

THE USE OF ENGLISH MODAL VERBS IN WRITINGS BY NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS AT A UNIVERSITY IN VIETNAM

VIỆC SỬ DỤNG ĐỘNG TỪ TÌNH THÁI TRONG CÁC BÀI VIẾT CỦA SINH VIÊN KHÔNG CHUYÊN
TẠI MỘT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC Ở VIỆT NAM

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ABSTRACT

In academic writing, modality is extremely important since it expresses the writer's attitude toward the ideas they provide as well as toward the readers. According to many researchers, the ability to use modality appropriately significantly contribute to the pragmatic aspect in English writing. It also indicates a high degree of linguistic and pragmatic competency in the written mode. However, past research has shown that learners of English seem to struggle with employing modal verbs appropriately. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate how Vietnamese learners of English use modal verbs in their writings. For this purpose, a collection of 75 pieces of writing from 30 non-English major students at a university in Vietnam was analyzed using a quantitative method. Findings indicated that Vietnamese learners of English do not use modal verbs frequently in their writing. Besides, they tend to overuse *can*, *should*, *will* and rarely use other modal verbs. Based on the analysis of the students' writings, this study proposed possible reasons that account for these issues. The study provided some insights into the use of modal verbs by Vietnamese learners of English as a Foreign Language and thus informed the teaching of modal verbs in the English classroom and contributed to the academic curricula design.

Keywords: *Modal verbs; modality; auxiliaries; use of modal verbs; using modality.*

TÓM TẮT

Trong văn phong học thuật, động từ tình thái đóng vai trò quan trọng vì nhóm động từ này giúp người viết thể hiện quan điểm, thái độ thông qua nội dung bài viết tới người đọc. Sử dụng động từ tình thái một cách hợp lý được coi là thước đo cho khả năng hành văn của người học. Nó cũng phản ánh năng lực ngôn ngữ và năng lực dụng học của người học. Tuy nhiên, những nghiên cứu trước đây đã chỉ ra rằng người học tiếng Anh gặp khó khăn trong việc sử dụng động từ tình thái một cách hợp lý. Do đó, nghiên cứu việc sử dụng động từ tình thái của người Việt học tiếng Anh trong văn viết là rất cần thiết. Với mục đích này, nhóm tác giả đã thu thập 75 bài viết của 30 sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh, tại một trường đại học ở Việt Nam và phân tích theo phương pháp phân tích định lượng. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy, nhóm sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh trong nghiên cứu này không thường xuyên sử dụng động từ tình thái trong bài viết của mình. Ngoài ra, nhóm sinh viên này có xu hướng lạm dụng các động từ tình thái *Can*, *Should*, *Will* và hiếm khi sử dụng các động từ tình thái khác. Dựa trên kết quả phân tích bài viết của sinh viên, nghiên cứu này đưa ra lý giải cho những vấn đề liên quan đến việc sử dụng động từ tình thái của sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh, từ đó đề xuất giải pháp nhằm nâng cao chất lượng dạy và học động từ tình thái trong các lớp học tiếng Anh dành cho sinh viên không chuyên.

Từ khóa: *Động từ tình thái; tình thái; trợ động từ; sử dụng động từ tình thái, sử dụng tình thái.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Modality holds considerable importance in academic writing as it expresses the writer's attitude toward both their statements and the audience. The ability to use modality appropriately also greatly enhances the pragmatic dimension of English writing [2, 3] and may indicate a high level of both linguistic and pragmatic proficiency in the written form [4]. However, modal verbs present a challenge for many English language teachers and learners because of its complexity. As [1] says "modality is realized by linguistic terms from a wide range of grammatical classes, covering not only modal auxiliaries and lexical verbs, but also nouns, adjectives, adverbs, idioms, particles, mood and prosody in speech", therefore analyzing modality expressions within linguistics is very challenging. According to [5], modal verbs are considered a complex linguistic unit, making it challenging to simplify their intricacies for learners. If this complexity is reduced, English language learners may find mastering modal verbs less difficult.

Previous studies have indicated that English learners often struggle to use modal verbs correctly, frequently overusing or underrepresenting certain meanings or forms of modal verbs [6, 7]. Therefore, it is necessary to examine modal verbs and their use by non-native speakers in the specific genre of research articles. Besides, English language education has always been a primary focus in Vietnam and frequently receive extensive media attention. Numerous strategies have been proposed in teaching grammar of the foreign and second language, especially in teaching modals. [8] discusses the teaching and learning of modals from the easy items to the more difficult ones. However, she discusses and foresees that there is a problem in determining what is difficult or easy and to whom it is difficult or easy - questions which need to be given consideration.

Unlike previous studies which compares non-native speaker corpora with native speaker corpora or learner corpora with professional corpora, this study aims to examine how non-English major students utilize modal verbs. It is believed that the study would assist create academic writing programs, provide insight into how students employ modal verbs, and enhance the academic writing proficiency of second language learners.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Modality

Despite the long existence, the definition has not been fully agreed upon in various linguistic schools. In

simple terms, modality is defined as the speaker's verdict about the "necessity" and "possibility" of subjects [9]. [10] defined modality as "the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified so as to reflect the speaker's judgment of the likelihood of the proposition of the sentence being true" (p. 219). [11] also defines modality as the expression of necessity and possibility. He claims that modality is "the speaker's assessment of probability and predictability. It is external to the content, being part of the attitude taken up by the speaker". It can be concluded that modality is the manner that the speaker uses to express their opinion or attitude towards the proposition that the sentence expresses or the situation that the proposition describes.

[12] state that English sentences are categorical or modalized. In modalized sentences, modality may be expressed grammatically or syntactically by means of auxiliaries, or it may be expressed in various lexical ways such as full verbs, adjectives, adverbs, etc. However, they further argue that grammatically modality is expressed in terms of *mood*. If the mood is expressed morphologically, it is considered *synthetic*. The subcategory synthetic mood has two types, namely the *subjunctive* and the *imperative*. If mood is expressed syntactically by means of *auxiliaries*, it is considered as *analytic*. The subcategory analytic mood also has two factors, namely possibility and necessity, which are expressed by the auxiliaries *may, might, can, could, must, should, need* respectively. This analysis can be illustrated in Figure 1.

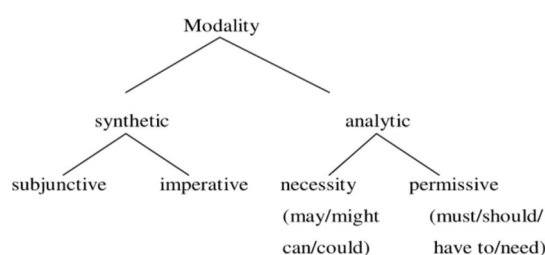


Figure 1. A spatial modal tense, aspect and modality [12]

In general, modality can express a wide range of semantic meanings which can be obligatory, necessary, requesting, permissible and so on. These meanings can be expressed through a variety of formal and lexical means such as the morphological mood of the verb, sentence adverbials, modal auxiliaries, and syntactic means. However, modal verbs are the most common devices being used and they are also the focus of this study.

Modality is a key component of English language learning. [13] claimed "rarely would one find a speech

situation in which modals are not used" (p.75). English language learners use modal verbs to express various notions in both oral and written forms such as hopes, desires, requests, opinions, speculations, permissions, abilities, possibilities, and dreams as well as to formulate conditions. [14] also argued that extensive research has demonstrated the pragmatic significance of modality in writing, describing it as "a discursal resource for negotiating knowledge claims and expressing a stance toward one's propositions and readers" (p. 184).

2.2. Modal Verbs

[15] defines modal verb as "a verb used with another verb to express an idea such as possibility that is not expressed by the main verb". He also claims that the modal verbs in English include *can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, and would*. They also have been identified in past literature as core modals [10]. Likewise, according to [16] *can, could, may, might, must, shall, should* and *will* are classified into the category of central modal verbs. These modal verbs can be used to express the modal meanings of permission, possibility, ability, obligation, necessity, volition, and prediction.

The focus of this study, based on the defining characteristics of modal verbs, is on the nine core modal verbs: *can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, and would*.

While the list of modal verbs is fairly limited, the list of possible semantic functions of these verbs fulfill is rather extensive. There is not a one-to-one correspondence of meaning and form, and most modal verbs can fill more than one semantic function. Different modal verbs can have different meanings when they are used in different contexts. According to [16], modal verbs can be divided into three main categories based on their meanings.

- 1) "Permission/possibility/ability": *can, could, may, might*
- 2) "Obligation/ necessity": *must, should*
- 3) "Volition/ prediction": *will, would, shall*

From the pragmatic perspective, [17] attaches the values of high, medium and low to different modal verbs. [18] divided modal verbs in terms of their pragmatic values as follows.

- High value modals: *must, ought to, need, and have to;*
- Intermediate value modals: *will, would, shall, should;*
- Low value modals: *may, might, can, could.*

2.3. Studies of modal verbs in writing

Extensive research into English modal verbs has been carried out over the last decades, however research in

modal verbs use in writing has revealed similar results. In the research studying the use of English modal verbs in academic writing, [19] found that Chinese learners tend to use modal verbs more frequently than professional writers (both native and non-native speakers) when comparing Chinese learners' academic writings with professional corpus which consists of published research articles. His result showed that Chinese learner writers employ modal verbs almost twice more than the professional writer. In the analysis on semantic functions depicted by modals used by advanced EFL Iranian students, [20] found that some meanings were overly used and some of them were not really used by learners. EFL advanced learners had great tendency to use *ability* meaning of modal *can* and *could* while their *possibility* meaning was not used frequently. Similarly, *may* and *might* were mostly used for *permission* rather than *possibility*. *Should* was mainly understood as *obligation/ advice* than *necessity*. *Will* and *would* tended to be mainly used with the *prediction* meaning. The modal *shall* had not been used by EFL learners. From the findings, the researchers showed the importance of drawing learners' attention to other pragmatic functions of modals.

Many researchers have studied the use of modality and modal verbs and the reasons about differences in the way people use modal verbs. [21] carried out a study on how cultural values are reflected in the way people from different countries use modal verbs. By comparing essays written by non-English speakers and essays on similar topics written by native speakers of American English, the study found that the use of root modals such as *must, have to, ought to* and *need* in native speakers and non-native speakers writing depends on culture and context. Non-native speakers use root modality to express the basic social values and presuppositions about notions of maintaining harmony, family and group responsibility, and extrinsically imposed obligation and necessity. By contrast, native speakers' writings express the preponderance of *need* to convey intrinsically imposed responsibility and necessity.

All previous studies about the use of modal verbs by non-native ESL learners revealed that students were uncertain about choosing appropriate modal verbs to convey modality in their sentences. This could be easily seen in the inaccuracy of modals at the syntactic and semantic levels. They tended to overuse some modals or particular meanings, lack knowledge about register-interference aspects of modals or information about

modal phrases and larger sentence patterns. Many research results also showed that language learners wrote compositions in a non-proficient way in terms of modal auxiliaries and had major problems producing them.

Linguists have reported many challenges about using modal verbs that students face, however not many learner-corpus studies have covered the root of these difficulties. To the knowledge of the researcher, no one has done a learner corpus study to investigate whether Vietnamese learners, are familiar with the use of modal verbs. Consequently, this study is conducted to find answers for this issue. This study aims to answer the research question "How do non-English major students use modal verbs in their writings?"

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in a university where English is an obligatory subject. 75 pieces of writing were collected from 32 second-year students majoring in Business. Since it took a great deal of time to analyze, the number was believed to be reasonable. These pieces of writing were categorized into 5 themes selected in the textbook "Basic English 3" for students of Business. These writings were chosen among students of all three English levels including poor, average and good students, which were decided by their English grades at class. In each writing topic, the researcher only collected 15 pieces in which 5 pieces from the group of poor students, 5 pieces from the group of average students and the last 5 pieces from the good student group. The writings were chosen from students of all English levels, so the results could be reflected more objectively.

The following are the five writing topics of the writings collected as data of this research:

- Imagine that you are an employee at a company. Write a paragraph about your office.
- Write a paragraph about a job that you want to do after graduation
- Write a paragraph about a company you would like to work for after graduation
- Imagine that you are an office manager. Write a paragraph about office etiquette to new employees.
- Write about your career plan after graduation.

The research used quantitative analysis to examine the use of modal verbs through students' own pieces of writing. Due to the time limitation and other resources, only nine modal verbs were surveyed: *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *shall*, *should*, *will*, *would* and *must*. Apart from *must*, these modal verbs are paired as present and past tense

counterparts of single lexemes (*can/ could*, *may/ might*, *shall/ should*, *will/ would*). Word count function by Microsoft Word was used to capture all instances from learners' writing of the nine modal verbs. Counts were made of total as well as individual modal use in writings.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Overall counts

The overall frequency counts of the use of modal verbs by the students are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency counts of nine modal verbs in writing corpora

Modal verbs	Learner Corpus	
	Frequency	Ranking
can (cannot, can't)	213	1
will (will not, won't)	115	3
could (could not, couldn't)	0	---
would (would not, wouldn't)	0	---
may (may not)	12	5
should (should not, shouldn't)	162	2
might (might not)	0	---
must (must not, mustn't)	21	4
shall (shall not, shan't)	0	---
Total modal verbs	523	
Total words in writing corpus	13542	

The results in Table 1 shows that only 5 out of 9 modal verbs were found in students' writing, which showed that student corpora exhibited a low frequent use of modal verbs. The high count in the corpora was 15.7 modal verbs per 1,000 words and the low was zero modal verbs per 1,000 words. While *can* and *should* were used more frequently than others, some modal verbs such as *would*, *might*, *shall* were not used by students in the writing corpus. In a total of 13542 words, modal verbs were only used 523 times. *Can* was the most frequently used modal verb with 213 times in all forms (positive form, negative form, shortened negative form). The second place was *should* which appeared 162 times in the corpora. *Will* is another modal verb that was used with high frequent level in the corpora in comparison with other modal verbs with 115 times. *May* and *must* was used only 21 and 12 times respectively. Other low frequent modal verbs such as *would*, *might*, *shall*, *could* were not used at all in the corpora.

It is immediately obvious that three modal verbs *can*, *should* and *will* occupied the majority of modal verbs used

by the learner writers, which account for 93.7% while *may* and *must* were rarely used by students in their writings. *Can* was the greatest use with 40.7%, taking up nearly half of all modal verb use. *Should* was the second frequently used modal verb, which accounts for about one third of all modal verb use in comparison with 22% of the use of *will* in learner writing. *Must* and *may* are the least frequently used modal verbs, accounting for 4% and 2.3% respectively.

4.2. The use of *can*, *should*, *will*, *may* and *must*

Can

According to [16], the meaning of a modal verb *can* indicates permission, possibility and ability. Two kinds of meaning of *can* can be found in student writing corpus, indicating ability and possibility.

In the corpora, *can* was mainly used to express the ability. Participants in the study used *can* in almost all situations when they wanted to express ability. *Can* was used in almost all situations when students wanted to indicate ability although there were many other ways or modal verbs that students could use such as *be able to*, *may*, *might*.

Can is also used to express possibility, however this kind of meaning is used with low frequency. In some situations, students use *can* to indicate *uncertainty* or *tentativeness*, which is inappropriate. In the writing corpus, there were 8 times that *can* was used to express the *possibility* but 6 out of 8 times it was used to express uncertainty.

However, [16] state that *can* is especially ambiguous in academic prose, since it can often be interpreted as marking logical possibility or ability". This is particularly true in the learner corpus as besides the above three functions, *can* is sometimes used with ambiguity between legitimacy and ability or as a chunk.

Should

From description of modal semantic class by [16], *should* indicates obligation (the agent is obliged to do something) and necessity (logical concludes something is likely/necessary based on evidence available). In the corpora, "should" is mainly used for the purposes of obligation. *Should* is also used to indicate necessity. However, this meaning of *should* is used with very low frequency. There were only 8 times in which students use *should* with this kind of meaning.

Will

In the corpora, the modal verb *will* was most used to indicate prediction or future plan. *Will* was used in every

situation in which students wanted to express their future plan.

Must

Must was used infrequently in the writing corpora, indicating the meaning of necessity.

4.3. Syntactic Analysis of Students' Usage of Modals

In the study, most of the occurrences of the modals were followed by the infinitive construction. In most writing pieces, modal verbs were used grammatically correctly. There was only one incorrect verb form in all writing pieces.

... *I can to apply what I have studied at university to my work. (File Topic 5)*

The error found in sentence was with the verb form, where the base form (without "to") of the verb "view" should be used after the modal verbs. They should be rewritten as following.

... *I can apply what I have studied at university to my work.*

This minor error underscores a specific area for improvement, highlighting that while students generally handle modals well, occasional lapses in verb form consistency may occur. Such errors can stem from the influence of different languages or dialects, which sometimes include similar constructions, or from overgeneralizing the pattern of infinitive use in English. The near absence of errors, however, reflects that students overall exhibit a strong command over modal constructions.

4.4. Misuse of modal verbs

Another incorrect use of modal verbs was that some modal verbs were used when they were unnecessary or inappropriate.

... *The computer helps me can do many things. (Topic 1)*

... *To become a good accountant, I'll need to have good numeracy skill because I'll have to deal with many numbers. (Topic 2)*

The error found in the sentence above was with the wrong use of the modal verb, where the modal verb is unnecessary or inappropriate. The use of modal verbs in these sentences even made these sentences grammatically incorrect and caused readers confused. It should be rewritten as following:

... *The computer helps me do many things. (Topic 1)*

... *To become a good accountant, I need to have good numeracy skill because I'll have to deal with many numbers. (Topic 2)*

Another common error in most writings was the lack of modal verbs in necessary situations. Here are some examples of students' errors:

... *I get a lot of benefits from this plan (Topic 5)*

...*In the future, I work as a data scientist at a cutting-edge technology company like Google.... (Topic 2)*

In the sentence "...*In the future, I work as a data scientist at a cutting-edge technology company like Google.... (Topic 2)*" the lack of a modal such as "will" makes the sentence sound awkward and incomplete, as it lacks the proper expression of future intent. The sentence would be clearer and more grammatically correct as, "In the future, I hope to work as a data scientist at a cutting-edge technology company like Google."

Similarly, in the phrase "...*I get a lot of benefits from this plan,*" the lack of a modal like "would" or "could" reduces clarity, as it implies certainty rather than a potential outcome. Adding an appropriate modal would refine the meaning, making the sentence more accurate and in line with the writer's intended tone.

5. DISCUSSION

The results from students' writing analysis demonstrated several features of students' use of modal verbs in their writing. Firstly, modal verbs were used at low frequency by the students. Of the nine modal verbs, only *can, could, will, should, may and must* were used while other modal verbs such as *would, should* were not utilized at all in the corpora. Secondly, *can, will* and *should* were the three most frequently used by students, in which *can* was the most popular. Students used *can* with the meaning of ability and possibility. *Can* was sometimes used with ambiguity between legitimacy and ability. Errors occurred when students used *can* to express uncertainty, where *may* would have been more appropriate. *Should* was mainly used for the obligation purpose while *will* was commonly employed for future predictions. *May* and *must* appeared infrequently, with *may* expressing possibility and *must* indicating necessity. Another finding from the study was that all modal verbs in the corpus were mostly used with the structure *modal + bare infinitive*. In most writing pieces, students rarely made grammatical mistakes about modal verb form. Most of the modal verbs were used grammatically correctly. Another common error that students made when using modal verbs was the misuse of modal verbs. In some sentences, they used modal verbs when they were unnecessary and made the sentence confusing. On

the contrary, in some situations, the use of modal verbs was necessary but students did not use them. They used assertive sentences, which made their sentences or arguments weaker. Some possible reasons can be explained for the findings.

Firstly, the learning of a second language was strongly affected by the native language. [22, 23] argued that the closer cultural (and psychological) distance between learners' own and the target language works positively for successful L2 learning. English modals include *can, could, may, might, should, shall, will, would* and *must* while the Vietnamese modals are *có thể* (which encompasses all cases of *can, could, may* and *might*), *nên* (the Vietnamese equivalent of *should*), *sẽ* (the Vietnamese equivalent of *shall, will, and would*), and *phải* (the Vietnamese equivalent of *must*). Looking at the data, *can* and *will* were used at high frequency, in which *can* was mostly used with the meaning of ability and *will* was used with the meaning of future prediction. This indicates that students may have translated from their native language to the target language. The error may happen when the writer tries to think in their native language and translates their ideas into the target language by translating word-by-word. Students made this error possibly because they might not master the grammatical rules or principles of the target language.

Another possible reason is related to how English words are taught to students in study materials. In the learning materials, the texts which are used for practice of English reading or listening skills used a lot of modal verbs. However, there are few formal lessons about modal verbs. In the series Basic Business English 1, 2, 3, 4, it is surprising that only in Unit 7 in Basic Business English 1, modal verbs are briefly mentioned in a short review of the lesson about *can and can't* and in Unit 4 in Basic Business English 3, modal verbs are briefly reviewed about some useful structures for giving advice. In other lessons, modal verbs were sometimes reminded in other grammar items or phrases. As the result, students may not have a systematic understanding of modal verbs, so they do not use them in their writing. This can be seen in the use of high frequent modal verbs. Some modal verbs like *can, should, will* were used more frequently because students were better understood about them. They are the most commonly used modal verbs and repeated in lessons in lower grades.

Besides, according to [24], learners tend to use modal verbs that were first taught to them. *Can, should* and *will*

are the first three modal verbs that are taught in junior school English classes in Vietnam. Thus, they may be preferred by Vietnamese students. This phenomenon can explain the underuse of *could, may, might, shall* and *would* and the misuse and excessive use of *can* and *will*. The overuse of *can* may in a way help explain the underuse of *may* as it frequently functions to propose uncertainty and hedging. As epistemic use of *may* is most common, the underuse of it may indicate that students may not make tentative statements to allow room for questions or doubt in their writing. Instead, they write overly positive, confident statements of fact, when a statement, which is less confident or assertive, would be more appropriate.

Recommendations for better teaching modal verbs to learners

For teachers

From the findings, it can be seen that students did not make many grammatical errors when using modal verbs but they misused them. This indicated that students had good knowledge about form of the modal verbs but they lacked knowledge of semantic functions of modal verbs. Therefore, when teaching modal verbs, teachers should not only focus on form but clearly explain their functions to students as well. When students clearly understand their semantic functions, they may use them more correctly. Moreover, in teaching modals, teachers should make students clear of the meanings and how to use them. Any vague meanings of the modals need to be clearly explained to ensure better comprehension of the modals. In addition, the structures introduced to students should be done repeatedly to improve students' comprehension and recognition of the structures before they fade away from their memories. Students overused of *can, should, and will* because they are modal verbs that were first taught to them. Besides, they are also used with high frequencies in most textbook. Teachers need to extend students' knowledge of modal verbs by using more other modal verbs in lessons and clearly explain their functions to students. By this way, students may form the habit of using habit in their expressions and writings.

For textbook designers

The study found that students have poor performance when using modal verbs due to insufficient instruction on them in foreign language teaching. It is recommended that students need to be taught two key types about modal verbs: (1) the pragmatic connotations of the modal verbs with instructions covering both semantic and pragmatic features, and providing varied contexts to

improve their appropriate use for fluent and natural communication; and (2) the differences among modal verbs with similar learning or of the same modal verbs, encouraging learners to notice their subtle distinctions. It suggests that textbooks should address these issues to enhance learners' understanding and use of modal verbs. When designing lessons about modal verbs, textbook designers need to provide real-life contexts for their use and promote authentic communication among students rather than just controlled practice. Instructions should focus not only on accuracy and literal meanings of modal verbs but on the pragmatics in discourse as well. Since students tend to use the modal verbs that they are first taught [24] textbook designers should consider having modal verb lessons in early grades, so that learners can get used to modal verbs and form the habit of using modal verbs in interaction and their writings. Modal verbs lessons also should be repeated in English course books, especially English textbooks that are used to teach students in large scales.

6. CONCLUSION

The present study has investigated the use of modal verbs by non-English major students in their writings. The research found that students used modal verbs infrequently and tended to overuse modal verbs including *can, will, should* while underusing the modal verbs *may, must*. Other modal verbs even were not used in students' writings. Although students rarely made some grammatical errors, they misused modal verbs due to lack of knowledge about the semantic functions of modal verbs. Based on analysis of the corpora, the researchers suggested that this misuse may stem from students translating directly from their native language lack of systematic lessons on modal verbs in their textbooks.

However, it is necessary to admit the limitations of this study. Firstly, the topics are limited, preventing students from using a wide variety of modal verbs. Besides, although the lack of other linguistic devices to express modality is assumed to be a major reason for the overuse of modal verbs, no evidence is provided. It is recommended that other researchers should combine many research tools to have better results and can give more detailed explanations.

The findings presented in this study can be especially useful to teaching modal verbs to Vietnamese learners in the EFL context. Firstly, modal verbs should be taught systematically in schools so that learners can have a good

understanding of them and use them accurately. In foreign language teaching, the lack of the related information about modal verbs results in this poor performance by foreign language learners. Modal verbs should be taught in context so that learners not only use the correct form of the modal verbs but apply them appropriately.

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