Peculiarities of the Development of the Modal System in German

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the development of the modal system in German. The comparative analysis of the changes in the semantics of the moods and of the preterite-present verbs expressing modality is based on Gothic, Old and Middle High German texts. On the basis of this analysis was shown as in the process of decategorization – transition of the functions of expression of the internal modality from moods to the being in process of formation modal verbs – the meanings expressed in morphological category on the grammatical level pass to lexical-grammatical means, that allow to express the internal modality more differentially.

Keywords: internal modality; modal verbs; Gothic, Old, Middle High German; decategorization

1. Introduction

Modern German language has a branched modal system; elements of this system express different types of modality: internal, objective external and subjective external modalities. The internal modality is the attitude of a subject (less frequently of an object) to an action they take (for an object it is the attitude to the action it undergoes). The main means of expressing the internal modality in modern Germanic languages are modal verbs. The external modality of a sentence is the attitude of its content to reality in terms of reality/irreality (the objective external modality) and the degree of firmness of a speaker to the facts he or she conveys (the subjective external modality). The means of expressing the subjective external modality in modern Germanic languages are modal words, the main means of expressing the objective external modality are moods (Ermolaeva, 1987, p. 68-69).

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There is no agreement in Russian and international German studies about the structure of the category of the mood and its division in modern German (for more detail refer to Zhukova, Babakina, 2012). Traditionally it is viewed as three-member opposition: the indicative/ the conjunctive/ the imperative. However, within the scope of this concept of moods the status of the imperative and of the indirect speech conjunctive are unsettled. The view of the relations between the present and the preterite forms of the direct speech conjunctive also seems contradictive.

The analysis of the process of development of the modal system in German gives the opportunity to show the peculiarities of this process, which in their turn allow to explain the specifics of the modal system of modern German and to suggest the decision to the disputable questions of the traditional theory of the moods.

**2. Methodology**

To understand the process of establishing the modal system in German *comparison and collation* of the modal systems of Gothic, Old and Middle High German were conducted, which allowed determining the peculiarities of the development of the modal system of German.

To that effect the original Gothic, Old and Middle High German texts were studied. In total, 8 sources were analyzed with *the method of continuous sampling*. The studied block of Gothic Bible (Die gotische Bibel, 1908) consists of 80 000 lexical units. The studied selection of texts of Old High German period consists of 46 000 lexical units from a gospel harmony translated by Tatian (1966), 60 000 lexical units of Notker’s translation (Notker der Deutsche, 1933) and 33 000 lexical units of Otfrid’s translation of Gospel (Otfrids Evangelienbuch, 1973). To analyze the modal system of Middle High German period the fragments of the following literary works were researched: “Poor Heinrich” written by Hartmann von Aue (1981) – 20 000 lexical units, “Parzival” by Wolfram von Eschenbach (1933) – 20 000 lexical units, lyric poetry by Walther von der Vogelweide (1972) – 20 000 lexical units, “The Song of the Nibelungs” (Nibelungenlied, 1992) – 20 000 lexical units.

In the selected examples from the given texts by means of the method of semantic interpretation and using *the method of contextual analysis* both the meanings of separate moods and the meanings of preterite-present verbs functioning as modal verbs in Gothic language and in the correspondent periods of the development of German language were determined.

Due to the consistent usage of *the method of comparison and collation* in the process of analysis of the specified units their similarities and differences in Gothic, Old and Middle High German languages were determined, which in its turn made it possible to show the transformation in the semantics of the moods under analysis as well as the preterite-present verbs in the process of restructuring of modal system. To follow the general tendency of its development in more detail while analyzing the transformation in the semantics of preterite-present verbs appeared in modal function, *the methods of mathematical statistics* were also used. Therefore, while determining the dominant meaning of the preterite-present verbs in modal function the percentage ratio of the meanings expressed by such verbs was calculated. In order to do so, sample survey was used, whereby not the whole sampled population (not the entire amount of the texts of analyzed periods), but some specific amount, which is called sample, is used, since “sample survey allows to draw the conclusion regarding the whole sampled population” (Nosenko, 1981, p. 12, 23). Calculating the percentage ratios of various meanings peculiar to preterite-present verbs in modal function in Gothic, Old and Middle High German languages was conducted on the average samples with the amount of the text’s frequency of 100 of every verb. The samples were articulated with *the method of continuous sampling*. Lesser amount of the samples for certain verbs is determined by the absence of such verbs in the texts of ancient periods.

During the comparative analysis of semantics of preterite-present verbs in modal function their frequency was taken under consideration, on the grounds that, according to J. Bybee (2003), it is the increase of frequency which contributes in appearance of new meanings. Thereby she distinguishes the frequency of two types frequency of occurrence of lexical unit in a text (token frequency) and the amount of lexical units, with which correlates a typical grammatical model (type frequency) (Bybee, 2003, pp. 604-605).

To determine the changes of the text’s frequency the absolute and the relative frequency were calculated for every verb. “The absolute frequency represents the amount of implementation of a verb in the analyzed text; the relative frequency is the absolute frequency to the amount of units in a studied selection” (Nosenko, 1981, p. 10). For the sake of convenience in conducting the comparative analysis of the text’s frequency, the relative frequency in this research was calculated to the amount of 1000 lexical units. Given that the studied selection for
Gothic language consists of 80 000 lexical units, the calculation for Gothic language was realized through the following equation:

\[
\text{the relative frequency} = \frac{\text{the absolute frequency}}{80}
\]

For Old and Middle High German periods the absolute and the relative text’s frequency were calculated for every individual literary work. Due to the fact that the text’s frequency for the verbs under analysis in different selections of the same amount of text is uneven, for every preterite-present verb in the modal function was calculated the sample average to the relative frequency. The sample average represents arithmetical average of the value of the relative text’s frequencies (Nosenko, 1981, p. 28).

3. Discussion of Results

The analysis of the Gothic Bible showed that the indicative in Gothic language was used only to define the actions that happen in the present: *amen auk qipa izwis*... (Mat. V, 18) ‘For verily I say unto you ...’, or in the past: *...izei sunja izwis rodida.* (Jhn. VIII, 40) ‘...that has told you the truth’, i.e. it expressed actual actions.

The imperative in Gothic language was widely used to denote command, order, which required immediate fulfillment on the side of a listener: *gagg hwanan in swums Siloamis.* (Jhn. IX, 7) “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” and expressed possible and desirable actions, i.e. non-actual actions.

There was no distinct differentiation between the optative and the imperative functions in Gothic language. Thus, for instance, in the first person plural to express invitation for mutual action both the imperative: *usleiþam jainis stadis.* (Mrk. IV, 35) ‘Let us pass over unto the other side’ and the optative: *pairhaggagaima ju und Beblaim jah saihvaima waurd þata waaurþano...*’ (Luk. II, 15) ‘Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass ...’ were used.

The optative in Gothic language could express accomplishable wish: *sijaþ-þan waurd izwarz: ja; ja; ne; ne;* (Mat. V, 37) ‘But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay;’, instruction: *waïla taujaid þain fijandam izwis.* (Luk. VI, 27) ‘do good to them which hate you.’, forbiddance: *...ni maurþrjais;* (Mat. V, 21) ‘Thou shalt not kill ...’, potential possibility: *hvaiwa sijai (the present optative) þata, þandei aban ni kann?* (Luk. I, 34) ‘How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?’, the future with the shade of must or doubt: *...niabai usqinai (the present optative) sis silbin ...* (Jhn. VIII, 22) ‘...will he kill himself?’, i.e. the forms of the optative expressed actions that did not take place.

The usage of the optative in the noun clauses where it is used to deliver third person’s speech is worth noting: *jus qipib þatei wajamerjau ...* (the present optative) (Jhn. X, 36) ‘and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest’. However, consistent appearance of the indirect speech delivered through the optative is not observed in the Gothic texts. To show indirectness the indicative could also be used: *amen qipa izwis þei hana ni hrukeþ ...* (the present indicative) (Jhn. XIII, 38) ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow ...’

Conditional clauses represent a specific field of usage of the moods, in such clauses the choice of the mood is dictated by content of a sentence. The indicative is used in subordinate clauses expressing real condition: *þu nu jabi inweitis mik in andwairþja meinaimam, wairþjþ þein all.* (Luk. IV, 7) ‘If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.’, to show a potentially possible condition the present optative is used: *jah jabi hvas inqis fraihnai: duhve andbindiþ?* (Luk. XIX, 31) ‘And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him?’

Thus, in Gothic language the category of mood was represented by three-member opposition: the indicative / the imperative / the optative, which had a semantic opposition “actuality (actions that take or took place)/ nonactuality (actions that did not take place)” in its basis.

Nevertheless, if the context in the Gothic written works allows it is possible to find the preterite optative in the meaning of unreal wish: *ei wainae uspulaideiþ meinaizos leitl hva unfofreins ...* (II. Kor. XI, 1) ‘Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly ...’, or in the meaning of unreal conditional possibility: *aifbaw barna izwara unhraiþja weseina, þþ nu weiha sind.* (I. Kor. VII, 14) ‘else were your children unclean; but now are they holy (the present tense)’; *unte jabi in Saudaujjam waaurþeina mahteis þos waaurþanos in izwis, aifbaw eis weseina und hina dag.* (Mat. XI, 23) ‘for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. (the past tense)’. In the given examples the preterite optative has irreal meaning both in the present and in the past tenses, which indicates a development of a new grammatical meaning of irreality of the
The analysis of meanings of the preterite-present verbs appearing in the function of modal verbs allows concluding that different lexical items could be used to denote one and the same modal meaning in Gothic language. The verbs *magan, *binauhan, lais, gadaursan expressed possibility.

The analysis of the material showed that the verb *magan is one of the most frequent preterite-present verb used in the modal function in Gothic language. Its relative text frequency equals to 1, 55. The given verb could express the possibility based on physical and mental abilities of a subject (80%), for instance: *graban ni mag, bidjan skama mik. (Luk. XVI, 3) ‘...I cannot dig: to beg I am ashamed.’ In 15 cases (15 %) *magan denotes the possibility influenced by external circumstances: *gen liugaida jah dupe ni mag qiman. (Luk. XIV, 20) ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ In 5 cases (5%) this verb denotes allowance or forbiddance from another person: jah qap: dupe qap izwis jatei ni ainshun mag qiman at mis, nibai ist atgiban imma fram attin meinamma. (Jhn. VI, 65) ‘And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.’

In some individual cases the verbs lais, *binauhan and gadaursan could be used in the meaning of possibility, for example: *lais jah haunjan mik, lais jah ufarassu haban; in allamma jah in allaim usproñips im ... (Php. IV, 12) ‘I know (can) both how to be abased, and I know (can) how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed ...’; *hvopan binah, akei ni batizo ist, ... (II. Kor. XII, 1) ‘It is not expedient (It is not possible) for me doubtless to glory, ... ’; *gadars hvas izwara, wijpra anparana staua habands stojan fram inwindaum jah ni fram? (I. Kor. VI, 1) ‘Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?’

The verbs *skulan and *paurban expressed necessity. The relative text frequency of the verb *skulan equals to 0,625. In Gothic language the verb *skulan is functioning both as a notional verb in the meaning of “to owe (something)” (6%), for instance: *paþroh pan du anparamaq gaþ: aþpan þu hvan filu skalt? (Luk. XVI, 7?) – ‘Then said he to another, And how much owest thou?’ and as a modal verb denoting necessity to act according to duty or law (28%): ni auk *skulan barna fadmareinam huzdjan ... (II. Kor. XII, 14) ‘for the children ought not to lay up for the parents ... ’; necessity as a result of another person’s will (16%): swa jah jus, pan tajajh alla po anabudanona izwis, qipæp jatei skalkos unbrukjai sijum, unte jatei *skuldedum taujan gatawidedum. (Luk. XVII, 10) ‘So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.’; subject’s internal need (10%): nauh ganoh skal qipan izwis. (Jhn. XVI, 12) ‘I have yet many things to say unto you’; necessity conditioned by external circumstances (10%): þanzei skal gaskan, jatei gardins allans usuðlagjand laisjandans jatei ni skuld ist, in faihugairneins. (Tit. I, 11) ‘Whose mouths must be stopped, who subtvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.’

The verb *paurban is also used to express necessity in Gothic language. The relative frequency of this verb is very low and equals 0, 225. It is used in the text of the Gothic Bible in 18 sentences and in 90% of all cases is appeared as an notional verb meaning “to need”: *ıp þesus gahausjandq qaþ du im: ni *paurban hailai lekeis ... (Mat. IX, 12) ‘But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician ... ’ Only in two cases (10%) the given verb is used in the function of a modal verb with the infinitive and it expresses necessity, determined by the internal need of a subject: land bauhtajah *parf galeþjan jah sahwan þata. (Luk. XIV, 18) ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it’ and necessity conditioned by the skill of a subject: aþpan bi broþrulanbon ni *paurbun meljan izwis, unte sibans jus at guda uslaisidai siþıp du frijon izwis misso. (1. Thess. IV, 9) ‘But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.’

The verb wilañ is one of the most frequent verbs used to express the shades of modality, its relative frequency equals 1, 388. The analysis of its meanings showed that in all 100 sentences the given verb expressed wish: *ıp so Herodia naiw imma jah wilda imma usquinan jah ni mahta (Mrk. VI, 19) ‘Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not.’

The absence of regular usage of preterite-present verbs shows that certain modal meanings haven’t yet been connected with certain lexical items and that the class of modal verbs with its peculiar semantic, morphological and syntactic attributes has not yet existed in Gothic language. About the criteria of defining the modal verbs refer to (Öhlschläger, 1989).
In the Old High German period the development of the class of modal verbs took place. Lexical units *muozan and kunnan began to express modal meanings. The preterite-present verbs used in Gothic language to denote modal meanings gained new semantic shades and gradually began to denote the meanings of wish, possibility, must, i.e. they gained the function of expressing the internal modality.

The comparative analysis of the text’s frequency of the Gothic verb *magan and the Old High German verb magan/mugan makes it possible to conclude that the given verb is one of the most frequent preterite-present verbs appearing in modal function both in Gothic and Old High German languages. The relative frequency of this verb in Old High German language significantly increases – from 1.55 to 4.42. The main meaning of the verb magan/mugan in Old High German language continues to be possibility determined by inner qualities of a subject: *joh wer thir dáti thia máht, thaz thú so scono séhan maht! (O. III, 20, 44) ‘And who gave you such might, that you can see so well!’ However, the usage frequency of magan/mugan in such meaning decreases (from 80% to 46%) and its usages in the meaning of allowance/forbiddance (from 5% to 20%) and in the meaning of possibility conditioned by external circumstances (from 15% to 23%) increase: *Her thó uzganganti bigonda predigon inti maren thaz uuort, só thaz her ni mohta giu ougazorhito gan in thie burg ... (T. 46, 5) ‘He (leper) began to preach and talk about what happened once he went out, that is why he (Jesus) could not enter the city openly...’

In the Old High German period the frequency of the verb wellen increases from 1,388 to 4,237. The main meaning of the given verb continues to be the expression of wish: *Her uuolta thó rehtfestîgón sîh selbon, quad ... (T. 128, 6) ‘As he wanted to justify himself, he said...’

In Old High German language the text frequency of the verb sculan significantly increases from 0,625 to 2,48. The Gothic verb *skulan and its Old High German cognate sculan show semantic similarity. Nevertheless, the decrease of the usage of the Old High German verb sculan in the meaning of necessity conditioned by law or by existence of certain rules (from 28% to 10%) and the increase of the usage frequency of this verb to show necessity conditioned by a will of a third person (from 16% to 35%) are worth noting. In the Old High German period such meaning becomes dominant: *Lért er sie mit wörtón, wio thaz firdrágan scoltun. (O. IV. 15, 43) ‘With his words he taught her how she should bear it’.

The verb thurfan was one of the less frequent verbs in the Old High German period, its relative text frequency compared with Gothic language increases insignificantly – from 0,225 to 0,302. However, in the set period the usage frequency of the verb thurfan in the modal function increases. Generally, it denotes instruction or forbiddance (44%): *then uueg man forahten ni darf. (O. IV. 5, 42) ‘You should not be afraid of this way’, Ni thárťhu thes wiht frâgen. (O. V. 20, 33) ‘You should not (are not allowed) to ask about it’, less frequently it denotes possibility (29% of all cases): ‘*Ni thárť es ...lóugnen, thin spracha scal thîh óugen ...’ (O. IV. 18, 27) ‘You cannot deny this... your tongue will reveal you...’

Preterite-present verbs *muozan u kunnan were also the means of expressing possibility in Old High German language. The relative frequency of the verb *muozan if fairly low and equals 0,65 in Otfrid’s texts, 0,79 in Notker’s texts. The analysis of the materials showed that the verb *muozan in the Old High German period had a wide range of meanings. In 30 % of all cases it was used as “to dare”, “to have a right” or it expressed permission from a third person: *Sie wünsgtun, musain rinon thôn sinan trâdon einan in sinen giwátin. (O. III, 9, 9) ‘They wanted to be allowed to touch at least the skirt of his clothes’. This verb denotes necessity conditioned by external circumstances in 27 % of occurrences. Cf.: Übe dâmne héiz chûmet tér uuólichenônto sûnt-uuiint só múazen die blûomen rîsen ába dien dörren. (N. B. I. 67, 2) ‘If the hot southern wind comes, the flowers must fall off the thorns.’ Approximately in 13% of all occurrences *muozan expresses possibility conditioned by external circumstances: *Ioh uuarun uuir gispannun, mit seru bifangan, mit ubilu gibuntan, ni muasun unser uualtan. (O. IV. 5, 14) ‘We were tight together, with misfortunes, with disasters, we could not control ourselves.’ In 7 examples (10%) the verb muozan* while expressing wish performs the function peculiar to the optative: *Joh wir thár múazin untar in blide fora göte sin. (O. I. 28, 19-20) ‘Let us be joyous among them before the Lord.’ In 10 % of all cases *muozan denotes necessity conditioned by the direction of a third person: *Taz summum múost tu légen châd si. (N. B. II. 208, 8-9) ‘You must lay the basket down, she said.’, in 10% of all occurrences – objective necessity: Ter himel múoz hér tôn gében lühtîtge tága únde uinsère náhtê. (N. B. I. 67-68, 1) ‘The sky must alternate between the bright days and dark nights.’
The usage of the researched verbs as notional verbs, the existence of different modal meanings for every verb and the expressiveness of one and the same modal meaning by different lexical items point to the fact that the class of the modal verbs is being in the process of development.

In contrast to Gothic language, where the optative expressed accomplishable wish, instruction, forbiddance, potential possibility, the future with the shade of must or doubt, in Old High German language the forms of the optative are not used to express potential possibility at all and the future is expressed only in few cases: \( \text{thu sís inan mu lázès} \) (O. IV. 24, 8) ‘Will you leave him like this?’

In the Old High German period to express forbiddance the optative was used rarely, the imperative gradually became to denote this function. The imperative denotes an order or request and most often used in the form of second person singular /plural: \( \text{Quemet inti gisëhet} \ldots \) (T. 16, 2) ‘Go (people) and see’; \( \text{Hilf, drúhtin, mir in nóti.} \) (O. III, 17, 63) ‘Help me, Lord, I am in need’.

The analysis of the works shows that in Old High German language the formal criteria of choice between the forms of the optative and the imperative were more frequently used than the semantic criteria. In most cases for the first person plural, the second person singular and plural the imperative was used, but for the third person singular and plural was used the optative. This presumably led to the formation of the single imperative-optative paradigm later on.

The most important changes in the semantics of the moods in Old High German language took place in the subordinate clause expressing indirect speech. The present optative in the subordinate clause of the indirect speech is used both if the principal clause is in the form of the present indicative (the sequence of tenses): \( \text{Spréchent thie liuti, thu sís (the present optative) théro forasagono einër.} \) (O. III, 12, 17) ‘People say that you are one of the prophets’ and in some rare cases if the principal clause is used in the form of the preterite indicative: \( \text{Ér gikundta hérasun, tház er si (the present optative) selbo gôtes sun.} \) (O. IV, 23, 25) ‘He proclaimed that he is a God’s son’. In such cases the present optative serves to convey the indirect speech. Along with the optative the meaning of indirectness can be expressed by the indicative: \( \ldots \text{sagetun, thaz sie gahun sterron einan sahun (the preterite indicative).} \) (O. I. 17, 19) ‘... they said that of all of a sudden they saw a star’. Thus, in Old High German language the present optative was not used to express the indirect speech regularly.

During this period the usage frequency of the preterite optative to express irreality increases, regardless the temporal meaning in simple sentences and subordinate clauses: \( \text{ob thu hier uuarist, thanne ni uuari tôt min brooder.} \) (T. 135, 20) ‘If you were here, my brother wouldn’t have died’, which indicates the rise of a new mood – irrealis. Over time the irrealis adjoins the category of the mood and by the end of the Old High German period it has four-member opposition lying in its basis: the indicative/ the imperative/ the optative/ the irrealis (cf. Ermolaeva, 1987) opposed to the category of mood in Gothic language, which constituted of three-member opposition.

The comparative analysis of the semantics of the moods in Old and Middle High German languages showed that in the Middle High German period the main innovation was the dissociation of the optative. The present forms of the optative are no longer used in an independent clause to express wish, forbiddance or the future, as it was in Old High German language. They are now only observed in different types of subordinate clauses, i.e. the present optative loses its peculiar meanings, which it had in Old High German language and becomes the means of expressing dependence in the subordinate clauses.

In Middle High German language the forms of the optative gradually lose the function of expressing hypothetical statements and become the means of expressing third person’s speech. During the Middle High German period the discernible trend of the present optative gaining the meaning of indirectness was reinforced by the parallel establishment in this period of the analytical form of the perfect optative (refer to Moskal'skaja, 2006, pp. 183-184), which allows pointing out the transformation of the present optative into the indirect speech conjunctive.

The distinctive feature of the modal system of Middle High German language becomes regular usage of the preterite optative forms to express irreality: \( \ldots \text{hete er sín svert enhende, só were ez Hagenen tôt...} \) (Nib. 927, 3) ‘...if he had had a sword in his hands, Hagen would have been dead...’ During this period begins the development of the analytical form of the pluperfect optative (cf. Moskal'skaja, 2006, pp. 183-184), which is included into the paradigm of irrealis, which allows its further inclusion into the system of moods.

The establishment of the irrealis and the indirect speech conjunctive (conjunctive I) lead to the change of the semantic basis of the category of mood. Its basis becomes the “reality/ irreality” opposition. The indicative, the imperative, and the conjunctive I (<the optative) denote real actions, the irrealis – irreal ones. Thus, Middle High
German language has four-member opposition in the basis of the category of mood: the indicative/ the imperative/ the conjunctive I / the irrealis. Real actions are those actions, which have not only been completed or being completed by the certain period of time, but the actions, the reality of which is possible, desirable, needed or only supposed (Ermolaeva, 1987, p. 70). Unreal actions are actions, which have not been completed or are unable to be completed by the certain period of time (implicit negation), which are nevertheless mentioned as conditionally completed or possible (the absence of direct indication of negation) (Ermolaeva, 1987, p. 70).

In the Middle High German period the most of the preterite-present verbs appearing in the modal function are rarely used as notional verbs. For instance, the verb *suln* is not functioning as a notional verb, but denotes different shades of necessity: *dar zuo hänt mich guote liute brâht: die mugen mir wol gebieten mé. ich sol singen unde sagen* (W.V. 31, 5) ‘the noble people refused me to this: they can order me more and more. *I should* sing and tell stories.’

The text frequency of this verb in the Middle High German period increases significantly, from 2,48 to 5,61.

The verb *mugen* in Middle High German language is still fairly frequent preterite-present verb, its text frequency is 4,75. The comparative analysis of the semantics of the Old High German verb *magan/mugan* and the Middle High German verb *mugen* showed that during the Middle High German period the given verb is no longer used as an independent verb. It is widely used to express possibility, conditioned by the external circumstances (in 50% of all cases, instead of 23% in Old High German): *sô ist mín herre lihte tôt, und kumen in só grôze nöt vil lihte von armuot, daz ir alsolhez guot z’einem man nit muget geben.* (A.H. 759-764) ‘So, my lord will possibly die soon and we will comprehend such poverty that you *might* not give me a dowry’, but is not used to denote allowance/forbiddance. Both in Old High German and in Middle High German the verb *mugen* the main means of expressing possibility.

There are no significant changes in the semantics of the verb *welen*. In the most cases this verb denotes wish: *ich wil kêrên in diu lant.* (Prz. 8, 9) ‘*I want* to go back to my country.’

In the Middle High German period the text frequency of the verb *müezen* significantly increases comparing to the Old High German period from 0,51 to 2,85. The shift towards expressing necessity in the semantics of the verb *müezen* is observed in the Middle High German period. This verb is rarely used to express possibility. The usage frequency of the verb *müezen* denoting necessity, conditioned by the external circumstances rises greatly from 27% to 67%: ‘...dâ von *muoz* *iu* diu helfe *mîn* durch alle nöt *sin* versaget. (A.H. 222) ‘...that is why my helping to you *must* be refused (because it is impossible to get this medicine)’. Aside from that, the given verb acquires a new shade of necessity — necessity conditioned by inner need of a subject (6%): *swie base er ist, der mich gesiht, des bœser muoz ich dannoch sîn.* (A.H. 414-415) ‘No matter how small is the one who is looking at me, *I must* be smaller’.

During the Middle High German period significant changes took place in the range of usage of the verb *kunnen*, the relative text frequency of the given verb increases from 0,108 to 1,53. The verb *kunnen* is rarely used in the function of a notional verb in the Middle High German period, only in 10% of all cases. Alongside with expressing possibility determined by skills, abilities and character of a subject (57%), in Middle High German language this verb is used to denote possibility conditioned by external circumstances (33%): *er’n kundez niht verenendi, si wären zârmec gemuot* (Nib. 93, 4) ‘*He could* not finish it, they were violently set’.

The verb *durfen* continues to be a low frequent verb in Middle High German language, its relative frequency equals to 0,25. In Middle High German *durfen* is not used as a notional verb, the primary innovation in its semantic is the meaning of the absence of necessity: *dune darf* dich niht der sippe schamn, daz din muoter ist mín muome. (Prz. 252, 15-16) ‘You don’t *have* to be ashamed of the kinship, of your mother being my fosterer’. However, both in the Old and the Middle High German periods the verb *durfen* expresses necessity and possibility: *Uns endûrfen ander tësent mit strize nîmmêr bestân.* (Nib. 342, 4) ‘A thousand of other men *could* not be able to smash us in a battle (because there are brave warriors with us)’.

Thus, the verbs *mugen, suln, welen* in the Middle High German period are used in the constructions with the infinitive and denote modal meanings of possibility (*mugen*), necessity (*suln*) and wish (*welen*). The indicated verbs of the researched period can be considered as modal, because they match the semantic, syntactic and morphological criteria of the allocation of the modal verbs. The verbs *müezen, kûnnen* u *durfen* in the studied period are not fully-functioning modal verbs, given that they have not yet gained definite modal meanings.
The development of the class of the modal verbs is fully over in Early New High German language. Simultaneously ends up the process of rebuilding of the moods and they change their focus as opposed to the Gothic and Old High German from internal modality to the objective external modality. Like in modern German, the means of its expression include such moods as irrealis and realis, which binds the indicative, the imperative and the indirect speech conjunctive.

4. Conclusion

The comparative analysis of the modal systems in Gothic, Old and Middle High German languages showed that during the process of the language development to express new modal meanings appearing in German language and to specify existing meanings the language due to the principle of linguistic economy uses the means it has in its system. Preterite-present verbs become the mean of expressing the internal modality and having received the status of the modal verbs they maintain this function in modern German language. The indicative, the imperative, the present optative (>the indirect speech conjunctive) denote reality, the forms of the preterite optative (> the irrealis) – irreality.

The process of transferring the functions of expressing the internal modality from the optative to the modal verbs represents decategorisation, due to the fact that the meanings of the internal modality, which was expressed originally by the forms of morphological category of mood on the grammatical level, turn to lexico-grammatical means. This provides the possibility of greater specification of the meanings of the internal modality, i.e. allows expressing more specifically different shades of the semantics of the internal modality, thus to satisfy to a greater extent communicative needs of society.

References