

An Exploratory Analysis of EFL Learners' Use of Modal Auxiliary Verbs in their Written Performance: The case of KRI Universities

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Abstract:

It has frequently been reported that the English modal verbs pose problems for EFL learners, including Kurdish learners, at both recognition and production levels. This problematic nature is attributed to a variety of factors, including the complexities of using modal verbs, their syntactic behavior and subtle meanings. The study's goal is to determine whether Kurdish EFL university students struggle with the structure of modals or their meanings and whether they have a sufficient understanding of English modal auxiliaries while they write in English.

The study has set for itself a number of research questions to answer all of which cover the uses of the following modal verbs: Can, Could, May, Might, Must, Should, be able to.

To achieve the study's objectives, two types of procedures were used: theoretical and practical. The theoretical procedure entails presenting a theoretical framework of the English modal verb, which includes definitions, classifications, features, modal verb uses, etc.

The practical procedure, on the other hand, consisted of two procedures. The first entails selecting a sample of Kurdish EFL learners, developing a test, and administering it to the chosen sample after ensuring its validity and reliability.

The test results were analyzed using appropriate statistical SPSS tools. The findings revealed that Kurdish EFL students have poor knowledge of the correct use and meaning of modal verbs in English. Also, the majority of Kurdish EFL university students failed to correctly distinguish between should/must auxiliaries and were unable to grasp the potential semantic difference between them because they used them interchangeably the majority of the time.

The second practical procedure was an interview of six lecturers from three universities in Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the finding of the interview was that according to the instructors' answers, KRI students' ability to use modal verbs is limited and they can correctly use modal verbs in writing only poorly. They perform better with regard to the form and structure of the modal verbs.

Keywords: English language, Kurdish.

الملخص:

تم الإبلاغ بشكل متكرر عن أن الأفعال الشرطية الإنجليزية تشكل مشاكل لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، بما في ذلك المتعلمين الأكاد على مستويي التعرف والإنتاج. تُعزى هذه الطبيعة الإشكالية إلى مجموعة متنوعة من العوامل، بما في ذلك تعقيدات استخدام الأفعال الشرطية وسلوكها النحوي والمعاني الدقيقة. الهدف من الدراسة هو تحديد ما إذا كان طلاب الجامعات الكردية في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يعانون من بنية النماذج أو معانيها وما إذا كان لديهم فهم كافٍ لمواد مساعدة اللغة الإنجليزية أثناء كتابتهم باللغة الإنجليزية. حددت الدراسة لنفسها العديد من الأسئلة البحثية للإجابة عليها جميعاً والتي تغطي استخدامات الأفعال الشرطية الرئيسية التالية: (can, could, may, might, must, might, must, should, and, be able to) قادراً على ذلك. ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة تم استخدام نوعين من الإجراءات: نظري وعملي. يستلزم الإجراء النظري تقديم إطار نظري للفعل النمطي الإنجليزي، والذي يتضمن التعاريف، والتصنيفات، والميزات، واستخدامات الفعل، إلخ. الإجراء العملي، من ناحية أخرى، يتكون من إجراءات. الأول يستلزم اختيار عينة من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية الأكاد، وتطوير اختبار، وإدارته على العينة المختارة بعد التأكد من صحتها وموثوقيتها. تم تحليل نتائج الاختبار باستخدام أدوات SPSS الإحصائية المناسبة. كشفت النتائج أن طلاباً بالأكاد اللغفقى الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لديهم معرفة ضعيفة باستخدام الصحيح ومعنى الأفعال الشرطية في اللغة الإنجليزية. أيضاً، فشل غالبية طلاب الجامعات الكردية في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في التمييز بشكل صحيح بين المساعدين الذين يجب / يجب عليهم، ولم يتمكنوا من فهم الاختلاف الدلالي المحتمل بينهم لأنهم استخدموه بالتبادل في معظم الأوقات. كان الإجراء العملي الثاني هو مقابلة ستة محاضرين من ثلاث جامعات في جامعات كردستان وكانت نتيجة المقابلة أنه وفقاً لإجابات المعلمين، فإن قدرة طلاب حكومة إقليم كردستان على استخدام الأفعال النمطية محدودة ويمكنهم استخدام الأفعال الوسيطة بشكل صحيح في الكتابة، فقط بشكل سيء. تعمل بشكل أفضل فيما يتعلق بشكل وهيكل الأفعال الشرطية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: لغة الإنجليزية، الكردية.

پوخته

زۆرجار باس لهوه کراوه که کرداره مۆدالی ئینگلیزی بهکانکیشه بۆ فیرخووانی زمانی ئینگلیزی وهک زمانبێگانه دروست دهکهن، لهوانهش فیرخووانی کورد له ههردووئاستی ناسینهوه و بهرهمهیناندا. ئهم سروشته کیشهداردهمگهریتهمه بۆ چههندین هۆکار، لهوانه ئالۆزبیهکانبیهکارهینانی کرداره مۆدالییهکان، ههلسوکهموتی رستهسازبیانو مانا وردهکان. ئامانجی توێژینهوهکه ئهوهیه که نایاخویندکارانی زانکۆکانی کورد کیشهیان لهگهڵ پیکهاته مۆدالهکان یان ماناکانیان ههیه و نایا تێگهیشتیتیکهتوموایان له یاریدهدمری مۆدالی ئینگلیزی ههیه لهکاتیکدابه زمانی ئینگلیزی دهنووسن. توێژینهوهکه چهندینبیرسیاری توێژینهوهی بۆ خۆی داناوه بۆ وهلامدانهمهوهیهموویان که بهکارهینانی ئهم کرداره سهرمهکییه مۆدالییهدهمگهریتهمه: (can, could, may, might, must, should and be able to). بۆ گهیشتن به ئامانجهکانی توێژینهوهکه دوو جۆرریکار بهکارهینان: تیوری و پراکتیکی. ریکاری تیوربیریتیه له خستهرووی چوارچیومهکی تیوری له کرداریمۆدالی ئینگلیزی، که پیناسه، پۆلینکردن، تایبهتمهندی، بهکارهینانی کرداری مۆدالی و هتد لهخۆدهمگهریت، له لایهکیدیکهوه ریکاری پراکتیکی له دوو ریکار پیکهاتبو، یهکههمیان بریتیه له ههلبژاردنی نمونهیهک له فیرخووانیکوردی زمانی ئینگلیزی وهک زمانی بێگانه و پهرمییدانیپاکیکردنهوهیهک و بهرئیهوبردنی به نمونهی ههلبژیردراو دوايلنیابوون له رهوایی و متمانهپیکردنی. ئهجامیاتیپاکیکردنهوهکان به بهکارهینانی ئامرازه ئامارییه گونجاوکهانی SPSS شیکراونهتهمه. دۆزینهوهکان دهیانخستوه کهخویندکارانی کورد له زمانی ئینگلیزیدا زانیارییهکیهمیان ههیه لهسهه بهکارهینان و مانای دروستی کرداریمۆدالی له زمانی ئینگلیزیدا. ههروهها زۆرینهخویندکارانی زانکۆی کورد زمانی ئینگلیزی وهک زمانبێگانه نهیانتوانیوه به شیومهکی دروست جیاوازی بهکهنله نیوان یارمهتیدهرهکانی پنیوست/دهبیت و نهیانتوانیله جیاوازی ماناسازی پۆتانسیلی نیوانیان تێگهن، چونکه زۆربهی کاتهکان به شیومهکی گۆراو بهکاریانیهیناوه. ریکاری پراکتیکی دووم چاوپیکهوتتیک بوو لهگهلهشهم ماموستای وانهبیژ له سێ زانکۆی زانکۆکانیکوردستان و دهرئهنجامی چاوپیکهوتتهکه ئهوه بوو که بهپێیوهلامی راهینههران توانای خویندکارانی ههریمی کوردستان بۆبهکارهینانی کرداری مۆدالی سنوورداره و دهنوان بهشیومهکی دروست له نووسیندا کرداری مۆدالی بهکاربهینننهها به شیومهکی خراپ. ئهوان سهبارت به قۆرم و پیکهاتهی کرداره مۆدالییهکان باشتتر کاردهکهن.

کلێله وشه: زمانی ئینگلیزی، کورد.

1. Introduction

This Article considers the field of Modal verbs as the main subject of its study, which are useful tools for expressing authors' stances concerning propositional content (Biber et al., 1999; Palmer, 2014; Collins, 2009). Therefore, these verbs can report perspective building in the introductions and conclusions. Modality is a linguistic concept that refers to the true condition of circumstances, and a situation of events is modularized if it is designated as being undecided in terms of its factual status, that is, it is neither positively nor negatively factual (Narrog, 2005: 186). Furthermore, Modality is a cover term for devices that allow speakers to communicate varying levels of commitment to or belief in a topic. (Saeed, 2016: 134). Moreover, Modality is the semantic category linked with the fundamental human cognitive ability to imagine that things could be different, that is, to imagine circumstances other than what is now the case. Modality refers to the language tools that allow "one to express things about, or based on, events that do not have to be true (Portner, 2009: 1, emphasis is ours) and Rocci (2017). In addition, In linguistics, modality refers to the articulation of a speaker's appraisal of an occurrence in terms of concepts such as likelihood, possibility, obligation, permission, and necessity, as well as other finer-grained attitudes toward the propositional content contained by the modal particle (Alonso-Almeida & Álvarez-Gil, 2020: 62-63).

The above definitions show that modality is a phenomenon that can reflect different realities. All approaches agree that modality in the service of eligibility means a linguistic event. One of the most interesting aspects is to learn what is modulated. Palmer (2001) and Saeed (2016) discuss propositions while Portner (2009) and Rocci (2017) refer to situations, Alonso-Almeida and Álvarez-Gil (2020) call them events and, finally, Narrog (2005, 2012) prefers to use the phrase "state of affairs". Therefore, it is important to highlight the technical meaning of the concepts of proposition and state of affairs because the situation of the phrase is more obvious.

The definition of modality by some authors, such as Saeed (2016), includes the concept of the speaker's commitment to the concern of a given proposition, which may include grading the likely probability to the unlikely probability. In the definition of Gotti and Dossena (2001), there is a difference between modality and mood, the latter being morphosyntactic and reflecting aspects of the reality referred to in the proposition. For example, the use of the imperative to express a command versus the use of a subjunctive to demonstrate hypotheses about the possible realization of action is described. In addition to mood, other linguistic elements relate to how to communicate modality as the modal verbs and some clitics, as highlighted by Palmer (1986). In short, modality can manifest itself both in morphology and with lexical mechanisms. The case of modal verbs, as confirmed by Aikhenvald (2004), is considered halfway between grammar and lexicon.

1.1 Hypothesis

- 1- The Kurdish EFL university students have little information about using modal verbs in their writing forms.
- 2- The Kurdish EFL university students have reasonable information about using modal verbs in their writing forms.

1.2 The aims of the study

The current study seeks to achieve the following aims;

1. To figure out that Kurdish EFL university students possess sufficient knowledge of English modal auxiliaries.
2. To find out whether Kurdish EFL students have more difficulty with the structure of models or their meanings.
3. To find out how correctly Kurdish EFL students use the modal auxiliaries: 'can', 'could', 'may', 'might', 'should', 'must', and 'was able to', together with their negative forms.

1.3 Significance of the study

The importance of this study is in its focus on both form and meaning of English modals and their use by EFL students of a specific university level. The focus on modal verbs is significant because of their complexity in both syntactical form and semantic content, which makes them challenging for EFL students to learn and use in any setting, and because of their importance in all communications, including the particular type of communication essential for international graduate students, scientific research articles.

It is hoped that the study's findings will be useful because they will have pedagogical value for EFL students and teachers. It can provide insights into the problematic areas of English modal verbs that teachers can use to help learners perform more effectively.

The study findings can also be beneficial to syllabus designers because they can be used to develop remedial teaching programs. It also encourages EFL teachers to pay closer attention to the errors that students make when producing English modal verb constructions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of modality

Modality reflects the speaker's individual judgment about the probability that something is right, necessary, permissible, etc., showing the attitude relationship between the language user and what he is saying (Dekeyser, Devrient, Tops, Geukens 1993: 84). Thus, the sentence:

"She often goes on business trips" can be considered incorrigible because the speaker mentions her frequent business trips as a fact. However, modality is used in the sentence "she must go on a business trip" because he gives his opinion on the necessity of her business trip.

Modality can be expressed in a variety of forms, including the imperative (1), the main verb plus infinitive (2), the subjunctive form (3), an adverb (4), or a modal auxiliary verb (5).

- 1) Let us go to the cinema tomorrow.
- 2) I wish to go to the cinema tomorrow.
- 3) I wish we went to the cinema tomorrow.
- 4) I will probably go to the cinema tomorrow.
- 5) I might go to the cinema tomorrow.

To date, various concepts and meanings of modality have been identified. The concept of “modal” can be explained based on the two main concepts of "necessity" and "possibility." Huddleston and Pullum relate the modal concept to the power of the speaker's commitment with "necessity," including strong commitment and "probability" of weak commitment (2002: 175).

Bache (2000: 142) “ considers two types of aspectual meanings of existence: probability (including logical possibility and necessity, hypothetical meaning, beliefs, and predictability) and desirability (including permission, obligation, and will)". He also defines the kind of way that relates to probability as "epistemic" and the kind that refers to desirability as "deontic." Typically, the epistemological method relates the speaker's attitude to the reality of past or present situations, while the deontic method relates to actualizing future situations. (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 178).

As mentioned, both necessity and possibility can be epistemic or deontic. To better understand the concept of connection between the possibility/necessity and epistemic/deontic modality, consider the following examples:

	<u>Possibility</u>	<u>necessity</u>
Deontic	1) You may come now.	2) You must come now.
Epistemic	3) You may be Sarah.	4) You must be Sarah.

The epistemological aspect can be interpreted as "possible/necessary" to express the speaker's attitude towards reality, while the dynamic aspect can be interpreted as "possible/necessary for," which describes the speaker's attitude towards actuality. In sentences (1) and (2), deontic propositions can be interpreted as "It is possible/necessary for you to go now" and the epistemological possibility of sentence (3) as “It is possible that you are John”. The sentence (4), * “It is necessary that you are John” does not exist in ordinary speech but shows the concept of aspect in terms of linguistic description (Palmer 1990: 8).

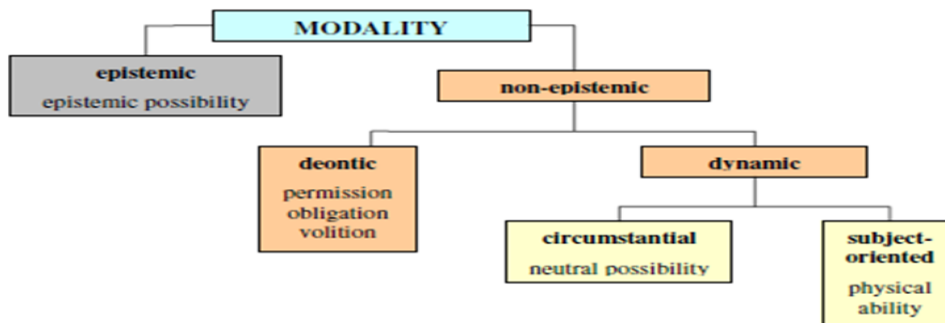
Sentences with facial verbs can be epistemic or deontic, but communicative and individual uses can be confusing, as shown in the following examples:

	<u>possibility</u>	<u>necessity</u>
Ambiguous	1) He may stay there.	2) He must be polite.

Without contextual reference, it is not possible to say whether (1) expresses an assumption (epistemological) or permission (deontic), and if (2) can be considered as a logical inference (epistemological) or an obligation (deontic).

Palmer proposed “dynamic modality”, which is related to “ability” and “will”, in addition to “epistemic” and “deontic” modality, as the third type of modality. He also examines two sub-modalities: neutral (or circumstantial)) and subject-oriented dynamics. Circumstantial modality refers to the possibility of neutrality, while the subject-oriented modality relates to the physical ability to live things (or the inherent quality of inanimate beings) (cf. 1990: 83-85). Figure (1) shows the three types of modalities and their meanings. The first distinction is between what is epistemic and what is not. The term "non-epistemic" summarizes the corresponding aspects and meanings that are not

epistemic. Since “possibility”, apart from the general concept, can express cognitive and dynamic potential, while " epistemic possibility " and "neutral possibility" are used to avoid confusion.



Figure(1.1) Type of Modality

2.2 Structure characteristics

In the introduction to the first edition of ‘Modality and the English Modals’, Palmer (1990) states that there is no area of English grammar that is more important or more difficult than the system of modals. He also says that the method of modals shows the ambiguity and uncertainty of the semantic system (1990: 3). As a result, it can be concluded that defining the semantic range of modals is not easy, so it is not always clear exactly what should be included in its formal system.

English modal verbs are frequently referred to as "defective" because of how dramatically their syntactical behavior differs from that of lexical verbs. The examples below demonstrate the "NICE" qualities, an acronym applied by Huddleston (1976: 333), which refers to the four formal types of modal and primary auxiliary verbs described below.

Modal auxiliary verbs

primary auxiliary verbs

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1) | He can't go. | He isn't going. |
| 2) | Must he go? | Is he going? |
| 3) | He will go and so will she. | He has gone and so has she. |
| 4) | He máy go. | He hás gone. |

Here are some formal features of the modal verbs:

- (1) Negative form with n't or not
- (2) Inversion with the subject to form questions
- (3) "Code" (if the lexical verb is given with the previous context, it is possible to use an empty auxiliary form)
- (4) Emphasis : the emphasis that is achieved with intense stress

There are criteria by which modal verbs can be distinguished from all other verbs, including primary auxiliary verbs. Three essential criteria are:

- In the present tense the singular does not take "s" for example. * He mays go.
- Have non-finite forms, for example. *maying, *mayed
- Do not happen at the co-occur, for example. * He may go.

To express the idea of may + can in a word group, it must be replaced by a marginal form: he may be able to go (Palmer 1990: 4).

Based on the above structural features that are always applicable, a list of nine significant modals can be identified:

“can, may, will, shall, must, could, might, would, and should”.

Palmer(1990: 5) states that the formal properties of modals form a complex set and argues that modals are preserved in language because the native speakers are aware of them as a set. He also believes that modals have a lot in common semantically.

2.3 Semantic Patterns of Modal verbs

Modal verbs contain varying degrees of explicitness when adverbs express the meaning of a word quite clearly (for example, it probably indicates that something is likely to happen or is true). However, dictionaries suggest several modal uses for ‘May’, which is one of the most critical problems for learners as English modal verbs have other functions and meanings. For example, it may sometimes be used to express the ‘possibility of epistemic’ (1) and sometimes to express ‘permission’ (2):

- 1) He may be Italian.
- 2) May I sit here?

Nowadays, finding ideas for the primary or original meaning for certain verbs has caused controversy. Palmer (1990: 15) states that the more diverse the different meanings, the more ambiguous and uninformative the original meaning.

Lewis (1986: 103) also argues that there is no reason for a particular structural item to have a unique meaning. He also states that if there are many alternative meanings, it is almost impossible for the listener to decipher quickly enough to understand natural speech. He further argues that different meanings of communication in various contexts necessarily mean a lack of primary meanings. Communication meaning is a combination of basic semantic features and other factors. Finally, he suggests that you look for a single central meaning and accept that this may require recognizing several marginal examples.

Moreover, numerous attempts have been made to find clear semantic patterns expressing the functions and meanings of common modal verbs based on the distinction between epistemological and non-epistemic methods. For example, Chalker has identified two general divisions of the communicative meanings of modals, one relating to possibility and necessity in terms of freedom of action (including ability, permission, and duty) and the other to the theoretical possibility of correct or incorrect propositions (including probability and Certainty) (1984: 117). Evaluation of facial verbs

based on influencing an individual's behavior and to express a hypothesis by Ungerer's et al. (1984: 153)

2.4 The adopted model

Notably, the current study has adopted Palmer's model of classifying the modal auxiliary verbs in English. The reason why this particular perspective was selected out of a plethora of approach and classifications to modal verbs is to attribute to the fact that he divided modals into three categories: deontic, dynamic, and epistemic. Deontic verbs are used to express wishes, demands, mandates, permission, and duty, according to him. The modals "must" for duty and "may" for permission can both express a deontic meaning. Dynamic modals denote an activity or a change in a certain state.

2.5 Review of previous works on Modal Auxiliary Verbs

In English, the concept of modality refers to the opinions and attitudes of speakers (Lyons, 1977: 452). It is concerned with communicating the message in terms of subjective meaning, which may be done in a variety of lexical ways. It can be stated using adjectives such as 'feasible', and 'likely', or adverbs such as 'possibly', as well as verbs such as 'believe' and 'suppose'. Moreover, complete verbs, modal auxiliary verbs, and semi-modal verbs all fall within this category. 'Can', 'could', 'may', 'might', 'must', 'shall', 'should', 'will', and 'would' are among the most common modal auxiliaries in English. Modality can also be stated with semi-modals, which share the same characteristics as modal verbs. For example 'Have to', '(have) been given to', '(had) better', 'ought to', 'be intended to', 'be going to', and 'used to' are some of the common semi-modals in English (Biber et al., 2002). Modal verbs have a common role in instructional registers by allowing a wide range of qualities to emerge in texts. They may be employed to carry out a few qualities that are common in instructional writing, in addition to their deontic, epistemic, and dynamic meanings.

To establish a link between our study and previous works in the field, in the literature that is related to our study:

Hyland (1994) conducted research on this specific function in textbooks written in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). He found that modal verbs are the most common way to indicate epistemic mitigation in ESP and EAP textbooks out of five possible hedging devices (including lexical verbs, modal adverbs, modal adjectives, and modal nouns). He stated that these textbooks' modal verb range is insufficient and that most exercises fail to emphasize the significance or characteristics of modal verbs.

Many scholars have claimed that non-native speakers' academic writing differs from native speakers, particularly when it comes to the usage of modal verbs. A considerable number of studies have been conducted to investigate the use of modal verbs in English nonnatives writing.

Aijmer (2002) for example, states that there is a global overuse of modal verbs by Swedish, French, and German writers. In this study, Aijmer compared two corpora: nonnative and native, that main corpus involves samples of argumentative essays by Swedish learners, whereas the second was the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOC NESS). This consists of nonprofessional writings by native speakers. The size of both corpora was approximately 52,000 words. Her study focuses mainly

on advanced Swedish learners and revealed that the modal verbs ‘will’, ‘should’, ‘must’ and ‘might’ that are significantly overused by nonnatives.

A study by Vethamani et al. (2008) investigated “ESL learners' use of English modals in narrative compositions: syntactic and semantic accuracy”. Their corpus consisted of 210 narrative compositions by Malaysian students in secondary schools. They concluded that Malaysian students are aware of the grammatical structure of modal verbs (i.e., they are helping verbs that are followed by infinitives). However, students often had problems concerning the semantic use of the modals. They were found to use a very limited range of modal verbs to convey various meanings instead of using different modal verbs. It is no surprise that language learners are confused by modal verb meanings.

In a study “A corpus-driven approach to modal auxiliaries and their didactics” that investigated the distribution and contexts of modal verbs in a language teaching material, Römer (2004) discovered some variations in the uses of modal verbs between the authentic language in the spoken part of the British National Corpus (BNC) and an EFL textbook. She found that the modals will, and can are overused in the textbook, whereas ‘would’, ‘could’, ‘should’ and ‘might’ are underused. Römer had also found that the modal ‘shall’ is never used to make predictions in teaching materials, but according to the BNC, it is often used for this purpose. Moreover, Römer’ study revealed a variation in the distribution of meanings of modal verbs. For instance, ‘can’ and ‘could’ are significantly overused for expressing ability more than possibility and permission. Together, these studies indicate that language learners have problems using the modals appropriately in writing, and the conventional teaching materials are not well aligned with how modal verbs are used by native speakers.

3. Methodology

This study adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods (mixed method) to analyze the collected data. In quantitative analysis, the participants' academic writing was examined grammatically and the modal verbs used in their performance. In the qualitative analysis, an interview with six EFL teachers in the relevant area had been conducted. In this research analysis, the researcher loosely followed Palmer's (2003) methods of analysis because Palmer's study was the only one to look in depth at modal verbs use and to do a semantic and functional analysis of the forms.

3.1 participants

Brown (2005: 292) defines "population" as "huge groups of people who are represented to be studied or watched." As a result, a representation or sample may be chosen. According to Richards et al. (1992: 321), a "sample" is any group of people selected to represent a population. The current study's population consists of two groups of participants. The first group to respond to the test was 90 university students in the third-year English Department of three universities: Sulaimani University's Faculty of Basic Education, Duhok University's English Department of Basic Education, and Salahaddin University's College of Education, English Department. The age of the EFL learners who responded varied from 20 to 22. The first language of all the participants was Kurdish.

The participants were chosen randomly from third-year students at the three universities mentioned above. The selection of third-year students was based on the assumption that they would have studied modal auxiliary verbs during their undergraduate years, in addition to the essay writing course, they had passed. The second group of participants included six lecturers who were interviewed.

3.2 Procedures of data collections

The current study aimed at investigating Kurdish EFL learners' written performance in the area of modal verbs. The study's sample is limited to third-year English students at three universities. The universities included the University of Sulaimani, Duhok University, and Salahaddin University—Erbil English Department—during the academic year of 2021–2022. The procedures to be followed are as follows: presenting a descriptive and structural theoretical background of modal verbs, creating and delivering a test to assess student's ability to handle English modal verb constructions at the recognition and production levels; analyzing the results with appropriate statistical tools (SPSS); identifying the student level and the areas in which they face difficulties.

3.2.1 Test

What may be said about testing, in general, can also be said about language testing; therefore language tests are measuring devices (Corder, 1973:367).

A test is a type of measurement tool that is used to elicit a sample of a person's aptitude, knowledge, or performance (Richards and Schmidt, 2002: 546). The test is considered a measuring tool intended to produce a sample of an individual's ability, knowledge, or performance (Richards et al Schmidt, 2002: 46). To prepare a test covering all the items explained in the theory course context, the researcher collected elements from different grammar books, as no ready-to-use tests were found for this survey.

The participants were exposed to testing techniques to elicit their recognition and production of the modal verbs, in the first, second, and third questions (recognition type), students were required to recognize the correct modal verb to use in each item. Question four was aimed to examine the testers' level of output. In this question, we asked the students to write an essay about a topic to examine the way that the students correctly use the modal verbs.

In the First question, participants were required to fill in the blanks with the appropriate form of (can, may, and might) second question respondents filled the gap with (can, cannot, could couldn't, was/ wasn't able to). The third question consisted of completing 6 sentences by choosing the right suggestion between (should/must). In the last part of our test, we asked the respondents to write an essay and use the modal verbs in the right way, shown in appendix 2.

3.2 .2Interviews

Five questions were asked during the interview, and the instructor responded with their responses. In addition to identifying the causes of their performance concerning generalizations, the questions focused on the student's capacity for recognizing and using the modal verbs in their writing performances. The interviewees provided great and comprehensive responses to the questions. The interview questions are shown in Appendix 2.

3.2.3 Procedure

For the purpose of conducting this quantitative, non-experimental correlational study, the needed data were collected through tests and interviews. At the beginning of the spring semester in 2022, the data were collected using tests and interviews.

The test has been made and chosen from different books then presented to a jury to accept the test as showed in appendix (A). After accepting and rewriting the test after the jury comment as showed in appendix (B). A pilot test was applied to 19 students of Sulaimanyah university students on 8th February 2022 as showed in appendix(C), the students were provided with some explanations about how to answer the test.

Then the test has been done at three different Universities; the University of Sulaimani on 22 February 2022, Duhok University on 2nd March 2022, and Salahaddin University – Erbil English department on 4th April 2022. 30 students have been chosen from each university and applied the test to them. Three teachers rated the essay question as shown in Table 2 Table (2).

Rate of Essay Question

Summations of Question 1,2,3 Q1 (10 Marks) Q2 (10 Marks) Q3(12Marks)	Question Four (First teacher) Essay writing (18Marks)	Question Four (second teacher) Essay writing (18Marks)	Question Four (Third teacher) Essay writing (18Marks)	Average (Question Four) (18Marks)
19	9	9	9	9
14	6	4	6	5.333333333
18	6	0	3	3
20	3	2	3	2.666666667
20	3	9	6	6
20	9	10	9	9.333333333
11	12	9	12	11
23	18	9	15	14
19	15	12	15	14
21	18	18	18	18
25	9	6	9	8
16	3	5	6	4.666666667
22	3	2	3	2.666666667
15	3	3	3	3
21	12	9	12	11
23	16	15	15	15.33333333
14	0	3	0	1
14	3	5	3	3.666666667
15	3	0	3	2
17	3	0	3	2
18	0	0	0	0
19	3	3	3	3
18	6	6	6	6
18	6	2	3	3.666666667
16	15	6	12	11
13	6	3	6	5
18	9	12	9	10
15	9	9	9	9
20	12	18	15	15
13	6	6	6	6
18	6	5	6	5.666666667
21	3	3	3	3
18	3	6	6	5
10	3	3	3	3
13	9	9	9	9
15	9	12	12	11
15	6	4	6	5.333333333
19	12	12	12	12



23	9	17	15	13.66666667
16	12	9	12	11
24	9	9	9	9
16	12	18	15	15
21	12	18	15	15
20	15	9	12	12
20	3	6	3	4
14	0	0	0	0
21	9	9	9	9
17	9	9	9	9
20	8	6	6	6.66666667
11	9	9	9	9
14	3	3	3	3
23	6	6	6	6
18	0	0	0	0
16	6	3	6	5
17	3	3	3	3
15	6	6	6	6
21	3	2	3	2.66666667
26	3	0	3	2
17	15	18	15	16
24	18	15	15	16
24	3	6	3	4
22	12	6	9	9
23	9	6	9	8
19	0	5	3	2.66666667
22	3	3	3	3
21	6	5	6	5.66666667
13	6	3	3	4
19	3	5	3	3.66666667
22	12	9	12	11
14	12	9	12	11
19	6	8	9	7.66666667
14	6	5	6	5.66666667
22	3	0	0	1
25	9	6	9	8
13	9	6	9	8
21	12	6	12	10
12	9	6	6	7
16	12	5	6	7.66666667
20	9	8	9	8.66666667
16	15	6	12	11
16	9	9	9	9
11	3	8	6	5.66666667
16	15	9	12	12
25	9	8	9	8.66666667

24	18	15	15	16
20	15	9	12	12
24	6	0	6	4
17	6	2	3	3.666666667
18	18	8	15	13.66666667
20	9	6	9	8
				670.6666667

3.3 Pilot test Administration

In the production of instructional materials, Richards et al (1992: 138) refer to pilot testing as "field testing" or "field trial," the try-out of materials prior to publication or further development in order to determine their suitability or effectiveness, as well as the reactions of teachers and learners to the material.

According to Mackey and Gass (2005: 43), a freshly prepared test material must go through a pilot test before publication, development, and operational administration to determine its acceptability and efficacy, as well as if the test is adequately structured. This type of test is often administered to a small group of learners before being applied to a larger sample.

Pilot tests, according to Mackey and Gass (2005:43), are used to: uncover any flaws and solve them before the main research is conducted. A pilot study is an essential tool for determining the feasibility and utility of data-gathering methods and making any required changes before using them with research participants.

The pilot test was administered to students at the Faculty of Basic Education of University of Sulaimani with the purpose of confirming our goal of evaluating whether the test items need to be revised, reformulated, modified, or explained in any other way.

The results of the pilot test indicated that it takes 35-40 minutes to complete the four test assignments and that 100% of the students were able to finish the test.

The table below shows the students' scores in the pilot test, from highest to lowest, as well as the results of question number.

Table (3) Pilot Test Result

Student number	Qestion1 (10 Marks)	Question 2 (10 Marks)	Question3 (12Marks)	Summation Questions1,2,and 3	Question4 (18 Marks)	sum
1	7	4	6	17	9	43
2	7	2	8	17	10	44
3	3	3	6	12	8	32
4	7	3	6	16	10	42
5	8	3	8	19	6	44
6	7	2	8	17	13	47
7	10	3	6	19	18	56
8	7	4	6	17	8	42
9	5	4	8	17	0	34
10	9	6	10	25	9	59
11	8	3	4	15	5	35
12	6	6	12	24	6	54
13	7	4	0	11	9	31
14	8	4	0	12	11	35
15	8	5	6	19	11	49
16	6	3	6	15	11	41
17	10	5	4	19	15	53
Summation	123	64	104		159	

3.4 Research Questions

The current study seeks to answer the following questions

1. How correctly do EFL university students in KRI universities use the modal auxiliary verbs of can-could -may -might?
2. How correctly do EFL university students in KRI universities use the modal auxiliary verbs of the can, cannot, could, could not, or was/was not able to?
3. How correctly do EFL university students in KRI universities use the modal auxiliary verbs of should and must?
4. Are there any significant differences between using modal auxiliary verbs of can/could, may/might; can/may, might/ cannot, was able to, was not able to, and should/ must in the written products of students in KRI universities?
5. How correctly do EFL university students at KRI university use English modal verbs in their writing?

3.5 Data analysis

Because this is a descriptive design, a set of descriptive statistical information was run, among which minimum, maximum percentage, mean, median standard deviation, and variance can be mentioned.

4. Results and Discussion

This study aims at analyzing the use of modal auxiliary verbs in the written performance of EFL learners taken from a test of English usage including 4 question types and an interview with EFL teachers among KRG universities. To achieve the study, an English test of the application of modal auxiliary verbs was designed which included three question types of fill in the blanks with (can/could/may/might), fill in the gaps with (can, cannot, could, could not or was/was not able to), and a test of using two options of (should/must), and finally an essay writing for correct application of modal auxiliaries. This was further enhanced by an interview conducted with select EFL teachers in the relevant field.

Due to the descriptive nature of this part of the study, descriptive statistics will be reported for the four tests administered in the study. It should be mentioned that the quantitative section of the research included two phases: a pilot study and the main study. Table 1.1 displays the descriptive statistics for the four tests during the pilot study. As is seen in Table 1.1, the minimum score in the fill-in-the-blanks with (can, may, or might) has been 3 and the maximum 10 out of 10, with a mean of 7.24 whose SD is 1.715. The mean scores for 'fill in the blank', 'fill the gap', and 'use the options' were 7.24, 3.76, and 6.12. The essay writing test had a mean score of 9.35 in the pilot study. For the 'fill in the gaps' type, it is seen that the minimum is 2 and the maximum is 6, with a mean score of 3.76 whose SD is 1.2. In the third type of question, it is seen that the minimum is 0, while the maximum is 12 out of 12, with a mean of 6.12, indicating a great range, SD, and variance. The essay type is seen as strange because we could find one that did not come to write even one modal auxiliary verb correctly in the whole essay, and there is a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 18 out of 18, with a mean score of 9.35, an SD of 4.046, and a high variance of 16.368.

Table 1.1 Descriptive Statistics Pilot Study

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Fill Blank	17	3	10	7.24	1.715	2.941
Fill Gap	17	2	6	3.76	1.200	1.441
Use Suggestion	17	0	12	6.12	3.039	9.235
Essay	17	0	18	9.35	4.046	16.368

4.1 Exploring the First Research Question

In order to answer the first research question "How correctly do EFL university students in KRI universities use the modal auxiliary verbs of "can-could -may -might", the following analyses were run and shown in the following tables and explanations.

Table 1.2 to Table 1.4 show the descriptive statistics for the EFL learners using modal auxiliaries in the first section of the main study for Question type 1, that is, fill in the blanks section related the auxiliary verbs of “*can, could, may, might*” The minimum and maximum scores in the fill in the blank section are 5, and 10; with a mean of 7.50, whose mode is 7 with the frequency of 31 cases repeated and the SD is seen to be 1.134.

Table 1.2 Descriptive Statistics related to Q1

N	90
Mean	7.50
Median	7
Mode	7
Std. Deviation	1.13425

As is seen in Table 1.3 the range of scores in Question 1 of the study 5 from 5 to 10.. One point worth mentioning is the fact that 2.2 percent of participants have marked 5 and, on the other side the maximum score of 10 has been scored just by 3 % of the participants.

Table 1.3 Descriptive Statistics related to Q1

Score		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	5.00	2	2.2	2.2	2.2
	6.00	15	16.5	16.7	18.9
	7.00	31	34.1	34.4	53.3
	8.00	23	25.3	25.6	78.9
	9.00	16	17.6	17.8	96.7
	10.00	3	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	90	98.99	100.0	

Table 1.4 also shows the summary of statistics concerning the performances of KRI university EFL learners on the fill in the blanks question with regard to the research question number 1.

Table 1.4 Descriptive Statistics related to Question 1

	N	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std.Dev.	Var.
Q1	90	5.00	5.00	10.00	7.50	1.134	1.287

4.2 Exploring the second research Question

In order to find out the answer to the second research question “*How correctly do EFL university students in KRI universities use the modal auxiliary verbs of “can, cannot, could, could not, or was/was not able to”, the following analyses were run and shown in the following tables and explanations.*

Table 1.4 shows the descriptive statistics for the EFL learners using modal auxiliary verbs of “*can, cannot, could, could not, or was/was not able to*” in the second section of the main study for Question

type 2, that is, fill in the gaps section. The minimum and maximum scores in the fill-in-the-blank section are zero and eight with a mean of 3.9, whose mode is 4, and the SD is seen to be 1.53.

Table 1.4 Descriptive Statistics related to Q2

Mean	3.9
Median	4
Mode	4
Std. Deviation	1.53
Minimum	.00
Maximum	8.00

As is seen in Table 1.5 the range of scores in Question 2 is from zero to eight. Regarding the second type of question, it is seen that 2 learners have scored zero for using the modal auxiliary verbs and just two learners have scored 7 and 8, indicating the weak knowledge of participants in modal auxiliaries.

Table 1.5 Descriptive Statistics related to Q2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	2	2.2	2.2	2.2
	1.00	1	1.1	1.1	3.3
	2.00	14	15.4	15.6	18.9
	3.00	20	22.0	22.2	41.1
	4.00	21	23.1	23.3	64.4
	5.00	17	18.7	18.9	83.3
	6.00	13	14.3	14.4	97.8
	7.00	1	1.1	1.1	98.9
	8.00	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	90	98.9	100.0	
Total		91	100.0		

Table 1.6 also shows statistics concerning the performances of KRI university EFL learners regarding the second research question on performances of learners on question number 2.

Table 1.6 Descriptive Statistics related to Q2

	N	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Var.
Q2	90	8.00	.00	8.00	3.9	1.53	2.36

4.3 Exploring the third research Question

In order to answer the third research question “How correctly do EFL university students in KRI universities use the modal auxiliary verbs of “should and must”, The related to the case were conducted by the researcher which are shown in the following tables and explanations. Analyzing the data in Table 1.7 indicates the descriptive statistics for the EFL learners using modal auxiliary verbs of “must and should” in the third section of the main study for choosing between “should and must”.

Table 1.7 Descriptive Statistics related to Q2

N	90
Mean	6.88
Median	8.00
Mode	8.00
Std. Deviation	2.93
Minimum	.00
Maximum	12.00

As is seen in Table 1.8 the range of scores in Question 2 is 12. In this question type which has been an easy one, it is seen that one learner has scored zero and 9 learners have taken 2 for choosing between “should and must” for which there has been 50% chance of using the correct choice. On the other hand, it is observed that just 6 out of 90 learners have scored 12 in this question type. The minimum and maximum scores in this section are zero and twelve with a mean of 6.88.

Table 1.8 Descriptive Statistics related to Q2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	1	1.1	1.1	1.1
	2.00	9	9.9	10.0	11.1
	4.00	17	18.7	18.9	30.0
	6.00	14	15.4	15.6	45.6
	8.00	26	28.6	28.9	74.4
	10.00	17	18.7	18.9	93.3
	12.00	6	6.6	6.7	100.0
	Total	90	98.9	100.0	
Total		91	100.0		

Table 1.8 above is representing that the mode is 8, repeated 26 times and the SD is (1.53). The large range of scores from zero to 12 once again indicates non-homogeneity among the learners in their knowledge of model auxiliary, particularly in the case of the third question of type of the test.

Table 1.9 Descriptive Statistics related to Q3

	N	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Var.
Q3	90	12.00	.00	12.00	6.88	2.939	8.639

Table 1.9 also shows statistics concerning the performances of KRI university EFL learners regarding the third research question on performances of learners on question number 3.

4.4 Exploring the fourth research Question

In order to find the answer to research question “are there any significant differences between using modal auxiliary verbs of “*can/could, may/might*”; “*can/may, might/ cannot, was able to, was not able to*”; and “*should/ must*” in the written products of students in KRI universities”, the following analyses were run and shown in the following tables and explanations.

Table 1. 9 ANOVA analysis for 3 question types

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Q1	90	7.50	1.13425	.11956
Q2	90	3.90	1.53645	.16196
Q3	90	6.88	2.93925	.30982

As is seen in the Table 1.9 there is a large difference between the mean scores of Q2 with those of questions 1 and 3. Questions 1 and 3 which required the participants to use the correct forms of “*can/could, may/might*” and “*should/ must*” were close in their mean scores correctly used by the participants and the number of options here was not too much, consequently, the learners have been able to use them with higher mean scores and similar together. Concerning question 2 which needed the participants to use “*can/may, might/ cannot, was able to, was not able to*”, is seen to have a much lower mean score compared to mean scores of questions 1 and 3. This may be due to the fact that the number of options to be used as the alternatives is more in comparison to the other two questions. Therefore, it can be said that the difference of mean score is noticeable as for question 2 with others.

The interrater reliability of the scorers was needed to be calculated, therefore it was calculated as the correlation coefficient shown in Table 1.10. which displays the Inter-Rater reliability indices for the three raters who rated the EFL learners’ essays.

Table 1.10 Pearson Correlations Inter-Rater Reliability Indices

		Rater2	Rater3
Rater1	Pearson Correlation	.719**	.923**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	90	90
Rater2	Pearson Correlation		.872**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N		90

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results showed that there were significant agreements between the first and second raters ($r(88) = .719$, representing a large effect size, $p < .05$), first and third raters ($r(88) = .923$, representing a large effect size, $p < .05$), and second and third raters ($r(88) = .872$, representing a large effect size, $p < .05$).

4.5 Exploring the fifth research Question

For the purpose of answering the research question “How correctly do EFL university students in KRI university use English modal verbs in their writings?” The relevant analyses were conducted and are displayed in the tables and explanations below.

First, it was required to indicate the descriptive statistics concerning how the essays were scored. For this purpose each essay was given to three scorers and the mean of each essay was considered the final score of the participants, the results of which as mean scores are presented in Table 1.11.

Table 1.11 Descriptive statistics for the three scorers of essays

	Scorer 1	Scorer 2	Scorer 3
Mean	7.90	6.78	7.66
N	90	90	90
Std. Deviation	4.80648	4.60702	4.49969

Analyzing the data in Table 1.12 shows the descriptive statistics for the EFL learners correctly using modal auxiliary verbs in the essays written by KRI universities EFL learners.

Table 1.12 As is seen in *Descriptive statistics for Essay scores*

N	90
Mean	7.45
Median	7.33
Mode	9.00
Variance	19.162
Range	18.00
Minimum	.00
Maximum	18.00

Table 1.12 the range of scores in essay writing is 18. In this section of the test, it is seen that the minimum is surprisingly zero scored by 3 learners telling us that even in free writing there may be some learners taking zero. The mean score of the learners for their essay writing is 7.45 lower than 9 the cutoff point indicating a low score among EFL learners in KRI universities.

Table 1.13 is representing that the mode which is 9 has been repeated 9 times and the SD is seen to be 2.93. The large range of scores from zero to 12 once again indicates non-homogeneity among the learners in their knowledge of model auxiliary, particularly in the case of the third question type of the test.

Table 1.13 Descriptive statistics for Essay Scores

Score		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	3	3.3	3.3	3.3
	1.00	2	2.2	2.2	5.6
	2.00	3	3.3	3.3	8.9
	2.67	4	4.4	4.4	13.3
	3.00	8	8.8	8.9	22.2
	3.67	4	4.4	4.4	26.7
	4.00	4	4.4	4.4	31.1
	4.67	1	1.1	1.1	32.2
	5.00	3	3.3	3.3	35.6
	5.33	2	2.2	2.2	37.8
	5.67	4	4.4	4.4	42.2
	6.00	5	5.5	5.6	47.8
	6.67	1	1.1	1.1	48.9
	7.00	1	1.1	1.1	50.0
	7.67	2	2.2	2.2	52.2
	8.00	5	5.5	5.6	57.8
	8.67	2	2.2	2.2	60.0
	9.00	9	9.9	10.0	70.0
	9.33	1	1.1	1.1	71.1
	10.00	2	2.2	2.2	73.3
	11.00	8	8.8	8.9	82.2
	12.00	4	4.4	4.4	86.7
	13.67	2	2.2	2.2	88.9
	14.00	2	2.2	2.2	91.1
	15.00	3	3.3	3.3	94.4
	15.33	1	1.1	1.1	95.6
	16.00	3	3.3	3.3	98.9
	18.00	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	90	98.9	100.0	

Table 1.14 represents the summary of statistics for the essays written by KRI university learners whose SD is 7.45 indicating non-homogeneous learners.

Table 1.14 Descriptive Statistics for the essay scores

	N	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Var.
Essay Scores	90	18.00	.00	18.00	7.45	4.377	19.162

Table 4.15 shows the descriptive statistics for the EFL learners in the whole quantitative section of the study. The minimum and maximum scores on the fill-in-the-blank section were 5, and 10; with a mean of 7.50, whose SD is 1.134, and a variance of 1.287. The scores on the fill the gaps part ranged between zero and eight, with a mean of 3.90. the SD for this section is 1.536 whose related variance is 2.361. The minimum and maximum scores on the use suggestion test were zero, and 12; with a mean of 6.89. The SD and variance are 2.939, and 8.639 respectively. The scores on the essay test ranged between zero and 18, with a mean of 7.45. The standard deviation for the essay test is seen to be 4.378 with a variance of 19.164.

Table 1.15 Descriptive Statistics Main Study

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Fill Blank	90	5	10	7.50	1.134	1.287
Fill Gap	90	0	8	3.90	1.536	2.361
Use Suggestion	90	0	12	6.89	2.939	8.639
Essay	90	0	18	7.45	4.378	19.164

Normality of the data

In order to do the statistical data, it is required that we have normal data. Both tests of Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk show that the significant level is below .05 therefore, all the collected data are normally distributed.

1.16. Tests of normality of the data

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Q1	.204	90	.000	.926	90	.000
Q2	.132	90	.001	.955	90	.004
Q3	.192	90	.000	.937	90	.000
Essay	.108	90	.012	.963	90	.012

4.6 Exploring the Instructors' Interviews Answer

The first interviewee has an MA degree in English Language and Linguistics, specializing in syntax, and her response to the first question, "Students' ability to use modal verbs," was that students either avoid or misuse them. They know the modal verb form, but they have problems using it correctly according to its meaning; for example, they misuse can and may (may I come in, can I come in). They misuse the "ability" and "permission" meanings. The most commonly used modal verb is the permission modal verb. Likewise, the second interviewee has an MA degree in the field of English language and linguistics, specializing in syntax, According to the instructor, university students frequently use modal verbs but struggle with understanding how to use them and contextualizing the context. He also agreed that it is easier for the student to use phrasal verbs, especially (perhaps) because they don't have to use the modal verb with a different meaning in a different context and can be used for certain purposes.

The third interviewee has an MA in English language and linguistics, with a focus on syntax. In response to our question, the instructor mentioned a point where she mentioned that nowadays students get a lot of benefits from YouTube because they have learned to use modal verbs and that social media and technology play a big role in their improvement, but she did not specify how this can be accomplished or demonstrated. Instead, they use "can" and "could," and they are good at using them because they use them frequently and it's easy to use them without struggling. Similarly, the interviewee's fourth point of view of university students' modal verb usage is that the students show a lack of information about how to use them according to their meaning; they avoid using "must," and they use "maybe" and "can" mostly.

The interviewee's fifth perception is that only 20% of the students can use the modal verb correctly, and they use it for ability more than possible due to their level; they use "should," "have," and "must" depending on their knowledge. Meanwhile, the interviewee's sixth stated that almost all of the students have difficulty using modal verbs correctly and are only familiar with a few of them; they frequently use "should," "must," and "could," but when they do, they misuse them to mean "ability," "permission," formality, or informality; otherwise, they don't have problems with the form of using it; they know it clearly, but they misuse the meaning; still, they prefer using a modal verb over a phrasal verb.

5 Conclusions

1. EFL students have poor knowledge of the correct use and meaning of modal verbs in English.
2. Their knowledge of them is restricted to some limited number of modal verbs and this knowledge is more about correct use and accurate meaning.
3. This study also concluded that when EFL students are faced with modal auxiliaries (can/could, may/might ,) in written texts they generally do well in managing and using them, but when they are not used in pairs (scattered in a text) their performance of recognition and significantly reduced.
4. The majority of EFL university students fail to correctly distinguish between should/must auxiliaries and cannot grasp the potential semantic difference between them since they use them interchangeably most of the time.
5. The EFL students' errors in using modal auxiliaries in free writing shows a marked failure and poor knowledge of EFL students about the meaning of the modals their correct uses.
6. Some EFL students avoid using the modals by replacing their with such words as 'perhaps' and some adverbs.

5.1 Recommendations of the study:

Based on the findings of this study and the results we have discussed, several recommendations can be suggested for EFL students, EFL teachers, syllabus designers, and those working in the relevant fields:

1. Teaching modal auxiliary verbs should not be restricted to matters of structure and use only.
2. Sufficient attention should be given by the EFL teacher to teaching the most common and frequent modal auxiliary verbs rather than a select number of modals of the teacher's own choice.
3. The study and the coverage of modal auxiliary verbs in grammar books should not be done hurriedly and without due attention to the matters of meaning and subtle shades of meaning.
4. The EFL teachers should insist that EFL students do NOT avoid using modal auxiliary verbs as they present a substantial amount of meaning and are widely used in English, therefore should be mastered efficiently and satisfactorily.

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