Semantic features based on deduction of collocations of cognitive non-factive verbs and epistemic adverbs

Đặc trưng ngữ nghĩa dựa vào sự đoán định của những kết ngôn giữa động từ phi thực hữu tri nhận và phó từ tình thái nhận thức

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Abstract

Modality has been an interesting field to all linguists in the world for a long time because of its complexity and variety. Lexical devices showing modality consist of verbs, adjectives, adverbs, particles... especially among them are collocations of a cognitive non-factive verb (CNFV) and an epistemic adverb (EA). The collocations aim at not only informing the action of the subject but also giving the speaker's judgement to the truth or falsity of the content of the proposition. Therefore, in order to achieve the proficient use of modality collocations in communication, language users need to master their linguistic features. Basing on over 700 English samples collected from novels, short stories, and online materials, the paper aims to show semantic features based on deduction to help not only learners of English or even native speakers of English have more effective conversations but also the teaching English as a foreign language be more useful.

Keywords: Pragmatic features; cognitive non-factive verb; epistemic adverb; collocations; modality.

Tóm tắt

Tình thái từ lâu đã là một lĩnh vực khá hấp dẫn với hầu hết các nhà ngôn ngữ học trên thế giới do bởi tính phức tạp và đa dạng của nó. Các phương tiện để diễn đạt tình thái bao gồm động từ, tính từ, phó từ, tiểu từ... đặc biệt hơn cả là các kết ngôn giữa hai phương tiện từ vựng: động từ phi thực hữu tri nhận và phó từ tình thái. Các kết ngôn tình thái này không nhằm mục đích thông báo hành động của chủ ngữ mà cho biết thái độ và sự đoán định của người nói với khả năng hiện thực của sự tình được nêu ở mệnh đề. Do đó, để hiểu và sử dụng các kết ngôn tình thái này có hiệu quả trong giao tiếp, người ta cần nắm rõ những đặc điểm ngôn ngữ của chúng. Dựa vào hơn 700 phát ngôn tiếng Anh được thu thập từ tiểu thuyết, truyện ngắn và trên mạng internet, bài viết này phân tích những đặc trưng ngữ nghĩa của các kết ngôn tình thái dựa vào sự đoán định nhằm giúp người học tiếng Anh hoặc thậm chí là những người Anh bản xứ nâng cao khả năng giao tiếp tiếng Anh cũng như sử dụng chuẩn xác các kết ngôn tình thái này trong việc kiến tạo các phát

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ngôn bằng tiếng Anh. Đồng thời, kết quả khảo sát trong bài cũng có thể giúp ích trong việc giảng dạy tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ.

Từ khóa: Những đặc trưng ngữ nghĩa; động từ phi thực hữu tri nhận; phó từ tình thái nhận thức; các kết ngôn; tình thái.

1. Introduction

Modality has become an interesting aspect to linguists in the world because of its complexity and variety. Investigating modality, we not only concern about form of language but also language in action, i.e. the interpersonal relationship, especially it is subjectivity that is paid more attention to and it means modality is always involved in all utterances because it is the indispensable factor playing an important role in imparting the speaker's thoughts and attitude to the hearer. Therefore, Bally says that modality is the soul of the utterance, as cited in Nguyễn Văn Hiệp [9, 74]. As a matter of fact, English possesses a variety of lexical means to express modality including modal nouns, adjectives, adverbs and lexical verbs. In addition, "*Modal elements frequently combine and interact dynamically*" [6, 3]. However, according to Perkins "*Doing research on modality is very similar to trying to move in an overcrowded room without treading on anyone else's feet*" [11, 4]. Despite its complication, the study of collocations has become an issue of so much interest that a lot of linguists have concerned about and in recent years, important advances have been made in the field of lexicology based upon the study of occurrence and collocation. With over 700 utterances consisting of the structure with the singular first person subject *I* and collocations including a cognitive non-factive verb and an epistemic adverb followed by a complement clause, semantic features based on deduction of the structure have been investigated.

2. Review of previous studies related

Discussing collocations, there have been some researches by linguists such as McIntosh [8], Lyons [7], Coates [4], Perkins [11], Hoye [6], Cappelli [1] [2], and Trần Thị Minh Giang [12], [13]. We can refer to the following studies: McIntosh [8] gave the clear and comprehensive definition of collocations. Later, Lyons [6], Coates [4] and Perkins [11] mentioned collocations, however they only made some overall introductions of collocations. Next, Hoye [6] undertook a study of modal-adverb collocations. He found a marked tendency for epistemic modals to attract adverb satellites. Then Cappelli [1] also mentioned modulating attitudes via adverbs but she only presented her general overview of adverbs co-occurring with verbs of cognitive attitude. Last but not least, Trần Thị Minh Giang [12] expressed her viewpoint of harmony of adverb satellites on non-factive verbs, however it is only a minor part in her master thesis because her study mainly investigated linguistic features of non factive verbs. Later, in her next study [13], the pragmatic features of English collocations between a cognitive non-factive verb and an epistemic adverb were mentioned. The above review shows that until now a study of semantic features of the structure I + cognitive non-factive verb and epistemic adverb collocations based on deduction remains a neglected area.

3. Methodology

The data collection of over 700 English samples consisting of the singular first person subject *I* and collocations of a cognitive non-factive verb and an epistemic adverb is collected from short stories, novels, and online materials including e-books and Brainy quotes. Especially, these English samples spoken by native speakers or writers of English such as *I*

think perhaps, I certainly believe, I guess maybe, I just hope... are necessary data for the study.

Epistemic modality is divided into the following small categories by Chung et al. [3] and Palmer [10] such as *assumptive mood, declarative mood, deductive mood, dubitative mood, hypothetical mood, interrogative mood, speculative mood,* samples are examined and classified into following three main semantic features including *belief, inference* and *prediction.*

4. Deduction-based semantic features

The use of patterns of the structure *I + CNFV and EA collocations* such as *I really think, I certainly believe, I think perhaps, I guess maybe, I hardly think, I just think* with the non-factual meanings… shows that the speaker does not give certain commitment to the truth of state of affair in the complement clause. The speaker thinks that the content expressed in the complement clause is true; however, he or she does not have enough grounds to affirm the certainty of the truth mentioned in its proposition. Palmer [10] calls them *weak assertion*. This means the speaker does not give completely certain commitment to the truth or falsity of the propositional content, yet in order to impart some information to hearers, speakers may indicate suitable types of knowledge chosen to add to the degree to which they hold the knowledge to be reliable, the source of their knowledge. Here are the following categories we base on:

- ***Assumptive mood*** is an epistemic mode attributing that the speaker expresses his/ her belief based on experiences in real life in order to deduce that what is said is true.

(1) "Maybe you'd better call up the doctor. ***I think maybe*** this is it."   [23, 298]

- ***Declarative mood*** is an epistemic mood showing that the propositional content expressed by the speaker'sutterance is an absolutely true statement of fact or a categorical assertion.

(2) "***I really believe*** he intended to empty his pockets of piastres and greenbacks."   [22, 38]

- ***Deductive mood*** is an epistemic mood expressing that the speaker's judgement towards the propositional content based on other facts is probably true.

(3) "I thought so the revolver had an ejector, and here is the third cartridge. ***I really think,*** Inspector Martin, that our case is almost complete."   [18, 452]

- ***Dubitative mood*** is an epistemic mood expressing the speaker's tentative commitment towards the precision of his or her utterances.

(4) "***I hardly think*** he'll be taken in again."   [20, 116]

- ***Hypothetical mood*** is an epistemic mood indicating that the speaker considers proposition as unreal situation but maybe possible in other circumstances.

(5) "***I really think*** that I should have fainted if I had not gone out."   [18, 298]

- ***Interrogative mood*** is an epistemic mood attributing that the speaker wants to elicit details involving in the content of his/her statement from the hearer.

(6) "***I think perhaps*** it's a good thing I'm going away, don't you?"   [20, 205]

- ***Speculative mood*** is an epistemic mood that the speaker's judgement from some certain facts towards the propositional content is possibly true.

(7) "…and when he held out his hand ***I really think*** he expected me to kiss it"   [22, 85]

Palmer [10] is especially interested in the speaker's speculation and deduction. In his arrangement of different modal system, he puts deduction higher than assumption and assumption higher than speculation. Consequently, his view plays an important part in analysis of semantic features of cognitive non-factive verb and epistemic adverb collocations in this theme. Therefore, samples are examined and classified into following three main semantic features namely *belief, inference* and *prediction.*

4.1 Realization of the structure I + CNFV and EA collocations showing in belief, inference and prediction

4.1.1. The structure I + CNFV and EA collocations expressing belief

Belief is a part of concept of knowledge involving the speaker's personal belief convictions in which the source of knowledge is not specifically indicated because belief is something that the speaker himself or herself always considers being true. This may be indicated by the discourse context where the assumption of the speaker seems to be reasonable and he/ she may agree with the hearer if they share the same background information and cultural understanding. In this research, belief is signaled by the use of *I think perhaps*, *I really think, I definitely think, I really believe, I rather think, indeed I think, I certainly think* … in English. Let us consider the following examples.

(8) "I have forgotten so much attention from girls I don't like because of you and you think it's funny."

"***I just think*** it's funny that they are jealous of you."   [28, 12]

(9) ***I just believe*** if you don't believe in God, then where is your moral barometer? That's just

me talking. You can believe what you want to believe."   [32]

(10) "Yes, I don't believe that the inter-Korean relationship has, quote, 'deteriorated' since I assumed office.

Rather I believe that the relationship between the two Koreas is entering into a new phase - a time of transition. And so I think that the North Koreans are trying to see what they can build with this, with my new administration."   [25]

(11) "You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Well, I don't know about that. ***I rather think*** you may, if you begin early in life."   [19, 417]

In (8) – (11), the structure *I + CNFV and EA collocations* show that the speaker has made a subjective statement without basing on any reason. It is a pure belief that expresses the speaker's speculation. The speaker may imply that he was not sure of the content of proposition but he thought he might be true. In instances like (8) and (9) the speaker gives his/her belief from his/ her own experience. With "*I just think*" and "*I just believe*" the speaker may want to express his low commitment to the truth of the proposition. In addition, "*I rather believe*" and "*I rather think*" in (10) and (11), the speaker gives his/ her judgement based on his/her speculation. However, the degree of the speaker's commitment to the truth of proposition in this case is lower than those in the following ones.

(12) "How will she manage to please him when they are married? I don't think she will manage it and yet it might be managed and his wife might, ***I really believe***, be the very happiest woman the sun shines on."   [17, 282]

(13) "***I really believe*** that if you practice enough you could paint the 'Mona Lisa' with a two-inch brush."   [15]

(14) "*I certainly think* that 10 to 20 years from now, clearly the majority of veterinarians will be women." [30]

(15) "Yeah, I guess I'm not a particularly religious person, but *I do really believe strongly that* we all need to believe in something, and that's very personal to each one of us." [16]

(16) "One of the things that I really like about young adult fiction is that you can explore the relationships between teens and their parents. *I definitely think* that teens are a product of their parents. You either end up just

like them or you consciously make the decision to be unlike them." [28]

(12) - (16) indicate higher degree of commitment of reality than (12) – (16). In this case, the speaker may want to convince the hearer to agree with him about the truth of proposition. With the constructions: *I really believe, I certainly think, I definitely think,* he himself had his own evidence to support his belief because the personal experience may be considered an element of knowledge which is also called belief. From this analysis, these expressions of belief can be formulated as the following Figure 1.
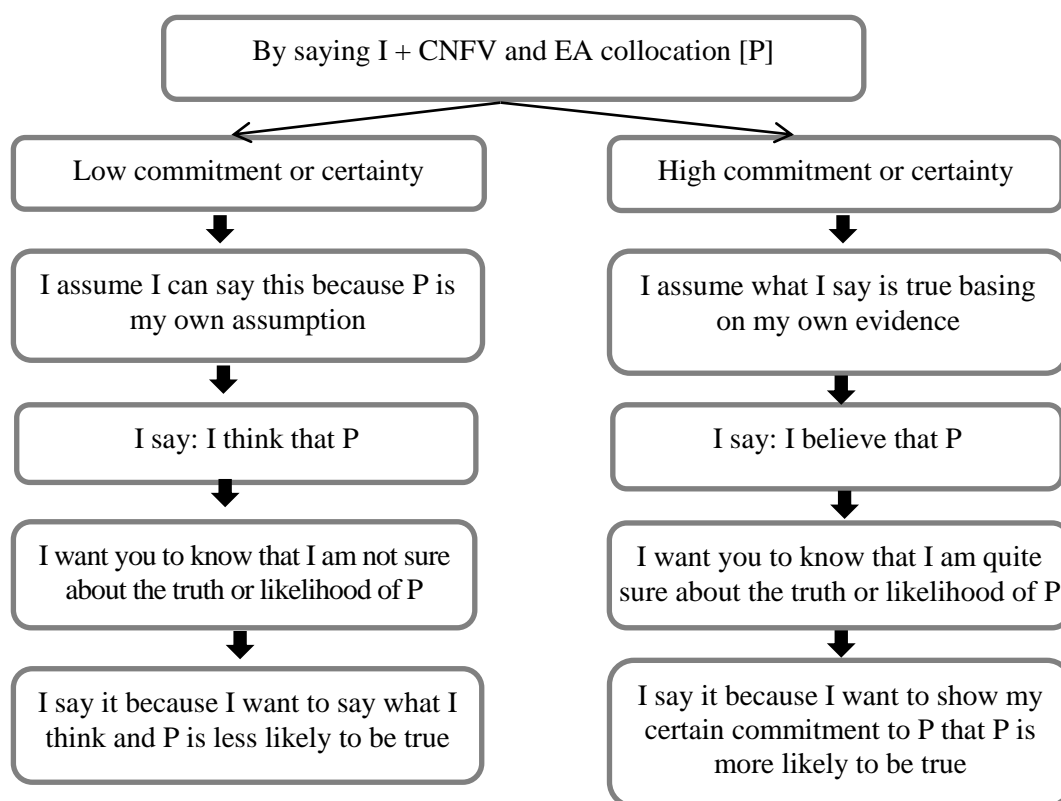
Figure 1. Formula of the structure I + CNFV and EA collocations expressing Belief

In fact, these expressions are not dogmatic since the speaker is not trying to impose his view on other people, but it is somehow determined and self-confident.

4.1.2. The Structure I + CNFV and EA collocations expressing inference

In contrast to belief, the concept of knowledge in which the speaker can give his/her inference from his/her experience also appears more often in communication. It is said that evidence is the main base to inference; however, in some cases the evidence itself is not directly mentioned in the sentence and the

speaker has to use inferential evidentials through a process of inference that bases on some information he has direct access before. With inferential modals, we often have a sub-set of modals that refer to something 'past-oriented' in that the situation referred to by the complement which is anterior (logically or temporally) to the judgement of modal expression. On the other hand, according to Hayakawa [5, 490] "*An inference is... the movement from premises to conclusion. Consequently, reasoning may be said to be the attempt to make valid inferences.*"

Inference seems to involve in not only knowledge reasoning but also perception. In fact, inference implies a transition from perception to knowledge. In inference, one arrives at some presumed knowledge by way of reasoning which takes as a point of departure of some empirical observation. The most commonly-used modal expressions showing this semantic feature are *I think probably, I think maybe, I think perhaps, I guess maybe, …* in English. Let us take the following examples into consideration.

(17) "***I guess maybe*** directors see a face that seems to have been lived in. I know that my face has been lived in, yeah." [26]

(18) "Let's have another drink. ***I think perhaps*** Catherine's had enough," [31, 139]

(19) "***I think probably*** the one trait that would concern me about brother Bing would be his lack of responsibility." [14]

(20)"How many crossroads are you allowed to have in life? I seem to have a lot of crossroads. ***I think maybe*** I crossed back across the same road too often." [29]

In (17) – (20), the speaker did not bother to specify the source of the presumed knowledge, leading the addressee to the thinking that there may be many things which underlie this knowledge. In (17), the speaker inferred directors' decision of choosing him to play an important role in the film because they see *his face has been lived in*, which is quite dogmatic with only his thought. In (18), the speaker gave suggestion for another drink without Catherine because he realized Catherine's being drunk with his/ her inference expressed by the pattern ***I think perhaps.*** In (19), with the pattern *"I think probably"*, the speaker showed the hearer his/ her anxiety about his/ her brother's bad behavior, *"his lack of responsibly"* which the speaker found in Bing's personality in the past. In (20), the speaker showed his deduction from his real life with a lot of crossroads each person is allowed to have and his inference with the pattern *"I think maybe"* displays that he guesses *he crossed back across the same road too often* thanks to his empirical observation. It means that he hasn't found his way yet and maybe he hasn't obtained anything new in his life.

Thus, the semantic mechanism of the structure *I + CNFV and EA collocations* of inference can be stated in the following Figure 2.
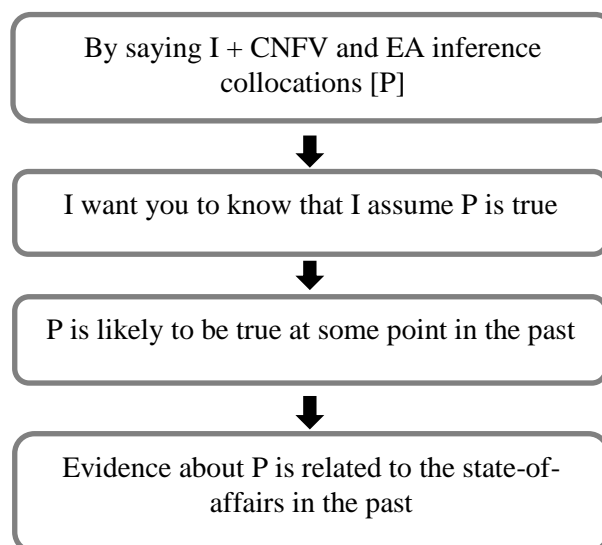
Figure 2. Formula of the structure I + CNFV and EA collocations expressing Inference

In brief, in inference, the speaker mostly bases on his feelings or subjective induction in order to give the commitment to the proposition because he/she didn't have enough foundation to assert the truth or falsity of the proposition.

4.1.3. The Structure I + CNFV and EA Collocations Expressing Prediction

Predictions are based on a certain premise, which may be a given situation, a general principle or even a hypothetical condition. Predictions are typically about the future and are seldom or never about the present or the past. On the other hand, with predictive modals we have a sub-set of modals that are 'future – oriented', in which the situation referred to by the complement is temporarily posterior or a posteriori verifiable. In fact, a posteriori verifiable can also be considered as the future likelihood of P. We have modal expressions to serve the semantic feature such as *I suppose really*, *I just assume, I just hope* …. in English.
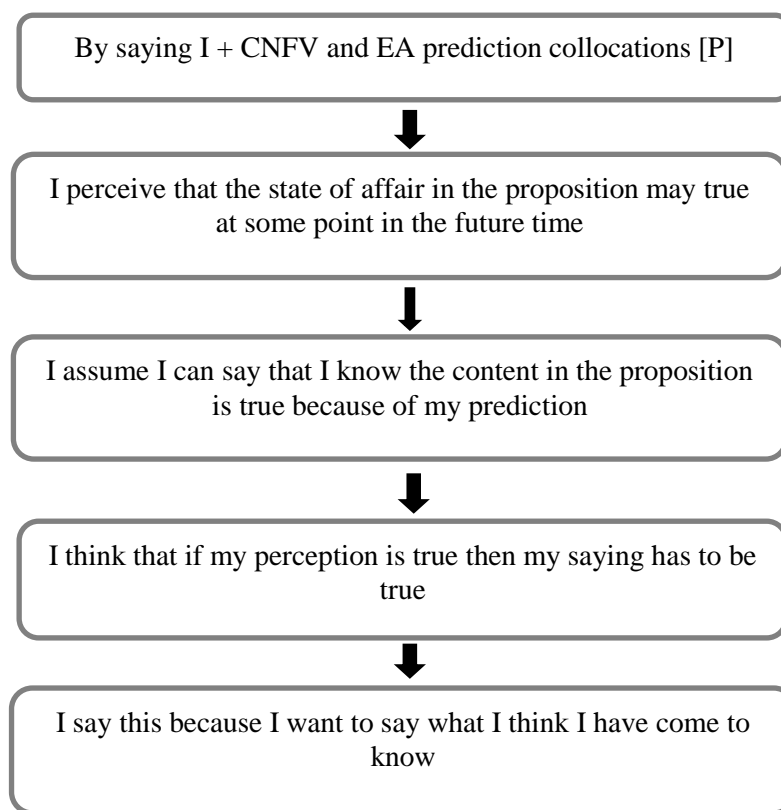
(21) "...She made a great point of being so near the river, in case of a conflagration; *I suppose really* did find some satisfaction in that circumstance."   [19, 475]

(22) "I think half the time *I just assume* I don't really know what I'm doing - you have to do that to a certain extent, but you don't have to think you're an idiot savant."   [21]

(23)"I have searched all over school and I still hadn't seen Mina! She's also been avoiding my calls… *I just hope* she isn't skipping school again to work."   [23]

In (21) and (22), the speaker gave the premises which would be perhaps true in the sense of the speaker's prediction. Especially, some modes of the structure *I + CNFV and EA collocations* such as *I suppose really*, *I just assume* in English refer to the speaker's possible judgements. Besides, these collocations also express the speaker's tentative commitment based on his deduction like in (23). The expression *"I just hope"* shows that the speaker's prediction that *Mina is skipping school again*. In addition to his prediction, there were no responses from her although the speaker tried to make contact with her.

From the interpretation of these examples we can have the semantic formula of the cognitive members of prediction group like the Figure 3.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   By saying I + CNFV and EA prediction collocations [P]   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                            ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   I perceive that the state of affair in the proposition may true │
│            at some point in the future time               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                            ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   I assume I can say that I know the content in the proposition │
│            is true because of my prediction               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                            ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   I think that if my perception is true then my saying has to be │
│                          true                             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                            ⬇
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   I say this because I want to say what I think I have come to │
│                          know                             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Figure 3. Formula of the structure I + CNFV and EA collocations expressing Prediction

Here is the summary of semantic features of the pattern *I + CNFV and EA collocations* (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Semantics features of the structure I + CNFV and EA collocations in English based on deduction

Semantics features of I + CNFV and EA collocations based on deduction		I + CNFV and EA collocations
Belief	I say I + CNFV and EA collocations belief P 1. Low certainty: • I want you to know that I am not sure of the likelihood of P. • P is just my own assumption. • P is less likely to be true. 2. High certainty: • I want you to know that I am pretty sure of the likelihood of P • P is more likely to be true • P is self-evidence	*I just think, I rather think, I just believe, I rather believe* *I actually think* *I really think, I definitely think, I really believe, indeed I think, I certainly think*
Inference	I say I + CNFV and EA collocations inference P • I want you to know that I assume P is true. • P is likely to be true at some point in the past. • evidence about P is related to the state-of-affairs in the past.	*I think perhaps, I think maybe, I guess maybe, I think probably, I guess really, I just guess*

Semantics features of I + CNFV and EA collocations based on deduction		I + CNFV and EA collocations
Prediction	I say I + CNFV and EA collocations prediction P • I want you to know that I assume P is true. • P is likely to be true at some point in the future. • Evidence about P is related to the state-of-affairs in the future. • If P is true, P can be pleasant/ desirable. • If P is true, P can be unpleasant/undesirable.	*I suppose really, I just assume, I just hope, I think possibly*

4.2. Frequency of the Structure I + CNFV and EA Collocations Showing in Belief, Inference and Prediction

In the study of semantics of the structure *I + CNFV and EA collocations* based on deduction, we carried out an investigation of 715 English samples collected from English short stories, novels and online materials like e-books, as well as online utterances spoken by English people were collected by accessing the websites Brainy Quotes. In spite of containing the same CNFV and EA collocations, some English utterances have different meanings based on the contexts that make these collocations change from perception to cognition. Therefore, semantics of the pattern *I + CNFV and EA collocations* based on deduction is an interesting illustration. Look at Table 2, we can see the different frequencies of three elements: *belief, inference*, and *prediction.*

Table 2. Frequency of the structure I + CNFV and EA collocations in Belief, Inference, and Prediction

Deduction	Occurrence	%
Belief	435	60.83
Inference	98	13.7
Prediction	182	25.45
Total	715	100

With the frequency of 60.83%, *belief* occurs most in communication by English people. The collocations such as *I really think, I definitely think, I really believe, I just believe, I just think...* appear more often than others because of language users' habit. On the contrary, the elements *inference* and *prediction* are in use with lower rates at only 13,7% and 25.45%, which indicate that English people seldom use the pattern *I + CNFV and EA collocations* to express inference and prediction in communication.

5. Conclusion

With the semantic features based on deduction of the structure I + CNFV and EA collocations mentioned above, we can see the importance of the structure in communication. It is impossible to use the English structure effectively without mastering its semantic features based on deduction which are used for specific communication purposes such as *belief, inference,* and *prediction.* In addition, from the results on the frequency of the structure I + CNFV and EA collocations in three above-mentioned semantic features, we can see that the structure I + CNFV and EA collocations expressing *belief* is used the most. In brief, good knowledge of the semantic features of the structure I + CNFV and EA collocations will help learners of English and

even native speakers of English use them more effectively in communication. I hope this paper will give readers some new findings on the structure I + CNFV and EA collocations in semantics and the study will open many interesting questions on modality to next researchers.

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