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# The Problems Facing the Second Semester Students in the English Department in Learning English Modal Verbs

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## Abstract

The present study is mainly concerned with a very important area of English grammar which is "The English Modal Verbs" in terms of the technique of introducing them to second semester students in the English department at the university of Benghazi. The researcher tries to clarify the problems that our students face in learning the English Modal Verbs because of introducing them individually, not as members of three basic types of modality which are Epistemic Modality, Deontic Modality, and Dynamic Modality. The population of the study consisted of ten teachers and thirty students.. The main purpose of this study is to discover the difficulties that our students face in learning these modal verbs which have so many different meanings that make it difficult to learn. Three tools of investigation were used, namely a questionnaire for the sample teachers and a test for the sample students. The analysis of the collected data has shown that both of the sample teachers and the sample students face difficulty. As for students, they face difficulty in dealing with the English Modal Verbs when they come in a context while they could master them in individual sentences. That is because of the way which is used in their textbook in dealing with each Modal Verb individually.

## Ke eords:

**Learning English - Modal Verbs**

## Introduction

English modal verbs are a class of auxiliary verbs. These modal verbs are CAN, COULD, SHALL, SHOULD, WILL, WOULD, MAY, MIGHT, MUSH, OUGHT To. The researcher in this research examined the problems that our students face when learning these modal verbs .These problems may result because of introducing the modal verbs in single sentences in their textbooks, not as members of three basic types of modality. These basic types are epistemic modality, deontic modality, and dynamic modality, according to Palmer's 1979 classification.

Epistemic modality merely states that something is possible or necessary. Epistemic modality is subjective in that it relates to an inference by the speaker and is paraphrased by "it is possible that". It is used to express the speaker's opinion about the truth of a proposition. When we say "*John CAN'T be the prime suspect*" (Papafragou, 2006:1694), we are saying that it's not possible that John is the prime suspect.

Deontic modality occurs when the speaker performatively creates possibility, necessity, etc. When someone tells his son "*You MUST be home by 1 0 o'clock*" (Collins, 2009:35), he is using deontic modality.

Dynamic modality distinguishes two subtypes: (1) neutral or circumstantial, and (2) subject oriented. Neutral dynamic modality expresses mere possibility. It shows that an event is possible or necessary without relating the possibility or necessity either to the subject or the speaker. Neutral dynamic modality suggests that there are circumstances in the real world that make possibility or necessity; as in "*You CAN actually use diagnostic skills*" (Palmer, 1979:72) (mere possibility). Subject oriented modality (ability) refers to the ability of the subject and can be paraphrased by "has the ability to". as in "Jane CAN speak English fluently*" (Leech and Svartvik, 1973:152)*. It refers to one of Jane's abilities, it doesn't give information about the speaker.

Palmer's three basic types of modality as either epistemic, deontic or dynamic, are not part of the grammar repertoire of the majority of the second semester teachers. Because of this lack, the complexity of modal verbs are not grasped by Libyan students. They find learning the modals difficult and frustrating.

Our students should learn each modal verb as epistemic, deontic and dynamic. In this way our students will find it easier to learn the English Modal Verbs according to this classification.

## Aims of the study

The research is an attempt to identify

1. The problems that the second semester students in the English department at the university of Benghazi face when learning the English Modal Verbs.

## Research Questions

**1.** What are the problems that the second semester students in the English department at the university of Benghazi face in learning the English Modal Verbs?

## Literature Review

### *2.1 Modal Verbs*

Modal auxiliary verbs are considered to be in the same class as the primary auxiliaries (Palmer, 1979:9).

### *2.2 The Three Basic Types of Modality*

There are three basic types of modality: (1) epistemic modality; (2) deontic modality; and (3) dynamic modality.

**The first type** is epistemic modality which is prototypically concerned with the speaker's attitudes towards the factuality of the situation. Epistemic MAY, for example, can be paraphrased by "it's possible that"; thus, if someone says "John MAY go home" he is saying that "it's possible that John go home". Epistemic MUST can be paraphrased by "the only possible conclusion is that…."; thus, when someone says "John MUST be home. Look, there is his car", he is saying that "the only possible conclusion is that John is at home" (Palmer, 1979:36).

**The second type** of modality is deontic modality. Deontic modality occurs when the speaker performatively creates possibility, necessity, etc. When someone tells his son "You MUST be home by 10 o'clock", he is using deontic modality. Deontic modality is usually subjective in that the speaker is the one who obliges, permits, or forbids (Thompson, 2002:1). Deontic modality is oriented towards performing speech acts-doing things with words, for example, "John MAY go home now" (here the speaker gives John permission to leave), or when someone advises, as in "Elena SHOULD go home, she looks tired". Thus, in deontic modality speakers can intervene in the speech event by laying an obligation, giving permission, or making a promise or threat ( Downey and Locke, 2006:382).

**The third basic type** of modality is dynamic modality and within dynamic modality we can distinguish between two subtypes which are: neutral (or circumstantial) and subject oriented modality (or ability). Neutral dynamic modality expresses mere possibility. It shows that an event is possible or necessary without relating the possibility or necessity either to the subject or the speaker. as in "the only way you CAN learn it is to think logically". This is circumstantial because the possibility is related to thinking logically. (Palmer, 1979:71-73) while subject oriented modality (or ability) refers to the ability of the subject and can be paraphrased by 'has the ability to', as in "Rosa CAN run a mile in under five minutes". It refers to one of Rosa's abilities.

### *2.3 Introducing Modals Showing their Epistemic, Deontic and Dynamic meanings.*

In this section each modal verb is introduced as epistemic, deontic or dynamic; they will be introduced under three main groups which are: (1) necessity and obligation (MUST, SHOULD, OUGHT TO); (2) possibility, permission and ability (MAY, CAN, MIGHT and COULD); (3) prediction and volition (WILL, SHALL, WOULD).

#### *2.3.1 Necessity and Obligation*

This section deals with the modals of necessity and obligation which are MUST, SHOULD and OUGHT TO.

##### *2.3.1.1 MUST*

***(a) deontic MUST***

We have subjective deontic must and objective one. When must is subjective (the speaker is the deontic source, as in

**(1)** You must try harder. (Downey and Locke,2006:3910

and when must is objective" the sorce of obligation is external to the speaker", as in

**(2)** At the United Nations the world agreed that Iraq must withdraw or be driven out of Kuwait. (Collins,209:35)

We can use must to give strong advice, as in

**(3)** You must keep every thing to yourself, be discreet. (Palmer,1979:62)

**(b) Epistemic MUST**

It is paraphrased by "the only possible conclusion is that" It can be subjective depends on the speakers beliefs, as in

**(4)** My grandfather must be sick. (Papafragou, 2006:1693)

or objective depends on what has known, as in

**(5)** The police told reporters that the victim must have known the killer. (Papafragou, 2006:1697)

***(c) Dynamic* MUST**

In dynamic must there is no indication of the involvement of the speaker. It expresses either internal need in the subject, as in

**(6)** A plant must have water to live. (downey and Locke, 2006:6)

or a circumstantially derived need, as in

**(7)** .To get there we must negotiate some of the stormiest oceans in the world and several hundred kilometers of pack ice. (Collins, 2009:41)

***2.3.1.2 SHOULD***

***(a) Deontic SHOULD***

It expresses obligation which may not be fulfilled because the obligation of should is not binding, as in

**(8)** People should drive more carefully. (Downey and Locke, 2006:393)

***(b) Epistemic SHOULD***

It indicates likelihood or assumption, as in

**(9)** Our guests should be home by now. (they probably are but I am not certain) (Leech and Svartvik, 1973:155)

or assumption, as in

**(10)** Why should the strati graphic divisions that we have established in Britain be of use in Australia or China. (Collins, 2009:47)

***2.3.1.3 OUGHT TO***

***(a) Deontic OUGHT TO***

It expresses obligation, suggestion, prohibition or advice, as in

**(11)** You really ought to cut down on smoking. ( obligation) (Collins, 2009:53)

**(12)** People ought to drive more carefully. (suggestion) (Downey and Locke, 2006:393)

**(13)** You oughtn't to waste all that money on smoking. (prohibition) (Downey and Locke,2006:393)

**(14)** There were things he didn't tell you and things he did tell you but I suggest to you the things he didn't tell you were stupid things and not really things which you ought to use In your deliberations when you're considering his evidence. (advice) (Collins, 2009:54)

***(b) Epistemic OUGHT TO***

It expresses likelihood (probability) or conclusion, as in

**(15)** I think it ought to take about three hours, if the traffic isn't too bad. (likelihood) ( carter And mcCarthy, 2006;660)

**(16)** Bananas ought to grow well in this country. (conclusion)(Downey and Locke, 2006:2010

***2.3.2 Possibility, Permission and Ability***

***2.3.2.1 MAY***

May is dominantly epistemic, whereas, deontic and dynamic possibility are minor meanings for MAY.

***(a) Epistemic MAY***

It's paraphrased by "it's possible that" and it represents factual possibility, as in

**(17)** The railways MAY be improved. (=it is possible that the railways will
be improved) (Leech and Svartvik, 1973:151)

It means I think that will be realized oneday

***(b) Deontic MAY***

It is used to give permission, ask for permission ,prohibition or convey a command, as in

**(18)** You MAY use my car. (give permission) (Downey and Locke, 2006:394)

**(19)** May I use your car? (ask for permission) (Downey and Locke, 2006:394)

**(20)** You MAY not borrow my car. (prohibition) (Downey and Locke, 2006:394)

**(21)** You MAY take it from me. (command) (Palmer, 1979:60)

***(c) Dynamic MAY***

It is paraphrased by 'it's possible for'. We have two types of dynamic possibility which are neutral (or circumstantial) which is (theoretical possibility) the possibility of the idea, as in

**(22)** In spring, wild orchids MAY be found in the woods. (Downey ad Locke 2006:394)

It's different from epistemic possibility (factual), as in

**(23)** The railways MAY be improved. ( (Downey and Locke, 2006:394)

Here there are definite plans for improvement not just an idea; The second type of dynamic possibility is dynamic implication, it suggests that by implication, an action will or should be taken, as in

**(24)** MAY I help you with the luggage? (Palmer, 1979:73)

***2.3.2.2 CAN***

***(a) Dynamic CAN***

There are "three subtypes of dynamic CAN which are

**A.** neutral(or circumstantial) which is paraphrased by "it's possible for", as in

**(25)** The railways CAN be improved. (= it is possible for the railways to be improved). (Palmer, 1979:7-72)

**B.** Subject oriented possibility or ability "has the ability to", as in

**(26)** She can speak English fluently. (she has the ability to do that) (Palmer, 1979)

**C.** Implication when the sentences have an illocutionary force of a request, an offer, a suggestion or an instruction, as in

**(27)** Can you spell that for me, please? (request) (Collins, 2009)

**(28)** Yes, we can send you a map, if you wish. (offer) (Carter and Mccarthy,200:646)

**(29)** You can read these two chapters before tomorrow. (suggestion) (Palmer, 1979:73)

**(30)** Well, I'll pour the ladies, and you can pour the men. (instruction) (Palmer, 1979;73)

***(b) Epistemic CAN***

It's paraphrased by "it's possible that". It's restricted to non-affirmative contexts, as in

**(31)** They CAN'T possibly be real pearls. (= it is not possible that they are real pearls) (Downey and Locke, 2006)

Epistemic CAN is also used in interrogatives, as in

**(32)** CAN they be real pearls? (Downey and Locke, 2006)

***(c) Deontic CAN***

We can use deontic CAN to seek permission, as well as give permission, prohibition, and command, as in

**(33)** CAN I use your car? (= Am I allowed to use your car?) (seek permission) (Downey and Locke, 2006)

**(34)** You CAN use my car. (= You are allowed to use my car.) (give permission) (Downey and Locke, 2006)

**(35)** No. You CAN'T have that. You might break it. (prohibition) (Leech and Svartvik, 1973)

**(36)** Oh, you CAN leave me out, thank you very much. (command) (Palmer, 1979)

***2.3.2.3 MIGHT and COULD***

***(a) Epistemic MIGHT AND COULD***

MIGHT and COULD can be paraphrased by 'it's possible that', as in

**(37)** They MIGHT be real pearls, you know. (Its possible that) (Downey and Locke, 2006)

There is another hypothetical (unreal) use for epistemic MIGHT and COULD, as in

**(38)** If you were a student, you COULD travel at half-price.(= would be allowed to) (Leech and Svartvik, 1979:171)

***(b) Dynamic MIGHT and COULD***

There are three sub-types of dynamic MIGHT and COULD which are theoretical possibility, ability and dynamic implication. Theoretical possibility means that it's just an idea, as in

**(39)** We MIGHT go to the concert. (just an idea not a factual one that means they don't have Plans to go to the concert. (Palmer, 1979))

The second sub-type is ability, as in

**(40)** Ann COULD write when she was three.(animate) (Collins, 2009)

**(41)** The bridge COULD support eight tons. (inanimate) (Collins, 2009)

The third sub-type is implication. Dynamic implication is found mainly with COULD to express both offers and requests, however, MIGHT can be used to express suggestions, as in

**(42)** I COULD give you that other book when I stay at Hilda's if you're near. (offer) (Collins, 2009)

**(43)** COULD you give me a ring if you can't make it, Bob. (request) (Carter and McCarthy, 2006:646)

**(44)** You MIGHT have a look at this book. (suggestion) (Leech and Svartvik, 1973:177)

***(c) Deontic MIGHT and COULD***

Both of these modals are used in asking for permission, not in giving permission, as in

**(45)** COULD I talk to you for a moment? (Carter and McCarthy, 2006:646)

***2.3.3 Prediction and Volition***

This section deals with modals of prediction and volition which are WILL, SHALL and WOULD.

### *2.3.3.1 WILL*

#### *(a) Epistemic WILL*

It is paraphrased by 'a reasonable inference is that'. It's used to express predictability with present situation, as in

**(46)** That'll be Jim at the door. (deduction from the present situation based on the available evidence) (Carter and McCarthy, 2006:648)

WILL is used to make predictions about the future, as in

**(47)** The parcel WILL arrive tomorrow. (it is predictable that) (Downey and Locke, 2006:208)

#### *(b) Dynamic WILL*

Dynamic WILL has two sub-types

**A.** Willingness will. It expresses polite offers, directives and requests, as in

**(48)** WILL you have another slice of melon? (offer) (Downey and Locke, 2006:390)

**(49)** WILL you sit down and just be quiet! (directive) (Downey and Locke, 2006:390)

**(50)** WILL you make sure the water's hot? (request) (Leech and Svartvik, 1973:175)

**B.** Intentions. It expresses promises and threats, as in

**(51)** I'll bring you something back from Paris, I promise. (= I intend to bring...) (promise) (Downey and Locke, 2006:390)

**(52)** I'll report you if you do that again. (= I intend to report you) (threat)(Downey and Locke, 2006:390)

#### *(c) Deontic WILL*

If I predict your a genitive action where I have the authority to require them, I will be understood as tacitly involving the authority, as in

**(53)** You' ll clean the bikes. (Collins, 2009:134)

### *2.3.3.2 SHALL*

#### *(a) Deontic SHALL*

SHALL is stronger than MUST because it does not only lay an obligation but also guarantees that the action will occur, as in

**(54)** I SHALL be there by six. (Palmer, 1979:62)

Deontic SHALL may express promises, as in

**(55)** No, I SHALL be back tomorrow. (Palmer, 1979:112)

***(b)Dynamic SHALL***

**A.** Dynamic SHALL expresses intentionally 'intend to', as in the following example where SHALL is used with a first person subject, as in

**(56)** We SHALL overcome. (= we intend to overcome) (Collins, 2009:137)

**B.** It also expresses willingness 'be willing to', as in

**(57)** Everything in Turkey is very cheap which reminds me Cath, I SHALL send you some Turkish money. (=I am willing to send) (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973:54)

**C.** In interrogatives volitional SHALL is used with a first person subject to make an offer or a suggestion, as in

**(58)** SHALL I carry those bags for you? (= Do you want me or Are you willing to) (offer) (Downey and Locke, 2006)

**(59)** SHALL we listen to some music? (suggestion) (Leech and Svartvik, 1973:177)

***(c) Epistemic SHALL***

**A.** Epistemic SHALL expresses predictions, as in

**(60)** We SHALL know about the results within two days. (= it is predictable that...) (Downey and Locke, 2006)

**B.** Epistemic SHALL may express conditional consequence, as in

**(61)** And if she recommends my book after that I SHALL be very surprised. (Collins, 2009:136)

***2.3.3.3 WOULD***

***(a) Epistemic WOULD***

Epistemic WOULD can be paraphrased by 'it's probable that'

**A.** It's used to express probability, as in

**(62)** That WOULD be his mother. (= it's probable that….) (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973:54)

**B.** Epistemic WOULD can also be used to express habitual behavior in the

past. In this sense WOULD is similar to 'used to', but it occurs in more formal contexts, as in

**(63)** She WOULD often go all day without eating. (Leech and Svartvik, 1973:155)

**C.** It expresses hypothetical use in unreal conditional constructions and also in the clausal complement of wish, as in

**(64)** The situation WOULD not be so bad if we all remained calm. (Kosur, 2010)

**(65)** I wish the stores WOULD open earlier. (Kosur, 2010)

***(b) Dynamic WOULD***

**A.** Dynamic WOULD expresses hypothetical willingness, as in

**(66)** My boss is so greedy, he WOULD do anything for money. (hypothetical) (Carter and McCarthy, 2006:652)

**B.** B. WOULDN'T expresses the negative of willingness, that is, refusal, as in

**(67)** The guards just WOULDN'T take any notice. They WOULDN'T listen to me. (=they refused take any notice and listen to me) (Leech and Svartvik, 1973:169)

**C.** Dynamic WOULD also expresses insistence, as in

**(68)** It's your own fault, you WOULD take the baby with you. (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1973:56)

**D.** . It also makes requests, as in

**(69)** WOULD you look after my seat for me, please? (=Are you willing to do that for me?) (Carter and McCarthy, 2006:652)

**E.** . It's also used in making offers, as i

**(70)** WOULD you like me to mail these letters. (Leech and Svartvik, 1973:184)

## Previous Studies

Palmer (1979) made use of data from written and spoken texts which are taken from the Survey of English Usage in University College, London for heuristic and exemplificatory purposes. He focused on the semantic concept of modality. The result which Palmer obtained from this study is that he distinguished between three basic types of modality which are epistemic, deontic and dynamic.

Lei and Moreira (2000) taught English modal verbs in the attempt to develop the cognitive flexibility of students learning English as a foreign language. Their program undertakes to improve English grammar teaching and learning within the field of the English modal verbs to the year university students at the University of Aveiro, Portugal. The students were both males and females, employing Didaktos

which stands for "didactic instructional design for the acquisition of knowledge and transfer to other situations". Three groups were engaged. The control group studied the materials in a traditional way and the two experimental groups studied them in a thematic criss-crossing manner, with the third group being more independent than the second one. The tools which were used in this experiment are pre-and post-tests and an interview. The results obtained from this experiment were that the students received a better understanding of the knowledge of modals after using this program; didaktos was found to be an effective teaching and learning tool.

Thompson (2002) studied the English modal verbs in terms of learning and teaching. He clarified the difference between "modal"which refers to the formal properties of a certain class of words and "modality" which refers to the meanings of those words. He maintained that students need to learn to distinguish between the three categories of modality (epistemic, deontic, and dynamic). The sample which he chose was a group of lower level students in Italy. He collected data through pre-and post-tests. The result of this experiment showed that the students could distinguish to some extent between the three different meanings of each modal verb.

Trejos (2008) used journals for learners' reflection and self-assessment in a high-beginner adult class throughout a three-month cycle at an institution in Colombia .The students were males and females. The tools which were used were role play and observation. In this experiment the students had to prepare some recommendations for their classmates using the modal verb SHOULD to give advice. This task was done in groups. The results of this experiment were: (1) the students became aware of the ways in which they could express their reflections; (2) the learners' level of satisfaction with their own learning process increased because through the use of journals they developed a greater sense of commitment to the accomplishment of the goals set for the course; (3) learners' reflections were fundamental for them to identify strengths and weaknesses in their class performance; and (4) at the end of the three month process, students' progress in their communicative ability could be evaluated more easily.

Collins (2009) referred to a corpus-based study of the meanings of the modals and quasi modals which are HAVE TO, HAVE GOT TO, NEED TO, BE SUPPOSED TO, HAD BETTER, BE BOUND TO, BE ABLE TO, BE GOING TO and distinguished between epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modality. This study examined the frequencies of usage for the meaning and use of modals and quasi-modals in three parallel corpora of British English, American English, and Australian English. Each corpus comprised 500 texts, which included 300 spoken texts (600,000 words) and 200 written texts (400,000 words). Each corpus samples the English of male and female adults (aged 18 or above) who have been educated to the end of secondary schooling. The tools which were used were role play in conversations and written texts. There were three main results: First,

American English is in the forefront of change in the rise of the quasi-modals and the decline of the other modals while British English is the most conservative, with Australian English occupying a middle position. Second, the quasi-modals' preference for occurrence in speech over writing is overwhelmingly greater in the American corpus. Third, British English has the highest proportion of modals in writing.

## Methods of Data Collection

Two data collection tools were used in this study a questionnaire for the teachers and a test for the students

### 3.1 The Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used in this study containing seven questions. The questions elicit information about the teachers, their background, their qualifications, the problems that they face in teaching the English Modal Verbs, etc.

### 3.2 The Test

A test was given to the students to help the researcher to evaluate their competence of using the English Modal verbs correctly. Statistical tools for analyzing the data collected were used. The sample was taken from the second semester students in the English department. The population of the study is 30 students, 10 male students and 20 female students. The test includes three parts as follows:

**Part 1** is an elicitation technique. It is a multiple choice question. It consists of five questions where the students have to read the question, comprehend its meaning then decide which option is the right one according to what they studied in their curriculum. It was given 5 marks.

**Part 2** is also an elicitation technique. It is an easy type of questions where the students have to match three groups of modal verbs with what they express. It was given 3 marks.

**Part 3** is a production task. This question is completely different from the other two questions because students in this question have to deal with the English Modal Verbs in a context or discourse not in single sentences as part 1 and part 2. it has been given 7 marks.

## Data Analysis

According to the analysis of the students' test.

**(1)** There's no significant difference can be observed between male and female students' performance for the total test as shown in the following table.

| Students' score | N | X | SD | t-test | df | p.value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 10 | 9.1282 | 2.82078 | -1.237 | 93 | 0.219 |
| Female | 20 | 9. 7857 | 2.34105 | | | |

**Paired Samples Statistics**

| | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std.Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 Q1 | 6.13 | 30 | 2.968 | .542 |
| Q3 | 3.10 | 30 | 1.561 | .285 |
| Pair 2 Q2 | 2.13 | 30 | 1.196 | .218 |
| Q3 | 3.10 | 30 | 1.561 | .285 |

**Paired Samples Correlations**

| | N | Correlation | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 Q1&Q3 | 30 | .235 | .211 |
| Pair 2 Q2&Q3 | 30 | .233 | .216 |

**Paired Samples Test**

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | Lower | Upper |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 Q1-Q3 | 3.033 | 3.011 | .550 | 1.909 | 4.158 |
| Pair 2 Q2-Q3 | -.967 | 1.732 | .316 | -1.613 | -.320 |

**Paired Samples Test**

| | t | df | Sig.( 2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 Q1-Q3 | 5.517 | 29 | .000 |
| Pair 2 Q2-Q3 | -3.057 | 29 | .005 |

## Summary of the Results

The students' performance on part 1 and part 2 of the test was good; however, their performance on part 3 was bad. These bad results are because of the fact that in this part of the test they had to deal with the English Modal Verbs in a context not individually as in part 1 and part 2. These results confirm the researcher's hypothesis which is that our students face difficulty in dealing with the English Modal Verbs in a context. In my opinion, this difficulty is because of introducing the English Modal Verbs in single sentences in their books.

***The results of this study can be concluded as follows*:**

The English Modal Verbs are introduced individually and that makes it too difficult for teachers to make students understand them.

- The large number of the students does not give them a chance to practice what they study

because only small groups can practice what they study.

- Teachers do not have any teaching aids to help them in their explanation except whiteboards.
- The teachers need some modern ways in presenting their lessons. For example, the storage of the curriculum on USBs and then presenting the lessons to the students by using DVDs that will make the students are interested in what they study and so on.
- There is a proficiency gap among students, some of them are good and the others are weak. Thus, teachers face very big difficulty in dealing with this problem.
- The time of the lectures is limited. Thus, teachers hardly find enough time to explain only, not to give a chance to students to practice.

## Concluding Remarks & Recommendations

### Concluding Remarks

What can be observed of the students' answers is that the students could, to a certain extent, master the English Modal Verbs in part 1 and part 2 of the test. Because of the fact that in the first part the students deal with single sentences and in the second part they just have to match. However, in the third part of the test the answers depend on a context rather than on single sentences as the other questions. Dealing with the English Modal Verbs in a context makes this question very difficult and that affects the students' scores which were very low in the third part. These results reflect the fact that our students will not be able to use the English Modal Verbs in everyday language because they do not master the English Modal Verbs in a context.

### Recommendations

After analyzing the data gathered for this study, and after looking thoroughly at the results, the researcher recommends the following hoping to see them applied on the ground:

**(1)** The technique of introducing the English Modal Verbs in single sentence without a context should be changed. Students should learn them according to the three basic types of modality which are epistemic modality, deontic modality and dynamic modality as suggested by Palmer (1979). Thus, their books should be changed. Also, it's important to add other curricula which help students to use the English Modal Verbs in a context. Especially, in speaking in order to be able to use them in everyday language.

**(2)** The number of students in each class should be between twenty to twenty five to give them a chance to practice everything they learn. It has to be mentioned that practice is the fundamental factor in any successful learning and teaching process.

**(3)** The time of each lecture should be three hours to give the students a chance to speak more and more. The students should have some lectures in the open air, in these lectures

they have to practice only speaking. In my point of view, this is an effective way to give the students a chance to practice what they study.

**(4)** The class cassette should be available for each student to give them a chance to learn the correct pronunciation of the English Modal Verbs from native speakers. Also teachers should be aware of the role which teaching aids play in helping the students to understand. Such as using pictures, flash cards, visual aids, etc

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## Appendices

**Appendix A: Teachers' Questionnaire**

**Dear teacher:**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out the problems and difficulties facing Libyan teachers in teaching English Modal Verbs for the second semester students in the English department

Your choice of the appropriate answer, which reflects your experience, will be highly appreciated. Please put (√) for the appropriate answer. Thank you in advance.

Teacher's background:

**1. Gender**
- □ Male
- □ Female

**2. Your experience in teaching**
- □ Less than 3 years
- □ 4-10 years
- □ More than 10 years

**3. Your educational qualifications**
- □ Teacher's diploma
- □ Bachelor of Arts
- □ Master's Degree
- □ Other

**4. Do you find it easy to teach the English Modal Verbs?**
- □ Yes
- □ No

**5. Do you use any teaching aids to teach the English Modal Verbs? If yes, what are they?**
- □ Yes
- □ No

**6. Do you use the cassette in your teaching?**
- □ Yes
- □ No
- □ Sometimes

**7. What do you think of the textbook for practicing the English Modal Verbs?**
- □ easy □ difficult
- □ clear □ unclear

**Thank you for your cooperation**

**Researcher: Nora Elarfi**

**Appendix B: Students' Test**

A Test assessing the second semester students' competence of English modal verbs

March, 2018

**Part 1: Choose A, B or C to show what each modal verb expresses (2×5=10 marks)**

1. Can I use your car, please?
   a. Possibility
   b. Permission
   c. Ability
2. You must try harder.
   a. Permission
   b. Possibility
   c. Obligation
3. You should leave it till tomorrow, don't you think.
   a. Suggestion
   b. Obligation
   c. Probability
4. Ann could write when she was three.
   a. Possibility
   b. Ability
   c. Permission
5. Would guests kindly leave their rooms by midday?
   a. Probability
   b. Offer
   c. Request

**Part 2: Match the three groups of modal verbs with what they express (1×3=3 marks)**

1. Modal verbs of possibility, permission and ability are a. will, shall, would
2. Modal verbs of necessity and obligation are b. Must, should, ought to
3. Modal verbs of prediction and volition are c. May, can, might, could

**Part 3: Complete the conversation with the modal verbs in the box (1×7= 7 marks)**

**Can- must -can -may -might -will -could**

John: Have you heard about Peter?

Mary: No, tell me.

John: He bought a very expensive car.

Mary: Really? He .....be rich.

John: I .....visit him tomorrow to see it.

Mary: .....I go with you?

John: Yes, you .....

Mary: Do you know how to drive?

John: I.....drive when I was very young, but I'm not sure if I remember how to.

Mary: Listen, someone is knocking the door.

John: That..... Be Jane, she told me she's coming now.

Mary: She.....go with us.

John: I think so.

**Thank you for your cooperation**

**Researcher: Nora Elarfi**