.” (1999:485)

All the modal meanings fit these categories except for the ability meaning, which has to be treated within a distinct category.

Similarly, Hladký (1976:90-91) characterizes modality in relation to the extralinguistic reality, distinguishing between internally determined modality and external determination. With the former the source of the modal attitude is in the speaker while with the latter it is determined by the extralinguistic reality and given in the communicative situation.

Tárnyiková (1985:10-11) presents the deontic-epistemic dichotomy from the viewpoint of functionally different levels of modality, i.e. concerning either the verbal element or the proposition as a whole. In the former, corresponding with deontic modality, the event expressed by a lexical verb is modified by the modal verb (*He must go*). In the latter, corresponding with epistemic modality, the modal verb can be isolated and substituted by a paraphrase resulting from logical deduction and thus expressing degree of certainty (*He must be thirty = I am certain that he is thirty*).

One of the fullest notional and theoretical accounts of modality is provided by Palmer (2001). Palmer replaces epistemic and deontic categories with more general ones, i.e. propositional modality, concerned with the speaker's judgement of the proposition, and event modality, concerned with the speaker's attitude towards a potential future event. The former is then divided into evidential and epistemic modality, the latter into deontic and dynamic modality. Propositional modality is concerned with the speaker's attitude to the

truth-value of factual status of the proposition. With epistemic modality speakers express their judgements about the factual status of the proposition, whereas with evidential modality they indicate the evidence that they have for its factual status. On the other hand, event modality refers to events that are not actualised, events that have not taken place but are merely potential. (2001:8,24,70)

Bybee *et al.* (1991:23) recategorize the modal concepts and suggest a different classification based on typological work.⁴ In place of the traditional distinction, agent-oriented, speaker-oriented (imperative, hortative, optative) and epistemic category (it retains its traditional definition) are posited. Agent-oriented modality encompasses those modal meanings that predicate conditions on an agent with regard to the completion of an action (desire, obligation, ability, root possibility, permission). Still, this classification is not fundamentally different because the concept of agent-oriented modality overlaps to a great extent with the concept of deontic modality.

In conclusion, the linguistics literature widely acknowledges two broad clusters of modal meanings, epistemic and deontic. Epistemic modality seems to be a less “problematic” concept in that scholars generally agree on its definition and delineation. By contrast, there is a great deal of disagreement concerning the definition and delineation of deontic modality. Therefore, some linguists speak about ‘epistemic’ and ‘non-epistemic’ modalities or adopt the term ‘root’ encompassing deontic and dynamic modality, which are considered to be related. (cf. Coates 1983, Papafragou 2000)

⁴ The traditional classification is abandoned because it is not seen to be cross-linguistically valid. (Bybee 1995)

2.3.1 Epistemic modality

A classic definition of epistemic modality is considered to be that of Lyons (1977):

“Any utterance in which the speaker explicitly qualifies his commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed by the sentence he utters, whether this qualification is made explicit in the verbal component or in the prosodic or paralinguistic component, is an epistemically modal, or modalized, utterance.” (1977:797)

Stated differently, epistemic modality is associated with the possibility or necessity of the truth of the proposition. Huddleston (1993:167) observes that the residue⁵ has the status of a proposition which is either true or false, depending on the speaker’s knowledge.⁶ Leech (2004) considers epistemic modality to be closely related with logic since ‘it deals with constraints of likelihood on the truth and falsehood of statements about the universe’. (2004:84)

Epistemic modality may be characterized as propositional (Palmer 2001) because it is normally understood as expressing the degree of the speaker’s commitment to the truth of the proposition. For Huddleston and Pullum (2002) or Palmer (2003), prototypical epistemic modality is concerned with the speaker’s attitude to the factuality of past or present time situations. Coates (1983:18) describes epistemic modality as associated with the speaker’s assessment of possibilities and his/her confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition expressed. Coates (1987:120), associating epistemic modality with the speaker’s attitude to addressees, refers to Halliday (1970), who sees modal forms as an important means of expressing addressee-oriented meaning within the interpersonal function of language.

As epistemic modality is essentially concerned with the speaker’s judgement or commitment to the truth of the proposition,⁷ it is considered to be subjective and non-factive. (Coates 1983:235) Its subjectivity seems to be taken

⁵ Huddleston (1993:167) uses the term ‘residue’ for what is left of the meaning of an utterance when the modality is abstracted away.

⁶ The term ‘epistemic’ is related to the Greek word for ‘knowledge’. (Huddleston 1993:167)

⁷ Papafragou (2000:117) discusses epistemic modal verbs in relation to syntactically non-parenthetical uses of performative verbs (*I conclude, I infer, I predict*) since both regularly contribute to the truth-conditional of the utterance.

for granted among linguists because conclusions are normally based on inference or opinion. By contrast, logicians and philosophers are primarily concerned with objective epistemic (alethic) modality, which deals with absolute or logical necessity or possibility, as in *It must be the case that two plus two equals four*, where the speaker's conclusion equals an objective fact. However, since the logical and epistemic domain often overlap (e.g. if the speaker's knowledge includes all logical possibilities), alethic modality can be treated as a subtype of epistemic, usually called objective epistemic modality (Lyons 1977:79)

Epistemic modality can be characterized in terms of qualified assertions: *It was a mistake* represents an unqualified assertion while *You may be right* is qualified in that it acknowledges the possibility that *You are right* is true. (see Huddleston and Pullum 2002:172 or Downing and Locke 1992:382) Coates (1987:120) points out that speakers often communicate their attitude by using epistemic modals⁸ and thus relatively few utterances make unqualified assertions.

2.3.2 Deontic and dynamic modality

Lyons's (1977) definition, based on von Wright's (1951) modal logic concept, describes deontic modality⁹ as:

“...associated primarily with the social functions of permission and obligation where the necessity or possibility of acts is crucial and these acts are performed by morally responsible agents.” (1977:823)

According to Facchinetti (2003:303), deontic modality is associated with acts controlled by the willingness or intentionality of the speaker, i.e. it is the modality of obligation, imposition, and permission. In Huddleston's (1993) terms, the residue has the character of an action and, prototypically, the time involved is future (*She must come in time*). Accordingly, Huddleston and Pullum

⁸ Epistemic modals involve a wide range of linguistic forms, i.e. not only modal verbs but also modal adjectives or adverbs, tag questions, and phrases such as *I think* or *sort of*. (Coates 1987:120)

⁹ The term 'deontic' comes from Greek and involves the notion of 'binding'. (Huddleston 1993:168)

(2002:178) conclude that deontic modality concerns the speaker's attitude to the actualisation of future situations.

As has been mentioned, apart from the epistemic-deontic distinction, dynamic modality, associated with real-world ability, possibility and intention/willingness, is often recognized. (Palmer 1990, von Wright 1951)

Palmer (2003) regards both deontic and dynamic modality to be directive in that they are concerned with enabling the subject of the sentence to act. Deontic modality is controlled by circumstances external to the subject of the sentence (*You can leave*), whereas with dynamic modality the control is internal to the subject, i.e. it relates to the subject's physical or mental powers (*She can swim*). (see Palmer 2001:9,70) Similarly, Perkins (1983) uses the term 'dynamic' to refer to physical necessity and possibility and the term 'deontic' in relation to principles or laws deriving from human agents within a social context.

By contrast, Facchinetti (2003:303) argues that dynamic modality can cover also situations determined by circumstances external to the subject, as in *There are certain things that you can get cheaper out there*. (cf. Palmer 2001:10) According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002:178), the prototypical dynamic modality is concerned with properties and dispositions of persons, especially the subject; however, the boundary between dynamic and deontic modality is somewhat fuzzy. Therefore, these two concepts, viewed as related, are often referred to simply as 'non-epistemic', 'agent-oriented' or 'root' modalities.

2.3.3 Root modality

The term that appears to be most commonly employed to refer to the non-epistemic modal meanings is 'root modality'. (see Coates 1983) Leech (2004:84) considers root modality to be the more basic type of modality in that it denotes constraint/lack of constraint in situations typically involving human behaviour, i.e. it includes permission, obligation, theoretical possibility and requirement. In addition, root meanings are unified with particular syntactic

patterns¹⁰ distinguishing them from their epistemic counterparts. Coates and Leech (1980:25) make an important point that in the case of root modality, we do not talk about a proposition, but about an event or state, the occurrence of which is influenced by some other phenomena.

Since this study focuses primarily on the issues relating to the concept of possibility, the terms 'epistemic' and 'root' possibility will be generally used. The term 'root' is employed for the reasons given by Coates (1983) and because it is not the central aim to distinguish between deontic and dynamic modality. However, if necessary, the more-specific terms 'deontic' or 'dynamic' modality will be used.

2.4 The concept of possibility and necessity

Possibility and necessity represent the most central notions in modal logic. (Huddleston 1993:166) The meaning contrast between the two concepts is termed 'inverseness', i.e. possibility is the inverse of necessity, which can be illustrated by Leech's (2004:82) example: *Someone has to be telling lies equals Not everyone can be telling the truth.*

The widely recognized epistemic-deontic distinction applies to both concepts or, in Coates's (1995:58) terms, 'it cuts across the necessity/obligation and possibility/permission distinctions'. Coates and Leech (1980:24-5) find it necessary to separate root possibility and necessity on the one hand and epistemic possibility and necessity on the other,¹¹ because they can be expressed by the same linguistic forms. For instance, MAY can express both epistemic and root possibility, as in *She may call them = perhaps she will call them or she is permitted to call them.*

¹⁰ For example, animate subject, agentive verb and passive voice are considered to be linked with root meaning. (Tárnyiková 1978, Coates 1983)

¹¹ Lyons (1977:802) or Huddleston and Pullum (2002:181) propose that, in English, epistemic possibility should be taken as more basic and less restricted than epistemic necessity, for the latter includes some peculiarities (e.g. the negative of MUST is CAN'T).

2.4.1 Epistemic vs. root possibility¹²

Epistemic and root possibility reading are usually distinguished in terms of subjectivity. The forms involving subjectivity are defined by Lyons (1977) as:

“...devices whereby the speaker, in making an utterance, simultaneously comments upon that utterance and expresses his attitude to what he is saying.” (1977:739)

The definition clearly indicates that epistemic possibility involves subjectivity and since epistemic possibility is concerned with uncertainty, it is termed speculative.¹³ (Palmer 2001) On the other hand, root possibility usually relates to statements of fact where subjectivity is not involved, and can thus be defined in terms of general enabling conditions, as in *it can take three hours to get there*. (Bybee and Fleischman 1995:5)

As epistemic and root possibility can be expressed by the same modal, linguists propose different paraphrases to disambiguate them. (see, for example, Leech 2004:85 or Palmer 2001:7) Epistemic meaning is paraphrasable by a *that*-clause, i.e. *it is possible that p*, whereas root modality by an infinitive construction, i.e. *it is possible for p to do...* In the epistemic paraphrase *p* stands for a proposition while *p* in the root paraphrase stands for an event, which implies a clear-cut boundary between epistemic and root possibility. As the paraphrases deny the existence of any intermediate cases, they are often criticized and are not regarded to be a reliable criterion. (cf. Leech and Coates 1980:85-6) When differentiating root and epistemic possibility, Coates (1995) argues that the semantic contrast is weaker than in other root-epistemic pairs. Hence instances of merger are common, particularly with the verb *MAY*, which can be indeterminate between its epistemic possibility and root possibility sense. (1995:56) (see also 2.6.2)

¹² In Leech's (2004) terminology, 'factual possibility' equals 'epistemic possibility' and 'theoretical possibility' equals 'root possibility'.

¹³ Palmer (2001) posits three types of judgement within epistemic possibility: speculative expressing uncertainty (*she may be ill*), deductive indicating an inference from observable evidence (*She must be ill*) and assumptive indicating inference from what is generally known (*John will be in his office*). Speculative can be explained in terms of a possible conclusion, deductive in terms of the only possible conclusion and assumptive in terms of a reasonable conclusion. (Palmer 2001:24)

Some linguists propose distinguishing between the two concepts in terms of scope. (see Tárnyiková 1979, Coates 1993) As has been noted, both epistemic and root possibility are related to the speaker's assessment of the likelihood that the content of a proposition is or may become true. According to Silva-Corvalán (1995:74-75), epistemic possibility, concerned with the speaker's logical inference, has both the proposition and modality in its scope. On the other hand, root possibility has only the proposition in its scope and is agent or event oriented, i.e. the subject is normally a wilful agent and/or the verb is a dynamic verb. She adds that the difference in scope has consequences for negation; negation affects the proposition in the case of epistemic sense (*they may not smoke there = it is possible that they do not smoke there*) but the modality and proposition in the case of root sense. (*they may not smoke there = they are not allowed to smoke there*) (see 2.5.3)

Similarly, Papafragou (2000) points out that epistemic operators take scope over propositions in that they convey how much evidence the speaker possesses for the proposition. By contrast, in root modal interpretations 'modality operates over propositions handled as truth-conditional descriptions of states of affairs'. (2000:70) Bybee and Fleischman (1995:6) add that epistemic modals, being 'clausal-scope indicators of a speaker's commitment to the truth of a proposition', have higher scope than the root modal, as in *They may have to go soon*.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) focus on the scope of the perfect infinitive, arguing that it belongs semantically either in the complement of the modal or may have scope over the modal. For instance, in *She must have saved him (=I am forced to conclude that she saved him)* the perfect infinitive applies to the lexical verb (epistemic modality), whereas in *She could have saved him if she'd tried (=It would have been possible for her to save him)* it has scope over the modal (root modality). (2002:203)

In conclusion, the scope difference between epistemic and root possibility applies to negation, past time marking and hypothetical marking. With epistemic modals, it is the main predication that is affected by these, i.e. the

speaker's lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition is unaffected. On the other hand, past time marking, hypothetical marking and negation affect the modal predication of root modals. (cf. Coates 1983:20) This scope difference is considered to be crucial and is thus regularly applied in the empirical chapters to facilitate the interpretation of analyzed utterances.

2.5 English modal verbs

The subject of this chapter covers a large number of issues, however, merely those concerning the modal verbs expressing possibility will be discussed. As with modality, the terminology relating to the English modal verbs is not unified, which results from adopting different approaches. The verbs in question are commonly called 'modal auxiliaries', 'modal verbs', often 'modal operators', and sometimes 'defective auxiliary verbs' or 'second auxiliaries'. In this study, they will be referred to by the widely recognized terms 'modal verbs', 'modal auxiliaries' or just 'modals'.

The syntax and semantics of the English modal verbs may present problems for analysis owing to a number of their idiosyncratic features. Some scholars note that these verbs do not form a strictly closed system with a fixed number of members. Yet the majority usually agree on the following set of core modal verbs, i.e. CAN, COULD, MAY, MIGHT, MUST, WILL, WOULD, SHALL and SHOULD. These are frequently called 'central modals', for they are restricted to operator function and thus relatively easy to delimit. (see 2.5.1)

Being an integral part of interpersonal communication, modal verbs occur significantly in all registers. Nevertheless, Biber *et al.*'s (1999:486) and Coates's (1983:23-24) investigations show vast differences in frequency and distribution of the central modal verbs across registers. For instance, they are generally more frequent in spoken language (except for MAY), the most frequently occurring spoken forms being WILL and CAN. Coates (*ibid.*) also mentions that

most modals have one meaning predominating quantitatively (e.g. MAY expressing epistemic possibility).¹⁴

2.5.1 General characteristics

There is widespread agreement that the English central modal verbs are clearly formally distinguished. Their principal formal characteristics can be found, for example, in Tárnyiková (1979) or Leech (2004). Probably the best known and the most thorough syntactic descriptions of the English auxiliaries seem to be provided by Huddleston (1980) and Quirk *et al.* (1985:120 –148), based on a synchronic continuum of auxiliary verbs and their list of criteria.

Briefly, the English central modal verbs share the characteristics of primary auxiliaries, i.e. their use in negation, inversion, code and emphatic affirmation. These features represent what Huddleston (1980) calls the NICE properties (negation, inversion, code, emphasis), and clearly draw a dividing line between auxiliaries and main verbs. In addition, the central modal auxiliaries have specifically modal criteria: they are always tensed, their grammatical categories are restricted (they do not have the third person -s form, their semantics is incompatible with commands) and they cannot co-occur in standard English. Tárnyiková (1978:10) observes that many features common to the modals are mutually conditioned, for example, the fact that modal verbs are finite implies that they have no participles and perfect tenses. Huddleston and Pullum (2002:175) regard CAN and WILL as the most straightforward modal auxiliaries because they possess all the properties.

Palmer (2003), however, points out that the English central modal verbs are concerned with some problematic features (e.g. the status of their morphologically past tense forms), so that they do not occur in a neat and symmetrical system.

¹⁴ In contrast, Leech's investigation (2003), based on a corpus analysis of comparable databases from the period around 1961 and the period around 1991, shows that the English modal auxiliaries as a group have been declining in their frequency of use.

2.5.2 Syntactic co-occurrence patterns

Epistemic and root modal verbs are commonly associated with specific grammatical features or syntactic co-occurrence patterns, which are considered to be detectors of a scope difference between epistemic and root modality. (cf. Coates 1983 or Tárnyiková 1979) For example, Biber *et al.* (1999:485) view the agentive human subject and dynamic verb as ‘two typical structural correlates of modal verbs with intrinsic meanings’. According to Krug (2000:171), ‘unambiguous epistemic modality can be triggered by a probability adverb alongside an epistemic matrix verb’.

Linguists find it generally easier to delimit grammatical features for epistemic modal verbs in that they have 100 per cent associations with some features, for instance, perfect and progressive aspect. The aspectual restriction implies that epistemic modal verbs have present or past orientation, whereas root readings have future orientation. (see Papafragou 2000:91) Palmer (2003:14) agrees, stating that although it is not possible to use MIGHT to say *It is possible that something happened*, one can make a present judgement about the past, as in *Something may have happened*. Jacobs (1995:239) concludes that with epistemic modals two time references are involved: the time at which the modal notion applies, typically the time of the utterance, and the time of the situation to which the modal applies.

Still, Papafragou (2005) believes that epistemic and root interpretations cannot be viewed as two separate clusters of modal meanings with different grammatical properties. ‘Grammatical features, such as the aspectual profile of the complement, typically interact with contextual considerations to favour one or the other interpretation of a modal verb.’ (2005:105)

Stated differently, despite being advocated by a considerable number of authors, the syntactic correlations seem to be inconclusive. Their reliability will be tested against the data in chapters 5 – 8.

2.5.3 Negation

As has been illustrated in 2.4.1, the major root-epistemic distinction can be explained in terms of scope, i.e. we can distinguish between the modality negation and the proposition negation. These two types of negation, often termed 'external' and 'internal',¹⁵ are reflected in paraphrases which help identify the type of negation. The negated modal predication (external negation) is paraphrased by *not possible*, as in *She can't be satisfied (=it is not possible that she is satisfied)*, i.e. the negation is external to the scope of the modal. On the other hand, the negated proposition (internal negation) is glossable by *possible not*, as in *She may not be satisfied (=it is possible that she is not satisfied)*, i.e. the negation falls within the scope of the modal.¹⁶ (see Huddleston and Pullum 2002:175 or Huddleston 1993:168-169) Consequently, Perkins (1983:48) views negation as one of the factors determining which realization of a core meaning may be used in cases where more than one realization is available.

Palmer (1995:456) stresses the role of negation in the logical relation between possibility and necessity in that the logically equivalent forms are *not possible = necessary not* and *possible not = not necessary*. Where the scope of negation is not reflected in the grammatical placement of the negative, another modal is used. For example, there is suppletion¹⁷ of CAN for MAY in terms of the logical equivalences, owing to the use of CAN in place of epistemic MAY for *not possible*. As a result, MAY and CAN are not comparable in their negative and question forms and thus the root-epistemic contrast of affirmative statements is not discernible in negative settings. (cf. Leech 2004:95)

¹⁵ This phenomenon has also been referred to as 'auxiliary' vs. 'main verb' negation (Leech 2004, Quirk *et al.* 1983), or 'modality' vs. 'thesis' negation. (Halliday 1970)

¹⁶ Leech (2004:93) or Huddleston and Pullum (2002:175) note that both types of negation can be combined in the same clause, especially with CAN. For instance, *I can't not tell her about it* equals *It is not possible for me not to tell her about it*, i.e. it is an emphatic equivalent to *I have to tell her about it*. Still, such cases of double negation are very rare.

¹⁷ Suppletive forms are especially common with epistemic modality. (Palmer 1995:462)

The logical equivalences between pairs of clauses expressing modal necessity and possibility are illustrated by Huddleston and Pullum (2002:177) as follows:

He isn't necessarily not guilty = He may be guilty

(not-Nec not P) = (Poss P)

He isn't necessarily guilty = He may be not guilty

(not Nec P) = (Poss not P)

P stands for the propositional content, not P = internal negation,
not Nec/not Poss = external negation

To summarize, in terms of inverseness, *it is possible that p* equals *it is not necessarily the case that not p*, whereas *it is not possible that not p* equals *it is necessarily the case that p*.

2.5.4 Time reference and past tense modal forms

Historically, most of the modals can be paired into past and nonpast forms, for instance, *can – could*, *may – might*. Leech (2004:73) criticizes the terms 'present' and 'past' for being misleading and proposes 'primary' and 'secondary' instead. Primary modal verbs (CAN, MAY) commonly refer to present and future time, but secondary modal verbs do not usually have their primary, temporal meaning. (cf. Huddleston 1993, Perkins 1983) Still, they may be used to refer to the past in certain contexts,¹⁸ as in *They could speak English when they were abroad*. Palmer (2001:204) demonstrates the present-past relationship of primary and secondary modal verbs by the sequence of tense rule and the same relationship to the present forms in unreal conditionals. (cf. Jacobs 1995:219)

Huddleston and Pullum (2002:196) characterize three major uses of the preterite forms; past time, backshift and modal remoteness, arguing that modal remoteness seems to be a distinctive property of past tense modals in that it is much more frequent and less restricted than their past time use. This issue

¹⁸ The restrictions on the temporal use of past tense forms only apply to the narrative past tense, not the backshifted past tense.

arises particularly with possibility meanings of MIGHT and COULD because, as Biber *et al.* (1995) maintain, these verbs distinguish between past time and non-past time in limited circumstances. MIGHT is used to indicate past time very rarely, whereas COULD referring to the past is more common but only when expressing root modality. Similarly, for Krug (2000:45), the tensed modal forms lost largely their potential to refer to past time. Bybee (1995) observes that past modals seem to evolve universally into present uses; hence they express the meaning that is similar to their present counterparts, but weakened by hypotheticality.

Accordingly, Biber *et al.* (1999:485) define the past tense modal verb forms as unmarked for tense, since their meanings relate, above all, to the speaker's stance and often convey overtones of tentativeness and politeness. Quirk *et al.* (1985) or Leech (2004) associate the past tense modal verbs with particular pragmatic uses, such as requests, suggestions or offers. Bybee and Fleischman (1995) summarize as follows:

“When agent-oriented¹⁹ modals combine with past tense, the resulting unit often undergoes a meaning change, losing the past-tense component of its meaning and coming to signal a weakened version of its original modal meaning in the present tense.” (1995:12)

Like Bybee, Larreya (2003) sees the hypothetical reading of COULD and MIGHT as resulting from the combination of CAN or MAY and the -ED morpheme (i.e. the past tense marker), the fundamental meaning of which is ‘the expression of some type of presupposed unreality which involves non-reality’. (2003:21) In conjunction with the temporal function of the perfect infinitive, the -ED morpheme expresses counterfactuality or tentativeness as in *she could have told us*. To illustrate the different roles of the -ED morpheme and the perfect infinitive, Larreya gives the following example *I might have seen it vs. I may have seen it*, where the perfect infinitive fulfils a temporal function while the -ED morpheme expresses counterfactuality or tentativeness. (2003:31)

To summarize, although COULD and MIGHT represent the morphologically past tense forms of CAN and MAY, they are considered to be unmarked for tense.

¹⁹ Agent-oriented modals are understood here as covering roughly root modals. (see 2.3)

Since they predominately appear in non-past contexts and are associated with tentative and polite meanings, they are treated as independent lexical items in this study.

2.6 Polysemous vs. monosemous nature of the English modal verbs

Despite the vastness of the literature on modality and modal verbs, many studies raise the question of polysemy or indeterminacy in order to deal with the fact that the same modal verb is commonly used for the expression of both types of modality. Researchers on modal auxiliaries generally disagree on whether modal verbs should be treated as polysemous or monosemous and whether their transition from one kind of modality to another is discrete or gradual. Huddleston (1993) comments on the issue as follows:

“Some writers claim to bring all the uses of any one modal within the scope of a single broad definition of its meaning, while others allow for polysemy but with widely varying views on how many different senses are to be distinguished in any given case.” (1993:165)

According to Huddleston (*ibid.*), such disagreements result from missing or insufficient criteria for determining senses for a modal auxiliary, and he concludes that at least some polysemy needs to be recognized. Leech and Coates (1980:85), for instance, regard *MAY* as polysemous²⁰ between epistemic possibility and root permission, whereas *CAN* is seen as monosemous, with root possibility gradually transiting into permission and ability.

Polysemy-based accounts of the English modal verbs have been advocated by a variety of linguists, Lyons (1977), Halliday (1970), Leech (2004), Tárnyiková (1979) or Palmer (1990). These authors associate the modal verbs with multiple meanings and treat them within the traditional discrete categories, such as permission, ability or possibility. Stated differently, the modal verbs are viewed as expressing two or more independent meanings, as in *She may come*

²⁰ According to Leech and Coates (1980), monosemantic approach fails because it has difficulty in assigning a basic meaning to *MAY*.

later = *she is allowed to come later* (deontic) or *she will perhaps come later* (epistemic). Polysemists also argue that meanings of a modal relate to distinctive syntactic and semantic properties and the modal is ambiguous between its root and epistemic meaning when used in abstraction from context. Therefore, Palmer (1990) approaches the English modals by assuming lexical ambiguity, i.e. by considering each modal as encoding distinct modalities. Tárnayiková (1985:20-21) characterizes the English modal verbs as polysemous and polyfunctional and describes their meaning in terms of semantic components; for instance, some of the semantic components of CAN might be ability, possibility, contingency, request, permission, suggestion, offer, command, or willingness.

On the other hand, the monosemy-based approach adopts a core meaning for each modal from which possible interpretations derive, being prompted by a particular context. (Ehrmann 1966, Perkins 1983, Papafragou 2000) Perkins (1983) suggests monosemous specification, but he allows for differences between rational, social and natural laws.²¹ For Papafragou (2000), the English modals have unitary semantic content which gives rise to distinct contextual readings in conjunction with different pragmatic considerations.

Coates (1983:9-12), providing one of the most comprehensive corpus-based treatments of modal expressions, insists that neither monosemantic nor polysemantic approach is wholly satisfactory. The former denies the existence of discrete categories and thus fails to deal with the problem of indeterminacy in real language, while the latter assumes discrete categories of meaning even in cases of indeterminacy. Hence Coates concludes that both approaches must be combined in order to deal adequately with indeterminate examples covering a range of possible meanings.

2.6.1 Fuzziness and centre-periphery viewpoint

Crystal's *Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (1990) reads that a semantic category represented by several lexical items is best regarded as

²¹ These terms correspond to epistemic, deontic and dynamic modality.

'having an invariant core with a variable (or fuzzy) boundary, which allows for flexibility of application to a wide range of entities, given the appropriate context'. (1990:131-2)

As far as fuzziness and the centre-periphery viewpoint are concerned, Daneš (1966) says:

“... the classes and (sub-classes) of elements should not be regarded as ‘boxes’ with clear-cut boundaries but as formations with a compact core (centre) and with a gradual transition into a diffuse periphery which, again, gradually passes (infiltrates) into the peripheral domain of the next category.” (1966:11)

A similar view is held by Palmer (1990)

“It has been increasingly apparent in recent years that there are many areas of syntax and semantics where no clear, discrete categorization is possible. This does not invalidate any attempt to categorize; it simply means that the model must recognize that there are often continua with extremes that are clearly distinct, but with considerable indeterminacy in the middle.” (1979:172-3)

Tárnyiková (2000) notes that the fuzzy set theory is reflected in Lakoff's (1973) fuzzy grammar²² and in Rosch's (1973, 1978) prototype theory. In the former, category membership, rule applicability or well-formedness are a matter of degree rather than either/or decisions; in the latter, the most representative members of a category are referred to as prototypical members. (2000:56-7) Inspired by these theories, some linguists (Coates 1983, Tárnyiková 1979) approach modality and modal verbs from this viewpoint.

Coates (1983:9-12) adopts a model based on the fuzzy set theory, developed by Zadeh (1965) (cited in Coates 1983), which posits a continuously graded degree of membership. Accordingly, Coates represents the meaning of a modal verb as a fuzzy set where an instance may fit a category to a certain degree (rather than either fitting or not fitting) and the transition from membership to non-membership is gradual. Similarly, Tárnyiková (1978) points out:

“The transition from central to peripheral semantic components is gradual, represented by a scale of contextually motivated semantic

²² The fuzzy-set theory also activated interest in the concepts of hedges and hedging, introduced by Lakoff (1972), whose function is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy. (see Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of this issue)

components 'pulsing' between the centre and its periphery with set phrases and frozen idioms at its very end". (1978:12)

Coates's data (1983) reveal that both root and epistemic meaning are fuzzy, though fuzziness applies mainly to root modality. Clear discrete examples occur at the semantic core, whereas those expressing various degrees of indeterminacy are found between the core and the periphery of each modal. Coates adds that the core represents the meaning learned first by children, yet the majority of examples are found at the periphery. For instance, the core meaning of MAY is permission, whereas the periphery is formed by its more frequent possibility sense. (cf. Tárnyiková 1985)

Leech (2004:72-73), advocating the polysemantic approach, admits its drawbacks in that it focuses on a logical (semantic) element of modal meaning but disregards its practical (pragmatic) element. This implies that the traditional notions become influenced and changed by the social and psychological factors, such as motivation, condescension, politeness, tact or irony. Therefore, Leech (*ibid.*) suggests considering the distinctions between the meanings as contrasts of meaning, as scales of similarity and difference.

Quirk *et al.* (1985:219) describe this issue in terms of a gradient²³ between intrinsic and extrinsic modality and thus acknowledge the areas of overlap and neutrality, i.e. the contexts in which the two modal senses seem to be more or less interchangeable; for example, a limited degree of overlap between root possibility CAN and MAY in formal written English.

Bybee and Fleischman (1995) summarize the difficulties associated with the distinctions between modal senses as follows:

"...the main issue is whether a form should be regarded as having a single underlying basic meaning (a so-called invariant meaning) that combines with contextual factors to yield differing interpretations for individual tokens, or whether, alternatively, it has a complex set of semantic properties that by definition incorporate meanings derived from context." (1995:6-7)

²³ The term 'gradient' refers to those areas of language in which there are no clear boundaries between sets of analytic categories, for instance, various phonetic, grammatical and semantic continua. (Crystal 1990:140)

The approaches discussed so far saw modal verbs as having a complex set of semantic properties, whereas the following approaches, advocated for example by Silva-Corvalán (1995) and Papafragou (2000), posit a single basic invariant meaning.

Silva-Corvalán (1995) does not attribute fuzziness to modal verbs but to the contexts in which they occur:

“...fuzziness or graded membership of contexts allows for various interpretations of modalized propositions, and the precise point at which one interpretation is no longer possible is usually difficult to establish.”
(1995:72)

Consequently, she introduces three types of meaning, i.e. de-contextualized invariant meaning, contextualized meaning and prototypical discourse meaning. De-contextualized invariant meaning denotes a core underlying meaning which is present in all uses of a modal (cf. Perkins 1983). Contextualized meaning denotes the sense which the modal conveys in a specific context and is thus determined by the interaction of the modal verb with morphosyntactic, semantic, prosodic, and pragmatic factors.²⁴ Prototypical discourse meaning refers to the most frequent contextualized meaning that the modal conveys in a corpus of language data, i.e. it corresponds to the sense that most speakers assign to a form.

Papafragou (2000:40,43-4) characterizes modal verbs as context-dependent expressions the meanings of which consist of two components: a logical relation and a domain of propositions. The modal verbs thus convey that a certain proposition bears a certain logical relation to the set of propositions in a domain. The domain is defined as the restrictor responsible for different modal interpretations. It may be represented, for example, by laws or regulations and may be either indicated or pragmatically inferred.

Despite proposing different approaches, researchers on modal auxiliaries agree that when these verbs are studied in real language data, one inevitably

²⁴ Silva-Corvalán (1995) points out that contextually inferred senses have been mistakenly considered to be the part of the modal meaning owing to their high frequency of occurrence.

comes across cases which cannot be unambiguously assigned solely to one category. Such cases are usually labelled 'unclear' or 'indeterminate' and their interpretation is seen as resulting from pragmatic interpretation.

2.6.2 Semantic indeterminacy of modal verbs

Coates (1983:13) characterizes indeterminacy in terms of gradience, based on Quirk's (1965) syntactic gradients, explaining that an indeterminate example exhibits gradience when it fits neither category but has elements of both. In order to determine the nature and extent of indeterminacy, Leech and Coates (1980:87-8) use Quirk's method (1965:210-11) of plotting instances against criteria in a serial-relationship matrix and attempt to provide a simplified example of such a matrix, relating possibility and permission senses of the verb CAN. However, in comparison with the gradience model with two clear endpoints where most examples occur, Coates's (1983) analysis reveals that the majority of indeterminate modal instances appear between the two extremes. Therefore, she prefers the fuzzy sets theory where the example may fit a category to a certain degree. (see 2.6.1)

The following classification of indeterminate cases is based on Leech and Coates (1980:81-3) and Coates (1983:15-6,39-40,92-93). According to these authors, there are three types of indeterminacy in the transition from one kind of modality, namely gradience, ambiguity and merger.

(A) Gradience

Gradience applies when intermediate cases cannot be clearly assigned just to one category, i.e. there is a continuum of meaning with variable degree of similarity to one of the categories. Two types of gradience can be identified when analysing the verb CAN.

The gradient of restriction relates the core meaning of permission and the peripheral meaning of possibility. In its possibility sense CAN conveys 'nothing at all prevents p from taking place' while its permission sense 'nothing prevents p

from taking place' is restricted to a specific world of man-made freedoms and obligations. (Leech and Coates 1980:80,83) (see 5.2.1 for a more thorough discussion of this issue)

The gradient of inherency relates the possibility and ability sense of CAN. The ability reading is associated with the enabling circumstances inherent to the performer, whereas the possibility reading concerns the enabling circumstances independent of the participants. Nevertheless, as Leech and Coates (1980:84) note, an action may be possible owing to a whole set of factors and merely a wider context can help determine which of them are more important than the others. (see 5.2.2 dealing with the gradient of inherency)

(B) Merger

Merger occurs when two interpretations are so closely related that they are in a both/and relationship and the text makes sense no matter which of them we choose. To put it differently, it is not necessary to decide which of the two senses is intended because the distinctions can be contextually neutralized. Leech and Coates (1980:82) find it difficult to detect merger since it is not usually noticed by speakers and since it overlaps with gradience to some extent. They suggest that paraphrasing seems helpful in order to distinguish between merger and gradience; with merger both paraphrases are satisfactory, whereas with gradience one of them is less satisfactory. According to Coates (1983:89), merger 'bridges the gap between monosemy and polysemy' in that it acknowledges distinct senses and simultaneously recognizes a common element of meaning connecting them; for example, MAY expressing epistemic and root possibility. (see 7.3) Consequently, root and epistemic meanings are seen to be related.

(C) Ambiguity

Ambiguity applies to the cases in which a modal verb has two senses belonging to different categories (root and epistemic) and it is not possible to decide from the immediate context which of them is intended. The distinct interpretations are in an either-or relationship, so that only one makes sense in

a particular context. Nonetheless, ambiguity is rare and can be found mainly in isolated sentences because context normally indicates the appropriate reading. Coates gives only one example, involving MUST: *He must understand that we mean business* is ambiguous between a root (*it is essential*) and an epistemic sense (*surely*). Huddleston and Pullum (2002:177) remark that the interpretations are essentially different and mirror a clear contrast between epistemic and deontic sense.

In conclusion, one of the central issues concerning the meanings of modal verbs is to what extent their interpretation can be inferred from the constructions it occurs in. Matthews (2003) states:

“Whether a modal auxiliary is univocal or ambiguous may be inherent to the auxiliary, but its interpretation in particular instances will be determined by construction, context and convention.” (2003:66)

Leech and Coates (1980) find it necessary to consider in what way the factors of speaker- and hearer-involvement are integrated into the representation of meaning and conclude:

“...an appropriate model of modal meanings must synthesize six orientations: mono-semantic, polysemantic, categorical, non-categorical, logical and pragmatic.” (1980:24)

Similarly, Tárnyiková (1985:19) points out that the final interpretation of a modal verb is influenced by a range of sentence and extralinguistic factors. Bybee and Fleischman (1995:7) find it necessary, above all, ‘to target the particular contextual factors that favour one interpretation over the other’.

3. Hedging

The use of the linguistic term 'hedge' dates back to the early 1970s, when G. Lakoff (1972) defined hedges as 'phrases whose meaning implicitly involves fuzziness as they make things more or less fuzzy'. (1972:195) Similarly, Brown and Levinson (1987:145) view hedge as an item that 'modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or a noun phrase in a set, i.e. membership is partial or true only in certain respects'.²⁵

However, the original concept has been widened, so that hedges are commonly considered to be modifiers of the speaker's commitment to the truth-value of a whole proposition. Markkanen and Schröder (1997) refer to an account of hedging developed by Prince, Frader and Bosk (1982:85), who distinguish fuzziness within the propositional content (expressed by approximators) and in the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition conveyed (expressed by shields). (cited in Markkanen and Schröder 1997:3)

There is widespread agreement that one of the major motivating factors for the use of hedges is politeness. Bearing in mind the influential theory of politeness put forward by Brown and Levinson (1987),²⁶ it is necessary to refer to the concept of face, which is central to this theory. Brown and Levinson distinguish between negative face needs, i.e. the need to have our personal space respected, and positive face needs, i.e. the need to be acknowledged and liked. Hedges are related to their concept of face needs,²⁷ particularly negative face needs, in that they mitigate the force of what is being said. Stated differently, hedges are one of conventional politeness markers through which negative politeness, oriented towards a hearer's negative face, manifests itself.

With regard to hedges, Markkanen and Schröder (1997:5) consider both negative and positive face needs equally important. On the one hand, hedges are used to emphasize the hearer's face-wants since they are vague in their meaning and the addressee can decide how to interpret them. On the other

²⁵ Both detensifiers and intensifiers are included in this definition of hedges.

²⁶ The principal theories of politeness are outlined and contrasted in Thomas, J. (1995) *Meaning in Interaction*, Chapter 6.

²⁷ According to Brown and Levinson (1987), speakers' sensitivity to the face needs of others, i.e. politeness, is a language universal.

hand, hedges are important for the speaker's own face because mitigating one's commitment to the truth-value of a proposition makes the claim only tentative and thus no one seems to be responsible for the truth of the statement.

Urbanová (2003) sees negative politeness as one of the categories of attenuation:

“...attenuation, sometimes called hedging, is a procedure which results in the weakening of the illocutionary force in situations which would otherwise lead to a loss of face (either for the speaker or for the listener) and which would thus make communication untenable mainly due to the infringing of the Politeness Principle.” (2003:58)

Attenuation can be caused by a lack of information or can be determined by tact, depending on the context. Holmes (1982:18-20) discusses this issue in terms of modal and affective meaning. The former involves the speaker's attitude to the content of the proposition (i.e. epistemic modality), whereas the latter concerns the speaker's attitude to the addressee and the function of an utterance in a particular social context (i.e. the degree of confidence). In discussing affective meaning, Holmes distinguishes boosters strengthening the illocutionary force of utterances and downtoners weakening their force. Accordingly, hedges are classified as downtoners in that they serve to convey the speaker's views tentatively or to attenuate the force of the proposition, and typically express deference. This implies that, apart from modifying the speaker's attitude to the content of the proposition, epistemic modals reflect the speaker's attitude to the addressee, i.e. convey affective meaning.

As with modality, the linguistic expressions that can be used as hedges are not restricted. Hyland (1999) observes that hedging is commonly associated with lexical verbs (*seem, tend to*), nouns (*likelihood, belief*) or adjectives (*possible, potential*). Thompson's (2000:7) research shows that different hedging devices often co-occur, for example, modal verbs commonly collocate with tentative verbs, as in *This would also appear to be the case*. (cf. Downing and Locke 1992:384) For Markkanen and Schröder (1997), 'no linguistic items are inherently hedgy but can acquire this quality depending on the communicative context or the co-text'. (1997:3)

3.1 Hedging and modality

Since the basic aspect of modality is expressing a subjective opinion, modality is incorporated in semantic indeterminacy,²⁸ which is understood as ‘epistemic remoteness expressed via the speaker’s attitude or state of knowledge’. (Urbanová 2003:28) This means that it reflects the degree of the speaker’s commitment to the proposition and is based on the distance between the factual and non-factual world. (ibid.)

Markkanen and Schröder (1997:5) view modality as the most important concept that cuts across the area of hedges in that hedging and modality, particularly epistemic modality, commonly overlap. For example, MAY modifying the commitment to the truth-value of the proposition, as in *It may be true*, can be labelled as both an epistemic modal and a hedge. As far as root modal verbs are concerned, they are not normally considered to be hedging devices, yet in certain contexts they can be interpreted as hedges:

“Even when modal forms convey speaker-external meanings, these are often given interpersonal significance by the particular context in which they appear, usually as part of a tentativeness strategy”. Preisler (1986:92) (cited in Markkanen and Schröder 1997:4)

Wilamová (2005), investigating devices employed in expressing negative politeness in English fictional discourse, finds out that modal verbs, specifically CAN, COULD, MAY and MIGHT, represent the most frequent lexico-grammatical markers in her data. She identifies two modal meanings which represent a highly productive source of negative politeness strategy, namely tentative possibility and hypothetical usage.²⁹ (2005:56) Leech (2004) explains these two modal uses in terms of psychological factors such as diffidence and tact.

²⁸ According to Urbanová (2003:28), semantic indeterminacy is manifested in concepts which modify the illocutionary force of the message, i.e. indirectness, impersonality, attenuation, accentuation and vagueness.

²⁹ Wilamová’s (2005:72) findings show that the modal verb choice strategy appears in 44,2% (based on her excerpted material), from which tentative possibility forms 9,3% and hypothetical usage 4,6%.

3.1.1 Tentative possibility

As has been indicated, hedging is clearly related to epistemic modality in that hedged statements reflect the speaker's attitude to the content of the proposition. (cf. Thompson 2000:7) Coates (2003) describes epistemic modal forms as polyfunctional owing to their different uses, for example, when the speakers are not certain about the truth of the proposition, when they want to avoid expert status or when they try to be sensitive to others' feelings. This implies that epistemic modals respect addressees' need not to be imposed on, hence Coates (1987:121) considers them to be important negative politeness strategies. Wilamová (2005:62) claims that the use of modal verbs expressing tentative possibility considerably lowers the degree of imposition by the speaker, as in *You might like to bring that book*.

3.1.2 Hypothetical usage

As has been stated in 2.5.4, hypothetical usage is associated with past tense forms of modal auxiliaries in non-past contexts where they express tentativeness. (Huddleston 1980:78) Tárnayiková (1978) views these forms as softeners and downtoners expressing modesty or diffidence. For Larreya (2003), two basic meanings of the hypothetical past forms are counterfactuality and tentativeness.

Wilamová (2005) discusses hypothetical usage in relation to Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) such as disagreement, request or refusal:

“Not only does hypothetical usage distance both the speaker and the addressee from an FTA, but it also decreases the degree of certainty and definitiveness. ... hence it contributes towards the maintenance of harmonious relations between the participants in an interaction.”
(2005:63)

Hypothetical modal forms commonly weaken the force of FTAs such as requests, suggestions, or offers, as in *You could work for me, if you like*, and thus essentially indicate deference, especially if the participants are not of equal status. (cf. Leech 2004:129)

In conclusion, the motivation for the use of hedges can be seen as mitigating one's commitment to the truth-value of a proposition and politeness or respect to the addressee. Thomas (1995:134-135) characterizes hedges in terms of indirectness at the level of what is implied, which concerns, for example, highly conventionalized polite requests (*can/could you...?*). As the studies of hedging confirm, modal verbs belong among the most frequent hedging devices in that they have attitudinal function, which enables the speakers/writers to express their subjective attitudes and thus modify the propositional content of the message. (see, for example, Wilamová 2005, Thompson 2000 or Hyland 1999)

4. Methodological framework

It seems necessary at this point to clarify which approaches will be adopted in the analysis of the modal auxiliaries CAN/COULD and MAY/MIGHT respectively.

As for the terminology concerning modal categories, in the chapters to follow, the root-epistemic distinction will be generally adopted. Since non-epistemic modalities, including deontic and dynamic modality, are often grouped together, the term 'root' is employed to cover non-epistemic meanings.³⁰ Within the root-epistemic distinction, epistemic possibility is basically understood as conveying the speaker's lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition and hence concerning the proposition as a whole. On the other hand, root possibility is viewed as concerning merely the verbal element in that it conveys that the occurrence of an event or state is conditioned by external circumstances.

It has been demonstrated that the English modal verbs can typically communicate both types of modality, epistemic and root. However, whereas MAY/MIGHT can convey both, it is doubtful whether CAN has any genuine epistemic uses, which implies that MAY and CAN are quite distinct in their nature. CAN possesses one underlying core sense, i.e. potentiality, and its permission or ability interpretations can be seen as contextually inferred in the appropriate settings. On the other hand, MAY can express two distinct senses, epistemic and root possibility, which are in most contexts mutually exclusive. Consequently, a polysemy-based approach seems to be applicable to MAY, whereas the insights of monosemists might fit the analysis of CAN. However, the fact that the two seemingly distinct senses of MAY (epistemic and root possibility) are difficult to separate in some contexts (e.g. academic style), it raises the question whether the modal verb is genuinely polysemous.

³⁰ The term 'root' is preferred to 'agent-oriented' since it seems to be more widely recognized in the linguistic literature.

4.1 Scope and central aims

The principal aim of this study is to analyze in detail and interpret the data of a small-scale corpus of 1000 occurrences, i.e. 500 occurrences of MAY/MIGHT and 500 occurrences of CAN/COULD, which have been drawn from contemporary written British English and assigned a possibility reading.

The analysis focuses primarily on the semantic components of possibility meanings of the examined modal verbs in relation to syntactic co-occurrence patterns, pragmatic aspects, stylistic variation and the concept of hedging. The factors such as aspect, negation or hypothetical marking are explored in order to investigate to what extent particular interpretations result from the combinations of grammatical categories. The findings are then discussed in relation to potential semantic overlap between the modal verbs. The corpus is also analyzed with focus on the relative importance of different forms and meanings in different registers and on the use of the modal possibility senses in terms of hedging.

Consequently, I would like to propose the following hypotheses, which will be checked against data:

1. Syntactic co-occurrence patterns and correlations do not seem to be a reliable criterion in distinguishing root and epistemic possibility readings. (see 2.5.2)
2. Since the use of the modal verbs is largely determined by various contextual factors, their overlapping senses are not synonymous.
3. As the concept of modal possibility is concerned with expressing an element of uncertainty, hedging is not restricted to epistemic possibility; certain root possibility senses can be employed as hedges as well.

4.2 The criteria of analysis

The studied modal verbs are approached synchronically and from the centre-periphery viewpoint. The research is based on a detailed analysis of contextualized occurrences of CAN/COULD and MAY/MIGHT, and attempts to

identify the crucial factors employed in determining their possibility senses. The results of the analysis predominantly relate to the frequency of occurrence of different meanings rather than of different forms. As the qualitative analysis has priority over quantitative methods, the element of subjective judgement is inevitably present throughout the investigation and all the shortcomings are my own.

The analysis of the excerpted data draws upon several sources, which serve as a basis for a comprehensive discussion of relevant findings. The sources were examined and contrasted in order to discover whether their findings are similar. The discovered facts were then tested against the gathered data.

Primarily, I draw upon various studies by Coates (1983, 1980, 1995), whose definition and delineation of the notions 'root' and 'epistemic possibility' has served as a basis for my research. I also ground the analysis upon Tárnyiková (1979), particularly on her exhaustive characteristics of contextual co-occurrence patterns for different senses of CAN and MAY. Another valuable source for my investigation is Biber *et al.* (1999), which provides important quantitative information on semantic and syntactic properties of the examined modal verbs. I also use Palmer's (1990), Leech's (2004), Dušková's (1972), Quirk's (1985) or Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) findings, typology and classification concerning the analyzed modal verbs.

Due to the extent of the material and its character, the study does not intend to map all the potential uses of CAN/COULD and MAY/MIGHT or to suggest universally valid conclusions. It only attempts to fully exploit the material under investigation and thus draw attention to significant issues. In order to provide a more conclusive picture, the data should be checked against spoken English and other English varieties. I am aware that not all the findings will be statistically significant, yet I would like to draw tentative conclusions based on the analysis, because I believe that they can be of some informational value. The tentative nature of individual findings in the empirical chapters will not be pointed to since all the findings in the chapters to follow are seen and treated as preliminary.

4.3 Characteristics of the research data

As source material for the analysis, exclusively contemporary printed British English is used. The selected texts were published in the period ranging between 2000 and 2007 and cover a wide scope of stylistic variation. Specifically, the study analyzes extracts from five different registers, i.e. administrative style, academic scientific style, popular scientific style, newspaper reporting and general fiction. Consequently, the corpus is divided into five sub-corpora corresponding to the respective registers. Each subcorpus may be regarded as homogenous because it is limited to one type of writing, which has resulted in findings relating to stylistic variation.

For easier comparison, the size of each sub-corpus was decided to be identical, i.e. 100 occurrences of MAY/MIGHT and 100 occurrences of CAN/COULD conveying possibility meaning. Since MIGHT and COULD are essentially preterite forms of MAY and CAN, to create each subcorpus, the selected texts were first scanned for the occurrences of CAN or COULD and MAY or MIGHT. Still, MIGHT and COULD are then treated as independent modals exhibiting meanings and functions different from those associated with their non-past equivalents. Secondly, each token was assigned an appropriate modal reading on the basis of contextual features with which it co-occurs. The tokens conveying other meanings than epistemic or root possibility were excluded, being beyond the scope of the analysis. Thirdly, 100 occurrences of CAN/COULD and 100 occurrences of MAY/MIGHT with possibility meaning were listed within each subcorpus.

Consequently, the corpus as a whole is formed by 500 occurrences of CAN/COULD and 500 occurrences of MAY/MIGHT conveying epistemic or root possibility meaning.³¹ As has been mentioned, the corpus is examined mainly qualitatively, with the aim of showing the correlations that exist between epistemic and root possibility meanings. Where relevant, quantitative methods are employed to support the major findings.

³¹ All the occurrences are listed in Appendix 2.

As for the text types used in the present study, the texts have been taken from various domains to reflect register stratification.

Table 1 *Data used in the analysis*³²

code	Source text	style
[FC]	<i>New Powers Against Organised and Financial Crime.</i>	ADMIN
[IT]	<i>Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom's Strategy.</i>	ADMIN
[HT]	<i>Human Trafficking (the government reply to the twenty-sixth report from the joint committee on human rights session).</i>	ADMIN
[HC]	<i>Government Response to the Health Committee's Report on NHS Charges.</i>	ADMIN
[JJ]	Jenkins, Jennifer. <i>The Phonology of the English Language.</i>	ACAD
[NS]	articles from <i>New Scientist</i> (July 2007)	NAT
[FS]	articles from <i>Focus</i> (August 2007)	NAT
[T1]	news reportage from <i>The Times</i> (April 10, 2004)	NEWS
[T2]	news reportage from <i>The Times</i> (June 2, 2002)	NEWS
[HM]	Mantel, Hilary. <i>Beyond Black.</i>	FICT

A vast majority of examples used in this study are drawn from the corpus sample. These instances are numbered and identified by bracketed references, while the examples taken from other studies are printed in italics and incorporated in text.

As for the excerpted examples, the bold lettering, underlining and italics are mine. Italics are used for introducing the immediate context relevant for the interpretation of an utterance. For greater clarity and better orientation, the modal verbs that are the object of analysis are in bold type. When discussing syntactic co-occurrence patterns, the analyzed structures are underlined. As has been noted, square brackets are used in the excerpted examples for identification of their source, whereas the information in round brackets refers to their listing in Appendix 2. For instance:

However, the discovery that they help protect the brain **might** lead to new drugs that mimic their function to treat Alzheimer's. [NS,14] (App.2D, NAT,159)

³² The full bibliographical information on the sources is given in *Appendix 1*.

where NS stands for the source from which the example was drawn, i.e. *New Scientist*, page 14; whereas the information in round brackets reads that the example is listed in Appendix 2D, in the subcorpus of popular scientific style, it is the occurrence number 159.

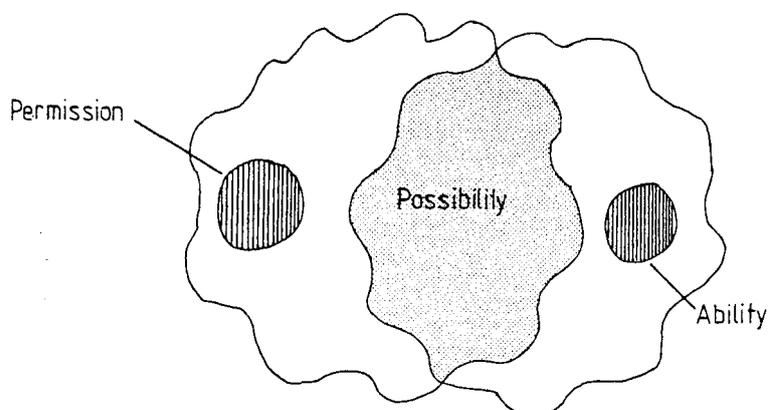
5. CAN

It is necessary to emphasize that *COULD* is discussed alongside *CAN* in some sections of this chapter in order to avoid unnecessary overlaps concerning their root possibility senses. These two verbs are treated together when the issues taken into consideration apply to both of them; the essentially distinct and infrequent epistemic reading of *COULD* is disregarded here.

CAN conveys three root senses, i.e. permission, possibility and ability, which are united through the concept of potentiality, and thus it is the only modal auxiliary where we do not find the regular root-epistemic distinction. (Leech 2004:85)

Coates (1983) characterizes *CAN* in terms of fuzzy sets where permission and ability represent the cores while possibility is found in the overlapping peripheral area:

Figure 1 Coates's Fuzzy Set Diagram of *CAN* (Coates 1983:86)



Similarly, Tárnayková (1978) focuses her analysis of *CAN* on distinctions between its central and peripheral semantic functions, with regard to the gradual transition between them. She considers ability to be the basic sense forming the centre, while the periphery is represented by possibility.

Consequently, we might characterize root *CAN/COULD* as having an invariant core meaning (potentiality) which interacts with semantic clues and

pragmatic inferences in the context from which the readings and interpretations of particular instances result, as in: (cf. Papafragou 2000:48 or Perkins 1983:35)

- (1) *We are in the last part of the race with Manchester United and Arsenal.*
Only Arsenal **can** lose the title and I don't believe they will. [T1,31]
(App.2A, NEWS,172)

This example has been assigned the root possibility reading since it describes theoretically conceivable happening, which is supported by the contrasting structure *I don't believe they will*. The ability reading is excluded since ability is normally associated with a positively accepted activity, while this one is not desired.

As for the frequency of occurrence of the readings assigned to CAN/COULD, a large number of studies reveal (Coates 1980, Leech 2004, Tárnyiková 1978, Palmer 1990 or Hladký 1983) that examples occur less frequently at the core than outside it,³³ i.e. the vast majority of occurrences convey root possibility and prevail in both spoken and written material.³⁴ My findings confirm this tendency because when scanning the selected texts in order to record 500 occurrences of possibility CAN/COULD, 184 occurrences of ability and mere 22 occurrences of permission were found and excluded from the excerpted material, which implies that the root possibility reading is obviously the most frequent one.³⁵

5.1 Aspect, time reference and factivity

Coates (1983) and Leech (2004) in their discussions of the modal verb CAN take into consideration aspect of the lexical verb, which Leech terms 'covert aspect'. The main predication can have, according to them, one of the following three aspects, i.e. dynamic aspect referring to an event, stative aspect referring

³³ This tendency seems to apply to the other root modals as well. (Coates 1983)

³⁴ Coates (1980) recorded 129 possibility occurrences out of 200 (10 occurrences of permission, 41 of ability and 20 of gradience) in spoken material and 148 possibility occurrences out of 231 (8 occurrences of permission, 57 of ability and 18 of gradience) in written material.

³⁵ MAY can convey root possibility meaning as well, but it is normally restricted to formal contexts (see 7.2 for more details)

to a state, or iterative aspect referring to a habit. Coates (1983:99-100) maintains that the main predication of all permission examples (*You can leave now*) and some possibility examples (*I can call them*) have dynamic aspect and refer to a single event located in the future. All examples of aspectual CAN (*I can see you*) have stative aspect and refer to a non-past state because the modal and main predications coincide. The main predication of all ability examples (*She can swim*) and a large number of possibility examples (especially those conveying generic possibility, as in *Dogs can be dangerous*) have iterative aspect and imply a potentiality for habitual or repeated action.

Another difference between the three senses of CAN is concerned with factivity, which is, according to Coates (1983:91), 'tied up with the time reference of the main predication'. As has been mentioned, the examples conveying permission have future time reference, those interpreted as ability have present time reference, but the examples of possibility range between the two. Coates (1983:235-6) points out that the non-factivity of root modals is linked with their reference to the future. Thus CAN expressing permission and possibility (with dynamic aspect) is non-factive while CAN expressing ability and possibility (with iterative aspect) and aspectual CAN are factive, i.e. the speaker is committed to the truth of the proposition expressed in the main predication.³⁶

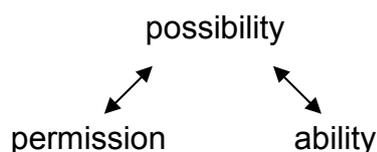
The previous paragraphs imply that the occurrences of possibility CAN are not homogenous in that some of them refer to a single future event and have dynamic aspect, whereas others refer to generic possibility and have iterative aspect. Consequently, Coates (1983) sees the possibility reading as semantically and aspectually fuzzy and defines it mainly in terms of negative characteristics, i.e. those that do not satisfy the criteria for ability and permission readings. (see 5.3.2)

³⁶ Coates (1983:236) adds that the ability cases can be problematic, explaining that it is not clear whether, for example, *Jane can swim* commits the speaker to the truth of *Jane swims* because *Jane can swim but she never does*.

5.2 Gradience

As has been noted, the distinctions between the permission, possibility and ability reading of CAN may often be only subtle. Leech (2004) argues that it is sometimes difficult to determine whether a particular occurrence belongs to one category or the other, giving the example *No one can see us here*, which could have the possibility reading (*It isn't possible for anyone to see us here*) or the ability reading (*No one is able to see us here*). (2004:73) Therefore, the readings of CAN are often described in terms of gradience (see Coates and Leech 1980 or Tárnyiková 1978) and CAN is treated as essentially a monosemous modal.

Leech (2004) illustrates the relationship between possibility, permission and ability by the following diagram, where the arrows represent gradients:



(Leech 2004:73)

The diagram demonstrates that two types of gradience can be distinguished when analysing root meanings of CAN and COULD, i.e. the gradient of restriction linking examples intermediate between permission and possibility and the gradient of inherency linking examples intermediate between ability and possibility. (see Coates 1983:93). The possibility sense is generally considered to be more neutral (unmarked) than the other two in that it often applies only because there is no clear indication of restriction or of inherent properties of the subject. As Dušková (1994:187) states, CAN is often assigned the possibility reading if the agent and content are incompatible with the ability and permission readings. (see 5.3.2 where this issue is dealt with thoroughly)

In the excerpted material, 36 out of 268 tokens of CAN (13.4%) are interpreted in terms of gradience, more specifically 16 occurrences represent the gradient of inherency (App.2A: 253–268) and 20 occurrences the gradient of

restriction. (App.2A: 233–252) As to COULD, no example of the gradient of restriction has been identified, but 16 tokens (out of 232) represent the gradient of inherency. (App.2B: 214-229) Both gradients are exemplified and discussed in more depth in 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 below.

5.2.1 The gradient of restriction (possibility vs. permission)

The possibility and permission reading of CAN/COULD sometimes overlap because permission may be interpreted as granted possibility. Coates (1983) states:

“CAN can be seen as implying a universe of possible worlds, ranging from the most restricted (where human laws and rules are in force) to the least restricted (where everything is permitted except what is contrary to so-called natural laws).” (1983:88)

This might be illustrated by the following examples:

- (2) Under present law, judges **can** order a fine or send a woman to jail if she refuses to honour court orders on access. [*The Times*, April 10, 2004, pg.11]
- (3) Flavonids are produced as a defence mechanism that **can** be triggered by nutrient deficiency. [App 2A, NAT, 151]

Example (2) represents the universe of possible worlds restricted by human laws, whereas (3) is not restricted in that way. Both can be paraphrased with *possible*, i.e. *it is possible for judges to order a fine* and *it is possible to trigger a defence mechanism*. Still, the paraphrase with *possible* fits particularly the possibility examples, like (3). The examples expressing permission are normally paraphrased with *allow/permit*, as in (2): *judges are allowed/permitted to order a fine or send a woman to jail*.

Generally, the permissive reading is concerned with the description of rules and regulations where the source of the authority is often specified, as in (2) *under present law*. However, the main factor that seems to be associated with the permissive reading is a human agentive subject representing the receiver of modality. (cf. Tárnayková 1978:15) Example (2) can be then analyzed as follows: *judges order* expresses agentive role, while *judges can*

expresses recipient role (*they are granted the permission*), hence the example can be assigned the permissive reading. In contrast, with the possibility instances the subject belongs only to the lexical verb, i.e. example (3) reads *nutrient deficiency makes it possible for a defence mechanism to be triggered*.

As has been stated, 20 tokens of CAN (App.2A: 233–252) intermediate between the possibility and permission reading have been recorded in the analyzed material. In these cases, the permission-granting authority is not clearly specified nor is it obvious whether it is implied, as in:

- (4) *Moreover, these powers all have weaknesses. They are overwhelmingly focused on individual offenders.* Most **can** only be used against offenders who have been convicted and only apply to the period of their sentence. [FC,29] (App.2A, ADMIN, 238)
- (5) Because the hearing **can** take place behind closed doors, no one knows how many times judges have approved requests to spy without probable cause, says Bankston. [NS,25] (App.2A, NAT, 246)

These examples could be interpreted in terms of enabling circumstances typically found with the possibility reading, as in (3) above. Nonetheless, some degree of permission is implied as well, in particular some unspecified rules or regulations seem to be employed. In comparison with the core permission instances, as in (2) above, the subject is inanimate and the verb is often passivized with an unexpressed but implied agent.³⁷ (9 instances out of 20) The corresponding active sentences would be interpreted as permission, as in (4) *We are allowed to use these powers only against offenders...*

To conclude, both enabling conditions and some degree of permission seem to combine in such indeterminate instances and therefore they have been classified as representing the gradient of restriction.

³⁷ Coates (1983:232) remarks that core permission examples involve strong agentivity and are easily identifiable while less central examples exhibit weak agentivity and tend to be fuzzy.

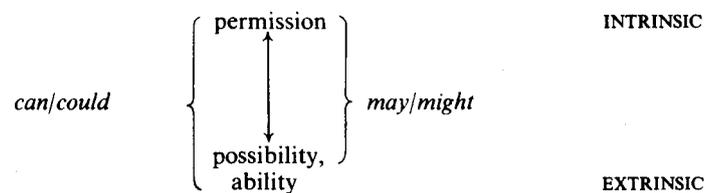
5.2.2 The gradient of inherency (possibility vs. ability)

The ability and possibility reading of CAN/COULD are very close because, as Leech (2004:75) notes, ability implies possibility, i.e. if someone has the ability to do x, then x is possible, for example,

- (6) We cannot assume that because NBESs are able to produce sound contrasts, they **can** necessarily discriminate aurally between them. [*The Phonology of English as an International Language*, pg. 34]

which can be interpreted *if NBESs are able to discriminate between sound contrasts, it is possible for them to do so*. Similarly, Quirk *et al.* (1985:221-2) consider ability to be ‘a special case of possibility due to some skill or capability of the subject referent’. Consequently, even though the ability reading typically involves human control over an action, they see it as extrinsic and, like other authors, emphasize that the distinctions between extrinsic and intrinsic meanings are gradual rather than absolute (see *Figure 2*), which implies that the ability and possibility sense sometimes merge.

Figure 2 Meanings of the modals CAN and MAY (Quirk *et al.* 1985:221)



The gradient of inherency, like the gradient of restriction, is characterized as a scale extending from the clearly identifiable core (ability) to the fuzzy periphery (possibility). (see Leech and Coates 1980:83) The core ability examples,³⁸ like (6) above, are commonly associated with a dynamic verb (*discriminate*) and human agentive subject representing the initiator of modality (*speakers*). The action is seen as possible owing to inherent properties of the subject, i.e. *speakers' knowledge* in this case. The subject of the ability reading

³⁸ The majority of ability examples have been found in fiction, above all, in past-tense narrative and in newspaper reporting, particularly in sports sections.

belongs to both the modal verb and the lexical verb, which also applies to the permission reading (cf. the analysis of (2) in 5.2.1). Thus *they can discriminate* means *they can = they are able + they discriminate* (agentive role).

By contrast, the clearest cases of root possibility are, according to Coates (1983:14,92), those where the enabling circumstances are specified, as in:

- (7) At present, this sort of case essentially leaves law enforcement with a choice between prosecution or no action, and the risk remains that these essentially peripheral players **can** step up to leadership in the organised crime group once the principals have been convicted. [FC,31] (App.2A, ADMIN, 19)

In this example, the subject is human agentive and the verb dynamic; however, the ability reading seems to be ruled out by the external enabling circumstances which are clearly expressed in the form of the temporal clause *once the principals have been convicted*. Therefore, the examples reads *the external circumstances (convicting their principals) make it possible for peripheral players to step up to leadership*, which indicates that, contrary to the permission and ability reading, the subject belongs only to the lexical verb, i.e. *players step up*. Consequently, such instances are interpreted as root possibility.

The gradient of inherency has been identified in 32 cases, i.e. 16 tokens of CAN (App.2A: 253-268) and 16 tokens of COULD (App.2B: 214-229) have been classified as indeterminate in that it is not clear whether the property in question is inherent to the subject or not, for example:

- (8) A bird-like, shape-shifting robot built to mimic the way the common swift alters its wing geometry during flight **could** slip unnoticed among a flock of real birds. [NS,26] (App.2B, NAT, 218)
- (9) “It’s far worse for those people left at home not knowing if they are going to be safe or even if they **can** get back. [T2,5] (App.2A, NEWS, 265)

The fulfilment of the action in these cases depends on a mixture of external factors and inherent properties of the subject. Thus in (8), *the robot would slip unnoticed because it would use its ‘inherent ability’ to change its shape and because particular conditions (being among a flock of real birds) would enable*

it. Similarly, in (9), it is not clear whether people will get back since the conditions in India allow that or since it is in their capacity. (cf. Coates 1983:93)

In conclusion, indeterminate cases of CAN/COULD are not likely to be interpreted as clear-cut instances of ability, permission or root possibility since it is not clear upon which factors the actualisation of the action is dependent. Hence it seems convenient to describe the fulfilment of the action resulting from combining different factors in terms of potentiality.

5.3 Root possibility CAN

As has been noted, the modal verb CAN is most commonly employed to express root possibility. 232 out of 268 tokens of CAN (86.6%) have been assigned the root possibility reading (App.2A:1-232); the remaining 13.4% being the examples of gradience discussed above.

5.3.1 Time reference

In its root possibility sense, CAN is generally glossable with *it is possible* followed by an infinitive clause. Quirk *et al.* (1985:221-2) give the example *Even expert drivers can make mistakes = it is possible for even expert drivers to make mistakes*, adding that CAN may denote a future possibility as well (*it will be possible to...*). In the analyzed corpus, the vast majority (93.5%) of root possibility CAN occurrences refer to present time, for example,

- (10) This, however, is still to simplify matters, for there is as yet no broad agreement on a definition of the term 'intelligibility': it **can** mean different things to different people. [JJ,69] (App.2A, ACAD, 70)
= *this sometimes means different things to different people*

and only a few (6.5%) to future time, as in:

- (11) Second, it will be important to identify contrived norms based on a subset of core EIL phonological features, which **can** then be learnt by all international speakers of English (including L1 speakers of English) [JJ,67] (App.2A, ACAD,115)
= *it will be possible for all international speakers of English to learn ...*

where future time reference applies on account of the structure *it will be important to identify* in the main clause. To put it differently, CAN denotes a future possibility in conjunction with other indicators of future time reference (verb forms and temporal adverbials).

Nonetheless, root possibility CAN is primarily associated with present time reference owing to its prevalent occurrence in positive statements having general validity and conveying theoretical possibility, as in (10). This implies that negative and interrogative structures are infrequent (16 interrogative structures and 38 negative structures have been recorded). Examples (10) and (11) also indicate that, unlike epistemic possibility, the speaker's attitude to the truth of the proposition is not involved in root possibility.

As has been explained in 5.1, time reference is linked with aspect and factivity, hence (10) could be described as factive with iterative aspect, whereas (11) as non-factive with dynamic aspect. Most of the infrequent non-factive examples (9 out of 15) (App.2A:195-203) can be found in newspaper reporting (24.3% of all root possibility occurrences of CAN in NEWS):

- (12) ... - but Wenger is bullish, a fervent believer: "If we can get a positive result against Newcastle, I feel that perhaps we **can** stay in command," he said. [T1,27] (App.2A, NEWS, 200)

On the other hand, non-factive occurrences are virtually absent in ADMIN, ACAD and NAT where root possibility CAN predominantly implies a potentiality for habitual or repeated action, and is thus factive, for example:

- (13) Biofilms, which contain bacteria such as *Staphylococcus aureus*, **can** form on medical devices, where they clog fine tubes and make the bacteria hard to eradicate. [NS,26] (App.2A, NAT, 137)

5.3.2 Enabling external circumstances³⁹

Section 5.2.2 has illustrated that the root possibility reading of CAN/COULD is bound to particular enabling conditions or circumstances, which appear to be crucial for the comprehension of an utterance. If these are explicitly stated, as in:

³⁹ Papafragou (2000) employs the term 'the restricting domain'.

- (14) Alison said, 'If you come into the front bar in about an hour, we **can** get a coffee.' [HM,85] (App.2A, FICT, 217)
- (15) *Haberl says that the Earth can just about cope if we meet future needs by producing food more efficiently.* This **could** be done by intensifying agriculture on roughly the same amount of land as we use now. [NS,15] (App.2B, NAT, 56)

where the conditional clause *If you come into the front bar in about an hour* in (14) and the prepositional phrase *by intensifying agriculture on roughly the same amount of land* in (15) represent the enabling conditions, then the modal verb can be unambiguously interpreted as root or theoretical possibility. (see also Tárnyiková 1985:26 or Coates 1983:92)

However, the analysis has revealed that in most cases the enabling conditions are not specified or clearly implied in the immediate context. Such occurrences of CAN/COULD seem to be less determinate in that they can be assigned the possibility reading merely on the basis of 'negative evidence', i.e. neither external authority (permission) nor innate ability applies:

- (16) We **can** categorize segmental deviation types conveniently into three groupings: ... [JJ,34] (App.2A, ACAD, 64)
- (17) Tamoxifen, which usually reduces the effects of oestrogen, **can** have the same effect, the team also found. [NS,132] (App.2A, NAT, 118)
- (18) Context and co-text **could** thus be expected to compensate for any non-recoverability of pronunciation. [JJ,118] (App.2B, ACAD, 46)

These instances frequently co-occur with a general human agent, as in (16), or with an inanimate subject, as in (17) and (18), and their interpretation is determined purely by context.

In order to interpret such cases, authors commonly use Ehrman's (1966) term 'nihil obstat', which reads *there is nothing to prevent*.⁴⁰ (see, for example, Coates 1983, Leech 2004, Palmer 1990, or Tárnyiková 1978) Consequently, examples (16), (17) and (18) can be understood as *nothing prevents us from categorizing, there is nothing to prevent Tamoxifen from having the same effect and nothing would prevent us from expecting*.

⁴⁰ Since CAN is essentially monosemous, Downing and Locke (1992:393) argue that all its senses might be interpreted as *nothing prevents x from occurring*, where x represents a set of laws (e.g. natural laws, moral laws, laws of physics, laws of good manners).

5.3.3 Syntactic co-occurrence patterns

According to Coates and Leech (1980:29), there are not many strong correlations between different senses of CAN and contextual features, owing to the monosemous nature of this modal verb. Similarly, Coates's analysis (1983:92) reveals that 'the fuzziness of CAN is reflected in a lack of definitive syntactic correlations'. Yet linguists commonly list and describe syntactic correlations for CAN/COULD in attempt to differentiate its possibility reading from that of permission and ability. Drawing on Tárnyiková (1985:24-29; 1978:14), the major variables supporting the theoretical possibility reading of CAN/COULD will be discussed in the following sections.

5.3.3.1 The nature of subject

As has been exemplified in 5.2, contrary to permission and ability, the subject of an utterance conveying root possibility belongs to the lexical verb only. This means that such an utterance can be understood as *external circumstances make it possible for someone/something to do something*, as in (14) and (15) above. Tárnyiková (1985:25) characterizes the usual subject of the possibility reading as inanimate and non-agentive. However, my findings show that inanimate and animate subjects are approximately equally distributed with root possibility CAN/COULD (290 occurrences with inanimate subjects, 210 with animate subjects). Leech (2004) argues:

“...the possibility sense is the only one available when the subject is inanimate ...because ability and permission senses require a human or at least animate subject.” (2004:75)

Nonetheless, instances of CAN conveying ability and co-occurring with an inanimate subject can be found:⁴¹

- (19) For the first match of the competition was as glorious as anything football **can** produce: skill, melodrama, carpet-chewing tension, the humbling of the world champions, but above all, the greatest gift that football **can** bring to the world: the victory of the underdog and the overwhelming triumphs of hope. [*The Times*, June 1, 2002, pg.1]

⁴¹ Similarly, Coates (1983:89-90) exemplifies the instances with an inanimate subject clearly referring to its inherent properties in *Britain's word can still be of value in some parts of the world*, adding that such examples occur particularly in written language.

Both occurrences of CAN in example (19) may be interpreted as ability because the possibility of the action is determined by the inherent properties of *football*, not by external conditions or circumstances.

The findings have revealed that the number of tokens with an animate subject is quite high. If the subject is human, it is often general *we* or *you* (47 tokens), as in example (16) above, or generic:

- (20) If we are to identify a phonological core on which speakers **can** rely, we cannot disregard these natural processes of transfer, but must take account of them. [JJ,99] (App.2A, ACAD, 81)

Although the agentive subject referring to one particular person is normally associated with permission and ability, it is not incompatible with the possibility reading. (cf. Coates and Leech 1980) Such instances have been recorded, above all, in fiction:

- (21) But she's really done enough – Gillian's brimming with gratification – so even if nobody comes through from spirit, she **can** just move right on to whoever is her next target. [HM,19] (App.2A, FICT, 216)

5.3.3.2 The nature of verb

According to Tárnyiková (1985:25), the verbs most commonly co-occurring with the root possibility reading of CAN/COULD in affirmative active sentences are stative and linking verbs,⁴² particularly the verb *be*, *have* and *get*. My findings confirm this tendency; more than a third of the non-passivized instances co-occur with stative verbs, the verb *to be* (54 occurrences) being the most frequent one:

- (22) Exposure to a forceful and inspiring figure, already committed to extremism, **can** be important here. [IT,10] (App.2A, ADMIN, 33)

Nevertheless, the most important correlation for root possibility CAN/COULD seems to be the passive. Passive structures have been recorded in

⁴² Dušková (1972:14-15) focuses also on the semantics of the complementary verb. She finds out that most verbs are compatible with both possibility and ability senses (e.g. *make*, *play*, *type*, *decide*, *explain*, *prove*); there are only a few verbs which do not favour the ability reading (e.g. *expect*, *afford*, *take*, *assume*). Nonetheless, Dušková draws the conclusion that the lexical verb semantics does not facilitate recognition of either meaning.

76 out of 232 instances of root possibility CAN (32.7%) and in 48 out of 205 instances of root possibility COULD (23.4%). These 124 passive structures have been drawn, above all, from popular scientific (38 out of 100) (App.2A:146-166; App.2B:53-63,96-101) and academic style (38 out of 100) (App.2A:99-126, App.2B:42-50):⁴³

- (23) Now that feedstocks like lactic acid and PDO are becoming available at a competitive price, companies are starting to ask what else they **can** be used for. [NS,31] (App.2A, NAT, 163)
- (24) Assuming that the chief motivation in ILT dyads, and especially those involving the exchange of crucial information, is communicative efficiency, the opposite behaviour of these two subjects in simplifying English syllable structure **can** be explained. [JJ,66] (App.2A, ACAD, 114)
- (25) If no other factors had been involved, we would have expected phonological error to be more evident in the former than in the latter, since phonological competence **could** be expected to have improved during a six-week period of language learning. [JJ,61] (App.2B, ACAD, 48)

As in these examples, passive structures mostly co-occur with third person inanimate subjects and unexpressed agents (there are only 9 occurrences with expressed agents). Agents, i.e. subjects of corresponding active sentences, are usually implied in the context, e.g. *companies* in (23) and *one/we* referring to the author(s) in (24) and (25). Such instances seem to be incompatible with ability interpretations, which is supported by Papafragou (2000):

“...inanimate subjects and passive sentences provide counter examples to an ability-based semantics for CAN and are naturally predicted to favour a root potentiality interpretation.” (2000:53)

However, it has been found out that the active counterparts of the examined passive constructions are sometimes likely to be interpreted in the ability sense. For example, when (24) is rephrased, it reads *one/we can explain the opposite behaviour of these two subjects...*, and obviously favours the interpretation *it is within our capacity to explain*. (cf. Leech 2004 or Dušková 1972)

⁴³ These findings are comparable to those reported by Coates (1983).

5.3.3.3 CAN + perfect infinitive

There are no occurrences of CAN in conjunction with perfect infinitive in the excerpted material. Leech (2004) and Dušková (1972) agree that this structure is rarely used in positive statements, COULD or MAY being used instead. However, it commonly occurs in negative and interrogative contexts where it is associated with epistemic modality. In negative settings, *can't have* conveys certainty based on logical deduction, as in *She can't have been there = I am sure that she wasn't there*; however, it is not dealt with because it is beyond the scope of this study. In interrogative structures, CAN + perfect infinitive is complementary to MAY + perfect infinitive, for MAY expressing epistemic possibility does not occur in questions. (see 7.1.1.1)

5.3.4 Contextual and pragmatic factors

The previous section has demonstrated that the syntactic correlations relating to the root possibility sense of CAN/COULD are rather weak and often prove ineffective in distinguishing subtle differences in the meaning conveyed. The interpretation of particular instances is determined, above all, by pragmatic factors including broader linguistic and extralinguistic context. Downing and Locke (1992:198) note that 'CAN lends itself to various pragmatic interpretations by inference, such as willingness, request, command or potential usuality'.

5.3.4.1 Root possibility CAN in declarative structures

Huddleston and Pullum (2002:184-5) characterize two major uses of root possibility CAN, normally co-occurring with third-person subjects. (cf. Collins 2007:7) Both uses are common in the analyzed corpus.

Firstly, CAN, often in passive structures, conveys what is circumstantially possible, as in:

- (26) Mitchell's team say the finding **can** be explained by the availability of nitrogen. [NS,16] (App.2A, NAT, 150)

which indicates that it is concerned mainly with the utterances which can be interpreted in terms of enabling conditions. (see 5.3.2)

Secondly, CAN conveys what is sometimes the case and thus corresponds to Downing and Locke's (1992) 'potential usuality' mentioned above. This use is commonly termed 'contingency' or 'existential possibility'.⁴⁴

- (27) Word groups also tend to coincide with syntactic boundaries, so that failure to divide the speech stream into these units **can** result in grammatical ambiguity or misinterpretation. [JJ,45] (App.2A, ACAD, 67)
- (28) There may still be cases where a prevention order **can** have clear harm reduction benefits while the illegality of the underlying behaviour is borderline (eg case study D below). [FC,30] (App. 2A, ADMIN, 18)

Palmer (1990:152-4) justifies the term 'existential', claiming that paraphrases with *some* or *sometimes* are more appropriate than those using *possible for*. Thus examples (27) and (28) might read: *failure to divide the speech stream into these units sometimes results in...* and *a prevention order sometimes has....* The existential interpretation of the latter is supported by the structure *there may still be cases*.

Stated differently, existential CAN involves an implicit existential quantifier that applies to at least some members of a set or to a situation that sometimes takes place and can thus be explained in terms of generalization. (see Huddleston 1971:297-8) For Heine (1995), existential possibility instances lack the properties normally associated with modal meaning.⁴⁵

According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002:185), the existential use of CAN includes instances describing characteristic behaviour, as in *He can be very tactless*. In contrast, Dušková (1994:188) views such examples as a special type of ability, but for Tárnyiková (1978:12), the ability reading of CAN is

⁴⁴ Leech (2004:74) characterizes this use as habitual, providing the example *Lightning can be very dangerous = Lightning is sometimes very dangerous*. Huddleston (1971:297-8) terms it 'qualified generalization' because the possibility derives from the fact that the situation sometimes takes place. Tárnyiková (1978:14) employs the term 'characteristic possibility' based on Ehrman's 'occurrential CAN'.

⁴⁵ The main properties of modal meanings listed by Heine (1995) are: some force having an interest in an event either occurring or not occurring; some agent performing the event; the event is dynamic; the event has not yet taken place at reference time; the event is non-factual.

incompatible with stative verbs. Two cases have been recorded in the corpus, both co-occurring with animate subjects and the linking verb BE:

(29) *"I was fighting like mad out there today. He [Muller] can be a flaky player, but when he's hot, he's really hot."* [T1,37] (App.2A, NEWS, 264)

(30) *You said he was called Morris. A little bouncing circus clown.' 'Yes.' 'Sounds a pain.' 'He can be.'* [HM,89] (App.2A, FICT, 268)

These two examples are understood as combining inherent properties of the subject referent and external circumstances relating to existential use. Hence they have been identified as indeterminate, representing the gradient of inherency.⁴⁶

Suggestion/offer

The modal verb CAN with a first- or second-person subject often functions as an offer or suggests a future action. (see Leech 2004:74) These interpretations are, as Papafragou (2000:54) points out, based on contextual assumptions; for example, in *We can meet one day after work* the proposition represents a state of affairs desirable to the hearer and the speaker is responsible for bringing about the state of affairs but not obliged to do so. (cf. Tárnyiková 1985:29) When used with first-person subjects, CAN usually indicates a possibility that is to be brought into existence by the participants.

On the other hand, when CAN co-occurs with a second-person subject, it is close to imperative. Leech (2004) terms this use a 'democratic imperative',⁴⁷ explaining that 'the speaker merely suggests a certain plan of action is possible because he or she does not like to exert authority openly'. (2004:74) Quirk *et al.*

⁴⁶ A completely different interpretation is offered by Perkins (1983), who sees such examples as permitting indirect epistemic reading, i.e. the speaker currently believes the proposition to be true. Perkins explains that 'such a feature is not attributable to the core meaning of CAN, but is entirely due to a particular context of use'. (1983:39) Matthews (2003) finds it difficult to detect any difference between a dynamic and an objective epistemic/logical reading; e.g. in example (34): *it is certainly possible that he's a pain and he is known to be a pain at times.*

⁴⁷ Leech (2004) classifies this use as possibility rather than permission, for CAN may co-occur with progressive aspect, as in *you can be standing.* (2004:74)

(1985:222) speak about ‘a quasi-imperative manner’ and describe the construction as tactful or polite.

Since the examined corpus consists predominantly of formal printed texts, there are merely 7 tokens of root possibility CAN suggesting a future action (App.2A: 2,3,64,86,183,213,217); three have a first-person subject, the remaining four a second-person subject, for example:

- (31) You **can** try and kick him out. [HM,48] (App.2A, FICT, 213)
- (32) Or you **can** write to us at: ... [FC,2] (App.2A, ADMIN, 3)
- (33) In such cases, it is not realistic to expect learners to forego their L1 variants readily, and the best we **can** probably do is to draw their attention to the item, in the hope that if they continue to be exposed to the L2, they will acquire it over time and when they are ready to do so. [JJ,119] (App.2A, ACAD, 86)

5.3.4.2 Root possibility CAN in interrogative structures

CAN in interrogative structures is generally associated with requests.⁴⁸ Quirk *et al.* (1985) note that ‘the speaker often asks for something politely, mainly when he/she is superior to the addressee’. (1985:222) Leech (2004:74) adds that this use may be intensified by the adverb *possibly*, as in *Can you possibly lend me an umbrella?*

Again, with respect to the nature of the analyzed material, there are only 16 interrogative structures with root possibility CAN; half of them in the subcorpus of fiction, particularly in direct speech. However, only four tokens are interpreted as requests:

- (34) I have someone here for you who’s very happy in spirit world, a Margo, Marje, **can** you accept that? [HM,20] (App.2A, FICT, 218)
- (35) ‘**Can** you hang on for a minute?’ *Colette said. ‘I need to know more.’* [HM,90] (App.2A, FICT, 224)
- (36) Al, **can** you come a bit closer to the mike? [HM,97] (App.2A, FICT, 225)
- (37) “*We’ll be going into the office here in Tokyo. Can* you write down that we’ll all be working diligently?” [T2,7] (App.2A, NEWS, 184)

⁴⁸ Tárnyiková (1978:15) terms this use ‘condescension’.

The remaining interrogative structures represent either rhetorical questions (6 instances) (App.2A: 56,74,76,167,181,262) or questions as such, asking for information (6 instances) (App.2A: 170,219-222,226). The former can be illustrated by example (38) drawn from academic style; the latter usually question the existence of the enabling circumstances, as in (39):

- (38) She [Gika] asks, 'how foreign **can** it be internationally, since people all over the world communicate in English?' (1996:15) [JJ,10] (App.2A, ACAD, 56)
- (39) '*Sometimes you've got to cut your losses,*' Natasha agreed. 'Well, sweetie, what else **can** I tell you?' [HM,67] (App.2A, FICT, 221)

5.3.5 Root possibility CANNOT

The previous sections dealt primarily with affirmative statements in which root possibility CAN is often interpreted as 'nihil obstat'. Hence negative instances can be by analogy interpreted as 'not nihil obstat', i.e. *it isn't the case that nothing prevents or something prevents*, as in:

- (40) Because the subjects are not the L1 speakers or fluent bilinguals of most accommodation research, we **cannot** assume that, like the latter types of subject, they will adjust their pronunciation in the direction of that of their interlocutors. [JJ,56] (App.2A, ACAD, 91)

where 'not nihil obstat' is represented by the reason clause *because the subjects are not the L1 speakers or fluent bilinguals of most accommodation research*. The example also indicates that the modality is negated.⁴⁹

It is necessary to emphasize that root possibility CANNOT/CAN'T is quite distinct from epistemic CAN'T. Coates (1983:101-2) summarizes the distinct features of epistemic CAN'T as follows: it is an invariant form used as the negative for epistemic MUST, it co-occurs with identical syntactic features as epistemic MUST and it expresses the speaker's confidence in the truth of the proposition (*it is necessarily the case that ... not...*). Furthermore, epistemic CAN'T is infrequent, while root CAN'T/CANNOT is of more frequent occurrence. Nonetheless, as epistemic CAN'T is beyond the scope of this study, it will not be dealt with in more detail.

⁴⁹ Coates (1983:100) argues that it is the modality, not the proposition, that is normally negated with root modality.

In the examined data, there are 38 tokens of negated CAN (App.2A: 35-39,88-106,145,186-191,226-232) as in (40) above, and 3 tokens of CAN in negative contexts (App.2A: 185,192,243), i.e. the form of the modal verb is positive but it is used alongside a negative sentence element, as in

- (41) *It is a long outfit, there are no discernible limbs, it is like a helmet in a flowing cape. No eyes **can** be seen or faces.* [T1,3] (App.2A, NEWS, 192)

where the subject is negated.

The negative of root possibility CAN has two forms, full *cannot* and contracted *can't*. All 10 occurrences of *can't* have been recorded in direct speech in fiction or newspaper reporting, for example:

- (42) Professor Sir Bernard Crick, commissioned by the Government to devise citizenship lessons for immigrants, said yesterday: "You **can't** substitute Britishness for multiculturalism. What about the Scottish, the Welsh, the Jewish?" [T1,8] (App.2A, NEWS, 189)
- (43) 'You'd need to build up your psychic skills, you **can't** expect to start cold at your age.' [HM,68] (App.2A, FICT, 227)

The findings confirm that the contracted form *can't* is restricted to less formal contexts reflecting spoken language, while the full form *cannot* is unmarked and can be found in all registers.

The analysis has revealed that, as opposed to affirmative settings, the majority of negated tokens of root possibility CAN co-occur with clearly specified disabling circumstances, as in (42) above or in the following example:

- (44) This is because, as we have already noted, in ILT the speech signal received by the listener is likely to contain considerable L1 phonological transfer, whereas in 'native-non-native' interaction, the speech received by the 'non-native' by definition **cannot** transfer from an L1. [JJ,81] (App.2A, ACAD, 94)

where they are represented by the fact that *the interaction is native-non-native*.

5.4 Epistemic CAN

No occurrence of epistemic possibility CAN has been identified in the analyzed data.

Whereas some authors doubt whether the modal verb CAN has any genuine epistemic uses (see Papafragou 2000 or Perkins 1983), other scholars recognize two specialised epistemic uses of CAN, i.e. in interrogative and negative utterances. (see Leech 2004 or Palmer 1990) CAN in interrogatives like *Can it be true?* is interpreted as epistemic possibility. However, Papafragou (2000) argues:

“... interrogative-initial modal verbs cannot be interpreted epistemically in genuine requests for information: the speaker cannot be expecting the addressee to supply the information whether a proposition is compatible with the speaker’s beliefs.” (2000:98)

The negative invariant form *can’t* is associated with epistemic necessity since it provides the missing negative form in the epistemic MUST paradigm (see 5.3.5 where epistemic CAN’T was briefly mentioned).

As far as affirmative statements are concerned, some authors suggest that CAN might develop epistemic possibility readings. Coates (1995:64-5) reasons that all the other English modals regularly convey root and epistemic meaning, the latter being generally derived from the former. In addition, root and epistemic possibility sense seem to be only weakly distinguished, which is confirmed by the existence of indeterminate cases between epistemic and root possibility MAY. (see 7.3) Coates (ibid.) predicts that emerging examples of epistemic CAN might co-occur with an inanimate subject and stative verb in contexts clearly supporting epistemic possibility readings.⁵⁰ According to her, CAN is also beginning to be involved in merger, especially in contexts where the writers wish to hedge their statements, as in *False statements can result in prosecution*. (see Chapter 12)

⁵⁰ Collins (2007:4) gives the following example of epistemic CAN, recorded in Australian English: *You **can** be maybe next Australia next South Africa*.

6. COULD

As has been explained in 2.5.4, the morphologically past tense forms of modal verbs are not restricted to past contexts. The findings confirm that *COULD* occurs freely in past and non-past contexts. In its root meaning, *COULD* reflects the semantic distribution of *CAN*, which means that the peripheral meaning of root possibility is the most common whereas the core examples of ability and permission occur less frequently. (cf. Coates 1983:107 or Leech 2004:132)

The analysis has revealed that *COULD* is predominantly used in its root possibility sense in non-past contexts. By contrast, epistemic possibility, which is the primary meaning of *MAY/MIGHT*, appears to be rarely conveyed by *COULD*.⁵¹

Table 2 *Meanings of COULD in the excerpted material*

	number of tokens	%
root possibility non-past contexts	142	61.2
root possibility past contexts	63	27.2
gradient of inherency	16	6.9
epistemic possibility	8	3.4
undecidable	3	1.3
total	232	100

In comparison with *CAN*, it was more difficult to analyze *COULD* and interpret some of its tokens, because apart from ruling out the permissive and ability reading, it was necessary to distinguish between its past or hypothetical interpretation within root possibility and to take into consideration epistemic possibility. Consequently, wider context had to be taken into account so that we could identify which of the potential senses applied. Still, there are three tokens

⁵¹ Hladký (1983:95) has found out that both factual and theoretical possibility of *COULD* are equally represented in written texts whereas in spoken texts *COULD* usually expresses theoretical possibility. He claims that his findings correspond with the description of usage given in grammar books; however, he analyzed in detail only a limited number of occurrences.

labelled ‘undecidable’ since their interpretation seems to be rather problematic. These will be discussed at the end of this chapter. (see 6.3)

6.1 Root possibility

When interpreting the findings concerning root possibility **COULD**, it is necessary to distinguish between **COULD** followed by bare infinitive and **COULD** in conjunction with perfect infinitive because these two structures are not comparable in all aspects. Firstly, the instances of **COULD** + bare infinitive will be analyzed in 6.1.1. and 6.1.2, then **COULD** + perfect aspect will be dealt with in 6.1.3

Table 3 *Readings of root possibility COULD*

	time reference	reading	number of tokens	%
COULD + bare infinitive	present/future	hypothetical	142	69.3
	past	past possibility	28	13.6
		reported possibility	20	9.8
COULD + perfect aspect	past	past possibility	6	2.9
		hypothetical	9	4.4
total			205	100

Quirk *et al.* (1985:222) regard root possibility **COULD** to be ambiguous between *it was possible to* and *it would be possible to*. However, Palmer (1990) and Dušková (1994,1972) exemplify that the potential ambiguity of **COULD** is resolved by immediate or wider context. Basically, **COULD** referring to past time is usually found with other past forms while hypothetical **COULD** occurs with present verb forms and other conditionals. Larreya (2003:31) illustrates the importance of context on the following examples: in *He had the key. He could open the door* **COULD** has temporal meaning, whereas in *He has the key. He could open the door* it has hypothetical (tentative) meaning.

6.1.1 Hypothetical root possibility COULD (non-past contexts)

COULD in non-past contexts, i.e. with present or future time reference, can function as the hypothetical form for all the three senses of CAN, the root possibility sense being the most common one. As the findings in *Table 3* show, the majority of tokens appear in non-past contexts (App.2B: 3-46,53-91,102-117,149-180) where they are interpreted as hypothetical root possibility, i.e. it is by far the most frequent reading of COULD and can be illustrated by the following examples:

- (45) The glove **could** also be used in online meetings to provide virtual handshakes. [NS,23] (App.2B, NAT, 60)
- (46) Most significant will be the need to ensure proportionality, particularly in cases where the degree of complicity in crime is unclear, and in cases where an order **could** cut across the interests of third parties. [FC,30] (App.2B, ADMIN, 29)

These examples demonstrate that hypothetical COULD is commonly associated with settings discussing potential states or situations and illustrate that the writer merely reports a state of fact and draws tentative conclusions on the basis of experiments or observations.

Most instances, like (45) and (46), occur without an expressed condition, only a few have been recorded in conditional clauses, for example

- (47) If Morris were earthside, she had once said to Al, and you and he were married, you **could** get rid of him easily enough; you could divorce him. [HM,48] (App.2B, FICT, 158)

The conditional clause specifies the external circumstances affecting the outcome of the proposition, so that (47) reads: *if certain conditions were fulfilled, then nothing would prevent you from getting rid of him.*

Leech (2004) explains the hypothetical uses of COULD (and MIGHT) in terms of diffidence and tact and sees them 'as generally toning down the meaning of the corresponding non-hypothetical auxiliary'. (2004:130) Stated differently, in non-past contexts COULD and MIGHT signal tentativeness and politeness. (see Chapter 12 where these modal verbs are discussed in terms of hedging)

There are two major areas where hypothetical **COULD** is used as a polite form of **CAN**, namely when making a request and when suggesting an action to the addressee. Since offers, suggestions and requests might be considered to be face threatening acts (Wilamová 2005), the modal verb **COULD** is employed to weaken their force and thus it essentially indicates deference, as in:

(48) '**Could** you find me a coffee?' [HM,3] (App.2B, FICT, 149)

(49) "*We'll be going into the office here in Tokyo. **Can** you write down that we'll all be working diligently?*" [T2,7] (App.2A, NEWS, 184)

COULD in (48) is considered to be less direct and hence more polite than **CAN** in (49), making the request more tactful. (cf. Leech 2004:129 or Dušková 1994:190)

(A) Request

When functioning as a request, **COULD** appears in interrogative structures with a second-person subject and, as has been stated, its use is explained in terms of politeness. Nonetheless, with respect to the nature of the analyzed material, the only subcorpus where requests have been recorded is fiction. Altogether, there are two interrogative structures interpreted as requests, (48) above and the following one:

(50) 'Colette, **could** you try to bear in mind, I've talked to about thirty people since then?' [HM,30] (App.2B, FICT, 156)

(B) Suggestion

As has been exemplified in 5.3.4.1, the modal verb proposing a future activity usually co-occurs with a first- or second-person subject. This use of **COULD** has been assigned to 17 tokens, drawn exclusively from fiction, for example

(51) The summer they had first got together, Colette had said, maybe we **could** write a book. I **could** make notes on our conversations, she said. 'You **could** explain your psychic view of the world to me, and I **could** write it down. Or I **could** interview you, and tape it. [HM,49] (App.2B, FICT,162-166)

- (52) *'Renee's money not come through yet?' she asked. She slid into the seat opposite. 'When it does, you **could** use some of it to buy me out of the flat.'* [HM,69] (App.2B, FICT, 172)

Whereas COULD with a first-person subject merely suggests a future action, as in (51), COULD with a second-person subject is usually described as covert imperative (see 5.3.4.1) and might be interpreted as a polite and tentative order, as in (52). COULD with a second-person subject has been recorded in 8 occurrences in the subcorpus of fiction (App.2B: 150,153,157,171-175); COULD with a first-person subject suggesting a future action appeared in 10 cases. (App.2B: 154,162,163,165-168,170,176,179)

6.1.2 Root possibility COULD in past contexts

COULD in past contexts, i.e. occurring alongside past tense markers, can cover all the meanings expressed by CAN. Again, the root possibility reading prevails, ability and permission being infrequent. As *Table 3* shows, 48 tokens of root possibility COULD have been recorded in past contexts, which constitutes 23.4% of all its root possibility occurrences. (App. 2B: 1,2,47-50,92-100,118-143,181-198) Still, in comparison with hypothetical COULD, the past possibility reading⁵² is rather infrequent.

All the instances of past possibility COULD appear in contexts which clearly indicate past setting, as in

- (53) Spiritual healing was going on in one corner, Kirlian photography in another, and each individual psychic's table, swathed in chenille or fringed silk, bore her stock-in-trade of tarot pack, crystal ball, charms, incense, pendulums and bells: plus a small tape machine so the client **could** have a record of her consultation. [HM,78] (App.2B, FICT,189)
- (54) *This meant the size and spacing of the arms determined the course the robot steered.* These **could** easily be changed to create different movement patterns – making it programmable. [NS,34] (App.2B, NAT, 98)

⁵² According to Leech (2004:99), the label 'past possibility' may be misleading because possibility tends to be a timeless thing. Therefore, expression of past possibility by means of COULD is rather unusual.

In both examples, the past context is indicated by past verb forms, i.e. *was going, swathed, bore* in (53) and *meant, determined* and *steered* in (54). As these instances imply, the past possibility reading of COULD is found mainly in narrative or descriptive texts. Nearly a half of the occurrences, namely 15, (App.2B: 181,182,184-187,189-198) have been recorded in the subcorpus of fiction in past-tense narrative, e.g. (53) above.

As with CAN, the prototypical examples of COULD conveying root possibility are those where the enabling conditions or external circumstances affecting the outcome of the proposition are specified, as in the following example where they are represented by the first sentence:

- (55) *In examples 20, 21, and 22, the listeners were attempting to draw a person from the speakers' descriptions. They **could** therefore be expected to have established a schema which included words such as 'hat' and 'zipper',... [JJ,89] (App.2B, ACAD, 47)*

The possibility reading of COULD is in many cases also facilitated by syntactic correlations, above all, an inanimate subject or the passive, as in (54), (55), or the following example:

- (56) *The explosions **could** be heard across the capital, which was almost deserted as people stayed home for fear of the escalating fighting which flares up almost every night in districts where guerrillas have their forces. [T1,2] (App2B, NEWS, 129)*

Coates's (1983:114) analysis reveals that a considerable proportion of past possibility COULD involves negation with specified disabling circumstances. Similarly, Tárnyiková's (1985:35) findings show that more than a half of tokens of COULD expressing possibility in the past are negated. However, my analysis shows the opposite trend. The vast majority of the past possibility occurrences appear in affirmative sentences, like examples (53) – (56) above; only four are negated (App.2B: 1,137,139,188), as in:

- (57) *These sort of orders might be used in cases where there was a strong weight of evidence but either not enough for a prosecution, prosecution was planned but additional measures were urgently needed to prevent harms in the interim, prosecution had been ruled not appropriate on public interest grounds, or the evidence of criminal activity **could not** be prosecuted (eg because it took place overseas). [FC,10] (App.2B, ADMIN,1)*

- (58) ‘She told me,’ she said to Gavin, ‘that she had a stairlift installed. Which, if she lived in a bungalow, she **couldn’t** have.’ [F,63] (App.2B, FICT, 188)

Clearly, the negated instances result in a state of non-occurrence. In addition, the disabling conditions are specified, i.e. the bracketed reason clause in (57) and the conditional clause in (58).

As has been stated, COULD with past time reference is also found in reported speech; 20 backshifted tokens have been identified. (App.2B: 49,92,132-143,190,191,195-198) Since the properties relating to past root possibility COULD, discussed above, apply to the tokens of COULD in indirect speech, they will not be analyzed here. Obviously, backshifted tokens usually appear in subordinate nominal clauses and have been drawn from newspaper reporting, for example:

- (59) The Gershon review had suggested that civil servants made redundant under efficiency measures **could** be redeployed as frontline staff such as classroom assistants. [T1,4] (App.2B, NEWS, 132)

6.1.3 Root possibility COULD + perfect infinitive

COULD in conjunction with perfect infinitive has past time reference and can convey both root and epistemic possibility. Still, no unambiguously epistemic occurrences have been identified in the analyzed material. As *Table 4* suggests, COULD + HAVE seems to be associated primarily with root possibility meaning, interpreted either hypothetically or as a past possibility.

Table 4 *Interpretations of COULD + perfect infinitive*

interpretation	number of tokens
past hypothetical root possibility	9
past root possibility	4
gradient of inherency	2
undecidable	1
Total	16

COULD + HAVE interpreted hypothetically is contra-factive, i.e. it denotes something that did not happen as viewed now, and results in non-occurrence of the action, which can be illustrated by the following examples: (App.2B: 51,52,145,146,199,200,203,204,205)

- (60) 'You don't mind what you say, do you? You **could have** really upset me back there.' [HM,87] (App.2B, FICT,203)
- (61) *She held up her arms, stamped her feet in her high heels. 'I **could have been** a flamenco dancer,' she said. 'That would have been more fun.'* [HM,32] (App.2B, FICT, 199)

According to Dušková (1972:22), COULD + perfect infinitive refers to situations which could happen in the past but their actualisation remains open and non-fulfilment is implied in the context. Thus, example (60) reads *I wasn't upset* and in (61) the sentence *That would have been more fun* indicates *I am not a flamenco dancer*, which means that COULD + HAVE obviously expresses unactualised event.

The two instances indeterminate between root possibility and ability confirm that the structure COULD + perfect infinitive does not exclude ability readings:

- (62) *'The mother, she must have been thinking his name.'* 'Oh, yes, I **could have picked it out of** her head. *I know that's your theory. Mind-reading.'* [HM,42] (App.2B, FICT, 227)
- (63) *Yesterday, a smiling Henry left the pitch to backslaps and high-fives. The thigh strain that became a back injury that, miraculously, disappeared overnight had not hampered him at all. He scored a hat-trick, **could have had** more and re-ignited the fire that burns within the marble halls.* [T1,31] (App.2B, NEWS, 224)

These examples demonstrate that the past event would have been possible owing to the ability or capacity of the subject, for their interpretations might be: *it would have been in my power to pick it out of her head* and *it would have been in his capacity to have more*. (cf. Dušková 1972:21,24) Although the association of COULD + HAVE with hypothetical meaning is not 100%, the past hypothetical possibility sense appears to be the most frequent one.

The structure COULD + HAVE occasionally has past time reference (4 instances – App.2B:144,147,201,202), as in:

- (64) *He routinely misled her: but was it any wonder? What sort of upbringing **could** he have had, from a woman with false teeth who told lies after she was dead? [HM,64] (App.2B, FICT, 202)*
- (65) *Only later did she realise it was the worst thing she **could have done**: introducing herself at the moment of his humiliation. [HM,53] (App.2B, FICT, 201)*

As opposed to hypothetical COULD + HAVE, the context implies that these occurrences are not contra-factive and might be interpreted as follows: *He had probably bad upbringing and She did something and now she regrets that.*

6.2 Epistemic possibility COULD

In comparison with root possibility COULD, epistemic COULD is infrequent; there are only 8 occurrences in the excerpted material, which accounts for 3.4%. (App.2B: 206-213)

Epistemic COULD, like epistemic MAY and MIGHT, is non-factive and conveys the speaker's lack of confidence in the proposition expressed. Hence it is semantically quite distinct from all the other uses of COULD discussed so far. It seems to be restricted in its use, since it most commonly co-occurs with a third-person subject and the verb BE, as in:

- (66) *His body is in Denver for a post-mortem examination and **could** be there for a week, Mrs Mikha was told. [T1,16] (App.2B, FICT, 209)*
- (67) *'Probably a Scorpio ascendant there. Controls by disinformation. Or **could** be Pisces. Makes mysteries where none needed.' [HM,59] (App.2B, FICT, 212)*

The immediate context of example (67) clearly demonstrates that epistemic COULD is employed when the speaker draws conclusions but is not confident about the truth of the proposition. Example (66) reads *Perhaps the body will be in Denver for a week*, whereas (67) could be interpreted as *It is possible that he is Pisces*, which implies that epistemic COULD can have future or present time reference, depending on the context in which it appears. To refer to the past, epistemic COULD co-occurs with perfect infinitive (see 6.1.3), but there is

no instance in the studied corpus. As to aspect, one token with progressive aspect has been recorded: (see 7.1.1.4 where progressive aspect co-occurring with epistemic modals is dealt with)

- (68) Lab-born fish of parents from high-predation areas **could** be exaggerating this default right-eye bias because they have inherited strong lateralisation. [NS,10] (App.2B, NAT, 208)

As far as the use of epistemic COULD is concerned, Coates (1983:166-7) argues that COULD seems to be an analogous non-past and non-hypothetical alternative to epistemic MIGHT⁵³ in the expression of tentativeness. Similarly, Leech (2004:132) points out that 'COULD extends its range of meaning into the epistemic territory of factual possibility as a tentative equivalent of MAY'. Differences and similarities between epistemic COULD and MIGHT are dealt with in detail in section 10.3.

6.3 Undecidable

Three cases have been labelled 'undecidable' as they seem problematic to interpret:

- (69) *Was that significant? It **could** be. Nothing else of a psychic nature seemed to manifest.* [HM,74] (App.2B, FICT, 230)
- (70) *'He grew up in Uxbridge. But you know, she might have had him in hospital.'* 'So it **could** have been anywhere along the A40?' [HM,59] (App.2B, FICT, 231)
- (71) 'What's the matter, what do you need?' Colette would murmur: because you didn't know what was happening, it **could** be trivial, but then again ... [HM,44] (App.2B, FICT, 232)

Examples (69) and (71) are used in past contexts, more specifically they appear in passages representing stream of consciousness, but the past root possibility interpretation does not seem to fit. Despite the past context, I would interpret them epistemically as relating to the speaker's subjective judgment concerning a particular situation. In example (70), the properties of epistemic and root possibility seem to combine, so that I would interpret this token as an instance of merger between epistemic and root possibility. (see 7.3)

⁵³ However, MIGHT has two other epistemic uses: quite frequent hypothetical use and rare past time use. (see 8.1.3 and 8.1.5)

7. MAY

It is important to note that MIGHT occurring in non-past contexts is discussed alongside MAY in the respective sections of this chapter in order to avoid unnecessary overlaps when their readings and uses are more or less analogous. However, MIGHT is treated separately when referring to the past or having hypothetical meaning.

The modal verb MAY, unlike CAN, conveys both epistemic and root meanings. Peters (2004:88) observes that it is most commonly associated with the sense of possibility and Coates (1995:60) adds that it regularly expresses both root and epistemic possibility, the former being restricted to formal contexts. Apart from these two senses, MAY can occasionally convey permission in formal settings; hence it is often characterized as polysemous in its nature. (see Leech and Coates 1980 or Palmer 1990)

Since root and epistemic meanings are normally seen as unrelated (see 2.4), the epistemic-root boundary for possibility meanings of MAY/MIGHT should be clear-cut, i.e. associated with clear semantic and syntactic criteria. The sections to follow will focus on the proposed correlations, with the aim of identifying those signalling reliably the appropriate interpretation of MAY/MIGHT.

7.1 Epistemic MAY

Epistemic possibility is generally considered to be primary and the most common sense of MAY. (cf. Coates 1983, Leech 2004, Biber *et al.* 1999 or Quirk *et al.* 1985). The analysis confirms that epistemic possibility is the most frequent use of MAY; it accounts for 60% of all its occurrences (184 tokens out of 308 have been interpreted epistemically).⁵⁴ (App.2C: 1-184)

Leech (2004:77) points out that epistemic possibility is the only meaning of MAY that is still flourishing and Coates (1980:211,1983:133) states that it is distinct from any usage of CAN. (see Chapter 5) Quirk *et al.* (1985:233) define

⁵⁴ Similarly, the epistemic possibility reading constitutes 61% of all the occurrences of MAY in Facchinetti's survey (2003).

MAY as ‘denoting the possibility of a given proposition’s being or becoming true’. According to Perkins (1983):

“...evidence available to the speaker is such that the proposition cannot be currently inferred to be true, nor can it currently be inferred to be false.” (1983:38)

Coates (1983:236) views the epistemic possibility reading as essentially non-factive in that the speaker does not commit himself to a categorical assertion. Stated differently, epistemic possibility is usually interpreted as the speaker’s lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition, as in:

(72) ‘It **may** take a bit of time to get close.’ [HM,77] (App.2C, FICT, 176)

where the speaker is uncertain whether it will take some time to get close or not.

As has been mentioned in 2.3.1, linguists usually consider epistemic modality to be subjective, oriented towards the speaker. (see, for example, Leech 2004, Palmer 1990, Coates 1995, or Quirk *et al.* 1985) Although objective cases can be found, the distinction is not easy to draw and does not seem to be significant. (cf. Huddleston and Pullum 2002:167,181) Since prototypical examples of epistemic possibility are unambiguously subjective, i.e. they encode the speaker’s uncertainty, all the occurrences of epistemic MAY/MIGHT in the analyzed data are treated as subjective.

7.1.1 Syntactic co-occurrence patterns

The root-epistemic distinction of possibility MAY is associated with specific syntactic restrictions and contextual features, which are, according to Coates (1983:137), ‘strong and in comparison with CAN clearer due to the discrete nature of MAY’. Before examining specific correlations for epistemic MAY/MIGHT, it is necessary to emphasize that epistemic possibility has the proposition as well as modality in its scope. Consequently, epistemic modal predication is not affected by negation, time marking and hypothetical marking, which implies that these are considered to be unique signals of the epistemic possibility reading of MAY/MIGHT.

Grammarians (Downing and Locke 1992, Leech 2004 or Tárnyiková 1985) list a wide range of syntactic co-occurrence patterns⁵⁵ for epistemic MAY/MIGHT, the majority relating to the nature of subject and verb. They generally agree that the epistemic reading is supported by the following factors:

- a) It frequently co-occurs with stative⁵⁶ and linking verbs, especially the verb BE followed by an evaluative expression. When MAY and MIGHT co-occur with dynamic verbs, these usually denote actions not dependent on the agent's will. Epistemic MAY and MIGHT can be followed by a lexical auxiliary.
- b) As for subject, the epistemic reading is often associated with a non-human, existential or general human subject or with anticipatory *it*.

There is widespread agreement among linguists that 100 per cent associations can be established for epistemic MAY when it co-occurs with an inanimate or existential subject, or with the pronoun *it*. However, these criteria focus largely on distinguishing epistemic possibility from root permission and do not relate to the differences between the two possibility readings. For instance, root possibility MAY, like epistemic MAY, commonly co-occurs with an inanimate subject or the pronoun *it*, as in:

(73) *The term "jihad" refers primarily to non-violent struggle, for example the spiritual struggle to lead a good life. It **may** also be used to mean military struggle, but the vast majority of Muslims do not consider today's terrorism to be legitimate, military jihad. [IT,7] (App.2C, ADMIN, 207)*

= using the term to mean military struggle is possible

Similarly, Biber *et al.* (1999:486) claim that these correlates are not absolute, demonstrating that epistemic MIGHT often occurs with an animate subject and dynamic verb, as in *He might accept it but reach different conclusions*. Consequently, the criteria focusing largely on distinguishing epistemic possibility

⁵⁵ Prosodic features may also be regarded as discrete contextual elements influencing the interpretation of modal verbs. For a description of modal usage taking prosody into account, see Coates (1983).

⁵⁶ According to Coates and Leech (1980), the probability value is approximately 90%.

and root permission are not examined in the following sections, being beyond the scope of this study.

7.1.1.1 Sentence type

Sentence framework or ‘communicative modality’ (Tárnyiková 1985:37) seems to be a relevant factor because epistemic MAY occurs only in statements. Matthews (2003) remarks:

“The nature of interrogation is itself dependent on epistemicity because the questioner does not know the truth of the proposition and thus asks *is it possible/imaginable, etc. that p?*.” (Matthews 2003:62)

In questions, epistemic possibility is conveyed by CAN, COULD or MIGHT, which implies that epistemic MIGHT is not restricted to statements. (see Dušková 1972:40, 1994:192) For Leech (2004), MAY is usually replaced by COULD or less frequently by CAN. According to Jacobs (1995:237-8), CAN, COULD or MIGHT are employed to ask about the addressee’s belief concerning a situation, MIGHT being infrequent.

Conversely, Papafragou (2000) argues that epistemic modals, unlike root modals, do not occur sentence-initially in yes-no interrogatives. She acknowledges their occurrences merely in deliberative questions where the speaker asks himself/herself (*Might John be a liar?*) and when the speaker is evaluating some publicly available, objective evidence (*Might the books still be at home?*) (2000:98)

As the examined corpus consists exclusively of written material, the majority of utterances are statements. No occurrences of epistemic CAN or COULD in interrogatives have been recorded. There is merely one instance of MIGHT in an interrogative structure. It has been drawn from fiction and its use could be explained in terms of politeness and tentativeness (see Chapter 12):

(74) **Might** you be interested in the Frobisher at all? *It comes with a spacious utility area.* [HM,217] (App.2D, FICT, 69)

7.1.1.2 Negation

Negated MAY and MIGHT seem to be associated exclusively with epistemic possibility (cf. Coates 1980, Leech 2004, Biber *et al.* 1999, Tárníková 1978, Huddleston and Pullum 2002, or Dušková 1972). In the analyzed material, mere 12% of the occurrences of MAY are negated (App.2C: 15,27,36-38,43,44,51, 58,67-72,74,100,107,162,163,174) and all of them are interpreted epistemically, as in:

(75) It is always open for a victim to sue an offender for damages (compensation) in the civil courts, although we recognize that this **may not** be a practical option in some cases. [FC,16] (App.2C, FICT, 15)

= *perhaps this is not a practical option*

As to MIGHT, 14 tokens (out of 192) are negative; 13 are interpreted as unambiguously epistemic⁵⁷ (App.2D: 2,10,42,46,48,51,53-55,62,67,68,117), for example:

(76) As long as it is on, your cellphone knows where you are, and **might not** mind who it tells. [NS, 24] (App.2D, NAT,10)

= *perhaps it does not mind who it tells*

Examples (75) and (76) illustrate that although the modal is morphologically marked for negation, it is the main predication that is affected by negation; the speaker's assessment of the proposition remains unaffected. (cf. Facchinetti 2003:312 or Coates 1983:134)

7.1.1.3 Time reference

Dušková (1972:30-1) observes that, in dependence on the context, MAY in conjunction with present infinitive refers either to the present or to the future, while a possible event in the past has to be indicated by MAY + perfect infinitive. The following instances illustrate time reference relating to the proposition of epistemic MAY + present infinitive:

⁵⁷ One negated token of MIGHT has been labelled 'undecidable' and is discussed in 8.4.

(77) The confusion between /r/ and // is relatively rare in J1's speech and, in this instance, **may**, in fact, be a case of overcompensation. [JJ,63] (App.2C, ACAD, 42)

= *in this instance it is perhaps a case of overcompensation*

(78) "We hope the stereo cameras will give us a close look at the swift's wing dynamics. They **may** behave differently in the open air, outside the confines of the wind tunnel," he says. [NS,26] (App.2C, NAT, 99)

= *we are not sure, but they will perhaps behave differently in the open air*

The paraphrases⁵⁸ demonstrate that the proposition in (77) refers to the moment of speaking and in (78) to the time subsequent to the moment of speaking, while the modal predication remains unaffected in both. In a considerable proportion of instances, time reference of the proposition is clearly indicated by other verb forms or temporal indicators in the immediate context, as in (77) or (78). In the former present time reference is indicated by the verb form *is*, while in the latter the verb form *will give* signals future time reference.

Coates (1983:234) describes the relationship between epistemic modality and futurity as unclear, arguing that MAY (as well as MIGHT) normally has future reference, but a significant proportion of examples have present reference. According to Leech (2004:77), MAY usually refers to the future when it combines with an event verb (for example *lose* or *go*), whereas Dušková (1972:31) concludes that reference to the future was found to be rare.

In the examined corpus, MAY with present time reference constitutes 54.3% of all the tokens of epistemic MAY. Future time reference has been found to be significant as it applies to 51 tokens (27.7%). (App.2C: 16-21,59-62,97-104,126-151,175-181) Future time reference prevails in newspaper reporting (26 tokens) (App.2C:126-151) but it is rare in administrative and scientific texts (10 tokens altogether). It often applies to the cases where MAY combines with a lexical modal (approximately 25% of the instances referring to the future), as in:

(79) 'Alison, I'm disappointed by your negativity. I **may** have to put the phone down, before it contaminates my day.' [HM,256] (App.2C, FICT, 181)

= *perhaps I will have to put the phone down*

⁵⁸ All the paraphrases accompanying the analyzed examples are mine; they are intended to clarify the interpretation of the modal verb in question.

Although it has been exemplified that MAY occurs freely with future time reference, present is considered to be more central. With the future, the issue is not so much the truth of a proposition but the occurrence of an event. As far as this issue is concerned, Comrie (1985) states:

“...the future is necessarily speculative in that any prediction we make about the future might be changed by intervening events, including our own conscious intervention.” (1985:43)

7.1.1.4 Aspect

Both perfect and progressive aspect are viewed as compatible merely with epistemic MAY. As with negation and time reference, the perfect or progressive construction applies to the meaning of the proposition. In Leech's words, ‘the modal expresses a current state of the mind, while the main verb describes an event or state having variable time and aspect’. (2004:99)

(A) Perfect aspect

Perfect aspect is commonly used in conjunction with MAY. It has been recorded in 33 instances (17.9%) (App.2C: 22-26,63-66,105-112,152-164,182-184), most of them being drawn from newspaper reporting (13 tokens). (App.2C: 152-164). The reading of all these occurrences is obviously epistemic, as in:

(80) Many of the travelers in India at this time of year are in the most remote parts of the country and may not yet have received the Foreign Office's warning. [T1,5] (App.2C, NEWS, 162)

= *perhaps the travellers haven't received the Foreign Office's warning*

This example illustrates that the function of perfect aspect is to assign past time reference to the proposition because the modal meaning itself cannot refer to the past. In other words, MAY + perfect aspect is used to make a judgement in the present about past events or situations. (cf. Biber *et al.* 1999:500 or Downing and Locke 1992:388) This is confirmed by Facchinetti (2003):

“...perfective aspect expressing anteriority exclusively applies to epistemic semantics as there can be no anteriority with reference to deontic modality.” (2003: 312)

The proposition of MAY + perfect infinitive can refer either to indefinite past (extending up to the moment of speaking), as in (80) above, or to definite past (prior to the moment of speaking), as in the following example:

- (81) He [Woods] **may** have had a four-under day yesterday, but it would be wrong to cling to the belief that the old master was back. [T1,35] (App.2C, NEWS, 158)

= *Although he perhaps had a four-under day yesterday...*

Perfect aspect in conjunction with MAY is a general marker of past time and thus utterances are interpreted as definite or indefinite on the basis of contextual clues. (see Leech 2004:99) In example (80) indefinite past time reference is supported by the verb form *are* and the prepositional phrase *at this time of year*. On the other hand, example (81) refers to definite past owing to the phrase *yesterday*.

(B) Progressive aspect

Only 6 tokens of MAY co-occur with progressive aspect of the lexical verb and all of them, like the instances of MAY in conjunction with perfect aspect, are interpreted epistemically. (App.2C: 8,50,73,81,96,170) (cf. Coates 1983:137)

- (82) The learner **may**, because of the difficulty involved, or because of embarrassment at producing a particular feature of the L2, simply be avoiding the item altogether. [JJ,111] (App.2C, ACAD, 50)

= *it is possible that the learner is simply avoiding the item altogether*

This infrequent use in written language might be explained in terms of the writer's assumption about how a specific situation is evolving at the moment of speaking, as in (82) where the author describes what is happening during a particular experiment. MAY in conjunction with progressive aspect is more common in spoken language because, as Facchinetti (2003:312) points out, 'the progressive form favours interactiveness and informal language'. (see also Coates 1983)

7.1.1.5 Concessive clauses

Epistemic MAY has been found to occur frequently in sentences having concessive force, in particular 39 tokens (21.2%) have been identified. Quirk *et al.* (1985) and Leech (2004) term this use of MAY 'quasi-subjunctive', for its concessive function is actualised according to the context.

All 39 instances are interpreted epistemically although they do not convey the prototypical epistemic reading of MAY discussed so far, for example:

- (83) She [Tarone] argues that 'the second-language learner **may** learn only one register of the target language, and still style-shift within that register in the sense of paying greater or lesser attention to speech' (1982:73) [JJ,55] (App.2C, ACAD, 40)

= *although they (possibly) learn only one register*

This example illustrates that the proposition in the second clause contradicts the proposition in the first clause and the writer appears to admit that a certain assumption is not ruled out by his/her current knowledge. On the other hand, Huddleston (1993) justifies this use as epistemic, arguing that with epistemic possibility the speaker implies, minimally, that he/she does not know that the proposition is false.

The contexts with concessive force in which MAY appears are of three types: concessive clauses introduced by the conjunctions *although/though* or *while/whilst*; concessive clauses introduced by an element ending in *-ever*; and coordinate clauses joined by the conjunction *but*.

(A) Coordinate clauses joined by the conjunction *but*

This frequent concessive use of MAY (18 tokens) (App.2C: 6,43,65,69, 72,73,80,85,88,109,115,136,154,156,157,158,161,163) occurs in the clause preceding the conjunction *but*. These instances of concessive MAY have been recorded mainly in newspaper reporting, being the only type of concessive context there, and in popular scientific style.

Since *although* can be used to interpret these instances, they have undoubtedly concessive force, for example:

(84) Ten years of democracy **may** have brought benefits for the politically connected urban black elite but here in the rolling hills and valleys of the Eastern Cape, South Africa's poorest province, there is still no escape from poverty. [T1,20] (App.2C, NEWS, 154)

= *although ten years of democracy perhaps have brought benefits....*

(85) The UK **may** not have a government-backed rocket programme, but there's a new burst of activity. [FS,27] (App.2C, NAT, 72)

= *although the UK does not have a government-backed rocket programme...*

Huddleston and Pullum (2002:182) point out that it is MAY that adds concessive meaning to such sentences. However, *but* is crucial as well because when replaced by *and*, the concessive force is lost.

According to Palmer (2001:31), this use of MAY is not speculative but presupposed in that the speaker accepts the proposition as true. Similarly, Collins (2007:5) believes that the speaker concedes the truth of the proposition, rather than expressing a lack of confidence in its truth. Conversely, Papafragou (2000) justifies the epistemic interpretation of these examples, arguing:

"MAY has its normal epistemic interpretation, its complement is an assumption which is derived by deliberate inferencing, and as such has come to belong to the speaker's belief-box with a degree of strength attached to it." (2000:133)

Papafragou (ibid.) adds that despite possessing enough evidence for the truth of the proposition speakers often use MAY, but since changes in epistemic states are expected, they can reject the point later.

(B) Concessive clauses introduced by *although/though* or *while/whilst*

Concessive clauses introduced by *although/though* or *while/whilst* represent another common concessive environment; 17 tokens of MAY have been recorded in subordinate concessive clauses, as in

(86) The problem is compounded by the fact that although they **may** experience variation as an *intra*-speaker phenomenon in their own L1 use, it is not something they consciously recognize, particularly in relation to pronunciation. [JJ,26] (App.2C, ACAD, 35)

= *although they perhaps experience variation...*

- (87) Whilst such a system **may** offer some advantages over current arrangements, the Government considers that they are outweighed by significant disadvantages. [HC,17] (App.2C, ADMIN, 10)

= *although such a system perhaps offers some advantages....*

As in coordinate clauses with *but*, MAY seems to lose something of its possibility sense in these instances since, as Quirk *et al.* (1985:224) point out, the proposition in the concessive clause is presumed to be true. They add that MAY is preferred to the alternative simple present perhaps because of politeness. As for examples (86) and (87), they are felt to be more tentative than their unmodalized counterparts.

By contrast, Huddleston and Pullum (2002:179,182) view this use of MAY as yielding a special case of pragmatic strengthening and classify it as low degree modality,⁵⁹ claiming that ‘it is difficult to detect any meaning difference between the unmodalized and modalized utterance’. On the other hand, they state that MAY is harmonic here in that ‘the concessive adjunct reinforces the possibility meaning of MAY’. (2002:182)

(C) Concessive clauses introduced by an element ending in –ever

The least common type of concessive environment in the examined material is represented by subordinate clauses beginning with *whatever*, *whenever* or *whoever*.

- (88) As Alexander argues, ‘Such terms now simply block understanding rather than allowing English teachers wherever they **may** originate and wherever they **may** work to acknowledge that English as an International Language (EIL) is here to stay’ (1996:35) [JJ,11] (App.2C, ACAD, 29-30)
- (89) Bless all my great-grandmothers, whoever and wherever they **may** be. May my dad rot in hell, whoever he **may** be; whatever hell is and wherever let him rot in it; and let them please lock the doors of hell at night, so he can’t be out and about, harassing me. [HM,12] (App.2A, FICT, 165-166)

⁵⁹ According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002), degree of modality is quite a different matter from strength because it has to do with the extent to which there is a clearly identifiable and separable element of modal meaning. The examples cover the scale of strength from weak MAY to strong WILL – but low degree modality is most often found at the upper end of the scale of strength, especially with WILL. (2002:179)

Merely these four instances have been recorded, but Leech (2004:77) observes that this use of *MAY* is quite common, adding that it is close to the subjunctive and would be synonymous with *whoever and wherever they be*. According to Leech (*ibid.*), both subjunctive and *MAY* are truth-neutral and slightly more open-minded than the indicative form.⁶⁰ Huddleston and Pullum (2002:182) call this clause type ‘exhaustive conditional construction’ and claim that *MAY* is used optionally. In comparison with the instances discussed in (A) and (B), these seem to be identical to their unmodalized equivalents, i.e. to the indicative interpretation.

7.1.1.6 Harmonic combinations

With epistemic modal verbs, it is possible for the speaker’s commitment to the truth of the proposition to be modified by using lexical items which either reinforce or reduce it.⁶¹ The former are termed ‘harmonic combinations’, the latter ‘hedges’. (see Halliday 1970:331)

Epistemic *MAY* and *MIGHT* often co-occur with modal adverbs or adjectives of comparable meaning, that is of possibility. The most common ones appear to be *perhaps*, *possibly*, *possible*, *unlikely* and *not very likely*, for example:

(90) Although there **may** have been other instances of non-comprehension, this was unlikely as the pairs of subjects and I listened in detail to the tapes together, pausing frequently to check whether what had been meant was what had actually been inferred. [JJ,87] (App.2C, ACAD, 66)

(91) ‘It’s possible I **might** be psychic myself,’ Colette said casually. [HM,67] (App.2D, FICT, 63)

Such co-occurrences are considered to be ‘modally harmonic’ (see Coates 1983:137 or Huddleston and Pullum 2002:182) and can be explained in terms of semantic agreement, i.e. two modal elements reinforce each other and thus

⁶⁰ Leech (2004:78) observes that *MAY*, having an affinity to the archaic subjunctive, is also found in dependent clauses of purpose introduced with *in order that* or *so that* (occasionally *that* alone). To illustrate this use, Quirk *et al.* (1985:224) give the example *Christ died, that we might live*. Both agree that this construction is archaic, rare, and highly formal.

⁶¹ Modal verbs are seen as instances of inference in that speakers indicate that they are inferring from available information, while lexical modals are considered to be instances of confidence in that speakers indicate the degree of confidence they have in what they are saying. (Palmer 2001:35)

support the subjective epistemic possibility reading of an utterance. (cf. Tárnyiková 1985:38) Huddleston and Pullum (2002:180) regard verb-adverb combinations to be the most common and central cases of modal harmony.

Epistemic **MAY** and **MIGHT** also often appear harmonically in the complements of verbs functioning as hedges, such as *I suggest, I suppose, I think, I don't know, I mean, or I feel*, for example:

- (92) They [patients] **may** speak or make noises, even smile, cry or grimace, but they seem to do nothing of their own free will. [NS,40] (App.2C, NAT, 85)
- (93) 'If we moved, we **might** be able to lose them. *I suppose Morris will stick, but I'd like to shake off his friends.*' [HM,201] (App.2D, FICT, 82)

Huddleston and Pullum (2002) classify the above-mentioned combinations as weak in that 'the modal verb and adverb are of the same strength and together express a single feature of modal meaning'. (2002:180)

7.2 Root possibility **MAY**

Root possibility **MAY** is less common than epistemic **MAY** and, being restricted in its distribution, it is considered to be secondary. Leech's study (2003) suggests:

"...this sense was virtually absent from speech even in 1961 and has declined in writing since then, which can be assigned to the fact that it can be replaced by **CAN**." (2003:234)

Root possibility meaning has been assigned to 103 out of 308 tokens of **MAY** (33.4%). (App.2C: 185-287) These instances have been recorded in formal settings, above all, in academic (49 tokens) (App.2C: 218-267) and administrative style (33 tokens) (App.2C: 185-217). Leech and Coates (1980:86) mention that the root possibility reading of **MAY** is often ignored or 'regarded as a rarity of formal literary style'. However, their analysis, like mine, reveals that in formal written language its occurrence is significant. (see 9.2)

Root possibility meaning is commonly associated with the enabling external conditions (see 5.3.2), as in:

- (94) According to this theory, which, in more recent years, has become more broadly based and known as Communication Accommodation Theory or CAT (see Giles and Coupland 1991), speakers **may** adjust their speech either in the direction of that of their interlocutors (convergence) or away from that of their interlocutors (divergence). [JJ,21] (App.2C, ACAD, 220)

= this theory enables speakers to adjust their speech...

However, the enabling circumstances are rarely explicitly expressed, more often they are implied in the context, as in the following example:

- (95) Alternatively, the elided sound **may** be replaced by a glottal stop as in the Chinese-English pronunciation of 'duck'. [JJ,34] (App.2C, ACAD, 261)

= we have some evidence that replacing the elided sound is possible

Unlike epistemic MAY, the case of root MAY is more complex since the verb can convey two root senses, possibility and permission. As with CAN, the possibility and permission readings are not strictly separable and can be discussed in terms of gradience where the core expresses permission and the periphery possibility. Generally, MAY conveys permission where some authority or regulations can be identified, but it is interpreted as possibility where the external circumstances apply. (cf. Coates 1983:139-143 or Leech 2004:75,88)

7.2.1 Gradient of restriction

It has been exemplified in 5.2.1 that permission and possibility may be occasionally blurred when the distinguishing contextual features are not clear. 10 tokens of root MAY indeterminate between permission and possibility have been identified. (App.2C: 288-297) All of them have been drawn from administrative style, for the analyzed governmental documents deal with rules and regulations, as in

- (96) Furthermore, information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, **may** be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data

Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004). [FC,2] (App.2C, ADMIN, 288)

- (97) If there is information or evidence that there is a risk to the individual, removal **may** be postponed or cancelled. [HR,16] (App.2C, ADMIN, 295)

Since the permission reading proved infrequent,⁶² the factors distinguishing permission and root possibility will not be dealt with. I will primarily concentrate on the issues associated with the two possibility senses (root and epistemic) and on the factors that differentiate them.

7.2.2 Syntactic co-occurrence patterns

The analysis has confirmed that negated MAY has a 100% association with epistemic possibility and therefore Coates (1983:143) considers the use of MAY in negative contexts to be the essential distinguishing factor. In other words, MAY in negative utterances is interpreted only epistemically⁶³ in that the negation applies to the proposition while the speaker's assessment of the proposition remains unaffected. (cf. Leech 2004:77 or Facchinetti 2003:305) In addition, root possibility MAY is not compatible with perfect and progressive aspect. (see 7.1.1.4)

Passive voice

Root possibility MAY is believed to co-occur significantly with the passive. However, as Coates (1983:142) states, this co-occurrence is 'not frequent enough to be significant in terms of the syntactic association measure'. This study confirms the low implication value of this variable in that a considerable

⁶² Mere two core permission senses were spotted when I was scanning the texts for the occurrences of possibility MAY/MIGHT. In the subcorpus of fiction, there appeared another use of MIGHT (in *push as he might*) which is not included either because, as Perkins (1983) observes, 'it represents the fairly productive idiomatic structure (V as NP MIGHT) in which the modal is to be understood in its antiquated sense of physical power'. (1983:54)

⁶³ Nevertheless, Facchinetti (2003) records a few examples of modal verb negation, as in *This is not to say that large, well-organized, and long established religions may not be monolithic*. She observes that such instances are very rare (6% of all her recordings of MAY) and explains that it may be partly due to the use of the epistemic CAN'T as a substitute for MAY in contexts where the modality is negated. (2003:305)

proportion of passive structures co-occur with epistemic MAY, namely 20 instances.

As to root possibility, MAY is frequently found in passivized sentences, 12 tokens (out of 50) (App.2C: 256-267) in academic style and 9 tokens (out of 33) (App.2C: 209-217) in administrative style, for example:

- (98) Mandarin speakers of English may, therefore, tend to add schwa to words which end in obstruents, for example, the word 'tag' **may** be pronounced /tægə/. [JJ,102] (App.2C, ACAD, 265)
- (99) The form has also been designed professionally so that many questions **may** be answered as "no" with signposting to the next relevant question or "yes" with a box to enter the required details. [FC,102] (App.2C, ADMIN, 216)

In nearly all the recorded passive structures (21 out of 22), the agent is unexpressed, but corresponding active sentences usually imply a general human agent, as in (98) and (99), which might read *One/speakers may pronounce the word* and *one/you may answer*, the agents being *one* or *speakers* respectively.

Linguists often mention the frequent use of passive structures like *it may be noted* in formal written language, the function of which is, above all, to draw the reader's attention. (see, for example, Tárnyiková 1985:40) However, only one instance (in ACAD) has been recorded:

- (100) It may be argued that to perceive or produce these distinctions to any degree of precision is unnecessary, since the context will compensate for any deficiency in the form of the message itself. [JJ 34] (App.2C, ACAD, 259)

Leech (2004:77) calls these structures 'impersonal phrases' and views them as 'rather empty formulae soliciting and focusing the reader's attention', which are intermediate between root possibility and permission. Nevertheless, the example above is interpreted in terms of enabling conditions or 'nihil obstat' as root possibility (*there is nothing to prevent us from arguing*).

As has been stated, the passive can be used freely with epistemic possibility MAY, as in:

- (101) Where such phonological avoidance does occur among adult L2 speakers, it **may be motivated** not only by articulatory difficulty, but also by embarrassment. [JJ,112] (App.2C, ACAD, 53)
- (102) Prions **may** also have been shown to help protect against damage from sunburn. [FS,42] (App.2C, NAT, 110)

Most passive structures co-occurring with epistemic MAY can be found in environments supporting the epistemic reading, for example, in negated utterances, as in (101), or in conjunction with perfect aspect, as in (102).

7.2.3 Existential possibility

Where the objective data lead the writer to state rather than infer, root MAY can convey existential possibility. This particularly common reading of CAN (see 5.3.4.1) appears to be relatively frequent with MAY, above all, in scientific style where it is employed owing to its high degree of formality (cf. Palmer 1990 and Facchinetti 2003), as in:

- (103) An intelligibility problem **may** result from a unique deviation source, that is, a deviant sound substitution/conflation, or deletion, or addition within a single word. [JJ,35] (App.2C, ADMIN, 229)
= it is sometimes the case that an intelligibility problem results...
- (104) In L2 acquisition, the same preference for cluster simplification **may**, depending on the learner's L1, be reflected in the use of consonant deletion in a manner similar to that of L1 child-acquisition. [JJ,101] (App.2C, ADMIN, 264)
= the same preference is sometimes reflected in the use...

These examples illustrate that the writer merely reports a state of fact and draws conclusions on the basis of experiments or observations. Such instances can be paraphrased with expressions of quantification like *some*, *any*, *all* or *sometimes* because existential possibility involves generalization, i.e. it applies to at least some members of the set.

7.3 Indeterminate cases - merger

The term 'merger', explained in Leech and Coates (1980), denotes the instances which might be interpreted as epistemic or root with little difference to the message conveyed. Such instances contain elements of both root and epistemic possibility and the two interpretations available coexist in a both/and relationship in that the context fails to exclude one of them. (see Coates 1983:16) Stated differently, merger occurs where the two possibility readings are not mutually exclusive, as in:

- (105) Weinberger suggests that within a second language, awareness of potential ambiguity **may** increase with proficiency. [JJ,119] (App.2C, ACAD, 300)

= epistemic: *perhaps awareness of potential ambiguity will increase with proficiency but perhaps it will not*

= root: *it is sometimes the case that awareness of potential ambiguity increases with proficiency*

- (106) The emerging belief that the prion **may** be as important in evolution as DNA is all the more remarkable given the molecule's sinister reputation. [FS,41] (App.2C, NAT, 308)

= epistemic: *we believe that it is possible that the prion is as important in evolution as DNA*

= root: *there is nothing to prevent the prion from being as important in evolution as DNA*

Altogether 11 tokens of MAY (App.2C: 298-308) and 2 tokens of MIGHT (App.2D: 187,188) have been interpreted as indeterminate. They have been drawn predominantly from academic⁶⁴ and administrative texts, which implies that merger tends to occur only in formal written language owing to the constraints of formality relating to root possibility MAY/MIGHT. Being restricted to particular contexts, merger may be termed 'contextual neutralisation'. (see Coates 1995)

⁶⁴ According to Coates (1983:61), merger is becoming endemic in academic writing.

8. MIGHT

MIGHT is often characterized as a past tense form of MAY which, unlike COULD, has lost its past meaning, for its reference to the past is signalled predominantly only in reported speech, while COULD is regularly used as the past form of CAN. (see 6.1.2) (cf. Huddleston and Pullum 2002:109,202) Therefore, MIGHT is termed 'hypothetical' or 'remote' form of MAY. Like MAY, it conveys primarily epistemic possibility but can be found in its root possibility sense in formal contexts.

Table 5 Readings of MIGHT in the excerpted data

	number of tokens	%
epistemic possibility non-past contexts	67	35
epistemic possibility past contexts	69	36
root possibility non-past contexts	43	22.4
root possibility past contexts	7	3.6
gradient of restriction	1	0.5
Merger between root and epistemic possibility	2	1
undecidable	3	1.5
Total	192	100

When interpreting the findings concerning MIGHT, it is necessary to distinguish between MIGHT followed by bare infinitive and MIGHT in conjunction with perfect infinitive because these two structures are not comparable in all aspects. Firstly, the instances of MIGHT + bare infinitive will be analyzed in 8.1 and 8.2; MIGHT + perfect aspect will be dealt with separately in 8.3.

8.1 Epistemic possibility MIGHT

Table 6 *Uses of epistemic MIGHT*

use	number of tokens	%
present time reference	24	22.6
future time reference	25	23.6
hypothetical present/future time reference	16	15
past time reference past contexts	6	5.7
past time reference reported speech	33	31.1
merger between future and hypothetical reading	2	2
total	106	100

8.1.1 Epistemic MIGHT in non-past contexts

As *Table 6* indicates, MIGHT is an important epistemic modal form commonly found in non-past contexts (37% of all the instances of epistemic MIGHT) (App.2D: 1-4,10-17,21-35,61-80) where it is used like MAY, i.e. to hint at doubt when the speaker is not certain about the truth of the proposition, as in:

(107) 'It's possible I **might** be psychic myself,' Colette said casually. [HM,67] (App.2D, FICT, 63)

= *it is possible that perhaps I am psychic myself*

(108) "I **might** need a holiday after this," the manager said and, in spite of the hospitality of their welcome, it is safe to assume he will not be returning to Saipan or Izumo. [T2,36] (App.2D, NEWS, 41)

= *perhaps I will need a holiday*

Examples (107) and (108) illustrate that MIGHT shows the same range of time reference like MAY, i.e. the proposition can refer either to the present, as in (107), or to the future, as in (108). 25 tokens refer to the future and 24 tokens to the present, which means that there does not seem to be any preference concerning time reference associated with the proposition of epistemic MIGHT. Time reference is usually indicated by other verb forms or temporal indicators in the immediate context. (see 7.1.1.3) (cf. Coates and Leech 1980:27)

Although MIGHT and MAY occur in analogous non-past environments and seem to be associated with identical syntactic co-occurrence patterns,⁶⁵ they are not considered to be synonymous since MIGHT is often characterized in terms of tentative possibility or as indicating a little less certainty about the possibility than MAY. (cf. Dušková 1972, Leech 2004)

8.1.2 Differences between epistemic MAY and MIGHT in non-past contexts

Linguists generally propose that the semantic difference between MAY and MIGHT concerns degrees of the speaker's certainty about the truth of the proposition. Therefore, MAY and MIGHT are not considered to be semantically interchangeable.

The most common view is that MIGHT is the tentative form of MAY expressing a weaker degree of likelihood than MAY. (see Palmer 1990:58, Dušková 1994:192, or Huddleston 1993:170) Consequently, MIGHT is sometimes termed 'doubted possibility' or 'doubt'. For Leech (2004), the expression of possibility is more tentative with MIGHT because it is primarily 'a hypothetical form with a contrary-to-expectation meaning'. Tárnayková (1985:42) views MIGHT as less probable than MAY from the speaker's viewpoint and Quirk *et al.* (1985:223) claim that, being a somewhat more tentative, MIGHT is often preferred to MAY.

The following example seems to support the suggestion that MAY and MIGHT are not in free variation owing to the degree of likelihood:

- (109) 'This lady, for example, when I speak about ear trouble, what I may be picking up is not so much a physical problem – I might be talking about a breakdown in communication.' [HM,27] (App.2D, FICT, 61)

Despite occurring in identical contexts, MIGHT and MAY are not synonymous. MIGHT refers to a possibility which is seen as less expected and indicates that the speaker is hesitant since the topic she is hinting at, i.e. *ear trouble as a*

⁶⁵ The syntactic co-occurrence patterns of MAY and MIGHT are not absolutely identical. MIGHT rarely occurs in concessive usage; according to Leech (2004:98), MIGHT is virtually unused in quasi-subjunctive senses of MAY. Coates (1983:152) adds that epistemic MIGHT is not significantly associated with perfective aspect.

breakdown in communication, appears to be more personal and sensitive than *ear trouble as a physical problem*. Similarly, Gresset (2003:84), investigating the reasons behind the choice of MIGHT instead of MAY, draws the conclusion that MIGHT usually suggests that there is something unexpected.

Larreya (2003) agrees that in some contexts MIGHT undoubtedly expresses a weaker degree of likelihood than MAY, as in *She might want to talk about it one day*. However, he stresses that 'contextual implicatures can make it difficult to judge whether there is any difference in the degree of likelihood', giving the example *The doctor said he can have one small drink a day, that it might even be good for him*. (2003:22) Peters (2004:340) notes that the choice between MAY and MIGHT is usually a matter of perspective rather than right or wrong.

Some instances could be explained in terms of the degree of politeness rather than the degree of likelihood, for example,

(110) Colette would smoothly pass over their business card, and say,
'When you feel ready, you **might** like to come for a private reading.'
[HM,22-3] (App.2D, FICT, 71)

which functions as an offer or invitation. However, since such instances usually occur in interpersonal communication, they are infrequent in the analyzed data.

On the other hand, the number of linguists who are convinced that there is not any significant difference between epistemic MAY and MIGHT in non-past contexts seems to be growing. They believe that MIGHT is the alternative form of MAY in non-past contexts and thus the two verbs are semantically interchangeable. According to Coates (1983), 'MIGHT is an epistemic modal in its own right' and 'there is not any expression of reduced likelihood inherent in the past tense form'. (1983:146-7) Quirk *et al.* (1985) conclude that the difference between MAY and MIGHT in terms of tentativeness 'tends to become neutralized and is not perceived by some speakers'. (1985:234) Leech (2004) adds that 'MIGHT is frequently used almost as a colloquial variant of MAY without any implication of reduced likelihood'. (2004:77)

Coates (1983:152,154) assumes that MIGHT is growing in popularity probably because it is normally used to express likelihood in colloquial speech.

In the excerpted material, epistemic MIGHT is by far the most frequent in fiction (74 tokens) (App.2D: 61-135) and in many cases it could be replaced by MAY without altering the meaning of the utterance, as in:

- (111) 'I'm grateful. I **might** not show it. But I am, sweetheart. I don't know where I'd be now, if we'd never met.' [HM,45] (App.2D, FICT, 62)
- (112) '*Did you send Gavin a change-of-address card?*' 'Yes.' 'Why?' 'As a precaution.' 'Sorry?' 'Something **might** come for me. *For forwarding. A letter. A package.*' [HM,232] (App.2D, FICT, 78)

Palmer (1990) observes that MAY is becoming marginalized in the standard variety. This observation is supported by Trousdale (2003), who identifies the same trend in regional varieties. He finds out that in Tyneside English epistemic modality is normally expressed by MIGHT since MAY is 'marked stylistically and socially as an old-fashioned, written and even ultra-standard form' and therefore it is rare.⁶⁶ Trousdale adds that the semantic levelling of MAY and MIGHT is not so advanced in the standard variety. In contrast, Leech's study (2003) reveals that epistemic meaning of MAY is still flourishing in the 1990s, and has even shown an increase over its frequency in 1961 in the written corpora.

8.1.3 Hypothetical epistemic MIGHT

Hypothetical MIGHT, also called 'conditional' or 'remote of MAY', occurs commonly in epistemic as well as root possibility meanings; the latter being analyzed closely in 8.2. Perkins (1983:51,53) argues that MIGHT, used as the conditional equivalent of epistemic MAY, is interpreted hypothetically on account of a condition which must be always present in some way, i.e. it may be realized formally as a conditional clause or may be implicit in the context of utterance.

16 tokens of epistemic MIGHT (15%) have been assigned the hypothetical reading (App.2D: 6,17-19,36,37,42,43,72,80-86); the majority (8 tokens) being drawn from fiction, for example:

⁶⁶ According to Trousdale (2003), the rarity of MAY is linked to formal linguistic and sociolinguistics issues. MAY displays some morphosyntactic anomalies, for example, epistemic MAY does not occur in questions; MAY can express the range of modalities, namely epistemic, dynamic and root possibility.

(113) 'If we moved, we **might** be able to lose them. *I suppose Morris will stick, but I'd like to shake off his friends.*' [HM,201] (App.2D, FICT, 82)

= *I believe that perhaps we would be able to lose them on the condition that we moved*

(114) *We have also been looking at some important, if essentially technical, changes to the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA). These would enable us, for example, to enable financial investigators who are police staff to exercise more of the powers under POCA, to contract out the enforcement of confiscation orders, and to examine what improvements **might** be necessary to the 'consent regime' in POCA.* [FC,25] (App.2D, ADMIN, 5)

= *it is possible that some improvements would be necessary...*

The paraphrases of examples (113) and (114) imply that, as with the scope of negation or time reference, the main predication is affected by the unreality while the modal predication remains unaffected, i.e. the speaker/writer expresses his/her opinion (at the moment of speaking) about an unlikely present or future situation. (cf. Coates 1983:158 or Dušková 1972:32)

The condition is explicitly expressed by a conditional clause, as in (113), only in 5 instances, the interpretation of which is thus clearly hypothetical. In the remaining cases, the condition is unexpressed and, as Coates (1983:160) claims, it is often difficult to posit. We have to rely on contextual clues, as in (114) where the hypothetical reading is facilitated due to the verb form *would* in the main clause. However, the hypothetical interpretation is not always obvious and thus some cases are seen to be indeterminate. (see 8.1.4)

8.1.4 Indeterminate cases of epistemic MIGHT

Two instances of epistemic MIGHT have been classified as indeterminate since they permit two readings in the contexts provided. According to Larreya (2003):

"...the unreality implicitly expressed by the past tense form of the modal seems usually fairly obvious, but in some cases the presupposition of unreality is much less clear." (2003:24)

Stated differently, it is not apparent whether the reading of such instances is hypothetical or purely epistemic, as in

(115) When she'd argued back – 'they **might** not understand me' – Colette lost her temper and said, 'Alison without blood pressure we'd all be dead, but if you want to sound like something from the remedial stream, don't let me get in your way.' [HM,24] (App.2D, FICT, 117)

= *perhaps they won't/wouldn't understand me*

(116) 'I'm trying to envisage – you didn't bring pictures, did you?' 'I'll drop some in.' 'That **might** be a help. So we could work out what sort of class of item we're dealing with...' [HM,94] (App.2D, FICT, 118)

= *perhaps that will/would be a help*

The examples illustrate that epistemic MIGHT is indeterminate between future and hypothetical epistemic reading. We can, however, agree with Coates (1983) arguing that 'the difference in meaning is not crucial to understanding the message and is not therefore significant'. (1983:163)

8.1.5 Past epistemic MIGHT⁶⁷

Huddleston and Pullum (2002:197) view past time MIGHT as very rare and somewhat formal or literary in style. MIGHT with past time reference is considered to be restricted to the backshifted senses in reported speech only. (see Dušková 1994:192 or Palmer 2001:34) However, 6 instances of past time epistemic MIGHT have been recorded outside reported speech, 5 of them in fiction (App.2D: 87-91) and one in popular scientific style:

(117) *Sometimes Al wanted chocolate out of her bag, sometimes she was facing the pangs of birth or the shock of a car crash. They **might** be awake for minutes or hours.* [HM,44] (App2D, FICT, 88)

= *perhaps they were awake for minutes or hours*

(118) *Some flowers open and close so punctually that a once-popular gardening fashion was to plant flowers in sectors of a bed resembling a clock face. These were so planned that flowers opening in each sector matched the position of a notional hour hand on the clock. In season, all being well, one **might** actually be able to tell the time by consulting one's flowering clock.* [NS, 77] (App.2D, NAT, 16)

= *perhaps one was actually able to tell the time*

⁶⁷ Tárnayková (1985:41) calls this use of MIGHT 'retrospective imagination'.

These examples illustrate that MIGHT can occur in past contexts signalled by the presence of past verb forms (*wanted, were planned, watched...*) and prove that past epistemic MIGHT can occasionally be found outside reported speech.

8.1.6 Epistemic MIGHT in reported speech

As opposed to epistemic MIGHT in past contexts, MIGHT in reported speech is quite common; there are 33 instances in the analyzed corpus. (App.2D:17,44-51,92-116) Backshifted epistemic MIGHT have been drawn primarily from two subcorpora, namely fiction (25 tokens) and newspaper reporting (7 tokens).

In nominal clauses of reported speech MIGHT functions as a past form of epistemic MAY or MIGHT, the proposition of which can refer either to the present or to the future, as in: (cf. Dušková 1994:192)

- (119) *For fortunes, the biggest part of the trade was young girls. They always thought there **might** be a stranger on the horizon, love around the corner. [HM,8] (App.2D, FICT, 93)*

They always thought: "There may/might be a stranger..." = perhaps there is a stranger ...

- (120) He [Marcel Desailly] stated that, subconsciously, they **might** surrender at some exacting moment. [T2,29] (App.2D, NEWS, 47)

He stated: 'We may/might surrender at some exacting moment.' = I'm not sure but perhaps we will surrender...

The proposition referring to present time is reported in example (119), whereas in example (120) the proposition in direct speech would have future time reference. Time reference of the proposition in direct speech can usually be determined on account of the immediate context. However, sometimes more than one interpretation can apply, as in:

- (121) They saw a converted flat in Whitton, and thought it **might** be a good investment. [HM,54] (App.2D, FICT, 99)

= they thought: 'Perhaps it will be/would be a good investment'.

Nonetheless, such instances are primarily treated as having past time reference owing to their occurrence in reported speech, their time reference in the original statement in direct speech being disregarded.

8.2 Root possibility MIGHT

Hypothetical root possibility MIGHT,⁶⁸ like hypothetical epistemic MIGHT, is commonly used. These two meanings are, however, quite distinct:

(122) I don't feel strongly either way, though if there is a good reason for doing it – if you could find a yeast that would give you a beer with a four-year shelf-life, for example – then it **might** warrant attention. [NS, 45] (App.2D, NAT, 8)

= I am not certain but perhaps it would warrant attention

(123) These sorts of orders **might** be used in cases where there was a strong weight of evidence but either not enough for a prosecution, prosecution was planned but additional measures were urgently needed to prevent harms in the interim, prosecution had been ruled not appropriate on public interest grounds, or the evidence of criminal activity could not be prosecuted (eg because it took place overseas). [FC,10] (App.2D, ADMIN, 136)

= using these sorts of orders in cases... would be possible

The paraphrases indicate that (122) conveys epistemic possibility as the main predication is affected by unreality, while (123) conveys root possibility since the modal predication is affected.

As for distribution, like root possibility MAY, hypothetical root possibility MIGHT occurs particularly in formal language where it might be substituted by COULD. Hypothetical root MIGHT has been identified, above all, in popular scientific and administrative style (App.2D:136-155,158-166,168-178). Most instances appear in utterances with the condition implied in the context, as in (124) which is interpreted hypothetically since it has been drawn from an article describing potential uses of invented devices:

(124) Soldiers and firefighters **might** also use such devices to steer remote-controlled robots with their tongues, leaving their hands free. [NS,23] (App.2D, NAT, 163)

According to Coates (1983:160), hypothetical root MIGHT is frequently used with verbs such as *say*, *add*, *ask*, *describe*, or *call*. However, only one example has been identified:

(125) This kind of economy is a particular advantage for plants that live in what **might be termed** stressful environments with limited

⁶⁸ Some linguists, for example Leech (2004) or Palmer (1990), do not acknowledge hypothetical root possibility MIGHT.

resources, where they would be hard-pressed to produce new flowers and so must protect their existing investment. [NS,77] (App.2D, NAT, 175)

The function of such structures is to draw the reader’s attention and at the same time soften the force of what is being said in that the writer allows for the existence of alternative descriptions.

One instance of root MIGHT has been assigned the past root possibility reading:⁶⁹

- (126) The programmable self-propelled machine might even go back as far as the 8th century BC, according to Homer’s Iliad: “[Hephaestus] was making twenty tripods that were to stand by the wall of his house, and he set wheels of gold under them all that they **might** go of their own selves to the assemblies of the gods and come back again – marvels indeed to see.” [NS,35] (App.2D, NAT,167)

This example might be interpreted as *he set wheels of gold under them all so that it was possible for them to go of their own selves*, i.e. as an instance of a purpose clause.

8.3 MIGHT + perfect aspect

Table 7 Readings of MIGHT + perfect aspect

interpretation	number of tokens
epistemic possibility past	18
epistemic possibility past hypothetical	12
root possibility past hypothetical	5
undecidable	2
total	37

⁶⁹ According to Coates (1983:147), MIGHT can occasionally function as the past form of root possibility MAY, as in *There was a private room where 40 men might be concealed*. However, this meaning is usually expressed by COULD.

As *Table 7* indicates, the interpretation of MIGHT + perfect infinitive is far more complex in comparison with that of MAY + perfect infinitive, which has a distinctive epistemic reading. According to Coates (1983:150), the most striking difference is ‘the lack of association between perfective aspect and epistemic MIGHT’ because this structure can convey both epistemic and root possibility. For Dušková (1972:34,36), the distinguishing factor is the implication of non-fulfilment associated with MIGHT + perfect infinitive. However, she adds that non-fulfilment is not inherent in the form itself, but results from the context.

In other words, depending on the context, the structure MIGHT + perfect infinitive denotes either a possible situation in the past or a non-actualised event, which can be illustrated by the following instances:

(127) ‘He grew up in Uxbridge. But you know, she **might have had** him in hospital.’ [HM,59] (App.2D, FICT, 122)

= *it is possible that she had him in hospital*

(128) *Arsenal were less than fantastic in the first half.* Had they displayed as much aggression as the seedy mass of ticket touts outside the nearby Tube station, the game **might not have drifted** so easily away from them. [T1,31] (App.2D, NEWS, 54)

= *perhaps the game would not have drifted so easily from them if they had displayed ...*

Example (127) undoubtedly denotes a possible situation in the past as it occurs in a passage where past events and states are described. On the other hand, example (128) is conclusively hypothetical owing to its occurrence in an unreal conditional clause.

The findings in *Table 7* show that MIGHT followed by perfect infinitive can signal unreal epistemic possibility, past epistemic possibility and occasionally unreal root possibility. The hypothetical possibility readings appear to be the most common ones.

8.3.1 Past epistemic possibility

MIGHT + perfect infinitive in its non-factive past epistemic possibility reading is analogous to MAY + perfect infinitive in that it is used when the speaker expresses doubt about past events and situations. 18 instances of MIGHT + perfect infinitive have been assigned this reading (App.2D:7,8,20,52,53,55,58, 120-130), the majority occurring in fiction. Perfect infinitive signals the anteriority and the proposition can refer either to definite past, as in (129), or to indefinite past, as in (130):

(129) I **might** have dreamed it, I used to dream I was flying. [HM,117]
(App.2D, FICT, 127)

= *I am not sure, perhaps I dreamt it*

(130) I was thinking, you never do know, Keith **might** have got his face fixed up. *They can do wonders these days, can't they? He might have got his appearance changed.* [HM,212-2] (App.2D, FICT, 129)

= *perhaps Keith has got his face fixed up*

In a few cases, MIGHT + perfect infinitive denotes past of epistemic MAY when it occurs in reported speech, as in:

(131) Earlier in the week there was bemusement when Marcel Desailly, the captain, said that the side, having won the World Cup in 1998 and the European Championship in 2000, **might** have run out of things to prove. [T2,29] (App.2D, NEWS, 58)

= *he said that it was possible that the side ran out of things to prove*

As has been demonstrated, to express epistemic possibility in the past, both MAY and MIGHT + perfect aspect can be used. Since they can occur in similar contexts, the difference between the meanings they convey is analogous to that between MAY and MIGHT in non-past contexts. (see 8.1.2) Quirk *et al.* (1985), concluding that the difference between MAY and MIGHT tends to become neutralized, observe that this neutralization may analogically extend to contexts in which only MIGHT would normally be considered appropriate, as in *An earlier launch of the lifeboat may/might have averted the tragedy*. They consider such cases to be 'evidence of a continuing tendency to erode the distinctions between real and unreal senses of the modals'. (1985:234)

8.3.2 Past hypothetical epistemic possibility

As has been exemplified, the past hypothetical reading of MIGHT + perfect aspect is determined by the context in which an utterance occurs. (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985:231 or Leech 2004:127) 12 instances of MIGHT + perfect aspect have been interpreted hypothetically (App.2D: 9,54,56,57,59,60,131-135), the majority occurring in unreal conditional clauses, which support the counterfactual interpretation of the structure, as in:

- (132) She tried to imagine the life they **might have had**, if they'd been planning to have a family. [HM, 219] (App.2D, FICT, 134)
= *she tried to imagine the life they would possibly have had, if they'd been planning to have a family*

In the remaining cases, counter-factuality is usually unambiguously supported by unreality implied in the immediate context, for example:

- (133) 'You have a very peculiar imagination. How can you think I would marry a man like that?' 'You might not know. Till you'd tied the knot. You **might have had** a nasty surprise.' [HM,200] (App.2D, FICT, 133)
= *perhaps you would have been surprised*

Infrequently, the whole construction is marked for past in indirect speech, as in:

- (134) Mark Stringer, the consultant surgeon, told police that her death **might have been explained** as a "million to one tragedy" had it not been for what happened on Tuesday of that week, the second day after the theatre had been reopened. [T2,9] (App.2D, NEWS, 57)
= *Mark Stringer believed it was possible that it would have been explained ...*

8.3.3 Past hypothetical root possibility

In its root possibility sense MIGHT + perfect infinitive signals counter-factuality as well. However, in comparison with past hypothetical epistemic possibility, it is rather rare, there are only five instances in the excerpted material (App.2D:157,179,184,185,186):

- (135) James Simpson-Daniel **might have been** with Lewsey at the World Cup last year but just missed selection; similarly he has watched

from the bench during the RBS Six Nations Championship as England's grand-slam crown slipped. [T1,33] (App.2D, NEWS, 184)

- (136) The decision to use the proceeds of the sale of the mansion to renovate Royal Lodge, which is described by royal courtiers as the "house where time stood still", was taken in order to deflect any criticism that **might** have arisen had public money been used. [T2,3] (App.2D, NEWS, 185)

These instances could be interpreted as follows: *to be at the World Cup would have been possible for James Simpson-Daniel if he had not missed selection and using public money would have made it possible for criticism to arise*, which implies that they are contra-factive.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002:204) mention potential ambiguity relating to the scope of perfect aspect in *He might have killed her*. This utterance can be interpreted as past epistemic possibility *It might be that he killed her* or as past hypothetical root possibility *His killing her was possible but unactualised consequence of what he did*. This type of merger has not been identified in the analyzed data.

8.4 Undecidable

The category labelled 'undecidable' contains those examples which have not been assigned unambiguously epistemic or root reading:

- (137) Apart from some fragments of an 11th-century treatise written in Andalusia by another engineer Ibn Khalaf Al-Muradi, and the 9th-century *Book of Ingenious Devices*, every description of machines from the Islamic world, the Byzantine empire and from China and India lacked the mechanical details that would have shown whether or not they **might** have been programmable. [NS,34] (App.2D, NAT, 190)
- (138) Al's voice was calm, unhurried, without the touch of tenderness that would overwhelm the woman entirely; dignified and precise, she **might** have been querying a grocery bill. [HM,38] (App.2D, FICT, 191)
- (139) 'You have a very peculiar imagination. How can you think I would marry a man like that?' 'You **might** not know. Till you'd tied the knot. You might have had a nasty surprise.' [HM,200] (App.2D, FICT, 192)

Examples (137) and (139) are negative, so that they should be interpreted as epistemic possibility. However, I would interpret (139) *you cannot know that*. Similarly, I would assign the root possibility reading to (137), i.e. *whether or not it was possible to program them*. Example (138) occurs with progressive aspect, but the epistemic reading does not seem to fit. These instances undoubtedly confirm that root and epistemic possibility are not strictly separated and that modal verbs may behave ‘unpredictably’.

The preliminary findings which have been itemized in Chapters 5 – 8 will be now contrasted with the aim of summarizing and illustrating the major differences and similarities in the usage and distribution of CAN, MAY, COULD and MIGHT. Firstly, particular attention will be paid to potential overlapping meanings and the extent of overlap between root possibility CAN and MAY on the one hand and between COULD and MIGHT in their epistemic as well as root possibility sense on the other. Secondly, distribution of the four modal verbs in the examined registers will be analyzed with regard to the frequency of occurrence of particular modal meanings. Finally, the modal meanings will be discussed in the framework of hedging in order to determine which of them are commonly employed as hedges.

9. Meanings and uses of CAN and MAY

Both CAN and MAY are described by Leech (2004:117) as expressing an element of uncertainty and thus belonging to the truth-neutral category, which corresponds to Coates's claim that 'they are non-factive because the speaker commits himself to neither the truth nor the falsehood of the proposition expressed in the utterance'. (1983:237)

Nevertheless, CAN and MAY can rarely be treated as synonyms because, as the figures in *Table 8* demonstrate, their main usages are distinct and they are overwhelmingly associated with different meanings.

Table 8 *Meanings of CAN and MAY*

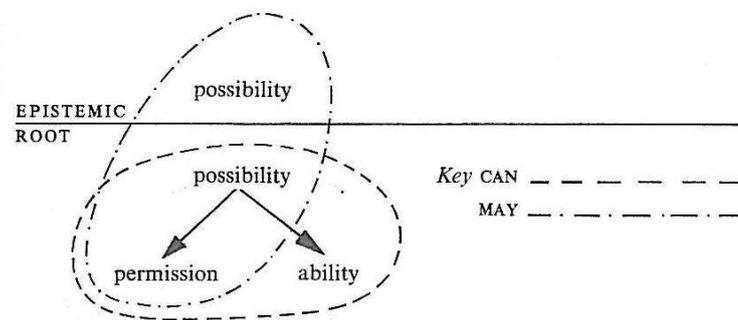
meaning	CAN		MAY	
	number of tokens	%	number of tokens	%
epistemic possibility	-	-	184	59.7
root possibility	232	86.6	103	33.4
indeterminate	36	13.4	21	6.9
total	268	100	308	100

The permission and ability sense of CAN and the root possibility and permission sense of MAY are seen to be secondary owing to their lower frequency of occurrence.⁷⁰ In addition, it is not possible to substitute CAN for epistemic MAY in that CAN does not normally convey epistemic possibility. Consequently, as Huddleston (1993:170) points out, there is no CAN/COULD contrast analogous to epistemic MAY/MIGHT contrast. (see 8.1.1)

Table 8 implies that the semantic overlap of CAN and MAY is obviously restricted to their root possibility meaning, which is illustrated by Leech and Coates (1980) as follows:

⁷⁰ This is confirmed by Coates's analysis (1995:61) of a representative sample of 200 cases of CAN and 200 cases of MAY drawn from written and spoken English. Her results are as follows: CAN - 129 occurrences of root possibility, 41 ability, 10 permission, 20 undecidable; MAY - 147 occurrences of epistemic possibility, 32 permission, 7 root possibility, 13 undecidable, 1 valediction.

Figure 3 *Semantic overlap of CAN and MAY*



Leech and Coates (1980:85)

Even if CAN and MAY are essentially linked in their root possibility (and permission) sense, they differ in distribution and thus the extent of overlap does not seem to be significant. (cf. Leech 2004:27 or Coates 1980:209, 217). This issue will be discussed thoroughly in 9.2.

9.1 Theoretical vs. factual possibility

As has been exemplified so far, root and epistemic possibility can be essentially distinguished in terms of scope. With regard to the primary uses associated with CAN and MAY, Matthews (2003) states:

“Root CAN is an assertion of possibility, i.e. *it is the case that p is possible*, as opposed to epistemic MAY expressing a predicted or speculated possibility, i.e. *it is possibly the case that p*”. (2003:60)

In Tárnyiková’s (1985) terms, theoretical possibility conveyed by CAN is intra-propositional (concerning just part of the proposition) while epistemic possibility expressed by MAY is extra-propositional (concerning the proposition as a whole). This difference might be illustrated by the following examples:

- (141) The Foreign Office added, however, that there **may** be many Britons in India that it does not know about. [T2,1] (App.2C, NEWS, 117)
= *it is possibly the case that there are many Britons in India*
- (142) This document describes that strategy and explains what organisations and individuals **can** do to help in its implementation. [IT,1] (App.2A, ADMIN, 22)
= *the strategy enables individuals to do something to help*

Leech (2004:117) considers factual possibility in (141) to be stronger and more immediate since it relates to 'the actual likelihood of the occurrence of a particular situation' (*there are many Britons*). By contrast, CAN in (142) relates to theoretically conceivable happening (*nothing prevents us from doing something*) since it is associated predominantly with general statements where possible or likely results are determined by external conditions.

The contrast between root CAN and epistemic MAY is clearly indicated in negative structures. *Cannot* negates the modality, i.e. it directs the negation to the possibility itself, whereas *may not* negates the proposition, i.e. it conveys a negative fact:⁷¹ (cf. Hladký 1983:95 or Leech 2004)

(143) Even for fluent listeners, language is a guide to context which, itself, **cannot** be activated until the utterance has been heard. [JJ,91] (App.2A, ACAD, 105)

= *activating the context is not possible until ...*

(144) Drugs **may** not be the only treatment option. [NS,43] (App.1C, NAT, 70)

= *it might be that drugs are not the only treatment option*

The four examples provided definitely illustrate that root CAN and epistemic MAY are quite distinct in nature. In Perkins's (1983) words:

"CAN focuses primarily on the current state of circumstances, whereas epistemic MAY focuses primarily on the current verifiability of the truth of the proposition." (1983:39)

Nonetheless, CAN and MAY do not correspond exactly with theoretical and factual possibility, the former being conveyed also by MAY in formal settings. The occurrences of root possibility MAY and their distribution are of particular interest in the following section.

⁷¹ As to negative forms, the difference between *may not* and *cannot* is parallel to *might not* and *could not*.

9.2 Overlap in root possibility

As *Figure 3* above clearly demonstrates, CAN and MAY can overlap only in their theoretical possibility sense. Moreover, as negated CAN and MAY are essentially distinct and thus not comparable (see 9.1), the potential overlap is restricted to affirmative utterances. Consequently, merely tokens of root possibility CAN and MAY in affirmative utterances are taken into consideration in this chapter.

The findings presented in *Table 9* below confirm that root possibility CAN and MAY are essentially distinct in terms of formality, or, as Dušková (1994:186) states, there is a stylistic difference between CAN and MAY.

*Table 9 Distribution of root possibility CAN and MAY in the examined registers*⁷²

	CAN		MAY	
	number of tokens	%	number of tokens	%
ADMIN	50 (64)	78.1	33 (68)	48.5
ACAD	51 (83)	61.4	50 (98)	51
NAT	39 (43)	90.1	17 (66)	16.5
NEWS	29 (46)	63	2 (54)	3.7
FICT	22 (32)	68.7	1 (22)	4.5
total	191 (268)	71.3	103 (308)	32.5

The first figure denotes the number of tokens with the root possibility reading
The bracketed figure denotes the total of tokens in the examined register

MAY functioning as the exponent of root possibility is restricted to formal contexts (cf. Coates and Leech 1980:27 or Coates 1983:103), so that the overlapping senses can be identified mostly in formal written language, particularly in ADMIN and ACAD, where the occurrence of root possibility MAY is significant. On the other hand, root possibility MAY is rare or virtually non-existent in FICT and NEWS. Hence we may consider CAN as the unmarked member of the pair in that it is not restricted in its use and is roughly equally distributed in all the analyzed registers. Papafragou (2000) states:

⁷² Altogether 41 tokens of root possibility CAN are not included, 38 being negated and 3 occurring in negative environments.

“...the pressure for differentiation between the two verbs seems to be responsible for the relatively low frequency of root possibility interpretations of MAY (since CAN grammaticalises precisely this part of the conceptual space of modality in English).” (2000:78)

As for the findings relating to NAT, these are rather surprising because in non-academic natural sciences where facts are based on experiments and observation, root possibility usually prevails, being associated with the need for objectivity. By contrast, scientific style shows a higher frequency of mostly epistemic MAY since it is associated with expressing doubt and caution. (see Facchinetti 2003) However, the fact that NAT is represented by articles from the magazines *New Scientist* and *Focus*, which also include interviews, might account for the significant frequency of epistemic MAY.

Both root possibility CAN and MAY have been found, above all, in general statements of possibilities with impersonal subjects (cf. Coates 1980:217-219), as in the following examples:

- (145) ‘Look, Col, as you quite well know, everything that **can** go wrong for me out there, has gone wrong at sometime.’ [HM, 40] (App.2A, FICT, 211)
- (146) This presents law enforcement with real problems in coming to grips with a sort of crime which in addition to being highly harmful and requiring long and complex investigations, also has many of the characteristics of a business and **may** depend on a range of facilitators with varying degrees of culpability in the underlying criminality. [FC, 9] (App.1C, ADMIN, 180)

Example (146) demonstrates that MAY, as opposed to CAN, is marked for formality⁷³ and is not likely to be substituted for CAN in (145). However, it would be possible to use CAN instead of MAY in (146). These examples illustrate that when root possibility CAN and MAY are contrasted in contexts differing in degree of formality, e.g. FICT as opposed to ADMIN, they appear to be in complementary distribution and can thus be described in terms of stylistic differences. (cf. Leech 2004:81)

⁷³ The same formal-informal distinction operates in the case of CAN and MAY expressing permission.

In contrast, when root possibility CAN and MAY are studied in formal contexts, e.g. ACAD or ADMIN, they are viewed to be in free variation. Although MAY primarily conveys epistemic possibility, the findings presented in *Table 9* indicate that its root possibility sense is not infrequent in formal contexts, particularly in ADMIN and ACAD, where it is employed with approximately equal frequency as epistemic MAY. It is then in these two subcorpora that we can, and will, talk about interchangeability of CAN and MAY, as in

- (147) In doing so, we will look at the action being taken to prevent the radicalisation which **can** lead to terrorism, action to pursue terrorists and those who sponsor them, as well as what is being done to protect the public and deal with terrorist incidents. [IT,5] (App.2A, ADMIN, 28)
- (148) Identifying the factors which **may** lead to radicalisation, and some of the arguments used to justify it, are important so that we can focus our responses in order to reduce the risk of terrorism. [IT,10] (App.1C, ADMIN, 194)
- (149) The time has come for us to examine in greater detail the ways in which NBES inter-speaker pronunciation **may** vary from the L1, and the extent to which such variation **can** impede intelligibility when NBESs interact with one another. [JJ,32] (App.2C, ACAD, 225)

Obviously, there is no difference in meaning or effect between CAN and MAY in these instances. In examples (147) and (148) they occur in analogous contexts and are followed by the same lexical verb. In example (149), they are employed in one utterance and seem to alternate merely to avoid repetition of formal MAY. Hence we might conclude that in these settings CAN and MAY are in free variation and can be viewed as equivalent forms or stylistic variants. (cf. Leech 2004:76 or Dušková 1994:186)

Instances of interchangeability can be found, above all, in affirmative statements with inanimate subjects, as in the examples above, or in passive structures with unexpressed agents, for example:

- (150) In the meantime, fraudsters are clearly taking advantage of the fact that the lack of routine data sharing means all too often that the left hand in the public sector does not know what the right hand is doing, and contradictory information **can** be submitted to a range of different agencies without it being picked up. [FC,13] (App.2A, ADMIN, 46)

- (151) *The term “jihad” refers primarily to non-violent struggle, for example the spiritual struggle to lead a good life. It **may** also be used to mean military struggle, but the vast majority of Muslims do not consider today’s terrorism to be legitimate, military jihad. [IT,7] (App.2C, ADMIN, 212)*

As in these examples, indefinite human agents are usually inferable from context. The findings reveal a considerable extent of overlap in passive structures with implied human agents; there are altogether 68 passive structures with implied agents in ACAD and ADMIN and in all of them these two verbs are interchangeable.

Of all 184 occurrences with the root possibility reading in ACAD and ADMIN, CAN and MAY are mutually interchangeable in 174 structures. There are 5 cases of CAN where the substitution may result in merger, as in (152), and 5 occurrences of MAY in which CAN is likely to favour the ability interpretation, as in (153):

- (152) Credit reference agencies seek to get information on the names of the deceased as quickly as possible, but this **can (may)** take many months. [FC,14] (App.2A, ADMIN, 8)

= *it is the case that ‘it takes many months’ is possible*

= *we assume that this will perhaps take many months*

- (153) Yet this variation in pronunciation, morphology, syntax, and lexis is apparently ‘so acute that the same individual, playing various social roles, **may (can)** frequently display form of standard and non-standard Englishes in different contexts’ (Brown *et al.* 1994:154). [JJ, 26] (App.2C, ACAD, 221)

= *playing various social roles makes it possible for the same individual to display form of standard and non-standard Englishes...*

= *the same individual is able to display form of standard and non-standard Englishes in different contexts*

The ability reading in example (153) is facilitated by the co-occurrence of the modal with a human agent and dynamic verb, whereas MAY merely presents a possibility due to the enabling external conditions.

Dušková (1972:41-43) draws similar conclusions, but, apart from examining the nature of subject and passive structures, she focuses on the role

of complementary verb semantics. As a result, she lists some lexical verbs which seem to support or imply the ability reading of CAN, for example, *find*⁷⁴ in its full meaning (*discover by inquiry*) or *verify*. Similarly, the ability interpretation can apply in passive constructions with definite agents (*The match can/may be won*). However, no such instances have been found in the studied material.

In conclusion, the modal verbs CAN and MAY should not be treated as synonymous because there are many distributions where they cannot compete. In the majority of cases root possibility CAN and MAY are in complementary distribution, i.e. MAY is obviously marked for formality and is unlikely to substitute for CAN in less formal contexts. Therefore, they may be regarded as contextually determined variants realizing the same core meaning. Their interchangeability is largely restricted to highly formal settings, where CAN and MAY are employed as stylistic variants, and seem to be conditioned by specific syntactic co-occurrence patterns. Yet the extent of the semantic overlap between root possibility CAN and MAY in such settings is remarkable, they are interchangeable in 95% of cases in ADMIN and ACAD.

⁷⁴ However, when the verb *find* is used in its sense *occur*, the two modals are interchangeable; in the sense *ascertain* or *obtain*, there is no difference in the passive, but in active structures CAN seems to be semantically more appropriate. (Dušková 1972:41)

10. Meanings and uses of COULD and MIGHT

It has been illustrated that morphologically past tense forms COULD and MIGHT commonly refer to present or future time. (cf. Bybee 1995:503, Quirk *et al.* 1985:231 or Downing and Locke 1992:387) While COULD also commonly acts as the past time equivalent of CAN, a similar use of MIGHT is virtually non-existent (mere 6 occurrences). (see 8.1.5) Generally, COULD and MIGHT are regarded to be relevant, above all, to the analysis of their hypothetical uses (see Palmer 1990)

Table 10 *Readings of COULD and MIGHT in the excerpted data*

reading	MIGHT	COULD
epistemic possibility non-past contexts	51	8
epistemic possibility non-past contexts hypothetical	16	-
epistemic possibility past contexts	69	-
root possibility non-past contexts hypothetical	43	142
root possibility past contexts	7	63
gradient of restriction	1	-
gradient of inherency	-	16
merger between root and epistemic reading	2	-
undecidable	3	3
total	192	232

Table 10 shows that both COULD and MIGHT can convey epistemic as well as root possibility, however, with dissimilar frequency. The primary use of MIGHT is epistemic and in this use MIGHT may have present or future time reference, can be used as a past tense form in reported speech or as a hypothetical form in non-past contexts; and all these uses are quite common. Root possibility meaning of MIGHT is infrequent and seems to be restricted to conveying

hypothetical possibility⁷⁵ in formal contexts. On the other hand, COULD is essentially associated with hypothetical root possibility in non-past contexts, whereas its epistemic possibility reading is infrequent. (cf. Coates 1983:167) COULD and MIGHT, unlike CAN and MAY, cover subtler senses and thus 6 tokens have been labelled ‘undecidable’ in that they have been difficult to interpret; these were discussed in 6.3 and 8.4.

10.1 Hypothetical use

The findings in *Table 10* confirm that non-past hypothetical uses are by far the most common and imply that these uses of COULD and MIGHT correspond to those of CAN and MAY, i.e. COULD is used merely in its root possibility sense, whereas MIGHT appears in both epistemic and root possibility sense, as in:

- (154) A series of impacts **could** accelerate the NEA incrementally, and if the NEA – or a fragment of it – moved towards a keyhole, a waiting gravity tractor **could** trim the deflection. [NS, 19] (App.2B, NAT, 77)
= root possibility, i.e. *accelerating the NEA would be possible; its moving towards a keyhole would enable a waiting gravity tractor to trim the deflection*
- (155) If you knew what the dogs were up to, she reasoned, if you knew what they were up to in spirit world, it **might** help you work out where their owners were now. [HM, 23] (App.2D, FICT, 72)
= epistemic possibility, i.e. *perhaps it would help you work out*
- (156) *Many NEAs are fragile, and the gravity holding them together is tiny. So attempting to move one using a sudden impulse risks fragmenting it – leaving a number of pieces, any one of which **might** still hit us.* [NS, 19] (App2D, NAT, 161)
= root possibility, i.e. *nothing would prevent any of the pieces from hitting us*

The paraphrases of these examples suggest that the main distinction between hypothetical epistemic and hypothetical root possibility is analogous to negating these two. The meaning of the predication is interpreted hypothetically with epistemic possibility, as in (155), whereas the meaning of the modal is

⁷⁵ Coates (1980) adds that MIGHT can also express past root possibility in formal contexts; however, it rarely appears in this use. There is only one occurrence of past root possibility MIGHT in the excerpted material. (see 8.2)

interpreted hypothetically with root possibility, as in (154) and (156) (see also Coates 1983:239-240)

A large number of tokens are interpreted hypothetically due to their location in hypothetical conditional sentences, as in (154) and (155), or because the condition is inferable from the context, as in (156). (cf. Coates 1983 or Gresset 2003) Despite the predominant occurrence of COULD and MIGHT in main clauses of conditional sentences, these two verbs are not syntactically restricted and can be used in subordinate clauses as well (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985:231 or Downing and Locke 1992:394), for example

- (157) “The case for [dark energy] would be much stronger if it **could** be detected in our neighbourhood, where the interpretation of [data] is easier than in the distant universe,” says Gene Byrd of the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. [NS,18] (App.2B, NAT, 57)
= *if something enabled us to detect it in our neighbourhood*

Owing to their occurrence in unreal conditional sentences or in hypothetical settings, COULD and MIGHT are seen as contra-factual, for example, in (157) *dark energy has not been detected in our neighbourhood*. Therefore, Huddleston (1993:170) characterizes these two verbs as indicating factual remoteness.

As to interchangeability, hypothetical COULD and MIGHT can be substituted for each other merely in their root possibility sense (see *Table 10*), as in (154) and (156) above. Like CAN and MAY, they occur in free variation in formal settings, particularly in affirmative active sentences with inanimate subjects and in passive structures (cf. Leech 2004:126-7), for example

- (158) *The reporting system has recently been reviewed by Sir Stephen Lander*. The key conclusion of this review was that the reports are a potentially invaluable resource and **could** be used much better. [FC, 20] (App.2B, ADMIN, 4)
- (159) These sorts of orders **might** be used in cases where there was a strong weight of evidence but either not enough for a prosecution, prosecution was planned but additional measures were urgently needed to prevent harms in the interim, prosecution had been ruled not appropriate on public interest grounds, or the evidence of criminal activity could not be prosecuted (eg because it took place overseas). [FC,10] (App.2D, ADMIN, 136)

However, if MIGHT co-occurs with a human subject whose nature is compatible with the ability reading (cf. Dušková 1972:45), then COULD should not substitute for it. COULD would present a possibility due to ability or capacity, which means that the two utterances would not be identical in meaning, as in:

- (160) Soldiers and firefighters **might (could)** also use such devices to steer remote-controlled robots with their tongues, leaving their hands free. [NS, 23] (App.2D, NAT, 163)
- = *nothing would prevent soldiers and firefighters from using such devices*
- = *soldiers and firefighters would be able to use such devices*

As has been exemplified, the factors affecting interchangeability of hypothetical root possibility COULD and MIGHT are identical with those applied to root possibility CAN and MAY. Of 124 occurrences of root possibility COULD and MIGHT in ACAD, ADMIN and NAT, these verbs are not interchangeable merely in four instances in that COULD might be interpreted as ability, as in (160). Consequently, we might conclude that hypothetical root possibility COULD and MIGHT are in most cases interchangeable apart from considerations of formality.

10.2 Past tense use and reported speech

In comparison with hypothetical root possibility COULD and MIGHT, we cannot talk about interchangeability of COULD and MIGHT with past time reference because in main clauses only COULD is commonly used to refer to the past (see *Table 10*), as in:

- (161) The explosions **could** be heard across the capital, which was almost deserted as people stayed home for fear of the escalating fighting which flares up almost every night in districts where guerrillas have their forces. [T1,2] (App.2B, NEWS, 129)
- = *it was possible to hear the explosions*

It is not possible to use MIGHT instead of COULD in this example because the structure *the explosions might be heard*, which would be probably interpreted epistemically, does not fit the past context. (see 8.1)

By contrast, both COULD and MIGHT are regularly employed as past tense equivalents of CAN and MAY in indirect speech. (see *Table 10*) Still, they are not

interchangeable in backshifted structures in that COULD conveys root possibility and MIGHT epistemic possibility, as in:

(162) Sports sponsorship experts said that the claims **could** damage his value, especially in the Far East, where companies specifically wanted family role models. [T1,6] (App.2B, NEWS, 134)

= *it was the case that 'the claims damage his value' was possible*

(163) *For fortunes, the biggest part of the trade was young girls. They always thought there **might** be a stranger on the horizon, love around the corner.* [HM, 8] (App.2D, FICT, 93)

= *it was possibly the case that there was a stranger on the horizon*

10.3 Epistemic MIGHT and COULD⁷⁶

The findings in *Table 10* imply that another potential semantic overlap could occur when COULD and MIGHT convey epistemic possibility. In their epistemic use, they relate to an assessment of possibilities and, therefore, Coates (1983:19) describes them as doubtful non-inferential. As has been explained, negated epistemic possibility is doubtful non-inferential as well in that it affects the main predication, for example:

(164) As long as it is on, your cellphone knows where you are, and **might** not mind who it tells. [NS, 24] (App.2D, NAT, 10)

= *it is possibly the case that it does not mind who it tells*

Since epistemic COULD does not appear in negative settings, the potential overlap is restricted to affirmative contexts.

When distinguishing epistemic MIGHT from root possibility COULD, certain parameters can be established. (see 10.1 and 10.2) In contrast, the distinction between epistemic uses of MIGHT and COULD is less clear and, moreover, the epistemic nature of COULD seems to be debatable. (see Gresset 2003:82) Unfortunately, there is not much agreement on this issue. Some linguists consider these verbs to be more or less equivalent, whereas others are

⁷⁶ Differences and similarities in the use of epistemic MAY and MIGHT were thoroughly described in 7.1.1, so that this chapter focuses, above all, on distinctive features between epistemic MIGHT and COULD.

convinced that they convey fine distinctions concerned with the degree of likelihood of the proposition.

Downing and Locke (1992:387-8) see MIGHT and COULD as interchangeable, with little difference to the message, because they both can be intensified by *(very) well*, which heightens the possibility, and by *just*, which lowers it.⁷⁷ Similarly, Leech (1987:120-121) finds it difficult to see any difference in *There could be trouble at the Springboks match tomorrow* and *Our team might still win the race*. Quirk *et al.* (1985:233) support these viewpoints, concluding that epistemic COULD and MIGHT are identical in meaning. Huddleston (1993:170) merely remarks that 'these two verbs are similar though probably not quite identical in meaning'.

By contrast, the choice between epistemic COULD and MIGHT is sometimes related to factors such as the degree of formality or tentativeness. Coates (1995: 58,63) or Biber *et al.* (1999:491) suggest that MIGHT represents the neutral form, while COULD seems to gain ground as a prospective alternative to MIGHT in the expression of a more tentative and hesitant attitude, which implies that the action/event is conveyed as less probable. On the other hand, Larreya (1996:29) characterizes COULD as expressing higher degree of possibility than MIGHT.

Gresset's analysis (2003:85-88), focusing on identifying contextual features that would indicate that 'the opposition between the two linguistic markers has never been completely neutralized', reveals that MIGHT and COULD occur in seemingly identical environments and in some settings can be treated as stylistic variants. Yet she discovers that COULD is often justified or followed by explanatory comments and is thus positively biased, while MIGHT simply suggests some options that can be taken into account and is thus negatively biased. This conclusion, however, does not apply to the occurrences of epistemic COULD in the analyzed corpus.

⁷⁷ The same applies to epistemic MAY when contrasted with MIGHT and COULD.

The analysis definitely proves relative infrequency of epistemic COULD;⁷⁸ mere 8 occurrences have been recorded. As for distribution, epistemic COULD appears only in FICT, NAT and NEWS: (see 6.2) (App.2B: 206-213)

(165) *'Probably a Scorpio ascendant there. Controls by disinformation. Or **could** be Pisces. Makes mysteries where none needed.'* [HM, 59] (App.2B, FICT, 212)

= it is possibly the case that he is Pisces

In contrast, MIGHT, primarily conveying epistemic possibility, though far more frequent in informal settings, appears in both formal and informal contexts, for example:

(166) *Colette: I mean Cheetham, that's not your name. Alison: I changed it. Think about it. Colette: Oh yes... Al, does this mean you **might** have previous identities?* [HM, 112] (App.2D, FICT, 65)

= it is possibly the case that you have previous identities

(167) The Government believes therefore that it **might** be necessary to lower the threshold for this offence to cover those who **might** be able to claim not to have the degree of certainty implied in saying that they believed something would happen but who are nevertheless in a position where they know it is highly likely that it will or have strong suspicion that this will be the case. [FC,25] (App.2D, ADMIN, 2-3)

= it is possibly the case that it is necessary to lower the threshold..

= it is possibly the case that those are able to claim

Furthermore, 6 instances of epistemic COULD co-occur with the verb BE, as in (165) or (168) below:

(168) His body is in Denver for a post-mortem examination and **could be** there for a week, Mrs Mikha was told. [T1,16] (App.2B, NEWS, 209)

Regarding the degree of tentativeness, epistemic COULD appears to be associated merely with tentative conclusions, as opposed to epistemic MIGHT, which can also convey a higher degree of probability,⁷⁹ as in:

⁷⁸ Coates (1983) draws her conclusions based on only 22 occurrences of epistemic COULD.

⁷⁹ Coates (1983) remarks that 'while MAY and MIGHT cover the gamut of likelihood from probable (MIGHT WELL), through a 50/50 assessment of possibility, to tentative possibility', COULD expresses only tentative possibility. (1983:165)

- (169) *'I think, it's Morris who attracts them, not me, so if he goes they'll all go. You see, it **might** be the end of Morris as we know him. It had to happen one day.'* [HM, 248] (App.2D, FICT, 70)
- (170) *So when are we likely to see unequivocally synthetic life, with the entire cell built from scratch? "It **could** be five months or ten years," says Church.* [NS, 7] (App.2B, NAT, 207)

In example (169), the logical possibility that MIGHT expresses is based on the existence of some evidence and the speaker thus conveys that *it is the end of Morris* is likely, which is supported by the explanatory phrase *It had to happen one day*. By contrast, in (170), Church has no evidence to support his conclusion and thus it is purely speculative and tentative.

To summarize, even if the distinctions, relating especially to the degree of tentativeness, between epistemic MIGHT and COULD seem to be subtle, these two verbs should not be considered as absolute synonyms. Undoubtedly, more occurrences of epistemic COULD need to be analyzed to allow relevant and firm conclusions.

10.3 MIGHT and COULD + perfect aspect

COULD and MIGHT in conjunction with perfect aspect may be difficult to interpret since they can convey both epistemic and root possibility. Furthermore, depending on the context, they may denote a past possibility or may have past hypothetical meaning. (see *Table 11*) (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985:231,236 or Leech 2004:127,131) The findings suggest that MIGHT + HAVE is primarily used epistemically, as opposed to COULD + HAVE with its predominant past hypothetical root possibility reading.

Table 11 *Interpretations of COULD and MIGHT + perfect infinitive*

interpretation	COULD	MIGHT
root possibility past hypothetical	9	5
root possibility past	4	-
epistemic possibility past	-	18
epistemic possibility past hypothetical	-	12
gradient of inherency	2	-
undecidable	1	2
Total	16	37

The following examples illustrate the four possible readings of COULD/MIGHT with perfect aspect:

- (171) I was thinking, you never do know, Keith **might** have got his face fixed up. *They can do wonders these days, can't they?* He **might** have got his appearance changed. [HM, 211-212] (App.2D, FICT, 129-130)

= *it is possible that Keith got his face fixed up ... perhaps he got his appearance changed*

→ epistemic possibility, past time reference

- (172) *Ferguson was impulsively quick to sell off Jaap Stam, the big Holland center back, who had displeased him by stating in his autobiography that United had "tapped him up" before his transfer. This **might** have been acceptable had Ferguson possessed a defender to replace him.* [T1, 40] (App.2D, NEWS, 56)

= *perhaps this would have been acceptable if Ferguson had possessed a defender to replace him*

→ epistemic possibility, hypothetical, past time reference

- (173) In examples 4 and 5, although there was no visual information, the subject of football was already under discussion and, once again, one **could** have expected a football match schema to have compensated for pronunciation problems. [JJ,89] (App.2B, ACAD, 52)

= *to expect a football match schema to have compensated was possible*

→ root possibility, past time reference

(174) *After Shocking Saturday and Terrible Tuesday it was a Good Friday for Arsenal. It **could have been** Forlorn Friday, when they ventured another sickly step towards the abyss, when a third defeat in seven days would have been too much to take, but the good ship Arsenal righted itself yesterday and all is now well in London N5. [T1, 27] (App.2B: NR,132)*

= *it was the case that 'it is Forlorn Friday' would have been possible*

→ root possibility, hypothetical, past time reference

These examples demonstrate that perfect aspect is essentially associated with past time reference, whereas its hypothetical reading results from an interplay of contextual factors, for example, its occurrence in unreal conditional clauses, as in (172), or co-occurrence with other hypothetical forms, as in (174) *when a third defeat in seven days would have been too much to take*. This implies that (172) and (174) have a contrary-to-fact interpretation,⁸⁰ which means that the speaker is committed to the falsehood of action/situation, i.e. *this wasn't acceptable* in (172) and *it wasn't Forlorn Friday* in (174). On the other hand, in (171) and (173), the actualisation of the predication is left open in that the modal structures describe a possible event in the past.⁸¹

As COULD and MIGHT with perfect aspect differ in their uses and basically cover different types of modality, it does not seem relevant to discuss their potential semantic overlap. The results would be incomplete and comments merely speculative since it would not be possible to support them by specific occurrences.

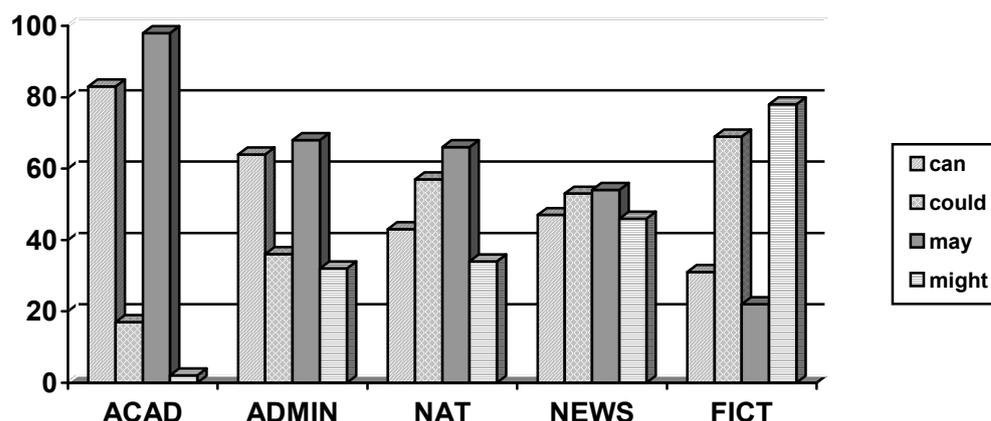
⁸⁰ Coates (1983:237) emphasizes that the contra-factive reference applies only with past time reference. In unreal conditional clauses with non-past time reference, the hypothetical modals are non-factive, as are the modals in real conditions.

⁸¹ Dušková (1972:48) argues that the two modals are essentially distinguished in that the relevant feature of COULD + perfect infinitive appears to be ability, capacity or being within one's powers, with reference to the past.

11. Distribution of modal verbs with regard to stylistic variation

As has been demonstrated in previous chapters, CAN and MAY have different distributions across registers, which can be explained mainly in terms of formality and their primary uses. (see Fig 4)

Fig 4 Distribution of modal verbs across registers



In formal written language modal verbs conveying root possibility prevail, while in less formal settings root and epistemic possibility seem to be equally distributed or there is a slightly higher proportion of modal verbs expressing epistemic possibility. (cf. Biber *et al.* 1999:492)

The findings suggest that CAN (268 tokens) and particularly MAY (308 tokens) are more frequent⁸² than their morphologically past tense forms COULD (232 tokens) and MIGHT (192 tokens). The noticeably higher proportion of MAY can be explained by its significant use in formal contexts,⁸³ particularly in ADMIN, ACAD and NAT, where it is commonly employed to express both epistemic and root possibility. By contrast, CAN seems to be unmarked since it is not restricted regarding stylistic variation and normally occurs in various

⁸² Dušková's results (1972:62-3) suggest that the most frequent English modals appear to be CAN (4,92%) and MAY (2,14%, i.e. the second place in the frequency of occurrence).

⁸³ This corresponds to Coates's (1983:153) results showing that the modal verb MAY is far more frequent in formal contexts where many instances have the root possibility reading.

settings, formal as well as informal; however, it is extremely common in academic scientific style.

Despite a large number of instances of root possibility MAY in formal contexts (49% in ADMIN and 51% in ACAD), epistemic MAY is generally more frequent; it accounts for 60% of all the occurrences of MAY. This finding seems to be supported by Leech's study (2003):

'MAY shows a common tendency for the dominant sense of epistemic possibility in the early 60s to be even more dominant in the early 1990s, whereas the minor senses, for example, root possibility, have become even more marginal, which implies that there seems to be a trend towards monosemy. (2003:243)

Epistemic possibility prevails in NEWS (96%) and in FICT (91%) because, as Facchinetti (2003:311) argues, 'epistemic modality is directly linked to the contexts where the writer brings forth his/her point of view'. Generally, contexts of debate, hypothesis, subjective interpretation and speculation concerning reasons and motives abound in epistemic modal verbs.

Like CAN, COULD is owing to its unmarked nature relatively common in all registers, being the most frequent in FICT. (cf. Biber *et al.* 1999:487) On the whole, COULD and MIGHT prevail in less formal contexts, particularly in NEWS and FICT, where they are often associated with tentative use, or as Hladký (1983:95) puts it, with the more reserved manner of expression. (see Chapter 12)

The following sections deal with distribution of modal verbs and their prevalent meanings in the examined registers. Originally, I intended to analyze each register in turn. However, to avoid unnecessary overlaps, administrative and academic scientific on the one hand, and popular scientific and newspaper reporting on the other will be discussed together since they are in many respects comparable, for example, in terms of formality, the frequency of occurrence of modal meanings or motivation for their use. The subcorpus of fiction, being entirely different, is discussed separately.

11.1 Administrative and academic scientific style

The findings clearly demonstrate that in ACAD and ADMIN the modal verbs predominantly mark root possibility, with MAY and CAN being extremely common in this function. (cf. Biber *et al.* 1999:491-3) The modal verb MAY seems to be significantly associated with academic writing because, in comparison with CAN, it conveys information more formally. (cf. Dušková 1972:64 or Peters 2001:88,341)

Table 12 *Distribution of modals and their meanings in administrative style*

	CAN		COULD		MAY		MIGHT	
	epistemic	root	epistemic	root	epistemic	root	epistemic	root
present	-	53	-	-	15	33	4	-
past	-	-	-	2	5	-	2	-
reported past	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
future	-	2	-	-	6	-	1	-
hypothetical	-	-	-	33	-	-	1	20
hypothetical past	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
indeterminate	9		1		9		3	
undecidable	-		-		-		-	
total	-	55		35	26	33	9	20
	64		36		68		32	

Table 13 *Distribution of modals and their meanings in academic style*

	CAN		COULD		MAY		MIGHT	
	epistemic	root	epistemic	root	epistemic	root	epistemic	root
present	-	69	-	-	32	50	-	-
past	-	-	-	3	4	-	-	-
reported past	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
future	-	2	-	-	4	-	-	-
hypothetical	-	-	-	11	-	-	-	1
hypothetical past	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1
merger/gradience	12		-		8		-	
unclear	-		-		-		-	
total	-	71	-	17	40	50	-	2
	83		17		98		2	

In both registers, a vast majority of root possibility CAN and MAY tokens have present time reference owing to their occurrence in general statements of possibilities, where they discuss possible explanations and indicate expected outcomes, i.e. they are concerned with conveying theoretical possibility. Apart from discussing alternative possibilities, the modal verbs MAY and MIGHT in their epistemic sense also typically qualify statements. Facchinetti (2003) notes that 'balancing between reporting objective data and signalling subjective evaluation seems to be fundamental in scientific discourse'. (2003:308)

The two registers differ markedly in the proportion of CAN/MAY to COULD/MIGHT in that the academic text employs mainly non-past forms, as opposed to administrative texts, where hypothetical COULD and MIGHT are commonly found. This difference might be explained in terms of a more speculative nature of the official documents, which basically tentatively suggest and introduce various measures, as in (175). On the other hand, the academic text prefers CAN and MAY to indicate what is, or is not, possible to achieve with regard to the enabling conditions represented by various models and methods, as in (176), and to guide the reader's attention through a conventionalized set of expressions, as in (177):

- (175) Preliminary discussions with the Information Commissioner suggest that codes of practice **could** be a useful way of agreeing procedures for public sector data sharing of this sort, giving public sector organisations the confidence to act, and the public the confidence that reasonable safeguards are in place. [FC,16] (App.2B, ADMIN, 19)
- (176) But even in the unlikely event of their having done so, the most interesting implication of Neufeld's findings for our purposes is their support for the view that some aspects of L2 pronunciation (and hence native-like pronunciation) **can** only be acquired through extensive (probably non-pedagogic) exposure to the second language. [JJ, 107] (App. 2A, ACAD, 125)
- (177) Because the subjects are not the L1 speakers or fluent bilinguals of most accommodation research, we **cannot** assume that, like the latter types of subject, they will adjust their pronunciation in the direction of that of their interlocutors. [JJ, 56] (App. 2A, ACAD, 90)

11.2 Popular scientific style and newspaper reporting

As the findings summarized in *Table 14* and *15* show, the frequency of occurrence of the four modals is virtually identical in NAT and NEWS.

Table 14 Distribution of modals and their meanings in popular scientific style

	CAN		COULD		MAY		MIGHT	
	epistemic	root	epistemic	root	epistemic	root	epistemic	root
present	-	39	1	-	30	17	3	-
past	-	-	-	8	8	-	1	1
reported past	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
future	-	1	2	-	8	-	2	-
hypothetical	-	-	-	39	-	-	3	20
hypothetical past	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	1
merger/gradience	3		5		3		-	
unclear	-		-		-		-	
total	-	40	3	49	46	17	12	22
	43		57		66		34	

Table 15 Distribution of modals and their meanings in newspaper reporting

	CAN		COULD		MAY		MIGHT	
	epistemic	root	epistemic	root	epistemic	root	epistemic	root
present	-	28	-	-	13	2	7	-
past	-	-	-	6	13	-	3	-
reported past	-	-	-	13	-	-	8	1
future	-	9	1	-	26	-	13	-
hypothetical	-	-	-	26	-	-	4	2
hypothetical past	-	-	-	2	-	-	6	2
merger/gradience	9		6		-		-	
unclear	-		-		-		-	
total	-	36	1	47	52	2	41	5
	46		54		54		46	

As for CAN and COULD, these two verbs basically occur in their root senses. Since newspaper reporting is based on reporting information, COULD is regularly found in backshifted statements, as in (178), while in popular scientific style COULD is used mainly hypothetically to tentatively suggest possible development or outcomes, as in (179):

- (178) Sports sponsorship experts said that the claims **could** damage his value, especially in the Far East, where companies specifically wanted family role models. [T1, 6] (App. 2B, NEWS, 134)
- (179) A virus has been genetically engineered that **could** help to break down the slimy colonies of bacteria that clog medical devices such as catheters. [NS, 26] (App. 2B, NAT, 85)

There is, however, a significant difference in the use of MAY and MIGHT. Their root possibility meaning is virtually absent in newspaper reporting due to the subjective nature of newspaper reportage. Stated differently, newspaper reporting employs predominantly epistemic uses of MAY and MIGHT because it presents the events and situations from the writer's viewpoint and expresses his/her uncertainty about the truth of the proposition, as in (180). In contrast, apart from their epistemic use, MAY and MIGHT in popular scientific style sometimes serve to generalize about what is possible on the basis of observation of what actually happens, as in (181), and are thus in some contexts interchangeable with root possibility CAN/COULD. (see 9.2 and 10.2)

- (180) The emerging Sunni-Shia alliance is hailed in mosques as a renewed Islamic unity, but **may** prove tenuous. [T1,16] (App.2C, NEWS, 243)
- (181) A costly fertility treatment that is designed to increase the likelihood of older women giving birth after IVF **may** actually reduce their chances of having a baby. [NS,4] (App.2C, NAT, 132)

11.3 Fiction

This register is in many respects quite distinct from those analyzed above. The modal verbs can be found mostly in dialogues and discussions, which are essentially evaluative. Since fictional dialogue tries to imitate reality and spoken colloquial language, interpretation is largely influenced by the context and the relationship between the participants. (see Wilamová 2005:35)

Table 16 *Distribution of modals and their meanings in fiction*

	CAN		COULD		MAY		MIGHT	
	epistemic	root	epistemic	root	epistemic	root	epistemic	root
present	-	27	3	-	10	1	10	-
past	-	-	-	15	3	-	15	-
reported past	-	-	-	5	-	-	25	-
future	-	2	-	-	7	-	8	-
hypothetical	-	-	-	33	-	-	8	-
hypothetical past	-	-	-	4	-	-	5	1
merger/gradience	3		8		1		4	
unclear	-		-		-		2	
total	-	29	3	57	20	1	71	1
	32		68		22		78	

The findings confirm that epistemic modals are particularly frequent in fictional dialogue. Their relatively high frequency of occurrence could be explained in terms of hedging in that they are used to modify the speaker's commitment to the truth-value of the proposition or to mitigate what might otherwise seem too forceful. According to Coates (2003), the use of epistemic modals corresponds to the main goal in informal conversation between equals, i.e. the maintenance of good social relationships.

MAY is rarely used in conversation⁸⁴ and when it occurs, it typically marks epistemic possibility. Its formal root possibility meaning is not used because it does not fit the colloquial nature of spoken language. Still, there is one occurrence of root possibility MAY, but it is employed in an obviously formal setting relating to business:

(182) 'Any alteration to the basic plan **may** be subject to extra costs,' Suzi said, 'but I don't say it will. [HM, 217] (App.2C, FICT, 287)

By contrast, CAN is normally used with root possibility meaning, but it is extremely common with ability meaning.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ The data from the Longman corpus (1999) show that MAY in conversation is outnumbered by CAN more than 20 times over.

⁸⁵ When recording 100 tokens with possibility meaning, 98 instances expressing ability were found.

A salient feature in fiction is a significant use of the morphologically past tense forms *COULD* and *MIGHT*, particularly in fictional dialogue. The motivation behind their use could be explained in terms of negative politeness and hedging strategies because they are often employed when it is important to avoid outright assertions and modify points of view. *COULD* is usually seen to be more tentative than *CAN*, as in (183), and *MIGHT* seems to be concerned with hedging the statement of speaker's feelings, as in (184): (cf. Coates 1980:24 or Biber *et al.* 1999:492-3)

(183) 'Well,' Al said, 'if Ruby kept you so warm and cosy, I think you **could** trust her with your baby.' [HM, 39] (App.2B, FICT,157)

(184) When she'd argued back – 'they **might** not understand me' – Colette lost her temper and said, 'Alison without blood pressure we'd all be dead, but if you want to sound like something from the remedial stream, don't let me get in your way.' [HM, 24] (App. 2D, FICT, 177)

12. Modal verbs in the function of hedges

As has been explained, hedging is employed for the sake of negative politeness, which is defined as 'redressive action addressed to the addressee's negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded'. (Brown and Levinson 1978:134) Since modal expressions are commonly used in the service of negative politeness, hedging, modality and politeness are closely related. (see Chapter 3)

Thompson (2000:7) notes that hedges in written language generally represent a defensive strategy when the writer qualifies a statement in order to reduce its strength. Consequently, modal verbs functioning as hedges indicate that there are insufficient grounds to make a strong claim and that an alternative to the proposition may also be valid. This characteristic seems to fit the truth-neutral modal verbs conveying possibility, which are generally described as involving an element of uncertainty. (see 1.4)

Nevertheless, since hedged statements signal a judgment, hedging is clearly related only to epistemic possibility senses, where the uncertainty is identified with the speaker. However, as Markkanen and Schröder (1995:3) emphasize, 'no linguistic items are inherently hedgy but can acquire this quality depending on the communicative context or the co-text'. Stated differently, even some root possibility modal senses can be employed as hedges in particular contexts, usually as related to negative politeness and tentativeness strategy.

12.1 COULD and MIGHT

As has been exemplified, in non-past contexts COULD and MIGHT express weaker meanings than their present counterparts CAN and MAY, which basically implies that they present a possibility as less probable or improbable. (cf. Dušková 1972:46, Bybee 1995:513, Quirk *et al.* 1985:231, or Leech 2004:130) Since the prevalent hypothetical senses of MIGHT and COULD are associated with the contrary-to-expectation implication, they are seen as expressing an element of tentativeness, diffidence, or extra politeness, which are concepts closely related to hedging.

These concepts are illustrated by Perkins (1983) as follows:

non-hypothetical	-----	hypothetical
non-past	-----	past
non-formal	-----	formal
non-polite	-----	polite
non-tentative	-----	tentative
non-indirect	-----	indirect

(Perkins 1983:50)

Perkins (1983:50,116) proposes several pragmatic scales representing different interpretative domains to illustrate the variable interpretations that secondary modals may have, for example, hypothesis, formality, politeness, tentativeness or more of these at the same time. All of these can be subsumed under the non-conditional-conditional scale due to their common presupposition of a particular conditioning environment implied in the context of utterance. Consequently, Perkins (1983:53) considers conditionality as a more precise way of distinguishing between different degrees of modality due to the nature of particular conditioning environments.

In all their epistemic uses (144 occurrences), **COULD** and **MIGHT** undoubtedly function as hedges in that they express tentative possibility and thus mitigate the force of the proposition. Root possibility **COULD** and **MIGHT** used hypothetically (185 occurrences) seem to mitigate the strength of the statements in which they occur as well. They are clearly employed as hedges when used with 1st or 2nd person human subject, i.e. in suggestions and polite directives, as in the following examples:

- (185) To observe how this happens in practice, we **might** consider the sentence: 'It's very hot in this room'. [JJ, 83] (App.2D, ACAD, 156)
- (186) You **could** ask them if they need to see the dentist, since everybody does, all the time; but you don't want to see them flinch. [HM,22] (App. 2B, FICT, 153)

Furthermore, they can be viewed as hedges when expressing hypothetical root possibility in non-past contexts, for these uses are considered to be tentative and speculative, as in:

- (187) Context and co-text **could** thus be expected to compensate for any non-recoverability of pronunciation. [JJ,118] (App.2B, ACAD, 46)

12.2 CAN and MAY

Obviously, all the occurrences of MAY conveying epistemic possibility (184 instances) function as hedges since they modify the speaker's commitment to the truth-value of the proposition. Coates (1983:134) talks about 'hedginess of MAY/MIGHT thrown into relief by the collocation *may or may not/might or might not*, where the 50/50 assessment of possibilities is made explicit'. Owing to their 50-50 assessment of possibilities, Hyland (1999:116) considers epistemic MAY/MIGHT to be prototypical hedges.

By contrast, root possibility CAN and MAY are generally considered to be incompatible with the concept of hedging. (see Hyland 1999 or Markkanen and Schröder 1995) Hedging is definitely incompatible with root possibility CAN and MAY co-occurring with dynamic verbs and agentive subjects, as in (188), because such instances usually imply the speaker's intention to do something:

- (188) *"I feel mentally tired because I've become too wrapped up in this ranking business for my own good," White said. "Now I can chill out, relax and go to the Crucible with one less thing on my mind. That's just magic." [T1, 35] (App.2A, NR, 219)*
= now I will chill out, relax and go to the Crucible as there is nothing to prevent my chilling out, relaxing,...

On the other hand, the occurrences of MAY classified as indeterminate, for example

- (189) The interplay between context and phonological environment **may** thus account for forms such as 'gley' for 'grey' in example 25. [JJ, 91] (App.2C, ACAD, 173)

could be interpreted as epistemic or root with little difference of effect as the message conveyed is approximately the same whether we choose the former or

the latter. Since such examples are concerned with the uncertainty of the proposition, they can be treated as hedges.

As to CAN, Meyer (1997:39) argues that some of its uses could be seen as hedging devices since they weaken the strength of an assertion, as in

- (190) It **can** only be hoped that the change of attitude this speaker refers to will not be too long in coming, and that L2 teachers of English will no longer be regarded as 'inferior' because they retain something of their 'local variety of English'. [JJ,30] (App.2A, ACAD, 108)

which weakens the assertion by reducing the degree of certainty to mere possibility.

To conclude, hedging is not restricted only to epistemic modal meanings. There are certain uses of root possibility modal verbs, particularly those of hypothetical COULD and MIGHT, which satisfy the criteria defining hedges. On the other hand, CAN, primarily associated with theoretical possibility, does not normally hedge utterances in that it does not weaken the strength of the assertion.

13. Conclusions

In this study the results of an investigation into the possibility meanings and uses of the English modal auxiliary verbs CAN/COULD and MAY/MIGHT have been reported, using data collected from five registers. The major focus has been on identifying epistemic and root possibility senses in relation to various contextual features and differences of style. We have also attempted to investigate the extent of semantic overlap between CAN and MAY/COULD and MIGHT and to reveal which of their senses are commonly employed as hedges.

With respect to the consistency and significance of some findings, provisional conclusions can be drawn. Since the majority of figures are based on assigning tokens appropriate readings, which inevitably involves subjectivity, they are more tentative than those giving frequency of forms. Consequently, many results relating to semantic and pragmatic aspects are preliminary and exploratory and some comments merely speculative.

Although a large number of authoritative accounts of modality propose polysemantic approach to the study of the English modal verbs, viewing the modals under study as having a core invariant meaning combining with contextual factors to yield different interpretations (monosemantic approach) seems to be adequate, particularly with CAN/COULD. The occurrences interpreted as ability, theoretical possibility, offer or suggestion can be seen as a modification of the underlying core sense, i.e. potentiality, in the appropriate contextual conditions. By contrast, since MAY/MIGHT can be employed to express epistemic and root possibility, which are in most contexts mutually exclusive, they should be characterized as polysemous. Nevertheless, the two seemingly distinct senses co-occur almost exclusively in formal settings, where it is not always possible to distinguish between them, i.e. they merge. They often merge in scientific discourse, where it can be difficult to differentiate between cautious statements (epistemic possibility) and presenting information as a fact (root possibility). Such indeterminate cases indicate that epistemic and root possibility senses of MAY/MIGHT are weakly distinguished.

The findings show that the basic criterion in interpreting CAN/COULD and MAY/MIGHT is the dependence of the respective meaning on the context. It was the context that provided the necessary clues for the final disambiguation of many instances. However, it was sometimes difficult to establish the point at which one interpretation was no longer possible. The notoriously known paraphrases (epistemic *it is possible that p* vs. root *it is possible for p to...*) posited by a large number of authors have proved to be inadequate and often failed to distinguish root and epistemic possibility.

The analysis has confirmed the proposed hypothesis that syntactic co-occurrence patterns and correlations do not represent a reliable criterion in distinguishing root and epistemic possibility readings. Particularly with MAY/MIGHT, the syntactic criteria listed in the literature on modality focus largely on differentiating epistemic possibility from root permission. Consequently, many of the suggested factors (especially those associated with the nature of subject and verb) do not relate adequately to the differences between the two possibility senses. Hence the syntactic co-occurrence patterns are considered to be of secondary importance and seen as mere tendencies in particular contexts. In place of syntactic correlations, a reliable criterion has proved to be the operation scope of the modal. Epistemic possibility is basically understood as concerning the proposition as a whole, whereas root possibility as concerning merely the verbal element (an event or state). Stated differently, epistemic possibility has proposition as well as modality in its scope, as opposed to root possibility, which has only proposition in its scope.

Even though the investigated modal verbs can express the same meanings, the findings have revealed little semantic overlap. The analysis has confirmed that the domain of root possibility is dominated by CAN/COULD, whereas that of epistemic possibility by MAY/MIGHT. Furthermore, root possibility is associated predominantly with formal contexts.

The modal verbs CAN and MAY overlap merely in their root possibility senses in affirmative contexts and their interchangeability is largely restricted to highly formal settings, i.e. ADMIN and ACAD in this study. In these two

subcorpora, they are used as stylistic variants and are interchangeable in 174 instances, i.e. 30.2% of all the occurrences of CAN and MAY. In the other subcorpora, root possibility CAN and MAY can be characterized as contextually determined variants which realize the same core meaning (theoretical possibility), i.e. they are mostly in complementary distribution because root possibility MAY is evidently marked for formality. Furthermore, root MAY merely presents a possibility due to enabling external conditions, whereas with CAN the fulfilment of the action sometimes depends on a mixture of the inherent properties of the subject and external factors.

Epistemic MAY and MIGHT in non-past contexts are frequently interchangeable. Even if there can be found instances in the corpus in which MIGHT expresses a weaker degree of likelihood than MAY or sounds more hesitant and polite than MAY, it is often difficult to judge whether there is any difference in the degree of likelihood. Hence we might speak about the semantic levelling of epistemic MAY and MIGHT in non-past contexts. The analysis has revealed that COULD is not purely epistemic but may take an epistemic interpretation in relevant contexts.

COULD and MIGHT in conjunction with perfect aspect have been difficult to classify owing to the lack of association between perfect aspect and epistemic modality. Furthermore, these structures may denote a past possibility or may have past hypothetical meaning. They can signal epistemic unreal possibility, epistemic past possibility, root unreal possibility or root past possibility. The findings suggest that MIGHT + HAVE frequently conveys epistemic past or unreal possibility as opposed to COULD + HAVE with its predominant root hypothetical reading.

A considerable proportion of the examined modal verbs seem to be closely related to the concept of hedging. The use of hedges in written language might be explained in terms of defensive strategies, i.e. by using modal verbs the writer qualifies a statement with the aim of reducing its strength. All the epistemic senses (328 tokens) are employed as hedging strategies since they

express the speaker's weaker commitment to the truth-value of the utterance and thus signal lack of confidence or tentativeness. However, it has been found that certain root possibility senses can commonly function as hedges, depending on the context. The root possibility senses that can be viewed as hedges are hypothetical **COULD** and **MIGHT** (185 tokens). Root possibility **COULD** and **MIGHT** are associated prevalently with hypothetical situations and with conveying overtones of tentativeness and expressing facts and ideas in a polite way.

To conclude, again, it is necessary to emphasize that this study is based on limited material and the analysis is not exhaustive. In order to draw general and firm conclusions, the investigation of more diverse material would be required. It should be supplemented by an analysis of spoken material due to considerable differences between modal usage in written and spoken English, partly demonstrated by salient differences between the subcorpus of fiction and the other registers.

14. Summary

Práce se zaměřuje na možnostní významy anglických modálních sloves CAN a MAY a jejich préteritních tvarů MIGHT a COULD. Cílem práce je popsat užití těchto sloves, a to jak z hlediska vzájemné zaměnitelnosti, tak z hlediska výskytů v různých stylech.

Práce je rozvržena do tří hlavních částí: teoretického úvodu (kapitoly 2 a 3), který představuje širší kontext zkoumané problematiky, tj. zejména oblast modality, a podává přehled přístupů ke studiu anglických modálních sloves popsaných v literatuře. Druhá část (kapitoly 5 - 8) prezentuje zjištěné výsledky týkající se výskytů jednotlivých sloves, se zaměřením na diskusi faktorů a kritérií, na jejichž základě lze epistemické a neepistemické možnostní významy odlišit. Tato dílčí zjištění jsou následně v závěrečné části (kapitoly 9 –12) shrnuta a porovnávána s ohledem na synonymní výskyty, hlavní odlišnosti v užití zkoumaných sloves, frekvenci užití nejen jednotlivých forem ale i významů v závislosti na stylistické diferenciaci a na možnosti užití analyzovaných modálních sloves jako prostředků atenuace (oslabení výpovědní síly, tj. 'hedging').

Kapitola 2, která definuje modalitu jako sémantickou kategorii reflektující vztah původce sdělení k jeho obsahu a pojednává o přístupech ke studiu anglických modálních sloves, představuje nezbytný teoretický základ pro vlastní analýzu, která se opírá o tradiční rozdělení modálních významů na epistemické (*epistemic*) a neepistemické (*root, agent-oriented*). Tato klasifikace je aplikována pouze na jeden ze základních konceptů modální logiky, a to na možnost.

Podkapitola 2.4 definuje epistemickou (faktickou) a neepistemickou (teoretickou) možnost a popisuje kritéria, na jejichž základě lze tyto dvě modální kategorie odlišit. Přestože autoři často navrhují odlišovat faktickou a teoretickou možnost pomocí parafrází (*it is possible that p* a *it is possible for p to do sth*), toto kritérium se jeví jako nespolehlivé a mnohdy zavádějící. Za účinné kritérium

lze považovat ‚dosah‘ modality (‘scope’), který je patrný především negováním výpovědi a u hypotetického použití MIGHT a COULD. Základní rozdíl vychází ze skutečnosti, že epistemická modalita modifikuje výpověď (propozici) jako celek, a je charakterizována jako extra-propoziční. Na druhé straně, modalita neepistemická modifikuje pouze část propozice, především lexikální sloveso a je označována jako intrapropoziční. Epistemická možnost je tedy nazírána jako nejistý postoj mluvčího k platnosti obsahu propozice vycházející ze subjektivní dedukce (*speaker’s lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition*), zatímco neepistemická možnost jako možná realizace děje na základě vnějších okolností (*external circumstances, enabling conditions*).

Výše popsané odlišování modálních významů je založeno na skutečnosti, že většina anglických modálních sloves vyjadřuje jak epistemickou tak neepistemickou modalitu (např. MAY vyjadřuje faktickou i teoretickou možnost) a významy jednotlivých sloves se mohou částečně překrývat (např. CAN i MAY vyjadřují teoretickou možnost). Tato „mnohoznačnost“ anglických modálních sloves vede k odlišným pojetím a přístupům k jejich studiu.

Podkapitola 2.6 charakterizuje polysémantický a monosémantický přístup ke studiu modálních sloves a pojednává o prolínání se a neostrosti (*fuzziness*) jejich významů jako projevů sémantické neurčitosti. Zastánci polysémantického pojetí (např. Halliday 1970, Lyons 1977, Palmer 1990, Leech 2004) přiřazují každému slovesu několik významů (např. CAN – schopnost, svolení, možnost). Oproti tomu autoři považující modální slovesa za primárně monosemní (např. Perkins 1983, Papafragou 2000) definují pro každé modální sloveso jeden základní význam, jehož různé interpretace nejsou považovány za odlišné významové složky, ale pouze za modifikace společného základního významu, které jsou výsledkem působením větných i mimojazykových faktorů.

Monosémantický a polysémantický přístup nelze uspokojivě aplikovat na všechna modální slovesa a problematika interpretace jednotlivých významů většinou vede k aplikaci teoretických modelů, ve kterých jsou modální slovesa chápána jako sémanticky neurčitá, s prolínajícími se významy a neostrými hranicemi mezi možnými interpretacemi (např. *gradience, fuzzy set theory, prototype theory*). Podle těchto teorií nejsou všechny modální významy jasně

vymezené (*clear-cut*), některé jsou vnímány jako prototypické (jednoznačně zařaditelné), jiné jako okrajové a neurčité (nejednoznačně zařaditelné). Analýza zkoumaných sloves z těchto teorií vychází, a výsledkem je skupina 86 výskytů, které nebyly jednoznačně interpretovány. (viz níže)

Kapitola 3 představuje pojem ‚atenuace‘ (oslabení výpovědní síly, tj. ‚hedging‘), definuje pragmatickou doménu ‚hedging‘ a snaží se ji propojit s oblastí modality a následně i konceptem modální možnosti. Atenuace je běžně považována za rys epistemických modálních sloves (Hyland 1999), která primárně oslabují výpovědní sílu propozice, neboť vyjadřují nejistý subjektivní postoj mluvčího. Pokud je ale modální možnost obecně vnímána jako vyjadřování neurčitosti a nejistoty týkající se platnosti propozice, je jedním z cílů práce zmapovat využití zkoumaných sloves jako prostředků strategie ‚hedging‘ a zjistit zda zahrnuje i některé neepistemické možnostní významy.

Kapitola 4 prezentuje data použitá při výzkumu. Byla provedena excerpce textů z pěti různých stylů: akademický (ACAD), administrativní (ADMIN), vědecko-populární (NAT), žurnalistický (NEWS) a beletrie (FICT). Z každého stylu bylo excerpováno 100 výskytů MAY/MIGHT a 100 výskytů CAN/COULD, které byly interpretovány jako možnostní. Korpus je tvořen reprezentativním vzorkem 500 možnostních výskytů MAY/MIGHT a 500 možnostních výskytů CAN/COULD. Analýza vzorku je primárně kvalitativní, neboť se soustřeďuje na interpretaci jednotlivých výskytů a zaměřuje se na vliv, relevanci a reliabilitu syntaktických, sémantických a pragmatických ukazatelů při rozlišování epistemické a neepistemické možnosti. Kvantitativní zhodnocení výsledků analýzy je vzhledem k rozsahu studovaného materiálu a cíli práce sekundárním prostředkem interpretace dat a je zohledňováno pouze pokud se jeví jako relevantní.

Analýza se opírá především o vymezení epistemické a neepistemické možnosti ve studiích Coatesové (1983,1980,1995), o charakteristiku sémantických komponentů modálních sloves Tárníkové (1979,1985) a o interpretaci výskytů forem a funkcí MAY/MIGHT a CAN/COULD v jednotlivých stylech popsaných v Biber *et al.* (1999). Zjištěné výsledky jsou porovnávány se

studiemi a teoretickými modely následujících autorů: Palmer (1990), Leech (2004), Dušková (1972), Quirk *et. al.* (1985), nebo Huddleston and Pullum (2002).

Kapitoly 5 až 8 podávají přehled o zjištěních týkajících se výskytů jednotlivých sloves, tzn. že každé sloveso je nejprve analyzováno samostatně. Přestože COULD a MIGHT jsou primárně préteritní tvary CAN a MAY, jsou zde chápány jako samostatné lexikální jednotky, s ohledem na časovou referenci neutrální, neboť se vyskytují zejména v neminulých kontextech, kde se uplatňují jako tentativní a zdvořilé hodnotící prostředky.

Významy modálních sloves jsou nepochybně značně kontextově závislé a jejich interpretace ovlivněny řadou větných i mimovětných faktorů. V literatuře jsou popsány zejména korelace a ukazatele v rovině syntaktické, jejichž funkcí je signalizovat pravděpodobnou interpretaci jednotlivých výskytů. Jedním z cílů analýzy bylo aplikovat gramatické ukazatele a zhodnotit jejich relevanci a reliabilitu při rozlišování epistemické a neepistemické možnosti zkoumaných sloves.

Byla potvrzena hypotéza, že především ukazatele charakterizující podmět a sloveso mnohdy selhávají, zejména při rozlišování možnostních významů u slovesa MAY, neboť se zaměřují převážně na odlišení epistemické možnosti a svolení. Většina syntaktických ukazatelů signalizujících epistemickou možnost se běžně objevuje i v neepistemických interpretacích. V případě možnostních významů CAN a MAY nemají syntaktická kritéria (zejména povaha podmětu a slovesa) distinktivní funkci a jsou tedy považována za pouhé tendence. Interpretace jednotlivých výskytů je chápána především jako záležitost ‚scope‘ a kontextových ukazatelů.

Kapitola 5 pojednává o zjištěních týkajících se slovesa CAN. Zatímco MAY nepochybně vyjadřuje obě modální možnosti (faktickou a teoretickou), nemá CAN srovnatelné epistemické užití, viz. *Tabulka 1*

Tabulka 1 Interpretace sloves CAN a MAY

interpretace	CAN		MAY	
	počet výskytů	%	počet výskytů	%
epistemická možnost	-	-	184	59.7
neepistemická možnost	232	86.6	103	33.4
neurčité	36	13.4	21	6.9
celkem	268	100	308	100

Analýza potvrdila, že rozdíly mezi interpretacemi výskytů slovesa CAN jsou mnohdy nezřetelné (*fuzzy*). 36 výskytů CAN nebylo možné jednoznačně klasifikovat jako možnost, byly tedy označeny jako neurčité, tj. oscilující mezi teoretickou možností a schopností na straně jedné (16 výskytů) a teoretickou možností a svolením na straně druhé (20 výskytů). CAN lze definovat jako monosemní sloveso, jehož základním významem je možnost ve smyslu ‚neexistují žádné překážky‘ (‘potentiality’, ‘nihil obstat’). Jednotlivé interpretace závisí na specifikaci nebo implikaci faktorů, které umožňují realizaci děje, tzn. děj je realizován díky inherentním schopnostem konatele, hovoříme o „schopnosti“; děj je realizován na základě stanovených pravidel, hovoříme o „svolení“, atd. Tyto interpretace (schopnost, svolení) mohou být chápány jako ‚pragmatické rozšíření‘ základního významu možnost (tj. neexistují žádné překážky‘).

Kapitola 6 prezentuje výsledky analýzy slovesa COULD, které v 96% vyjadřuje neepistemické významy srovnatelné s CAN. Přestože se COULD často vyskytuje v minulých kontextech a nepřímé řeči jako préteritní tvar CAN, jeho hlavní užití (61.2%) je v neminulých kontextech, kde je interpretováno hypoteticky a je chápáno jako zdvořilé a tentativní. Překvapivě pouhých 8 výskytů COULD (v NAT, NEWS a FICT) bylo interpretováno epistemicky, což potvrzuje skutečnost, že CAN a COULD jsou primárně neepistemická modální slovesa, která mohou být ojediněle v určitých kontextech epistemicky interpretována (i když COULD je v literatuře běžně uváděno společně s epistemickým MAY a MIGHT jako exponent modality epistemické). Přestože žádný

výskyt CAN nabyl označen jako epistemický, někteří autoři (Coates 1995, Collins 2007) uvádějí a dokládají příklady vyvíjející se epistemické užití CAN.

Kapitola 7 se zaměřuje na užití a významy MAY. MAY, primárně exponent epistemické možnosti, běžně vyjadřuje i možnost neepistemickou ve formálních kontextech. Protože jsou tyto modální kategorie v literatuře definovány jako distinktivní, očekávali bychom, že se navzájem vylučují. Analýza ale ukázala, že zejména v akademickém stylu, je u některých výskytů nemožné zvolit jednu či druhou interpretaci, např.

- (1) Weinberger suggests that within a second language, awareness of potential ambiguity **may** increase with proficiency. [JJ,119] (App.2C, ACAD, 300)

= epistemic: *perhaps awareness of potential ambiguity will increase with proficiency but perhaps it will not*

= root: *it is sometimes the case that awareness of potential ambiguity increases with proficiency*

V 13 případech se epistemická a neepistemická interpretace vzájemně nevylučují, proto jsou označeny jako ‚merger‘, tzn. prolínající se interpretace. Tyto výskyty dokládají, že hranice mezi epistemickou a neepistemickou možností není jasně definovaná, z čehož vyplývá, že tyto dvě modální kategorie nejsou zcela odlišné. Jak již bylo řečeno, syntaktické korelace pro epistemické a neepistemické možnostní MAY nejsou ve většině případů spolehlivými ukazateli zamýšleného významu.

Kapitola 8 se věnuje analýze výskytů slovesa MIGHT, které má stejně jako MAY, primárně epistemický a sekundárně neepistemické významy. Ve svém epistemickém významu se používá především v neminulých kontextech, a to buď jako ekvivalent MAY (tzn. epistemická možnost týkající se přítomného nebo budoucího děje) nebo k vyjádření hypotetické epistemické možnosti. Kromě nepřímé řeči se v minulých kontextech vyskytuje pouze zřídka (6 výskytů), k odkazování na minulé děje se běžně používá MAY/MIGHT + minulý infinitiv.

Užití a funkce epistemického MAY a MIGHT v neminulých kontextech jsou srovnatelné a v mnoha případech jsou tato dvě slovesa zaměnitelná, přestože je MIGHT často vnímáno jako zdvořilejší a tentativnější. Rozdíl v míře pravděpodobnosti popisovaný v literatuře (tzn. MIGHT vyjadřuje méně

pravděpodobný děj než MAY) je poměrně obtížné identifikovat, je patrný především pokud MIGHT je použito bezprostředně po MAY (jeden výskyt v beletrii)

Docházíme k závěru, že i přestože je možné charakterizovat modální sloveso jako monosemní (v případě CAN) nebo polysemní (v případě MAY), interpretace v konkrétních promluvách je závislá především na mimojazykovém kontextu (což také naznačuje, že je poměrně subjektivní) a některé výskyty nelze jednoznačně klasifikovat.

Kapitoly 9 a 10 vycházejí ze srovnávání dílčích výsledků popsaných v kapitolách 5 - 8, s cílem vymezit případné synonymní výskyty CAN a MAY na straně jedné a MIGHT a COULD na straně druhé. Výsledky ukazují, že zkoumaná slovesa se liší svými primárními významy a jejich frekvencí. (viz výše *Tabulka 1*) CAN je exponentem možnosti neepistemické, kdežto MAY primárně vyjadřuje možnost epistemickou. Neepistemická možnost je sekundárním významem slovesa MAY, respektive neepistemické MAY je formálním ekvivalentem neutrálního CAN, neboť se vyskytuje téměř výlučně ve formálních kontextech (pouze jeden doklad v beletrii, dva doklady v novinových člancích). Z těchto údajů vyplývá, že ve většině případů nelze hovořit o synonymii. (viz. *Tabulka 2*)

Tabulka 2: Výskyty CAN a MAY interpretovány jako neepistemické

	CAN		MAY	
	Počet výskytů	%	Počet výskytů	%
ADMIN	50 (64)	78.1	33 (68)	48.5
ACAD	51 (83)	61.4	50 (98)	51
NAT	39 (43)	90.1	17 (66)	16.5
NEWS	29 (46)	63	2 (54)	3.7
FICT	22 (32)	68.7	1 (22)	4.5
total	191 (268)	71.3	103 (308)	32.5

Data v *Tabulce 2* ukazují, že MAY vyjadřující teoretickou možnost je ve formálních kontextech poměrně časté, např. v akademickém stylu se epistemické a neepistemické interpretace objevují s téměř stejnou frekvencí.

Ve formálních kontextech je možné MAY ve většině kladných vět charakterizovat jako stylistickou variantu slovesa CAN. Nejvíce synonymních výskytů bylo zaznamenáno v pasivních konstrukcích s nevyjádřeným podmětem a v aktivních větách s neživotným podmětem a sponovým slovesem.

Při podrobné analýze kontextových prvků je však patrné, že ani ve formálním psaném jazyce nejsou neepistemické CAN a MAY zcela synonymní. Pokud nahradíme některé výskyty MAY slovesem CAN, dochází k posunu významu, tj. CAN není interpretováno jako pouhá možnost, ale možnost díky schopnosti konatele děje, např.

- (2) Yet this variation in pronunciation, morphology, syntax, and lexis is apparently 'so acute that the same individual, playing various social roles, **may** frequently display form of standard and non-standard Englishes in different contexts' (Brown *et al.* 1994:154). [JJ, 26] (App.2C, ACAD, 221)

Naopak, v některých případech nahrazením slovesa CAN slovesem MAY dochází k modifikaci interpretace v tom smyslu, že MAY není jednoznačně chápáno jako teoretické možnost, neboť jeho epistemická interpretace není zcela vyloučena, např.

- (3) Credit reference agencies seek to get information on the names of the deceased as quickly as possible, but this **can (may)** take many months. [FC,14] (App.2A, ADMIN, 8)

Analýza potvrdila hypotézu, že CAN a MAY nemohou být považována za zcela synonymní, a to ani ve formální psané angličtině, kde se jejich interpretace mohou v závislosti na kontextu nepatrně lišit. Na druhou stranu, výskyt neepistemického MAY je v akademickém stylu nezanedbatelný (stejná frekvence jako epistemické MAY), přestože je v literatuře mnohdy popisován jako význam okrajový a zřídka užívaný. Důsledkem jsou poměrně časté synonymní výskyty MAY a CAN v akademických textech (95% ze všech neepistemických výskytů v ADMIN a ACAD, tj. 30.2% ze všech výskytů CAN a MAY)

Co se týče sloves COULD a MIGHT, jak již bylo řečeno, vyskytují se zejména v kontextech neminulých a jejich významy jsou interpretovány především jako hypotetické (viz. *Tabulka 3*)

Tabulka 3 Interpretace COULD a MIGHT

interpretace	MIGHT	COULD
epistemická možnost, neminulé kontexty	51	8
epistemická možnost, neminulé kontexty, hypotetické	16	-
epistemická možnost, minulé kontexty	69	-
neepistemická možnost, neminulé kontexty, hypotetické	43	142
neepistemická možnost, minulé kontexty	7	63
oscilující mezi svolením a možností	1	-
oscilující mezi schopností a možností	-	16
“merger” mezi epistemickou a neepistemickou možností	2	-
nejasné (problematické)	3	3
celkem	192	232

Z tabulky 3 vyplývá, že vzájemná zaměnitelnost COULD a MIGHT se týká především neepistemického hypotetického významu v neminulých kontextech a, stejně jako u CAN a MAY, je omezena na formální kontexty. Na rozdíl od MIGHT je COULD běžné v minulých kontextech, a to jak v řeči přímé, tak v řeči nepřímé, vyskytuje se převážně v NEWS a FICT. Přestože literatura uvádí, že epistemické MIGHT nelze použít, pokud odkazujeme na minulost, bylo zaznamenáno 6 takových výskytů, zejména ve FICT, např.

- (4) *Sometimes Al wanted chocolate out of her bag, sometimes she was facing the pangs of birth or the shock of a car crash. They **might** be awake for minutes or hours.* [HM,44] (App2D, FICT, 88)

Pokud porovnáme výskyty hypotetického neepistemického COULD a MIGHT ve formálních kontextech, ve většině případů jsou zaměnitelné, ale platí zde stejné restriktce jako pro CAN a MAY, tj. COULD v některých kontextech upřednostňuje schopnostní interpretaci a MIGHT lze interpretovat jako neurčité mezi epistemickou a neepistemickou možností.

Kapitola 12 pojednává o interpretacích možnostních významů CAN/COULD a MAY/MIGHT s ohledem na jejich využití jako prostředků nepřímého vyjadřování (hedging), které je motivováno zejména zdvořilostními faktory. Autoři zabývající se problematikou atenuace (Hyland 1999, Wilamová 2005) považují anglická modální slovesa za nejčastěji využívané prostředky strategie ‚hedging‘, neboť

mluvčímu umožňují vyjádřit své postoje nejen k posluchači, ale i k obsahu propozice. Epistemická modální slovesa jsou běžně charakterizována jako ‚hedges‘, analýza ale ukazuje, že i některé významy neepistemické lze jako prostředky atenuace charakterizovat, zejména již zmíněné hypotetické formy COULD a MIGHT, které vyjadřují tentativní teoretickou možnost. CAN se většinou jako prostředek ‚hedging‘ nevyužívá, neboť primárně vyjadřuje možnost vyplývající z vnějších okolností.

Závěrem je třeba podotknout, že tato práce, vycházející pouze z analýzy psaného jazyka, nevyvozuje obecně platné závěry, ale poukazuje především na tendence týkající se užití a výskytu zkoumaných modálních sloves a jejich možnostních významů v psaném anglickém jazyce. Tato zjištění by měla být doplněna studií mluvené angličtiny, ve které se užití modálních sloves v mnoha ohledech liší, jak bylo doloženo výraznými odlišnostmi mezi výskyty modálních sloves z beletrie a ostatních registrů.

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Appendix 1: Data used in the analysis

SOURCE TEXTS

Administrative style (ADMIN)

Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom's Strategy (2006), presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Home Department by Command of Her Majesty, July 2006, London: The Stationery Office.

Government Response to the Health Committee's Report on NHS Charges (2006), presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Health by Command of Her Majesty, October 2006, London: The Stationery Office.

Human Trafficking (the government reply to the twenty-sixth report from the joint committee on human rights session) (2006), presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department by Command of Her Majesty, December 2006, London: The Stationery Office.

New Powers Against Organised and Financial Crime (2006), presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department by Command of Her Majesty, July 2006, London: The Stationery Office.

Academic scientific style (ACAD)

Jenkins, J. (2000) *The Phonology of the English Language*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1 – 120.

Popular scientific style (NAT)

Focus, August 2007, No 179, Bristol: Bristol Magazines, Ltd.

New Scientist, July 2007, Vol. 195, No 2611. England: Reed Business Information.

Newspaper reporting (NEWS)

The Times, Saturday June 2, 2002, London: Times Newspapers Limited.

The Times, Saturday April 10, 2004, London: Times Newspapers Limited.

Fiction (FICT)

Mantel, H. (2005) *Beyond Black*. London: Harper Perennial, 1 – 260.

Appendix 2A: tokens of CAN [App.2A]

I. Root possibility

Administrative style [ADMIN]

1. There are a variety of ways in which you **can** provide us with your views. [FC,2]
2. You **can** email us at:... [FC,2]
3. Or you **can** write to us at:... [FC,2]
4. SOCA and other law enforcement are increasingly interested in alternative tools which **can** prevent crime from happening in the first place, rather than simply dealing with the offenders afterwards. [FC,9]
5. We **can** see three basic areas where these orders would come in useful. [FC,9]
6. The current blocks to sharing data **can** frustrate the public, which does not expect to have to give the same information to large numbers of different arms of Government. [FC,12]
7. Even where legislation proves necessary, it is still possible to rely on implied powers within that legislation, rather than including specific gateways, which **can** have the effect of creating uncertainty in the minds of front line staff in any situations where no explicit gateways exist. [FC,13]
8. Credit reference agencies seek to get information on the names of the deceased as quickly as possible, but this **can** take many months. [FC,14]
9. One of the most basic ways of self-protection is to share information on frauds which have been attempted or committed to ensure other agencies **can** be on the look out for the same fraud. [FC,15]
10. The public sector should be moving towards a general expectation that anyone applying for payments or other benefits from the public sector **can** expect to have the details in their application checked against relevant databases to ensure entitlement and prevent fraud. [FC,18]
11. The Audit Commission's National Fraud Initiative is a prime example of how matching similar data **can** prevent fraud. [FC,19]
12. *Contracting out and institutional changes have also moved parts of the local government sector outside the Commission's remit, for example housing associations, contracted out local authority staff and NHS Foundation Trusts. As such, the benefits the NFI **can** offer to local government (eg detecting fraudulent tenants and payroll frauds) are no longer automatically available to these bodies.* [FC,19]
13. These data sets would typically be for mutually exclusive purposes which **can** reveal where entitlements are being incorrectly granted, eg when the same name appears in connection with pension payments and a list of deceased persons. [FC,22]
14. Having identified, in partnership with SOCA and other law enforcement agencies, priority areas for mining, we intend to work with the Information Commissioner with a view to producing guidance on the circumstances in which this sort of exercise **can** take place, perhaps building on the principles set out in the Code of Data Matching produced by the NFI. [FC,23]
15. Under Clause 2 (1) of the Law Commission's draft Bill, a person who has provided assistance or encouragement (referred to in the Report, Draft Bill and hereafter as "D") **can** be liable if he does an act which is capable of encouraging or assisting another person to do a criminal act in relation to a principal offence he believes will be committed. [FC,25]
16. *There are also circumstances where the assistance is indirect or peripheral and may not be considered capable of encouraging or assisting a criminal act itself.* This is a particular problem in relation to organised crime as the assistance or encouragement **can** often be to wider activity underpinning the criminal network rather than specific offences. [FC,26]
17. Such activities would include, for example, the maintenance of the legitimate activities of a "front" business or providing facilities for meeting or storage facilities **can** indirectly assist others in the preparation or planning of serious criminal activity. [FC,26]
18. There may still be cases where a prevention order **can** have clear harm reduction benefits while the illegality of the underlying behaviour is borderline (eg case study D below). [FC,30]

19. At present, this sort of case essentially leaves law enforcement with a choice between prosecution or no action, and the risk remains that these essentially peripheral players **can** step up to leadership in the organised crime group once the principals have been convicted. [FC,31]
20. We **can** envisage circumstances in which civil orders could play a role where prosecution *is not feasible, alongside* prosecution or *as an alternative* to prosecution. [FC,31]
21. The order **can** draw on the pattern of known behaviour from past convictions and the evidence of R's current activity. [FC,33]
22. This document describes that strategy and explains what organisations and individuals **can** do to help in its implementation. [IT,1]
23. The United Kingdom faces a continuing threat from extremists who believe they **can** advance their aims by committing acts of terrorism here in the UK and against our citizens and interests abroad. [IT,1]
24. *Since early 2003, the United Kingdom has had a long-term strategy for countering international terrorism (known within Government as CONTEST).* Its aim is to reduce the risk from international terrorism, so that people **can** go about their daily lives freely and with confidence. [IT,1]
25. *The PREVENT strand is concerned with tackling the radicalisation of individuals.* We seek to do this by engaging in the battle of ideas – challenging the ideologies that extremists believe **can** justify the use of violence, primarily by helping Muslims who wish to dispute these ideas to do so. [IT,2]
26. *The PROTECT strand is concerned with reducing the vulnerability of the UK and UK interests overseas.* This covers a range of issues including; Strengthening border security – so that terrorists and those who inspire them can be prevented from travelling here and we **can** get better intelligence about suspects who travel, including improving our identity management, for example by use of biometrics [IT,2]
27. The threat is real: this paper explains how we **can** all work together to understand and tackle it successfully. [IT,4]
28. In doing so, we will look at the action being taken to prevent the radicalisation which **can** lead to terrorism, action to pursue terrorists and those who sponsor them, as well as what is being done to protect the public and deal with terrorist incidents. [IT,5]
29. The individuals who have carried out terrorist attacks which they claim are in defence of Islam do not in fact adhere to a single set of beliefs: they may appear to outsiders to hold similar views, but **can** nevertheless have quite distinct opinions and approaches on particular issues. [IT,7]
30. *Second, the terrorists brand the current governments of many Muslim states as 'apostate' – that is as having turned away from true Islam – on the basis that those states do not conform to the terrorists' idea of how a Muslim state should be run.* By labelling existing Muslim states in this way, the terrorists believe they **can** justify taking violent action against the governments and citizens of those states, even though they are coreligionists. [IT,8]
31. Identifying the factors which may lead to radicalisation, and some of the arguments used to justify it, are important so that we **can** focus our responses in order to reduce the risk of terrorism. [IT,10]
32. Given the impact on local ways of life, those already predisposed to be suspicious of the West **can** seek to portray these changes as a deliberate attempt to replace traditional structures with Western models, rather than as the consequence, for good and ill, of modernisation. [IT,10]
33. Exposure to a forceful and inspiring figure, already committed to extremism, **can** be important here. [IT,10]
34. This person may be associated with a particular place (e.g. a mosque) or **can** be a national or international figure, seen on video or heard on tapes. [IT,10]
35. However preliminary discussions with prosecutors suggest an offence of this type would be useful to ensure those involved on the fringes of organised crime and on whom it largely depends **cannot** escape prosecution. [FC,26]
36. Any number of prosecutions **cannot** stop this infiltration where those convicted are simply replaced in the suborned organisation. [FC,34]
37. Law enforcement might also have evidence of crimes committed overseas which **cannot** be prosecuted in the UK, or the subject of an order might have been released after conviction overseas in circumstances where we would expect them in the UK to be subject to strict licence conditions – the prevention order would enable us to put such controls in place. [FC,31]

38. But in the case of organised crime investigations, there may be significant numbers of individuals at the fringes who **cannot** be pursued in the main trial, and for whom a separate trial is not thought worthwhile. [FC,31]
39. We would welcome your views on new measures to merge confiscation and enforcement hearings, to contract out enforcement of confiscation orders, to cancel orders which **cannot** be enforced, and to extend certain search and seizure powers to all financial investigators. [FC,38]
40. It is available as a printed document, and **can** also be downloaded from www.homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk [FC,1]
41. The full list of those who we consulted in developing this paper **can** be found at Annex B. [FC,1]
42. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality **can** be maintained in all circumstances. [FC,2]
43. Meanwhile, pilot exercises in the identity fraud arena and within SOCA are throwing up striking examples of what **can** be done when public and private data is shared, with particular potential to reduce financial crime, money laundering and fraud. [FC,7]
44. The implementation of these proposals will need careful management to maintain a proper balance between respecting privacy rights, while ensuring that publicly held data **can** be properly used to prevent crime, as the public has every right to expect. [FC,8]
45. We welcome these proposals, and are considering adopting them while looking at how they **can** be extended to deal more effectively with those on the periphery of organised crime through special targeted provisions. [FC,9]
46. In the meantime, fraudsters are clearly taking advantage of the fact that the lack of routine data sharing means all too often that the left hand in the public sector does not know what the right hand is doing, and contradictory information **can** be submitted to a range of different agencies without it being picked up. [FC,13]
47. SOCA will work with partner agencies to see how these problems **can** be addressed, and any IT solution would clearly need to be carefully designed with a robust business case, but the potential for real added value to SARs is obvious. [FC,21]
48. We believe however that targeted exercises of data sharing **can** themselves be considered on a case by case basis, without requiring agencies to look at every item of data separately. [FC,21]
49. Data matching and mining **can** be interpreted in different ways in different circumstances. [FC,22]
50. *Data mining, on the other hand, uses more advanced software to analyze data in a number of ways. It can be used within data sets to expose fraud, and is particularly useful when there are many variables within a data set, or the sheer volume of data means that automated analysis is necessary.* [FC,22]
51. We would question this analysis, however, we believe a robust case **can** be made for data mining in relation to entire data sets in appropriate circumstances. [FC,23]
52. Such guidance should provide assurances for agencies with relevant databases in both the public and private sector about the circumstances in which this sort of exercise **can** safely be run, while giving the public the confidence that due safeguards are in place. [FC,23]
53. *In the first category would fall cases where there is sufficient evidence to justify an order to a civil standard, but insufficient for a conviction.* This may be because of the absolute quantity of evidence, or because some of it is in a form not admissible in a criminal proceeding but which **can** be used in civil cases (eg certain types of hearsay evidence). [FC,31]
54. We are seeking ways to further improve the enforcement of confiscation orders, potentially by merging the confiscation and enforcement hearings so that findings of fact as to assets that the defendant owns **can** be made. [FC,38]
55. *The PROTECT strand is concerned with reducing the vulnerability of the UK and UK interests overseas.* This covers a range of issues including; Strengthening border security – so that terrorists and those who inspire them **can** be prevented from travelling here and we can get better intelligence about suspects who travel, including improving our identity management, for example by use of biometrics [IT,2]

Academic style [ACAD]

56. She [Gika] asks, 'how foreign **can** it be internationally, since people all over the world communicate in English?' (1996:15) [JJ,10]
57. In describing Kachru's model, Crystal argues that 'the question of whether autonomous norms **can** develop in a foreign language situation as Japan remains unresolved' (1995:364) [JJ,12]
58. *Indeed, pronunciation appears to play a very major role in problematic ILT.* This is not surprising when one considers that the different L2 varieties of English are characterized by the transfer of L1 pronunciation features, which **can** vary markedly from one variety to another. [JJ,19]
59. *The original motivation found to account for convergence was the desire to be liked.* This desire **can** operate both at an interpersonal level, i.e. the desire to be liked by one's interlocutor, and at group level, i.e. the desire for membership of the community represented by an interlocutor. [JJ,21]
60. In the rest of this book, I will explore not only the possibility of establishing a phonological core for EIL, but also how pedagogic procedures **can** help speakers of English to acquire such flexibility. [JJ,22]
61. While inter-speaker phonological variation **can** certainly impede communication in EIL, particularly in interlanguage talk (ILT), it is no longer appropriate to regard all such variation from the L1 as automatically deviant. [JJ,27]
62. Much of it comprises acceptable regional variation on a par with that which we find among L1 accents of English (where, incidentally, inter-speaker variation **can** also present an obstacle to intelligibility). [JJ,27]
63. The time has come for us to examine in greater detail the ways in which NBES inter-speaker pronunciation may vary from the L1, and the extent to which such variation **can** impede intelligibility when NBESs interact with one another. [JJ,32]
64. We **can** categorize segmental deviation types conveniently into three groupings: ... [JJ,34]
65. *Addition can* be of two types: *epenthesis* and *paragoge*. [JJ,34]
66. And as has been demonstrated above (and see Chapter 4), segmental transfer errors **can** prove highly detrimental to successful communication in English, particularly in ILT. [JJ,39]
67. Word groups also tend to coincide with syntactic boundaries, so that failure to divide the speech stream into these units **can** result in grammatical ambiguity or misinterpretation. [JJ,45]
68. Their mutual difficulty in interpreting one another's pronunciation **can** account for both the Taiwanese subject's *decrease* in consonant deletion and the Korean subject's *increase* in paragoge in the information exchange tasks as compared with the social conversation. [JJ,66]
69. However, we have since observed that L2 variation is very often the result of an attempt to produce pronunciation that is intelligible for the particular interlocutor – an attempt which **can** lead to both more and less target-like production, according to the interlocutor's pronunciation features involved. [JJ,66]
70. This, however, is still to simplify matters, for there is as yet no broad agreement on a definition of the term 'intelligibility': it **can** mean different things to different people. [JJ,69]
71. For even leaving aside for one moment the role of extralinguistic contextual phenomena, there is another compelling reason why recognizability and recognition of form **can** play only a relatively minor part in the successful conveying and receiving of messages among fluent speakers. [JJ,71]
72. Their formal grammatical competence enables them to assess, for example, what **can** and cannot be a word and what syntactic and phonotactic permutations are possible. [JJ,74]
73. Again, they know that the vowel sound /i/ is slightly longer before a voiced consonant sound than before a voiceless one (for example, in 'pig' as opposed to 'pick'), and therefore which sort of sound they **can** expect to follow /i/ in either case. [JJ,74]
74. Tarone asks: In a [*sic*] ESL classroom composed of 20 learners from seven different native-language backgrounds, **can** we really speak of speech communities and shared qualitative norms in the way we can speak of these for monolingual speakers?
75. Tarone asks: In a [*sic*] ESL classroom composed of 20 learners from seven different native-language backgrounds, can we really speak of speech communities and shared qualitative norms in the way we **can** speak of these for monolingual speakers?
76. **Can** we expect learners from different native-language backgrounds to share the same perceptions of the social dimensions of English language use... (1988:118) [JJ,75]

77. In addition, both interlocutors have receptive processing problems as described above and in the next section, which phonological L1 transfers (such as the example on page 76) **can** only exacerbate. [JJ,77]
78. This situation is especially problematic when the cause of non-sense is speaker error, and thus in ILT, as Olsson (1978) points out, a listener needs to know that he has heard an error before he **can** begin to seek an alternative meaning. [JJ,82]
79. However, because of the nature of the interactions taking place, I **can** say with confidence that if there were any such instances of pragmatic failure, they neither disturbed the flow of the conversation nor affected the final outcome of the task. [JJ,84]
80. Thus, while we **can** build on what L2 speakers already have in common phonologically, we must take the argument one very large step further by identifying what they *need* to have in common and contriving a pedagogic core that focuses on this need. [JJ,95]
81. If we are to identify a phonological core on which speakers **can** rely, we cannot disregard these natural processes of transfer, but must take account of them. [JJ,99]
82. According to Tarone, 'some variables ... whether phonological, morphological, or syntactic, **can** be shown to vary in form depending upon those linguistic forms immediately adjacent. [JJ,110]
83. They (teachers of EIL) would also enable learners to make more effective use of the support provided by L1-L2 similarity if they differentiated more clearly between productive and receptive uses and, in particular, emphasized how knowledge of the L1 pronunciation system **can** help learners understand what they *hear* in the L2. [JJ,115]
84. As we have already noted, at the phonological level in particular, the fact that NBESs tend to deviate in very different ways from the L2 system (Bradford 1982) **can** lead to serious intelligibility problems for listeners. [JJ,116]
85. Phonological transfer is deep-rooted and **can** be of benefit to learners; it is not – and should not – be abandoned easily or willingly, unless there is very good reason to do so. [JJ,119]
86. In such cases, it is not realistic to expect learners to forego their L1 variants readily, and the best we **can** probably do is to draw their attention to the item, in the hope that if they continue to be exposed to the L2, they will acquire it over time and when they are ready to do so. [JJ,119]
87. In other words, like fluent speakers of English in their use of assimilatory features (see above pages 72-3), they will opt for the easiest route to speech production if they think they **can** 'get away with it'. [JJ,90]
88. And, as Rampton (1990) points out, it implies the ethnic Anglo speaker as a reference point against which all other Englishes should be measured, **cannot** be acceptable or appropriate for a language that has passed into world ownership. [JJ,9]
89. Moving on to the learners themselves, we **cannot** escape the close links between language and identity. [JJ,16]
90. We **cannot** assume that because NBESs are able to produce sound contrasts, they can necessarily discriminate aurally between them. [JJ,34]
91. Because the subjects are not the L1 speakers or fluent bilinguals of most accommodation research, we **cannot** assume that, like the latter types of subject, they will adjust their pronunciation in the direction of that of their interlocutors. [JJ,56]
92. Their formal grammatical competence enables them to assess, for example, what can and **cannot** be a word and what syntactic and phonotactic permutations are possible. [JJ,74]
93. *Can we expect learners from different native-language backgrounds to share the same perceptions of the social dimensions of English language use... (1988:118)* [JJ,75]. My answer is no, we **cannot**. [JJ,75]
94. This is because, as we have already noted, in ILT the speech signal received by the listener is likely to contain considerable L1 phonological transfer, whereas in 'native-non-native' interaction, the speech received by the 'non-native' by definition **cannot** transfer from an L1. [JJ,81]
95. Ioup and Tansomboom's findings in relation to Thai provide support for this claim, and their explanation highlights a basic contradiction in attempts to teach pitch movement to adults: we **cannot** expect adult L2 learners to be able or willing to eschew all other linguistic levels as a long-term strategy in the pursuit of L2 pitch movement. [JJ,108]

96. We **cannot** assume that because a learner does not appear to have a problem with a particular item known to be difficult for speakers from their L1, that no problem, in fact, exists. [JJ,111]
97. While the LFC is concerned, above all, with international intelligibility, clearly it **cannot** escape the need to achieve acceptability also. [JJ,124]
98. Even assuming that one can be identified and that it is substantial enough to warrant serious attention (for it may be very small as compared with Jenner's phonological core of L1 varieties), we **cannot** avoid the fact that if such a core already exists, it has not to date resulted in mutual international intelligibility among speakers of English. [JJ,127]
99. It should go without saying that an L2 speaker of English who has attained BES status (and whose production **cannot** therefore be considered an IL) does not exhibit 'deviant' pronunciation, but rather L2 regional variation, along with some degree of variation in standardness of the type exhibited by L1 speakers. [JJ,27]
100. This contrasts largely with the situation relating to L1 variation, where regional pronunciation norms may, and often do, cause attitude judgements of inappropriacy, rather than grammatical judgements of incorrectness (though note, the same **cannot** be said of L1 regional morphology and syntax, where non-standardness is indeed regarded as inaccuracy). [JJ,28]
101. Even for L1 learners of sound systems, there is evidence that the auditory level is not necessarily primary (see page 47), so that 'acoustic differences **cannot** be readily perceived until the corresponding articulatory gestures have been learnt' (Ladefoged 1967:167). [JJ,34]
102. It could be argued that intra-speaker variation is a matter of natural adjustment in use, as speakers converge towards or diverge from the speech of their interlocutors, and therefore that such accommodative processes **cannot** be taught – or at least do not need to be taught. [JJ,54]
103. For, in a number of important ways, the negotiation of intelligibility in ILT **cannot** be considered typical of such negotiation in interaction where one or both interlocutors are fluent speakers of English, not least when it comes to the controversial issue of the relative roles of bottom-up and top-down processing in NBESs' speech perception, which we turn to next. [JJ,80]
104. This is not to claim that learners **cannot** be taught to apply some (but not, in my view, all) of the contextual inferencing strategies they undoubtedly employ in their L1; but simply that at present they rarely do so (but see, for example, Anderson and Lynch 1988; Field 1998 for a different opinion). [JJ,80]
105. Even for fluent listeners, language is a guide to context which, itself, **cannot** be activated until the utterance has been heard. [JJ,91]
106. For as we saw in the previous chapter, intelligibility is an elusive and complex phenomenon, and one that **cannot** be guaranteed by pronunciation alone. [JJ,126]
107. It is at the NBES level, where speakers still retain IIs, that the phonological and phonetic forms that occur **can** be judged for 'correctness'. [JJ,27]
108. It **can** only be hoped that the change of attitude this speaker refers to will not be too long in coming, and that L2 teachers of English will no longer be regarded as 'inferior' because they retain something of their 'local variety of English'. [JJ,30]
109. In fact, the majority of phonetic approximations seem to lead to foreign accent alone rather than to unintelligibility, and **can** therefore be ignored unless a learner wishes to acquire 'native-like' pronunciation. [JJ,36]
110. ...; it **can** also be attributed to the fact that, unlike the situation for NBESs, my process of interpretation was not complicated by the presence of a second IL, i.e. the receiver's as well as the speaker's, falling wide of the target in a different direction. [JJ,38]
111. As Rost points out, even among fluent speakers (he is, in fact, discussing L1 speakers), 'most mishearings **can** be identified as occurring at a segmental level', even though higher level phenomena, such as schematic effects, may also be involved (1990:52) [JJ,39]
112. *The three exceptions are 'balconies'/'balcon', 'road' and 'covered'* (four times). The L1 influence in the first **can** be explained by the fact that the word is a cognate. [JJ,61]
113. This **can** be clearly demonstrated where a subject increases the transfer of a particular L1 phonological feature in the information exchange task without affecting ILT intelligibility. [JJ,64]

114. Assuming that the chief motivation in ILT dyads, and especially those involving the exchange of crucial information, is communicative efficiency, the opposite behaviour of these two subjects in simplifying English syllable structure **can** be explained. [JJ,66]
115. Second, it will be important to identify contrived norms based on a subset of core EIL phonological features, which **can** then be learnt by all international speakers of English (including L1 speakers of English) [JJ,67]
116. According to Hymes, this knowledge **can** be analyzed in terms of four parameters: ... [JJ,73]
117. Some degree of shared socio-cultural background between L1 and L2 speakers of English **can** therefore be assumed. [JJ,74]
118. In ILT the 'necessary conditions' are, probably above all, mutually intelligible pronunciation, for even 'high adequacy in lexis and grammar **can** be negated by incompetence in the signalling phase' (Gimson 1994:270) [JJ,79]
119. In many of the breakdowns where the source **can** be traced back to the speaker's pronunciation, there was extensive extralinguistic contextual information available. [JJ,89]
120. This will best be done, on the one hand, by establishing a core of intelligible pronunciation which **can** be made available to all learners regardless of their L1 and, on the other, by developing learners' accommodative skills so that they are able to improve their intelligibility for specific listeners. [JJ,91]
121. Mc Arthur, in fact, takes the argument one stage further in his conclusion that the issue **can** be viewed from three perspectives: the 'pessimistic', the 'optimistic', and the 'neutral'/'pragmatic'. [JJ,92]
122. Since they are universal, such linguistic constraints **can** be expected to play an important part in the acquisition of L2 phonology, and subsequent research into interlanguage phonology has duly revealed tendencies similar to those operating in L1 acquisition. [JJ,101]
123. The areas of difficulty that a language learner will have **can** be predicted on the basis of a systematic comparison of the grammars of the native language, the target language and the nakedness relations stated in universal grammar, such that, ... [JJ,103]
124. The appearance of this process in interlanguage **can** therefore be considered a developmental as well as a universal feature. [JJ,105]
125. But even in the unlikely event of their having done so, the most interesting implication of Neufeld's findings for our purposes is their support for the view that some aspects of L2 pronunciation (and hence native-like pronunciation) **can** only be acquired through extensive (probably non-pedagogic) exposure to the second language. [JJ,107]
126. Even assuming that one **can** be identified and that it is substantial enough to warrant serious attention (for it may be very small as compared with Jenner's phonological core of L1 varieties), we cannot avoid the fact that if such a core already exists, it has not to date resulted in mutual international intelligibility among speakers of English. [JJ,127]

Popular scientific style [NAT]

127. *Fish growing up in the wild among predators use their left eye to look at novel objects, while their offspring raised in captivity use their right eye.* This suggests that life experiences **can** affect which side of the brain fish use, and even, says Victoria Braithwaite of the University of Edinburgh, UK, that they have emotional mindsets, since different sides of the brain may correspond to a curious or suspicious attitude. [NS,10; *Left eye, I'm scared, right eye, I'm cool*]
128. Does that mean that one day we **can**, either mathematically or via observations, know about the pre-big bang universe? [NS,16; *Before the big bang there was amnesia*]
129. *Does that mean that one day we can, either mathematically or via observations, know about the pre-big bang universe?* To answer this question, Bojowald developed a simple LQG model to determine the limits of what we **can** know. [NS,16; *Before the big bang there was amnesia*]
130. Just as the Bee Gees' disco style sounds antique compared to hip-hop, birdsong **can** also go out of fashion. [NS,17; *Sparrows tire of the same old song*]
131. The result shows that meaningful differences in song styles **can** arise within just a few years, and thus that mating barriers can be erected quickly, says Derryberry. [NS,17; *Sparrows tire of the same old song*]

132. Tamoxifen, which usually reduces the effects of oestrogen, **can** have the same effect, the team also found. [NS,18; *Popular breast cancer drug could backfire in rare cases*]
133. *Typically, quadriplegics must suck or blow into a straw to steer a wheelchair or move a computer cursor.* That **can** be unhygienic and irritating for the user, says Ravi Vaidyanathan, an engineer at the University of Southampton, UK. [NS,23; *Get moving at a lick*]
134. Both fingerprints and DNA **can** be critical to proving who actually used a phone, since they are frequently borrowed or stolen. [NS,25; *Cellphones dish the dirt on crime suspects*]
135. Officers at a crime scene **can** accidentally mess things up just by leaving a phone switched on while in transit to the lab. [NS,25; *Cellphones dish the dirt on crime suspects*]
136. Even immersing a cellphone in water won't readily change the state of its memory transistors, so contact lists, photos and other information, which **can** establish a suspect's network of contacts, often remain. [NS,25; *Cellphones dish the dirt on crime suspects*]
137. Biofilms, which contain bacteria such as *Staphylococcus aureus*, **can** form on medical devices, where they clog fine tubes and make the bacteria hard to eradicate. [NS,26; *Slimebusters could clean medical kit*]
138. *The new breed of biorefineries is setting off down a similar road.* While their primary function is to make biofuels, refiners are looking at the various types of biomass and the by-products of biofuel production, and asking what they **can** do with them. [NS,29; *Who needs oil?*]
139. The structures of these plant compounds **can** be industrially useful, for example, many are already polymer chains. [NS,30; *Who needs oil?*]
140. Biological systems often make only one of these forms, however, and in many pharmaceuticals, only one form is acceptable because the other form won't create the desired effect or **can** cause drastic side effects. [NS,30; *Who needs oil?*]
141. "We're starting to ask where else bio **can** play a role," Pierce says. [NS,31; *Who needs oil?*]
142. "You **can** actually talk about bringing biomass-derived chemicals online without perturbing food supplies." [NS,31; *Who needs oil?*]
143. "Biology often helps you make new materials that **can** command a higher price, but then you have to create a market." [NS,30; *Who needs oil?*]
144. "When you have a \$75 barrel of oil," Stoppert says, "a lot of things **can** happen." [NS,31; *Who needs oil?*]
145. The results also suggest that super-heavy dark matter particles **cannot** be the main source of ultra-high energy cosmic rays. [NS,8; *Cosmic rays from heart of darkness?*]
146. For 15 years, deep beneath Hamburg, HERA smashed together electrons and protons, allowing physicists to confirm the nature of the strong force, and to prove that the weak force and the electromagnetic force **can** be unified. [NS,5; *End of an HERA*]
147. "This is a very important signature and it **can** be tested by the Auger observatory," says Aloisio. [NS,8; *Cosmic rays from heart of darkness?*]
148. "And this **can** be achieved with four to five years of statistics." [NS,8; *Cosmic rays from heart of darkness?*]
149. *However, fish that had to deal with a lot of predators in the wild favoured one eye, as did their lab-born offspring, especially when viewing the novel object.* "This shows that a tendency for brain splitting **can** be inherited," says Braithwaite. [NS,10; *Left eye, I'm scared, right eye, I'm cool*]
150. Mitchell's team say the finding **can** be explained by the availability of nitrogen. [NS,16; *Organic tomatoes win on level farming field*]
151. Flavonoids are produced as a defence mechanism that **can** be triggered by nutrient deficiency. [NS,16; *Organic tomatoes win on level farming field*]
152. The result shows that meaningful differences in song styles can arise within just a few years, and thus that mating barriers **can** be erected quickly, says Derryberry. [NS,17; *Sparrows tire of the same old song*]
153. Van Haaren's work suggests that biorhythms **can** be preserved for far longer. [NS,17; *Moon migration*]

154. The team say that the motion of small galaxies **can** only be explained by a model that includes dark energy. [NS,18; *Is dark energy right on our doorstep?*]
155. All phones transmit a unique identifying number to the nearest cellular mast, which means the phone's location **can** be pinned down to within a few kilometres at least. [NS,24; *We know where you are, your cellphone told us*]
156. The phone can communicate with several towers at once and, because the closest tower gets the strongest signal, the information **can** be combined to triangulate the phone's position to within a few tens of metres. [NS,24; *We know where you are, your cellphone told us*]
157. Increasingly, however, the precision with which someone **can** be tracked is dropping to a few metres, thanks to the addition of GPS devices to cellphones, which vastly improves the services LBS companies can provide. [NS,24; *We know where you are, your cellphone told us*]
158. But it also means that users **can** be pinpointed in a way that simply wasn't possible before, which Bankston says could play into the hands of snoopers. [NS,24; *We know where you are, your cellphone told us*]
159. So they [phages] will probably find their first use as an addition to a fluid for flushing out catheters, which are accessible from outside the body: they **can** become locked as they rest inside a patient's veins or bladder. [NS,26; *Slimebusters could clean medical kit*]
160. The RoboSwift does not require this range of shapes and so **can** be made of cheaper carbon-fibre composite. [NS,26; *Acrobatic robot set to fly with the flock*]
161. Its [oil] strands of carbon-based molecules **can** easily be vaporised and rearranged with the help of various catalysts. [NS,28; *Who needs oil?*]
162. Succinic acid **can** be used to make solvents, paints, adhesives, pharmaceuticals and other traditionally oil-based products. [NS,30; *Who needs oil?*]
163. Now that feedstocks like lactic acid and PDO are becoming available at a competitive price, companies are starting to ask what else they **can** be used for. [NS,31; *Who needs oil?*]
164. Bio-based chemical products are also stalled by the same obstacles that face biofuels: the need to degrade the cellulose and lignin in plant matter into the sugars and other components that **can** be converted into products. [NS,31; *Who needs oil?*]
165. *A program is simply a set of instructions that tell a machine what to do.* They don't have to be written out; they **can** be hard-wired into a machine. [NS,32; *I ropebot*]
166. The important point is that these instructions **can** be changed without having to dismantle or rebuild the entire mechanism – in other words, the program has to be separate from the rest of the machine's workings. [NS,32; *I ropebot*]

Newspaper reporting [NEWS]

167. Another Sunni member of the council, Ghazi Ajil al-Yawer, asked: "How **can** a superpower like the US put itself in a state of war with a small city like Fallujah. This is genocide." [T1,1; *Iraqi leaders revolt over transfer of power*]
168. Britain's race relations chief wants free holidays for all school-leavers so that they **can** mix with teenagers from other backgrounds and develop a shared "British" identity. [T1,1; *Race chief wants teenagers to share free holidays*]
169. In another move to improve the family courts, the Department for Education and Skills is trying to tackle delays in cases reaching court, which **can** mean fathers being denied access to children for months. [T1,11; *Driving ban for mothers who refuse child access*]
170. "You know, that's the hardest part: not knowing what happened. My children are very confused. And how **can** we plan a funeral?" [T1,16; *Translator died trying to make a difference*]
171. *A clinic was built in 1994, although it still does not have a doctor. Electricity came in 1997.* But the people of Qunu **can** still live and die without ever having a proper job. [T1,20; *Mandela legacy buys scant help for rural poor*]
172. *We are in the last part of the race with Manchester United and Arsenal.* Only Arsenal **can** lose the title and I don't believe they will. [T1,31; *Confident Ranieri makes his point*]

173. Batsmen on both sides, and in particular the three most notable underachievers in the series so far – Vaughan himself, Marcus Trescothick and, of course, Lara – **can** hope for a much better time here. [T1,34; *Read's flaws with bat open door for Jones*]
174. This Masters is merely further evidence that Woods **can** suffer from everyday troubles. [T1,35; *Woods struggles to face up to life in the real world*]
175. What is incredible about his golf now, though, is that this new version of Woods, the one who cannot keep the momentum going, the one who **can** miss a three-foot putt, is still here challenging for the title. [T1,35; *Woods struggles to face up to life in the real world*]
176. “*I feel mentally tired because I've become too wrapped up in this ranking business for my own good,*” White said. “Now I **can** chill out, relax and go to the Crucible with one less thing on my mind. That’s just magic.” [T1,35; *White continues his resurgence to set up semi-final date with Ebdon*]
177. I think the level of the game has been raised so much that nowadays all the players **can** play. *It is just a matter of having the right week.* [T1,35; *Rose holds nerve to maintain European challenge*]
178. “*I am frustrated because I believe the boys deserved more,*” Gregory said. “But we’ll take whatever we **can** take at the moment because Saints are on the crest of a wave and we are fighting.” [T1,36; *Farrell shines as Wigan put brakes on the old enemy*]
179. “I think the World Championships **can** get in the way if you want to do well at the Olympics,” she [Cave] said. [T1,37; *Cave determined to avoid holding poisoned chalice*]
180. At Haydock, Saffron Fox **can** underline Psychiatrist’s chance by seeing off the highly-rated Mount Vettore in the Bigwigs Bloodstock Racing Club Rated Handicap [2.30] [T1,38; *Keep Psychiatrist in mind at Kempton*]
181. For the moment Stoute has kept his counsel; how **can** he do otherwise with a Jockey Club inquiry hanging over Fallon? [T1,39; *Fallon goes overboard with habit of rocking boat*]
182. Since 1993, the Queen’s income has been taxed, but we **can** assume that she has the best fiscal advice available and keeps the bills as low as possible. [T2,3; *At £35m a year, we are getting a royal bargain*]
183. Now, however, Thommo and his mates Tony and Gaz – “if you think you’re getting our full names you **can** p*** off” – were safely ensconced amid the cigar smoke and sweat of the Frog and Toad bar in Gaiehigashi Avenue,... [T2,7; *St George and stout at the Frog and Toad*]
184. “*We’ll be going into the office here in Tokyo. Can* you write down that we’ll all be working diligently?” [T2,7; *St George and stout at the Frog and Toad*]
185. If there were any doubts about this before yesterday, and going by the success of Europe in the Ryder Cup, then there **can** be none now. [T1,35; *Rose holds nerve to maintain European challenge*]
186. *Mr Gilmore took a similarly philosophical view.* “It’s the world capital of film, so you **can’t** expect no filming,” he said from his converted office block near skid Row. [T1,19; *Lights, camera, friction in the city of big shots*]
187. “The players must realize you **can’t** win a game with one pass.” [T1,39; *Canterbury start with win thanks to double by Chapman*]
188. *Gardening is about philosophy, about loving and longing, about endeavour and artisanship.* It **cannot** all come off the back of an arctic. [T1,6; *Border conflict*]
189. Professor Sir Bernard Crick, commissioned by the Government to devise citizenship lessons for immigrants, said yesterday: “You **can’t** substitute Britishness for multiculturalism. What about the Scottish, the Welsh, the Jewish?” [T1,8; *Race chief sets it out in black and white*]
190. However, Mr Slatter adds: “A cultural melting-pot would be awful. You **can’t** order everyone to read three Shakespeare plays and feel a pang in their heart every time they see the Union Jack. [T1,8; *Brummies see multiculturalism as a betrayal of our roots*]
191. *The US State Department advised the 60,000 American expatriates in the country to leave if they could, saying:* “Tensions have risen to serious levels and the risk of intensified military hostilities between India and Pakistan **cannot** be ruled out.” [T2,1; *Britain and US warn citizens to leave India*]
192. *It is a long outfit, there are no discernible limbs, it is like a helmet in a flowing cape.* No eyes **can** be seen or faces. [T1,3; *Friends in disguise await return of the great bustards*]

193. Margaret Hodge, the Children's Minister, is exploring how that process **can** be speeded up to a matter of weeks to reduce the time that fathers are denied access. [T1,11; *Driving ban for mothers who refuse child access*]
194. The Foreign Office is hopeful, however, that a diplomatic solution **can** still be found. [T2,1; *Britain and US warn citizens to leave India*]
195. Last month the crofters formed Pairc Trust to outline plans for their takeover of the estate which they hope **can** be agreed with the laird. [T1,5; *Crofters take on landlord in power struggle*]
196. "I don't think they **can** be saved if the Government does not consider pulling the troops out – there are only two days left." [T1,17; *Families plead for Japanese hostages*]
197. Managers from Deloitte & Touche are due at Chester Barrie's headquarters today to decide whether a buyer **can** be found. [T2,1, *Chester Barrie forced to call in the men in suits*]
198. From September next year all teachers in state schools will be entitled to have 10 per cent of their week free from classes so that they **can** mark homework and prepare lessons. [T1,4; *Teachers to vote on strikes over unqualified staff*]
199. "I am free to read the newspaper I want but what I will read is that my mother is dead, or that a suicide bomber has attacked a convoy," said Hambartzum Ohanian, 22, whose mother was killed outside the US military base where she worked as a laundry woman by gunmen targeting "collaborators". "That is what I **can** read in these newspapers. Freely." [T1,16; *Anger and anguish after one lost year*]
200. ... - but Wenger is bullish, a fervent believer: "If we can get a positive result against Newcastle, I feel that perhaps we **can** stay in command," he said. [T1,27; *Brilliant Henry steadies the ship*]
201. Ranieri, who is said to want to resolve his future in the next few weeks so that he **can** speak to other clubs if necessary, held talks with Kenyon this week, and more are planned for next week. [T1,31; *Confident Ranieri makes his point*]
202. *Richard Hannon dominated the alanbrazilracing.com Easter Stakes [3.10] at Kempton in the Nineties, saddling the winner five times in six runnings from 1992 to 1997. He has yet to win the race this decade but **can** put the record straight with Psychiatrist today.* [T1,38; *Keep Psychiatrist in mind at Kempton*]
203. The earl of Essex **can** barely afford the annual rent and maintenance on his 57-room mansion in Surrey, even though the Queen is to double his income. [T2,3; *Burden on royal purse fails to move the Wessexes*]

Fiction [FICT]

204. But I **can** assure you, he's telling me now, carnations were his favourite. [HM,22]
205. *I do my duty, I do what I'm here for.* I put it out there, so the person it applies to **can** pick it up. [HM,27]
206. Now people in spirit world **can** make mistakes. [HM,27]
207. *Now people in spirit world can make mistakes.* They **can** be wrong, just like the living. [HM,27]
208. *'It's easy, when you're thin. Everything's easier. Moving. Thinking. Deciding what you'll do and what you won't. You have choices. You **can** choose your clothes. Choose your company. I can't.* [HM,31]
209. 'Oh you're so lovely,' she said. 'Such a lovely, warm and understanding audience, I **can** always count on a good time whenever I come in your direction.' [HM,36]
210. Times have changed, and for that we **can** all be thankful. [HM,38]
211. 'Look, Col, as you quite well know, everything that **can** go wrong for me out there, has gone wrong at sometime. [HM,40]
212. Al sighed and said, in spirit world it's not that simple. You can't just kick out your guide. You **can** hope he gets called away, or that he forgets to come home. [HM,48]
213. You **can** try and kick him out. [HM,48]
214. She was stagnating, and struck by how quickly a temporary situation **can** become desolating and permanent. [HM,74]
215. But then, when you've looked at my books, you'll be able to tell me what I **can** afford. [HM,90]

216. But she's really done enough – Gillian's brimming with gratification – so even if nobody comes through from spirit, she **can** just move right on to whoever is her next target. [HM,19]
217. Alison said, 'If you come into the front bar in about an hour, we **can** get a coffee.' [HM,85]
218. I have someone here for you who's very happy in spirit world, a Margo, Marje, **can** you accept that? [HM,20]
219. *'Her granny didn't tell you.'* 'How **can** you be sure?' [HM,31]
220. *'You'd have said it was one of my lucky guesses.'* She sighed. 'Look, Colette, what **can** I tell you? *The boy was standing there.'* [HM,42]
221. 'Sometimes you've got to cut your losses,' Natasha agreed. 'Well, sweetie, what else **can** I tell you?' [HM,67]
222. *'The thing is, with cuff-links, with dads, they get them for Christmas and then it's, "oh, thanks, thanks a bunch, just what I always needed!"'* Colette nodded. 'But what **can** you do? *What can you get, for men?'* [HM,67]
223. *Colette nodded. 'But what can you do? What can you get, for men?'* [HM,67]
224. '**Can** you hang on for a minute?' *Colette said. 'I need to know more.'* [HM,90]
225. Al, **can** you come a bit closer to the mike? [HM,97]
226. ..., 8.33 she is dropping the sodden tea bags from the saucer into the used cups, Al, she says, what are you doing, **can** we **not** get on the road please ... and then she will see Al's shoulders tense. [HM,47]
227. 'You'd need to build up your psychic skills, you **can't** expect to start cold at your age.' [HM,68]
228. *'It's easy, when you're thin. Everything's easier. Moving. Thinking. Deciding what you'll do and what you won't. You have choices. You can choose your clothes. Choose your company. I can't.'* [HM,31]
229. And on this evening, like every other, she fights down the panic we would all feel, trapped with a crowd of dead strangers whose intentions towards us we **can't** know. [HM,19]
230. Then, 'Steal the shower caps,' because, she would say, 'you **can't** get them these days, you know, and they're only good for twice.' [HM,47]
231. 'It's a shame your mum's passed, so you **can't** ask her what was what. Or why. Or anything like that.' [HM,83]
232. 'If I'm with a client, I **can't** always break off.' [HM,90]

II. Gradient of restriction

233. The sharing **can** also rely on the exemption in section 29 of the DPA. (ADMIN) [FC,15]
234. There are a number of grounds for legitimate processing including customer consent. Customers are also made aware of the possible use to which information about them **can** be put. (ADMIN) [FC,15]
235. There has traditionally been considerable nervousness about this sort of data sharing, with some agencies believing that only individual 'case by case' requests **can** be made under the legislation. (ADMIN) [FC,21]
236. The aim of the offence is to ensure that it **can** be used where there is evidence that D had a good degree of knowledge or suspicion that an offence would take place but was not 100% certain. (ADMIN) [FC,25]
237. Probably best known, section 1 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 introduced Anti Social Behaviour Orders. These **can** be obtained against subjects when the court believes ... (ADMIN) [FC,28]
238. *Moreover, these powers all have weaknesses. They are overwhelmingly focused on individual offenders. Most can only be used against offenders who have been convicted and only apply to the period of their sentence.* (ADMIN) [FC,29]

239. Since our counter-terrorist strategy comprises both open elements (which **can** be freely publicised and discussed) and classified elements (which are kept secret), this paper gives only a partial account of the strategy and omits those secret aspects. (ADMIN) [IT,1]
240. The very fact that English is an international language means that no nation **can** have custody over it. *To grant such custody of the language is necessarily to arrest its development and so undermine its international status.* (ACAD) [JJ,7]
241. What this means in practice is that any word, regardless of its syntactic position, **can** be given nuclear stress if it is the one which the speaker wishes to make the focus of her or his message. (ACAD) [JJ,46]
242. On the other hand, when used as an international language, that is, between L2 speakers, English is not tied to any one cultural background and thus, unlike EFL, no single English culture **can** – or should – be the goal of pedagogy. (ACAD) [JJ,74]
243. Nor **can** they add inflections or particles to the endings of words to indicate their relative importance in relation to each other. (ACAD) [JJ,46]
244. *However, it is nuclear placement itself which causes the most serious suprasegmental problem for NBESs at the productive level. English has one of the most rigid word orders among the world's languages.* This means that speakers of English, unlike speakers of many other languages, **cannot** rely on moving important words to salient positions such as the beginnings of phrases and clauses in order to emphasize them. (ACAD) [JJ,46]
245. If we are to identify a phonological core on which speakers can rely, we **cannot** disregard these natural processes of transfer, but must take account of them. (ACAD) [JJ,99]
246. Because the hearing **can** take place behind closed doors, no one knows how many times judges have approved requests to spy without probable cause, says Bankston. (NAT) [NS,25; *We know where you are, your cellphone told us*]
247. The makers recommend the two chickens provided with the eglu are given a garden to run about in of a minimum 18ft by 24ft, but if the owner is prepared to provide fresh straw and points of interest, they **can** be kept in smaller areas without grass. (NEWS) [T1,3; *Urban hen coop for the designer chic*]
248. Such an “ism” [multiculturalism], he said yesterday, suggests that any culture is equally valid and **can** exist in British society independently of others. (NEWS) [T1,8; *Race chief sets it out in black and white*]
249. “*The way you get the money is to stress the difference between your community and other communities,*” he says. “If it works, you **can** employ yourself, some of your family and get jobs for your friends.” (NEWS) [T1,8; *Brummies see multiculturalism as a betrayal of our roots*]
250. He [President Rolandas Paksas] remains popular with the poor, the old and the unemployed and **can** stand again for the presidency. (NEWS) [T1,15; *President impeached*]
251. Britain **can** pick three women for the Games in Athens and the first of its triathletes home in Ishigaki is guaranteed a place, provided that she [Cave] finishes in the first five. (NEWS) [T1,37; *Cave determined to avoid holding poisoned chalice*]
252. *There is still a fuzziness on the line dividing what belongs to the Queen as an individual and what belongs to the head of state.* The Duchy of Lancaster falls into the latter category, but the income from it **can** be used to meet private as well as public costs and it was up from £ 5.8 million to £ 7.3 million last year. (NEWS) [T2,3; *At £35m a year, we are getting a royal bargain*]

III. Gradient of inherency

253. The PREVENT strand is concerned with tackling the radicalisation of individuals. We seek to do this by deterring those who facilitate terrorism and those who encourage others to become terrorists – changing the environment in which the extremists and those radicalising others **can** operate (ADMIN) [IT,1]
254. The PREPARE strand is concerned with ensuring that the UK is as ready as it **can** be for the consequences of a terrorist attack. (ADMIN) [IT,2]
255. Clearly, then, the optimum situation will be one in which EIL **can** both express the identities of its (L2) speakers and be a successful means for communication, much as any language reconciles, for

- the greater part among its L1 speakers, the opposing forces of the desire to establish 'wider networks of communication' and to preserve the speaker's 'particular identity'. (ACAD) [JJ,17]
256. *The ILT intelligibility problem thus involves both production and reception, and in replacing an L1 teaching model, we need to take both fully into account.* If we can identify precisely which phonological and phonetic features affect intelligibility for ILT hearers (and these will not necessarily be the same as for L1 English speakers – only ILT data **can** provide this crucial information) – we can then devise pedagogic measures to facilitate the accurate production of these by ILT speakers. (ACAD) [JJ,21]
257. *The ILT intelligibility problem thus involves both production and reception, and in replacing an L1 teaching model, we need to take both fully into account.* If we can identify precisely which phonological and phonetic features affect intelligibility for ILT hearers (and these will not necessarily be the same as for L1 English speakers – only ILT data can provide this crucial information) – we **can** then devise pedagogic measures to facilitate the accurate production of these by ILT speakers. (ACAD) [JJ,21]
258. In other words, we **can** establish some sort of pronunciation core of intelligibility such that exists among L1 varieties of English (see Chapter 6) and then set about finding ways to encourage speakers to adjust their speech in its direction as and when necessary; and here, accommodation processes also have an essential role. (ACAD) [JJ,21]
259. In this connection, better data were found to be provided by the recordings of the subjects engaged in social conversation, which is probably as near as we **can** get to the subjects' vernaculars. (ACAD) [JJ,63]
260. When intelligibility is highly salient, then, we **can** predict that speakers will react as Weinberger's subjects did in the absence of context and co-text. (ACAD) [JJ,118]
261. *Companies selling these services say they have great potential to change the way we stay connected to one another.* They **can** also enhance existing websites and services by presenting only information relevant to your location, such as restaurant reviews. (NAT) [NS,24; *We know where you are, your cellphone told us*]
262. *This astonishing idea raised some intriguing questions: was da Vinci influenced by an earlier design? And if so, how far back in history can we trace programmable robots?* (NAT) [NS,32; *I ropebot*]
263. Only six weeks after undergoing an operation to save his career, Matt Perry returns to the Bath side today in the first leg of the Parker Pen Challenge Cup semi-final against Montferrand hoping that in time he **can** once again prove his value to Sir Clive Woodward, the England head coach. (NEWS) [T1,33; *Perry sets sights on England recall after operation*]
264. *"I was fighting like mad out there today.* He [Muller] **can** be a flaky player, but when he's hot, he's really hot." (NEWS) [T1,37; *Henman provides customary rescue act*]
265. *"It's far worse for those people left at home not knowing if they are going to be safe or even if they can get back.* (NEWS) [T2,5; *Chaos at airport as news filters through*]
266. *'Now I want you to sit back, I want you to relax, I want you to smile, and I want you to send some lovely positive thoughts up here to me ... and let's see what we can get.'* (FICT) [HM,36]
267. *'If you hang on till I'm finished here, I can do you psychometry, cards and palms, thirty quid all in.'* (FICT) [HM,79]
268. *'You said he was called Morris. A little bouncing circus clown.'* 'Yes.' 'Sounds a pain.' 'He **can** be.' (FICT) [HM,89]

Appendix 2B: tokens of COULD [App.2B]

I. Root possibility

Administrative style [ADMIN]

1. These sort of orders might be used in cases where there was a strong weight of evidence but either not enough for a prosecution, prosecution was planned but additional measures were urgently needed to prevent harms in the interim, prosecution had been ruled not appropriate on public interest grounds, or the evidence of criminal activity **could** not be prosecuted (eg because it took place overseas). [FC,10]
2. These actions are a selection from the full range of current counter-terrorist activities, not all of which **could** be included here. [IT,5]
3. These sorts of orders **could** be imposed to prevent criminal activity in the first place, but they might also constitute an alternative disposal for those individuals at the fringe of major cases who were not targeted for prosecution, but from whom specific assurances of future good behaviour are needed, or for individuals preparing to agree a deal under the Queen's Evidence provisions in SOCPA. [FC,10]
4. *The reporting system has recently been reviewed by Sir Stephen Lander.* The key conclusion of this review was that the reports are a potentially invaluable resource and **could** be used much better. [FC,20]
5. The Government agrees that it is important to ensure that these offences are carefully drafted in order to ensure that liability is not extended too far, but we also need to ensure that those who **could** be said to have a reasonable degree of belief that an offence was likely to take place, and that their act would provide assistance or encouragement, could not escape prosecution by arguing that they were not absolutely certain that the offence would take place. [FC,25]
6. The exercise of the legal tools provided by SOCPA and the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 is expected to have a considerable impact in terms of bringing organised criminals to justice, but there is more that **could** be done. [FC,24]
7. An example of how this offence **could** be used would be where D provides a property, which he fits with security features, for X. [FC,26]
8. We therefore believe there remains a gap which we believe **could** be filled by a new civil order, the "Serious Crime Prevention Order". [FC,29]
9. This order **could** be imposed following a contested hearing, or the terms could be agreed between the subject and prosecution and the order validated by the court. [FC,30]
10. This order could be imposed following a contested hearing, or the terms **could** be agreed between the subject and prosecution and the order validated by the court. [FC,30]
11. In the case of terrorist control orders, Parliament chose to specify in broad terms the sort of conditions which **could** be imposed (section 1(4) of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005). [FC,32]
12. An earlier chapter has outlined the potential value that **could** be extracted from SARs through improved data-mining and datamatching. [FC,39]
13. *Identifying the factors which may lead to radicalisation, and some of the arguments used to justify it, are important so that we can focus our responses in order to reduce the risk of terrorism.* Of course, setting out these factors does not in any way imply that we accept their validity or that resorting to terrorist violence **could** ever be justified. [IT,10]
14. This paper sets out some simple and practical steps for improved data sharing, which we believe **could** make a considerable impact against financial crime, fraud and money laundering. [FC,7]
15. Orders **could** restrict businesses' activities in certain areas or with certain customers, or permit certain lines of business only in return for transparency about customers - for example, a company making concealed compartments supposedly to enable drivers to hide their valuables, but which in practice have been used to conceal drugs. [FC,10]
16. Making the compartments is not in itself illegal, but an order **could** impose a requirement on the business to notify law enforcement of the details of all such compartments which have been fitted and the details of the customers. [FC,10]

17. As the financial sector liberalised and the number of players increased, fraudsters **could** commit the same frauds in a short period on a whole range of institutions, maximising criminal profit while minimising the risk of detection. [FC,15]
18. *Even in those circumstances involving sensitive data (such as criminal convictions or allegations of crime) in most cases the current DPA conditions should suffice.* Where they do not, it would be possible to make further Orders under the DPA (for example under schedule 3) to ensure that the sharing and processing **could** take place. [FC,16]
19. Preliminary discussions with the Information Commissioner suggest that codes of practice **could** be a useful way of agreeing procedures for public sector data sharing of this sort, giving public sector organisations the confidence to act, and the public the confidence that reasonable safeguards are in place. [FC,16]
20. The mechanics of a public-private database of this sort need to be agreed, as there are several options available, of which CIFAS is one which **could** be useful in the short term. [FC,17]
21. Crimes on the CIFAS database which have never been reported to the police **could** provide valuable new lines of enquiry for law enforcement teams working on, for example, terrorism or organised crime. [FC,17]
22. *The reporting system has recently been reviewed by Sir Stephen Lander. The key conclusion of this review was that the reports are a potentially invaluable resource and could be used much better.* One of the key ways this **could** happen is through better information sharing. [FC,20]
23. Depending on the underlying facts behind the report, there **could** be a range of possible responses. [FC,20]
24. SOCA is currently working to develop an IT approach which will enable SARs to be checked periodically against a series of relevant non-law enforcement databases containing information that **could** have a bearing on crime. [FC,21]
25. In practice, we would expect them to be short term and targeted exercises, rather than ongoing processes which **could** swamp law enforcement with data. [FC,23]
26. It is not the intention to widen criminal liability to every person who has some idea that their acts **could** assist others to commit offences. [FC,25]
27. The Government's view is where there is sufficient evidence to show that D does something for a person [X] whom they knew or suspected to be involved in serious organised crime and that D believes or suspects their own actions **could** encourage or assist the criminal activities, D should be guilty of an offence. [FC,26]
28. We have been working with law enforcement to identify possible new tools which **could** help prevent crime, examining in particular the sort of range available to agencies dealing with fraud and regulators. [FC,28]
29. Most significant will be the need to ensure proportionality, particularly in cases where the degree of complicity in crime is unclear, and in cases where an order **could** cut across the interests of third parties. [FC,30]
30. We can envisage circumstances in which civil orders **could** play a role where prosecution *is not feasible, alongside* prosecution or *as an alternative* to prosecution. [FC,31]
31. Secondly, orders **could** be an additional option in the run up to a criminal prosecution, imposed to restrict the harm the subject can do while the case is being prepared, in cases where the subject is aware of law enforcement interest already. [FC,31]
32. A preventative order disrupting future criminal activity by these currently minor players **could** play an important role in preventing them taking over the organisation in the leaders' absence. [FC,31]
33. They might include restrictions on how the enterprise carries out its business, it **could** require the removal of certain directors or office holders, or in extreme circumstances it could require the dissolution of an entity altogether. [FC,34]
34. They might include restrictions on how the enterprise carries out its business, it could require the removal of certain directors or office holders, or in extreme circumstances it **could** require the dissolution of an entity altogether. [FC,34]
35. There have to be such secret elements, in order to avoid alerting the terrorists themselves either to capabilities we possess for countering their purposes or to vulnerabilities which they **could** exploit. [IT,5]

Academic style [ACAD]

36. *A third option is that of 'cloning', whereby learners model their pronunciation on that of someone they admire, not necessarily a 'native' speaker, but someone whose accent is easily intelligible.* This **could** include speakers heard only on recorded teaching materials, such as the journalist Kate Adie, who features in the *Headway* series. [JJ,17]
37. For example, the answer to the question 'When do you want to travel round the world?' **could** be the following: *I want to travel round the world when I leave school.* [JJ,49]
38. This may be a simple statement of fact; it **could**, on the other hand, be an oblique request for someone to open a window. [JJ,83]
39. This was, I believe, because of the non-threatening manner in which the follow-up discussion was conducted, the goal being not to criticize either speaker or listener, but to help them to identify together the ways in which they **could** mutually improve their performance for the forthcoming CAE Speaking examination. [JJ,87]
40. In the latter respect, teaching **could** focus on pronunciation universals as well as on specific L1-L2 similarities and include extensive exposure to a wide range of L2 accents in order to highlight the similarities among them. [JJ,115]
41. For example, in the case of the word 'and', epenthesis would produce /ændə/, rendering deletion obsolete, whereas deletion would produce /æn/, which **could** then become /ænd/ by epenthesis. [JJ,118]
42. And in view of the close links between accent and personal and group identity that were discussed in the previous chapter, the need for such redefinition of phonological correctness **could** be said to amount to a moral obligation. [JJ,28]
43. As with the deviations described in previous sections, non- or misunderstanding was in each case the consequence, despite the presence of linguistic and/or extra-linguistic contextual information – though it **could** be argued that intonation is itself an essential part of the context (see the discussion of Nash 1969 above) [JJ,49]
44. It **could** be argued that intra-speaker variation is a matter of natural adjustment in use, as speakers converge towards or diverge from the speech of their interlocutors, and therefore that such accommodative processes cannot be taught – or at least do not need to be taught. [JJ,54]
45. And even if they were able and willing, the only good reason for learning pitch movement is for its contribution to meaning, so it is difficult to see how it **could** be taught for meaningful use unless it is taught in association with meaning and, thus, with other linguistic levels. [JJ,108]
46. Context and co-text **could** thus be expected to compensate for any non-recoverability of pronunciation. [JJ,118]
47. *In examples 20, 21, and 22, the listeners were attempting to draw a person from the speakers' descriptions.* They **could** therefore be expected to have established a schema which included words such as 'hat' and 'zipper', especially considering that in example 20, the speaker said 'She wears a hat *on her head*', and the 'zipper' in example 21 is mentioned in the context of a raincoat. [JJ,89]
48. If no other factors had been involved, we would have expected phonological error to be more evident in the former than in the latter, since phonological competence **could** be expected to have improved during a six-week period of language learning. [JJ,61]
49. Rost (1990) notes that in experiments on lexical effects, subjects 'tended to identify sounds as English words as long as there was some phonological evidence that a word **could** be identified'. [JJ,88]
50. More problematic, though, is the second example, where both a BES and NBES receiver **could** (and did) simply misunderstand the intended message. [JJ,35]
51. In addition, the context of this exchange **could** have been expected to provide the listeners with clues to meaning, since they were sitting round a table with paper and coloured pens. [JJ,51]
52. In examples 4 and 5, although there was no visual information, the subject of football was already under discussion and, once again, one **could** have expected a football match schema to have compensated for pronunciation problems. [JJ,89]

Popular scientific style [NAT]

53. *Last week, genomics pioneer Craig Venter announced that his team has passed an important milestone in its efforts to create a bacterial cell whose genome is entirely synthetic – constructed chemically from the building blocks of DNA.* Venter claims this goal **could** be achieved within months. [NS,6; *Life begins again*]
54. *Church believes there should be no fundamental barriers.* He sees the team's artificial organism becoming a workhorse for biotechnology that **could** be adapted to do useful tasks such as making complex biochemicals. [NS,7, *Life begins again*]
55. These findings **could** be explained if the ultra-high energy cosmic rays were coming from within our galaxy. [NS,8; *Cosmic rays from heart of darkness?*]
56. *Haberl says that the Earth can just about cope if we meet future needs by producing food more efficiently.* This **could** be done by intensifying agriculture on roughly the same amount of land as we use now. [NS,15; *Earth suffers as we gobble up resources*]
57. "The case for [dark energy] would be much stronger if it **could** be detected in our neighbourhood, where the interpretation of [data] is easier than in the distant universe," says Gene Byrd of the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. [NS,18; *Is dark energy right on our doorstep?*]
58. If the slow-pull technique isn't powerful enough, then a spacecraft **could** be crashed into the asteroid, as the European Space Agency's Don Quijote mission is designed to demonstrate. [NS,19; *How not to save the planet*]
59. The US military already uses PackBot, made by iRobot of Massachusetts, to carry lethal weapons, but the new stun-capable robots **could** be used against civilians. [NS,23; *Don't mess with the shock-bot*]
60. The glove **could** also be used in online meetings to provide virtual handshakes. [NS,23; *Gizmo*]
61. The biomass **could** be supplied by anything from corn, sugar cane, grasses, wood and soybeans to algae. [NS,29; *Who needs oil?*]
62. The relatively modest biomass required to meet this demand means that corn or other food crops **could** be used without creating the competition for food that has arisen over corn-based ethanol fuel in the US, Shank says. [NS,29-30; *Who needs oil?*]
63. Everything that could be done with the one axle **could** now be done with each half of the split axle. [NS,35; *I ropebot*]
64. "Of course there are risks," says Callas, pointing out that the terrain **could** be harder for the rover to grip than expected. [NS,5; *Rover to go over*]
65. "The slips **could** be such that it would be very difficult to get out again." [NS,5; *Rover to go over*]
66. Synthetic life **could** be just around the corner – depending on what you mean by "synthetic". [NS,6; *Life begins again*]
67. However, Roberto Aloisio and Francesco Tortorici of the Gran Sasso national Laboratory in Assergi, Italy, think that super-heavy dark matter particles in our galaxy **could** yet account for some, if not all, of the ultra-high energy cosmic rays arriving on Earth, and that the Auger observatory should be able to confirm or rule out this territory within the next five years. [NS,8; *Cosmic rays from heart of darkness?*]
68. Aloisio says that if Auger does find more ultra-high energy cosmic rays coming from the galactic centre than from other regions, the number of events **could** tell us what fraction of dark matter is made of super-heavy particles. [NS,8; *Cosmic rays from heart of darkness?*]
69. *Giorgio Vallortigara from the University of Trieste, Italy, who studies lateralisation in vertebrates, says that the left side of the brain directs approach behaviour and the right side withdrawal.* "The wild fish **could** similarly use their left eye here because they are frightened and more likely to withdraw," he says. [NS,10; *Left eye, I'm scared, right eye, I'm cool*]
70. Left-eye preference for novel objects in wild fish **could** mean they have learned to take better advantage of their innate ability to lateralise: "Using the left lobe could simply be the default in this context," Brown says. [NS,10; *Left eye, I'm scared, right eye, I'm cool*]
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72. Their technique **could** offer low-budget academic labs and biotech start-ups a chance to compete with big pharma. [NS,11; *How to teach an old drug new tricks*]
73. Things **could** get even worse if we grow more plants like palm oil and rapeseed for biofuels to ease our reliance on fossil fuels. [NS,15; *Earth suffers as we gobble up resources*]
74. “This [zooplankton migration] has nothing to do with physical processes,” says van Haren, “but a biochemical clock **could** explain it.” [NS,17; *Moon migration*]
75. *Tamoxifen, a drug routinely prescribed to treat breast cancer, may actually help some cancers proliferate.* It **could** do so by mimicking the hormone oestrogen, says David Shapiro and colleagues at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. [NS,18; *Popular breast cancer drug could backfire in rare cases*]
76. A hit by one of these [asteroids] **could** wipe out a city or cause a devastating tsunami. [NS,19; *How not to save the planet*]
77. A series of impacts could accelerate the NEA incrementally, and if the NEA – or a fragment of it – moved towards a keyhole, a waiting gravity tractor **could** trim the deflection. [NS,19; *How not to save the planet*]
78. Shock waves would still shake the NEA, but in such a situation it **could** be our only hope. [NS,19; *How not to save the planet*]
79. *The mucus produced by jellyfish is rich in a compound that is vital to some cosmetics and drugs.* The finding **could** help combat rising numbers of some jellyfish species. [NS,23; *Jellyfish face made-up future*]
80. *But except as a restaurant delicacy, people have few uses for jellyfish.* Now their disposal **could** become economical. [NS,23; *Jellyfish face made-up future*]
81. But it also means that users can be pinpointed in a way that simply wasn’t possible before, which Bankston says **could** play into the hands of snoopers. [NS,24; *We know where you are, your cellphone told us*]
82. Nonetheless, even if it doesn’t store it, the phone gathers highly precise GPS location information in real time, and Bankston says that the government **could** still ask a judge for permission to access it. [NS,25; *We know where you are, your cellphone told us*]
83. The precise location data supplied by GPS-equipped cellphones **could** allow governments to track the movements of suspects more closely than ever before. [NS,25; *Cellphones dish the dirt on crime suspects*]
84. “*You have to stop the phone attaching to the network.* Even allowing new text or Bluetooth messages to be received **could** destroy evidence on it,” says Goode. [NS,25; *Cellphones dish the dirt on crime suspects*]
85. A virus has been genetically engineered that **could** help to break down the slimy colonies of bacteria that clog medical devices such as catheters. [NS,26; *Slimebusters could clean medical kit*]
86. Equipped with twin cameras that beam back three-dimensional video, it **could** allow people to fly virtually with real birds and gain a first glimpse of how the swift flies in its natural environment. [NS,26; *Acrobatic robot set to fly with the flock*]
87. For those who depend on pharmaceuticals synthesised from oil-based building blocks – to control diabetes, hypertension or depression – doing without oil **could** be life-threatening. [NS,28; *Who needs oil?*]
88. In a 2004 report, the DOE identified the top 12 chemicals derived from biomass sugars that it says **could** become the ethylenes, propylenes and benzenes of the modern biorefinery – molecules with the potential to replace the keystones of today’s petrochemical industry. [NS,30; *Who needs oil?*]
89. Indeed, given that the entire US soybean crop **could** only supply around 6 per cent of the nation’s diesel demand, Shank suggests that soy oils might be better used as chemical precursors in biorefineries than burned as diesel. [NS,31; *Who needs oil?*]
90. For lactic acid, solvents, coatings and antifreeze **could** all be on the cards. [NS,31; *Who needs oil?*]
91. On the other hand, further rises in oil costs **could** make many pricey opportunities suddenly feasible. [NS,31; *Who needs oil?*]
92. The VLA had warned that novel H₅N₁ strains **could** emerge as wild birds congregate for the summer moult. [NS,5; *Flue flies in gain*]

93. *Fish swam towards a slatted barrier through which they could see either a novel object [a yellow cross], nothing, or another bishop fish. They **could** then swim past the barrier either to the left or to the right.* [NS,10; *Left eye, I'm scared, right eye, I'm cool*]
94. He opted to rest the weight on a cylinder full of wheat grains and made a small hole in the bottom so they **could** trickle out. [NS,34; *I ropebot*]
95. He just split the front axle in two and attached one end of the string to each piece so that they **could** move independently. [NS,35; *I ropebot*]
96. Drill holes all around the beam and the musicians **could** be reprogrammed to create entirely different rhythmic patterns simply by rearranging the pegs. [NS,34; *I ropebot*]
97. The clever bit, worked out by IS robotics expert Mark Rosheim, is how the robot **could** be programmed to steer automatically. *As the gear wheels rotated, they turned smaller wheels which had raised wooden arms attached to the edges.* [NS,34; *I ropebot*]
98. *This meant the size and spacing of the arms determined the course the robot steered.* These **could** easily be changed to create different movement patterns – making it programmable. [NS,34; *I ropebot*]
99. Cams **could** also be used to create lifelike movements in an automaton, such as a singing mouth or a nodding head. [NS,34; *I ropebot*]
100. Everything that **could** be done with the one axle could now be done with each half of the split axle. [NS,35; *I ropebot*]
101. Such particles **could** have been created during inflation – when the universe expanded exponentially just after the big bang. [NS,8; *Cosmic rays from heart of darkness?*]

Newspaper reporting [NEWS]

102. The validity of passports **could** be cut from ten to five years and the costs could soar to £80 under government plans to improve the security of the travel document. [T1,2; *Passports set to cost twice as much for half as long*]
103. The validity of passports could be cut from ten to five years and the costs **could** soar to £80 under government plans to improve the security of the travel document. [T1,2; *Passports set to cost twice as much for half as long*]
104. Schools **could** face strikes if they seek to save money by replacing teachers with unqualified staff. [T1,4; *Teachers to vote on strikes over unqualified staff*]
105. Mr Lomas has been involved in negotiations to site a 125 turbine wind farm on the estate which **could** be worth up to £400,000 a year if planning permission is approved later this year. [T1,5; *Crofters take on landlord in power struggle*]
106. Mothers may also be warned that false allegations **could** harm their chances over custody. [T1,11; *Driving ban for mothers who refuse child access*]
107. Mystery surrounds exactly what happened in the Speaker Connolly pub in North Dublin last weekend, but it has become synonymous with a new type of crime that **could** undermine the two-week-old smoking ban just as Ireland's politicians are busy hailing its apparent success. [T1,14; *Smoke rage threatens Ireland's ban*]
108. *"I think 50 to 60 per cent of Japanese people support the Japanese Government's position that there must be no compromise with terrorism.* But this **could** change dramatically if the three hostages are brutally killed. [T1,17; *Families plead for Japanese hostages*]
109. The Government's fear is that the deaths of the three hostages **could** galvanise popular opposition to Japan's involvement in Iraq and bring down Mr Koizumi. [T1,17; *Families plead for Japanese hostages*]
110. Now Jan Perry, a local councillor, has proposed guidelines that **could** force Hollywood studios to tone down their "high impact" filming and find a new city to use as a playground. [T1,19; *Lights, camera, friction in the city of big shots*]
111. To enter the area, the northern rebels would have to cross Sri Lankan government-held territory, raising fears that government forces **could** be drawn into the fray. [T1,21; *Teenage girls die as Tiger factions clash*]

112. *Wenger will reshuffle his pack – “We will need fresh legs,” he said – and is likely to bring in Sylvain Wiltord, the France forward, who has not played since December because of ankle trouble. José Antonio Reyes and Edu **could** also start while there is concern about Patrick Vieira, the captain, who has a knee problem. [T1,27; *Brilliant Henry steadies the ship*]*
113. *Although Chelsea will be buoyed by reaching the European Cup semi-finals and have four of their remaining seven matches at home, they also have to take on Newcastle at St James’ Park and United at Old Trafford. The result of the latter, on May 8, **could** force them to concede second best. [T1,27; *Brilliant Henry steadies the ship*]*
114. *When you look at people coping and surviving under pressure, you **couldn’t** get a better example than the pressure he has been under, but the fans are behind him and I think it [T1,the win over Arsenal] has been great for the man. [T1,31; *Ferguson goes to war over Brown*]*
115. *If it is indeed as good as recent history and its appearance suggest, Gareth Batty **could** yet be a beneficiary, too, at least in being given plenty of work. [T1,34; *Read’s flaws with bat open door for Jones*]*
116. *Millar, who is competing at the track World Cup in Manchester, **could** also be investigated for alleged financial fraud. [T1,35; *Allegations implicate Millar in doping controversy*]*
117. *“I have not made the decision as to whether I would do the world champs if I qualify but I think that, if I **could** avoid doing it, I would,” Cave said. [T1,37; *Cave determined to avoid holding poisoned chalice*]*
118. *As the rest of the fleet completed the final race in the series without him yesterday, Ainslie acknowledged that his amazing run of consistent form has given him a powerful psychological hold over those who **could** challenge him for gold in Athens in August. [T1,39; *Dominant Ainslie continues to leave rivals in his wake*]*
119. *No such threat exists in India, other than in Kashmir, and the Foreign Secretary’s warning yesterday gives the clear signal that London and Washington fear the impasse **could** lead to nuclear war. [T2,1; *Britain and US warn citizens to leave India*]*
120. *Although yesterday’s travel warning was couched in diplomatic language, the effect **could** be disastrous for India’s international reputation as a safe holiday destination and a stable country for investment. [T2,1; *Britain and US warn citizens to leave India*]*
121. *Intentional or not, the impact of the warning is likely to increase pressure on Mr Vajpayee’s Government to be more conciliatory. The alternative **could** be international isolation. [T2,1; *Britain and US warn citizens to leave India*]*
122. *There is concern within the Palace and the Government that if the Duke of York is seen to be mixing pleasure with his obligations to promote British businesses abroad he **could** become embroiled in the kind of controversy that plagued the Earl and Countess of Wessex. [T2,3; *Burden on royal purse fails to move the Wessexes*]*
123. *“We have told them they **could** fly home from Delhi but they would have to go to their own insurers,” Mark Hanson, Exodus’s Asia manager, said. [T2,5; *Holiday Britons head home as war fears grow*]*
124. *They [Japanese sporting authorities] must have been dreaming of a well-mannered breed of free-spending, club-class travelers – the sort of Englishmen the doorman at the Imperial with the immaculate white gloves **could** salute smartly. [T2,7; *St George and stout at the Frog and Toad*]*
125. *Those convicted of mercy killings or mentally disordered murderers **could** serve a minimum term as low as eight years. [T2,8; *Life means less as jail term is cut to 12 years*]*
126. *He [Lord Woolf] said that in these cases judges should tell murderers that there is no minimum term that **could** be properly set. [T2,8; *Life means less as jail term is cut to 12 years*]*
127. *Judges will then set the term and the Parole Board will decide on release, providing Hindley with hope that she **could** win her freedom. [T2,8; *Life means less as jail term is cut to 12 years*]*
128. *The 16-year minimum term for contract killing or murders committed during robbery **could** rise if a firearm was used or the body was concealed or dismembered. [T2,8; *Life means less as jail term is cut to 12 years*]*
129. *The explosions **could** be heard across the capital, which was almost deserted as people stayed home for fear of the escalating fighting which flares up almost every night in districts where guerrillas have their forces. [T1,2; *Leaders revolt on power transfer*]*

130. Throughout the day, while most of the English shoe-horned themselves into the tiny bars of Rappongi, a sleazy square mile of pimps, prostitutes and blazing red neon, gaggles of green-clad figures **could** be seen at the city's most wondrous sights. [T2,7; *St George and stout at the Frog and Toad*]
131. The operating theatre was closed for the day, and when Gemma's relations returned to the hospital over the weekend they **could** view her body only through a window because security guards protected the scene for the hospital investigation. [T2,9; *Mother demands answers after hospital deaths*]
132. The Gershon review had suggested that civil servants made redundant under efficiency measures **could** be redeployed as frontline staff such as classroom assistants. [T1,4; *Teachers to vote on strikes over unqualified staff*]
133. Hundreds of police were deployed in North London yesterday to prevent what Scotland Yard feared **could** be serious clashes between Muslim fundamentalists and supporters of the far-right National Front. [T1,4; *Protesters gather at mosque*]
134. Sports sponsorship experts said that the claims **could** damage his value, especially in the Far East, where companies specifically wanted family role models. [T1,6; *Loos talk*]
135. As Irish pubs prepared for one of their busiest weekends of the year, there were fears last night that "smoke rage" **could** spread. [T1,14; *Smoke rage threatens Ireland's ban*]
136. He [the cleric] scorned fears that the country **could** descend into Sunni-Shia civil war. [T1,16; *Anger and anguish after one lost year*]
137. Joe Garcia, a friend and former colleague, said that Mr Mikha had been in a "cautious" mood about returning to Iraq, but he saw it as an opportunity that he **could** not miss. [T1,16; *Translator died trying to make a difference*]
138. A hat-trick from Thierry Henry, the France striker, provided the highlight of a 4-2 victory against Liverpool at Highbury that not only re-established Arsenal's title credentials but also cocked a snook at the crisis who predicated that their recent loss of form **could** be permanent rather than a temporary blip. [T1,27; *Brilliant Henry steadies the ship*]
139. Just when it seemed as though things **could not** possibly get any better from the Europ standpoint at the Masters, the improbable happened. [T1,35; *Rose holds nerve to maintain European challenge*]
140. *The sources commented that the leaders' focus appeared to be short term.* Neither felt that they **could** back down, and neither was thinking through the doomsday consequences of a war that could involve nuclear weapons. [T2,4; *Sub-continent 'does not understand scale of disaster'*]
141. *The sources commented that the leaders' focus appeared to be short term.* Neither felt that they could back down, and neither was thinking through the doomsday consequences of a war that **could** involve nuclear weapons. [T2,4; *Sub-continent 'does not understand scale of disaster'*]
142. Mr Keay said the situation in Kashmir **could** ruin his business if it persisted into July and August when bookings begin in earnest for winter holidays. [T2,5; *Holiday Britons head home as war fears grow*]
143. Lord Woolf emphasized that his starting points of 12 and 16-year minimum terms **could** be increased or decreased by the trial judge if there were aggravating or mitigating circumstances. [T2,8; *Life means less as jail term is cut to 12 years*]
144. In an imperfect world things were done as well as they **could** have been done at the time. *I do not think any reasonable person would expect a country like Iraq to turn into a country like the US or England in one year.* [T1,16; *Anger and anguish after one lost year*]
145. *After Shocking Saturday and Terrible Tuesday it was a Good Friday for Arsenal.* It **could** have been Forlorn Friday, when they ventured another sickly step towards the abyss, when a third defeat in seven days would have been too much to take, but the good ship Arsenal righted itself yesterday and all is now well in London N5. [T1,27; *Brilliant Henry steadies the ship*]
146. *"I am in pretty good shape now. Good as gold, in fact," Cullen said.* "It has taken time to get fully fit, but if I had tried to rush things it **could** have come back to haunt me." [T1,33; *Munster count on Cullen magic in quarter-final*]
147. For Stoute, his employer, the rumpus **could not** have come at a worse time – particularly as no date for the disciplinary hearings has been set. [T1,39; *Fallon goes overboard with habit of rocking boat*]

148. *But what of Sir Alex Ferguson at United?* How much luckier **could** he have been when, in the European Cup final in Barcelona against Bayern Munich, he fielded an unbalanced team with the left-footed Ryan Giggs on the right and Jesper Blomqvist, the ineffectual Swede, on the left? [T1,40; *Wenger's flaw show evokes memories of Chapman's error*]

Fiction [FICT]

149. '**Could** you find me a coffee?' [HM,3]
150. You **could** probably plot it on a graph, she thought, or have some kind of computer program: the demographics of each town, its typical punters and their networks, the location of the venue relative to car parks, pizza parlour, the nearest bar where young girls could go in a crowd. [HM,7]
151. You could probably plot it on a graph, she thought, or have some kind of computer program: the demographics of each town, its typical punters and their networks, the location of the venue relative to car parks, pizza parlour, the nearest bar where young girls **could** go in a crowd. [HM,7]
152. Tonight she would be flitting around the hall with a microphone, identifying the people AI picked out and passing the mike along the rows so she **could** get clear answers out of them. [HM,13]
153. You **could** ask them if they need to see the dentist, since everybody does, all the time; but you don't want to see them flinch. [HM,22]
154. 'You've no need to worry about what anybody here's thinking, we **could** most of us stand to lose a few pounds. *I mean look, at me, I'm a size twenty and not ashamed of it.*' [HM,24]
155. This is how you handle them; you tell them the small things, the personal things, the things no one else **could** really know [HM,26]
156. 'Colette, **could** you try to bear in mind, I've talked to about thirty people since then?' [HM,30]
157. 'Well,' AI said, 'if Ruby kept you so warm and cosy, I think you **could** trust her with your baby.' [HM,39]
158. If Morris were earthside, she had once said to AI, and you and he were married, you **could** get rid of him easily enough; you could divorce him. [HM,48]
159. If Morris were earthside, she had once said to AI, and you and he were married, you could get rid of him easily enough; you **could** divorce him. [HM,48]
160. Then if he pestered you, you **could** see a solicitor, take out an injunction. [HM,48]
161. You **could** stipulate that he doesn't come within a five-mile radius, for example. [HM,48]
162. The summer they had first got together, Colette had said, maybe we **could** write a book. *I could make notes on our conversations, she said. 'You could explain your psychic view of the world to me, and I could it down. Or I could interview you, and tape it.* [HM,49]
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167. 'So how about it?' Colette said. 'We **could** self-publish. *Sell it at the psychic fayres. What do you think? Seriously, we should give it a go. Anybody can write a book these days.*' [HM,50]
168. 'I suppose you don't know, do you?' she said. 'I **could** ring your mum.' [HM,58]
169. '*Imagine, for instance, if you kept falling off your horse, You'd need to know, is this an ideal pairing? It could be a matter of life or death.*' [HM,59]
170. '**Could** we just say, London?' [HM,59]

171. *'Take my name off your list,' her mother-in-law said. 'And if you must call me, could you not call during my programme? It's one of my few remaining pleasures.'* [HM,60]
172. *'Renee's money not come through yet?' she asked. She slid into the seat opposite. 'When it does, you could use some of it to buy me out of the flat.'* [HM,69]
173. *'You mustn't mind-read me.' 'I would try not to.' 'An hour and a quarter?'* 'You could get some fresh air.' [HM,86]
174. 'So if it's not a switch-' 'About the job – you could sleep on it.' 'And it's not a tap-' 'You could ring me tomorrow.' [HM,89]
175. *So if it's not a switch-' 'About the job – you could sleep on it.' 'And it's not a tap-'* 'You could ring me tomorrow. [HM,89]
176. *'I'm not quite sure what you'd want me to do. I'm used to a job description.'* 'We could work one up.' [HM,90]
177. *She waited and waited.* By mid-August she thought, what fraud could there be? [HM,93]
178. *'Underwear, outerwear, whatever, you see it's not just specific to her trade, is it?' 'What? You mean, she could pop to the postbox in it? Do the dusting? In one of her stage outfits?'* [HM,94]
179. *'I'm trying to envisage – you didn't bring pictures, did you?' 'I'll drop some in.'* 'That might be a help. So we could work out what sort of class of item we're dealing with...' [HM,94]
180. *Hence, her good idea, about writing a book.* How hard could it be? [HM,95]
181. Alison kept out of London when she could. [HM,10]
182. There'd been nights when she'd had to sit in the audience, so Alison could pick her out first and get the show going, but they didn't like doing that and they didn't need to do it often. [HM,13]
183. 'This seems to be before you could order your groceries online', she said. *'Honestly, when you think how they lived in those days – we forget to count our blessings, don't we?'* [HM,16]
184. She liked to have clothes with pockets so she could carry a folded cologne tissue, ready for a surreptitious dab, but you don't usually get pockets in women's clothes, and it looks stupid taking a handbag out there on stage. [HM,20]
185. *Like the punters out there, she could entertain simultaneously any number of conflicting opinions.* They could believe in Al, and not believe in her, both at once. [HM,31]
186. Colette could only admire the radiant sincerity with which Al said this: year after year, night after bloody night. [HM,35]
187. *The wedding was designed to be exhausting, to wring value for each moment they had paid for.* So they could recover, she had booked ten days in the Seychelles: sea view, balcony, private taxi transfer and fruit in room on arrival. [HM,54-5]
188. 'She told me,' she said to Gavin, 'that she had a stairlift installed. Which, if she lived in a bungalow, she couldn't have.' [HM,63]
189. Spiritual healing was going on in one corner, Kirlian photography in another, and each individual psychic's table, swathed in chenille or fringed silk, bore her stock-in-trade of tarot pack, crystal ball, charms, incense, pendulums and bells: plus a small tape machine so the client could have a record of her consultation. [HM,78]
190. The logic of this, as Colette had often pointed out, was that a wife could find herself paired with a pre-adolescent for a husband. [HM,34]
191. *The logic of this, as Colette had often pointed out, was that a wife could find herself paired with a pre-adolescent for a husband.* Or your son could, in spirit world, be older than you. [HM,34]
192. The woman nodded, again and again and again: as if she could never nod enough. [HM,39]
193. *She gripped his hand. Her fluttering breath registered.* You could almost hear her heart [HM,39]
194. Her bosom was created by a garment with two curved underwires, and boosted by padding which slid into a pocket so you could remove it; but why would anyone want to do that? [HM,54]
195. Her eyes flickered over him, from his head downwards, to where the counter cut off the view; she was already, she realised, looking for a man she could move on to. [HM,56]

196. *Peas or green beans?* she asked.... 'OK,' he said. 'Whatever. Both.' 'You can't.' Her voice shook. 'Two green veg, you can't.' 'Who says?' 'Your mother,' she said; she felt she **could** say anything, as he never listened. [HM,60]
197. She spoke as if her feelings and thoughts **could** be mended; she imagined popping into the dry-cleaner's, and getting the broken zip replaced, the zip that joined her thoughts to her feelings and joined her up inside. [HM,75]
198. It encouraged her to think that somebody **could** hand over a tenner at the door and get so much hope in return. [HM,78]
199. *She held up her arms, stamped her feet in her high heels.* 'I **could** have been a flamenco dancer,' she said. 'That would have been more fun.' [HM,32]
200. 'That woman at the end, the couple, the miscarriage - you **could** have heard a pin drop.' [HM,42]
201. Only later did she realise it was the worst thing she **could** have done: introducing herself at the moment of his humiliation. [HM,53]
202. *He routinely misled her: but was it any wonder?* What sort of upbringing **could** he have had, from a woman with false teeth who told lies after she was dead? [HM,64]
203. 'You don't mind what you say, do you? You **could** have really upset me back there.' [HM,87]
204. 'And my mum. I mean, for all you know, I **could** have burst into tears, I could have collapsed.' [HM,87]
205. 'And my mum. I mean, for all you know, I could have burst into tears, I **could** have collapsed.' [HM,87]

II. Epistemic possibility

206. *Venter says that efforts to synthesise his minimal genome from scratch are still in progress, but once it is ready, the transplant method should allow the first bacterium with a synthetic genome to be created with little delay.* "It **could** be weeks or months," he says. (NAT) [NS,7; *Life begins again*]
207. *So when are we likely to see unequivocally synthetic life, with the entire cell built from scratch?* "It **could** be five months or ten years," says Church. (NAT) [NS,7; *Life begins again*]
208. Lab-born fish of parents from high-predation areas **could** be exaggerating this default right-eye bias because they have inherited strong lateralisation. (NAT) [NS,10; *Left eye, I'm scared, right eye, I'm cool*]
209. His body is in Denver for a post-mortem examination and **could** be there for a week, Mrs Mikha was told. (NEWS) [T1,16; *Translator died trying to make a difference*]
210. The Earl, the number of whose official engagements are yet to reflect the increase in his allowance, **could** prove to be the black hole in the Royal Family's finances. (NEWS) [T2,3; *Burden on royal purse fails to move the Wessexes*]
211. 'That's far too low. They must think you're an idiot. And they **could** be right.' (FICT) [HM,71]
212. 'Probably a Scorpio ascendant there. Controls by disinformation. Or **could** be Pisces. Makes mysteries where none needed.' (FICT) [HM,59]
213. 'I know where you live, sweetheart, but this isn't anywhere round here, it's a filthy old place, Lancashire, Yorkshire, I'm getting a smudge on my fingers, it's grey, it's ash, it's something below the place you hang the washing – **could** it be Ashton-under-Lyne?' (FICT) [HM,16]

III. Gradient of inherency

214. The Government agrees that it is important to ensure that these offences are carefully drafted in order to ensure that liability is not extended too far, but we also need to ensure that those who could be said to have a reasonable degree of belief that an offence was likely to take place, and that their act would provide assistance or encouragement, **could not** escape prosecution by arguing that they were not absolutely certain that the offence would take place. (ADMIN) [FC,25]
215. *The nature of dark matter and the source of ultra-high energy cosmic rays are two of the biggest unsolved mysteries in physics.* A mammoth instrument nearing completion in Argentina **could** soon tell us whether the two questions are linked. (NAT) [NS,8; *Cosmic rays from heart of darkness?*]

216. What it [the report] failed to say was that if the survey deadline shifted a few years, then the existing Pan-STARRS and LSST telescope projects **could** do this for just \$ 10 million a year, from 2008 to 2023. (NAT) [NS,19; *How not to save the planet*]
217. A series of impacts **could** accelerate the NEA incrementally, and if the NEA – or a fragment of it – moved towards a keyhole, a waiting gravity tractor could trim the deflection. (NAT) [NS,19; *How not to save the planet*]
218. A bird-like, shape-shifting robot built to mimic the way the common swift alters its wing geometry during flight **could** slip unnoticed among a flock of real birds. (NAT) [NS,26; *Acrobatic robot set to fly with the flock*]
219. The US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is also involved in designing military aircraft with shape-shifting wings, but it is using expensive “shape memory” materials to allow a variety of wing shapes, so that a plane **could** both “loiter” for reconnaissance and “dash” to intercept a target. (NAT) [NS,26; *Acrobatic robot set to fly with the flock*]
220. The US State Department advised the 60,000 American expatriates in the country to leave if they **could**, saying: “*Tensions have risen to serious levels and the risk of intensified military hostilities between India and Pakistan cannot be ruled out.*” (NEWS) [T2,1; *Britain and US warn citizens to leave India*]
221. The Indian Defence Minister and his officials even seemed to have calculated that India would survive a nuclear war and **could** then march into Pakistan. (NEWS) [T2,1; *Britain and US warn citizens to leave India*]
222. “This is no time to get complacent – there are a lot of really good sailors in the class who **could** go out and win in Athens, so I’ve got to watch out.” (NEWS) [T1,39; *Dominant Ainslie continues to leave rivals in his wake*]
223. He looked at things logically and thought about how he **could** solve them. (NEWS) [T1,1; *The last e-mail from the Briton killed helping to rebuild Iraq*]
224. *Yesterday, a smiling Henry left the pitch to backslaps and high-fives. The thigh strain that became a back injury that, miraculously, disappeared overnight had not hampered him at all. He scored a hat-trick, **could** have had more and re-ignited the fire that burns within the marble halls.* (NEWS) [T1,31; *Henry ensures Arsenal’s return to health*]
225. *Her eyes swept over the paying public, flocking in from the dappled street; ten women to every man. Each evening she liked to get a fix on them, so she **could** tell Alison what to expect.* (FICT) [HM,7]
226. *‘Her granny didn’t tell you.’ ‘How can you be sure?’ She **couldn’t**, of course.* (FICT) [HM,31]
227. *‘The mother, she must have been thinking his name.’ ‘Oh, yes, I **could** have picked it out of her head. I know that’s your theory. Mind-reading.’* (FICT) [HM,42]
228. He liked to be sure, he said, that if need be he **could** get back to her within twenty minutes of the pubs closing. (FICT) [HM,47]
229. I **could** kill him, she thought, as he lies here; or just maim him if I liked. (FICT) [HM,64]

IV. Undecidable

230. *Was that significant? It **could** be. Nothing else of a psychic nature seemed to manifest.* (FICT) [HM,74]
231. *‘He grew up in Uxbridge. But you know, she might have had him in hospital.’ ‘So it **could** have been anywhere along the A40?’* (FICT) [HM,59]
232. *‘What’s the matter, what do you need?’ Colette would murmur: because you didn’t know what was happening, it **could** be trivial, but then again ...* (FICT) [HM,44]

Appendix 2C: tokens of MAY [App.2C]

I. Epistemic possibility

Administrative style [ADMIN]

1. Data holders **may** need to have been notified of the prospect of this sort of exercise. [FC,23]
2. There are also circumstances where the assistance is indirect or peripheral and **may** not be considered capable of encouraging or assisting a criminal act itself. [FC,26]
3. There **may** still be cases where a prevention order can have clear harm reduction benefits while the illegality of the underlying behaviour is borderline (eg case study D below). [FC,30]
4. *In the first category would fall cases where there is sufficient evidence to justify an order to a civil standard, but insufficient for a conviction.* This **may** be because of the absolute quantity of evidence, or because some of it is in a form not admissible in a criminal proceeding but which can be used in civil cases (eg certain types of hearsay evidence). [FC,31]
5. Alternatively, you **may** wish to write to: ... [FC,43]
6. The individuals who have carried out terrorist attacks which they claim are in defence of Islam do not in fact adhere to a single set of beliefs: they **may** appear to outsiders to hold similar views, but can nevertheless have quite distinct opinions and approaches on particular issues. [IT,7]
7. While an individual **may** not be relatively disadvantaged, he or she may identify with others seen as less privileged; also different generations within the same family may have significantly different views about these issues. [IT,10]
8. The Government will be working with local communities to identify other areas where radicalisation **may** be taking place and to help communities protect themselves and counter the efforts of extremist radicalisers. [IT,13]
9. *For all patients, provider units should ensure that they provide details of the HTCS and of local transport and concessionary fare arrangements with appointment or admission letters.* Ideally those who **may** be able to claim low income entitlement should receive the information early enough to be able to apply to make a LIS claim for an assessment in advance of their travel. [HC,10]
10. Whilst such a system **may** offer some advantages over current arrangements, the Government considers that they are outweighed by significant disadvantages. [HC,17]
11. *While the legislative framework to prohibit trafficking is clearly in place, we share the concerns of those who say that there have not been enough prosecutions under the existing laws on trafficking, compared to the number of victims, arrested, detained and deported.* Lack of awareness and training among law enforcement agencies **may** be contributing factors for this. [HR,9]
12. Such information on rights under the ECHR and other instruments to which the UK is a party should also be disseminated as widely as possible, in co-operation with human rights organisations and other representatives of civil society, among sectors of the population which may **include** trafficking victims, to encourage them to report cases of human rights abuses with confidence and ease. [HR,12]
13. At present, 600 (10%) of border control officers are trained in identifying children who **may** be at risk and are located at 26 ports of entry into the UK. [HR,13]
14. The range of services provided by these specialist authorities will include safe and secure arrangements for children who **may** be at risk of falling prey to their traffickers. [HR,15]
15. It is always open for a victim to sue an offender for damages (compensation) in the civil courts, although we recognize that this **may** not be a practical option in some cases. [HR,16]
16. Much should be achievable simply through a more robust approach to the use of existing powers, though there **may** also be a need to make secondary legislation under the DPA. [FC,13]
17. In addition, we believe that it **may** generate a significant number of additional claims with no certainty that those would result in provision of the help sought with consequent disappointment for those involved. [HC,7]
18. In March 2006 Ministers announced the establishment of an Implementation Review Group consisting of senior dental stakeholders (representing the interests of patients, dentists and the NHS) to monitor the impact of the reforms and make recommendations on any changes that **may** be needed. [HC,7]

19. *These new products are: electronic food ordering, bed management/call flow system, telephone based interpreter services, electronic questionnaires and patient information services.* Adequate uptake of these services **may** enable the private providers to reduce significantly the cost of their incoming calls. [HC,14]
20. In relation to the involvement of victims in court proceedings against their traffickers, in some cases it **may** be necessary to liaise with police forces in the source state to ensure protection for the witness or his or her family (although we recognize that ensuring this kind of protection will not always be easy or possible). [HR,15]
21. It is recognized that those who have been trafficked for exploitation **may** need time to recover or reflect on whether they wish to assist the authorities. [HR,17]
22. *Victims of trafficking will often meet this test and as such will not usually be charged under Section 2.* We acknowledge that there **may** have been incidents when victims of trafficking have been charged with offences under Section 2 and this is largely due to a lack of early identification. [HR,8]
23. We believe the Government should fund a public outreach and awareness campaign through advertising and the use of a freephone number of victims to self-refer and for those who use prostitutes to refer women whom they think **may** have been trafficked. [HR,11]
24. While we understand and recognize the reasons why politicians of all parties have called for prosecution of such men for rape, it does appear that this **may** have been counter-productive. [HR,11]
25. We do not consider it inconsistent to encourage those paying for sexual services to report to the authorities any concerns they have about women they **may** have encountered who they believe may have been trafficked, or otherwise working under duress. [HR,12]
26. The aim of this training is to identify and transfer any child who **may** have been trafficked into the comprehensive statutory network of protection and safeguarding available to all children thought to be at risk in the UK. [HR,13]

Academic style [ACAD]

27. *Kramsch argues that 'The notion of a generic native speaker has become so diversified that it has lost its meaning' (1993:49).* While this **may** not necessarily represent the situation for all languages, it clearly holds good for English. [JJ,8]
28. It tacitly acknowledges that many L2 speakers of English **may** have no desire to speak it fluently, let alone like a 'native', and their English may have progressed to the level at which it serves their particular international communicative purpose. [JJ,10]
29. As Alexander argues, 'Such terms now simply block understanding rather than allowing English teachers wherever they **may** originate and wherever they may work to acknowledge that English as an International Language (EIL) is here to stay' (1996:35) [JJ,11]
30. As Alexander argues, 'Such terms now simply block understanding rather than allowing English teachers wherever they may originate and wherever they **may** work to acknowledge that English as an International Language (EIL) is here to stay' (1996:35) [JJ,11]
31. ... while 'Japanese English', 'German English', 'Russian English' **may** be facts of performance linguistics, there is no reason for setting them up as facts of institutional linguistics or as models for the learners in the countries (1982:27) [JJ,12]
32. *Although motor control is likely to be an element in this process (see Chapter 2), identity is probably the more salient issue.* As Dalton and Seidlhofer argue, 'Pronunciation is so much a matter of self-image that students **may** prefer to keep their accent deliberately, in order to retain their self-respect or to gain the approval of their peers.' [JJ,16]
33. For, as Lynch points out, 'in unusual situations, such as ... dealing with an unfamiliar accent ... we **may** be obliged to pay greater attention to bottom-up information' (1996:22). [JJ,20]
34. Indeed, it **may** well be that Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) potentially has the greatest contribution of all to make to ILT pronunciation and, thus, to EIL. [JJ,21]
35. *The problem, though, is not simply that many speakers of standard English favour linguistic conservatism and uniformity.* It is compounded by the fact that although they **may** experience variation as an *intra*-speaker phenomenon in their own L1 use, it is not something they consciously recognize, particularly in relation to pronunciation. [JJ,26]

36. The latter situation is particularly troublesome, since learners **may** not be aware of any difference in the articulation of sounds which are purely allophonic in their L1. [JJ,33]
37. Thus, although an NBES **may** place word stress correctly, it may not be perceived as such, especially by an L1 receiver, who will be accustomed to and therefore expect the acoustic cues of length and weakness in addition to that of pitch change. [JJ,40]
38. Thus, although an NBES may place word stress correctly, it **may** not be perceived as such, especially by an L1 receiver, who will be accustomed to and therefore expect the acoustic cues of length and weakness in addition to that of pitch change. [JJ,40]
39. So while it **may** often (though not always) be the case that pronunciation reception precedes production, the gap between the two competences seems to be far greater for intonation than for other phonological areas, in both L1 and L2 English. [JJ,47]
40. She [Tarone] argues that 'the second-language learner may learn only one register of the target language, and still style-shift within that register in the sense of paying greater or lesser attention to speech' (1982:73) [JJ,55]
41. Although phonetic problems **may** cause NBESs more problems than they do fluent speakers (see above, pages 36-7), they are in many cases still likely to be less serious for NBES comprehensibility than phonemic errors, such as the substitution of /r/ with ///. [JJ,62]
42. The confusion between /r/ and // is relatively rare in J1's speech and, in this instance, **may**, in fact, be a case of overcompensation. [JJ,63]
43. Not only **may** information be provided by features of the extralinguistic context, but also by the co-text, and each of these types of information may or may not be accessible to interlocutors. [JJ,81]
44. Not only may information be provided by features of the extralinguistic context, but also by the co-text, and each of these types of information **may or may not** be accessible to interlocutors. [JJ,81]
45. When deciding how much cognitive effort to invest in replacing transfer with a more target-like pronunciation, speakers **may** (either consciously or subconsciously) weigh up the risks involved for their NBES interlocutors. [JJ,90]
46. It **may** be, then, that where the rules of the first language are conducive to schwa paragoge, this process, rather than consonant deletion, is selected by sufficiently proficient learners of English – probably subconsciously – as being more likely to promote the intelligibility of their speech. [JJ,102]
47. For this reason, Schmidt considers the possibility that his subjects' problems **may** derive in part from the same kinds of developmental sources that affect the L1 acquisition of these sounds. [JJ,105]
48. Schmidt also points out that /θ/ and /ð/ are well documented as 'the sounds mastered last and substituted most frequently by English native speakers' (ibid.: 367). This **may** explain why L2 learners from virtually all L1 backgrounds have problems with these two sounds:... [JJ,106]
49. It **may** be that features of L2 English which do not occur in a second language learner's L1, *and* are late (or even never) acquired by its L1 speakers, are unteachable for that learner (in the sense that no amount of teaching will result in automatic production). [JJ,106]
50. The learner **may**, because of the difficulty involved, or because of embarrassment at producing a particular feature of the L2, simply be avoiding the item altogether. [JJ,111]
51. The lack of avoidance data for phonology **may** reflect a very real difficulty that learners have in employing this strategy at the phonological level, for while they may not find it difficult to avoid certain L2 structures or lexical items, the avoidance of phonological features would involve forward planning and quick thinking of a kind unlikely to be within the grasp of all but the most advanced learners. [JJ,111]
52. The lack of avoidance data for phonology may reflect a very real difficulty that learners have in employing this strategy at the phonological level, for while they **may** not find it difficult to avoid certain L2 structures or lexical items, the avoidance of phonological features would involve forward planning and quick thinking of a kind unlikely to be within the grasp of all but the most advanced learners. [JJ,111]
53. Where such phonological avoidance does occur among adult L2 speakers, it **may** be motivated not only by articulatory difficulty, but also by embarrassment. [JJ,112]
54. So while similarity **may** facilitate the acquisition of L2 lexis and syntax and receptive pronunciation, it may well be a handicap in that of L2 productive pronunciation. [JJ,114]

55. So while similarity may facilitate the acquisition of L2 lexis and syntax and receptive pronunciation, it **may** well be a handicap in that of L2 productive pronunciation. [JJ,114]
56. Indeed, where the difficulty with an L2 English pronunciation feature is universal, or is known to pursue a certain developmental path, we are looking at an item that **may** well be unteachable, in the sense that learning will not follow classroom teaching. [JJ,119]
57. Mandarin speakers of English **may**, therefore, tend to add schwa to words which end in obstruents, for example, the word 'tag' may be pronounced /tægə/. [JJ,102]
58. This means, as Brown points out, that from a listener's perspective, 'context alone **may** not illuminate language use unless language is first deliberately used to guide listeners to identifying those features of context which will be relevant to the interpretation of language' (1989:97) [JJ,91]
59. We **may** also be able to identify within the L2 varieties common phonological features necessary for adoption by L1 speakers of English when they themselves engage in international communication. [JJ,29]
60. However, a French NBES is likely to have a problem with the consonant sound /h/ and the vowel sound /o/: he **may** omit the /h/ altogether and pronounce the /o/ as /a/. [JJ,83]
61. Thus, the word 'hot', pragmatically the most crucial one in the utterance, **may** well sound more like 'ut' /at/. [JJ,83]
62. If he opts for the latter course, there **may** well follow an exchange involving several moves, during the course of which the first speaker will reformulate and, most likely, express his original request more transparently. [JJ,83]
63. It tacitly acknowledges that many L2 speakers of English may have no desire to speak it fluently, let alone like a 'native', and their English **may** have progressed to the level at which it serves their particular international communicative purpose. [JJ,10]
64. On the other hand, in the second case, where a normally completely reduced syllable is given primary stress, and also because of the consequent misplacement of nuclear stress (see next page), the opposite **may** have obtained. [JJ,41]
65. The occasional pragmatic failure **may** have occurred but passed unnoticed or without comment by the interlocutors, both at the time and during the subsequent playback of the recordings. [JJ,84]
66. Although there **may** have been other instances of non-comprehension, this was unlikely as the pairs of subjects and I listened in detail to the tapes together, pausing frequently to check whether what had been meant was what had actually been inferred. [JJ,87]

Popular scientific style [NAT]

67. Also the cell **may** not contain the same number of chromosomes as other cells in the embryo, which means some embryos deemed normally by PGD may in fact not be. [NS,4; *Fertility failure*]
68. Also the cell may not contain the same number of chromosomes as other cells in the embryo, which means some embryos deemed normally by PGD **may** in fact not be. [NS,4; *Fertility failure*]
69. Cellphones **may** not look like smoking guns, but that's exactly how some police officers see them. [NS,25; *Cellphones dish the dirt on crime suspects*]
70. Drugs **may** not be the only treatment option. [NS,43; *Impossible awakenings*]
71. If Barres is right, and women don't receive the same support and encouragement as men, this may also affect productivity, particularly early on in their careers when they **may** not be pushed sufficiently to publish. [NS,49; *Quantity, quality and equality*]
72. The UK **may** not have a government-backed rocket programme, but there's a new burst of activity. [FS,27; *Britain's space race*]
73. So while Woomera village **may** no longer be resounding to the sound of rocket launches, Britain is still a big noise in space. [FS,27; *Britain's space race*]
74. Over the years, some of the world's most distinguished scientists, including Einstein, have pondered the possibility that the fundamental constants **may** not actually be constant. [FS,68; *Crisis of constants*]
75. The easiest way to find new drugs **may** be to start with an old one. [NS,11; *How to teach an old drug new tricks*]

76. They say the strategy of looking for potentially useful side effects **may** actually be harder than screening all drugs using molecular modelling. [NS,11; *How to teach an old drug new tricks*]
77. Thomas Thiemann of the Max Planck Institute for Gravitational Physics in Golm, Germany, says that although some of Bojowald's assumptions **may** turn out to be too simple, the model is "the cleanest derivation of a pre-big bang scenario that any physical theory has delivered so far". [NS,16; *Before the big bang there was amnesia*]
78. *Is organic food healthier for you, after all?* A 10-year study comparing organic tomatoes with those grown conventionally suggests that it **may** be. [NS,16; *Organic tomatoes win on level farming field*]
79. "Addicted to oil," that is what westerners like me are supposed to be. That **may** be true of gargantuan SUVs commuting from the suburbs but I hardly ever drive and, anyway, my car is tiny. [NS,28; *Who needs oil?*]
80. *In other words, most of the time we are simply reacting instinctively to the world around us.* This **may** sound disheartening if you see yourself as rational master of your destiny, but breaking down this illusion could be the key to bringing the science of human behaviour back in line with other studies of animal behaviour. [NS,37; *What made you read this?*]
81. It appears that although we think we are reasoning out our decisions and choosing our actions deliberately, we **may** often just be responding more or less automatically to cues in our environment. [NS,37; *What made you read this?*]
82. Language and reasoning **may** be what take us from 80 per cent accuracy at predicting what others do up to something closer to 100 per cent, suggests Shanks. [NS,39; *What made you read this?*]
83. *If unconscious thinking comes into its own whenever we face information overload, it is hardly surprising that we use it so much in our complex social interactions.* In fact, this **may** be its most important sphere of influence. [NS,39; *What made you read this?*]
84. "It **may** be that important parts of our personal thinking are actually caused by the social network we're in – triggered by unconscious and automatic signalling and imitation," Pentland says. [NS,39; *What made you read this?*]
85. They [patients] **may** speak or make noises, even smile, cry or grimace, but they seem to do nothing of their own free will. [NS,40; *Impossible awakenings*]
86. It **may** simply be that brain scanning is capable of picking up signs of recovery earlier than clinical tests, Owen says. [NS,42; *Impossible awakenings*]
87. Although the center has not done formal clinical trials, it claims about twice as many of its patients regain consciousness compared with published averages – though the odds **may** be stacked in its favour as its patients are all children or young adults and are often at the most favourable end of the spectrum. [NS,43; *Impossible awakenings*]
88. It **may** sound crazy, but these unique processes are what make the beer the way it is. [NS,45; *Always going with the grain*]
89. Ben Barres, a neurobiologist from Stanford University in California, highlighted how women **may** be both judged more harshly, and not given the same encouragement and support as their male colleagues. [NS,49; *Quantity, quality and equality*]
90. Science **may** also favour other attributes more typically exhibited by men, such as self-promotion and competitiveness. [NS,49; *Quantity, quality and equality*]
91. One of the few top women physicists, Deb Kane, professor of physics at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, feels that "women's reduced success **may** be an indicator of an environment where only the top 'competitors' succeed". [NS,49; *Quantity, quality and equality*]
92. Researchers at Miami University in the US **may** have the answer. [FS,15; *Do you look like a Bob or a Brian?*]
93. One solution **may** be for scientists and the media to work together more closely and with a greater respect for each other's skills – and to work for the common good. [FS,20; *"There is no robust evidence to prove Wi-Fi damages health"*]
94. So if you've always wanted to learn a new language, Esperanto **may** be the thing for you – good luck, or as Esperantists would say 'bonsancon'. [FS,52; *Q&A: What ever happened to ... Esperanto*]

95. *Theorists have uncovered surprising links between the fundamental constants and the nature of space and time.* These links hint that changes in the constants **may** be inevitable. [FS,68; *Crisis of constants*]
96. Dirac believed a fluke in timing was just too implausible, and argued that the force of gravity, as measured by the universal constant of gravitation, G, **may** be getting weaker with time. [FS,70; *Crisis of constants*]
97. Abagyan's approach **may** indeed offer a useful short cut to new drugs, says Michael Sundstrom, who leads the University of Oxford's Structural Genomics Consortium. [NS,11; *How to teach an old drug new tricks*]
98. Still, the bacterial colonies are so persistent that it **may** be necessary to combine the engineered phages with other methods, including conventional antibiotics. [NS,26; *Slimebusters could clean medical kit*]
99. "We hope the stereo cameras will give us a close look at the swift's wing dynamics. They **may** behave differently in the open air, outside the confines of the wind tunnel," he says. [NS,26; *Acrobatic robot set to fly with the flock*]
100. *The carbon in oil forms the basis for the world's trillion-dollar petrochemicals industry from which a profusion of industrial and household products are made: paints, inks, plastics, pharmaceuticals, adhesives, lubricants, flavouring agents, perfumes and more.* It **may** not be that way for long, however. [NS,28; *Who needs oil?*]
101. With an ageing population where, in future, life expectancies **may** approach 90, tackling Alzheimer's will be increasingly important to improve quality of life. [FS,42; *The Prion villain or hero?*]
102. It will be some time before this new insight into prions **may** lead to tangible results. [FS,43; *The Prion villain or hero?*]
103. It **may** be possible in future to use proteins like curli in vaccines to protect us against other diseases involving amyloids, such as CJD and Alzheimer's [FS,43; *The Prion villain or hero?*]
104. Any ships that do founder **may** well vanish without trace. [FS,51; Q&A: *What forces could be at work in the Bermuda Triangle?*]
105. Life on the ocean floor **may** have provided bacteria with the survival strategies to cope with life as a pathogen, says Satoshi Nakagawa of the Japan Agency for Marine-earth Science and Technology, Yokosuka, whose team carried out the analysis. [NS,18; *Sick-making bugs came from the deep*]
106. Comparing scans from eight months and 26 months after his awakening, Schiff found some clues as to why Wallis **may** have resurfaced. [NS,42; *Impossible awakenings*]
107. Some suggest that the successes **may** not have been true cases of PVS, but something more like minimal consciousness. [NS,43; *Impossible awakenings*]
108. *A recent Panorama programme found that the level of electromagnetic radiation produced by a Wi-Fi-enabled laptop at a school was three times that from a nearby mobile phone mast.* This **may** simply have been because the school wasn't in the path of the beam from the phone mast – clearly in that case you would expect the Wi-Fi intensity to be the greater of the two. [FS,20; "There is no robust evidence to prove Wi-Fi damages health"]
109. *In October, the same month that the Russians launched Sputnik, the fourth British skylark made it into space.* It **may** have been puny by international space standards, but a full engine test was an unforgettable experience. [FS,25; *Britain's space race*]
110. Prions **may** also have been shown to help protect against damage from sunburn. [FS,42; *The Prion villain or hero?*]
111. If confirmed, this would suggest hunter-gatherers like Aborigines **may** have developed telepathy due to the evolutionary survival advantage it would give them. [FS,46; Q&A: *Can Australian Aborigines communicate via telepathy?*]
112. In 2003, astrobiologist, Professor Paul Davies, then of Macquaire University, Australia, suggested that meteors from Mars **may** have seeded life on Earth. [FS,56; Q&A: *Are we all Martians?*]

Newspaper reporting [NEWS]

113. Some Sunni fighters, who have seen their power wane since the fall of Saddam, believe the uprising **may** just be a prelude to a civil war in which they would fight to regain influence in Iraq. [T1,16; *Power struggle by Shia clerics fans insurgency*]
114. The FA Cup semi-final defeat against Manchester United last Saturday **may** niggle; the European Cup quarter-final defeat against Chelsea on Tuesday night will take a while to erase from the memory, too. [T1,27; *Brilliant Henry steadies the ship*]
115. Out of the FA Cup and European Cup they **may** be, swept away by Manchester United and Chelsea respectively in the past seven days, but the biggest domestic bauble of the lot still holds its infinite fascination. [T1,31; *Henry ensures Arsenal's return to health*]
116. It **may** be Jones's good fortune to begin his career for England on the best batting pitch of the series and he has already been told that he will be playing his first Test in England against New Zealand at lord's next month. [T1,34; *Read's flaws with bat open door for Jones*]
117. The Foreign Office added, however, that there **may** be many Britons in India that it does not know about. [T2,1; *Britain and US warn citizens to leave India*]
118. For instance, its count does not include many young backpackers who **may** be difficult to track down and who may know nothing of the border tension. [T2,1; *Britain and US warn citizens to leave India*]
119. For instance, its count does not include many young backpackers who may be difficult to track down and who **may** know nothing of the border tension. [T2,1; *Britain and US warn citizens to leave India*]
120. "The insurers **may** well look at it in a different light than if the Foreign Office had said people should definitely leave," Mr Hanson said. [T2,5; *Holiday Britons head home as war fears grow*]
121. The caution **may** be driven by the knowledge that few ministers will be joining official celebrations. [T2,11; *Holiday ministers miss the party line on jubilee weekend*]
122. *The biggest rise in the number of applications to UK universities is in Scotland, according to figures from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.* This **may** reflect the decision by the Scottish Executive to scrap tuition fees as these still apply in England and Wales. [T2,16; *Australian heads exams watchdog*]
123. Anxious France supporters **may** make comparisons between the present tournament and the 1990 World Cup, and not just because that also featured an opening match in which the holders lost 1-0 to a team nicknamed the Lions from a French-speaking West African nation that gained independence in 1960. [T2,30; *Final route changes as France run off the road*]
124. Tomorrow, of course, will be a different matter, but it **may** be that the team is feeling the pressure of being favourites in the eyes of many, including virtually all of their countrymen, who are looking to the squad to lift a mood of national depression. [T2,35; *Batistuta could pay for absence of friendly fire*]
125. Half a Murali may be better than none but by the time the White Rabbits finally began to be plucked from the Conjuror's hat yesterday, England's top three batsmen had taken firm control of the second Test. [T2,36; *Ireland focus restored as storm drifts slowly into distance*]
126. We are expecting to be overrun tonight and we **may** have to fight our way to a safe haven. [T1,1; *The last e-mail from the Briton killed helping to rebuild Iraq*]
127. Officials have been told that the chips **may** need to be replaced after about five years. [T1,2; *Passports set to cost twice as much for half as long*]
128. The findings **may** partly explain why holiday bookings are an estimated 30 per cent higher than usual. [T1,3; *Why the Easter break arrived just in time*]
129. A windswept expanse of empty moorland overlooking the Atlantic **may** be the setting for Scotland's first "land grab", when crofters use new laws to force a laird to sell his estate. [T1,5; *Crofters take on landlord in power struggle*]
130. The perfume **may** be called Heart Of The Ocean, after the necklace worn by Kate Winslet in the Oscar-winning film. [T1,11; *Titanic perfume comes in waves*]

131. The party of his rival, President Kumaratunga, failed to secure a majority and **may** have to form a coalition with a new party of Buddhist monks opposed to making concessions to the Tigers. [T1,15; *Sri Lankan defeat*]
132. The emerging Sunni-Shia alliance is hailed in mosques as a renewed Islamic unity, but **may** prove tenuous. [T1,16; *Power struggle by Shia clerics fans insurgency*]
133. If President Bush loses the election in November, he **may** well view the past seven days as the week in which the tide manifestly turned against him. [T1,18; *The past seven days may prove to be the turning point in the 2004 election campaign*]
134. Bill O'Reilly, a popular conservative news commentator who supported the war, said that Iraq **may** cost Mr Bush the Oval Office. [T1,18; *The past seven days may prove to be the turning point in the 2004 election campaign*]
135. But if jumpy office workers and sleepless residents get their way, Hollywood **may** soon have to find another city to pose as New York, Chicago or even London. [T1,19; *Lights, camera, friction in the city of big shots*]
136. A damp, grey area on a length at the Pavilion End suggested that the best time for a fast bowler during the next five days **may** well be before lunch today, but there is bound to be more life for the first two days than after the weekend. [T1,34; *Read's flaws with bat open door for Jones*]
137. Olazábal, who is 38, is the oldest of the trio who **may** be united in appearing for Europe against the US in the Ryder Cup in Detroit in five months' time. [T1,35; *Rose holds nerve to maintain European challenge*]
138. There **may** be no relay for Marshall at her first Games in Athens, however, after the combined times of those who followed her home at a distance at the Olympic trials at Ponds Forge failed to impress Sweetenham. [T1,36; *Improving Marshall provides golden promise for Athens*]
139. With a host of front-runners in the line-up, the Coral Rosebery Heritage Handicap [2.10] looks sure to be run at a furious pace and that **may** set things up for Blythe Knight. [T1,38; *Keep Psychiatrist in mind at Kempton*]
140. *This quarter-mile shorter trip is his optimum and, still open to plenty of improvement, he [Blythe Knight] can make a winning reappearance.* The main threat **may** come from Turbo. [T1,38; *Keep Psychiatrist in mind at Kempton*]
141. Ponderon and Anak Pekan fought out the finish of a competitive handicap at Doncaster last autumn and the pair **may** also dominate the finish of the alanbrazilracing.com Queen's Prize [2.40] [T1,38; *Keep Psychiatrist in mind at Kempton*]
142. The Indian and Pakistani leaders are expected to attend a regional summit meeting in Kazakhstan next week, when it is hoped they **may** be persuaded to begin dialogue. [T2,1; *Britain and US warn citizens to leave India*]
143. Hundreds of British holidaymakers were being flown home from India last night but they **may** be forced to pay for their flights. [T2,5; *Holiday Britons head home as war fears grow*]
144. Insurance companies **may** refuse to pay for emergency flights back to England, he added, because the Foreign Office had advised British citizens only to "consider whether they should leave". [T2,5; *Holiday Britons head home as war fears grow*]
145. Already France cannot overhaul Senegal if the African team manage a win and a draw from their remaining two games and if Denmark and Uruguay produce a positive result today, the world champions **may** start to fear not reaching the second round at all. [T2,30; *Final route changes as France run off the road*]
146. England are weakened by the absence of Gary Neville, Steven Gerrard and Kieron Dyer – who will be on the bench tomorrow and **may** be saved for the game against Argentina – but the return of Beckham has destroyed the notion that injuries can be blamed for defeat. [T2,32; *Eriksson pleads with England to seize the moment*]
147. Crowd control **may** yet be an issue for Pia Olsson, owner of Restaurang Hörnet, which will host a big-screen showing of the match between Sweden and England tomorrow morning. [T2,32; *Loyalties are split at the peaceful home of Svennis*]
148. *Excellent in the air for one not so tall, Henrik's sense of anticipation is remarkable.* He knows that he **may** miss, but he expects to score, regardless of the quality of opposition. [T2,33; *Beware the conjuror trying to trick England*]

149. He [Onigbinde] **may** also decide that he can do without Celestine Babayaro, of Chelsea, whose late arrival at the training camp after extended treatment of a thigh injury did not meet with his approval. [T2,35; *Batistuta could pay for absence of friendly fire*]
150. Morrison admitted that “time has dragged a bit,” but Japan is now awash with Irish supporters and, you suspect, his ditties **may** be drowned out. [T2,36; *Ireland focus restored as storm drifts slowly into distance*]
151. For Morrison, for Damien Duff – envious eyes are being trained at Blackburn Rovers – and for others, the World Cup **may** become a personal launchpad. [T2,36; *Ireland focus restored as storm drifts slowly into distance*]
152. Despite claims that trade **may** have fallen by a third overall and up to three quarters in some rural areas, there is little evidence to support this. [T1,14; *Smoke rage threatens Ireland’s ban*]
153. Colin Powell, the US Secretary of State, admitted that “dramatic” evidence he presented to the United Nations that Iraq had mobile laboratories for making biological weapons **may** have been wrong. [T1,15; *Evidence of error*]
154. Ten years of democracy **may** have brought benefits for the politically connected urban black elite but here in the rolling hills and valleys of the Eastern Cape, South Africa’s poorest province, there is still no escape from poverty. [T1,20; *Mandela legacy buys scant help for rural poor*]
155. The Madrid massacre, for which Eta was initially blamed by Spanish intelligence and the Government, **may** have given the group’s internal debate a strong push towards calling a ceasefire. [T1,20; *Eta ready for ceasefire, Basque leader insists*]
156. The Communist revolution in 1949 **may** have put an end to the Sport of Kings in China, but an Irish trainer has big plans to revive thoroughbred horseracing there. [T1,21; *Chinese racing back under starter’s orders*]
157. People **may** have thought that we were gone at half-time – and maybe we were – but we came out and proved just how much we wanted it. [T1,27; *Brilliant Henry steadies the ship*]
158. He [Woods] **may** have had a four-under day yesterday, but it would be wrong to cling to the belief that the old master was back. [T1,35; *Woods struggles to face up to life in the real world*]
159. Even when he squandered a glorious opportunity to steal the seventh frame for 5-2, White refused to fall apart as he **may** well have done in the recent past. [T1,35; *White continues his resurgence to set up semi-final date with Ebdon*]
160. The demands of the royal children **may** have made dents in the Queen’s capital but careful investment should more than have made up for what has gone out of her bank account. [T2,3; *At £35m a year, we are getting a royal bargain*]
161. India **may** have lost its legions of colonial administrators, but the legacy of Empire lingers on. [T2,4; *Confrontation puts Britain’s £5bn trade with India at risk*]
162. Many of the travelers in India at this time of year are in the most remote parts of the country and **may** not yet have received the Foreign Office’s warning. [T2,5; *Holiday Britons head home as war fears grow*]
163. France **may** not have been permitted the flow of passing that, like a river in spate, sweeps away everything unlucky enough to be in its path, but they still ought to have won. [T2,31; *Diop brings France crashing down to earth*]
164. The return of Beckham **may** just have given England the fillip they needed to secure the narrowest of wins. [T2,32; *Eriksson pleads with England to seize the moment*]

Fiction [FICT]

165. Bless all my great-grandmothers, whoever and wherever they **may** be. May my dad rot in hell, whoever he may be; whatever hell is and wherever let him rot in it; and let them please lock the doors of hell at night, so he can’t be out and about, harassing me. [HM,12]
166. Bless all my great-grandmothers, whoever and wherever they may be. May my dad rot in hell, whoever he **may** be; whatever hell is and wherever let him rot in it; and let them please lock the doors of hell at night, so he can’t be out and about, harassing me. [HM,12]
167. Or there **may** be such a woman, out in some jungle or desert: but these blighted exceptions are not likely to be visiting Alison’s Evening of Psychic Arts. [HM,19]

168. *But what I hear, I pass on.* And it **may** happen, you know, what I tell you may mean nothing to you at the time. [HM,27]
169. *But what I hear, I pass on.* And it may happen, you know, what I tell you **may** mean nothing to you at the time. [HM,27]
170. 'This lady, for example, when I speak about ear trouble, what I **may** be picking up is not so much a physical problem – I might be talking about a breakdown in communication.' [HM,27]
171. You **may** say Al's a fake because she has to be, because nobody can do what she claims to do. [HM,94]
172. 'It **may** be a girl I'm seeing.' [HM,173]
173. Rummaging in your heart for *joy* – **may** as well go through the bins for it. *Where's God, she had said to Al, where's God in all this?* [HM,174]
174. The fork buckled against the crust; Al snapped back, smiled, took the fork from her hand. 'It **may** not be so bad,' she said. [HM,198]
175. *You can try and kick him out.* You might succeed, for a while. But he gets back at you. Years **may** go by. [HM,48]
176. '*You'll have a, what's the word, a long association.* It **may** take a bit of time to get close.' [HM,77]
177. 'I **may** not be able to pay as much as your last job.' [HM,90]
178. "Well, you're in for it now. You've started so you **may** as well finish. [HM,96]
179. Alison thought, I **may** as well change the whole thing while I'm about it. [HM,138]
180. 'We **may** as well get on the road,' she said. '*Get ahead of the coffin.*' [HM,160]
181. '*Alison, I'm disappointed by your negativity.* I **may** have to put the phone down, before it contaminates my day.' [HM,256]
182. '*Let's just see if we can unknot this,*' Al said. '*You say these are your father's cuff-links.* I say, no, though they **may** have belonged to the man you *called* your father. [HM,83]
183. No... for God's sake... I'm just talking about other names, other names by which you **may** have been known to the Revenue, I mean you must have worked before you became self-employed, so you must have tax records in the name of Cheetham, with some other district. [HM,112]
184. I know you thought Lug and Glug tried it on, though you say you had been taking Nytol so were a bit confused at being woken and you suspect it **may** well have been Simon, judging by the smell. [HM,157]

II. Root possibility

Administrative style [ADMIN]

185. This presents law enforcement with real problems in coming to grips with a sort of crime which in addition to being highly harmful and requiring long and complex investigations, also has many of the characteristics of a business and **may** depend on a range of facilitators with varying degrees of culpability in the underlying criminality. [FC,9]
186. *Once misconceptions about consent have been dispelled, there is considerable potential to make inroads into the fraud problem through bulk data matching.* This is the process of taking datasets which **may** contain multiple bits of data (for example employment records) and, literally, matching them with other sets of data (eg pension records). [FC,19]
187. We believe there **may** be greater scope for law enforcement to adopt this process of 'profiling' in order to check across a range of datasets to identify suspicious patterns of activity. [FC,22]
188. But in the case of organised crime investigations, there **may** be significant numbers of individuals at the fringes who cannot be pursued in the main trial, and for whom a separate trial is not thought worthwhile. [FC,31]
189. The Government would welcome views on the types of situation where an organised crime prevention order **may** prove useful and proportionate in preventing organised criminality. [FC,37]

190. *The debate around the introduction of a prescribed form has recently been outlined in the Lander Review. SOCA is now consulting stakeholders on the best way forward. This **may** involve additional amendments to POCA.* [FC,39]
191. Tackling disadvantage and supporting reform – addressing structural problems in the UK and overseas that **may** contribute to radicalisation, such as inequalities and discrimination [IT,1]
192. The Government keeps under review the range of potential terrorist threats that **may** arise in the United Kingdom and to our citizens and interests overseas. [IT,6]
193. As we saw in the tragic events of 7 July 2005, terrorists inspired by Islamist extremism **may** come from within British communities – the bombers were British citizens brought up in this country. [IT,8]
194. Identifying the factors which **may** lead to radicalisation, and some of the arguments used to justify it, are important so that we can focus our responses in order to reduce the risk of terrorism. [IT,10]
195. While an individual may not be relatively disadvantaged, he or she **may** identify with others seen as less privileged; also different generations within the same family may have significantly different views about these issues. [IT,10]
196. While an individual may not be relatively disadvantaged, he or she may identify with others seen as less privileged; also different generations within the same family **may** have significantly different views about these issues. [IT,10]
197. *An important factor is exposure to radical ideas. This **may** come from reading radical literature on Islamic and other subjects or surfing the Internet (where many types of radical views are strongly promoted), but more often radicalisation seems to arise from local contacts and from peers.* [IT,10]
198. None of these factors is conclusive and they are probably best viewed as considerations which **may** influence radicalisation. [IT,10]
199. The first area of action to counter radicalisation lies in addressing structural problems in the UK and elsewhere that **may** contribute to radicalisation. [IT,11]
200. There **may** be situations where the police believe they have no choice but to take action on the basis of the specific intelligence they have received. [IT,17]
201. We recommend that the Government consider extending the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme to some hospital visitors on low incomes (for example, to those visiting longstay mentally ill patients for whom it **may** be particularly important to maintain links with family and friends). [HC,12]
202. *It is for local PCTs, as commissioners of services with an overview of the needs of their patient populations, to commission services based on clinical need and cost effectiveness. This **may** include attendance of visitors as part of a care package for long stay mental health patients where it is proven to be effective to do so.* [HC,12]
203. Help with costs to visit someone who is ill **may** be available in the form of a Community Care Grant from the Social Fund. [HC,12]
204. *The Government believes that a national formulary brings with it uncertain benefits at the cost of far greater central process expenditure and a greater number of decisions taken in Whitehall rather than in the NHS locally. Ultimately it **may** undermine NHS organisations' ability to manage their own drugs spending effectively in the light of local circumstances.* [HC,18]
205. We urge the Government to publish the research into organised crime markets currently being conducted by Home Office researchers, which **may** assist in providing a clearer picture of the scale and extent of human trafficking into the UK. [HR,3]
206. A Home Office-led working group incorporating the police, SOCA and other relevant agencies has already begun working on measures to identify and tackle any law enforcement issues that **may** arise, including work on the issue of awareness raising amongst potential victims of trafficking. [HR,4]
207. In order to discourage media practices which **may** affect the safety of victims, the Press Complaints Commission should have, and use, wider powers to protect the privacy of victims, as breaches of its Code. [HR,13]
208. It is possible that victims of trafficking **may** be eligible for compensation under the Scheme if they meet the standard criteria of the injury being sufficiently serious to qualify for the minimum award of £1000, the claimant has been blameless in the incident giving rise to the injury, has reported the incident promptly to the investigating authorities, has co-operated in the investigation and bringing the perpetrator to justice and has applied for compensation within two years of the incident. [HR,16]

209. The information you send us **may** be passed to colleagues within the Home Office, the Government and related agencies. [FC,2]
210. It is important that people's expectations are managed appropriately and that they are notified that their data **may** be used for fraud prevention purposes. [FC,18]
211. Be clear about what your proposals are, who **may** be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses. [FC,44]
212. *The term "jihad" refers primarily to non-violent struggle, for example the spiritual struggle to lead a good life. It **may** also be used to mean military struggle, but the vast majority of Muslims do not consider today's terrorism to be legitimate, military jihad.* [IT,7]
213. Media coverage of isolated and unacceptable incidents involving Western forces in Muslim countries, where individuals fail to live up to the standards we have set ourselves in the treatment of prisoners and civilians, **may** also be used to convince susceptible individuals that the West is antipathetic to Islam. [IT,10]
214. *Exposure to a forceful and inspiring figure, already committed to extremism, can be important here. This person **may** be associated with a particular place (e.g. a mosque) or can be a national or international figure, seen on video or heard on tapes.* [IT,10]
215. All publicity material is available free of charge and **may** be ordered from the Department of Health Publications Orderline by telephone, fax or email: Tel: 08701 555 455, Fax 01623 724 524, email dh@prolog.uk.com. [HC,9]
216. *The form has been written professionally in language designed to be understood by those with limited reading ability. It has also been designed professionally so that many questions **may** be answered as "no" with signposting to the next relevant question or "yes" with a box to enter the required details.*
217. The PPD is looking at ways in which the content **may** be simplified but with regard to the information that needs to be collected. [HC,11]

Academic style [ACAD]

218. Further, it is crucial for the third term, 'non-bilingual English speaker' (NBES), to allow for the fact that a speaker **may** be bilingual, but not in English. [JJ,10]
219. However, as Wolff (1959) demonstrated long ago, intelligibility is not necessarily reciprocal and **may** be the result rather than the cause of negative social-psychological attitudes which have, themselves, reduced the receiver's motivation to make an effort to understand. [JJ,14]
220. According to this theory, which, in more recent years, has become more broadly based and known as Communication Accommodation Theory or CAT (see Giles and Coupland 1991), speakers **may** adjust their speech either in the direction of that of their interlocutors (convergence) or away from that of their interlocutors (divergence). [JJ,21]
221. Yet this variation in pronunciation, morphology, syntax, and lexis is apparently 'so acute that the same individual, playing various social roles, **may** frequently display form of standard and non-standard Englishes in different contexts' (Brown *et al.* 1994:154). [JJ,26]
222. By employing accommodative processes, speakers **may** vary their pronunciation in such a way that their phonological variation constitutes a solution rather than a problem, as we will see both here in relation to same-L1 and different-L1 interlocutors, and in the following chapter in relation to different task-types. [JJ,27]
223. This contrasts largely with the situation relating to L1 variation, where regional pronunciation norms **may**, and often do, cause attitude judgements of inappropriacy, rather than grammatical judgements of incorrectness (though note, the same cannot be said of L1 regional morphology and syntax, where non-standardness is indeed regarded as inaccuracy). [JJ,28]
224. Nelson condemns Selinker's (1972) claim 'that interlanguage (IL) competence "in whole groups of individuals" may become fossilized, "resulting in the emergence of a new dialect (as Indian English), where fossilized IL competences [*sic*] **may** be the normal situation".' (1995:273) [JJ,31]
225. The time has come for us to examine in greater detail the ways in which NBES inter-speaker pronunciation **may** vary from the L1, and the extent to which such variation can impede intelligibility when NBESs interact with one another. [JJ,32]

226. *While the process of interlingual identification makes for greater ease of articulation at first, ultimately it holds the threat of fossilization.* This **may** manifest itself simply in a slight degree of foreign accent, but may have implications for intelligibility, especially in ILT. [JJ,33]
227. *While the process of interlingual identification makes for greater ease of articulation at first, ultimately it holds the threat of fossilization.* This may manifest itself simply in a slight degree of foreign accent, but **may** have implications for intelligibility, especially in ILT. [JJ,33]
228. Secondly, two or more allophones in the learner's L1 **may** have full phonemic status in English, for example, [n], [m], and [ŋ] in Japanese, as in the English words 'sun', 'sum', and 'sung'. [JJ,33]
229. An intelligibility problem **may** result from a unique deviation source, that is, a deviant sound substitution/conflation, or deletion, or addition within a single word. [JJ,35]
230. NBESs, on the other hand, **may**, and indeed did on this occasion, have more of a problem. [JJ,35]
231. On the other hand, in a small number of cases, phonetic L1 transfer **may** cause unintelligibility, as happened in the previous example. [JJ,36]
232. In addition, the stress patterns **may** change over time with the dictates of fashion, while for a small group of words such as 'controversy' and 'kilometre', two distinct patterns are current and intelligible in British English use. [JJ,40]
233. The overall effect **may** thus be quite different from that of languages whose important content words are not highlighted or less important words reduced to the same extent. [JJ,43]
234. Because of its relationship with parts of the utterance not in the immediate linguistic vicinity, a misplaced or mis-pitched nucleus **may** apparently affect meaning at the global level of the whole interaction. [JJ,49]
235. In EFL situations – interaction between 'native' and [non-bilingual] 'non-native' speakers of English – while the latter's intuitions about the former's phonological and phonetic performance are likely to be undeveloped, the sociolinguistics characteristics described above **may** still obtain to some extent. [JJ,74]
236. Although there is not the same degree of shared socio-cultural background as exists between L1 interlocutors, English socio-cultural appropriacy is one of the subjects of learning and **may** even be its goal (for example, in British Cultural Studies) [JJ,74]
237. In this regard, Krash (1998) discusses the pedagogic use of cross-cultural awareness-raising activities through which learners **may** develop into 'intercultural speakers'. [JJ,75]
238. In ILT, listeners are concerned also about the face-loss of their non-fluent interlocutors, for the signalling of non-comprehension of an NBES interlocutor's speech **may** serve to draw attention to the latter's inaccuracies of phonological form, in other words, to their 'poor' English accent. [JJ,77]
239. The failure of NBEs to exploit contextual and co-textual information and, hence, their dependency on phonological form, **may** be either because it is unknown, and so *unavailable*, or because it is known but *inaccessible* for some reason (for example, the pressure of on-line processing). [JJ,82]
240. This **may** be a simple statement of fact; it could, on the other hand, be an oblique request for someone to open a window. [JJ,83]
241. If clear contextual cues are available, they **may** assume that it is safe to relax their 'controls' on pronunciation, and thus those sounds which have not yet become automatically target-like will emerge with L1 transfer. [JJ,90]
242. One explanation for the phonological transfers in the ILT data **may** therefore relate to speaker/listener differences in orientation to context. [JJ,90]
243. The interplay between context and phonological environment **may** thus account for forms such as 'gley' for 'grey' in example 25. [JJ,91]
244. Alternatively, it **may** result in epenthesis (vowel addition). [JJ,101]
245. The problem for EIL, then, is that the specific learner's L1 means for realizing the universal preference for CV syllables **may** result in an L2 simplification which conforms not to the rules of English elision but to the rules of their own L1. [JJ,101]
246. Grammar and lexis **may** differ enormously from one language to another, at times making interlingual identifications difficult, if not impossible. [JJ,104]

247. These items **may** then be further candidates for unteachable phonological features, in the sense that the vast majority of L2 learners are unlikely to proceed to the developmental stage at which the items are fully acquired. [JJ,106]
248. *Thus, it seems that L2 speakers will instinctively attempt to replace L1 phonological transfer with more target-like forms in more formal speech contexts.* This **may** be largely a function of the salience (to speakers) of intelligibility for their receivers. [JJ,109]
249. Stylistic variation in the degree of transfer in interlanguage phonology **may** also occur as a function of variability in the model(s) heard by the learner. [JJ,110]
250. However, whereas the Dickersons suggest that the acquisition process **may** involve variation from the start, Gatbonton proposes that in the first phase of acquisition, a learner first uses one incorrect phonological form in all contexts, and then introduces another form, which is used in free variation with the first, while in the second phase, each form is gradually restricted to its own context. [JJ,110]
251. ..., Odlin points out that although it is misleading to equate transfer with old habits, the English problems with uvulars 'suggest that a theory of habit formation **may** be applicable to certain types of phonetic transfer' (1989:116) [JJ,112]
252. On the other hand, such constraints **may** operate to inhibit transfer in comparable lexical and grammatical situations. [JJ,112]
253. Faerch and Kasper point out that 'transfer **may** occur at the articulatory level only, all other levels being processed according to the IL system'. [JJ,113]
254. In terms of the first indication, the categorizing of an L2 sound in terms of the L1 system **may** result in the omission of essential phonetic information. [JJ,115]
255. Items **may** be 'difficult' for universal or developmental reasons, or because learners regard their replacements as causing ambiguity (as is potentially the case with certain features of English connected speech for listeners not easily able to disambiguate by using contextual cues). [JJ,120]
256. Therefore, insisting on learners conforming to target-language pronunciation norms and renouncing those of their mother tongue **may** even be seen as forcing them to reject their own identity. [JJ,16]
257. Nelson condemns Selinker's (1972) claim 'that interlanguage (IL) competence "in whole groups of individuals" **may** become fossilized, "resulting in the emergence of a new dialect (as Indian English), where fossilized IL competences [*sic*] may be the normal situation".' (1995:273) [JJ,31]
258. Firstly, two distinct phonemes (i.e. sounds which distinguish meaning) in the learner's L1 **may** be reduced to allophonic status (i.e. different realizations of the same phoneme) in English. [JJ,33]
259. It **may** be argued that to perceive or produce these distinctions to any degree of precision is unnecessary, since the context will compensate for any deficiency in the form of the message itself. [JJ,34]
260. In the case of *consonant deletion* a sound **may** be omitted altogether, such as the omission of the /r/ in 'price', typically by a Taiwanese speaker of English. [JJ,34]
261. Alternatively, the elided sound **may** be replaced by a glottal stop as in the Chinese-English pronunciation of 'duck'. [JJ,34]
262. Potentially still more problematic for intelligibility is a word group containing a range of substitutions and confluents, which, with each individual deviation further compounding the problem, **may** be rendered totally incomprehensible to both NBES and BES interlocutors. [JJ,36]
263. As Rost points out, even among fluent speakers (he is, in fact, discussing L1 speakers), 'most mishearings can be identified as occurring at a segmental level', even though higher level phenomena, such as schematic effects, **may** also be involved (1990:52) [JJ,39]
264. In L2 acquisition, the same preference for cluster simplification **may**, depending on the learner's L1, be reflected in the use of consonant deletion in a manner similar to that of L1 child-acquisition. [JJ,101]
265. Mandarin speakers of English may, therefore, tend to add schwa to words which end in obstruents, for example, the word 'tag' **may** be pronounced /tægə/. [JJ,102]
266. In addition, certain phonetic realizations that learners transfer from their L1 as a result of categorical perception **may** be perceived by speakers from other L1s as 'belonging' to a completely different phoneme from that intended. [JJ,115]

267. Transferred to English, words like 'boat' and 'dream' **may** be pronounced respectively 'vote' and 'dreon', or 'dreang'. [JJ,115]

Popular scientific style [NAT]

268. A costly fertility treatment that is designed to increase the likelihood of older women giving birth after IVF **may** actually reduce their chances of having a baby. [NS,4; *Fertility failure*]
269. Mastenbroek suggests that removing a cell **may** harm an embryo's chances of survival. [NS,4; *Fertility failure*]
270. *Fish growing up in the wild among predators use their left eye to look at novel objects, while their offspring raised in captivity use their right eye.* This suggests that life experiences can affect which side of the brain fish use, and even, says Victoria Braithwaite of the University of Edinburgh, UK, that they have emotional mindsets, since different sides of the brain **may** correspond to a curious or suspicious attitude. [NS,10; *Left eye, I'm scared, right eye, I'm cool*]
271. Tamoxifen, a drug routinely prescribed to treat breast cancer, **may** actually help some cancers proliferate. [NS,18; *Popular breast cancer drug could backfire in rare cases*]
272. Kevin Bankston says that a raft of emerging technologies known as location-based services, or LBS, **may** make people more vulnerable to government spying than ever before. [NS,24; *We know where you are, your cellphone told us*]
273. As the "biorefinery" begins to supply our gasoline and diesel needs, it **may** also begin to satisfy other aspects of our oil use. (NAT) [NS,28; *Who needs oil?*]
274. Other studies suggest that our social interactions too **may** reflect unconscious influences far more than we suspect. [NS,37; *What made you read this?*]
275. What's more, even if we do learn quite a lot about each other from non-verbal cues, we **may** still use these to make conscious judgments about one another. [NS,39; *What made you read this?*]
276. Publishing more papers **may** work like an ad for your research: other people remember your name and refer to your work. [NS,49; *Quantity, quality and equality*]
277. Long-blooming flowers close and reopen repeatedly, whereas other flowers **may** drop their petals after a single day. [NS,77; *Closing time*]
278. Where sun, dew, frost, wind or insects are likely to damage exposed reproductive organs, closing **may** be advantageous during times when flowers are unlikely to attract pollinators. [NS,77; *Closing time*]
279. A protein that **may** numb your tongue and help you to sense cold has been identified. [FS,15; *In brief*]
280. Ironically, the ability of some proteins to form the kind of fibrous tangles that cause Alzheimer's and CJD **may** actually help protect our skin from burning. [FS,42; *The Prion villain or hero?*]
281. A cup of tea **may** actually be better for your health than water. [FS,21; *good news*]
282. Soil **may** be key to saving our planet. [FS,21; *good news*]
283. Research into antibodies **may** yield therapies for prion diseases, exploiting the same line of defence used against better-understood infectious diseases caused by viruses and bacteria. [FS,44; *The Prion villain or hero?*]
284. The problem is that since congenitally blind people have never experienced colour, it is hard for them to definitively state whether the experience they **may** call 'colour' is the same as yours. [FS,53; Q&A: *Can people who are born blind see colours in their head?*]

Newspaper reporting [NEWS]

285. Patricia Hewitt, the Trade and Industry Secretary, has said that she wants the manifesto to contain plans to help fathers to work more flexibly, and **may** offer them the right to share maternity leave with their partners. [T1,11; *Driving ban for mothers who refuse child access*]
286. Mothers **may** also be warned that false allegations could harm their chances over custody. [T1,11; *Driving ban for mothers who refuse child access*]

Fiction [FICT]

287. 'Any alteration to the basic plan **may** be subject to extra costs,' Suzi said, 'but I don't say it will. *Might you be interested in the Frobisher at all? It comes with a spacious utility area.*' [HM,217]

III. Gradient of restriction

288. Furthermore, information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, **may** be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004). (ADMIN) [FC,2]
289. In addition to having the statutory vires, we also need to look at processes for dealing with clients to ensure they are properly notified of the use that **may** be made of the information they supply, and to ensure that information is accurate and protected from misuse. (ADMIN) [FC,16]
290. Legally, we expect the main obstacle to progress to be departments and agencies' statutory vires, which **may** in some cases prevent data sharing with the private sector. (ADMIN) [FC,16]
291. An offence of this nature would need to be carefully formulated as it would impose liability for acts that **may** be legitimate and that do not relate directly to specific criminal offences. (ADMIN) [FC,26]
292. Patients who need to have several items prescribed over a period **may** purchase Prescription Pre-Payment Certificates (PPCs) and are not required to pay a further charge at the point of dispensing. (ADMIN) [HC,1]
293. *The LIS can provide full help whereby a qualifying patient will not pay any charges.* Those with slightly higher income **may** receive partial help with health costs. (ADMIN) [HC,2]
294. In the UK the price of branded medicines is controlled by the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS) which limits the profits and prices that **may** be charged by brand medicine manufacturers. (ADMIN) [HC,17]
295. If there is information or evidence that there is a risk to the individual removal **may** be postponed or cancelled. (ADMIN) [HR,16]
296. In such cases permission to remain **may** be granted on either a limited or permanent basis, and any proposed removal action deferred where appropriate. (ADMIN) [HR,17]
297. *'At this stage, subject to building regulations, some redesign is possible?'* Suzi said. 'Extra costs **may** be incurred?' (FICT) [HM,217]

IV. Merger: epistemic vs. root possibility

298. One possible empirical way forward **may** be to identify what all L2 varieties of English have in common, in other words, an 'International English', and to build on that. (ACAD) [JJ,126]
299. It **may** also account for whatever truth there is in the claim that 'NNSs who command the TL as an FL' (Selinker 1992:121), at least as far as pronunciation is concerned, since the latter have first-hand experience of the intelligibility problem for the NBES listener engaged in interlanguage talk. (ACAD) [JJ,116]
300. Weinberger suggests that within a second language, awareness of potential ambiguity **may** increase with proficiency. (ACAD) [JJ,119]
301. In their study of the English of Steinar, their Icelandic subject, Hecht and Mulford suggest that much of Steinar's phonological variation **may** result from the range of target language models he is exposed to, including the L1 speech of his school friends, schoolteacher, the adult investigator, and the Icelandic-accented L2 English of his parents. (ACAD) [JJ,110]
302. This factor is one which **may** help to explain why the devoicing does not improve over the course of the fourteen weeks, for 'it is an acceptable American English pronunciation in some phonetic contexts and speech styles (for example, in rapid speech and sentence final position)' (1982:223) (ACAD) [JJ,110]
303. For example, an Arabic learner of English **may** pronounce 'film' as /filðm/ because of an L1-related difficulty in producing the cluster /lm/. (ACAD) [JJ,101]

304. For example, an Arab speaker of English **may** insert a vowel between the /p/ and // in the word 'place'. (ACAD) [JJ,34]
305. At the level of production, the L1-L2 syllable and word stress difference **may** lead to serious intelligibility problems for both L1 and L2 receiver. (ACAD) [JJ,40]
306. *Just as the Bee Gees' disco style sounds antique compared to hip-hop, birdsong can also go out of fashion.* Such stylistic changes **may** help explain how mating barriers arise, eventually leading to new species. (NAT) [NS,17; *Sparrows tire of the same old song*]
307. If Barres is right, and women don't receive the same support and encouragement as men, this **may** also affect productivity, particularly early on in their careers when they may not be pushed sufficiently to publish. (NAT) [NS,49; *Quantity, quality and equality*]
308. The emerging belief that the prion **may** be as important in evolution as DNA is all the more remarkable given the molecule's sinister reputation. (NAT) [FS,41; *The Prion villain or hero?*]

Appendix 2D: tokens of MIGHT [App. 2D]

I. Epistemic possibility

Administrative style [ADMIN]

1. While fraud is likely to be one of the main reasons to take on the identity of a dead person, the practice **might** also be concealing money laundering or a range of other serious crimes. [FC,14]
2. As technology advances, and ever more information is stored electronically, there is a huge opportunity to use these sort of techniques, which hold out the opportunity to protect the public by picking up patterns and trends in criminal activity which **might** not be spotted when data is looked at individually. [FC,22]
3. The Government believes therefore that it might be necessary to lower the threshold for this offence to cover those who **might** be able to claim not to have the degree of certainty implied in saying that they believed something would happen but who are nevertheless in a position where they know it is highly likely that it will or have strong suspicion that this will be the case. [FC,25]
4. *An example of how this offence could be used would be where D provides a property, which he fits with security features, for X. D knows or suspects X is a criminal involved in drug trafficking, blackmail or other serious offences typically committed by organised groups. While D has no idea what offence X **might** be planning in this property he knows or suspects that the property will be used by X in his "criminal activities".* [FC,26]
5. The Government believes therefore that it **might** be necessary to lower the threshold for this offence to cover those who might be able to claim not to have the degree of certainty implied in saying that they believed something would happen but who are nevertheless in a position where they know it is highly likely that it will or have strong suspicion that this will be the case. [FC,25]
6. *We have also been looking at some important, if essentially technical, changes to the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA). These would enable us, for example, to enable financial investigators who are police staff to exercise more of the powers under POCA, to contract out the enforcement of confiscation orders, and to examine what improvements **might** be necessary to the 'consent regime' in POCA.* [FC,9]
7. Law enforcement might also have evidence of crimes committed overseas which cannot be prosecuted in the UK, or the subject of an order **might** have been released after conviction overseas in circumstances where we would expect them in the UK to be subject to strict licence conditions – the prevention order would enable us to put such controls in place. [FC,31]
8. *But in the case of organised crime investigations, there may be significant numbers of individuals at the fringes who cannot be pursued in the main trial, and for whom a separate trial is not thought worthwhile. Such individuals' role **might** have been marginal and not warrant a prosecution, but an order might be sufficient to deter future criminal activity.* [FC,31]
9. The Government is aware of the crucial importance of frontline staff at ports of entry being fully trained to identify minors who **might** have been trafficked into the country. [HR,13]

Popular scientific style [NAT]

10. As long as it is on, your cellphone knows where you are, and **might** not mind who it tells. [NS, 24; *We know where you are, your cellphone told us*]
11. The programmable self-propelled machine **might** even go back as far as the 8th century BC, according to Homer's Iliad: "[Hephaestus] was making twenty tripods that were to stand by the wall of his house, and he set wheels of gold under them all that they might go of their own selves to the assemblies of the gods and come back again – marvels indeed to see." [NS,35; *I ropebof*]
12. *Students commonly fill out questionnaires at the end of the year to rate their lectures, giving apparently logical reasons for their high or low marks. They **might** mention the clarity of the lectures or the confusion of the overall lesson plan, for example.* [NS,37; *What made you read this?*]
13. *You could, for example, have your body gold-plated by metal vapour deposition and then encased in a huge solid concrete pyramid. Put this somewhere stable, such as South Africa's Northern Cape, and you **might** be still there in 200 million years.* [FS,54; Q&A: *Could you ever fossilise yourself?*]

14. Nagakawa says he has no idea how the bacteria jumped from the deep sea to the human body. “The best answer **might** come from the fossil record,” he says. [NS,18; *Sick-making bugs came from the deep*]
15. The finding **might** explain why Tamoxifen is notoriously less effective in women with tumours that contain high levels of oestrogen receptors. [NS,18; *Popular breast cancer drug could backfire in rare cases*]
16. *Some flowers open and close so punctually that a once-popular gardening fashion was to plant flowers in sectors of a bed resembling a clock face. These were so planned that flowers opening in each sector matched the position of a notional hour hand on the clock.* In season, all being well, one **might** actually be able to tell the time by consulting one’s flowering clock. [NS,77; *Closing time*]
17. For a start, NASA refused to formally recommend a programme and budget for a new survey; perhaps it feared Congress **might** fail to provide it with the necessary funds. [NS,19; *How not to save the planet*]
18. *In one study, Pentland’s team monitored people attending a business conference and tried to predict who would exchange business cards.* You **might** expect that this would require some knowledge of what information delegates changed, to see if they discovered some common interest. [NS,38; *What made you read this?*]
19. I don’t feel strongly either way, though if there is a good reason for doing it – if you could find a yeast that would give you a beer with a four-year shelf-life, for example – then it **might** warrant attention. [NS,45; *Always going with the grain*]
20. But in 500,000 years it is possible that a new hominid species could have arisen in the Americas – and it **might** have been the Ice Age hunters who were out-competed instead. [FS,56; Q&A: *What if... Homo erectus had reached America?*]

Newspaper reporting [NEWS]

21. You **might** think that familiarity dulls this all-English encounter, two clubs who meet twice a season in the domestic Premiership and who know each other inside out. [T1,33; *Wasps determined to make mark on Europe’s elite*]
22. “The defects of great men,” Disraeli said, “are the consolation of dunces.” For men, you **might** well read football managers. [T1,40; *Wenger’s flaw show evokes memories of Chapman’s error*]
23. Wenger **might** console himself that one of his illustrious predecessors, Herbert Chapman, was guilty of a far worse – not to say humiliating – error in January 1933. [T1,40; *Wenger’s flaw show evokes memories of Chapman’s error*]
24. “You have to exercise self-control. It **might** look like a runway, but everyone knows the Highway Code.” [T2,12; *Ton-up drivers take new route straight to court*]
25. France are alone with their anxieties, wondering if Zinedine Zidane **might** be able to free himself of a thigh injury and return on Thursday for the match against Uruguay. [T2,29 *Senegal turn world upside down*]
26. “It **might** sound strange, but one of my strongest attributes is my shooting,” he [Hargreaves] said. [T2,33; *Has talent, will travel: England hail timely arrival of Hargreaves*]
27. Military intervention by the international community **might** be necessary to contain possible ethnic cleansing in Darfur region, he said. [T1,1; *Sudan warning*]
28. “We have a reasonable expectation that these people **might** be killed by the hostage takers.” [T1,17; *Families plead for Japanese hostages*]
29. “I cannot bear to think that my child **might** be burned alive.” [T1,17; *Families plead for Japanese hostages*]
30. The parochial bun-fight against Tottenham Hotspur at White Hart Lane on April 25 **might** be the toughest of their fixtures. [T1,27; *Brilliant Henry steadies the ship*]
31. While in his mood of steely resolve, Vaughan well **might** decide today to bowl first, as he did last week in Barbados. [T1,34; *Read’s flaws with bat open door for Jones*]
32. “This is definitely a cause for concern and I **might** have to postpone my visit now.” [T2,5; *Chaos at airport as news filters through*]

33. Yesterday he [Signor Sgarbi] said he had changed his mind: "After all, it [the obelisk] has already been damaged, so we **might** as well give it back." [T2,20; *Bolt of lightning persuades Italy to give back obelisk*]
34. The FBI has warned American police departments that terrorists **might** try to use surface-to-air missiles to bring down jets after the latest wave of intelligence gathered from captured al-Qaeda men. [T2,22; *FBI alert on missile attacks*]
35. The film is the first to be preceded by a message warning of "disaster images" that some **might** find upsetting. [T2,23; *Hollywood blockbuster dices with disaster*]
36. That **might** still leave Brazil and Argentina lying in wait in the quarter and semi-finals, though, and there is also the possibility that England might top their group only to find France, unexpected runners-up, as second-round opponents. [T2,30; *Final route changes as France run off the road*]
37. That might still leave Brazil and Argentina lying in wait in the quarter and semi-finals, though, and there is also the possibility that England **might** top their group only to find France, unexpected runners-up, as second-round opponents. [T2,30; *Final route changes as France run off the road*]
38. Owen Hargreaves has been doing well and Paul Scholes **might** have a good World Cup. *I hope so – I like him.* [T2,32; *Beckham's match-fitness may be source of concern*]
39. I think Turkey and Poland **might** do all right and Cameroon are strong. [T2,32; *Beckham's match-fitness may be source of concern*]
40. They [the Ireland team] are going to miss him [HM,Roy Keane] but, at the same time, it **might** strengthen their resolve. [T2,32; *Beckham's match-fitness may be source of concern*]
41. "I **might** need a holiday after this," the manager said and, in spite of the hospitality of their welcome, it is safe to assume he will not be returning to Saipan or Izumo. [T2,36; *Ireland focus restored as storm drifts slowly into distance*]
42. He was preferred to José Antonio Reyes, the Spaniard who cost £17 million, supposedly he **might** not dovetail with Bergkamp. [T1,40; *Wenger's flaw show evokes memories of Chapman's error*]
43. If Captain Tattersall fails to get the job that she wants in 3 Commando Brigade, there are other specialized roles in the Services that **might** suit her talents. [T2,6; *Unique CV for a promising future*]
44. It has not always worked that way, of course, but, for the most part, Henman has been a rock of reliability and at the Esch Alzette Stadium yesterday his 6-3, 6-3, 6-2 victory over Gilles Kremer, the No 888 in the world, meant that Palmer could just about get away with fluffing his lines when the thought occurred that he **might** be world perfect at last in a competition that, four years ago, reduced him to a gibbering wreck. [T1,37; *Henman provides customary rescue act*]
45. Sir John Colville, a former private secretary to the monarch who had become a director of her bank, Coutts, actually wrote to *The Times* to suggest that the numbers of between £50 million and £100 million that were being mentioned were wildly exaggerated, and that £2 million **might** be nearer the mark. [T2,3; *At £35m a year, we are getting a royal bargain*]
46. It will be the cathedral's fourth jubilee service; the first, for Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, was held on the west steps because the clergy feared that the 78-year-old Queen **might** not make it to the top. [T2,11; *Choirboys in full voice for new work*]
47. He [Marcel Desailly] stated that, subconsciously, they **might** surrender at some exacting moment. [T2,29; *Senegal turn world upside down*]
48. So frequent were the opportunities that it took most of the evening to absorb the thought that they really **might** not score. [T2,31; *Diop brings France crashing down to earth*]
49. "Where would the world be without the English?" Eriksson said yesterday when asked for some patriotic tub-thumping ahead of their opening game, but it was more pertinent to ask where England **might** be without him. [T2,32; *Eriksson pleads with England to seize the moment*]
50. His [Hargreaves] 12 minutes as a substitute in the 5-1 victory in Germany ended the hopes of Wales and Canada that he **might** turn his back on England and it is a decision that has been vindicated now that he prepares to start the World Cup finals at the heart of the side. [T2,33; *Has talent, will travel: England hail timely arrival of Hargreaves*]
51. Having seen Emma Snowsill, her successor, suffer a similar slide – she even failed to gain selection for Australia's Olympic team – Cave is convinced that winning the 2004 world title in Madeira, an event that incorporates the second British Olympic trial, **might** not be a good thing. [T1,37; *Cave determined to avoid holding poisoned chalice*]

52. But he [Henman] was not as downcast as one **might** have imagined. [T1,37; *Henman provides customary rescue act*]
53. "It would be similar to the American summer camps or the colonies de vacances schemes in France. The only condition would be that you could not go with your mates, you would have to mix with people you **might** not have met before" Mr Phillips said. [T1,1; *The last e-mail from the Briton killed helping to rebuild Iraq*]
54. *Arsenal were less than fantastic in the first half.* Had they displayed as much aggression as the seedy mass of ticket touts outside the nearby Tube station, the game **might** not have drifted so easily away from them. [T1,31; *Henry ensures Arsenal's return to health*]
55. Had it not been for a debilitating bout of glandular fever in the winter of 2002-03, who knows whether Simpson-Daniel **might** not have trained on in a manner that seemed likely when he made his international debut against New Zealand 17 months ago. [T1,33; *Wasps determined to make mark on Europe's elite*]
56. *Ferguson was impulsively quick to sell off Jaap Stam, the big Holland center back, who had displeased him by stating in his autobiography that United had "tapped him up" before his transfer.* This **might** have been acceptable had Ferguson possessed a defender to replace him. [T1,40; *Wenger's flaw show evokes memories of Chapman's error*]
57. Mark Stringer, the consultant surgeon, told police that her death **might** have been explained as a "million to one tragedy" had it not been for what happened on Tuesday of that week, the second day after the theatre had been reopened. [T2,9; *Mother demands answers after hospital deaths*]
58. Earlier in the week there was bemusement when Marcel Desailly, the captain, said that the side, having won the World Cup in 1998 and the European Championship in 2000, **might** have run out of things to prove. [T2,29; *Senegal turn world upside down*]
59. With an organized defence balanced by several incisive counter attacks, Senegal were rewarded justly with a victory that **might** have been of a greater margin. [T2,30; *Time has taken its toll on Lemerre's troops*]
60. He [Kieron] has had one or two injury problems with us, but we have pushed him and played him once or twice when he **might** have needed another two weeks. [T2,32; *Beckham's match-fitness may be source of concern*]

Fiction [FICT]

61. 'This lady, for example, when I speak about ear trouble, what I may be picking up is not so much a physical problem – I **might** be talking about a breakdown in communication.' [HM,27]
62. 'I'm grateful. I **might** not show it. But I am, sweetheart. I don't know where I'd be now, if we'd never met.' [HM,45]
63. 'It's possible I **might** be psychic myself,' Colette said casually. [HM,67]
64. 'Does he live with you? In your house? I mean, if you call it "live"?' 'You **might** as well,' Al said. She sounded tired. 'You **might** as well call it "live", as call it anything.' [HM,89]
65. *Colette: I mean Cheetham, that's not your name. Alison: I changed it. Think about it. Colette: Oh yes... Al, does this mean you **might** have previous identities?* [HM,112]
66. 'Shh!' Al said. 'She **might** be listening. *She's not gone yet, you know.*' [HM,161]
67. 'Oh yes. Aitkenside. Well, I should hear 'is lorry, I should think.' 'That's right. But he **might** not be driving a lorry any more.' 'What's happened to it?' 'I don't know. I'm just saying, he **might** not. He **might** just turn up. If anybody comes knocking at your window-' [HM,210]
68. 'Oh yes. Aitkenside. Well, I should hear 'is lorry, I should think.' 'That's right. But he **might** not be driving a lorry any more.' 'What's happened to it?' 'I don't know. I'm just saying, he **might** not. He **might** just turn up. If anybody comes knocking at your window-' [HM,210]
69. 'Any alteration to the basic plan may be subject to extra costs,' Suzi said, 'but I don't say it will. **Might** you be interested in the Frobisher at all? *It comes with a spacious utility area.*' [HM,217]
70. 'I think, it's Morris who attracts them, not me, so if he goes they'll all go. You see, it **might** be the end of Morris as we know him. *It had to happen one day.*' [HM,248]
71. Colette would smoothly pass over their business card, and say, 'When you feel ready, you **might** like to come for a private reading.' [HM,22-23]

72. If you knew what the dogs were up to, she reasoned, if you knew what they were up to in spirit world, it **might** help you work out where their owners were now. [HM,23]
73. *You can try and kick him out.* You **might** succeed, for a while. But he gets back at you. Years may go by. [HM,48]
74. 'You don't want them. You won't cook.' 'I **might** want to cut something.' 'Use your teeth.' [HM,72]
75. 'Do you think you **might** get a message from Dodi? *No, I forget, you don't do ethics, do you?*' [HM,161]
76. I have to make myself do it, she thought, I have to listen right through: see if I get any insight, any grip on other furtive schemes that Morris **might** come up with. [HM,206]
77. 'Oh yes. *Aitkenside. Well, I should hear 'is lorry, I should think.'* 'That's right. But he **might** not be driving a lorry any more.' 'What's happened to it?' 'I don't know. I'm just saying, he **might** not. He **might** just turn up. *If anybody comes knocking at your window-*' [HM,210]
78. 'Did you send Gavin a change-of-address card?' 'Yes.' 'Why?' 'As a precaution.' 'Sorry?' 'Something **might** come for me. *For forwarding. A letter. A package.*' [HM,232]
79. 'Tell you what, gel, tell you what, stop off south of Leicester somewhere, and we **might** meet up with Pikey Pete.' [HM,196]
80. *Colette: So...are you going to tell me?* Alison: I **might** if I was quite sure I knew. [HM,110]
81. 'I've never worked a mower.' 'Anyway, with your weight. You **might** have a stroke.' [HM,232]
82. 'If we moved, we **might** be able to lose them. *I suppose Morris will stick, but I'd like to shake off his friends.*' [HM,201]
83. Move on, she thought: it **might** baffle them for a bit. *Even a temporary bewilderment could keep them off your back. It might cause them to disperse, lose each other again in those vast tracts the dead inhabit.* [HM,201]
84. Move on, she thought: it **might** baffle them for a bit. *Even a temporary bewilderment could keep them off your back. It might cause them to disperse, lose each other again in those vast tracts the dead inhabit.* [HM,201]
85. 'You're forgetting what's what. You've been kicking around too long.' She spoke to him roughly, man to man, as Aitkenside **might**: 'You're fading, mate. Fading fast.' [HM,245]
86. 'Say no, say no? *Is that a way to treat a mate of yours? If old string bean asked you, keep this package for me, would you refuse her, would you say, Colette, me old mate, no can do?*' 'I **might**.' [HM,246]
87. Ruthless, she gave the whole tribe the brush-off: Margaret Rose, Princess Di, Prince Albert, and a faint old cove who **might** be some sort of Plantagenet. [HM,34]
88. *Sometimes Al wanted chocolate out of her bag, sometimes she was facing the pangs of birth or the shock of a car crash.* They **might** be awake for minutes or hours. [HM,44]
89. Al's absurd generosity to the waitress in the coffee shop **might** represent one side of her nature, but she was businesslike in her own way. [HM,93]
90. *But when they played the tapes back, they found that, just as Al had foreseen, other items had intruded.* Someone speaking, fast and urgent, in what **might** be Polish. [HM,96]
91. 'I want you to look out for a little accident that could happen to her, nothing serious, I'm not seeing a hospital bed; it's more as if, as if she **might** just fall over and cut her knee.' [HM,173]
92. As she turned it the right way out, she felt a tiny stir of disgust, as if flesh **might** be clinging to the seams. [HM,3]
93. *For fortunes, the biggest part of the trade was young girls.* They always thought there **might** be a stranger on the horizon, love around the corner. [HM,8]
94. It wasn't nerves exactly, more a strange feeling in her diaphragm, as if her gut were yawning: as if she were making space for what **might** occur. [HM,13]
95. She took the mike gingerly, and held it as if it **might** detonate. [HM,20-21]
96. She always travelled with two or three pairs of scissors, and her own sewing kit; as if she were afraid that she **might** begin to unravel. [HM,46]

97. Al would shout at him for picking his feet; after that, she would go quiet and look furious, so Colette could only guess what he **might** be doing. [HM,47]
98. In religious studies she stared out of the window, as if she **might** see some Hindu deities squatting on the green mesh of the boundary fence. [HM,52]
99. They saw a converted flat in Whitton, and thought it **might** be a good investment. [HM,54]
100. This was not strictly true; she had cut out an article about the topic from a trade mag passed to her by an ex-colleague who worked for a medical supplies company, and she had put it in the back pocket of his briefcase, where she had thought he **might** see it. [HM,54]
101. She copied the files she thought **might** interest her, and erased his crucial data for tomorrow. [HM,64]
102. It was no use telling him either that she thought she **might** be psychic herself. [HM,71]
103. I thought you **might** like to have me with you, round and about.' [HM,102]
104. I remember once, I must have been twelve, thirteen, I came in from school and I thought the house was empty for once, I thought, thank Christ for that, I thought, I **might** make some toast then do a bit of cleaning while they were all gone out. [HM,121]
105. In the early days, he didn't follow her into the house. He seemed nervous about who **might** be in there. [HM,126]
106. She was afraid of what **might** come out of his mouth, so she concentrated on his hand, planted against the brick. [HM,127]
107. 'I thought you **might** like to look at my advert.' *She picked up one of the magazines. 'Flick through from the back and you'll see me.'* [HM,143]
108. But then if he had dallied too long among the men, if he thought they **might** drive off with him, his heart would hammer at his dried ribs: wait for me! [HM,166]
109. Colette had said, I thought you **might** have a psychic way of choosing – for instance, you'd get the map and swing a pendulum over it. [HM,221]
110. *Her little shoulders shook, she pressed her knees together; she clenched her fists and pressed them into her skull.* She cried quite loudly, thinking that Al **might** hear. [HM,229]
111. She was afraid that Alison, after her deafness, **might** now choose to hear. [HM,230]
112. She slept through the night and woke refreshed, ready for what the day **might** bring. [HM,253]
113. *'Anyway, who told you that I would require you to sew on my shirt buttons?'* 'I thought you **might**.' [HM,257]
114. *Sometimes Colette would leave the tape running without telling Al. There was some obscure idea in her mind that she **might** need a witness. That if she had a record she could make Al stick to any bargains she made; or that, in an unwary moment while she was out of the house, Al might record something incriminating.* [HM,259-60]
115. ...That if she had a record she could make Al stick to any bargains she made; or that, in an unwary moment while she was out of the house, Al might record something incriminating. Though she didn't know what her crime **might** be. [HM,259-60]
116. *Sometimes Colette would leave the tape running without telling Al. There was some obscure idea in her mind that she **might** need a witness. That if she had a record she could make Al stick to any bargains she made; or that, in an unwary moment while she was out of the house, Al **might** record something incriminating.* [HM,259-60]
117. When she'd argued back – 'they **might** not understand me' – Colette lost her temper and said, 'Alison without blood pressure we'd all be dead, but if you want to sound like something from the remedial stream, don't let me get in your way.' [HM,24]
118. *'I'm trying to envisage – you didn't bring pictures, did you?' 'I'll drop some in.'* 'That **might** be a help. *So we could work out what sort of class of item we're dealing with...*' [HM,94]
119. – now, Alison, we've sort of addressed the point about the trivia, haven't we? Still, you **might** like to put your answer on the tape. [HM,97]
120. *Alison turned back to her packing. She was perplexed.* It had never occurred to her that she **might** have inflicted the damage herself. *Perhaps I did, she thought, and I've just forgotten.* [HM,pg.158]

121. *'Mum, if they turn up, any of them, you let me know. You've got my number.'* 'I **might** have it written down somewhere.' [HM,209]
122. 'He grew up in Uxbridge. But you know, she **might** have had him in hospital.' [HM,59]
123. 'You mean you **might** just have mentioned it?' [HM,62]
124. When she got to the door it occurred to her that it **might** have been his single, clumsy effort at reconciliation. [HM,73]
125. She believed she never saw Keith again, but she **might** have seen him and just not recognized him; it didn't seem as if he'd have much left, by way of original features. [HM,107]
126. So what puzzles me, and the only thing that makes me think it **might** have been a dream, was that darkness – because how did they switch the street lamp off? [HM,116]
127. I **might** have dreamed it, I used to dream I was flying. [HM,117]
128. I think he had relatives, cousins, up and down the country, you used to hear him talk about them, they **might** have come by but I don't really know. [HM,129]
129. I was thinking, you never do know, Keith **might** have got his face fixed up. *They can do wonders these days, can't they? He might have got his appearance changed.* [HM,211-212]
130. *I was thinking, you never do know, Keith might have got his face fixed up. They can do wonders these days, can't they?* He **might** have got his appearance changed. [HM,211-212]
131. *She realised that she hadn't comprehended half that the fortune tellers had said to her.* She **might** as well have stood in the street in Brondesbury ripping up tenners. [HM,75]
132. When Alison was young she **might** as well have been a beast in the jungle as a girl growing up outside Aldershot. [HM,99]
133. *'You have a very peculiar imagination. How can you think I would marry a man like that?'* 'You **might** not know. *Till you'd tied the knot.* You **might** have had a nasty surprise.' [HM,200]
134. *I never got this far with Gavin, Colette thought.* She tried to imagine the life they **might** have had, if they'd been planning to have a family. [HM,219]
135. If I'd had somebody around me with more sense when I was training, instead of Mrs Etchells, I **might** have had a better life. [HM,259]

II. Root possibility

Administrative style [ADMIN]

136. These sorts of orders **might** be used in cases where there was a strong weight of evidence but either not enough for a prosecution, prosecution was planned but additional measures were urgently needed to prevent harms in the interim, prosecution had been ruled not appropriate on public interest grounds, or the evidence of criminal activity could not be prosecuted (eg because it took place overseas). [FC,10]
137. These sorts of orders could be imposed to prevent criminal activity in the first place, but they **might** also constitute an alternative disposal for those individuals at the fringe of major cases who were not targeted for prosecution, but from whom specific assurances of future good behaviour are needed, or for individuals preparing to agree a deal under the Queen's Evidence provisions in SOCPA. [FC,10]
138. Again, there are continuing discussions about how consent **might** be obtained from mortgage customers to make this permissible. [FC,19]
139. *Depending on the underlying facts behind the report, there could be a range of possible responses.* Some **might** justify full scale criminal investigation themselves, others might lead to valuable further leads, and many are likely to justify further investigation on tax or asset recovery grounds. [FC,20]
140. *Depending on the underlying facts behind the report, there could be a range of possible responses.* Some might justify full scale criminal investigation themselves, others **might** lead to valuable further leads, and many are likely to justify further investigation on tax or asset recovery grounds [FC,20]
141. There is no reason why reasonable safeguards necessary to comply with the provisions of DPA, and indeed with most people's sense of what is fair and proper, should stand in the way of a

- common sense tool for identifying suspicious activity which **might** otherwise go entirely undetected. [FC,23]
142. The orders **might** be used *alongside* prosecution, for example as part of a deal to turn Queen's Evidence, ensuring that the QE subject is bound to conditions of good behaviour. [FC,31]
 143. One option **might** also be to enable the courts to impose an order as part of a disposal after conviction, over and above the standard licensing conditions, although this would obviously have implications for the licensing system. [FC,31]
 144. *But in the case of organised crime investigations, there may be significant numbers of individuals at the fringes who cannot be pursued in the main trial, and for whom a separate trial is not thought worthwhile.* Such individuals' role might have been marginal and not warrant a prosecution, but an order **might** be sufficient to deter future criminal activity. [FC,31]
 145. The Government would welcome views on the kinds of conditions that **might** be attached to an organised crime prevention order. [FC,32]
 146. The range of possible restrictions would be broad, depending upon what is necessary and proportionate in each case. They **might** include restrictions on how the enterprise carries out its business, it could require the removal of certain directors or office holders, or in extreme circumstances it could require the dissolution of an entity altogether. [FC,34]
 147. Some of these powers exist elsewhere in certain circumstances already, and the court making the order **might** be given access to powers elsewhere exercisable by regulators or the secretary of state (for example the Secretary of State's power in the Companies Act to wind up companies when it is in the public interest). [FC,34]
 148. Operational experience of the legislation over the last three years has shown areas where it **might** be improved. [FC,38]
 149. *The list of Unacceptable Behaviours published on 24 August 2005 sets out the behaviours likely to lead to an individual being excluded or deported from the UK.* It covers any non-UK citizen who uses any medium to express views which foster hatred which **might** lead to inter-community violence in the UK. [IT,12]
 150. Eligibility for optical vouchers relates predominantly to income and is targeted at those who **might** otherwise have most difficulty in purchasing glasses or contact lenses. [HC,2]
 151. The intention of these arrangements is to provide support to people who are most at risk from eye disease or who **might** otherwise be discouraged on financial grounds from having their eyes examined. [HC,2]
 152. We recommend that all pharmacies, hospitals, and GP and dental surgeries make available to patients information on charges to which they **might** be liable, eligibility for exemption, and possible assistance with costs associated with attending for treatment. [HC,9] [ADMIN]
 153. The review should include: the possibility of establishing a package of core services which would be free (these **might** include prescriptions and dental care) [HC,18]
 154. The Government should also engage in a dialogue with sectors of the business community which **might** be at risk of employing migrants illegally. [HR,7]
 155. However we do not think it appropriate to seek to set out on the face of the Scheme itself, the types of crime that **might** be eligible. [HR,16]

Academic style [ACAD]

156. To observe how this happens in practice, we **might** consider the sentence: 'It's very hot in this room'. [JJ,83]
157. In the rare instances where this is the case, motivation enters the equation, and an item which **might** otherwise have remained unteachable (for example, word-initial consonant clusters) becomes teachable. [JJ,120]

Popular scientific style [NAT]

158. *At present, no country is deemed by the International Seabed Authority to have geological structure beneath the pole – so no country owns it.* While Russia has yet to restate its claim, news that it

- might** has already provoked protests from Canada, the US, Norway and Denmark. [NS,4; *Is North Pole part of Russia?*]
159. However, the discovery that they help protect the brain **might** lead to new drugs that mimic their function to treat Alzheimer's. [NS,14; *Prions reveal their benevolent side*]
 160. *How should we protect ourselves from asteroid strikes? Not in the way NASA suggests.* In its recent report on this question, the agency is evasive about how it **might** search for incoming asteroids and has plumped for the most dangerous of deflecting them. [NS,19; *How not to save the planet*]
 161. *Many NEAs are fragile, and the gravity holding them together is tiny.* So attempting to move one using a sudden impulse risks fragmenting it – leaving a number of pieces, any one of which **might** still hit us. [NS,19; *How not to save the planet*]
 162. NASA also seems to have grossly underestimated the chance that a clumsy deflection **might** push the NEA into a keyhole, so it would still strike Earth. [NS,19; *How not to save the planet*]
 163. Soldiers and firefighters **might** also use such devices to steer remote-controlled robots with their tongues, leaving their hands free. [NS,23; *Get moving at a lick*]
 164. *One source of DNA on a phone, she [Amanda Goode] says, is from loose cheek cells that have settled in the microphone from the user's breath.* Skin flakes in the button recesses and earpiece, meanwhile, **might** also harbour valuable DNA. [NS,25; *Cellphones dish the dirt on crime suspects*]
 165. For some products, we **might** even use animals. [NS,30; *Who needs oil?*]
 166. Indeed, given that the entire US soybean crop could only supply around 6 per cent of the nation's diesel demand, Shank suggests that soy oils **might** be better used as chemical precursors in biorefineries than burned as diesel. [NS,31; *Who needs oil?*]
 167. The programmable self-propelled machine might even go back as far as the 8th century BC, according to Homer's Iliad: "[Hephaestus] was making twenty tripods that were to stand by the wall of his house, and he set wheels of gold under them all that they **might** go of their own selves to the assemblies of the gods and come back again – marvels indeed to see." [NS,35; *I ropebof*]
 168. And if unconscious decision-making and behaviour is a lot more important than psychologists and social scientists have traditionally suspected, it raises the deeper question of what this "instinctual" form of thinking does for us, and how it **might** complement conscious thought. [NS,39; *What made you read this?*]
 169. The team who studied patient X now have more clues as to what their discovery **might** mean. [NS,41; *Impossible awakenings*]
 170. PVS patients often have reflex-like responses in the brain to words, sounds, faces and painful stimuli, but these register only in the outermost sensory areas and never reach regions that **might** become aware of them. [NS,41; *Impossible awakenings*]
 171. *Researchers generally agree that the right to die should remain an option, and that a correct diagnosis of PVS usually goes along with irreversible neural death.* The problem, it seems, is not with the right itself, or even challenging the persistence of true PVS, but with recognizing patients who **might** instead be in the twilight of the minimally conscious state. [NS,42; *Impossible awakenings*]
 172. If it can take two decades for the brain to recover, just how persistent is PVS, and how long **might** unconsciousness last? [NS,42; *Impossible awakenings*]
 173. How **might** doctors decide which patients warrant a lengthy vigil, and make sure that families seeking the right to die for their loved ones are not denying them a late awakening? [NS,42; *Impossible awakenings*]
 174. *You don't generally think of electrons as nervous.* Yet observe one closely enough and that is exactly how it **might** appear. [NS,50; *Zitterbewegung*]
 175. This kind of economy is a particular advantage for plants that live in what **might** be termed stressful environments with limited resources, where they would be hard-pressed to produce new flowers and so must protect their existing investment. [NS,77; *Closing time*]
 176. Eventually the technology **might** be incorporated into clothing or even wallpaper. [FO,19; *Bendy TV*]
 177. I ask whether he has concerns about being another Einstein – that his research **might** ultimately lead to the creation of a new atom bomb. [FS,63; *Interview Freeman Dyson*]

178. Surprisingly, Paul Dirac's suggestion in 1937 that the strength of gravity **might** change met with relatively little interest. [FS,70; *Crisis of constants*]
179. Terry Wallis is one person whose story **might** have run a little differently if routine scanning had been available. [NS,42; *Impossible awakenings*]

Newspaper reporting [NEWS]

180. Yesterday, officials in Tokyo and Baghdad were poring over the video and letter for clues which **might** lead them to the hostages. [T1,17; *Families plead for Japanese hostages*]
181. It is not impossible that they [France] **might** be knocked out before the knockout phase, though still unlikely. [T2,2; *Underdogs of the world rejoice*]
182. *The aftershock of yesterday's 1-0 defeat in the opening match of the tournament is a tremble for the organizers of the World Cup as well for neutral observers.* If this can happen, what else **might** occur over the next month? [T2,29; *Senegal turn world upside down*]
183. The sources also said it was quite clear that the Indian and Pakistani leaders had no concept of each other's "red lines" – the point at which either side **might** turn to nuclear weapons. [T2,4; *Sub-continent 'does not understand scale of disaster'*]
184. James Simpson-Daniel **might** have been with Lewsey at the World Cup last year but just missed selection; similarly he has watched from the bench during the RBS Six Nations Championship as England's grand-slam crown slipped. [T1,33; *Wasps determined to make mark on Europe's elite*]
185. The decision to use the proceeds of the sale of the mansion to renovate Royal Lodge, which is described by royal courtiers as the "house where time stood still", was taken in order to deflect any criticism that **might** have arisen had public money been used. [T2,3; *Burden on royal purse fails to move the Wessexes*]

Fiction [FICT]

186. Look on the bright side, you **might** have been lumbered with a Tibetan. *She imagined the Collingwood, ringing with temple bells.* [HM,249]

III. Merger: epistemic vs. root possibility

187. Some of this new data sharing **might** require legislative changes; in particular changes to the vires of agencies whose data sharing is governed by statutory provisions. (ADMIN) [FC,13]
188. A simpler alternative **might** be for the legislation or rules of court to state explicitly that the authority applying for the order should draw to the court's attention relevant facts about the possible interests of third parties. (ADMIN) [FC,37] [ADMIN]

IV. Gradient of restriction

189. Law enforcement **might** also have evidence of crimes committed overseas which cannot be prosecuted in the UK, or the subject of an order might have been released after conviction overseas in circumstances where we would expect them in the UK to be subject to strict licence conditions – the prevention order would enable us to put such controls in place. (ADMIN) [FC,31]

V. Undecidable

190. Apart from some fragments of an 11th-century treatise written in Andalusia by another engineer Ibn Khalaf Al-Muradi, and the 9th-century *Book of Ingenious Devices*, every description of machines from the Islamic world, the Byzantine empire and from China and India lacked the mechanical details that would have shown whether or not they **might** have been programmable. (NAT) [NS,34; *I ropebot*]
191. Al's voice was calm, unhurried, without the touch of tenderness that would overwhelm the woman entirely; dignified and precise, she **might** have been querying a grocery bill. (FICT) [HM,38]
192. *'You have a very peculiar imagination. How can you think I would marry a man like that?'* **You might** not know. *Till you'd tied the knot. You might have had a nasty surprise.* (FICT) [HM,200]