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Analysis of the linguistic expression *I think* in a corpus of late Modern English scientific texts



Francisco J. Álvarez-Gil¹ ·  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8752-9091>



Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

Departamento de Filología Moderna, Traducción e Interpretación. Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, España

Natalia García Alonso

Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

Departamento de Filología Moderna, Traducción e Interpretación. Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, España

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ABSTRACT

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The present paper deals with the relationship between modality and evidentiality, focussed specifically on the use of the expression *I think* in combination with other modal devices, as well as the possible pragmatic effects observed in text samples obtained from the *Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing* and whether the variable of discipline might have some effect on the functions the expression represents in these texts. Even if much research is still to be done in academic texts from a diachronic perspective, there are some previous studies on stance devices carried out within the arena of historical pragmatics (cf. Gray, Biber and Hiltunen 2011; Moskowich and Crespo 2014; Alonso-Almeida 2015; Álvarez-Gil 2017, 2018, 2019). Following this tradition, we focus on the expression *I think*, following the work of van der Auwera and Plungian (1998) for the description of modality and modal types..

¹ Corresponding author · Email: francisco.alvarez@ulpgc.es



Palabras clave

evidencialidad,, *I think*, evaluación,
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RESUMEN

Este trabajo trata sobre la relación entre modalidad y evidencialidad. Está centrado específicamente en el uso de la expresión *I think* en combinación con otros elementos modales, así como los posibles efectos pragmáticos observados en muestras de textos obtenidas del *Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing*. Asimismo, analizamos si la variable de disciplina podría tener algún efecto sobre las funciones que la expresión lleva a cabo en estos textos. Aunque todavía queda mucho por investigar en textos académicos desde una perspectiva diacrónica, hay algunos estudios previos sobre elementos de posicionamiento realizados en el ámbito de la pragmática histórica (cf. Gray, Biber y Hiltunen 2011; Moskowich and Crespo 2014; Alonso-Almeida 2015; Álvarez-Gil, 2017, 2018, 2019). Siguiendo esta tradición, nos centramos en la expresión *I think*, siguiendo el trabajo de van der Auwera y Plungian (1998) para la descripción de la modalidad y los tipos modales.

1. Introduction

In the present paper, we analyse the uses and functions of the evidential expression *I think* in two subcorpora of the *Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing*, specifically, *The Corpus of History English Texts* (CHET) and *The Corpus of English Texts on Astronomy* (CETA). The texts compiled at the *Universidade A Coruña* (Spain) by the MuStE Research Group belong to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The objective of selecting those two corpora is to show whether there are disciplinary differences in the use and communicative functions of this structure in the period of the English language comprising the two centuries just mentioned. In our inspection of the occurrences found, we also take into consideration the linguistic context in which this specific form appears embedded. This means especially the syntactic context since it has relevant effects on the way in which *I think* should be interpreted.

Our interpretation of findings follows from earlier literature in the domain of modality and evidentiality studies and other linguistic related concepts such as commitment, mitigation or politeness, among others (cf. Aikhenvald, 2004; Alonso-Almeida, 2012 and 2015a, 2015b; Alonso-Almeida and Álvarez-Gil, 2019; Besnard, 2017; Besnard, 2017; Brown and Levinson, 1987; Burkhardt, 2010; Chafe, 1986; Coates, 1985, 1987; Cornillie, 2009; Cornillie and Delbecque, 2008; De Brabanter and Dendale, 2008; Diewald and Smirnova, 2010; Fujii, 2010; Marín Arrese, 2017; Narrog, 2012; Palmer, 1976, 1986; Schneider, 2010; Von Fintel, 2006; Willet, 1988). Our notion of stance is based on the readings of Du Bois (2007), Hyland (2005), Stubbs (1983) and Lorenz (1999), among others.

After the description of our theoretical framework, we will present a description of the work corpus and of the methodology used. The methodology for analysis includes computer tools in order to detect, count and excerpt cases of *I think* along with convenient context for a thorough understanding of *I think* in use. This is material for manual inspection in order to evaluate the pragmatic communicative functions. At this stage, reading backwards and forwards in the texts

may be fundamental to capture the writers' intentions. This analysis allows the discussion of findings preceding the conclusion section of this paper.

2. Literature review

2.1. Stance

The concept of stance seems to be considered by many scholars as a linguistic phenomenon, which "has not yet been fully explored" (Lorenz, 1999, p. 5). In fact, it is a complex linguistic notion whose function is to signal authorial attitudes. It seems to be universal in language, as it seems to be practically nothing that a speaker can convey without showing some sort of attitude. Stubbs (1983, p. 1) argues that

Whenever speakers (or writers) say anything, they encode their point of view towards it: whether they think it is a reasonable thing to say, or might be found to be obvious, questionable, tentative, provisional, controversial, contradictory, irrelevant, impolite, or whatever. The expression of such speakers' attitudes is pervasive in all uses of language. All sentences encode such a point of view, [...] and the description of the markers for such points of view and their meanings should therefore be a central topic for linguistics.

The concept has been analysed from diverse standpoints, but there is no scholarly consensus as to the exact extent of its scope. In this study, we will follow Hyland's definition, which stands that stance "can be seen as an attitudinal dimension and includes features which refer to the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgements, opinions and commitments. It is the way that writers intrude to stamp their personal authority onto their arguments or step back and disguise their involvement" (Hyland, 2005, p. 176).

Other relevant works dealing with the analysis of stance include Du Bois (2007) and Hyland and Tse (2004). When analysing stancetaking in dialogic discourse, Du Bois (2007, p. 163) refers to the "stance triangle". The author claims that any act of stancetaking comprises three basic features, namely (i) evaluation, (ii) positioning and (iii) alignment, in other words, that when we take a stance, we evaluate a determined object, as well as we position ourselves in an evaluative dimension regarding that object; and lastly, we also align ourselves with others. In a similar way, Hyland and Tse (2004) divide the features involved in an evaluative construction into at least four elements, i.e. the evaluated entity, the evaluative stance, the source of the evaluation and the evaluative expression itself.

In these definitions, Du Bois (2007) and Hyland's and Tse's (2004), the key aspect that both have in common is the evaluative dimension of the notion of stance. In general, stance can be understood as the way in which speakers appraise people, objects and ideas, and it also covers self-evaluation, as Alonso-Almeida (2015b, p. 1) claims. Evaluation is defined by Hunston and Thompson (2000, p. 5), as follows:

evaluation is the broad cover term for the expression of the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking

about. That attitude may relate to certainty or obligation or desirability or any of a number of other sets of values. When appropriate, we refer specifically to modality as a sub-category of evaluation.

In relation to evaluative language, authors can decide to include diverse linguistic elements, in order to express their opinions, both, positive or negative, in relation to the propositional content. Among the linguistic devices, which are normally employed to transmit these interpersonal meaning, probably the most common ones are adjectives, adverbs and modal verbs.

2.2. Modality

Modality is a linguistic category, which deals with the potentiality for a given situation to be eligible to be true in the present, the past or the future. This linguistic domain is intrinsically connected to the field of modal logic which has been defined by Davies (1997, p. 336) as "the logic of necessity and possibility- intuitively, of the ways things must be, and the ways things might have been" and whose means of expression are characterised by its great dependence on the use of devices conveying modality.

2.2.1. Subcategories of modality

Scholars do not agree in which concerns to the categorisation of modality; therefore, the categories vary according to the linguist. We follow Nuyts' taxonomy (2016), which is focussed on three main subcategories, below, namely:

- *Deontic modality* constitutes the subcategory of modality, which deals with the expression of necessity, and possibility from the standpoint of a pre-existing system (e.g. social constructions, religious systems, 'common sense') with a particular set of norms of its own. This category is described by Nuyts (2016, p. 36) as "an indication of the degree of moral desirability of the state of affairs expressed in the utterance, typically but not necessarily on behalf of the speaker. [...] this definition should be taken widely: it involves 'societal norms' as well as personal 'ethical' criteria of the person responsible for the deontic assessment". In this sense, the expression of ideas such as personal expectations, desires, permissibility or obligation is also liable to fall into this category.
- *Dynamic modality* has been given a wide array of different designations amongst which we can find 'neutral', 'facultative', or 'inherent modality'. Some other authors may even divide it into two different subcategories. A proposition may fall into the domain of dynamic modality when its condition of necessity and possibility depends directly on a previously given set of circumstances, or factors, which may be 'subject-internal' or external, e.g. the speaker's ability to perform the action which is being described in their clause.
- Finally, *epistemic modality*, which, along with evidentiality, will be the essential concepts for the purpose of this paper. Faller (2006: 1) defines epistemic modality as "the marking of the speaker's degree of certainty and/ or the necessity/possibility of the truth of the propositional content". Later on, and following a similar reasoning, Nuyts and van der Auwera (2016, p. 38) describe it as "an estimation, [...] typically but not necessarily by the speaker, of the chances or the likelihood that the state of affairs expressed in the clause applies in the world".

In this context, epistemic modality can be understood as a subcategory of linguistic modality involved in the speaker's evaluation and expression of the likelihood for a hypothetical situation, with its own particulars, to be eligible to take place in a present, or future case scenario, as well as the chances of it having occurred in the past. This evaluation judgement will often be carried out with regard to the speakers' knowledge of the world, in other words, what speakers think they know, and the degree of trust towards the source for their information. In the same way, this evaluation, or estimation, appears to be carried out by following a sort of gradation system, as highlighted by Nuyts and van der Auwera (2016, p. 38), since the devices involved in expressing epistemic modality operate almost on a scalar basis "from absolute certainty, via probability to fairly neutral possibility that the state of affairs is real".

2.3. Evidentiality

The concept of evidentiality has been largely discussed amongst scholars without having reached a consensus as to its scope. Therefore, there exist scholars that claim it should be considered as a separate linguistic category in its own, or rather, as a sub-domain of the concept of epistemic modality, as Alonso-Almeida (2015a, p. 390) points out. In the present work, we follow the standpoint that considers that 'evidentiality', on its own, embodies a whole new category distinct from that of epistemic modality. Though, sometimes, depending on the diverse communicative contexts, they can experience functional overlapping.

Within the field of pragmatics, evidentiality can be understood as the set of linguistic mechanisms involved in expressing the source of information from which the speaker has obtained the information to formulate the specific propositional content he or she expresses, as well as the way in which the information has been attained. In fact, the conveyance of the notion of 'source of knowledge' is usually achieved by means of linguistic strategies other than grammatical evidentiality. Usually, these strategies follow lexical schemes involving locutions, clauses, or one-word adverbs in order to create the same effect.

According to Aikhenvald (2004, p. 10), the lexical means employed by a speaker of a language lacking grammatical evidentiality can include "different statuses", or categories, for example; verbs or verb centred introductory clauses such as, *I hear, I think, I guess, they say, I hear that, it seems to me that, or allege; or adverbs such as allegedly, or reportedly*. In fact, the analysis of evidentiality in languages such as English or Spanish frequently arises terminological as well as analytical disagreement amongst scholars. In this context, Aikhenvald (2004) also points out that in the particular case of the English language cannot be said to present evidentiality, or at least not grammaticalized evidentiality. Instead, it could be said that it does present pragmatic evidentiality:

Saying that English parentheticals are 'evidentials' is akin saying that time words like 'yesterday' and 'today' are tense markers. These expressions are not obligatory and do not constitute a grammatical category; consequently, they are only tangential to the present discussion. Saying English has 'evidentiality' (cf. Fox 2001) is misleading: this implies a confusion between what is grammaticalized and what is lexical in a language (Aikhenvald, 2004, p. 10).

With regards to the relationship between the concepts of epistemic modality and evidentiality, this last one can be classified into three different categories, namely: inclusive, intersective and disjunctive. In the case of the inclusive type, epistemic modality is considered as a subcategory of epistemic modality, and thus evidentials evaluate the possibilities that one specific proposition has to be true. The intersective approach makes reference to a sort of continuum between degrees of certainty concerning the actualization of the proposition based on the evaluation of the evidences a determined speaker has to claim that the propositional content is the it is affirmed. In this same line, Van der Auwera and Plungian (1998) underline the notion of evidential inferentiality, which advocates the intersective relationship between epistemic necessity and inference. An instance that exemplifies this can be *Ask Rachel. She must know the answer*. In this example, the epistemic modal verb *must* indicates the speaker's inference in the light of the contextual premises selected. This intersective perspective is found in Diewald *et al.* (2009:190): "Evidentiality is concerned with indicating the information source the speaker is relying on to make a claim. This places this category next to epistemic modality without, however, merging them into one". Finally, the third category is the disjunctive one, which contemplates evidentiality as a category on its own. This conception of evidentiality is followed in Cornillie (2009) and Alonso-Almeida (2015a).

The disjunctive perspective basically states that evidentials inform on the speaker's involvement to claim a specific propositional content rather than on the evaluation of chances of this content to be true. Generally, the assessment of a given proposition in terms of truth is performed on the evaluation of the evidential. In this vein, following Willet (1988), first hand, in other words, visual and auditory evidence is said to be more reliable than third hand (hearsay, reported) evidence and inferential meaning. This interpretation has been challenged in Alonso-Almeida (2015b), paper in which the author claims that evaluation of source of knowledge does not necessarily entail different degrees of propositional truth.

3. Corpus description and methodology

The Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing (henceforth CC) has been developed by the Research Group for Multidimensional Corpus-Based Studies in English (MuStE). All the different subcorpora of the CC tend to have an average of 40 text samples, and around 400,000 words each. All the texts included in this compilation belong to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this sense, it can be said that the main scope of this corpus, in terms of linguistic periods, is the study of scientific texts belonging to the Late Modern English period. During this period, many changes took place in social, cultural and political spheres including: science, philosophy, economy, technology; all these changes affecting the language of the period to some extent.

For this reason, the academic community enjoyed a new burst of interest for language, as well as concern for the supposed limitations of English and its purity. This brought with it the proliferation of an extensive bibliography of grammar writings, and dictionaries which sought to bring some order to the 'chaos of language'. Similarly, the improvements and new discoveries of this period needed of a more fixed and formulaic scientific wording so as to reach all audiences within the academic community.

In this study, we work with two of the subcorpora, which are part of the Coruña Corpus, namely: the *Corpus of English Texts on Astronomy* (CETA) and the *Corpus of History English Texts* (CHET). Table 1 illustrates the texts distribution per century and the number of texts belonging to each century in both subcorpora.

Subcorpus		Number of texts	Number of words
CETA	18 th century	21	208.079
	19 th century	21	201.830
CHET	18 th century	20	201.794
	19 th century	20	202.823

Table 1. Number of words and texts per century in each of the two subcorpora

The genres in CC (cf. Moskowich, 2017b) have been distributed into eight groups corresponding to different categories: treatises, essays, textbooks, letters, lectures, articles, dialogues, and others. Moskowich (2011, p. 182) clarifies that this classification is not based merely on linguistic features, but also on other aspects, such as epistemological features, social factors and the authors' purposes, for instance (also in Crespo, 2012). In Figure 1, the distribution of texts per genre category in both subcorpora are given:

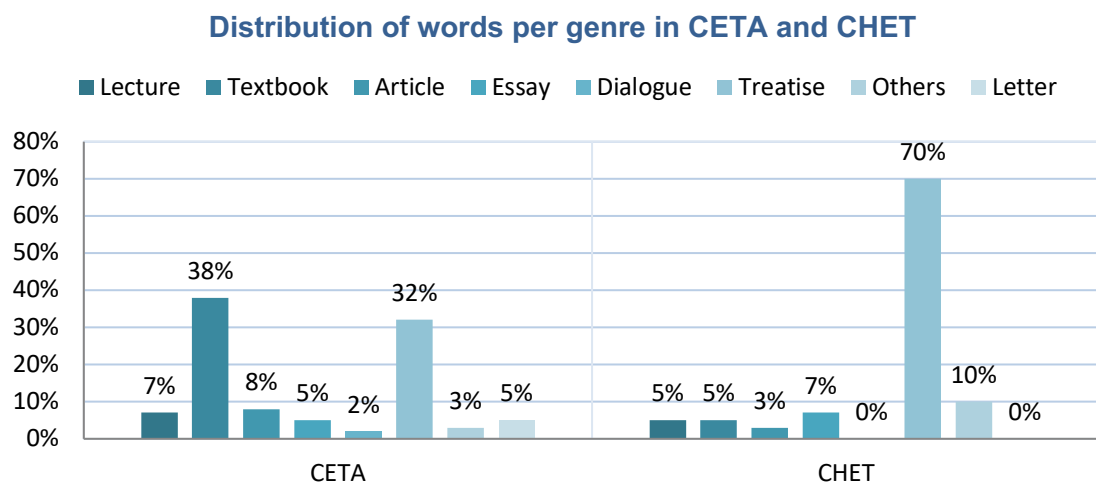


Figure 1. Distribution of words per genre in CETA and CHET

4. Results and analysis

Our analysis focuses on the contrastive study of the use, frequency and function of the linguistic structure *I think* in scientific texts written in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The number of occurrences of the expression *I think* raises to the total of 52 cases; 23 of these tokens belong to CHET, while the examples in CETA amount to 29 tokens. In this case, the majority of the samples found belong to the eighteenth century, as can be seen from the graphic below.

Distribution according to centuries

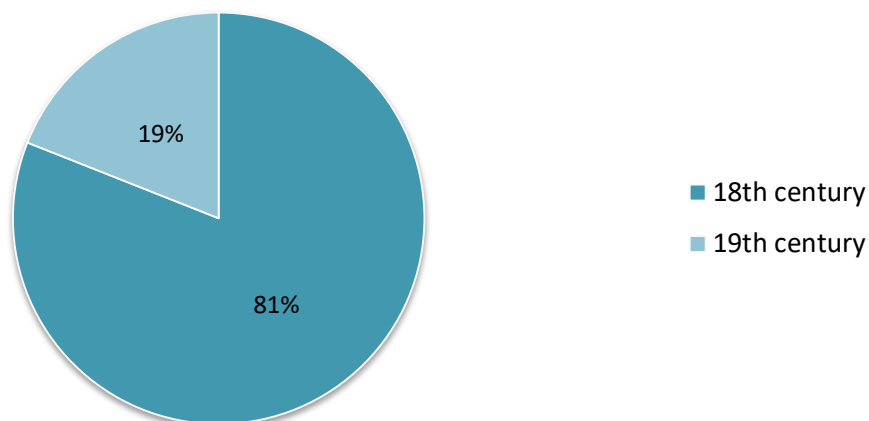
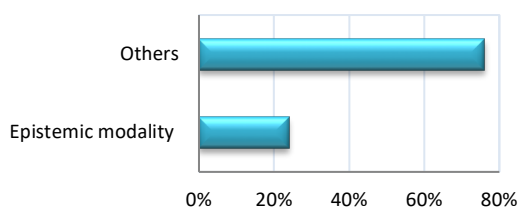


Figure 2. Distribution of words per genre in CETA and CHET

Concerning the pragmatic functions, out of those 52 cases of this item the 86.54% express politeness, while the other 13.46% of the occurrences indicate involvement or convey cognitive or conceptual-procedural meaning. In most of the cases the conveyance of real commitment is achieved thanks to the support of other linguistic elements, these usually being modal such as in the case of *I think is highly probable*, but also through other structures namely, agentless passive phrases, intersubjective strategies, among others.

Epistemic modality devices used in combination with *I think* in CETA



Epistemic modality devices used in combination with *I think* in CHET

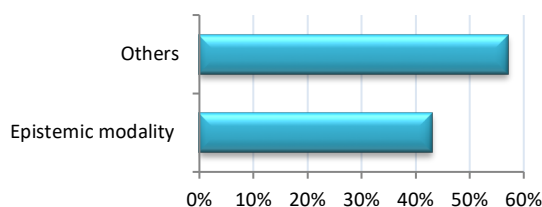


Figure 3. Occurrences conveying epistemic modality in CETA and CHET

In the case of CETA we find that 24.14% of the occurrences present epistemic modality as well as evidentiality [see figure 3]; while in CHET, this percentage rises up to 43.48% [see figure 3]. This seems to indicate that in samples belonging to the field of history the conceptualizers appear to be more prone to specifying their own personal attitudes, as well as their assessments with respect to their propositions so as to justify any possible variation or mistake.

5. Discussion of the results

The *Collins Dictionary* explains the use of the hedge *I think* as follows:

- a. You use 'I think' as a way of being polite when you are explaining or suggesting to someone what you want to do, or when you are accepting or refusing an offer. [politeness]

- b. You use 'I think' in conversations or speeches to make your statements and opinions sound less forceful, rude, or direct. [vagueness]

In definition b, the notion of vagueness coincides with that of politeness in the pragmatic sense as dealt with in the course of this work. In this sense, it comes as no surprise that most of the occurrences that will be presented here represent examples of face-saving acts showing negative politeness.

- (1) **I think**, however, that there are other arguments, also drawn from scientific discoveries, which bear, in a very important and striking manner, upon the opinions in question, and which Chalmers has not referred to [...] (Whewell 1858) [CETA]
- (2) THAT, Madam, is called the Celestial one, said I, because 'tis designed for a Representation of the Firmament, and the Concave Arch of the Heavens; and indeed it doth well enough exhibit to us the fixed Stars, and the Tracks or Circles of the Sun and Planets apparent Motions, if you get a right Notion of it, as this Figure, which we call an Armillary Sphere, will **I think** help you to obtain: In order to which you must now imagine your Eye placed within at the Center of the Globe [...] (Harris 1719) [CETA]
- (3) I only farther add, that [Mr]. Gordon in his account of his Galgacan camp takes no notice, **I think**, of a ftone that is in the middle of it, a tumulus nigh it, and a military way that goes from it; and in computing its contents, omits the legions, and the four alae, that were kept as a reserve: for the auxiliaries alone were eight thousand, and the horse on the wings were three thousand. (Horsley 1732) [CHET]

Examples (1) and (2) belong to CETA whilst, (3) belongs to CHET. All these occurrences represent cases of negative politeness in appositive position, for their only purpose is that of downtoning the strength of the proposition so it is not perceived as an imposition. Occurrences (4), (5) and (6), below, seem to convey mitigation of claim:

- (4) I SEE it is, said the Lady, and I believe I see also the Reason why it must be so; for it is just as far ([viz]. 90°) from the Equator to the Pole, as from the Zenith to the Horizon; so that taking away the middle Part, which is common to both, the Latitude of any Place, and the Height of the Pole above its Horizon are all one in Quantity; and so I suppose 'tis called the Height of the Pole, because the Pole Star, which is near the Polar Point (as **I think** you told me) will appear, in the Night, just so high above the Horizon of any Place, as is that Place's Latitude. (Harris 1719) [CETA]
- (5) **I THINK** I understand you; said she, the Figure of a Globe is not flattish like that of a Cheefe or a common Ninepin-Bowl; but rather like a Boy's Marble, or a Bullet cast in a Mould. (Harris 1719) [CETA]
- (6) Three of the comets have had their periods settled, as near the truth as could be expected, yet not, **I think**, permanently so. The first of these is that which appeared in 1532, 1607, 1682, 1759, which I have before mentioned; the latter appearance of which did not exactly answer to the foregoing periods: — should it in future conform to either, its period being supposed about 75 years, we may expect its return in 1834. (Bryan 1797) [CETA]

Due to the communicative contexts in which this expression is inserted, in the examples (4) and (5) from CETA listed above, it can be interpreted that the author, or the speaker as it is meant to resemble a dialogue between a man and a woman, seems to be doubtful about her having understood well. For this reason, she uses the hedge *I think* as a means of presenting the information only as her perspective so that she cannot be held responsible in case the

propositional content was inaccurate. However, it cannot be claimed this indicates in any way the speaker's own assessment of the possibilities for that scenario being true.

In example (6), on the other hand, although the primary function is that of reducing the strength of the proposition in order to perform an example of negative politeness, in this case, one could say that the author is also presenting the information as a perspective of the truth detach himself from the responsibility for the prediction, independently of his own appraisal of the actual possibilities of that being the case. This idea is reinforced with the fact that he expresses that the predictions have been erroneous in the past.

Except for the examples (4), (5) and (6), which show that this epistemic lexical item can sometimes be used as well to imply lack of commitment to some degree, the great majority of cases depict the hedge *I think* functioning in combination with other epistemic modality devices to show varying degrees of commitment, and/or the potentiality for the propositional content expressed to be eligible for being true.

(7) AGRICOLA left Britain, before Cerialis reigned to Frontinus. This, **I think**, is highly probable, because the historian so expressly mentions his serving under Cerialis, but says nothing of his being under Frontinus. (Horseley 1732) [CHET]

(8) But **I think** it is extremely probable that, in some of its stages, the nebula had a very much higher temperature than that now possessed by the sun. (Croll 1889) [CETA]

In (7) and (8), we can observe that *I think* works to mitigate the strength of the proposition so as to stop it from being perceived as too direct, or inconsiderate, with respect to the readers' expectations. Therefore, in these examples just like in the previous instances presented in this section, *I think* is used as a negative politeness strategy to protect the *face* of the interlocutor. The difference in this case, lies in the addition of the modal expression 'is highly probable', or 'extremely probable' in the case of (8), which shows both; the authors' appraisal of the possibilities of their statement being true; and their full commitment to the propositional content which they have purposely decided to highlight through their choice of intensifying the modal adjective 'probable' with the adverbs 'highly' and 'extremely'.

In the following examples, we can find *I think* in combination with other modality devices and showing different effects:

(9) But, **I think, it may** be questioned, whether, to produce such doubts, is a common or probable effect of an acquaintance with astronomical discoveries. [Whewell 1858] (CETA)

(10) Taking all things into consideration, **it is, I think, obvious** that the average rate of denudation since the beginning of Palæozoic times was probably not much greater than at the present day. [Croll 1889] (CETA)

(11) [...] unless it should appear plainly, that the people were excluded from having any share, in the ensuing elections of Senators, **I think, we may very fairly presume**, that they continued to exercise the same right, in every subsequent instance, which we have already shown them to have done, in the first. [Chapman 1750] (CHET)

- (12) From them, **I think, it is evident**, that the election of the fenate as related above from Dionyfius of Halicarnaffus, was conducted with all the formality, required by the fundamental laws of the Roman conftitution [Chapman 1750] (CHET)

In all of the occurrences above, namely (9), (10), (11) and (12), *I think* keeps bearing the role of expressing negative politeness towards the potential readers by presenting the information as a perspective. However, the elements, which accompany them, are the ones, which slightly modify its pragmatic effect. In (9), for instance, we find the modal expression *it may*. The choice of using this expression shows the author's desire not to be perceived as excessively direct. For this reason, he seems to present the information as a mere estimation.

In the same way, *it may* could also fall into the category subjective implicit, presented by Marín Arrese (2011), as the 'conceptualizer' seems to be present in the proposition although it is never explicitly highlighted. In the same vein, occurrence (11) constitutes an example of an 'intersubjective explicit' mood. In this case, the author chooses to present the mitigating modal verb *may* following the first person plural pronoun, *we*. This indicates that the responsibility for the estimation is shared between himself and the potential reader so as to take part of it off his own shoulders as well as to reduce the force of the statement in order to show negative politeness. Nevertheless, in spite of using all these mitigating strategies to frame the proposition, the fact that the author continues with the adverbial cluster 'very fairly presume' suggests that the speaker is actually committed to the truth of his statement to a high degree. Lastly, occurrences (10) and (12) are examples of an 'intersubjective opaque' speaker since the conceptualizer is neither explicitly pointed at, nor is he suggested. Rather, the role of the conceptualizer remains somewhat 'virtual'.

6. Conclusions

The study performed on our corpus of late Modern English scientific texts demonstrates that the function of evidential *I think* is to show politeness in discourse. The presence of this device allows reducing the strength of the illocutionary force of the proposition it frames to avoid potential face-threats. For the same reason, *I think* also appears to be used with the intention of protecting the positive face of the writer by attenuating the strength of the commitment to the truth of what is being said. Epistemic *I think* seems to contribute towards the expression of either negative or positive politeness. In general, this device is deployed to safeguard the writers' own public faces, while they also care for their audience's face.

From a register perspective, our findings reveal that the number of *I think* in history texts, either alone or in combination with other modal devices, almost doubles those identified in the astrology texts. This tendency may arise from the fact that historians obtain their information from their reading-around of the available material used as source of evidence. From here, they elaborate the information included in their texts, and so *I think* appears to be tremendously useful to suggest both the cognitive nature of the information given and the author's position.

About the author

Francisco J. Álvarez-Gil is a lecturer of English in the Departamento de Filología Moderna, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. He has delivered talks on linguistic aspects of English scientific writing in international conferences. He has been a visiting scholar in some Universities with leading departments in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and he is currently a member of the research team of the project "Identificación y análisis de las estrategias metadiscursivas en artículos científicos en español e inglés" (supported by the *Ministerio de Economía, Industria y Competitividad*). His research interests primarily concern the analysis of specialised English from a synchronic and diachronic perspective, corpus linguistics, and language pedagogy at tertiary level. He has written papers on English for specific purposes from different periods of the language.

Natalia García-Alonso is a Graduate in Modern Languages, and she is currently working on her PhD in English linguistics. She has participated in international conferences in the field of applied linguistics.

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