

PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF THE STRUCTURE “I + COGNITIVE NON-FACTIVE VERB AND EPISTEMIC ADVERB COLLOCATIONS”

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Abstract: With 250 English examples containing the structure “I + cognitive non-factive verb and epistemic adverb collocations” from different sources such as novels, short stories and online materials, in the light of the Speech Act theory three main pragmatic features have been identified including *decreasing complaining/ admonishing, giving counselling, and reducing boasting*. These three pragmatic features are very helpful to learners of English in daily communication because by using the structure in his/ her utterances the speaker wants to decrease his/ her complaint or admonishment to make conversations more comfortable, give the hearer persuasive advice with his/ her own experience, and reduce boasting so that the hearer feels easy to co-operate.

Keywords: modality, pragmatic features, cognitive non-factive verb, epistemic adverb, collocations

1. Introduction

Modality has become an interesting aspect to linguists in the world because of its complexity and variety. To investigate modality, we not only concern about the form of the language but also the language in action, i.e. the interpersonal relationship, especially it is subjectivity that receives more attention and it means modality is always involved in all utterances because it is an indispensable factor playing an important role in imparting the speaker’s thoughts and attitude to the hearer. Consequently, Bally says that modality is the soul of the utterance, as cited in Nguyễn Văn Hiệp (2008: 74). As a matter of fact, English possesses a variety of lexical means to express modality including modal nouns, adjectives,

adverbs and lexical verbs. In addition, “*Modal elements frequently combine and interact dynamically*” (Hoye, 1997: 3). Yet, according to Perkins “*Doing research on modality is very similar to trying to move in an overcrowded room without treading on anyone else’s feet*” (1983: 4). Despite its complication, the study of collocations has caught much interest from linguists and in recent years, many researches on the field have been conducted. With 250 utterances containing the structure with the singular first person subject *I* and collocations including a cognitive non-factive verb and an epistemic adverb followed by a complement clause from different sources such as novels, short stories and online materials, the pragmatic features of the structure have been investigated to help learners of English or even native speakers of English use the structure more effectively in communication.

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2. Literature review and theoretical background

2.1. Literature review

Up to now, language collocations have been dealt with in numerous studies by linguists such as McIntosh (1961), Lyons (1977), Coates (1983), Perkins (1983), Hoye (1997), Cappelli (2005, 2008), Võ Đại Quang (2009), and Trần Thị Minh Giang (2011, 2015).

First, McIntosh (1961) gave a clear and comprehensive definition of collocations. Later, Lyons (1977), Coates (1983) and Perkins (1983) made brief introductions to collocations. Next, Hoye (1997) studied modal-adverb collocations. He found out a marked tendency for epistemic modals to attract adverb satellites. Then, Cappelli (2005) also mentioned modulating attitudes via adverbs but she only presented her general overview of adverbs co-occurring with verbs of cognitive attitude. For collocations, Võ Đại Quang (2009) discussed the possible collocations of adverbs and cognitive verbs; however, it is just a general introduction. Anyhow, his study proposed a basic theoretical ground of modality that has inspired us to conduct our own research. Noticeably, Trần Thị Minh Giang (2011) investigated harmony of adverb satellites on non-factive verbs. In addition, Trần Thị Minh Giang (2015) continued studying the harmony of cognitive non-factive verbs and epistemic adverbs in the pragmatic aspect based on the scale of certainty. Recently, there has been an article on speech act types in conversations of *New Interchange* by Nguyễn Quang Ngoan and Nguyễn Thị Ngọc Dung (2017), which discusses speech acts from the perspective of conversational analysis. It can be seen from the above review that until now a study on speech acts expressed by the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” remains an untouched area to be investigated.

2.2. Theoretical background

2.2.1. Epistemic adverbs

Epistemic adverbs are one of the most popular lexical devices showing modality since in communication, the speaker often uses them to convey his/her judgement and attitudes to the possibility of the states of affair conveyed in the proposition. According to Biber et al. (1999), epistemic adverbs consist of three kinds: *epistemic stance adverbs*, *attitude stance adverbs* and *style stance adverbs*. He thought that epistemic stance adverbs often used in communication are single word adverbs such as *certainly*, *perhaps*, *probably*, *possibly*, *maybe*, *surely*, *definitely*....

(1) *Perhaps* you'll be hurt just a little in the foot.

(A farewell to arms, 1993: 149)

(2) That is *certainly* the simplest explanation.

(The moon and six pence, 1998: 58)

However, Lưu Quý Khương and Trần Thị Minh Giang (2012), support the division of epistemic adverbs into two kinds: assertive epistemic modal adverbs such as *certainly*, *surely*, *definitely*, *clearly*... and non-assertive epistemic modal adverbs such as *probably*, *possibly*, *perhaps*, *maybe*....

Based on the scale of certainty by Givón (1982), assertive adverbs can be presented on the continuum below:

Surely/Clearly Definitely Certainly


Figure 1. The scale of certainty of assertive epistemic modal adverbs

Palmer (1986) suggested that epistemic modality should involve any modal system indicating the degree of commitment by the

speaker to what he or she says – the extent to which the truth of a proposition is possible. Therefore, non-assertive epistemic modal adverbs can be described as possibility-based. The degree of possibility can be presented as follows.

Maybe/ Perhaps Possibly Probably

Figure 2. The scale of possibility of non-assertive epistemic modal adverbs

In this study, epistemic adverbs are also classified basing on the scale of certainty and possibility. Epistemic adverbs are divided into two kinds: assertive and non-assertive epistemic adverbs.

2.2.2. Cognitive non-factive verbs

In modality, there are a lot of modal lexical devices such as modal verbs, modal adjectives, and modal adverbs... However, among them, “Modal lexical verbs are the modal devices with the most frequency in both languages but especially in English with 75.11%” (Nguyễn Thị Thu Thủy, 2012: 60).

For Kiparsky (1968), modal lexical verbs are divided into two main types: factive verbs and non-factive verbs. Non-factive verbs work as an operator to mitigate the commitment and bring open-hearted atmosphere with the cooperation. In his research, Ngũ Thiệu Hùng (2004) deals with three main types of non-factive verbs: cognitive non-factive verbs: *believe, think, expect, suppose, guess, hope* ..., perceptive non-factive verbs: *look, feel, sound, seem, appear*... and reportive non-factive verbs: *say that, tell, hear, it is said that*.... Cognitive non-factive verbs do not inform the listener or hearer of the subject’s action, but show the speaker’s attitude to the proposition. From the views on cognitive non-factive verbs by Palmer (1986), Thompson & Mulac (1991), Halliday (2004), and Hann

(2005), we can conclude that, syntactically, to become a modal lexical device, propositional attitude verbs like non-factive verbs must satisfy the following distinctive features:

- The subject is always in the singular first person.
- The verb is in simple present tense.
- Adverbial phrases of causes or purposes mustn’t be added in the sentence.
- In tag questions, the tag only aims at the subject of proposition (complement clause)
- As a modal device, these structures can stand in different positions in a sentence such as initial, medial, and final. Besides, they function as adjuncts.
- The complementizer *that* is often omitted (in about 90 % of the cases).

For example,

(3) ***I think*** you’re real rude to throw off on my poor hands.

(Gone with the Wind, 1947: 347)

(4) *The Advance of Red China, the challenge to Democracy, The Role of the West – these, I suppose, were the complete works of York Harding.*

(The Quiet American, 1980: 549)

(5) *They ragged him about me at the café, I guess.*

(The Sun also Rises, 1954: 242)

2.2.3. Speech-act modality

In his study, Nordstrom (2010) stated that all linguistic studies involving modality must eventually have a connection with the speech act theory by Austin (1962) and the notions of performatives & illocutionary force because one of the functions of modality is to denote speech acts. (Nordstrom; 2010: 49).

According to Siewieska (1991), in the past most logicians in the world only paid attention to the necessity and the possibility of the proposition, and the speaker's attitude towards what is said or the proposition, whereas nowadays functional linguists or pragmatic linguists bring out communicative intention in the definition of modality.

Usually, all types of speech acts originate from speaker's communicative purposes, such as *promising, complimenting, apologizing, complaining, requesting* or *inviting*. The performance of an act comprises three related acts: *locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act*. Among them, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts take an important part in the analysis of semantic-pragmatic aspect. Studying the effects of illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts of language in general and modal lexical verbs in particular is a meaningful task.

After Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), Yule (1996: 53-54) declared that "*One general classification system lists five types of general functions performed by speech acts: declaratives, representatives, expressives, directives, and commissives.*"

In the scope of this study, the authors mainly dealt with the form of representatives or assertives, because the function of speech acts will be treated as the one with performatives. In fact, cognitive non-factive verbs and epistemic adverbs are contrary to performative verbs and adverbs because according to Austin (1962: 3) these modal verbs and modal adverbs only show the speaker's state of cognition or attitudes to the truth of the proposition without doing the act of utterance when producing utterances.

Searle (1976)'s view on speech acts concern the relation between the speaker

and what is said. This relation was also mentioned by Sweetser (1990) and Cinque (1999); especially Paparofragou (2000)'s study showed the speech-act modality in detail. Noticeably, in our study Sweetser's (1990) proposal on 'speech-act modality' was applied. The following examples by Sweetser (1990) illustrate the category of speech-act modality in daily communication.

(6) "He may be a university professor, but he sure is dumb".

(7) "There may be a six-pack in the fridge, but we have work to do."

(Sweetser, 1990: 70)

Following are four interpretations for the above two examples that the speaker may want to convey (Sweetser, 1990: 70).

(6a) I admit that he is a university professor, and I nonetheless insist that he is dumb.

(7a) I acknowledge your offer, and I nonetheless refuse it.

(6b) He may be a university professor, but I doubt it because he is so dumb.

(7b) There may be a six-pack in the fridge, but I'm not sure because Joe had friends over last night.

It can be seen that the interpretation in (6a) and (7a) is often applied to the conversational world, whereas modality in (6b) and (7b) only carries normal epistemic meaning. Therefore, the above two examples can be paraphrased as follows:

(6c) I do not bar from our (joint) conversational world the statement that he is a university professor, but...

(7c) I do not bar from our conversational world your offer of beer, but...

(Sweetser, 1990: 73)

Consequently, speech-act modality is the application of modal concepts to conversational interaction like Sweetser's statement: "*the speaker (or people in general) is forced to, or (not) barred from, saying what the sentence says*" (Sweetser, 1990: 73).

Since 1970s, the classification of modality based on view of utterance and action of utterance has been also affected by the theory of speech acts. In Vietnamese, Cao Xuân Hạo (1991) distinguished between modality of utterance-act (*énonciation*) and modality of statement (*énoncé*). In the past, all definitions of modality basically used to take interest in parameters of necessity or possibility and the speaker's attitude to the propositional content, but in recent years, depending on function and pragmatics in modality, linguists have suggested communicative intention in definition of modality. However, other linguists can give different terms like sentence-type modalities and matter of illocution. Siewieska (1991: 123) stressed "*What are often referred to as sentence-type modalities and other means used to transmit and modify the speaker's communicative intention are treated as matter of illocution, rather than modality sensu stricto.*"

Modality of utterance-act (*énonciation*) consists of statements, interrogatives, directive utterances grammaticalized in most languages (Cao Xuân Hạo, 1991).

Modality of statements is divided into two categories: modality of sentences (main clause in which main lexical verbs indicate modality) and modality of predications (subordinate clause) (Cao Xuân Hạo, 1991).

Consider the following example:

(8) "*I believe* that she did the right thing."

(The Garden of Eden, 1986: 185)

Our brief analysis shows that the main clause "*I believe*" does no more than expressing the speaker's epistemic modality – that is his belief but what is the belief about? This answer can be found in the subordinate clause. The speaker's belief is toward the proposition "*she did the right thing.*"

3. Research methodology

3.1. Aim and research question

The study aims at investigating pragmatic features based on speech act theory in the structure "I + CNFV and EA collocations" to provide learners of English and native speakers of English with practical knowledge to use the structure more effectively in communication.

The research question to be answered is: What are pragmatic features of the structure "I + CNFV and EA collocations" based on speech act theory?

3.2. Samples and methodology

The data of 250 English samples consisting of the singular first person subject pronoun *I* and collocations of a cognitive non-factive verb and an epistemic adverb was collected from short stories, novels, and online materials including E-books and Brainy quotes. These English samples were written or spoken by English native speakers. All the data were analyzed to draw out pragmatic features of the structure with necessary interpretations.

To conduct the research, the qualitative approach was resorted to in this study to find out the pragmatic features of the structure. Besides, the quantitative one was employed to collect and figure out the frequency of the pragmatic category of the structure "*I + CNFV and EA collocations*" that are present in the collected data. Consequently, the analysis of the study was undertaken by the combination

between the quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

4. Findings and discussion

Examining 250 English samples, we have found out main pragmatic features in light of Speech Act Theory. Noticeably, the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” can be used to display different speech acts such as *decreasing complaining/ admonishing, giving counsel, and reducing boasting*.

4.1. Decreasing complaining or admonishing

By using the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” such as *I just hope, I really believe, I think maybe, I just think...*, the speaker wants to impart his/ her complaint or admonition to the hearer like in the following examples.

(9) “***I just hope*** you’ll have enough decency to disappear to wherever you came from.”

(The Storm Child, 2012: 185)

(10) “Do you think I’d go this far for sex? I can get any fucking girl in this god dam school but guess what? I chose you. I want you no one else but you.”

“I don’t think so Kyle. ***I really believe*** you think of me as a challenge not a lover.”

(To Love a Player, 2012: 13)

(11) “***I think maybe*** one weekend evening a week, not two, not all day together, is a very fair restriction. There is no reason for you to follow that boy everywhere he goes.”

(On Emma’s Bluff, 2013: 158)

(12) “***I just think*** it’s funny how you are so concerned about me forgiving my brother, while you shed nothing about your father.”

(Bedful of moonlight, 2009: 83)

In (9), the speaker showed his/ her annoyance with the hearer’s appearance;

however, by using the pattern *I just hope* the speaker decreased his/ her reproach a little and hoped that the hearer could identify his/ her uncomfortable attitude. Similarly, in (10) the speaker expressed her real thought that Kyle’s love to her is not a truth but a challenge. With the pattern *I really believe* the speaker’s reproach was transmitted to the hearer successfully. In addition, in (11) the speaker’s complaint was displayed to the hearer with the pattern *I think maybe*. It is certain that such admonition is from a person who is older and more experienced than the hearer and of course with higher social status. In this case, it is the father’s complaint about his daughter. Furthermore, in (12) the pattern *I just think* is employed to give the speaker’s admonition to the hearer. The speaker’s question is why the hearer is so concerned about the speaker’s brother and it is not the hearer’s business.

In brief, employing the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” in giving complaint or admonition is effective in communication because the hearer will feel more comfortable to receive the speaker’s complaint or admonition.

4.2. Giving counsel

The next pragmatic meaning expressed by the structure is counselling. With the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations”, the speaker would like to impart to the hearer his/ her advice more easily. Consider the following examples:

(13) “***I think probably*** - I think, you know, when you’re first dating somebody, if they’re just not that physical with you, if they don’t want to make concrete plans with you, you know, if they’re sort of ambiguous about where everything is going, I think that’s a pretty good sign that they’re not into you.

(Greg Behrendt, Brainy Quotes)

(14) “***I really think*** that you have to find a partner that compliments you and is somebody that pushes you and is better at some things than you are, so they can push you to improve yourself as a person.”

(Ashton Kutcher, Brainy Quotes)

(15) “Whatever is about you that is translated into your art, that’s gonna keep you completely original and fresh and ***I just think that***, that’s just the best advice I can give, to an artist creatively.”

(Bubba Sparxxx, Brainy Quotes)

(16) “***I really believe*** the only way to stay healthy is to eat properly, get your rest and exercise. If you don’t exercise and do the other two, I still don’t think it’s going to help you that much.”

(Mike Ditka, Brainy Quotes)

(17) “***I just believe*** that sometimes in life you’re like a shark - you have to keep moving through water; otherwise, you’ll die.”
(Michelle Ryan, Brainy Quotes)

From (13) to (17), it can be seen that *I think probably*, *I really think*, *I really believe*, *I just think*, *I just believe* are used to express the speaker’s counsel without imposition on the hearer and the hearer will feel more comfortable in receiving the speaker’s advice. In (13), with the pattern *I think probably* the speaker told the hearer his/ her own experience in dating to guess whether his dating is successful or not. Besides, in (14) the speaker advised the hearer to make a friend with a better person to look him/ her up. By employing *I really think*, the speaker showed his certain commitment to the hearer’s case. In addition, in (15) the speaker considers that creativity in art is very important, therefore he suggested the hearer keep himself original and fresh. Similarly, in (16) and (17) with patterns *I really believe* and *I just believe*

the speaker proposed the hearer the best way to stay healthy with moderation in eating, rest and exercise and especially in (17) the speaker encouraged the hearer to keep going ahead through difficulties in life like a shark moving in water.

The use of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” in giving counsel really plays an essential part in daily communication since the hearer will feel more certain with the speaker’s persuasive reasons thanks to his/ her own experience.

4.3. Reducing boasting

Employing the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” to reduce the speaker’s boast is one of the communicative strategies. By making use of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations”, the speaker really wishes to reduce his/ her boast so that the hearer feels more comfortable in participating in conversations. Look at the following examples:

(18) “***I think probably*** one of the coolest things was when I went to play basketball at Rucker Park in Harlem. First, who would think that Larry the Cable Guy would go to Harlem to play basketball? And I was received like a rock star. It was amazing! There were people everywhere. There were guys walking by yelling, ‘Git ‘r done!’”

(Larry the Cable Guy, Brainy Quotes)

(19) “I went to a lovely school, and I got an incredible education. And ***I actually think*** that my education is what really sets me apart, ‘cause I’m very smart.”

(Lady Gaga, Brainy Quotes)

(20) “I’ve been extremely fortunate in my life. So ***I actually believe*** that I’m the living embodiment of living the American dream.”

(Dan Rosensweig, Brainy Quotes)

(21) “Honestly, this face of mine will always be familiar to people. It’s that unique quality, man. If it’s a dark and crowded room, people are just able to point me out. I think I’ll always be famous. *I just hope* I don’t become infamous.

(CeeLo Green, Brainy Quotes)

(22) “Well, now I have suffered and struggled enough! *I really believe* I am as good as many a one who sits in the church.”

(Andersen’s Fairy Tales, 1992, p.257)

With modality patterns *I think probably, I actually think, I actually believe, I just hope, I really believe* in samples from (18) to (22), the speaker wanted to show off his/ her talent in playing basketball, his/ her intelligence,

embodiment of American dreams, fame, moreover in (22) the speaker would like to confirm his/ her good behaviour like others in the church. Although the speakers’ main purpose is to show their boast, the presence of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” in their utterances lowers their boasting and the hearer will feel something modest and polite in the speaker’s way of speaking. In brief, reducing the speaker’s boast or pride by employing the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” is one of the most interesting pragmatic characteristics of the structure.

Below is the summary of pragmatic features of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations”:

Table 1. Pragmatic features of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations”

Pragmatic features	Concrete Patterns	Orientation
Complaining/ Admonishing	<i>I just hope, I really believe, I think maybe, I just think</i>	Hearer-orientation, reducing the speaker’s complaint/ admonition.
Counselling	<i>I think probably, I really think, I really believe, I just think, I just believe</i>	Hearer- orientation, avoiding the speaker’s imposition.
Reducing Boasting	<i>I think probably, I actually think, I actually believe, I just hope, I really believe</i>	Speaker- orientation, reducing the speaker’s boast.

The following table will show the occurrence of the structure “I + CNFV and EA

collocations” in expressing pragmatic features in daily communication.

Table 2. Frequency of occurrence of pragmatic features of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations”

Pragmatic Features	Occurrence	%
Complaining/Admonishing	103	41.2
Counselling	110	44
Reducing boasting	37	14.8
Total	250	100

In Table 2, it can be seen that the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” often occurs in daily communication. The pragmatic

features: complaining/ admonishing and counselling are used more often than reducing boasting with the percentages of 41.2%, 44%

and 14.8% respectively. In brief, pragmatic features based on Speech Act theory of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” can be employed effectively in communication; therefore, learners of English and native speakers of English should master them to get better conversations.

5. Conclusions and implication

Through the pragmatic features of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” mentioned above, we can see the importance of the structure in communication. It is impossible to use the structure effectively without mastering these pragmatic features such as *decreasing complaining/admonishing, giving counsel* and *reducing boasting*. With the survey numbers of frequent occurrence of pragmatic features based on speech acts such as 41.2% for decreasing complaining, 44% for counseling, and 14.8% for reducing boasting, the structure with these pragmatic features should be taught by teachers of English because good knowledge of the pragmatic features of the structure will help learners of English and even native speakers of English use them more effectively in communication. Practically, the pragmatic features of the structure such as *decreasing complaining/ admonishing, giving counsel* and *reducing boasting* should be mentioned in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. However, it must depend on learning and teaching goal and learners’ level because it is difficult to master the structure for language learners at the elementary and pre-intermediate levels. Finally, having good knowledge of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations”, especially pragmatic features based on speech-act theory is useful for English-Vietnamese translation work. In addition, the use of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” should be mentioned in

English textbooks as a part of grammar so that learners can master the structure more easily and correctly.

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ĐẶC TRƯNG NGÔN NGỮ CỦA CẤU TRÚC “I + KẾT NGÔN GIỮA ĐỘNG TỪ PHI THỰC HỮU TRI NHẬN VÀ PHÓ TỪ TÌNH THÁI NHẬN THỨC”

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Tóm tắt: Trên cơ sở phân tích 250 ví dụ tiếng Anh có chứa cấu trúc với chủ ngữ là ngôi thứ nhất số ít *I* và các kết ngôn gồm một động từ phi thực hữu tri nhận và một phó từ tình thái nhận thức được thu thập từ những nguồn khác nhau như tiểu thuyết, truyện ngắn, trên mạng, nghiên cứu này đã xác định được những đặc trưng ngữ dụng của cấu trúc dựa vào lý thuyết hành động lời nói như *giảm bớt sự phàn nàn, khiển trách, đưa ra lời khuyên, và giảm bớt sự khoe khoang*. Ba đặc trưng ngữ dụng này rất hữu ích đối với những người học tiếng Anh bởi vì bằng cách sử dụng cấu trúc này trong phát ngôn của mình, người nói có thể làm giảm sự phàn nàn, khiển trách của người nói, cung cấp cho người nghe những lời khuyên đầy thuyết phục bằng kinh nghiệm của bản thân, và giảm nhẹ sự khoe khoang trong phát ngôn, giúp người nghe cảm thấy dễ chịu hơn khi tham thoại. Kết quả nghiên cứu có thể áp dụng vào việc nâng cao chất lượng dạy và học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ ở Việt Nam.

Từ khóa: tính tình thái, đặc trưng ngữ dụng, động từ phi thực hữu tri nhận, phó từ tình thái nhận thức, kết ngôn