

Developing Argumentation in History Texts: Epistemic Modality and Evidentiality

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ABSTRACT: This paper reports on the use of epistemic modal devices and evidentials in order to indicate perspective in modern English texts in the domain of history. The data has been excerpted from the *Corpus of History English Texts (CHET)*, compiled as a subsection of the *Coruña Corpus* at the University of A Coruña (Spain) (Moskovich and Crespo, 2007). The corpus is to be used with its own corpus tool, i.e. the *Coruña Corpus Tool (CCT)* for text retrieval and analysis. There is not an agreed position concerning the relationship between epistemic modality and evidentiality. In this paper, our approach is disjunctive (see Dendale and Tasmowski, 2001) in the sense that it stands as a distinct category from epistemic modality, even if functional overlapping may result from the pragmatic interpretation of particular samples. Conclusions will show that these devices have a strong textual potential and can, therefore, be used to develop argumentation.

KEYWORDS: epistemic modality; evidentiality; argumentation; modern English; history texts.

SUMMARY: 1. Introduction. 2. Modality, evidentiality and related concepts. 3. Corpus description, research method and results. 4. The rhetorical function of epistemic and evidential strategies in CHET. 5. Conclusion.

EL DESARROLLO DE LA ARGUMENTACIÓN EN LOS TEXTOS DE HISTORIA: MODALIDAD EPISTÉMICA Y EVIDENCIALIDAD

RESUMEN: El objetivo de este trabajo es estudiar el uso de los mecanismos epistémicos y evidenciales para expresar opinión en el entramado argumentativo en textos sobre historia en inglés moderno. Los datos se han tomado del *Corpus of History English Texts (CHET)*, compilado como una subsección del *Coruña Corpus* en la Universidad de A Coruña (España) (Moskovich y Crespo, 2007). El corpus posee su propia herramienta de análisis denominada *Coruña Corpus Tool (CCT)*. No hay un consenso en cuanto a la relación entre la modalidad epistémica y la evidencialidad. En este documento, nuestro enfoque es disyuntivo (véase Dendale y Tasmowski, 2001) en tanto que se entiende como una categoría distinta de la modalidad epistémica, incluso si existen casos de superposición funcional. Las conclusiones muestran que estos dispositivos tienen un fuerte potencial textual y pueden, por lo tanto, utilizarse para el desarrollo de la argumentación.

PALABRAS CLAVE: modalidad epistémica; evidencialidad; argumentación; inglés moderno; textos de historia.

SUMARIO: 1. Introducción. 2. Modalidad, evidencialidad y conceptos relacionados. 3. Descripción del corpus, método de investigación y resultados. 4. La función retórica de las estrategias epistémicas y evidenciales en CHET. 5. Conclusión.

LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DE L'ARGUMENTATION DANS LES TEXTES D'HISTOIRE : MODALITÉ ÉPISTÉMIQUE ET ÉVIDENCIALITÉ

RÉSUMÉ: Le but de cet article est d'étudier l'utilisation de mécanismes épistémiques et probatoires pour indiquer l'opinion dans le cadre argumentatif de l'anglais moderne dans les textes d'histoire. Les données sont extraites du *Corpus of History English Texts (CHET)*, compilé comme une sous-section du *Coruña Corpus* à l'Université de La Coruña (Espagne) (Moskovich et Crespo, 2007). Le corpus dispose de son propre outil d'analyse appelé *Coruña Corpus Tool (CCT)*. Il n'y a pas de consensus sur la relation entre le mode épistémique et l'évidentialité. Dans ce document, notre approche est disjonctive (consulter Dendale et Tasmowski, 2001) en ce sens qu'elle est comprise comme une catégorie différente du mode épistémique, même s'il existe des cas de chevauchement fonctionnel. Les conclusions montrent que ces dispositifs ont un fort potentiel textuel et peuvent donc être utilisés pour le développement de l'argumentation.

MOTS-CLÉS: modalité épistémique ; evidentialité ; argumentation ; anglais moderne ; textes d'histoire.

SOMMAIRE: 1. Introduction. 2. Modalité, evidentialité et concepts connexes. 3. Description du corpus, méthode de recherche et résultats. 4. La fonction rhétorique des stratégies épistémiques et de la evidentialité dans CHET. 5. Conclusion.

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Developing Argumentation in History Texts: Epistemic Modality and Evidentiality

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1. INTRODUCTION

Evidentiality, that is the expression of the source or mode of information, and epistemic modality, that is the expression of the chances of a proposition to be true, appear to have a strong textual potential to develop argumentation. Obviously, this is not exclusive of modal verbs and evidentials, but we are interested in showing the way in which these devices strategically combine in order to elaborate and perspectivise meaning (Alonso-Almeida and Carrió-Pastor, 2017). In this paper, our aim is to discuss particular cases of evidential and epistemic devices which are used to structure ideas in order to defend a particular claim. For this study, all samples are excerpted from the *Corpus of History English Texts* (CHET), compiled as a subsection of the *Coruña Corpus* at the University of A Coruña (Moskowich and Crespo, 2007). Our methodology of inquiry involves the use of corpus tools to detect modal and evidential devices. After this, inspection of context has been essential not only to disambiguate the evidential and epistemic meanings of the devices under review but also to disambiguate epistemic meanings from, say, root senses in the case of such modals as *can*, *could* and *may*, which may have any of these meanings.

Our approach to evidentiality is disjunctive, as described in Dendale and Tasmowski (2001) in the sense that it stands as a distinct category from epistemic modality, even if functional overlapping may be contextually implicated. Conditions of truth and commitment to that truth concerning the propositional contents have also been called for in the construal of the use of modals and evidentials. The position in this paper is, as will be shown, that epistemic modals hedge propositional truth. Evidentials, however, do not own that particular semantic meaning. They potentially serve the primary function of indicating the role of the speaker in the formulation of knowledge. The implications of the recipient's interpretation of the declared source, or mode of information, (either first hand or third party or inferred) in terms of its trustworthiness represent a different matter. In other words, evidentiality aims at providing with justificatory material accounting for (a) the speaker's role in the conceptualisation of the information presented (see Cornillie and Delbecque, 2008, for more information in this respect), and (b) the speaker's responsibility in making a particular claim. In this article, we argue that the pragmatic readings of modals and evidentials very often meet. These devices have a strong argumentative potential, and this could therefore explain their job in organising ideas in the paragraph, as we shall show in due course with evidence from CHET.

In the remaining of the paper, we first present our theoretical stance with respect to the concepts of modality and evidential-

ity in some detail in section 2. Then, in section 3, we describe the *Corpus of History English Texts*, which serves as evidence for the idea held here that evidentials and modal verbs have a strong textual potential, and they are consequently used in scientific texts to develop argumentation. In this same section, we describe our methodology of inquiry. The results of our analysis are the focus of the subsequent section, and discussion will be guided by the notions of modality and evidentiality hereby acknowledged. The conclusions drawn from the present study will be offered in section 5.

2. MODALITY, EVIDENTIALITY AND RELATED CONCEPTS

In general terms, modality can be defined as the linguistic encoding of the speaker's or writer's beliefs and attitudes towards the proposition manifested, as pointed out in Biber *et al.* (1999: 966). Modality can be encoded by grammatical and lexical means. There is a wide range of modal categories in the literature, depending on the school of thought (see Collins, 2009). A tripartite classification is, however, generally accepted, namely (a) epistemic, (b) deontic and (c) dynamic modality, as pointed out in Palmer (2001[1986]). Epistemic modality is defined as "(the linguistic expression of) an evaluation of the chances that a certain hypothetical state of affairs under consideration (or some aspect of it) will occur, is occurring, or has occurred in a possible world" (Nuyts, 2001: 21) and this is our working definition in this paper. This modal type "applies to assertions and indicates the extent to which the speaker is committed to the truth of the proposition" (Bybee *et al.*, 1994: 179). Epistemic modality is, according to Hoyer (1997: 42), "concerned with matters of knowledge or belief on which basis speakers express their judgements about state of affairs, events or actions". This includes senses of possibility, probability, inferred certainty, and counterfactuality. Palmer (1986: 33ff) includes modal verbs, mood, and particles and clitics as examples of grammatical marking of modality.

Deontic modality refers to the "necessity of acts in terms of which the speaker gives permission or lays an obligation for the performance of actions at some time in the future" (Hoyer, 1997: 43). The third type, i.e. dynamic modality, "includes ability, volition and also non-deontic root (or, circumstantial) meanings" (Collins, 2009: 23). For Palmer (2001: 7ff), deontic and dynamic modalities belong to the same category of event modality (2001: 70) referring to things that are yet to take place and "are merely potential". Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 52) defines dynamic modality in terms of "the properties and dispositions of persons, etc., referred to in the clause, especially by the subject". This sense of possibility very often gives way to some kind of association of this type of modality with epistemic modality. In our paper, we focus on the first of these categories, i.e. epistemic modality, and also on evidentiality.

Evidentiality "concerns the speaker's indication of the nature (the type and quality) of the evidence invoked for (assuming the existence of) the state of affairs expressed in the utterance" (Nuyts, 2001: 27). Plungian states that "evidential values indicate the source of informa-

tion the speaker has for P where P represents a described situation” (Plungian, 2001: 353). Willet (1988: 57) divides evidentials according to the nature of evidence they represent into (a) direct, attested, evidence, which can be (a1) visual and (a2) other sensory, and (b) indirect evidence, which can be (b1) reported and (b2) inferring. For some, the indication of source/mode of knowledge may suggest an evaluation of the proposition in terms of how reliable an evidence is judged. In this context, the relationship between evidentiality and epistemic modality gives way to three approaches, namely (a) inclusion, (b) intersection and (c) disjunction (Dendale and Tasmowski, 2001). Inclusion considers evidentiality as a subdomain of epistemic modality (Chafe, 1986). Rooryck (2001: 125), for instance, describes the function of evidentials and the types of evidence in terms of their truth values from an inclusive perspective. In terms of reliability, observed phenomena are considered more reliable than knowledge obtained through inferential processes, as pointed out in Willett (1988).

The intersective perspective (van der Auwera and Plungian, 1998; Mushin, 2000) means an overlap between evidentiary inferentiality and epistemic necessity. One example in this respect is the one given in (1) where the modal form *must* indicates an inferential process in the form of a conclusion following from the evidences owned. van der Auwera and Plungian (1998) have labelled these modals as epistemic necessity modals.

- (1) I saw Mary earlier this morning. She looked terribly tired. She must be home now.

Concerning the forms epistemic modals and evidentials may present, epistemic modality can be encoded by grammatical and lexical means, and that seems to be one key aspect in its difference to evidentiality. According to Aikehenvald (2006), evidentiality is exclusively grammatical, and that means that such languages as English, Spanish, and French, for example, are not typologically classified within the group of evidential languages. They do not seem to own a complete morphological evidential system. The only exception, Aikhenvald (2006) acknowledges, is the modal verb, which may encode evidential nuances, as also reported in Boye and Harder (2009). For this reason, English has primarily lexical evidentials save for the class of modal verbs, as already suggested. Examples of lexical evidential forms are the stance adverbs *fairly*, *evidently*, and *clearly*, as discussed in Álvarez-Gil (2018) in his discussion of these forms as exemplified in CHET.

3. CORPUS DESCRIPTION, RESEARCH METHOD AND RESULTS

The *Corpus of History English Texts* (CHET) is one of the subcorpora of *The Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing* (henceforth CC) which allows scholars to analyse English scientific prose from a diachronic scope. CC covers a period of two hundred years (1700-1900), which belongs to the so-called late Modern English period.

As to its present status, it currently includes four publicly available subcorpora. The first subcorpus compiled was the *Corpus of English Texts on Astronomy* (CETA), then the *Corpus of English Philosophy Texts* (CEPhiT), and the *Corpus of English Life Sciences Texts* (CELiST) and, finally, the *Corpus of History English Texts* (CHET). It is precisely this last subcorpus the one we use for the purposes of our research. This corpus is part of a research project conducted by the members of the *Research Group in Multidimensional Studies in English* (MuStE) at the University of A Coruña (Spain), which focuses on the compilation of late Modern English scientific texts written in English.

Regarding the distribution of words in CC, the four subcorpora now released result in a total of 1,618,458 words distributed in 162 text samples, and each subcorpus contains 40-42 text samples. The MuStE Research Group decided that each of the subcorpus compiled would be composed by two texts per decade, hence, twenty texts per century in order to obtain a relevant sample that can offer significant and sounding results. Each sample counts around 10,000 words. These samples from different scientific registers and genres allow scholars to analyse the evolution of the English language the centuries covered in CC.

In relation to the textual genres gathered in CC, the samples have been organised in eight groups corresponding to a genre category (see Moskowich, 2017): treatises, essays, textbooks, letters, lectures, articles, dialogues, and others. Moskowich (2011: 182) explains that this classification is not based solely on linguistic features, but also on other aspects, such as epistemological features, social factors and the authors' purposes, for instance.

CHET is not a very extensive corpus, but it is definitely not manageable for manual analysis. The corpus includes approximately 400,000 words. The distribution of words per century is well balanced. 201,794 of the words compiled belong to the eighteenth century whilst 202,823 belong to the nineteenth one. In our analysis, the *Coruña Corpus Tool* has been employed for quantification and text retrieval. This tool simplifies the research to be done, and its use combined with manual analysis is useful to obtain more accurate results, at least from a pragmatic and discursive perspective. The results in this paper are given in raw figures.

The corpus has been interrogated firstly to identify epistemic modal verbs retrieved by inputting the forms *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *will*, *would*, *shall* and *should*. The software has returned 3,501 cases of modal verbs. Of these, 1,446 are cases of epistemic modals, and 237 are cases of epistemic necessity modals (inferential). The distribution per form is given in Table 1.

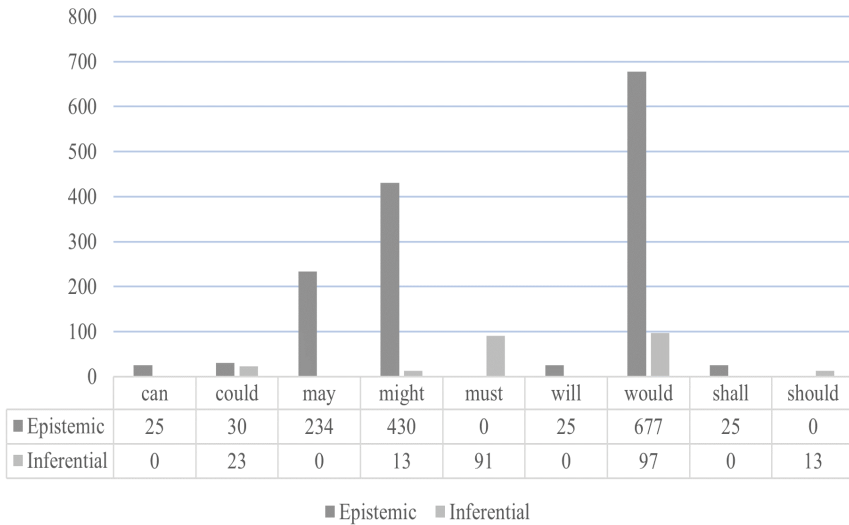


Table 1: Epistemic modal verbs, including epistemic necessity modal verbs

As to the adverbs, we have produced a wordlist with all the head forms in CHET from where adverbs have been extracted. These were later reinput in order to obtain the set of concordances from where epistemic and evidential adverbs were identified. The number of these found in the texts amounts to 564 cases. The corpus shows 205 cases of epistemic adverbs, e.g. *perhaps*, *possibly* and *probably*, and 359 cases of evidential adverbs, e.g. *actually*, *clearly*, *indeed*, *doubtless*, *really* and *surely*. The commonest epistemic adverbs are *probably* and *perhaps*, scoring 98 and 82 samples, respectively. These two adverbs openly signal lack of commitment towards the proposition, as in “The fleet probably coafted along Fife, Angus, and Mernes” (Horsley, 1732) and “The history of no country, perhaps, can exhibit fuch a fcene as that of Scotland now presents” (Adams, 1795). In the case of the evidential adverbs, the commonest is *indeed* with 107 cases, followed by *certainly* with 49 and *really* with 33. These evidential adverbs suggest factual information, indicating thus a clear authorial perspective, as in the following instances:

- (2) His elder Brother John indeed continued Czar; but his Name was little mentioned, except in the Beginning of public Acts (Bancks, 1740).
- (3) Those old Irish habits certainly demanded parliamentary reform (Bennett, 1862).
- (4) Whatever he reports himself to have heard or seen, the reader may be assured he really did hear and see (Smyth, 1840).

The same procedure has been used to identify adjectives and verbs with potential epistemic and evidential nuances. As in the case of ad-

verbs, CHET was interrogated again to obtain the concordances of these forms from which 701 epistemic and evidential matrices were identified. Epistemic devices are less frequent (83 cases) than evidential devices (618 cases). Examples of epistemic matrices are *it seems probable that...*, *it is possible...*, *it is/seems likely that...*, while examples of evidential devices include *'tis plain...*, *it seems plain...*, *it is obvious that...*, *X assert that...*, *X certainly know(s) that...*, *it is said/reported that...*, *X BE told that...*, *X seem(s) that/to INF*, etc. Some instances are these:

- (5) [EPISTEMIC] As this occurred about the time of the destruction of the caliphate of Cordova, it seemed likely that the Christians would again get the whole Spanish peninsula into their hands (Masson, 1855).
- (6) [EVIDENTIAL] It is obvious, therefore, that recen writers have given undue credit to their co-religionists for not rising in rebellion at this juncture (Killen, 1875).
- (7) [EVIDENTIAL] We only know that they were formerly under the Government of severall diftinct Princes, and many petty Dukes, till reduced to the Obedience of one Monarch (Bancks, 1740).
- (8) [EVIDENTIAL] The patent seems to have been procured by corruption, and the issue of copper coins was unquestionably quite too large: but the detriment was absurdly magnified (Killen, 1875).

In the following section, we seek to show the rhetorical potential of these devices in order to develop argumentation. We illustrate each category with examples from the corpus.

4. THE RHETORICAL FUNCTION OF EPISTEMIC AND EVIDENTIAL STRATEGIES IN CHET

The analysis of the texts reveals that modal verbs, adverbs, and lexical matrices showing epistemic and evidential nuances are used with a rhetorical function to elaborate meaning and develop an argument. As we shall see, these devices may appear either in isolation or in combination with other items of the same category or with other items from different categories. When a set of these stance strategies occurs, these seem to fulfil a textual function in late Modern English scientific texts in the domain of history, as we shall exemplify below.

The use of epistemic modal verbs appears in argumentative passages to hedge propositional content, as *may* and *might* in example (9); cases are indicated with an asterisk in the examples in this paper:

- (9) IT may from the Deeds at Durham be thus argued for the Homage, That the duplicated Charter of William Rufus contains the very same Lands, with the same in the Copy of Edgars Charter, without any alteration: And tho there be only a Copy of Edgars Charter, to which the King of England's Charter relates, yet is Ancient, And the Original might* be loft, or deliver'd up, in Purfuance of the Release of Homage; And also tho it be not Recorded, in an Ancient Cartuary; yet there be some Charters in this Record; That are now wanting, which shews some Originals are loft or miscarried, and the Charter of Edgar yet extant under Seal, tho' it be not to be found in this Cartuary, & may*

labour under fuspicion, yet it might upon the lofs of the true old one been foifted in: And the Original duplicated Charter of King William of England, being relative to Edgar's Charter; and exprefly mentioning, That the grant of Edgar was done with his confent; feem ftrongly to fupport the Copie; and may* give ground to think, there was once an Original, and therefore, this duplicated Charter may* be thought ftill, to retain fome Tincture of Homage (hif 1705 Anderson).

In this text, the author shows lack of authorial commitment during his logical reasoning on the assumption that the original charter mentioned here is lost, and a copy is used instead so that he avoids future critical reaction. This possible loss of the charter is marked with *might*, which signals here stronger uncertainty than *may*. The author appears to seek legitimacy for this copy, and he hedges this conclusion with *may* in his last claim, i.e. *this duplicated Charter may be thought ftill*. All his previous supporting ideas contain *may* and *might* entailing some degree of tentativeness. The form *might* is used twice in the same context, that is, to indicate the author's position concerning the loss of the charter, and the use of this form reflects the high probability that the charter is not really lost. The complete argumentative process is supported by the use of some contrast discourse markers, e.g. *yet*, in combination with these modals. There is an exception in the case of the final deduction introduced by *and* and *therefore*, as diagrammatically represented in (10), below. It seems that the subjective force of the modals is softened, or seemingly veiled, by the use of *it* and other third-person singular subjects. In this example, the first use of *may* is an example of root modality entailing dynamic possibility.

- (10) IT... be thus argued – (yet/And) the Original might be lost – (tho') [it] may labour under fuspicion – (yet) it might upon the lofs... been foifted in – (and) may give ground to think – (therefore) this duplicated Charter may be thought ftill.

The representation in (10) shows the use of epistemic modals with a clear function of structuring the text. Modality itself is really more aptly studied in the context of Halliday's interpersonal metafunction as part of the MOOD lexicogrammatical options. We argue, however, that these devices contribute to creating texture, i.e. "what holds the clauses of a text together to give them unity" (Eggins, 1994: 24). This rhetorical use of modals fits in what Halliday categorises as textual metafunction, and it has an important role in communication, as it "can be regarded as an enabling or facilitating function since the others – construing experience [ideational metafunction] and enacting interpersonal relations [interpersonal metafunction] – depend on being able to build up sequences of discourse, organising the discursive flow, and creating cohesion and continuity as it moves" (Halliday, 2013: 30–31).

Epistemic modals, as much as evidentials, seem to have the potential to contribute to the logical development of the text in so much as they do to show the author's position with respect to their texts. In this sense, epistemic certainty, for instance, can be construed using a well-knit group of epistemic devices (modals, adverbials, matrices, etc.) rein-

forcing the speaker's evaluation of the state of affairs. Or, the same unit can be endlessly repeated in a text, e.g. the modal *may*, to signal the author's appraisal, and so this adds unity to the text through its repetition.

From an interpersonal perspective, authors might seek to explicitly commit themselves to the truth of the proposition, to mitigate the illocutionary force of this proposition, and to foreground a particular statement, among other functions, depending on the nature of the device, i.e. epistemic or evidential. In this context, we contend that the interpersonal function of epistemic modal and evidential devices are exploited in order to gain textual unity and develop argumentation.

Another example is given in (11) where epistemic necessity modals are also deployed to organise discourse:

- (11) The laft interval will balance the deficiency in the year of his confulfhip; for as he was made conful on the firft of July, fo on the other hand it muft* have been much about the fame time in the year following, or rather later, before he arrived in Britain, as the hiftorian expreffly affures us. If therefore Agricola left Britain at firft in the year 74, the year before Cerialis quitted the government; he muft* according to Tacitus's account have come over again to Britain in the year 78, when the fummer was far advanced. And this fuits exa□tly well both with the Falti Confulares, and Tacitu's account of Agricola. According to the former he was conful in the year 77, and according to the latter he was made legate of Britain immediately after his confulfhip. This teftimony of the hiftorian is fo particular, that it can by no means be contefted... From hence it follows, that the year of Vefpafian's death (namely 79) muft* have been but the fecond year of Agricola's command in this illand, and Cambden muft* be fomewhat miltaken, when he fuppofed that Titus died in the fifth or fixth year of it.

In this instance, the form *must* is repeated to show inferential communication in the construction of knowledge (Boye and Harder, 2009). The use of *must* in the first three cases in (11) combines (a) with the perfective in order to indicate conclusions in the argumentative process, namely *must have been* and *must have come*, and (b) with *be* followed by the past participle or by an adjective, as in *must be mistaken*. The logical deductive process is also contextually enriched by a few linguistic devices which apparently have the function of mitigating the strength of the information that follows from the interpretations conceptualised by the author and signalled by the use of *must*. These linguistic devices in (11) are identified as cases of (a) vague language, (b) attribution-signalling devices, (c) lexical matrices suggesting deduction, and (d) epistemic lexical matrices.

The instance of (a) vague language, in the sense in Cutting (2007), is found in *much about the same time in the year following, or rather later*. In this case, the use of *about* and *rather later* gives some imprecision to the statement (see Hyland, 2005) and consequently, the author reduces somehow the responsibility ensuing from a more declarative stance. This purposeful declaration of imprecision is also seen in the last statement with *must*: *Cambden muft be somewhat mistaken*. Evidently, the word *somewhat* reports on inaccurate infor-

mation, as it seems that the author wants to avoid stating clearly that Cambden was wrong about the dating of the event. This might be also due to an attempt not to be fully assertive and intimidating, and so the term *somewhat* in this context represents a negative politeness strategy, thus anticipating the effects of imposition and future scholarly criticism in the event his findings are not exact. As to (b) the use of attribution-signalling devices in (11), that is *according to Tacitus's account*. Attribution markers belong to the category of *evidentials* in the work of Hyland (2005), and these are deployed to “establish an authorial command of the subject”. In this sense, the author wants to have his own view of the subject matter backed, therefore gaining credibility and avoiding imposition over his readers.

There is also (c) the use of lexical matrices suggesting deduction, e.g. *From hence it follows*. This type of expressions contributes to the thematic progression of the text as well as to the reliability of the information framed by *must* in (11), as in *From hence it follows, that the year of Vespasian's death (namely 79) must have been but the second year of Agricola's command in this ifland*. In this instance, the author seems to seek avoidance of imposition by revealing his own line of thought leading to the conclusion BE + THE SECOND YEAR OF AGRICOLA'S COMMAND. Concerning (d) the use of epistemic lexical devices in (11), one case is *he supposed*. This device is deployed to convey mitigation. In this case, the information mitigated is Cambden's conclusion concerning the year of Titus's death. By doing this, the author seeks to validate his own deduction with regard to the death of Vespasian.

In addition to modal verbs, epistemic and evidential adverbs also appear to have a rhetorical meaning to organise ideas and develop argumentation. The more general position of both types of adverbs are medial, although there are certain initial uses and parentheticals. Strictly speaking, the adverbs we have come across cannot be regarded as discourse markers (Aijmer, 2008). Instances (12) and (13) below reveal, however, that they have an undisputable rhetorical function contributing to the overall organisation of ideas in the argumentative process. The adverbs *apparently*, *expressly* and *surely* have a distinct organising function in (13) and indicate different types of mode of knowing. In the specific case of *surely*, it also has an attitudinal force to the extent that it presents some nuances of the imposition of the author's point of view:

- (12) This was done and no more; this was all that, apparently* at least, was attempted; no pretences were made to any merit of salutary alteration or legislative reform; the original declaration, the subsequent bill of rights, were each of them expressly* stated to be only declarations of the old constitution... and it then can surely* not be denied that this public assertion on a sudden, this establishment and enactment of all the great leading principles of a free government, fairly deserves the appellation which it has always received, of the Revolution of 1688 (hist. 1840 Smyth).
- (13) THE Caledonians, who probably* derived their origin from the adjacent country of Gaul, were the first inhabitants of Scotland. The Picts undoubtedly were the Britons, who were forced northwards by

the Belgic Gauls, above fourscore years before the descent of Julius Cæsar; and who settling in Scotland were joined by great numbers of their countrymen, that were driven northwards by the Romans. The Scots, most probably*, were a nation of adventurers from the ancient Scythia, who had served in the armies on the continent, and, after conquering the other inhabitants, gave their own name to the country. The Scots and Picts long continued separate, and the hand of nature had contributed to mark the distinction. The former were the men of the hills, and the latter those of the plains (hist 1795 Adams).

In (13), the evaluative force of *probably* is obvious, but the use of the adjective *probable* in a kind of cleft sentence in (14) below is more informationally salient than *probably* in (13), as put forward in Aijmer (2008: 21). In this excerpt, *probable* is used together with copular *be*, *seem* and *appear*. The scalar dimension of *probable* allows the author to exactly show his evaluation of claims, and so authorial stance fluctuates between degrees of probability and certainty to finally signal high probability. The argumentative force of these *probable*-matrices is also marked by the addition of *also* in the last sentence of this example. This presence of *also* reveals authorial awareness concerning the discourse organising function of the structure *it* {*COPULAR*} *probable*.

- (14) It is then much more probable*, that by the part which lies over-against Ireland is meant Galloway, or the maritime parts of Cantyr, and Argyleshire. And if Roman antiquities are found in Galloway, and not in the other two counties, as I am informed; this is a strong argument to prove, that Agricola coasted along the south side of the frith, rather than the north... It seems probable that* the Romans upon this occasion must discover the Lewis, or western, islands of Scotland, and could not mistake these for the Orcades, which were afterwards discovered... However it is certain that* their ships were in Clyde; and I am apt to think, that they failed through the British and [St]. George's channels, attending Agricola's march along the western parts of the island. It also appears highly probable that* they returned, and were laid up during the winter at portus Ritupensis; or else that there were other ships, which failed from thence along the eastern coast of the island, and were ready to attend Agricola, when he crossed the frith of Forth, or marched over at Sterling into Fife and Angus (hist 1732 Horsley).

Keeping with the organising potential of epistemic and evidential devices, matrices containing evidential *seem to* are also an option, as shown in example (15). Propositional content here is framed by this cognitive evidential and, as described in some previous instances, the expression *also* is added to the last sequence in (15) to reinforce the author's position. Similar to the examples of *probably* in (13), the syntactic subjects are fulfilled by third persons, but the conceptualisers remain opaque, thus contributing to promoting lack of subjectivity:

- (15) WHEN Agricola came over, he seems to have* gone directly to the borders of the Silures, where probably the main body of the army was quartered after the reduction of that people by Frontinus. His first action was against the Ordovices. As the principal feat of the war was for some time hereabout, the Roman soldiers seem to have* quartered in those parts most frequently, and

to have* made the borders and the adjacent countries of the Silures their usual rendezvous... Hither some other of the legates seem allo to have* repaired after their first landing (hist 1732 Horsley).

In this context, there is the use of the evidential *seem*-related verb, i.e. *appear to*, to introduce deduction in (16), below. This repetition contributes to signalling the way in which information has been conceptualised. Along with this function, the rhetorical sense of this repetition is strong.

- (16) Nor does the Cistercian work appear to* have suffered from rivalry on the part of the many monastic orders founded towards the close of the eleventh century. The most important of these was the order of the Carthusians, founded in 1084... The only religious body which could in all probability compare with that of Cîteaux at this time in vigour and rapidity of growth were the Premonstratensian canons founded by Norbert about 1120. With these the relations of the Cistercians appear to* have been of a most friendly nature. [note] A dispute however broke out in 1147 and lasted some time, needing the mediation of Eugenius III. [end-note] Moreover, the sphere of activity of the two orders was, in theory at least, somewhat different. The exact nature of the connexion between them is not quite clear... However this may be, the bond which united the two orders would appear to* have been very close (hist1893Cooke).

The following excerpt in (17) contains two instances of evidential *appear (to/that)* given in combination with some other epistemic and evidential strategies, including *it maybe safely concluded...that, ...as Colgan and the subsequent writers supposed, ...perhaps there is not sufficient evidence to, ...little doubt can be entertained that, it is even highly probable that*, among other strategies. The author cleverly stitches these devices throughout the text to pattern, and evince his own argumentative stance:

- (17) Hence also it would appear that* the *Senchus Mor* is the work described by Jocelyn in the following words... On the whole, then, it may be safely concluded* from the preceding evidences, that* the *Seanchus Mor* was not, as Colgan and the subsequent writers supposed*, a mixed compilation of history and law, but a body of laws solely; and though perhaps there is not sufficient evidence to* satisfy an unprejudiced inquirer that the Apostle of Ireland had any share in its composition, or even that its origin can be traced to his time, little doubt can be entertained that* such a work was compiled within a short period after the full establishment of Christianity in the country. It is even highly probable that* [St]. Patrick, assisted by one of the bards, converted to Christianity, may have laid* the foundation of a revision of such of the pagan laws and usages of the country as were inconsistent with the doctrines of the Gospel; and that such a work, when completed by the labour of his successors, was ascribed to him to give it greater authority with the people... If, as has been shewn, there is not sufficient evidence to* establish the fact of the compilation of the *Seanchus Mor* by [St]. Patrick,... Indeed*, for this statement, which has been so much dwelt upon by Kennedy, Toland, O'Connor, and others, as an argument for the use of letters anterior to the introduction of Christianity, no ancient authority or reference has been found; and it appears to* rest solely on an assertion of O'Flaherty, derived, as he states*, from a letter addressed to him by the celebrated Duaid Mac Firbis (hist1839Petrie).

Along with all the evidential and epistemic devices in (17), many of them semantically related, there are several other items, such as adverbs (*hence, then*) and attribution lexical expressions (*the work described by Jocelyn, so much dwelt upon by Kennedy, Toland, O’Conor, and others*), that are used to show logical thinking and to indicate accountability of claims, among other functions.

5. CONCLUSION

In our paper, we have explored the use of epistemic and evidential devices in samples of history texts from the late Modern English period (1700-1900). Our analysis has shown that these devices, when they appear in groups, have a rhetorical function in the configuration of these texts. Epistemic modal verbs are strategically used to develop main ideas while they also contribute to clarifying the authors’ stance with respect to their own texts to the extent that subtle nuance of probabilistic meaning is conveniently interwoven in texts to ostensibly lead readers to the understanding of the intended tentative conclusion. Evidential strategies own the same function, but the meaning of probability cannot be clearly identified in any of the examples analysed. The use of modal verbs with an inferential sense is used in argumentative passages to report mode of knowing concerning the information presented.

Evidential and epistemic adverbs similarly have a clear discourse organising function, and they tend to appear medially rather than initially, and this hinders somehow their categorisation as grammaticalised discourse markers. These adverbs are apparently less informationally salient than their counterpart adjectives embedded in cleft sentences, which leave, at the same time, the conceptualiser out of focus in an attempt to avoid subjectivity. In addition to this, while adverbs do not allow for fine distinctions through the use of modifiers, the adjectives embedded in the matrices are subject to scalar variation. That is the case of *most/ very probably* against *indeed/ highly/ most/ very/ more/ too/ quite probable*. In contrast to epistemic structures, evidential matrices appear to be more intersubjectively construed, so that the information given may be more naturally accepted, as readers may feel identified with that information.

In general, these devices contribute to creating texture and to developing the argumentative flow. Modals, adverbials and matrices perfectly combine with themselves and other argumentative discourse markers to complement their discursive function. The reiteration of a particular device, namely epistemic *probably*, unambiguously signals the authors’ attitudinal stance concerning their texts. Another function of these devices is the mitigating function which is especially clear in the case of epistemic modals, adverbs and matrices. In this context, the writers seek to downtone the elocutionary force of their claims. In the case of evidentials, this is less obvious, and the function of evidentials is to show the role of conceptualisers in the construction of knowledge. By doing so, readers are informed on how the information presented has been gained, and that seems to reduce the strength of potential imposition.

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